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**WOMEN AND TERRORISM: VICTIMS OR
EXECUTIONERS?**

Analysis of the role of women in the terrorist
phenomenon as an active subject of leadership, through
examples of yesterday and today organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has always been inextricably linked to the male image. The terrorist subject has always been imagined by us as a strong man who acts on the front line, while the female component of his family remains tied to a supporting role. In the context of terrorism, in fact, we are not used to conceiving of woman as a potential danger, since we are still "trapped" in the image of woman as wife and mother. However, the reality is quite different and precisely for this reason, the following work, entitled "Women and terrorism: victims or executioners?" aims to address this issue, thus investigating the logic behind the terrorist phenomenon and above all the degree of importance that women have in it.

In the first chapter, we will begin with a historical analysis of the phenomenon of terrorism, to tell in detail how it was born, the reasons and its developments. We will then analyze the transition from political terrorism, which characterized movements such as the Italian Red Brigades or the German RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion), to the most recent Islamic terrorism, which materializes in organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. Finally, we will focus on the analysis of the suicidal method, which began to be used precisely to strengthen the power and message of the terrorist act.

Subsequently, in the second chapter we will analyze feminist theory and its history instead, in order to be able to understand why the search for affirmation by women also through a negative phenomenon such as terrorism. In fact, we will compare the progress achieved by the feminist movement in our current society and therefore all the achievements to date, with the same type of claim in the world of terrorism. We will then analyze the origins of this relationship between women and terrorism, to finally arrive at its evolution to the present day.

Finally, the third chapter will be dedicated to the collection and display of examples of terrorist organizations in which women have played a leading role. The examples will be divided into two categories: the first will be composed of five political organizations, both far left and far right, (*Japanese Red Army; Red Brigades; Weather Underground Organization; NARs (Revolutionary Armed Forces) & National Socialist Underground*) over a period of time up to the 1980s. From that moment on, in fact, the transformation into Islamic terrorism begins, and therefore the second category that we will analyze will be divided into three examples of Islamic organizations (*Al Qaeda; Black Widow & ISIS*).

The purpose of this work will therefore be to demonstrate that the belief on which we have relied so far, of the woman considered as a passive person and not involved in the terrorist struggle, is however false. Women, in the context of terrorism, have always been able to fill roles automatically labeled as male, thus being able to compete in ruthlessness and cruelty with their male counterpart. Furthermore, not considering women as an integral part of the phenomenon of terrorism is not only wrong, but also misleading. In fact, this lack does not allow an adequate understanding of the phenomenon and its logics and above all does not allow an adequate process and attribution of responsibilities.

The following work, therefore, aims to highlight this sort of "emancipation", albeit in a totally negative way, to allow a more accurate analysis of the terrorist phenomenon and its actors.

1. TERRORISM

1.1 The terrorist phenomenon from its origins to today

Terrorism is defined as "the use of illegitimate violence, aimed at instilling terror in the members of an organized community and destabilizing or restoring their order, through actions such as attacks, kidnappings, hijackings of planes and the like"¹

Starting from this general definition, we can affirm that terrorism is not a phenomenon belonging only to modern democracies. It is, in fact, a phenomenon that we can find traces of since Roman times, with their conspiracies of the palace, to continue during the Middle Ages, with attacks on the rulers of the time and finally arrive at more modern times, for example, with anti-colonial movements. It is clear, however, that terrorism from ancient times to today continues to change in its characteristics and in particular, it has gone through an evident radicalization in the course of conflicts of various kinds.

The first terrorist demonstrations in the modern age were born between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, in the form of attacks against heads of state and government, often with an anarchist origin. In fact, this historical period was marked by the activity, including terrorist activity, of a vast assortment of political movements. We can start from the Italian phenomena defined as "brigandage", which included anti-Savoy organizations expressing their dissent following the Unification. Subsequently there were also independence movements following the Sardinian revolutionary movements of the 1700s, as well as many nationalist and irredentist unrest in Europe and in the world and also anarchists and patriots of many countries. Anarchists

¹ Definition Encyclopedia Treccani

attempted to claim either a new model of society or freedom and / or recognition for their peoples. As for this second objective, the most famous example is undoubtedly the Serbian student Gavrilo Princip, who killed Archduke Francesco Ferdinando of Austria, thus causing the outbreak of the First World War.

We can see how the definition of "terrorism" was already used in those times to label movements or individuals still known today. For example, we can think of the Irish Republican Army or Italian Carboneria, considered as terrorist organizations by the sovereigns of the time. The expression "terrorist" however, arises more precisely in the modern age, during the so-called period of Terror (1793-94) which followed the French Revolution. Power ended up in the hands of the most radical wing of the revolutionaries, the Jacobins, who to assert their dominance began to stage mass executions using the famous *guillotine*. According to some historians, the expression was introduced by Jean-Lambert Tallien and "Gracco" Babeuf, both protagonists of the Revolution, who first spoke of terrorism and "*terrorists*" explicitly indicating "the will to inspire terror".

After the Second World War, then, new terrorist demonstrations took place, mainly connected to the process of decolonization and to the failure or incomplete self-determination of peoples. The modalities used in this second wave of terrorism were, for example, the forced hijacking of aircraft or ships; kidnapping of people subject to special international protection; the hostage taking of foreigners aimed at exerting pressure on the States concerned or "terrorizing" public opinion, etc ...

Then later, starting in 2001 with the terrorist attack on the twin towers, a new type of terrorism was imposed on the public: that of Islamic origin. Islamic terrorism arose between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, when sects that declared themselves Ismailis, a current of Shiite Islam, inspired by the Shiite sect of the Nizarites or "Sect of the Assassins" spread in the East. To assert their

ideas, the Nizarites resorted to targeted political killings, especially against the Sunnis. Subsequently, precisely with the attacks of 11 September 2001, Islamic terrorism began to be perceived as a global threat to peace.

Finally, during the 70s, in Italy, a series of terrorist organizations developed, both with leftist ideologies (Red Brigades, First Line, NAP - proletarian armed nuclei etc ...), and with rightist ideologies (NAR - nuclei armed revolutionaries, Third Order, New Order etc ...). This phase was later referred to as "years of lead". In the late 1990s, political terrorism reoccurred with sporadic, but massive actions, thus operating until the early 2000s. In addition to terrorism of this type, definable as political, there was also terrorism linked to organized crime of Mafia and Camorra origin, by organizations such as Cosa Nostra, Camorra, 'Ndrangheta and Sacra Corona Unita. The long duration of Italian terrorism has attracted the attention of many scholars who have tried to analyze it and interpret its causes. Italy seems to be the only large European country where political terrorism has had such an important history, with the exception of Northern Ireland and the Basque Country, in which, however, an ethnic and religious problem was involved.

The same development process was also taking place in Europe, where, at the same time, the so-called liberation movements² were beginning to develop, such as the Palestinian terrorist groups of nationalist origin (Al Fatah, Black September, Popular Front for the liberation of Palestine, etc. ...), or ETA (Euskadi Ta askatasuna), a nationalist and socialist organization fighting for independence and the secession from Spain of the Basque Country, or the PKK for the independence of the Kurdish people against Turkey. However, these national organizations were then dismantled over time because States

² Liberation movements are organized and militarily framed groups that with the use of violence and armed actions want to claim the independence of a territory, the freedom and organization of an independent nation, a people, an ethnic group and / or religious.

themselves and organizations such as the UN accepted the requests of these groups.

Basing on the aims of the various terrorist organizations, we can distinguish three main types of terrorism: right-wing ideological, left-wing ideological and ethnic-religious.

The ideological-inspired terrorist organizations of the right were not homogeneous in their internal structure, nor in the tactics used. In Europe, this term was used mainly in the 60s and 70s and later in the 90s, to indicate radical right-wing groups that have been responsible for numerous attacks that aimed to generate panic, delegitimizing democracy and promoting the transition to an authoritarian regime. The 70s seemed to be the period of crisis for these movements, however towards the beginning of the 80s a new generation of young militants began to emulate violent leftist groups, leading then to the 90s, when throughout Europe racist violence spread with groups such as skinheads or neo-Nazis. These groups then never really died out. Just think, for example, of the Hanau massacre, carried out on the night of February 19th, 2020 by the 43-year-old Tobias Rathjen, who opened fire targeting some very popular bars with the Turkish and Kurdish community, killing nine people. Furthermore, according to estimates by Exit Deutschland, in Germany there were on average two acts of violence per day attributable to the far right. Germany is obviously not the only case. Italy, for example, where this kind of terrorism was called “Black Terrorism”, also has the longest history of violence in Europe, far longer and more resistant than any other European experience of political-revolutionary terrorism and if we look at the general European case instead, we can see how dozens of xenophobic attacks have taken place in recent years in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, France and Holland. From shootings to vandalism, from bombs to cars thrown on people, and dozens of right-wing extremists arrested every year in Europe, the numbers speak of 44 attacks only in 2018.

On the other hand, there was left-wing terrorism, which mainly acted against those who were considered "enemies" of the people. It is commonly called "Red Terrorism" and is a type of armed struggle of communist and revolutionary inspiration and, more generally, linked to far-left political ideologies, which has as its objective the overthrow of the current capitalist governments, to replace them with a dictatorship of the proletariat. In this context, the use of weapons is seen as the only possible means of lifting the proletariat and thus triggering a revolutionary impetus to free the oppressed masses. Over the 70s, organizations of this type have proliferated across Europe, leading to the formation of groups such as the Rose Brigades in Italy, terrorist organization that reached its peak with the kidnapping of Aldo Moro in the spring of 1978 and which overall caused about 130 deaths between 1974 and 2002, the Weather Underground in the United States, a terrorist organization active since 1969 until 1976 which used violent protest methods in reaction to the foreign policy of the United States and also espoused the anti-racist cause of the Black Panthers and the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion) in Germany, which were responsible overall for numerous terrorist operations and 33 murders and reached the peak of activity between 1975 and 1977, to then declared their official dissolution in 1998. These groups were responsible for numerous massacres, particularly in the 1980s against NATO installations, in what will later be called Euro terrorism. During the following decade, however, the number of groups of this type began to decrease dramatically, until it reached the beginning of 2000, when it had almost completely disappeared.

1.2 The transition from political terrorism to Islamist religious terrorism

There is a third category in which terrorist groups can be classified, and it is religious terrorism. In fact, the situation just described radically changed when we went from a confined threat to the borders of a state, to an international

threat. It is important first of all to mention the ideological fact that triggered Islamist terrorism. It should be clarified first that there is no substantial relationship between Islamic religion and terrorism, but that the use of Islam is only instrumental in achieving a rift between the two different realities of the Western and Muslim world. The triggering ideology behind terrorism against the West arose in many Islamic countries, such as Iran, Egypt, the Maghreb countries, Syria, which after freeing themselves from colonialism and having started to "westernize", they witnessed the birth of internal terrorist movements, aimed at opposing this drift, which led Islam to marginalization. Hence, Islamic fundamentalism was born, resulting in a fracture within the Muslim world, with a return to fundamentalism. This ideological thought, combined with the meeting with the jihad or "holy war" theorists, or the affirmation of the Quranic dictate with weapons, will then be transmitted to radical Islamists in the recruitment and training centers and in certain Quranic schools, in which the jihadist community was developing strategies for establishing the Islamic State in every Muslim country; it is in these environments that Bin Laden had built the base (al-Qaeda) and the network of contacts with jihadists around the world.

The first sign of this ideology occurred during the 1972 Munich Olympics, when the Palestinian terrorist group Black September³ kidnapped and killed the Israeli delegation. The biggest change then came with the end of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, the attack on Sadat in Egypt and above all with the attack on 11 September 2001. New movements were beginning to develop which made "jihad" or Islamic holy war their political and military ideology. They originated

³ "Palestinian terrorist organization founded in 1970 and active until 1973, responsible for air hijackings and attacks, culminating in the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes in 1972 at the Munich Olympics. It takes its name from the offensive ('black September') of the Jordanian government unleashed in September 1970 against the Palestinian guerrilla that took office in the kingdom after the Third Arab-Israeli War (1967). King Husain succeeded, with Israeli, US and British support, in eradicating the bases of guerrilla warfare by ending the organized presence of Palestinians in Jordan. In the serious political crisis Syria and the USSR were equally involved, alongside the Palestinians, while the Egyptian President G.A. Nasser acted as mediator between Jordan and the PLO, the main guerrilla organization at the time". Definition Encyclopedia Treccani

precisely in areas that include the south of the Mediterranean, the Arabian Peninsula, the African desert and central Asia. It is in this context that Hamas was born, as an expression of Palestinian discontent towards those secular and nationalist liberation movements that had been protagonists of the political scene in previous years and of the request for the creation of a Palestinian state, in which Islam is the official religion. Their actions began when the Egyptian Islamic jihad group killed President Sadat in Egypt, guilty of being leading the country towards an excessive "westernization". However, it is in Afghanistan and the African desert where the most violent and radical jihadist groups developed and still operate today. Afghanistan had in fact, the role of "incubator" of this type of terrorism during that period, since it was precisely here, during the war against the Soviet Union, that the main jihadist terrorist organization of the 20th century was being formed.

Al Qaeda was immediately a huge success as it brought together Arab fighters along with groups of Islamic religious extremists: the Taliban, formed in the Koranic schools of southern Afghanistan and Pakistan, united by the common desire to hunt the enemies present on Afghan soil, for the purpose to create an Islamic state in which the Koranic law is sovereign. Therefore, the members of Al Qaeda, anointed with the Taliban, began to forge relationships with the greatest powers of the time, the United States and China in particular, acting as a weapon against the USSR. However, the situation quickly worsened when the United States decided to grant some military bases for the Persian Gulf war against the invasion of Kuwait, which is located on Arab territory. From then on Al Qaeda and the Taliban also began to threaten the American embassies present in their territory and the escalation of threats and attacks culminated in the attacks of 11 September 2001. To avenge its losses, America began a bankruptcy strategy, in which through various wars (mainly Afghanistan and Iraq) led to the affirmation of Al Qaeda as the world's largest terrorist network, becoming even more compact, including small local terrorist organizations in its ranks. The two wars, in fact, while establishing Western-inspired

governments in the countries, did not lead to the elimination of Al Qaeda. Indeed, many observers believe that the US armed strategy has only worsened the situation of the conflict, transforming a country previously unrelated to terrorism, Iraq, into a real outbreak of guerrilla or terrorist organizations. For this reason, the subsequent major attacks (Madrid - 11 March 2004) and (London - 7 July 2005), have been officially attributed to the Islamic organization and have affected capitals of states participating in the military occupation of Iraq.

After the death of Osama Bin Laden (the organization's main guide), however, a gradual transformation began within the main structure and together with other factors, such as the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, the organization began to weaken, becoming less influential. It branched out in various organizations located in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and some Central African countries, but still carried out sporadic attacks: some of its members remained loyal to the group, while others, the most violent fringe, reorganized into a new and more violent organization that is now known under the name of ISIS⁴ (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or Daesh in Arabic) operating since 2014. Meanwhile, the leadership of Al Baghdadi, political and religious heir of the previous leader, Al Zarqawi, who led to the secession, took over in the new Islamic state. IS radicalized even further, starting mass persecutions against minorities of all kinds, as well as terroristic attacks across many countries. In fact, it is responsible for the attacks in Tunisia, Turkey and Europe in Paris (7-9 January 2015 and 13 November 2015) and Brussels (22 March 2016) triggering a military intervention by an international coalition against the terrorist organization. It is possible to observe the birth of a new phenomenon:

⁴ “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, commonly known as the Islamic State. Today ISIS is the strongest militia in the deployment fighting against Assad. [...] In 2013 he had settled in the eastern part of Syria, assuming the new and more adherent name of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (Isis). Making things even more complicated, ISIS changed its name again in June 2014, proclaiming itself the state of the Islamic caliphate (Sic), a title that reflects its ambitions of authority over all Muslims in the world. (The Economist, United Kingdom Internazionale.it, 17 November 2015, News)”. Definition Encyclopedia Treccani

the “Foreign Fighters”, who are fighters from various parts of the world who train in places of the caliphate and then return to their places of origin and carry out attacks, thus making this new form of terrorism more difficult to eradicate. Furthermore, the use of the Internet has become the propaganda tool par excellence used by these organizations, where the public is global and terrorists can act transnationally, fighting not only on the ground but also through cyberterrorism. Cyber-attacks and numerous websites containing ideological documents supporting jihad, propaganda praising violence and hatred, recruiting, financing and preparing for attacks are just some of the new weapons of terrorists. On the use of these innovative methods, ISIS is currently in the front row, making a qualitative leap and targeting young people, much more able to use social media and smartphones. Indeed, ISIS militants have become experts in the use of videos where those who disagree with their fundamentalist thinking are terrified.

Finally, we come to the present day and it is possible to say that terrorism as it was known in the 70s has completely changed. Now it materializes in the Islamic state, with a real army scattered throughout Europe and ready to serve, as well as technological means capable of reaching every corner of the world.

1.3 Terrorism and the suicidal method

Since the first appearances of terrorism, it has been possible to identify sporadic utilizations of the suicide method, used in the attacks organized by the various existing groups. From the assassins of ancient Palestine, up to the Islamic extremists, in fact, the self-sacrifice was and still is used as a weapon of war.

The spread of the suicide method is mainly due to two factors. The first is its easy planning and the possibility of allowing the attackers to correct their route to the last. The second factor is that using this suicidal tactic has a great

psychological effect, showing that the group that adopts it has the intention of fighting to the end and not being willing to stop in front of anything.

The history of this practice has very distant origins, just think that already in ancient Palestine, the Sicarii, a group of extremist Jews who wanted the political independence of Judea from Rome, to oppose Roman rule used the self-blast to attack Roman officials and thus ended up killed with them. They used tactics never seen before, attacking in broad daylight and, preferably during the holidays or when a crowd gathered at various points in Jerusalem, in order to kill as many victims as possible. Even in the Middle Ages we find evidence of this practice, for example with the Shiite sect of the Assassins, who through it made a long series of murders of Christian and Muslim leaders.

The first real suicide attack can be traced back to 1881, when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by an anarchist who launched a bomb against the emperor's carriage, being killed himself. This guerrilla method began to be used more and more, until after the Second World War, when it seemed to disappear almost completely for four decades. In fact, the use of suicide as a weapon reappeared only in the 1980s, during the Lebanese civil war.

The focal point was then in December 1981, when the first suicide bombing as we understand it today took place: a militant of a Shiite group drove down to the Iraqi embassy in Beirut and blew himself up there. The victims were 61 and 110 were injured. Since then, attacks of this type have continued in Lebanon, making the self-suicide return among the most frightening and powerful weapons available to terrorists. Subsequently, a new small group called Hezbollah began its activity with attacks against western targets. The first was against the American embassy in Beirut in April 1983, followed by some other attacks to US and French targets. After having obtained the retirement of western forces from the territories of Lebanon, Hezbollah has started targeting Israeli military forces and southern Lebanese posts as targets of suicide attacks. After this particularly violent period, the use of this type of attack was

significantly reduced. From this brief historical introduction, we can therefore say that the Hezbollah group was the inventor of this new and more violent military tactic as we mean it today.

In the history of Islamic terrorism, the eighties can be considered among the bloodiest. In fact, a new way of killing was born, thus enriching the repertoire of death of modern terrorism: a suicidal action in which the perpetrator eliminated himself, thus decreeing the success of the operation. Right from the start, this new method displaced security experts, inhabited by attacks in which terrorists were willing to do anything, but in general with the will to preserve their lives. This unprecedented form of terrorist attack, however, eluded this logic: it was different, almost superhuman and very difficult to stop.

From that moment on, in fact, a spiral of terror began: following the attacks in Lebanon, militants of the independence group of the Hindu minority of Sri Lanka, "Tamil Tigers", were also inspired. They created within them a group dedicated to this type of attacks, the Black Tigers, composed of both men and women, that began their activity in 1987, thus starting a series of bloody attacks that ended in 2009 with almost 200 targets hit. They were arguably the most effective and brutal terrorist organization to use suicide terrorism. Between 1987 and 2001 they carried out more than 180 suicide bomb attacks in Sri Lanka, with thousands of mostly civilian casualties. It should be stressed, however, that the Tamil Tigers were not moved by religious ideologies, but nationalist ones, such as those that inspired almost all terrorist groups up until the 2000s. The movement has in fact killed many army commanders, many Tamil politicians who have tried to cooperate with the government to find a peaceful solution in Sri-Lanka and is also the only organization that has managed to assassinate two heads of State. Their goal has always been the maximum destabilization of that area and continues today. In his attempts to eliminate Sri Lankan government forces. To start identifying a religious matrix within the attacks, you have to wait until the mid-1990s, when they were first

used by Shiite groups close to Iran and then Sunni Islamic extremist groups, such as ISIS and Al Qaeda.

The last organization that benefited from suicide terrorism as the main attack mode and worth mentioning is suicide terrorism in Israel, a phenomenon that has been active since 1993 on behalf of Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) and Islamic-Palestinian Jihad (PIJ), who carried out about 30 suicide attacks causing about 120 victims. Hamas and Jihad, like the Tamil Tigers, were also inspired by actions by Hezbollah. Indeed, the leaders of these groups have had contacts with Iran and Hezbollah since the early 1980s, only to strengthen their relationship when Israel deported Palestinian prisoners to Lebanon (in 1992).

Hamas and Jihad initially concentrated their suicide attacks on military targets in the occupied territories but soon their attention shifted to cities and civilians. The two Palestinian fundamentalist groups have managed to inflict a very high number of victims among the Israeli civilian population, obtaining the effect of calling into question personal security systems in the eyes of public opinion. This effect was created and intensified by various factors, first of all the fact that the terror campaign accompanied the attempt to create a peace process, wanted to bring peace to relations between Israelis and Palestinians and secondly the factor concerning the continuity of attacks, which could go from being sporadic to weekly. In early 2000, Hamas attempted to carry out other suicide attacks in Israeli cities. Over the past two years, attacks by suicide bombers have intensified and in the first eight months of 2002 the victims of suicide terrorism are very many and largely unarmed civilians. It is important to mention this conflict, as it is among the longest and bloodiest in terrorist history and because it has certainly had an important effect on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

"Suicide bombings are inexpensive and effective. They are less complicated and compromising than other kinds of terrorist operations. They guarantee media coverage. The suicide terrorist is the ultimate smart bomb. Perhaps most

*important, coldly efficient bombings tear at the fabric of trust that holds societies together. All these reasons doubtless account for the spread of suicide terrorism from the Middle East to Sri Lanka and Turkey, Argentina and Chechnya, Russia and Algeria — and to the United States”.*⁵

As pointed out by Bruce Hoffman, suicide attacks soon became the most used method by Islamic extremist groups, thanks to their effectiveness. Precisely for this reason, after a first use by the Palestinian group Hamas, in the 2000s it became the trademark of Al Qaeda and with the cessation of the Tamil Tigers in 2009, it became the exclusive prerogative of Islamic fundamentalist groups. From then on, the number of suicide attacks carried out in a year has increased six-fold, with the greatest concentration in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.

Suicide terrorism seems to escape from any possible understanding or explanation, however some of its characteristics are not so foreign to us: martyrdom in the name of political or religious ideologies is central to the phenomena analyzed in these pages, such as the great religious traditions and nationalist movements that they shaped the modern West. Public opinion represents the terrorist as a lone wolf acting in the name of his madness or deviance: he is an irrational subject, who has been plagiarized by distorted ideologies and therefore acts so violently. Other scholars also attempt to reincorporate these choices to serious psychological distress or critical living conditions. However, they are totally incomplete approaches, as the terrorist is not a solitary subject, but rather inserted in a very specific organization in which each pawn has a role and acts by attributing a high and shared value to the gesture. For this reason, trying to trace a psychological and/or social "identikit" of this type of terrorist is very complex, if not impossible. It is important, first of all, to stress that there are no organizations capable of "creating" the tendency

⁵ Bruce Hoffman, *The Atlantic*, 2003

or desire to sacrifice oneself within the individual. This is because the different conflicts that characterize the territories from which terrorist groups that use this technique originate, produce different effects on the groups and members within them, who could potentially feel determined to sacrifice themselves for a cause they consider right. Precisely for this reason, the goal of the recruiters of these groups is not to "instill" the desire for sacrifice, but to identify the individuals in whom this predisposition is natural and strengthen it. This often happens by leveraging their faith and their hope for an afterlife reward, but also for numerous other causes such as patriotism or hatred for the enemy. This is exactly why terrorists cannot be perceived as lone wolves: they know very well to be part of something bigger and greater. The final aim, in fact, is to make it a habit in the "corrupt" West to look over your shoulder. Suicide terrorism in fact undermines the foundations of our modern society, for which trust and security are at the base: sitting down to have a coffee, take the subway or go to the cinema, suddenly become actions with a dangerous implication.

To try to better understand the functioning and the reasons for these attacks, Kenneth Waltz in his examination of the causes of war over fifty years ago (Waltz 1954), introduced the distinction of three levels of analysis. The first one is the individual level of analysis, which means that we need to identify the personal motivations of the actors involved in the attacks. It is important to stress that this first level should not stop to the understanding of the motivations of the perpetrator of the attack only, but it should also look for the other components of it. This because, as David and Jenkins point out, looking at the overall structure allows to identify amongst it the different roles⁶. The second level of analysis focuses on the organizations. It is fundamental to understand the nature of the terrorist organizations, so as to distinguish between individual reasons to engage in the attack and organizational ones. This because

⁶ Davis and Jenkins (2002), Deterrence Influence in Counterterrorism, RAND

organizations usually do not supply suicide bombers from within their organization, but rather try to recruit someone from the outside. Lastly, we have the third level of analysis which focused on the environment which surround the attackers, trying to uncover the various socio-cultural factors and conditions that move their intentions and provide the framework for the first two levels. This third level is key to understanding how individuals and organizations react to the political, cultural, historical, economic and religious context that surrounds them.

Looking at suicide terrorism in its twenty-year history, we can try to draw some conclusions. Surely these types of attacks, born to instill the greatest fear in the objectives to which they are addressed, have proved to be very powerful vehicles for universal dissemination of distorted Islamic ideology. In fact, the message that passes from these attacks is strong and clear: the terrorists operating through these means are ready for anything. Furthermore, as we have highlighted for example with the case of Hamas, in cases of presence of military forces on foreign soil or during the fragile period of political negotiations to reach peace, suicide attacks can have a negative and very destabilizing influence. For example, the Hezbollah managed to expel the M.N.F. from Lebanon. Hamas managed to bring down the Oslo agreements for peace in the Middle East. The LTTE has managed to stop the Indian peace deployment in Sri-Lanka.

The factor that could trigger a change of course in an attempt to combat suicide attacks is to make terrorist organizations understand that this method of action involves very high costs for what concerns the large organizational infrastructure needed. These organizations in fact, resort to suicide terrorism only if their community, and in some cases a protective State, approves of it. Precisely for this reason, the adoption of political and economic sanctions against the terrorist community can contribute to reducing or eliminating suicide

terrorism. However, the limitation of these political counterterrorism tactics is that they require very long implementation times with uncertain results.

Trying to identify and block individual attackers is practically impossible, as it is impossible to think of stopping or preventing an ongoing attack. Precisely for this reason, if it has been ascertained that an organization has decided to resort to the suicide method, the security services can target the managers and organizers involved in the recruitment, training and planning of the attacks. This method, according to some military scholars, would allow to achieve two fundamental results: reduce the effects of a suicide attack and act as a brake against possible assaults. This is because for the organizers of terrorism every single suicide team is precious; it is therefore unlikely that they will field them in front of very protected targets or with limited resources that would risk causing the operation to fail. However, it is important to stress that governments must not forget that terrorism is a form of psychological warfare and that suicide is the extreme frontier of such warfare. Precisely for this reason, the main objective is to reassure citizens: even if governments do not have an immediate solution to the attacks, they must convince citizens that they are not defenseless targets. In the fight against this form of terrorism, it is essential not to give in to the idea that terrorists are unstoppable fanatics determined to indiscriminately kill millions of people for the sole purpose of spreading fear and chaos. The suicide bombings, however, remain a form of terrorism that will hardly see the end until the causes that determine it are resolved. It can continue in the future with even more dangerous new tactics, such as blowing up airplanes or using weapons of total destruction, reaching a level of threat that is difficult to defeat. The best way, however, but also the most difficult one to avoid this danger is certainly to try to resolve the political and territorial issues that have plagued that area for more than fifty years.

2. FROM WOMEN IN SOCIETY TO WOMEN IN TERRORISM

2.1 Feminism: a brief history

Feminism is a movement to claim women's economic, civil and political rights; in a more general sense, the set of theories that criticize the traditional condition of women and propose new relationships between genders in the private sphere and a different social position in the public sphere.⁷

Women's claims began with a weak first phase in the seventeenth century as a reaction to a misogynist culture, deeply influenced by Aristotelian theories on female biological inferiority. The main answer at that time were the writings of L. Marinelli⁸ and M. de Gournay⁹, which supported the equality between the two sexes, whose 'natural' differences were the result of a different education. Precisely for this reason, the Enlightenment favored education and female participation in political movements. In fact, feminist claims resumed during the eighteenth century with two important personalities: Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft. Olympe, at the time of the French revolution and inspired by those ideals, claimed the equality between man and woman, writing the first Declaration of the rights of women and citizens, which stated that women, having "the right to go up to the gallows" to because of his opinions, also had that of "going up to the grandstand". These opinions were the reason why she was guillotined in 1793. After her there was the British Enlightenment author Mary Wollstonecraft, herself the author of the claim to women's rights, in which she stated that:

⁷ Definition Encyclopedia Treccani

⁸ L. Marinelli (1601) *The nobility and excellence of women*

⁹ M. de Gournay (1622) *Egalité des hommes et des femmes*

*«It is time to effect a revolution in female manners — time to restore to them their lost dignity — and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world».*¹⁰

Feminism then was actually born in the late nineteenth century as an awareness of the strong social disparity between women and men. In fact, feminism is primarily a denunciation of this situation. It therefore presents itself as a movement that proposes both practical and political actions and initiatives, and theories that have as their final objective the giving of a theoretical basis for this complaint. Feminism in a general sense can be defined as a work of reflection, accompanied by an action of transformation of women on their experience in the world. However, there are different interpretations of the disparity between men and women and this has led to different theorized solutions and different practices implemented, thus giving life to the various feminisms present both on the historical-social scene and in theoretical reflection. Feminism manifested itself with somewhat different aims and forms in different historical moments precisely because it has passed through several generations of women and men. There can be identified three broad "waves" of feminisms that have followed one another since the end of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century.

2.1.1 The first feminist wave (end of 1800 – beginning of 1900)

The first feminist wave, called "feminism of equality", developed between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The term "feminism" is coined to baptize the new movement for the empowerment of women, whose goal was to achieve legal equality between men and women, through law, education, the right to vote, to participate in public life and the right to work. This first phase was configured as an emancipation movement

¹⁰ M. Wollstonecraft (1792) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p.71

extended from the United States and England to Europe. In fact, until the last decades of the nineteenth century civil laws and political institutions kept intact inequality between men and women. Subsequently, in 1865, an epochal turning point occurred, when the first committee for the extension of voting rights to women was established in Manchester. This movement was of fundamental importance as until then only men could participate in political life, while the role of women was relegated to the home. Precisely for this reason, the image of the "suffragettes", founded by E. Pankhurst in 1903 with the Women's social and political union and so ironically called by their opponents, who march on Manchester and London to claim their rights aroused great sensation.

The main pillar behind the movement is that the situation of women contrasted the principles of the time regarding liberal and industrial society, which also required the active participation of women.

In this first wave of feminism, however, we can distinguish two theoretical currents: the liberal current and the socialist current.

Liberal feminism was represented by the concept that women have the same rights as men and therefore it is a moral obligation to recognize them and work so that the equality of every human being is reality. The main objectives were the refutation of the alleged "natural" inferiority of the woman, based on what Mary Wollstonecraft had already said, and the identification of the means and ways to overcome the condition of inferiority and subjection of the female sex. The main thinkers of this current in the nineteenth century were Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill. In particular, the English thinker J.S. Mill argued that the elevation of women was a symptom of a nation's civilization and claimed equal civil and political rights with the male sex and the admission of women to all functions and occupations.

On the other hand, we find socialist feminism, which criticized the liberal one because it was unable to change the material condition of subordination of women, which according to the Socialists would have been accomplished only

with the advent of socialist society. The main thinkers were, for example, Friedrich Engels and August Bebel. The socialist elaboration of the female question was formulated by A.F. Bebel, while F. Engels stated that patriarchy was born with the affirmation of private property and the monogamous family, both subject to the domination of the male sex. Its end therefore coincides with the end of private property and with the advent of socialist society, in which the family ceases to be the basic economic unit and where the care and rearing of children become a public interest¹¹.

However, the emancipation campaigns started with the suffragettes, in which numerous intellectuals participated, did not have the expected results: the suffragettes, derided by the conservative bourgeoisie, judged bourgeois by the socialists and dangerous by the Catholics, remained politically isolated. However, the movement did not give up and it was at this stage that the first and important conquests were obtained: first of all, the admission of women to high schools, gymnasiums and universities took place in 1874 (from 1877 to 1900 there were 224 female graduates). In the meantime, the awareness of the exploitation of women spread, underlined with the first strikes (the first was to strike the street workers, in 1883), the birth of trade unions (the first was that of textile workers, in 1889), access to public offices, telegraph and postal, and the first "pink" commercial activities (1882). The right to vote came shortly after: the first country to obtain the right to vote for women was Finland in 1906, followed by Great Britain in 1918 and the United States in 1920. As for the Italian and French, however, we will have to wait until the second post-war period. In Italy, in fact, with Fascism women's rights took a step back: the granting of the administrative vote to women, given in 1925, was immediately suspended since elections were no longer held. The teachers were also excluded from the professorships of Letters and Philosophy in high school, and the school

¹¹ F. Engels (1884) The origin of the family, private property and of the State.

fees for the students doubled. Suitable jobs for women were established, which automatically excluded them from most occupations.

The conclusion of this first wave of the feminist movement is undoubtedly represented by the very important work done in those years by Eleanor Roosevelt, named by Truman "first lady of the world", for her very important contribution to the cause of human rights, of which she was a very important supporter. In December 1945, in fact, President Harry S. Truman appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. In 1946 she became the first chairperson of the preliminary United Nations Commission for Human Rights and in 1948 she played a fundamental role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, applied equally to women and men.

2.1.2 The second feminist wave (end of 1960 - 1990)

The second feminist wave instead, also known with the name of "neo-feminism", was born at the end of the years Sixties of the twentieth century in the United States. After the war, in fact, the United States experienced an even more explosive economic boom than the European one, and prosperity contributed to wearing down the old social structures, already questioned during the conflict, when women had replaced the men engaged in the front in the factories. There is talk of "second wave" because attention is not placed on the demand for equality with the world of males, as happened with the first feminist claims, but now also deals with the differences between women and men and the diversity of female thinking with respect to male. The goal is therefore, in other words, to take female particularities into account and ensuring gender equality. Also, for this reason, we discuss and deepen topics hitherto "unrelated" to the traditional conception of politics such as, ad example, daily life experiences, relationships, feelings. It then also begins to pose attention to new topics, scandalous for the time: the body, sexuality, desire and choices (or not chosen) maternity.

Going to analyze this phase better, we see that after the Second World War, in fact, the debate on the female condition resumed, when women won the vote and in which many of the legal bans seemed to fall. In this contest, the contribution of Simone de Beauvoir¹² was very important since she tried to trace the roots of female oppression, denouncing how the relationship with the nature and culture of women is however mediated by man. Subsequently, the contribution of a group of American theorists was fundamental for the development of feminist ideas: first of all, Betty Friedan¹³, who analyzed the new characteristics of the oppression of women in industrial society, together the contrast between his ability and the tasks performed. Kate Millet¹⁴ also made an important contribution, discovering the basis of all power in patriarchy. Finally, Shulamith Firestone¹⁵ hoped for a feminist revolution that would be able to challenge all Western culture and also to change the organization of nature itself. These ideas increasingly took hold, from America to Europe, taking advantage above all of the 1968 youth contest. Women's centers were set up everywhere and they organized social assistance programs, for example for the protection of women victims of violence or the battle for the legalization of abortion. To think about the conquests of this second wave, just think that in 1961 the contraceptive pill was marketed in the United States, which allows women to control their fertility in an easy, discreet and above all autonomous way. After that, the laws on divorce and the social protection of motherhood were born in 1970. The decisive step was the 1975 family law reform, which canceled the concept of "head of the family" and the mitigation for honor killings. With the onset of the economic crisis and terrorism, in the late 1970s feminism ceased to exist as a movement and entered a different phase: the third "wave".

¹² S. de Beauvoir (1949) *Le deuxième sexe*

¹³ B. Friedan (1963) *The feminine mystique*

¹⁴ K. Millet (1970) *Sexual Politics*

¹⁵ S. Firestone (1970) *The dialectic of sex*

2.1.3 The third feminist wave (1990 - today)

The third and current wave of the movement, which started in the nineties of the last century, it changes its characteristics: in fact, while in previous decades women tended to research and underline what they shared, or all those characteristics that made being woman more specific and the difference between feminine and masculine, also the incompatibility between male and female, now internal differences are highlighted inside the female universe. They concern the social, cultural, age, generational condition, ethnic, of sexual orientation, position with respect to the male world. This change was dictated by various factors, including the lack of organization and a leader and the plurality, often conflicting, of the various positions, which proved unsuitable to ensure the permanence of the feminist movement in a period of serious crisis. Nevertheless, feminist ideas had somehow penetrated, albeit sometimes partially modified, in some parties, in unions, in the media and in general in the mentality of women included in institutions and politics. This led to a critical rethinking of certain positions, including radical opposition to institutions, estrangement from politics and family criticism, and required that institutions, both economic and social and political, were characterized by a greater female presence and by the recognition of female needs and aspirations. The debate then moved mainly to the institutional sphere. Feminists, in fact, continue to fight for the wage gap between men and women to be recognized and bridged, they also point out the difficulties that professional women face in making a career and are fighting to establish legislation against harassment at work. In addition to all this, the movement also reviews some positions gained in previous decades, for example regarding prostitution and pornography. If in fact in the 70s and 80s most of the feminists had sided against any form of exploitation of the female body, during the third wave this common voice ceases to exist and feminism begins to look more and more like a "network" of feminisms, also thanks to the enlargement to countries that had lived the battles of the 70s in a marginal way. Soon then, the first Islamic feminists appeared,

and the movement also had to deal with the criticisms of the black women, disappointed by a battle that although professing to be universal often seemed to look only at the needs of white women.

The third wave accompanies us to this day, where the current political agenda continues to include important topics such as sexual and domestic violence, occupational segregation, the gap wages, artificial insemination, HIV, globalization, technologies, etc.

2.2 From the feminist movement to date: women in today's society.

If we think about the situation of women before the birth of the feminist movement, we see how they have been exploited in every possible way and also deprived of their fundamental freedoms. Without a brave movement determined to give voice to all women, many of the improvements we enjoy today would probably never have happened. Therefore, it is possible to notice how the wake of the feminist movement continues to accompany us today. This happens because, despite the important achievements to date, it is undeniable that the disparities between the female and male condition still exist. In fact, the equality achieved so far can be labeled as purely formal and this has pushed institutions, in recent times, to work to make equal opportunities between women and men a reality. This objective was in fact defined in 1995 in the UN Conference in Beijing, through the identification of two main tools for its achievement: "mainstreaming" and "empowerment". The first has as its purpose a profound transformation of the culture of government, affirming the perspective of gender equality within all relevant issues, such as the quality of development and major social reforms. The second, however, provides for the attribution of greater power to women, through the removal of obstacles to their active participation in all spheres of public and private life. This has materialized in particular in the

request for measures to change access to public offices and electoral mechanisms, in order to integrate women in equal proportions to men. For example, in Italy in 2003 an amendment to art. 51 of the Constitution was approved to legitimize all financial measures aimed at ensuring the equal participation of men and women in elective offices.

These instruments took on particular importance, as in the late 1900s we again witnessed a hot phase for women, as their rights were again questioned with the advent of discoveries and experiments in the field of genetic engineering. Thus, it began a process of re-discussion regarding the appropriation of the reproductive faculty by women, since the experimentation of new artificial fertilization techniques is accompanied by a new desire to control the body of women. When the abortion is sentenced, the women will respond with a massive demonstration, denouncing rape as a political crime in peace and war. It is the same human rights of women, despite the United Nations declarations made possible thanks also to Eleanor Roosevelt, to be questioned.

It is important, however, to also talk about the achievements brought about by the feminist movement in recent years, as they are of great importance. Today, in fact, it is possible to look around and notice how the female presence in contexts of relevance is increasing. We have not yet come to be able to say that we have achieved certain parity, but we can say that we are on the right path to reach the final goal. The most important event from the end of the previous century was undoubtedly the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in August 1995 and in which women actively participated: thanks to their intervention, in fact, the subjectivity of women was recognized as constitutive element of any project on women themselves.

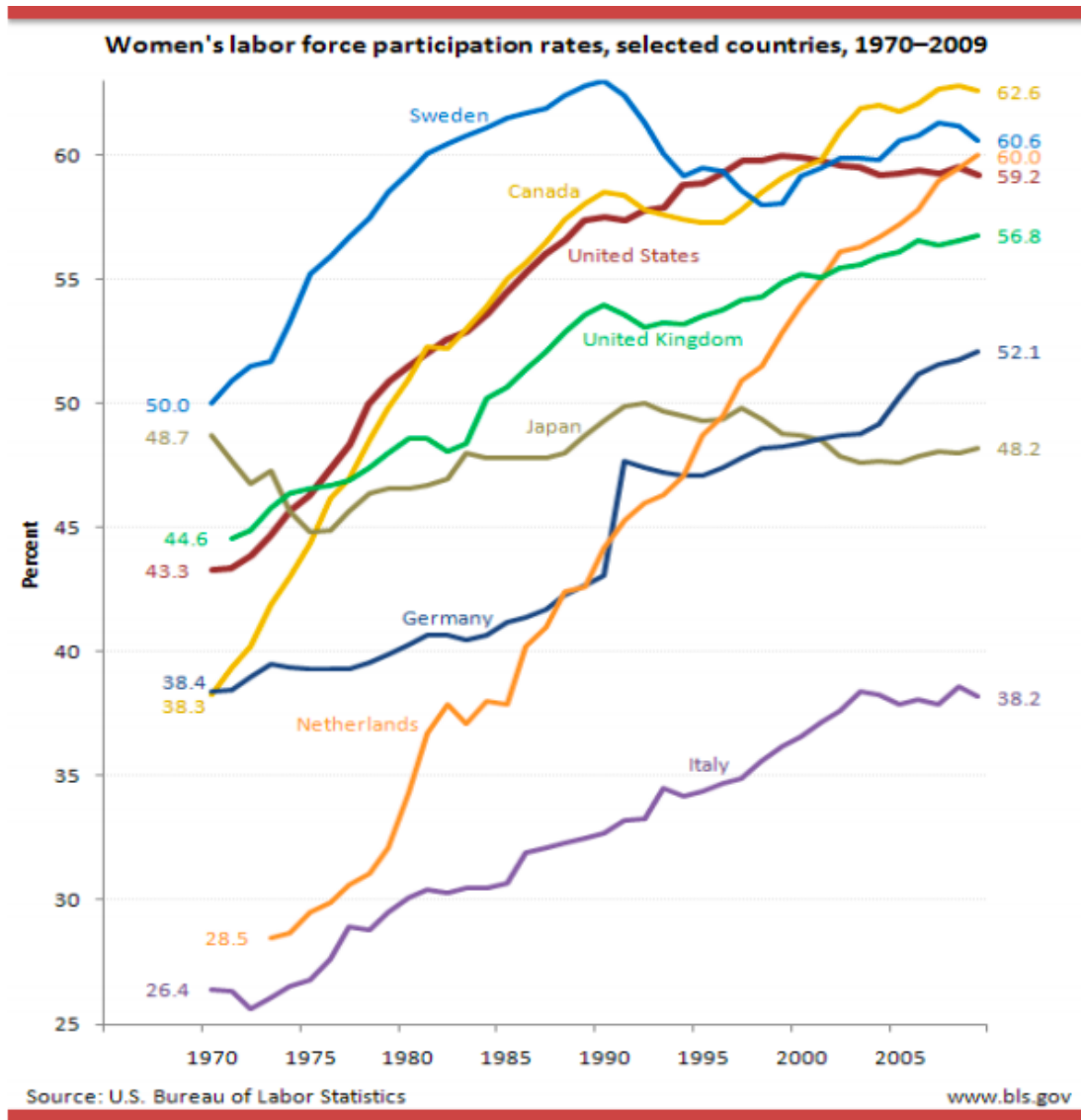
From that moment on, the presence of women has been increasing in numerous fields. If we start from looking at the education field, we see how the gender gap in education is decreasing more and more: between 1999 and 2009 in fact, the number of women who dropped out of school decreased from 61 million to

35 million and the figure even more encouraging is that today an equal number of boys and girls complete their studies in both Latin America and East Asia and that in some cases the number of women enrolled in university exceeds that of men. This produces various positive effects, since an improvement in women's education increases the income of women and therefore leads to a growth in GDP. Moreover, it also brings important effects for what concerns the social development: it has been demonstrated a strong link between women's education and international development.

The female presence in the employment world is also growing during these last years the number of females who started working is remarkable, to the point that today they are real competitors to the male counterparts. While for some professions we still witness the presence of the so-called "glass ceiling", which slows down women's aspirations to occupying the highest positions, in other fields there has been an increase of women presence. For example, in some professions such as the medical ones, or the legal and financial ones. Moreover, since the late 1990s the first female aspiring soldiers started to get recruited for the army, the Navy and the Air Force.

The obvious consequence of this change in women employment has been the creation of various socio-economic legislations meant to protect the economic interests and basic rights of the new female workforce. These new legislations cover important topics, such as equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefits and job security.

The increase in women as a workforce has led, as in the case of education, to an improvement in the general situation in the country. As we see from the chart in fact, all countries except Japan, presented major improvements in terms of growth.

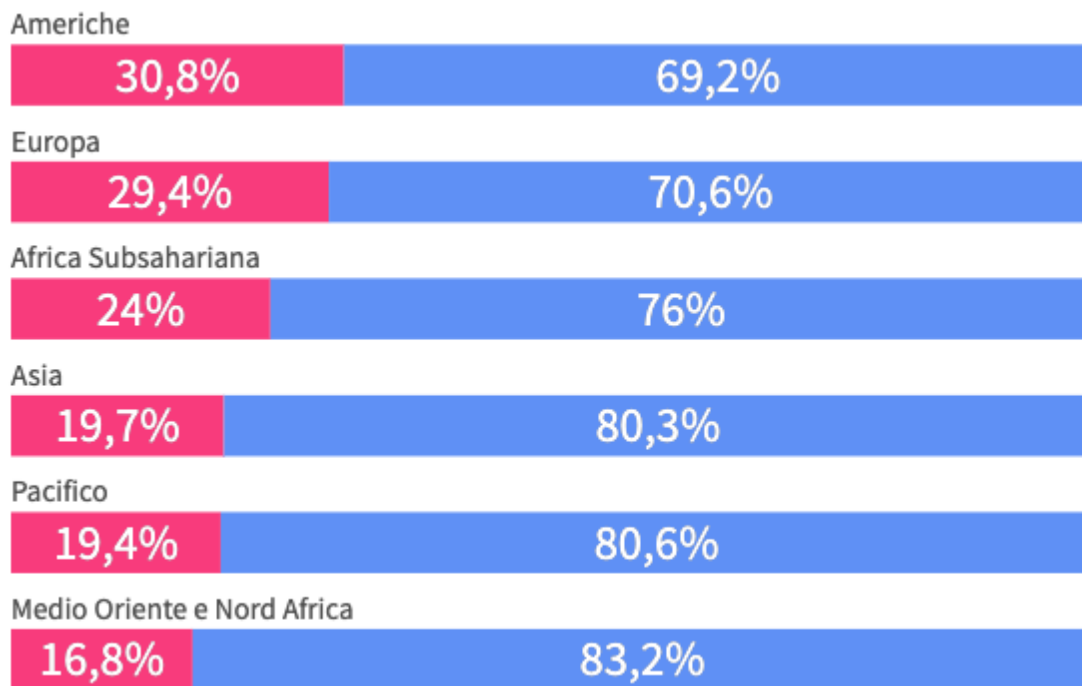


Therefore, thanks to their battles, women have now reached important levels of autonomy and integration in society, which is leading them to assume more and more leading roles.

2.3 Form woman leader in society to woman terrorist.

One of the most important fields in which women have made great progress, thus succeeding in obtaining excellent results, is undoubtedly that of politics

and institutions. The participation of women in fact continues to grow and it is estimated that in July 2013, 35 countries, including 9 Africans, have a national Parliament of which at least 30% is made up of women. In addition, many countries today have so-called "pink quotas", to ensure a correct representation of both sexes. The examples of women who have managed to overcome prejudices are numerous today, we can think for example of Hillary Clinton, from First Lady to challenger of the current President of the United States of America, or Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the German state for now 15 years. If, however, we look even higher, that is to say the important positions in a government or in the main institutions of a country, we see that they are still mainly driven by men. In March 2019, in fact, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) published a summary document of the presence of women in politics called *Women in Politics: A Global Perspective*. The document aims to make a clear point of the situation both at a global and European level, regarding the presence of women in parliaments and national governments. The situation presented is of general increase, but not yet at a satisfactory point. From 1998 to 2018, in fact, women in the role of head of state or government went from being 12 to 21. However, women only cover 18% of ministerial roles worldwide and always concentrated in certain spheres, such as health or education. In addition, in 2019 only 20.9% of the 278 places in bureau are occupied by a woman. The graph below shows us exactly this: in pink we see the percentage of women present in national parliaments by area of the world, while in blue we see the male percentage.



Source: [IPU](#)

It is therefore clear from these data, how important the conquests were, but not yet sufficient. Women in Western society therefore continue to try to establish themselves on a par with men, through the search for equality also and above all in public and social contexts.

At this point it is therefore interesting to note that the same phenomenon also occurs very far from us, that is, in the East. We talked about terrorism and this gave us the opportunity to start understanding the structure of a society that is profoundly different from ours. Precisely this diversity has made possible the battles of the feminist movement that have developed from the 18th century to today, while if we look at our Eastern counterpart, we see how the condition of women is profoundly different. In the West women, who have already won numerous battles, are now trying to continue on the path of change through both public and social struggles (just think for example of the #MeToo movement, born from Hollywood and spread all over the world). In the East, however, this cannot be done because society is characterized differently and women in many

countries are still prevented from accessing public life, if not the right to demonstrate and be independent. Hence, it is easy to relate to the theme of terrorism: women seek relevance but do so in other ways: through a leading role in the terrorist groups that characterize those areas. In fact, the phenomenon of female terrorism has long been underestimated precisely in those territories where the feminist phenomenon just analyzed is still at a backward point with respect to the West. However, it is a phenomenon that exists and expands more and more: the woman is no longer just an object in the hands of a man's terrorist will, she is now a thinking subject, able to decide for herself and to take part, up to even at command posts, into terrorist operations. In fact, we can also think of the largest terrorist organizations that have attacked the West in recent years, such as Al Qaeda or ISIS, since even there it is possible to find a strong female presence not only as wife and mother, but also as a convinced fighter of her own ideas. Women to join the so-called "foreign fighters" and leave their countries and families to pursue the Islamic cause.

If we look carefully, it is not even necessary to go so far geographically to analyze the role of women in terrorism, it is enough to focus on those terrorist organizations that we have discussed previously, which developed around the 60s and 70s and which acted as a spokesman for national ideals. For example, if we think of the Italian case of the Red Brigades, we realize how the role of Margherita "Mara" Cagol, wife of one of the main executives Renato Curcio, was fundamental in the success of the operations that shocked Italy during the so-called "Years of Lead". Or again, if we think of the American Weather Underground Organization, we can see how a fringe completely made up of women was born from the organization, whose aim was to: "build a militant women's movement that commits itself to the destruction of American imperialism ".¹⁶

¹⁶ Berger, D. (2006) *Outlaws of America*, Oakland, CA: AK Press

2.4 The relationship between women and terrorism in the past.

So far, we have analyzed the terrorist phenomenon in all its nuances, starting from a historical analysis and then to an analysis of the methodologies used by organizations operating in the terrorist field, first of all the successful strategy. We have therefore seen how women also took up this phenomenon, starting from terrorist organizations in the 60s and 70s, up to the most current Islamic terrorist organizations.

If we think of a woman in connection with the terrorist phenomenon, it is common to imagine her as submissive and victim of the phenomena that happen around her, unable to react. Nothing is more wrong however, since the role of the woman has always been more silent, but not non-existent. As anticipated, in fact, the female presence was an important component in the success of the terrorist operations that took place in those years, since being in the rear they mainly assumed roles of organization and coordination. However, although the women who decided to join these organizations motivated their choice with conviction, the work of the media of those years canceled their belief in the cause and transformed them both into victims, passive and subordinate subjects, and into diverted and moved women from their primordial instincts, even discussing their actual belonging to the female gender.

If you want to understand the link between gender and terrorism, you must first become aware of the fact that gender has been almost totally erased from the historical past of terrorism. The most common assumption is in fact that the terrorists were all men, a belief due to the limited number of female terrorists, gender stereotypes and mainly to the fact that women have been excluded almost entirely from studies on terrorism, to date.³ In reality, however, women have always been part of these terrorist organizations, both as organizational support figures and as fighters. We can take as an example as early as 1878,

Vera Zasulic, a key figure in the attempt by the Russian terrorist organization "People's Will", to assassinate the governor general of St. Petersburg. For example, they also played an important role in the years of the anti-colonial wave (1970s), when the previously mentioned nationalist movements spread. For example, in 1970 Germany, fighter Ulrike Meinhof co-founded Red Army Faction, a pro-socialist organization that used violence to support the cause of the third world liberation. Even in the last "Wars of Religion" we find a strong female presence, where women have held the most important roles as organizers or perpetrators of acts of terror in many countries such as Pakistan, India, Afghanistan or Chechnya. In the 1980s, movements such as Hezbollah or the Tamil Tigers began to recruit women and then use them as suicide bombers. In 2002, for example, Wafa Idris became the first female suicide bomber in history.

These women, therefore, must be considered as political subjects because they were, and considering them as handicapped compared to their comrades would only help to ensure that the phenomenon of armed struggle is analyzed in a false and incomplete way. Furthermore, denying the political identity of these women would also open the way to a "justification" for their actions, thus effectively imposing that they take responsibility and consequences.

2.5 Women as active protagonists in terrorism nowadays

We have therefore seen how women have become involved in terrorist organizations even in times past, taking on important roles. Analyzing the terrorist phenomenon, we note how terrorism has changed its face for some years now, becoming mainly Islamic terrorism. Despite what one might immediately think, even here women have taken on a significant role, in fact, in recent years, members of society usually considered "weak", such as women or

children, are increasingly involved in operations. This is because, in addition to offering new recruits, women provide terrorist organizations with a great advantage: the element of surprise. The use of women is also useful to further damage the mental well-being of soldiers facing terrorists. The soldiers were trained to protect the civilian population. For example, the US Army statute specifies that "preserving noncombatant lives and dignity is central to mission accomplishment in counterinsurgency". Therefore, the act of shooting people that soldiers were normally trained to protect can have deep psychological impact.

Another important reason why women take part in this violence is schooling: women are rarely educated in the same way men are educated. This makes it easier for leaders of organizations to recruit them into groups through "propaganda" messages, as women do not have the tools necessary to counter their arguments. In this way, charismatic leaders can convince them that martyrdom is an acceptable option for Muslims, when in fact the most religious are aware that suicide attacks violate three of the most important laws of the Islamic faith: the opposition to suicide, opposition to the killing of civilians and opposition to the killing of Muslims. Precisely for this reason, in countries like Pakistan, religious schools specifically aim to hire young women, driven by the conviction that they will then educate the future generation of warriors.

All the reasons we stated, find their evidence in the data: it has been proven that in the almost 25 years going between 1985 and 2008, female suicide bombers were responsible for more than 230 attacks, about a quarter of the total attacks of that period. This because, as said, women are now the ideal weapon for terrorists, for they are less likely to be suspected. This new tactic has proven to be highly effective, generating media attention capable of attracting more terrorists ready to sacrifice for the cause.

2.5.1 Motivations

A key issue, when talking about female involvement in terrorism, is for sure the need to understand the motivations behind their participation in these movements. For what concerns women in fact, the investigation of their reasons has always been limited, especially for what concerns suicide bombers. However, this is an issue of the uttermost importance, for it shows the gender differences eradicated in the narrative of terrorism. In fact, motivation is not usually considered or sought for men, because they are immediately considered to be dedicated to the cause and prepared, if not more inclined, for the use of violence. When the terrorist is a woman, however, these assumptions are surpassed without even taking them into consideration, even though there are historical evidences of the contrary. The theme of the investigation of the real motivation that drive women's participation has particularly arose after the events of 9/11. Before that day in fact, women' role was mainly seen as the victims of violence instead as perpetrators. For example, Gentry and Sjoberg (2016) characterize the gender difference as follows:

“Media, scholarly, and policy world reactions to women's participation in violence classified as terrorism” is to treat women's terrorism “as not terrorism but women's terrorism, and women terrorists are at once characterized as aberrant, personally motivated, and beyond the agency of the female perpetrator”.¹⁷

Since 9/11 instead, researchers have started to acknowledge female involvements as an active and aware choice, beginning to recognize them their effective role.

¹⁷ Gentry, C., & Sjoberg, L. (2016). Female terrorism and militancy. In J. Richard (Ed.), *Handbook of critical terrorism studies* (pp. 145–155). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Their participation has usually been attributed to two factors: either the act of a liberated feminist or the outcome of gender oppression. Evidence has been collected to support both assumptions, although both are considered incomplete, for women involved in terrorist organizations are generally driven by several causes, among which we can find social expectations and political pressure.

According to Mia Bloom in "Bombshells", female involvement in terrorist organizations can be explained by 4 R: Revenge, Redemption, Relationship and Respect. The Revenge in particular seems to be one of the main reasons, that is, revenge for dead or killed family members. Redemption is another popular explanation, with the idea that women are trying to redeem themselves through martyrdom: these women might consider martyrdom an attractive option also to cleanse the family name because of some other scandal. Relationship is also crucial in understanding women's participation: the main reason why a woman can decide to join an organization is due to knowledge or kinship with an insurgent or Jihadi. In fact, this relationship provides the woman with both the means to enter and then be introduced within the organization. An introduction that can often take place through a marriage with a fighter, which is essential to create a cohesive network and on the other hand can also push women to commit acts of violence. Finally, there is the Respect's motivation: women seek respect for the community and by engaging in violence, they can demonstrate that they are as dedicated to the cause as men. In fact, women choosing to die for the cause believe they leave an important mark for which they will be remembered.

3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TERRORIST PHENOMENON TODAY

3.1 Terrorist movements and the role of women: some examples

Now, let's move to the analysis of some of the most important terroristic groups, from the 70s to date, to see what the main role of women and their importance was.

3.2 Far left groups:

We will now analyze nationalist terrorism, starting with leftist terrorist groups. We will analyze the Japanese Red Army, founded by terrorist Fusako Shigenobu and responsible for various massive terrorist attacks, such as the Lod airport massacre. Next, we will talk about the Red Brigades, an Italian terrorist organization operating in the period called "Years of Lead" and led, among others, by Brigadist Mara Cagol. We will then analyze the Weather Underground Organization, which was characterized by the presence of an entire female fringe among its ranks, the Women's Brigade of Weather Underground Organization. Finally, we will conclude by moving to two extreme right-wing terrorist groups, the NARs (Revolutionary Armed Forces), which also operated during the 1970s and led, among other members, by terrorist Francesca Mambro and the German National Socialist Underground, led by a core of three terrorists, of whom the only survivor and sentenced was the terrorist Beate Zschäpe.

3.2.1 Japanese Red Army;

The Japanese Red Army was founded in 1971 in Lebanon by activist Fusako Shigenobu and was operational until its official dissolution on April 14, 2001. The group, mainly composed of Japanese communist militants, had more than 400 members, all carefully selected, and for this reason, many consider him one of the best known leftist armed groups in the world.

The history of this group is inextricably linked to the history of its founder Fusako, called by media "the queen of terrorism", who while in Lebanon conceived the organization with the aim of overthrowing the Japanese monarchy and starting a world revolution, an intent later spread with the Declaration of World War to the mass media. Fusako, like many terrorists, began to mature his ideas during university, approaching the student movements which then functioned as a springboard for a wider application of those ideas. After graduation, she moved to the Middle East, where she came into contact with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, with whom she created close ties and from which she began to take ideas. Then in 1971, she moved to Lebanon, where she founded the Red Army and began planning terrorist attacks. The probably most terrible operation occurred shortly thereafter, on May 30, 1972, with the massacre at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel. Shigenobu, after a failed hijacking of the plane, decided to prepare the attack with extreme care, which then killed 26 people and injured another eighty. Despite the security measures, three members of the Japanese Red Army managed to bring inside three suitcases full of weapons in the middle of the crowd, full of pilgrims. The attack was sudden and ferocious and is today remembered also and above all for its suicidal mold: according to some it led to the beginning of the suicide attacks of the Palestinians.

Fusako was then arrested in November 2000 and accused of organizing attacks, kidnappings and hijackings and was therefore labeled as the "most feared female terrorist in the world".

The Japanese Red Army is one of the clearest examples of how the role of women has been fundamental in the context of terrorist organizations, since it is likely that without Fusako Shigenobu the organization would not have existed or would not have become so extensive. Then in 1973, Fusako had a daughter, May, who today describes her as a loving mother. Although it is difficult to trace a standard profile of a terrorist, we can therefore conclude that Fusako Shigenobu constitutes an example of an ambivalent woman: a loving mother on

the one hand and a ruthless fighter on the other. Fusako, however, was not the only woman to take part in the operations. For example, other equally bloodthirsty women are also remembered, such as Yukiko Ekita or Junzo Okudaira.

3.2.2 Red Brigades;

The Red Brigades were an extreme left Italian terrorist organization, which operated in the period between 1970 and 1988. The group is extremely well known, in particular for being the largest, most numerous and longest-lived left-wing terrorist group formed after the end of the Second World War in Western Europe. Its birth can be reconstructed in August 1970, when some of the main militants made the decision to undertake an armed struggle and therefore to formally found the Red Brigades. Among these participants we find names then recognized as main militants, such as Alberto Franceschini, Renato Curcio and his wife, Margherita "Mara" Cagol. It was Mara who quickly became one of the pillars of this organization, assuming command even after the arrest of her husband and Franceschini. Mara, in fact, begins her political experience after graduating in Social Sciences, when with her husband Renato they decide to found the Metropolitan Political Collective (CPM) and shortly thereafter a fighting organization called "Proletarian Left". These two experiences served to open the way for something bigger and more structured, which materialized in a short time in the foundation of the Red Brigades.

Mara immediately took part in the operations of the BR, initially of small size, as short seizures, and subsequently gradually more important. Then in 1974, her husband and Franceschini were arrested and it was Mara who led the coup that released them from prison on February 18, 1975. Subsequently, the woman remained at the helm of the Turin column of the organization and took part in her latest kidnapping, proposing herself the name of Vittorio Vallarino Garcia. However, the blow was discovered thanks to the blowout of another Brigadist and Mara Cagol was killed during a fire fight with the Carabinieri.

However, Mara was probably the most important example of female participation in the cause of the Red Brigades, but not the only one. In fact, to understand its role, just quote the book by Patrizio Peci, the first repentant of the group, "I the Infame", to have a precise definition of the role of women: Patrizio declares that within the organization, women " they were absolutely equal to men¹⁸", and like them they sat at the table to make the most important decisions and took part in the fight on the field.

3.2.3 Weather Underground Organization

The Weather Underground Organization was a radical left militant organization active from the late 1960s until their dissolution in 1976, founded on the campus of the university of Michigan. The organization was organized in 1969 as a faction of Students for a Democratic Society and only in 1974 they began expressing a political goal, which was to spark a revolution through the creation of a new party, capable of overthrowing what they saw as American imperialism. The WUO, immediately classified by the FBI as a domestic terrorist group, had some very uncommon positions for the time, like the support for Black Power and the opposition to the Vietnam War.

Here, unlike the organizations previously analyzed, we do not have a woman-image of the movement. The WUO is in fact characterized by a particularity: an entire fringe of the movement made up of women. The Women's Brigade of Weather Underground Organization was probably founded around the 1970s, when women who began to sympathize with the movement decided they wanted to be an active part of it. The Women's Brigade was made up of roughly seventy members led by terrorist Bernardine Dohrn. The activities of this group, albeit supportive, proved to be extremely important from the outset, as they resulted in espionage and recruitment of new members. The women who were part of it were extremely convinced of the cause, since the living conditions imposed on

¹⁸ P.Peci, *Io l'Infame*, a cura di Giordano Bruno Guerri, cit., p.93

the members of the organization were extremely harsh. Indeed, all members were required to live in collectives, to strengthen their bond and reject bourgeois society. This, therefore, also applied to women, who were prohibited from having monogamous relationships and in case of pregnancies, they were required to give the babies to members of the organization with less important roles, so as not to be so distracted by political objectives.

The Women's Brigade was responsible for several bloody attacks. The first was in October 1970, when they bombed the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. They chose that goal precisely because it was linked to the Vietnam War, so as to contest the claim among some feminists that Vietnam War was not a topic for women. Then later, in July 1973 they promulgated a "Collective Letter to the Women's Movement", to encourage women's participation in the movement and to stimulate political debate within the movement itself.

In March 1974, then, the Women's Brigade attacks the San Francisco Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The attack takes place shortly before Women's Day (8 March) and the terrorists justify the act just as in honor of the anniversary and in honor of former members Diana Oughton, Ted Gold and Terry Robbins. The act was accompanied by a letter urging women to take control of their daycare, health care, birth control and other aspects of women's daily lives.

However, the most important document released by the Women's Brigade was certainly the "Mounting Moving Day", dating back to January 1973. In that period, in fact, in light of a stop between the United States and Vietnam, the Weatherwomen decided to separate from the inconsistent WUO policies about the liberation of women and to dictate their own direction. With this manifesto, therefore, they focused on feminism and how the struggle for the liberation of women is one of the most important on a global level, as well as taking up the WUO principles of internationalism and anti-racism. The principles contained in the article were not then widely applied, given that in the same period the

WUO began to decline, however the article still had a significant impact for the women in the group. In fact, shortly after the manifesto was promulgated, the women of the movement began to organize themselves into collectives in which to share their experiences and commitments.

3.2.4 NARs (Revolutionary Armed Forces)

The NARs were an Italian neo-fascist terrorist organization, born in Rome and roughly active in the same period as the Red Brigades (1977 - 1981). Despite only 4 years of activity, the NARs were responsible for 33 murders, as well as the death of 85 people following the infamous massacre of the Bologna station. The movement was born in an extremely tense period, due to the situation of generational revolt that saw the two far-right and far-left factions oppose, ending up dividing thousands of young people and bringing Italy almost to the brink of an ideological civil war.

As happened in the same period for the Red Brigades, women in this organization not only took part, but also played an impact role. In fact, among the founders and main members of the group, Francesca Mambro is mentioned, tried and sentenced in 1982 for various crimes and 96 murders. With his partner, Valerio Fioravanti, another member of the group, they took moral responsibility for the crimes of the NARs and in particular, for the ten murders among which Mambro was convicted, thus recognizing the error resulting from too much drift violent assumption by the group.

Then there were other female fighters in the group, so much so that the episode symbol of the female part of the NARs can be considered without doubt on March 7, 1979, when Mambro, together with a group of right-wing extremist women, on the eve of the International Women's Day, they placed a rudimentary bomb in the Prati district of Rome. The group continued with several attacks, until 1981, the year in which the arrests and therefore the trials began.

3.2.5 National Socialist Underground

The National Socialist Underground terrorist group is a neo-Nazi-inspired German far-right group. It is not clear when it was born, it can be placed during the 90s, and it is known with certainty instead that it was known in 2011, when its existence was revealed publicly. The group was born from a main core consisting of three members, two men, Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Boehnhardt and a woman, and Beate Zschaepe, who met in the town of Jena in the early 1990s and find a common element in their far-right thinking. In January 1998, then, we have the first traces of the group, when the three ran away from the police to avoid arrest following a bomb-making workshop in Jena. From that moment attacks and murders began, mainly against migrants of various nationalities.

Then in 2011, two of the three founding members (Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Boehnhardt) were found dead in an apparent suicide after a failed bank robbery attempt and Beate Zschaepe was the group's only survivor. Shortly thereafter, she was found and arrested and in 2013 the famous and long trial against the organization began, known as the "National Socialist Underground trial", which lasted 437 days and involved 73 lawyers and hundreds of witnesses. In the process, Beate was recognized as the material perpetrator and creator of a large part of the organization's crimes, thus being sentenced to life imprisonment. The sentence was widely contested, being considered as a representative sentence against the whole group rather than just Baete. Beyond the sentence, however, the process was fundamental in highlighting the leading role played by Beate in the organization, thus revealing yet another example of female leadership in the context of terrorism.

3.3 Islamic groups:

We will now analyze the second group of terrorist movements, that is, those of an Islamic nature. In chronological order, we will first of all deal with the movement of the Chechen terrorists "Black Widow, born in the 2000s and the first manifestation of female terrorism. Next, we will continue with the analysis

of the "Al Qaeda" organization, which despite its extremely fundamentalist mold and therefore attached to a role of the mainly passive woman, has gradually revised its positions, reaching today to use female intervention on several occasions. Finally, we will analyze the latest and most well-known organization, ISIS, in which women are gradually taking on an important role, also due to the need to recruit fighters.

3.3.1 Black Widow;

The Black Widow movement is an Islamic terrorist organization made up of suicide terrorists, representatives of the most extreme fringe of jihad¹⁹. The Black Widow, founded by the Chechen independence leader Šamil Basaev in 2000, then became known in 2002 with the Moscow theater hostage crisis. From then on, in fact, the Black Widow became a symbol and instrument of the Islamic-inspired Chechen independence movement. The birth of a movement composed only of women, called Black Widow probably in reference to their husbands, killed by Russian forces in Chechnya, is in fact never happened before in the Islamic world, therefore signing a profound change of the female figure in the Islamic religion. From that moment on, this modernization has continued, causing an increasing number of women to join the struggle. In fact, as Francesco Vietti writes “as regards the specific case of Chechnya, we must not forget that traditional Caucasian culture has always reserved women for an active role in the war, not only as a support for men, but also as a first-person author of acts of military heroism”²⁰.

The first episode that brought Black Widow to the attention of the world was precisely the Moscow theater hostage crisis in 2002, which ended with 850 hostages and more than 170 deaths. The attack was carried out with the request that Russian forces withdraw from Chechnya, thus ending the Second Chechen

¹⁹ “A holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty; A personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline” Definition Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia.

²⁰ Francesco Vietti, *Cecenia e Russia – Storia e mito de Caucaso ribelle*, cit., p.116

War. From that moment on, the attacks intensified and among the bloodiest we can mention 2003, when two terrorists blew themselves up in front of the Duma, in Moscow or 2004, when again in Moscow, two other terrorists blew themselves up during a rock concert, thus killing 14 people. The attacks perpetrated by these "Black widows" were many and fierce and brought to the general attention the new role of women in the terrorist struggle, more than ever involved. In fact, women carried out 55% of the suicide attacks at the hands of the Chechens, while men 18%.

These women were driven by several reasons. First of all, as mentioned above, we can certainly find a common thread in the desire for revenge for the death of their husbands, brothers or children killed during the two Chechen Wars between Russia and Islamist rebels since 1994 or in clashes with Russian-backed forces. To understand more deeply what really pushed them, it is also useful to analyze what was said by Russian journalist Yulia Yuzik, who called these terrorists "Allah's girlfriends²¹" to describe the process by which these women are recruited by Basayev. In fact, the author carries out an accurate analysis of this phenomenon by reconstructing the paths of plagiarism and suffering to which Chechen terrorists are subjected, and which finally convince them to commit suicide by killing other innocent people. It divides the Black Widow mainly into two categories, "the unfortunate" and "the girlfriends". As for the first category of the unfortunate, they are women with a difficult life, marked by the loss, for example, of children lost in the war and therefore with suffering personalities and therefore easily malleable. The terrorists will therefore try to gain the trust of these women, and then indoctrinate them. The second category of girlfriends, on the other hand, is made up of women younger than the "unfortunate", not yet of child age, therefore, who have probably suffered the loss of a father or brother. No longer having any male reference, necessary in Islamic culture, the woman is easily prey to kidnappings and

²¹ *Julija Juzik, Le Fidanzate di Allah – Volti e destini delle kamikaze cecene, Manifestolibri editore*

abuses by other men. This fact, however, entails his automatic departure from the family, since the dishonor would be too great to return and therefore indoctrination and finally martyrdom.

Therefore, even in this case, as in the case of the Weather Underground Organization, we do not have a terrorist of "reference", but an entire movement of women, united by the cause they have decided to pursue.

3.3.2 Al Qaeda;

Al Qaeda is a Sunni Islamist paramilitary terrorist movement born in 1988, during the War in Afghanistan and still active today. The main ideals according to which the movement operates can be traced back to the purest Islamic fundamentalism, therefore talking about female involvement in the context of such a deeply rooted organization seems almost inadequate. This conception derives from various factors, for example the way women were treated in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime or the marked differences between women and men in Islamic thought. Indeed, this thought has always relegated women to a secondary role, mainly supportive as mothers and wives. However, since 2000 the conception of the female role has started to change, mainly due to the need for as many warriors as possible and still continues to change. This evolution began with the involvement of women in operational roles in the terrorist attacks in Palestine. This event was crucial, as it began to strengthen the thought that women had the right to defend themselves and defend their families with the same means available to men.

In 2001 then, Mia Bloom reported that the Saudi high council opened the way to the participation of women in jihad. The turning point in particular came when Yusuf al-Uyayri was chosen as head of the organization, thus leading to an increase in the attacks carried out by women. There was no lack of opposition to this new opening, but it certainly did not stop female involvement, which

today is a fact. A long BBC dossier²² illustrates the occasions when women played a key role in the implementation or internal organization of the attacks and the terrorist network in general. In recent times, female participation has continued to increase, thanks to the fact that women are generally less suspicious and are subject to less security checks. Furthermore, if at the beginning the memory of the female intervention was limited to the attacks in Saudi territory, today it is instead gradually extending to western countries, as shown for example by the case of the Belgian terrorist Malika al-Aroud, tried for attempting to kill a Swedish man and attempted to recruit militants through the Internet, with the aim of committing terrorist attacks abroad. Or even the most well-known case of the terrorist Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani based in the United States and sentenced to 86 years in prison for attempting in 2009 to kill American government agents in Afghanistan.

We have therefore seen how the use of women has also been possible in an organization at the time as conservative as Al-Qaeda. This use continues and is today strengthened, as evidenced by the discovery made by the intelligence network "Debka", which unveiled an Al-Qaeda plan that aimed to send dozens of terrorist women from Algeria to Europe, with the aims to conduct attacks in Paris and other cities on the continent.

3.3.3 ISIS:

ISIS is a military and terrorist organization born in the Middle East and active since 2013, which supports Islamic fundamentalism. ISIS is the English acronym for "Islamic State of Iraq and Sham", whereby Sham is meant a set of territories which includes Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan.

When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi self-proclaimed Caliph and leader of the Islamic State on 30 June 2014, he called all Muslims back to him, urging them to join his struggle since hijra (migration to Muslim territories) is an obligation and

²² Murad Batal al-Shishani (2010) *Is the role of women in al-Qaeda increasing?* BBS News. Disponibile in: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11484672>

duty of every Muslim. Many from all over the world answered this call and surprisingly even a number never seen before of western women. In the beginning, their role was non-combatant, so they were called in as the wives of the soldiers and mothers of their children. However, in the following years the situation changed radically, due to the loss of territories and the general reduction of the terrorist group into small cells, and this led to the growing need for soldiers to carry on the Holy War. It is precisely at this moment, therefore, that women come into play no longer as passive non-combatants, but as actively engaged subjects and bearers of these ideals.

It is surprising how such an ultra-conservative group not only manages to attract such a large number of female subjects, but also to derogate from the role always attributed to women, in favor of a more important role. This happens because in reality, women for the Islamic State are real milestones on which to base and grow the Caliphate. In fact, the Islamic State sees women's participation in the organization's activity as a great resource and is therefore willing to make concessions to its ideology in order to make the most of it. According to Frank Gardner, the women of the Islamic State are "half of society. They play an important role in many areas: the medical area, the educational area, in the collection of taxes; they are essential to the survival of the Islamic State itself²³". Within the Islamic State structure, women have various roles. Firstly, surely being good wives and mothers, a vital role for the growth and prosperity of the country, but secondly, they also play various leading roles: they can become operational agents used in the front line, they can be real tools of recruitment that push women and men to join the ranks of the Islamic State, they can operate as a moral police, they can become incentives for combat, financial instruments (when sold as slaves on the black market) but also as propaganda tools.

²³ Frank Gardner, *The crucial role of women within Islamic State*, in 'BBC', 20 agosto 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33985441>.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this work was to demonstrate that in terrorism man is not the only actor, but rather that woman has always played a role of great importance and in some cases even in the foreground. Through this work, in fact, it was possible to analyze all the factors that characterize this involvement. Starting from the historical analysis of terrorism, in fact, it has been possible to note that terrorism is an extremely rooted phenomenon, however bringing with it the belief that it was an exclusively male phenomenon. Precisely for this reason, the analysis continued with a focus on the feminist movement, on the achievements it achieved, and the progress made. This was done to allow us to compare this female emancipation that is still going on in our modern society, with the same type of "emancipation", in the context of terrorism, obviously with a negative connotation.

This is therefore the focal point of this analysis, which has thus allowed us to bring evidence to support women's involvement in the phenomenon of terrorism. In fact, it has been possible to see how female involvement has always been present in all types of terrorism. By analyzing the "political" terrorism, therefore of the extreme right and extreme left, which concentrated in the 70s-80s, it was possible to notice various examples of women leaders in this situation or even entire groups involved, such as the Women's Brigade of the Weather Underground Organization. Moving on to Islamic terrorism, the main point highlighted was that even in organizations that rely on extremely conservative religious and social principles, women have gradually acquired their own space for action in the operations and in the planning of the same. This therefore supports the fact that the use of religion is purely instrumental in the context of terrorism and has the sole purpose of motivating the fighters and making them feel part of a superior mission. In fact, even the fundamental principles of this religion can be overcome in the face of the need to carry on

the Holy War, thus coming to involve women as an active part of Islamic terrorist organizations.

Finally, we also analyzed the reasons that push these women to such acts. It is important to devote attention to this study, since while for men the motivations are given for certain, as well as their involvement in the cause, when speaking of women, it is thought rather that they have been forced through various ways. However, women are driven by various causes and we can isolate some main ones. Surely, at the base we find the will to fight for a cause in which they believe, as for example we have seen with Mara Cagol for the Red Brigades, or with Fusako Shigenobu as regards the Japanese Red Army, that is, women totally dedicated to the cause they pursue . There is also a desire for affirmation and in some cases even for revenge, such as the Black Widow, born precisely as avengers of their husbands or family members who died in clashes with Russian forces.

Finally, Mia Bloom in "Bombshell" identifies 4 main causes through which to explain women's participation: the 4 Rs, Revenge, Redemption, Relationship and Respect. Revenge as precisely in the case of the search for revenge for acts suffered against one's family or loved ones, redemption to indicate the search for salvation and forgiveness through martyrdom, relationship intended as some kind of connection with members of the organization that leads the woman to take part in it and finally respect, that is the search for respect by the woman inside the community through the use of violence, to also demonstrate that she is involved in the cause as much as men.

We therefore have all the elements to be able to affirm that the involvement of women in the phenomenon of terrorism is a real fact, of which it is necessary to become aware in order to have a total understanding of this phenomenon, including the actors and the dynamics of it.

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RIASSUNTO DELL'ELABORATO

Il terrorismo è sempre stato indissolubilmente legato all'immagine maschile. Il soggetto terrorista nell'immaginario collettivo è sempre stato percepito come un uomo forte che agisce in prima linea, mentre la componente femminile della sua famiglia rimane legata a un ruolo di supporto. Nel contesto del terrorismo, infatti, non si è abituati a concepire la donna come un potenziale pericolo, poiché si è ancora "intrappolati" nell'immagine della donna come moglie e madre. Tuttavia, la realtà è piuttosto diversa e proprio per questo motivo, il seguente lavoro, intitolato "Donne e terrorismo: vittime o carnefici?" mira ad affrontare questo problema, indagando così la logica alla base del fenomeno terroristico e soprattutto il grado di importanza che le donne ricoprono in esso. L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è infatti cercare di debellare la convinzione per cui le donne non sono in grado di macchiarsi di atti di violenza e terrorismo. Attraverso l'analisi, infatti, è possibile dimostrare non solo che le donne sono sempre state coinvolte nel fenomeno terroristico, ma anche che in alcuni casi sono state le protagoniste.

Il lavoro comincia con un'analisi approfondita del fenomeno del terrorismo dalle sue origini, al fine di poterlo comprendere a fondo ed essere in grado di apprenderne le motivazioni. In questo modo, è stato possibile distinguere tre tipi principali di terrorismo: ideologico di destra, ideologico di sinistra ed etnico-religioso. Dopo averne spiegato le origini e la storia, si è passati all'analisi degli stessi e così abbiamo identificato esempi per ciascuno di questi gruppi. Per quanto riguarda il terrorismo etnico-religioso poi, abbiamo chiarito un punto sostanziale di grande importanza, vale a dire che non esiste una relazione sostanziale tra religione islamica e terrorismo: infatti, il l'uso dell'Islam è solo strumentale per raggiungere una frattura tra le due diverse realtà del mondo occidentale e quello musulmano. L'analisi del fenomeno terroristico si è poi

conclusa con un approfondimento delle metodologie di attacco utilizzate in tale contesto, la prima delle quali include l'uso del metodo suicida. L'analisi di questo metodo è stata possibile e chiara anche grazie all'aiuto della distinzione dei tre livelli effettuata da Kenneth Waltz nel suo esame delle cause della guerra (Waltz 1954).

Successivamente, l'attenzione si è spostata su un'analisi del pensiero femminista, con una descrizione approfondita delle tre "ondate" che compongono la sua storia, vale a dire la prima dalla fine del 1800 all'inizio del 1900, la seconda dalla fine del 1960 al 1990 e il terzo dal 1990 ad oggi. Attraverso le principali figure ed eventi che hanno caratterizzato il movimento femminista, è stato possibile ricostruirne una storia che permettesse di avere un'immagine completa, seppur breve, per comprendere quanto tale movimento sia stato fondamentale nel dar vita al processo di emancipazione femminile. Tale analisi infatti, è stata necessaria per poter analizzare la figura delle donne nella società di oggi e quindi essere in grado di identificarne i risultati e progressi ottenuti. Utilizzandola come punto di partenza, infatti, abbiamo capito il percorso che ha portato le donne ad affermarsi nella società, anche se ancora con problemi irrisolti. Dopodiché, il passo successivo è stato confrontare il processo di affermazione delle donne nella società con lo stesso processo nel contesto del terrorismo. Nel terrorismo, il gender è stato quasi completamente cancellato e questo ha portato per molto tempo ad un'analisi incompleta del fenomeno. È possibile, tuttavia, ricostruire i fatti reali con le fonti disponibili e quindi sottolineare il ruolo di primo piano svolto dalle donne in questo contesto. Il passo successivo poi, è sicuramente analizzare anche le motivazioni che spingono queste donne a tali atti. È importante dedicare attenzione a questo aspetto, poiché mentre per gli uomini le motivazioni sono date per scontate, così come il loro coinvolgimento nella causa, quando si parla di donne, si pensa piuttosto che siano state costrette in diversi modi. Tuttavia, le donne sono guidate da varie cause e possiamo isolarne alcune. Sicuramente, alla base

troviamo la volontà di lottare per una causa in cui credono, come ad esempio abbiamo visto con Mara Cagol per le Brigate Rosse, o con Fusako Shigenobu per quanto riguarda l'Armata Rossa giapponese, cioè donne totalmente dedite alla causa che perseguono. C'è anche il desiderio di affermazione e in alcuni casi anche di vendetta, come per le Black Widow, nate proprio come vendicatrici dei loro mariti o familiari morti negli scontri con le forze russe.

Infine, Mia Bloom in "Bombshell" identifica 4 cause principali attraverso le quali è possibile spiegare la partecipazione delle donne: le 4 R, Vendetta, Redenzione, Relazione e Rispetto. Vendetta come precisamente nel caso della ricerca di vendetta per atti subiti contro la propria famiglia o i propri cari, redenzione per indicare la ricerca di salvezza e perdono attraverso il martirio, relazione intesa come una sorta di connessione con i membri dell'organizzazione che porta la donna a prenderne parte e infine rispettare, cioè la ricerca del rispetto da parte della donna all'interno della comunità attraverso l'uso della violenza, per dimostrare anche che è coinvolta nella causa tanto quanto gli uomini.

Infine, il terzo capitolo è stato dedicato all'analisi di varie organizzazioni terroristiche in cui è possibile vedere un chiaro elemento femminile. La prima ad essere analizzata è stata l'Armata Rossa giapponese, la cui storia è strettamente legata a quella della sua fondatrice Fusako Shigenobu. Successivamente, abbiamo visto le Brigate Rosse italiane, con la figura di riferimento di Mara Cagol, che certamente però non fu l'unica donna a partecipare. La Weather Underground Organization fu anche un esempio concreto di partecipazione delle donne, con la creazione della Women's Brigade of WUO, guidata da Bernardine Dohrn. Successivamente, l'analisi si è spostata all'estrema destra, prima con gli italiani NAR (Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari), tra i quali spiccava la figura di Francesca Mambro e successivamente con la tedesca National Socialist Underground, la cui unica sopravvissuta al nucleo originario fu la terrorista Beate Zschaepe.

Si è proseguito poi con i gruppi terroristici islamici, di cui il primo ad essere analizzato è stato il gruppo ceceno delle Black Widow, composto principalmente da mogli o familiari di soldati ceceni uccisi dalle forze russe in Cecenia e simbolo del terrorismo femminile. Si è poi passati ad Al Qaeda, per mettere a contrasto la forte natura conservatrice del gruppo con il suo successivo superamento e quindi l'impiego di donne anche in operazioni armate. Infine, è stata la volta della più "moderna" in termini storici di queste organizzazioni, vale a dire l'ISIS, attraverso la quale è stato possibile comprendere come le donne siano considerate una vera pietra miliare su cui basare e far crescere il califfato.

Lo scopo di questo lavoro era dunque quello di dimostrare il ruolo di primo piano che le donne hanno sempre avuto nelle organizzazioni terroristiche, già a partire dall'alba del fenomeno. Infatti, il lavoro mira a sottolineare questo impegno, come forma di partecipazione e anche di "emancipazione", in senso negativo. Tale indagine è quindi necessaria per comprendere il fenomeno terroristico nella sua interezza, in modo tale da poterlo fermare.