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Title:

The Use of Family Networks in Suicide Terrorism: A Case Study of the 2018 Surabaya Attacks

Abstract

This article investigates the use of family networks in suicide terrorism using the 2018 Surabaya suicide attacks as a case study. The Surabaya attacks were the first case in the region that involved entire family networks including parents and their young children. The main aim of the article is to provide an understanding of the use of family networks in suicide terrorism particularly that of women and children and explore the implications that it has for the region. It is argued that there are numerous advantages of using women and children in suicide terrorism which will continue to be exploited by terrorist groups. A simplified model of motivating factors for suicide attackers is proposed and it is found that the three main motivating factors are ideology, socio-cultural factors and personal crises. The Surabaya case shows that individuals may be motivated to carry out suicide attacks primarily by a misconstrued religious ideology rather than motivations that are nationalistic in nature. The Surabaya case is not an isolated case and the use of family networks is likely to be a growing trend in future suicide attacks.

Keywords: Family networks, women, children, suicide terrorism, Surabaya attacks

Word count: 9,952 words

Introduction

This article uses the case study of the 2018 Surabaya attacks to discuss the use of family networks particularly the role of women and children in suicide terrorism. This has proven to be a dangerous new trend that poses a significant threat to the region.

The use of women and children in suicide terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Women and children have been used in suicide attacks by various terror groups in the past. Similarly, numerous suicide and terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by members of the same family. For example, six out of the nineteen 9/11 terrorists were brothers. In 2013, former leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and founder of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Abu Musab al-Zarqawi dispatched his own father-in-law, Yassin Jarrad to carry out a suicide attack outside the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Baghdad that killed prominent Shiite cleric Ayatollah Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim (Hafez, 2014, p. 438). The 2013 Boston bombings were carried out by the Tsarnaev brothers; Dzhokhar and Tamerlan.[1] Both of them were lone wolf attackers who were heavily influenced by Al-Qaeda's ideology. The 2015 Paris terror attacks were carried out by an ISIS cell that involved the Abdesalam brothers; Salah and Brahim. Similarly, the 2016 suicide bombing attacks in Brussels were carried out by another ISIS cell that involved the Bakroui brothers; Khalid and Brahim El Bakroui (Sharma & Vitkovskaya, 2016).

Apart from siblings, husband-wife teams too have been involved in carrying out attacks. In November 2005, Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi and her husband, Ali Hussein Ali al-Shamari, both belonging to an Al-Qaeda cell attempted to carry out a suicide bomb attack at the Radisson Hotel in Amman (Alexander, 2019). Sajida's vest failed to detonate but Hussein's

[1] The brothers did not carry out a suicide attack in this case but manufactured and planted the bombs.

bomb detonated killing 57 and injuring 110 (Fattah & Slackman, 2005). The 2019 Sri Lanka Easter attacks is another example. Two of the eight suicide bombers, Inshaf and Ilham Ibrahim were brothers (Amarasingam, 2019, p. 1). Ilham's wife, Fatima Ibrahim who was also part of the network blew herself up killing three of her young sons when the Sri Lankan forces raided their housing complex in the suburbs of Colombo (Amarasingam, 2019, p. 1). The 2019 Jolo suicide attacks in Philippines were also carried out by a couple, Rullie Rian Zeke and his wife, Ulfah Handayani Saleh who were members of ISIS-affliated Indonesian terror group Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) (Santos, 2019). The August 2020 twin suicide bombings in Jolo were carried out by the wives of slain Abu Sayaf militants, Abu Talha and Norman Lasuca (Nasir & Yaoren, 2020).

The abovementioned examples are cases of 'segmented' family networks, where only a few members of the family unit were involved in carrying out the attacks. However, the 2018 Surabaya attacks was one that involved entire family networks; involving both parents and their young children. The aim of this article is to study this new trend using the 2018 Surabaya attacks as a novel case study and provide a brief analysis of the implications it has for the future in Indonesia as well as the region.

This article is divided into three parts. The first part covers the theoretical aspects of suicide terrorism. This section provides a preceding theoretical base for the discussion of the case study in mention by discussing the reasons for which groups may use suicide terrorism as a tactic, the advantages of using women and children as suicide attackers and the motivating factors that may drive individuals to engage in suicide terrorism. A simplified model of motivating factors is proposed. The second part looks at the case of the 2018 Surabaya attacks in

detail. The final part of the article is a brief analysis on the attacks and the implications it has for the region in the future.

Methodology

This article is written based on a study that was undertaken as a deep-dive or in-depth case study. The methodology of case studies has generated some debate among academics with regards to its efficacy. Abercrombie et al. (1984) in the Dictionary of Sociology state that the case study method does not provide any reliable information about the broader class and is only useful at the preliminary stages of the study since it provides a hypothesis which may be tested against a broader sample. Psychologists Campbell & Stanley (1966) state that case studies "have a total absence of control as to be of almost no scientific value….Any appearance of absolute knowledge, or intrinsic knowledge about singular isolated objects, is found to be illusory upon analysis" (Campbell & Stanley, 1966, p. 6-7).

Despite the above arguments, case studies cannot be dismissed completely. The case study research methodology does have its own benefits to academic research particularly in cases of 'black swan events'. This was an analogy introduced by Austrian-British philosopher, Karl Popper, who famously proposed the example of a theory that proposed all swans are white. Having said that, the supposed observation of a single black swan would falsify the theory and merit further investigation. This analogy was linked to the idea of 'falsification', where if one, singular observation does not fit the proposition, it is falsified and has to be revised (Popper, 1959, p. 10). This is an example of the benefit of using the case study approach.

Many discoveries in the natural sciences have been based on the use of singular case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006). For example, the discovery of a constant acceleration due to gravity

which was independent of the mass of an object by Galileo Galilei was not based on experiments involving large sample sizes but a just a single experiment or case study.

Flyberg (2006) refutes five common misunderstandings about the efficacy of the case study as a research methodology which includes the fact that theoretical, context-independent knowledge is more valuable than context-dependent, practical knowledge and one cannot generalize from a single case. He argues that context-dependent knowledge is more valuable than universal theories and states that the formal generalizations in scientific method is overvalued whereas ‘the force of example’ is underestimated. He concludes by saying that

> *….the case study is a necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology* (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 241).

Walton (1992), Kuhn (1987) and Eysenck (1976) agree with Flyberg’s arguments in that the case study remains a viable research methodology that does provide useful insights. It is believed that this study which is based on a case study would provide an in-depth analysis of the 2018 Surabaya suicide attacks in the hope of providing a greater understanding of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism in general. This case study has already shown that traditional theories of suicide terrorism such as that proposed by Robert Pape need to be extended to include a purely, religiously-motivated dimension.

One may further question if this case study may be generalized to the wider, global arena. Although this is a localized event, the ideological factors that drove the attackers in the Surabaya case transcend boundaries and is independent of geographical location. It may be the common

factor that motivates any individual in any other country and thus, this study may provide valuable insights that may have a wider, global reach.

Part 1: Theory of Suicide Terrorism

It is known among terrorism scholarship that there has been no universally accepted definition of the term ‘terrorism’ till date (Ganor, 2005; Hoffman, 2017). Likewise, the term ‘suicide terrorism’ is one has not been universally defined. Moghadam (2006) argues that there are two categories of definitions for suicide terrorism, i.e. broad and narrow.

The narrow definition of suicide terrorism sets the death of the perpetrator as a precondition for the success of the mission and assumes that the act of dying and killing occur simultaneously (Moghadam, 2006, p. 17-18). Similarly, Ganor (2000) defines suicide terrorism as “an operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator”(Ganor, 2000, p. 6). An important point to note here is that an attack can only be considered a suicide attack if the attacker is fully aware of the fact that the completion of the attack is contingent upon the death of the attacker. The attacker is in a psychological state of ‘tunnel vision’ i.e. if he or she enters one end of the tunnel and decides to march to the other end to fulfil the mission, his or her’s death is essential (Ganor, 2000, p. 7). This has to be differentiated with attacks where there is a finite possibility of the attacker coming out alive. For example, in cases where an attacker may carry out a shooting with full knowledge that he may be killed upon usage of all his ammunition or may even be wearing a suicide vest in the event of being apprehended by security forces, these may not be considered a suicide attack as the attack would have been successful even without the death of the attacker (Ganor, 2000, p. 7). Scholars Martha Crenshaw and Yoram Schweitzer agree to this category of definitions which presupposes

the death of the perpetrator as a requirement for the success of the attack (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 21; Schweitzer, 2002, p. 28). Bloom (2005) subscribes to the same category of definition as she states, "The premeditated certain death of the perpetrator is the precondition for the success of the attack" (Bloom, 2005, p. 76).

The second, broader category of suicide terrorism does not presuppose the death of the perpetrator as a condition for success of the mission but focuses more on the self-sacrificial willingness of the perpetrator, defining suicide attacks as ones where the perpetrator professes a willingness to die regardless of whether he or she actually dies in the process (Moghadam, 2006, p. 18). For example, Merari (1998) defines suicide terrorism as acts characterized by the perpetrators' " readiness to die in the process of committing a terrorist act" (Merari, 1998, p. 192).

For the purposes of this article, the narrower, operational definition of suicide terrorism is used as the attackers in this case study had shown an intentional willingness to sacrifice themselves and knew for sure that the success of the operation depended on their deaths.

Why is Suicide Terrorism Used?

Pedahzur (2005) notes that suicide terrorism is normally used by groups in asymmetric conflicts where the group is in a state of real or perceived inferiority against a stronger enemy and all other means of fighting the enemy have been exhausted. He further states that suicide terrorism is mainly used in territorial struggles and in situations where there is no socio-cultural resistance to the idea of self-sacrifice (Pedahzur, 2005, p. 28-30). This is captured in the words of the founder of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Dr. Fathi al-Shaqaqi who said, "Martyrdom actions

will escalate in the face of all pressures. . . . [they] are a realistic option in confronting the unequal balance of power" (Fathi al-Shaqaqi, 1995).

A similar argument is made by Pape (2005). He states that suicide terrorism is mainly used by groups in campaigns of national liberation against foreign occupiers (Pape, 2005, p. 43). He further argues that the similarities between all suicide campaigns by groups are their secular and strategic goal of compelling democracies to withdraw their military installations from the group's homeland, of which religion plays no part other than recruitment in some instances (Pape, 2005, p. 63).

Pape (2005) further looks at suicide terrorism as a three-step process. According to his framework, the causal logic of suicide terrorism is divided into the strategic, social and individual level. The strategic logic for a group to use suicide terrorism is political coercion. Pape says that "suicide terrorist campaigns are primarily nationalistic, not religious, nor are they particularly Islamic" and they are "an extreme strategy for national liberation" aimed at foreign occupation and troops that pose a threat to their (terrorist group's) homeland. One may argue if a defence of the homeland constitutes an act of terrorism. As mentioned earlier, there is an absence of a one-size-fits-all definition for terrorism. However, most accepted definitions accept the fact that terrorism is the use or threat of violence in pursuit of a political goal. Hoffman (2017) defines terrorism as the "deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change" (Hoffman, 2017, p. 69). An act of national liberation from occupying forces in itself constitutes political change. Therefore, acts of violence in the name of national liberation, does fall within the realm of an act of terror as it is a deliberate use of violence in pursuit of a political goal.

The social logic of terrorism is to garner mass support for the political goal that the group is pursuing (Pape, 2005, p. 44-45). Finally, the individual logic of suicide terrorism is altruism or self-sacrifice as a duty for the good of the people (Pape, 2005, p. 44).

Bloom (2005) agrees with Pape's argument in that suicide terrorism is "coercive bargaining" focused at the enemy to drive them out of the homeland, however, she does not discount the fact that the tactic is also used as an outbidding tool to garner support and enhance the organisations prestige due to the competition among rival organisations who use similar tactics (Bloom, 2005, p. 94). Another point to note is that while Pape's argument identifies nationalist-inspired motivations, it fails to consider religiously-inspired motivations for suicide terrorism (Bloom, 2005, p. 84).

There are a number of reasons why suicide terrorism is used by terrorist groups. Suicide terrorism generates a large amount of publicity which is in fact the main goal of terrorist groups carrying out suicide attacks. Owing to the large number of casualties and the dramatic effect of suicide bombings, it is always bound to create wide media coverage (Ganor, 2000, p. 8). The media coverage in turn carries with it a substantial psychological impact on the government and the public (Pedahzur, 2005, p. 27).

Secondly, suicide terrorism is cost effective and technologically primitive (Ganor, 2000, p. 8). Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are relatively easy to make with components that are cheap and readily available. A basic knowledge of chemistry and electrical circuitry is all that is required. A popular explosive that has been used in many suicide attacks including the Surabaya attacks is TATP (Triacetone Triperoxide) also known as 'Mother of Satan' which can be concocted with common household products like hair bleach and nail polish remover (Callimachi et al., 2016).

Suicide terrorism also ensures a high casualty rate and is one of the most highly lethal forms of terrorism. It has taken more lives than any other form of terrorism. Between 1980 and 2001, over 70% of all deaths due to terrorism were the result of suicide terrorism despite the fact that suicide terrorism accounted for only 3% of all terrorist attacks (Pape & Feldman, 2010, p. 5). The 9/11 attacks and the 2002 Bali bombings are clear proofs of this. With proper concealment of the explosives, 'human bombs' are able to select and penetrate heavily populated target locations and breach security perimeters fairly easily before detonating. Suicide attacks also have a high success rate with almost guaranteed success as compared to other forms of attacks (Ganor, 2000, p. 8). The only possible cause of failure would be technical issues relating to faulty explosives. In order to mitigate this, many attackers employ secondary detonation capabilities to enable other members to detonate the device in case of the bomber deciding to change his or her mind at the last moment. It can be said that once the suicide bomber embarks on his mission, the success of the mission is almost guaranteed as detection of suicide terrorists are an extremely difficult enterprise. Even if the bomber is close to or suspects detection, he or she can press the button and detonate.

The Use of Women and Children in Suicide Terrorism

Between 1969-2000, the majority of female suicide attacks were carried out by ethno-nationalist groups (Davis, 2013, p. 281). Post 2000, there has been an increase in the use of women by religiously motivated groups (Davis, 2013, p. 281) (particularly Islamist groups). Examples of groups that have employed women are the Hezbollah in Lebanon; Chechen Black Widows (CBW) in Chechnya; Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Fatah in Palestine; Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka; Boko Haram in Nigeria and now recently al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Children have also been used in suicide terrorism

primarily by Boko Haram in Nigeria and Palestine (Nnam et al., 2018; Pedahzur, 2005). It has to be noted, however, that the case of Boko Haram is an exception. This is because Boko Haram employs tactics of kidnapping and coercion in order to force women and children into carrying out the suicide attacks. Most of the women and children who are involved in Boko Haram's terror campaign do not participate in it out of their own will and rational choice and can therefore be considered to be victims of terrorism rather than perpetrators of terrorism (Nnam et al., 2018, p. 37-38). An example will be the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping case where 276 girls were kidnapped by the Boko Haram from a school in Chibok, Nigeria and were forcibly indoctrinated and persuaded into carrying out suicide bombing attacks (Bloom & Matfess, 2016; Nnam et al., 2018, p. 36).

The use of women and children in suicide terrorism provides a number of advantages that can be divided into tactical and strategic (Turner, 2016, p. 16; Zedalis, 2004, p. 8-9 & 11). An empirical study by Davis (2007) shows that female suicide bombers are more lethal than male suicide bombers. The study showed that the average number of victims of female suicide attacks between 2000 and 2005 was 57 as compared to the average number of victims of international terrorist attacks during the same period which was 10.89 (Davis, 2013, p. 282).[2] This shows that suicide attacks carried out by women are approximately five times more lethal than international terrorist attacks. At the tactical level, the use of women and children does not arouse suspicion as they are commonly regarded as non-combatants. Therefore, they are more likely to be able to pass through security checks more easily than their male counterparts. Bloom states that, "The

[2] The number of victims in this study includes both injuries and fatalities.

use of the least likely suspect is the most likely tactical adaptation for a terrorist group under scrutiny" (Bloom, 2007, p. 100).

Secondly, women are able to conceal suicide vests easily under their clothing particularly in Islamic countries. The *abaya* (worn by the female attackers in Surabaya) usually worn by most women in these countries provides much room to conceal the vest and explosives without arousing much notice from the public and security forces. Women also have the advantage as they are able to conceal explosives by faking a pregnancy. In most conservative Muslim countries, security forces are hesitant to subject women to rigorous body checks as these are matters of high sensitivity. One is highly unlikely to ask a woman to remove her clothes or hijab[3] as compared to a man.

At the strategic level, the use of women and children is highly likely to attract more publicity and media attention. In fact, attacks by women generate eight times more media attention than attacks by men, largely because women are not expected to carry out these forms of violence (Bloom, 2007, p. 100). This in turn leaves a deeper psychological impact on the society and the government. As Claudet states, "Suicide attacks are done for effect, and the more dramatic the effect, the stronger the message; thus a potential interest on the part of some groups in recruiting women" (Claudet, 2002).

The new trend of using entire family networks as seen in Surabaya poses a new type of threat as compared to using segmented family networks. The kinship bonds that are involved make defection from the cell and attack plans difficult as it would be tantamount to betraying one's own family (Ismail, 2007, p. 8). In this case, defection from the group becomes a "double

[3] The hijab is a female head covering/veil worn by Muslim women. Asking a woman to remove the hijab is seen as derogatory and at times, outraging the modesty of a woman.

betrayal – betraying the cause and betraying one's family" (Hafez, 2016, p. 16). Disengagement from familial cells becomes more difficult as one risks severing ties with their own family members (Hwang & Schulze, 2018, p. 921). There is also the issue of peer pressure and a lack of viable exit options for younger members of a family unit involved in a terror plot. Jones (2018) notes that one of the kids involved in the Surabaya attacks did not buy into his parents persuasions to join the attacks and was found by neighbours to be "sobbing uncontrollably before the family left on its death mission, but in the end, he went along." It may just be that he did not have any other choice as his life depended on his parents due to his age.

The atmosphere of trust, confidentiality and secrecy would also mean that detection by the intelligence and security services is much more difficult (Basit, 2019). With segmented family networks or cells, there is always a likelihood that other members of the family who are not involved with the planning of the attack may divulge information. This vulnerability is somewhat reduced when the entire family network is involved.

Apart from difficulty of detection and a reduced likelihood of defection from the cell, familial networks facilitate recruitment into a cell. Hafez (2016) highlights three important reasons for why this is so. Firstly, he argues that it is easier to recruit from people who have a shared sense of collective identity rather than those who don't (Hafez, 2016, p.16). The familial relationships automatically espouses a collective identity among people which make them easier to recruit.

Secondly, is the factor of trust and commitment that is involved when members of a group engage in violence. Members who have familial ties are most likely to be more trustworthy and committed to each other and to carry out the act as compared to those who don't share the same familial ties and 'emotional camaraderie' (Hafez, 2016, p. 16). As for the latter

case, more time and effort is needed for them to forge trust, commitment and collective identity before engaging in violence or carrying out an attack. Thirdly, tight-knit groups present the opportunity for recruitment 'en-bloc'. Once a few individuals decide to 'take the leap of faith', others within the same group or family will find it difficult to stay behind and be left out (Hafez, 2016, p. 16). Kinship networks also reduce the effects of cognitive dissonance, provide an extra layer of security as "political ideas are infused with emotional commitments" and "narrative fidelity is enhanced by actual brotherly fidelity" (Hafez, 2016, p. 15-16).

What Motivates an Individual to Become a Suicide Terrorist?

It is important to note that one must differentiate clearly the difference between leaders of terror groups who sanction suicide attacks for strategic reasons and suicide attackers themselves who may be driven by nonmaterialist, trivial factors (Ramakrishna, 2009, p. 157). At an individual level, there are a varying number of factors that motivate people to become suicide terrorists. It is nearly impossible to define a clear profile of a suicide terrorist. Suicide terrorists are neither suicidal individuals (Townsend, 2007) nor are they insane. Many of them can be described as normal people. Pape (2005) states that

> *"The bottom line, then, is that suicide attackers are not mainly poor, uneducated, immature religious zealots or social losers. Instead, suicide attackers are normally well-educated workers from both religious and secular backgrounds. Especially given their education, they resemble the kind of politically conscious individuals who might join a grassroots movement more than they do wayward adolescents or religious fanatics"* (Pape, 2005).

Post (1990) highlights the importance of group identity. He states that terrorists tend to submerge their own identities and this in turn leads to the formation of the "group mind" (Post, 1990). As a result, the group identity becomes more important than the individual identity, there is a heightened sense of shared grievances against an out-group and this leads to aggressive behaviour towards the out-group (Ramakrishna, 2004, p. 39). The group will then isolate themselves, by keeping out from "competing social networks and constructions of reality," in order to reinforce these aggressive behaviours (Ramakrishna, 2004, p. 41).

A simplified model of the motivating factors that lead an individual to become a suicide terrorist is as follows. This model does not account for those who are forced into carrying out attacks like the girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram.

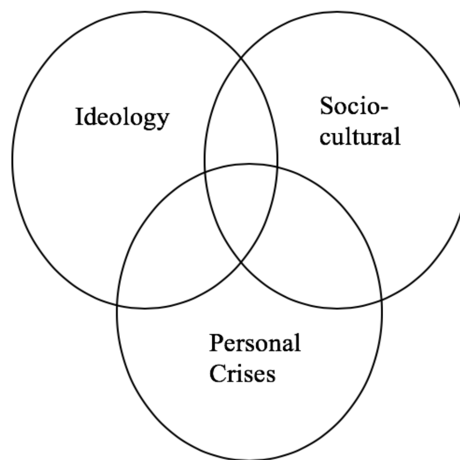

Figure 1: Simplified model of motivating factors for suicide terrorist

The three main motivating factors are ideology, socio-cultural factors and personal crises. There are three types of ideologies that are common driving factors: nationalistic, nationalistic with religious drivers and religious. Groups such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka used a nationalistic ideology to radicalise and indoctrinate members of their suicide brigade. The LTTE, who

pioneered the use of suicide terrorism as a strategic tactic and carried out more suicide attacks than any other group was a purely secular group with no religious motivations (Pape & Feldman, 2010, p. 291-292). Their primary goal was the establishment of an independent, sovereign state for the Tamils known as the Tamil Eelam.

Members of the Middle Eastern and Palestinian groups such as Hezbollah, Fatah, Hamas, PIJ and al-Qaeda (to a certain extent) were driven by a nationalistic ideology that was fused with an Islamist narrative. Their primary goal was to drive out all foreign forces and form a sovereign state. Islam was used as a means of recruitment, indoctrination and a tool to obtain religious legitimacy for carrying out suicide attacks. Hezbollah was one of the earliest groups to pioneer the use of suicide terrorism as a tactic in the 1980s. Their use of suicide terrorism was primarily motivated at ending foreign occupation by the American, Israeli and French military forces in Lebanon. Religious justification for committing suicide is clearly highlighted in a speech delivered by the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah in 2001 who said, "sacrificing life in the holy name of Allah is the weapon entrusted by Allah into the hands of this nation" (Pedahzur, 2005, p. 53). Hamas, PIJ and Fatah had a similar agenda with their suicide campaigns which was used as a means for liberating Palestine and ending Israeli occupation. Although Fatah is deemed to be secular and nationalistic in its ideology, there are religious elements that are fused into its justification for suicide terrorism. Fatah uses terms such as *shaheed* or martyr to describe its suicide bombers; and *jihad* and *ishtishad* (martyrdom seeking operations) to describe its suicide bombing operations (Fatah - Nablus Branch, 2017). This clearly highlights an Islamist undertone in the justification for their suicide operations.

Al-Qaeda began their suicide terrorism campaign in 1998 with the American embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. The central theme of Al-Qaeda's ideology with regards to

suicide terrorism is also the concept of *ishtishad* (martyrdom; self-sacrifice in the name of God) (Schweitzer, 2006, p. 132). In Osama bin Laden's worldview, the Muslims were under constant persecution and occupation by the Jewish-Crusader alliance, i.e. America, Israel and its allies, and suicide terrorism was employed as a weapon to compel them to stop persecuting Muslims and leave Muslim lands. Therefore, Al-Qaeda can be said to be driven by a global religio-nationalistic ideology that fights for the liberation of the lands of the global Muslim *ummah* (community) from Western forces (America, Israel and its allies).

Finally, in the case of ISIS, while there may be some cases that are driven by a religio-nationalistic ideology as al-Qaeda, the current trend that is observed with some ISIS members is that they are driven primarily by a misconstrued Islamist ideology involving an end of times narrative and martyrdom. They believe that the world is coming to an end and the only way into heaven is to carry out 'martyrdom operations' (suicide attacks). They also believe that those who participate in suicide attacks will be granted an entry into paradise, salvation for themselves and 70 other family members and 72 virgins in Heaven (Abu al-Tirmidhi (824-892), n.d.).[4] This idea has also been used by al-Qaeda to entice individuals to carry out attacks as is expressed in the pre-suicide will of a suicide terrorist by the name of Muhammad bin-'Abdul Wahab al-Muqit who carried out an attack in Saudi Arabia:

> *Young members of Islam hurry and set out on Jihad, hurry to the Garden of Eden which holds what the eye has never seen, the ear has never heard, and the human heart has never desired! Do not forget the reward that has been prepared by Allah for a martyr. The messenger of Allah, may peace and prayer be upon him, said: "The martyr is*

[4] Al-Tirmidhi was a collector of hadith (collection of words and actions of Prophet Muhammad) from Termez in modern day Uzbekistan and author of *Jami al-Tirmidhi*, one of the six canonical collections of Prophetic traditions used in Sunni Islam.

> *granted seven gifts from Allah: he is forgiven at the first drop of his blood; he sees his status in Paradise; he is dressed in the clothes of Imam; he is safe from the punishment of the grave; he will be safe from the great fear of the judgment; a crown of honour, with a gem that is greater than the entire world and the contamination in it, will be placed on his head; he will marry 72 dark eyed maidens; and he will intercede on behalf of 70 members of his family"* (Wahab al-Muqit, 2003 in Schweitzer, 2006, p. 136).

These perceived eternal rewards attract many towards carrying out suicide attacks and act as a pull factor. Greenland et. al (2020) refer to this as the infinite afterlife utility payoff, i.e. perceived rewards that the suicide attack will receive in return for taking his or her life. This is the payoff for his or her's actions. However, they argue that belief in the afterlife alone is insufficient. It is a mixture of this with a strong political/ideological conviction along with additional factors of "oppressive social circumstances where life is hard and there is little hope for change" which provides a sufficient justification to die for the cause (Greenland et al., 2020, p. 99).

Socio-cultural aspects involves a culture of normalization of violence, glorification of martyrdom and peer pressure. An example would be suicide terrorists from Palestine. The fact that Palestinian society has glorified martyrdom through posters, ceremonies, songs and films dedicated to suicide bombers has attracted a large number of youth to give themselves up to become a *shaheed* (martyr) (Erez & Berko, 2014, p. 223). These youth tend to look up to *shaheeds* who have taken part in suicide missions as heroes due to these propaganda campaigns. They feel it is a path to fame and prestige for them and their families. Some children have also cited peer pressure as a motivation, the fact that they did not want to be left out as all their friends were volunteering (Erez & Berko, 2014, p. 223).

Personal crises such as loss of family members, revenge resulting from that, poverty and repentance for past deviant behaviour such as alcoholism is also another category of motivating factors. For example, the primary motivation for members of the CBW were the loss of their husbands and male relatives who died fighting the Russians (hence the name 'Chechen Black Widows'). The same applies to members of Palestinian groups. Financial rewards given to suicide bombers and their families by groups such as Hamas and LTTE are also a motivating factor (Erez & Berko, 2014, p. 219) particularly for those who live in poverty.

Many suicide bombers under this category have also cited very trivial reasons. An interesting example would the cases of failed Indonesian suicide bombers Ika Puspitasari and Dian Yulia Novi. Both the women were domestic workers working abroad who joined ISIS cells and were arrested in December 2016 for plotting suicide attacks. Ika was involved in a suicide attack plot in Bali while Dian was involved in a suicide attack plot targeting the Presidential Palace in Jakarta (IPAC, 2017).

As for the case of Ika, one of the reasons she had volunteered to take part in a suicide mission to seek redemption from alcoholism (Kelsey-Sugg & Sommer, 2018). Apart from that, she had been contributing money to ISIS but once she lost her job, she had decided to give herself up and volunteer for a suicide mission as she no longer had a source of income to continue her financial jihad (Kelsey-Sugg & Sommer, 2018). The personal crises that she was facing was her alcoholism and the fact that she had lost her job.

As for Dian's case, there are two aspects to her motivation for volunteering to be a suicide bomber. Having been radicalised online whilst working in Taiwan, Dian had been indoctrinated with a salafi-jihadi ideology and wanted to participate in jihad to avenge the death of fellow Muslims in Syria and other conflict areas (IPAC, 2017, p. 22). However, another

reason for her decision to become a suicide bomber was because she felt that by participating in a suicide mission, she could save her ailing father. Dian had found out that her father had visited a witch doctor in the village to seek treatment for his ailments (IPAC, 2017, p. 22). She had already become indoctrinated at that point and believed that her father had committed a grave sin which was considered to be *shirk* or the sin of idolatry in Islam (IPAC, 2017, p. 22). Therefore, Dian felt that the only way that she could save him was to sacrifice herself in a suicide operation as that would enable her to seek salvation for her family members as well.

Carrying out suicide attacks is a highly complex psychological phenomenon. It has to be noted that at times, the motivations of a particular terrorist group to employ suicide terrorism as a tactic at the strategic level is very much different from the individual motivations of the actual bombers who carry out the suicide attacks. Each suicide terrorist's individual motivating factors are different. They may fall into any of the regions of the Venn diagram above. Some may be motivated by one, some may be motivated by a mixture of two and some may even be motivated by a complex mixture of all three. The suicide terrorist may or may not be motivated by the strategic goals of the group they belong to.

Part 2: The Surabaya Attacks: Background and Overview

The attacks comprised five separate bombing incidents perpetrated by three families. The first string of attacks were carried out by Dita Operiarto, a candlenut oil producer from Surabaya and his family. On the morning of 13th May 2018, a Sunday, Dita's wife, Puji Restu and their two daughters, Fadhila (12) and Pamela (9) blew themselves up at the Indonesian Christian Church on Jalan Diponegro.[5] Their sons, Yusuf (18) and Firman (16) rode their motorcycle into the

[5] *Jalan* translates to road or street in the Indonesian language. The above means Diponegro Street.

Santa Maria church compound on Jalan Ngagel Madya and blew themselves up, while Dita detonated a car bomb at the Pentecostal Church on Jalan Arjuno. The attacks killed 19 people including the bombers and 41 more were injured (Schulze, 2018, p. 1).

The second incident occurred later on the same day when a bomb exploded prematurely at an apartment complex in the Sidoarjo area, close to Surabaya. The apartment complex belonged to Anton Ferdianto, a close friend and accomplice of Dita. The blast killed Anton's wife, Puspitasari and one of his sons, Hilta (17) (Schulze, 2018, p. 1). He himself was shot by the police who raided the unit shortly after. Three of his other daughters, Farisa (11), Garida (10) and Ainur (15) survived (Prasetio, 2018; Schulze, 2018, p. 1).

The third and final incident occurred the next morning, on 14th of May 2018. The attack was carried by Tri Murtiono and his wife, Tri Ernawati along with their two sons, aged 18 and 14 and their daughter, aged 7. They arrived at the Surabaya police HQ on two separate motorbikes. They stopped briefly at the entrance's security checkpoint before detonating themselves. The daughter, who did not have any explosives strapped onto her and was seated in between two of the bombers on one of the motorbikes survived the blast. The four bombers were killed and 10 people were injured in the attacks (Faridz et al., 2018).

The main perpetrators in the attack namely Dita, Anton and Tri were part of a terror cell belonging to the ISIS affiliated group, Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD). The formation of JAD was a result of Indonesian ISIS leader, Aman Abdurrahman's efforts at uniting all pro-ISIS organisations in Indonesia together under one banner and to make Indonesia a province of the Islamic State in the region (IPAC, 2018, p. 2).

JAD has a hierarchical structure, inherited from Abu Baakar Bashir's Jemaah Ansharul Tauhid (JAT) group who joined forces with JAD in 2015 (IPAC, 2018, p. 2). The structure consists of central board (*markaziyah*), followed by units at the provincial and district levels (*wilayah* and *mudiriyah*, respectively) (IPAC, 2018, p. 3). At each level there is a military wing (*askari*) tasked to carry out *jihad* operations (*amaliyah*) (IPAC, 2018, p. 3).

Dita was recruited into JAD by Budi Satrio, the *amir* (leader) of the Surabaya/Sidoarjo *mudiriyah* which was part of the JAD East Java division. The others, Tri and Anton too were members of the group and attended lectures and meetings organised by JAD. They were students of Khalid Abu Bakar Besleme, a preacher from Surabaya known for his strict implementation of Islamic Law (IPAC, 2018, p. 4-5). The families attended JAD lectures together and their children were exposed to jihad ideologies. The children were told bedtime stories about martyrdom and were encouraged to watch ISIS videos before going to sleep (IPAC, 2018, p. 4-5).

Owing to his bomb-making skills and religious knowledge, Dita was soon made the *amir* of JAD Surabaya. The main ideological motivation for the attacks was an apocalyptic, end of times idea that Dita became preoccupied with (IPAC, 2018, p. 6). He believed that the end of times was imminent and that the redeemer of Islam, Imam Mahdi would appear after a 40-day *dukhan* (dark cloud) enveloped the Earth. Most of the population of the world will die in the *dukhan* except for the people in the blessed land of Syria. Tri, Anton and their families too believed in this concept. As they could not go to Syria, they believed that the only way they would be granted salvation and direct passage to heaven was to carry out a suicide operation before the *dukhan* (IPAC, 2018, p. 6).

Beginning in October 2017, Dita began bomb construction in his home. Dita's candlenut oil business provided cover for the procurement of chemicals for the bombs (Nasir & Yaoren,

2020). Over the next five months, Dita, Tri, Anton and Budi made nearly 100 pipe bombs and some 64 'mug bombs' (IPAC, 2018, p. 6). These were the first suicide attacks in Indonesia perpetrated by female and children suicide bombers and the first involving the entire family unit, i.e. parents and children.

Part 3: Analysis – A new trend or a one-off occurrence?

The Surabaya attackers were clearly primarily motivated by a radical, post-apocalyptic Islamist ideology involving the idea of salvation and martyrdom. Their secondary motives may have been to prove that ISIS still had an impact and revenge for police arrests of JAD leaders. This places the attackers within the ideological category of the model proposed earlier with the ideology clearly being religiously-motivated in nature.

This attack seems to contradict Pape's arguments that suicide attacks are used purely as a coercive tool against foreign occupation and a weapon of national liberation rather than for religious purposes. Instead, it shows that suicide terrorism may be motivated primarily by religious ideology as well. Pape and Feldman (2010) state the following:

> *"Instead of religion, what over 95% of all suicide terrorist attacks before 2004 had in common was a strategic goal: to compel a democratic state to withdraw combat forces that are threatening territory that the terrorists' prize. From Lebanon to Sri Lanka to the West Bank to Chechnya, the central goal of every suicide terrorist campaign has been to resist military occupation by a democracy"* (Pape & Feldman, 2010, p. 9).

Whilst this is clearly the case for groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, PIJ and even al-Qaeda (to a certain extent), this study does not take into account of groups such as ISIS and its affiliates as the study was conducted in 2010 before the rise of ISIS. These religio-nationalistic groups had

fundamentalist Islamic ideologies but these ideologies were mainly used as a driver or catalyst to gain legitimacy for the use of suicide attacks to achieve their primary goal which was national liberation. ISIS's ideology, on the other hand, can be viewed as having three levels: the first two being localised ideological narratives premised upon the sectarian struggle between Sunnis and Shias and the uprising against the Assad regime for their persecution of Sunnis in Syria (Ali, 2014). The third level is a more global, transnational idea premised upon the formation of an Islamic Caliphate as a result of the transmogrification of the first two localised levels with a misconstrued understanding of the Islamic religion and the Quran. While there are elements of national liberation, ISIS (and al-Qaeda's) ideology vis-à-vis suicide terrorism is primarily based on a misinterpretation of Islamic concepts such as *inghimas* (attacking the enemy in a manner where the likelihood of survival is low), *ishtishadi* (martyrdom) and *jihad* (Hassan, 2017). This trend can be seen as an extension of the arguments made by Pape (2005) and Pape and Feldman (2010) which seem to point towards the fact that suicide terrorism is primarily motivated by a goals of national liberation. As pointed earlier, their theories miss out the religious aspect and this incident proves the need to take into account that aspect.

As in the case of the Surabaya attacks, while JAD's strategic goals may have been political in nature based on the concept of *takfir,* which is the accusation and declaration of another Muslim as an apostate and the need to fight against the secular, *thaghut* (oppressor) government (Jerard & Arianti, 2018), the Surabaya attackers were not primarily motivated by these goals. The attacks proved that suicide terrorism can be motivated primarily by a religious (in this case, post-apocalyptic Islamist) idea.

The decentralised structure of many ISIS-affiliated groups such as JAD may also have played a part. The Surabaya attackers acted as an autonomous cell with Dita as the leader. They

did not need to get any form of approval for the bombings from higher up (IPAC, 2018, p. 1). This shows a shift in process as compared to more traditional groups like the Palestinian ones where the decision to carry out attacks had to go through three stages in the organizational process i.e. strategic decision making by the leadership; recruitment; and finally, training and carrying out the attack (Pedahzur, 2005).

The use of women and young children, i.e. parents weaponizing their own children in Surabaya came as a new trend and big shock to the public, counter-terrorism officials and even those within extremist circles. The attacks received mixed reviews from extremists; some supported them while others condemned the use of young children. JAD leader, Aman Abdurrahman in a recorded statement from prison stated:

> "*The actions of two mothers who guided their children to blow themselves up in the church parking lot could not have been undertaken by people who understand the teachings of Islam and the demands of jihad. They could not come from sane people…. This was a cruel act under the pretext of jihad"* (IPAC, 2018, p. 8).

On the other hand, ISIS-linked *al-Fatihin* magazine praised the attacks saying that it was a successful martyrdom operation. It said that Islam is the superior religion and the rest of the *kafir* or infidels (anyone other than Muslims) should not be left to live in peace. It stated also that it is a religious duty to rid the lands of the *kafirs* and those who do that will be granted great rewards in heaven (Al-Fatihin, 28 Sya'ban 1439H, p. 9-11).

The Institute of Policy Analysis for Conflict (IPAC), in their report of the incident suggests that the use of children and families in suicide attacks is highly unlikely owing to Aman's disapproval of the attacks and similar views held by one group of jihadis. They termed it

an "idiosyncratic act carried out by a group of friends" (IPAC, 2018, p. 1). However, the fact that this event is a one-off occurrence and might not happen again cannot be discounted.

The use of family networks does indeed pose a significant threat to the region. This is due to the increasing number of Indonesian women who have joined extremist networks and are radicalised both overseas and inside Indonesia (Zaugg, 2019). A good example would be the cases of Dian and Ika mentioned earlier. Since 2015, Indonesian women have been increasingly open about expressing their admiration for women suicide bombers and have been pushing for a more active role in jihad (IPAC, 2017, p. 20).

Another issue would be the returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) from Syria and Iraq. Estimates show that there are approximately 689 Indonesian fighters still in conflict zones including Syria (Counter Extremism Project, 2020). The question remains as to the threats that these women and children pose if they are allowed to return in the future and the potential of them carrying out similar attacks in Indonesia.

Even though ISIS has been physically diminished by the security forces, its ideology continues to live on. The fact that ISIS has normalized the use of women and youth in martyrdom operations without consideration for their age (Bloom et al., 2016, p. 32) and the group's call for *jihad* among women will continue to influence individuals to carry out this form of attacks given the 'success' of the Surabaya attacks.

Pro-ISIS groups and affiliates such as JAD and Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) who continue to remain active and carry out recruitment pose a grave threat to the region (International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, 2020, p. 5). Women and children continue to be indoctrinated by pro-ISIS families in Indonesia with many of them

having undergone *i'dad*, basic physical training in preparation of *jihad* (International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, 2020, p. 10). For example, Jemaah Anshar Khilafah (JAK), a pro-ISIS group continues to recruit members from Central Java, West Java and Jakarta by organising weekly meeting sessions (International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, 2020, p. 10).

Former influential ISIS leader and Indonesian national, Bahrun Naim was a key figure in encouraging women to carry out *amaliyah* (jihad operations). He played a key role in providing financial support, instructions and encouragement to both Dian and Ika to carry out suicide attacks. In fact, it was he who wanted to use a female bomber (Dian) in the Presidential Palace attack as a new strategy (IPAC, 2017, p. 23). There is no guarantee that current leaders of terror cells in Indonesia will not be inspired by Bahrun's ideas and vision despite his death. Similarly, despite Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death, his call for *jihad fardhiyah* (individual jihad) in 2018 will reverberate strongly amongst jihadist circles for much time to come.

The 2019 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka is another testimony to the threat of the use of family networks in suicide terrorism (Gettleman et al., 2019). It has happened twice in the space of two years and there is no guarantee that it will not happen again. The threat of suicide attacks using chemical and biological agents also cannot be discounted. In November 2019, Indonesian authorities discovered a JAD cell in Cirebon, West Java that planned to carry out a suicide attack using lethal abrin poison, which is a biological agent found in rosary pea seeds (Arianti, 2019).

Conclusion

This article discusses the use of family networks in suicide terrorism using the 2018 Surabaya attacks as a case study. The Surabaya case was novel for two reasons; first it demonstrated a new

trend in terrorism whereby the perpetrators where motivated primarily by a misconstrued religious ideology as compared to the vast majority of previous suicide terrorism cases where attackers were motivated by nationalistic ideologies and liberation by foreign occupying forces; secondly it was the first case in the region which involved the use of the entire family unit including parents weaponizing their own young children. While some have argued that the use of women and children in the attacks were an isolated case that is unlikely to occur again, it is argued here that this is likely to be a new trend and should not be taken lightly given its lethality and psychological impact as well as the large number of Indonesian women involved with ISIS. As a result, governments, intelligence and counter-terrorism agencies must work together to mitigate this threat, protect the younger generation from getting involved in terrorist activities and ensure the safety and security of the region.

A measure that is often given low priority in counter-terrorism is the importance of education and awareness. Children must be taught the values of religious and racial tolerance from a young age. Topics on religious extremism should be incorporated into the curriculum to prevent the younger generation from getting sucked into deviant ideologies and enable them to differentiate between normal and extremist beliefs. Religious education and religious spaces such as mosques, madrassahs and religious schools where lectures and preaches are conducted must be regulated to prevent any radical and deviant ideologies from being propagated to the society.

With increased education and awareness comes community awareness and vigilance. The government and security forces must engage with and form a close relationship with the community. The community must be made aware of the threat of extremism in their midst and 'keep an eye' on their peers and friends. The public must be encouraged to be vigilant and report any untoward behaviour of friends or family members to the police. Education, awareness and

community vigilance are key elements in counter-terrorism efforts that should be utilised to its full potential and not overlooked.

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