

## PREVENTING SUICIDE TERRORISM

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Governments, law enforcement bodies, and even scholars are faced with a great challenge to combat suicide terrorism than ever before as such attacks are steadily on the rise. From 2000 to 2004, there have been more than 472 suicide attacks have taken place globally in 22 countries, killing more than 7,000 people.

Despite the complexity of the mission, suicide terrorism can be prevented with appropriate security precautions. Prevention of suicide attacks through security measures can be divided mainly by four stages: 1. Monitoring and threat assessment; 2. Proactive preventive measures; 3. Incident Response; and 4. Consequence Management.

Monitoring and threat assessment incorporates deterring, predicting, and detecting potential suicide missions. The most important issue is to firstly understand the terrorists' mindset and their operational environment. Monitoring of their activities in the pre-attack stages can lead to the prediction and detection of potential suicide missions. The strongest key to this is intelligence gathering. As evident in the case of Israel, more than 80% of attempted suicide operations were foiled through counter-intelligence operations. Therefore, governments must enhance the capacity of its intelligence in order to disrupt the network that organizes and supports such activities. Intelligence collection must be done at both the top and grass-root level along with an efficient channel in disseminating intelligence.

Proactive measures require the fortification of infrastructures and the increased protection of both hard and soft targets. Previous suicide attacks committed by terrorism groups such as the Tamil Tigers tend to focus mainly on attacks on VIPs. However, this trend has evolved over the years, as the purpose of suicide attacks was to inflict large number of casualties. Thus, terrorist suicide operations became broader and focused on softer targets. The protection of infrastructure comprises of three phases (perimeter security; internal security system; vital area protection), which requires the efforts of not just the security forces, but also private security industries and the empowerment of the citizens.

In case of spotting a suicide bomber on the spot, several security precautions can be taken to minimize casualties. It is paramount to teach law enforcement awareness and to have policies and procedures in the event of an attack or an attempt. Rigorous training is needed for identifying a potential suicide bomber, confronting a suspect, and responding and securing the area around the attack site in the event of an explosion. This must also be followed by the establishment of a consequence response in order to mitigate the impact of the suicide attacks, to ultimately discourage the terrorist organizations from employing such tactic in the long-run.

Though security measures can successfully prevent suicide terrorism, such measures are merely effective in containing suicide terrorism and not its eradication. Security measures can stop suicide attacks from physically happening, but it does not contribute in extinguishing the ideology and motivations which drive suicide bombers. This can be only tackled through socio-political approach. Many countries have mastered operational counter-terrorism but not strategic counter-terrorism. For a long-term success there is a need to not only hunt operational terrorists, but also to tackle the ideology that drives the use of this unique tactic. Therefore, socio-political measures must simultaneously be addressed to eradicate the root causes of suicide terrorism. Consequently, it would create an environment that is 'unfriendly' to terrorists and resilient to political violence.

First and foremost, it is crucial to understand that motivations of employing suicide missions greatly differ at organizational and individual level. Therefore, tackling suicide terrorism starts from identifying the so called 'target audiences', and then implementing socio-political measures appropriately to the groups. Whether it is a religious or an ethno-nationalist motivated terrorist attack, strategic countermeasures must be implemented accordingly to the appropriate levels of target. Strategic measures against organizations must be carried out to cripple the ideology that drives and sustains their movement. Other socio-political measures must be tailored to discourage and de-radicalize the individuals at a personal level who perform the suicide mission. Finally and most importantly, measures must be adopted in order to create a society altogether that is vigilant and resistant to suicide attacks, and to create an environment which discourages terrorists to employ such tactics.

Support and recruitment for suicide terrorism occur not under conditions of poverty, foreign occupation, and unemployment per se- but when converging political, economic, and social trends produce fewer opportunities relative to expectations. This generates frustrations that radical organizations can exploit to propagate their ideas among the public. Reasons and motivations behind the missions are many, and there is no one-size-fits all approach that can socio-politically prevent incidents. Motives of suicide terrorism can be broadly categorized in two different aspects: religious vs. secular suicide missions. In a religious context, it is necessary to combat the extremist religious ideology promoting suicide bombing and to create a dialectical space to condemn suicide bombings, both practically and ideologically. In a secularly motivated context, the root causes and grievances of each case must be addressed and redressed both by the government and the people. Socio-political measures need to attend to the grievances and the root cause of the conflict in each particular case, so no universal answer that can be applicable to all cases can be given.

As history has proved us in the recent years, suicide bombing can be quelled like in the case of Hamas and Hezbollah. Multi-layered and improved security measures can successfully contain suicide terrorism. Both preventive and proactive measures need to be taken, through performing necessary threat assessment. Such efforts must be accompanied by implementing socio-political approach. Countries and governments need greater understanding of the root causes of suicide terrorism in their own particular context to work towards its sustained eradication. It is therefore paramount to invest in more resources to counter them strategically, whether it be a religious or a secular motive.

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