

# Women and Terrorism

- SRA-211, Threat of Terrorism and Crime
- Penn State Altoona
- Larry Garvin

# Examples

- **Thenmuli Rajaratnam –**
- In 1987, Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister of India. In an attempt to end the terror campaign by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, sent Indian troops to Sri Lanka.
- The troops eventually withdrew when their mission was not successful.
- Sri Lanka is an island south of India. Since the 1970's the Tamil part of the population has engaged in a terrorist campaign for independence against the Buddhist majority.
- Time Magazine described them as “the most organized, effective and brutal terrorist groups in the world.
- They invented the suicide vest...” After decades of conflict, Sri Lankan troops launched an all out military assault and destroyed them in early 2009.

# Examples

- In 1991, he ran for prime minister again.
- Fearful that he would again take a strong stand against the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) , they sent **Rajaratnam** to kill him with a suicide bomb.
- She walked up to him, put garland around his neck, knelt down in front of him and set off the bomb.

# Examples

- **Thenmuli Rajaratnam** , Gandhi, and 16 others were killed.
- The bomb had 10,000 2mm pellets in it.
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g00kwomw\\_Ls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g00kwomw_Ls)

# Examples



- Wafa Idris – she was the first Palestinian female suicide bomber
- She had a tough life. She was born in a refugee camp.
- Her father died when she was a child, and she married her first cousin at the age of 16.
- At 23, she gave birth to a still born baby and was told that she could not children, so her husband divorced her.
- She moved in with her mother and became a ambulance driver/paramedic.

# examples

- In January 2002, she drove her ambulance into Jerusalem.
- She did not arouse suspicion both because she was a woman and driving the ambulance.
- She then detonated a 22 pound backpack bomb.
- An 81 year old man was killed and a 100 were injured.

# examples

The bigger problem may be what her legacy says about the Palestinian mentality.

Since then, she has been praised in newspapers, had Palestinian youth centers and sporting events named after her, had songs written about her, and generally been held out as a hero and role model by the Palestinian media and government.



# Factors that influence women to join terrorist organizations

- 1. Ideological motives**-they agree with the underlying philosophy
- 2. Nationalist motives**-freedom for their people, ethnic group or country
- 3. Individual victimization**-strong correlation between assaults and abuse on a woman and her decision to turn to terrorism
- 4. Romantic connections**



# Comparisons to Men

- **Lack full equality** - Although women have been assuming more prominent roles in social causes and everything else, they have not achieved full equality with men.
- **Positive example** - Melinda Gates is largely responsible for Bill Gates' and Warren Buffet's philanthropy
- In some cultures, this disparity is quite wide, while in others, it is nominal
- Levels of equality vary by society, culture and ideology
- Holds true for terrorists
  - Some have Equal roles
  - Others, more limited roles

# Comparisons to Men

- Walter Laqueur wrote that “women terrorists are more fanatical and have a greater capacity for suffering.
- Their motivation is predominantly emotional and can not be shaken through intellectual argument.”
- Women terrorists have repeatedly demonstrated the capability of male terrorists
- However, there aren’t as many of them
- But like society, their roles are often more limited



# Levels of Involvement

- Sympathizers
- Spies
- Warriors
- Leaders

# A More Jaded Typology

- This typology was drafted by a Russian revolutionary named Sergei Nechaev in the 1800's
- He was a violent radical And not very nice. In spite of what he writes, manipulated, used and compromised are his key themes
- He states Empty headed, senseless and brooding women in positions of wealth or influence should be exploited
- Women who are sympathetic to the revolution but not completely committed to the cause should not be trusted, but manipulated, used and compromised
- Women who are absolutely and completely dedicated to the cause are a precious treasure

# Roles by Group Type

- This deals with differences in women's roles based upon terrorist group type
  - Left
  - Right
  - Nationalists
  - Religious
- Devotion to the respective cause is usually a common feature
- But the role of women in each type tends to vary quite a bit
- What role will women have after the terrorists win?

# Left Wing

- Want to change society - Driven by a desire to change society to something more fair and equitable
- Gender equality - Pursue full rights for women; promote gender equality
- Typical left wing Roles include
  - Combatants
  - Leaders
  - Policy makers that create and promote the ideologies
- Left wing groups are often 50% women

# Right Wing

- Right wingers are usually the opposite of women's rights - Right wing organizations tend to be conservative, averse to change, and as result, inclined to preserve women's traditional roles in society
- Seldom this type of thinking results in female leaders
- Assume secondary roles - They have female members, but no women in their leadership hierarchy



# Right Wing

- Women accept secondary roles in the group-cheerleaders, cooks, attend meetings and still hard core, but not leaders
- Motivations are Not motivated by gender issues
- A women's Motivation are led by desires to advance the cause of their own racial or religious group
- Fewer women associated with extreme right
- Groups are 25% women

# Nationalists

- Nationalist movements also tend to have women in traditional conservative roles
- Although there are Few women in leadership roles
- This is reflective of the movements' conservative nature
- Nationalist female terrorists tend to have the motivation of helping society in general
- Some women find their way into nationalist movements because of the abuse of women by the occupying power
- Victimized women are often used as suicide bombers

# Nationalists

- One theory on this....
- Rape victims in some countries are regarded as tarnished and lose hope of marrying or having families
- They are scorned, isolated and ostracized
- As a result, they seek purpose by devoting themselves to self sacrifice for the good of society

# Nationalists

- Feelings of rage and the need for revenge lead them to terrorism
- They are easy to persuade to volunteer for suicide missions, and they do at a high percentage-33-66%
- Be careful with this theory. There is certainly some truth to it, but some women join these organizations just because they want to fight for their independence as well

# Religious Terrorists

- Religious terrorists welcome female members
- Have no aspirations to leadership roles and are not permitted to do so
- religious terrorists find women to be operationally useful
- They are motivated by religion to join
- Religions in general oppose women leadership-Islam, Catholics, Southern Baptists

# Female Terrorists and Islam

- Conservative Muslim societies and religious authorities once opposed women engaging in violence
- Growing aggressiveness of radical Islam and operational needs has resulted in newfound religious justification
- In 2001, the High Islamic Council in Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa calling on women to martyr themselves in the fight against Israel

# Female Terrorists and Islam

- Note that there are also fatwas opposing terrorism and violence, and the Koran explicitly forbids it
- Hamas has encouraged women to engage in active combat and suicide bombings
- So Martyr operations have gained too much momentum for the Muslim clergy to resist



# Volunteers or Blackmail?

- Some Muslim women certainly volunteer for terrorism
- Others are victimized
- Israeli authorities have claimed that some are blackmailed by Palestinian leaders and have to redeem themselves

# Volunteers or Blackmail?

- Considerable evidence for this
- Israel may have its own agenda, but their intelligence services are pretty good, and the claims might be valid
- They blame Palestinian leaders for taking advantage of individual personal, emotional and social vulnerabilities to force them into terrorism

# Volunteers or Blackmail?

- Examples include pregnant unmarried women and extramarital affairs from which they must redeem themselves
- There is some evidence of this
- One story emerged about a woman blackmailed by Fatah to carry out a suicide mission because she had an affair. Her family learned about it and hid her to save her life
- First female Palestinian suicide bomber Wafa Idris was divorced by her husband because she could not have children
- Israeli intelligence maintains that her situation was not unique

# Value of Women Terrorists

- Women are seldom perceived as a threat.
- These misperceptions can be capitalized upon by terrorists to outwit and defeat defenses.
  - EXAMPLE - Wafa Iris was driving an ambulance
- Searching women poses logistical problems

# Value of Women Terrorists

- **Four reasons women are prized in terrorist organizations**
  1. Women are perceived as nonthreatening and scrutinized less carefully than men
  2. Searching women poses logistical problems. In certain Muslim societies, men are not permitted to search women
  3. Difficult for men to search pregnant women, but an excellent disguise for a bomber
  4. Conventionally, women are victims of violence, not the perpetrators. So law enforcement tends to pay less attention to them

# vids

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfJqkX59iuc>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeLh1ZVOVoc&t=111s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fInV5aF6K48>

# Aafia Siddiqui

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aafia\\_Siddiqui](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aafia_Siddiqui)



- 
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOTyVBhpTEM>