

Suicide Bombing in the NWFP: The Need for Research and Information Collection on Human Bombers*

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Abstract:

Terrorism got its ugliest and deadliest face as suicide bombing since 9/11. The law-enforcement agencies throughout the world were constrained to redefine their role and modify their structures to respond to the new phase of this violent organized crime. The academics are searching to locate the underlying reasons for this and also find the solutions and policy choices how to respond to it. However, most of the researches on terrorism in the western world lack proximal observation and understanding of ground realities. The researchers close to the scene of terrorism, on the other hand, lack resources, skills and peace of mind. So, a persistent gap of understanding exists on both sides. This paper explains the urgent need for a proper, analytical, comprehensive and valid research on the rapidly growing and aggravating problem of human bombing in the context of Pakistan, which is not only a serious crime, but also has strong ideological messages for others.

Keywords:

Suicide Bombing, Living Bombers, Research, Jihadi, Prevention, Investigation, Interrogation, Intelligence, Counter-terrorist Strategy, Characteristics.

Suicide terrorist attack is one of the most feared forms of terrorism. Simple to execute and plan, it uses people as human guidance systems and directs them towards targets that are hard to penetrate or attack using more conventional means (Nance, 2008). Suicide terrorists in Pakistan may not choose the hard targets only and rather spread the threat by the maximum casualties in an open crowded place, as evident from the reported cases. This is not a new phenomenon in the history but reached its operational peak when 19 men hijacked four airliners over the United States on September 11, 2001. Until the beginning of the 21st century, suicide terrorism proved effective, but was limited in its usage. According to Professor Robert Pape, between 1980 and 2003 there were 315 suicide bombings worldwide, the largest was that of 9/11. However, after the invasion of Iraq, suicide bombing became a principal weapon in the resistance to the occupation and at an astronomical rate. The US military reported over 1400 suicide bombings between 2003 and 2007 alone (Nance, 2008). Like Nance, many believe that the suicide attacks became a

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fashion during the US occupation of Iraq, but it is still not clear whether the suicide attacks in Afghanistan were and are also a reaction to the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, or are merely an intrusion or transportation of Al-Qaeda tactics to the Afghan guerrilla war. Dr. Brian Williams is of the opinion that it is the Al-Qaeda who taught their Afghan buddies how to use the suicide bombing as a quick, effective and lethal weapon (Williams, 2008).

However, the transportation of the idea and tactics of human bombings to Pakistan from across the border in Afghanistan is absolutely undeniable, though a thorough and sound empirical research is needed to quantify the claim. It will have the capacity not only to foster more sophisticated debate on specific policy options, but also to expand criminology's empirical and theoretical domain, especially on issues such as criminal careers, co-offending, ethnicity and a situational analysis of various crime phenomena. Currently, there is no published research where the researchers have had direct access to the jihadis. The result is that all of the analysis is done at a distance. This means either relying on media or court reports, as Sageman and Baker have done, or else drawing inferences from other populations that are believed to be relevant in some way to the jihadis (Silke, 2008). Silke dilates upon the psychology of terrorism and tries to look for various indicators and factors singly or in combination, which shall explain logically and with scientific evidence that why does someone become a terrorist. These include age and gender, education, career and marriage, social identity with religion and group loyalties as main aspects, social marginalization, discrimination, perceived injustice, status and personal rewards and opportunity and recruitment. No one factor has entirely unambiguous causative role, there is certainly found a correlation between all these factors and terrorist organizations. Silke, (2008) observes:

“Criminology will have to work hard to develop theories and models that can comfortably account for the distinctive patterns seen in the lives of terrorists”.

Much literature is now coming out on the various aspects of terrorism and suicide bombings but as noted by Silke most of them are done at a distance. Fasihuddin (2008) generally calls such researches as 'alien researches' done in the 'ivory towers' of the developed nations. Not only the theoretical researches, but also the operational strategies are criticized by scholars on account of wrong perceptions and calculations. For example, Serena (2008) in his theory of 'dynamic attenuation', where network ties and not the actors in the network are targeted, observes:

“The stabilization strategy employed in Afghanistan by coalition forces call for reducing the capabilities of former Taliban regime members and insurgents. A part of this strategy dictates the capture and/or death of Taliban military leaders like Mullah Dadullah. In May 2007, US and NATO forces killed Dadullah. But with Dadullah's death and replacement, the process of collecting information on and

determining the network ties of the new commander will largely have to start from scratch. The goal of stabilization has not been improved by the targeting and death of Dadullah; it has only been further delayed.”

All these studies and discussion at various levels have given rise to certain and clear-cut implications for law-enforcement. Nance (2008) identifies certain pre-incident intelligence and behavioural indicators, collectively called Terrorist Attack Pre-incident Indicators (TAPIs), which according to Nance, may reveal the intent and, possibly, the location of the impending attack, besides a few characteristics of suicide bomber. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, the field of criminology and research is so barren and the offices of the law-enforcement are so inaccessible and the data collection system is so pathetically underdeveloped that we are unable to test these indicators on a specific academic touchstone or draw our own hypotheses and indicators in light of the available information, statistics and outcome of criminal cases. This paper gives a detail of the foiled suicide attackers whereby we can have sufficiently credible access to some key information which are otherwise lost in a completed attempt. The degree of the information clearly shows the level of the competence, hard work and professionalism of the police in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the sorry conditions of constraints of various resources. Though no separate and professional department or section thereof is being established in Pakistan to counter terrorism or an indigenous model of intelligence-led policing is being developed in any of the provincial police department, yet the NWFP police have rendered excellent service in countering the terrorist attacks or containing the damages of an accomplished attack despite their meager resources, inadequate facilities, capacity and training difficulties. The record compiled by the writer fully vindicates this viewpoint. But, the need for a comprehensive research into these cases is yet far from reality. Mere a few statistics may not be a sufficient stuff or support for a particular policy option. To formulate our own TAPIs, we have to work hard on the available data, its analysis and looking for a proper theorization of the available information. Needless to say that without expanding criminological research to our other fields of social sciences and law-enforcement schools and academies, we may not achieve the goal of a scholarly and authentic work on suicide bombers, the living bombers, the terrorist networks, their characteristics, their modus operandi, their support line, their indoctrination, their ideology and their criminal career, etc.

Terrorist and Suicide Attacks in the NWFP

The North-west Frontier Province, due to its geographic location, received the major setbacks in terms of terrorist incidents and suicide attacks after the US and NATO forces came into Afghanistan. The 'war on terror' and its manifestations and its implications for regional security is a hot topic in our current debate on politics,

national integration, sovereignty, foreign aid, international relations and religion. The missing link is that of the law-enforcement. Much is said and trumpeted on the various aspects of terrorism but rarely a case for anti-terror, counter-terror, counter-insurgency and law-enforcement policy is made, presented or debated. A single empirical study and a thorough research is never attempted. Data is generally confusing, incomplete, conflicting and controversial. The official data generated by different provincial police and other forces are usually incompatible and in different format. The NGOs and some international organizations mostly rely on news from mass media, which at times, are not dependable and inconclusive for a variety of



Mir Janan s/o Sigrat resident of Dara South Waziristan, a would-be suicide bomber arrested by Nowshera Police

reasons. For the time being, the only authentic data is available with the Provincial Police Department, which is used for the NWFP for the purpose of this paper.

Table I consists of the total terrorist incidents in the NWFP for the period of 2006-2009. It shows the rising tide of terrorist incidents which include explosions, bombing, suicide attacks, missiles/rocket launcher attacks and blasts at different places including music shops and barbar shops. The complete analysis of this data shall be the focus of a separate research paper which will identify the various places of attacks, the targets of the attacks, the timing of the attacks, the damages to the public property and the outcome of the investigation of all such terrorist activities. A comprehensive and meticulous analysis of all the available data will certainly be a basis for a good research which may guide academics as well as practitioners to show the pattern, severity, strategy, tactics and damages caused by these incidents, and the motivation, support and demands of the organizations behind these incidents. Table II shows a further classification of Table I which is based on the total suicide attacks in the given period. This is an attempt to show that out of all the incidents, the suicide attacks are the deadliest, most virulent, most damaging and highly unpreventable and unmanageable. A comparison and detailed analysis of the two tables can lead to a lot of startling information for future research. The share of suicide attacks in all of the terrorist activities is enormous and obviously the biggest challenge for our law-enforcement and security agencies.

Table I: Details of Terrorist Incidents in the NWFP

Year	No. of Registered Cases	Person Killed				Person Injured			
		Police	Frontier Constabulary	Army/ Security Forces	Civilian	Police	Frontier Constabulary	Army/ Security Forces	Civilian
2006*	38	18	-	-	55	24	-	-	121
2007*	359	62	32	62	253	172	162	592	
2008*	494	116	25	51	376	256	88	883	
2009**	140	23	9	10	81	67	54	329	
Total	1031	219	66	123	765	519	304	1925	

Source: Office of the Additional Inspector General of Police (Investigation) NWFP

* Figures for Frontier Constabulary and Army for 2006 were not available at the time of writing

** The period of 2009 is only for 1st January, 2009 to 25th March, 2009

Table II: Details of Suicide Attacks in the NWFPP

Year	No. of Registered Cases	Person Killed				Person Injured			
		Police	Frontier Constabulary	Army/ Security Forces	Civilian	Police	Frontier Constabulary	Army/ Security Forces	Civilian
2006*	4	2	0	4	44	2	0	12	75
2007*	28	45	23	57	210	54	43	137	351
2008*	30	30	7	25	219	92	43	65	450
2009**	7	3	0	2	45	31	21	54	191
Total	69	80	30	88	518	179	107	268	1067

Source: Office of the Additional Inspector General of Police (Investigation) NWFPP

*The period of 2009 is only for 1st January, 2009 to 25th March, 2009

Preventive Measures Counter-terrorist Strategies and Tactics

The counter-terrorism strategy is simply to hunt down the terrorists (Yateendra Singh Jafa, 2005), but in case of suicide attackers it becomes extremely challenging for the police as the identification of a potential suicide bomber is next to impossible. The London Police Chief, Sir Ian Blair proposed a counter-terrorist protocol as “shoot-to-kill-to-protect” after the 7/7 bombing, but the first target was not a suicide bomber but a poor Brazilian electrician who, from his appearance was taken for a suicide bomber and shot dead, giving rise to serious controversies and questions for Metropolitan Police professionalism and security paradigm (McLaughlin 2007). Actually, the police forces use defensive and offensive tactics. They guard vulnerable places and vital installations and deploy road-opening parties to secure roads used by VIPs and police and military convoys. The offensive action is in the form of quick retaliation in the event of a terrorist attack. Reinforcements are called, the area surrounding scene is cordoned, and a search for the culprits starts. Suspects are detained, causing fear among their relations that would be tortured in interrogation centers, etc (Yateendra Singh Jafa, 2005). This is the usual pattern of policing in most of the countries in order to prevent any terrorist attack or contain the damage or repetition of a completed attack. In the case of suicide attacks, the absolute prevention with no damage has not been reported so far. However, in some of the cases, the suspected bomber or vehicle loaded with explosives has been fired by a police party where little or no damage is caused to the police or public. This is due to the gradual gaining of experience of the local police who now have considerable knowledge of identification of a potential suicide bomber or terrorist or a suspected vehicle with loaded explosives. There is a need for a comprehensive study of these cases and a detailed interview with the successful police party and officials while focusing on the early recognition of such a potential attacker. Enormously valuable information can be gathered and elicited in this respect. Future researchers will find good and productive academic exercise in the subject.

Table III: Terrorist Attacks Foiled by the NWFP Police

	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of Cases Registered	9	75	94	5
Explosive Material (s)	1.6kg	122kg	52366kg	42kg
Explosive /Suicidal Jackets	0	20	20	3

Rocket Launcher, Bomb, Missile & Mortar Missile Shells	29	190	481	248
Hand Grenade/Dynamites, Detonators & Anti Tank Mines	7	220	93	41

Source: Office of the Additional Inspector General of Police (Investigation) NWFP

Table III provides the details of all the foiled attempts by the terrorists. Some of them (arrested terrorists) admitted to 'would-be suicide bombers' or 'martyrs' during the police interrogation. The NWFP Police have now acquired a certain level of experience and operational capability whereby they successfully thwarted these attacks, if could not control all of them. Those who couldn't blow themselves up and got arrested are dubbed as 'living bombers' by a senior police officer. Some arrested with suicide jackets and other explosive materials or hand grenades were smart enough to make an ex-culpatory statement and confession of only carrying the suicide materials for another 'would-be martyr' in some other remote tribal areas, where obviously police have no territorial jurisdiction or authority. Like Nance (2008) and other researchers on terrorism, we are inclined to derive certain key findings and characteristics of the suicide bombers in Table IV. These indicators are not exhaustive and are based on some of the classified record of the interrogation reports of the living bombers. Future researchers can find more startling points if these cases are made a subject of further indepth enquiries and research.

Table IV: Some Key Characteristics of Living Bombers in the NWFP

INDICATORS	FINDINGS
Age Group	1528
Marital Status	80% unmarried
Education	Only Religious (None); Only Secular (10%); Combined Religious and Secular (90%)
Maximum Secular School Education	5 th Class to Intermediate (Undergraduate)
Employment	100% Unemployed
Affiliation	Proscribed/Defunct Militant Organizations (100%)
Jihadi Training Received	15 days to 3 Months (Maximum) (100%)
Domicile	Tribal Origion (70 %); Settled/Urban Districts (30%)
Motivation	Religious (100%)

Source: Office of the Additional Inspector General of Police (Investigation) NWFP

- Following are some of the preventive measures which the local police have taken as strategic and operational techniques to arrest the tide of suicide bombing, terrorist attacks and contain the damages of such incidents:
- Anti Terrorist Squad: Anti Terrorist Squad as a striking force has been raised in all 23 districts and the Capital City Police of Peshawar in the NWFP. Each squad consists of 30. They are given ATS training at Simly Dam and Nowshera.
- Bomb Disposal Squad: Bomb Disposal Squads have been activated at district level. Their structure and functions are the same.
- Raising of Elite Force: A 25000 special force is being raised in 2009 with special allowances, training, equipments and new organization. 500 policemen were trained by Sindh Police, 500 by Frontier Police and 930 by the Pakistan Army on emergency basis in the first phase with funding from the Federal Government. The proposed elite force will be increased upto 7500.
- Introduction of Reconciliation Committees at Police Station level: This is an indigenous approach for community policing at village levels. Some NGOs are working with the local police in this regard. The major aim is to gain support for the police for criminal intelligence and also an attempt directed towards de-radicalization and de-indoctrination of 'youth at-risk' or potential militants.
- Perceived Threats: Perceived threats to the VVIP & VIP, key points & vital installations have been re-assessed and all such areas have been identified and categorized as hard and soft targets. Surveillance over foreign missions, foreign NGOs, multi-nationals and government buildings has been increased. Security measures are being regularly checked through district police as well as Special Branch. Lapses found are immediately reported and corrective measures are taken.
- Enhanced Patrolling: Though it is a regular police duty, yet patrolling has been intensified and vigorous checking is being carried out on all sensitive points in major cities.
- Checking of Public Places: Hotels, Serais and places of public resort are being regularly checked, searched and suspects are sent for interrogation.
- Barricades: Barricades have been erected on all important entry and exist points in the cities, particularly in Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and DIKhan.
- Raids: Raids on the abodes of the hardened criminals have been intensified, and a good deal of gangs is busted and criminals arrested for ascertaining their potential links with terrorist groups. This is the subject of a separate article. The police in Peshawar, Charsaddah and Mardan districts have launched effective operations against hard core criminals.

- CCTV: Closed circuit televisions have been installed in all important and busy centers in Peshawar.
- Afghan Refugees: Efforts are in hand to register Afghan refugees through the Afghan Commissionerate and to repatriate them honourably to their home country. At the moment, there are 1.5 million Afghan refugees in the NWFP. The crowded Afghan camps are a potential source for hiding terrorists.
- Proscribed Organization: The activities of defunct and proscribed organizations are being monitored according to the provisions of the Anti Terrorism Act, 1997. This is done through information-sharing with the local intelligence agencies.
- FM Channels: FM Radio channels are strictly monitored and a considerable number of unauthorized channels have been closed. These FM channels are being used by the extremists for supporting and propagating their views to the local community.
- Security for Foreigners: In view of the threat perception, security for Chinese and other foreigners working in various projects at various parts of the province particularly Karak, Gomal Zam, Tank, Bannu, DIKhan, Batagram and Mansehra has been enhanced. Similarly NGOs in such areas are also being provided security cover.

These are some of the police initiatives to address the issue on emergency basis with whatever resources they have, and in cooperation with some foreign donors. However, it can't be ascertained at the moment that which preventive strategy or tactic is more effective than the other and why certain measures are effective at certain place and time and not at other. Moreover, there is no valid research on the overall effects of this locally-devised preventive approach. The financial implications, human rights abuses, public concern and police high-handedness are also not determined. This is why we need further research on the subject.

Investigation and Interrogation of Suicide Bombing

Terrorism investigations have a number of unique characteristics that set them apart from more traditional approaches. The investigator must have a high tolerance for lengthy stakeouts and surveillance, be mindful of minor details and seemingly insignificant information, and be willing to shun publicity. He or she must recognize the importance of teamwork and cooperation, be thoroughly familiar with technology and the use of computers, and have an appreciation for detail. Terrorist investigations are usually lengthy and may involve months or even years of painstaking effort. The success of a terrorist investigation depends largely on intelligence and analysis and the actual investigation of an incident will frequently

- include different agencies or organizations (Osterburg and Ward, 2004). In most cases, there are special laws and provisions for investigation of terrorist acts and interrogation of terrorist suspects. In some countries, the interrogation techniques used by the police are derived from military, but in others the police have tried to develop their own techniques. The key to successful interrogation is the understanding of the cultural background, motivation and the communication strategies of the detainees. In order to conduct an effective interrogation of a subject with extremist ideology and one who is committed to jihad, the interview must have some understanding of the subject's ideology and history associated with his thinking, commitment and beliefs. (Galles et al quoted in Newburn, et al 2007). In the western societies, the law-enforcement departments are highly developed and equipped with modern facilities and instruments. They have sophisticated technologies and latest equipments in addition to their constantly revamping and re-organization of their units and sub-units. In most instances, there are specialized units and teams for the investigation of various organized and serious crimes. They utilize developed techniques for interrogation and intelligence gathering. Some police departments have adopted the new style of Intelligence-led policing and/or community policing in such serious crimes.
- However, the situation in Pakistan is absolutely different. Since 9/11 and besides the cascade of terrorist attacks, we could not develop separate, specialized, independent and modernized units within the law-enforcement agencies or a centralized unit for prevention, investigation, interrogation and prosecution of terrorist incidents. A multi-disciplinary approach, based on a joint investigation work by the operational and strategic units of various intelligence agencies and the law-enforcement operational wings is yet to be introduced and adopted in Pakistan. In addition to this major gap, and after thoroughly studying and examining the terrorist attacks in the NWFP and especially the suicide attacks, the following are the major constraints faced by the investigation staff:
- Inadequate Investigation Facilities: After the separation of Preventive (Watch and Ward) and Investigation wings of the police under the new Pakistani police law, the Police Order 2002, the investigation wing has not been given its due place. Highly qualified officers and officials were expected to be posted and recruited for the newly established wing but it didn't happen. No worth mentioning efforts were taken by any international organization to enhance the capacity of the existing investigative staff of our local police. The new police reforms remained short of commitment, resources and legal clarity. The cost of investigation remained at the lowest and the only available Forensics Science Laboratory at Peshawar is still deprived of modern equipments and sophisticated facilities. The Investigation seems to be a disbanded and deserted

wing at the police station level. Clearly identified roles are still not available for various officers in the hierarchy of the investigation branch. No proper and effective capacity-building training were conducted for the staff.

- **Double Territorial Jurisdiction:** In most of the cases, the arrested suspects or nominated criminals/terrorists belong to the tribal territories where police have no jurisdiction to trace back the cases to their original places of early education and indoctrination and their family or organizational background. This makes the case a difficult thing for prosecution to exhibit relevant documents in the competent court of law in the city areas. There is a dire need of some sort of political and legal arrangement to overcome this anomaly.

Conclusion - Need For Research

Counter-terrorism is re-shaping policing and security arrangements [in Australia] in specific ways. Researching these changes demands close attention to what occurs in specific locations as much as it might relate to international comparisons along the lines of changes to the legal powers of policing authorities. Undoubtedly such work is crucial (Palmer and Whelan, 2006). Almost all departments of law-enforcement have been forced to change and modify their functions and structures by the new face of terrorism after the deadliest suicide attacks of 9/11 (White, 2007). Coupled with other major suicide attacks around the world, these mass-casualty terrorist attacks have led to a rapidly expanding scholarly examination of terrorism and related topics, giving rise to approximately 20,000 articles written on this topic. Through a plethora of rigorous social science methods, the study of terror groups has grappled with key questions such as: Who joins terror groups? Why do they join? and How do they learn? To fully intervene in terrorism, a framework is needed that is action-oriented, thus focusing on intervention and prevention points in terrorism (Smith and Picarelli, 2008). Some researchers are of the view that terrorism research should be comparative in nature and can be conducted by asking researchable questions at various levels of analysis, from the individual incident through historical spirals of terrorist waves as terrorism not only bunches but may clycle (Bergesen and Han, 2005). Others opine that the more researchers discover and examine terrorism, the more there is to know, and the less valid common stereotypes or assumptions become, because there is no consistent unity in the way terrorism has been defined or constructed throughout the ages (Oliverio and Landerdale, 2005).

Due to these scholarly discourses and individual and institutional efforts in examining the phenomenon of terrorism with its basics and complexities, there has been copious and good research in the western countries. However, the situation in Pakistan is absolutely depressing and no such tangible individual or institutional endeavors have been seen in order to carry out a comprehensive and empirical

research on terrorism or suicide attacks or a thorough documentation and analyses of the reported cases. This gap of knowledge or gap of understanding gives rise to many missing links in our approach to address the issue of terrorism and human bombings in Pakistan. Resultantly, the law-enforcement agencies are deprived of any scholarly advice and insight into the underlying causes of terrorism, the characteristics and tactics of terrorists, and the organization, structure, sustainability and finances of terrorist groups. At times, the lack of proper investigation and poor interrogation and prosecution lead to faulty findings and thus make the job of the researchers difficult to analyse and theorize the subject matter for a more incisive and value free understanding. I suggest a better working amongst the officials of law-enforcing wings and recommend a meaningful, verifiable and authentic research by academics. An indigenous research in Pakistan will be a more relevant document for all stakeholders of the 'war on terror'.

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