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Eli Berman and David Laitin

The three books under review reflect a radically altered agenda in social science, affected by the attacks of September 11, 2001, in which international terrorism in general and suicide missions in particular are "hot" topics. But because (sadly) new cases are recorded daily, the analyses in these books must be considered exploratory.

In this essay, we address fundamental issues raised in the emerging research program to which these books contribute. In part supported by the books under review, we argue: 1) Suicide missions do not rely on psychotic attackers imbued by crazed ideologies, but rather on altruistic communitarians. 2) Insurgent groups employ suicide missions as a tactical move in asymmetric warfare both against the state and against opposing factions. 3) Popular sensibilities among constituencies that insurgents purport to represent may restrain organizations from employing suicide attacks, but this remains a conjecture. 4) Successful suicide attacks require the policing of defection, an organizational skill few insurgent groups can acquire. 5) Popularly held links between suicide missions and Muslim theology cannot be sustained, but radical religious groups that demand personal sacrifice have distinctive capacities enabling them to sustain suicide campaigns. 6) Suicide attacks are best understood as a tactical evolution in an "ecological theory of rebellion." We conclude that 7) counterinsurgency ought to be designed as a "best response" to the tactical considerations that induce organizations to employ suicide attacks.

1. Psychological and sociological perspectives

The psychological and sociological evidence in the wider literature on terrorism grounds the common perspective developed in the three books under review—namely, that suicide missions are not signs of madness or psychological deficiency.[1] Indeed, suicide terrorists have a strategic advantage in portraying themselves as fanatical, "because they want their potential victims to believe that there is nothing that can be done against such an adversary" and that they are acting out of pure desperation (Bloom 2005, 89). Thus, any evidence that attackers appear to be crazed by religious enthusiasm is an essential part of the terrorist package, rather than evidence of the terrorists' mental states.

Not psychology but rather sociology provides the answer in these works to the question of why anyone would volunteer for certain death. The authors are particularly drawn

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to Emile Durkheim's concept of "altruistic suicide." Jon Elster writes:

> The willingness to lay down one's life for a cause depends on the strength of one's conviction. Nobody will or should think it a serious puzzle why people sometimes volunteer for war service, or lie about their age and disabilities to get into a situation that is quite likely to get them killed. To obtain or defend a national homeland is a cause that may seem as compelling as was the defense of democracy in the struggle against Hitler (In Gambetta 2005, 239).

Robert Pape concurs:

> Suicide terrorist organizations are bound to their societies by virtue of pursuing political goals viewed as legitimate by the society at large, by their participation in local charities and other institutions that benefit society, and by the use of elaborate ceremonies and other rituals that identify the death of a suicide attacker with the good of the community. These close social bonds . . . create the conditions under which individuals who wish to sacrifice for their community can be confident that their self-sacrifice will be viewed as altruistic (2005, 185, 187–88, 193).

According to Pape, such sacrificial actions are different from what Durkheim called egoistic or anomic suicide. Because suicide attackers are communalist rather than psychotic, we will not learn much about their gruesome acts through the study of deviance.

2. Tactical conditions favoring suicide missions

The three books outline conditions favoring the tactical use of suicide missions. Each condition captures a small part of reality; we lack a general model showing when a suicide mission is an optimal tactic. Favorable conditions depend on whether the strategic target is the state (or its allies) or other rebel factions.

Fighting the state. When Conditions Disfavor Insurgency: Suicide attacks are more likely to be chosen under conditions of asymmetric warfare when conditions disfavor standard insurgency tactics (Berman and Laitin 2005). The military missions of insurgencies typically involve hiding in the mountains and surviving off an intimidated peasantry. Yet in countries where land is flat, militaries are strong, and infrastructure is thick, these tactics are hard to pursue. Rebels will therefore pursue other forms of violent resistance (Crenshaw 1990). Suicide attacks are favored when targets are "hard," that is, effectively enough protected that their destruction makes capture or death likely for attackers. They are not used in African insurgencies where states are too weak to protect targets; in Israel, they are far more likely inside the Green Line than in the West Bank and Gaza, where targets are less effectively protected. These three books contain evidence supporting this "hard target" explanation for the tactical choice of suicide attacks.

Stephen Hopgood, for example (in Gambetta, pp. 50–53), demonstrates that in the Tamil war against the Sri Lankan state, the tactical evolution of the Tamil Tigers from standard insurgency tactics—for example, ambushes of Sri Lankan army convoys—to Black Tiger suicide missions was in response to changed conditions that strengthened the Sri Lankan army. Similarly, Mia Bloom (pp. 39, 83) points out that suicide terror usually comes in the second stage of a struggle (Intifada II rather than Intifada I; Chechnya II rather than Chechnya I) because it is a tactic that is deployed after more traditional tactics have failed, after rebels face the hardness of enemy targets.

When Insurgents Do Not Seek to Govern Target Populations: In fighting the state, rebels rely on suicide attacks in separatist wars more than in wars to gain control over the political center. Bloom suggests the reason is that rebel organizations need to worry about the backlash effects of killing people in communities that they hope some day to govern. Most suicide attacks kill indiscriminately. Indeed, it is this randomness that provides the shock and awe that suicide organizations seek to engender in the target population. Visions of mutilated children reveal an unimaginable callousness to the community of the victims. Dehumanizing callousness is not the image organizations wish to have in populations they seek to represent.[2]

There are, however, anomalies. In November 2003, Al Qaeda sponsored bombings on a Riyadh housing estate, killing innocent Muslims. This was not a war of secession and the targets included the population that an Al Qaeda–supported state would hope to govern. But the fact that Al Qaeda lost prestige on the "street" for this bombing makes it an exception that helps sustain the rule. Similar anomalies include the 2005 suicide attacks on hotels in Amman, Jordan, and intra-Iraqi suicide killings as part of the anti-American insurgency. Furthermore, guerrilla armies universally attack civilians living in communities over which they hope to govern. But these attacks focus on supposed collaborators and are "selective" (Kalyvas 2006). Indiscriminate killing of civilians by insurgents through suicide attacks is therefore unusual even in guerrilla warfare, especially when insurgents seek to capture power in the political center. Thus, Bloom has a point: Alienating the very people you hope to govern through the use of suicide attacks is a poor strategy.

The logic of compellence. Rebel organizations use suicide attacks to compel states to change their policies. Pape's claim about the compellent logic of suicide attacks is that it works. Of the 13 suicide campaigns between 1980 and 2003 that Pape identifies, seven were followed by policy changes by the target state that the terrorists could claim as victories. In six cases, there were no noticeable concessions. However, he reckons, with a 50% success ratio, rebels around the world "learned" that this was an

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effective tactic, and they therefore sought to emulate it (pp. 64–66).

Beyond forcing concessions, Pape infers that suicide attacks compel because they are destructive. Of the 315 incidents in his data set (not counting 9/11), the average number killed is 12. In that same period for all terrorist incidents worldwide, the average is 1.3, almost an order of magnitude fewer.

Fighting internal rivals. Suicide missions can be modeled as a game between rebel moderates and radicals where a strategic logic accounts for the timing of the attacks (Kydd and Walter 2002). When moderates begin to sue for peace, Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter reason, radicals can drive the negotiators representing the state away from the table through spectacular attacks on civilians. For example, Hamas's suicide attacks before the 1996 Israeli elections undermined Labor's claim for the success of the Oslo peace process. Israeli voters, influenced by the terror, abandoned hope in peace through negotiations and voted to bring the anti-Oslo Likud Party into power. Thus, the bombings reduced the chances of an Israeli settlement with the Palestinian Authority.

Bloom (p. 22) disputes this as a general model as it cannot explain several other Israeli responses to suicide campaigns. For example, Palestinian bombings in 1995 did not undermine negotiations when Yitzhak Rabin was prime minister. Also, there were several episodes of suicide violence before Ehud Barak, considered a dove willing to negotiate, was elected in 1999. These attacks did not prevent his election nor forestall his negotiations. This model also cannot explain the continued Palestinian attacks of March 2002, even when there were no talks to disrupt, and no one (at least, at that time) took seriously the Road Map being offered by President George W. Bush.[3]

Despite a host of anomalies, the basic intuition that the choice of suicide missions is the result of a game between moderates and radicals within the insurgent camp is a powerful one, and has led to a variety of alternative conjectures. Bloom postulates a divided insurgency, with each faction seeking to establish its bona fides to the population that all the insurgent operations claim to represent. One way of establishing bona fides is to "outbid" other factions through reliance on ever more radical strategies. Bloom generalizes that the greater the competition among insurgent groups, the greater the pressure for spectacular attacks that demonstrate heroism.

In support of her argument, Bloom interprets the initiation of suicide attacks by the Palestinian Authority as a tactic to regain its radical mantle. After the beginning of the Intifada II in 2000, she points out, "[a]ll of the [radical] groups vie[d] for the right to claim each attack as their own." She goes beyond what public opinion data could reasonably reveal when she further claims that "[v]iolence has become the source of all honor among Palestinians" (p. 29). As evidence, she notes (pp. 30–31) that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) gained popularity after it organized a separate wing for martyrdom operations (the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades). Similarly, Luca Ricolfi (in Gambetta, pp. 158–59) interprets Palestinian suicide attacks as attempts by leaders to boost the morale of organization members, or to enhance the relative standing of their organization vis-à-vis its rivals (e.g., the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which sought to increase the declining prestige of the Palestinian Authority in comparison with the Islamic parties).

Outside of a few examples, however, the evidence for the outbidding mechanism is paltry and contradictory.[4] The Sri Lankan case initially appears to support Bloom's outbidding argument, for suicide bombing began when there was competition for leadership of the Tamil community. But splits that ensued subsequent to the ascendancy of the Tamil Tigers did not spark new rounds of suicide terror, as the outbidding theory would predict.

The Kurdish case in Turkey is even more troublesome for the theory. In 1995 there were internecine wars in Kurdistan, and the Islamic terrorists (Turkish Hizb'allah) began selective murders of the secular Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK) elites. In 1996, the PKK responded to government offers for compromise by initiating a terror campaign against its own moderates. Bloom's theory would predict a rise in suicide missions in the face of these two internecine wars, but there was no outbidding. However, in 1999 after Abdullah Ocalan's arrest, when there was no internal Kurdish opposition to the PKK, there was a spate of suicide bombings.

Pape rejects Bloom's outbidding theory. He agrees to a correlation between suicide missions and rebel factionalization in the Palestinian and Lebanese cases, yet he shows that these factions cooperated on suicide attacks, and so outbidding could not have been the mechanism. Pape further points to many societies (Somalia, Colombia, El Salvador, Nigeria, and Nicaragua) in which multiple rebel groups competed for domestic political support without an outbidding process leading to suicide terrorism.

Despite the empirical problems in both the spoiler and outbidding arguments as general mechanisms behind suicide missions, the notion that suicide missions are a result of strategic positioning between rival insurgent organizations yields partial insights and consequently is one worth developing.

3. Do culture and grievance level limit suicide attacks?

That culture and grievance level influence the incidence of suicide attacks seems undeniable. And while neither factor is nailed down in the books under review, both do draw attention. Regarding cultural inhibitions on the use of suicide missions, compare the disgust of so many Irish

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Catholics in Northern Ireland and Basques in Spain for even the relatively low levels of terrorism performed in their name (Kalyvas and Sánchez-Cuenca in Gambetta; Bloom, p. 91) with the increasing popularity of attacks among the Palestinian public post 2000 in their conflict with Israel (Bloom, chap. 2). Stathis Kalyvas and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca make a compelling case that insurgents have their ears to the ground, and adjust their tactics when their support base rejects those tactics. But the data on popular acceptance are not clear-cut. Bloom found that even with low support in Tamil Eelam for suicide attacks on civilian targets, the Black Tigers were not deterred. It seems that the Tigers so terrorized internal opposition that the suicide attackers became answerable to no one. It remains to be seen if popular feelings are an exogenous cultural constraint or are influenced by events and rebel-group coercion.

In a similar vein, lower levels of grievance in some countries might be expected to limit support for suicide attacks. Pape argues that suicide campaigns get mass support when they are seen as pursuing legitimate nationalist goals in the face of a societal grievance. According to his data set of 71 individuals who killed themselves on Al Qaeda missions from 1995 to 2003, "the presence of American military forces for combat operations on the homeland territory of the suicide terrorists is stronger than Islamic fundamentalism in predicting whether individuals from that country will become Al Qaeda suicide terrorists" (pp. 103–4). Pape has a broad criterion for foreign occupation (it includes Saudi Arabia, where American troops are welcomed by the state) and submerges the anomalous case of Syria (which produces many suicide attackers without being occupied).[5] Pape's is the only claim in the books under review that links grievances to suicide attacks, and at best it is a plausible conjecture.

4. An organizational theory of suicide missions

Organizational constraints—susceptibility to defection or leakage of operational information—may be more consequential than the societal constraints discussed earlier. Hopgood (in Gambetta, p. 92), for example, emphasizes that Black Tiger identities are closely guarded, and only publicized when they are honored after successful suicide missions. The need for secrecy is clear: In asymmetric warfare, the stronger opponent can use information to quickly arrest or attack conspirators.

Secrecy, however, is difficult to maintain when missions require a long chain of operatives who must coordinate. For their attack on Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1984, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) sent four team members to Madras three weeks before the appointed rally. Two were assigned the task of helping the attacker close in on her target. A third was assigned photographic duties. Hamas missions are equally intricate and thus similarly vulnerable (Pape, pp. 220–32). Leaks from recruits even to their own parents are potentially catastrophic for the rebel organization. In the early period of the second Intifada, for example, Palestinian parents reportedly phoned Israeli intelligence reporting when they had not seen their children in recent days, begging authorities to find and arrest them. It is no wonder that videos of the attacker included interviews with proud parents almost always *after* the mission had been completed.

Secrecy is all the more important when the targets live in wealthy democracies, where rebel organizations face information-rich militaries that are able to penetrate rebel organizations. Only organizations that can remain defection-proof can survive in the use of suicide terrorist tactics against civilian populations. This leads to the question of what organizations are best able to maintain secrecy and thereby become "defection-proof."[6]

A theory of clubs (Iannaccone 1992) has shown formally and provided evidence empirically that religious sects tend to create tight social-service provision networks based on mutual aid. These organizations are susceptible to cheating by members who might draw too much or donate too little. Sacrifices—signals of commitment, such as time spent in religious seminaries—indicate to the mutual aid organization that members represent the type of person who is committed to the cause and thus can be trusted. Should that religious sect choose to engage in organized violence, it has the advantage of being able to identify recruits whose commitment has already been observed in a benign setting, making defection less likely (Berman 2003; Berman and Laitin 2005).

Bloom's account underscores the exchange of social security for popular support. She reports (p. 78) that the "insurgents provide social services . . . to the members of their society to shore up their popularity . . . especially salient when there is little external funding." (See also Berman and Stepanyan [2003] and Chen [2005]). Pape similarly emphasizes the social-service provision aspect of Hezbollah and Hamas. He writes (p. 188) that "far from being an isolated cult, Hezbollah [in Lebanon] devotes considerable effort to social services for the community as a whole. . . . Indeed, Hezbollah's legitimacy seems to have rested more on the establishment of social services than on religious affinity." In regard to Hamas, Pape reports that in 1997, "an estimated 22,615 families received assistance from Hamas-affiliated social welfare organizations."[7] "By providing collective goods," Pape concludes, "Hamas sends a credible signal that the sacrifices it demands of its members actually benefit the community as a whole" (p. 192). He sees benign activity such as social service provision as an instrument aimed at building social approval for the sacrifices of the suicide attackers. The club model, in contrast, views the benign activity as an essential component of a club structure, which is common both to nonviolent and violent radical religious communities.

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While violence is uncommon among religious sects, their structure allows the option of defection-proof violence.

The club model also requires that nonmembers be excluded from the provision of services, even if the benign club activity is a basis for organized violence. The limited evidence we have on exclusion by radical Islamic organizations remains ambiguous. Certainly, Al Qaeda funds have been used to support several Islamic social service organizations that might be supporting individuals who are not religious radicals. Future research should determine the percentage of social service expenditures that go to nonmembers as opposed to members. Exclusive provision to members suggests a club. Provision to nonmembers suggests a conventional political party. To the extent that benefits go mostly to members, the altruism of the suicide attack is toward one's sect, and the club is distinctly capable through its exclusivity to carry out campaigns with low probability of defection.

Clubs, even with the loyalty bought with social services, still need to develop commitment devices to reduce the incentive to defect, and sacrifices that induce club members to abjure bribes from state authorities. Gambetta's concluding summary reveals that suicide campaigns require tightly knit groups capable of reinforcing collective commitments through negative and especially positive sanctions. Black Tigers, as Gambetta infers from Hopgood's essay, "are subject to a commitment pressure by having a ritual dinner with their leader, Prabhakaran, before the missions—a subsequent defection would imply a catastrophic loss of faith" (p. 276). A videotaped statement taken a few days before the mission is another commitment device. For Al Qaeda, group prayer played a role in maintaining commitment for a long period of preparation for the 9/11 attacks, as Stephen Holmes argues in his chapter in Gambetta's volume (pp. 131–72). Organizational theories, which focus on the challenge of avoiding defection, provide more promise than theories based on members' dispositions in explaining which organizations succeed in carrying out suicide attacks, given rebellion under conditions that disfavor insurgency.

5. The religious factor

There is concordance in the three books that suicide missions are not linked in any firm way to Muslim theology. However, on the basis of data before the Iraq war, we found that the attacker and the preferred target were of different religions in 89% of suicide attacks (Berman and Laitin 2005). In contrast, of the 127 insurgencies in the world since 1945, as inferred from the data set of James Fearon and David Laitin (2003), in only 16% were the insurgents and the dominant ethnic group of the state of different religions. While "Islam" is not causal, the role of religion cannot be ignored.

Bloom plucks the Muslim canard straightforwardly. She proclaims (pp. 2–3) that there is "nothing inherently dysfunctional about the Islamic faith . . . that predisposes its adherents towards violence." However, because suicide attacks in the modern era began with Muslims, and processes of emulation occurred within the Muslim world, there is a "mistaken" association of this tactic with Islam. At one time or another, as she recounts with numerous historical examples (pp. 4–17), groups from nearly all religious denominations have used terror tactics, and many of the Muslim groups that use terror are secular. While the bombers themselves may have religious motivations, she acknowledges, the organizations that send them have secular aims: ending foreign occupation, gaining regional autonomy, or enhancing the prestige of their group. Pape adds fuel to Bloom's fire, noting (p. 205) that many Middle Eastern suicide bombers were not Muslims but Christian Arab nationalists.

Yet Pape's data set on suicide attacks also reveals the tight relationship between religious difference and suicide missions. Examining 58 cases from 1980 through 2003 in which a democracy "occupied" the homeland of a distinct national community, he finds that suicide terrorism occurs half the time (seven out of fourteen cases) when there is both rebellion and religious difference. Meanwhile, suicide tactics occur in only one of nine cases where there is rebellion but no religious difference (p. 99).

Pape identifies three ways that religious difference facilitates organizations seeking to run suicide terror campaigns (pp. 88–92): a) It makes the conflict zero-sum, as resources go either to one side or the other; b) the strange rituals of any religion make it easy for radicals to demonize occupiers; and c) with religion, it is easiest to manipulate the language of martyrdom, which is primarily a religious idea, and "religious difference is itself a common standard for martyrdom" (p. 91). Gambetta (p. 292) relatedly discusses the "bellicosity capital" afforded to weaker groups by a common religion.

We offer a simpler explanation for the religious-difference effect. First, we relate religion to target hardness. Since intrareligious conflict allows rebels to pose as loyalists, targets in intrareligious warfare tend to be softer than when warfare is interreligious. For example, the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) (communist Sinhalese) blends more easily in Sinhalese society than do Tamil Tigers, and thus the JVP can more easily plant bombs near Sinhalese targets and not tie them to their bodies.

Second, we note that radical religious groups are frequently clubs in the sense discussed earlier. Commitment mechanisms give clubs an advantage in any group activity that is sensitive to defection—and suicide attacks are a tactic particularly sensitive to defection. Perhaps counterintuitively, the link between effective violence and religion is through the organizational advantages that sects provide, rather than through theology. Thus, while Islamic

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Jihad and Hamas share the same radical Islamic theology, Hamas—which provides exclusive social services—is much more effective at suicide attacks (Berman and Laitin 2005).

6. An ecological theory of asymmetric warfare

Diego Gambetta sees suicide missions (SMs) as one of many tactics of terrorism. Summarizing the case studies in his book, he writes that "none of the organizations . . . is monogamously wedded to SMs. SMs have been only a minuscule part of the arsenal deployed by the regular or insurgent armies that have used them" (p. 260). If so, we should consider under what conditions suicide attacks are chosen over other tactics.

Take Lebanon, where modern suicide missions began. According to Ricolfi, suicide attacks came into play in Lebanon when air hijacking began to fail. More than 200 episodes of air hijackings took place from the 1950s through the 1970s. Suicide attacks became a functional substitute with the declining marginal returns to hijacking. They proved to be "purer" than air hijackings as well, as hijackings look like blackmail whereas suicide attacks look like martyrdom. From this, Ricolfi reasons: "If the means have changed so frequently, this is on account of the many changes in constraints and resources that organizations have had to face. There has not always been a strong presence of a foreign army in Lebanon. There hasn't always been a peace process to disrupt" (in Gambetta, p. 105).

Because tactical choice is dynamic, and all organizations that use suicide attacks have other tactics in their repertoires, it is useful to put the tactical repertoire of rebellion into an evolutionary perspective. Air hijackings had their moment in the terrorist sun in the 1970s when each successful hijacking spread terror among the traveling public and brought publicity to the terrorist cause. But target states raised its cost (through security measures at airports and the increased likelihood of commando raids at the point of landing), and its repeated use lowered its effect (as the public became somewhat inured to new incidents). It is likely that suicide attacks will have a similar life cycle as homeland security will raise its costs and greater use (especially in Iraq in 2004–6) reduces its shock value. Because data suggest that terrorist tactics are sensitive to cost (Enders and Sandler 2002) and require a powerful emotional reaction by the target population to be effective, we should expect a decline over time in the use of any one tactic.

An ecological theory of rebellion would relate changing tactics to opportunities offered by the environment (such as terrain); the nature of the enemy (political regime, strength of army); the strategic value of targets and whether they are hard or soft; the organizations available to rebels as allies (such as radical religious groups, tribal structures); and the ability of rebels to communicate with one another clandestinely (such as through a distinct language, or through tight information networks). Such an approach would put suicide missions in a more dynamic context, explaining tactical shifts with changes in ecological factors. For instance, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and southern Lebanon reduced suicide attacks by removing targets, yet by July 2006, the newly ungoverned spaces were exploited by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah (respectively) to launch rocket attacks. Therefore, counterinsurgency strategy requires not only effective tools to raise the costs of suicide attacks but also effective options to confront and influence terrorism's changing tactical repertoire.

As an example of an ecological approach to rebellion, consider the following irony. During the 1990s, civil war violence decreased throughout the world (Fearon and Laitin 2004) with tremendous savings in human lives. That may well have been because governments (with support from the United Nations) improved their counterinsurgency technologies, hardening targets and shrinking the amount of ungoverned territory available for terrorists in which to set up clubs and train. The shift to suicide terrorism in the 1990s and 2000s might well reflect the inability of Al Qaeda and other rebel groups to capture territory and conduct standard insurgency. Ironically, the American invasion of Iraq in reaction to Al Qaeda terrorism represents regression, as the chaotic governing structures implanted in Iraq present "soft" targets.

The three books under review isolate suicide missions as an object of analysis, though the authors in the Gambetta volume seek to blur the boundary between suicide attacks and other forms of rebellion. The ecological theory that we propose demands the collection of data that spans the set of rebel tactics in order to analyze contemporary forms of rebellion in a more dynamic perspective.

7. The "best response" to suicide campaigns

Bloom appeals for a measured policy response to terrorism. She sees outright war on terrorism as counterproductive and recommends a counterinsurgency strategy of closing off foreign funds (thereby forcing radical organizations to tax their own people for these operations), and then "outbidding the outbidders," that is, giving better social services to the affected population than their radical representatives can provide without foreign support.

Pape recommends a policy of "offshore balancing." He argues that the post 9/11 U.S. policy of promoting a world of democracies implies regime change and ultimately occupation, measures likely to incite anti-U.S. terrorism. Instead, he argues that Americans should withdraw all combat forces from the region expeditiously, while making sure that no country has the ability or the interest to upset the status quo. The United States should work with any authoritarian regime, whether in Iraq, Saudi Arabia,

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or other Gulf states, to maintain their ability to rule, while funding their militaries with oil purchases (chap. 12).

There are problems with all these recommendations. Bloom's evidence that Sri Lanka's moderation has reduced its vulnerability to LTTE attack and Israel's hard-line counterterrorism has increased its vulnerability is hardly borne out since her writing. And there are problems with Pape's solution—it does not address the issue of states that cannot themselves contain terrorism, and it ignores the incentives that the United States would be giving to authoritarian regimes (who are protected from their enemies by U.S. offshore forces) in order to eliminate those enemies costlessly through their influence over target choice.[8]

Our ecological theory builds a sounder foundation for policy. First, we agree with Bloom about the wisdom of "outbidding the outbidders," through giving incentives to governments (or even nongovernmental organizations) in terrorist-exporting countries in order to provide basic social services and education in competition with religious clubs.

Political representation should be included in that mix. Representation is a service-provision vacuum left by many Middle Eastern governments that radical religious clubs eagerly fill. Greater competition in the provision of services, including political representation, reduces the sacrifices religious radicals can ask of members, which in turn reduces their ability to engage in cooperative production, benign or violent. Political reforms that allow viable organization outside of mosques have the potential to break the near monopoly that religious radicals often have on opposition politics.

Second, and missing from the current policy debate, is that targeted countries should reconsider devoting massive resources to snuffing out "terror" tactics that have succeeded in the past, and should pay more attention to predicting future tactics of asymmetric warfare and how they might be countered. For instance, improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, in the third year of the Iraqi insurgency became the leading cause of U.S. military fatalities. Loose nuclear devices and biological weapons, by this reckoning, become more attractive as suicide attacks are successfully cauterized, yet have received much less scholarly attention than have suicide attacks. Target countries (and scholars) should not see the enemy as "suicide terrorism," but rather the set of evolving tactics employed by rebel organizations to conduct asymmetric warfare. To better defend against these tactics, they must all be better understood.

Notes

1 See Laitin and Shapiro (forthcoming) for a review of this literature.
2 Machiavelli, with his notion of *virtù*, might object.
3 These criticisms might take too seriously Hamas's stated intention of rejecting negotiations. Their true intention may have merely been political power. If so, the continued attacks by Hamas (and other Palestinian opposition groups) can be understood as an attempt to weaken their political rivals irrespective of who was radical and who moderate.
4 There is no table in Bloom's book that examines the numbers of competing organizations (with data collected blindly) and the rate of suicide attacks in Israel, in Sri Lanka, in Turkey, and in Chechnya; she repeats the factionalization → outbidding argument but does not put it to systematic test.
5 Pape does not employ standard quantitative tests that would allow for a confident statement about statistical significance. Using a related data set, Alan B. Krueger (2006) analyzes the national origins of foreign fighters captured by the U.S.-led coalition. In an extension of his statistical models (personal communication), and relying on a data set enumerating overseas U.S. troop levels (available at http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/troopMarch2005.xls), Krueger finds no statistical relationship (with the sign being opposite to what Pape's theory would predict) between U.S. occupation forces in a Middle East country and the supply of anticoalition volunteers.
6 Combating Terrorism Center (2006) emphasizes the importance of solving agency problems for terrorist organizations. Dichter and Byman (2006) reveal that one weak link in Palestinian terrorist organizations is messengers who carry information by word of mouth between cells in order to avoid electronic surveillance.
7 The work of Mishal and Sela (2000) would consider this an underestimate of Hamas-provided social services.
8 Seymour M. Hersh develops this point in "Up in the Air: Bush's intransigence and the coming air war" *The New Yorker* (December 5, 2005, 42–54). For this reason, Hersh points out, senior defense officials are reluctant to cede the power to identify targets for U.S. bombing to dictators.

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The attacks on September 11, 2001 released a barrage of public rhetoric characterizing the 19 Muslim hijackers as evil fanatics "in love with death" and animated by a "hatred of freedom." A spate of scholarship, op-ed articles, and policy papers devoted to anatomizing the "problems with Islam"—a propensity for violence and authoritarianism, an archaic conflation of religious and political domains, the pent-up rage of Muslims "left behind" by modernity—soon flooded airwaves, newspapers, and bookstores, in many cases recycling arguments several decades and even centuries old.[1] Counterclaims about the inherently peaceful and tolerant essence of Islam quickly followed, and a very peculiar American public debate about Islamic authenticity was born.

As if in reply, several studies have recently appeared that gather empirical evidence drawn from a variety of suicide campaigns past and present to demonstrate how and why such debates about Islam are a red herring we pursue at our own peril. By both argument and example, they seek to prove that suicide attackers and the organizations that recruit, train, and send them to their deaths are strategic actors whose behavior is not only intelligible but amenable to rational analysis—the kind of analysis conducive to developing those counterstrategies required to outmaneuver actual enemies, rather than spar fruitlessly with ghostly projections of our own fears and anxieties. Far from being the source or even primary cause of such behavior, religion is either bracketed under the rubric of "incentives" (Bloom 2005, 85) or treated as the ideological miasma that must be penetrated to excavate the strategic logic constitutive of rational behavior.

As Robert Pape argues, for example, religion may well be an effective tool frequently used by terrorist organizations to recruit and indoctrinate (2005, 4), but it is ultimately instrumental to the essentially "secular and strategic goal" of nationalist liberation (p. 22). Mia Bloom concurs: Suicide missions may reveal a common pattern in which religion is "manipulated to induce followers to kill in the name of God," but it is crucial to look beyond the patina of piety to recognize suicide bombing as a "tactic of coercive bargaining which includes the risks of outbidding because of the competition among rival organizations utilizing the tactic" (p. 94). Stephen Holmes goes so far as to characterize Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri as professional entrepreneurs who want to "keep up the value of their investment in terrorism" (in Gambetta 2005, 171). In his view, the paranoid, apocalyptic "orgy of blame" they peddle bespeaks less an

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