



FOR YOU
TO DO!

Reading for meaning



Read the newspaper article 'Turning tide of suicide bombings' on the next page and complete the activities.

1. In two words state the main topic of this article.
2. List any words in the article you do not understand. Look them up in the dictionary and write out the meanings. Also check in an Atlas to make sure you understand where the places are that are mentioned.
3. What current events does the writer mention that motivated them to understand this topic further?
4. What approach do most scholars studying this topic take?
5. According to the writer of this article, Fareed Zakaris, most scholars ask the question, 'What kind of person would be a suicide bomber?' Fareed has a different approach and asks a different question. What is it?
6. To find the answer to this question, Fareed Zakaris compares two different examples. List the two examples and take notes about each one.
7. Use your notes to complete a 3 column table to compare the two examples.
 - Decide on subheadings to compare the two examples and put these down the first column.
 - The two examples become the second and third column headings.
 - Give your table a title.
8. Whose approach of trying to understand suicide bombing is more effective – Fareed Zakaris or the other scholars that are mentioned? Justify your choice.
9. What is the hardest thing to understand about suicide bombing according to the writer of this article? Do you agree or disagree. Explain your answer.
10. What other questions do you think it would be relevant to ask to add further to your understanding of suicide bombing? List them and describe how you could go about finding the answers. Also make a list of places other than Turkey and Chechnya that could be used as examples.



Turning tide of suicide bombings

COMMENT: Modern horror is the product of political realities, writes Fareed Zakaria

It is relatively easy to understand why someone kills another human being. Human beings have done it forever – in war and in peace. It is far more difficult to fathom why someone would kill himself – or herself.

Russians today are asking just this question, because they have witnessed a rash of suicide bombings by women.

In the past four months seven Chechen suicide bombers, all but one of them women, have detonated explosives that have taken 165 lives, including their own. What has made this conflict one that moves people not merely to kill but to die?

Scholars who have studied the phenomenon tend to look at the personal profiles of suicide bombers for some sign of a pattern. Generally, they are Muslim (with the exception of the Sri Lankan rebels), young, single and have some religious education.

They are usually not newcomers to their political cause, or to terror tactics.

All this is interesting, but why do some choose this path and not others? After all, there are tens of millions of young, single Muslims and only a few hundred suicide bombers, who are found in a few specific places.

In searching for better answers, I have been struck by two phenomena – the rise of suicide bombings in Russia, and their decline in Turkey.

In the early 1990s, there were no Chechen suicide bombers, despite a growing, violent movement against Russian rule. The Chechens have been trying to declare independence from Russia for 150 years, but the Chechen resistance was always nationalist and non-religious.

Source: Newsweek, in NZ Herald, 21st August 2003.

Samil Beno, Chechnya's foreign minister in the early 1990s, explained that he and the then president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, feared the rise of religious and terrorist groups. They wanted a Chechen nation. The Islamic groups wanted an Islamic state, comprising other areas and run in a medieval manner.

Over the past 10 years, Russia's military has had a scorched-earth strategy toward Chechnya. The targets are not simply Chechen rebels but, through indiscriminate warfare, ordinary Chechens.

The Army has destroyed Chechnya as an economic and a political entity. And over time the Chechen rebellion has become more desperate, more extreme and more Islamist.

The female suicide bombings, for example, are in part a direct response to Russian military tactics. Many of the women bombers are relatives of Chechens killed by the Russian military – that's why they are called 'black widows' in the Russian press.

The human-rights group Memorial adds that another contributing factor might be the routine rape of Chechen women by Russian soldiers.

None of this is to absolve the Chechens of responsibility.

They have been lawless, chaotic, corrupt and brutal in their own tactics. But looking at things now one has to ask: Was there any other way?

Turkey's experience with the Kurds suggests that there might have been.

In the mid-1990s Turkey was racked by suicide bombings. The leader of the Kurdish rebel group PKK explained in a 1997 interview that 'suicide bombings are very much [our] tactic'.

Between 1996 and 1999 there were more than 20 such attacks all over Turkey. But in a few years they began to peter out. Today, apart from

an isolated incident here and there, suicide bombings have largely disappeared from Turkish life. Why?

A combination of reasons: First, the Turkish military hit the rebels hard, crushing the PKK, closing down international support for them and eventually arresting their leader.

But the Army directed its fire at the rebels and not the surrounding population. In fact, the Turks worked very hard to win over the Kurds, creating stable governing structures for them, befriending them and putting forward social-welfare programmes – to improve agriculture and women's education, for example.

The Turkish Government made a massive investment (totalling well over \$32 billion) in the Kurdish southeast.

Per capita, it has invested more in the Kurdish region than in any other part of Turkey.

It also had agreed to a number of Kurdish demands on language, cultural freedom and educational reforms. These concessions were dramatically accelerated as a result of European pressure over the past few years.

We treat suicide bombers as delusional figures, brainwashed by imams. But they are also products of political realities. There are many differences between the Kurds and the Chechens. But both are Muslim populations that have political grievances.

In one case, the grievances and tactics grew more extreme and violent, culminating in suicide bombing.

In the other, suicide bombing gave way to political negotiations and even coexistence. There is a lesson here.