

“If You Can, Kill and, if You Cannot, Die!”

The Development of the Concept of Martyrdom in Islam

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ABSTRACT

This study will provide a framework for understanding the concept of martyrdom in Islam and the development of the 'suicide bomber' as a form of martyrdom. I will argue that 'suicide bombing' as a form of martyrdom is not a simple development of traditional jurisprudential concepts of martyrdom or *jihad*, for either the Shi'a or the Sunni tradition. Its introduction as a form of martyrdom is due to the reinterpretation of Shi'a revivalist martyrdom ideologies into Sunni revivalist *jihad* ideologies. It is 'suicide bombings'' martyrological origin within a Shi'a concept of 'political martyrdom' that is responsible for the transformative nature of 'suicide bombing' use as a tactic.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1:1 INTRODUCTION

‘Suicide bombing’ as a phenomenon is not exclusive to any religion;¹ it does not necessarily need to be connected with religion at all.² However, religion does play a proportionally significant role. Over 70 percent of all ‘suicide bombings’ from 2000-2003 were motivated by religion.³ While ‘suicide bombing’ is in no way restricted to the religion of Islam,⁴ it is specifically relevant: approximately half of the ‘suicide bombing’ attacks that have occurred from 1983-2003 have an association with Islam.⁵ Islamic groups that use ‘suicide bombing’ use religious rhetoric to support the motivation and legitimacy of the use of the tactic.⁶ All Islamic groups that use ‘suicide bombing’ claim that the ‘suicide bombers’ are martyrs for Islam.⁷ The role of the ‘suicide bomber’ as a martyr is consistently used to provide religious legitimization for the use of ‘suicide bombings’ as a tactic. In light of this, it is crucial that ‘suicide bombing’ associated with Islam is understood in terms of the concept of martyrdom in

¹ Although I do not technically agree with the accuracy of the term ‘suicide bombing’, I have chosen to use it because there is an accepted understanding of what it entails. ‘Suicide bombing’ can be concisely defined as: ‘a politically or religiously motivated violent attack perpetrated by a self-aware individual (or individuals) who actively and purposely causes his own death through blowing himself up along with his chosen target. The perpetrator’s ensured death is a precondition for the success of his mission’. (Yoram Schweitzer, “Suicide Bombing: Development and Characteristics”. *Institute for Counter Terrorism*, <http://www.ict.org.il>, accessed: August 18th 2006). Note: for the purpose of this study the term ‘suicide bombing’ generally refers to all types of ‘suicide attacks’, such as when a vehicle is used instead of a bomb.

² Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. (New York: Random House, 2005), p.4.

³ Scott Atran, “Mishandling Suicide Terrorism”, *The Washington Quarterly* 7:3 (Summer 2004), p.69.

⁴ On a group-by-group comparison, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka hold the record for the most prolific use of the tactic of ‘suicide bombing’. Robert Pape, op cit, p. 4.

⁵ Ibid, p.17.

Bruce Hoffman of the Rand Corporation found that 80 percent of the ‘suicide bombings’ since 1968 have occurred post-9/11; of those, 31 out of the 35 groups responsible for the attacks are associated with Islam. Bruce Hoffman, “Security for the New Century”, Washington D.C., September 23, 2005. Accessed in, Scott Atran, “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism”, *The Washington Quarterly* 29:2 (Spring 2006), p.127.

Note: “Islamic groups” refers to groups who consider themselves to be associated with Islam and who use ‘suicide bombing’ as a form of martyrdom.

⁶ The use of Islamic rhetoric to claim the legitimacy of ‘suicide bombing’ is highly controversial and the rhetoric used is in no way universal to Islam, or even accepted by a significant proportion of Muslims. This study is an examination of the development of the Islamic concepts apparent in ‘suicide bombing’, not a judgment on the legitimization of these concepts.

⁷ The use of the word ‘suicide bomber’ etc. from this point onwards is with reference to specifically Islamic ‘suicide bombing’, unless otherwise specified.

Islam. This study will provide a framework for understanding martyrdom in Islam and will examine the development of the concept of martyrdom that lead to the emergence of the 'suicide bomber' martyr. It will demonstrate that, contrary to assertions in most studies on 'suicide bombing', the developments within the concept of martyrdom play a significant role in the introduction of 'suicide bombing' associated with Islam and continues to influence the developments of 'suicide bombings' as a tactic.

By examining the development of the concept of martyrdom from early Islam, this study will illustrate that Islam has a diverse martyrological tradition. The concept of martyrdom is not static, and understood very differently across jurisprudential traditions, particularly in concern to the relationship of martyrdom with *jihad*. Essentially, this will demonstrate that 'suicide bombing' as a form of martyrdom is not a simple development of traditional jurisprudential concepts of either martyrdom or *jihad*, in either the Shi'a or Sunni tradition. The development of the 'suicide bomber' as a form of martyrdom is due to an amalgamation of *Shi'a* revivalist martyrdom ideologies into *Sunni* revivalist *jihad* ideologies.⁸ It is 'suicide bombings'' martyrological origin within Shi'a revivalist martyrdom ideologies that is responsible for the transformative nature of 'suicide bombing' as a tactic, as there is a constant need to renegotiate its symbolic value. It will become clear that the driving force behind the Islamic 'suicide bombing' phenomenon is Shi'ite scholar Ali Shari'ati's philosophy; '*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die*'.

This study seeks to provide a new understanding of the Islamic concept of 'suicide bombing' and to rectify the misconception in the current literature on the subject, as outlined below.

⁸ I use the term Revivalist in a very board sense, to mean movements who seek a renewal of Islam, through a reinterpretation of a historical ideal into the contemporary situation.

1:2 LITERARY REVIEW

‘Suicide bombing’ as a concept is a relatively new area of study, therefore, the quantity and quality of related research is limited. The ‘popular’ literature as a whole tends to be journalistic and sensationalist in nature, generally consisting of a series of case studies focusing on the life of individual ‘suicide bombers’. Each narrative tends to highlight that which is foreign to the typical Western audience, making generalizations and feeding common Orientalist stereotypes. However, there seems to be increasingly more valuable ‘academic’ studies being produced on this subject. They come under a number of different schools of study, from strategic studies to psychology. Nevertheless the ‘academic’ literature on this subject, irrespective of approach, displays a series of key misconceptions when referring to Islamic ‘suicide bombing’, which results in an analysis of Islamic ‘suicide bombing’ which is out of context from its development. These misconceptions significantly limit the ability to provide an adequate understanding of Islamic ‘suicide bombing’.

There are four problematic areas in the current literature that contribute to the misunderstanding of Islamic ‘suicide bombing’;⁹ there is no distinction made between the different jurisprudential traditions within Islam and their understanding of the concepts of martyrdom and *jihad*; the notion of *jihad* is given disproportionate and misleading significance in the development of ‘suicide bombing’; the concept of martyrdom (and occasionally *jihad*) is considered to be static; and finally, martyrdom is considered to be exclusively a subsidiary concept within the notion of *jihad*. These problematic areas represent a crucial gap in this area of study, and are the result of the lack of in-depth

⁹ Needless to say, not all of the literature makes all four of these misconceptions simultaneously.

study focusing on the development of the concept of martyrdom in Islam directly in relation to the development of the 'suicide bomber' as a form of martyrdom.

An analysis of the development of the concept of martyrdom is crucial to being able to understand the foundations of the phenomenon of Islamic 'suicide bombing', as martyrdom is the central jurisprudential concept behind 'suicide bombing' and its continuing development as a tactic. The concept of martyrdom is used by Islamic groups for legitimization, justification, glorification and propaganda. Furthermore, it is the construction of the concept of martyrdom that is one of the key issues for those who do not support the use of 'suicide bombing' and it forms the basis on which they condemn the action.¹⁰ Islamic 'suicide bombing' cannot be separated from the concept of martyrdom and cannot be understood successfully when removed from that context. It is by highlighting the importance of the concept of martyrdom in the development of Islamic 'suicide bombing' that I hope to rectify the misconceptions within the current studies in this field.

Although current studies that refer to Islamic 'suicide bombing' universally acknowledge that 'suicide bombers' are understood as martyrs by those who support them and generally provide some analysis of the concept, they fail to place 'suicide bombing' within the context of the development of the concept of martyrdom in Islam. Instead there is a focus on the notion of *jihad*, placing martyrdom exclusively as a subsidiary of *jihad*, and thus understand 'suicide bombing' not as a development within the concept of martyrdom, but as a development purely within the notion of *jihad*. While *jihad* is crucial to the understanding and the development of 'suicide bombing', the importance attributed

¹⁰The basic argument against 'suicide bombing' as a form of martyrdom is that actively and intentionally causing one's own death is equivalent to suicide, regardless of the situation. This martyrdom/suicide issue will be explored in more depth in the following chapter.

to it is disproportional in relation to the importance given to the concept of martyrdom. As this study will attempt to show, the model of martyrdom that provided the ideological basis for the development of ‘suicide bombing’ is not at all a subsidiary of the notion of *jihad*.

To assess the development of the concept of martyrdom in Islam, it is necessary to examine first the early jurisprudential and historical construction of the concept. This is a significantly outdated and neglected area of study, with one of the better studies, A.J. Wensinck, *The Oriental Doctrine of the Martyrs*, dating back to 1921.¹¹ The modern studies on ‘suicide bombing’ that make reference to earlier jurisprudential and historical constructions of martyrdom keep the discussion brief and they do not afford the subject any critical or in-depth analysis. This results in the failure to make a distinction between the understanding of martyrdom and *jihad* across different jurisprudential traditions. The differing jurisprudential traditions’ constructions of martyrdom and *jihad* are an essential aspect of the development of the Islamic ‘suicide bomber’. The introduction of ‘suicide bombing’ occurred as the result of an amalgamation of a revivalist Shi’a ideological understanding of martyrdom and a revivalist Sunni ideological understanding of *jihad*.

1:3 METHODOLOGY

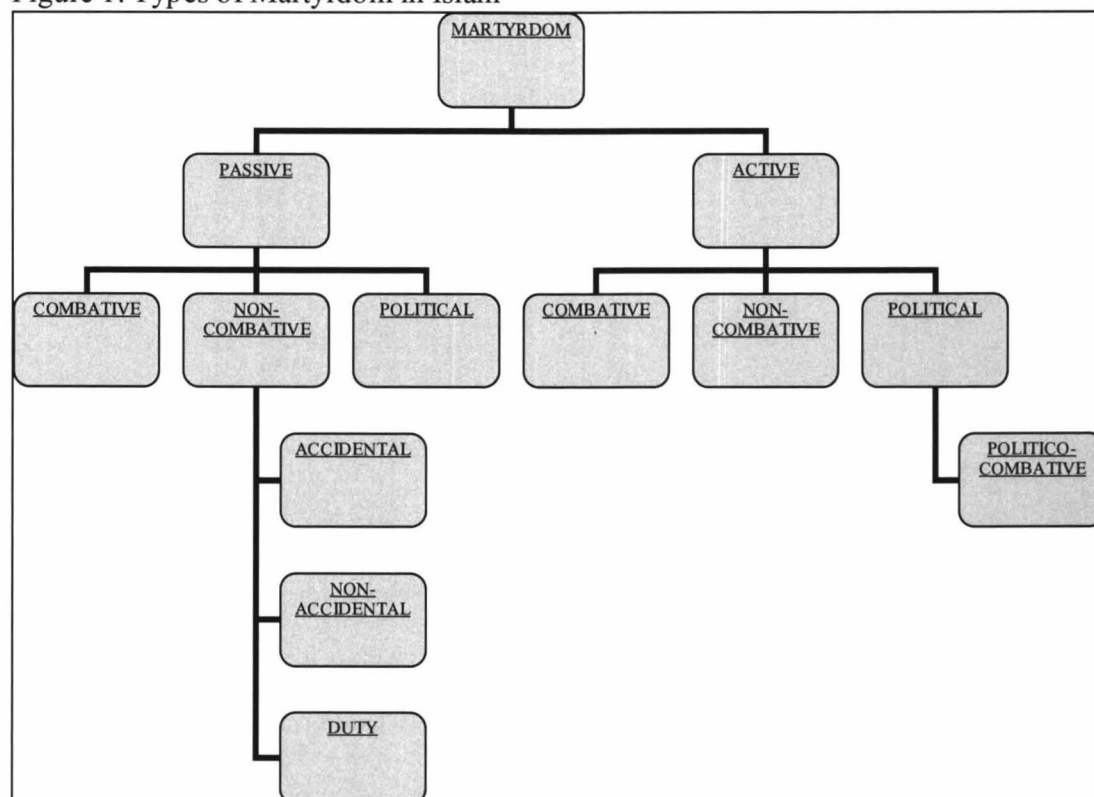
1:3:1 Method of Study for Islam and the Categorization of Martyrdom

In an attempt to provide an examination of Islamic ‘suicide bombing’ within a context of the development of the concept of martyrdom, I have, during the course of this study, devised a framework for the categorization of martyrdom in Islam. This framework will

¹¹ Although it is fairly ‘Orientalist’ in nature. The most valuable study on early constructions of the concept of martyrdom in Islam is, Etan Kohlberg, *Medieval Views on Martyrdom*. (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1997).

provide the primary structure for my analysis on the developments within the concept of martyrdom.

Figure 1: Types of Martyrdom in Islam



PASSIVE: refers to martyrdom in which the martyr has no predetermination over his death and does not have any intention of dying.

-‘PASSIVE COMBATIVE’: Non-intentional death in the context of military *jihad* (conventional battlefield death)

-‘PASSIVE NON-COMBATIVE’: Non-intentional death that is not within the context of military *jihad*.

-‘Passive Non-Combative Accidental’: Accidental death (e.g., death during childbirth, crushed by falling building, eaten by a lion).

-‘Passive Non-Combative Non-Accidental’: Death at the hands of someone else (homicide, execution).

-‘Passive Non-Combative Duty’: Death is not required, title of martyr earned via duty (Qur’an reciter).

-‘PASSIVE POLITICAL’: Non-intentional death within a political context or for a political cause (execution).

ACTIVE: refers to martyrdom in which the martyr has an intention or a predetermination of dying; it can include any situation in which the martyr has any influence over his death.

-‘ACTIVE COMBATIVE’: Intentional death within the context of military *jihad* (early Islamic martyrdom).

-‘ACTIVE POLITICAL’: Intentional death within a political context or for a political cause (Iranian revolutionary martyrs).

-‘Active Politico-Combative’: Active political martyrdom with combative means (Suicide bomber martyrs)

- 'ACTIVE NON-COMBATIVE: Intentional death not within the context of military *jihad* and not for a military cause (*Murder or execution of steadfast scholars and protestors*).

This categorization of the types of martyrdom provides a structure that allows for the key ideological developments in this concept to be clearly identified. The primary distinction for martyrdom in Islam is between 'passive' and 'active' martyrdom. This distinction is essential in understanding the developments in the concept.¹² Furthermore, the 'passive' and 'active' distinction illustrates the key conceptual difference between Sunni and Shi'a traditional understandings of martyrdom. An examination of the concept of martyrdom in terms of this distinction highlights the significance of the appropriation of 'suicide bombing' by Sunni groups, as Sunni jurisprudence traditionally prohibits 'active' martyrdom. The lesser categories of martyrdom will be examined in-depth within the second chapter, as Islam's rich martyrological tradition is explored.

1:3:2 Method of Study for the Contemporary Development of Martyrdom

The Islamic notion of the 'suicide bomber' arose due to a series of reinterpretations of historical and fundamental Islamic ideologies on martyrdom and *jihad*, as a response to political situations. It is the religious scholars that play the principal role in creating these ideological shifts. It is through an analysis of primary scholarly text and secondary source commentary, in conjunction with an assessment of the political situations the scholars were responding to, that I hope to provide a clear illustration of the developments that have occurred within the concept of martyrdom in Islam during the 20th century.

While there is a diverse range of Islamic scholarship on the subjects of martyrdom and

¹² Note: While 'Active' and 'Passive' are mutually exclusive categories, the exact division between the two is blurred: categorisation depends on the jurisprudential position. This distinction is alluded to within studies on 'suicide bombing', but has never been categorized systematically.

jihad, my study will be qualitative rather than quantitative. In the third chapter I have sought to examine the most influential scholars responsible for the ideological changes on the central concepts of martyrdom and *jihad*. For my analysis on martyrdom, I have concentrated my research on the Shi'ite religious scholarship coming out of Iran and Iraq during the 1960's and 1970's. I have focused specifically on the works of Khomeini and Shari'ati, who I have identified as the key political and intellectual figures, respectively, in the development of the concept of martyrdom. For my analysis on *jihad* I have concentrated my research on three key scholars in the revivalist Sunni movement; Mawdudi, Al-Banna, and Qutb. These three scholars were highly influential on 'popular' Islamist thought on *jihad*. Through a comparative analysis of the Shi'ite scholars' work on martyrdom and the Sunni revivalist scholars' work on *jihad*, I have identified complementary ideological features that have allowed for the possibility of the 'suicide bomber' martyr. The fourth chapter is essentially an examination of the application of these complementary ideologies in the emergence and consequent spread of the idea of the Islamic 'suicide bomber'. An analysis of Fadhlullah's speeches is used to illustrate how the complementary ideologies of the revivalist Shi'a concept on martyrdom and the revivalist Sunni notion of *jihad* transformed into the 'suicide bomber' and created the conditions that allowed for the conceptual leap across to Sunni groups in Palestine.¹³ Finally an examination of current adaptations occurring in the use of 'suicide bombings' as a tactic will be examined in relation to its martyrological origins, demonstrating that the transformative nature of the phenomenon is an attempt to renegotiate its symbolic value.

¹³ I have been restricted in my ability to utilize primary texts because of my very limited knowledge of Arabic and Persian: I have for the most part had to rely on translations and secondary commentary. Although this is not ideal, reading a variety of translations and commentaries has given me a good understanding of the different ways in which some of the scholars have been understood and at points misinterpreted altogether.

1:4 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter Two: ‘Early Islamic Martyrdom’ will provide the historical background of the concept of martyrdom in Islam and construct an understanding for the framework of the different types of martyrdom in Islamic jurisprudence. This chapter will essentially show that the understanding of the concept of martyrdom is not homogeneous in Islamic thought; furthermore, the distinctions between the different understandings of martyrdom primarily arises as a result of internal splits within the Islamic community and the subsequent development of different jurisprudential traditions.

The early dissenting groups who opposed the Sunni ruling authority tended to place significant emphasis on martyrdom, specifically ‘active martyrdom’. The Shi’ites, as a dissenting group, placed great importance on the concept of martyrdom. The historical event of the Imam Hussein’s martyrdom at the hands of the Sunni caliph Yazid, is central to Shi’a identity and provides the basis for their understanding of martyrdom. Their historical position as a persecuted minority has resulted in the development of an extensive tradition of martyrdom and allowed for the preservation of the legitimacy of ‘active martyrdom’. As a response to dissenting groups’ emphasis on ‘active martyrdom’, *Sunni* jurisprudence rejected the idea of ‘active martyrdom’: prohibition of ‘active martyrdom’ reflected an attempt by Sunni jurists to create a jurisprudential disassociation from dissenting groups. The Sunni historical position as the central authority has resulted in the development within the Sunni tradition of a quietist ‘passive’ tradition of martyrdom.

Chapter Three: ‘Contemporary Islamic Scholarship and the Revival of Martyrdom’ will provide a comparative analysis of influential contemporary revivalist scholarship on

martyrdom and *jihad*. This chapter will examine the ideological shifts within the revivalist Shi'a concept of martyrdom and the revivalist Sunni notion of *jihad*. Demonstrating that although the 'suicide bomber' is not a simple development out of either revivalist movement, there are parallel ideologies that would allowed for the emergence of 'suicide bombing'.

The analysis will show that it is the Iranian Revolutionary understanding of martyrdom, 'active political martyrdom', that provides the primary ideological basis for the 'suicide bomber'. The 'active political martyrdom' is the result of Shari'ati's reinterpretation of the narrative of Hussein as an act of martyrdom *divorced* from *jihad*. Divorcing Hussein's martyrdom from the restrictions of the Shi'a conditions of *jihad* allowed for the transformation of Hussein as an example of revolutionary spirit into an imitable model for revolutionary martyrdom. Khomeini utilized Shari'ati's ideas on Hussein to create the 'active political martyr' of the Iranian Revolution and Iran-Iraq war, the martyr who chooses to give up his life and die as a symbolic tool to condemn the 'oppressor'.

Sunni revivalist notions of *jihad*, specifically that of Qutb, show several similar ideological shifts to those that were crucial in the Shi'a development of the 'active political martyr'. The similar ideologies can be seen in the role of the individual and the construction of the enemy as the 'oppressor'. This chapter will argue that it is these parallel ideologies that provided a complementary basis that could allow for the amalgamation of the revivalist Shi'a concept of martyrdom and the revivalist Sunni of *jihad*. This amalgamation would essentially allow for the introduction of the 'suicide bombing' as a form of martyrdom, as it would theoretically give the Shi'ite martyr who could actively choose to die, the ability of the Sunni *jihadi*, who could legitimately

choose to kill.

Chapter Four: ‘The Islamic ‘Suicide Bomber’’, will examine the practical application of the Shi’a ‘active political martyr’ into the revivalist notion of *jihad*, with the emergence of the ‘suicide bomber’ martyr in Lebanon in 1983, by the Shi’a group Hezbollah.¹⁴ An examination of the pronouncement by Fadlullah, the spiritual guide of Hezbollah, on ‘suicide bombing’, shows how the reinterpretation of the ‘active political martyr’ into a revivalist notion of *jihad*, allowed for Shari’ati’s philosophy of ‘*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*’ to be understood as justification for a martyr to choose to die while killing. The ‘suicide bomber’ became a successful *jihad* tactic for the militarily weak against the ‘oppressive’ enemy. The reinterpretation of the ‘active political martyr’ into *jihad* removed the Shi’a-centric model of Hussein, shifting the legitimacy onto the condition of *jihad*. This made the ‘suicide bombing’ form of martyrdom more available for appropriation by Sunni groups in Palestine. Finally, this chapter will illustrate that one of the recent tactical developments within the Sunni use of ‘suicide bombing’ as a tool of ‘terrorism’, the introduction of the female ‘suicide bomber’, is the result of its origins as Shi’a ‘active political martyrdom’.

The emergence of the Islamic ‘suicide bomber’ is primarily a result of developments within the concept of martyrdom in Islam – a process that this study will now attempt to unfold.

¹⁴ Because of the Shi’a focus on my research, I follow Iranian scholars in transliterating Arabic and Persian words to English, i.e. short (i) is transliterated as (e) rather the common method (i).

CHAPTER TWO: EARLY ISLAM MARTYRDOM

2:1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is essentially an attempt to provide a context and understanding of martyrdom in Islam. By examining the early construction of martyrdom and the developments that occurred in the concept due to changes in the early political situation, this chapter will show that the understanding of martyrdom in Islam is not static. The categorization of the different types of martyrdom explored in this chapter can provide a framework for understanding martyrdom in Islam.¹⁵

An examination of the Qur'an and Hadith literature¹⁶ clearly illustrates that the early understanding of who and what made the first Islamic martyrs is defined within the context of war against non-Muslims. The sources surrounding the early Islamic military battles suggest that the original ideal martyr was one who zealously waged war against the unbeliever and fought to the death.¹⁷ Within the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, the understanding of martyrdom began to develop,¹⁸ allowing for one to zealously engage in battle but wish to come out alive, they did not need to seek certain death. After the death of Muhammad, divisions within the foundational Muslim community arose due to the issue of succession. These divisions and the changing political situation of the post-conquest era ultimately resulted in a radical

¹⁵ See: Figure 1, p. 9

¹⁶ Recorded sayings and actions of Muhammad, based on the authority of a chain of reliable transmitters.

¹⁷ Based on the Qur'an and the attributed Hadith.

All Qur'anic quotations and references from a translation by Yusuf Ali, available at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchquran.html> (cited: 18th August 2006)

All Hadith references in this study (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, Malik's Muwatta), are available at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html> (cited: 18th August 2006)

Unless the information was gathered from a secondary source, and they have not provided the specific reference to a Hadith.

¹⁸ Approximately 59 years after his birth.

transformation in the understanding of martyrdom, to a concept that went well beyond its original meaning.

The Shi'a sect, who formed over the issue of succession of Muhammad, holds the event of Imam Hussein's martyrdom at the hands of the ruling Sunni caliph Yazid as central to their identity. Their historical position as a minority dissenting group under a central Sunni authority allowed for preservation of an 'active' approach to martyrdom. The Sunni tradition as the ruling authority rejected the 'active' and the 'combative' form of martyrdom in order to create political distance from dissenting groups and to make the rewards of martyrdom more available in the political stable post-conquest era. Thus, from a very early stage in Islamic history the concept of martyrdom had many different constructions. The understanding of the concept of martyrdom differs greatly across jurisprudential traditions.

2:2 THE ORIGINS OF THE SHAHID

When examining the Qur'an for references to martyrdom, there is a problem of terminology. The Arabic noun for martyr is *shahid* (plural *shuhada*), which literally translates to mean 'witness', a terminology that is identical to that of the Christian concept of martyr. The application of the word *shahid* to mean martyr in Islam, one who witnesses for his faith by the sacrifice of his life, generates some controversy over its origin. Historical evidence suggests that *shahid's* meaning as martyr is not because of a connection between witnessing and death in Islamic thought; rather, it is a post-Qur'anic construction and is derived from the Syriac Christian notion of the concept.¹⁹ The term *shahid*, however, does appear frequently in the Qur'an, although

¹⁹ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies Volume Two*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), p.350.

it is not used in relation to martyrdom. The term appears to be used in its literal sense, describing ‘one who witnesses an event’,²⁰ in either the legal sense or in the ordinary sense of ‘eyewitness’.²¹ The term is used to describe both God as a ‘witness’ and human beings as ‘witnesses’ to a variety of events and ideas.²² In addition, there are some verses in the Qur’an where the title *Al-Shahid* is used as a divine name for God, since in Islam God is understood to be ‘witness’ to all things and possessor of all knowledge.²³

The actual Qur’anic verses that are clearly on the concept ‘martyrdom’ are sparse. The verses do not appear to convey a unified concept of martyrdom, in the technical or linguistic sense, and are not conveyed through the same Arabic root as *shahid*, but in phrases such as “*those slain in the path of Allah*” (Q.2:154, 3:169).²⁴ The Qur’anic verses that display a notion of martyrdom appear to be in reference to deaths that occur in the struggle for the cause of God in general. Thus, struggle, *jihad*, provides the initial context for martyrdom in Islam. Accounts of the earliest Muslim martyrs reflect this context.²⁵

For a detailed argument on the adoption of this word from the Syriac Christian concept, see Keith Lewinstein article in, Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

²⁰ Bernard K. Freamon, “Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 317

²¹ “Martyrdom” Islam and the Muslim World,” <http://www.gale.com/pdf/samples/sp656032.pdf>, (cited: October 14th 2005)

²² It is important to note that the ideas of witnessing, witness etc, are central to Islamic thought and to being a Muslim. The most important assertion of the concept of ‘witness’ is the first pillar of Islam, that a Muslim bares witness to the theological fact that God is the one God and Muhammad is his messenger.

²³ Bernard K. Freamon, (December 2003), p.318

²⁴ Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 79

It seems that later Qur’anic commentary has sought to read ‘martyr’ in some areas where the root *sh-h-d* appears and the phrasing or context is ambiguous, most notably Q 3:140, 4:69, 3:170 and 57:19 where *shuhada*, ‘witnesses’ appears to describe people who are rewarded for being ‘truthful’ and ‘steadfast’ for the cause of God. A ‘steadfastness’ where ‘sacrifice of life’ might reasonably be included. By wide consensus, in contemporary Qur’anic commentary ‘witnesses’ is now read as ‘martyr’ in many of these verses. Bernard K. Freamon, (December 2003), p. 318

²⁵ “Martyrdom”, *Islam and the Muslim World*, <http://www.gale.com/pdf/samples/sp656032.pdf>, (cited: October 14th 2005)

2:2:1 Early Martyrdom and the Qur'an

According to the Qur'an and Hadith literature, there are two types of *jihad*. The 'greater *jihad*', *jihad al-akbar*, and the 'lesser *jihad*', *jihad al-asgar*. The greater *jihad* consists of an individual's constant and internal struggle with the earthly and immoral aspects of the individual self. The lesser *jihad* is external and involves the concept of military or combative struggle, *inter alia*, a collective struggle by Muslims in order to protect and defend Islam and/or the Muslim community. According to Hadith literature, the Prophet Muhammad said that the greater *jihad* or the internal *jihad* is more important than its external military or combative counterpart.²⁶ The greater *jihad* places emphasis on justice, rectitude, fidelity, integrity, and truth. These aspects of the greater *jihad* set the foundations for the understanding of the concept of *jihad* in Islamic jurisprudence and law, and for the construction of meaning for the lesser *jihad*.²⁷ The lesser *jihad* is the primary context for early Islamic martyrdom.²⁸

The early Islamic concept of martyrdom is one of the key features that stem out of military aspect of the lesser *jihad*. Military *jihad* is authorized in the Qur'an and the following verses are the genesis of the concept of military *jihad* in Islamic theology:

²⁶ The expressions "greater *jihad*" and "lesser *jihad*" appeared in various non-canonical compilations of Hadith such as the *sunan* of Ahmad ibn Al-Husein Al-Bayhaqi (d. 1066). According to the hadith, the Prophet said to those returning from the battles: "You came from the best place, from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*." They said: "What is the greater *jihad*?" He said: "When man overcomes his urges." "Special Dispatch Series No. 972", *The Middle East Media Research Institute*, , <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP97205> (cited: September 1st 2006).

²⁷ Bernard k. Freamon, p.301.

²⁸ There are two different types of lesser *jihad*, offensive and defensive. Defensive *jihad*'s meaning is relatively universal; it is the obligation to protect Muslims and the 'land of Islam'. However, offensive *jihad* is understood differently in Sunni and Shi'a jurisprudential traditions. Offensive *jihad* has more prominent in Sunni jurisprudence due to their position as the central authority in the caliphate. Although offensive *jihad*'s importance has diminished in the last few centuries; however, its' traditional understanding by Sunni jurisprudence was as an obligation to make war against polytheists and the means by which to expand their caliphate and the rule of God.²⁸ For Shi'a theology the ability Shi'ites to engage in offensive *jihad* disappeared with the occultation of the Twelfth Imam in 874, as offensive *jihad* only be legitimately declared by an Imam. As a result offensive *jihad*, for the expansion of territory, spread of Islam or any construction of *jihad* that is not purely defensive, cannot be legitimately be declared until his return. (This is a Twelver Shi'a understanding of the different types of *jihad*.) This is different understanding of the conditions of *jihad* for the Sunni and Shi'a traditions is often overlooked, however it is a distinction that is particularly important in the contemporary development of the 'suicide bomber' martyr.

Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Taba Tabaie, *Shi'a in Islam*, Qom: The Office of Islamic Publications, 1990), p.65-77

"To those against whom war is made, permission is given [to fight], because they are wronged- and verily, Allah is Most Powerful in their aid- [They are] those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right – [for no cause] except that they say, 'Our Lord is Allah.'"-Yusuf Ali Q 22:39-40

The Qur'anic verses on military *jihad* state that when there is war, there will sometimes be the need for the loss of life of community members. It is from this notion that the first concept of martyrdom in Islam is constructed, 'combative martyrdom', those who die in a battle.

The introduction of the concept of martyrdom in Islam stems from the early military encounters of Muhammad and his followers with non-Muslim Arabs. It is from the traditions based on these encounters and the Qur'anic revelations accredited to them that we can construct an understanding of how the early Muslims first understood Islamic martyrdom and how they perceived the notion:

"Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah: And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve."- Yusuf Ali Q 3:169-70

The above Qur'anic verses refer to those who are killed while fighting for God. The Hadith traditions based on these verses suggest that this is probably the earliest establishment of martyrdom in Islam. The tradition based around the above verses follows that Muhammad received the revelation in 625, on the occasion of one of the earliest battles, the battle of Uhud, between Muhammad and his followers²⁹ and polytheist Arab tribes. According to the tradition, when the Muslims warriors were killed, their spirits rose to Paradise, and when they discovered the wonders of Paradise they wished they could return to the living world to inform their brothers of

²⁹ All dates are C.E.

it, so that their brothers would not be scared and would surge forward in battle for God. God agreed to do this on their behalf, thus the verse was revealed to Muhammad.³⁰

Like the above verse, all other Qur'anic verses that are clearly concerned with martyrdom are with reference to a war, or they specifically refer to military *jihad*. The above verse and those similar indicate that those killed while fighting for God will be rewarded. However, the emphasis in the Qur'anic verses regarding this reward is not purely isolated to just those who were slain, it also includes all those who fight 'in the way of God'. Those who fight 'in the way of God' are awarded special status beyond the promise of Paradise, they have the 'highest rank in the sight of Allah'³¹, their sins would be forgiven and, whether they are slain or victorious, they receive 'reward of great value'.³² The one reward purely designated for martyrs is the promise of immediate life in Paradise,³³ beyond that the Qur'an is not overly concerned with martyrs as a separate group apart from the non-martyred Muslims.³⁴ It is in the Hadith literature that the subject of martyrdom becomes elevated and martyrs become clearly distinguished from non-martyred Muslims.

³⁰ Etan Kohlberg, *Medieval Views on Martyrdom*, (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1997), p. 6

³¹ *Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allah's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are the people who will achieve (salvation).* -Yusuf Ali Q9:20

³² *Let those fight in the cause of Allah Who sell the life of this world for the hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah, - whether he is slain or gets victory - Soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).* -Yusuf Ali Q4:74

³³ *Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord;* -Yusuf Ali Q3:169

The contemporary understanding of the rewards are martyrdom are; "From the moment the first drop of blood is spilled, the martyr does not feel the pains of his injury, and is resolved of all his bad deeds; he sees his seat in Paradise; he is saved from the torture of the grave; he is saved from the fear of the Day of Judgment; he marries seventy-two beautiful black-eyed women; he is an advocate for seventy of his relatives to reach Paradise; he earns the Crown of Glory, whose precious stone is better than all this world and everything in it." -Sheik 'Abd-Salam Abu Shukheude, chief mufti of the Palestinian Authority Police Force. Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses, Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2004), p.112

³⁴ Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 81

2:2:2 Early Martyrdom and Hadith

As would be expected from the Qur'anic verses, it is the 'combative', or battlefield martyrs who receive the most attention and glory in Hadith literature. The martyrs of early Islamic history were predominantly male, as traditionally females did not under normal circumstances actively participate and engage in battle.³⁵ This early construction of martyrdom took on an 'activist' ideal, 'active combative martyrdom'.³⁶ It was the martyrs who threw themselves into battle with courage and abandon who were the ideal warriors in these early military encounters. Ibn Ishaq's account of events on the occasion of at the battle of Badr, in 624, clearly displays 'active combative martyrdom' behaviour. The battle at Badr is another of the first important battles of Muhammad's lifetime and Ibn Ishaq's account attributes this battle as one of the first times that Muhammad declared that those who were killed in battle, while facing the enemy, would enter Paradise. On hearing this, one of Muhammad's companions, 'Umayr b. al Humam b. al-Jamuh al-Ansari immediately said "Excellent! All that stands between me and entering Paradise is being killed by these people!". He then took his sword and plunged into battle, he fought the enemy until he was killed.³⁷ Another of Muhammad's companions, Ibn Afra, who had put on his armour in preparation for the battle, then asked Muhammad what would be pleasing to God? Muhammad answered "It would please God to see you plunge into battle without armour." At that Ibn 'Afra removed his armour and fought the enemy until he too was killed.³⁸

³⁵ This is not to say that there are no instances of female participation in warfare or female battlefield martyrdom, only that by a extremely large proportion it is a predominantly male arena. Muhammad's 'favourite' wife A'isha is reported to be a great warrior in many Hadith and there are reports that the Kharijite leader Shabib b. Yazid (d. 697 C.E) lead an army into battle that included 250 women warriors. Reportedly his mother and wife were among those women, and both were martyred in battle. Etan Kohlberg,(1997), p. 7

³⁶ See: Figure 1, p. 9

³⁷ "Martyrdom", *Islam and the Muslim World*. <http://www.gale.com/pdf/samples/sp656032.pdf>, (cited: October 14th 2005)

³⁸ Etan Kohlberg,(1997), p. 7

This 'active' approach to 'combative martyrdom', seeking martyrdom,³⁹ as the sole interpretation Islamic martyrdom behaviour did not resonate long within the early Muslim community. Note that there is a difference between seeking martyrdom and willingness for martyrdom. Seeking or 'active' martyrdom implies that there is a determination for certain death, whereas willingness is 'passive' and implies an acceptance of martyrdom, should it occur.

Around 629 during an expedition by Muslims to Mu'ta, Ibn Rawaha was given command of the expedition after the two previous commanders were killed in the battle. A hadith reports that Ibn Rawaha received an injury, and fearing death he withdrew from battle. He later regained his composure and courage, and urged himself back into the battle and was killed. The Hadith report then proceeds to explain that Muhammad told his companions about the two preceding commanders' martyrdoms, and then drew silent for a moment, before reassuring his companions that Ibn Rawaha had indeed also died as a martyr. Muhammad's silence represented Ibn Rawaha hesitation in the path of God.⁴⁰ This represents the introduction of a new approach to martyrdom, in which a warrior does not have to intend to 'actively' seek death. A good warrior is willing to risk his life for Islam, but may also wish to come out of battle alive and victorious. If they are slain, it is not their urgency or determination to seek death that qualifies them as martyrs, rather, it is their involvement, 'passive combative martyrdom'.⁴¹ This concept of 'passive combative martyrdom' is later emphasised by the Sunni tradition after divisions occur in the

⁴⁰ Etan Kohlberg, (1997), p. 11

⁴¹ This emphasis can be supported by a number of Qur'anic verse, 4:74, 9:52 and elsewhere and in the Hadith.

Let those fight in the cause of Allah Who sell the life of this world for the hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah,- whether he is slain or gets victory - Soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).-Yusuf Ali Q4:74

Say: "Can you expect for us (any fate) other than one of two glorious things- (Martyrdom or victory)? But we can expect for you either that Allah will send his punishment from Himself, or by our hands. So wait (expectant); we too will wait with you." -Yusuf Ali Q9:52

Islamic community. However, at this stage, to zealously seek martyrdom in battle, 'active combative martyrdom', is still the ideal. The above incident signifies only a slight adaptation to the concept of martyrdom behaviour but not a fundamental change to its nature, which is developed once different jurisprudential traditions evolve.

This initial ideal of 'active martyrdom' behaviour was to later be identified as 'the quest for martyrdom', *talab al-shahada*. Later revaluations by Sunni jurists see the concept of martyrdom shift away from this behaviour altogether, to a point where it is condemned by the majority of Sunni jurists to this day.⁴² The discussions above suggest that actively seeking martyrdom, 'active combative martyrdom' was the first understanding of martyrdom in Islam, and historically there is ample praise for this type of behaviour. *Talab al-shahada* through participating in military *jihad* did not remain as an ideal understanding of martyrdom in Islam. In spite of later transformations in theological definitions, this notion has re-emerged throughout Islamic history. It is an ideology that mobilises revolutionary thought and dissenting groups. It is an exceptionally potent tool for cementing loyalty, particularly in rebel groups with charismatic leaders.

The early historical example of an extreme understanding of 'active martyrdom' is found with in the Kharijites philosophies.⁴³ The Kharijites are thought to have split

⁴² The specific Sunni jurists and scholars are not named. Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 86

⁴³ The Kharijites are often referred to as the historical origins of the 'suicide bomber'. As will be clear later, this is incorrect. Their form of 'active martyrdom' is more aligned with the 'combative' than the 'political' category of 'suicide bombing' (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, there is a difference between desiring martyrdom because of religious conviction or for the cause of Islam (suicide bombing), and desiring martyrdom for the seeking of eschatological reward (Kharijites). From a contemporary understanding martyrdom for reward is considered egotistic and impure in intention; the impurity of the intent would negate the martyrdom in the eyes of God. Interviews with failed 'suicide bombers' show that the rewards of martyrdom are considered compensation, they are not the primary motivation of undertaking a

from the early Muslim community around 657, after a dispute over the issue of leadership.⁴⁴ The Kharijites, called themselves *shurat*, or vendors, in reference to the Qur'anic praise for those who sell their earthly lives in exchange for Paradise.⁴⁵ They opposed the direction the early Muslim community was heading regarding the issue of authority after the death of Muhammad. They took an exclusivist stance, arguing that there was no other understanding of Islam but their own. Martyrdom was central to Kharijiite thought. There are many reports of Kharijite leaders promoting the desire for martyrdom and Paradise to their followers. For Kharijites, martyrdom was not an inconvenient possibility of courageous participation in *jihad* or death for which one needs to be compensated; it was the primary goal and intention of participation. Furthermore, the Kharijites also demonstrate a shift in the original concept of 'combative martyrdom'. Contrary to its traditional meaning that defined martyrdom as a status achieved only in a battle against non-Muslims, for the Kharijites, martyrdom could be achieved through any struggle for justice and purity, even from within the Muslim community itself.⁴⁶ This construction did not fade with the demise of the Kharijites, 'active martyrdom' and the identification of the enemy within the Muslim community, re-emerges and is practised throughout Islamic history.⁴⁷

'suicide bombing'. Nichole Argo, *Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs: The Palestinian Case and the Pursuit of a Martyrdom Complex*. (International Studies Association: website: <http://www.isanet.org>, cited: 21st August 2006) Although the Kharijites do not have a direct affect on the development of martyrdom, they are an interesting example of extreme 'active martyrdom'.

⁴⁴ Daniel Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*. (USA: Blackwell Publishing ltd, 2004), p.108

⁴⁵ Q4:74 and 9:112. These verses are favoured by Sayyid Qutb of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

⁴⁶ "Martyrdom", *Islam and the Muslim World*, <http://www.gale.com/pdf/samples/sp656032.pdf>, (cited: October 14th 2005)

⁴⁷ One such group is the Assassins, a Shi'a movement in the 12-13 century. The Assassins staged political assassination attacks that had an extremely 'high risk' of death, as frequently the 'assassin' would be killed shortly after the mission. The group's leader Hasan al Sabbah promised them immediate entry to Paradise if they did die as a result of their mission. The Assassin movement is interesting and mistakenly commonly referred to as the historical foundation of suicide bombing. However, they will not be discussed in this study, as their actions and understanding of martyrdom do not directly affect the evolution of the concept of martyrdom in Islam.

2:3 REVALUATION OF MARTYRDOM DUE TO JURISPRUDENTIAL TRADITIONS

As has been illustrated, martyrdom in early Islam was not a static concept, however, it was confined to the single category of 'combative' casualties. Although the Qur'an does not specifically refer to other categories of martyrdom, the concept is extended far from its original meaning soon after the death of Muhammad in 632. Primarily martyrdom's meaning altered as a result of the formation of different jurisprudential traditions. The Sunni jurists encouraged a quietest 'passive' shift in the concept of martyrdom that expands well beyond the 'combative' context. For the Shi'a tradition, one of the factors that ultimately distinguished them from the Sunnis is the event of Imam Hussein's martyrdom. Hussein's martyrdom is the central basis for their understanding of martyrdom and it is central to Shi'ite identity.

The formation of the Sunni and Shi'a jurisprudential traditions sees the extension of martyrdom to include the category of 'non-combative martyrdom'. Non-combative martyrdom is not unique to Islam; it is also identified by Judaism and Christianity. However, the historical circumstances around the development of the theological concept of martyrdom in Islam are very different to either Judaism or Christianity. The first generations of Muslims did not identify the concept of 'non-combative martyrdom'. Early Muslims enjoyed relatively great political and military success after the *hijra*.⁴⁸ Although they suffered and were persecuted by non-Muslim groups, they mostly suffered under local authorities and from tribal battles. This was relatively minor compared to the cases of Christians or Jewry who were persecuted under foreign rule and forced to renounce their faith. The Islamic construction of 'non-combative martyrdom' arose primarily as a consequence of internal

⁴⁸ Migration, with reference to the early Muslim community's migration from Mecca to Medina.

fragmentation of the Muslim community.⁴⁹ It is the consequence of these internal splits that created radial shifts in the understanding of the concept of martyrdom in both the Sunni and Shi'a traditions. As the Shi'a notion of martyrdom grows out of a tradition which was historically formed under the Sunni rule, it is crucial to discuss the Shi'a understanding before discussing the shifts in the Sunni tradition which seem to be a reaction to minority groups under their authority.

2:3:1 Shi'a Martyrdom

2:3:1:1 The Early Construction of Shi'a Martyrdom

The word Shi'a in Arabic means 'followers', technically 'followers of Ali'. The Shi'a tradition was formed as a result of disputes over the issue of the succession of Muhammad. The Shi'ites believe that the legitimate authority after Muhammad was his son-in-law and cousin Ali. They argue that a line of descendants through Ali and Fatima, whom they call the "Infallible Imams", should lead the Muslim community. However, the majority of Muslims voted for Abu Bakr, Muhammad's trusted friend and subsequently the succession of authority was passed to him. Those who believe Abu Bakr was the rightful successor became known as the Sunnis, meaning 'followers of tradition'.

The concept of martyrdom for Shi'a Islam is a central value and an almost unavoidable topic of discussion in all areas of Shi'a jurisprudence. The shifts in the construction of martyrdom for the Shi'a tradition seem to be a direct result of the interactions with the central caliphate as a minority group living under the Sunni

⁴⁹ Etan Kohlberg, *Medieval Views on Martyrdom*, (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1997), p. 19

authority. Following the reign of the “Four Righteous Caliphs”, the Sunni authorities viewed the Shi’a beliefs as a direct challenge to their rule. This condition of authority placed the Shi’ites in an oppositional and problematic situation. They were obliged to choose between openly expressing their oppositional and threatening views and even fighting for them, or remaining quiet about their views and seeking accommodation with the Sunni majority system.⁵⁰ As a minority group with views that directly challenged and threatened the ruling authority, inevitability occasions occurred when Shi’ites were imprisoned, persecuted, or killed. It is this problematic jurisprudential, theological, and political situation for the Shi’ites, which resulted in the re-interpretation of the concept of martyrdom into several distinct types that can be categorized as ‘combative’, ‘non-combative’ and ‘political’. The Shi’a position as a minority group under Sunni rule also allowed for the preservation of the ‘active’ form of martyrdom.⁵¹

2:3:1:2 Shi’a Non- Combative Martyrdom

Early on, Shi’ites who expressed their views and beliefs, passively or violently, had full knowledge they were placing their lives in serious danger. In the early Umayyad period, al-Mughira b. Shu'ba, the governor of Kufa, cursed Ali during each Friday prayer. The curse against Ali caused unrest amongst the Kufan Shi’ites present at the prayers; their protest resulted in their imprisonment. When five of them refused to remain silent about the incident and refused to denounce their association with Ali, they were sentenced to death by Mu'awiya.⁵² This is one of the first

⁵⁰ The behaviour associated with quietest accommodation is known as *taqiyya*, often understood as 'precautionary dissimulation'. There are various forms of *taqiyya* within the main branch of Shi'ism, the Twelvers, and it has been elevated to a central tenet of faith at certain times. Etan Kohlberg, (1997), p. 19

⁵¹ These categories are not always clear-cut. Both the ‘combative’ and ‘non-combative’ categories in the Shi’a tradition tend to incorporate political features. ‘Political martyrdom’ as a separate category was utilized during the Iranian revolution in 1979.

⁵² In the Shi’a tradition to lie about ones faith in order to avoid oppression/persecution is a legitimate behaviour with the

incidents that motivated the construction of 'active non-combative martyrdom' for Shi'a.⁵³ Among the five executed was Hujr b. Adi (d. 670 C.E), who had been a loyal companion of Muhammad.⁵⁴ The early narratives surrounding Hujr's death details that before his execution Hujr asked to be buried in his bloodstained clothes,⁵⁵ suggesting that he considered himself (or the early Shi'ite writers/story tellers considered him) to be comparable, at some level, to the early battlefield martyrs.⁵⁶ Hujr's execution has since been regarded as one of the earliest cases of Shi'ite martyrdom. Considering him a martyr represents a separation from the early Islamic notion of martyrdom which was confined to the 'combative' realm.

It was not only the faithful resisters that refused to denounce their faith who were given the title of martyr through a 'non-combative' construction. As the Shi'a jurisprudential institution developed, , Shi'ite scholars and intellectuals became the new threat to the central Sunni authority. The persecution and occasional execution of Shi'ite scholars and intellectuals created one of the most honorary categories of 'non-combative martyrdom' for the Shi'a tradition; one that is still very much alive.⁵⁷ Two early and prominent accounts of martyrs in this category are the scholars Muhammad

understanding of the concept of *taqiyya*.

⁵³ As they were offered the opportunity to renounce their faith but they refused, their martyrdoms are considered 'active', but had they been executed purely on the fact that they are Shi'ites, it would be 'passive'.

⁵⁴ The date of Hujr's death differs from source to source, they range from 670-673 C.E.

⁵⁵ Etan Kohlberg, (1997), p. 20.

⁵⁶ Traditionally it is only 'combative martyrs' that die at the hands of the non-Muslims that are not washed. Ahmad reported: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Do not wash those who die as martyrs, for their every wound or drop of blood will exude a fragrance like musk on the Day of Judgement." The Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered the martyrs of the Battle of Uhud to be buried in their bloodstained clothes. They were not washed, nor any funeral prayer offered for them. Ash-Shafi'i said: "Burying the martyrs without washing or offering funeral prayer on them may be explained by the fact that they shall meet Allah with their wounds exuding fragrance like musk. The honor bestowed on them by Allah frees them from the need for funeral prayers by others. Moreover it makes things easier for the surviving Muslims, who may have received injuries in battle and fear the enemy's attack, and may be concerned about the security of their families and their families' worries about them. Sayyid Saabiq, *Fiqh-us-Sunnah*, http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/law/fiqhussunnah/fus4_60.html (cited: 18th August 2006)

⁵⁷ Scholarly 'non-combative martyrdom' can be 'passive' or 'active' depending on the steadfastness of the scholar and whether they are executed for prior works or whether they continue to propagate their ideas although they know they are risking their lives. The 20th century Iranian scholar Ali Shari'ati could be considered an 'active' martyr as he was very vocal about his ideas, although he knew it was putting his life at risk.

b. Makki al-Amili and Zayn al-Din b. Ali. Muhammad b. Makki al-Amili, from the Jabal Amil region in Southern Lebanon, who were accused of having written defamatory propaganda works against the Sunnis. He was taken to Damascus and executed in 1384. Two centuries later, Zayn al-Din b. Ali, also from the Jabal Amil region, was arrested by the Ottoman authorities after a Sunni judge accused him of heresy. The circumstances surrounding Zayn al-Din b. Ali's death are unreliable but the Shi'ites believe he was killed by the Sultan's agents in 1558.⁵⁸ Shi'ites later designated these two scholars the honoured titles of "First and Second Martyrs", respectively.⁵⁹

2:3:1:3 The Martyrdom of Imam Hussein

The central and most prominent narrative of martyrdom in Shi'a history and an event that has significantly shaped Shi'a jurisprudence is that of the third Imam, Ali's second son Hussein. Hussein's death is seen as the event that cemented the difference between the Sunni and Shi'a traditions. The meaning and understanding of this prominent event has been re-interpreted in various contexts due to changing political and social situations. However, the basic outline of the event of the martyrdom of Hussein has been reported consistently throughout history. Hussein refused to pay the oath of alliance to Yazid the ruling Caliph of the Umayyads. He believed Yazid was an unjust and corrupt ruler and not an appropriate person to guide the Muslim community. Hussein wrote to the Shi'ites in Kufa and asked for alliance and they promised him their support. Hussein led a small force of Shi'ite men from Medina, destined for Kufa. However, when Hussein and his men reached Karbala, they were

⁵⁸ Some place his date of death in 1559.

⁵⁹ Etan Kohlberg, (1997), p. 20.

meet by a very large army sent by Yazid. A battle ensued. On the 10th (approximately) of October 680 Hussein was slain, along with many members of his family and his small army endured large numbers of casualties.⁶⁰ The traditional understanding of Hussein's death is that he sacrificed himself for justice, to revive the religion of the Prophet Muhammad and save it from destruction. Since that day in 680 C.E the anniversary of Hussein's death has been known as *Ashura*,⁶¹ a time to commemorate and mourn the martyrdom of Hussein.

Shi'ites identify Hussein's martyrdom as a distinct event in their history and understand it differently from the earlier construction of martyrdom in Islam. His death can be understood within the context of *jihad*, and defined under the category of 'combative martyrdom', historically, this is the dominant reading of the event.⁶² However, the context in which he was killed makes his martyrdom distinct. First, Hussein's position as an Imam and as a descendant of Muhammad divinely validated his actions according to Shi'a understanding. Second, Hussein went into the battle against the very large army of Yazid's, he was aware that, with his small force, there was no chance of victory. Hussein and his army knew that the battle was all but lost from the beginning. Third, Hussein's and his army's martyrdoms were not the result of being in the battle for expanding the Islamic Caliphate; it was martyrdom at the hands of the Caliphate, an unjust Caliphate. These distinctions have the potential to significantly change the construction of martyrdom.

Hussein and his army were greatly out-numbered and had little, to no chance of

⁶⁰ Manochehr Dorraj, "Symbolic and Utilitarian Political Value of a Tradition: Martyrdom in the Iranian Political Culture", *The Review of Politics* 59:3 (Summer, 1997): p.499

⁶¹ Yitzhak Nakash, "An Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of Ashura", *Die Welt des Islams* 33:2 (November 1993), p. 162

⁶² The contemporary understanding is that Hussein was a political martyr.

victory, this makes the possibility of being killed extremely high. Depending on how the narrative is read, this has the potential to make the event of martyrdom an 'active' participation. In addition, there is a significant shift in the understanding of 'combative' enemy. The opposition in the battle were not from an outside community of unbelievers; the enemy was within the Muslim community itself. Thus, the focus of the uprising was to seek justice and purity within the community. Because the battle was not undertaken to advance the reign of Islam, it has enhanced potential to serve as a symbolic event and can be read readily as sacrifice. Since the foundation of Shi'ism, martyrdom has become intrinsically connected with the concept of justice. Modern Shi'a ideologues have created a sophisticated ideology of activism and revolution out of the doctrine of martyrdom based on the narrative of Hussein's death.⁶³

2:3:2 Sunni Martyrdom

2:3:2:1 Early Constructions of Sunni Martyrdom

For the Sunni tradition, there was a shift to a 'passive' approach to martyrdom and the removal of emphasis on 'combative martyrdom'. One of the primary reasons that Sunni jurists discourse developed a 'passive' approach was their attempt to amplify their disassociation from dissenting groups like the Kharijites and to create distance from the Shi'ites, both of whom placed significant emphasis on martyrdom in this context. As mentioned above, the Kharijite sect was a dissenting group that placed a great deal of emphasis on *talab al-shahada*, 'active martyrdom' and as Hussein's narrative demonstrates 'active martyrdom' has the potential to be central to Shi'a jurisprudence. In response, Sunni jurists endeavoured to remove any emphasis on

⁶³Chapter three will discuss this.

‘active martyrdom’ or the seeking of the eschatological rewards of martyrdom in their jurisprudential approach. Sunni jurists have justified this ideological shift in the understanding of martyrdom by prohibiting *talab al-shahada*, ‘active martyrdom’, arguing that *talab al-shahada* or intentionally and actively seeking martyrdom can be categorised as suicide,⁶⁴ which is forbidden in Islam.

2:3:2:2 Suicide and Martyrdom

Suicide, *intihar*,⁶⁵ in Islam has, by long-held consensus, been prohibited under any circumstance. The basic reasoning for the prohibition is based on the belief that life is a sacred gift from God and human beings may not control its end. The classical understanding of suicide is as an act of self-murder, *qatal al-nafs*. With a prohibition on self-murder, there is an avoidable and problematic grey area between suicide and martyrdom, specifically ‘active martyrdom’. This issue is not unique to Islam but the subject of much discussion and debate for Christianity and Judaism as well. Muslim scholars, particularly Sunni scholars, have attempted for many centuries to precisely define the borderline between the two. The distinction is made by intention, *niyyah*.⁶⁶

Without the proper motivation and intention, one does not fulfil the qualification of a

⁶⁴ Bernard K. Freamon, “Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 323 and A. J. Wensinck, *The Oriental Doctrine of the Martyrs*. (Amsterdam, 1921), p.152. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies Volume Two*. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), p.352, notes that the process of opening up the category of martyrdom as a reaction against ‘seeking martyrdom’ is not isolated to Islam, a similar process occurred among the Christians in Spain.

Note: That even participating in a battle with a smaller number of troops on your side than the opposition is considered to be comparable to suicide by some Sunni jurists, as the changes of dying are higher.

⁶⁵ *Intihar*, suicide, comes from the root verb *nahara*, literally meaning ‘to slaughter’. The verb is usually used in reference to animals. *Intihar* implies to ‘slaughter oneself’. The term *Intihar*, however does not appear in the Qur’an, even though the word appears to have been in use at the time. See, Mustapha Jawad, *People Who Committed Suicide in Pre-Islamic and Islamic Times*, (Cairo: Halal, 1934). The nearest term to suicide that does appear in the Qur’an is the term, *qatal nafs*, read by modern commentators to mean self-killing. Nadia Dabbagh, *Suicide in Palestine: Narratives of Despair*, (Massachusetts : Olive Branch Press, 2005), p.25

⁶⁶ Intention, or *niyyah*, is central to Islamic thought, if acts are preformed without the proper intentions then the requirements are not fulfilled and the action becomes ‘void’ in God’s eyes. The act of martyrdom is judged under *niyyah*. The community is not in the position to judge who is and who has not technically qualified as a martyr, as according to Islamic understanding humans are not able to accurately judge the intentions and sincerity of others, this is in God’s hands alone. Consequently all deaths that conform to the construction of martyrdom from the jurisprudential traditions understanding are treated with the respect of a martyr and receive the funeral rites of a martyr, leaving the ultimate judgement to God.

marytr.⁶⁷ With the 'passive' shift in Sunni jurisprudence on martyrdom, it was generally considered that if there is any possible relationship between the man's death and his own will or a desire not pure in intent, the action would fall under the banner of suicide and would thereby be condemned. Thus 'active martyrdom', *talab al-shahada*, and is considered prohibited from a traditional Sunni jurisprudential understanding.

The historical battlefield incident used by Sunni jurists to support the prohibition of 'active martyrdom' does not come from Hadith, but from an event that occurred after the death of Muhammad, that has been ascribed special significance by Sunni jurists.⁶⁸ The report refers to Bara' ibn Malik, a courageous and experienced warrior for the Islamic cause. Bara' had for most his military career desired the glory of martyrdom. The important incident occurs in one particular battle against the army of Musailamah⁶⁹ (one of the battles during the 'Apostasy Wars' that occurred shortly after Muhammad's death). Abu Bakr, the first caliph, commanded his army to meet Musailamah's army with force. Musailamah's army garrisoned itself in a fort and put up a strong resistance. Abu Bakr's army were receiving heavy losses and were unable to penetrate the fort. At this point Bara' suggests that he should be catapulted over the walls of the fort and then open the gates for his army from the inside. The account of this incident specifies that Bara' knew that he would face certain death in this endeavour but volunteered for the plan primarily due to his desire for martyrdom. The plan was successful, and Bara' (miraculously) was not killed. However, Bara' was so

⁶⁷Margaret Cormack (ed.), (2001), p. 81

⁶⁸Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003), p.325

The use of this narrative is probably because the prohibition against 'active martyrdom' was a continuation of the apostasy conquest era and not reflected in that Hadith, which place 'active martyrdom' as the ideal form of martyrdom.

⁶⁹Musailamah, sometimes referred to as Musailamah the Liar, claimed to be a prophet of God, he and his followers refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad and refused to acknowledge to rule of the Islamic State.

severely injured he should have been dead. He complained to Abu Bakr about his failure at achieving martyrdom, to which Abu Bakr replied “Strive for death and you will live!”. The commentary surrounding this narrative suggests that God denied Bara’ martyrdom because he desired it, seeking death primarily for his own benefit, rather than fighting for the justice of God's cause.⁷⁰ Sunni jurists and scholars used this incident to illustrate true martyrdom, and the distinction between ‘passive martyrdom’ and suicide. Even though Bara’ also sought to further the way of God, he intended to die a martyr, and as a result, his action was comparable to suicide. Thus identification of ‘active martyrdom’ as suicide de-legitimised the minority or dissenting groups’ prominent understanding of it and placed them as heretics within Sunni thought.

2:3:2:3 Sunni Non-Combative Martyrdom

The urge for disassociation from the Kharijites and to create jurisprudential distance from the Shi’ites, may not have been the only factor responsible for this shift in the construction of martyrdom in Sunni thought. The Sunni political situation may have played a significant role in the shift to emphasise the ‘non-combative martyrdom’ over ‘combative martyrdom’. Historical evidence suggests that the reconstruction of the notion of martyrdom in Sunni jurisprudence coincides with the end of the conquest era.⁷¹ The post-conquest era saw the disbanding of Arab tribal armies, the formation of urban societies, and the gradual establishment of a more stable political authority, which in turn was detrimental to the both the opportunity and importance of ‘combative martyrdom’. During the post-conquest era, Hadith and jurisprudential literature demonstrated an expansion in the categorization of martyrdom, a

⁷⁰ Bernard K. Freamon, “Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003), p.325

⁷¹ Approximately 632-750

transformation that was drastically different from its original definition.⁷²

One of the new categories that appeared was ‘passive non-combative accidental martyrdom’. Victims of drowning, pleurisy, plague, accidental building collapse, and childbirth were considered qualifications to be called martyrs. Other reports include death in defence of property, death by accident while engaging in *hajj*, death from falling off a mountain, and death from being eaten by lions.⁷³ The deceased were granted the honoured title *shahid* and understood to be rewarded direct access to Paradise. Most of the new categories are cases of death by incident that is particularly violent, sudden, or painful, suggesting that there was a need to somehow assure compensation and, thus allow these deaths to be considered as atonement for sins and grant the victims special treatment in the afterlife.⁷⁴ These new categories reflect an attempt by Sunni jurists and scholars to make martyrdom more accessible to people in the stable political environment of the post-conquest era, which had limited access to situations that may afford the chance of ‘combative martyrdom’. The incidents that make up this category of martyrdom stress an ‘accidental’ nature to encourage a ‘passive’ intention, in accordance with the attempt to dissociate with ‘active’ martyrdom. In addition, this category indicates the reshaping of gender boundaries by making the rewards of martyrdom accessible to females who did not traditionally partake in military *jihad*.

⁷² ‘Combative martyrdom’ was still considered to be of high virtue; however, it was not emphasized as the opportunities for ‘combative martyrdom’ were not highly available.

⁷³ Once such Hadith reports, “...The Apostle of Allah (peace_be_upon_him) said: There are seven types of martyrdom in addition to being killed in Allah's cause: one who dies of plague is a martyr; one who is drowned is a martyr; one who dies of pleurisy is a martyr; one who dies of an internal complaint is a martyr; one who is burnt to death is a martyr; who one is killed by a building falling on him is a martyr; and a woman who dies while pregnant is a martyr.” Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 20, Number 3105. <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html>, (cited: 12th August 2006)

⁷⁴ Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 82

2:3:2:2 *The Removal of Death*

Although different from ‘combative martyrdom’ in context and intentional behaviour, the ‘passive non-combative martyrdom’ category still requires death as the central factor for being qualified a martyr. However, Sunni jurists and scholars expanded this ‘passive non-combative’ category further by equating various religious activities with martyrdom, ‘passive non-combative duty’. Consequently, this removed death altogether. It was no longer death in the ‘path of God’, which qualified a Muslim as a martyr, but rather being merely a Muslim itself that could in some circumstances bring a Sunni Muslim to the level of a martyr. Hadith literature suggests that the honour of a martyr is transferable to any Muslim who fulfils their religious duties with a marked degree of zeal. This category includes those who read the Qur'an for God's sake,⁷⁵ those who perform daily pray obediently, and those who undertake a blameless pilgrimage.⁷⁶ As martyrdom became a topic of discussion and debate in Sunni religious scholarship, scholars and intellectuals, and the caller to prayer (those devoted to the work of God), became qualified for the honour of martyrdom. This type of martyrdom became understood as the category of martyrdom that superseded the significance of all other categories:

“The ulama in their own interest composed a prophetic saying in which their merit is reckoned as higher than that of the Shuhada and the ink which flows from the pens of the learned is recognised to be of more value than the blood of martyrs shed in war for faith.”⁷⁷

In these literatures, it is reported that the reciters of the Qur'an and the leaders of daily prayers receive the reward of 40,000 martyrs.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies Volume Two*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), p.352

⁷⁶ A. J. Wensinck, *The Oriental Doctrine of the Martyrs*, (Amsterdam, 1921), p.154

⁷⁷ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies Volume Two*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), p.352,

⁷⁸ It is not mentioned what specific literatures report this. Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 83

2:4 CONCLUSION

The various interpretations of martyrdom in early Islam were driven chiefly by the formation of different jurisprudential traditions in the Muslim community due to debate over the issue of central authority. The Shi'a ideal reinterpretation of martyrdom allows for 'active' martyrdom in 'combative',⁷⁹ 'non-combative', and 'political' constructions and is a direct result of their position as a minority group under Sunni authority. The concept of martyrdom becomes crucial to Shi'a political thought and reflects their struggle against injustice and oppression. The Shi'a understanding of the nature of martyrdom is articulated in the narrative of Hussein's martyrdom at the hands of Yazid. Hussein's martyrdom narrative preserved the possibility of 'active martyrdom', although throughout history Shi'ites have followed relatively quietest symbolic approach to this narrative.⁸⁰ The Sunni approach is motivated by both a 'passive' and 'non-combative' impulse. Their jurisprudential reinterpretation of the concept of martyrdom reflects their position as the central authority of the Caliphate. Sunni reinterpretations prohibit 'active martyrdom', favoured by dissenting and minority groups, by associating it with suicide. This prohibition of 'active martyrdom' creates jurisprudential distance and allows the dissenting groups to be identified as heretics. Their concept of martyrdom also signifies attempts to sustain political stability, by demilitarizing martyrdom, and opening up the 'non-combative' category, martyrdom becomes more accessible to Muslims in the post-conquest era.

⁷⁹ Until the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. See footnote: 48

⁸⁰ Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.38

CHAPTER THREE: CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP AND THE REVIVAL OF MARTYRDOM

3:1 INTRODUCTION

In the wake of ‘post-colonialism’ and increasing western influence in the Middle East in the 20th century, Islamic ‘revivalist’ movements revitalised the importance of the concept of martyrdom and *jihad*, a process that would ultimately provided the basis for the Islamic ‘suicide bomber’. This chapter will assess the ideological shifts that occurred in the concept of martyrdom and *jihad*. It will show that while ‘suicide bombing’ did not occur as a simple development out of either the revivalist Sunni or revivalist Shi’a movements, there are ideological parallels that would have allowed for the possibility of the ‘suicide bombing’ as a form of martyrdom if the revivalist Shi’a concept of martyrdom was reinterpreted into a revivalist Sunni notion of *jihad*.

This chapter will provide an analysis of the revivalist Shi’a scholars’ discourse on martyrdom, focusing on the works of Khomeini and Shari’ati. Shari’ati’s individualized reinterpretation of the historical narrative of Hussein’s martyrdom into the contemporary Iranian political situation created the philosophy for revolutionary martyrdom. Khomeini’s own ideas on martyrdom were heavily influenced by Shari’ati’s martyrdom philosophy, and he utilized the philosophy during the Iran-Iraq war, creating the ‘active political martyr’; the martyr who choose to die, in order for his death to serve as a symbolic tool against the ‘oppressor’. This analysis highlights that the actual concept of martyrdom that is apparent in the later development of the ‘suicide bomber

martyr' originates for this Shi'a form of 'active political martyrdom'.

The analysis of the revivalist Sunni scholars' discourse on *jihad* will focus on the works of Mawdudi, Al-Banna and Qutb. The Sunni revivalist understanding of *jihad*, typified by Qutb, asserted pan-Islamic aggressive notion of *jihad*, in which it is every individual Muslims' duty to participate. The *jihad* was focused against the western 'oppressor', who keeps the present-day Muslim societies in a state of constant *jahiliyya* (*ignorance*). The comparative analysis of the revivalist movements will show that both assert an individualized response to the contemporary situation of the Islamic world, and both understand the enemy as the 'oppressor'. It is these parallel ideologies that will later create a complementary basis that will allow for the development of the Islamic 'suicide bomber'. As they provide an ideological basis that will allow the 'active political martyr' who can die, and the Qutbian *jihadi*, who can kill, to integrate.

3:2 SHI'A AND MARTYRDOM

The narrative of Hussein's martyrdom is the crux in the development of the Islamic 'suicide bomber' martyr. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hussein martyrdom is a central event for the understanding of martyrdom in the Shi'a tradition. Furthermore, Hussein is a central figure in the conception of Shi'a identity and his martyrdom is commemorated annually by Shi'ites during the *Ashura* celebration. There is no correlating figure in the concept of martyrdom in the Sunni tradition.

Although Hussein's martyrdom has always been a powerful event and idea in Shi'a religious thought, its political significance has waxed and waned. Until the nineteenth century the event's significance was approached and understood primarily from a quietest and pragmatic philosophical standing. The *Ashura* ceremonies associated with

Hussein's martyrdom were in the form of commemorations and lamentations of his death as opposed to celebrations. They consisted of mourning, weeping, and self-flagellation. These commemorations were founded on the merit of mourning and the achievement of salvation through the re-enactment of Hussien's grief and suffering. This interpretation of the martyrdom was on, a basic conceptual level, comparable to the Christian concept of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, in the understanding that Hussein suffered and was killed, in a sense to purify the Muslims community's corruption and to vindicate the Shi'a cause.⁸¹ It was not until the middle of the twentieth century, with a growing distrust over western influence in Iran and in Iraq, that the *Ashura* commemorations took on a new meaning. The dominant quietest philosophical approaches' influence began to wane, and revolutionary revivalist ideologies gained a sustained influential position, exerting their presence in the political realm, an area neglected during the quietest era.⁸² As the oppositions against Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's policies mounted in Iran and the issue of injustice become the primary area of contention, similarly the issue of injustice was read as the dominant cause of Hussein's martyrdom. Hussein's martyrdom myth, as an effective means for making sense of the surrounding social and political reality, was both realised and utilised, becoming inspiration for political activism,⁸³ and ultimately, it would become a model for political martyrdom.

3:2:1 The Introduction of The New Concept of Martyrdom

⁸¹ Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 333

⁸² Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.38

⁸³ Jill Swenson, *Martyrdom: Mytho-Cathexis and the Mobilization of the Masses in the Iranian Revolution*, (Chicago: American Anthropological Association, 1985), p.123

It was out of Najaf, Iraq,⁸⁴ and Qom, Iran, in the 1960's that significant shifts in Shi'a jurisprudence and ideologies on martyrdom first began to appear. The newly installed Ba'ath party was in power in Baghdad,⁸⁵ and they were beginning to construct their new order in Iraq. The Sunni elite in Baghdad were benefiting from the oil boom, while the Shi'ite population in the south of Iraq remained comparatively impoverished and suffered increasingly from the Ba'ath party's regime, becoming a target of discrimination and oppression. The religious discourse that began to appear out of Najaf at this time introduced ideas centred on a reinterpretation of Shi'a history and a re-evaluation of the Shi'a role within the larger Islamic community. The *ulema* of Najaf began to discuss the responsibility of the Shi'ite *ulema* in saving the Islamic *umma* from what was perceived to be oblivion at the hands of colonialism and secularism.⁸⁶ This predicament called for Shi'ites to exert their religious and political presence over the ruling elite and the corrupt colonial rulers. To fulfil this responsibility required a new form of revivalist Shi'ism, and ultimately an Islamic Revolution. This called for a reinterpretation of the concept of martyrdom, through a reinterpretation of the narrative of Hussein's martyrdom into the contemporary political situation.

In terms of discourse on martyrdom, the most prominent theoreticians out of Najaf and Qom included, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1935-1980), Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini (1900-1989), Ayatollah Talequani (1903-1979) and later Muhammad Hussein Fadlullah (1935-). Khomeini was the most influential to the developments of martyrdom in contemporary Shi'a thought. Khomeini's ideas on martyrdom began to

⁸⁴ Najaf, Iraq has for many centuries been the home of important and influential theological colleges and institutions. Najaf institutions have played a central role in the development of the Twelver (Jafari) school of Islamic Jurisprudence.

⁸⁵ In Iraq the Ba'ath party briefly came to power in 1963, and then seized power officially in 1968. Robin Wright, *In The Name Of God: The Khomeini Decade*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p.82

⁸⁶ Ulema: Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law.

Umma: Islamic Community.

Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 333

develop before his exile from Iran in 1964.⁸⁷ Khomeini had been an active critic and vigorous protester of both the ruling Shah and the Pahlavi regime; however, it was in 1963, when the Pahlavi regime sent paratroopers into a *masdrasa*⁸⁸ in Qom, killing a number of students that Khomeini's ideas gained potency and began to resonate within the public sphere. During the *Ashura* commemorations following the killings, Khomeini gave a mobilising historical speech in Qom, promoting those who died at the *madrassa* to a higher status, not as *shahids*, but the elevated status of 'the companions of Hussein' on the grounds of suffering under oppression.⁸⁹ Khomeini paralleled the policies of the Shah government with the tyranny and oppression of Yazid rule. He was arrested by the SAVAK two days after the speech.⁹⁰ This ultimately resulted in his exile from Iran. He briefly moved to Turkey, before settling in Najaf, Iraq in 1965.⁹¹ In Najaf, his prominence as an intellectual and religious figure continued to grow.

One of the first significant publications out of Najaf that displays Khomeini's ideas on martyrdom, was authored by Khomeini's student Ni'matollah Salihi Najaf-adabi, in 1968. The pamphlet called "*Shahid-e Javid*", "The Eternal Martyr", contained the contemporary interpretation of Hussein's martyrdom as a political sacrifice and promoted Hussein's political activism as an inspiration to all Shi'ites. The "Eternal Martyr" claimed that Hussein went to battle not because he sought dynastic power, the Sunni understanding, and not because he was following his divine fate, the dominant quietest Shi'a understanding, but as a calculated and conscious action against an oppressive regime. Thus his martyrdom was the ultimate sacrifice in his commitment to revolution against an unjust and oppressive political regime, not an action of divine

⁸⁷ Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, (London: Peregrine, 1987), p.398

⁸⁸ Religious school.

⁸⁹ Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 1993), p.29

⁹⁰ SAVAK is the intelligence service during the Shah's time.

⁹¹ Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, (London: Peregrine, 1987), p.187, 398

nature.⁹²

As a result of this new interpretation of Hussein's martyrdom, *Ashura* commemoration in Iran and Iraq began to evolve and grew increasingly volatile and political in nature. By 1974, the commemoration in Iraq had developed into violent political protests against the Ba'ath party and over the following years *Ashura* protests became exceedingly more violent each year. In 1977, the Iraqi Government outlawed all *Ashura* commemorations, creating a tumultuous climate of unrest in the Shi'ite communities. The prohibition of *Ashura* commemorations ultimately resulted in many political trials and widespread persecution and executions of Shi'ite Iraqis. The political trials fed into the revitalized *Ashura* myth and legitimized its new political nature and its cause. These events can be seen as important concrete evidence of the implications and power of Shi'a *ulemas*' reinterpretations of the notion of Hussein's martyrdom.⁹³ They can be directly attributed to the religious discourses on martyrdom that had been produced in Najaf.

3:2:2 Ayatollah Khomeini

Khomeini built an influential position in Najaf, while also managing to sustain his influence in Iran. When Khomeini gave seminars in the theological centre of Najaf, Iranian pilgrims to Iraq recorded them, allowing for the production of cassettes and religio-political tracts which were then smuggled back and distributed in Iran. In 1978, the Ba'athist Government grew nervous of Khomeini's influence and he was sent into

⁹² Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 1993), p.29

⁹³ Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 338

exile again. After no other Islamic country allowed him entry, he settled in France.⁹⁴

It is through the way in which Khomeini utilises the two words *mostazafin* (oppressed) and *shahid* (martyr) in his writings that we can see a transformation in his ideas. In his very early writings, he would use the word *mostazafin* in the traditional Qur'anic sense, the humble, passive, meek believers, particularly orphans, widows and the handicapped. In the 1970's, *mostazafin* was used as a word to represent the angry poor, the exploited and downtrodden masses.⁹⁵ The category of representation undergoes further extension after the revolution to include the middle classes that actively support the revolution. Similarly, the word *shahid* underwent a process of transformation. In Khomeini's very early writing, he rarely uses the word and, when he does, *shahid* is used in the conventional sense with reference to famous Shi'ite martyrs, such as Hussein. He never used *shahid* to represent the average person killed. By the early 1960's, those killed against a 'tyrant' regime in protest or uprisings are given elevated status. Their death takes on a significance, and they are given the titled *bicharehha* (unfortunate ones).⁹⁶ Shortly before the Revolution, while in France, Khomeini ideas on the concept of martyrdom begin to thrive, probably due to the influence of the theories of Ali Shari'ati, who was enjoying relative popularity in Iran at the time.⁹⁷ He extends the boundary of the category of martyr to include almost anyone killed, in any sense, for the Shi'a cause; they became 'glorious *shahids*', revolutionary martyrs.⁹⁸

Khomeini's exile to France was beneficial for propagating his message. From his Paris base, Khomeini was able to develop and produce more on his political ideas, as there

⁹⁴ Bernard K. Freamon, (December 2003.) p. 339

⁹⁵ Ervand Abrahamian, (1993), p.27

⁹⁶ Ervand Abrahamian, (1993), p.27

⁹⁷ Although Khomeini never publicly admitted influence from Shari'ati's writings, there are similar qualities, and both scholars' works certainly re-enforced each other within Iranian public opinion.

⁹⁸ Ervand Abrahamian, (1993), p.27

were fewer governmental restraints. His sermons, that were sent back to Iran, were carefully directed towards the youth audience, rather than the clerical elite, as he did not want to alienate potential allies.⁹⁹ Daniel Brumberg, in his article *Khomeini's Legacy: Islamic Rule and Islamic Social Justice*, suggests that in retrospect it becomes clear that this targeting of the youth audience was in the hope of inspiring them to take a political stance, and they did. Khomeini seems to have had an agenda, hoping for and anticipating the killing of the youth protesters by the Shah, which would encourage Iranians to identify themselves with Hussein and result in the comparison of the Shah with the 'tyrant' Yazid. After the success of the Revolution, he used the narrative to firmly secure the current political situation within a prominent Shi'ite historical event. Thus in a chaotic environment of economical suffering and oppression, Khomeini was seen as the hopeful alternative, a leader of absolute good, a leader with a conviction to resist evil and a leader who was prepared to lead his people into the light.¹⁰⁰

Ultimately Khomeini's popularity spread and his vision of an Islamic state in Iran came true. Many of the Iranian clerics whom Khomeini taught in Najaf were installed in positions in the new Islamic government in Tehran. Of these clergy, the one who centred his understanding of an Islamic revolution based on martyrdom was Ayatollah Talequani. His definition of martyrdom took form at Najaf, but gained influence once the Islamic government was in place in Tehran.

In short, anyone who has understood the truth and divine goal and has stood for it, sacrificing his life, is called shahid in the terminology of the Qur'an and jurisprudence. The shahid is the one who has experienced the shuhud (vision) of truth. The sacrifice of his own life is not based on illusion or agitation of his emotions. He has seen the truth and the goal. That is why he has chosen to wallow in the blood and the dust. Such a person does so with the intention of intimacy with God, not on the basis of fantasies and personal desires. He is above these worldly matters. He has understood the value of truth...A shahid is the one who understands religion, knows his God, and believes in the hereafter

⁹⁹ Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution*, (USA: Adler and Adler, 1986), p.131-2

¹⁰⁰ R. Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.37-38

as well as in eternal life. He must realise the goal. Then because he has seen the truth, he has no fear of death. Death is easy for him.¹⁰¹

Talequani's ideas on martyrdom are a good example of the religious interpretations of the significance of martyrdom in the contemporary situation. His concepts are very similar to those of Ali Shari'ati, specifically the promotion of sacrifice and the need to realise the importance of martyrdom.

3:2:3 Shari'ati on Martyrdom and *Jihad*

It seems that much of Khomeini's and Talequani's rhetoric was based around, or at least received an important boost by the ideas of Ali Shari'ati. Shari'ati was originally a schoolteacher; he held a doctorate in sociology from the Sorbonne and was the son and grandson of influential Iranian religious scholars. Although he was not a cleric and was not directly involved with the religious discourse in Najaf or Qom during the time, he produced a number of religious works, which played an essential role in the ideological development of revolutionary religious ideology that occurred within the greater Iranian society. It could be argued that Shari'ati is the most influential scholar in the ideological development in the concept of martyrdom that resulted in the 'suicide bomber'.¹⁰²

Shari'ati's writings were influenced considerably by his philosophical studies in France, he was fascinated by Western schools of thought, such as Marxism and existentialism.¹⁰³ He considered himself to be a 'God worshipping socialist' and showed little respect to the traditional role of Shi'ite clerics in Najaf and Qom. He gave old tradition religious narratives a modern spin by integrating them with the themes of

¹⁰¹ Ayatollah Talequani, cited in: Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 339

¹⁰² Shari'ati is often overlooked in studies on 'suicide bombing'. The next chapter will illustrate that Shari'ati's philosophy of martyrdom can be seen in the current developments in the tactic use of 'suicide bombing' by Sunni groups.

¹⁰³ Janet Afary, *Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance: Michel Foucault and the Culture of the Iranian Revolution, 1978-1979*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/radical_history_review/v086/86.1afary.html (cited: 22nd March 2006), p. 10

Western leftist thought.¹⁰⁴ It was Shari'ati who introduced the expressions 'Red Shi'ism', his view of Shi'ism was as a revolutionary force and a tradition, which has been constructed on uprising against injustice.¹⁰⁵ He criticized the Safavid interpretation of Shi'ism that allowed for the legitimacy of an oppressive government.¹⁰⁶

3:2:3:1 Shari'ati on Martyrdom

Martyrdom was the central concept for Shari'ati's vision of Shi'ism; he elevated it above all else and interpreted Hussein's martyrdom to be the defining moment of Shi'ite history. Shari'ati was a gifted writer and speaker and his two central works of martyrdom, *'Martyrdom: Arise and Bear Witness'* and *'Jihad and Shahadat'* are exceptionally poetic and powerful.¹⁰⁷ In his discussions of martyrdom, Shari'ati relies heavily on the notion of the individual. He positions his discussions to directly address the individual and constructs a feeling of personal responsibility in the narrative of Hussein. He develops the notion of 'constructing a revolutionary self' or a political 'consciousness-rising'.¹⁰⁸ It is the political consciousness of individuals that Shari'ati considers the essence that leads a revolution to victory. This consciousness is a political preparedness for death and the sacrifice of one's life.¹⁰⁹ He formulated his theories based on defining the 'secret of victory', which to Shari'ati is articulated in a demand for

¹⁰⁴ This approach made his work more popular to the educated youth of Iran. By 1969 he had built a reputation as a powerful lecturer and had acquired a mass following. His lectures were recorded and distributed to a large audiences and his controversial ideas were discussed widely, causing much jealousy and resentment from the traditional Shi'ite clergy. His leftist position was seen as a threat by the Shah regime, and following a series of confrontations, Shari'ati left Iran in 1977. He died shortly afterwards in London, reportedly from a heart attack at the age of forty-four, however there is speculation that he was actually killed by the SAVAK.

¹⁰⁵ The colour red in 'Red Shi'ism' was chosen to represent the blood of the bodies of Hussein and his men, and to refer to an association with western leftist thought.

¹⁰⁶ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.41

¹⁰⁷ Shari'ati's works are available in English translation from his official website *The Official Website of Dr. Ali Shari'ati*, <http://www.shariati.com/>, (cited: 22nd March 2006)

¹⁰⁸ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.41

¹⁰⁹ This is not the same as a consciousness to commit oneself to the conditions of martyrdom for reason of personal interest or for egotism, which would be suicide. For Shi'a theology, as with Sunni, the distinction between suicide and martyrdom is based on intention. However, for Shi'a theology it is personal intention, not behavioural intention. Thus, a martyrdom can physically mimic a suicide, but if the personal intention behind taking one's own life is pure for the cause of God it is legitimate.

sacrifice via ‘active martyrdom’ in the uprising against injustice, an issue, which, according to him, is more important than life itself. Shari’ati’s discourse on martyrdom is constructed around and legitimized by a unique interpretation of Hussein’s martyrdom. Shari’ati’s reading creates two important shifts in the Shi’a constructions of martyrdom; it removes the condition of *jihad* and it creates a symbolic death.

3:2:3:1 Shari’ati’s Hussein

Shari’ati provides an existentialist reading of the narrative of Hussein’s uprising against Yazid.¹¹⁰ Shari’ati makes an absolute division in the motives and reasons for participating in martyrdom, and he legitimates this division within the context of Shi’a religious history. He uses two models to define the distinction; first, the Prophet Muhammad’s uncle Hamzah, who fought at Uhud and died on the battlefield, second, Hussein who, according to Shari’ati, is different from any other because he is ‘the figurehead of martyrs’ and defines “existential choice”.

Hamzah, for Shari’ati, represents a ‘hero’, one who gives meaning to *jihad*, the *mujahid*, one who strives against the enemy for victory in the battlefield:

Hamzah is a mujahid and a hero who goes (into battle) to achieve victory and defeat the enemy. Instead, he is defeated, is killed, and thus becomes a shahid. But this represents an individual shahadat. His name is registered at the top of the list of those who died for the cause of their belief.¹¹¹

Hussein, however, for Shari’ati is a pious political rebel who chooses to make the ultimate sacrifice for the Shi’a cause:

Hussein, on the other hand, is a different type. He does not go (into battle with the intention of) succeeding in killing the enemy and winning victory. Neither is he accidentally killed by a terrorist act of someone such as Wahshi (savage). This is not the case. Hussein, while he could

¹¹⁰ Janet Afary, *Shi’i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance: Michel Foucault and the Culture of the Iranian Revolution, 1978-1979*, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/radical_history_review/v086/86.1afary.html (cited: 22nd March 2006), p. 11

¹¹¹ Ali Shari’ati, *Jihad and Shahadat*, <http://www.shariati.com/>, (cited: 20th March 2006)

stay at home and continue to live, rebels and consciously welcomes death. Precisely at this moment, he chooses self-negation. He takes this dangerous route, placing himself in the battlefield, in front of the contemplators of the world and in front of time, so that [the consequence of] his act might be widely spread and the cause for which he gives his life might be realized sooner. Hussein chooses shahadat as an end or as a means for the affirmation of what is being negated and mutilated by the political apparatus. Conversely, shahadat chooses Hamzah and the other mujahidin who go for victory. In the shahadat of Hussein, the goal is self-negation for the sanctity [of that ideal], which is being negated and gradually is vanishing. At this point, jihad and shahadat are completely separate from each other.¹¹²

Thus, he considers Hamzah, a *mujahid*¹¹³ who wanted to defeat the enemy. He was prepared to take death as a possible outcome of war but did not seek to die, i.e, ‘passive combative martyrdom’. Whilst Hussein is a politic rebel, he made the conscious decision to sacrifice his life as a tool for political means against injustice and oppression. According to Shari’ati, Hussein’s model of consciously choosing death over earthly life, when he could have continued to live, has much greater religious significance than Hamzah’s model, or any martyrdom for the sake of *jihad*.¹¹⁴ Shari’ati is the first to approach Hussein’s martyrdom in such away that it allows for the distinction between martyrdom in the context of *jihad* and martyrdom in the context of the political realm. This is a significant shift in the concept of martyrdom, and is essentially the basis for the revival of ‘active martyrdom’, as it allowed from Hussein’s death to become a model for martyrdom.

Hussein’s martyrdom as political, rather ‘combative’, allows for ‘active martyrdom’ to be emancipated from the confines of the Shi’a conditions of *jihad*. When Hussein’s martyrdom is within the context of *jihad*, reinterpretations into the contemporary context can only promote Hussein as the ultimate example of revolutionary spirit (as Khomeini’s early interpretations). This is because of the Shi’a understanding of the

¹¹² Ali Shari’ati, *Jihad and Shahadat*, <http://www.shariati.com/>, (cited: 20th March 2006)

¹¹³ “*Strivers*”. *Those who struggle for the faith, those who wage jihad. Here is it used in a way that is similar to soldier.*

¹¹⁴ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.43

conditions of *jihad*. According to Shi'a theology, only the Twelfth Imam has the legitimate authority to declare *jihad*¹¹⁵ and, thus, in the absence of the Twelfth Imam the conditions in which Hussein's martyrdom occurred cannot be in existence today. Therefore, Hussein's martyrdom cannot be imitated. Shari'ati's unique interpretation of Hussein's martyrdom, as political, removes it from these restrictions of the Shi'a conditions of *jihad*. This represents a significant ideological shift in the concept of martyrdom, as it allows for Hussein's martyrdom to be imitated in the contemporary situation and provides legitimacy of use of 'active political martyrdom'.

In addition to legitimizing 'active martyrdom' modelled on Hussein, removing Hussein's martyrdom from *jihad* completely reconstructs the function of martyrdom. Martyrdom becomes a death that has a *symbolic* value rather than a 'combative' value. Shari'ati's Hussein is individualised, humanised and revolutionised. This breaks the traditional transcendent and infallible nature of Hussien as the Imam. Individualising him makes him responsible for his individual conscious decision to be martyred and rejects traditional interpretations of divine intervention and predestination. Humanising him places his rebellion solely upon his humanity and conscious reasoning, rejecting any innate knowledge. Hussein, as a revolutionary, shifts the understanding of his death exclusively into the context of political rebellion, which is more applicable to the contemporary situation. Thus, Hussein, based on his own individual conscious decision, chose to die a death that was a *symbolic* sacrifice against the unjust.

To emphasise this *symbolic* shift, Shari'ati proposes that martyrdom, imitating the model of Hussein, equates to becoming completely religiously good, and subsequently

¹¹⁵ Note: Twelver understanding.
The 12th Imam has been in occultation since 874.

provides a free pass to paradise without judgement. Theologically, human beings are made up of earthly body and a divine soul, mortal and divine. Humans, therefore, by nature have the possibility to be both good and bad. The purpose of religion is to guide the good half to triumph over the bad. However, according to Shari'ati, 'active political martyrdom', in the model of Hussein, insures the triumph of the good over the bad:

Martyrdom is an act whereby a man is suddenly, and in revolutionary mode, flings his vile being (the diabolic half) into the fire of love and faith and thus becomes completely good. This is why a martyr must not be washed in keeping with the Islamic ritual, and why, on Judgement Day, he does not have to account for his actions because the sinful and guilty man- this was his way of life before he was martyred- was sacrificed before he died, and because he is now 'in the presence'¹¹⁶... When they are weakened and have no means whereby to struggle, they guarantee their lives, movements, faith, respect, honor, future and history with martyrdom. Martyrdom is an invitation to all ages and generations: "If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!"¹¹⁷

The last sentence, '*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*', is essentially the foundation for the contemporary use of 'active political martyrdom'. Shar'iati reasons that it is legitimate to intentionally and consciously control one's death and sacrifice one's life, after having reasoned that there is no other conventional alternative available and the sacrifice of the life will further the cause of Islam on its *symbolic* value. This displays the crucial distinction between 'active combative martyrdom' and 'active political martyrdom'. The 'active combative martyr' is one who chooses to *fight* to the *death*. The *fight* is the tool, and the *death* is the condition. Whereas, the 'active political martyr' is the one who chooses to *die*, rejecting earthly life for *death*.¹¹⁸ The choosing to *die* is the tool and the *death* is the condition.

In *Jihad and Shahadat*, Shari'ati states that the affects of martyrdom in the model of Hussein: "*By his [Hussein's] death, he condemns the oppressor and provides*

¹¹⁶ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.44

¹¹⁷ Ali Shari'ati. Ali Shari'ati, *Martyrdom: Arise and Bear Witness*, <http://www.shariati.com/>, (cited: 20th March 2006)

¹¹⁸ Note: 'earthly' life, 'earthly' is specified as martyrs are not considered to be dead; they are understood to have eternal life in Paradise.

*commitment for the oppressed. He exposes aggression and revives what has hitherto been negated”*¹¹⁹ Thus, in the contemporary situation, “*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*”, or ‘active political martyrdom’ is a legitimate tactic against tyranny and oppression. It is this clause that resonated with those who perceived themselves weaker politically, and militarily, than their enemy.¹²⁰ It was in the Iran-Iraq war that this sentence transitioned from a philosophy to an ‘active’ phenomenon.

Shari’ati’s work displays his beliefs that one of the greatest and most revolutionary contributions of Islam to human society has been to instil a sense of devotion and sacrifice in the pursuit of justice.¹²¹ Before the revolution, Shari’ati’s work found popularity mostly among the student population, and it was these students that put up spectacular protests during the revolution. The real influence of his work was not felt until after his death in 1977, in the post- revolution decade. Khomeini adapted Shari’ati’s ideas into his religio-political scholarship and commissioned mass re-printings of his work.

Unfortunately, Shari’ati is often overlooked in the literature on ‘suicide bombing’, and the important ideological shifts are not assessed.¹²² As a result, to reconcile the martyr’s of the Iranian Revolution within Shi’a jurisprudence, without an understanding of Shari’ati’s Hussein, leads to most studies falsely assuming that Khomeini declared *jihad*, which, in turn, results in an understanding of the development of the concept of ‘suicide bombing’ and the revival of ‘active martyrdom’ which is out of the context

¹¹⁹ Ali Shari’ati. *Jihad and Shahadat*, <http://www.shariati.com/>, (cited: 20th March 2006)

¹²⁰ Both Hezbollah and Palestinian groups have utilised this clause to legitimate their use of ‘active martyrdom’.

¹²¹ Manochehr Dorraj, “Symbolic and Utilitarian Political Value of a Tradition: Martyrdom in the Iranian Political Culture”, *The Review of Politics* 59:3 (Summer, 1997): p. 512

¹²² Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), is one of the only studies that provides any discussion of Shari’ati’s philosophies. However, Khosrokhavar sociological and jihad focused approach limits the ability to see the true significance of Shari’ati’s ideas.

from which it occurred. The martyrs of the revolution and the Iran-Iraq war are not martyrs in the context of *jihad*, as there is no evidence that Khomeini actually declare *jihad*. The assumption that Khomeini did declare *jihad* is not completely unfounded, as Khomeini did reinterpret the Shi'a conditions of *jihad* during the revolution, claiming that until the Twelfth Imam returned his authority to declare *jihad* should be invested in the religious leadership. However, he actually never did declare *jihad*, he only ever said that he could legitimately declare *jihad*, if he needed to. It was on the 19th of February 1979 that Khomeini gave this strong warning about *jihad* to the Shah's regime, basically saying that he had the legitimacy to declare *jihad*, but he had not ordered it yet. He ordered the regime to stop killing of the Iranian people immediately or he would have to make his final decision about declaring *jihad*.¹²³ However, on the 20th of February 1979 the Shah's regime fell. Khomeini never actually had to declare *jihad*. Furthermore, I have also found no evidence that Khomeini declared *jihad* against Iraq, although according to Shi'a tradition, the conditions of the Iran-Iraq war were purely defensive and the Twelfth Imam's authority is not need in a defensive *jihad*. Khomeini could have legitimately declared *jihad* as a defensive measure to protect the boarders of Islam. Despite this, there is no evidence that he ever did.

3:2:4 Iran-Iraq War

When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September of 1980, Khomeini resurrected the Hussein martyrdom narrative. Khomeini advocated Shari'ati's interpretation of Hussein's martyrdom, completing the transition from theory into the reality of the phenomena of 'active political martyrdom'. With the success of the revolution and the

¹²³ *Etteli'p* (Iranian Newspaper). 19th February 1979: last page, top of the last column. Translation: Negar Partow.

removal of the Shah, the role of 'Yazid' was void; Khomeini flawlessly recast the role with Saddam Hussein and his western supporters.¹²⁴ The application of the narrative to the war with Iraq, forged a sense of solidarity, encouraged mass mobilisation, defended the sacred values of the community and legitimated conscious death, with much greater potency than the revolutionary years. It is the Iranian youth soldiers that voluntarily walked through the Iraqi mine fields to clear a path of the Iranian tanks and military divisions that we can assign the full conversion of Khomeini's and Shari'ati's ideas from theory into practice.¹²⁵ Systematic and symbolic martyrdom pervaded Iran during the war with Iraq,¹²⁶ this represents Shari'ati's existentialist individualism, combined with an absolute faith in Khomeini's revolutionary leadership.

Christopher Reuter describes in his book, *My Life Is A Weapon*, that the 'human waves' of Iranian youths, mostly unarmed, would chant "*Ya Karbala! Ya Hussein! Ya Khomeini!*" as they marched towards the Iraq artillery.¹²⁷ Furthermore, he describes a scene where more than 23,000 Iranian youths from one of the 'human wave attacks' all lay dead with plastic keys around their necks, which they had been told would open the doors to paradise once they had died as martyrs. The chants and the keys of the martyred Iranian youths graphically demonstrate the culmination of the political reinterpretation of Hussein's death and powerful religio-political discourse. The overriding readiness of these youths to march towards their certain deaths clearly embodies conscious 'active political martyrdom'. They choose to *die*, rejecting earthly life for symbolic *death*. The youth martyrs were a successful tactic, not only because it

¹²⁴ Christoph Reuter, *A Modern History of Suicide Bombing*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 43

¹²⁵ It is in 1980, during the Iran-Iraq war, that the first ever 'suicide bombing' associated with Islam technically occurred. 13 year old Mohammed Hossein Fahmideh threw himself underneath an Iraqi tank and detonated a bomb.

¹²⁶ Manochehr Dorraj, (Summer, 1997), p. 489

¹²⁷ Christoph Reuter, *A Modern History of Suicide Bombing*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 34-35
Reuter describes 'Human wave attacks' as "parades of mass self-sacrifice". Christoph Reuter, p. 36

caused the Iraqi machine gunners to run out of ammunition because of the volume of people, but more so they could no longer bear to shoot masses of children the same age as their own. This clearly illustrates the definition of 'active political martyrdom' as martyrdom in which choosing to *die* is the tool and the *death* is the condition. This is the individualised martyrdom ideology that provides the martyrological basis for the 'suicide bomber'.

3:3 SUNNI REVIVALIST JIHAD

The Sunni world went through a similar revivalist approach during the 20th century and many of the ideas parallel developments occurring within Shi'a discourse, however, there are two prominent distinctions: the focus remains firmly grounded within the notion of *jihad*, and the traditional understanding of martyrdom as 'passive' is retained. Three of the most prominent intellectual figures in the early Sunni revivalists scene are Sayyid Abu Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. Their works can be considered the foundation of Sunni revivalist thought and are central to the contemporary interpretations of the concepts of revivalist *jihad* and provide a suitable foundation for the later appropriation of the Shi'a model of 'active political martyrdom' back into the context of *jihad*.

Sunni revivalist thought is a diverse area of scholarship. I will be focusing on several key shifts in the notion of *jihad* that complemented the shifts in Shi'a thought on 'active political martyrdom'. The key shifts in the Sunni notion of *jihad* are displayed in the influential works of Mawdudi (1903-1979), founder of Jama'at I Islami in Pakistan, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) of the Egyptian Muslim

Brotherhood. Mawdudi's works reflect a strong political-religious position. He shifts the focus of *jihad* away from the foreign and external forces, and reflects it inwards towards local 'tyrannical' government authorities. The second shift can be seen in the theories of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Al-Banna rejected the traditional held two-fold notion of *jihad*, and placed primary emphasis on the external physical *jihad*. Finally, Sayyid Qutb, of the Egyptian Brotherhood, who was heavily influenced by the former scholars' notions, advocated a form of active individual military *jihad*. Qutb's work is perhaps most important in terms of its ideological influence on contemporary Islamist groups. He is considered to be one of the most important scholars of the twentieth century by some Palestinian groups. Qutb created an ideological basis for *jihad* for the individual and focused against the 'oppressive' enemy, this provides the complementary ideological basis the appropriation of 'active political martyrdom'.

3:3:1 Mawdudi and *Jihad* against the Central Authority

The contemporary movement to redefine *jihad* was led by Mawdudi. In his work Mawdudi focused on the thesis that present-day Muslim societies are going through a new era of *jahiliyya* (ignorance), despite being ruled by Muslim rulers.¹²⁸ *Jahiliyya's* original meaning refers to the Muslim understanding of the state of ignorance in the pre-Islamic period, which was characterised by idolatry. For Mawdudi, this state can recur at any time when the society strays from the true understanding of Islam. When a state of *jahiliyya* has occurred and inhibits Muslims from the true God or the true Islam, it is

¹²⁸ Earlier theoreticians such as Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Kathir focus on this subject. Noor Mohammad, "The Doctrine of *Jihad*: An Introduction", *Journal of Law and Religion* 3:2 (1985): p.394, see, Abu Mawdudi, *The Meaning of the Quran*, http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/tafsir/chapter_introduction_of_Quran_Mawdudi/index.htm, (cited: 17th August 2006) *Jahiliyya*, is a Qur'anic term that refers to the era of pre-Islamic ignorance in Arabia. Mawdudi's and Qutb's revivalist notion of *jahiliyya* transforms the term from a specific historical period of time, into a 'condition'. Pre-Islamic *jahiliyya* is simple ignorance; modern *jahiliyya* is conscious arrogation of God's authority. Roxanne Euben, "Killing (For) Politics", *Journal of Political Theory* 30:1 (February 2002): p.15

then necessary to declare *jihad* to eliminate it. This idea of the present condition of *jahiliyya* was a central issue for Qutb and has become one of the driving forces behind revivalist *jihad* and a central theme in Islamist political writing of Sunni revivalists in the twentieth century.

Mawdudi's understanding of the Muslim world being in a state of *jahiliyya* represents a radical reshaping of the scope and practice of *jihad* for the Sunni tradition. It turned the focus of the direction of *jihad* inwards, towards Muslim society and government.¹²⁹

With a strong politico-religious approach, Mawdudi saw *jihad* as a revolutionary tool.¹³⁰

This direction of *jihad* that was counter to the traditional Sunni quietist approach to the central authority, which asserted acceptance of leadership whether corrupt or not as long as they were identified as Muslim. Mawdudi asserts that in the current world conditions *jihad* is not ordinary warfare but social revolution,¹³¹ a struggle to transform society and eliminate all aspects that prevent obedience to God. He understood *jihad* as a non-violent gradual political process. He considered the current form of nationalism to be completely devoid of God and an institutionalised form of Godlessness. He claimed that traditional Islam has respect for the fundamentals, the five pillars of the faith, and *jihad*. This reinterpreted and politicised *jihad* is the primary necessity for Mawdudi and he understood it to a dominant fundamental principle, the sixth pillar of Islam.¹³² Thus it is a duty to declare and wage *jihad* against anyone or anything that has or will infringe upon God's power and sovereignty. For Mawdudi's construction of *jihad*, a tyrannical or impious Muslim government is just as much a legitimate focus of *jihad* as a colonial

¹²⁹ Roxanne Euben, "Jihad and Political Violence", *Current History: Journal of Contemporary World Affairs* (November 2002): p. 369

¹³⁰ David Zeidan, "Fundamentalist View of Life as a Perennial Battle", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5:4 (December 2001): p. 4

¹³¹ The social revolutionary function of *jihad* was historically more suited to Shi'a thought.

¹³² Traditionally there are considered to be 5=five pillars of Islam. *Shahadah*, profession of faith. *Salah*, prayer five times a day. *Sawn*, fasting during Ramadan. *Zakat*, giving charity. *Hajj*, pilgrimage to Mecca.

oppressor, because *jihad* is the struggle for Islamic social revolution, the enemy is both inside and outside.¹³³

Shifting the focus inwards, towards Muslim governments allowed Mawdudi to assert an individual relationship with *jihad*. In accordance with classical Sunni understanding of *jihad*, *jihad* is a collective duty when the enemy is external, however, if the enemy invades or occupies Muslim lands the duty of *jihad* becomes incumbent upon each individual. It is the individual duty of every Muslim to participate in the *jihad* required to liberate Muslim land.¹³⁴ Mawdudi's understanding of the *jahiliyya* condition present in the colonial/post-colonial Muslim world, in which corrupt Muslim leaders are aiding and abetting Westerners, represents an invasion and, therefore, individualised *jihad* is a necessity to return the society to true Islam. Mawdudi did not, however, advocate an armed or violent form of *jihad*, and thus the notion of martyrdom is not prominent in his discourse. Mawdudi saw education, rather than violence, as key to bettering the Muslim world, 'the society must be Islamised before the true state can apply'.¹³⁵

Mawdudi's ideas are more closely aligned to a Shi'a approach of critiquing the central authority than the traditional Sunni quietist approach to authority. His work is similar to understandings of tyranny and oppression in the Shi'a scholarship coming out of Najaf and Iran in the 1960's and 1970's. Like Shari'ati, Mawdudi's work places an emphasis on the role of the individual and he borrows heavily from western leftist schools of thought.

¹³³ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.57. This inward shift of *jihad* towards corrupt Muslim authority is not of primary importance to the adaptation of 'active martyrdom', as by the 1970-80 Sunni revivalist generally shift the focus of *jihad* back towards the external, foreign 'infidel'. However, the inward shift is a stepping-stone in the shaping of revivalist *jihad*, it created the emphasises on the 'individual', which are key foundations to the adoption process of 'active martyrdom'.

¹³⁴ Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self: Perspectives on Martyrdom and Religion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 112

¹³⁵ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.57

3:3:2 Al-Banna, the Rejection of the Two-Fold Notion of *Jihad* and the Revival of Martyrdom

Hasan Al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 as a reaction to Western imperialism. Like Mawdudi, Al-Banna sought to return the Muslim world to 'true Islam' through *jihad*. For Al-Banna, it was the revival of the importance of the physical *jihad* and martyrdom that was necessary for the success of the Muslim community and the return of 'true Islam'.¹³⁶ Al-Banna rejected the two-fold notion of *jihad*, the 'greater *jihad*' (*jihad al akbar*) and the 'lesser *jihad*' (*jihad al asgar*),¹³⁷ claiming the traditions on which the distinction of lesser and greater *jihad* are made are unreliable and developed to try and divert Muslims from the importance of waging physical *jihad*.¹³⁸ Al-Banna asserted that those who have faith in the traditions of internal spiritual *jihad* and minimise the importance of external physical *jihad* are not true to the Islamic faith. For Al-Banna it was entirely on the ability and willingness of Muslims to carry out physical *jihad* that the future and success of the *umma* depended on.¹³⁹ Initially, like Mawdudi, Al-Banna did not advocate violence; he envisioned change through gradual social reformation, as a result vehemently carrying out 'true' *jihad*, by means of protest, scholarship, education and welfare.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Translations of al-Banna's work are available at <http://www.youngmuslims.ca>. Hasan Al-Banna, *Jihad*, http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/jihad/index.htm, (cited: 22nd August 2006)

¹³⁷ See chapter one.

¹³⁸ Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Sacrificing the Self: Perspectives on Martyrdom and Religion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 111 and David Zeidan, "Fundamentalist View of Life as a Perennial Battle", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5:4 (December 2001): p. 16

¹³⁹ Margaret Cormack (ed.), (2001), p. 111. The rejection of the internal *jihad*, is not an outright rejection, it is more so that they can not be separated out, one is incorporated in the other and visa versa.

¹⁴⁰ It was not until World War II that the Muslim Brotherhood, under al-Banna, added a military arm to their organisation. Are Knudsen, "Crescent and Sword: The Hamas Enigma", *The Third World Quarterly* 26:8 (2005): p.1375 and, Youaaef Aboul-Enien, "Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimeen: The Muslim Brotherhood", *Military Review* (July-August 2003): p. 28

In keeping with traditional understandings of lesser *jihad*, Al-Banna saw *jihad* as a defensive strategy only. A defensive *jihad* traditionally requires a communal obligation; however, for Al-Banna, the post-colonial central authority was corrupt and controlled by unbelievers, thus Al-Banna stressed the necessity for individual responsibility:

“It has become an individual obligation, which there is no evading, on every Muslim to prepare his equipment, to make his mind to engage in *jihad*, and to get ready for it until the opportunity is ripe and God decrees a matter which is sure to be accomplished.”¹⁴¹

As Al-Banna's *jihad* became a concrete physical notion; martyrdom as a feature of *jihad* underwent the same process. If the only 'true' *jihad* is physical struggle, then the only true martyrs are those who die in that 'true' struggle.¹⁴² He emphasised the individual duty of *jihad* and, consequently, the individual duty to be prepared to die a martyr for this *jihad*. The success of the Muslim community depends on *jihad* and the success of *jihad* depends on the willingness to die. Similar to revolutionary Shi'a thought, Al-Banna recognised the use of heroic death as a 'political art-form':¹⁴³

“Brothers! God gives the umma that is skilled in the practice of death and that knows how to die a noble death an exalted life in this world and eternal felicity in the next. What is the fantasy that has reduced us to loving this world and hating death? If you gird yourselves for a lofty deed and yearn for death, life shall be given to you . . . Know, then, that death is inevitable, and that it can only happen once. If you suffer in the way of God, it will profit you in this world and bring you reward in the next.”¹⁴⁴

Al-Banna asserted that since all must die, we should prepare to die in a way that will make a difference to the cause of Islam. He emphasised the rewards of martyrdom by referring to the same Qur'anic verse that the Kharijites emphasised and named themselves after, *'Let those (believers) who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter*

¹⁴¹ Hasan Al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949): A Selection from the Majmu 'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 150-151. Accessed in: David Zeidan, "Fundamentalist View of Life as a Perennial Battle", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5:4 (December 2001): p. 4

¹⁴² Cormack, Margaret (ed.), (2001) p. 112. The 'passive accidental' categories of martyrdom are not rejected entirely by the al-Banna's revivalist model, those who die of the plague or during childbirth are still considered to be martyrs but a different and much lesser category of martyr.

¹⁴³ Laden Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, "Terror, Islam and Democracy", *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (April 2002): p. 7-8

¹⁴⁴ Hasan Al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna (1906-1949): A Selection from the Majmu 'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 156.

fight in the cause of Allah., and whosoever fights in the Cause of Allah, and is killed or is victorious, We shall bestow on him a great reward. '(Q 4:74). His understanding of martyrdom is as an exchange of life for the Islamic cause for which one needs to be rewarded.¹⁴⁵ In accordance of his narrowing of the notion of *jihad*, Al-Banna declared that the ultimate true and supreme reward of martyrdom is reserved exclusively for those who are killed in the way of God through a physical fighting *jihad*.¹⁴⁶

Martyrdom in Al-Banna's work is an individual and conscious acceptance of the willingness to sacrifice yourself and die for *jihad*. The element of consciousness places this form of martyrdom on the cusp between 'passive' and 'active' martyrdom. It is not 'active martyrdom', as there is only an acceptance of martyrdom as a 'willingness, not a 'determination' for death.

3:3:3 Sayyid Qutb

After Al-Banna was executed by the Egyptian Government in 1949,¹⁴⁷ Sayyid Qutb took over leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁴⁸ Qutb draws together the ideas of Mawdudi's social revolution against *jahiliyya* and Al-Banna's physical *jihad* and

¹⁴⁵ Hasan Al-Banna, *Jihad*, http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/jihad/index.htm (cited: 22nd August 2006) Margaret Cormack (ed.), (2001), pp. 107-117. Parallels Al-Banna's use of the Qur'anic verse 4:74 to the Kharijites. Brown makes an interesting connection about the dual emphasis of the verse, while the comparison is important; there are some significant differences. The Kharijites understood this verse to justifying 'active martyrdom', whereas al-Banna does not read activism into the verse, it is a preparedness to martyr and if that were to happen, it would be a noble way to die.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Cormack (ed.), (2001), p. 112

¹⁴⁷ Incidentally, execution of the prominent clerics/intellectuals/leaders that write about the concept of martyrdom has occurred regularly for both Sunni and Shi'ite in the 20th century. This meant that they became martyrs themselves, some zealously, others accidentally. Frequently this was at the hands of their own government, which feeds back and legitimised their ideologies and their cause. Al-Banna was assassinated in 1949. The Egyptian Government executed Sayyid Qutb in 1956. The Iraqi Government executed Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in 1980. Ali Shari'ati, although he reportedly died of a heart attack, much speculation surrounds his death, and according to his official website he was 'martyred' three weeks after he moved to London in 1977 by the SAVAK (*Sazeman-i Ettelaat va Amniyat-i Keshvar*, the security and intelligence service of Iran).

¹⁴⁸ For more detailed information of Sayyid Qutb's life and his work see Luke Loboda, *The Thought of Sayyid Qutb*, <http://www.ashbrook.org/tools/printerpage.asp>, (cited: 10th August 2006). An English translation of *Milestones* is available online at http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/hold/index_2.asp

willingness for martyrdom, to promote a militant, political, activist form of Islam.¹⁴⁹

Qutb's work has been highly influential in the contemporary Islamist world. His work had a huge effect on creating a complementary basis of *jihad* and individualism for which 'active martyrdom' was able to be appropriated with in.

Like Mawdudi, Qutb identified the condition of *jahiliyya* as plaguing the Muslim world and as preventing true Islam from flourishing.¹⁵⁰ Similarly to the way in which the Shi'a clerics in Najaf utilised the narrative of Hussein in the contemporary context, Qutb made an analogy with the Qur'anic references to the Pharaoh, who is considered to be 'arrogant' and 'insolent' and 'in the land without reason', to reinforce the concept of *jahiliyya* in the contemporary context. Qutb asserted that the rule of the Pharaoh displays a tyranny that parallels the contemporary Egyptian Government. Referring to the Qur'anic story of Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh, Qutb reinforced his call for *jihad* by suggesting that it is the aggressive and courageous confrontation of tyrants who control God's land that is exactly what is necessary today.¹⁵¹

Like Al-Banna, Qutb emphasised the external physical *jihad*, however, Qutb understood it to be political, aggressive, and militant.¹⁵² He challenged the majority view of Sunni

¹⁴⁹ For Qutb the three main sources of *jahiliyya* are the 'Crusading Christian West, Marxist Communism, and World Jewry', they are considered to be the enemies of God and continuously plotting the destruction of Islam. David Zeidan, "Fundamentalist View of Life as a Perennial Battle", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5:4 (December 2001): p. 9

¹⁵⁰ In Qutb's later writings he asserts that the condition of *jahiliyya* has been so since 661 C.E, except for a 3 year period during the rule of 'Umar II from 717 to 720. Shahrough Akhavi, "The Dialectic In Contemporary Egyptian Social Thought", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29:3 (August 1997): p.381

¹⁵¹ Sayyid Qutb. 'This is the Road'. *Milestones*. (Online: http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/hold/index_2.asp) and Dale. F Eickelman, and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 65. This analogy between Qur'anic Pharaonic rule and the contemporary Egyptian Government resonated within Islamic activist groups. The assassins of Sadat made this connection: "I am Khalid Islambuli: I killed the Pharaoh, and I am not afraid of death." Eickelman, and James Piscatori, (1996), p. 66

¹⁵² His understanding of *jihad* is not restricted to the political or militant realm, like al-Banna, the rejection of the two-fold notion is not out right rejection. Physical *jihad* issues, like politics and militancy, also have a spiritual component, they cannot be separated. One must wage external physical *jihad* for the sake of internal spirit. Luke Loboda, *The Thought of*

ulema of the time and their understanding of external *jihad* as a collective defensive measure and asserted that *jihad* is an offensive ‘active’ personal obligation. For Qutb, *jihad* is the method of eradicating *jahiliyah* and establishing God’s authority on earth and, therefore, cannot be restricted to the defensive notion.¹⁵³ Qutb had a pan-Islamic approach to *jihad* and saw it as a universal tool for freedom, because all human beings deserve to be free from the oppression of *jahiliyya*. His understanding of *jihad* is not a regionally specific solution, as God it is not restricted by country, sex, race, or religion. Western civilisation is suffering from the condition of *jahiliyya* in the same way as Muslims, and once they are exposed to ‘true’ Islamic society they will be drawn to it:¹⁵⁴

“It[Islam] addresses itself to the whole of mankind, and its sphere of work is the whole earth. God is the Sustainer not merely of the Arabs, nor is His providence limited to those who believe in the faith of Islam. God is the Sustainer of the whole world.”¹⁵⁵

Qutb claims that *jihad* should only be directed against institutions and organisations, and not individuals. Institutions and organisations create *jahiliyya*, not the individuals under them. It is the individual obligation of every Muslim to wage *jihad* in order to free humans from the institutions and organisations that create *jahiliyya*.¹⁵⁶ Qutb vehemently condemned all Muslims who refused to individually accept the duty to wage *jihad* in such circumstances.¹⁵⁷ Relying on justification from the Qur’anic verse 4:76,¹⁵⁸ Qutb, reasoned that all Muslims who are able should continuously wage *jihad* and that any individual who considers him or herself Muslim, but fails to do so, is not a true believer.

Sayyid Qutb, <http://www.ashbrook.org/tools/printerpage.asp>, (cited: 10th August 2006), p.18

¹⁵³ The first target of Qutb’s *jihad* was the ruling elite of Egypt, starting with Nasser. His book *Milestones* (1964) was considered to be a direct threat to Nasser’s government, resulting in his arrest in August of 1965. Qutb was sentenced to death and hanged in August of 1966. Luke Loboda, (2006), p.2. Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), pp. 30,44

¹⁵⁴ Luke Loboda, (2006), p.19

¹⁵⁵ Sayyid Qutb, “*Jihad in the Cause of God*”, *Milestones*, http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/hold/index_2.asp (cited: 10th August, 2006)

¹⁵⁶ Luke Loboda, (2006), p. 20

¹⁵⁷ Bernard K. Freamon, “Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 349

¹⁵⁸ *Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject Faith Fight in the cause of Evil: So fight ye against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.* - Yusuf Ali 4:76

Consequently, a Muslims willingness to engage in physical and militant *jihad* is the true test of faith. Qutb's *jihad* is 'active'; he completely rejects the 'passive', equating it with the ungodly. It is from within this framework of *jihad* that Qutb stressed the importance and the virtues of martyrdom.

If it is every individual Muslim's obligation to engage in 'active' *jihad*, then, Qutb argued, it is every individual Muslim's obligation to be willing to die for *jihad*, if death were required for the way of victory of Islam. Strikingly similar to Shari'ati's understanding of the role of martyrdom, for Qutb, the willingness to sacrifice oneself is "The Way" to the victory of Islam. Martyrs are the *milestones* on the path to liberation. Furthermore, because Qutb's *jihad* is politically framed and he asserted an individual conscious connection to the duty of *jihad*, there are parallels to Shari'ati's notion of individual political consciousness.

Many western scholars directly attribute Qutb's ideas to modern 'active martyrdom' in the form of 'suicide bombing'. Although his work has had a significant influence on the understanding of Islam, *jihad* and martyrdom, it should be noted that Qutb never actually suggested or advocated 'active martyrdom'.¹⁵⁹ He asserted one should be prepared and willing to be martyred in *jihad* but not to engage in *jihad* with the determination to die and seek martyrdom. Qutb's understanding still remains on the 'passive' side of the martyrdom spectrum. However, because of the heightened 'active' understanding of *jihad*, the emphasis on the role of the individual consciousness, and the preparedness for martyrdom, his conditions of *jihad* challenge the boundaries of the traditional understanding of martyrdom. The condition of the individual is similar to the Shi'a

¹⁵⁹ Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 350

revolutionary understanding that was the foundation of allowing for the possibility of 'active political martyrdom' to transform into 'suicide bombing'.

3:4 CONCLUSION

The 20th century witnessed the development of revivalist movements within Sunni and Shi'a discourse as a response to post-colonialism and increasing Western influence in the Middle East. Both the revivalist Shi'ite scholars of Najaf, Iraq and Qom, Iran, and the revivalist Sunni scholars of Jama'at I Islami in Pakistan, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, saw an 'individual approach' as the answer; the Shi'ite scholars within the context of martyrdom and the Sunni scholars within the context of *jihad*.¹⁶⁰

The dominant theme of Shi'ite revivalist scholars in the 1960's and 1970's, lead by Ayatollah Khomeini, Muhammad al-Sadr, Ayatollah Talequani and Ali Shari'ati, was the re-interpretation of the traditional narrative of Hussien's martyrdom into the political context to inspire revolutionary activism. However, it is the works of Shari'ati, who divorces Hussein's martyrdom from *jihad*, that creates the important ideological shifts that allow for Hussein martyrdom to become a model of symbolic martyrdom that was able to be imitated. Khomeini utilized Shari'ati's martyrdom ideologies during the post-Revolutionary war with Iraq, casting Saddam Hussein and his western supporters as the 'oppressors' and the Iranian Shi'a youths as Hussein. From Shari'ati's "*If you*

¹⁶⁰ The parallel in the 'individual' shift suggests that the emergence of the Islamic 'suicide bomber' could be seen as one form of an attempt to reconcile traditional Islamic concepts articulation within modernity. It required an individualization of the concept of martyrdom and an individualization of the notion of *jihad*. The process of individualization is seen by the ideas of Shari'ati on martyrdom and Qutb on *jihad*. Shari'ati's individualized construction of martyrdom required a reinterpretation of the historical narrative of Hussein into the contemporary political situation. It calls for the waking of individual political consciousness, in which each individual will realize that they must choose to sacrifice their lives for a cause that is greater than life itself. Qutb's individualized understanding of *jihad* required a reinterpretation of the Qur'anic concept of *jahiliyya* into the contemporary situation facing the Muslim world. The current state of *jahiliyya* plaguing the world calls for every individual Muslim to realise the need to wage an aggressive *jihad*. This reflects an attempt to reconcile traditional Islam concepts with modernity and an attempt to establish Islam's place against the west in the modern world.

can, kill and, if you cannot, die!” philosophy, Khomeini created a phenomenon of ‘active political martyrdom’ out of the Iranian youth that voluntarily walked through the Iraqi mine fields to clear a path of the Iranian tanks and military divisions. The ‘active political martyr’ provides the foundation for the construction of the concept of martyrdom in the ‘suicide bomber’.

The dominant theme of Sunni revivalist scholars in the early to middle 20th century, led by Sayyid Abu Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, was the individualised duty of *jihad* and a revitalisation of the importance of a willingness to sacrifice the maximum, including your life, for *jihad*. The influential works of Qutb had a pan-Islamic approach, declaring *jihad* the universal tool to free the world from oppression due to *jahiliyya*. He asserted an ‘active’ form of *jihad*, of which it was every individual Muslims’ obligation to be willing to die for, if death was required in the way of victory for Islam.

The revivalist Shi’a developments on the concept of martyrdom allowed for the martyr to choose to die; however, it never permitted the killing, as *jihad* was not available at that time. On the other hand, the revivalist Sunni developments of the notion of *jihad*, allowed for the aggressive waging of *jihad* in which one could kill; however, it never permitted actively choosing to die, as that would be suicide. This demonstrates that ‘suicide bombing’ as a form of martyrdom is not a simple development out of either the Sunni or the Shi’ite jurisprudential traditions. However, there are ideological parallels in the role of the individual and the construction of the enemy as the ‘oppressor’ that would allow for a complementary basis for the new Shi’a martyrdom to be reinterpreted into Sunni *jihad*. Thus, creating the ‘suicide bomber’, who can actively choose to die while killing.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ISLAMIC ‘SUICIDE BOMBER’

4:1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter put forward an account of the theoretical developments in the concept of martyrdom and *jihad* in Sunni and Shi’a revivalist thought. These illustrate that although the ‘suicide bomber’ as a form of martyrdom was not a simple development for either tradition, there were complementary ideological factors that would allow for the possible development of the ‘suicide bomber’ martyr. The development of the ‘suicide bomber’ required a reinterpretation of the revivalist Shi’a martyrdom into the revivalist Sunni *jihad*. This chapter will essentially illustrate the merging of these constructions of martyrdom and *jihad* and the conversion from theory to reality for both Shi’a and Sunni groups. Furthermore, this chapter will argue that it is ‘suicide bombings’ martyrological origins within Shi’a ‘active political martyrdom’ that is essential to its continual modification as a ‘terrorist’ tactic.

4:2 LEBANON AND INTRODUCTION OF ‘SUICIDE BOMBING’

On October 23rd, 1983, the Islamic ‘suicide bomber’ was born, when two Shi’ite youths connected to the Shi’a group Hezbollah crashed two trucks packed with more than 2,250kg of explosives into the French and United States Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon.¹⁶¹ More than 300 military men and women died. The martyrdoms of the two

¹⁶¹ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p.166. There were two other incidents prior to this; December 1981, during Lebanon’s civil war, a car bomb exploded outside the Iraqi embassy in Beirut, the Islamic Dawa Party is suspected to have been responsible. April 18th 1983, there was a suspected truck bombing on the United States Embassy, which killed 63 people. The conditions surrounding this incident are unclear; however, the group Islamic *Jihad* (the precursor or alter-ego of Hezbollah) claimed responsibility for the attack. Because specifics of these attacks are unclear, the Hezbollah bombings of October 23rd are commonly understood as the beginning of the Islamic ‘suicide bombing’ phenomenon.

Shi'ite youths were highly successful and resulted in a string of similar attacks. The use of 'suicide bombing' as a tactic ultimately led to the withdrawal of the French and United States military from Lebanon and caused the Israeli army to decrease its area of occupation.

These attacks display the reality of the reinterpretation of Shi'a 'active political martyrdom' ideologies within a revivalist understanding of notion of *jihad*. For the Lebanese situation, there is one Shi'a scholar that deserves attention, Sheikh Fadlullah, the spiritual guide of Hezbollah.¹⁶² It is Fadlullah's pronouncements on martyrdom that not only support the use of 'suicide bombing' by Hezbollah, but, furthermore, his stance is foundational in opening up the possibility of the appropriation of 'suicide bombing' by Sunni Palestinian groups.

4:2:1 Fadlullah and Hezbollah

Fadlullah was born in 1935¹⁶³ in Najaf, Iraq, into a poor, but prominent Lebanese Shi'ite clerical family. He went into religious scholarship, studying under many of the prominent Shi'ite scholars of the time in Najaf; and he was a young contemporary of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.¹⁶⁴ Fadlullah's moved to Lebanon in 1966, shortly after Khomeini settled in Najaf. His move was well timed and he escaped the chaos that was soon to occur in Iran and Iraq. Once in Lebanon, he quickly established himself in politics and worked under the Lebanese Imam Musa al-Sadr, helping to establish the Lebanese Higher Islamic Supreme Shi'ite Council. Fadlullah's most notable

¹⁶² See, Fadlullah's Official website, "*BAYYNAT: The website of religious authority Sayyed Muhammad Hussein Fadlullah*", <http://english.bayynat.org.lb/> (cited: 15th September 2006)

¹⁶³ His date of birth is referenced as both 1935 and 1936 depending on the source. The Concise Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://concise.britannica.com/ebc/article-9364149/Muhammad-Hussein-Fadlullah> places his birth in 1935.

¹⁶⁴ Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was born in 1936 in Kadimiya, Iraq. He was a highly influential scholar in Najaf

achievement is his role in the establishment of Hezbollah.¹⁶⁵ Much of Fadlullah's juristic ideology for Hezbollah are the result of the influence of Khomeini and Baqir al-Sadr.

Fadlullah's works show a shift from the traditional Shi'a jurisprudential tradition and calls for a new military *jihad*, with 'active martyrdom' as one of its central tenets.¹⁶⁶ The role of Fadlullah's *jihad* was multi-faceted with both a Lebanese Shi'ite and a universal pan-Islamic function. Fadlullah saw *jihad* as a means to free Lebanese Shi'ites from tyranny and oppression. However, Fadlullah also envisioned a universal function of *jihad*, similar to the Qutbian understanding of the notion. He advocated that a pan-Islamic, military *jihad* is required to transform the Islamic world, and ultimately the entire western world to 'true' Islam.¹⁶⁷ Fadlullah addressed his message to all Muslims and all oppressed people who suffer from tyrannical authority or injustice. Fadlullah's visions are not confined to the limits of nationalism or Shi'ism. It is within this universal, pan-Islamic context of military *jihad* that Fadlullah firmly places his understanding of 'active martyrdom'.¹⁶⁸

Fadlullah is heavily influenced by the Iranian revolutionary martyrs and borrows from Shar'iati's '*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*'. However instead of understanding it

¹⁶⁵ Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 354. Fadlullah's role in the establishment of Hezbollah is controversial. Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001), believes that Fadlullah was not overly instrumental in the establishment of Hezbollah, suggesting that he is a strong source of inspiration rather than a spiritual mentor for the party. This was because of his strong popular following that required him to maintain an independence from any political party. Hala Jaber, *Hizbu'llah*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1997) shares this view of Fadlullah's role.

¹⁶⁶ Note that Fadlullah never glorified 'active martyrdom' or advocated blowing oneself up before 1983. Before the 1983 suicide bombings his position on 'active martyrdom' was one of acceptance of its virtue and its tactical advantage, it was not until after the 1983 suicide bombings that he really clarified his position (discussed above) on the use of 'active martyrdom'.

¹⁶⁷ Bernard K. Freamon, (December 2003): p. 354

¹⁶⁸ For more information on Fadlullah's pan-Islamic and ecumenical approach see Martin Kramer's article "The Oracle of Hizbullah: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah". In R. Scott Appleby, *Spoken for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997)

as martyrdom modelled on the narrative of Hussein, as it was in the Iranian situation, Fadlullah *re-jihadises* it within his pan-Islamic notion of *jihad*. By *re-jihadising*, and not relying on the narrative of Hussien for historical legitimisation, Fadlullah needed to reconcile *jihad* with ‘active martyrdom’, he did so by militarizing Shari’ati’s weapon of the weak philosophy and his ‘good’ out ways the ‘bad clause’:

"When a conflict breaks out between oppressed nations and imperialism, or between two hostile governments, the parties to the conflict seek ways to complete the elements of their power and to neutralize the weapons used by the other side. For example, the oppressed nations do not have the technology and destructive weapons America and Europe have. They must thus fight with special means of their own. [We] recognize the right of nations to use every unconventional method to fight these aggressor nations, and do not regard what oppressed Muslims of the world do with primitive and unconventional means to confront aggressor powers as terrorism. We view this as religiously lawful warfare against the world's imperialist and domineering powers."¹⁶⁹

If the aim of a Muslim’s ‘active martyrdom’ is “*to have a political impact on an enemy whom it is impossible to fight by conventional means, then his sacrifice can be part of a jihad*”, because “*naturally, there is a positive aspect and a negative aspect to every event in the world,*”.¹⁷⁰ The positive (negatively impacting the enemy) would out weigh the negative (both the declaration of *jihad* and ‘active martyrdom’). The intentions of the ‘active martyr’ would be sincere because they further the cause of God in the only available way.

Thus, for Fadlullah, in a circumstance where it is impossible to fight by conventional means, the only difference between the early battlefield martyr that storms into battle, with a knife, kills and then gets killed and the martyr that straps a bomb to his waist and covertly infiltrates the enemy zone and denotes the bomb, kills while being killed, is the timing and the technology. Most importantly, he asserts that in the eyes of God there is

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Fadlallah, *Kayhan*, 14 November 1985; accessed in Martin Kramer, *The Moral Logic of Hizbollah*, <http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/MoralLogic.htm#n30>, (cited 17th August 2006)

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

no difference between the two:

“What is the difference between setting out for battle knowing you will die after killing ten [of the enemy], and setting out to the field to kill ten and knowing you will die while killing them? There is no difference between dying with a gun in your hand or exploding yourself.”¹⁷¹

Although the Iranian ‘active political martyr’ and the new ‘suicide bomber’ are based on Shari’ati’s weapon of the weak, *‘If you can, kill and, if you cannot, die’*, the *jihadization* creates one crucial difference between them. Shari’ati’s original version that was divorced from *jihad* only legitimated the death of the martyr, the weapon was in the symbolic value of the readiness to be sacrificed. However, in Fadlullah’s version of ‘active martyrdom’ as the weapon of the weak, the weapon is twofold. The *jihadization* allows for enemy casualties, but simultaneously it allows for the martyrdom to maintain its symbolic value against the ‘oppressor’. His conscious readiness to sacrifice himself against the ‘oppressor’, means “...*he condemns the oppressor and provides commitment for the oppressed.*”¹⁷² Thus, *‘If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!’* becomes, if you can, kill and if you cannot, die while killing’.¹⁷³

4:2:2 Fadlullah’s *Jihad* and Palestine

As part of Fadlullah’s universal vision of *jihad*, he adopted a particularly anti-Western and anti-Israel stance, understanding the West and Israel to be the primary enemy, not only of Lebanese Shi’ites, but of the Islamic world. He placed the Palestinian situation as the primary example of Western influence and destruction in the Islamic world and declared Palestine a central problem in his vision of the Islamic world. Fadlullah draws

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Martin Kramer, *Suicide Terrorism: Origins and Response*, <http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/PapeKramer.htm>, (cited: 12th July 2006)

¹⁷² Ali Shari’ati, *Jihad and Shahadat*, <http://www.shariati.com/>, (cited: 20th March 2006)

¹⁷³ I would categorize the ‘suicide bomber’ as ‘active politico-combative martyrdom’

comparisons between the displaced Shi'ites in the refugee camps in Beirut and the Palestinian people. Fadlullah understood the plights of both the Lebanese Shi'ites and Palestinian Sunnis as identical via the hands of a common enemy of Islam. This comparison was popular among the Palestinian Sunnis and Lebanese Shi'ites, it galvanized both communities by feeding off the common enemy and opened up an avenue for communication of ideologies.

Fadlullah's reinterpretation of Shi'a 'active martyrdom' into his universal, military notion of *jihad* gave Hezbollah the religious support to carry out a string of highly successful 'suicide bombing' attacks against foreign military targets.¹⁷⁴ With the military success of the tactic against the common enemy of both Lebanon and Palestine, coupled with Fadlullah's particularly pan-Islamic approach to *jihad* and sympathy for the Palestinian struggle, it was only a matter of time before this tactic of 'active martyrdom' was adopted in Palestine. On April 16th, 1993, at a roadside café at Mehola Junction in the northern Jordan Valley, Tamam Nabulsi, a Palestinian connected with the Sunni group Hamas drove a van into a parked Israeli bus and detonated it, killing two passengers and injuring five others.¹⁷⁵

It could be argued that it was the result of Fadlullah's interpretation of 'active political martyrdom' into the context *jihad*, and consequently Hezbollah's successful use of the tactic, that lead to the possibility of the adoption of 'active martyrdom' in the form of 'suicide bombing' by Palestinian groups. Fadlullah's declaration of support over the

¹⁷⁴ The first attack was upon the American Embassy in Beirut, in April of 1983, killing 80 and injuring 142. In October of 1983 two simultaneous attacks were performed on the United States Marine headquarters near Beirut, killing 273 and injuring 81, and the French Multinational Forces, killing 58 and injuring 15. In November of 1983 an attack on the Israeli Defence Force Headquarters in Tyre killed a further 88 and injured 69. Jim Winkates, *Suicide Terrorism: Precedents and Profiles*, <http://www.isanet.org/>, (cited: 18th August 2006)

¹⁷⁵ Shaul Kimihi, and Shmuel Even, "Who are Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?", *Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies. Strategic Assessment* 6:2 (September 2003), <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v6n2p5Kim.html>, (cited: 26th August 2006)

similar plights endured at the hands of the West and Israel forged an alliance between the two communities against a common ‘oppressive’ enemy. This opened up the avenue of communication, making Shi’ite works more available to Sunnis and Sunni works more available to Shi’ites. Furthermore, Fadlullah’s understanding of universal *jihad*, is very similar to Qutb’s understanding and was complementary to *jihad* ideologies already resonating in Palestine. Palestinian Sunnis have a strong Muslim Brotherhood connection, dating back to 1935. Qutbian ideologies hold a special place in the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, and many considered Qutb to be the symbol of Revolutionary Islam.¹⁷⁶ It is within the universal *jihad* vision that Fadlullah confines his reinterpretation of ‘active political martyrdom’, this removes the Shi’ite centric understanding of ‘active martyrdom’ legitimated by its modelling on Hussein and legitimizes it within the context of a more universal revivalist understanding of *jihad* as the sacrificial tool of the politically and militarily weak. Without Lebanon, Fadlullah and Hezbollah, as the conceptual stepping-stone, Palestinian Sunni groups may not have adopted the use of ‘suicide bombing’.

The transmission of Shi’ite martyrdom ideologies into Sunni thought maybe more concrete than traces of complementary ideologies from Iran and Iraq, via Fadlullah in Lebanon to Palestine. Fathi al Shiqai, a founding member of the Palestinian Movement of the Islamic *Jihad*, freely acknowledges that they have had to resort reading Shi’ite scholars to help understanding their struggle, as Sunni ideologies do not provide a sufficient basis for guidance in the struggle against tyranny and oppression.¹⁷⁷ In a 1999 interview, Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, the secretary general of the Palestinian Movement of the Islamic *Jihad*, acknowledges that they have read the thoughts of

¹⁷⁶ Zaid Abu-Amr, “ Hamas: A Historical and Political Background”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22:4 (Summer 1993): p.6

¹⁷⁷ Bernard K. Freamon, “Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 358

Ayatollah Khomeini, Muhammad al-Sadr, Ali Shari'ati and Fadlullah.¹⁷⁸ In a later interview in 2003, when asked if the organisation borrowed the idea of 'suicide bombing' from Hezbollah, he answers "Of course", detailing how they were the first to use such a tactic and how it was inspirational for Islamic *Jihad*.¹⁷⁹

The use of 'suicide bombing' has now spread throughout the world, primarily to Sunni groups. 'Suicide bombing' is now synonymous with Sunni Islam and not Shi'a. In fact, in a strange twist of fate, in Iraq it is the Shi'ites who suffer almost daily from 'suicide bombings' executed by Sunni militant, a form of martyrdom whose origins are within their own jurisprudential tradition.

4:3 SHOCK VALUE

'Suicide bombing', as an amalgamation of 'active political martyrdom' and *jihad*, has a two-fold weapon value, it creates victims, while maintaining the death of the martyrs' *symbolic* value. The choosing to *die* is the *symbolic* tool against the 'oppressor', and the *symbolic* value is within the death.¹⁸⁰ For 'suicide bombing', as a 'terrorist' tactic, it is the attacks 'shock value' that provides the vehicle for the *symbolic* value to be communicated.

'Suicide bombings'' origins within 'active political martyrdom' and the method of *symbolic* value of death, can be seen in the motivations of Sunni groups who use this form of martyrdom. They are generally motivated by two things, support and power.

'Suicide bombing' can be understood as a strategy of communication, intended on one

¹⁷⁸ Khali Al-Ayid, "The Movement of Islamic *Jihad* and the Oslo Process", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28:4 (Summer 1999), p. 62

¹⁷⁹ Bernard K. Freamon, "Martyrdom, Suicide and the Islamic Law of War: A Short Legal History," *Fordham International Law Journal* 27 (December 2003): p. 358

¹⁸⁰ 'Passive martyrdom' and 'combative martyrdom' has a compensatory value of death, rather than a symbolic value within the death.

level to create fear in the victims and, on an other level, to create sympathy and gain support both domestically and internationally. The *symbolic* value of 'suicide bombing' is carried through both fear and sympathy. In order to widen the reach of the *symbolic* value, the act of martyrdom needs publicity and something shocking guarantees media coverage. Thus, instigate a shocking event like a 'suicide bombing' and the media will act as an instant advertising tool for the *symbolic* value of the attack.

'Suicide bombing' adopted because of its' *symbolic* value, not because of its ability to kill, however, it does have advantages as a military tactic.¹⁸¹ 'Suicide bombings'' *symbolic* value provides a voice for the 'oppressed' and condemns the 'oppressor' via the death of the martyr.¹⁸² In respect to the global media, groups may undertake 'suicide bombing' because it will bring attention to their plight. On a domestic level, media coverage of a new, shocking attack can amplify the collective feeling of injustice and rally support for the cause.¹⁸³ At the same time, it can make a model of the martyr for doing their part, praising them, glorifying them and turning them into an instant hero.¹⁸⁴ Without the need to convey the *symbolic* value of a 'suicide bombing' the ritual surrounding 'suicide bomber' as martyrs, i.e., posters, pamphlets, and video wills, would not be as necessary.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ It is tactically flexible and highly cost effective

¹⁸² See page, 59.

¹⁸³ This evaluation of the shock value as a vehicle for the symbolic value an extension on my article on the shock value of female 'suicide bombing' and how it impacts the strategic calculations of terrorist movements. James Veitch (ed.), *International Terrorism: New Zealand Perspectives*, (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, 2005), pp. 69-81

¹⁸⁴ See Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*. (Robinson: London, 2004), for various examples of the ritual surrounding female 'suicide bombers' in Palestine.

¹⁸⁵ www.youtube.com, search: suicide bombing has a selection of various 'suicide bomber' video wills, from Palestine to Iraq. http://www.youtube.com/verify_age?next_url=/watch?v=zPx1UgFTpc0 (example of propaganda video) *Adham Ahmad Hujyla Abu Jandal Video Will*, prepared before his mission on December 7th 2004. Published on Hamas website in February 2006. Itamar Marcus, and Barbara Crook, *A Self-Portrait of Suicide Terrorists*, <http://www.pmw.org.il/Latest%20bulletins%20new.htm> (cited: 13th August 2006)

Mu'min Rajab Rajab Abu Hafz will, prepared before his mission on December 7, 2004, published on Hamas website in February 2006. <http://www.pmw.org.il/Latest%20bulletins%20new.htm> (cited: 13th August 2006)

However, there is a catch to the *symbolic* value of ‘suicide bombing’ as a ‘terrorist’ tactic, because it is articulated via ‘shock value’. ‘Shock value’ only has a limited lifetime. As a certain type of ‘suicide bombing’ becomes more and more routine, the ‘shock value’ depletes and thus the *symbolic* value also depletes. There is a constant need to renegotiate the *symbolic* value by amplifying the ‘shock value’ and, thus maximising the media potential. Both international and domestic media will pick up on any added aspect of a ‘suicide bombing’, and the *symbolic* value of the martyrdom will capitalise on the sensationalism. After numerous attacks by male ‘suicide bombers’ in Palestine, the first female ‘suicide bomber’ was suddenly introduced in 2002. The attack was reported in newspapers around the world. This martyrdom required the female ‘suicide bomber’ to make an individual conscious decision to not only refute the traditional role prescribed by the community and Islam, but reject her life as well, sacrificing herself for the cause of the Palestinian plight. This increased the scope of the *symbolic* value of the *death* of the martyr against the ‘oppressor’ of Israel. However, as female ‘suicide bombers’ became more routine, they too lost their ‘shock value’ and, consequently, the loss of media attention, thus in 2004 a young mother undertook a ‘suicide bombing’, renegotiating the *symbolic* value back onto the side of the martyr.¹⁸⁶

Since the turn of the millennium, Sunni groups around the world have been pushing the conventional boundaries of ‘suicide bombing’, creating new and highly shocking events, in order to renegotiate the *symbolic* value and draw on new methods of *symbolism*. The best example is perhaps the attacks of 11th September 2001, which not only reached new heights in terms of the number of fatalities but also struck at the symbolic heart of

¹⁸⁶ For more information on the details of the logic behind the introduction of females into Palestinian ‘suicide bombing’ see, James Veitch (ed.), *International Terrorism: New Zealand Perspectives*, (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, 2005), pp. 69-81. For specific information about the individual females lives see, Victor, Barbara. *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*. (Robinson: London, 2004)

America, using its own symbolism against it. I would argue that 9/11 was not planned based on its ability to kill nearly 3000 people, but more so because of its' *symbolic* value. The death toll was never planned to be that high. The death toll rose due to the collapse of the towers, which was not in the control of the 'suicide bombers'. The targets were chosen because of their potential *symbolic* value within American and Western identity, as the symbols for their economic and military superiority.

The transformative nature of 'suicide bombing' as a tactic, is a testimony to its origins within Shi'a 'active political martyrdom'. It is 'suicide bombings' constant need to communicate a *symbolic* value that accounts for the changes in its use as a tactic.

4:4 CONCLUSION

Islamic 'suicide bombing' martyr was introduced in Lebanon in 1983 by the Shi'a group Hezbollah. Fadhlullah's understanding of 'active martyrdom' is based on the pan-Islamic *jihadization* of Shari'ati's weapon of the weak, transforming "*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*" into "*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die while killing!*" This clearly demonstrates the reinterpretation of the Shi'a revivalist concept of martyrdom into a revivalist understanding of *jihad*, 'active politico-combative martyrdom'. It is the successful use of 'suicide bombing' as a tactic and the pronouncements of Fadlullah that provided the stepping-stone for Sunni Palestinian groups to adopt the 'suicide bombing' form of 'active martyrdom'. Fadlullah was sympathetic to the Palestinian situation and saw their situation as similar to the Shi'ite struggles in Lebanon. The two communities forged an alliance over a common enemy. Fadlullah reinterpreted the revivalist Shi'a 'active political martyr' into a context of *jihad* that was similar to the individualistic, pan-Islamic *jihad* of Qutb that was resonating within Palestinian Sunni groups.

Palestinian groups looked to Hezbollah for guidance in the struggle against tyranny and oppression and borrowed the clause that Hezbollah had borrowed from Revolutionary Iran, "*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*". 'Suicide bombings' origin as a method of martyrdom that condemns the 'oppressor' through the tool of *symbolic* death is demonstrated in 'suicide bombings' transformative nature as a tactic. There is a continual need to create shock value in order to communicate the *symbolic* meaning of the martyrdom.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study has provided a new understanding of the concept of martyrdom in Islam and presented a framework for understanding the development of the ‘suicide bomber’ as a form of martyrdom. It has demonstrated that ‘suicide bombing’ is not a simple development of traditional jurisprudential concepts of martyrdom or *jihad*, for either the Shi’a or the Sunni tradition. The introduction of ‘suicide bombing’ as a form of martyrdom is due to the reinterpretation of Shi’a revivalist martyrdom ideologies into Sunni revivalist *jihad* ideologies. It is ‘suicide bombings’ martyrological origin within a Shi’a concept of ‘political martyrdom’ that is crucial to understanding the nature of ‘suicide bombings’ use as a tactic.

The examination of the concept of martyrdom in early Islam illustrates the complexities of the concept and its sensitivity to changes in the political environment. The early developments were primarily due to splits within the Islamic community over the issue of authority and the development of different jurisprudential traditions. The dissenting groups, including the Shi’ites, placed significant importance on the concept of martyrdom. The understanding of martyrdom for dissenting groups is intrinsically connected with the issues of injustice and oppression and tends to allow for importance to be placed on the ‘active’ concept of martyrdom. The Sunni traditions development of the concept of martyrdom reflects their position as the central authority. The development of a ‘passive’ approach to martyrdom illustrates an attempt to dissociate and create jurisprudential distance from dissenting and minority groups. The relationship

between the understanding of the concept of martyrdom and the political position is reflected in the contemporary development and spread of the 'suicide bomber' martyr.

The introduction of the Islamic 'suicide bomber' as a form of martyrdom is not a simple development for either the Sunni or the Shi'a jurisprudential traditions. Both Shi'a and Sunni revivalist movements in the Twentieth Century revitalised the concept of martyrdom and asserted an individualistic response to their specific situations. The Shi'a revivalist understanding of martyrdom allows for a martyr who can choose to die a symbolic death but who cannot choose to kill. The Sunni revivalist understanding of martyrdom allows for a martyr who can choose to kill, but who cannot choose to die.¹⁸⁷ The 'suicide bomber', a martyr who can choose to die, while killing, requires a reinterpretation of the Shi'a revivalist concept of martyrdom into a Sunni revivalist notion of *jihad*. It is the parallel ideological shifts on the role of the individual and the construction of the 'oppressive' enemy in both the revivalist movements to allow for the integration of the concepts of martyrdom and *jihad*.

The Shi'ite revivalist construction of martyrdom is reflected in Shari'ati's phrase, "*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*" This phrase essentially provides the rationale for the 'active political martyrdom'; when no other conventional alternative is available, then sacrifice of the life will further the cause of Islam on its *symbolic* value. The complementary Sunni revivalist notion of *jihad* is illustrated by Qutb's pan-Islamic aggressive notion of *jihad* against the Western 'oppressor', who keeps the Muslim societies in a state of *jahiliyya (ignorance)*. It is every Muslims' individual responsibility to participate in this *jihad*, they must be willing to sacrifice everything for this *jihad*, including their lives.

¹⁸⁷ Note that is a *possible* martyr, as the construction is 'passive'.

The introduction of the Islamic 'suicide bomber' in Lebanon in 1983 demonstrates the reality of the reinterpretation of the revivalist Shi'a martyrdom into revivalist Sunni *jihad*. The 'suicide bomber' is essentially a *rejihadization* of Shari'ati's weapon of the weak philosophy, transforming "*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die!*" into "*If you can, kill, and if you cannot, die while killing!*" The *jihadization* of Shari'ati's martyrdom creates a two-fold weapon, one that allows for enemy casualties, while allowing the martyrs' death to maintain its symbolic value against the 'oppressor'.

The successful use of 'suicide bombing' as the tactic by Hezbollah, and Fadlullah's pan-Islamic approach to *jihad* against the common 'oppressive' enemy, provided the stepping-stone for Sunni Palestinian groups to adopt the 'suicide bombing' form of 'active martyrdom'. 'Suicide bombings' in Islam is now almost exclusively associated with Sunni groups. This demonstrates an increase in the shift from an understanding of martyrdom related to authority, to the understanding of martyrdom that is characteristic of the oppressed. 'Suicide bombings' transformative nature as a tactic is an attempt to create 'shock value', the vehicle through which the *symbolic* voice of the 'oppressed' is heard. The current adaptations occurring in 'suicide bombing' use as a tactic are a testimony to 'suicide bombings' martyrological origins within a dissenting jurisprudential tradition, and an interesting reflection of the current political situations.

With a primary focus on the concept of martyrdom in Islam, this study is important because it sheds a new light on the origins of the Islamic 'suicide bomber'. The development of the concept of martyrdom plays a crucial role in defining the conditions for the appropriation of 'suicide bombing' by Islamic groups and it is the driving forces behind changes in the use of 'suicide bombings' as a tactic.

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