UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE TERRORISM IN
BANGLADESH AND SRI LANKA
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Understanding Suicide Terrorism in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

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To

the innocent souls who fell victim
to the scourge of suicide terrorism around the world
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Abbreviations

AD	Allahr Dal
AQ	Al- Qaeda
AHM	Ahle Hadith Movement
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPP	Communist Party of Pakistan
DC	District Commissioner
EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
EPC	Eastern Provincial Council (Sri Lanka)
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HT	Hizbut Tawhid
HUJI-B	Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam, Bangladesh
HuT	Hijb-ut-Tahrir
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammad
JMB	Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh
JMJB	Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh
LeT	Lashkar-e-Toiba
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PKK	Kurdistan Worker’s Party
PPP	Pakistan People’s Party
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>RIHS</td>
<td>Revival of Islamic Heritage Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Sri Lankan Army</td>
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<td>SLAF</td>
<td>Sri Lankan Air Force</td>
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<td>SLN</td>
<td>Sri Lankan Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>STF</td>
<td>Special Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAF</td>
<td>Tiger Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMVP</td>
<td>Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>Tamil National Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>TULF</td>
<td>Tamil United Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<td>WMD</td>
<td>Weapon of Mass Destruction</td>
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CHAPTER I

Suicide Terrorism: Analytical Framework

[Suicide attacks] have distorted and undermined the basis of the Palestinian struggle. Every liberation movement throughout history has stressed that its struggle is for life and not for death. Why should ours be different? The faster we educate our Zionist enemies and show them that our opposition offers coexistence and peace, the chances that they will be able to claim victims among us at their whim and treat us only as terrorists will be reduced.

—Edward Said (May 2002)¹

In the contemporary world, a major challenge facing the international community is countering the menace of terrorism, as most countries have been victims of terrorism in various forms. One of the prominent and intensifying trends in recent times has been of ‘suicide terrorism’. Suicide terrorism has proved to be successful for several terrorist outfits. For instance, the bombs that devastated the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998; the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that killed over 3,000 people; the Bali bombings in October 2002 and again in 2005 that killed hundreds of foreign tourists; the Madrid bombing in March 2004, with 190 people killed; the serial bomb attacks on London in July 2005; the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan in December 2007, all demonstrate the efficacy of suicide terrorism. In recent times, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan have been witnessing series of suicide bombings carried out by religious and sectarian organizations, not just targeting its own state, but also targeting Western troops, citizens and properties. Thus, since the 1990s, suicide terrorism has become an ever-spreading phenomenon assuming marked importance.

Generally, terrorist groups consider suicide bombers as ‘martyrs’, in a way glorifying their acts.² Subsequently, they have resorted to
suicide tactics as a reliable means of incurring both material and psychological damage on the state structures and the collective psyche of the people. As of the middle of 2003, there have been well over 300 suicide attacks carried out in 14 countries by 17 terrorist outfits around the world. However, the present data would reveal that more than 500 attacks would have taken place in different parts of world and thousands of people killed.

Some of the notable terrorist organizations to have endorsed these tactics are the Shi’ite organization and Hezbollah in Lebanon; the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka; Hamas (the Islamic resistance movement), Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Al-Aqsa Brigade, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Israel-occupied territory; the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and Gamaya Islamiya (Islamic Group (IG) of Egypt; the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) of Algeria; the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) of Turkey; Chechen militants; Islamic jihadi outfits in Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in India; several insurgent groups in Iraq like radical Sunnis, Shi’ite Mahdi Army of Muqtada al-Sadr, Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) in Bangladesh and also Al-Qaeda, the transnational group which has spread across more than 60 countries and has affiliations with local Islamic outfits in the respective countries, which are also perpetuating violence through suicide attacks against the US and its allies around the world.

The tactics usually involve terrorists carrying explosive charges concealed on their bodies or carried on various vehicles like cars, trucks or boats. In some instances, the explosives were transported by bicycle or loaded on to a pack animal. Even airplanes have been blown up in mid-air, as in the 9/11 attacks. However, the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) is a relatively sure means of incurring maximum damage on the enemy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Suicide terrorism is not a new phenomenon, having been practised even in the pre-modern period, though the intensity and
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impact were less compared to the present day. According to Robert Pape, the world’s first suicide terrorists were probably the two Jewish revolutionary groups, the Zealots and the Sicaii, determined to liberate Judea from Roman occupation. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Ismaili Assassins, a Muslim sect based in Iran, carried out suicide missions against the Sunni rulers of the region as well as on the Christian Crusader states. These groups prepared their members to die in the execution of an attack, deliberately seeking martyrdom as they used daggers to kill their victims. The origin of suicide attacks dates back to this period.

There are also a few instances of suicide attacks that have taken place in Asia, and specifically carried out by Islamic outfits in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the Malabar coast of south-western India, Aceh in northern Sumatra, and in Mindanao and Sulu in the southern Philippines. Apparently, in each of these places, it was Muslims that carried out suicide attacks in their fight against Western hegemony, particularly against the European colonial rule. Subsequently, suicide tactics were used by these groups when they felt that other methods to combat the opposition forces failed, and from frustration and desperation, suicide attacks were carried out against the colonial powers. In modern times, suicide missions became the weapon of choice of Irish and Spanish anarchist movements, as well as of the Russian Social Revolutionaries. However, suicide attacks were few. During World War II, Japanese kamikaze pilots tried to cause maximum damage by crashing their fighter planes into US ships. Thus, suicide terrorism is not a modern-day phenomenon and had occurred from time to time.

A watershed in the history of suicide terrorism came in October 1983, when a Hezbollah member drove his truck into the US Marines barracks in Beirut, killing 241 off-duty US service personnel and injuring more than 100 others. Subsequently, a similar truck bomb exploded at the French peacekeeping compound nearby, killing 58 soldiers and wounding around 15 others. These attacks led to the withdrawal of US and French forces from Lebanon. Hence, this was regarded as the first large-scale suicide attack, which killed many persons and still remains the deadliest terrorist strike on Americans.
overseas (excluding the present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan). Moreover, these attacks have been an inspiration for the present terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda and some of the Palestine-based jihadi outfits to adopt suicide tactics on the basis that they can be extremely effective against the Western powers.

Although suicide terrorism in the modern age was first introduced in the Middle East, and later endorsed by other organizations around the world, it is the LTTE that perfected suicide bombing as a weapon of war and used suicide bombers much more effectively than any other organization around the world.

DEFINING SUICIDE TERRORISM

Generally, a suicide attack is regarded as the readiness to sacrifice one’s life in the process of either destroying or attempting to destroy a target (person/property) to advance the political goals of an organization. According to Adam Dolnik, suicide terrorism is a ‘premeditated act of ideologically or religiously motivated violence, in which the success of the operations is contingent of self-inflicted death, by the perpetrator(s) during the attack’.13 However, this is not a comprehensive definition, as it does not include the other motivating factors. For example, the LTTE carried out suicide attacks not necessarily due to their ideology or religion, but in their fight for eelam [independence]. Maha Azzam defines it more comprehensively by interlinking two facets with regard to suicide terrorism. First, it has a political purpose in aiming to attack the enemy and is more confrontational and nihilistic than other means. Second, suicide bombers seem to have developed a cult that attracts recruits partly on the basis of exclusivity and the association with heroism made for a sacred and just cause.14 Before we proceed, it is important to address some of the prevailing misconceptions related to suicide bombing.

MYTHS AND REALITY

Despite the availability of vast literature and studies on suicide terrorism, many myths prevail. The first is that suicide bombers are
always politically motivated. There are various reasons for taking up suicide missions, and these are mostly more personal and religious than political. This is a common feature among women suicide bombers in the Middle East, as their motivation is very religious and personal. Even the women suicide bombers in Chechnya, popularly known as Black Widows, are prepared to kill and to die to avenge the deaths of fathers, husbands, sons and others rather than for Chechen nationalism. Thus, the Black Widows are most often guided by personal rather than political motives.

A second myth is related to the general characterization of suicide bombers as being uneducated, unemployed, socially-isolated single men or women in the age group of 10–20 years. However, this trend has also undergone a sea change, as presently most bombers are well-educated, generally prosperous individuals, married, socially-integrated, and in the age group of 13–47 years. For example, the suicide bombers involved in the 9/11 attacks, 7/7 London bombing and even some of the Palestinian suicide bombers were well-educated and had happy married lives before taking up suicide missions.

A third assumption is that religion is the main motivating factor and that suicide bombing is limited to Islamic extremists. Ironically, the Western media frequently (deliberately) ignore the hard fact that the most successful outfits in carrying out suicide terrorism are the LTTE in Sri Lanka and the PKK in Turkey, which offer a limited role for religious values as they are based on Marxist/Leninist ideology and are followers of a cult personality and not products of religious persuasions. Furthermore, even the Bosnian Muslims who took to suicide attacks did not express religious sentiments, hope or a willingness to die. According to Robert A. Pape, from 1980 to 2001, of the 188 suicide attacks that took place, most had non-religious motives. To a certain extent, most of the female bombers fighting for the Palestinian and Chechen causes are motivated by personal rather than religious reasons. Thus, religion is not the paramount reason for becoming suicide bombers, and it is certainly not confined exclusively to Islam.

A fourth myth that ‘poverty, ignorance and anarchy are vital
motivating factors for the bombers’ is a common notion shared among the US (Bush) Administration and the mass media. Ironically, vast studies on these aspects reveal that most of the bombers are economically well-off, educated, have grown up in countries with democratically-elected governments and are rarely ignorant. On the other hand, ‘neither poverty nor education has a direct causal impact on politically motivated violence and terrorism’. A notable example is of Muriel Degauque, the first European Muslim woman who carried out a suicide attack on the American military patrol in Baquaba, Iraq on 9 November 2005. She was a well-educated Roman Catholic, born and brought up in Belgium and believed in democratic values. Apparently, she got converted to Islam before carrying out the suicide mission. This was the first event where a White woman was involved in suicide terrorism. Many suicide bombers were used to leading their lives in democratic environments, but turned to suicide bombing for other cogent reasons.

A fifth assumption has been prevalent that most suicide bombers are males. However, in recent times, one of the notable features of suicide bombers is the rising percentage of women and children suicide bombers. The main motive behind using a female is to take full advantage of the trust they enjoy in general as ‘the gentle sex’. It is considered easier for a docile, innocent-looking or ‘pregnant’ woman to bypass heavy security arrangements while approaching their targets. As a result, most outfits like the LTTE, Chechen extremists, militant groups in Palestine and so on are recruiting females as suicide bombers. In the LTTE, Chechnya and PKK, female bombers are more than one-fourth of the total bombers. Thus, the entry of females has not only strengthened the organizational structure of terrorist outfits, but also led to a higher intensity of violence in various parts of the world. In addition, to a certain extent, even children have taken up suicide missions, which, in a way, has appeared as a new dimension of suicide terrorism. For example, in Iraq, on 11 November 2008, a girl as young as 13 years is believed to have carried out a suicide attack at a checkpoint outside a hospital in Baquaba, killing five people and injuring many. It is often difficult to determine the exact age of children involved in
this kind of mission; nevertheless, the percentage of child bombers is low compared to women bombers.

Among the above myths, increase in the numbers of female bombers around the world has been an interesting trend in the history of suicide terrorism. Thus, it is important to analyse further the dynamics of women suicide bombers.

FEMALE BOMBERS: A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

In the beginning, girls and women acted as facilitators in armed struggles like running arms, procuring survival necessities, carrying messages, supplying food, and so on. Unfortunately, women were also kidnapped by rebel forces and forced to act as porters, sexual providers, and labourers at military bases in the worst conditions. Thus, women being part of the terrorist outfits is not a recent phenomenon, and they existed in most parts of the world, forming part of Italy’s Red Brigade, Germany’s Baader-Meinhof faction, Lebanon’s Hezbollah, PKK, the Japanese Red Army, and so on.

However, the recruitment of female suicide bombers is a recent trend and is popular due to its high success rate when compared to male bombers. For instance, in the LTTE, women have undertaken suicide attacks with greater frequency than their male counterparts. They began to figure in the organization after 1983 and their unit came to be known as the Suthantira Paravaigal Magalir Munnani (Females’ Front of Liberation Tigers). Interestingly, the female suicide squad is known as Suthantira Paravaigal (Birds of Freedom), which comprises young girls aged 14–16 years. The first female bomber was identified as Dhanu (aka Tanu), who assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, the former prime minister of India, in 1991. Since then, Dhanu became a vital mythical force utilized for further recruitment by the LTTE.

Suicide attacks became a regular part of the Palestinian militant strategy since 1993. However, it was only since the beginning of 2002 that groups like Hamas, Al-Aqsa Brigade, PIJ and PFLP began using female bombers frequently despite the fact that they had previously banned women from becoming bombers on the basis
that Islam forbids use of women for suicide missions. However, it was 27-year-old Wafa Idris (aka Wafa Idrees) who blew herself up in Jerusalem on 28 January 2002, killing 1 Israeli man and injuring more than 100 others, who became the first Palestinian female bomber, due to which she is also called ‘Daughter of Palestine’. Subsequently, an Al-Aqsa leader stated, ‘we have 200 females from Bethlehem [who] are ready to sacrifice for the homeland’, indicating the potential number of female bombers in the pipeline. Since then, many female bombers have carried out successful attacks in Israel. Interestingly, in the beginning, on the basis of Islamic social norms, Hamas had refused to send women to blow themselves up. Even successive Hamas spiritual leaders had stated that the participation of women was not needed in martyr operations. Moreover, women only form the second line of defence in resistance to the occupation. Later on, it was modified that if a woman wanted to carry out a ‘martyr operation’ she should be accompanied by a man. However, they have not offered any Islamic credentials to support their arguments for either opposing or supporting (at a later stage) the use of female bombers based on the interpretation of Islam’s religious texts. Nevertheless, Reem Raiyshi (aka Reem Saleh Raiyshi) became the first Hamas female bomber when she blew herself up at the border of the Gaza Strip on 14 January 2004, killing 4 Israelis and injuring around 10 people. Apparently, she was a mother of two children, in her early 20s, and it is stated that religion was the main motivating factor. Hamas justified her act by stating that the inability of male terrorists to penetrate Israeli defences forced Hamas to use women, and, moreover, perceived that women were a ‘reserve army’ and may have a better chance than men of evading Israeli security precautions. Subsequently, in the four major pro-Syrian terror organizations in Lebanon and in the Kurdish PKK, the number of female bombers rose noticeably.

Presently, in Iraq too insurgents’ groups have resorted to suicide attacks carried out by women. For example, on 28 September 2005, at Tal Afar in north-west Iraq, a female bomber detonated an explosive device packed with metal balls among a group of men lining up to enlist in the Iraqi army, in which 6 people were killed.
and at least 30 wounded. Subsequently, in reaction to the US-led occupation of Iraq, Al-Qaeda had claimed responsibility for the serial bombings that targeted three US-owned hotels in Amman on 9 November 2005 which killed 57 persons and injured more than 300. This suicide bombing was successfully carried out by 4 Iraqis including a woman identified as Om Omaira. She was responsible for causing the maximum damage in the Radisson Hotel, where a wedding party was under way. This success story of female bombers has come as a shot in the arm for Al-Qaeda for further recruitment of women bombers. Even the PKK has used female bombers more often to perpetrate suicide attacks in Turkey. The first female member to carry out a suicide attack was in 2002 in protest against the treatment of her friends in a Turkey prison. Since then, female bombers have become a common feature of PKK.

Apart from these terrorist outfits, there are many other groups in different parts of the world recruiting female bombers, as in Chechnya, were the female Black Widow bombers are the wives or relatives of other Chechen rebels. The suicide attacks have intensified since 2000, and tackling them has become a major challenge for the Russian security forces. The first Chechen women suicide bombers were Khava Barayeva and Aiza Gazueva who martyred themselves on 29 November 2001, and continue to inspire many Chechen guerrillas to take up suicide attacks. The female bombers have allegedly participated in several high-profile attacks in Moscow, like the October 2002 hostage-taking raid on a Moscow theatre, in which 19 of 41 attackers were masked females with explosives. Some of the other incidents included the Beslan School siege of September 2004, where 32 terrorists including female bombers took 1,000 children, parents and teachers hostage. However, Russian forces were able to counter this siege.

Similar is the case among the militant groups in Kashmir, which are scattered among different banned outfits, like Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and some other sectarian organizations. These bombers call themselves ‘fidayeen’, and their attacks are primarily based on a hit-and-run strategy and the targets have been mostly military personnel and innocent civilians. The
notable suicide attack carried out by a female bomber was on 15 October 2005 in Kashmir. However, since then, incidents of female bombers are few.

One can conclude that female bombers are becoming a global phenomenon. In this context, it is important to examine the main guiding factors for terrorist outfits to recruit women more and more to carry out suicide attacks.

WHY WOMEN?

For any terrorist group, the main guiding factors for adopting suicide attacks are the facts that the effects of suicide attacks are always quite dramatic, result in maximum casualties, and cause extensive damage to property, with the involvement of just one or two bombers. The involvement of women bombers in terrorist outfits has several advantages. (1) Women are not subjected to serious security checks as they attract less suspicion compared to men, making their task much easier. Interestingly, even male suicide bombers prefer to disguise themselves as females in order to infiltrate checkpoints or the targeted areas, and this is a popular method among Palestinian militants and even in Iraq. Subsequently, female bombers make it more difficult for the police and soldiers manning checkpoints, particularly due to shortage of women officers to conduct body searches. This is evident in Iraq, as the US-led troops are not able to prevent female bombers from crossing the vital checkpoints. (2) The layers of females’ clothing can more easily conceal bulky suicide belts, and explosives can be hidden even in the undergarments, which will be difficult for male bombers. (3) The participation of females increases the overall morale of the female cadre, thereby inducing more to join the group. According to Bruce Hoffman and G. H. McCormick, these acts by female bombers reflect the group’s ‘ideological identity in its purest form, which in turn plays an important role in shaping the behaviour of its membership and morale boosting’. (4) Sacrifices of women generally generate more sympathy among the people than those of male bombers, which strengthens the cause and the fight. In this
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regard, the LTTE justified female roles in suicide missions as ‘it is a way of assisting female’s liberation and counteracting the oppressive traditionalism of the present system’.\(^3\) (5) It is relatively difficult to maintain a regular supply of male cadres due to prolonged war and the continuous emigration of people. Thus, females became an easy recruitment target for terrorist groups for exploiting their vulnerability and also for indoctrination and brainwashing. (6) It is a given that women and children are greater victims of any conflict and are also more vulnerable than men. This provides an atmosphere conducive for terrorist outfits to recruit women more easily than men. Refugee camps are perfect breeding grounds for recruiting female bombers, as most of them inside the camps feel helplessness and despair, and are humiliated and frustrated about the vulnerable lives they are leading. This is a common phenomenon among the Palestinians in refugee camps.\(^4\) Thus, for any terrorist outfit, the main source of recruitment are suffering women who are victims in the affected region.

WHY DO TERRORIST OUTFITS OPT FOR SUICIDE TERRORISM?

Generally, for any terrorist outfit, suicide attacks are an attractive option, having many advantages like the consequences of suicide attacks always being significant, as they result in maximum casualties and extensive damage to property, with the involvement of just one or two suicide bombers. This, in turn, inflicts profound fear and anxiety among the public and produces a negative psychological effect on an entire population, rather than on just the victims of the actual attack. Moreover, according to Robert Pape, from 1980 to 2001, suicide attacks reportedly represented just 3 per cent of all attacks, but accounted for 48 per cent of total deaths.\(^4\) The highly-devastating suicide attacks boost the morale of cadres of terrorist outfits and help them to overcome any demoralization caused by military losses.

Second, with the increase in number of 24/7 news channels around the world hungry for news to fill their programmes, suicide
attacks attract wide media coverage. A suicide attack is indeed a newsworthy event for the media, as it indicates great determination and inclination for self-sacrifice on the part of the terrorists. As a result of there being a large number of victims, it ensures public attention, which is one of the main motives of terrorist outfits to opt for suicide tactics, since the terrorists aim at publicity designed to gain the highest possible exposure. Furthermore, this publicity is used for mobilizing funds from internal and external sources, e.g. some of the jihadi outfits in Palestine and the LTTE have raised millions of dollars for their causes from the diaspora as a result of carrying out suicide attacks.

Third, these suicide tactics virtually guarantee that the attacks will be carried out at the most appropriate time, place, and on the correct target. The bomber has the choice of location, time, and exact circumstances of his/her attack. Hence, they pose an extremely difficult challenge to the government security forces. Even if they do succeed in stopping a suicide bomber before he/she reaches the intended target, he/she can still activate and cause at least some damage. Moreover, it is not possible to prevent suicide attacks through any planning or closing off of escape routes once a terror attack has occurred. Thus, due to lack of counter-strategies and means of combating suicide terrorism, terrorist outfits depend upon suicide attacks, as they have a high success rate.

Fourth, another significant aspect has been that even if the perpetrator is killed during the course of the action, there is no fear of him/her being caught, interrogated, put on trial or imprisoned, thereby blocking any information about the terrorist organizations being revealed to the government intelligence and counterterrorism agencies. Perhaps this encourages suicide bombers to carry out the attack without much fear of being caught.

Fifth, these tactics are cost-effective, since, apart from the loss of a life or two to the organization, all it entails is electrical components and chemical supplies for producing a suicide bomb. According to Bruce Hoffman, the price of materials used in a suicide attack in Israel is less than US$150. It is financially much less expensive for terrorist organizations.
Hence, unlike other tactics used in terrorism, suicide attacks offer a variety of advantages for terrorist organizations, and countering this has become a major challenge for the security forces.

**SUICIDE TERRORISM IN SOUTH ASIA**

Formerly, suicide attacks were viewed as a problem confined to the Middle East region. However, over a period of time, it has spread around the globe and affects most of the region around as a result of increased migration of terrorist groups from conflict-ridden countries; the formation of extensive international terrorist infrastructures; the increased number of terrorist groups adopting suicide tactics; and availability of adequate funds and weapons for carrying out such attacks. Hence, suicide terrorism has become a global phenomenon and countering it has become a major challenge for the international community.

In the case of South Asia, it is no different from other regions. Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh have been witnessing frequent suicide attacks. In India, suicide attacks have intensified since the post-Kargil period (1999) specifically carried out by jihadi outfits based in J&K. Apparently, these squads are not part of any single organization, and are scattered among the different banned outfits, like LeT, JeM, Al Mansoorian and other such sectarian organizations. However, over the years, the JeM has been held accountable for numerous attacks in J&K and other parts of India. The JeM has laid claim to being the pioneer of fidayeen attacks in J&K, when it rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into the gates of the Badami Bagh Cantonment area of Srinagar in April 2000. The attack was the first of its kind in the 13-year history of militancy in the Valley. Apart from government buildings and military facilities, even hotels and marketplaces were among the targets of a wave of fidayeen attacks. Since then, they have developed a modus operandi of sorts that has continued till date not only in J&K but also other parts of India, like the Parliament attack (December 2001), and the joint operation by LeT and JeM in 2002, a dramatic fidayeen attack on the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, killing
at least 29 people. Both LeT and JeM are headquartered in Pakistan and both are alleged to have links with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. They profess the radical pan-Islamism of Al-Qaeda and are bent on liberating J&K from India. However, interestingly, both the LeT and JeM are not able to be as effective as the LTTE in terms of causing maximum casualties and damaging property. Nevertheless, the fidayeen attacks have intensified the conflict in J&K.

In Pakistan, suicide attacks are a post-9/11 phenomenon and are sponsored by religious and at times even by sectarian organizations. Over the years, Pakistan has been struck by a wave of suicide bombings intensifying, in general, particularly in various parts of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. For instance, in 2008 alone, more than 57 suicide attacks took place, killing at least 700 people, of which the majority are members of Pakistan’s security forces. One of the major suicide attacks of the year was carried on 20 September 2008 at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, where a suicide bomber detonated a truck packed with explosives killing around 60 people and injuring at least 200, including a Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) legislator. In this regard, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik stated that this attack was ‘the biggest attack [casualtywise] since the last seven years’.

Interestingly, most of the suicide attacks in Pakistan are carried out by religious (Islamic) outfits like JeM, LeT, Harkat-ul Ansar, Fedayeen-i-Islam, and so on. Even the failed assassination attempt on former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in December 2004 was carried out by the JeM for his stance on purging Pakistan of terrorism. Subsequently, in recent times, it is alleged that most of the attacks are carried out with the collaboration of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, which are active in South Waziristan, one of Pakistan’s seven tribal areas. Apart from this, the numerous suicide bombings taking place in the tribal belts have been sectarian in nature, particularly by the Shias and Sunnis and not necessarily against the Western nations. Apart from this, the Islamic and jihadi outfits have also targeted the Western countries since the 9/11 attacks, as a result of Pakistan emerging as a frontline state in the so-called US-led war on terror. For example, apart from targeting the US troops
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and infrastructure in June 2008, the Danish embassy in Islamabad was targeted by a suicide bomber, who blew up his car outside the Danish embassy, killing at least 8 persons and injuring 30 more.47 In addition, very rarely is there any involvement of female bombers, indicating, in a way, that most of the outfits subscribe to Islamic social norms and have refused to send women to blow themselves up. However, there are a few instances of children being suicide bombers, like in 5 April 2009 when a suicide bomber aged 14 or 15 years killed 22 people and wounded more than 40 persons at a packed Shia mosque in the Punjab province.48 Overall, suicide attacks in Pakistan are targeted mainly at Pakistani establishments and the Western countries, particularly the US and its allies.

In Bangladesh, suicide attacks are of recent origin and have high chances of intensifying, as in Pakistan, as a result of rise in Islamic fundamentalist and Islamic jihadi outfits, which are intent on establishing a Muslim state. On the other hand, the suicide attacks in Sri Lanka were more than two decades old and were successfully carried out by the LTTE. In this context, it is interesting to analyse the dynamics of suicide terrorism in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which has many similarities and dissimilarities. Thus, the following chapters will examine the nature of suicide terrorism in both countries.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 According to Human Rights Watch, suicide bombers are not martyrs, but war criminals, and include those who help to plan such attacks. This type of violent act violates the basic international humanitarian laws and international human rights law. See Human Rights Watch Report, *Erased in a Moment: Suicide Bombing Attacks against Israeli Citizens*, November 2002. Also see ‘Martyrdom and Murder’, *Economist*, 8 January 2004, p. 15.


4 Since the US-led invasion in Iraq in March 2003, there have been frequent suicide attacks carried out successfully by various insurgents’ groups alleged to have links with Al-Qaeda: Smith, P. J., ‘Transnational Terrorism and the Al-Qaeda Model: Confronting New Realities’, *Parameters*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 33–46.


8 Schweitzer, Yoram, ed., ‘Suicide Terrorism: Development and Main Characteristics’, in the international conference on Countering Suicide Terrorism, Herzliya: The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2001, pp. 75–85; and Shay, op. cit., n. 1 above, p. 27.


13 Eggen and Wilson, op. cit., n. 11 above.


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17 The PKK was founded in 1987, but opted for suicide terrorism only in 1995. Although its members are Muslims, they are not necessarily motivated by Islamic ideas: Ergil, Dogu, ‘Suicide Terrorism in Turkey: The Workers Party of Kurdistan’, in Countering Suicide Terrorism, op. cit., n. 8 above, pp. 105–14.

18 Pape, op. cit., n. 3 above.


21 Smith, Craig S., ‘From Catholic Girl to Suicide Bomber’, Deccan Herald, 7 December 2005.


30 Ergil, op. cit., n. 17 above.

31 The last time females were involved in bombing in Iraq was during April 2003, when the female bombers in a car killed three US soldiers: ‘Female Suicide Bomber Kills Six in Iraqi City Declared Free of Terrorists’, Guardian, 29 September 2005.

Shay, op. cit., n. 1 above, p. 3.

The Chechen people have been fighting for freedom from Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union: Cunningham, op. cit., n. 22 above, pp. 171–93; and Kurz, Robert W. and Charles K. Bartles, ‘Chechen Suicide Bombers’, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 20, 2007, pp. 529–47.


See www.ict.org.il/articles/articleid.cfm?articleid=470


Pape, op. cit., n. 3 above, p. 14.

Hoffman and McCormick, op. cit., n. 38 above, p. 249.

Ibid., p. 250.


For further details, see ‘Fidayeen (Suicide Squad) Attacks in Pakistan (2008)’: http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/Fidayeenattack.html

For more details, see ‘Post-9/11 Attacks on Western Targets in Pakistan (2008)’: www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database.html


CHAPTER II

Suicide Terrorism in Bangladesh: 
Past, Present and Future

INTRODUCTION

In this era of mutual collaboration and peaceful coexistence, the most violent threat to human rights and world security is worldwide terrorism, which, currently, has taken the mask of suicide terrorism. It poses a serious security challenge to many countries, most significantly the Third World countries, some having unstable socio-political structures. The term suicide terrorism carries a certain image which corresponds with the terms suicide attack, suicide bombing, suicide homicide bombing, martyrdom operation, etc. in today’s terrorism discourse. In his book, Dead for Good, Hugh Barlow describes recent suicide attack campaigns as a new development in the long history of martyrdom, that he labels predatory martyrdom. The fundamental characteristics of suicide bombing, and its strong attraction for the terrorist organizations behind it, are universal: suicide bombings are inexpensive and effective, and less complicated and compromising than other kinds of terrorist operations. Perhaps, suicide bombing is the ultimate smart bomb as it guarantees media coverage. In fact, a suicide attack is an attack upon a target, in which an attacker intends to kill others and/or cause great damage, knowing that he or she will either certainly—or most likely—die in the process. The willingness of an attacker to die has strategic value. While it does not exclusively require the detonation of a bomb, the means of attack usually include vehicles filled with explosives and individuals wearing vests filled with explosives according to the amount of devastation required. These methods can cause severe lethal damage within a very short space of time.
Like the Middle East, South and South-East Asia, Bangladesh has also been facing the threat of suicide terrorism which appeared in 2005. The spectacular rise of extremist Islamic groups and destructive activities of suicide terrorists in recent years through bomb/grenade attacks, including suicide bombing in different public places created panic among the masses and took a great toll of life beyond anticipation.

Though Bangladesh had been facing the challenges of various types of terrorism like ideological, ethnic and criminal terrorism, suicide attacks are a completely new phenomenon in the local terrorism discourse. These religious terrorist groups introduced a terrible new form of violence through suicide operations in Bangladesh. They introduced suicide bombing in Bangladesh for the first time through killing two judges in Jhalakathi. The suicide bombers also hit Chittagong and Gazipur courts and the DC’s office, killing 10 persons and injuring more than 70. The government, security and law-enforcing forces and general people are stunned with the sudden emergence of suicide terrorism in Bangladesh. These attacks not only challenge the sovereignty and political structure of the government, but also tarnished the image of Bangladesh all over the world as a moderate, Muslim, peace-loving country.

In this backdrop, this chapter tries to present an overview of the suicide attacks which occurred in 2005, the social profiles of the culprits behind the scene, and the causes of rise of suicide terrorism in Bangladesh. We will also try to find out the motivating factors behind suicide terrorism.

OVERVIEW OF SUICIDE ATTACKS IN BANGLADESH

Dateline 14 November 2005

Two senior assistant judges were killed and four others were injured on 14 November 2005 at Jhalakathi district town when a militant member of a JMB suicide squad hurled a bomb on the microbus carrying the judges. Though the assassin Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun did not get killed, the bomb that he had thrown into
the microbus ended the lives of both Judges Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey.²

Dateline 29 November 2005: Gazipur and Chittagong

On 29 November 2005, the courthouses of Gazipur and Chittagong witnessed the explosion of suicide attacks. The first explosion occurred around 9 a.m. during scanning by the police with a metal detector³ at the checkpoint outside the Chittagong court building. The suicide bomber who set off a bomb strapped to his body blew himself up, killing one of the police officers and a civilian. The suicide bombing occurred before lawyers and judges had arrived for sessions, as the suicide bomber was caught by the police during a metal detector check, said lawyer Shakhawat Hossain. ‘If the bombers could have carried the things inside the court, it would have caused more havoc,’ Hossain said.

An hour after the explosion, a second suicide bomber, disguised in the black robe of a lawyer, blew himself up in the Gazipur Bar Association office, where some 50 lawyers and their clients had assembled. The powerful bomb reduced the room to ashes and blew out the windows, killing 7 people, including the bomber. The police later discovered wires wrapped around the legs of the bomber’s mutilated body.⁴

Dateline 1 December 2005: Gazipur

After the gruesome bomb blast on the Bar Association Building on 29 November, another suicide bomb attack by JMB in the Gazipur DC’s office killed a government employee and injured at least 40 people on 1 December 2005. According to the police and witnesses, the explosion occurred at about 11:40 a.m. when a number of lawyers were standing in front of the DC’s office before joining a bar association meeting. Besides rickshaw pullers and pedestrians, the attack injured 8 lawyers and 5 law enforcers, sending shock waves throughout the country. Immediately after the incident, police arrested the severely injured suicide bomber from the spot, who was in the guise of a tea vendor.
Dateline 8 December 2005: Netrokona

On 8 December 2005, a suicide bomber, suspected to be a member of the suicide squad of the JMB, blew himself up in a crowd in front of the office of a leftist cultural organization in Netrokona called ‘Udichi’. Three people, including the suicide bomber and Udichi’s district unit joint convener, died on the spot, one on the way to hospital, while the others succumbed to their injuries later.

THE CULPRITS BEHIND THE ATTACK

Undoubtedly, the term ‘suicide terrorism’ is the species of which terrorism is the genus and very much interlinked with the term ‘extremism’. Bangladesh has a long and glorious history of movements against the discrimination, oppression and injustice of foreign rulers. The Bangladeshi people fought against British rule and Pakistani oppression with the aim of socio-economic advancement and freedom of the people. But it has never followed extremism as a means of realizing those goals. The popularly-known term ‘Islamic militancy’ is nothing but a recent phenomenon in Bangladesh. The recent suicide attacks initiated by the JMB were in the name of establishing Islamic rule, replacing the present structure of government, what they term taguti government. They branded this as a jihad (movement) against manmade rule to attain martyrdom (shahadat).

Various reports published in newspapers and other investigatory reports show that there exist more or less 40 militant groups in Bangladesh. However, some of such organizations which are reported to be actively pursuing their activities in recent times are listed below.

- Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).
- Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).
- Hizbut Tawhid.
- Allahr Dal.
- Hijb-ut-Tahrir.
It is evident from the statements of members of the suicide squad who survived the suicide attacks that some of the Islamic militant organizations had motivated and recruited them, provided training for preparing bombs, explosive devices and monetary support to attack their identified targets. Though most of the intimidatory threats of suicide attacks have been issued in the name of the JMB only, some have been jointly issued by the JMB and the HUJI-B, indicating close coordination of the activities of different jihadi terrorist organizations. So it will not be irrelevant to discuss here the emergence, principles and activities of these two organizations, namely, JMB and HUJI-B.

**Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)**

Some madrassa [an Islamic religious school] students (17–18) of Mohammadia Arabia Madrassa on being motivated by Sheikh Abdur Rahman organized the JMB in 1998 with the aim of establishing Islamic rule in Bangladesh. Accordingly, a Central Committee was formed, with Sheikh Abdur Rahman as the spiritual leader of the organization and Siddiquil Islam ‘Bangla Bhai’ as the operational chief. All the members of the central committee started visiting the mosques and madrassas of urban areas and motivating people for jihad by referring to the Afghan, Palestine and Iraq wars. The JMB grew unnoticed during 1998–2000 with its mission in northern parts of Bangladesh and made an audacious pronouncement of their existence with 500 countrywide simultaneous bombings on 17 August 2005. After that, during November–December 2005, they created four suicide bombers, killing judges, lawyers and other people and left the whole country in panic.

The JMB, following the Wahabi interpretation of Islam, saw rebellion against an unjust ruler, who does not apply sharia law, as legitimate. In their literature, they apply the following ideas directly against the current constitutional rule and political framework in Bangladesh: that there is no evidence and acceptance in the Koran and correct Hadith to maintain the regime under democracy, socialism, communism, secularism, etc.; that all these systems are manmade laws invented by the kafir (non-believers); that each
and every ‘-ism’ is a rival to the rule of Allah; and that in order to destroy the basic belief of Muslims, these ‘-isms’ were formulated by kafirs, mushriks and Jews.

Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam, Bangladesh (HUJI-B)

The HUJI-B was established by the returnee Bangladeshi mujahideen with a new political ideology of jihad during 1989–90. HUJI-B started their open and formal jihadi activities from 30 April 1992, when Afghanistan was in the midst of civil war and the Taliban government was yet to be formed. HUJI-B was proscribed by the then government as ‘a self-confessed terrorist group’, along with the homegrown JMB and JMJB.

The mission of HUJI-B is to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh. HUJI-B has an estimated cadre strength of several thousand members who operate and are trained in certain hideouts inside Bangladesh. Funding of the HUJI-B comes primarily from madrassas in Bangladesh. The group, reportedly, may have ties with the militants across the border who might also have provided another source of funding.

SOCIAL PROFILE AND MOTIVATION OF SUICIDE BOMBERS

There is no clear profile any more—not for terrorists, and especially not for suicide bombers.

Just after the first suicide attacks the primary question in the minds of the general people was: Who are they? The more pertinent question was: Why are they killing people indiscriminately and also sacrificing their own lives? One assumed initial reaction was that the suicide bombers were motivated by despair, and likely to come from poor, neglected segments of society. On 9 December 2005, after the Udichi bomb explosion at Netrokona, Khandaker Monirul Alam, a spokesman of the Bangladesh Home Ministry said, ‘These suicide bombers are dangerous and daring. They are mostly poor, madrassa educated and thoroughly brainwashed.’

However, a research finding shows that Sheikh Abdur Rahman’s educational background appears to be confined to religious studies
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and Arabic language and literature. The educational background of JMB activists is more diverse, with 53 per cent having a general education, some with graduate and postgraduate qualifications, 39 per cent with madrassa certificates, and only 7 per cent illiterate. The professional profile of JMB activists is startling, with 67 per cent in employment and 24 per cent students. The vast majority of activists were in their 20s, with 88 per cent between the ages of 15 and 39. The strength of the JMB in 2004 stood at 6,739 of which 24 per cent were trained and 3.2 per cent constituted a hard-core group with 4,250 sympathizers. The JMB, with a total figure of 10,989 activists and sympathizers, still only represents 0.73 per cent of Ahle Hadith's 1.5 million members. The suicide squads are a completely distinct category composed of those in their late teens or early 20s, single, lower middle-class, madrassa-educated non-graduates and motivated by martyrdom.

Though it is presumed that people from madrassa backgrounds were involved in the suicide attacks, that was not always true. Some of the suicide bombers had a modern education. However, the discussion of life sketches of some of the suicide bombers will help in better understanding of their socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

BACKGROUNDS OF SUSPECTED SUICIDE ATTACKERS

• Ataur Rahman Sani, who was executed with another top six militants on charges of (suicide) attacks and killing of two judges on 14 November 2005 was the head of the suicide squad of JMB and the younger brother of Sheikh Abdur Rahman (head of the JMB). Sani completed dakhil from a local madrassa in 1996 and thereafter got admission at Kushtia Islamic University with honours in Islamic Studies.
• Md. Hossain Mahmood, an active member of the JMB suicide squad, was arrested from the Chittagong court building in a seriously injured condition just after the suicide attack on 29 November 2005. He died later in hospital. He was a resident of Taktarchala, Sakhipur,
Tangail and a student of class X in a local high school.

- Abdur Razzak, alleged to be the suicide bomber of the Gazipur bomb blast on 29 November 2005, was found dead on the spot. He was a student of dakhil level at Hefzul Ulum Kamil Madrassa, Rajshahi.

- The profile of Wasim alias Sabuj, suspected to be a suicide attacker of the 2 December bomb blast at Gazipur, was somehow different. He was born in Kaliakuir, Gazipur. Being a very bright student, he got scholarships in classes 5 and 8. He passed SSC and HSC examinations with 1st Division. After that he got admission in the Economics Department of Jahangirnagar University during the 2001–02 session. Later, in 2004 after his 3rd semester final examination he joined the Tablegue-i-Jamat and constantly avoided connection with his family and friends.

- Delwar alias Ayub Ali alias Abu Zor, an active member of the JMB suicide squad was a resident of Kumira, Sitakunda. He lost his father at an early age and was very poor. He completed primary education; other members of his family were illiterate.

MOTIVATION

The suicide bombers of JMB are mostly young madrassa students from poor and lower middle-class families with rural backgrounds. In addition to their strongly-held religious beliefs, the teachings received from leaders of the Islamic extremist groups may provide an additional impetus to commit suicide for religion. They teach that martyrdom (shahadat) is rewarded in the afterlife if anyone dies for the cause of religion. It has been found in field research that the youths undertaking suicide bombings are simply following what they are taught to be their religious duty and regard their own lives in this world as less important compared to the next, eternal life. So they are willing to sacrifice their own lives in the hope of becoming a martyr, though the difference between suicide, which the Koran condemns, and martyrdom is not known to them. So, the promise
of instant entry into paradise as a reward for killing infidels (holders of Taguti Ain) works as a great motivation for suicide attacks. A member of a suicide squad who was injured and arrested during the suicide bomb attack in Chittagong Court on 29 November 2005 said to journalists when in a critical state that he participated in the attack only to attain heaven eternally. The statistics based on the study of the suicide squads of various militant groups show that 67 per cent members are 18–21 years and the rest are under the age of 30 years. Psychologists observe that persons in this stage are mostly tempted by emotion. Militant groups use this emotion to influence the ignorant by religious belief, which creates nothing but religious misconceptions in their minds. Consequently, these misconceptions lead them to withdraw from the present structure of the society. In fact, their beliefs are warped not by the notion of nationalism as observed Robert Pape in his book *Dying to Win*, but by the religious education they get. They get this education not only from the madrassas but also from religious scholars. These so-called scholars create a belief in their minds that the people who dedicate their lives for jihad will be considered as *shaheed* (martyrs) and will certainly get a place in *jannat* (heaven).

Having made a close study of the profile of three suicide bombers, however, one can be certain that a few causes worked as motivational factors apart from distorted religious indoctrination, though similarity was found with other suicide bombers seen elsewhere. Most of the suicide bombers were in their teens and were uncertain of their future in countries like Bangladesh where opportunities for income generation are limited. The inequality that persists in Bangladeshi society and the widening gap between the emerging elite and the majority of the rural populace and youth, and inequality in terms of the education system have produced class differences that are commonly exploited by the religious militants.

**RECRUITMENT OF MEMBERS OF SUICIDE SQUADS**

Islamic militant groups began the practice of recruiting impressionable young men giving them fundamentalist religious
indoctrination and preparing them for martyrdom. Unlike the secular, nationalist, or leftist militant activists, these Islamic terrorists fully intended to die in the course of carrying out an attack. In fact, the attacker’s death became an integral part of the plan of operation.

Militant groups motivate people, and, thereby, recruit members of the group by preaching jihadi ideas through distributing books and leaflets among the people. For example, one such leaflet titled *Prokrito Islamer Daak* (‘Invitation to True Islam’) said, ‘we are observing some Islamic rules at personal level, like namaz, ramadan, haj, etc. but in most of the fields like economics, politics, the judiciary, and other social activities we follow the rules made by men’. They also propagate that ‘anybody who does not join the organization is a *Kafir* or infidel, and military measures are a must to establish Islam’.\(^{11}\) The activists of the groups also motivate people by urging them to join their organization because it will help them to attain *jannat* (heaven) in the afterworld.\(^{12}\)

Apart from preaching jihadi ideas, their activities also include a training course in militancy. Women are specially chosen for training in recruiting techniques as they can easily motivate the local people, especially the local women.\(^{13}\)

Research findings also show that fundamentalist terrorist groups have demonstrated that they can easily recruit new members from disillusioned elements of society. In some cases, the prospect of martyrdom actually increases these groups' appeal among the youth, who feel disenfranchised and are looking for ways to make a name for themselves and achieve special treatment for their families.

**CAUSES OF SUICIDE ATTACKS**

A ‘curative prescription’ for suicide terrorism calls for a clear comprehension of its causes. Understanding why they sacrifice themselves is crucial to ending what appears to be senseless and irrational. Obviously, suicide terrorism does not spread spontaneously without certain definite reasons. Its rise has important causes along with certain special causes related to socio-economic and geopolitical factors.
It is believed that poor governance, socio-economic factors, an ominous political culture, religious fanaticism, etc. are the main contributors to generating suicide terrorism all over the world. Robert Pape, director of the Chicago Project on suicide terrorism and expert on suicide bombers, analysing data on 315 suicide attacks from 1980 to 2003 observes that 95 per cent of suicide attacks all over the world in recent times have the same specific strategic goal: to cause an occupying state to withdraw forces from a disputed territory. Following this, in his book *Dying to Win*, Pape claims that foreign occupation is the root cause of suicide terrorism. Other characteristics which Pape found to be correlated to suicide terrorism included:

- difference in religion between the attackers and the occupiers and grass-roots support for the attacks;
- brutality and cruelty of the occupiers;
- growth of Islamic fundamentalism;
- competition among the militant groups;
- poverty;
- poor education;
- history of suicide attempts; or
- social maladjustment of the attackers.

However, anthropologist Scott Atran found in a 2003 study that this is not a justifiable conclusion. In his paper ‘The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism’, he commented that it is not just politics which Pape found to be the root cause, but that moral values and group dynamics can no longer be ignored. Further, a recently-published paper by Alberto Abadie, Professor of Public Policy of Harvard University casts doubt on the widely held belief that terrorism stems from poverty, finding instead that terrorist violence is related to a nation’s striving for political freedom.

In this global context of causes of suicide terrorism, the search for potential causes of suicide terrorism in Bangladesh would be made from the following factors.
Socio-Economic Factors

After 1980, the imbalanced development concentrating only on cities has widened the gap between rich and poor which has great impact on the socio-economic condition of ordinary people in Bangladesh. The lack of effective control on the part of the government and countrywide corruption negatively affects the distribution of production and wealth. As a result, the perception of poor governance, social injustice and economic inequities cause disgruntlement in the minds of the general people in Bangladesh. Moreover, the high rate of unemployment creates confusion and depression about their future among those sections of the society. These disappointing perceptions make the recruitment of suicide bombers easier.  

Education System

Experts and social thinkers observe that the cause of suicide terrorism in one form or the other is rooted in the whole education system of Bangladesh. The views are based on the evidence that the JMB and HUJI-B, which are mainly responsible for suicide attacks, are led by madrassa-background people. Moreover, many madrassa students are arrested on charges of involvement with suicide terrorism and huge arms, ammunitions, grenades and bomb-making materials are recovered from madrassa premises. There are some reports that the madrassas are mostly responsible for the production of human weapons (suicide terrorists) and the increase in the recent suicide attacks. Various research findings show that madrassas, funded by Saudi, Kuwaiti and Pakistani money, continue to mushroom without any check by the government. In Bangladesh, there are 84,000 villages that have at least 78,000 madrassas. Among them are 20,000 quawmi [sectarian] madrassas.  

Except Islamic religious education, Arabic and Urdu literature, no traditional general education, e.g. Bangla, English, human science, general science, geography and vocational science or training is
included in their curriculum. So, the students of *quawmi* madrassas cannot be integrated with the mainstream education system at any stage of their education. More importantly, strong religious indoctrination acts as a stumbling block in their social and religious integration. As a result, they fail to secure jobs, either public or private, for their livelihoods after completion of their study. In this situation, the religious clerics succeed in convincing them that current manmade democratic rule instead of Islamic rule based on the sharia are responsible for all their existing sufferings. They are also taught in madrassas about the glorious eternal afterlife in heaven if they become martyrs (*shaheed*) due to fighting against this manmade rule.

However, noted security expert Brig Gen M. Sakhawat Hossain (retd) refuted this view, saying that:

…It is not Madrasah education that drove these fanatics to take their lives but social and personal trauma that worked as [a] strong motivating factor. One of the three was a Madrasah student, the rest were from regular schools. The point to note here is that Siddiquil Islam of JMB, was a graduate in Bengali and lecturer in Bengali. Therefore, it is fallacious to suggest that Madrasahs in Bangladesh produced these extremists. Madrasahs existed for hundred[s] of years in this part of the world. The problem lies elsewhere.¹⁹

**RADICAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM**

Research findings on the life sketches of the various militants give the indication that the thing which most importantly influences the suicide attackers to sacrifice their lives is nothing but the religious factor. Many assume that the driving force behind the suicide attacks was Islamic fundamentalism. Persons returned from the Afghan War with a new ideology warped with pan-Islamism who more or less from the very beginning had close connections with politics based on religion and also had education in the religious field. Their main aim was to eliminate the existing manmade political government system, and, thenceforth, to establish an Islamic government based on the sharia. Democratic government is nothing but a *taguti* government to them.
Essentially, they got this inspiration from the *salafis*, who believe that the Hadith (oral traditions) and literal readings of the Koran are sufficient guides for social law and personal life. They also believe that all contemporary Muslim-majority countries have strayed from the true path of Islam and that the only way back is through violent jihad. Leaflets from JMB found at the spot after the 1 December 2005 suicide bomb explosion at the Gazipur Bar Council Building reveal the facts: ‘It is time to implement Islamic Law in Bangladesh’, ‘Bush and Blair be warned and get out of Muslim countries’.\(^{20}\)

Again, a militant who killed two judges on 14 November 2005 tossing a bomb in their microbus had tried to hand over leaflets to them demanding sharia-based rule and judiciary in Bangladesh. ‘Law framed by human beings cannot continue and only the laws of God will prevail’, the leaflets said.\(^{21}\)

The confession made to the intelligence agencies in 2005 by HUJI leader Mufti Abdul Hannan stated the fact: ‘Various bomb and grenade blasts including suicide attacks from time to time was aimed at only for capturing the power of the state and to establish an Islamic government within 10 years.’\(^{22}\)

In fact, the intimidatory threats were mainly directed at those not supporting the jihadi’s demand for the establishment of Islamic rule in accordance with the sharia.

THE MONEY-MINE OF THE SUICIDE TERRORISTS: FACTS BEHIND THE STORY

The ultimate question is: What is the main source of money of these terrorist groups? The commander of the military squad of JMB, Ataur Rahman Sani, confessed that the main source of money is the toll given by the members and supporters. *Zakat* and *fitr*, given as donation by Muslims in general as a religious ritual, and that of supporters were other sources of income. The Ahle Hadith movement was widespread all over the world and in the 1990s Bangladesh was chosen as its ground of activities. Thereby, the fund which already had 20 million taka [the currency of Bangladesh] was enriched by the money coming from various parts of the globe.\(^{23}\)

An investigation report on the northern part of the country shows
that the source of money of the JMB are the NGOs based in the Middle East which had intimate links with Al-Qaeda. The most vigilant of them is a Kuwait-based Islamic organization, Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), which has been blacklisted by the US State Department for its close association with Al-Qaeda. The other NGOs which were also identified as sources of money were Al Markajul Islami, Qatar Charitable Society, Welfare Association (based in the Middle East). By playing ideology, various Islamic organizations and banks were also active in raising funds. A police source informed that after the 29 November 2005 suicide attack, an investigation found bank accounts of the JMB in Islami Bank, and the Dhaka, Bogra and Jamalpur branches of the Al Arafa Islami Bank.

BEYOND THE LINE: OTHER SPECTRA OF THOUGHT

Whatever be the causes of suicide terrorism in Bangladesh, it remains a terrible reality. Though there was no suicide attack after 2005, the spectacular rise of Islamic militancy cannot be ignored. Every month, JMB activists are being arrested by law-enforcing agencies on charges of possession of arms, explosives and ammunition from different parts of the country. There are obvious reasons to be worried about future security threats and the potential of future suicide attacks in Bangladesh. Islamic militant groups, through wrong interpretation of Islamic principles, continue their activities to replace the existing political system and Islamic rule based on the sharia.

Radical Islamic activists who decide to become shaheed see themselves as fulfilling a divine command of protecting their religion from attack by the infidels. In many cases, the perpetrator was exposed to ongoing incitement (by his commanders and religious clerics directly or indirectly by video and audio cassettes, the media and through the Internet) that urges him to fulfil his religious obligation giving his life in defence of his religion. In that respect, committing a suicide attack is considered by the perpetrator and his entire community as an altruistic step for the religion and for Allah.
But concerning suicide, this act is manifestly forbidden by the most authoritative sources of Islamic law. These laws clearly forbid suicide even when the individual committing suicide is supposedly doing so for a good cause. The Koran clearly admonishes, ‘And do not kill yourself, for God is indeed merciful to you’ (4:29). Koranic interpreters explain that the verse and the lines on committing suicide are a direct negation of divine mercy. In another verse, the Koran states, ‘And do not throw yourself into destruction with your own hands’ (2:195). Interpreters explain that ‘throwing yourself into destruction with your own hands’ refers to committing suicide. The Hadith also states:

Whoever kills himself with a knife will be in hell forever, stabbing himself in the stomach; Whoever kills himself by drinking poison will eternally drink poison in the hell fire; And whoever kills himself by falling off a mountain will forever fall in the fire of hell (Muslim Sharif).

In the light of all this conclusive evidence, one must inevitably ask an obvious question: How is it possible for certain groups, which claim to be Islamic and even to represent Islam, to advocate both terrorism against the civil population and suicide terrorism? It is opined by noted Islamic scholars that this is just one of the fruits of a foul theory based on the distortion and falsification not only of these, but also of many other basic tenets of Islamic belief. Bangladesh must eliminate suicide terrorism.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 That was not the first ‘suicide’ bombing in the strict sense, as the attacker had not died during the attack. Still, this incident is included here as the suicide bomber was a member of a suicide squad and he had full acceptance of his getting killed during the attack, but survived incidentally. For the first time, the people of Bangladesh became familiar with suicide attacks through this incident.

3 Scanning with metal detectors was introduced then due to the serious security threat of suicide bombing to the judiciary by the JMB.


7 South Asians, op. cit., n. 5 above, p. 34.

8 Hoque, op. cit., n. 1 above, p. 10.

9 ‘Twin JMB’, op. cit., n. 4 above.


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.


17 Hossain, op. cit., n. 6 above, p. 49.


19 Hossain, op. cit., n. 6 above, p. 50.


23 Interview with Ataur Rahman Sani, ‘Amader Miting e Protimontri, Snaio Daroga Uposthit Thakto’ ('State Minister, Local Daroga of Police Used to be Present in our Meetings'), *Saptahik 2000*, 10 March 2006, p. 32.


25 Ibid., p. 62.


CHAPTER III

Suicide Terrorism in Sri Lanka: Past, Present and Future

We die for our land [Tamil Eelam]...It is death we welcome. It is our greatest honour.

—A Black Tiger

The LTTE had perfected the use of suicide bombers, invented the suicide belt, pioneered the use of women in suicide attacks, killed some 4,000 persons in the past two years alone and assassinated two world leaders—the only terrorist group to do so. Needless to say, the Tamil Tigers are among the most dangerous and deadly extremists in the world.

—FBI Report, 2008

Sri Lanka, once known as the Island of Paradise is now known as the island of protracted conflict, which has already taken around 70,000 lives, half of them civilians with the majority aged between 20–35 years and has left thousands permanently disabled. Subsequently, an estimated 130,000 families were internally displaced and about 750,000 fled the country and sought asylum abroad. At the same time, even the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) lost around 22,390 fighters since 1982 in its struggle to achieve eelam (a homeland). In 2008 itself around 2,239 LTTE fighters were killed while countering the Sri Lankan military. This trend intensified due to the ongoing military confrontation between the Government of Sri Lankan (GOSL) forces and the LTTE.

Interestingly, for more than two decades the LTTE was successful in sustaining its struggle against the GOSL through its military campaign. One of the prominent and intensifying trends it adopted was ‘suicide terrorism’, which proved to be one of the most
successful weapons against the Sri Lankan military. The LTTE’s suicide squad succeeded in achieving its mission to a certain extent, except on a few rare occasions when they failed, as in 1999 when President Chandrika Kumaratunga survived a suicide bomb attack while addressing an election rally in Colombo, though she did lose the sight of one eye; four police officials, three senior ministers and a foreign journalist were killed. This attack was carried out by a female bomber.

Sri Lanka is regarded as one of the countries which has witnessed a very large number of suicide attacks and has lost many leaders in a short span of time. The LTTE was the only terrorist outfit which conducted suicide operations in the island. It is said that the LTTE’s highly effective and extremely brutal suicide terrorism campaign surpassed the more publicized ones waged by groups in the Middle East like Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Al-Aqsa Brigade, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and so on. According to Manoj Joshi, until the US invasion in Iraq (March 2003), the LTTE carried out more suicide strikes than all the other groups, including Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups combined.5 Moreover, the LTTE is the only group to have assassinated two world leaders, from India and from Sri Lanka (Rajiv Gandhi and Ranasinghe Premadasa respectively), both assassinations having been carried out by suicide bombers. Thus, the LTTE were considered by terrorism analysts as the prime and most inexorable users of suicide terrorism in the world.

The suicide squad of the LTTE was popularly known as Karim Puligal (‘Black Tigers’) and were the most honoured members of the organization. It was considered the elite brigade and was the distinctive feature of the LTTE. The Black Tigers were the subdivision of the LTTE’s central governing committee.6 Unfortunately, even children were part of its suicide squad; however, when compared to women, children were used on a small scale for suicide operations. One of the notable examples was 29 May 1999, when a cycle-borne teenage suicide bomber successfully killed Muthulingam Ganeshkumar (Razeek), leader of an anti-LTTE vigilante group called the ‘Razeek Group’ on the Trincomalee road.7 Since then,
there were few incidents of children’s involvement in suicide squads, but they were active as child soldiers.

Generally, Black Tigers underwent years of training and brainwashing before they were engaged in such missions. They were supposed to be the most disciplined and ruthless of all LTTE cadres. Interestingly, the Black Tigers also carried glass capsules containing sodium or potassium cyanide around their necks, which they used to kill themselves and avoid capture. If they failed to carry out their mission, they would face a more painful form of death at the hands of the LTTE.

ORIGIN OF BLACK TIGERS

The origin of the Black Tigers can be traced back to 1987, when the Sri Lankan troops conducted large-scale operations to recover the Jaffna peninsula. In the process, the LTTE suffered a series of humiliating defeats. Hence, to salvage their pride and boost morale, the organization sought revenge by carrying out suicide attacks on the government forces. It was Wasanthan (the LTTE identified him as ‘Millar’) who conducted the first suicide attack on 5 July 1987, driving a truck full of explosives into an SLA camp, killing 16 soldiers and injuring 22. In recognition of his daring act, Millar was posthumously raised to the rank of Captain. The day was also marked as ‘Black Tigers Day’, when yellow and red flags of the LTTE were unfurled in the regions under their control to commemorate the first suicide bombing. The next suicide attack was carried out in March 1990 in Colombo, by a Black Tiger known as ‘Pork’, killing the Sri Lankan minister of defence. Interestingly, from July 1987 to March 1990, there was no case of suicide attack, indicating that the LTTE had not yet adopted this technique as an organizational idea. Rather, the main purpose of using this technique was to counter the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) and later the SLAF. Hence, from the 1990s, suicide attacks became a common phenomenon in the LTTE’s quest for eelam. Nevertheless, it was only in November 2002 on the occasion of ‘Heroes Day’, where for the first time the Black Tigers, with masked faces, were shown to the public.
Since 1987, the Black Tigers carried out more than 350 attacks and killed more than 2,000 persons. Most of the victims were civilians, security forces and even important political personalities such as: Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India (May 1991); Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka (May 1993); Gamini Dissanayake, Opposition leader (October 1994); Neelan Tiruchelvam, leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF, July 1999); and Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Foreign Affairs (August 2005). Many Members of Parliament (MPs) from the Tamil community were also victims of the Black Tigers, like Joseph Pararajasingham, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP, Batticaloa (December 2005); Nataraja Raviraj, TNA MP, Jaffna (August 2006); and so on. The Black Tigers also assassinated Army and Naval chiefs, mayors, and local political leaders consisting of Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims. They were successful in assassinating their enemies irrespective of their community and region.

They also led suicide attacks on economic, religious and strategic targets to erode public will, like on Sri Lanka’s Central Bank (January 1996), the World Trade Center (October 1997), the Temple of the Tooth (January 1998), and the Air Force base in Katunayake (July 2001). In the process of eliminating personalities and devastating government property, many innocent civilians too lost their lives. Apparently, only in a few instances did the LTTE use the Black Tigers to target civilians; more often, their targets were individuals and government infrastructure. Among these attacks, there were many notable instances of women suicide bombers, indicating the level of women’s participation in the LTTE’s struggle.

WOMEN’S SQUAD

One of the unique features of the LTTE was the women suicide bombers constituting one-third of the Black Tigers. It is stated that women participated in more than 30–40 per cent of the group’s overall suicide activities. In fact, they undertook suicide attacks more frequently than their male counterparts. Women began to figure in the organization only after 1983 and their unit came to
be known as the Suthantira Paravaigal Magalir Munnani (‘Women’s Front of Liberation Tigers’). The women’s suicide squad was known as Suthantira Paravaigal (‘Birds of Freedom’). This was propagated by Adele Balasingham, and normally comprised young girls aged between 14 and 16 years.\textsuperscript{13} The Sri Lankan media referred to them as ‘Black Tigresses’ or ‘Birds of Paradise’.

Generally, women bombers had more success than their male counterparts. The first successful attack was the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Another prominent attack was on 3 February 2008, when a woman bomber was successfully able to carry out an attack at Colombo Fort Railway Station, where 12 persons were killed and around 100 injured.\textsuperscript{14} One of the reasons for women being more effective for suicide missions is that they are not subjected to serious security checks, which made the task easier. As a result, the LTTE recruited harmless-looking female members posing as pregnant women to circumvent extreme security measures and approach their target safely.\textsuperscript{15} A notable example took place on 25 April 2006, when Army Commander Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka was critically injured, and at least 8 were killed and 27 injured when a female suicide bomber, disguised as a pregnant woman, blew herself up in front of the military hospital inside the Colombo Army Headquarters.\textsuperscript{16}

Apart from this, the layers of women’s clothing can easily conceal the bulky suicide belt, which is more conspicuous under a man’s shirt or trousers. Moreover, the participation of women boosts the morale of its female cadres, thereby enthusing more to join the group. Thus, the LTTE depended upon women, as it provided several advantages and it was relatively difficult to maintain a regular supply of male cadres due to the prolonged war and the continuous emigration of Sri Lankan Tamils. It was estimated that more than 6,000 women cadres were killed in the struggle for \textit{eelam}.\textsuperscript{17}

Generally, like men, the women Black Tigers also had to follow strict rules, like being forced to suppress their femininity and sexuality, which was regarded as a crime and an evil force that could weaken their strength. Marriage was not allowed for women cadres up to the age of 25 and for men up to the age of 28 years.\textsuperscript{18} This ensured committed and disciplined cadres, and also ensured
a regular supply of Black Tigers for suicide missions. Apart from women Black Tigers, the LTTE also had the Black Sea Tigers, which made them the only terrorist outfit in the world having a naval suicide squad.

BLACK SEA TIGERS

The LTTE’s military wing consisted of Sea Tigers, Black Tigers, Elite Fighting Wing, also known as the Charles Anthony Regiment, a highly secretive intelligence group. Among these, the Sea Tigers emerged as an important fighting force to counter the SLN. This was established in July 1992 under the command of Col Soosai. Sri Lankan and foreign intelligence agencies estimated the strength of the Sea Tigers to be around 3,000–5,000 cadres, which included seagoing units, onshore marine engineering and maintenance personnel, naval communication, intelligence cadres, commanders and Black Sea Tigers. However, the number of Sea Tigers declined due to the tsunami which struck the island in December 2004, killing over 1,000. Subsequently, due to the offensive attacks by the SLN and SLA, the number of Sea Tigers gradually reduced. The main headquarters of the Sea Tigers was Mullaitivu, as it was easy for them to dominate the eastern coast from Jaffna to Trincomalee and counter the supremacy of the SLN. Subsequently, Sea Tiger bases and facilities were also situated in and around the coasts of Mannar. It is alleged that the Sea Tigers enhanced their capabilities and acquired the latest equipment from several countries in Asia and Europe. As a result, to a certain extent, they were able to withstand attacks by the SLN. It is estimated that the Sea Tigers were successful in destroying around 30–50 per cent of SLN coastal craft.

The strength of the Sea Tigers was not just equipment or motivation; rather, it was the addition of the Black Sea Tigers. This suicide squad was inducted in the LTTE’s naval wing mainly to challenge the technical superiority of the SLN. Since then, the Black Sea Tigers adequately carried out most of their missions successfully in terms of destroying SLN ships, naval vessels and containers, and
also killed many SLN personnel. Perhaps, the Black Sea Tigers also carried cyanide around their necks.

The Black Sea Tigers used small boats packed with large quantities of explosives. Most of the attacks were carried out in darkness, by triggering off explosions and in the process obviously sacrificing their lives for the sake of achieving eelam. The first attack by a Black Sea Tiger was carried out on 10 July 1990 at Valvettitturai, which damaged the Sri Lankan ship Edithara. Since then, around 254 Black Sea Tigers laid down their lives in various sea operations, of which 76 were female commandos.22 Ironically, most of the female commandos always acted as deputy commander and did not lead any mission, in a way indicating the supremacy of the male commandos.

BLACK AIR TIGERS

The LTTE’s Air Tigers were also one of the important forces which had been attempting to overcome the air superiority of the SLAF. The air wing of the LTTE was known as ‘Tamil Eelam Air Force’ or Vaan Padai, which was formed by Col Shankar alias Vythialingam Sornalingam.23 Perhaps the LTTE started using their air wing only from March 2007. Most of the Air Tigers received flying training in the UK and France. Generally, the LTTE operated 3–5 Czech-made Zlin-143 single-propeller aircraft converted into bombers, which were not very effective against the SLAF, which is well-equipped with aircraft and weapons. Nevertheless, since their inception, they conducted around nine raids against economic and military targets in southern parts of Sri Lanka, including Colombo city and later in March 2009. During the raids, they dropped one or two bombs of small intensity, i.e. 250-pounders.24 One notable raid took place on 3 May 2007, when the Air Tigers carried out air raids dropping four bombs, three of which exploded in the Aeronautical Engineering Wing of the Air Base, killing 3 airmen and injuring 16 others.

Apparently, this wing also consisted of Black Air Tigers, but they were not deployed operationally. However, it is alleged that
the Black Air Tigers participated in an attack on Katunayake Air Base in July 2001. Moreover, in recent times, the Sri Lanka forces successfully captured the three airstrips of the LTTE, which was a setback for the LTTE’s Air Tigers and also for Black Air Tigers to strike at targets in southern Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the Black Air Tigers still posed a threat to the Sri Lankan military.

TRAINING

Once the LTTE high command identified the cadre/person for a suicide mission, he/she would receive the basic military training, before being trained by the intelligence wing. They were then separated from the ordinary cadres and were eligible for becoming Black Tigers. However, those who volunteered to become Black Tigers were required to demonstrate a higher level of skill, dedication, and motivation than ordinary LTTE cadres. Once they became Black Tigers, they had to sever all contacts with family and friends, to avoid any emotional attachment which would hinder the suicide mission when carried out.

The training, equipment and operation of the Back Tigers was different from the usual cadres. Generally, the intelligence wing conducted training for the Black Tigers either individually, or, on rare occasions, training was done in small groups at secret locations. Then, they would have to undergo six months of arduous training at a place known as ‘Red Garden’, deep in the Mullaitivu forest. Apart from physical training, the intelligence wing also equipped the Black Tigers with a comprehensive range of skills, like language (Sinhala/English), behaviour, and other skills necessary for the mission. At the end of the training camp, the Black Tiger would swear an oath of personal loyalty to their charismatic leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and hang a cyanide capsule around his neck. Finally, before carrying out the mission, Black Tigers got a chance to meet and dine with Prabhakaran, this being an encouragement to suicide bombers. Apparently, the Black Tigers had uniforms and accoutrements, which were rarely worn, except during training sessions. In operations, they wore clothes needed for the operation.
Thus, the Black Tigers underwent rigorous physical and mental training, which equipped them to carry out the mission successfully.

The training of Black Sea Tigers was considered to be much more tough than of the other Black Tigers. For example, once a person was recruited as a Sea Tiger, ‘both his arms are deep gashes, with the concertina wire he has to crawl under repeatedly’.26 Further, they were taught to be good swimmers and got trained as frogmen to enable them to stay underwater for a long time. Once all this training was done effectively, then the person was entitled to become a Black Sea Tiger. Hence, becoming a Black Sea Tiger required more skills than those of Black Tigers.

MODUS OPERANDI

The LTTE carried out two types of suicide attacks. In the battlefield, this was during the course of general combat both as an offensive and defensive technique, where two or more Black Tigers were involved in the operations. The other attack was off-battlefield, in non-combat areas where one or two Black Tigers were involved, like assassinating a political leader, military personnel or personalities like Rajiv Gandhi, Lakshman Kadirgamar, and so on. However, sometimes a group of Black Tigers did carry out attacks like the July 2001 attack on the Air Force base in Katunayake and the Bandaranaike International Airport. Here, a group of at least 20 suicide squad cadres wearing military uniforms and carrying shoulder-launched anti-tank weapons, mortars, T-56 rifles and RPGs carried out the attack. As a result, 8 military aircraft, including Kfir jets, 2 Mi-17 helicopters, 1 MiG-27 fighter, 3 Chinese K-8 trainer aircraft, and 6 Airbus passenger aircraft were destroyed.27 Around 13 LTTE cadres, 6 soldiers and an airport engineer were killed. Even the attack on the Temple of the Tooth Relic (January 1998) was carried out by a group of Black Tigers. Only on a few occasions did a group of Black Tigers carry out attacks in non-combat areas.

The tools for Black Tigers often were either individually-carried explosives or vehicles fitted with IEDs, where the driver activated the switch. According to Rohan Gunaratna, the Black Tigers used
six types of IEDs for their suicide missions, like the human-borne suicide IED, also known as a suicide body suit, which was equipped with explosives and two switches. One switch was for arming the device, and the other for triggering it. Vehicle-borne suicide IEDs, motorcycle-borne suicide IEDs, naval craft-borne suicide IEDs, scuba diver-borne suicide IEDs, and aerial-borne suicide IEDs were others.28

Apart from IEDs, another type was the ‘suicide shot’, which made use of steel ball bearings. On exploding, the ball bearings were shot out at a very high speed and destroyed whatever lay in their path. One of the most successful and reliable device was the belt-bomb, worn on the abdomen. This also used steel ball bearings.

MOTIVATING FACTORS

Generally, for any terrorist outfit the main source of recruitment is the suffering men/women of the affected region, who offer support to groups fighting for their rights and against political and economic oppression by the state. So in the case of the LTTE. Apart from capitalizing on the prevailing environment, the LTTE also played a vital role in motivating their cadres and innocent people to become Black Tigers. Some of the notable means adopted by the LTTE were as follows.

First, unlike the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iraq, where religion plays an important role in motivating suicide bombers, in the case of the LTTE the role of religion was limited. However, to a certain extent, the LTTE on occasion used the Hindu religion to motivate the Black Tigers, like connecting its ideology with judicious use of symbols rooted in Tamil myths such as the tiger and with one of the favourite Tamil gods, Murugan. They drew inspiration freely from various Tamil mythological events.

Second, the kind of cult hysteria that the LTTE consciously cultivated through rituals like Martyr’s Week; building of special cemeteries with granite tombstones over graves that hold no bodies; naming of weapons after Black Tigers; and promise of honour after death led to the prevalence of a vibrant cult of martyrdom in the.
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LTTE. Moreover, every year, 5 July was celebrated as Black Tigers’ Day, as in July 2008, on the eve of commemorating 21 years of the practice of suicide bombing, the LTTE organized a remembrance ceremony, where Prabhakaran and other members paid homage to 356 Black Tigers by lighting a lamp in front of the tombstone of every Black Tiger who had lost his or her life. Subsequently, the LTTE flag was hoisted and parents of Black Tigers were honoured. LTTE radio broadcast the brave deeds of the Black Tigers with their operational details, indicating the honour the Black Tigers got after their deaths. Perhaps for this reason only, when the SLA took over Jaffna in 1995 from the LTTE, they first bulldozed the cemetery which glorified the sacrifice of Black Tigers.

Third, the LTTE used two types of indoctrination for recruiting cadres who could become Black Tigers, depending upon their capabilities. One type was through education, attempting to convince the public about the importance of the cause and the means necessary, including suicide bombing, for its implementation. Subsequently, Prabhakaran motivated his cadres to take up suicide missions through speeches, like the following.

With perseverance and sacrifice, Tamil Eelam can be achieved in 100 years, but if we conduct Black Tiger operations, we can shorten the suffering of the people and achieve Tamil Eelam in (sic) shorter period of time. This is an era of Black Tigers. No force on earth today can suppress the fierce uprising of the Tamils who seek freedom.

The other type was mission-oriented persuasion of the person intended for suicide, i.e. before a Black Tiger set off on a mission, he was given an opportunity to dine with their leader Prabhakaran and be photographed with him, a rare opportunity for LTTE cadres. Thus, only Black Tigers got the opportunity to see and meet Prabhakaran, which is why Black Tigers were considered to be the elite brigade of the LTTE.

Fourth, the LTTE also used music albums to motivate their cadres, as in July 2008, it released six music albums glorifying the sacrifices of its cadres in general, and particularly by the Black Tigers. Subsequently, the LTTE regularly screened films of
their successful suicide bombing operations, which were shown to motivate their cadres to take up this Herculean task. It also recognized the achievements of brave cadres and honoured them by giving awards. For example, the Tiger Air Force (TAF) airmen who carried out five consecutive successful missions on Sri Lankan targets received the Neelap Puli Viruthu (‘Blue Tiger Award’). The air pilots who participated in three consecutive successful air attacks received the Thamizheezha Ma’ravar Viruthu (‘Warriors Award of Tamil Eelam’) by Prabhakaran. Thus, the LTTE had adopted various means to woo their cadres and people to become Black Tigers to achieve eelam. As a result of such motivation techniques, the LTTE were able to successfully sustain their struggle for more than two decades and ensure a regular supply of Black Tigers.

GUIDING FACTORS FOR BLACK TIGERS

Generally, when a particular mission was identified by the LTTE hierarchy, a suitable cadre or person was informed and requested to be ready to conduct a suicide mission. To be considered itself was to be honoured and there were no refusals, as the LTTE did not tolerate refusal to serve. More often, cadres expressed their wish to become a Black Tiger and after a process of ascertaining the suitability and capability of the person, the volunteer was shortlisted. Those who volunteered to be become suicide bombers were more often guided by rational choices. However, there were many other factors that came into play in the individual’s decision while becoming a suicide bomber. For instance, economic distress was an important guiding factor for the Black Tigers, as most had a low socio-economic status, which was a notable driving force. The LTTE contributed to improving not only their social status, but also that of their families by rewarding them and showering them with honours and praises. For example, a female suicide bomber revealed to the Sri Lankan police that the LTTE paid SLR 25,000 to her parents, who reportedly permitted her to join the organization to become Black Tiger.\textsuperscript{34} However, in the case of Islamic suicide bombers, the promised benefits include eternal life in paradise,
and permission to see the face of Allah. Apart from honour, the family also got monetary rewards. Indian sources also claim that the *fidayeen* in J&K were more often drawn to terrorist activities by financial incentives. In addition, many suicide bombers felt that due to their low socio-economic status, there was less hope for a better future and fewer options even after completing their schooling, hence it was better to become a Black Tiger and fight for *eelam*.

According to Mark Juergensmeyer, sociological and psychological aspects are also motivating factors. Those who were orphans or had no family or children were also known to have volunteered for suicide attacks. This can be a source of grave concern in violence-ridden societies like Sri Lanka, particularly in societies that are built around family units. In the given situation, orphan youth became Black Tigers, as it provided them with a home and extended kinship. Moreover, some of them were compelled to join this struggle due to different social factors and specially the political system in the country. For example, one Black Sea Tiger stated, ‘we wanted an alternative to this [Sinhala-dominated] system and the LTTE and Prabhakaran seemed to be that alternative’. Thus, the prevailing supportive environment from most of the (Tamil) community was carefully inculcated by the LTTE, and, as a result, social conditioning was one of the most important motivational forces for volunteers to become Black Tigers.

Revenge was an additional motivation for the Black Tigers as they often sought to avenge the death of family members, relatives or friends who were victims of operations carried out by the security forces. This was also one of the main motivating factors for women bombers, as most of them were victims of rape or had lost close family members. A notable example is of Dhanu, who became a suicide bomber because she was gang-raped by the IPKF, who had also killed her brothers. Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka, Tamil rape victims are socially prohibited from marriage and childbearing, thus providing fewer choices for the women to lead normal lives in society. Nevertheless, the sacrifice of suicide bombing by them was considered equal to motherhood. As a result, this act became
acceptable and was also one of the main reasons for young females to join the LTTE suicide squad.

Black Tigers also perceived their self-sacrifice as a way of legitimizing their cause to achieve the ultimate goal, *eelam*. Subsequently, in their ‘sacred’ fight for freedom, they viewed suicide and their own fanaticism as having a ‘positive value where martyrdom is a rational terminal decision demonstrating a worthy and ‘invincible cause’. For instance, a Black Sea Tiger stated that, ‘all cadres were devoted to Prabhakaran and believed that an independent Tamil *eelam* was the only answer to Tamil problems in Sri Lanka...’ Thus, achieving *eelam* was one of the main driving forces for the Black Tigers to sacrifice their lives.

Apart from fighting for *eelam*, there are enough reasons to believe that a sense of deep humiliation and a strong urge to regain their lost pride through a dignified act of sacrifice might also greatly motivate a suicide bomber. Moreover, those selected for suicide missions perceived it as an honour and privilege by being chosen from among many cadres.

This is unlike the Middle East or Chechnya, where the bombers are regarded as primarily suicidal or having serious health problems. Even the Sri Lankan military hypothesizes that the majority of Black Tigers were LTTE battle casualties who were seriously disabled or suffering from serious diseases. Although there were a few instances where suicide bombers suffering from illness took part in LTTE’s suicide missions, as on 28 November 2007 in Colombo, a polio-affected woman suicide bomber had attempted to target EPDP leader and Minister for Social Welfare Douglas Devananda. Excluding this, the LTTE commandos did not suffer from any diagnosable psychological disorder or cognitive impairments impeding effective problem-solving skills. Rather, they were eager to sacrifice their lives for the Tamil cause and accomplish the sacred mission in honour of their charismatic leader. Moreover, by taking up a suicide mission, they attempted to gain recognition in society of being ‘someone’, part of the ‘elite brigade’, which gave them an identity to be proud of. Thus, one can conclude that there was no single guiding factor, rather, many vital motivations working in
concert for suicide bombers.

Apparently, the Black Tigers had been the backbone of the LTTE and in the process enhanced the strength of the LTTE in sustaining their struggle. However, since the beginning of Eelam War IV in July 2006, the Black Tigers were at the receiving end, and with the Sri Lankan military successfully defeating the LTTE (May 2009), it seems to be the end of the road for the Black Tigers.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3 Approximately 66,000 are living in various camps in India, 40,000 live outside camps in India, and more than 200,000 live in Western countries: National Peace Council, The Cost of War: Challenges and Priorities for the Future, Colombo: Marga Institute, 2003, p. 4.

4 It was on 27 November 1982 that the LTTE lost their first fighter, Lt Sankar. Since then, 27 November was celebrated as Heroes’ Day: ‘LTTE Leaders Pay Homage on Heroes’ Day’, 27 November 2008: www.tamilnet.com/art.html


7 The child soldiers in the LTTE were popularly known as the ‘Baby Brigade’, and were commanded by Capt Justin in 1984. See ‘Suicide Attacks by LTTE’: www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/srilanka/database/data_suicide_killings.html


10 ‘Prominent Political Leaders Assassinated by the LTTE’: www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/srilanka/database/leaders_assassinated_byLTTE.html

11 The Sri Dalada Maligawa, Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy is a sacred place for Sinhala Buddhists and a cultural heritage site recognized by UNESCO. Around 16 persons were killed and extensive damage done to the building in the attack.


14 It was alleged by the officials that the female bomber intended to target the security forces personnel who were returning to their bases after rehearsals at the Galle Face Green: Sri Lanka Timeline, op. cit., n. 2 above.


16 ‘Suicide Attacks’, op. cit., n. 7 above.
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17 Gunawardena, Arjuna, ‘Female Black Tigers: A Different Breed of Cat?’, www.sel.isn.ch/serviceengine/file_content.html
19 Chalk, op. cit., n. 6 above.
21 Manoharan, N., ‘Tigers with Fins: Naval Wing of the LTTE’: www.ipcs.org/South_Asia_articles.html
22 Tamilnet, op. cit., n. 4 above.
23 Col Shankar was an aeronautical engineer with Air Canada, with an engineering degree in aeronautics from Hindustan Engineering College in Tamil Nadu. Shankar was the chief of the Air Tigers and was responsible for developing the air wing from its infancy until his assassination in December 2001: ‘Air Tigers’, Tamilnet, 27 March 2007, www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=21668
27 ‘Suicide Attacks’, op. cit., n. 7 above.
33 Tamilnet, op. cit., n. 4 above.
34 She is currently under detention by the Terrorist Investigation Division. Further investigation revealed that she had undergone one year’s training in Killinochchi as a suicide cadre and came to Colombo to carry out a mission against a VIP: Sri Lanka Timeline, op. cit., n. 2 above.
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39 The first female bomber was identified as Dhanu (aka Tanu), who assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, in 1991. Since then, Dhanu became a vital mythical force utilized for further recruitment by the LTTE: Cunningham, op. cit., n. 35 above, pp. 171–93.
40 Voorde, op. cit., n. 15 above, p. 188.
42 Swamy, op. cit., n. 26 above. For further details, see Lester, David, Bijou Yang and Mark Lindsay, ‘Suicide Bombers: Are Psychological Profiles Possible?’, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, vol. 27, 2004, pp. 283–95.
43 The woman suicide bomber blew herself up when physical checking was being done by the PRO. The blast critically injured the PRO, one ministerial aide and one officer of the Ministerial Security Division, who succumbed to his injuries later: ‘Suicide Attacks’, op. cit., n. 7 above.
44 Voorde, op. cit., n. 15 above, p. 189.
Tragic and violent suicide attacks seem to be the major national security challenges to Bangladesh since November 2005. The state structures and institutions have been significantly threatened and the people across the country terrorized by massive suicide attacks on important state establishments including courts, DC’s offices on the one hand and questioning the Constitution, the supreme law of the land, and the democratic system of the state on the other. Though that security threat in the form of suicide attacks was sudden and transient, the causal linkage is deep-rooted and has developed over time. Just after the suicide attacks in November 2005 which stunned the whole country, the government law-enforcing agencies pursued all possible measures to eliminate the threat of suicide attacks from the country. The initiatives of the law-enforcing agencies, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), CID and police earned much appreciation from all quarters. The RAB especially launched massive actions against the JMB, JMJB and HUJI-B to identify the key persons behind the suicide attacks. The RAB formed several special teams including intelligence groups. Finally, they succeeded in arresting all the Majlis-e-Shura (the highest executive body) members of the JMB and the chief leader of HUJI-B, Mufti Abdul Hannan. The police also arrested a large number of Islamic militants and seized huge quantities of arms, bombs, grenades, and essential materials used for making bombs from their sanctuaries. Ultimately, all the key persons of the JMB who were the main masterminds of suicide attacks in Bangladesh were executed as a result of a fair judicial trial in 2007. Though no such suicide attack took place
after 2005, the state forces must continue to be alert so that at any
time in the future larger security threats do not emerge.

In this chapter, the research highlights the measures adopted
by the GoB against suicide terrorism till date. It also suggests some
policy options and recommendations to curb suicide terrorism in
the country.

STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE SUICIDE TERRORISM

Banning

With the increased attacks on important political leaders, cultural
activists, NGOs’ offices and ordinary people by the JMB, JMJB and
HUJI-B, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia instructed the Home Ministry
and the intelligence agencies on 24 February 2005 to ‘root out’ suicide
attacks, their hideouts and subversive activities. The government also
proscribed the JMB and JMJB, accusing them of a large number of
bomb attacks and killing of general people in recent times. A press note
to the effect read:

The Government notices with concern that two organizations called Jagrata
Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh
(JMB) have been carrying out a series of murders, robberies, bomb attacks,
threats and various kinds of terrorist acts causing deaths to peace-loving people
and destruction of property. Under the circumstances, the Government of
Bangladesh has announced enforcement of ban on all activities of three (3)
extremist groups that are believed responsible for militant attacks: the Jamaat-
ul-Mujahedin, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam.3

Arrest

The strong drives of the law-enforcing agencies including the
RAB, police, and CID against suicide attacks succeeded in arresting
all the key persons behind the suicide attacks including all the
Majlis-e-Shura of JMB, regional commanders and the main leader
of HUJI-B, Mufti Abdul Hannan. On 2 March 2006, the 50-year
old JMB ‘supreme commander’, Abdur Rahman, surrendered and
was later arrested after a 34-hour siege on his East Shaplabagh
hideout in Sylhet city along with his wife, sons, daughters,
grandson, domestic help and some associates. Four days later, on 6 March, the JMB second-in-command, Siddiquil Islam alias Bangla Bhai, who was hiding in a tin shed in the remote Rampur village of Mymensingh, was wounded and captured after skirmishes with the RAB. On 25 April, Salahuddin, Majlis-e-Shura member of the JMB and ‘commander’ of the Sylhet-Mymensingh region, was arrested along with six of his associates from Halisahar in Chittagong. On the following day, on 26 April, another Shura member, Khaled Saifullah, who was the outfit’s ‘commander’ of the Rangpur-Dinajpur region, was arrested along with his wife, three children and brother from a rented house at Demra in Dhaka city. Prior to these high-profile arrests, three other Majlis-e-Shura members of the JMB had been arrested. They included Ataur Rahman Sani (arrested on 14 December 2005), Abdul Awal (arrested on 18 November 2005) and Rakib Hasan Russel alias Hafez Mohammad (arrested on 28 February 2006).

Execution of the Top Six Militants

With all the loopholes and shortcomings in judicial administration in Bangladesh, both the executive and judicial branches of the government employed their sincere efforts in accomplishing all essential steps including investigation, trial and execution to bring the masterminds of the suicide attacks to justice. The summary of the cases filed after suicide attacks in 2005 in Table 4.1 will help to better understand the attitude of the government agencies towards these cases of suicide attack.⁴
TABLE 4.1 SUICIDE ATTACKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Incident</th>
<th>Situation of the Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 November 2005, Jhalakathi</td>
<td>Mamun (a member of a suicide squad of JMB) was arrested in injured condition. Two cases were filed under the Explosive Substances Act 1908. A charge sheet was filed against eight persons: Mamun, Sultan Hossen Khan, Shayakh Abdur Rahman, Abdul Awal, Ataur Rahman Sani, Siddiquil Islam ‘Bangla Bhai’, Omar Molla, Mehebi. The case was sent to the Speedy Trial Tribunal. A charge sheet was submitted on 21 March 2006. On 30 May 2006, penalty of death was awarded to the following seven offenders: (1) Shayakh Abdur Rahman, (2) Bangla Bhai, (3) Ataur Rahman Sani, (4) Abdul Awal, (5) Masum, (6) Khalid, and (7) Saifullah. JMB confessed their involvement. The sentence of death was finalized on 30 March 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 November 2005, Gazipur and Chittagong</td>
<td>Two cases were filed on 3 December 2005.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 December 2005, Gazipur</td>
<td>Two cases were filed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 December 2005, Netrokona</td>
<td>On February 2008, a Speedy Trial Tribunal in Dhaka sentenced three JMB militants to death for a suicide bomb attack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ain O’Salish Kendra, Daily Star, Prothom Alo.

The additional district and sessions judge of Jhalakathi, Reza Tarik Ahmed, sentenced seven JMB militants on 29 May 2006, including the outfit’s ‘chief’, Abdur Rahman, his second-in-command Siddiquil Islam alias Bangla Bhai, who is also the ‘commander’ of the JMJB, to death for their involvement in the 14 November 2005 suicide attack that killed two judges in Jhalakathi. The others are the group’s Majlis-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sani, Abdul Awal and Khaled Saifullah, suicide bomber Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun (who was critically injured in the attack, but
survived) and Asad-ur-Rahman Arif, a member of the suicide squad who escaped from the scene, and remains at large.

The execution of the top JMB–JMJB leadership on 30 April 2007 was the high point of the government’s measures against suicide terrorism. In the early hours of that day, the outfit’s chief, Abdur Rahman, and second-in-command, Siddiquil Islam ‘Bangla Bhai’, Majlis-e-Shura members Abdul Awal, Khaled Saifullah, Ataur Rahman Sani, and suicide squad member Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun were hanged in different prisons. Earlier, on 4 March 2007, President Iajuddin Ahmed had rejected the mercy petitions of the six convicted leaders. As the leaders of the JMB were walked to the gallows, the curtain fell on the forces that had catapulted a small gang of Islamists to a level where it had dared to coordinate and execute all the devastating terrorist activities including suicide attacks across the country. Since the execution of the JMB leaders, most of its lower-level activists have been arrested from various parts of the country.5

Legislative Reform

In response to the recent rise of terrorism, including suicide attacks, the government initiated appropriate legislative reform. It updated the Anti-Money Laundering Ordinance through an official gazette on 15 April 2008 to restrict money transfer for the purpose of terrorism. The government enacted the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2006, and also amended the Bangladesh Telecommunication (Amendment) Act, 2006, in February 2006. In accordance with Section 97(a) of the Telecommunication (Amendment) Act, 2006, the intelligence agencies, any investigation authority or any officer of any law-enforcing agency are authorized to create impediment of any telecommunication or exchange of information and record it as well. The GoB also enacted the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance, 2008, on 11 June 2008 with a view to successfully combating gangs of suicide terrorists. The salient features of the ordinance are given below.

- Any person or group of persons is considered as committing terrorist activities who, by its destructive acts, frighten the public
and create confusion in government organizations and thereby compel them either to do or not to do anything which ultimately cause negative effects towards the territorial integrity, sovereignty, security and the political independence of the country. The persons engaged in such activities are to be punished with death or life imprisonment.

- Any person who murders or attempts to murder anyone by arms, explosives or any other chemically-composed materials is punishable with death. Any person assisting him is to be awarded imprisonment of 20 years.
- Any one who collects or assists in collecting funds for terrorist groups and wishes to use the money in such acts is to be punished with imprisonment for 20 years.
- Bangladesh Bank is given the authority for taking all adequate steps to detect the accounts alleged for supply and laundering of money to terrorist groups.
- Any person who is a member of any terrorist organization expressly banned by the government is to be punished with imprisonment for six months or with fine or with both. Anyone who publishes or distributes anything in support of those groups is punishable with imprisonment for not more than seven years or with fine or with both.
- One or more than one tribunal can be established according to law for the trial of offences relating to terrorism. However, a district judge or sessions judge can proceed with the trial until such a tribunal has been established. Appeal can be filed against any order of such judge within 30 days of the order.

DANGER OVER?

The political leadership in Bangladesh has repeatedly claimed to have ‘broken the back’ of Islamic militancy and potential of suicide attack through the arrests and execution of high-profile Islamic militants. But intelligence and newspaper reports continually warn the government to be alert and vigilant against future suicide attacks. Government efforts appear to have consisted of only occasional
raids on ‘militant dens’ leading to the recovery of explosives and ‘bomb-making material’. Moreover, whereas intelligence reports indicated that following the arrests of the top leadership, the JMB cadres were trying to regroup in the north and north-eastern regions of the country, the most recent arrests and raids have taken place largely in a few of the north and north-western districts. The JMB’s extensive network during the August 2005 countrywide attacks was known to have consisted of hundreds of thousands of cadres and sympathizers and a group of ‘2,000 suicide bombers’. A few arrests and raids are not expected to significantly dent the outfit’s strike capability. Further, there are even some indications that the official drives against the group have not had any impact on its lifeline: its financial networks and international linkages, specially those with foreign Islamic charities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Though apparently the administrative and judicial measures temporarily succeeded in curbing the suicide attacks, they are not adequate to root out the threat of suicide attacks completely from the country. As no security force in the world, no matter what weapons it has at its disposal, can prevent determined criminals from blowing themselves up, the best way to fight terrorism is to prevent the creation of suicide bombers. To root out the threat of suicide attacks entirely, it needs deeper research into it based on socio-economic and political study and adopt appropriate measures accordingly to eliminate all the contributing factors that generate suicide bombers. For combating suicide terrorism successfully, the GoB should immediately adopt effective counter-suicide terrorism strategies taking cognizance of the following factors.

**Coordination among Law-Enforcing Agencies**

Although the law-enforcement agencies (especially the RAB and police) during the last few years seem to have been much more active than before in combating suicide terrorism, but to meet the expectations, a long path yet remains to be traversed. In
this connection, close coordination among these agencies should
be increased by establishing an Inter-Agency Counterterrorism
Coordination Cell to monitor and coordinate their activities. To
improve coordination between the intelligence and law-enforcement
agencies and respond to suicide terrorism effectively, efficiently
and rapidly, Bangladesh has to adopt a national counterterrorism
strategy and a detailed action plan to combat radicalization and
recruitment of radical combatants. To reduce the possibility of
attacks in highly-populated areas and on critical infrastructure, it
is necessary to adopt multifaceted plans to maximize security. This
could be done by establishing Joint Surveillance Teams comprised
of personnel from the different law-enforcement agencies.

Effective Investigation and Prosecution Mechanisms

Lately, the continuing arrest of members of suicide groups shows
the positive attitude of the GoB in tackling threats of suicide attacks.
Along with taking action to thwart terrorist attacks, it is also essential
to bring the terrorists to justice through an effective prosecution
system. With this in mind, the government should immediately
give special attention to speed up the investigation, prosecution
and trial of cases relating to suicide bombings. Additionally, to
establish efficient administration of justice, it requires strengthening
of the domestic legal framework against terrorism in line with the
international legal framework through revision of the Anti-Terrorism
Act, updating of the Anti-Money Laundering Act, strengthening the
financial intelligence unit, augmenting the capacity of Bangladesh
Bank, and ensuring NGO accountability.

Reformation of Education System

Madrassa education has become an issue for profound blame as
a breeding ground for suicide terrorism in Bangladesh. A need for
modernization of madrassa education has long been felt. It should
be modified to keep up with the changing world. A new syllabus
and modern educational methods need to be introduced. Some
noted education experts suggest introduction of a unitary system of
education in Bangladesh.
Involvement of People, Civil Society and Media

So far, the success Bangladesh has achieved in the fight against suicide terrorism is only because people are strongly against all kinds of terrorism, specially suicide terrorism. But this aversion needs to be converted into active resistance through awareness campaigns and enlightened religious education in the public sphere, including places of worship. Consciousness, patriotism and moral values need to be raised among the citizens. They have to be enlightened by informing them of the negative effects of terrorism on the society. The mindset of people has to be made antagonistic to violence. Strong peace movements need to be created throughout the country. The media should be encouraged to play a constructive role in awareness campaigns by different programmes in combating suicide terrorism.

There is also an urgent need to educate the media regarding the importance of their responsibilities as the first responders to terrorist attacks. The media can be used and/or misused as part of psychological operations. Using the example of a suicide attack, the media will home in on the scene of the attack, broadcasting images of death and destruction. These pictures are the strongest weapons in the hands of terrorist organizations, as they show the results to the targeted population and play to the gallery of an international audience. Such activity is the real ‘bread and butter’ of terrorism, and deserves at least as much coverage as do terror attacks. However, this kind of coverage requires intensive investment, professionalism and journalistic expertise.9

Political Reform

The noted research findings show that like the other countries of South Asia, in Bangladesh the germ of violence is rooted in the overall structure of religion-based political parties. Political parties, whether in government or in opposition, must always be opposed to terrorist organizations. Perhaps, it would be the major step forward to destroy the roots of suicide terrorism.
Blocking the Process of Radicalization of Individuals and Groups

For an effective strategy to counter suicide terrorism, it is essential to prevent the elements that facilitate the process of radicalization of individuals and groups in Bangladesh. To prevent radicalization, it is important to find out the causes and address them. Radicalization often stems from grievances, a sense of injustice, exclusion or lack of opportunity, inequality and youth unemployment. It was found in our field visit and personal interviews that the leaders of the radical groups (e.g. JMB, HUJI) generally use religiously-indoctrinated fanatics who seek an early entry to paradise, and/or who seek large financial side-payments to their families as compensation for engaging in acts of self-destruction from suicide terrorism. Radicalization of individuals or groups needs to be tackled by addressing structural problems at the national level that may contribute to radicalization. Essential tools in preventing radicalization in Bangladesh are public-private partnerships and political consensus. Islamic organizations, imams, religious organizations or institutions should be brought into the terrorism discourse. They should be trained and designated as important actors in combating ideological fanaticism and restraining the process of radicalization in Bangladesh.

Preaching the True Teachings of Islam

The best way to turn altruistic suicide bombers who believe that what they are doing is sacred away from violence may be promotion of the sacred values of religion.10 When Bangladesh was undergoing a crisis of suicide terrorism, tens of thousands of demonstrators all over the country protested against the ‘anti-Islamic’ suicide bombings following an appeal by Maulana Obaidul Haq, the chief cleric of Bangladesh’s Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, to Muslims to protest against the suicide bombings. He denounced them as ‘against the basic tenets of Islam’. He told a Friday religious congregation in Dhaka on 9 December 2005: ‘Suicide bombers are Islam’s enemies. Islam prohibits suicide bombings. We have to be united to fight this evil force.’
International Cooperation and Mechanisms

The clear and present transnational profile of domestic and international terrorism demands greater international cooperation over a spectrum of activities, including suppressing and freezing terrorist financing, prohibiting Bangladeshi nationals at home and abroad from supporting terrorists financially, denying safe haven, and taking steps to prevent the movement of cross-border terrorists. These are all about international cooperation. But at regional level, the countries of Asia and of the South Asian region must unite to get rid of terrorism and not be the breeding ground of suicide terrorism. In the case of Bangladesh, cooperation among the SAARC countries would be best. In this regard, the foreign-policy experts of Bangladesh should monitor the situations of Pakistan and Sri Lanka which are frequently rocked by suicide attacks. However, appreciating the terrorist threat to Bangladesh, the GoB should also devise a counterterrorism strategy without delay to successfully tackle the problem of suicide terrorism in cooperation with global partners.¹¹

Last, but importantly, diagnosis of the overall problem of terrorism including suicide terrorism shows that the problem is deeply rooted in structural issues like poverty, youth unemployment, corruption, educational disparity, lack of democracy, and political instability. It is vital that improvement in these areas contribute positively to strongly curb all sorts of terrorism in Bangladesh. First, religious fanaticism must be nipped in the bud to prevent escalation. Further, good governance and socio-politico-economic reforms will help in uprooting all sorts of terrorism from the country. Policy formulation—and more importantly, policy implementation—is essential to eliminate terrorism. An orchestrated endeavour of all is essential.
SRI LANKA

There are no magic or immediate concrete solutions to counter the menace of suicide terrorism around the world. Simply, prevention is better than cure. Generally, many scholars have advocated different counter-strategies to combat suicide attacks. Most favour both offensive and defensive measures that may reduce the number and/or severity of attacks. In this regard, the GOSL had adopted both offensive and defensive measures to counter the Black Tigers and to a certain extent were successful in their mission.

OFFENSIVE MEASURES

From time to time, the Sri Lankan military had carried out offensive measures against the LTTE in general and the Black Tigers in particular, and were successful to a certain extent. Some of the offensive measures include military operations to destroy the physical infrastructure of the LTTE. Since July 2006, the GOSL had carried out many military operations in the LTTE-controlled areas, been successful in destroying the infrastructure and took over all the LTTE-controlled areas including the administrative capital, Killinochchi. During the course of these confrontations, the Sri Lanka military successfully killed some of the Black Tigers and their infrastructure through air raids, as in July 2008, the SLAF carried out an air raid and killed around 22 Black Tigers and even destroyed the Uddayarkattukulam LTTE camp in Mullaitivu, where the Black Tigers were undergoing training. Subsequently, in October 2008, the SLAF fighters had launched a precision air strike at the LTTE’s main female Black Tiger training facility at Rathnapuram, in Killinochchi. However, the LTTE denied this report. Thus, for the first time, the LTTE and even the Black Tigers were unable to withstand the offensive attacks of the Sri Lankan forces. Apart from this, during the war, the Black Sea Tigers, who were the reliable weapon of the LTTE, were not able to counter the attacks by the SLN. For instance, on 1 November 2008, the SLN’s Special Boat Squadron and Rapid Action Boat Squadron
Combating Suicide Terrorism: Strategies and Means

successfully countered and neutralized the four suicide boats of the Sea Tigers. In the process, 7 Black Sea Tigers were killed and 16 injured.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, due to these offensive measures the activities of the Black Tigers declined.

Another level of offensive measures successfully initiated by the GOSL was to cut off funds for the LTTE. Generally, the Tamil diaspora living in North America, Europe and India played a vital role in the emergence and build-up of the LTTE as a political and military force. The Tamil diaspora, which was the main source of the LTTE’s funding, later showed some restraint. This was due to the banning of the LTTE in most countries, such as the US, EU, Australia, India and so on. The LTTE was proscribed by more than 32 countries around the world (including Sri Lanka). This was the result of intense lobbying and campaigning by the GOSL in the international arena over the ill consequences and implication of LTTE activities, particularly of the Black Tigers, on the Sri Lankan society. Hence, the ban on the LTTE severely curtailed their means of procuring weapons and funds for their struggle. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan military had been able to procure weapons from Iran, China, Pakistan, Ukraine and private arms dealers, and were thus successful in countering the LTTE.

During the course of the military confrontation between the Sri Lankan forces and LTTE, the former carried out pre-emptive strikes designed to capture or kill important leaders of the LTTE, which was a serious setback for the LTTE’s struggle and for the Black Tigers. For example, in November 2007, the SLAF killed the senior Tamil Tiger S. P. Tamilselvan and five other important leaders in an aerial attack. Tamilselvan was the head of the LTTE’s political wing and the international face of the group. He was also involved in negotiations with the previous GOSL along with the LTTE’s then chief negotiator Anton Balasingham. Another notable example was the Special Task Force (STF) member killed, an area leader of the LTTE, Shankar, at Saukade in Batticaloa. He was responsible for all the terrorist activities that were carried out by the LTTE after the security forces liberated the Eastern Province.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, successive loss of important leaders hindered the LTTE’s strength and also affected
Understanding Suicide Terrorism in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

The security forces to a certain extent countered the Black Tigers through cordon-and-search operations, although they were not very successful, as the Black Tigers either committed suicide by taking cyanide or blew themselves up as a last resort to avoid capture. The SLA also undertook other measures like vigorous human and technical intelligence gathering to counter the LTTE. As a result of good intelligence reports, the GOSL was able to prevent fresh recruitment, often exaggerating the numbers of Black Tigers ‘in service’ in order to draw the attention of the international community to ban the LTTE. As a result of good intelligence gathering through contacts with individuals from the LTTE, the GOSL played a vital role in splitting the LTTE in April 2004. This was a major blow to the LTTE’s struggle—and even for the Black Tigers.

According to Audrey Kurth Cronin, the last of the offensive measures was related to efforts to reduce the potential recruitment ability of terrorist outfits, like policies that alter the political, cultural and socio-economic contexts, which perpetuate suicide attacks. In this regard, the GOSL adopted these measures, e.g. after taking control of the Eastern Province from the LTTE, it conducted the Eastern Provincial Council (EPC) elections in May 2008. As a result, the Eastern Province got a democratically-elected government led by Pillayan. Unfortunately, after that, the GOSL failed to implement any serious policies and programmes such as improving life, increasing social stability, providing opportunities for productive political expression, employment, education, and so on. Rather, in the Eastern Province, it was confronted with many challenges such as large-scale insecurity, and Chief Minister Pillayan and his cadres continuing to carry weapons, despite heading a democratic government. Disarming Pillayan and his group and also assimilating the TMVP into the democratic mainstream was a major challenge for the GOSL; reconstruction of the war-torn East and rehabilitation of the displaced persons were the other serious issues confronting the GOSL and Pillayan Administration. Thus, due to the prevailing insecurity and political bickering, the
Rajapakse Government had a difficult task in bringing peace and stability in the Eastern Province and in meeting the aspirations of the people. The Rajapakse Government should attempt to resolve these problems at the earliest.

DEFENSIVE MEASURES

Apart from offensive measures, defensive measures are also important for preventing the perpetrators from physically getting at the target. In this regard, the GOSL had initiated various defensive measures such as physical barriers for security screening at strategic and symbolic targets, particularly in Colombo, Kandy and other southern parts of the island. Despite tight security, the Black Tigers had penetrated some of the highly-guarded security checkpoints. For example, in 1999, President Chandrika Kumaratunga was attacked by a Black Tiger who was able to penetrate a screen of over 1,000 presidential security, police and military personnel to approach and detonate the explosive jacket within 50 feet of the target. Thus, military barriers and checkpoints were not able to counter the attacks of the Black Tigers.

The GOSL learnt about the relative success of creating ‘zones’ by Israel to prevent the Palestinian suicide bombers entering Israeli territory. The GOSL used the same strategy to combat the Black Tigers through setting up ‘prohibited zones’ and ‘surveillance zones’ at the coast and territorial waters of the north-east region to prevent the LTTE from procuring weapons and other supplies through the sea from their international network. The ‘security zones’ and ‘high-security zones’ were demarcated on land, mainly to prevent the LTTE from carrying out attacks on the Sri Lankan forces and also prevent the Black Tigers from reaching their targets. The Sri Lankan security forces also asked the public to respond calmly in the face of an attack, which in a way reduces the potential attractiveness of the attack in advance.

Another and more viable solution to tackle suicide bombing lies at the psychological and cultural levels. According to Scott Atran, an anthropologist and psychologist, suicide bombers are not crazed
cowards who thrive in poverty and ignorance. According to him, there is no special psychopathology of human bombers.\textsuperscript{19} Other analyses, however, have pointed out that a key motivating factor for a bomber is the enhanced social prestige of ‘martyrdom’. This is true in the case of the LTTE, who evolved an elaborate cult of martyrdom by honouring and providing financial support to the families of the suicide bombers. To tackle the Black Tigers, the GOSL should have tried to counter and dilute the mass psychopathology that glorifies ‘suicide warfare’.

**EELAM WAR IV: THE END OF THE LTTE**

The LTTE and the Sri Lankan military fought many battles in which both experienced success and failure for short periods. However, Eelam War IV ensured victory for the Sri Lankan military, as it was fully backed by the government, which ensured maximum morale, political and financial support. As a result, all the top leadership of the LTTE, including the chief Prabhakaran, have being physically eliminated; most of their cadres are dead; some have surrendered and the remaining are scattered. Most of the infrastructure of the LTTE has been destroyed, including the training camps for Black Tigers. Moreover, now the entire Northern and Eastern Provinces are under government control. This war was a big blow to the LTTE’s struggle.

**POST-WAR CHALLENGES**

The Rajapakse Government has successfully defeated the LTTE. However, this does not mean the end of conflict: rather, it is the beginning of another phase of conflict in which the government is confronted with many challenges. First, the ‘war for peace’ caused large-scale civilian casualties and displacement. Most people from Killinochchi and Mullaitivu have been displaced and as of now there more than 2.8 lakh [10 lakh equal 1 million] Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka, currently housed in 29 temporary camps in the districts of Vavuniya, Mannar and Jaffna.\textsuperscript{20} Most are
put up in temporary welfare centres or camps, erected hurriedly to house the fleeing civilians from the rebel-controlled areas at the borders of the conflict zone. The 100,000 people who were displaced during 2008 are still lodged in welfare camps in Vavuniya and other places and leading miserable lives without proper resettlement or relocation. Ensuring their safety and providing them basic amenities is the biggest challenge.

Second, with the military victory, President Rajapakse is now confronted with the challenge of evolving an amicable solution to the Tamil issue. India and the international community have been insisting that Rajapakse work towards a politically-negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of the Sri Lankan society, but within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka. In this regard, the Rajapakse Government has assured India and the international community that they would implement the 13th Amendment, recommended by the APRC, at the earliest. However, implementation of the 13th Amendment would be a difficult task, since the main political parties such as the UNP, JVP, SLMC and TNA were not part of the APRC deliberations. Hence, without the consent of these parties, implementation of the APRC recommendations would be difficult. At the same time, for any successful resolution of the ethnic crisis, ‘southern consensus’ is important, i.e. consent of the Buddhist Sangha, which is an influential organization in Sri Lankan society. Finding an amicable political solution with the involvement of all the stakeholders would be a challenging task for the Rajapakse Government.

With the electoral victory in the Eastern Province, President Rajapakse had promised to implement the 13th Amendment in both letter and spirit. Ironically, even after one year, the police power has been devolved in the Eastern Province. Thus, India, the international community and the Tamil diaspora would closely watch President Rajapakse’s steps towards finding a lasting solution.

The defeat of the LTTE has not necessarily resolved conflict; rather, it has created an opportunity for the Rajapakse Government to genuinely address the legitimate grievances and aspirations of the Tamils. If Rajapakse fails to capitalize on the opportunity, there are
chances of the LTTE’s re-emergence either in the present form or in some other form, where once again suicide terrorism will continue to create havoc in Sri Lanka.
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2 Specialized elite force in the police.


5 Ibid., pp. 63–73.


8 Ibid.


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CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Suicide attack, though not a new phenomenon, is the most virulent and horrifying form of terrorism that endangers the safety of the world today. It is the most dangerous modus operandi of modern terrorism which is a new development in the long history of martyrdom. Suicide attack has overturned the traditional concepts of terrorist attacks. When a suicide attack occurs in any country, it seems to be a slap not only to the state structure of that particular country, but also to humanity and civilization of the world community at large. A conclusion can also be drawn that after a successful suicide attack a suicide bomber not only obliterates the lives of many people, but also insults the value of his own life and ultimately degrades his own position as a human being.

In recent times, five major countries in the South Asian region have witnessed more suicide attacks than anywhere else in the world, apart from Iraq. The rate of suicide attacks has increased significantly, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The emerging trend has further threatened the security situation of this volatile region. The Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008 at the Taj Mahal Hotel, Hotel Oberoi, Chabad House and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus left more than 200 killed and hundreds injured and is the most recent significant suicide attack (apart from the frequent attacks in J&K in the post-Kargil era).

Sri Lanka had been witnessing suicide attacks by the LTTE ever since their first attack in 1987. The LTTE was one of the few groups in the world along with Hezbollah, Hamas and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey to have an elite suicide squad, known as Karumpuligal (Black Tigers). They are the only group which succeeded in assassinating two former prime ministers, Rajiv Gandhi and Ranasinghe Premadasa. The mission of a Black Tiger is to give up his or her life, which ensures elite status for them within
the LTTE and makes other cadres aspire for that status. The success rate of the Black Tigers made them very popular. In most cases, except on a couple of rare occasions, the Black Tigers succeeded in achieving their missions. The presence of women cadres in the Black Tigers is a distinct phenomenon; nearly one-third of the Black Tigers were women. The presence of women in the suicide squads asserted the gender equality that the LTTE preached. As for motivation, to a certain extent the LTTE cadres were not influenced by ideology. There were a number of other Tamil militant groups which had a Marxist ideology, and even the LTTE, initially, did have a socialist framework; this can be seen from the work of Anton Balasingham, *Socialist Tamil Eelam*. But, at a later stage, Prabhakaran gave up this ideological orientation. The Black Tigers mostly motivated their cadres by their action and sacrifice.

From time to time, the GOSL adopted offensive measures like carrying out military operations to destroy the physical infrastructure of the LTTE; pre-emptive strikes on prominent LTTE leaders; a successful campaign at the international level to ban the LTTE, as a result of which the LTTE’s means of procuring weapons and funds were severely curtailed; vigorous human and technical intelligence gathering to counter the LTTE; and so on. At the same time, the GOSL also opted for defensive measures to combat the Black Tigers, such as setting up physical barriers like roadblocks for security screening at strategic and symbolic targets; creating prohibited and high-security zones; and also through educating its citizens about their responsibility to avoid the menace of suicide attacks. As a result of these offensive and defensive measures, the Sri Lankan military could reduce the number and/or severity of attacks. Nevertheless, the Black Tigers remained the most reliable and potent weapon of the LTTE to sustain their struggle.

Since July 2006, the Sri Lanka military gained an upper hand over the LTTE in the military confrontation with them. The LTTE was on the decline with the fall of Killinochchi, their main administrative and political capital, to the Sri Lankan military on 2 January 2009. Although as of now the LTTE, having been defeated militarily, also affected the Black Tigers. However, this does not
mean that attacks by the Black Tigers would come to an end. For example, the day the Sri Lankan military captured Killinochchi, there was a suicide attack carried out by a suspected female Black Tiger outside the headquarters of the SLAF in the heart of Colombo, killing 2 and injuring 30. This indicates that, despite the decline of the LTTE, its Black Tigers could continue to create havoc for the GOSL. Thus, for the time being, it is the end of the LTTE. However, if the Rajapakse Government fails to address the humanitarian crisis and find an acceptable political solution to the Tamil issue, then the LTTE in some other form will wait for the right opportunity to bounce back by resorting to guerrilla tactics and suicide attacks against the Sri Lankan military to achieve eelam.

Bangladesh, though in no way having a long history of suicide attacks like Sri Lanka, has been facing severe security threats, which are national in character, from Islamic militants in recent years. There were several brutal suicide attacks in 2005 by the Islamic militant groups JMB and HUJI-B, killing 20 people including 2 judges and injuring many. However, the JMB’s effectiveness and capacity to strike has indeed declined after the execution of most of the masterminds and members of their Majlis-e-Shura as the outcome of the verdict of a fair judicial trial. Nevertheless, the pervasive and self-destructive belief of religious martyrdom continues to hold a magical spell in the Muslim youths of the (so-called moderate Muslim) country. The recent radical deviation by a section of the more moderate people seems to find fertile grounds in Muslim populations or communities with politico-social scenarios of discrimination, poverty or social oppression, giving rise to both individual and communal grievances that can then be easily exploited by terrorist groups. In the field visit of the current study, it was revealed that the problem of militancy is rooted in structural issues like poverty, youth unemployment, corruption, educational disparity, lack of democracy, and political instability. Therefore, it is understandable that improvement in these areas will contribute positively to curb militancy in Bangladesh. Otherwise, this is likely to continue, if Bangladesh does not remain vigilant in monitoring the activities of its non-state religious organizations. Realistically,
all these problems cannot be addressed adequately simultaneously. As terrorism is an immediate threat for the nation, it is essential to find out some concrete solutions for this problem. Appreciating the problem, the government is active in devising a strategy to combat terrorism externally and internally in cooperation with global partners. The Counter-Terrorism Bureau has already set forth a counterterrorism strategy that covers all the relevant aspects of modern terrorism taking into account the experience of global partners in action, expert groups, its own strategies and policies envisaged. Now, the challenge is how to sustain this spirit and commitment. One major step forward would be that all the major political parties should express a zero tolerance attitude to militancy, whether they come to power or not. It is important because analysis shows that for militancy to get a strong hold, political support of influential political personalities or parties is necessary. If this is denied, they will not be able to become strong.

The fundamental characteristics of suicide attack and its strong attraction for the terrorist organizations behind it are universal: suicide bombings are inexpensive and effective. They are less complicated and compromising than other kinds of terrorist operations. They guarantee media coverage. That is why the suicide terrorist is the ultimate smart bomb. Perhaps most important, coldly efficient bombings tear at the fabric of trust that holds societies together. Undoubtedly, all these reasons are accountable for the spread of worldwide suicide terrorism, and also cover the situations prevailing in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

However, apart from that, we found certain subtle differences that made us think differently. While these attacks have much in common for the fact that suicide attacks ‘simply work’, their dissimilarities are significant. Thereby, the main differences are as follows.

First, they differ in their objectives. While suicide attacks led by the LTTE are nationalistic and secular, the objectives behind attacks led by various jihadi organizations in Bangladesh are religious. While the Black Tigers of the LTTE gave up their lives to establish eelam, an independent Tamil homeland, the jihadis do likewise to change
the state structure, i.e. to establish an Islamic nation on the basis of an Islamic constitution based on the Koran and sunnah where sharia law would take preference over all manmade laws. Moreover, the jihadis fight for a particular stream of Islam, especially the Wahabi–Sunni faith. Obviously, the motivation comes from the influence of orthodox doctrines prevalent in other parts of the world.

The second dissimilarity is of the targets of the suicide bombers. The principal targets of the LTTE were always political and military leaders; killing of the innocent was perceived as collateral damage. Generally, the mandate for the Black Tiger was always a single person, a political or military leader who had enmity with the LTTE. The list of LTTE suicide attacks reveals that they never used their Black Tigers against innocent bystanders: elimination of the target had a special focus and significance for the LTTE. Conversely, the victims of jihadi suicide attacks in Bangladesh are mostly people associated with the administration of justice, secular political leaders and members of secular cultural organizations. The four incidents of suicide attacks reported in this study reveal that one attack was against a vehicle carrying judges where 2 judges were killed, 2 were in the court premises of Chittagong and Gazipur, one was near the DC’s office at Gazipur, and one was against a secular cultural programme.

The third major difference relates to the organizational cohesiveness of the suicide bombers. In the case of Sri Lanka, the suicide bombers belonged to a single organization, the LTTE, particularly to a specialized unit called the Black Tigers. The suicide squad was part of the LTTE’s military command and executed the orders of the leadership. Jihadi suicide terrorists in Bangladesh, on the other hand, are not part of any single organization, much less part of any specialized squads, and are scattered among different outfits including the JMB, JMJB and HUJI. Despite their common religious orientation, they lack cohesiveness because of their distinct and diverse interpretations of the religion. Thereby, suicide attack in Bangladesh is more or less closely associated with misinterpretation of religion, but in Sri Lanka this factor had little importance. That means that the causes of suicide terrorism in Sri Lanka were clearly identifiable (and, thereby, negotiable), but it is not so in the case of Bangladesh.

A study of the composition of suicide squads highlights the fourth dissimilarity. Women constituted one-third of the LTTE’s
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suicide squad. In contrast, women’s participation in Islamic militant organizations is almost non-existent, which also uncovers a corollary to the dissimilarity of the society these organizations wish to establish. The LTTE cadres, irrespective of their sex, dreamt of a Tamil homeland that would be egalitarian, with equal rights for women. This is manifest in the ferocity and determination with which the cadres, including the Black Tigers, fought towards realization of their dream. On the other hand, exclusion of women from jihad, in effect, construes jihad as a male fight for a male-dominated society.

Fifth, the opinion that outfits harbour towards Western culture and ethos is yet another discerning factor that differentiates the Black Tigers from the jihadis. The LTTE held nothing against Western culture, and, in fact, shared the secular and egalitarian values of the West. Their struggle was against the Sri Lankan (Sinhala) state for a separate homeland, and not against Sinhalese culture and religion. To that extent, suicide attacks were not directed against the Sinhala community as such, but against the Sinhala-Buddhist authority. Jihadi suicide attacks, in contrast, reveal an inherent animosity towards Western-based legal systems, constitutions, culture and ethos. Anti-West (particularly Anti-American) sentiments predominate the motives behind jihadi suicide attacks. In the leaflet found on the scenes of attacks and recovered during arrests of Islamic militants, they declared jihad against all taguti (manmade) laws, legal systems and culture.

Finally, the problem of suicide attack in Sri Lanka has been consistent, having a long historical background. On the contrary, Bangladesh witnessed the brutality of suicide attack only in 2005. Though Islamic militants are still being caught by law-enforcing agencies with leaflets, jihadi books, grenades and other materials for preparing bombs, there has been no incident of suicide attack after 2006.

To conclude, counterterrorism should not be viewed as merely a legal, intelligence, or military solution to the problem in isolation, as the battle will ultimately be won or lost in the arena of ideas so long as men and women are attracted to ideologies
that are uncompromising, intolerant and radical. A steady stream of recruits will continue to replenish the ranks of those that have been apprehended and sought the ultimate sacrifice in martyrdom. Trends show that it is not possible to combat terrorism with a long-lasting effect without preventing, isolating or curbing the process of radicalization. Awareness campaigns in the sensitive areas and addressing the disparity in the education system are essential. A holistic approach can be taken where the government, civil society and media work together to solve the problem of suicide terrorism. Last, the final supposition is that whatever may be the demands of suicide bombers, it must be expected from all that the means of achieving their goals must always be peaceful instead of destructive. Both in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the causes may be political, psychological, economic, sociological, religious or merely personal, or lie somewhere beyond the imagination. This reality has to be faced boldly and war declared against suicide attacks. As members of human society, we must do our best not to leave this wonderful planet in the hands of perverted terrorist groups to convert this into a wilderness. We must remember the fact that it is a struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, a struggle for existence.
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3 The Government of Bangladesh and the civil society like to label Bangladesh a ‘moderate Muslim country’.


5 It is inspiring that the Awami League political party which promised to curb militancy in their election manifesto has come into power in the December 2008 national election. The party chief Sheikh Hasina reaffirmed the vow in the first press conference after victory.


7 Amin, op. cit., n. 3 above.
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