

Department
of Political Science

Chair: Sociology of Terrorism

How do terrorists engage in suicide
terrorism? -
Two different perspectives.

Prof. Alessandro Orsini

SUPERVISOR

Maria Allegra Magnini

Matr.085962

CANDIDATE

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Introduction

This research aims to provide two different perspectives about suicide terrorism. The comparison between the two authors is necessary to understand better the complexity of suicide terrorism in the light of a political view and a psychological one. Suicide terrorism is a growing threat around the world, but why so is still questionable. As most of the suicide attacks are perpetrated by Muslims, the common view would be that suicide terrorism is caused by Islamic fundamentalism. This assumption may be misleading since religious motives are not the main element in inducing suicide bombers.

Suicide terrorism cannot be identified as terrorism as whole, in fact it is the most aggressive form of terrorism. Suicide bombers do not expect to survive the mission like ordinary terrorists. Scholars started to analyse this phenomenon in depth trying to give response to why individuals engage in suicide attacks. Some identified suicide terrorists as terrorists of the first hour¹ who are the ones willing to sacrifice their lives to achieve their mission. The vocational terrorist believes the collective wellbeing is more important than his life. Other scholars try to give a political or demographic explanation. However, suicide terrorism is not a consequence of poverty, age, educational and economic background or political rivalry among domestic organizations. The theories developed in these chapters, show the main elements in the production of suicide bombers and consequently suicide terrorism.

The first chapter analyses Robert Pape's theory of suicide terrorism in his book *Dying to Win* (2005). Pape describes the strategic logic of suicide terrorism. For him, suicide terrorism is a product of a three-step process: the strategic, the social, and the individual level. The strategic level aims at political coercion. Suicide attacks are organized missions with specific political goal, usually nationalistic. Until terrorists recognize that suicide terrorism pays off, we will have an increase in suicide attacks. The social level focuses on national communities and their legitimization of terrorist organization. The individual level addresses the altruistic motives of individuals to engage in suicide attacks. Suicide bombers sacrifice their lives for the nation's good. Finally, Pape shows a new strategy to cope with suicide terrorism. In particular he applies it to the USA.

¹ Alessandro Orsini, *Poverty, Ideology and Terrorism: The STAM Bond*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 35/2012, p. 678.

The second chapter proposes Ariel Merari's theory of suicide terrorism analysing his book *Driven to Death* (2010). He recognizes three main elements in producing suicide bombers: the community from which he emerges, the group's tactic and the individuals willing to sacrifice themselves. As a psychologist, Merari tries to fill the gap in suicide terrorism researches on the personality characteristics of suicide bombers. His study focuses on the Palestinian case and specifically on the would-be suicides. Lastly, Merari suggests his strategy to cope with the suicide terrorism phenomenon.

Finally, the third chapter provides a comparison between the two authors on different levels. Firstly, they are analysed in the light of sociological theories. The sociological theories tackled are Durkheim's theory of suicide and rational choice theory, focusing on Homans and Blau. Durkheim's study is based on suicide and his three different types: egoistic, altruistic and anomic. Instead rational choice theory focuses on the role of individuals as rational and tries to identify a rational behaviour in suicide bombers. Secondly, Pape and Merari are compared in the light of common case studies. These case studies address terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

In order to understand the suicide terrorism phenomenon, many different points of view are necessary. Both studies are necessary to understand the various elements composing suicide terrorism. Not all suicide bombers can be identified under a specific psychological and social profile, but these books summarize all the important information gathered until now on suicide terrorism. As a sociological phenomenon, suicide terrorism is constantly changing. New perspectives and studies are needed to continuously fill the gaps and uncertainties of this phenomenon.

Chapter One

1.1 Robert Pape

Robert Pape is professor of political science at the University of Chicago. He teaches International Politics and he is director of the Suicide Terrorism course. He graduated in Political Science from the University of Pittsburgh and, in the same field, obtained a PhD from the University of Chicago. As a scholar of national security affairs, he writes widely about international relations, coercive airpower, economic sanctions and politics of unipolarity. Moreover, he wrote several articles for internationally renowned American newspapers like New York Times, Foreign Affairs, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and New Republic, appearing also in major tv programs and radio like ABC's World News Tonight. Between his acclaimed publications there are *Bombing to Win* (1996), *Cutting the Fuse* (2010) and *Dying to Win* (2005).

1.2 Dying to Win (2005)

The book is based on data collected from suicide bombings and attacks around the world between 1980 and 2003. Overall, it analyses 315 attacks.² The study's definition of suicide attack was one where at least one terrorist who killed himself. Attacks conducted by national governments are ignored in the database. The evidence displays a weak relation between religion and suicide terrorism. Instead evidence shows that there is a common strategic goal based on the liberation of their homeland from modern democracies forces. The achievement of this conclusion comes from three common patterns in the data: the attacks are part of organized campaigns; democratic states are vulnerable to suicide terrorists and the terrorist campaigns are directed and aimed to achieve strategic goals.³ The turning point in the boost of American security was 9/11, when the world discovered that even the USA was vulnerable in their own home. From 1980 through 2003 suicide terrorism fatal rate has grown by a multiple of 12 times more, making it the deadliest type of terrorism. Since 9/11 US engaged in policies to mutate Muslim societies, but this type of intervention is likely to increase event like 9/11. Instead

² Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House, New York, 2005, p.3

³ *Ivi*, p.4.

Robert Pape suggests a new conception of victory: eliminate terrorists who are planning to kill Americans and block the next generation to arise.

1.2.1 What is Suicide Terrorism?

Terrorism involves the use of violence by an organization other than a national government to intimidate or frighten a target audience.⁴ In general, terrorism has two broad purposes: to gain supporters and to coerce opponents. Robert Pape recognizes three different types of terrorism based on trade-offs of objectives: demonstrative, destructive and suicide terrorism. Amongst them suicide terrorism is the most aggressive since it aims to provoke the targeted community and the neutral one. The most striking feature of a suicide terrorist is that the attacker does not expect to survive and to carry out the attack his death is necessary. The classic model of “suicide attack” is therefore a situation in which the attacker kills himself or herself.⁵ In *Dying to Win* only suicide attacks that are following this definition are considered. The basic findings of the analysis define coercion as the predominant objective of suicide terrorism, with the ultimate goal of angering as many people as possible.

Suicide terrorism is often identified by scholars as a product of indoctrination into Islamic fundamentalism or of the suicidal inclinations of individuals who would likely end their lives in any event.⁶ The first wave of explanation was believable from 1980s until 1990s as it was difficult to identify with certainty which individuals became suicide terrorists and why terrorist organization increasingly resorted to this type of attack. Firstly, suicide terrorism attracts most of the western media and moreover it does not only concern Islamic fundamentalism. For instance, the attacks of the exemplar Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Secondly, psychological explanations cannot explain why suicide terrorism occurs only in certain societies and at certain times. A political and social view are needed. Identifying suicide terrorist as people from a broad display of lifestyle. Believing that terrorists come from uneducated, unemployed, socially isolated, and poor lifestyle is alluring. But poverty is an indigent evidence since the countries most affected by suicide terrorism are far from being the poorest countries. Lastly, some believe suicide terrorism is a product of domestic competition among multiple organizations for support from their

⁴ *Ivi*, p.9.

⁵ *Ivi*, p.10.

⁶ *Ivi*, p.16.

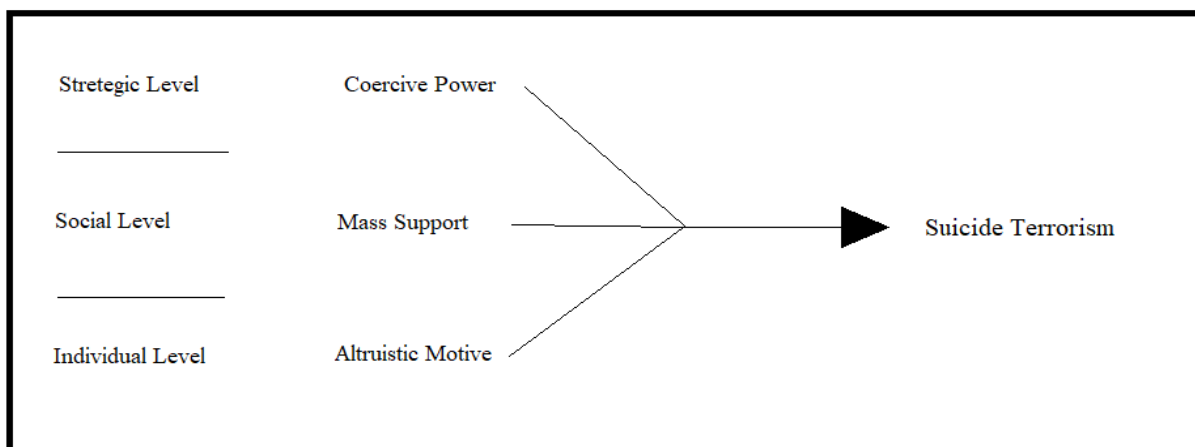
community.⁷ But if this is the case, it becomes difficult to explain why suicide terrorism is so popular between Palestinian population or why groups who formed Hezbollah in Lebanon worked together rather than against.

Therefore, to explain suicide terrorism, Pape suggests thinking at a suicide terrorist campaign as an output of a three-step process:

- 1- The strategic logic of suicide terrorism is political coercion. Suicide attacks are not isolated or random events made by delocalized individuals, but rather occur in clusters as part of a larger operation by terrorist organizations to achieve their goal. Their campaigns are mainly nationalistic rather than religious, and their target are democracies.
- 2- The social logic of suicide terrorism is commanding broad social support. Particularly from national communities where they recruit because of their pursuit of liberational goals from foreign occupation.
- 3- The individual logic of suicide terrorism is altruistic suicide. Based on the idea that high levels of social integration and respect for the community can lead individuals to commit suicide out of a sense of duty.

Understanding the strategic, social, and individual logic of suicide terrorism helps us seek effective domestic and foreign policies to stop this threat.⁸

CAUSAL LOGIC OF SUICIDE TERRORISM



Robert Pape, *Dying to Win*. Random House Trade Paperback, New York, 2005, p.22.

⁷ Ivi, p.20.

⁸ Ivi, p.24.

1.2.2 The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism

The main purpose of suicide terrorism is targeting democratic states to obtain a change in policy. Suicide terrorism is a strategy of coercion. The strategy is simple: wreak on the opposing society to crush their enthusiasm in resisting the terrorists, making the government concede or the population revolt. Terrorists' enthusiasm to die amplifies the effects in three ways. Firstly, suicide attacks have a greater destructive impact than other terrorist attacks. Secondly, suicide attacks are usually used as a tool to increase expectations of future attacks, also called "art of martyrdom".⁹ Justifying suicide terrorism on the basis of religious or ideological motives to meet wider national communities, intensifies the status of martyrs and brings more followers. Terrorist groups usually propagate "sacrificial myths" to elevate an attacker's death to a contribution for the nation. Lastly, suicide terrorist organizations can escape more easily detention and permit a certain use of violence against all social norms.

As said before, the core goal of suicide terrorism is coercion. It can be applied with two different strategies: punishment and denial. The former consists in increasing the costs or risks for the target that he is overpowered by the value of interests. And the latter is based on the idea that you have to demonstrate to the target that he cannot win the dispute. Considering that suicide terrorism as the role of the coercer and, simultaneously, of the weaker actor and the target is the stronger one, the only strategy that can be used is punishment. Their logic is the same of the one used by states: to cause mounting civilian costs to overwhelm the target state's interest in the issue in dispute and so to cause it to concede the terrorists' political demands.¹⁰

In order to support further the idea that suicide terrorism is a strategic phenomenon to constrain democracies to withdraw military forces from their homeland and not a religious or an irrational behaviour, Robert Pape discovers three general patterns repeating in the data analysed.

- Timing: out of all the 315 attacks analysed, 300 were parts of organized campaigns, while only 14 were random events. An organized terrorist campaign can be distinguished from random events by an admission of the terrorist leaders that explain and justify the attacks as calculated to gain political concessions.

⁹Ivi, p.28.

¹⁰Ivi, p.30.

Moreover, a campaign lasts until the leaders quit it because of a fulfilment in gains or a failure in the effort. But the striking feature is the timing of the suspensions of campaigns. Leaders usually decide that further counterattack would be disadvantageous to their purposes.

- Nationalist goals: due to its highly costly nature, suicide terrorism needs crucial interests at stake. In fact it maximizes coercive leverage at the expense of support among their own community and to resist overtime it needs a high degree of commitment among the potential recruits.¹¹ Therefore the most important goal a community can have is the independence of its homeland. Following a strategy permits to achieve realistic goals in two senses. Firstly, their political aims are more mainstream than others could think because they use common, genuine nationalist demands of their community. Secondly, these groups have significant support for their policy goals. Thus, terrorists do not pursue radical objectives but rather they are the most optimistic in the use of violence for achieving their purposes.
- Democracies as the targets: democracies are the most likely to be attacked for three main reasons. Firstly, they are most sensitive to coercive punishment since the public has more ability to influence state policy. Secondly, democracies are more restrained. In fact, although they can intervene with harsher and bigger punishment on terrorists, democracies are believed to be less likely to attack civilians. Lastly, suicide attacks are harder to boost in authoritarian regimes.

The cause of an increase in suicide terrorism since 1980 is primarily given to the capacity of terrorist groups to learn from past coercive successes. The starting point of the global threat is Hezbollah in Lebanon in the early 1980s. It influenced terrorist groups as Tamil Tigers, Palestinians and al-Qaeda that suicide attacks pay off. However, there are limits to the range of concessions that terrorists can gain. Punishment can be a weak coercive strategy because modern states are not willing to leave important national goals. Usually, terrorist groups can achieve their goal only in states with low strategic importance, but if the territory is central to the target's economy or security, terrorist groups are less likely to achieve their purposes. Although suicide terrorism has achieved limited goals beginning from 1980, it is also true that it failed in forcing target democracies in abandoning central goals to their economy or security. Thus, suicide attacks aimed to

¹¹Ivi, p.42.

achieve more ambitious goals are expected to fail, unless terrorists gain more destructive technologies.

1.2.3 The Social Logic of Suicide Terrorism

Current reports about suicide attacks undertake the analysis of terrorists under personal alienation, mass unemployment, social humiliation, or religious totalitarianism. But for Robert Pape the starting point is nationalism – the belief among members of a community that they share a distinct set of ethnic, linguistic, and historical characteristics and are entitled to govern their national homeland without interference from foreigners.¹² Religion difference only hardens the borders between communities and makes easier for terrorists to paint the conflict with a demonization of the enemy and legitimization of the martyrdom. In this paragraph I will explain the social logic of suicide terrorism that is under which circumstances it acquires mass support and how terrorist campaign can occur. They are more likely when a country is occupied by foreigners, the religion of the enemy is different from the homeland and the opponent is a democratic state.

As suicide attacks are part of organized campaigns a wide support from the community is needed. Community support enables terrorists to restock members. Usually terrorist organizations are installed in social institutions like universities, schools, religious congregation and charities. Moreover, the society backing is needed against detection by the security forces of the enemy. And lastly, martyrdom needs to be accepted by the community. In this way people are more willing to volunteer if martyrdom is recognized as a high status. Martyrdom is a social construct and martyrs are usually placed by the community in an outstanding position.¹³ To make this violent behaviour possible, suicide terrorist groups have to overcome their own religious and social norms in order to convince the society in supporting them.

To predict wherever or not a suicide attack will occur, Robert Pape gives a theory based on the community's support on self-sacrifice which is at the same time concerned by the link between the occupier's identity and community's national interest. As occupation is defined as the exertion of political control over territory by an outside group,¹⁴ the possibility to have their own homeland occupied by foreigners increases nationalist

¹² *Ivi*, p.79.

¹³ *Ivi*, p.82.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p.83.

sentiments. The future of the nation is no longer controlled by the community and people who love their nation can come to feel harshness towards the foreign state, growing a heroic sense of duty in order to punish the occupiers to make them leave. Foreign occupation boosts nationalism, also people that were not nationalistic before, by unifying them and establishing a shared threat. A defined border between “us” and “them” needs to be created to aliment nationalism. Occupation aggravates both societies’ images towards each other and when that difference is wider, then the locals start to view the occupiers as “aliens”. In this relationship the religious difference is the most important in separating the occupier and the local community. Independence is strongly guard by religion and the different religion can boost the fear that the foreigners will change forever their nationalist characteristics. The exclusivity of the fact that religion cannot be shared as others cultural differences (because you can not be part of two different religions) makes more extreme the “us” vs “them” dichotomy. As Pape says:

“Under the circumstances of a foreign occupation, the relative importance of religious and linguistic differences normally reverses, and religious difference can inflame nationalistic sentiments in ways that encourage mass support for martyrdom and suicide terrorism.”¹⁵

In this way, individuals from the community can learn the foreigner’s language but if they change the religion, they will be traitors of their own nation.

Three main factors aggravate nationalist resistance and strengthens mass support for martyrdom:

- 1- Zero-Sum Conflict: religious difference decreases chances of negotiations between the occupier and the occupied. As the occupied community fears the presence on their territory to worsen their expenses, the conflict is perceived zero-sum.
- 2- Demonization: enemy believed to be military threatening and morally inferior. Enemy embraced as the evil. Demonization strengthens the main features of suicide terrorism: martyrdom and innocents killing.
- 3- Legitimacy for Martyrdom: martyrdom as the legitimate use of violence. “Martyrdom” means death for the sake of faith.¹⁶ The use of this word permits to

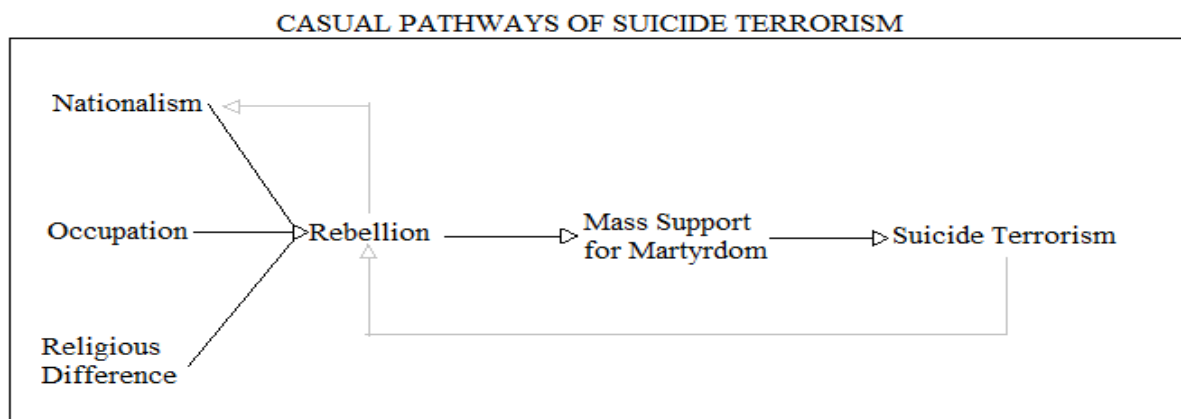
¹⁵Ivi, p.88.

¹⁶Ivi, p.91.

overcome the taboo of suicide in the religious context. Moreover, to be killed by someone outside your fate persuades the community that the suspension from the prohibition of suicide is needed in order to combat the enemy and protect the community from an alien faith.

Therefore, suicide terrorism organization differs from ordinary terrorists because they grow from nationalist liberation movements created in times of guerrilla warfare that discovered guerrilla strategy is not enough to obtain their objectives. They employ in suicide attacks as a “last resort” strategy.

The same process described until now can be seen in the opposite direction. Therefore, national identities can already be settled down in the territory without a rebellion happening. Furthermore, it is possible that mass support for the rebellion can be created thanks to terrorism instead of the contrary. But usually Pape asserts that suicide terrorism generated from occupation the causal effects run in a fixed way: from nationalism to rebellion and terrorism.



Robert Pape, *Dying to Win*. Random House Trade Paperback, New York, 2005, p.96.

1.2.4 The Individual Logic of Suicide Terrorism

A common misunderstanding covers suicide terrorist: that most of them are willing to die because is inevitable anyway and to reach death in a theatrical way. Suicide occurs when an individual deliberately acts to kill himself.¹⁷ Using Durkheim’s study of suicide in the 19th century, Robert Pape identifies three forms of suicide:

- 1- Egoistic suicide: an individual who has multiple personal traumas and no attachment to the society which can help him endure the pain like family or friends, encounters a moment in his life where there is no reason to live anymore.

¹⁷Ivi, p.173.

Life without a purpose pushes the individual vulnerability to impulsive decisions like suicide. Egoistic suicide is mainly a private act.

- 2- Altruistic suicide: an individual is extremely attached to his community, so when the society pressures the individual to make personal sacrifices for collective goals. Instead of losing public respect, the individual is pressured to kill himself to gain social prestige. Altruistic suicide is therefore a public act.
- 3- Fatalistic suicide: an individual is under brainwashing that does not permit him to have independent thoughts. When an individual is in isolation with small groups and loses the touch with the surrounding society, he starts to value more conformity with the small group above else creating what are called “suicide pacts”. The main difference with altruistic suicide is that individuals are not venerated or celebrated as heroes by their community, on the contrary they are seen as lost souls.

Most of suicide terrorism acts are altruistic suicide. They differ from the other two types because in egoistic suicide the individual is not integrated in the society which is the opposite for terrorists. From fatalistic suicide because the group is not isolated from the society but tries to integrate itself in the community. Therefore, suicide terrorism is not principally egoistic, unlikely fatalistic, but probably carry out by people attached to the community or friendship networks. Altruistic motivations are massively influenced by social approval as the society support and honour such act. When a terrorist organization is part of the society, members try to create deeper social ties and to take part in social institutions. They are linked with their society by the same political goal recognized by the whole legitimate. They do not create altruistic individuals, but just the circumstances by which an individual feels courageous that their self-sacrifice will be honoured.

To contradict the myth that sees suicide terrorists as people without job, education, prospects or hopes, Robert Pape conducts a survey about 462 suicide terrorists who committed the act and he analysed their biographical data. The findings show that what unifies suicide terrorists is not ideology or indoctrination, but a strong commitment in combatting the foreigner occupation. Moreover, most of the terrorists were not teenagers, but adults with secular background and mostly women. None of them had suicidal problems. They are not poor and uneducated people since most of them received post-secondary education. In addition, they come from middle income families without socioeconomic problems. Therefore, suicide terrorists are typically mentally normal

individuals, with a job and good prospects or well-integrated in the society. Pape describes them as ordinary soldiers with a strong sense of duty and a willingness to sacrifice all for the common good of their community.¹⁸

1.3 The Next Strategy

As suicide terrorism is identified as a response to foreign occupation and not a result of Islamic Fundamentalism, USA and its allies can achieve a strategy capable of reducing suicide terrorism campaigns without giving up their international security interests. For Robert Pape the best strategy is to kill the actively organized terrorists who plan to attack Americans and independently from the former, US needs to prevent new generations to come up. The lessons state should learn from the past are the fact that military action rarely works, and concessions need to be handled carefully. Lastly, home security is needed with stronger control over borders and immigration.

Americans need to be attentive in how the strategy is carried out. Until now, USA tried to establish new governments in Muslim countries to decrease the role of radical Islam in the society. But as Pape said before, it is not Islamic Fundamentalism the cause of suicide terrorism but rather occupation. Any policy aimed to transform Islamic culture is absurdity although the intentions are good. A change in American military policy is needed in order to achieve a decrease in suicide terrorism. The best choice for Pape is to withdraw military forces from the occupied territory slowly and to assure the infrastructures created are maintained with friendly relations with the states on the borders. The use of military force is strictly necessary only in cases of direct attacks that threaten the balance of the region in question.

As the US decreases its involvement in the region, al-Qaeda will be in greater difficulty in carrying out future suicide attacks in the United states and in making believe Muslim that they should attack America.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p.219.

Chapter Two

2.1 Ariel Merari

Ariel Merari is a retired professor at the department of psychology of Tel Aviv University. He graduated in psychology and economics at a B.A. degree level from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and afterwards he received a Ph.D. in psychology from Berkeley University. During his time as professor at Tel Aviv University he established the Terrorism and Low Intensity Conflict Program at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies. Until his retirement he was director of the Political Violence Research Unit at Tel Aviv University. Moreover, he was a visiting professor at Berkeley and Harvard University, and a Senior Fellow at the Kennedy School's International Program. He has studied political terrorism and political violence for more than thirty years. Meanwhile, he is the author, co-author and editor of several articles and books on the subject. In addition, he founded Israel's Hostage Negotiations and Crisis Management Unit and directed it for more than twenty years. His most acclaimed book about suicide terrorism is "Driven to Death" published in 2010.

2.2 Driven to Death

The book concerns empirically suicide terrorism and analyses as suicide terrorist attacks as situations in which a person intentionally kills himself for the purpose of killing others, in the service of political or ideological goal.¹⁹ The purpose of the book is to illustrate and demonstrate suicide terrorism as a global phenomenon. In particular Merari focuses on the case of Palestinian suicide bombers because of the wider data available with regards to their attitudes. The studies illustrated by Merari are important to delineate a psychological view and personality characteristics of suicide bombers never considered before. This book represents the first direct psychological study of suicide bombers analysing would-be suicide bombers who were caught carrying explosive devices without committing the attack and control group of non-suicide terrorists to complement the data obtained. Merari firstly analyses the historical perspective of the main campaigns and the demographic features of suicide terrorists. In particular the ones of Palestinian families, then the would-be suicide terrorists and the personal characteristics of Palestinian

¹⁹ Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p.9.

organizers focusing on the importance of public opinion in the terrorists' community, finally he uses sociological and psychological theories applied to suicide terrorism to give an overall view of the suicide terrorism phenomenon and how to deal with it.

2.2.1 Demographic Characteristic of Suicide Bombers

In a database compiled since 1983 Merari identifies that most of suicide bombers follow a rough profile. His research finds out that most of the suicide attacks analysed are a man's job including the 95% of attacks, however the result varies among different groups. For exemplar, in Russia half of the Chechen suicide attacks were carried out by women, in the Palestinian region only 6% of the attacks were by women and in the Tamil Tigers the 20%. These rates show that groups mainly dominated by a strong Islamic ideology usually use male individuals to carry out suicide attacks, whereas groups motivated by nationalistic/ethnic tendencies have often use female individuals. Suicide bombers were mostly sent by three different types of groups: pure Islamic groups with extreme religious Islamic themes, pure nationalistic/ethnic groups and religious-nationalistic groups.²⁰ In the first category there are groups like al-Qaeda, in the second one groups like Tamil Tigers and Palestinian Fatah, and in the third category there are Hizballah, Palestinian Hamas and Chechen rebels. Religion is therefore a strong factor in the willingness of terrorist groups to use women for suicide attacks. Recently, major Islamic figures have spoken out in favour of women's engagement, increasing their social and religious acceptance in the terrorist organizations. However, religion is not the only trait in women's engagement in fact for personality traits and cultural influences, women are usually less inclined to join the combat.

Another trait of suicide terrorist is the age. Suicide bombers are usually young. Merari identifies the mean ages between the different organizations and found out the average age goes between 21 and 26.6. This is not shocking if we consider that young people are keener on radical action, have fewer family obligations and take more risks. In addition, majority of the suicide terrorists were single except for al-Qaeda which registered more suicide attacks carried out by married people than singles like the other organizations. Considering the status of single, it results that people without family restrains are more

²⁰ Ivi, p.65.

willing to sacrifice instead of people married, but for instance, in the Palestinian case, there was a policy refraining in recruiting married people.

Education shows that suicide bombers have higher educational levels than the general population. Moreover, most of them are coming from middle class families. Thus, this makes suicide bombers are not uneducated and poor people. A strong feature that characterizes suicide attacks is that the majority of them were carried out by groups following an Islamic ideology. Therefore, it is possible to point out common characteristics of suicide terrorists through different organizations like gender, age, marital status, and religious affiliation.

2.2.2 Palestinian Suicide Bombers: family perspective

Palestinian terrorists' organizations shared information of the suicide bombers carrying out the attacks, making it easier for the government and authorities to find the families they came from and facilitating Merari's research on their behaviours and personalities. In analysing the families, Merari points out to seven topics: family's demographic details, suicide bombers' demographic details, their social status, religious attitudes, possible previous events that impacted their suicidal behaviour, admired people by the suicide bomber, and personality characteristics.

Merari finds out most of the suicide bombers came from the Gaza Strip. One suggested explanation was that most suicide terrorists originate from refugee camp that are in higher percentage in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the families registered under refugee status are higher than the actual habitants at the refugee camps. It is not the refugee status the central point of the demographic characteristics but rather the fact they were living in a refugee camp. The number of dwellers is higher in the refugee camp possibly because of the resentment towards Israel generated by the poor and miserable life in the refugee camps. Furthermore, radical groups have greater influence on operations and recruitment in these places.

The suicide attacks show that no females were used, and all the suicide bombers analysed were single people with an average age of 22, an education going from elementary to university degree and a middle-class background. Then neither education nor poverty can be considered as main points in the analysis of suicide bombers' motives. On the other hand, religion was more influential, in fact more than half of suicide terrorist were coming

from very religious families. In the Palestinian case at least, religion has shown to be one important factor in carrying out a suicide attack. Instead of the belief that these attacks could be the result of personal revenge, the studies demonstrate that suicide bombers engaged in previous periods of detention or jail making the families claiming they had been tortured changing their behaviour. Their sons' behaviour in the eyes of the families resulted quieter, more hateful towards Israel and more religious. In particular, most of them started talking about martyrdom. The trauma experienced, the intense indoctrination and pressure in jail by the organizations are all responsible in the influence of jail in suicide terrorists' motives. Families also noticed a bigger participation of their sons in political militancy.

Few days before committing the suicide attacks, the suicide bombers usually stay at their home and very few decided to stay alone, mainly because they wanted to avoid emotions or not be suspected by Israeli authorities. In both cases all of the suicide bombers paid a last visit to their families. For their families, their behaviour was normal, but Merari finds two main types of behaviour occurring. Firstly acts related to the mission like haircuts or clothes. Secondly actions related to the family before leaving like photographs as memento or giving away personal belongings.

As for their personality, the suicide bombers did not have any previous psychological episodes or criminal behaviour. Their families described most of them to be introverts or leader types. They also gave out information about heroes or personality admired by their sons and most were militant Islam representatives. For exemplar, Sahaba who are Muhammad's companions that fought wars against infidels or the Prophet Muhammad.²¹ These heroes are all identified in Muslim culture as brave, willing to self-sacrifice and great leaders. Suicide bombers also engaged in hobbies closely related to physical activities or readings about Islamic literature. Most of their time was spent in the mosque where they could engage in religious worship or social interactions with other individuals. Further families usually attribute pride in the actions committed by their sons and at the same time sadness in losing their sons.

²¹ Ivi, p.96.

2.2.3 Palestinian Would-Be Suicides

Merari is the first one engaging in interviews of almost suicide bombers. This definition includes all the terrorists that were caught in the act of committing attacks with explosive devices or for those where the bombs malfunctioned. Merari tries to identify more characteristics and motives of suicide bombers by comparing would-be suicides with a control groups sharing similar demographic characteristics.

The demographic characteristics show that would-be suicides are young in age with an average of 19.5. Their educational level was higher than the control group with at least all the subjects being high school graduates and their economic situation was average. Although, as aforementioned, the dwellers were most from refugee camps, it is not true for would-be suicides where the membership rate in refugee camp was lower. Therefore, being from a refugee camp does not amplify your willingness in committing suicide attacks. However, would-be suicides confirmed the fact that most of them are from religious families and denied the perception of suicide bombers to have taken previously part of insurgent activity.

The personality characteristics present a dependent-avoidant personality for the majority of would-be suicides. A dependent personality is focused on lack of self-confidence, reliance on others, fear of rejection and disapproval, so willingness in carrying out tasks for others. An avoidant personality is about a timid and fearful individual, usually afraid of criticism and shamed to be ridiculed.²² Most of the would-be suicides presented suicidal tendencies or depressive tendencies. Feelings of loneliness, sadness and helpless influenced the 53% of them. Meanwhile, no would-be suicides had psychopathic tendencies. In general, the research demonstrates how different types of people are keener to suicide terrorist missions. The predominant type of would-be suicides is shy, socially marginal, and followers rather than leaders. He is characterized by a social failure like disappointing his parents. Many present suicidal tendencies that can play a huge role in their martyrdom. Therefore, the main profile of a suicide bomber is an avoidant-dependent personality type, socially marginally and downgraded by the people around him, who finds an opportunity to soar to importance and fame becoming a martyr.²³

²² *Ivi*, p.112.

²³ *Ivi*, p.120.

The motives behind would-be suicides are various. Many of them were driven by nationalistic motives, others by family related motives, and many by personal revenge or money. It is important to underline that most of the would-be suicides were engaged in suicidal missions because of the atmosphere in the Palestinian community. From the terrorist organizations, suicide attacks are the most effective tactic. It is thanks to social encouragement that these motives could be instilled in the individuals. Organizations' legitimacy and power are not enough if there is no public support. Martyrdom culture and public pressure can be applied only on certain personality types, not all the younger people are affected by these. The dependent-avoidant personality permits vulnerability to external influences.

2.2.4 Palestinian Organizers

The demographic characteristics of the organizers of suicide attacks were opposite to the would-be suicides. Organizers are on average older with a range between 21-36. Most of them are married and with children. Their education is higher with many having a university degree. For the personality characteristics they show a strong ego strength. They are adaptive, they can handle external pressure and control their behaviours. None of them had suicidal tendencies. Organizers have leadership traits: dominant, self-confident, and resourceful.²⁴ Moreover, they were not willing to sacrifice their lives as they believed their role was more important and neither sacrifice a life of a close family member.

The decision to carry out an attack is given by the availability of explosives and candidates or also the capability to reach the target. Therefore, organizers depend more on the capability rather than fluctuations in motivation for carrying out an attack. In fact, organizers' recruitment is represented by a strict procedure. First of all, they start to approach young unmarried people who have expressed their willingness to volunteer in the community. Their social background is not important if they have precise characteristics as strong religious belief and nationalist motivation. Women, unstable and hesitant candidates are usually not taken into consideration. Most of the organizers do not check the candidate's background but in some cases it is necessary to discover intelligence agents. Organizers usually try to convince the candidate to drop out the mission to know how much he is motivated to conduct it. After being recruited, organizers start to train the

²⁴ *Ivi*, p.152.

candidates individually. They engage in discussion varying from religious issues to their future higher status in paradise. Candidates are concerned only about their families and the organizations to fully convince them promise to take care of their families after their suicide. In case the family of a candidate is against their son suicide mission, the organizers are requested to suspend the attack as it could generate opposition in the community towards the organization. To gain influence on the enemy and on the community, organizers engage in a ritual based on videotaping the suicide bomber last words the day before the attack. The videotape has the aim of publicizing the campaign around the world, gaining support in the community, and inflicting fear in the enemy. Multiple attacks are more impactful on the enemy because they show the organization capability. The candidates can meet only few hours before the mission, in this way no dominant figure in the group tries to convince the others in aborting the attack. The location is decided by the suicide and in certain cases the organizers bring the suicide bombers in the location chosen to make them familiar. The main characteristic of a location has to be a crowded place aimed to kill as much people as possible. Then, organizers choose an escort for the suicide terrorists in case they have a change in mind. Not carrying out the mission is usually linked with the impediment in reaching the target and dropping out is usually explained with family motives.

2.2.5 Public Sphere

Terrorist organizations are largely influenced by the community within they emerge. Public opinion affects suicide attacks at both the group and the individual levels.²⁵ As terrorist organizations recruit from the community and represent the interests of the community, tactics and targets are influenced by the population's approval. Most of the suicide bombers and organizers would stop doing attacks if the community is against it. On an individual level, the community recognize suicide bombers as national heroes giving to the act a moral and political justification. Moreover, refusing or volunteering dictates a change in the social status of an individual among the peers, by making him a hero or a coward. In the Palestinian case, Merari attributes higher support on suicide attacks by younger people which tend to be more radical, university students and graduates, and women. Usually higher rates of suicide attacks are in a direct proportionality relation with higher pessimism towards negotiation with Israel. But public

²⁵ Ivi, p.173.

opinion is not enough to create suicide attacks. Three conditions are needed in order to generate a massive suicide campaign: a feeling that the struggle involves existential interests of the community, support and encouragement of suicide attacks by media and authority, and an organization that transforms the raw readiness to actual behaviour by recruiting the suicides and preparing the mission.²⁶

2.2.6 Psychological theories explaining Suicide Terrorism

Personal characteristics of suicide terrorists are explained by psychological theories. As sociologists look in relations between society and suicide rates at a macro level, psychological methods analyse the individual characteristics focusing on his personality and his specific circumstances. On the other hand, psychology usually ignores political suicide and in particular terrorist suicide.

Freud attributed suicide to an ambivalent and conflictual love-hate attitude toward a very significant person with whom one identifies.²⁷ For Maltzberger, suicide derives from the fact that the individual recognizes himself or a part of his as an enemy or alien. Zilboorg believes suicidal individuals are the one identifying themselves with a dead person with whom they started an identification process during childhood. But losing a parent in childhood is a controversial feature of suicide because many other scholars found out this yield no significant difference.

Meninger identified three types of suicides according to the motivation: the wish to die to escape a difficult life, the wish to kill – suicide as revenge, and the wish to be killed – as self-punishment.²⁸ The first two types were frequently present in Merari's research. Most Palestinian wanted to kill the enemy and the rest wanted to die. However, Meninger identified as enemy in the wish to kill type the family towards whom the individual senses a mixture of love and hate.

Suicide attacks are characterized by individuals carrying explosive devices that cause the death of large group of targets and result in the mutilation of the suicide's body. Maltzberger recognized a suicide's attitude towards his body, in particular he said suicides feel alienated from their bodies. This perspective is given by bodily changes in puberty with sadistic feelings. Suicide persons are aggressive individuals with the

²⁶ *Ivi*, p.183.

²⁷ *Ivi*, p.122.

²⁸ *Ivi*, p.213.

impression of suicide as self-directed aggression. Consequently, they feel anxiety and depression.

Instead of focusing on internal aggression, Shneidman emphasizes despair. Individuals tend to commit suicide because of a psychological pain caused by psychological needs. Suicide is therefore the end to the pain the individual feels. Shneidman identifies “ten commonalities of suicide”. This study is particularly relevant for would-be suicide. Two of the commonalities show how some individuals sense helpless and hopeless that they do not care about after death. On the contrary, would-be suicides engaged in suicide attacks for empowerment. Suicide was a tool. Moreover, there is no consistency principle since Would-be suicides did not have previous records of suicide attempts. On the other hand, Shneidman’s frustrated needs were behind terrorist suicide acts. Frustration for terrorists derives from the community’s situation or unfulfilled status in the community. Also, Shneidman’s communication of intention is present in suicide terrorists as they use videotapes to communicate their commitment or as propaganda tools. Furthermore, would-be suicides reported hesitance in accordance with the principle of ambivalence and they were in a state of constriction as it was needed to confront hesitation.

Farber underlined the importance of hopelessness as higher hope, less likely are suicides to occur. In this view, suicidal individuals see the future and present as negative which is also found in the would-be suicide profile. Myatt and Greenblatt highlight that tendencies of suicides in adolescent age groups are given by social influences and stressors. Their model to suicide is relevant for would-be suicides with suicidal personality because it can be applied only for personal reasons rather than to social encouragement.

2.3 The Next Strategy

Merari show how suicide attacks can be reduced by tactical countermeasures. The degree of success of these countermeasures depends on the conditions prevailing in the arena of struggle. For exemplar, Israel applied barriers to reduce terrorists’ movements but only in places where there are small occupied territories. Targeted killing also is useful only in cases of no control over the terrorists’ territory and therefore no access for civilian police. This countermeasure becomes negative for the government in case of full control over its territory as targeted killing can increase the community consensus and suicide attacks. Therefore, governments should weight the longer-range consequences of their

measures. The main tactical countermeasure is a good intelligence work without a massive use of force.

The main battlefield against suicide terrorists is the community who generates the suicide bombers. When an insurgent movement loses its social support, it will likely disappear. For some, this means an educational and psychological warfare mission. For others, it is the cause of political violence in the first place. All of these approaches create resentments on other parts of the conflict. Educational and psychological operations, for Merari, are partially useful. For exemplar, spreading statement by Muslim clerics condemning suicide attacks has limited younger people in engaging in suicide missions. On the other hand, radical Muslims published laws encouraging the population in becoming suicide bombers. Younger people usually act in accordance with their political and social context, and under the influence of a reference group.

Although Merari recognizes the importance of soft power tactics, he also emphasizes how changes in the community are harder to achieve without the use of force. In the Palestinian case, the decline in suicide attacks is not a result of a variation in beliefs, but rather because of the social and economic costs derived by armed struggle. Violence temporarily ceases until, as history shows, a mutually acceptable peaceful solution is found.²⁹

²⁹ *Ivi*, p.277.

Chapter Three

3.1 Suicide Terrorism in the Light of Sociological Theories

3.1.1 Durkheim

Le Suicide is a book published in 1897 by Durkheim, in which he described suicide as a social phenomenon rather than an individual experience. He indicated three different types of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, and anomic. Social integration for Durkheim is the key factor for both egoistic and altruistic suicide. Lower social integration increases probability of egoistic suicide, instead a higher social integration has higher rates of altruistic suicides.

Egoistic suicide occurs when an individual has an insufficient social integration in the community or the family. The individual is isolated from the society and he experiences personal traumas. Personal traumas are recognized as personal illness, disclosure of private matters or career failures. These traumas can be endured if the individual is socially integrated in his community or family. However, an isolated individual starts to engage in pessimistic thoughts about life when there is no social integration. Egoistic suicide is therefore a private act since the individual copes with pain alone.

Altruistic suicide is common in situations of high social integration. Sometimes, individuals feel extremely attached to their society that they engage in personal sacrifice to reach collective goals. Citizens who do not make self-sacrifice for the country lose their public respect. Instead, citizens who commit suicide to avoid harm to their community are elevated in social prestige by it. Durkheim describes three forms of altruistic suicide: obligatory, optional, and acute.³⁰ Obligatory suicide is the one dictated by social norms or customs in specific situation. Optional suicide occurs when suicide is a merit like the Japanese Samurai customs. Acute suicide is the willingness to die to be elevated as a deity for religious beliefs.

Anomic suicide occurs when the individual experiences a sudden change in life. These changes can be economic or social as loss of a job, loss of a fortune or death of a close

³⁰ Ivi, p. 201.

friend. The individual has difficulties in adjusting his lifestyle to the new situations and therefore he isolates himself and commits suicide.

Pape's perspective

Pape recognizes that most of the suicide attacks happened in terrorism are indeed Durkheim's altruistic suicide. Many terrorists are killing themselves to advance what they see as the common good.³¹ Suicide bombers are in fact highly social integrated in the community and they usually search for higher social status by committing the attack. Moreover, society approves of the group's behaviour.

Normally, suicide attacks occur in groups organized for weeks or months. These groups have high social interactions and ask for unity among the members, all characteristics typical of altruistic suicide. A team of suicide attackers need altruistic motives to remain united and they need to be motivated by a collective purpose. Egoistic and anomic suicides are not enough in explaining team suicides because between individuals of the same team, social bonds are required, and egoistic suicides do not need a group to commit suicide as said before egoistic suicide is a private act. Therefore, altruism is not a sufficient, but a necessary condition in suicide terrorism.

For Durkheim, social approval is a key feature of altruistic suicide and Pape finds it also in suicide terrorism. Pape identifies a suicide terrorist organization as integral part of the society.³² The society legitimates the political goals of the terrorist organisation and honours individuals who carry out suicide attacks. Although these social bonds do not create altruistic individuals, they are the base on which individuals are motivated to commit suicide since it will be viewed as altruistic.

Merari's perspective

Merari believes Durkheim's error is the fact he looked at the societies as a whole and not at the individual. Durkheim looked at suicide rates in various societies, but he did not mention individuals' motives. For him, altruistic suicide is a stable condition of societies sharing high social integration. However, Merari identifies disagreement with Pape because altruistic suicide for Durkheim can be applied on societies and micro-societies with similar characteristics. However, it does not support the fact that terrorist suicide is

³¹ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House, New York, 2005, p. 180.

³² *Ivi*, p. 187.

from very diverse societies. Then, it is more accurate to consider the micro-society of a terrorist group which generates self-sacrificial suicide in accordance with Durkheim's altruistic suicide.³³ Still, the majority of terrorist organizations have not use suicide attacks yet. Overall, there is no evidence of stricter terrorist groups with usually higher suicide rates than looser groups.

In addition, altruistic suicide is characterized by the willingness of the individual in saving his honour rather than helping the community. Durkheim, in fact, used the example of the Japanese custom of *seppuku*, when suicide is considered as a merit. Instead Merari describes terrorist suicides differently as they are committed for the society rather than personal humiliation. They are indeed similar to the kamikaze phenomenon.

3.1.2 Theories of Rational Choice

Rational choice theories are based on the assumption that individuals are rational and base their actions on what they perceive to be the most effective means to their goals.³⁴ One of the major research in rational choice theory is the exchange theory. Exchange theorists tend to identify social interactions as exchange goods. Individuals engage in exchange after considering the costs and rewards of various line of actions and then choose the most alluring. Modern exchange theories are associated with Homans and Blau.

Homans

Homans identifies exchange in social interactions. People receive their reward in the exchange under interpersonal relations. Homans suggests three principles of human behaviour to explain human rationality. The three principles are:

- Success principle which consists in the repetition of an action if the reward is high.
- Stimulus principle based on the idea that a past action that brought an adequate reward is likely to happen again if the individual finds himself in the same situation.
- Value principle based on the importance of an action, if the individual has to decide between alternative choices, he will go for the action that has a higher importance for him.

³³ Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 204.

³⁴ Ruth A. Wallace & Alison Wolf, *Contemporary Sociological Theory: Expanding the Classical Tradition*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1995, p. 279.

From these principles, the rationality principle emerges. It is based on the idea that the individual chooses from alternative actions, the one with a higher “value” of reward. Moreover, Homans believes that an individual gives less importance to past rewards that happened often. In case the individual receives an inadequate reward, he will assume an aggressive behaviour.

Homans identifies social approval as a main exchange good available in almost every exchange situation. He gives as an assumption the fact that social approval is desirable to everyone. Therefore, conformity in groups is created and maintained by social approval. Members of a group behave in a way that other members approve, so they can obtain consent. Furthermore, Homans pinpoints power as the ability to provide valuable resources.³⁵ This concept can be applied to both coercive and noncoercive power. But noncoercive power is more effective.

Blau

As Homans, Blau uses exchange theory to explain social interactions in particular he analysed exchange theory and social integration at a macro level instead of Homans using the micro one. Social exchanges generate bonds of friendship and subordination or domination. Social integration increases if exchanges create trust, enforce conformity with group norms and develop collective values. For friendship and love, Blau explains how people from the same social status are likely to engage in exchanges since they share the same interests and lifestyle.

Economic exchange differs from Blau’s social exchange because social exchange creates trust and integration of individuals within a social group. This phenomenon happens slowly with smaller exchanges until reciprocity and trust is created between the individuals. Therefore, reciprocity is the cause of norms and values within a group since individuals in situation of discord can come together and create common norms and values.

Moreover, Blau as Homans gives importance to power in social exchange. Power is the ability of some individuals to impose their values on others and in case of dissonance with them, individuals use threat as a mean of punish or retreat of rewards. In fact, weaker

³⁵ *Ivi*, p. 300.

individuals tend to legitimate the power of stronger individuals if they perceive the rewards are greater in a submissive state.

Pape's perspective

Pape agrees in believing suicide terrorists are rational individuals. First of all, as Homans and Blau said, suicide terrorists receive a reward for engaging in suicide attacks that is usually portrayed as hero's status or recognition by the community.

Secondly, as Homans' theory explained, group cohesion is created by social approval. Terrorist organizations are in fact based on approval by the community: individuals engage in suicide terrorism as the disapproval of the society has a greater impact than losing their lives. Moreover, communities recognize the terrorist organization's power and legitimize it because they feel it is needed for achieving greater rewards such as the liberation of the homeland.

Finally, suicide terrorism acts rational if we consider Homans' principle of success where an action is repeated if the reward is high success, in this way suicide terrorism is becoming more and more used by terrorist organizations that are learning that suicide attacks pay off more overall.

Merari's perspective

Merari does not agree with the proposition of many terrorist authors who views the decision of suicide bombers to carry out an attack as a matter of rational choice. Rationality in this context is associated with the exchange of material and non-material goods in order to achieve a greater reward like Homans and Blau explained. In suicide terrorism, the individual gains valuable resources like the hero's status or his place in paradise for his life. But presuming that every individual is rational is an error as Merari explains people can have mistaken premises. For example, a paranoid who believes that his greengrocer is planning to kill him, is acting rational when he kills a greengrocer in defence.³⁶

Furthermore, implying the fact that suicide terrorists are rational means everyone can become a suicide terrorist and therefore they are identified as "normal" individuals. Merari is against this proposition because sociological theories do not take into

³⁶ Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 250.

consideration personality characteristics and individual life experiences. For most suicide terrorist authors, an individual with psychological problems is not able to carry out a complex plan for suicide operations. Merari, instead, says history shows that people with mental disorders are capable of organize complex plans like Hitler or Stalin.

Therefore, suicide terrorists are not rational individual since Merari's research supports the fact they share typical personality traits between each other. Two main personality patterns were found: dependent-avoidant individuals and impulsive-unstable ones. For Merari, individuals engage in suicide attacks because their human behaviour is produced by group processes and individual traits interacting.³⁷

3.2 Suicide Terrorism explained by Case Studies

Suicide terrorism is a rising threat for governments. Until 1980s, there were little or no evidence of suicide terrorism so it a relatively novel phenomenon. Suicide attacks grew over the 88% after the 1980s. To prove Pape and Merari's perspective on suicide terrorism is necessary to analyse case studies of the major terrorist organizations. Pape tries to explain through case studies why suicide terrorism has to be considered as a strategy used by groups seeking to compel democratic states to withdraw military forces from the territory that they consider their national homeland.³⁸ In doing so he focuses on case studies were difference in religion with the foreign occupation escalated in suicide terrorism. On the other hand, Merari does not stick with a fixed theory about suicide attacks but he rather tries to use case studies to investigate the different motives behind the most significant terrorist organizations in order to obtain as much as possible of data. The following case studies are about Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Israel, and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. They show two different perspectives of a political scientist, Pape, and a psychology professor, Merari.

3.2.1 Lebanon

Hezbollah is a militant federation of Shia groups. It started to emerge in the 1980s where it conducted 36 suicide attacks from 1982 to 1986. Hezbollah is seen as the first modern suicide terrorist organization. Its targets were political and military people from US,

³⁷ Ivi, p. 269.

³⁸ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House, New York, 2005, p. 126.

France and Israeli forces. Although Hezbollah is not the deadliest terrorist organization, it was used by others as an example of why suicide attacks pay off. Hezbollah was able to achieve a withdrawal of foreign military forces from Lebanon.

Pape's perspective

The common explanation on the appearance of Hezbollah is believed to be Islamic fundamentalism. In 1979, radical Islamic values and principles grew inside the communities following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979.³⁹ Since the identity of the attackers were Islamic, most people believed in Islamic fundamentalism as the main cause of suicide attacks, given also the fact that radical Islam reports the salvation of individuals through martyrdom.

Pape does not support this proposition. During his research, he accounts that 30 of 41 attackers did not fit Islamic fundamentalism. Most of them were communists and socialists, and a narrow part Christians. Moreover, the rise of Hezbollah happened at the same time of Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 1982. Furthermore, it is true that religious motives were used to recruit, but martyrdom by Hezbollah was a justification of suicide attacks, necessary as an extreme measure to end foreign occupation of the homeland.⁴⁰ To understand better this point, Pape reports a Hezbollah's Open Letter of 1985 in which is defined the main purpose of the movement:

*“great and necessary objectives to put an end to foreign occupation and to adopt a regime freely wanted by the people of Lebanon...to expel the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land”.*⁴¹

The Shia community, before Hezbollah in 1980s, did not engage in suicide terrorism. In the 1970s they were called Amal, a nationalistic movement created to change Lebanese political system. They proposed principles as equality, social justice and national unity. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, the pact was to abandon Lebanon if Syrian forces did the same. For some Shias in Amal, Israel's plan of expansion was unacceptable and therefore they created Islamic Amal to support an Islamic state in Lebanon. From this, Hezbollah was created. If at first Sha was not totally against Israel's occupation, it later

³⁹ Ivi, p. 129.

⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 130.

⁴¹ Ivi, p. 31.

became a problem. The more Shia exponents resented Israel, the more Hezbollah grew as an organization controlling the resistance groups. The rise in Hezbollah militants is given by the unification of existing social groups under the same purpose.

Moreover, community support on martyrdom was essential in creating suicide bombers. Most of the suicide bombers in Lebanon left a statement or videotape, this shows the importance suicide terrorists and organizations give to the community opinion. All of the 41 attacks justify their actions as needed to oust the foreign enemy. Furthermore, public support was crucial. The community recognizes the martyrs' sacrifice by naming a street with their name or by using their picture as symbols or by holding public commemorations.

For Pape, Hezbollah rose because of religious difference between the occupiers and the occupied. Foreign occupation created the base on which occupied leaders aroused the nationalistic sentiment. To encourage public support, Hezbollah used numerous speeches and interviews to explain their point of view of Israel. For Hezbollah, Israel is a state motivated by its own religion to seize Lebanon's resources for use by Jews at the expenses of Muslims.⁴² Israel's occupation is justified by their bible in Hezbollah's eyes. The main purpose of Israel is to create a "Greater Israel". Moreover, religious difference was also used for the demonization of the enemy. Israel became the evil incarnate and, on this assumption, Hezbollah justified self-sacrifice and the kill of innocents. The community started to legitimize martyrdom as necessary to win against the occupiers.

Pape identifies Hezbollah's discourse on martyrdom as relying on three themes:⁴³

1. Response to occupation. Martyrdom purpose is to end the occupation of the homeland by foreign forces.
2. Conventional inferiority mandates self-sacrifice. Suicide attacks are the last resort in combatting foreign forces' greater military power
3. The enemy is vulnerable to coercive pressure. Idea that suicide attacks pay off.

Merari's perspective

Merari, as Pape, describes the first use of suicide attacks by terrorist organizations happening in Lebanon in 1982. Hezbollah, a Shia faction, born from an existing political movement called Amal, engaged in a suicide truck bomb against Israeli military

⁴² Ivi, p. 136.

⁴³ Ivi, p. 189.

headquarters. The attacks recorded 89 deaths. In Lebanon, the first suicide attacks were for American targets and consequently, after their departure from the territory, the new targets became Israeli forces. Furthermore, Merari notices how firstly suicide acts were conducted by Hezbollah and later used by other social groups like the Amas movement. After 1985, there is a decline in suicide attacks in Lebanon. Most people attribute this decline to a decrease in insurgents' motivations. However, Merari shows that the decrease is given by a lower effectiveness in the attacks. Hezbollah's attacks were mainly organized to target roads with soldiers or military vehicles. When Israeli forces engage in roadblocks and vehicle controls, this facilitated the minimization of casualties and the rate of suicide attacks decreased.

Accordingly, Merari accounts Pape's proposition that suicide attacks are generated by foreign occupation. It is true that leaders of the terrorist organizations describe occupation as suffer, despair and hopelessness, but this description is usually not true. For exemplar, in Lebanon, one of the Hezbollah's leader, Husayn Musawi,⁴⁴ justified a suicide attack against multinational forces as a response to the fact that multinational forces were considering war. Another exponent of Hezbollah committed a suicide act against American marines as a response to US aggression. He believed USA used Lebanon as a laboratory for weapons. These claims are obviously untrue but Merari recognizes the political motives behind suicide attacks. Although there are political grievances, it is impossible for Merari to describe suicide attacks as a response to oppressive occupations characterized by despair and hopelessness.

In contrast with Pape's claim about the appeal of suicide attacks as the achievement of a strategic goal like the expulsion of a foreign occupying force from the homeland, Merari notes that in the 1984 withdrawal of Israeli forces it is not considered, so Pape's examples are wrong. The Israeli withdrawal of 1985 was caused by different types of terrorist attacks rather than suicide bombers. In fact, in the three years before 1985 only 1217 Israeli deaths were registered and only 50 of them were caused by suicide attacks. The high number of casualties before Israel's withdrawal in 1985 is not explained by suicide attacks. Furthermore, also the final withdrawal in 2000 was not given by suicide attacks. In that years, suicide attacks almost ceased thanks to Israeli countermeasures. Only three

⁴⁴ Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 229.

attacks were carried out after 1995.⁴⁵ When suicide attacks failed to achieve their purpose and diminished the casualties, Hezbollah's leaders decided to stop.

Furthermore, Merari does not recognize the crucial role of religion in creating Lebanon suicide bombers. Religion is not a sufficient cause because only a small fraction of suicide attacks is conducted by religious fanatics. For exemplar, in Lebanon, although Hezbollah was the first militant Islamic group engaging in suicide terrorism, only 14 of 41 suicide attacks in that country are done by them.⁴⁶ Still, Merari recognizes the influence of culture and religion on people's perceptions and actions. Cultural differences do affect human behaviours and therefore it is plausible for Merari to agree with Pape's stance. Cultural differences under some political conditions can increase suicide terrorism.

3.2.2 Israel

Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist militant organization. Influenced by Hezbollah's experiences, Hamas engaged in the early 1990s in suicide attacks against Israel. They organized four different suicide campaigns each year from 1994 to 1997.

Pape's perspective

For Pape, every terrorist organizations' objective is to free their homeland from foreign occupation. Hamas communicated their purpose in 1987 and stated that if an enemy invades Muslim territories, then Jihad and fighting the enemy becomes an individual duty on every Muslim.⁴⁷ Violence for Hamas is a mean not a goal. Hamas perfectly fits Pape's image of terrorists being the most optimistic members of society toward violence. In particular, Hamas provoked Israeli retaliation and calculated its use of violence. If suicide attacks are means for achieving intermediate goals like Israel's withdrawal, the final purpose described as the creation of an Islamic state needs other forms of armed forces.

Hamas is notoriously known as an Islamic fundamentalist organization. They believe in charging other religions than Muslim with crimes and also to free their homeland from Israeli occupation. But Pape notices that Hamas has principally political motives because if religion was a crucial point in the suicide attacks than there would not been

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 236.

⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 243.

⁴⁷ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House, New York, 2005, p. 31.

differentiation between Christians and Jews. Therefore, Hamas primarily concentrates its force against the occupiers.

After Israel's occupation in 1967, peaceful protests started by Palestinian civilians in the 1970s became violent in the 1980s. It is important to note that religion did not play a key role in the starting of the rebellion. In fact, the first intifada was a rebellion of independent activists supported later by Fatah, a nationalistic organization. The rise of this resistance movement is probably given by an increase in Jewish settlements. Pape identifies a 50% rate of increase that brought more checkpoints and less territory for Palestinians making it difficult for them to move.⁴⁸ The second intifada instead results from a missed peace that required Israeli withdrawal. Suicide attacks began in 1994 until the beginning of the second intifada where it is recorded an exponential increase in suicide attacks. Pape states that Islamic fundamentalism is not the explanation for this rise but rather the public support which was essential in sustaining the cause for these many years. Community support was flat during the 1990s and registered an increase with the beginning of the second intifada. Therefore, public support came from the intensified political motives in that period.

Furthermore, Pape responds to critiques about the irrationality of terrorist groups like Hamas. He demonstrates that Hamas has a strategic tactic by analysing two cases: Israel's withdrawal in 1994 and in 1995. Firstly, Palestine and Israel engage in negotiations in 1993 with the Oslo Accords by which Israel had to withdraw before 1994. When some points were not been resolved, Hamas decided to intervene with suicide attacks. Consequently, Israel retook the withdrawal procedures. Pape states that although these attacks were not coercive because previously announced, they obtained the objective needed. Hamas' tactic accelerated the process because Israel had no intention in concluding the Oslo Accords and Hamas had as intermediate goal to obtain West Bank and the Gaza. For terrorists, the unexpected result of the 1994 suicide attacks was used as an optimistic view for future attacks and greater concessions.

Secondly, from 1994 to 1995, Hamas together with Jihadi organizations engaged in attacks to induce more withdrawals from Israel. When Israel announced that no further withdrawals would happen before 1996, Hamas did other suicide attacks. The withdrawal was then carried out immediately. Israel explained that its retirement was stimulated by

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 48.

the desire of reducing suicide terrorism. On the other hand, Hamas concluded that indeed suicide terrorism works.

In addition, Pape recognizes that like Hezbollah, Hamas too is deeply embedded in the surrounding society, supporting an extensive network of more than forty social welfare organizations.⁴⁹ Providing collective goods assures Hamas of legitimacy by the communities and justifies self-sacrifice. Pape identifies the same three themes of Hezbollah on Hamas' martyrdom:

- Response to occupation. Main goal is to free the homeland from Israeli forces.
- Conventional inferiority mandates self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice to achieve a collective goal.
- The enemy is vulnerable to coercive pressure. Withdrawals obtained in 1994 and 1995 from Israel.

Merari's perspective

For Merari, ideologically Hamas wanted to be free from Israeli forces but practically they were worried of a future scenario where PLO takes control and suppresses Hamas. Merari identifies as the first suicide attack by Hamas the one that occurred in 1993. Influenced by the Hezbollah organization, a suicide bomber attacked two buses of Israeli civilians. Until 1994, the suicide attacks remained in the Palestinian territory. Two thirds of the suicide attacks were carried out by Hamas and this, for Merari, impeded the peace agreements at that time. Moreover, also Israel engaged in countermeasure with no results as they animated more the rebellion. In 1996, Hamas stopped the suicide attacks because the public opinion was generally positive about peaceful agreements, until Israel killed the Hamas' leader. Israel demanded for more serious countermeasures and Palestine engaged in harder suicide attacks. Suicide terrorism increased in the second intifada.

For Merari, the decline of Hamas' suicide attacks derives from the stronger countermeasure adopted by Israel. Israel created the Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 where terrorist groups' infrastructure and targeted terrorists were killed. Moreover, they increased the number of Israeli forces in Palestinian territories which gave important information to their intelligence. But the numbers of suicide attacks did not decrease. It is true that successful attacks were diminishing but terrorists' motivation was still high. Another favourable countermeasure of Israel was the security fence in some Palestinian

⁴⁹ Ivi, p.191.

territories. Furthermore, the killing of Hamas leader favoured the decrease in public support for the organization. The community support decreased also because the second intifada left Palestinians with a weak economy and higher deaths than Israel.

Merari disagrees with Pape's vision of the case in Hamas motivation in carrying out the peace process by soliciting Israel with suicide attacks. Merari believes that Hamas did not want to continue the peace process. Suicide attacks by Hamas did contribute to the demise of the peace process.⁵⁰ Moreover, Hamas leaders at that time stopped suicide attacks because they were losing popular support. Merari reports a decline in Hamas support of the 5.8%.⁵¹ Pape's error lays also in Hamas success. He believes Hamas spiritual leader was liberated because of Hamas pressures. Merari disagrees and demonstrates that the release of Hamas spiritual leader happened because of Jordan. Jordan captured two Israeli agents that were trying to kill a Hamas leader and consequently Israel, to obtain his agents back, decided to engage in an exchange with Jordan.

3.2.3 Afghanistan

Al-Qaeda is an Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization. Their purpose is to end American occupation in the Arabian countries. Like Hamas, al-Qaeda's purpose is to create an Islamic state. Unlike Hamas, their purpose has to be applied also in other Muslim countries.

Pape's perspective

Al-Qaeda first terrorist attack happened in 1995 against American forces. Unlike others terrorist organizations, al-Qaeda was not born from a local rebellion although they had a guerrilla army back in 1988. Although al-Qaeda recruits Islamic fundamentalists from various countries, Pape denies the plausibility of religion as the key factor in the terrorist organization motives. Pape explains the definition of Islamic fundamentalism as a conception commonly used for Muslim movements that seeks to establish an Islamic state.⁵² This definition is extremely amplified, most of the people engaged in Islamic movements do not resort in violence. Moreover, different Islamic movements usually do not engage in cooperation. Al-Qaeda is in fact a Sunni movement following Salafism.

⁵⁰ Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 236.

⁵¹ *Ivi*, p. 237.

⁵² Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House, New York, 2005, p. 105.

Salafism movements are those believing in an Islamic revival. It is important to highlight the difference between Salafism and Islamic fundamentalism as they do not share the same religious tenets.

Between 1995 and 2003, al-Qaeda engaged in 71 suicide attacks. The majority of the suicide bombers were Sunni Muslims. If we consider the Salafism population around Muslim countries is two times higher the Sunni population. Therefore, Pape states that Salafi terrorists should be the majority instead of the Sunnis if religion was the main cause. However, the Islamic commitment in al-Qaeda permits Pape to state that religion is at least a weak factor in their motives. The main cause of suicide terrorism in al-Qaeda is indeed American occupation of the Persian Gulf.

Specifically, al-Qaeda tries to form intergroup alliances with other nationalistic movements. In doing so, they portray USA as a religious enemy in order to create a common threat to the communities. Al-Qaeda describes America as a “veiled colonialism”⁵³ because USA show support to repressive regimes that serves its interests. Moreover, religious difference is crucial in al-Qaeda campaign. The US becomes the “crusader” that wants to occupy and change Muslim societies. The use by Bin Laden of the US’ Christian Crusade states how Muslim groups have to collaborate towards a common goal, or they will be oppressed.

For al-Qaeda, the only solution for US religious occupation is the Islamic state. To combat against the US, al-Qaeda needs to use its coercive power in order to make the occupiers leave. Like the previous cases, Pape defines three themes in al-Qaeda value of self-sacrifice:

- Response to the occupation. War is needed to respond to America crusade against the Islamic state.
- Conventional inferiority mandates self-sacrifice. Suicide terrorism inflicts the maximum casualties.
- The enemy is vulnerable to coercive pressure. Al-Qaeda takes inspiration for its suicide attacks from Hezbollah and, therefore, recognizes the coercive power of suicide terrorism.

Merari’s perspective

⁵³ Ivi, p. 117.

For Merari, al-Qaeda suicide attacks do not explain oppression as the main motive in suicide terrorism. Merari agrees that people's perceptions are different on the same event, but this is not an explanation of suicide terrorism per se. For exemplar, in Pakistan, Sunnis are the majority of the population, but they yet committed suicide attacks against the Shiite minority. The motivation behind it was that Shiites are heretics. In both Pakistan and Iraq, Merari notices that Sunni suicide campaigns are not dictated by oppression since they are the majority in their territories.

In contrast with Pape, Merari does not recognize al-Qaeda as an organization with nationalistic goals. For Marari, al-Qaeda fights primarily both Western cultural and political influence in accordance with their religious and political motives.⁵⁴ Al-Qaeda's goal is to expel American forces from the Arabian countries. But as Pape's definition of occupation that involves exertion of political and military power, then no occupation is recognizable in these states. Therefore, Pape ignores that not all the suicide attacks are generated by occupations. Merari stresses the importance of other factors like social and religious ones as history show that people are willing to die for their religious belief no less than for their country.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 233.

⁵⁵ *Ivi*, p. 234.

Conclusion

It is clear from the research that Pape and Merari have different perspectives on suicide terrorism. Both authors recognize the importance of political, group and individual factors to motivate suicide terrorism. Pape tends to concentrate his theory on a strategic logic. For him, suicide terrorism is based on political motives. The rise in suicide attacks is given by the successfulness of them. Merari, instead, believes that political grievances do push individuals in using violence, but they do not explain why some of them become suicide bombers. To understand better the process by which an individual becomes a suicide bomber, an analysis of personality characteristics and pressure by group and the community is needed. The main differences between the authors stand in the successfulness of suicide attacks and the individual.

Firstly, Pape explains with historical data that suicide terrorism is a rising threat because of its success in obtaining little goals. The coercive power of a terrorist organization stands in the capacity of intimidating the enemy by achieving limited goals. His proposition is demonstrated by case studies like Hezbollah and Hamas. Terrorist organizations are rational individuals acting in a strategic logic. On the other hand, Merari explains how Pape's research is insufficient. Analysing only the strategic objectives does not explain suicide terrorism. This strategy does not show why some terrorist organizations do not use suicide attacks if they are so successful. For Merari, suicide attacks are means of political-strategic objectives. But political objectives do not explain why suicide attacks are preferable between other form of violence.

Secondly, both look at the individual level of suicide bombers. They identify demographic characteristics of suicide terrorists. Their research show that, contrary to the common perception, suicide terrorists are not social misfits. All terrorists share an average age of 25, most of them are single and men. Suicide terrorists are not coming from a disadvantage background instead most of them are from middle class families. Moreover, they are not uneducated people, on average they have a university degree. Pape justifies suicide bombers as individuals driven by altruistic motives. They believe in self-sacrifice for collective goals. Individuals usually engage in martyrdom for the community's honour and duty. On the other hand, Merari recognizes a certain importance on individual decision to become suicide bombers of personal characteristic. From his research, it emerges that suicide bombers share similar personalities. He believes a dependent-

avoidant or an impulsive-unstable personality are more susceptible towards suicide terrorism. His focus on psychological explanations gives a new perspective on suicide terrorism and outlines the limits of it by saying there is not much data available. On this stand, Pape argues that psychological explanations can not explain why, although suicide rates fluctuate from one society to another, suicide terrorism is not in all the societies.

In conclusion, this research assets two different point of view of a novel phenomenon that is suicide terrorism. Both authors, in explaining the beginning and ending of suicide terrorist campaigns and the specific motives behind it, are trying to shed more light on this yet obscure phenomenon. In doing so, they both suggest a future strategy for governments to cope with suicide terrorism. Pape suggests to governments to engage in stricter countermeasure in regards of border controls and internet sites. Moreover, it is necessary to eradicate the terrorists from their territory and to create stable democratic infrastructure. To eradicate suicide terrorism, time is needed. Merari, instead, contemplates the importance of intelligence apparatus and their successful victory in Israel for example. Moreover, controls over accessible places and target has proven to be effective against suicide attacks. The key factor of governments has to be the long run achievement, because if they engage in strong countermeasure in the short run, the results could worsen the situation.

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Sintesi

Questa tesi si propone di analizzare il fenomeno degli “attacchi suicidi terroristici” utilizzando lo studio effettuato da Robert Pape e Ariel Merari per far comprendere al lettore come lo stesso non possa essere limitato unicamente nell’ambito del terrorismo religioso.

Nel primo capitolo della tesi, l’analisi parte dallo studio della teoria esposta da Robert Pape nel libro *Dying to Win (2005)*. L’autore inquadra la logica strategica del terrorismo in un processo composto da tre livelli: strategico, sociale ed individuale. Il livello strategico, secondo l’autore, è finalizzato alla coercizione finalizzata verso specifici obiettivi politici e nazionalistici. Il secondo livello, quello sociale, si concentra invece sullo spirito nazionalistico della comunità e la sua legittimazione come organizzazione terroristica. Infine, il terzo livello si concentra sulle cosiddette “motivazioni altruistiche” per spingere i soggetti ad effettuare attacchi suicidi. Robert Pape identifica tre differenti tipi di terrorismo in base agli obiettivi che si vogliono cogliere. Il terrorismo dimostrativo è diretto al reclutamento di un maggior numero di attivisti, quello distruttivo utilizza la morte per trovare consensi alla propria causa ed infine il terrorismo suicida, la forma più aggressiva delle tre, è diretta a creare consensi ed attenzione non solo nella stessa comunità da cui proviene, ma anche nei confronti di un pubblico neutrale. Il terrorista suicida non si aspetta di sopravvivere o di uscire indenne dal suo attentato. L’autore identifica in questa forma di terrorismo sia la coercizione dell’individuo che la volontà di danneggiare il maggior numero di persone possibile. La coercizione degli individui nel terrorismo suicida è il prodotto dell’indottrinamento del fondamentalismo islamico nelle scuole, ma non solo. Secondo Pape, vengono coinvolti soggetti già predisposti per inclinazione personale ad eventi suicidari. L’autore approfondisce la sua analisi evidenziando che gli attacchi suicidi non sono eventi sporadici ed isolati o compiuti da individui a loro volta isolati, ma fanno parte di una più larga organizzazione terroristica che porta avanti programmi specifici ed ha obiettivi ben delineati. Al contrario di quanto comunemente si pensi, Pape sostiene che questi obiettivi sono radicati prevalentemente nella sfera nazionalistica più che in quella religiosa. La logica del terrorismo suicida cerca supporto nelle comunità nazionali e nell’integrazione sociale al fine di spingere gli individui a suicidarsi quasi fosse un dovere. L’autore analizza gli eventi di terrorismo suicida dal 1980 in poi dimostrando che in tutti quegli eventi si possono ritrovare i tre livelli da lui esposti.

Nel secondo capitolo della tesi sono esposte le teorie di un altro studioso del fenomeno, il professor Ariel Merari, autore del libro *Driven to Death* (2010). Merari vuol dimostrare che il terrorista suicida è una persona che intende volontariamente uccidersi al servizio di obiettivi politici o ideologici. Questo rende il terrorismo suicida un fenomeno globale. Merari si concentra sui terroristi palestinesi con un'analisi sia storica che demografica. Allargando il suo studio oltre il fenomeno palestinese, l'autore evidenzia come alcune caratteristiche del fenomeno non siano globali, come sostenuto da Pape, ma che possano variare in dipendenza delle situazioni politiche, culturali e religiose. Merari smentisce inoltre la teoria che i terroristi suicidi provengano da situazioni familiari disagiate o difficili o siano giovani con scarsa scolarizzazione. In realtà gli stessi, che hanno un'età compresa fra i 21 e 26 anni, sono in possesso di un titolo di studio di scuola superiore o addirittura di livello universitario. Merari analizza anche le storie personali di coloro i quali hanno tentato di compiere attentati suicidi e che sono stati arrestati o si sono ritirati prima di commetterli. Emergono, secondo l'autore, caratteristiche comuni della personalità: soggetti con poche relazioni affettive e amicali, non dotati di senso di autostima, preoccupati della disapprovazione di chi li circonda. Tutti che percepiscono di essere considerati soggetti ridicoli. Su questi individui più facilmente può prevalere la coercizione e l'alienazione mentale. Entrambi gli autori, Merari e Pape, concordano su un punto: le organizzazioni terroristiche sono fortemente influenzate dalla comunità nella quale sorgono. Merari aggiunge che per generare una massiva campagna suicida necessitano tre condizioni: un sentimento diffuso di ribellione nella comunità, supporto ed incoraggiamento agli attacchi suicidi da parte delle autorità religiose o politiche, dei media, ed un'organizzazione che sappia reclutare i soggetti più predisposti e li prepari alla missione. Merari nella sua analisi affronta anche gli aspetti psicologici considerandoli importanti nello sviluppo del fenomeno, al contrario di Pape che non li ritiene di grande interesse.

Il terzo capitolo della tesi mette a diretto confronto le teorie dei due autori, utilizzando anche l'analisi di singoli attacchi terroristici. L'analisi inizia con la teoria di Durkheim che descrive il suicidio come un fenomeno sociale differenziandolo in tre tipologie: egoistico, altruistico e anomico. Per il sociologo il grado di integrazione sociale è il termometro che misura l'incidenza del suicidio egoistico ed altruistico: la minore integrazione sociale accresce la probabilità del suicidio egoistico mentre una più alta integrazione sociale aumenta i casi di suicidio altruistico (obbligatorio, opzionale o

acuto). Il suicidio anomico interviene nei casi di cambiamento radicale improvviso delle condizioni di vita del soggetto.

In questa prospettiva sociologica, Pape identifica la maggior parte degli attacchi terroristici suicidi nella categoria di Durkheim del suicidio altruistico. Merari invece non concorda con Pape perché la caratterizzazione del suicidio altruistico di Durkheim può essere associata unicamente con società con caratteristiche simili. Merari sottolinea che la maggior parte delle organizzazioni terroristiche non ha ancora utilizzato gli attacchi suicidi proprio perché vi sono realtà sociali e nazionali differenti. Inoltre, Merari afferma che i suicidi terroristici vengono commessi maggiormente a causa di un'umiliazione sociale più che personale.

Continuando nell'analisi ci si è soffermati sulla teoria della "scelta razionale" di Homans e Blau. Per i due studiosi l'individuo si determina con scelte razionali finalizzate a raggiungere il miglior risultato. In tal modo il pensiero di un soggetto forte e prevaricatore può coercizzare soggetti più deboli che trovano in esso una motivazione per migliorare la propria esistenza. Pape condivide questa posizione: i terroristi suicidi sono individui razionali e riconoscono come superiore l'organizzazione che li prepara all'atto estremo. Merari, invece, non concorda. Riconoscere ai terroristi suicidi la razionalità vuol dire qualificare il terrorismo suicida come fenomeno politico senza tenere in considerazione le motivazioni culturali, religiose e le situazioni psicologiche dei singoli individui.

Nella parte finale del terzo capitolo vengono esaminati tre casi specifici di terrorismo suicida: Hezbollah in Libano, Hamas in Israele e al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Nei tre casi esposti, Pape si baserà sempre sulla teoria che il terrorismo suicida è un fenomeno che trova le sue radici nel sentimento popolare che vuole cacciare l'invasore o l'oppressore dalla propria terra. Merari al contrario non si concentra su un'unica teoria, ma utilizza questi esempi per affermare nuovamente che il terrorismo suicida trova il suo fondamento in più cause contemporaneamente anche non strettamente connesse fra di loro, concludendo che considerare questo fenomeno unicamente su un livello politico non ne consente la corretta interpretazione né la ricerca della soluzione.

Il terrorismo suicida è una patologia universale troppo giovane per poter identificare in modo certo ed incontrovertibile le reali cause ed influenze che ne alimentano la diffusione; i fenomeni storici degli ultimi quarant'anni, le emigrazioni dei popoli, la diffusione dei social media, internet hanno portato profondi cambiamenti nelle persone,

nel modo di vivere e nella socializzazione creando da un lato una fortissima globalizzazione della popolazione mondiale, ma anche forti contrasti e differenziazioni tra gli individui. Solo una visione più ampia di tutte queste variabili potrà portare ad una soluzione efficace finalizzata allo sradicamento di questo tragico fenomeno.