

The Logic of Suicide Terrorism

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Abstract

Suicide terrorism is the outcome of an individual rational choice. In the context of an oppressive society, a terrorist organisation that competes for resources provides young people with an incentive to invest in an identity that is rendered more valuable by death. From this viewpoint acts of suicide terrorism are analysed as the outcome of a self-enforcing contract between the young person and the terrorist organisation that recruits him or, less commonly, her. Solutions to a number of empirical puzzles are suggested. Finally, the phenomenon of suicide attacks is placed in the wider context of terrorism.

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