

Is the Increase of Women Terrorists Being Driven by the Same Motivations as Men?

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Recent reports have suggested new terror groups particular to the MENA region have embarked on new efforts to recruit women into their organizations. Although the phenomenon of women engaging in terrorist activity dates back centuries, this kind of deliberate recruitment does not. This study takes stock of prejudices about men and women worldwide, that have served to profit such groups in penetrating security mechanisms currently in place. The landscape of gender inequities among the countries most threatened by terrorist activity—in combination with the weight of push and pull factors relative to women—outlined by notable female security experts, is examined. The resulting data concludes the new emergence is unique and potentially sustainable, contributing to the discourse challenging myths that generalize men as perpetrators and women as victims in addition to identifying breaches in security through culturally induced stereotypes.

Introduction

Is the increase in women's participation in terrorism being driven by the same motivations as men? Recent reports have indicated an emergence of women participating in visible roles within religious terrorist organizations, including front line combat within the Islamic State. Such reports raise important questions with regard to the factors responsible for the increase and whether this presents a greater security threat relative to the participation of men. This is important to investigate because underlying stereotypes exist with regard to women and political violence that contrasts with men, which could hinder further investigation. All across the world, men are assumed to be common perpetrators of political violence and are often viewed as aggressors by default, while women are often assumed to be peaceful. This study will contribute to the discourse concerned with the increased participation of women in visible roles and non-visible roles with respect to new terrorist organizations. The results of this thesis aim to better inform scholars and security analysts in forming best practices to help stem the tide of the recruitment of women while serving to acknowledge and address loopholes in national security.

II. Literature Review

The words, "female terrorist," typically evoke a curious response from Westerners. For security analysts around the world, the practice of women engaging in violent acts is not a new phenomenon. The challenge is, their numbers are increasing and so is the risk of ignoring any associated risks. The scholarly research collected in this regard include

a series of anatomical explanations for the push and pull factors relative to women joining terror organizations as well as common demographic profiles that help identify vulnerable populations for recruiters of new terrorist organizations. Much is found to be contingent on religious, cultural and socioeconomic factors, but what appears to be of some significance is that the underlying theme across many regions of the world that stems from women's lack of agency borne from the pervasiveness of gender inequality. Several lessons have been considered by the global community following the failures and setbacks of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which have served to refine the way policymakers and advocates alike view future counterterrorism strategies and tactics; including advocacy for the empowerment of women and support for human rights.

Stereotypes

The body of work associated with women terrorists presents a significant amount of scholarship with respect to gender stereotypes. Dominique Grisard in, *History of Knowledge, Terrorism and Gender*, discusses major violent events that, since the 20th century, have been fundamentally conceptualized and historicized as masculine, due to male-dominated institutions' In *The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media*, Nacos explains that a gendered lens also exists with respect to the way the media portrays female politicians and female terrorists; outlining the narratives as: The Physical Appearance frame, The family Connection frame, Terrorist for the Sake of Love, The Woman's

Lib/Equality frame, The Tough-as-Males/Tougher-Than-Men frame, The Bored, Naïve, and The Out-of-Touch-with-Reality frame (Nacos, 2013). Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry warn against the deference of stereotypes about women and note two frequent false assumptions; “that there is something more peaceful about women than men naturally or inherently and that women’s status as women is so precarious that their vulnerability as women draws them to terrorism”—they furthermore implore scholars and policymakers to recognize that, “women are complex actors making complex choices” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2016). In *Brides of Palestine/Angels of Death: Media, Gender, and Performance in the Case of Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers*, Dorit Naaman shares the prejudicial nature that surrounds women who commit themselves as suicide bombers. Naaman suggests the practice feeds into the stereotypical narrative that women are pure and self-sacrificing—thus exacerbating the shock afflicted on the public when such an act occurs. This tendency encourages media outlets to subsequently reward the terrorist organization with free publicity in exchange for higher ratings from viewers. Through the process of content analysis, Naaman also asserts that the media and advertisers have long been dependent on stereotypes and perpetuating a sellable image of female identity in order to sell products to women and continue the segregation of women in societies (Naaman, 2007). These historical narratives help understand the origins of gender stereotypes and their relationship to women seeking power and autonomy. Though the stereotypes persist even today, it is unclear to what extent they continue to affect the psyche of the public given the emerging increase of female consciousness and awareness of sexist tropes. This being true among younger generations who consume a disproportionate amount of social media content and enjoy instant access to information.

Motivations (Push Factors)

Push factors are influences that drive women to become terrorists. This subject has been a major concern for scholars across varying disciplines. Dr. Mia Bloom, who specializes in both gender studies and terrorism, recently authored a book on the overlap that exists entitled, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism*. This body of work accounts for and describes the most common motivations that push women to enter terrorist organizations which she defines as, “The Four R’s Plus One: Redemption, Revenge, Respect, Relationship, and Rape” (Bloom, 2011). One contemporary example of revenge as a motivating factor appears to be taking place in Asia among the Dalit class in India. Akanksha Narain takes stock of the increased brutality of the women terrorists involved in the left-wing Naxal movement inside India, orchestrated in response to the violence imparted on indigenous tribes by state authorities. The police’s rampant sexual abuse against the community as well as their ambivalence toward the safety and security of the lower castes, has motivated women to seek justice through violent means (Narain, 2017). To examine differences and similarities between

the profiles of men and women terrorists, Karen Jacques and Paul Taylor conduct a quantitative analysis titled, *Myths and Realities of Female-Perpetrated Terrorism*. The study examines data on 222 women and 269 men across eight different variables, finding that a persistent outlier appears to be that women terrorists display a superior level of education and are less likely to be employed, compared to their male counterparts (Jacques and Taylor, 2013). In *Guerrillas in Latin America: Domestic and International Roles*, Margaret Gonzalez-Perez suggests that women are more likely to join domestic terrorist organizations rather than international ones, provided they are promised more rights in their immediate environment whereas the latter organizations are often formed as a rejection of American imperialism. Across the board, it seems plausible that women’s lack of agency and gender inequality resulting from cultural relativity and sexist violence could be underlying themes that drive women to commit unspeakable acts that are unlike the common experiences of men. The limitations of the scholarship is the limited accuracy of data, given potential dangers associated with access to legitimate sources.

The Recruitment of Women (Pull Factors)

The scholarship that exists with respect to pull factors suggests that the recruitment of women has broadened in part, due to the effects of internet access and globalization. In the Middle East, Esther Solis Al-Tabaa highlights the content of propaganda magazines published by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which are being used to attract and recruit Western Muslim women into terrorist organizations. Using the same strategies that American advertisers such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* use to target female audiences, AQAP’s *Al-Shamikha*, features beauty tips and relationship advice, peppered around persuasive content intended to recruit women and convince their husbands to become martyrs for the cause (Al-Tabaa, 2013). The groups that have caught the attention of security scholars and global leaders most recently, is the international terrorist organization known as the Islamic State, headquartered in the MENA region of the globe. Considering I.S.’s aim to commit genocide on all who refuse to join in the establishment of a Caliphate governed by Sharia Law, the threat is unique and consequential. One study suggested the pull factors for women seemed minor and insignificant in *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Robert Pape conducts a statistical analysis including 315 general suicide attacks up until 2003 and points out that the fundamentalist view of Islam may in fact discourage women from participating in future attacks (Pape, 2005). However, according to Jennifer Philippa Eggert, author of *Women Fighters in the ‘Islamic State’ and Al-Qaeda in Iraq: A Comparative Analysis*, the first female IS combatant sighting was in fact confirmed in 2016 and their numbers appear to be growing. Such a revelation has left observers incredulous, considering the rampant misogyny and violence against women within the organization, prompt-

ing further investigation into their recruitment efforts. The answer could be surprising; in a quantitative study titled, *What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?* Lindsey O'Rourke measures the female to male ratio of efficiency across both secular and religious terrorist organizations controlling for number of casualties per individual gender, by group between 1985 and 2008. Her study finds a 70 percent increase for Lebanese women, 164 percent for the PKK, 116 percent for the LTTE, 157 percent for the Chechen women, 85 percent Palestinian, accounting for a total average of a 158 percent increase overall (O'Rourke, 2009). In *Women of the Caliphate: the Mechanism for Women's Incorporation into the Islamic state (IS)*, Hamoon Khelghat-Doost reveals that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have announced proposals similar to Saudi Arabia and Iran—to establish gender-segregated institutions in hopes of attracting female fighters but have gone even further by promising female-run education, healthcare, administration, police, finance and service as a challenge to the perceived sin of emancipation of women in the West. As a result, Khelghat-Doost explains that I.S. is effectively replacing redemption for emancipation by promising a kind of utopia for women, based on religious adherence and is actively recruiting a historically unprecedented number of migrant women to participate in both supportive and combat roles (Khelghat-Doost, 2017). Terrorist handlers are well aware of the consequences of sensationalized publicity that follows a female-perpetrated attack. In *Death Becomes Her: The Changing Nature of Women's Role in Terror*, Government overreaction is noted as one of several goals that is sought by terrorist groups in order to mobilize support for the cause. As a result, Bloom states that terrorists will increasingly recruit women as a strategy; transitioning them away from supportive roles and moving them into combat, in order to breach security barriers that men would likely not penetrate with the same ease. She offers that their utility has been underestimated in several ways. As such, female attackers have been instrumental in conducting psychological warfare due to the unpredictable nature of their threat to the casual observer (Bloom, 2010). The above literature reveals new strategies and tactical forces that are being used to pull women into terrorist activity, most of which seem to share a common goal; the exploitation of stereotypes and cultural norms. However, one challenge is the absence of recruitment figures as the numbers appear to be mere estimations, lacking necessary empirical data.

Gender Inequality & Terrorism

A substantial amount of scholarship details the unequal treatment of women and its pervasiveness throughout history. Despite the abundance of research centered on women and gendered roles, few figures have opted to consider the unequal treatment of women and its relationship to global security. One exception has been former United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who in her professional capacity asserted that, “the subjugation of women is a direct

threat to our national security” (Saiya et al., 2017). Nilay Saiya, Tasneem Zaihra, and Joshua Fidler respond by conducting a quantitative study to research whether any empirical data exists to support Clinton's theory and its relation to Anti-American terrorism. In *Testing the Hillary Doctrine: Women's Rights and Anti-American Terrorism*, researchers indeed produce supportive evidence, including the finding that a correlation exists between higher numbers of women in parliament relative to lower levels of international conflict. Furthermore, in a report published by the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on terrorism, nonproliferation and trade, Jamille Bigio testifies extensively on the consequences of absent female security, stating that, “extremist groups use women to their advantage—recruiting them on the one hand as facilitators and martyrs, and on the other hand benefiting both strategically and financially from their subjugation (Targeted News Service, 2018). In *Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror*, Dr. Mia Bloom and Hilary Matfess explain that Boko Haram increase their recruitment of women through violence against women and coercion (Bloom and Matfess, 2016). Although these findings are significant, and shed light on a multitude of external factors, it would also be productive for scholars to explore the intersection of gender equality and the cultural relativity within such communities, including societal features to aid in the discovery of best practices for mitigating such consequences.

Current Counterterrorism Strategies & Tactics

The invasion of Iraq produced many lessons for Westerners, specifically the deadly consequences invited by the lack of appreciation for cultural norms in societies different from our own and the difficulties of engaging insurgent warfare. Recognizing that the military response to combat this threat lacked strategy and soft power, states have learned valuable lessons and issued new responses with a focus on culture-centric warfare, a strategy that David Kilcullen, senior advisor to General Petraeus has referred to as, “armed social work” (Malvern and Koureas, 2014). In addition to these measures, the United Nations published a meeting report based on *Counterterrorism in the Post-Arab Spring Context*, identifying several tactical decisions that created a power vacuum in the MENA region: Heavy foreign military involvement including the use of air strikes caused great collateral damage thus, facilitating opportunities for terrorist groups to seize territory, recruit new members and assert control. It was also documented that lack of opportunity and bleak political prospects isolated groups even further, resulting in expanded radicalization. (International Centre for Counterterrorism, 2015). Despite new opportunities for advancement, women are underrepresented in the intelligence community which reduces the potential for valuable perspectives on the current challenges surrounding the rise of female terrorists.

Counterterrorism Tactics for Women

In *Assessing the Significance of Women in Combat Roles*, Jessica Darden points out that women have been integrated into combat roles within terrorist organizations in much higher proportion compared to legitimate state militaries, which poses unanswered questions with regard to the dynamics of women battling other women in war. The mobilization of female soldiers in other countries could serve two benefits: challenging the stereotypes that women are weak and dependent, and providing women with more autonomy, therefore empowering them to assert control over their own lives. The United Nations could aid in this endeavor through its advocacy of states who allow women to participate in combat roles within their militaries. The normative and pragmatic issues that exist are religious objection and the potential to be subjected to often overlooked sexual abuse and harassment by their male peers, as is the case in the United States today.

Policies on Counterterrorism Strategies for Women

Several policies including ones mentioned by academics featured in this review have been suggested. The focus on human rights has often been the north star to a path forward on delegitimizing extremist groups by many think tanks and NGOs. The policy options that have been recommended tackle both social and military concerns. In, *The Security Dimension and Women*, Cheryl Benard cites three important points of interest: long term security for women, the international support and encouragement of criminal justice reform, and efforts to support the integration of women into governance positions. The United Nations serves as a valuable platform to arouse cooperation for such efforts. Although the normative promotion of human rights may intuitively seem like the correct response to mitigate terrorist involvement, these rights may be relative according to different regions and religions exercised around the world and could limit the degree to which rights may be expanded. A pragmatic approach would be to reach a consensus on the definition, linking the contingency of expanding the roles of women to afford them more agency.

The above readings provide evidence to support the existence of women as a unique threat to global security given the implications of rampant stereotypes and systemic discrimination against women and girls. However, plenty of scholarship also makes a strong case for women voluntarily joining terrorist organizations through their own volition which should not be discounted. Local level engagement in terms of providing safety and security for women around the world would be a noble and pragmatic pursuit in terms of providing a better foundation for women and children so they are less likely to be seduced by extremist causes. However, the practicality of such efforts appear bleak, given the isolationist philosophy of the current leaders in powerful states that are in a proximate position to provide relief through diplomatic or military means—in cooperation with intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and others.

III. Methodological Framework

This thesis utilizes qualitative research and secondary sources such as books, academic journals, and congressional committee minutes to conduct a case study by way of comparative analysis to examine the discrepancies between the push and pull factors that exist relative to the emerging increase of women's participation in terrorist organizations. First, we will begin with an overview of psychological and social factors that influence society such as common stereotypes and prejudices with respect to gender and political violence from a Western perspective. Next, an examination of women's involvement will be conducted through the lens of the Four Waves of Terrorism theory introduced by David Rapoport to identify any common themes associated with ideology and the roles of women within terrorist organizations. The study will then trace the motivations that drive admitted men and women terrorists to participate in political violence and segue into scholarship that suggests whether or not the recruitment of women is a lucrative venture for new organizations and conclude with an assessment on whether the increase of women's participation poses unique security risks at home and abroad.

IV. Definitions

What is *terrorism*? According to scholars who have studied this subject, over 100 different definitions of terrorism are used by researchers around the globe (Stampnitzky, 2017). For the purposes of this case study, we will be applying United States Code, Title 22, Chapter 38, Section 2656f(d)(2) which defines terrorism as: "Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents" (22 U.S. Code § 2656f). Some debate also exists in terms of the distinction between *old* and *new terrorism*. It is presumed that "old" terrorism relates to the goals of actors as limited in scope and negotiable, whereas "new" terrorism refers to actors who commit acts based on apocalyptic ends and are non-negotiable (Crenshaw, 2003). Although the subject matter of this thesis applies to new terrorism, it is important to also shed light on old terrorism to appreciate the full scope of motivations behind women terrorists. *Honor Codes* are rules related to the chastity of women that are observed in Islamic societies. The violation of an honor code, often through no fault of her own, may render a woman worthless, brings shame upon her family and is ultimately killed as a result. *Non-visible roles* will refer to supportive positions within a terrorist organization that are not on immediate display to the public nor to the adversaries of the organization. In contrast, *Visible roles* will refer to positions within a terrorist organization that both the public and its adversaries can visually observe, such as participating in hand-to-hand combat, the routing of accomplices, and suicide bombing.

V. Findings

Gender Stereotypes and Terrorism

Western social norms tend to administer gender blindness when considering the profile of terror suspects. That is, men are often assumed to be aggressive and therefore by default, are expected to be the dominant perpetrators of violence. For women terrorists, the public response is more complicated. Researchers Carol Gentry and Laura Sjoberg have found that women are put into three broken characterizations by societies to reconcile the capacity of women-led political violence known as; Mother, Monster or Whore (Gentry and Sjoberg, 2016). The Mother narrative is used in an attempt to rationalize the violent act by suggesting that because women have the unique capacity to bear children, they are naturally protective and therefore their actions must have been performed to protect a loved one, or the opposite may be true—the accused woman is assumed to be barren and is so traumatized by that fact, that she is pushed to violence. The most cited narrative according to Gentry and Sjoberg is the Monster Narrative, in which society suggests that her feminine gene must be broken, or that there is something inherently wrong with her because violent behavior contradicts the norms of womanhood. Finally, with the Whore narrative, society accepts the prejudice that women who are sexually “deviant,” participate in such acts because they are evil. The problem with these views is that they perpetuate groupthink effects and therefore downplay the consideration that women are rational beings that may engage in violence out of their own volition.

The media is one of the most powerful tools for communication in society. It has the ability to sway large swathes of public opinion and control what narratives are amplified. For this reason, it is important for journalists to report events in a way that is responsible and objective. Brigitte Nacos demonstrates the various frames with which the media portrays women who participate in political violence and finds a potential correlation between women who seek political office (Nacos, 2013). Such frames are identified as: the Physical Appearance frame: in which the perpetrator’s physical appearance before the attack drives the story rather than her motivations; the Family Connection frame describes the assumption that association or coercion by a family member is the only explanation for her involvement; the Terrorist for the Sake of Love frame, suggests that the woman executed the attack to attract the attention of a potential romantic partner; the Women’s Lib/Equality frame: a scapegoat for those who believe the pursuit of gender equality is an extremist idea and assume it must therefore incite violent behavior; the Tough-as-Males/Tougher-than-Men frame: another stereotype that suggests women perpetuate violence to prove their physical agility is equal or superior to that of a man; and finally, the Bored, Naïve, and Out-of-Touch-with-Reality frame, suggesting that women do not possess the mental capacity to exercise rational thought and are assumed to have been manipulated into participating in the violent activity by someone else. Moreover, the pervasive nature of each lens dismisses the idea that women are multifaceted beings and

potentially independent perpetrators of violence, essentially downplaying the impact of women’s participation. However, these stereotypes may easily be dispelled upon closer inspection of women’s participation through the historical context of political violence.

Waves of Women Terrorists

In relation to the recorded historical timeline of terrorism, UCLA professor, David C. Rapoport reports that observable waves of terrorism have taken place that align with global events. The four waves he identifies are: Anarchist, Nationalist, Socialist and Religious Fundamentalist, each lasting about forty years (Walls, 2017). Moreover, each wave has been borne from specific cataclysmic events, defining the ideological pursuits of violent actors from one generation to the next. Understanding the dynamics of these waves help researchers better understand the broader pattern of attacks and provides them with a timetable for the duration of the wave. The relevance here is the level in which women are either willing or forced participants of terrorism relative to ideology. According to research conducted by Weinberg and Eubank, women participated in each of these waves in varying degrees which this case study will trace to identify common threads. For Rapport, the current wave we find ourselves in is a religious fundamentalist wave, meaning that ostensibly religious sects appear to be the dominant force engaging in widespread acts of terrorism. The concern is at best twofold; religious fundamentalist terrorism falls under the umbrella of new terrorism—unlimited and apocalyptic—and two, it appears these sects are successfully activating women despite their deeply misogynistic philosophies.

The First Wave: Anarchist Terrorism

The first wave of terrorism took place in Russia, which sprouted through disillusioned men and women following the implementation of massive democratic reforms by Tsar Alexander II. (Rapoport, 2001). Coincidentally, the first record of a person charged for the act, was in fact a woman. When Vera Zasulich stood trial in 1878 for the alleged attempt to assassinate St. Petersburg’s governor-general, she indignantly embraced her accusations, insisting she did not consider herself a murderer, but a terrorist (Bloom, 2019). The women of this time became increasingly involved as they grew resentful over gender inequality and the denial of a formal education which culminated in the enlistment with the terror organization, The People’s Will. Many became radicalized with the encouragement of Author Sergei Nechev, of the *Revolutionary Catechism*, who declared that women who were fully committed to the cause would be considered, “our most precious jewel, whose help is absolutely indispensable” (Engel, 1977). Though women were initially relegated to subordinate positions, others rose up through the ranks and expanded their operations. For instance, The Socialist Revolutionary Party of Kharkov committed itself to the use of provocateurs and succeeded in the assassination of the Russian Minister of

Interior, an execution that was planned by Donna Brilliant, a female bomb-maker associated with the Combat Organization (Weinberg and Eubank, 2011). Being part of the Marxist revolution enabled women to share leadership positions with men, something that was not possible for them anywhere else in the country during this time (Engel, 1977). In America, Emma Goldman, was a self-proclaimed anarchist and transplant via Germany, often delivering speeches promoting, “propaganda by deed” which many were often inspired by and led to the assassinations of leaders in the United States, France, and members of royalty in Europe with a slew of attempts on others.

Although exact numbers cannot be determined for all women who were involved in the terrorist events of the 17th century, some data obtained from arrest records produce a sample of the demographics engaging in deviant behavior during this time. For instance, records from 1873 through 1877 in St. Petersburg, Russia reveals 1,611 arrests made for disseminating illegal propaganda with 244 of those arrested being women (Engel, 1977). Furthermore, researcher M.M. Merkulov found that out of the 80 women who were charged and imprisoned for severe violations, 35 of those belonged to nobility, and 19 were daughters of high-ranking officers. Such results appear to show a connection between more radical attitudes among women with access to education or proximity to power and status.

The Second Wave: Nationalist Terrorism

The Nationalist wave, also referred to as the anti-colonial period, began in 1920. This era marked the transition of newly independent states, with others attempting to drive remaining colonizers out and recover or maintain certain ethnic traditions. To that end, it is understood that few women participated in these events with the exception of the National Liberation Front in Algeria, who mobilized their Muslim population against French rulers, using guerilla warfare and urbanized terror tactics. Beyond liberation from French rule, educated women took to the mountains to join rebel forces known as the maquis, to give illiterate peasant women lessons on colonial rule and the urgency of independence (Turshen, 2002). Recruiters sought out Muslim women who passed for “European,” to carry out specific bombing attacks in places where rebel men could not enter undetected. The women were instructed to remove their veils and dye their hair to distract suspicious French security officials—successfully planting bombs in European quarters, restaurants and soccer stadiums (Weinberg and Eubank, 2011). Though the initial promise of emancipation appeared attainable to the mujahidat, or women combatants, they soon found themselves exploited. The exact numbers of women that engaged in terrorist acts during this period are not known, however, about 2,200 were indeed captured by French militaries with countless others killed in combat (Turshen, 2002). Surviving women of the terrorist group lament that they were afforded more liberties during the war than they were afterward.

The Third Wave: Leftist Revolutionary Terrorism

The Leftist Revolutionary wave was triggered by both the American involvement in the Vietnam war, as well as the income inequalities that culminated from the American capitalist economic system. The events activated leftist propaganda and terrorism that disseminated throughout the Americas and Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, featuring a revival of women’s involvement in terrorism. Some evidence suggests that the promise of women’s equality was responsible for the increased numbers in several parts of Europe. In Palestine, a young woman named Leila Khaled, associated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, became the first woman to complete an airplane hijacking mission before being compromised and arrested by authorities in London (Weinberg and Eubank, 2011). Khaled since then has been idolized by young women across the Arab world, whose portrait also adorns the walls that line the West Bank.

Other European states such as Italy, saw a clash of leftist and neo-fascist terrorist organizations between 1969-1982. Major leftist groups in Italy featured Margherita Cagol and Susanna Ronconi, co-founders of the Red Brigades and Front Line, respectively. Both maintained a number of women combatants staffed in high ranking positions involved in kidnappings, and murders including the assassination of Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. Another woman also helped execute the kidnapping of a NATO general. Estimates show that 20 percent of those who participated in the Italian terror groups were women and accounted for twice the average of the women who participated in right-wing terror groups (Orton, 1998). The neo-Fascist groups in Italy were just as deadly, responsible for thousands of deaths from 1970-1984. Weinberg and Eubank report that out of 572 alleged neo-Fascist terrorists that were arrested or wanted by authorities, 39 of these were women. Moreover, out of the 1,763 belonging to leftist terror groups, 406 of the accused were women.

Similar events took place in 1938 throughout Western Germany, with an even greater number of women, as much as 33 percent, pledging allegiance to various terrorist groups such as the 2 June Movement, and Revolutionary Cells (Weinberg and Eubank, 2011). Some women were co-founders of Marxist terror organizations, namely Ulrike Meinhoff and Gudrun Ensslin, of the Red Army Faction. Both women were formally educated intellectuals who were also coincidentally daughters of Protestant clergymen. The women were responsible for numerous bombings of government institutions and other buildings that contributed to consumerism. Later, they focused their attacks on authorities and civilians including a resident of the Berlin court, bankers and prosecutors (Weinberg and Eubank, 2011). The women were eventually arrested and reportedly committed suicide while in custody after members of the PFLP were killed or arrested in an elaborate attempt to force the women’s release. Following their deaths, other women, led by Brigitte Kuhlman, took over the spot-light when they engaged in yet another plane hijacking

mission in conjunction with a separate Palestinian group called the Palestinian Liberation Organization (Weinberg and Eubank, 2011). Jillian Becker reports in her book, *Hitler's Children*, that 27 out of 65 known German terrorists that were either wanted by the police or in custody during the attack were women who took part in visible roles.

The Fourth Wave: Religious and Nationalist Terrorism

The Fourth wave has the distinctive quality of being synonymous with new terrorism. This means the dominant ideology of most terror groups at the present time have been religious fundamentalist groups, motivated to perform largely indiscriminate attacks. Dr. Rapoport theorizes that the arrival of the fourth wave of terrorism began toward the end of the 1970s when the Soviet Union chose to invade Afghanistan, and more significantly, following the Iranian Revolution. The American invasion of Iraq is said to have also exacerbated tensions between the West and Middle East even further.

In 1985, women began using self-sacrificing maneuvers as a new tactic to produce a greater number of fatalities across the Middle East. These suicide bombers were first seen in Lebanon when a seventeen-year-old girl, named Sana'a Mehaydali, was sent on behalf of the Syrian Socialist National Party to sacrifice herself and others as a statement against the actions of the occupying Israeli forces. The act garnered so much publicity for the movement that such acts became the preferred weapon in states like Turkey, Israel and Russia. In Chechnya, female combatants utilized this tactic so often, they were soon nicknamed Black Widows (Bloom, 2019). Scholars have also indicated that suicide bombing has become an indispensable strategy for weaker organizations to get more mileage out of the limited resources they have on hand.

Black Widow bombers began surfacing in defense of the Chechnya population in 2000. These women took on government targets and civilians in Russia proper in response to the state government's refusal to grant independence to the Muslim region and the government's apparent attempt at ethnic cleansing. Soon after Russia's declared strategy that it would focus its attacks on men between the ages of 17-40, the women of their families chose to take up arms in their defense to exploit the weakness of the government in recognizing the potential threat of women combatants. More women began volunteering themselves in growing numbers as a result of the marginalization they faced following the loss of their husbands and children; mobilizing them to take revenge on Russian forces. This same phenomenon has since been replicated in parts of Iraq following what American General Stanley McCrystal has defined as, "insurgent math," or the exponential creation of new terrorists following the deliberate attacks on civilian communities.

In South East Asia, the Tamil Tigers or LTTE, found strength in their commitment to martyrdom as a form of resistance and to compensate for the major losses suffered

at the hands of their adversaries. It has been estimated that women combatants made up 20 percent of the LTTE organization and committed 40 percent of all suicide attacks (Dissanayake, 2017). The women of the Tamil Tigers felt empowered by the perceived success of the movement with many participating on the premise that the fight would secure women's equality in Sri Lanka. In 2008, the Federal Bureau of Investigation listed the Tamil Tigers as, "the most dangerous and deadly extremist outfit in the world" (Dissanayake, 2017). This title was achieved in part through the invention of suicide vests, which served to aid terrorists in the assassination of Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Despite their efforts, it was understood that the organization maintained a male-dominated, patriarchal structure that never delivered on their promise to guarantee gender equality in Sri Lanka. In fact, former female combatants have been targeted in discriminate attacks based on their prior affiliation (Dissanayake, 2017). Unfortunately, the same exploitation of women combatants has been on display in other regions of the world as is the case in Al Qaeda in Iraq as the literature review previously identified.

Terrorist Profiles

Though it is often the case that scholars may reduce the politically violent actions of men and women to behave according to traditional gender norms and ideology, forensic psychologist Randy Borum offers an assessment based on regularities formed through sociological and psychological dynamics. Borum identifies a sequence of stages or thought processes that lead individuals of diverse backgrounds to commit themselves to unspeakable acts. He explains that once an unjust event occurs, individuals filter the consequences through four stages which he identifies as: "It's not right," "It's not fair," "It's your fault," "You're evil" (Borum, 2003). Once the individual has processed a major grievance through these stages, they become at-risk individuals for participating in violence. Borum also explains that individuals that are predisposed to aggressive behavior may indeed use ideology to justify their violent acts. Following the at-risk stage, Borum identifies other psychological contingencies that are present for an at-risk individual, namely: "(1) a need for personal identity or meaning; (2) a need for belonging; and (3) perceived injustice/humiliation" (Borum, 2003). This framework has then been applied to various studies concerned with vulnerable populations that may be subject to recruitment into terrorist organizations.

Although limited empirical data has been produced to test the discrepancies between the demographics of men and women due to the inherent danger in interviewing active participants, Jacques and Taylor have conducted a quantitative assessment using recorded biographies of known terrorists across all ideologies, producing a total sample of 491 individuals. The data compared 269 male terrorists to 222 women terrorists and were tested against eight variables: age; education; employment; marital

status; immigrant status; conversion to religion; criminal history and activist family. The statistical results found similarities between the sexes with an average age of women terrorists at 22.6 years compared to 22.2 years for their male counterparts; low or nonexistent links to previous involvement in criminality; and the attainment of higher education. Moreover, Jacques and Taylor determined there were indeed some discrepancies relative to other variables—women were more likely than men to be unemployed; almost one-third of the females recorded had familial ties to their organization; women were less likely to be immigrants; less likely to be religious converts; and more likely than men to be divorced or widowed. Although this study may only serve as a snapshot of a wider population, it nevertheless produces evidence to deduce that men and women terrorists should be studied differently.

Motivations for Women Terrorists

Despite women's long history of participation in terrorist organizations, states often dismiss them as a threat, including the United States, until several years after female suicide bombers began to detonate themselves against American soldiers in the Iraq War. Dr. Mia Bloom finds that women across conflicts are often motivated by what she terms, "The Four R's Plus One" (Bloom, 2011). The first "R" stands for Revenge: usually in response to the murder of a family member or spouse; the second "R" is identified as Redemption, which occurs when women are associated with scandalous activity and choose to take up arms as a way to redeem past sins such as committing themselves as suicide bombers. This is important because according to Bohen, conservative cultures who live by honor codes, associate acts of martyrdom with hopeful feelings of being rewarded in the afterlife for their sacrifice (Bohen, 2003). Bloom then associates the third "R" with Relationship, determining that the woman's participation is often traced to a family member that is likewise a participant of the organization. Bloom argues that the family member connection is common and significant because it serves as a useful vetting mechanism—families can vouch for their relatives' intentions, which further entrenches newcomers to the cause. The fourth "R" refers to Respect and represents the woman's desire to obtain the respect of their communities. This especially tends to be a common motivation for women who seek recognition or feel they stand as a role model for young girls that may look up to them. Rape is cited as the "plus one" by Bloom as an exploitative mechanism where women are systematically raped, leaving the women in violation of the honor code, with no other choice than to commit herself as a martyr because the shame that would be brought to her family upon realization would inevitably lead to her own death as a result.

Motivations for Male Terrorists

The scholarship dedicated to the study of men's motivations to join terrorist groups is less complicated. A study conducted by Jacques and Taylor on the difference between

male and female suicide bombers determined that men place less emphasis on personal motivations and are more inclined to become mobilized through concerns of identity, such as: group membership—a strong desire for association with the in-group; previous involvement in the conflict; some association with individuals that are already involved; religious beliefs and nationalist ideology (Jacques and Taylor, 2018). One motivation that is observable in women and immediately eliminated from the equation as it relates to men is rape. This is because men are not adversely affected by patriarchal social structures in Islamic societies that place critical importance on the chastity of women. The other contrast that presents itself is that men tend to cite political concerns for their decision to participate in violence whereas women cite personal concerns. This may be a byproduct of men's supreme agency over that of women; as men are less limited in realizing goals and aspirations within their conservative societies and therefore better positioned within Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Still, the limited research that exists in terms of motivational factors behind gender segregated studies further reinforces the stereotype that men are inherently violent.

Why are Terrorists Recruiting Women?

Recent scholarship has indicated an increasing number of women choosing to participate in visible roles within ISIS. In fact, Brugh suggests the increase in women's participation has been observed in nine out of 11 recently established terror groups (Brugh, 2019). The finding is supported by Turner, who reports that the number of women involved in suicide attacks has been increasing particularly in organizations such as Boko Haram, Al Shaabab, and the Taliban; with as many as 220 women executing attacks within Sri Lanka; Russia and Chechnya; Palestinian and Israeli territories; and Turkey since 1985 (Turner, 2016). Besides the undeniable benefits associated with the replenishment of resources, scholars have determined specific tactical and strategic motivations exist for the recruitment of women (Turner, 2016). Bloom explains that strategic advantages to using female combatants are significantly psychological because they provide an element of surprise as they are not viewed as the stereotypical perpetrators of political violence (Bloom, 2010). This is an auspicious detail for terrorist groups given the much needed publicity to help amplify their message to their enemies, attract vulnerable demographics, and further legitimize their organization. She also explains that many tactical advantages exist as well, including the ability to conceal weapons underneath traditional garb or by feigning a pregnancy to conceal a bomb. In conservative, Islamic societies such as Iraq, women avoid being searched because any invasive contact by male strangers violates strict honor codes that can inspire outrage in the community and turn the population against military personnel or worse: bring shame to the woman's family which could result in her murder. Therefore, the ability to compromise security checkpoints ensure closer access to desired targets that may be out of reach for

male perpetrators. Evidence revealed through a quantitative study on the casualty rates inflicted by male and female suicide bombers, provide important data for reference. According to Lindsey O'Rourke, because women are less detectable than men, they are in fact more effective killers. As evidence, her study reveals a 158 percent increase in civilian casualties perpetrated by women over men (O'Rourke, 2009). The startling statistics brings to light the severe strategic implications of insurgent women terrorists.

Terrorist Recruitment Efforts

The recruitment efforts of terror organizations have grown in sophistication since the age of globalization and instant internet access. Some security experts argue that new terror groups like Al-Qaeda are the first insurgents in history to transfer from a physical arena to cyberspace. Al-Tabaa reveals that terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula essentially use American women's magazines as a blueprint to promote terrorist propaganda. One such publication called *Al-Shamikha*, uses beauty tips and relationship advice to attract women readers while encouraging women to either enlist themselves or persuade their husbands to commit themselves to martyrdom (Al-Tabaa, 2013). According to Bloom, groups in the Middle East prefer to recruit Western women over native women because all else being equal, the novelty of Western appearances again draws more attention to their cause (Bloom, 2010). This is especially significant because it reveals further intentions to obscure the expectations of potential victims of terrorist violence.

VI. Summary

The research conducted concludes that significant differences in push and pull factors exist between men and women terrorists. For one, although women and men both possess the capacity to engage in political violence, throughout history, women have shown a tendency to increase their level of participation when societal gender reforms are assured. Advancing gender parity appears as a running theme since the inception of women's participation in the 17th century through the new emergence of women's participation in the Jihadi-inspired terrorism of present day. This also coincides with the existing statistical data that suggests women with higher educational attainment represent a modal value across the board unlike their male counterparts. Therefore, it is possible to theorize that women who are educated, realize their value and develop aspirational goals that cannot be achieved in their immediate environments due to the culture of gender norms within certain societies. This historical precedent was illustrated in Italy's attempts to rehabilitate the women who had participated in terror—where admitted women terrorists were less likely than men to denounce their involvement in exchange for a lenient sentence. Women

appear eager to satisfy the desire to elevate their own status because they have few outlets in which to achieve this. Considerable attention should be given to the findings presented in terms of the ratio of casualty rates inflicted by men and women terrorists—particularly that women suicide bombers account for a 158 percent increase over suicide missions executed by men. The startling data gives credence to the feminist scholarship that warns of the dangers associated with gender stereotypes. The limitations of this research include access to discrete empirical data relative to the numbers of women that are currently enlisted in active terrorist groups. Further research involving the specific overlap of women's involvement in new terrorism and gender inequality as a motivation would provide a clearer picture of the current status of women and where certain improvements should be prioritized. Furthermore, experts and authorities that are tasked with the maintenance of national security at home and abroad would be best served if they applied different counterterrorism strategies for women and men given the unique threat that women terrorists present. For instance, culture-centric opportunities for vulnerable women would help divert individuals away from terrorist recruiters. In addition, the adoption of mixed militaries may circumvent inspection procedures that fail to detect women who intend to execute successful suicide missions, reducing immeasurable pain and the needless loss of life of allied militaries and civilians.

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