Introduction

The world is a big place, and those who seek to study it have struggled with the question of whether to focus their analysis at the level of individuals, states or the international system. Scholars of international relations (IR) have traditionally emphasized the latter two 'levels', defined by a distinction between foreign policy analysis and international relations theory. The importance of the individual has, however, been highlighted in more recent debates regarding human security, which were in part inspired by statistics that 90 per cent of the casualties in contemporary wars are civilian.[1] On the other side of the spectrum, the international focus on terrorism, and 'suicide terrorism' since 11 September 2001, has represented individuals as a threat to the state. The targeting of civilians is a breach of the laws of armed conflict. 'Suicide terrorism' represents a problem of a different kind, given that non-state actors have not been written into the rules of war and their status remains ambiguous. The latter was most evident in Guantanamo Bay, where detainees were categorized as 'unlawful combatants', which, according to the administration of President George W. Bush in the United States, excluded them from protection by the Geneva Conventions. Historically, the rules, institutions and customs of international relations have placed individuals outside the boundaries of war, except as soldiers of the state or representatives of institutions of other kinds, such as diplomats. The individual has primarily been constructed as a subject within discourses of the

[1] Adam Roberts (2011: 357; see also Roberts 2010) argues that the 90 per cent statistic, which since the early 1990s has become an 'urban myth', is flawed, as is the view that civilians are much worse off than in earlier periods. These statistics have increasingly been questioned. In the academic literature, the shift of focus to human security was reinforced by the development of critical security studies, which highlighted the individual as the referent object of security. See, in particular, Booth (1991); Krause and Williams (1997); Fierke (2007).

state – a subject with rights, duties and obligations whose death in war may be memorialized as a glorification of the state.[2]

The sacrifice of the soldier in war is tragic yet has 'sense' given that the larger values of a sovereign community are at stake. The recent phenomenon of 'suicide terrorism' has proved to be far more difficult for Western observers to comprehend, raising the question of how it could be rational to undertake voluntarily an act that would result in the loss of one's own life. Indeed, much of the early literature on this subject focused on the psychology of the individuals involved, assuming that the agent had to be irrational or psychologically disturbed (see Kramer 1990; Merari 1990; Post 1990).[3] Use of the word 'suicide' implies that the bodily death is more individual than political. If one looks more closely, however, and from a somewhat different angle, the assumption of the purely individual nature of the act has to be called into question.

The terminology of 'suicide' terrorism is at odds with the terminology of 'martyrdom' used by the agents themselves and those who identify with them. Martyrdom more explicitly embeds the actor in a social world in which the death is a witness to injustice on behalf of a community. As I began to look beyond the human bomb, to other contexts that involved some form of self-sacrifice, such as hunger strikes, self-burning or non-violent martyrdom,[4] two striking patterns became evident. The first was the recurring contestation over the identity of the agent as a criminal or terrorist, on the one hand, or a martyr, on the other, as well as the meaning of the act as a suicide or martyrdom. The second was a contestation over the reason for the act – that is, whether the agents were perpetuating crimes against the state, or whether they were witnessing to human rights violations by an 'occupying' power.[5]

[2] Recently, the individual has begun to occupy a more distinct place in international law, in reference both to human rights and to potential culpability before the International Criminal Court.

[3] Many scholars have argued subsequently that suicide bombers are indeed rational, viewing the benefits of the tactic as outweighing the costs (Sprinzak 2000; Cronin 2003; Moghadam 2003; Bloom 2005; Pedahzur 2005; Hronick 2006).

[4] Non-violent martyrdom is not a fate inflicted by the agents themselves, and in this respect is not voluntary. It is a predictable consequence of a refusal to conform, however, and this non-violent witness is in fact more consistent with the meaning of martyrdom than the act of the human bomb.

[5] I place 'occupying' in quotation marks as I am not using it in the formal, legal sense of the term but, rather, highlighting the claims being made by the agents.

The patterns raised several questions that challenge the tendency to draw fixed boundaries around bodies, whether individuals or states. The first question is one of identity in relation to a social world and whether the agent is outside community, a criminal or terrorist who is violating the norm, or a martyr who suffers on behalf of a community and is therefore an integral part of it. The second is a question about the strategic choices available to those whose sovereignty has been denied, as distinct from citizens inside the state or sovereign agents outside it, in the international realm. The third question regards the role of violence or nonviolence in transforming the boundaries between the individual and the 'body politic'. A central claim of this book is that the individual, state and international levels cannot be neatly separated in an era of globalization. Acts of political self-sacrifice provide a fascinating site for exploring how the three interact.

Inside/outside

Since 11 September 2001 the question of why individuals would sacrifice their lives in a suicide mission has been a central theme of the burgeoning literature on suicide terrorism. Scholars have highlighted several types of causal explanation for the phenomenon, including personal motivation (Lachkar 2002; Sarraj and Butler 2002; Berko 2007), group organizational factors (Bloom 2005; Pape 2003; Pedahzur 2005), socio-cultural causes and multiple levels of analysis (Moghadam 2006a; Hafez 2007; Singh 2011). This study is a departure from these debates in several respects. First, although some have acknowledged the role of a language of 'martyrdom' in garnering local support (Hafez 2006, 2007; Moghadam 2008), this study goes further to analyse the significance of the *contestation* over the meaning of acts of bodily destruction as a 'suicide' or 'martyrdom' (see also Fierke 2009b). The question of cause thereby shifts to one of the constitution of meaning. Second, I examine a class of actions, including not only the human bomb but also hunger strikes, self-burning and nonviolent martyrdom, that share a family resemblance as more or less voluntary acts of bodily destruction with a political end, or what I refer to as 'political self-sacrifice'. Third, the book explores the strategic dynamics that arise from the various forms of political

self-sacrifice, including the role of violent or non-violent resistance, in shaping the emotional dynamics surrounding the body and the context to which authorities must respond.

Suicide and martyrdom usually rely on different ontological assumptions. The former is often assumed to be a framework of individual action. Maurice Halbwachs (1978 [1930]: 10) argues that solitude is common to all types of suicide, stating: 'People only kill themselves following or under the influence of an unexpected event or condition, be it external or internal (in the body or in the mind), which separates or excludes them from the social milieu and which imposed on them an unbearable feeling of loneliness.' Suicide also violates a social code. As Naim Ateek (2000: 11) points out, in Christianity the person who commits suicide has been considered the only true atheist, as he or she has no faith or hope in God and has totally given up on life. The word for 'suicide' in Arabic is *intihar*, which means killing oneself for personal reasons. In both traditions, ending one's life with suicide brings an end to earthly life, and, given the religious prohibition, is not generally tied to an afterlife.

Suicide is taboo in most religious traditions, and is regarded as the act of the non-believer who has given up all hope. It is also the act of the isolated individual who is alienated from any human or divine community. In the more secular world of the West, the association of suicide with criminalization and the moral responsibility of the individual is a product of modernity and the principle that life at any cost is preferable to death (Minois 1999: 328). Suicide is defined in opposition to Western notions of rationality, which focus first and foremost on a self-interest in survival. To call an act a suicide is to depoliticize it and to place the agent outside community.

Martyrdom, in contrast to suicide, is associated with an act of witness to truth or injustice. Martyrdom requires a martyr, who is a person who on some level chooses suffering and death in order to demonstrate absolute commitment to a cause (Cook 2007: 1). David Cook refers to this witness as one of the most powerful forms of advertisement, insofar as it communicates personal credibility and experience to an audience, which locates the act in a social world. Mark Juergensmeyer (2003: 167) highlights the performative nature of martyrdom as a religious act of self-sacrifice. As Lindsey Harlan (2001: 121) states:

Frequently a martyr is someone who dies and is willing to die, but is always understood as being forced to choose to die, contradictory as that may seem. A martyr defends a principle, a notion of truth, which he or she cannot surrender. The idea that a martyr chooses to defend truth until death, but does not choose death itself, makes the martyr heroic and denies the accusation that the martyr embraces suicide, for the martyr's death serves and is effected by a compelling cause. Such a martyr sees no other way to affirm, defend, and propagate truth. Whereas suicide is selfish – it represents a failure of nerve, endurance, or patience and often an inability to go on despite grief, pain, dissatisfaction or deprivation – martyrdom is selfless.

Aside from a few examples of cult suicide, the word 'suicide' highlights the choice of the individual to take his or her own life, and the problem thus fits within a model of individual preference, if not rational choice.[6] Suicide, no less than martyrdom, is a socio-cultural phenomenon, however, which has varied in meaning across historical and cultural space (Durkheim 2006 [1897]).[7] As Georges Minois (1999: 2) notes, actors in other historical periods or cultural contexts, and philosophers from Cato to Seneca to Bruno Bettelheim, to name just a few, regarded an act of voluntary death as 'the supreme proof of liberty and of the freedom to decide one's own being or non-being'. Martyrdom is more directly recognizable as a social phenomenon, insofar as one does not martyr the self for the self's own sake but for a cause, whether this be religious, political or humanitarian.

Suicide and martyrdom are central to the political contestation revealed in the empirical analyses of this book. The theoretical exploration revolves around a concept of political self-sacrifice, however. 'To sacrifice' is a verb, which points to an agent, an act and an outcome. The word suggests a relationship between the individual who is sacrificed and a community that is the beneficiary of that sacrifice. Sacrifice is a rite of destruction that, according to Juergensmeyer (2003: 167), is found in virtually every religious tradition. The spiritual process of

[6] As Domenico Tosini (2009) notes, rational choice theory continues to be the dominant paradigm of terrorism studies.

[7] Émile Durkheim emphasized the importance of understanding the social world in which suicide takes place and cautioned us to be wary of explanations that focus on individual psychology. Durkheim's main point was that we tend to think of suicide as a supremely individual and personal act, but it also has a social and non-individual aspect, as shown by the fact that different types of society produce different rates of suicide. Suicide is not a purely individual phenomenon (Bloch and Parry 1982: 2) but a social category.

destroying, which comes from the Latin word *sacrificium*, means 'to make holy', which suggests the transformation of death into something positive.

There are several reasons for choosing political self-sacrifice as the key analytical concept. First, given that suicide and martyrdom are at the heart of the contestation explored in the various cases, 'self-sacrifice' is a more neutral and less politically loaded term. Second, political self-sacrifice approaches the problem from a different angle. The question of how it can be rational to give up one's life voluntarily rests on an assumption that individual survival is the ultimate rational end. A concept of political self-sacrifice, like martyrdom, shifts the focus away from the individual to a social space, raising the question of 'Survival for whom?'. Sacrifice points to something outside the self, insofar as one cannot meaningfully sacrifice the self for the self's own sake but only for others. Third, sacrifice is an ancient human practice that is modified by a more modern concern with 'self'. In Chapter 1 I argue that contemporary forms of self-sacrifice share a family resemblance with older practices, while finding distinct expression in the context of the modern state and a globalizing media. Finally, the word 'political' points to the objective of the sacrifice, which is the restoration of sovereign community.

Inside/outside states

Sovereignty and non-interference have been defining principles of the inter-state system in the period since Westphalia. Survival has been the priority of the sovereign state; but survival has had two sides in Western thought, depending on whether one is looking inside the social contract or outside to the world of international relations. Rational choice begins with a concept of humans as self-seeking egoists, an idea that goes back at least to Thomas Hobbes and the idea that society could be organized around selfish motives. Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1968 [1651]) sketches a world of permanent 'war of all against all' in which life was 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short'. The social contract was a way out of the perpetual fear of death and involved relinquishing a degree of individual sovereignty to an authority that, in return, would provide protection. Hobbes asks a question as to why, having agreed to the contract, humans would necessarily abide by it. He provides two possible reasons: '[E]ither a Feare of the consequence of breaking their

word; or a Glory or Pride in not appearing to break it.' Pride, he argues, was seldom sufficient to ensure that individuals would keep to the contract, so fear had to be the dominant motive.

Inside the social contract, conformity or compliance arise out of a fear of sovereign authority, although this also presumes sovereign protection. Outside, in the international 'state of nature', states need to conform with the competitive logic of self-help in order to survive (Waltz 1979).[8] International relations theories often emphasize the rational constraints imposed on sovereign states by the condition of anarchy. For those who have historically been situated outside sovereignty – that is, those whose sovereignty has been taken away or never been formalized – the logic is quite different. To conform to the rules of a hegemon from this position is to lose one's separate identity, and the compelling challenge is to salvage some notion of community when the material and ideological forces of the world are pushing against this. Survival thus comes to rest on an interesting dialectic between existence and non-existence, inside and outside. It is not merely that collective being is existentially threatened. Sovereignty has already to some degree been denied, devalued or eliminated. Communities that have historically been victims of the state system or balance of power politics fall within this category, their sovereignty and security sacrificed for the sake of the sovereignty or wealth of another people.

The focus of IR theory has been on the security and sovereignty of those states that are in a position to securitize others by virtue of their successful constitution as states. We can also ask a question, however, about those communities that have fallen between the cracks. The problem of rationality, self-interest or self-sacrifice looks different in a situation in which sovereignty has *already* been lost or severely curtailed. In this case, the context cannot be approached in terms of bounded insides and outsides, or a single rational and autonomous actor, because it is the boundaries themselves and the structure of authority that are drawn into question. This book approaches the central problem of international relations, sovereignty and non-interference from a different angle, focusing on communities that have been victims of the practices of international politics.

[8] The way in which IR theory defines the distinct worlds inside and outside the state was the theme of R. B. J. Walker's (1992) classic work.

Inside/outside violence

Fighting from the boundary is inherently paradoxical. The sovereign agent fights in order to survive. The defeated or occupied community exists only by virtue of their conformity with someone else's rules, which may define them as second-class citizens. In these circumstances, to live by their own rules, almost by definition, means nonconformity. International law defines who has a legitimate right to use violence and who does not. In this respect, the rules define the agency of violence in two distinct ways. On the one hand, sovereigns have the legal authority to use violence, which has been buttressed by the moral authority of 'just war' theory. On the other hand, those who belong to defeated, occupied or marginalized communities do not have this right, although since World War II, based on the experience of the French resistance, this rule has been somewhat modified (Walzer 1977: 177–8).[9] In using violence, members of these communities are likely to be labelled 'terrorists', or, in refusing to comply with the rules of a hegemon in other ways, may be branded as criminals.

If material power and force are what primarily drive international politics, as argued by realists and neo-realists, then actors in the second category can only step into the position of moral authority, such that they have a legitimate monopoly on the use of violence, by defeating and replacing the existing powers that be. By virtue of their position, however, they play with a weak hand and are unlikely to be successful in any attempt to overpower without assistance from outside, which carries risks of its own, given that sovereignty is the objective. There is also a danger that an attempt to overpower without the strength or conditions to do so may result in a further loss of legitimacy, which could be used to justify the elimination of violent resistance, as happened in 2009 with the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

The anti-colonial literature on resistance in the period since World War II emphasized overpowering the enemy in order then to impose a

[9] Michael Walzer notes that, if the citizens of a defeated country attacked the occupation authorities, the act once carried the charge of 'war treason', which was punishable by death. After the experience of the French partisans and other guerrilla fighters in World War II, however,'war treason' has disappeared from the law books. He states: 'We have come to understand the moral commitment [that individuals] may feel to defend their homeland and their political community, even after the war is officially over.'

new set of sovereign rules. Frantz Fanon (2001 [1963]: 27), writing in the context of Algerian resistance to France, states:

> [N]ational liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people. . .decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. At whatever level we study it – relationships between individuals, new names for sports clubs, the human admixture at cocktail parties, in the police, on the directing boards of national and private banks – decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete and absolute substitution.

Non-violent campaigns, such as Mohandas Gandhi's independence movement in India, shifted the balance, making nonconformity with the rules of the dominant power a major site of political contestation rather than violent conflict. By eliminating violence from one side of the equation – that is, the action of the resistance – Gandhi highlighted the questions 'Whose rules, whose sovereignty, and whose security?' while resolving the question of 'Whose violence?', since this was left to the forces of authority. This represents agency in a pure sense, which goes against the dominant structure, while recognizing that the failure to conform will bring certain suffering and perhaps death. For the non-violent campaign, principled mobilization replaces military mobilization. Arguably it is harder to persuade a population to remain calm and disciplined, without hitting back, in the face of government retaliation to resistance than to persuade a minority to pick up arms, even in largely unequal conditions. It is arguably easier to make sense of killing someone else in the context of violent exchange than to make sense of sacrificing one's own life without hitting back. The latter defies not only rational concerns for self-preservation but the natural impulse to retaliate in self-defence.

Although the choice between violent and non-violent resistance is in theory clear-cut, in practice they usually combine in different ways during the course of an extended campaign, and self-sacrifice is not the territory exclusively of non-state resistance. The soldier on the battlefield who fights in defence of the state also potentially sacrifices his or her life to be hailed as a martyr. The idea of martyrdom is often firmly attached to the honour of warriors. Farhad Khosrokhavar (2005: 6–10) makes a distinction between two types of martyrdom: offensive and defensive. Offensive martyrdom arises from a desire to

destroy the enemy but relies on violence that has been sanctioned by religion and is thus legitimate. This strand, which has focused on military confrontation, can be found in a variety of religions and has often inspired nationalism. He provides several examples, including the patriotism of World War I or the revolutionary phenomena of 1789. With offensive martyrdom, one bears witness in sacrificing the self in a battle against injustice.

Defensive martyrdom can be traced back to Christian martyrdom during the Roman Empire. The first martyr, according to Eusebius of Caesarea, was Procopus, who refused to make a sacrifice to the gods in the presence of the emperor, stating that he recognized only one god and was ready to sacrifice himself to Him (Khosrokhavar 2005: 6). His head was then cut off. Christian martyrdom was characterized by a refusal to obey Caesar in matters of religion, and subsequent death at the hands of the authorities.

Many contemporary acts of political self-sacrifice, while often informed by religious meaning, are directed to secular ends and, in the cases explored here, the sovereignty of a community. The agent who 'acts as if' a different set of rules is in place, but without violence, may be no less engaged in defence of a community and no less likely to sacrifice the self for a political end than the agent who uses violence. The most troubling combination of violence and self-sacrifice is to be found with the suicide terrorist. The suicide terrorist deliberately takes his or her own life, while killing innocent victims in the process. The recent spread of this tactic has raised questions about how rational human beings can take their own life in this way. The Romans also asked this question of the Christian martyrs, however, and they were all the more perplexed because they did so without fighting back. As Khosrokhavar (2005: 6) notes, the Romans viewed these acts of martyrdom with incomprehension, asking how a rational being could commit 'irrational suicide', especially when he or she caused the fatal blow to be struck by others.

The international and the global

Political self-sacrifice remains exceptional. On the surface, cases of voluntary death or suffering would appear to have little to do with questions of international relations. In several respects, though, when approached from a different angle, the relevance is clear to see. I have