

Comparative Insurgencies:  
The Role of Suicide Tactics in Iraq and Afghanistan

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In early April, heavy insurgent ground fire brought down yet another helicopter of the forces that perceive themselves to be liberators. Is the year 2007 or 1987? Are the insurgents Iraqis or Afghans? Are the liberating forces American or Soviet? In this illustrative case, the incident occurred in Iraq in 2007.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, hauntingly similar to the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. In this paper I contend that there is much insight to be gained through a comparative analysis of the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan and the anti-American insurgency in Iraq. The paper is motivated by the question: why, given the many similarities between the respective Soviet and American invasions, have the insurgencies against them produced significantly different results? While there are clear empirical differences in the size and duration of the insurgencies, I argue that the fundamental difference in insurgencies is the Iraqi use of suicide warfare.

The anti-American insurgency in Iraq is less successful than the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan because of the unsustainable Iraqi tactic of suicide warfare. This thesis is based on the following concepts: first, suicide warfare is where the insurgent's death is assured; and second, the 'success' of an insurgency is measured by the number of occupying force's casualties that leads to the overall demoralization of the force. This paper is principally concerned with how military tactics evolve. It is not strictly a policy paper. That is, the findings here should not be taken as advice to the Iraqi insurgents on how to conduct a more successful insurgency. They should also not be interpreted to mean that suicide warfare is positive for

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<sup>1</sup>“US helicopter ‘shot down’ in Iraq,” *BBC News*, Available 5 April 2007 [Online] [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/6528953.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6528953.stm)

American objectives. The cessation of war is clearly in everyone's interests. The obstacle presented by suicide warfare in Iraq, however, is militarily unique in that averting it requires societal change, not simply tactical change. Fortunately, the type of societal change required to avert suicide warfare is also the type of societal change that can foster peace-building.

This paper is in three parts: first, the argument is framed by the political science literature on the topic of collective action; second, there is an empirical and theoretical discussion of suicide warfare; and third, there is a comparative case study analysis of the Afghanistan insurgency against the Soviet Union and the Iraq insurgency against the United States. Among the variables discussed in the cases, I compare battlefield geography, the composition and tactics of the invading force, the composition and tactics of the insurgent force, exogenous actors, conflict adaptation, war costs and casualties, and the role of suicide warfare. Where Afghanistan and Iraq differ most is in war casualties and in the role of suicide warfare.

### Collective Action

The political science literature on collective action begins from the premise that politics is contentious. People join groups to accomplish objectives that they would not be able to accomplish on their own. All avenues are open to groups to attain their goals, including violence. Insurgency, therefore, is a form of collective action. Ted Gurr claims that participants in political violence value their actions as a means to express strong demands or to oppose undesirable policies.<sup>2</sup> Gurr claims that individuals turn violent when faced with increased relative deprivation.<sup>3</sup> This includes access to power-wielding political institutions.

Collective action has a feedback mechanism. Sidney Tarrow claims that as a movement

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<sup>2</sup>Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 4.

becomes more popular, the personal cost of entry for new members decreases.<sup>4</sup> That is, a person takes less of a risk when they join movements that are growing. Similarly, collective action can have a negative feedback effect whereby the movement becomes less popular over time and the personal costs and risks of remaining in the movement increase.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true in movements that resort to violence. The principle aim in resorting to violence is to become mobilized. Mobilization is the argument of Charles Tilly.<sup>6</sup> While it takes a principal injection of funds and resources to begin collective action, in order to sustain the action the movement must become “mobilized,” especially if it is violent. According to Tilly, a group is only mobilized when it achieves “collective *control* over resources, rather than the simple accretion of resources.”<sup>7</sup> Only when a group is “mobilized” in this sense can, Tilly argues, can it contend for political power.

Insurgencies can increase in popularity when they are framed as ethnic struggles. Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin find that such ethnic violence challenges the state’s claim to a monopoly on the use of violence.<sup>8</sup> The violence can also be amplified when an ethnic group is transnational and has diaspora support. However, Laitin later finds with James Fearon that ethnic and religious differences do not cause violence, but rather, these differences provide the conditions that *favor* insurgency.<sup>9</sup> This is because insurgent groups utilize ethnic identities to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 338-341.

<sup>4</sup>Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Ch. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>8</sup>Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” *Annual Review of Sociology* (Vol. 24, 1998).

<sup>9</sup>James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science*

maximize support for their collective action.

The political science literature on collective action has helped to show that individuals have interests. People are willing to use violence to attain their objectives. When violent movements, including insurgencies, increase in popularity there is less risk for individuals in supporting it. The ultimate goal of a group that resorts to violence is to have a share in power in order to control resources. Finally, one mechanism commonly used to build support for insurgencies is to appeal to people's ethnic or religious identities. There is, however, an aberrant form of violence wherein the individual who resorts to it cannot benefit from the action. This is suicide warfare to which I turn next.

### Suicide Warfare

Suicide warfare is a form of violent action that not only seeks to kill others, but assures the perpetrator's own death. Suicide warfare as an individual act defies reason because the actor has no chance of benefitting from his/her own actions. It must, therefore, be understood in the context of collective action. Mario Ferraro notes that history has an abundance of military, political, or religious acts that involve a very high risk of death.<sup>10</sup> Such actions may objectively seem suicidal. However, suicide warfare is unique in that the action is *certain* to result in the death of the actor. Ferraro searches for an explanation for this phenomenon.

In reaching his conclusions about suicide warfare Ferraro rules out rival explanations. For example, he rules out the 'madman' explanation that claims society has a certain number of psychotic people who are simply willing to kill themselves. Ferraro rejects this hypothesis because of the disproportionately high number of volunteers who sign up for suicide missions

and because “extensive interviews with a large sample of these volunteers or their relatives show them to be entirely normal, nonpsychotic people.”<sup>11</sup> Ferraro rejects Islam as a cultural explanation for suicide warfare. After all, the first known suicide bombers were anarchists in Russia.<sup>12</sup> There have also been the Japanese *kamikaze* and the world-leading suicide bombers, the Tamil Tigers.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, even within Islam, Ferraro notes, the post-mortem rewards for suicide warfare appears to be tailored to men, yet there are plenty of Muslim female suicide bombers.<sup>14</sup> For Ferraro the explanation comes from the nature of collective action.

Suicide warfare is used because it has a deadly effect and because of social pressure on the actor to go through with the action. Empirical data has shown that suicide attacks cause significantly more deaths than non-suicide attacks by a ratio of thirteen to one.<sup>15</sup> When explosives are used, suicide missions have an average severity of 41.11 deaths while non-suicide missions have an average severity of 14.41.<sup>16</sup> For its sheer deadly effect, suicide warfare is an invaluable tactic for insurgents. When the collective group calls upon an individual to engage in this more deadly type of warfare, a great deal of pressure is exerted on the individual. It is the collective pressure of sanction, Ferraro argues, that prevents individuals from reneging on suicide missions.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, preventing suicide warfare requires that the reward for reneging be

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<sup>10</sup>Mario Ferraro, “Martyrdom Contracts,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Vol. 50, No. 6), 855-856.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 856.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 865.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 856.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Aaron Clauset, Maxwell Young, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “On the Frequency of Severe Terrorist Events,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Vol. 51, No. 1, 2007), 73.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ferraro, 858.

greater than the sanction for reneging.<sup>18</sup> Ferraro claims that economic growth that provides more and better-paying jobs can undermine the compulsion of a collective movement that advocates suicide warfare. Yet in the midst of war and insurgency fostering such conditions is a daunting challenge, as is illustrated by the following case comparison of Afghanistan and Iraq.

#### Afghanistan (vs. USSR)

In many ways the Soviet experience in Afghanistan through the 1980s is similar to the American experience in Iraq during the 2000s. The variables described here include battlefield geography, the composition and tactics of the invading force, the composition and tactics of the insurgent force, exogenous actors, conflict adaptation, war costs and casualties, and finally the role of suicide warfare.

The Soviet Union justified its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 according to the Brezhnev doctrine which dictated that a communist state must remain communist, even by force if necessary. According to Scott Bennett's definition, Afghanistan's terrain is conducive to a protracted war and a long insurgency.<sup>19</sup> That is, Afghanistan is mountainous. Mountains slow conventional forces while they simultaneously facilitate mobile guerrilla insurgencies. According to Milton Beardon, the former CIA station chief in Islamabad during the late 1980s, the initial small Soviet expeditionary force had grown to an occupation force of around 120,000 troops by 1985.<sup>20</sup> For the most part these troops were stationed at fixed locations.

The anti-Soviet insurgency conducted by the *mujahideen* was composed of a diverse group of individuals with the collective goal of expelling Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Peter

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 861.

<sup>19</sup>D. Scott Bennett, "Predicting the Length of the 2003 US-Iraq War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* (No. 2, 2006), 106.

Marsden defines the *mujahideen* as the sum of those Afghans who fled Afghanistan for Iran and Pakistan from where they engaged in incursions plus the Afghans who remained in Afghanistan but fled into the mountains from which they engaged in incursions.<sup>21</sup> Olivier Roy characterizes four types of *mujahideen*: one, fundamentalist Sunni clerics; two, Sunni Islamists that were split into moderate and radical camps; three, Shi'a Islamists; and four, 'Wahhabis' or 'neo-fundamentalists'.<sup>22</sup> Fighting alongside the *mujahideen* were the Arab volunteers—as many as 25,000, according to Beardon.<sup>23</sup> It has been suggested by both Beardon and Gabriel Kolko that Arab states—Saudi Arabia in particular—“discreetly emptied their prisons of homegrown troublemakers and sent them off to the jihad with the fervent hope that they might not return.”<sup>24</sup> Estimates regarding the total number of *mujahideen* range from 150,000<sup>25</sup> to 250,000.<sup>26</sup>

The *mujahideen* used a variety of tactics to conduct an effective insurgency. Their tactics were always quick, conducted on a small-scale, and designed to have a speedy retreat. Rather than causing massive Soviet casualties, the *mujahideen* harassed the occupying forces and wore down Soviet morale. Some of the tactics favored by the *mujahideen* included ambushes and raids.<sup>27</sup> These are covert operations designed to seize supplies and retreat before the enemy has a

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<sup>20</sup>Milton Beardon, “Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,” *Foreign Affairs* (Vol. 80, No. 6, Nov/Dec. 2001), 21.

<sup>21</sup>Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War and Religion in Afghanistan*, Expanded Edition (London: Zed Books, 2002), 27.

<sup>22</sup>Olivier Roy, *Afghanistan: From Holy War to Civil War* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>23</sup>Beardon, 24.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*; see also Gabriel Kolko, *Another Century of War?* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 41.

<sup>25</sup>Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 172.

<sup>26</sup>Beardon, 21.

<sup>27</sup>Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *Afghan Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Compendium Publishing, 2001), 3; 69.

chance to respond. The *mujahideen* conducted quite successful urban guerrilla warfare, especially in Herat, Kandahar, and Mazar-i-Sharif.<sup>28</sup> However, due to anxiety about potential informants, such urban fighters often lived in the countryside or suburbs and entered the city only to engage in combat.<sup>29</sup>

Bombs were key to the *mujahideen* insurgency. Though mines, or improvised explosive devices (IEDs), were commonly used throughout the countryside to attack vehicles, bombs were often employed in urban environments in order to kill selected individuals. Allegedly, the *mujahideen* used the same “lady contact” to smuggle a bomb into both Radio Afghanistan and Kabul University.<sup>30</sup> According to Steve Coll, the *mujahideen* received training from Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in malleable explosives which they used to conduct car bomb and even camel bomb attacks against Soviet targets.<sup>31</sup> Unlike in the Iraqi context, however, such bomb attacks were rarely suicide attacks.

The insurgency in Afghanistan had the support of exogenous actors, particularly the United States and Pakistan. Charles Cogan, a former CIA officer, claims that President Jimmy Carter responded quickly to support the anti-Soviet resistance. Carter’s National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, allegedly saw Afghanistan as an opportunity to embarrass the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup> Within two weeks of the Soviet invasion the first shipment of arms funded by

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<sup>28</sup>Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 65.

<sup>29</sup>Jalali and Grau., 365.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 368; and Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 132.

<sup>31</sup>Coll, 128-129.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 46.

America arrived in Pakistan.<sup>33</sup> As the insurgency dragged on, Congressman Charlie Wilson sought a more deadly way to strike at the dominant Soviet air power. Initially, Wilson favored the Swiss-made Oerlikon cannon, but it was pointed out to him that such a cannon would require the *mujahideen* to defend fixed positions that could easily be destroyed by the Soviets. Wilson's blind determination is illustrated by his response: "I don't care if you lose them all, just so long as one Soviet helicopter is shot down. If it takes ten million dollars' worth of Oerlikons to shoot down one ten-million-dollar Hind, that's a good investment. And if you shoot down two, you're way ahead."<sup>34</sup> Prudent judgement prevailed and the CIA settled on the portable Stinger missile instead which arrived in the hands of insurgents by September 1986.<sup>35</sup>

The Soviet military adapted their tactics to the new *mujahideen* weaponry. While conventional Soviet tactics concentrated on securing airfields and achieving aerial dominance, the Stinger missile proved deadly against the Soviet air power.<sup>36</sup> Pilots flew at increasingly higher altitudes to escape the range of the Stinger. Soviet ground troops sardonically referred to these pilots as "cosmonauts."<sup>37</sup> With their aerial advantage diminished, the Soviet military resorted to a surge in ground troops to 120,000 in 1987.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, this surge took place after the political decision to withdraw from Afghanistan had already been made by Mikhail

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<sup>33</sup>Charles G. Cogan, "Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan Since 1979," *World Policy Journal* (Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 1993), 76.

<sup>34</sup>George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 245.

<sup>35</sup>Alan J. Kuperman, "The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan," *Political Science Quarterly* (Vol. 114, No. 2, Summer 1999), 241; and Goodson, 68.

<sup>36</sup>Jalali and Grau, 227; see also John C. Griffiths, *Afghanistan: A History of Conflict* (London: Carlton Books, 2001), 175, regarding Soviet air power tactics; and *Afghanistan: Eight Years of Soviet Occupation*, Special Report No. 173 (Washington D.C.: United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, December 1987), 6-7, regarding the impact of surface-to-air missiles on the Soviet air power.

<sup>37</sup>Kuperman, 248.

<sup>38</sup>*Afghanistan: Eight Years of Soviet Occupation*, 9.

Gorbachev and the Soviet Politburo.<sup>39</sup>

The cost of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has high, both in monetary terms and human terms. Materially, the Soviet forces' losses included 118 jets, 333 helicopters, 147 tanks, 1,314 armored personnel carriers, 433 artillery pieces and mortars, and 11,369 trucks.<sup>40</sup> John Griffiths estimates that the total monetary cost to the Soviet Union would have been between thirty and forty billion dollars.<sup>41</sup> With respect to the human cost of the war, Gilles Dorronsoro puts the Soviet casualty count at 13,369 dead, 311 missing, and 35,578 wounded.<sup>42</sup> The number of *mujahideen* killed or wounded is not given in these sources, although over a million Afghans were killed and six million forced into exile.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to note that the *mujahideen*'s insurgency inflicted these damages on the Soviet military without any notable use of suicide warfare. Despite the evidence that suicide missions are more deadly, they were not a weapon of choice in Afghanistan. Steve Coll recalls that many Afghans trained by the ISI denounced suicide attack proposals as against their religion.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, it was the Arab volunteers to the insurgency who advocated suicide attacks. Coll offers a cultural explanation for why Afghan fighters did not use suicide warfare. He claims that individual Afghans were "tightly woven into family, clan, and regional social

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<sup>39</sup>See Griffiths, 183; and Kuperman, 236, 239.

<sup>40</sup>Griffiths, 182.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>42</sup>Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 192. Dorronsoro reports the following year-by-year death-toll breakdown on pg. 189: 1500 (1980), 2000 (1981), peak of 2300 (1984), 1868 (1985), 1300 (1986), 1215 (1987), 759 (1988). Griffiths claims that the death toll was higher. He reports on pg. 181 that 14,263 Soviet combatants were killed or reported missing presumed killed, and 49,985 were wounded.

<sup>43</sup>Griffiths, 182.

<sup>44</sup>Coll, 134.

networks.”<sup>45</sup> Considered in Ferraro’s terms, Afghans would have rationally perceived a greater reward in living beyond the insurgency. This may also explain why the *mujahideen* often avoided attacking bridges or trade routes in Afghanistan that were important to civilian traders and farmers.<sup>46</sup> Following Ferraro’s argument, the *mujahideen* seem to have been optimistic about the post-war scenario in an Afghanistan without Soviet occupation. The situation in Iraq, however, appears to be the opposite.

#### Iraq (vs. USA)

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 was justified according to a doctrinal rhetoric similar in kind to the Brezhnev doctrine. In a post-9/11 context, the Bush doctrine reserves the right of American intervention anywhere in the world that the President deems to be a threat to America. Although America’s first military response to 9/11 was conducted in Afghanistan, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reportedly asked President Bush the day after 9/11, “Why shouldn’t we go against Iraq, not just al Qaeda?”<sup>47</sup> Seventy days later, President Bush asked Secretary Rumsfeld to update the war plan for Iraq.<sup>48</sup>

The battlefield geography of Iraq is also conducive to a protracted insurgency. It is not mountainous like Afghanistan, but according to Bennett’s terms, dense battlefield terrain includes urban environments.<sup>49</sup> Conventional military forces like the American military or the Soviet military face the same challenges in a dense environment whether it is a mountain or urban landscape. The American invading force was large, but not large enough. Military experts

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 77.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 81.

estimated that an effective troop level for invading Iraq would need to be between 300,000 and 400,000 troops.<sup>50</sup> When General Eric Shinseki proposed this number of troops, he was publically rebuked by then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz who firmly believed that the number of troops needed to occupy Iraq should be less than the number it would take to invade Iraq.<sup>51</sup> The invading force began with 180,000 troops and increased as high as 250,000.<sup>52</sup> After three years the occupying force was reduced to 130,000 troops.<sup>53</sup>

The anti-American insurgency is composed of individuals of diverse interests. In November of 2003 the Pentagon estimated the number of insurgents to be no greater than 5,000.<sup>54</sup> However, this number does not consider the much higher potential number of insurgents that would include former Baathists. There is evidence to suggest that former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein knew that he could not defeat the American military by conventional means. In 2003 prior to the invasion of Iraq, Colonel Steve Peterson made a presentation to a Pentagon policy group entitled “Saddam Hussein’s *Black Hawk Down Strategy*.”<sup>55</sup> Colonel Peterson hypothesized that President Hussein’s plan was to engage the American military in a long-term insurgency that would break the morale of the American troops and of the American public. Colonel Peterson may have been correct. In April 2003 a US military translator found an eleven-

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<sup>49</sup>Bennett, 106.

<sup>50</sup>Michael R. Gordon and Gen. Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 53; and .

<sup>51</sup>Peter W. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 89.

<sup>52</sup>Gordon and Trainor, 48.

<sup>53</sup>Galbraith, 7.

<sup>54</sup>George Packer, *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2005), 303-304.

<sup>55</sup>Woodward, 121.

point document that had been issued by President Hussein two months prior to the American invasion. It gave instructions to each Mukhabarat intelligence service agent, all local Baath cells, and each Fedayeen squad that in the event of President Hussein's overthrow, all were responsible for assassinating American collaborators, burning ministry buildings, looting, and burning public documents to produce a sense of chaos.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, the document said nothing about aggravating sectarian interests in the country.

Iraqi insurgent tactics place an emphasis on targeted killings in urban settings with a particular emphasis on IEDs. George Packer claims that the Iraqis trained for their insurgency prior to the American invasion. The camp to the southeast of Baghdad that the American administration had alleged was an al-Qaeda training camp was actually, according to Packer, the location where Iraqi intelligence operatives trained fighters in explosives for the upcoming guerrilla war.<sup>57</sup> By the summer following the American invasion, IED attacks were killing several American soldiers per week.<sup>58</sup> The insurgents' use of IEDs has subsequently been met with a \$3.3 billion Pentagon plan to devise a better strategic defense against the weapon. As in the Soviet case of the Stinger missile in Afghanistan, the American military has been forced to adapt its tactics.

The insurgency in Iraq also has the benefit of support from an exogenous actor. In this case the actor is Iran. Early on in the American invasion, the Pentagon was embarrassed to learn that its choice for leader of a post-conflict Iraq, Ahmed Chalabi, was providing information

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 184.

<sup>57</sup>Packer, 299.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 300.

regarding American troop movements to Iran.<sup>59</sup> American forces have also caught Iranian operatives attempting to consolidate pro-Iranian support among Iraq's Shi'ite population.<sup>60</sup> Most significantly, the American military has noted that Iraqi IEDs are increasingly deadly. Since mid-2005, evidence has suggested that IED components are coming into Iraq from Iran.<sup>61</sup> The Iranian technology is of higher quality and has led to a new weapon, known as an explosively formed penetrator (EFP). These EFPs are now capable of penetrating American tanks.<sup>62</sup>

The cost of the American invasion of Iraq in monetary terms has been higher than the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,<sup>63</sup> but in human terms the cost has been lower. Over 3,300 American soldiers have died and more than 25,000 have been wounded. The overall trend of the insurgency suggests that American soldiers will face an increasing number of attacks. In June 2003, the number of attacks against American forces was approximately 200. A year later attacks numbered 1,750 per month.<sup>64</sup> This number reached 3,000 attacks in August of 2004.<sup>65</sup> As of May 2006, American forces have faced 3,500 attacks a month—that is more than one hundred per day.<sup>66</sup> Casualties on the Iraqi side have been high, but again, not as high as in Afghanistan. One conservative estimate of the number of Iraqis killed since the invasion is 100,000.<sup>67</sup> Of these

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<sup>59</sup>Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 123-124.

<sup>60</sup>Raphael Israeli, *The Iraq War: Hidden Agendas and Babylonian Intrigue, The Regional Impact on Shi'ites, Kurds, Sunnis and Arabs* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 238.

<sup>61</sup>Woodward, 414.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 474.

<sup>63</sup>Galbraith, 11. The estimate is over \$300 billion.

<sup>64</sup>Woodward, 327.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 471-472.

<sup>67</sup>Les Roberts, et al, "Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey," *Lancet*

deaths, more than 50% are considered to be women and children.<sup>68</sup>

Suicide warfare has been a favored tactic in the Iraq insurgency. Only weeks after the American invasion of Iraq, the first suicide bombings hit American checkpoints.<sup>69</sup> During the particularly fierce battles in Fallujah, one imam had been quoted as saying: “In these days there will be a great victory for Fallujah and for all of Iraq and the entire Arab nation. Go to them, this is a battle of history, the battle for all of Iraq. The *mujahadeen* who are fighting, they welcome death! They want to be martyred!”<sup>70</sup> Over a two year period from 2003 to 2005, over 400 suicide bombings took place in Iraq, with every two out of three bombings in Iraq being a suicide mission.<sup>71</sup> Recent developments suggest that suicide bombers are using chlorine gas as a new form of chemical suicide warfare.<sup>72</sup> As Clauset, et al, have shown, suicide bombings are much more deadly than non-suicide bombings and as insurgent tactics change, they are likely to grow more deadly.<sup>73</sup> If we are to judge Iraq by Ferraro’s understanding of suicide warfare, it is clear that the suicide bombers have no sense of optimism for Iraq that would cause them to avert their missions. Is it because the suicide bombers are foreign insurgents? Or is it because they are Saddam Hussein loyalists, as Colonel Peterson would contend? It is not yet clear who precisely the suicide bombers are, but it is clear that they do not perceive the reward for renegeing on their

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(No. 364 (9448)), 1857.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 1863.

<sup>69</sup>Packer, 298.

<sup>70</sup>Aaron Glantz, *How America Lost Iraq* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2005), 192.

<sup>71</sup>Dan Eggen and Scott Wilson, “Suicide bombs Potent Tools of Terrorists,” *Washington Post* (July 17, 2005), A1.

<sup>72</sup>“Ramadi suicide bombing ‘kills 35’,” *BBC News*, Available 6 April 2007 [Online] [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/6532271.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6532271.stm)

<sup>73</sup>Clauset, et al., 73.

missions to be greater than the sanctions.

### Conclusion

In numerous ways the insurgency in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union is similar to the insurgency in Iraq against the United States. They share a dense battlefield geography, similar invasion force size and tactics, insurgencies composed of diverse interests, exogenous patrons of the insurgency, and tactical adjustments on the part of both the invading force and the insurgents. What is different is the ‘success’ of the insurgency—measured by the number of invading force soldiers killed—and the emphasis on the use of suicide warfare as a tactic. Afghans successfully sustained a protracted insurgency against the Soviet forces without resorting to suicide bombings. Iraqis have utilized the more deadly tactic against the Americans over a shorter period of time. While an Afghan *mujahid* could participate in multiple attacks over the period of the insurgency, an Iraqi suicide bomber can only be used in one attack. This is ultimately the likely explanation for the variation in the number of invading soldiers killed. Although the Iraqis use the more deadly tactic, it is not a sustainable tactic, and therefore, American casualties in Iraq are unlikely to exceed Soviet casualties in Afghanistan. What is ultimately clear is that all parties involved in Iraq must develop a sense of optimism in planning for the post-war phase. This is the societal remedy that can both curtail the suicide bombings and build the necessary conditions for peace in Iraq.

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