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# Women and Terrorism: expressions and dynamics of female radicalization.

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# Introduction

This undergraduate thesis intends to study the world of female terrorism, in the light of preconceptions that canalize the phenomenon only to an obligation perpetrated by men or only to roles that see women just on the background. This study wants to draw attention to the radicalization of women, and to the majority of the various roles they perform inside the terrorist organizations. The misconception of this reality is mainly based on lack of female-terrorism-centered information, which risks becoming just one news among many on television, on the internet, and on other medias. Some of the European misconceptions derive from the fact all the terrorist attacks in Europe were realized by men<sup>12</sup>, but the European vision is not enough to understand the female terrorist universe. Also, the fact women did not perpetrate terrorist action in Europe does not mean they had not participated in other forms. Chapters 1 and 2 follow the chronological order of the events and of the theories.

The first chapter will focus on the main examples of female terrorists in the last century, all around the world, highlighting their different roles and the different scenario that influenced their choices and their actions. One of the main authors in this field is Mia Bloom. She wrote the book “Bombshell. The many faces of women terrorists”, published by Hurst & Company, London, in 2011. The book recounts the stories of the main female terrorists until 2011, describing their main positions, their ideology, their environment and their history. Bloom also adds a brief history of terror and oppression and develops an innovative theory about the reasons that led a woman to radicalize, with the theory of “The Four Rs plus One”.

Another author for what concerns female terrorism is Sofia Cecinini with her book “Le Sanguinarie. Storie di donne e di terrore”, published by LUISS University Press in 2018. This book is more recent (referring to the year of writing of this thesis, 2021), and for this reason provides us with the finale stories about female terrorists. Cecinini introduced female terrorism in Italy basing the study on the book of Mia Bloom “Bombshell. The many faces of women terrorists.”.

The second chapter will examine around the main sociological theories about radicalization and female terrorism. Due to the specific character of female radicalization, I chose to select theories not only about female radicalization but also about radicalization in general, trying to give a broader view to the research. Female theories in Chapter 2, include: Anne Speckhard’s articles “The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What Everybody should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, “Studies in Conflict and Terrorism”, March 20, 2020, pp. 22-23, available on <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669?journalCode=uter20> (viewed on February 15, 2021);

<sup>2</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation*, in “Commentaire”, n. 156, Hiver 2016-2017, pp. 788-789, available on <https://www.cairn.info/revue-commentaire-2016-4-page-783.htm> (viewed on February 1, 2021);

<sup>3</sup> Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>;

(2008) and “Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq”<sup>4</sup>(2009), Mia Bloom’s “Four Rs Plus One”<sup>5</sup>(2012), L. Windsor’s “The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities”<sup>6</sup>(2018), Lauren R. Shapiro and Marie-Helen Maras with “The Social Learning Theory and Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism”<sup>7</sup> (2019), C.I. Morgades-Bamba, P. Raynal & H. Chabrol, with “Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women”<sup>8</sup> (2020). Regarding radicalization theories in general, I chose three different authors from the article of Alessandro Orsini “What Everybody Should Know About Radicalization and the DRIA Model”<sup>9</sup>, then analyzed more with the reading of some of their works: A.W. Kruglanski, J.J. Bélanger and R. Gunaratna, with “The Motivational Imbalance Theory”<sup>10</sup> (2019), McCauley and Moskalkenko, with the theory included in their book “Friction”<sup>11</sup> (2011) and Alessandro Orsini itself with “DRIA Model”.<sup>12</sup> Another author I wanted to include in this research is Martha Crenshaw with the article “Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of “Suicide Terrorism”<sup>13</sup>. Even if these last theories were made to be general, I decided to insert them in my research because of the inclusion of female terrorists in their studies and the general approach of their models, that make believe they are useful for the purpose of my research.

The third chapter will describe a specific case throughout the lens of the theories. In particular I will analyze the case of Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian suicide bomber<sup>14</sup>. Her biography and actions, will then be examined in the light of four theories, studied in Chapter Two. The choice of sociological theories with the history of the terrorist will be treated is not generic, but made specifically because theories are suitable for the specific case. The theories with which I decided to investigate the deep reasons for the woman's act are:

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Speckhard. *Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq*. Routledge in “Democracy and Security”, 2009, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419160902723759>;

<sup>5</sup> Mia Bloom. *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012;

<sup>6</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

<sup>7</sup> Lauren R. Shapiro and Marie-Helen Maras, *Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, vol. 42, 2019, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1513694> (viewed on March 15, 2021);

<sup>8</sup> Clara Isabel Morgades-Bamba, Patrick Raynal & Henri Chabrol, *Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, Vol. 32, n. 7, 1439-1457, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1481051> (viewed on March 17, 2021)

<sup>9</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>13</sup> Martha Crenshaw, *Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of “Suicide Terrorism”*, in “Political Psychology”, Vol. 20, n. 3, pp. 359-364, 2009, available on [https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655399?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A915073461b5cfb7675e59b46d0a20c04&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655399?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A915073461b5cfb7675e59b46d0a20c04&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>14</sup> See also: James Bennet, *Arab’s Woman’s Path to Unlikely ‘Martyrdom’*, in “The New York Times”, last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021); Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, Vol. 31, Issue 11, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>; Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in “The Guardian”, last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

McCauley and Moskalkenko's theory<sup>15</sup> in the book "Friction", the "Four Rs Plus One" by Mia Bloom<sup>16</sup>, Leah Windsor's theory<sup>17</sup> and the "Motivational Imbalance Theory"<sup>18</sup> by A.W. Kruglansky, J.J Bélanger and R. Gunaratna.

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<sup>15</sup> See also: McCauley Clark and Moskalkenko Sophia, *Friction. How Conflict Radicalizes them and Us*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, 2017; and Alessandro, Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>16</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012;

<sup>17</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

<sup>18</sup> See also: Kruglanski Arie W., Bélanger Jocelyn J., Gunaratna Rohan, *The Three Pillars of Radicalization. Needs, narratives and Networks*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019; and Alessandro, Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 2020, pp. 27-28. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

## Chapter One.

### *The different women of the terrorist world*

#### 1.1 Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)

The movement of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) was an extremist group, to claim the Basque identity, within the northern Spain and South-West of France territory, operative from 1959 to 2018. Eta was born as a student movement in opposition to the repressive military dictatorship of General Franco, from a division to the PNV, Basque National Party. The militants of the organization demanded independence and autonomy, of all those territories which they indicated as Basque. «Its violent campaign has led to more than 820 deaths over the last 40 years, many of them members of the Guardia Civil, Spain's national police force, and both local and national politicians who are opposed to ETA's separatists demands. »<sup>19</sup> In 1975, during the Franco regime, Euskera was prohibited in public administration documents and in information channels. During the Second World War, an exiled Basque government was established in New York, where official recognition was sought, without any result<sup>20</sup>. The first action, which killed no one, dates back to 1961, when a train, carrying civil war veterans to Donostia, was derailed, from here a series of bloody actions follow. In 1969 they carried out the first murder of a member of the civil guard and an inspector, in order to claim the police killing of one of their militants<sup>21</sup>. The origins of female participation in ETA, goes back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when political functions were considered duties that women should have performed. In the first period the role of women is relegated to that of guarantor of Basque traditions. Between 1975 and 1978, the functions change, arriving at the attribution of command to *María Dolores Gonzales*.

*María Dolores Gonzales* or “Yones” grew under the dictatorship of the General Franco. In 1971 she entered in ETA and in 1973 she lost her boyfriend *Jose Etxberria*, also a militant, due to the explosion of a bomb he was carrying. Through his tenacity and leadership skills, she managed to make her way into the organization by becoming a model for everyone in ETA and their leader. Following the death of her mentor, *José Miguel Benaran Ordenana*, between 1979-1980, she began to embrace more diplomatic positions, losing the role of the leader. She was allowed to leave the organization secretly and to move into exile in Mexico, where she created a family and began to study. In 1985 she returned to Spain and the militants, convinced that she was a spy, killed her in the main square of Ordizia, in front of her son, on September 10, 1986<sup>22</sup>.

*María Soledad Iparriguirre Guenechea* nicknamed “Anboto”, was the second and last woman to be a leader of ETA. She entered in Eta as a teenager, starting as a courier. She was responsible for about 14 murders in more than 10 years, including accusations in participation in the assassination attempt, on King Juan Carlos

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<sup>19</sup> BBC News, *What is ETA?*, last modification on April 8, 2017, available on <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11183574> (viewed on February 8, 2021);

<sup>20</sup> Sofia Cecinini. *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, p.88;

<sup>21</sup> *Ivi.*, p. 87;

<sup>22</sup> *Ivi.*, p. 89;

in 1997. At the age of twenty, during a raid, in which her boyfriend lost his life, were found 8000 kg of explosives, in the house of her parents. She was arrested and then released soon after. She became an active member of the group, returning to Spain in 1985, committed more than 6 murders. In the early 90s she joined the ETA of Madrid, and then returned to France in 1992. Here she began the recruitment and indoctrination work, and in 2000 she became the second female leader of ETA. She was arrested on October 3, 2004, together with her boyfriend Mikel Albizu Iriarte. In 2010 she was sentenced by a French court, to twenty years of prison<sup>23</sup>. Quoting Sofia Cecinini, in her book “*Le sanguinarie. Storie di donne e di terrore*”: «Anboto seems to personify the portrait of the perfect terrorist. She went from a courier of the organization to unscrupulous executor and active recruiter of followers. Beyond the desire to prescribe strategies and goals, the woman, just as terrorist men, wanted to guide the attacks and she wanted to kill victims herself.»<sup>24</sup>

Anboto was the perfect example of a woman that wanted to do the same tasks as men, embodying a decisive and capable person. Although her actions were not noteworthy, she represents all those women who not only took part in terrorist actions, but who are also aware, motivated and determined, just like men.

## 1.2 Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)

In 1969 born PIRA, an affiliate organization, but more violent, of the Original IRA, which had the aim of putting an end to the English domination to reunify the Northern Ireland and the Southern Ireland, under the same flag. Between 1968 and the end of the 90s, Northern Ireland was crossed by a strong ethnic-nationalist protest, which went down in the history with the name of “The Troubles”. The violent clashes saw the participation of two opposing factions: on one hand the Protestant Unionist, who wanted the country to remain linked to United Kingdom; on the other hand, the Catholic Nationalists, who wanted a reunion with the rest of Ireland. In 1969 British troops, were deployed to Ireland to quell tensions. The role of women in the PIRA was never central but still supportive, starting their militancy even at a very young age<sup>25</sup>.

The only exception of female leader in PIRA was *Mairéad Farrell*. *Mairéad* came from a Catholic family, and for this reason she did not have a simple childhood. Children of her neighborhood used to bully her for her faith, a treatment that was addressed not only to children, but also to adults who were Catholics. The woman decided to join the PIRA at the age of 14, in 1971. She was arrested in 1976 and taken to the Armagh penitentiary, while she was placing a bomb at the Conway Hotel, in Dunmurry. In the penitentiary she became the leader of the prisoners, representing the armed combat of the PIRA, within the prison walls. The undignified conditions in which the prisoners live, lead the woman, together with her companions, to carry out a series of protests, in the hope of obtaining more rights. Among these there was a protest, lasted 13 months, in which women refused to use the toilets and wash themselves, covering the cells with excrement.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ivi*, p. 92;

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*;

<sup>25</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 93-95;



Many of them contracted various infections, due to the poor hygienic conditions<sup>26</sup>. She was released from prison in 1986, denouncing sexual abuses and poor conditions, rejoining the PIRA and becoming the first objective of the British secret services. She was killed on March 6, 1988, together with two other members of the PIRA, by the agents of the Special Airborne Services in Gibraltar. *Siobhan*, a “disciple” of Mairéad, said:

*«To the people of Falls Road Mairéad was a patriot. To the British, she was a terrorist. To her family she was a victim of Irish history. »*<sup>27</sup>

The history of *Siobhan* is well described by Mia Bloom in the book *“Bombshell. The many faces of women terrorists”*. *Siobhan* had been raised in Ardoyne, a West Belfast neighborhood that suffered from the tension and conflict caused by sectarianism. There were five streets in her neighborhood that were safe, and her parents cautioned her the “Shankil Butchers” were taking anyone and to be careful<sup>28</sup>. *Siobhan* uncle was been imprisoned as a rebel and shot while trying to escape. *Siobhan* was inspired by Mairéad and other women of the Armagh prison, joining the organization of PIRA at a very young age, just as her. Mairéad had taken the young girl, under her wing, when *Siobhan* secretly joined the PIRA. She was still in her first year when her mentor was shotted down by the SAS in Gibraltar. At seventeen, on April 28, 1990, the girl faked herself pregnant to pass the security checks at the Belfast Airport. What she was really doing was carrying a bomb, under her denim overall, pretending it was a baby bump. This technique was never used before her, and was later resumed with success by a woman of Tamil Tigers, killing the Indian Prime Minister, Rjiv Gandhi. The attempt of *Siobhan* was discovered by police, that found her in a bus, escorting her out of it and unveiling the bomb<sup>29</sup>. The terrorist believed that someone had given the authorities information about her attempt of attack, because of their confidence checking on her. She counted herself lucky to not been shot by police. She was sentenced on May 21, 1990, to fourteen years in the prison of Armagh, just like her mentor. The experience of Mairéad, and the other women that fought to have better conditions in prison, help women like *Siobhan* to find her way out from terrorism, researching other ways to help people. While in jail she worked for two hours a day and studied to obtain a political science degree at the Open University. When out of Armagh she pursued a degree in political science at Queen’s University in Belfast, she then married to a man of her social circle, grown a family and worked for several benevolent organizations connected to Sinn Féin. After the experience in prison, she continued pursuing her idea of peace and justice, but in legally way, helping Sinn Féin to win the elections<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Mia, Bloom. *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 82-92;

<sup>27</sup> *Ivi.*, p.93, italics added;

<sup>28</sup> *Ivi.*, p. 93;

<sup>29</sup> *Ivi.*, p. 69;

<sup>30</sup> *Ivi.*, pp. 92-97;

### 1.3 Women and Red Brigades: Margherita Cagol, Susanna Ronconi, Nadia Ponti

The “Red Brigades” was an Italian terrorist group, active from 1970 to 1986, inspired by communist ideology. Margherita Cagol founded the “Red Brigades” in 1970, together with Renato Curcio, her husband and Alberto Franceschini.<sup>31</sup> “That she wanted the armed organization as much as I, or even more than me, is a fact”<sup>32</sup>, these were the words of Renato Curcio about his wife, mentioned in the book of Sofia Cecinini. *Kim Cragin* and *Sara Daly*, defined Margherita as an “operational leader”, a woman who plans and executes high profile attacks: she was one of the people that directed the command that made her husband Renato Curcio, escape from the Casale Monferrato prison.<sup>33</sup>

Margherita Cagol born on April 8, 1945, in Trento, Italy. After her graduation, she enrolled in the faculty of Social Sciences, where she met her future husband, Renato. In 1969, Renato and Margherita founded the CPM “Collettivo Politico Metropolitano”, an organization that at the beginning had recreational purposes. The organization reached its peak during the Piazza Fontana massacre, in which 17 people died. Following the dissolution of the CPM, the two first formed a fighting organization called “Sinistra Proletaria”, whose experience last a few months, being finally replaced with the organization of the Red Brigades.

The central idea of the organization was that the bourgeoisie and its actors were nothing than “pigs”, and as such they deserved nothing but death<sup>34</sup>. Communist ideology not only drives their actions and thoughts but becomes so radical to justify brutal murders as a correct punishment. In 1972, Cagol and Curcio, decide to become clandestine, forming the Turin column, which will then be directed by Cagol since the arrest of Curcio and Franceschini. After the police had identified the place where Margherita and a militant were hiding, on June 5, 1975, Margherita Cagol was captured and killed<sup>35</sup>.

Cagol represents the female leader role of a terrorist organization. She did anything a terrorist man did: she was a founder of the Brigades, she killed people, she organized actions, she became a leader, she was killed just like any other terrorist man.

Susanna Ronconi joined the Red Brigades in 1974, motivated to fight in the Red Brigades, in the name of feminism. Specifically, she participated in the planning of several murders and killed 5 people, herself. Murders, also in this case, was granted because it was mediated by a great ideology, which made the victim appear only as the herald of wrong values, and for this reason, worthy to be eliminated. She decided to live the Red Brigades, after the arrest of her partner, and then after founded “Prima Linea”.

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<sup>31</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2011;

<sup>32</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, p. 68, italics and translation added;

<sup>33</sup> *Ivi*, p. 68;

<sup>34</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2011;

<sup>35</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp.70-71;

« She devoted her body and her soul to the new movement, even developing the idea that the maternal instinct predisposed women to violence. In particular, she was convinced that, at the moment of the birth, only the mother had power of life and death, over the child: a power capable of making the woman perfectly capable of perpetrating violence on a par with men, if not more”<sup>36</sup>. After six years on the run, she was arrested in Florence in 1980, she escaped two years later, thanks to the help of Sergio Segio, her future husband. She was again arrested in 1982, with Segio, and then progressively abandoned the armed combat, obtaining semi-freedom in 1991<sup>37</sup>. »

*Angela “Augusta” Vai* is remembered for her ferocity in gambling enemies, and together with *Nadia Ponti*, headed the factory brigades. *Nadia Ponti* is instead known as an ambitious woman within the organization. «*She desperately wanted to make career, to become someone, and for this reason she did not look anyone in the face, she did not take refuge in any means, she leaned on everyone*»<sup>38</sup>, as *Roberto Peci* stated. It is said, for example, of *Nadia* tried every trick, in order to make success within the Red Brigades, even walk, among her companions, completely naked.

*Anna Laura Braghetti*, with a disarming detachment, describe the homicide of *Vittorio Bachelet*, in the book “*Il Prigioniero*”: «I walked towards him and fired eleven shoots. It was a moment. Only as he fell, I look at him, I saw the grey hair, the glasses, the blue coat. No blood. People screamed and ran. I ran away, as fast as I could. [...]it was not me who identified the objective, nor conducted the investigation. [...] I do not remember if being tasked with shooting had a particular effect on me, but I think it did not. Morally, there is no difference between deciding the death of someone and administering it personally. »<sup>39</sup>

Even in this case, the woman deliberately decides on her actions and despite the murder of the man, she remains firm on her ideology and on the correctness of her actions. The Red Brigades were one of the best examples of equality between women and men. Women could do anything men could do: from perform leader roles, to organize action, from kill people to being killed by police.

## 1.4 Tamil Tigers

Since its founding in 1976, the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)*, often called simply the *Tamil Tigers*, had the goal to create the independent State of Tamil Ealem, in the Northern Sri Lanka. The terrorist’s attacks started in 1983, resulted as a civil war, officially finished in 2009. 70.000 people died and 250.000 militants of the Tamil Tigers were held in battle fields<sup>40</sup>. Differences between the inhabitants of Southern India

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<sup>36</sup> *Ivi*, p.74;

<sup>37</sup> *Ivi*, p. 75;

<sup>38</sup> *Ivi*, p. 76;

<sup>39</sup> *Ivi*, p.78, italics and traslation added;

<sup>40</sup> *Sofia Cecinini, Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, p. 111;

and Ceylon, were practically non-existent, initially. The differences began to be evident when in the XVI century, the Portuguese and Danes began to colonize, asking to declare which of the two ethnic groups they wanted to belong to, creating conflict. The rivalries escalated when many of the Tamils began sending their children to study abroad, who once returned held positions of prestige in Ceylon society. These inequalities exacerbated sentiments towards Tamils even more, resulting in nationalist believes. Sinhalese was declared the official language of the country, to be used in the administrative, school and work fields. *Cecinini* accurately illustrated in her book<sup>41</sup> the development of the organization. She writes that between 1973 and 1980, five different organizations were born: the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Tamil Eelam (EROS), People's Liberation Organization for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), Tamil National Tigers (TNT), the most radical one. To prevent from terroristic threat, the Sri Lanka government launched the Prevention Terrorism Act (PTA), which allowed police to detain people up to 18 months without a trial and the use of torture during the interrogations. The Tamil Tigers used suicide to successfully spread terror. They also were known as "Black Tigers" for their habit to always carry with them a cyanide pill, to kill themselves in case of arrest. Women had not prominent positions until 1983, when they started to take an active part in terrorist acts, crating the "Freedom Birds" in 1984, a female division to achieve the right of self-determination of the Tamil people, to abolish discrimination against Tamils, to guarantee economic and social equality in the country<sup>42</sup>. Kamikaze women followed a different type of military training, they could become such only if they had enough motivation and strong reasons to kill themselves and if they strictly followed trainings. Before committing the act, they had to visit the area where the action should have taken place, paying attention to every detail that could put in danger the suicide. When it was possible, they tried to film themselves during the suicide to train the new recruits. Other rules included the prohibition to drink alcohol and to use drugs, also they could not have sex, if they were not married. The importance of women within the Tamil Tigers was also declared by its leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, that said:

*«Today young women have taken up arms to liberate our land. They made supreme sacrifices for this cause, astonishing the whole world. I am proud to say that the birth, growth and expansion of the women's military wing is an exceptional achievement, which marked a turning point in our struggle.»*<sup>43</sup>(March 8, 1992)

Thenmuli Rajaratnam, known as *Dhanu*, was the murderer of Rajiv Gandhi, former prime minister of India. On May 21, 1991 morning Dhanu was waiting for the prime minister in Sriperumburdur, where he was supposed to give a speech. The girl had hidden an explosive belt and two detonators under a typical dress, revealing a belly, which everyone would have confused with that of a pregnant woman. She positioned herself in a spot where she would be close to the minister, and when he shook her hand she knelt down, igniting the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ivi.* pp. 110-119;

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid* ;

<sup>43</sup> *Ivi.*, pp. 115-116, italics and translation added;

explosives and causing the deaths of 16 people. *Robert Pape* would have then said, the woman had been motivated from revenge<sup>44</sup>. The family of Dhanu had been massacred by Indian soldiers, causing in her a silk of revenge that only death could fill. The attack of Thenmuli was the first suicide bombing of a woman who pretended to be pregnant, paving the way for unprecedented female violence. To reconstruct the real vision of women within Tamil Tigers organization, it is important to understand the words of Mia Bloom:

«In a region where women's rights were few, the LTTE had the highest number of female suicide bombers in the world (a significant percentage of female frontline fighters) because of its verbal support of gender equality. Military roles were gender-neutral, and the glory of martyrdom was bestowed equally upon men and women. But unlike the men, who usually sought to become martyrs for the glory of the community, some of the female bombers took on the role out of desperation or as last resort. Not only did women constitute an important part of the LTTE's military leadership, but they also had their own combat divisions and participated at almost every level of fighting. They died in battle just like men, and the Sri Lankan government targeted them for the assassination regardless of their gender. From the point of view of the LTTE, there was even a psychological advantage to be gained by using women to defeat Sri Lankan military in a country where women were seen as second-class citizens. The organization trained the women in karate, hand-to-hand combat, the use of automatic weapons, and the techniques of suicide bombing. They even showed the women how to walk and sit if they were pregnant, while carrying explosives around their waists. Once the female operatives were trained, the LTTE held them in reserve, to release whenever they wanted to flex their muscles. »<sup>45</sup>

## 1.5 Sendero Luminoso

*Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path), or Partido Comunista del Perú Sobre ed Sendero Luminoso de Marátegui, was born in the late 60s, by a group of professors and students of the University of Huamanga, in the city of Ayachucho. The violent organization aimed to transform Peru into a modern state, through a neo-Maoist ideology, while glorifying the Inca civilization. The birth of Sendero Luminoso coincided with the redistribution of land by the Peruvian state, which had in that context disadvantaged the region of Ayachucho, where most of the indigenous people were concentrated. In the first phase Sendero Luminoso limited itself to carrying out symbolic actions, such as hangings of dogs and attacks on state properties, starting from May 17, 1980 the first military action was carried out, in which they set fire to the ballot boxes in the city of Chuschi. During the 80's the organization grew and coinciding with the adoption of the new Constitution of 1979, and the first elections after 12 years, the zone of Ayachucho, Huancavelice and Apurímac were declared dangerous, with the ability for the police to interrogate and detain anyone who appears suspicious. Some of the attacks by Sendero Luminoso included: sabotage of electrical system of Lima, causing the blackout in the

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<sup>44</sup> *Ivi*, p. 110;

<sup>45</sup> Mia, Bloom. *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp 153-154;

whole area and put a bomb in the offices of the ruling party, in 1983 and the attack in the Miraflores district, which resulted in the death of 25 people and the wounding of 155, on July 16, 1992<sup>46</sup>.

The role of women in Sendero Luminoso is essential, the organization actually presented a female majority and a male minority, and the top leader positions of Sendero were held by women. The attraction of the organization has to be seen in the Peruvian context of the 60s. Emblematic figure is represented by *Edith Lagos*, woman who inspired the militants who succeeded her. Edith Lagos become the first leader of Ayachucho, at the age of 16. She was clever and shrewd, enough to be able to escape from prison several times. She directed the assault of the prison of Huamanga in Ayachucho, leading 50 militants that free 297 prisoners. She was murdered at 19, but a crowd of 30.000 attended her funeral<sup>47</sup>.

*Laura Zambrano Padilla*, known as Mache, was arrested in 1985, accused of being the leader of the actions of Sendero Luminoso in Lima<sup>48</sup>.

*Brenda Perez Zamora* was the second leader of Sendero Luminoso, starting in 1988. Other women who had a role in Sendero Luminoso included: Marina Loyaza, Sonia Rosas, Violeta Quispe, Hydee Ciceres, Filipina Palomino, Hermelinda Escobar, Emma Frida, Patricia Zorrilla, Carla Carlota Kutti and Clementina Berrocal<sup>49</sup>. Up to that time women lived for the family: the assignment that they had to achieve was to take care of their children, of the housework and of the kitchen, while their husbands were busy at work. Sendero Luminoso was not only attractive for the ideology it proposed, but also because in that context, it was one of the first situations in which women could even hold leadership roles, a reality that appeared new and distant from what they had been used to live. One of the strengths of the organization, in order to terrify citizens, was the leadership role of women. Cecicini writes:

«Robin Kirk, author of *The Monkey's Paw: New Chronicles of Peru*, in the course of his research and interviews on the role of women in Sendero Luminoso, had identified two widespread perceptions that female guerillas were either “sexless automaton” or “bloodthirsty nymphomaniacs. In particular, the author explains that guerrillas were seen as having an unnatural aura, a kind of magical power that made them difficult to kill. To reinforce this cold and ruthless image there was the fact that the guerrillas of Sendero Luminoso, during the assaults and attacks used to give the final blow to the victims. »<sup>50</sup>

## 1.6 Ahlam Tamimi

Ahlam Tamimi is one of the most important examples of female terrorism in the Arabic world.

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<sup>46</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp. 147-153;

<sup>47</sup> *Ivi* p. 150;

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>50</sup> *Ivi*, p. 152;

Ahlam Tamimi was the woman behind the Sbarro massacre, on 9 August 2001, in downtown Jerusalem, that provoked the murder of 15 civilians, including 7 children, and 130 wounded<sup>51</sup>. The story and the ideology of the terrorist are well described by Sofia Cecinini, in her book “Le Sanguinarie. Storie di donne e di terrore.”<sup>52</sup>. Cecinini explains how the attack was anything but improvised.

Ahnam Tamimi identifies the Sbarro restaurant for her attack, with the specific aim to kill as many people as possible, including children. The restaurant was, in fact, visited, per the majority by families.<sup>53</sup>

Who was Ahlam Tamimi, before being a terrorist?

The woman born on 20 October 1980, in Az-Zarquaa, Jordan but was a native of Nabi Saleh, a Palestinian village in the central West Bank. Ahlam was a Jordanian national. As *Mia Bloom* said: “She was a symbol of the Palestinian resistance and the new feminine face of Hamas.”<sup>54</sup> Referring to this, Alham joined *al-Qassam Brigades*, the armed wing of *Hamas*, following the outbreak of the second Intifada, on 28 September 2000, becoming the first female militant. After the murder of Jamal and Omar Mansour, on 31 July 2000, she was called by the vertices to organize the Sbarro massacre.

On 30 June 2001, she placed a bomb inside a can in a Jerusalem shop, but without having the desired results. The bomb was in fact found by police. This attempt convinced the terrorist that a suicide bombing was the most effective choice for an attack.

On 9 August 2001 morning, Ahlam Tamimi and her suicide recruit, Izzedine as-Suheil al-Masri, met on Ramallah bus station, where they get on the bus for East Jerusalem. At 14:00 Izzedine as-Sulheil al-Masri set off the bomb, causing the murder of 15 people.

Ahlam Tamimi declared, following the attack, the joy of Palestinian passengers at the news of the death of the Israelis, on the return bus<sup>55</sup>, with these exact words:

«It could be felt that everyone was happy. (The passengers) did not know each other, but congratulated among them. While I was sitting on the bus, the driver turned on the radio, which reported the dead were 3. I admit I was disappointed at first because I expected a higher number. [...] A few minutes later it was announced that the victims had risen to 5, I struggled to hide my smile, Allah be praised, it was great. As the casualties increased, the passengers cheered more and more. [...] Even the policemen at a check-point were celebrating what had happened. They were all happy.»<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Israel Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Suicide bombing at the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem-9-Aug-2001*, last modification on 9 August 2001, available on:

<https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000/Pages/Suicide%20bombing%20at%20the%20Sbarro%20pizzeria%20in%20Jerusalem.aaa#:~:text=09%20Aug%202001&text=both%20parents%2C%20were%20killed.&text=15%20people%20were%20killed%2C%20including,Jaffa%20Road%20in%20downtown%20Jerusalem> (viewed on February 6, 2021);

<sup>52</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp. 23-29;

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*;

<sup>54</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012. p. 112;

<sup>55</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, p. 24;

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, cit., italics and translation added;

The words of Ahlam strike and diverge from the stereotype of a female terrorist, mainly depict as a succubus of a man. Ahlam Tamimi was in fact the maker of the massacre, not just a pawn nor a helper. The words of the woman were clear and she did not feel the slightest feeling of pain or repentance. Ahlam Tamimi lucidly organized the bombing of innocent people, being disappointed by the low number of deaths. Killings also included 3 children; Umm Anas, militant of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, explains children are little Israelis, that eventually will become soldiers, so their murder is justified as the prevention of their future killings toward the Palestinians.<sup>57</sup>

The terrorist was part of al Qassam Brigades, military wing of Hamas, group based on the ideology of resistance linked to Israel and Palestine. The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades has carried out hundreds of attacks against Israeli civilians, committing over 90 suicide and bombing attacks, launching 12.000 rockets and 5.000 mortars and killing over 650 civilians. In 2006 Hamas entered the institution of the Palestinian Authority, as a democratically elected party, after it had established a de facto government in the Gaza Strip<sup>58</sup>, fighting not only against Israel but also against non-Islamist forms of governance<sup>59</sup>. Devorah Margolin affirms the role of Islamic ideology, which has always relegated women to domestic duties, played a central role in the introduction of female terrorists into Hamas. Precisely because women went unnoticed, they managed to perpetrate attacks without the police or citizens becoming suspicious. The role of the women as custodians of home that had been attributed to them, made them the perfect terrorists<sup>60</sup>.

## 1.7 The Black Widows of Dubrovka

Chechnya is the native country of terrorist women, known as the “Black Widows”. The Chechen territory was known for having maintained its autonomy until 1559, when it was subjected to Russia. Chechnya had maintained its autonomy until 1559, when it was subjected to Russia. In 1732 it defeated the Russian colonial forces, in 1732 it became a Russian protectorate, only to return to an autonomous province in 1922. After the Chechen collaboration with the Nazis, during World War II, the first xenophobic feelings towards Chechnya began to grow subtly<sup>61</sup>. Beliefs on the circulation of the Chechen mafia begin to spread. In 1994 Russia begins bombing the territory<sup>62</sup>. The main reason of the conflict between Dudayev and Yeltsin, was mainly related to the proceeds of the oil industry; the first conflict ended in 1996. Dudayev, during the presidency, had also

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<sup>57</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, p. 27;

<sup>58</sup> Israel Defence Forces, *Hamas' military wing*, available on <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/hamas/hamas/hamas-military-wing/> (viewed on February 202);

<sup>59</sup> Devorah Margolin, *The Changing Roles of Women in Violent Islamist Groups*, George Washington University, Washington, 2019, available on <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/The%20Changing%20Roles%20of%20Women%20in%20Violent%20Islamic%20Groups.pdf> (viewed on February 7, 2021);

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*;

<sup>61</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012. pp. 35-39;

<sup>62</sup> *Ivi*, p. 40;



introduced the *sharia law*, resulting an even more vigorous return to Islam, at the end of the First Chechen war<sup>63</sup>.

«Chechen Islamization would become the dominant trait of resistance against the Russians, during the Second War in 1999. [...] Yanbardiev introduced an Islamic penal code, based on that of Sudan, and appointed other Wahhabi leaders within the administration of the country. »<sup>64</sup>, as Sofia Cecicini wrote in her book “Le sanguinarie. Storie di Guerra e di terrore.”.

The arrive of Putin to the Russian government was presented as a revenge for the 1996 defeat, but he was also seen as the only man capable of averting the Islamic danger. The war against Chechnya, and Islamism, characterizing the Chechen state, was made more meaningful if read together with the fight against international terrorism, following the events of 9/11.

The phenomenon of Black Widows was born in this context. Chechen women have begun to use suicide terrorism as a weapon in the fight against Russia in 2000<sup>65</sup>, highlighting a non-marginal role attributed to women in battle<sup>66</sup>. The name “Black Widows” meant how those women became killers, to revenge their lost loved ones, dead in war; the adjective “black”, on the other hand, symbolized entirely dark clothing with the only exception to a slit for the eyes, a typically Islamic clothing<sup>67</sup>. After the constant attacks on Chechnya, and the destruction of infrastructure and services, it had become barely impossible to live a normal life.

One of the most significant episodes was the kidnapping of the House of Culture, in Dubrovka, on October 22, 2002. The theater was hosting 850 people that day, for the musical *The Two Captains*. Forty terrorists from the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the Chechen rebel forces, took the spectators hostage by threatening to blow up the bombs, which they previously placed throughout the theater and to kill themselves. They then got in touch with newspapers and televisions: what they wanted to obtain was the declaration of the end of the war in Chechnya, by President, Vladimir Putin. After three days, the Russian police, managed to evacuate the theater by introducing gas into the ventilation system, causing the death of 41 terrorists and 129 hostages<sup>68</sup>. The group of terrorists was also composed by women. During the attack, many of the them appeared to hardly hide their tears, they did not pronounce the Islamic prayers correctly and they wore traditional religious clothes in the incorrect way<sup>69</sup>.

The role of woman in this episode is very emblematic. Many terrorists are motivated by the desire for revenge towards the Russian soldiers, who have destroyed entire families, depriving them of their husbands, their children and their sons, committed to fight the war. Others female terrorists were raped, depriving them of having children or marrying. These acts were in fact, not only a source of personal trauma for the victim, but also object of stigma from the society: a women who had suffered rape, became a woman without honor. It is therefore understandable that, in both cases, women often preferred suicide rather than live an undignified

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<sup>63</sup> Sofia Cecicini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp. 53-62;

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*;

<sup>65</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, p. 41;

<sup>66</sup> Sofia Cecicini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp. 53-62;

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*;

<sup>68</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 43-51

<sup>69</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 55-57;

life<sup>70</sup>. According to some episodes, like the case of Fatima and Khadizhat Ganiyeva, several women who participated in the Dubrovka siege, were sold to the militants to become suicide, against their will. The promise to get thousands of dollars in exchange for their daughters, seemed a valid motivation for some families, to give their girls in order to become terrorists.

Ajza Gazueva was one of the Chechen terrorists identified with the name of Black Widows, officially became a martyr on November 29, 2001, when she blew herself up, in Urus Martan, in the Autonomous Republic, near a military commando<sup>71</sup>. The woman became widow of Alihan, due to the Russian general Gejdar Gazdiev, when she was 20<sup>72</sup>. Alihan had been arrested by mistake but he was still killed brutally, in front of his wife. Gejdar Gazdiev killed Aihan slashing his belly, in front of Ajza, and then dragging her in front of his dead body, to make her see what he had done to him. This event represented a trauma to the woman, that started to harbor revenge, culminating in her suicide bombing in Urus Martan.

## 1.8 Jemaah Islamiyah

The terrorist organization, Jemaah Islamiyah, was one of the most well-known organizations, within the panorama of Southeast Asia. The Geography of Indonesia plays an important role in JI's success, thanks to its vastity: it is made up of more than 17.500 islands covering an area of 1.919.440 square kilometers. The role of women within the Jemaah Islamiyah organization, is different from what we have analyzed so far: because of the structure of Jemaah Islamiyah, made up of cells spread around the country, women has to ensure bonds through the cells thanks to marriages<sup>73</sup>. More specifically JI is a terrorist organization with cells scattered throughout the territory, mostly linked by family ties. Jemaah Islamiyah originated from the Indonesian radical Islamist group Darul Islam, established just after Indonesia's independence, and then spread its goals, structure and strategy through the Pedomam Umum Perjuangan Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiyah brochure. Although many, at the origin of the formation, have identified the organization as a branch of *al-Qaeda*, today no one believes that this is still true, arguing instead the position of an independent formation.

One of the most famous women in the scene of Jemaah Islamiyah, was Paridah Binti Abas, wife of Ali Ghufon bin Nurhasyim, one of the leaders of JI. On October 2, 2002, three suicide bombers blew themselves up, in different parts of Bali, precisely two attacks in Kuda and one in Denpasar, causing the death of 204 people and 209 injured<sup>74</sup>, and then, reportedly, the perpetrator of the action was identified as Ali Ghufon. After the capture of Ali Ghufon, on December 4, 2002, both his wife and his family, claimed his innocence, pointing Ali as the object of a deception by the CIA, which allegedly added more explosive material to his device, causing the death of more people<sup>75</sup>. Paridah Binti Amas had been betrothed by her father Abas bin

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<sup>70</sup> Ivi, pp. 62-67

<sup>71</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, p. 53;

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>73</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 173-196;

<sup>74</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp. 124-131;

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*;

Yasuf, a frequenter, in *Malaysia*, of two radical clerics, by which he was very inspired. One of them, Abdullah Sugkar, had a dear student, Ali Ghufron, to whom Paridah, was promised. Despite the marriage being arranged, the girl fell in love with her husband and did not condemn the choice of her father.

The role of women within this organization is fundamental: since JI is not physically united, but divided into cells, located throughout the country, the women represent the bonds throughout the group, with marriages, keeping the organization unite<sup>76</sup>. Paridah, for example, while never becoming a suicide bomber, helped the organization by looking after the family and perpetuating the bonds through her marriage.

*Noralwizah Lee Binti Abdullah*, wife of a former commander of JI, Hambali, born in 1970. She grew up in a poor family with an alcoholic father, a situation that convinced her to escape from home, converting to Islam from Buddhism and moved to Johor, a southern Malaysian state<sup>77</sup>. In 1990 Noralwizah joined Sungkar's female corps, which was a group made up to spread the radical messages of the leader of Jemaah Islamiyah. The group offered lectures on the role of women in jihad to other women. She married Hambali in 1991, becoming officially a member of JI. As soon as she entered the organization, she started recruiting women to form her new circle of friends and to eventually provide them to other members of JI. Even if women do not participate in terrorist acts, they have not a secondary role in the group. Their roles form the nexus that allows the organization to function and stand in planning. According to Mia Bloom:

«All of JI's suicide bombings to date have been carried out by men. A small number of JI women have been caught smuggling bomb detonators and explosive materials from Malaysia into Indonesia, although this would still be considered a support rather than an operational role. However, in 2007 Superintendent Edwin Corvera, the deputy director for the police in Central Mindanao, received reports that the local chapter of JI planned to use women for terrorist operations. [...] Whether the reports were true or not, authorities prepared themselves for a worst-case scenario: more bombings by previously unsuspected operatives. Corvera ordered the police to deploy policemen in public bus and train terminals to search female passengers. »<sup>78</sup>

Even if women in Jemaah Islamiyah have never taken part in a terrorist event that involved them in practice, it is remembered, in May 13, 2018, the first suicide attack by an entire Indonesian family. *Dita Oepriarto and Puji Kuswati*, were respectively, mother and father of: Famela (8), Fathila (12), Firman (15) and Yusuf (17), and that day took part in a suicide attack.

Puji, after installing a bomb inside his car, blew himself up with it in front of the Surabaya Center Pentecostal Church, meanwhile Firman and Yusuf threw themselves with two motorcycles, loaded with explosives, against the church of Santa Maria, Famela and Fathila threw themselves up in the church, followed by their mother, Dita. The attack caused 13 deaths excluding the bombers<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>77</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 173-196;

<sup>78</sup> *Ivi*, p. 193;

<sup>79</sup> Sofia Cecinini, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018, pp. 124-131;

Unlike other radical Islamist groups, Jemaah Islamiyah is more women-friendly. Women of JI ensure the survival of the group through the links of marriage and progeny, guaranteeing unity of the organization, even if the cells are disseminated around the whole country<sup>80</sup>. Another task is selling Islamic products, spreading to the brand, the message of JI. Their role of ensuring the continuity of the organization is seen not only in the bonds created with marriages, but also in their children, the future militants of Jemaah Islamiyah; women have the duty to guarantee the education of the future members of JI, preparing them to life, actions, ideology, terrorism and much more.

## 1.9 Terrorists of Iraq

According to *Mia Bloom*<sup>81</sup>, Iraqi women are mainly motivated by the loss of their loved ones, just as the women of Chechnya. Many of the Iraqi women participating in terrorist actions or entering in terrorist organization, are people who lost their husbands or their sons in war, and torn apart by loss and convinced their role is nothing more than related to the family, subjugated by terrorist recruiters, become part of the dark, terrorist world.

Many of the Iraqi female bombers were recruited by *Itisam Adwan*, or “*Umm Fatima*”. From what was then recounted by the police about the woman, Umm Fatima «was one of the several mother who tell their daughters that they will go to the heaven, sit in comfort by rivers of honey, and lunch with the prophet Muhammed (PBUH) if they perpetrate an act of martyrdom. The girls are married off to Al Qaeda members and their husband tell them that martyrdom will be glorious and that their willingness to kill in the name of Islam will automatically get them into heaven. »<sup>82</sup> Adwan was arrested in September 2008, and replaced by *Umm Salamah*, wife of *Abu Abaydah al Rawi*. Umm Salamah used her skills to recruit martyrs in Baghdad, highlighting how much her squad was devoted to the cause and was anxious to sacrifice its life. Mia Bloom also analyzes the fact that terrorist organization mainly recruit women that already have someone in their family circle to be a member of the organization, to discourage the providing of information to police or secret services.

It is known that becoming a female terrorist do not imply a standard procedure, valid for everyone. Some of the female terrorist in Al Qaeda, for example, choose to be part of that, someone not. “Al Qaeda has succeeded in deepening women’s depression by using their personal tragedies to its advantage. Many of the women are poor and borderline illiterate. Al Qaeda recruiters make use of their poverty, despair, resentment and eagerness to take revenge against the American troops to recruit them. The women are exploited based on three factors: tribal affiliation, financial pressure and revenge for their loss of family.”<sup>83</sup> The author describes

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<sup>80</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 173-196;

<sup>81</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, p. 216;

<sup>82</sup> *Ivi*, p.217;

<sup>83</sup> *Ivi*, p.218;

very precisely the ability of Al Qaeda identifying weaknesses of people that lost members of their family or suffer of poverty or even want to redeem themselves from gender stereotypes, converting them in advantages for their organization, through the recruitment of that kind of people. Other problems that affect women in Iraq, which can affect the choice to be part of the terrorist world, are the lack of government programs to support families that lost their members, leaving women with severe psychological issues. Some of women who enter in Al Qaeda have not someone who could protect them, they have not religious background, they have not a house, and for these reasons they are prone to be in an organization that provide them all of these features. On the other hand, other women are simple trickled to be bombers, by persuading them to be carrying a simple packaging, but then causing them to explode from a distance.

Some of the women are even drugged, kidnapped and be victim of sexual assault, an example of woman who was forced to be a bomber without any agreement, was the fifteen years old *Raniya Ibrahim Mutlaq*, that on October 2008, was caught before trigger the bomb she was bringing, in front of a school in Barnuba. When she was found by police officers she offered no resistance, so an officer managed to remove the bomb, without hurting her or the people she had around. Raniya lost her father in 2003, being killed by sectarian violence, after the American invasion. After her loss, she was forced from her family to marry Muhammed Hassan al Dulaimi, a member of Al Qaeda in Iraq, when she was fourteen. Even if both her mother and aunt were involved in Al Qaeda wanting Raniya to be sacrificed for the cause, it was actually the cousin of her husband, that got her involved. Raniya remembered to have drank something that he gave her, and suddenly became submissive. From the reconstruction, the cousin would had tied up the bomb around the waist of Raniya, completely unconscious of what she was doing<sup>84</sup>.

Another example of not consenting bombers, include *Sumaya*. Sumaya was the wife of Amjad al Dulaymi, a former army officer that joined Al Qaeda in Iraq, in lack of any other opportunities. Amjad was forced by the circumstances to be part of the organization, after the loss of his job, seeing no other ways to sustain his family. After a year in Al Qaeda, his emir required women to become part of the organization, and Amjad believing his wife would have recovered information roles, suggested her but as soon as she became part of Al Qaeda, she was tasked to be a suicide terrorist. The family ended up running away, to avoid the irreversible decision of the leaders.

*Samira Amhed Jassim* was arrested in February, 2009, for arranging the rape of eighty girls over a period of two years and turning them into suicide bombers for Ansar Al Sunnah, an insurgent group in Diyala linked to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Mia Bloom recount<sup>85</sup> twenty-eight had successfully became suicide bombers, out of eighty victimized. Samira Amhed Jassim worked as a recruiter for Shakir Hamid Malik. The idea behind this terrifying practice, was that the women victimized would have become so ashamed by themselves not to believe that there were other possible ways to continue life without dishonor, than suicide. An important role was played by Samira, who not only identified fragile women, but trained men to be able

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<sup>84</sup> *Ivi*, p. 220;

<sup>85</sup> *Ivi*, p. 223;

to rape them. After rapes, women often could not even speak, and Samira, reminding them of the shame they would have brought to their families, convinced them that there was no solution but suicide. One of the victims of Samira, was identified as *Umm Huda*, who after had been raped, could barely make eye contact, with her. Samira convinced to become a suicide bomber and some weeks later, Umm detonated her explosive belt in the main gate of the Muqdadiah.

Not all the female terrorists have been trickled, an example could be seen in the Dhat al Nitaqayn Martyrdom Brigade, an organization female made only, led by the radical woman Umm Salamah. Referring to Al Qaeda's leaders' opinions about women being terrorists, Ayrman Al Zawairi, Al Qaeda second-in-command, believes "women's role is to support their men, helping them endure the hardships associated with frequent moves, difficult terrain and harsh living conditions."<sup>86</sup> For some jihadi women this answer is disappointing because they want to be part of the war, "even" being women.

## 1.10 Boko Haram

On January 8, 2021 a woman member of the terrorist group Boko Haram has provoked the death of 13 people, including 8 children<sup>87</sup>. The attack took place in a little village, in Northern Cameroon. Terrorists arrived in the village during the night, screaming "Allah Akbar", scaring residents who tried to escape. The architect of the action was a woman, member of the group Boko Haram known for the frequent attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, starting from 2009. The terrorist organization has killed more than 36.000 people and it has forced more than 3 million people to escape from their houses, after Boko Haram started insurrections in 2009 where they kidnapped children and women in order to make them suicide bombers. In 2012 it has been established a Joint Multinational Task Force to combat the rebels.

Episodes like these are just the latest in a series of kidnappings and attacks that have started in 2009.

On February 19, 2018 Boko Haram militants attacked the secondary school for the girls in the north-east Nigerian of Dapchi in Yobe, the government would later confirm 110 girls missing<sup>88</sup>. On February 21, Yobe state government announced rescue of some of the girls but then retracting the day later. On the 25<sup>th</sup> BBC News has reported Nigerian Air Force announced deployment of military aircraft and additional personnel for search and rescue mission and on March 12, 2018 President Muhammadu Buhari announced a plan to negotiate the girls' release, without using military force and on March 21, Nigerian government announced that 104 of the 110 abducted schoolgirls have been freed.

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<sup>86</sup> *Ivi* p. 226;

<sup>87</sup> Chiara Gentili, *Cameroon: Donna Kamikaze Uccide 13 Persone* in "Sicurezza Internazionale", last modification on January 8, 2021. <https://sicurezzainternazionale.luiss.it/2021/01/08/cameroon-donna-kamikaze-uccide-13-persone/> (viewed on February 9, 2021)

<sup>88</sup> Chris Ewokor, *Nigeria Dapchi abductions: Schoolgirls finally home*, in "BBC News", last modification on March 25, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43535872> (viewed on February 10, 2021);

Since the first attack, on June 2014, women and young girls, between the ages of 7 and 17, have been coerced into targeting civilians<sup>89</sup>. Even if the use of female suicide bombers is expected because of the use of them by various groups, it is surprising the use by Boko Haram, that has employed more than 90 women per one year despite Tamil Tigers, deploying “only” 46 women over the course of 10 years<sup>90</sup>. Mentioning Mia Bloom:

«When the group abducted the Chibok Girls from their school in April 2014, impassioned advocates around the world promulgated the #BringBackOurGirls movement and popularized the hashtag on social media, demanding that former President Goodluck Jonathan mount a serious effort to rescue the victims. Not only did human rights advocates marshal support through NGOs and public awareness campaigns, but Nigeria’s international partners, including the United States, also provided supplementary military support. The United States bolstered Nigeria’s capacity to monitor the Sambisa Forest, where much of Boko Haram was located, and collect intelligence on the insurgency by providing drones and unmanned surveillance aircraft. The attention that the group garnered following these abductions, which facilitated the spread of its propaganda domestically and internationally, may have emboldened the group to rely more heavily on female operatives.»

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According to the author the use of female terrorist has to be seen in the light of the fact that the use of gender-based violence is a form of strategy, allegedly shared by terrorist organization all over the world. The significant difference from Boko Haram to other groups, stands in the unwillingness of the women participating in terrorist action in Boko Haram and their consensus in other organizations. This position is the result of how Boko Haram portrays itself as the vanguard of “true Islam”. Quoting again Mia Bloom: “Women and girls have become “swords” mobilized and weaponized to carry out attacks while also being used as powerful “symbols” of Boko Haram’s ideology; understanding women in the insurgency requires an examination of ideology in the context of other Islamic actors in the region, and a determination of the factors that prompted Boko Haram’s operational shift towards female operatives.”<sup>92</sup> Just as many other groups, the introduction of female terrorism coincides with a large spread of rape since 2012; women raped developed feelings of contempt for themselves and anger, useful for the martyrdom cause. The vast majority of women in Boko Haram are not participating to their own vocation, and their unwillingness produces support, in terms of the organization. Women are tasked with various duties. Some of them are provide to the group for sexual purposes, but in the majority of these cases they are gifted to Boko Haram fighters for “marriage”, institutionalizing sexual slavery.

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<sup>89</sup> Bloom Mia, and Hilary Matfess, *Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror*, Prism vol. 6, n. 1, Washington D.C., 2016, p. 104;

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* italics added;

<sup>92</sup> *Ivi*, p. 106;

«There is a horrific logic at play in the institutionalization of sexual slavery; research suggests that sexual violence may be effective for building group cohesion and fostering camaraderie, particularly in insurgencies that rely on forced conscription»<sup>93</sup>, as Mia Bloom stated.

These marriages have also the purpose to increase fear in society, reaffirming aggression and brutality but also could be seen as the perverse interpretation of the *hadiths* narrated by *Abu Zayd*, that said “every infant is born with a natural disposition to accept Islam, but parents can socialize their infants to accept other religions”<sup>94</sup>. Sexual slavery would also be the way to perpetrate, through the result of the action, new Islamic progeny. Other duties include female bombings typically against “soft targets”, thanks to their ability to arouse less suspicion. Some of them are encouraged by their families, some participating willingly, some are forced, some of them do not have education, some are married to members or arrested ones, some do it for revenge, and some for free themselves from a life without meaning.

Violence against women and girls" is often meant to humiliate their families and communities, where women and girls must be "spotless" and pure in honor and men are ashamed of not protecting "their" women. Violence becomes a means of destroying the identities of girls, making them excluded from their families and resulting marginalized from society. this is the aim of terrorist groups, which in this way, finding fragile people, are more easily able to manipulate and radicalize them. <sup>95</sup>

According to Mia Bloom:

«Women serve the dual purpose of serving as symbols of Boko Haram’s ideology as well as swords bolstering the insurgency’s operational effectiveness. Boko Haram’s abuse and use of women provides a clear example of how women who are victimized may in turn victimize others because of coercion, honor-bound cultures, and (mis)conceptions about how identity and ethnicity are transmitted from one generation to the next—a process that is, unfortunately, being replicated globally. »<sup>96</sup>

The information collected in the chapter are multiple and various, and let the reader understands the difficulty to categorize the terrorist world in specific groups and rules applicable to all cases. The world of female terrorism is large and varied, so much so that is not possible to give a univocal definition.

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<sup>93</sup> *Ivi*, p. 109;

<sup>94</sup> *Ivi*, p. 110;

<sup>95</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 113-114;

<sup>96</sup> *Ivi*, p. 116;



## Chapter Two.

### *The main sociological theories about terrorism, with a focus on female cases*

The complexity of the universe of female terrorism has been analyzed by a plurality of researchers. When it comes to female terrorists and suicide bombers, there are two main positions adopted by scholars. The first one believes in the submission and the subjugation of women, so terrorist acts committed by women are the result of men's pressure and constraint. The second position consider female terrorism as a decision taken by women, motivated by a variety of reasons: from revenge to ideology, from economic motives to gender equality. Referring to this last position, Eva Herschinger, Senior Researcher at CISS at the Universität der Bundeswehr München, in her article "Political Science, Terrorism and Gender" said<sup>97</sup>:

« Social reasons are inter alia the striving for better living conditions, gender equality or the violation of human rights. While nationalism or religion count as idealistic reasons personal reasons range from personal distress to monetary worries and are intermingled with the importance of specific events in the life of the women and their desire to take revenge. The idea that female terrorists' resort to violence to liberate themselves, to achieve feminist goals and feminist emancipation, i.e. that women are fighting against oppression in their societies has also been voiced. This has been severely criticized as a Western idea, in particular by authors from non-Western countries. »

She also added<sup>98</sup>:

« The question of motivation has been most vividly discussed with regard to female suicide terrorists. Between 1985 and 2006, Mia Bloom reports, 15 per- cent of all suicide bombers were women, and they stemmed from secular as well as religious groups, though in particular the latter have been reluctant to use women for their aims. Accordingly, the involvement of Muslim women has caused the most irritation since Islamic societies relegate women to the private sphere and allow only limited public part. In addition, it is argued that an analysis of their motivation needs to take into account the often highly conflictive situations they live in. Again, what figures prominently in the debate is the question whether personal reasons are crucial or multi-causal explanation need to be advanced. Hence, the explanations for female suicide terrorists do not vary that much: female suicide bombers display by and large the same motivations as female terrorists in general; however, religion is the most prominent among ideological reasons and the conflictive context they live in seems to be an additional stimulus. »

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<sup>97</sup> Eva Herschinger, *Political Science, Terrorism and Gender*, in "SSOAR", 2014, p. 54 Available on: [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/39298/ssoar-hsr-2014-3-herschinger-Political\\_science\\_terrorism\\_and\\_gender.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-hsr-2014-3-herschinger-Political\\_science\\_terrorism\\_and\\_gender.pdf](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/39298/ssoar-hsr-2014-3-herschinger-Political_science_terrorism_and_gender.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-hsr-2014-3-herschinger-Political_science_terrorism_and_gender.pdf) (viewed on March 2, 2021);

<sup>98</sup> Ivi, p. 55;

This chapter will analyze the main sociological theories about female terrorism with a particular emphasis on scholars that had developed the position believing women are conscious of their actions, but also theories about radicalism and extremism in general.

## 2.1 Anne Speckhard, “Female Suicide Terrorists” (2008-2009)

Anne Speckhard is an Adjunct Associated Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical School and she is the Director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (CSVE). Her bibliographic production includes several volumes and articles about terrorism, ISIS and female bombings. For the purposes of my research, I will focus majorly on the two Speckhard’s articles “The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists”<sup>99</sup> and “Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq”<sup>100</sup>, very useful for better understanding her thought on female terrorism.

In the article “The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists”<sup>101</sup>, Speckhard reconstructs, through the analysis of the phenomenon of terrorist women all over the world, the roles, motivations and activities that characterized these terrorists. After a brief analysis about the historical data of suicide bombing and women bombers in modern times<sup>102</sup>, the author identified suicide bombing as a result of a four-levels synergy:

1. The personal factors and motivations operating on the level of the individual
2. The social political concerns that foster it
3. The group that decides to engage it
4. The ideology that promotes it within the culture as a viable method of enacting political change

Author stressed the fact that not all kamikaze women are linked to radical religious groups such as ISIS. Indeed, the phenomenon of female suicide bombers occurred in non-religious terrorist formations such as PFLP, PPK, LTTE, even before ISIS used them as an instrument of terror.

Females as weapons are often denied by society, can tends to think about women only as mothers, loving, caring and beautiful creatures. This tendency was and still is very harmful when it comes to terrorism. Precisely

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<sup>99</sup> Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>;

<sup>100</sup> Anne Speckhard, *Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq*. Routledge in “Democracy and Security”, 2009, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419160902723759>;

<sup>101</sup> Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>;

<sup>102</sup> *Ivi*, pp.995-997;

because of the positive prejudices (in this case) towards women, there have been many occasions in which female terrorists have managed to carry out their missions, because of lack of attention of their possible ill attentions. Speckhard said that often women are not considered dangerous, and with the exception of Israel, many military departments deny their participation in the various compartments. Despite the stereotypical view of women as associated with peace and good, some statistics regarding mistreatments between spouses, collected in the United States, have shown the same frequency of mistreatments in both sexes. Precisely because of the sweetened vision of women, there is often a tendency to hide this type of reality, in which women are as scary as men. The attacks perpetrated by women turn out to be more unpredictable, due to less control over them, but also more horrifying, due to the screeching between the imaginary of the woman and reality.<sup>103</sup>

Author affirms, in her thesis, a substantial equality between men and women when it comes to terrorist galaxy, pointing out a series of elements in support of her thought<sup>104</sup>. Factors highlighting the little difference between the two genders include:

1. The same set of motivation (that differ by the terrorist being radicalized within or outside of a conflict zone).
2. Women's roles differ a bit compared to the men's ones reflecting the traditional difference in society between the two genders.
3. In the majority of the cases, women are not forced to be terrorists or to be kamikaze.
4. Both genders that suffered traumas are prone to be in a terrorist organization.
5. According to the studies, both genders are not psychologically abnormal.
6. The causes of female and male bombers do not differ much from causes of traditional suicide.
7. They both want people to feel their pain.
8. Organizational backing is a strong component of making a bomber possible.
9. Speckhard does not include feminism as a primary factor in committing suicide in honor of a radical organization or taking part in terrorist groups.
10. «Muslim women the world over are recognizing their roles as the bearers of future warriors: human bombs included. This role should not be underestimated as the special socializing force of mothers to indoctrinate their children with hate, single out children for a self and community sacrificial role, and to accept ideologies supporting suicide terror are truly frightening. »<sup>105</sup>
11. In accordance with the author, women can manipulate men too, to become active terrorist and take part in radical groups.

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<sup>103</sup> *ivi*, p. 1001;

<sup>104</sup> *ivi*, p. 1002;

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*;

Regarding the motivational sets for suicide bombings, Speckhard wrote that can occur majorly two types of sets.

- a. The first set take place within conflict zones and consists of a combination of nationalistic, trauma, revenge, and dissociation motivations. In this situation the factors are often associated with the ideology of martyrdom, in which whoever wants to be a suicide bomber becomes martyr for an important cause, sacrificing himself to God. This type of act has the ultimate aim of attracting new followers and making the other feel pain. This set of motivations can be the same in both sexes, although men have more ways of venting their pain, like taking up arms.
- b. The second motivational set operates in non-conflict zones, often in arenas where there is despair among the first to third generation immigrant communities' areas with ethnic and religious tensions, or societal oppression and serious frustration. This second set consists of: alienation, marginalization; lack of positive identity; secondary traumatization; desire for adventure, and / or a desire to redeem oneself. When these motivations are associated with a strong extremist ideology, it can lead to suicide terrorism<sup>106</sup>

The primary motivations of the first set, linked with conflict zones, include nationalistic and personal motivations often driven by trauma and revenge for themselves or for the community they are connected to. The second group, the one that is not in conflict zone, include motivations for suicide terrorism as immigration, migration and a clash of culture, as primary guide. Speckhard added a series of other motivations that can be connect to the previous ones, in the second group as extreme sense of societal alienation, loss of positive self-concept or lack of positive identity, desire for meaningfulness, desire to belong to a group with a purpose or a mission, desire for adventure and heroism, strong resonance to secondary traumatization occurring within conflict zones, need for personal redemption from vice or senso of inner corruption, a desire to be seen as attractive and worthy to the opposite sex.<sup>107</sup>

«In all of the religiously oriented groups of bombers using women, except for the Chechens and Uzbeks, it has been seen that women joined their ranks later than men. But once this role was opened to them they often participated whole-heartedly. This can change, however, and particularly becomes important in societies where repressive policies can make a combination of the two motivational sets salient. That is where repressive government policies inspire nationalistic and trauma-based motivations whereas the second set (alienation, marginalization, etc.) is as well active. »<sup>108</sup>

Many traditional prejudices towards women were been shattered down from Speckhard's study, from the general belief females "have" to act as bombers to influence society to some scholars' opinion about the

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<sup>106</sup> *ivi*, p. 1003;

<sup>107</sup> *ivi*, p. 1005;

<sup>108</sup> *ivi*, p. 1006;

link between feminism and female terrorism.<sup>109</sup> In the same article “Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists”, Barbara Viktor sustains the thesis women enter in terrorist organization also because of the lack of high role assignment in society, trying to seek terrorism as a career. On the other hand, Speckhard rebated this position, corroborating her thought with the words of Arin Ahmed, asked if her decision to engage suicide terrorism was connected to feminism, that said: «If I wanted to fight for feminism I certainly wouldn’t do it by exploding myself. »<sup>110</sup>

Other motivations conducting to suicide terrorism, listed in the article, included the sense of empowerment and euphoria, connected with the thought of a bomb strapped to the body<sup>111</sup> and dissociation, observed more on the girls’ sample than on the boys’ one.<sup>112</sup> Concerning female terrorism only, another cause according to Speckhard would be connected to shame.

Female reasoning to terrorism is would also be connected with revenge,<sup>113</sup> more than men and the advantage of having women in terrorist group, less inclined to be suspected, thanks to prejudices against them.<sup>114</sup>

In the article “Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq”,<sup>115</sup> Speckhard retrace major data of female suicide bombers in Iraq. The first suicide attack in Iraq, occurred in 2003 and from them, over 900 suicide attacks took place, killing over ten thousand people.<sup>116</sup> The frequency of suicide attacks is summarized in Figure 2.1.1 [Table 2.]. Also, Speckhard introduced in her study on female kamikaze in Iraq, a table including the types of suicide attacks perpetrated between 2003 and 2008, represented by Figure 2.1.2 [Table 3.]. As seen in Fig.2.1.2, female suicide vest attacks were 24. The high number of successfully detonated women (19) has to be attributed to the cynical use of fake pregnancy to hide bombs under their vests.

« Given that only two women have used pregnancy as a ruse among the female Iraqis terrorists thus far (the other case involving a posed pregnancy by a woman in 2008 waiting to blow herself up as a Shia wedding party passed by) may simply be a statement of how easily women, especially if dressed conservatively in a burka or abaya, can pass checkpoints. There is little need to pretend to be pregnant to avoid a search. »<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *ivi*, p. 1007

<sup>110</sup> *Ivi*, p. 1011;

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>112</sup> *ivi*, pp. 1113-1114;

<sup>113</sup> *ivi*, p. 1116;

<sup>114</sup> *ivi*, p. 1117;

<sup>115</sup> Anne Speckhard, *Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, in “Democracy and Security”, 2009, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419160902723759>;

<sup>116</sup> *ivi*, p. 19;

<sup>117</sup> *ivi*, p. 28;

Fig. 2.1.1<sup>118</sup>

**Table 2:** Frequency of suicide attacks yearly attempted and carried out by Iraqi female suicide bombers and female bombers in Iraq, 2003–2008.

Year	Total Achieved Suicide Attacks	Total Achieved Attacks (percent)	Year	Thwarted and Failed Suicide Attacks	Total Attempted and Achieved (percent)
2003	1	1 car bomb	2003	1	4 arrested with vests
2004	0		2004	0	
2005	4	2 car bombs; 2 suicide vests	2005	2	1 arrested with vest; 1 failed detonation
2006	1	1 suicide vest	2006	0	
2007	6	6 suicide vests	2007	1	1 shot with suicide vest
2008	12	11 suicide vests; 1 car bomb	2008	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20 vests; 4 car bombs</b>		<b>4</b>	
	Total Achieved Attacks	Total Achieved Attacks		Total Thwarted or Failed Attacks	Total Attempted and Achieved Attacks

Fig. 2.1.2<sup>119</sup>

**Table 3:** Types of suicide attacks by Iraqi female suicide bombers and female bombers in Iraq, 2003–2008.

Total Female Suicide Vest Attacks—24		Total Female Car Bomb Attacks—4	
Percent of total female suicide attacks—86% are by suicide vest		Percent of total female suicide attacks—14% are by car bomb	
Type of Incident	Total Females Involved	Incidents	Totals Females Involved
Successfully detonated	19 women	Successfully detonated cars bombs—3 cars	4 women
Arrested with suicide vests prior to detonation	5 women	Successfully detonated car bomb—1 taxi	1 woman
Gunned down prior to detonation	1 woman		
Failed detonation of device	1 woman		
Remote detonation of device	2 women		
Total females involved—33	28 total by suicide vest		5 total by car bomb

<sup>118</sup> *ivi*, p.26;

<sup>119</sup> *ivi*, p.27;

Figure 2.1.3 [Table 5.] describes the target of attempted and successful female attacks while Figure 2.1.4 [Table 6] represent a global summary of female suicide bombings.

Fig. 2.1.3<sup>120</sup>

**Table 5:** Targets of attempted and successful female suicide attacks involving Iraqis, 2003–2008.

Target of Attack	Number of Attacks	% of Total Attacks	% of Total Attacks
US Forces			17.6%
US forces, checkpoints, patrols, and facilities	4—Car bomb	14%	
US military and diplomats en route to Iraq and on R & R	1—Suicide vest*	3.6%	
Iraqi Army, Police, and Security Forces			46.6%
Iraqis standing in line outside Iraqi army recruiting center	1—Suicide vest	3.6%	
Iraqi police, courtroom, and security forces	7—Suicide vest** 1—Car bomb	29%	
Awakening and other Sunni groups working with Americans	4—Suicide vest	14%	
Iraqi Civilians			32%
Iraqi civilians in Baghdad markets	3—Suicide vest***	11%	
Iraqi civilians—Shi'a	6—Suicide vest	21%	
Unclear target	1—Suicide vest	3.6%	3.6%
Total female suicide attacks	28		

\*Female bomber with a malfunctioning suicide vest attacked along route three other male suicide bombers three hotels in Amman frequented by US forces. The attacks hurt and killed mainly Jordanian civilians.<sup>56</sup>

\*\*One attacker removed her vest when denied access to the building but still detonated it, a second one was gunned down as she attempted to approach, which detonated her bomb prematurely killing only herself.<sup>57</sup>

\*\*\*One arrested in route to her target, two were mentally handicapped women remotely detonated.<sup>58</sup>

Fig. 2.1.4<sup>121</sup>

**Table 7:** Female suicide bombings globally by country of origin (includes failed and intercepted).<sup>59</sup>

Nationality of Bomber	Number of Female Bombers	Percent of Total
Sri Lankans	78	29%
Palestinians	73	27%
Chechens	48	17.5%
Iraqis	32	12%
Turkish Kurds	15	5.5%
Lebanese	8	3%
Uzbek	6	2%
Moroccan	4	1.2%
Pakistani	2	1%
Indian	1	1%
Tajikistani	1	.2%
Somali	1	.2%
Afghani	1	.2%
Belgian	1	.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>120</sup> *ivi*, p. 31;

<sup>121</sup> *ivi*, p. 34;

The article points out the situation of the Sunni Phenomenon in Iraq. The principal points are summarized in the following sentences.

The article underlines the importance of trauma and revenge in aspirant suicidal people. These tools are excellent instruments in order to carry out the act directly and without the need for accompaniment. Being traumatized or driven by revenge, however, is not enough to cause a person to commit suicide. For example, a person who has experienced a loss, whether for a husband or a family member, despite being in an environment favorable to radicalization, often initially does not believe in martyrdom for revenge. It is not easy, to take advantage of this condition. On the other hand, however, these situations also occur due to the lack of another way out for women. Increasing ways out and help for them, could be the beginning to discourage radicalization.

«It pays to invest in and offer security to psychosocial trauma centers where psychological, social work and psychosomatic treatments are offered; and to offer jobs assistance, training and entrepreneurship programs including offering micro-credits to Iraqi women who are interested to rebuild their communities and countries. Iraq was once a thriving country and can be again in the future. Women are necessary for building that future, and should not be left vulnerable to those who would use them for purposes of destruction.»<sup>122</sup>

## 2.2 Martha Crenshaw, “The Puzzle of Suicide Terrorism” (2009)

Martha Crenshaw is a political scientist and a senior fellow emerita at CISAC and FSI. She has published extensively on the subject of terrorism. The article I choose for my thesis is entitled “Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of «Suicide Terrorism»”<sup>123</sup>, published in “International Society of Political Psychology”, in 2009. Even if in the article is not intended to be specifically descriptive for female terrorism, the general character of the models makes me believe in its indistinct applicability in both male and female cases, and therefore useful for the purpose of my thesis.

The path towards terrorism is composed of a series of steps, according to Crenshaw:

1. Individuals seek significance
2. Ideologies provide a rationale
3. Organizations channel and direct that search
4. Society rewards the result

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<sup>122</sup> *ivi*, p. 46;

<sup>123</sup> Martha Crenshaw, *Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of “Suicide Terrorism”*, in “Political Psychology”, Vol. 20, n. 3, pp. 359-364, 2009, available on [https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655399?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A915073461b5cfb7675e59b46d0a20c04&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655399?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A915073461b5cfb7675e59b46d0a20c04&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents);



The author began the research asking herself two questions: why a person would choose suicide terrorism, despite other forms of political opposition, how could we explain the timing and the varying intensity of campaigns of suicide attacks, is significance uniformly in the same society-wide and why ideologies glorify suicidal attacks? <sup>124</sup>.

«At any rate, the individuals who wished to be suicide bombers tended to come from specific localities within their home countries- the recruits were not randomly distributed across society. Most were first-time volunteers who joined in groups. Interestingly, these foreign fighters sign a contract in advance. They pledge that they are seeking martyrdom out of their own free will and they will not renege on this promise once they arrive in Iraq. If they do back out, they understand that Al Qaeda will abandon them except for helping them leave the country. If they change their minds, they cannot switch to being simply a combatant. Complete exclusion from the group is a coercive threat. We do not know how many have reneged despite the negative consequences. »<sup>125</sup> wrote Crenshaw about future suicide bombers.

Cases of suicide terrorism in Afghanistan, highlighted the fact perpetrators were in most of the cases refugees in Pakistan. UN reports described most of the bombers as young, poor, uneducated, introvert, impressionable and heavily influenced by their recruiters, men<sup>126</sup>. Crenshaw ends with:

«The ultimate conclusion is pessimistic. If attaining significance by killing oneself along with others builds on a universal drive, it cannot easily be stopped. Conflicts that generate both grievance and reminders of mortality show no sign of going away. The only mildly encouraging factor is that Al Qaeda circles are roiled by a hot debate over the killing of civilians. »<sup>127</sup>

### 2.3 McCauley and Moskalkenko, “Friction” (2011)

“Friction” is the book published in 2011 by Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, useful for everyone that wants to understand the complex world of terrorism and radicalization<sup>128</sup>.

Even if the radicalization’s theory described in the book was not made to be specifically based on female terrorism, McCauley and Moskalkenko mention a variety of females including Vera Zasulich<sup>129</sup> (1849-1919), failed attacker of Russia’s General Governor Trepov, and Sophia Perovskaya<sup>130</sup>, mastermind and executive of People’s Will, together with her husband Zhelyabov.

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<sup>124</sup> *ivi*, pp. 359-360;

<sup>125</sup> *ivi*, p. 362;

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>127</sup> *ivi*, p. 363;

<sup>128</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, p. 14, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>129</sup> Clark, McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko. *Friction. How Conflict Radicalizes them and Us*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, 2017, pp. 22-36;

<sup>130</sup> *ivi*, pp. 55-64;

Authors McCauley and Moskalenko agreed on the complexity of the theme of radicalization<sup>131</sup>, and divided the phenomenon in three steps:

1. *Individual Radicalization*
2. *Group Radicalization*
3. *Mass Radicalization*

Starting with “Individual Radicalization”, McCauley and Moskalenko identified six possible mechanisms to approach it:

1. Personal Grievance: when an individual tends to see himself as a victim of injustice, it can be possible that he wants revenge towards the person who did the injustice but also towards an entire category.<sup>132</sup>
2. Group Grievance: someone could radicalize because of his empathy with a group who suffered from injustice, even if the injustice did not occur directly to himself.<sup>133</sup>
3. Slippery Slope: slippery slope stands for a progressive, and in part unintentional, radicalization. At the beginning the individual doesn't join the group to use violence intentionally, but they end up becoming a terrorist after having been involved in a series of situations that pushes them in the dynamics of the group.<sup>134</sup>
4. Love: people joining an extremist or a terrorist group, could be involved due to their partners, formerly part of the formation.<sup>135</sup>
5. Status and Risk Seeking: someone could also undertake the path to radicalization because of their need to gain a better social status, or even because they want to live strong emotions. This category is often reported to be associated to people from lower classes.<sup>136</sup>
6. Unfreezing: this mechanism can take place following "extraordinary" conditions. Anyone who is a victim of a war in his\her country, is fired, moves to the other side of the world, can feel lost and afraid. In this case the terrorist organization initially function as a shield, a barrier, some help, in a reality that the individual does not recognize and in which he finds a family in terrorism.<sup>137</sup>

It is important to underline that even if the scholars identified six different categories for Individual Radicalization, they are not separate classes. As is common knowledge, most terrorists, including Osama Bin Laden<sup>138</sup>, do not identify only in a category, but in a combination of them.

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<sup>131</sup> The model created by McCauley and Moskalenko was also included in other articles, see also: Clark, McCauley and Sophia, Moskalenko. *Mechanism of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism*, (2009), Clark, McCauley and Sophia, Moskalenko. *Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction Between Activism and Radicalism*, (2008);

<sup>132</sup> Alessandro, Orsini. *What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA Model*. Routledge in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, p. 14. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*;

The second type of radicalization, according to the authors, is “Group Radicalization”, that can be divided too, into three sub-categories:

1. Group Polarization: in the words of Orsini: «Many individuals join a group with a moderate inclination at the beginning, but they end up radicalizing through partaking in discussions and the sharing of ideas with the other members. This phenomenon, known as group polarization, shows how the group has power over the individual on the basis of the radicalization through discussion phenomenon. Those who are willing to face the danger of death are considered the most devoted members to the group and its cause. Therefore, these people are admired, hence why during a discussion, nobody would want to give the impression that they were less willing than others to take any risks. Group cohesion also enhances radicalization.»<sup>139</sup>
2. Group Competition: a great appeal to the group could be produced thanks to the introduction of an external enemy, capable of creating cohesion through the group and to cause a strong identity. Bonds in the group can also be generated from the competition with other groups<sup>140</sup>.
3. Group Isolation: when the group isolates itself from the outside world, bonds through it become stronger, even much more if the group participate to a war. <sup>141</sup>

In conclusion McCauley and Moskalkenko pointed out three main categories for “Mass Radicalization”: it is important to spread values of the groups, in order to reach more proselytes:

1. Jitsu Politics: this particular politic refers to actions that intends to provoke violent reactions from states and governments, due to achieve new believers, pushed from the extreme responses of countries<sup>142</sup>.
2. Hatred: this is another mechanism that led to mass radicalization due to the extremization of the enemy’s actions, which make him hateful and worthy of death. An individual who is perennially described as a parasite and a human not worthy of compassion, will eventually be categorized as an object to be destroyed. <sup>143</sup>
3. Martyrdom: martyrdom fulfills various functions. First of all, it helps to increase competition between terrorist groups, if one group starts making attacks, the other will feel compelled to do so too, in order to maintain its honor. Martyrdom also helps to cohesion among the sympathizers. Finally it can be useful if read as:« Groups who employ suicide terrorism do not judge the usefulness of this tactic based solely in terms of the damages inflicted: a failed suicide attack can lead to positive results. Richard Reid, who hid an explosive device in his shoes while he was on a Paris- Miami flight, on 22nd

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<sup>139</sup> *ivi*, p.15;

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*,

December, 2001, was discovered, but Western citizens were scared regardless of it not going off and authorities were forced to invest more financially to prevent similar attacks.»<sup>144</sup>

After their research, McCauley and Moskalenko, wanted to underline the difference between radicalization of ideas (cognitive radicalization) and radicalization of behavior (violent radicalization), stressing the idea that people with radical ideas are rarely violent. <sup>145</sup>

## 2.4 Mia Bloom, “The Four Rs Plus One” (2012)

Mia Bloom analyzed the problem of female terrorism in her book “Bombshell. The Many Faces of Women Terrorists” developing the original theory “The Four Rs Plus One”<sup>146</sup>. The author firmly believed female terrorism was underestimated because of the general assumption that women are “for nature” non-violent. This assumption led in various case to underestimate the potential of women that revealed themselves as terrorists.

The theory of The Four Rs Plus One intended to examine the deep reasons that led a woman to become a terrorist or a suicide bomber. The Four Rs stands for: *Revenge, Redemption, Relationship and Respect*. A woman could be moved from *revenge* when a family member is brutally killed because of a war or a faction, that eventually she will identify in an enemy to destroy. The grief of a loss could be so heavy that a terrorist action could become reasonable. This is the case, for example, of the Black Widows of Dubrovka. Another cause could be recognized in *redemption*. Especially in those cases when a woman grew up in a very conservative or radical environment, it is simple to believe that something pointed as a stigma could be perceived as a sin from a woman that perpetrated it. Some themes as adultery are perceived so disgraceful to let them believe they have to redeem themselves through terrorism. The third R is *relationship*, and it refers to the inclination to become terrorists when the person has a relationship with someone that is connected with the organization. Some examples could be seen in Tamil Tigers or Al Qaeda. The last R stands for *respect* and it is revealing of a sense of gratitude of female terrorists that know someone will depict them as heroines, after their death. The author adds an R for *rape*. Terrorists especially affected by this cause are the Iraqi ones or terrorists from Chechnya, or even the ones from Boko Haram. This cause is very similar to redemption, and affects women raped during wars or from someone identified as an enemy from the state they are living. The shame of the women towards themselves is so deep they become terrorists. Mentioning Mia Bloom:

«Either these women are unaware of who is ultimately to blame or they are suffering from such a deep sense of traumatic shock that they are willing to work for the organization that has victimized them. These women are victims of the conflict, victims of their attackers, and victims of the situation in which they found

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>146</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 233-249;

themselves. We cannot help but sympathize with women in this situation and yet they kill and maim hundreds of innocents. »<sup>147</sup>

It is important to point out that to be terrorism there has to be both motive and opportunity. Occupations of countries by foreign troops together with the motivation of a person to be a terrorist cause the “perfect” environment for terrorist actions. Some female terrorists are forced to be terrorists, some are pushed from economical motives, some of them are even compelled by their families. The author also analyzed the fact that women tend to become necessary in a terrorist organization when men are incapacitated to enjoy an action, it is also underlined leadership roles are rarely assigned to a woman, so their participation do not in any sense improve social equality in their environment.

In order to discourage female terrorism, Mia Bloom suggested the three Ds: *Delegitimize*, *Deglamorize* and *Demobilize*<sup>148</sup>. She wrote that an effective way to deter radicalization, could be to deglamorize terrorism. Medias play an important role in this: instead of describing terrorists as bad and powerful, they should emphasize their moral corruption. In this order, it could be useful to report considerations and interviews of terrorists who have repented of their actions. To further avert the terrorist danger, it is also important to underline its scarce ability to achieve the religious and political objectives that they set for themselves. It is important to associate by contrast to this hypothesis the way of negotiation and reconciliation; it is important in this process to be focused on women, who, according to the author, often appear more radicalized than men. Although it is not always possible to change its ideology, it is important to change the means by which it is realized, passing from violence to negotiation.<sup>149</sup>

## 2.5 Alessandro Orsini, “DRIA Model” (2016)

The DRIA model is a sociology theory that inspect the theme of terrorist radicalization, developed by Alessandro Orsini. The theory was firstly published in Alessandro’s Orsini *Anatomy of the Red Brigades*<sup>150</sup>, and then further developed in other articles and books<sup>151</sup> as “What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model”<sup>152</sup>. Just as “Friction”, the DRIA Model gives a broader view on the terrorist world, not limiting itself only to the female terrorism. Despite this, there are many examples of the model applied on female cases, including terrorist women like Margherita Cagol, Susanna Ronconi and Nadia

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<sup>147</sup> *ivi*, p. 237;

<sup>148</sup> *ivi*, pp. 247-248;

<sup>149</sup> *Ibidem*;

<sup>150</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 2011;

<sup>151</sup> The DRIA Model was included in other books and articles; see also: Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomia delle Brigate Rosse: le radici ideologiche del terrorismo rivoluzionario*. (2010), Alessandro Orsini, *Sacrifice. My Life in a Fascist Militia*. (2017), Alessandro Orsini, *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli*. (2016);

<sup>152</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

Ponti, which biographies are narrated in the book “Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists”<sup>153</sup>.

Orsini also applied the DRIA Model to other female cases, including the one of Muriel Degauque, the first European citizen that became a suicide bomber after being radicalized to jihadism<sup>154</sup>. Her story was recounted by the author in his book “ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo.”

Muriel Degauque was a Belgian citizen who blew herself up at the age of 38 in Iraq, on November 9, 2005. Through the reconstruction of her life, the woman grew up in a humble family, and her teachers remember her as a not particularly brilliant student, but always impeccable in her manner and appearance. The first signs of backsliding begin in the third year of high school, when she reported to start using drugs, according to several sources, including police<sup>155</sup>. The tragic death of his brother increased her inexorable collapse into the abyss. Her life soon became disoriented and pervaded by alcohol and drugs, until she met an Algerian boy who introduced her to Islam. Her conversion had beneficial effects initially, which dragged her out of the addiction tunnel. The woman married Issam Goris, moved first to Brussels and then to Morocco, where she studied Arabic and the Koran. Her conversion represented a radical change in her person: if at first she was a disoriented and fragile girl, with the conversion she becomes intolerant, loyal to the rules of the Koran and respectful of the customs and traditions of religion, which she also imposed to her family<sup>156</sup>. She soon withdrew into herself, moving to Syria and severing all relations with her previous life. Her husband joined a group of recruiters who were tasked with recruiting people to commit suicide in Iraq for terrorist purposes for the cause of al-Zarqawi. Muriel managed to carry out her suicide attack, blowing herself up in 2005, her husband was killed by the police.<sup>157</sup>

“DRIA” is an acronym that stands for:

Disintegration of Social Identity

Reconstruction of Social Identity through a Radical Ideology

Integration in Revolutionary Sect

Alienation from the Surrounding World

The DRIA model reconstructs the path of a vocational terrorist in order to become such, through the study of the biographies of the following thirty-nine jihadi and terrorists<sup>158</sup>:

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<sup>153</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 2011;

<sup>154</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli*, Rizzoli, Milano, 2017, p. 203;

<sup>155</sup> *ivi*, p. 204;

<sup>156</sup> *ivi*, pp. 205-207;

<sup>157</sup> *ivi*, p. 208;

<sup>158</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 21-22;

- Mohammed Bouyeri, who killed Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam (2 November 2004);
- Mohammed Sidique Khan, Hasib Hussain, Germaine Lindsay, Shehzad Tanweer, the perpetrators of the London Bombings (7 July 2005);
- Muriel Degauque, who is considered the first European female suicide bomber. She committed suicide in Iraq, after she became a jihadist, (9 November 2005);
- Nidal Malik Hassan, a former American Army Major convicted of killing 13 people in the Fort Hood mass shooting (5 November 2009);
- Mohammed Game, who tried to blow himself up in front of the Santa Barbara military barracks in Milan (12 October 2009)
- Zouheir Jelassi, the ringleader of an al-Qaeda-affiliated Tunisian network that operated out of the Milan area (Buccinasco)
- Arid Uka, who conducted the attack against the Frankfurt airport, causing the death of two US soldiers (2 March 2011);
- Mohammed Merah, who carried out the massacre against the Hebrew school of Toulouse (19 March 2012);
- Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who perpetrated the massacre against the Boston marathon (15 April 2013);
- Michael Adebolajo, the murderer of the soldier Lee Rigby, killed in London (22 May 2013);
- Giuliano Delnevo, a 23-year-old Italian convert to Islam who died as a martyr on 12 June 2013 in al-Qasayr, Syria, while fighting with a group of Chechen Islamic extremists against Asad forces.
- Martin Couture-Rouleau, who committed the assassination of the policeman Patrice Vincent, in Saint Jean sur Richelieu, in Quebec (20 October 2014); Michael Bibeau, who killed the soldier Nathan Cirillo in Ottawa (22 October 2014);
- Said Kouachi and Chérif Kouachi, the perpetrators of the slaughter against the offices of Charlie Hebdo (7 January 2015);
- Amedy Coulibaly, who conducted the massacre against the kosher supermarket in Paris (9 January 2015);
- Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, the author of the Chattanooga massacre (16 July 2015);
- Omar Mateen, who carried out the slaughter against the night club Pulse in Orlando, Florida (12 June 2016);  
Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, the perpetrator of the Nice massacre (15 July 2016);
- Adel Kermiche, one of the two authors who killed Jacques Hamel in the Catholic church in Normandy (26 July 2016).
- Larossi Abballa, the author of the Magnanville stabbing (13 June 2016) Mohammad Daleel, the perpetrator of the Ansbach bombing (24 July 2016) Khaled Babbouri, the author of the Charleroi Police Officers stabbing with a machete (6 August 2016)

- Anis Amri is responsible for the Berlin truck attack (23 December 2016)
- Khalid Massod, the author of the Westminster truck attack and stabbing (22 March 2017)
- Rakhmat Akilov, the perpetrator of the Stockholm truck attack (7 April 2017)
- Karim Cherufi, the author of the Champs-Élysées shooting (20 April 2017)
- Salman Abedi, the suicide bomber who blew himself-up at the Manchester Arena at the end of Ariana Grande concert (22 May 2017)
- Abderrahman Bouanane, the perpetrator of the Turku stabbing (Finland, 18 August 2017)
- Ahmed Hanachi, the author of the Marseille stabbing (1 October 2017)
- Younes Abouyaaqoub who drove a van into pedestrians on La Rambla in Barcelona (17 August 2017)
- Redouane Lakdim, responsible for the Carcassonne and Trèbes assaults (23 March 2018)
- Khamzat Azimov, the author of the Paris knife attack, near Palace Garnier (12 May 2018)
- Benjamin Herman, responsible for the stabbing of two female police officers and a civilian in Liège, Belgium (28 May 2018)
- Chéerif Chekatt, the perpetrator of the Strasbourg attack (11 December 2018)

As Alessandro Orsini explained in his article, people can lose themselves as a result of a series of personal traumas or failures. how they react to these moments appears fundamental: there are people who abandon themselves to despair, those who are proactive and embrace new trends and beliefs, trying to improve their situation, and those who, being marginalized, can come into contact with extremist and terrorist groups.<sup>159</sup>

This situation eventually could lead to the so-called *Disintegration of Social Identity*, first stage of the model. In this period the individual starts to question himself/herself, and while some people remain stuck in this circle, some others start to approach new ways to get out from that uncomfortable situation, including ways like the terrorist world.

The phase of *Reconstruction of Social Identity* began with the belief to have found the lost points of reference in the Jihadi ideology, realizing to have a great mission in the world. According to the author, embracing the jihadist mentality, the individual acquires a "radical mental universe", which is based on the categories of: a) Radical Catastrophism; b) Waiting for the End; c) Obsession with Purity; d) Identification of Evil; e) Obsession with Purification; f) Exaltation of Martyrdom or Desire to be Persecuted; g) Purification of the Means through the End.<sup>160</sup>

Also the ones that embrace extremist ideologies, justify their beliefs and radical actions through a characteristic way of think, that could be summarize as:

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<sup>159</sup> *Ivi*, p. 23;

<sup>160</sup> *Ivi*, p. 24;



«The world has been plunged into an abyss of pain and misery (radical catastrophism) because of the actions of certain categories of people (identification of evil) who deserve to be exterminated (obsession with purification). Before the world ends (waiting for the end) one must isolate oneself to protect oneself from rampant moral corruption (obsession with purity) and rejoice in being persecuted, because the sacrifice of life is evidence of spiritual purity (desire to be persecuted). The end is such that it justifies the use of murder (purification of the means through the end). »<sup>161</sup>

The third phase is the *Integration in a Revolutionary Sect*. Radicalized people begin to enter in groups sharing their same ideas and often start to have direct relationship with members' groups. Through the power derived from relationships, members move from cognitive to violent radicalization, identifying violent actions as fair as long as shared by the other members.

The last phase of the DRIA Model is the *Alienation from the Surrounding World*. Alessandro Orsini identifies this phase as fundamental in order to accept the idea of killing, from the members, as part of the terrorist role. According to Orsini, the alienation from the surrounding world has two functions, one being “manifest” and the other “latent.”

The former has the function of not having contact with the surrounding world, in particular with the Western world, which could corrupt the pure values of their ideology. The second has a function of marginalization of the person from the surrounding world in order to exercise power over him, and not allow him to deal with others outside the sect or group, in order not to highlight the inconsistencies.<sup>162</sup>

## **2.6 L. Windsor, “The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities” (2018)**

Leah Windsor published the article “The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities” in 2018 in “Terrorism and Political Violence”. The aim of her research was to explain why young Muslim women radicalize, undertaking the risks of it, to examine the reasons that could push someone to extremist groups, to understand how internet blogs could improve the chances to be eventually part of groups as ISIS or Al-Qaeda and their role in the recruitment of young women; through the case study of Aqsa Mahmood, originally from Scotland, that joined ISIS fighters in Syria.

Aqsa Mahmood (hereafter, AM) disappeared from her family in Scotland in November 2014, when she decided to become part of the front lines of the conflict in Syria, starting a blog chronicling her political

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*;

<sup>162</sup> *Ivi*, p. 25;

radicalization<sup>163</sup>. Aqsa was from a Pakistani family, grown in Scotland as a privileged girl, she liked music and reading. She started her path to radicalization in October 2013 when started a Tumblr Page (fatubalilghuraba.tumblr.com), active since September 2015, when she reposted block portions of text from religious teachings.<sup>164</sup> Leah Windsor proposed the following factors for Aqsa's radicalization, including age-appropriate developmental markers, political cues provided by family and community, personal attributes, religion characterizing her self-identity and geopolitical environment.<sup>165</sup>

According to the author, social media has increased the possibility to get into contact with women who radicalize and that are getting into the same path, reinforcing their view of the world. But could blogging be classify as propaganda? It depends on the focus of the audience. Specifically, with AM case, her audience changes during her path to radicalization: if before she limited herself to share religious texts, after she moved to Syria, she started to approach her readers with a pedagogical aim and through a persuasive narrative<sup>166</sup>.

Based on Windsor's studies, there are mainly three spheres affecting young women radicalization process, divided in:

1. *Individual Factors:*

- a. Privilege: this includes access to high quality education and technological savvy, that could have facilitated AM to focus more than others, on conceptually complex themes. The fact that she came from a privileged family gave her the instruments to understand the complexity of the Syria situation and the religious texts. Some examples of extremist people coming from wealthy families, besides AM, are Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Osama Bin Laden.<sup>167</sup> Her privileged position came also from her connection both with Western and Islamic cultures.
- b. Power: according to the author high-risk political activity is associated with strong emotions, both positive and negative. The moment of an important choice, coming from a negative period, such as migrating to Syria, symbolize a powerful moment, translating itself as euphoric relief and optimistic language. This transformation of the language appeared clear on AM's blog, after she moved to Syria.<sup>168</sup> «In Scotland, AM was innocuous and quotidian, but in Syria, she became notorious and powerful both through her blog and physical presence»<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

<sup>164</sup> *ivi*, p.507;

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>166</sup> *ivi*, p. 509;

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>168</sup> *ivi*, pp. 511-513;

<sup>169</sup> *ivi*, p.513;

- c. Gender and Expectations: based on the article<sup>170</sup>, men tend to participate in high-risk political activity for nationalistic and religious reasons, while women tend to do so for personal reasons, including reclamation of dignity after war rapes, personal losses, need to validation, need to significance, need to emancipate themselves. ISIS contrary to other terrorist organization, let women fulfill gendered-typical roles in society within the group. AM's radicalization differed from the reasons list before, she did not suffer personal losses either she was not victim of rape. AM possible reasons to racialization stand in exhibit symptoms from secondhand exposure to traumatic events, connecting with losses felt by other women while experiencing the alienation from Western European society as a woman of color and a child of immigrants. In her blog she discusses five points to help young women prepare to become an ISIS volunteer: firstly, she wrote about practical items to bring, then about other themes as radicalization process, a typical day in the life of a voluntary emigrant and life as a volunteer in violent campaigns, she called jihad.<sup>171</sup>
- d. Youth: Windsor wrote that age plays an important role in young's people susceptibility. At the beginning of her path to radicalization, AM approach was uncritical, romanticized and lacks of analytical depth, and as a middle teenager demonstrated her parent's approval mattered to her, but on the other hand she began to be involved in ISIS activities although in contradiction with her parents' beliefs. There is also a biological explanation of why young people are more inclined to participate in higher risk activities. It is known that the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision making and risk-taking behavior, it is not fully developed until the mid 20s; it is for this reason that adolescents are more predisposed to radicalize at a young age.<sup>172</sup>
- e. Recruiter

## 2. *Social Forces and Factors*:

- a. Social Mobility: one of the factors that could push a woman to radicalize stands in lack of educational and employment opportunities available to young women, that find in extremist group a social mobility. Absent opportunities for them also in social participation, can make women vulnerable up to become involve with risk activities. AM became consumed with religious indoctrination providing her a useful entrée to radicalization<sup>173</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

<sup>171</sup> *ivi*, pp. 513-515;

<sup>172</sup> *ivi*, pp. 515-517

<sup>173</sup> *Ivi*, pp.517-518;

- b. Strong and Weak Ties: an individual could become involved in high-risk activities due to strong ties or weak ties. Strong ties are more prone to become the link of an individual with radicalization. Strong ties include personal contact with a member of a group. Weak ties are a very minor reality in the path through radicalization and include Internet blogs and groups.<sup>174</sup> According to *Granovetter*: «As a long-distance connector, the Internet can facilitate trust building between individuals, leading to an increase in reciprocation and intimate disclosures. This creates an environment primed for predators looking to deceive and manipulate their targets, and an inviting environment for targets to seek validation and companionship. »<sup>175</sup>
- c. Computer Mediated Communication: self-radicalized individuals through Internet and blogs are more prone to a black-white vision, because of their obsessive research of information that tends to validate their first radical ideas, reinforcing their thought.<sup>176</sup>

### 3. *International Relations*:

The ongoing conflict in Syria, and the following conflict and humanitarian crisis that affected the Middle East, worked as a tool for political awareness and personal transformation to high-risk activities. These are the main conflict that affected radicalization, according to the author<sup>177</sup>.

- a. 9/11
- b. Arab Spring
- c. Syrian Civil War

The previous scheme «summarizes the factors affecting the radicalization of young women and their vulnerability to recruitment to high-risk activities. The focus of this inquiry is on young Muslim women in Western societies; however, this model has wider applicability because the mechanisms of radicalization are largely grounded in universally applicable developmental processes. In this context, AM was a prime target for successful online radicalization: her family sent only weak political and religious cues; she was at a developmentally vulnerable age; and in the aftermath of a disappointing life circumstance, she found unchecked solace online as she became increasingly isolated from her friends and family. Her privilege afforded her access to social media, and her education provided the language and technical skills to communicate, process, and publicly chronicle her political transformation. Family, friends, education, and work all represent strong ties in theory. However, in AM's case, they were weak in the face of the omnipresent, ubiquitous Internet. While the Internet itself does not necessarily represent a strong tie in absolute terms, it only need be the strongest tie in a vulnerable individual's life. »<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *ivi*, pp.518-519;

<sup>175</sup> *ivi*. P.519;

<sup>176</sup> *ivi*, p. 518;

<sup>177</sup> *ivi*, pp. 519-521;

<sup>178</sup> *ivi*, pp. 520-521;

For what concerns *language*, Windsor has carried out a careful analysis of the style of AM within her blog. She started the analysis processing text files from her blog posts through *Text Cleaner*. She then evaluated AM's language with three computational linguistic programs: *Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC)*, *Coh-Matrix* and the *Stanford NLP Topic Modeling*. Topics were extrapolated using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), a software that provides sets of terms that represent categories of topics contained within large bodies of text<sup>179</sup>. Table 1. [Fig. 2.6.1] shows the most commonly used words in Aqsa Mahmood's blog.

Fig. 2.6.1<sup>180</sup>

**Table 1.** Most commonly used words in Aqsa Mahmood's blog.

about	everi-	mai-	religion	Think
abu	<i>follow</i>	<i>make</i>	sai-	Those
all	for	<b>man</b>	said	Time
<b>allah</b>	from	mani-	see	Upon
<b>allah</b>	give	<b>messeng-</b>	she	<i>Want</i>
and	<b>good</b>	more	<i>should</i>	Were
ani-	had	most	<b>sister</b>	What
ask	have	<b>muslim</b>	some	When
becaus-	<b>heart</b>	<i>need</i>	such	where
<i>becom-</i>	her	never	take	which
<b>believ</b>	him	<b>night</b>	than	who
bin	how	not	that	why
<b>brother</b>	ibn	<b>onli-</b>	the	will
but	<b>islam</b>	other	thei-	with
call	<b>jihad</b>	our	their	without
can	just	out	them	<b>world</b>
come	know	<b>peopl-</b>	then	would
dai-	<b>knowledge-</b>	<b>person</b>	there	you
did	let	prai-	these	your
enemi-	life	prophet	thi-	

Table 1.<sup>181</sup> highlights a series of recurring words in which words such as "Allah", "sister", "brother", "world" stand out. The recurrence of these words is not accidental, but such as to convey a sense of commonality and closeness to those who read the blog. It is important to understand how the type of communication is identified as central in Windsor's theory. The choice of words is very important because it must create a link with possible followers and build an environment of inclusion and involvement from a distance. Communication and the single word therefore appear to be of fundamental importance for this purpose. The way of interacting with the reader must be careful to excite the followers and to give that extra push to become part of the root cause.

The importance of interaction is reflected not only in the choice of words but also in the main topics covered. Specifically, the main topics are listed below. The educational and training purpose certainly appears very present, with topics ranging from Jihad, to the roles of Islam, to its benefits, up to topics such as the Internet in general.

<sup>179</sup> *ivi*, pp. 521-522;

<sup>180</sup> *ivi*, p. 523;

<sup>181</sup> *ibid*;

Table 2. [Fig. 2.6.2] shows the topics of Aqsa Mahmood’s Tumblr Blog.

Fig 2.6.2<sup>182</sup>

**Table 2.** Topics in Aqsa Mahmood’s Tumblr blog.

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10
“Roles in Islam”	“Ramadan”	“Islam”	“Jihad”	“Scholarship”	“Mother”	“Benefits of Islam”	“Hijrah”	“Home-making”	“Internet”
people	day	allah	allah	allah	mother	people	allah	allah	smellthedeem
imam	man	muslims	jihad	ibn	things	allah	sisters	love	twitter
woman	night	people	bin	knowledge	good	muslims	hijrah	life	abu
mujahideen	people	life	messenger	mercy	love	knowledge	time	don	sin
world	abu	religion	path	shaykh	person	brothers	brothers	children	prophet
today	ibn	state	wealth	sunnah	heart	scholars	making	time	shia
alayhi	pray	fear	person	death	allaah	sheikh	find	husband	umm
religion	allaah	muslim	fighting	leave	feel	prison	dont	people	ali
muslim	umar	islam	narrated	asked	left	quran	women	person	friend
men	qur	war	enemy	children	don	time	back	made	hate
father	reported	sake	fight	authority	bring	evil	heart	didn	alaihi
prophet	replied	land	man	heart	light	book	wallahi	make	tumblr
hadith	lord	earth	mujahid	muhammad	remember	truth	make	dunya	salaam
sallam	ramadan	lands	muslim	women	forget	great	give	home	dont
wasallam	soul	islamic	killed	ummah	time	group	part	years	heard
love	prayer	prophet	good	truth	thing	call	life	death	watch
enemy	give	support	day	imaam	face	ibn	sincere	put	follow
companions	fast	ummah	peace	righteous	stop	benefit	people	give	man
nation	days	peace	prophet	entered	jannah	ahmad	family	patience	army
palestine	water	blood	islam	silent	tears	blessings	bring	sister	back

Windsor analyze the tables as follows:

«I identify several critical decision points that highlight phases of her radicalization that correspond to the categories of privilege, youth, gender, recruiter, and power (Table 3). Early in her blog, she becomes more outwardly pious, remarking on wearing the hijab. She also alludes to a disappointment in her life that changed the course of her life and priorities. Shortly thereafter, she purchases her first abaya. Three months into her blog, she first references the desire to make hijrah, and shortly thereafter laments the difficulty of her family questioning her decisions to become more religious. Two days apart in April 2013, she mentions more specifically that she wants to make hijrah after university, and that she needs to find a job. We can possibly interpret the proximity of these posts as her intent to earn money to finance her emigration process. In the months before she emigrates, she provides frank discussions about her aspirations and acceptance of the practice of polygamy. She also notes her jealousy of other women who have already emigrated. Her last post before emigrating is particularly contemplative, reflecting on the spiritual aspect of hijrah »<sup>183</sup>

<sup>182</sup> *ivi*, p. 524;

<sup>183</sup> *ivi*, p. 525;

Table 3. [Fig. 2.6.3] shows the significant decision points towards radicalization.

**Table 3.** Significant decision points toward radicalization.

Date	Excerpt	Significance
1/22/13	We who wear the Hijab need to become more accepting of our fellow sisters who do not...	Initial blog post
1/27/13	Even though last year was my most depressed year ever I'm so happy everything that happened to me, happened. Because if it didn't, I wouldn't have realized how amazing my life is with Allah in it.	Justification for onset of radicalization
2/27/13	I just bought my first abaya	Purchased first abaya
3/12/13	I just want to make hijrah ok. cbb with Dar al-Kufr anymore.	Initial mention of intent to emigrate
3/16/13	Nothing is more hurtful than your family questioning you why you're wearing the abaya or why you've started growing the beard.	Tensions with family
4/9/13	I need to find a job.	Intent to find a job
4/11/13	InshaaAllaah making hijrah after university.	Declaration of emigration timeline
7/31/13	The way my sisters without mahram made hijrah was that an initial group of sisters with their mahrams made hijrah and got settled and when they were ready they invited the sisters without mahram who travelled together and were met by the original muhajireen.	Admiration of others for hijrah
8/30/13	I have absolutely nothing against polygamy, ma shaa Allaah its such a blessed and beautiful concept in Islaam.	Acceptance of strict religious doctrine
10/26/13	Im getting so so Halal jealous hearing of all those whove recently made Hijrah to Bilaad ash Shaam Feesabeelilah:)	Further admiration of others for hijrah
11/14/13	Hijrah has a comprehensive meaning as understood in Islam. It is not simply just the act of moving from one place to another; from a non-Muslim country to a Muslim country. Ibn al-Qayyim explains that it is, in fact, an emigration of the body and the spirit.	Analytical and contemplative blog post about hijrah; final post before emigrating
12/05/2013	The war broke out ... if you [Muslim men] are not going to be chivalrous knights in this war (fursan al-harb), make way for women to wage it... Yes, by God, men have lost their manhood.	First post after emigrating; strong feminist overtones
03/12/2014	...And I am in no way demeaning those who havent yet embarked upon this journey and most importantly I am not at all deterring sisters from choosing this path—I just want to paint a realistic picture of what is in store for the sisters here.	Next subsequent post (three months later); realistic advice for new recruits
06/03/2014	...If you need to contact me then follow me on Twitter (@_UmmLayth) or Kik me (_axa)...	Soliciting other young women

Fig. 2.6.3<sup>184</sup>

In conclusion the study sums up not only the factors that influence young women to radicalize, but also the development of the language of a young woman, through her radicalization. It is interesting to notice how language and intentions of AM, grow simultaneously, showing the development of AM herself and her radicalization.

## 2.7 A.W. Kruglanski, J.J. Bélanger and R. Gunaratna, “The Motivational Imbalance Theory” (2019)

*The Motivational Imbalance Theory* was published by A.W. Kruglanski, J.J. Bélanger and R. Gunaratna in 2019 in the book “The Three Pillars of Radicalization”, it offered «a psychological perspective on extremism as a general phenomenon of which radicalization leading to terrorism is just a particular case». <sup>185</sup> Based on the theory, individuals have some basic needs, that can be divided into fundamental biological

<sup>184</sup> *ivi*, p. 526;

<sup>185</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

concerns and psychogenic needs. The first ones include nutrition, hydration and rest, the second ones include safety, love, belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Psychogenic needs and biological needs have the same importance for the individual, it is for this reason human tend to fulfill and balance every need<sup>186</sup>.

Authors compare violent extremism to other form of extremism including extreme diets, extreme love, extreme sports, pointing out the danger of this situations, where only a need is satisfied. Our energies are limited, it is possible to understand why extreme situation request more energies, missing out the accomplishment of other needs. In sum: extremism never benefits the individual. Among all the basic human needs, quest of significance as to be pointed out as common to everyone. Every individual wants to matter, to gain respect and to have a purpose, so it is easy to understand that when an individual lost its significance, will do everything to reacquire it. Loss of significance can happen mainly in three ways:

1. *Through loss of significance or humiliation of some sort*: this can include:
  - a. “Personally based significance loss”, caused by a personal failure or an event that tends to make the person feel as their life become suddenly meaningless
  - b. “Socially based significance loss”, caused by the humiliation of one’s group and the consequent perception of the humiliated group of having undermined his founding principles and consequently his stability.<sup>187</sup>
2. *Through an anticipated significance loss*: this can happen when an individual, who begins to perceive his/her own stability as undermined, decides not to face the situation, resorting instead to extreme acts, such as becoming a kamikaze.<sup>188</sup>
3. *Through an opportunity for significance gain*: this last point can be associated with the moment on which a person, having perceived his/her loss of significance, decides to resort to extreme acts, in order to reacquire it. Also in this case, the acts can take the form of terrorism, which convinces the person that the gesture could become a moment of redemption and purification.<sup>189</sup>

According to Kruglanski, Bélanger and Gunaratna there are three pillars that drive to violence: Needs, Narratives and Networks. *Narratives* are represented by ideology: ones it has been activated, the quest of significance can push individuals to commit action they never imagined doing. *Networks* function as links through which individuals, reinforce their ideology and their quest for significance<sup>190</sup>.

«Kruglanski, Bélanger, and Gunaratna always remember that ideology plays a decisive role by clarifying that a social network can promote violent extremism only if its members embrace a radical ideology. In fact, networks with a moderate narrative incompatible with violence are known to facilitate individuals’ exit from violent movements. That is the reason why the Saudi Ministry of the Interior initiated, in 2004, a

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>187</sup> *ivi*, p. 27;

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>190</sup> *ivi*, p. 28;



deradicalization program based on the use of families, with a moderate and peaceful worldview, to pull members back from radical Islam. Involvement of militants' families also characterized the successful Singaporean deradicalization program, initiated in 2001»<sup>191</sup>

Despite the general character of the theory, the Motivational Imbalance Theory was applied to a series of cases of terrorist women.

A story that seems to me so dramatic as so explanatory is the one of Tatiana Menake, the woman that on September 28 in 2006, tried to kill the Sri Lankan prime minister, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake. The woman's intent was discovered by the police, who during some of her on-site inspections of the premeditated suicide bombing place, would have identified her as a suspect, later discovering she was a member of the LTTE. Tatiana's life was described as very tragic. The authors wrote that his father was an alcoholic, that he usually beat her mother and that he killed her when Menake was only three years old. At the age of seven she was abused for four days in a row by her father, while he was drunk, only to be found by her grandfather on the forth day, when he took her away. She lived with her grandparents until the age of fifteen, when they both died and she was brought to her uncles. They considered it a burden and after only two years offered her as a human tax to the LTTE. At seventeen she was trained with other 150 women, and although at first, she did not want to be part of it, after being assigned to a bureaucratic division and suffering from depression, she requested in 2002 to join the Black Tigers, the suicide squad of LTTE.<sup>192</sup> The woman will then explain that her choice was in order to her life to gain respect and meaning. During what should have been her last supper, everyone made her feel like a heroine. The fundamental role that the group and the surrounding environment plays in the beliefs of the followers is evident. The woman's training was hard and meticulous, not everyone is allowed on the suicide squad, and she had to wait more than a year before being assigned an attack. Women who want to join must demonstrate their loyalty to the cause and the group, and their strong will to take their own life.<sup>193</sup>

As explained by the authors, all the elements of the 3N model were present in Menakes's case.

«Her volunteering to the Black Tigers unit was motivated by her quest for significance, to have purpose in life and to matter, as she herself attested. The narrative in LTTE advocated suicide attacks as a praiseworthy testimony of the commitment to a sacred cause, of Tamil independence, and she was immersed in a network of girls who were volunteering to become suicide bombers, socially validating the notion that this deed is prestigious and significance affording»<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>192</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Rohan Gunaratna, *The Three Pillars of Radicalization. Needs, narratives and Networks*, Oxford Univeristy Press, New York, 2019, pp. 119-120;

<sup>193</sup> *ivi*, p. 121;

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*;

In sum the Motivational Imbalance Theory provides a thesis that start from the loss of significance evolving through the three Ns: Needs, identified in the quest for significance, Narratives, or ideology, that function as a justify for violent actions and Networks, helpful to reinforce the links of the individual to the group and their doctrine<sup>195</sup>.

## **2.8 Lauren R. Shapiro and Marie-Helen Maras, “The Social Learning Theory and Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism” (2019)**

“Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States” is an article by Lauren R. Shapiro and Maire-Helen Maras, published in November 2018, that analyzes the evolution of women’s roles in ISIS, applying the Social Learning Theory (SLT) to thirty-one USA women cases joining radical groups. Shapiro and Maras applied the SLT by Aker, to the thirty-one USA women’s cases of radicalization to religious terrorism in order to understand how the extremist ideologies and associated behaviors can be extinguished through deradicalization <sup>196</sup>. Scholars had depicted four factors in SLT contributing to the acquisition and maintenance of “deviant” behaviors. <sup>197</sup>

The first factor is “*differential association*”, it supports the thesis that the interaction between group members structures the environment in which beliefs grow. This factor would build an environment in which these beliefs are easily accepted and repeated, regardless of their violent or not nature. The grade of radicalization to religious terrorism stands in the frequency and intensity of the interactions between group members or users of a radical online group. This statement was confirmed by Shapiro and Maras that wrote:

«Women with only a rudimentary understanding of Islam who use the Internet to learn more information are the most vulnerable to extremist ideology, mainly because they lack the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate the messages critically. To ensure radicalization, ISIS discourages recruits from asking outsiders about Islam, thereby pre- venting them from being introduced to potentially conflicting information.

The online social network provides ISIS with an inexpensive means for finding female sympathizers, connecting with them frequently over long periods of time to dis- cuss, educate, and recruit them to radicalized Islam. ISIS was able to wage electronic jihad because by 2013, most Americans (91 percent) owned cell phones and by 2015, a large subsection of young adults used their phones to access social media (86 percent) and the Internet (88 percent), especially YouTube (82 percent) and Facebook (77 percent). »<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>196</sup> Lauren R. Shapiro and Marie-Helen Maras, *Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, vol. 42, 2019, p. 89, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1513694> (viewed on March 15, 2021);

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>198</sup> *ivi*, p. 90;

The second factor of SLT stands in “*neutralizing definitions*”, or acceptance of acts of violence through social affiliation. ISIS dehumanizes enemies depicting them as infidels or apostates, degrading them so much to convince followers to kill them, without any regret, but rather by convincing them to do the right action. Women learn to perform unacceptable acts, as justified by religious war and by the need to clean the world from infidels.

After “neutralizing definitions” comes the factor of “differential reinforcement”. This factor refers to the reinforcement of their beliefs through internal and external sources in the environment. More precisely:

« The likelihood that the women will voice neutralizing beliefs and engage in terrorism and terrorist-related activities is modulated by the frequency and type of reinforcer. An immediate and continuous reinforcement schedule is used to facilitate the acquisition of new, desirable behaviors and is typically followed by variable ratio reinforcement, such as applying reinforcers after a set number of times desired behavior occurs, to maintain the newly acquired behaviors. During acquisition and maintenance phases, a person increases the number of desired behaviors exhibited when positive consequences or rewards are applied, or unpleasant consequences are removed and decreases undesirable behaviors when unpleasant consequences or punishments are applied. »<sup>199</sup>

The last factor is “*imitation of modeled behaviors*” and evolves around the fact women imitate models that are perceived as desirable and similar to them. One of the most common ways for women to imitate other women from ISIS is by physically travel to the caliphate, or by retweeting a message or image online from ISIS.

According to the study, there are many reasons that attract women to terrorist groups. In the majority of the cases, reasons that push a woman to become part of ISIS, may not differ too much from the reasons of men. Sjoberg and Gentry pointed out daily political and social struggles of women, compared with a better version offered by ISIS<sup>200</sup>; Kneip indicated “female emancipation” as one of the deepest reasons<sup>201</sup> and in accordance with Hoyle, Bradford and Fernet, single women approaching to ISIS have three motives: grievances (e.g., perceived mistreatment of Muslims), solutions (i.e., state-building, sense of belonging, identity), and personal (e.g., revenge, redemption, relationships, respect)<sup>202</sup>. In “Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States” it is also wrote:

Push / pull factors have been suggested by researchers to explain what are the factors that lead people to be receptive to terrorist ideology and subsequently to radicalize and commit violent acts. According to Windsor, push factors for radicalization may include: sociopolitical alienation; religious identity; and anger, hostility,

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<sup>199</sup> *ivi*, p. 92;

<sup>200</sup> *ivi*, p. 93;

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*;

and / or frustration over perceived discrimination, socioeconomic inequality, and foreign policy. as regards female terrorism. <sup>203</sup> Saltman and Smith identified the push factors for Western women who joined ISIS, in the social and cultural isolation and perception of being persecuted, and that no one does anything to avoid this persecution.<sup>204</sup>

The purpose of the research was to investigate the radicalization of American women applying the SLT, analyzing data of ISIS supporters, provided by the government. Data led to the formation of a series of tables.

*Table 1.* [Fig. 2.8.1] analyzes the personal details of the women accused of ISIS terrorist crimes. The table shows data such as age, residences, educational qualifications and religion<sup>205</sup>.

Fig 2.8.1 <sup>206</sup>

**Table 1.** Demographics for U.S. sample of thirty-one women accused of terrorist crimes for ISIS.

Variable	<i>n</i>		<i>n</i>
<b>Age</b>		<b>Religion</b>	
Under 21	9	Islam-born	21
21–30	7	Islam-convert	10
31–40	8		
41–55	7	<b>Birthplace</b>	
		United States	15
<b>Residential location</b>		Somalia	7
Northeast	5	Bosnia	3
Midwest	15	Pakistan	1
South	8	Turkey	1
West	3	Afghanistan	1
		Bangladesh	1
<b>Marital/family status</b>		Sudan	1
Single/no children	11	Unknown	1
Single/children	4		
Relationship/no children	1	<b>Education level*</b>	
Relationship/children	2	Less than high school	5
Married/no children	3	GED/high school	3
Married/children	10	College/graduate	9
		Unknown	14

*Note.* \*Less than high school referred to girls who were homeschooled or currently in high school. College/graduate referred to women who had some college and those with college and graduate degrees.

*Table 2.* [Fig. 2.8.2] makes a further division. In Table 2. data are divided according to three principal criteria: *Radicalization Process Classification* (it refers to the process of the radicalization of women. Did the radicalization occurred alone, in a dyad or in a group?); *Socialization and Support Network* (women’s perceived support from family and friends during the radicalization) and *Internet Functionality* (the study identified two methods for the interaction between recruits or other sympathizers: *Long-lasting/permanent messages*, through Facebook, e-mail, Messenger, You Tube, Twitter Tumblr, blog and chat rooms; and

<sup>203</sup> *ivi*, pp. 93-94;

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>205</sup> *ivi*, p. 96;

<sup>206</sup> *ivi* p.96;

Temporary/encrypted messages, with the use of Instagram, What's App Messenger, Kik, Surespot and Skype).<sup>207</sup>

Fig 2.8.2<sup>208</sup>

**Table 2.** Mean percentage of approval, involvement, and Internet use during radicalization by radicalization process class.

	Self	Dyad	Group
<b>Approval</b>			
Family	00	60	100
Friends	89	60	75
<b>Involvement</b>			
Family	00	60	83
Friends	100	70	75
<b>Internet</b>			
Start	78	100	58
Continued	78	90	83

Table 3. [Fig. 2.8.3] investigates the main reasons of women's radicalization. The study revealed there are six possible reasons for women's radicalization, including: *identification* of women with the terrorist/groups religious, political or extremist ideas, *need* for belonging or to feel a void, desire to correct a real or perceived *injustice*, believing in the *same ideas* of the group, being or desiring a *relationship with a member* of the group and *vulnerability* due to being mentally ill, young, impressionable, bullied or brainwashed.<sup>209</sup>

Fig. 2.8.3<sup>210</sup>

**Table 3.** Mean percentage of reasons by radicalization process class.

Reasons	Self	Dyad	Group	Mean
Identify	78	40	42	51
Need to belong	22	00	00	06
Correct injustice	00	10	00	03
Sympathize	67	50	33	48
Relationship	44	80	100	74
Vulnerable	33	10	33	26

The research highlighted also six possible *roles* that women fulfilled<sup>211</sup> (Table 4. [Fig. 2.8.4]).

1. *Planner*: a role that imply providing tactical strategies for the group or a member of the group,

<sup>207</sup> *ivi*, p. 98;

<sup>208</sup> *ivi*, p. 100;

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>210</sup> *ivi*, p.101;

<sup>211</sup> *ivi*, p.99;

2. *Financial Provider/Adviser*: someone that provides the group directly or indirectly with money and funds,
3. *Supplier*: this role deals with supplying members with things they need (food, weapons...),
4. *Terrorist Enactor*: someone who perpetrated at least one terrorist act,
5. *Spouse/Companion*: travel around the world to offer male ISIS terrorists support or children,
6. *Educator*: an educator is someone who indoctrinates others, even family and friends.

Fig. 2.8.4<sup>212</sup>

**Table 4.** Mean percentage of roles by radicalization process class.

Roles	Self	Dyad	Group	Mean
Planner	22	40	00	19
Financial provider	22	20	50	29
Supplier	22	20	25	23
Terrorist enactor	22	40	00	19
Traveler	67	40	50	52
Educator	56	00	25	19

It is also important to mention the main *types of support* women provided, according to the study<sup>213</sup> (Table 5. [Fig. 2.8.5]):

1. *Instrumental Support*: it includes any support made up of tangible things (self, materials...),
2. *Social Cognitive Support*: consisting of dialogue with members and sympathizers or haters of the group in order to change their minds,
3. *Operational Support*: can be associated to a member that have an active role in the group, realizing terrorist attacks.

Fig. 2.8.5<sup>214</sup>

**Table 5.** Mean percentage of support type by radicalization process class.

Support type	Self	Dyad	Group	Mean
Instrumental	78	70	100	83
Social-cognitive	67	50	67	58
Operational	22	40	00	19

<sup>212</sup> *ivi*, p. 102;

<sup>213</sup> *ivi*, p.99.;

<sup>214</sup> *ivi*, p. 102;

According to Lauren R. Shapiro and Marie-Helen Maras<sup>215</sup> female radicalization has to be divided into three groups of: self, dyad and group.

For all groups, considering both full members and sympathizers, the most used tool was text messages, and for the secondary media, Facebook and Twitter were used more by the self class, Facebook were mostly used by dyad-class women; and YouTube and chatrooms by group-class women.

The reasons for the radicalization, through the study, were verified to be the sympathy towards ideology and the group for the self class and links with militants, for the other two classes.

The roles entrusted to women were in most cases instrumental and secondarily socio-cognitive, they rarely provided operational support.

What was suggested by the authors was to help women with extremist ideologies through programs that let them interact with other sympathizers, channeling these thoughts into discussions and discouraging violence. It is also useful to introduce examples of psychological, physical and moral harm done by ISIS into these programs.<sup>216</sup>

## **2.9 C.I. Morgades-Bamba, P. Raynal & H. Chabrol, “Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women” (2020)**

The research intitled “Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women”<sup>217</sup>, by Clara Isabel Morgades-Bamba, Patrick Raynal and Henri Chabrol in 2020, was conducted on a sample of 643 French college women (aged 18 to 29) and wanted to examine the association between radicalization and a series of elements, that according to the hypothesis, would have been predictors. In particular the study analyzed the following features:

1. *Socio-Cultural Factors*: in this group were included elements as:
  - a. Cultural Identity: examining if the woman was more prone to be tied with nationalist\ethnic identity or a religious one. According to the research: « For example, it has been shown that individuals who rate their Muslim identity as being more important than their national or ethnic identity tend to have more positive attitudes toward jihad and martyrdom. »<sup>218</sup>
  - b. Perceived Discrimination: groups that shown a high perceived discrimination towards themselves or their group, were revealed to be more inclined to become radicalized.<sup>219</sup>
  - c. Religious Involvement

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<sup>215</sup> *ivi*, pp. 107-109;

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>217</sup> Clara Isabel Morgades-Bamba, Patrick Raynal & Henri Chabrol, *Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, Vol. 32, n. 7, 1439-1457, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1481051> (viewed on March 17, 2021);

<sup>218</sup> *ivi*, p. 1440;

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*;

2. *Psychological Issues*, were observed in order to examine if they could determine an element that contributes to radicalization;
3. *Dogmatism*: this element is very popular when it comes to the theme of radicalization, especially because of its link with hostility, dehumanization and increased aggression, toward people who hold different views and principles<sup>220</sup>;
4. *Personality Traits*, in particular it was observed if any of the women included in the study were compatible with the *Dark Tetrad of Personality*<sup>221</sup>:
  - a. Machiavellianism: « Coldness, duplicity, instrumentality, ability to detach oneself from conventional morality, and tendency to deceive and manipulate others »<sup>222</sup>
  - b. Psychopathy: « Impaired empathy, lack of remorse, antisociality, high impulsivity, thrill-seeking, and anxiety »<sup>223</sup>
  - c. Narcissism: « Grandiosity, entitlement, dominance, and superiority »<sup>224</sup>
  - d. Sadism: « Tendency to humiliate and hurt others for enjoyment or pleasure, feeling of power and dominance by inflicting suffering on others, and gratuitous cruel or demeaning behavior towards others »<sup>225</sup>
5. *Psychological Tendencies*:
  - a. Borderline: tendencies to have a dichotomous thinking, (as “all or nothing”, “black and white” and “right and wrong”), identity struggle, frequent social isolation and affective, cognitive and behavioral impulsivity<sup>226</sup>;
  - b. Schizotypal: social isolation and odds believes linked with a tendency to be suspicious, prone to believe to be persecuted, vulnerable and anxious;
  - c. Depressive

The following figure [Fig. 2.9.1] shows the hypnotized model created by Morgades-Bamba, Raynal and Chabrol. The aim of the research was to design a predictive model of radicalization of young college women, where all the factors, earlier mentioned, would have eventually conducted to radicalization through terrorism. According to the hypothesis the factors would have increased the level of dogmatism that would have led to radicalized conditions and radicalized behaviors.

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<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>221</sup> *ivi*, p. 1441;

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*;



**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha, scale ranges, descriptive statistics, and bivariate correlations.

	$\alpha$	Range	$M (SD)$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Cultural Identity	.88	12–60	39.70 (8.91)	–											
2. Cultural Discrimination	.80	10–50	17.82 (6.61)	.28***	–										
3. Religious Involvement	.98	37–148	54.03 (23.81)	.37***	.34***	–									
4. Machiavellianism	.73	20–140	71.39 (12.60)	–.10**	.15***	–.11**	–								
5. Psychopathy	.75	15–60	25.94 (6.14)	.00	.15***	–.04	.45***	–							
6. Narcissism	.64	0–16	3.63 (2.58)	.10*	.11**	–.01	.32***	.26***	–						
7. Sadism	.70	11–44	16.12 (4.13)	–.05	.18***	–.05	.46***	.35***	.23***	–					
8. Borderline	.80	9–63	33.76 (11.29)	–.02	.21***	–.02	.31***	.09*	.14***	.37***	–				
9. Schizotypy	.81	0–22	8.83 (4.64)	–.00	.28***	.11**	.34***	.29***	.02	.33***	.55***	–			
10. Depression	.84	0–27	9.90 (5.50)	–.09*	.20***	.04	.30***	.11**	.02	.25***	.60***	.47***	–		
11. Dogmatism	.82	36–180	78.98 (14.00)	.19***	.28***	.33***	.24***	.19***	.09*	.13**	.08*	.16***	.15***	–	
12. Radicalized Cognitions	.83	0–44	12.02 (3.62)	–.01	.19***	.04	.29***	.22***	.20***	.26***	.11**	.11**	.11**	.32***	–
13. Radicalized Behaviors	.81	0–55	3.31 (5.76)	.06	.13**	.03	.24***	.13**	.21***	.20***	.15***	.12**	.11**	.27***	.46***

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The participants of the case study were undergone to online questionnaires, were they had to provide information. The sample included 643 women aged between 18 and 29, 94.6% were of French nationality while 3.6% of the participants were of European non-French nationalities and 1% African nationality, 0.3% Middle-East nationality and 0.3% American nationality<sup>228</sup>. 54% of the sample was single, 45.5% was in couple and only 0.5% was married<sup>229</sup>. The sample was also cataloged for study field, including: Human sciences (psychology, sociology, ethnology): 32.3%; laws: 14.6%; literature, foreign languages: 12.8%; scientific fields, engineering: 12.3%; economy and trade, business and communication: 9%; history, geography, political science: 8.6%; arts: 4.8%; education, pedagogy: 3.4%; architecture: 1.1%; and philosophy: 1.1%<sup>230</sup>. Also 26.5% of the sample was at the first year of bachelor, 26.7% was at their second year of bachelor, 23.4% was at their third year of bachelor, 16.5% was at their first year of master, 6.7% was at their second year of master and only 6% was following a doctorate<sup>231</sup>.

The study led to the following table (Table 1.) [Fig.2.9.2], showing scale ranges and Cronbach's alpha measures, for the features of: Cultural Identity, Cultural discrimination, Religious Involvement, Machiavellian Traits, Psychopathic Traits, Narcissistic Traits, Sadistic Traits, Borderline Traits, Schizotypal Traits.

<sup>227</sup> *ivi*, p.1442;

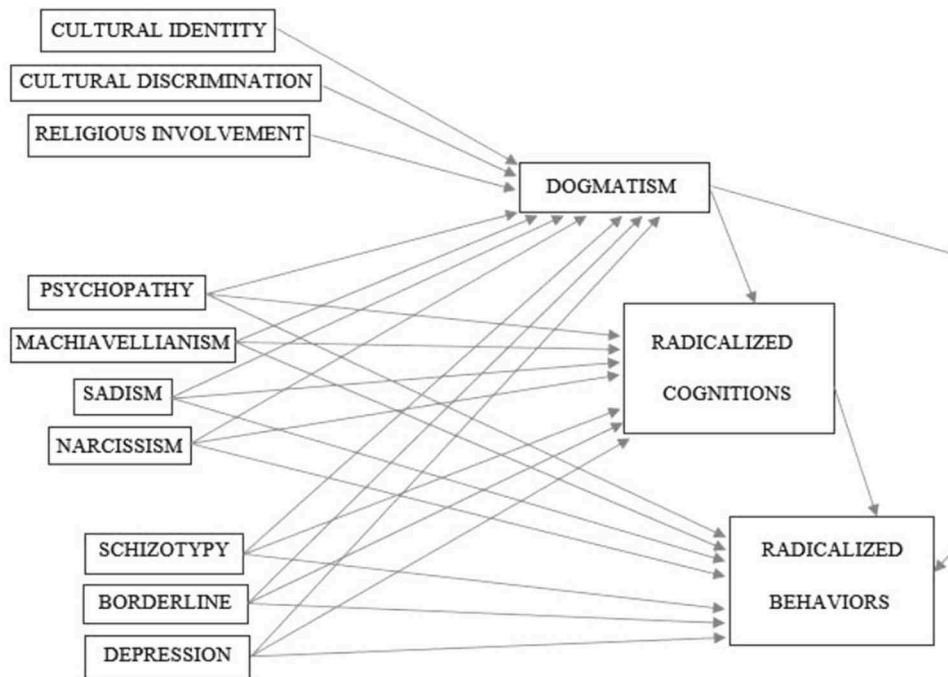
<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*;

[Fig.2.9.2]<sup>232</sup>



Results showed the expected relationships. « Dogmatism, radicalized cognitions, and radicalized behaviors were moderately correlated. All variables, especially religious involvement, were significantly associated to dogmatism; while all psychological factors, especially the Dark Tetrad, were significantly associated to radicalized cognitions and behaviors. »<sup>233</sup> It is also important to underline that, as shown in Table 2. [Fig. 2.9.3], some of the elements that were analyzed, as Psychopathological Features, did not have a certain correlation with radicalization. Understand the lack of association between the two elements, another improved hypothesis was tested (Trimmed Model, Table 2.), resulting to be more in accordance with data. It was also shown, regarding Dark Tetrad, that the element of sadism seemed to be influencing radicalized cognition while narcissism seemed to be only a predictor of radicalized behaviors<sup>234</sup>.

Fig. 2.9.3<sup>235</sup>

**Table 2.** Goodness-of-fit indexes for the full and the trimmed model.

Model	$\chi^2$	df	p	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Full model	10.748	6	.096	.997	.961	.998	.035
Trimmed model	17.848	12	.120	.994	.975	.995	.028

Note. GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

<sup>232</sup> *ivi*, p.1446;

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>234</sup> *ivi*, p. 1447;

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*;

Fig. 2.9.4<sup>236</sup>

**Table 3.** Unstandardized path coefficients, standard errors, and critical ratios for the trimmed model.

Path	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Cultural identity to Dogmatism	.121	.06	2.01	.045
Cultural discrimination to Dogmatism	.246	.08	3.00	.003
Religious involvement to Dogmatism	.168	.02	7.28	<.001
Machiavellianism to Dogmatism	.250	.04	5.64	<.001
Psychopathy to Dogmatism	.195	.09	2.18	.029
Dogmatism to Radicalized Cognitions	.067	.01	7.00	<.001
Machiavellianism to Radicalized Cognitions	.037	.01	3.08	.002
Narcissism to Radicalized Cognitions	.140	.05	2.63	.009
Sadism to Radicalized Cognitions	.129	.04	3.65	<.001
Dogmatism to Radicalized Behaviors	.054	.02	3.60	<.001
Radicalized Cognitions to Radicalized Behaviors	.626	.06	10.68	<.001
Narcissism to Radicalized Behaviors	.269	.08	3.42	<.001

Fig. 2.9.5<sup>237</sup>

**Table 4.** Test of the mediating role of dogmatism: Direct, indirect and total effects, and associated bootstrapping bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI).

Predictor	Outcome: Radicalized Cognitions		
	Direct effect [CI]	Indirect effect [CI]	Total effect [CI]
Cultural Identity	-.06 [-.16, .03]	.02 [-.00, .04]	-.04 [-.14, .05]
Cultural Discrimination	.10 [-.01, .20]	.03 [.01, .06]**	.13 [.02, .23]*
Religious Involvement	-.04 [-.13, .06]	.07 [.05, .12]**	.03 [-.05, .13]
Machiavellianism	.10 [.01, .18]*	.06 [.03, .10]**	.16 [.08, .23]**
Psychopathy	.05 [-.04, .12]	.02 [.00, .04]*	.07 [-.01, .15]

Note. All the reported estimates are standardized. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Fig. 2.9.6<sup>238</sup>

**Table 5.** Test of the mediating role of radicalized cognitions: direct, indirect and total effects, and associated bootstrapping bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI).

Predictor	Outcome: Radicalized Behaviors		
	Direct effect [CI]	Indirect effect [CI]	Total effect [CI]
Cultural Identity	.05 [-.02, .13]	.02 [.00, .04] <sup>1</sup>	.06 [-.01, .15]
Cultural Discrimination	.00 [-.07, .09]	.03 [.01, .05]** <sup>1</sup>	.03 [-.05, .12]
Religious Involvement	-.04 [-.13, .04]	.07 [.04, .10]** <sup>1</sup>	.03 [-.05, .11]
Machiavellianism	.07 [-.01, .14]	.10 [.06, .16]** <sup>1</sup>	.17 [.08, .26]**
Psychopathy	-.06 [-.14, .01]	.02 [.00, .04]* <sup>1</sup>	-.04 [-.12, .03]
Narcissism	.10 [.03, .17]**	.04 [.01, .07]*	.14 [.06, .21]**
Sadism	.06 [-.03, .14]	.06 [.02, .10]**	.11 [.02, .21]*
Dogmatism	.13 [.05, .22]	.10 [.06, .16]**	.23 [.14, .32]**

Note. All the reported estimates are standardized. <sup>1</sup>Dogmatism is also mediating. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

<sup>236</sup> *ivi*, p.1448;

<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>238</sup> *ivi*, p. 1449;

It has to be underlined the non-general nature of the study, due to the online character of the questionnaire, to the cross-sectional design of the research and also to the limitation of French law that forbidden measuring ethnic origin and religion<sup>239</sup>.

In conclusion the thesis shown that dark personality traits, perceived cultural discrimination, religious involvement and cultural identity facilitate both cognitive and behavioral religious radicalization for women while other factors as psychopathological features does not.

«For this reason, we propose that dogmatism may be a target for prevention and treatment of radicalization, while the Dark Tetrad traits must be taken into account in the development of strategies aimed to prevent and counter religious radicalization among women. »<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> *ivi*, p. 1450;

<sup>240</sup> *ivi*, p.1451;

## Chapter Three.

### *Wafa Idris, a case study*

The first intent of the thesis was to understand if female terrorism was the result of coercion against women or if it was actually an autonomous movement, but through the study of the materials new questions emerged. What is the role of women in terrorism? Were women just a tool or did they play a strategic role? Should we talk about a general rule or are there various cases of female terrorism? Does female terrorism take shape as a different branch from classic terrorism, or is it part of terrorism in general? Could we speak of terrorism as a result of feminism?

These are just some of the questions that emerged in these chapters, and to which I will try to answer more precisely through the analysis of the third chapter. In this chapter I will analyze the case of Wafa Idris, in light of some of the theories I have previously studied.

### 3.1 Life of Wafa Idris

Wafa Idris born in a refugee camp in 1975 and died in 2002, after blowing herself in to pieces in a shopping district, killing a man and injuring 140 other people, in Jerusalem.

Wafa Idris was the first Palestinian woman to become a suicide bomber<sup>241</sup>. The day of the attack, the woman was carrying a backpack with explosives that was reported to be left to someone else, but getting stuck in a revolving door, it exploded provoking her death. Some days later a group called Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>242</sup>

According to *The Guardian's* article entitled "Death and the maidens"<sup>243</sup>, there could have been a series of reasons behind the act of the woman, in taking revenge on Israel. Her family was originally from Ramallah, a Palestinian city in the central West Bank, from which they were expelled by Israelis, ending up in a refugee camp, in West Bank, after the 1948 Arab-Israel war. She lost her father when she was still a child. Based on the reconstruction of her story, the woman would have suffered a lot, during her life. She lived in three rooms with her mother, a brother and his wife with their five children. The three brothers of Wafa Idris were part of Fatah, the Palestinian faction associated with Yasser Arafat, and one of them, Khalil, was imprisoned by the

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<sup>241</sup> James Bennet, *Arab's Woman's Path to Unlikely 'Martyrdom'*, in "The New York Times", last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021);

<sup>242</sup> Mia Bloom, *Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend*, in "Nonviolence & Violence", vol. 136, n. 1, Winter 2007, p. 97, available on [https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028092?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=wafa+idris&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoFdoBasicSea%3FQuery%3Dwafa%2Bidris&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Afddc24609782a0a477088f495442dc70&seq=4#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028092?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=wafa+idris&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoFdoBasicSea%3FQuery%3Dwafa%2Bidris&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Afddc24609782a0a477088f495442dc70&seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents) (last viewed April 19, 2021);

<sup>243</sup> Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in "The Guardian", last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

Israelis for a decade. After her marriage had a miscarriage, and on that occasion, she was informed by doctors that it was impossible for her to have children. To the pain given to her by the news, was added the pain of the divorce, wanted by her husband, who instead wanted to build a family.

She was working as a medic. Reporting a passage from the article of *The New York Times*:

«Even before she began her medical work, Ms. Idris was steeped in the violence of the conflict. She demonstrated against Israel in the first intifada, the uprising in the late 1980's and early 90's. In one protest, a close girlfriend lost an eye. As a medic retrieving the wounded from the battlefields of this conflict, Ms. Idris was hit by Israeli rubber bullets, family and friends said.»<sup>244</sup>

Her work as a volunteer medic, was then reported by her family to be very suffering for Wafa. She was one of the 3,000 volunteers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. After the loss of her marriage, she went back on serving her community as a nurse in an ambulance. Her role was to be a first aid to Palestinians who were often victims of armed conflicts with the Israeli Defense Force. The woman witnessed a series of violent traumas, deriving from clashes with Israelis and was wounded twice doing her work<sup>245</sup>. In Anne Speckhard article<sup>246</sup>, Barbara Victor was reported to support the thesis, according to the family, a particular episode during her work, would have made Wafa affected the most. The episode to which she referred, concerned a patient of the woman seriously injured in the head. His skull had been so devastated that the nurse had to spend the entire run in the ambulance, holding two parts of the skeleton, in order to do not let the brain come out. Due to bumpy roads, Wafa lost her grip, causing brain to pop out and the patient to die. This was just one of the many episodes that happened to her weekly, often unable to help, due to so much violence inflicted on people.

According to her brother the woman was also a reference point for her neighborhoods, who often were looking for her when they needed health care help.

Even if her family did not believe that Wafa could ever carry out a suicidal act, despite her moments of depression and suffering, in 2002 even the placement of a bomb by a woman, appeared a revolutionary act.

Now I will analyze the story of the terrorist according to some of the theories, studied in Chapter Two, that seem to be more suitable with her biography.

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<sup>244</sup> James Bennet, *Arab's Woman's Path to Unlikely 'Martyrdom'*, in "The New York Times", last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021);

<sup>245</sup> Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 2008, Vol. 31, Issue 11, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>;

<sup>246</sup> Ivi;

### 3.2 Individual Radicalization, Group Radicalization and Mass Radicalization

Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko published the book “Friction” in 2011, introducing an innovative theory about radicalization based on the conviction that someone who radicalizes follows precise steps in doing so. The two authors deny the hypothesis according to which those who participate in terrorist groups, are only crazy, evil or ideologically hazy<sup>247</sup>, proposing a series of causes, useful to investigate the reasons that would lead a terrorist to become such, avoiding the motives proposed by stereotypes.

McCauley and Moskalenko identified three areas for a possible radicalization, divided themselves into subgroups of Individual Radicalization (Personal Grievance, Group Grievance, Slippery Slope, Love, Status and Risk Seeking, Unfreezing), Group Radicalization (Group Polarization, Group Competition, Group Isolation) and Mass Radicalization (Jitsu Politics, Hatred and Martyrdom).

The definitions of these subdivisions are detailed in Chapter Two. In this paragraph we will instead analyze how Wafa Idris’s biographical elements, can be traced back to this model, highlighting what could be the reasons behind the young woman’s act.

I will start the analysis from the first group: “Individual Radicalization”. Considering the history of Wafa, contact points with the model, may be noted in Personal Grievance, group Grievance and Unfreezing. “Personal grievance” is identified in the theory of a situation where an individual tends to see himself as a victim of injustice, this could be noticed in her family’s background, due to the coercion by the Israelis to have them transferred to refugee camp and the arrest of her brother. Also, her role as a nurse and her continuous assistance to massacred Palestinians, make me believe that she may also have developed a solidarity towards her compatriots and their beliefs, conducting us to “Group Grievance”. Finally, both the war environment she grew in and personal story, including the fact she could not have children and was forced to divorce for it, led to “Unfreezing”. The situations lived by Wafa necessarily involves an adaptation and a change of life, which can take the form of terrorism.

Concerning the other two groups, “Group Radicalization” and “Mass Radicalization”, the story of Wafa does not give precise information on the topics, however the theme of “Martyrdom” can be explored. Even if she did not write messages about her suicide neither talk about it, her suicide, conscious or not, provoked the awareness, women could be terrorists and suicide bombers, just like men. Her suicide was claimed back by Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade, that caused willingness from women to donate their lives to terrorist causes. The book “Friction”<sup>248</sup> states that:

«A successfully constructed martyr can radicalize sympathizers for the martyrs’ cause»<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> McCauley Clark and Moskalenko Sophia, *Friction. How Conflict Radicalizes them and Us*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, 2017, pp. 1-7;

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*;

<sup>249</sup> *Ivi*, p. 197;

It is also added:

«Self-sacrifice is not self-evident; it has to be constructed in the public eye. The perception of self-sacrifice depends on seeing a costly or even fatal act as motivated by devotion to the cause. An individual under compulsion cannot choose, and anything that undermines the attribution of choice is likely to undermine the perception of self-sacrifice. A self-harming act may be attributed to the influence of drugs, for instance, or the delirium of extreme emotion. [...] In general, attribution of any kind of selfish motivation will undermine the attribution of self-sacrifice for a cause that defines martyrdom.»<sup>250</sup>

### 3.3 The Four Rs Plus One

As already explained in Chapter Two, Mia Bloom developed the theory of the Four Rs' Plus One, in her book "Bombshell. The many Faces of Women Terrorists."<sup>251</sup> In sum, Bloom created a model that examined the deep motivations that would have led women to radicalize. The Four Rs' Plus One identified five possible reasons for female terrorism:

1. Revenge
2. Redemption
3. Relationship
4. Respect
5. Rape

The biography of Wafa Idris compared with the model, gives different elements to reflect. Wafa's history have connections with Revenge, Relationship and Respect.

#### Revenge

It can be believed that the woman had several reasons to want revenge. Revenge, in Wafa's case, is outlined in the form of Israelis. As part of a Palestinian family, Israel can be identified as a common factor in the misfortunes of her life. As it was already said, her family was expelled from Ramallah by Israelis, ending up in a refugee camp and her brother was imprisoned by Israelis for about a decade. Her involvement as a Palestinian nurse in the conflict against the Israeli Defense Force could have triggered the desire for revenge in the name of her community. The woman was in fact in close contact with the victims of the conflict and nationalistic feelings could have arisen from this. It appears clear that the frictions between Idris and Israelis had foundations. An example of revenge deriving for war, was described by Mia Bloom, about the Black Widows

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<sup>250</sup> Ivi, p. 206:

<sup>251</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012;



of Dubrovka<sup>252</sup>. Wafa Idris's death was claimed by Al-Aqsa Brigades, that also used her suicide to incite Palestinian women to do the same and sacrifice themselves for the cause, just like men<sup>253</sup>.

### Redemption

According to the sources<sup>254</sup> Wafa went through a period of depression, due to her husband's will to divorce, after the doctors told her that she was unable to have children, immediately after she has a miscarriage. For a woman who is not in an emancipated society, whose figure is still relegated to the sole role of mother and protector of the home, the news of never being able to become a mother must be devastating. The impossibility of not having children in these societies does not only involve the pain of not being able to create a family, but also the stigma of a society that judges the situation. In these cases, the stigma can be so deep that allows the person to believe that the fault belongs to him\her. Often the themes regarding the stigma are taboo, as in this case, and the person may believe that the only way to redeem himself\herself is through extreme actions (from terrorism to suicide, to extremism).

### Relationship

Wafa Idris' brothers were part of Fatah, the Palestinian faction associated with Yasser Arafat. Fatah was founded by Arafat in 1950s with the first aim to create a Palestinian state. Originally its leaders wanted to rally Palestinians in the diaspora in neighbouring Arab states to launch commando raids on the young Israeli states. Also during the second intifada were seen to emerge new armed groups linked with Fatah, as al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.<sup>255</sup> As well explained by Bloom in her book<sup>256</sup>, female radicalization can be favored by the presence of a family member, friend or boyfriend in a radical group. According to this theory Wafa's proximity to a partly extremist family environment, could have helped her radicalization process.

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<sup>252</sup> Chapter Two, 2.4 paragraph;

<sup>253</sup> Mia Bloom, *Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend*, in "Nonviolence & Violence", p. 98 vol. 136, n. 1, Winter 2007, available on:

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028092?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=wafa+idris&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoFdoBasicSea%3FQuery%3Dwafa%2Bidris&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Afddc24609782a0a477088f495442dc70&seq=4#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028092?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=wafa+idris&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoFdoBasicSea%3FQuery%3Dwafa%2Bidris&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Afddc24609782a0a477088f495442dc70&seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents), (last viewed April 19, 2021);

<sup>254</sup> See also: James Bennet, *Arab's Woman's Path to Unlikely 'Martyrdom'*, in "The New York Times", last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021); Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 2008, Vol. 31, Issue 11, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>; Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in "The Guardian", last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

<sup>255</sup> BBC News, *Profile: Fatah Palestinian Movement*, last modification on June 16, 2011, available on:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13338216> (viewed on April 23, 2021);

<sup>256</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012;

## Respect

As the last common factor between Bloom's theory and the woman's life, I will now analyze the “respect” element. As already explained regarding to the “redemption” factor, Wafa Idris was a woman extremely touched by her impossibility to have children, and the divorce that followed from that condition. Precisely for this reason it is possible to believe that the woman approached radicalism also to obtain the respect that had been taken away from her by society and by her ex-husband, due to her condition. It is in fact very common for stigmatized people to see an opportunity to gain respect through suicide for a “just cause”. Suicide in these cases is seen as the only way capable of giving integrity to stigmatized people. In reference to this, in the article<sup>257</sup> by Mia Bloom was reported the following speech of Al-Sha’ab:

«It is a woman who teaches you today a lesson in heroism, who teaches you the meaning of Jihad, and the way to dye a martyr’s death. It is a woman who has shocked the enemy.»<sup>258</sup>

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, added:

«Palestinian women have torn the gender classification out of their birth certificates, declaring that sacrifice for the Palestinian homeland would not be for men alone; on the contrary, all Palestinian women will write the history of the liberation with their blood, and will become time bombs in the face of the Israeli enemy. They will not settle for being mothers of martyrs.»<sup>259</sup>

### **3.4 Leah Windsor’s Theory**

Leah Windsor’s theory<sup>260</sup> is mainly based on the case study of Aqsa Mahmood, a young women that documented her radicalization process on Tumblr, in 2013. Her research investigates the reasons that lead a woman to radicalization and how an effective and convincing communication, via social media, can be incentive to come into contact with terrorism. Also in this case, author divides three spheres affecting young women radicalization process, in:

1. Individual Factors
  - a. Privilege
  - b. Power

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<sup>257</sup> Mia Bloom, *Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend*, in “Nonviolence & Violence”, p. 98 vol. 136, n. 1, Winter 2007, available on:

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028092?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=wafa+idris&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoFdoBasicSea%3FQuery%3Dwafa%2Bidris&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Afddc24609782a0a477088f495442dc70&seq=4#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028092?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=wafa+idris&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoFdoBasicSea%3FQuery%3Dwafa%2Bidris&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Afddc24609782a0a477088f495442dc70&seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents), (last viewed April 19, 2021);

<sup>258</sup> *ibid*;

<sup>259</sup> *ibid*;

<sup>260</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

- c. Gender and Expectations
  - d. Youth
  - e. Recruiter
- 2. Social Forces and Factors
    - a. Social Mobility
    - b. Strong and Weak Ties
    - c. Computer Mediated Communication
  - 3. International Relations
    - a. 9\11
    - b. Arab Spring
    - c. Syrian Civil War

Starting with the first sphere it can be noticed a connection with: “Power”, “Gender and Expectation” and “Youth”.

The author refers to “Power” in order to outline a condition where the person radicalized, feels empowered following the decision to be a terrorist or to sacrifice her life for a cause she deems right, in the case of Aqsa, Syria, in the case of Wafa, Palestine. Even if the topic of power was never examined in her biography, it can be understood how her difficult private life and the surrounding environment led the young woman to re-evaluate herself in the light of what was happening to her. In fact, it is known that Wafa was experiencing a deep depressive period, and as in cases already analyzed in Chapter One, she may have found a reason of “joy”, in the terrorist cause. Terrorist group have the ability to alienate you from your surroundings, destroying all your beliefs and all the bridges with the past<sup>261</sup>, finding in the most fragile people, like Mrs. Idris, the perfect individual for carrying out terrorist suicide acts.

Speaking of “Gender and Expectation”, as already discussed in the previous paragraphs [3.2, 3.3], the death of Wafa Idris, even if not intentionally of a feminist origin, caused the mobilization of women from the most extremist fringes of terrorist groups. Many groups saw the young woman’s suicide as the hope for women

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<sup>261</sup> See also: Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 2011; Alessandro Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021); Alessandro Orsini, *Sacrifice. My Life in a Fascist Militia.*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2017;

to have the same roles as men, in terrorism as well, serving the cause as equals<sup>262</sup>. Wafa was the first Palestine woman to die as a result of a terrorist suicide, and as such, she was referred to as a model and heroine<sup>263</sup>.

Windsor depicted “Youth” as an important factor during the path of radicalization<sup>264</sup>. According to the author, the young age of the girls would contribute to their sensitivity towards the events that surround them. In this case, Wafa’s young age could have made her internalize the Palestinian cause, so much so that it made her susceptible to terrorist groups.

The second sphere is linked with “Social Forces and Factors”. In this area it should be excluded “Social Mobility”, the factor that would lead women to radicalization due to a scarce possibility of social climbing. I would exclude this factor because from her family’s and coworkers’ stories<sup>265</sup>, Wafa was very dedicated to her work and did not seem to live her condition with feelings of frustration. On the contrary, I believe that the factor of “Strong and Weak Ties” should instead be analyzed more in depth. Wafa’s brothers were members of the group Fatah, the Palestinian faction associated with Yasser Arafat. Despite the suicide would later be claimed by Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and not from Fatah, the fact she knew the terrorist reality through her brothers could have facilitated her proximity to this environment.

The last sphere refers to “International Relations” and supports the thesis that the conflictual environment of some countries has affected the proximity to terrorism. In particular, as already stated several times, Wafa idris experienced the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in a profound way, on several occasions. The same mode of suicide makes me believe that the attack was aimed precisely at the Israelis. It is recalled that Wafa’s family was forced to move to a refugee camp, that her brother was arrested by the Israelis and that she was a Palestinian rescuer, required to see compatriots’ victims daily<sup>266</sup>. Through this analysis, it can be confirmed that Wafa had several reasons for resenting Israelis.

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<sup>262</sup> Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, Vol. 31, Issue 11, 2008, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>; Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in “The Guardian”, last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

<sup>263</sup> *ibid*;

<sup>264</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, pp. 515-517, Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

<sup>265</sup> See also: James Bennet, *Arab’s Woman’s Path to Unlikely ‘Martyrdom’*, in “The New York Times”, last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021); Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, Vol. 31, Issue 11, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>; Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in “The Guardian”, last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

<sup>266</sup> *ibid*;

### 3.5 The Motivational Imbalance Theory

A.W. Kruglansky, J.J B elanger and R. Gunaratna defined the model of the “Motivational Imbalance Theory” in the book entitled: “The Three Pillars of Radicalization”<sup>267</sup>. The authors’ approach aims to be a psychological reflection on extremism, in which terrorism becomes a specific case. The theory affirms the necessity for individuals to fulfill basic needs biological and psychogenic, and the common need to fulfill the quest of significance. If an individual loses his\her significance, he\her could do anything to get it back, even join a terroristic group, if some other factors occur. In the first phase of theory, however, it is only explained how an individual can actually lose significance, it is not yet about terrorism but only about extremism.

According to Kruglansky, B elanger and Gunaratna, loss of significance could happen in three ways, explained more specifically in Chapter Two. <sup>268</sup>:

Once the individual had experienced the loss of significance, there are three pillars that could lead him\her to violence, identified as the Three Ns: Needs, Narratives and Networks<sup>269</sup>.

1. Needs, to fulfill;
2. Narratives, ideologies that can justify violent, extremist and terrorist acts;
3. Networks, links with individuals that can lead someone to radicalize.

Many of the traits of Wafa’s biography let to think the events happened her, could have led the woman to a “Personal loss of significance”. In particular it has to be remembered the desperation of the young woman after a miscarriage and the following divorce, from a man who wanted a family with her. Wafa’s inability to have children is perceived as a lack of woman, by herself and by the man she loved. This condition appears even more debilitating, when read together with the fact Wafa had grown up in territories where the traditional conception of woman seen only as mother and housekeeper, still survives. The inability to have children was an unexpected news for the young woman, who later entered in a state of depression. The one who had been her husband remarried and had two children<sup>270</sup>, a situation which certainly did not help Miss Idris, who probably felt despised once again.

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<sup>267</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski, Jocelyn J. B elanger, Rohan Gunaratna, *The Three Pillars of Radicalization. Needs, narratives and Networks*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019;

<sup>268</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2020, pp. 27-28, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>269</sup> *ibid*;

<sup>270</sup> See also: James Bennet, *Arab’s Woman’s Path to Unlikely ‘Martyrdom’*, in “The New York Times”, last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021); Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, Vol. 31, Issue 11, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>; Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in “The Guardian”, last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

Other factors that have undermined her stability, can be classified under the name of “Socially based significance loss”. It is important to reiterate once again, how the social situation in which she lived could be perceived by her, as a destabilizing factor, capable of making her lose her references. Over the years the situation between Israelis and Palestinians has produced many Palestinians terrorists’ groups, in which Wafa Idris is positioned as one of the many participants. Among the political factions we recall for example Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), Harakat al-Sabireen<sup>271</sup>. Among these appears the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, armed wing of Fatah, group that claimed her suicide. The factors that contributed to the socially based significance loss can be found in the transfer by her family to the refugee camp and the war environment she lived in, pervaded by bodies tortured by Israelis<sup>272</sup>.

The “Narrative” takes the form of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ideology of Fatah, in particular of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Even in the case of Wafa, despite in the articles concerning her history, there is no trace of her radicalization, ideology tends to dilute the gravity of violent acts thanks to the strong matrix of thought. It is also because of ideology that a woman dedicated to helping others and apparently “normal”, can turn into a suicide terrorist. What resocialization and ideology do to a person is both frightening and enlightening, in understanding the deep dynamics that could led an individual to believe the death of other people can be justified by a thought. As written in “The Three Pillars of Radicalization”<sup>273</sup>:

«Typically, a violence-justifying narrative is designed to accomplish two functions. First, it arouses the exposed individuals’ quest for significance by highlighting and dramatizing the humiliation one’s group may have suffered. [...] Second, it forgets the critical link between violence and significance, suggesting that engagement in the former will bring about the latter...»<sup>274</sup>

The “Networks” appear evident. Wafa’s brothers were in fact part of Fatah, whose Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade is categorized as its armed wing. Even in this case, through the study of documents there was no trace of a possible approach to the group due to her brothers. Despite this, evidently their proximity to the group served as a bridge between the reality of the woman and terrorism, facilitating her approach. According to the theory, individuals tend to agree with those who are close to them, like friends, family and other relatives. It

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<sup>271</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, *Palestinian Terrorism: Major Terror Organizations*, available on <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/major-palestinian-terror-organizations> (last viewed on April 28, 2021);

<sup>272</sup> See also: James Bennet, *Arab’s Woman’s Path to Unlikely ‘Martyrdom’*, in “The New York Times”, last modification on January 31, 2002, Section A, Page 1, available on <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/31/world/arab-woman-s-path-to-unlikely-martyrdom.html> (viewed on April 19, 2021); Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, Vol. 31, Issue 11, pp. 1008-1009 Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>; Giles Forden, *Death and the maidens*, in “The Guardian”, last modification on July 18, 2003, available on <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jul/18/gender.uk> (viewed April 20, 2021);

<sup>273</sup> Arie W., Kruglanski, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Rohan Gunaratna, *The Three Pillars of Radicalization. Needs, narratives and Networks*, Oxford Univeristy Press, New York, 2019;

<sup>274</sup> *ivi*, p. 48;

follows that people who are fragile or easily susceptible, due to a series of causes, and therefore not capable of critical skills, can be succubus and participant of extremist ideologies<sup>275</sup>.

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<sup>275</sup> *ivi*, p. 51;

## Conclusions

This thesis was aimed to understand if female terrorism could be seen as the result of men's coercion or could be cataloged as an autonomous movement. The research on this question then generated a series of subsequent questions. It is clear that, if on the one hand, most of the women studied in these chapters were not forced to become terrorists, on the other hand, we cannot consider female terrorism as a branch in itself. What has emerged has not only shown that in most cases the choice to become a terrorist is voluntary, but it also helped to reflect on new points.

First of all, female terrorism does not appear to be a separate line of terrorism, but it is still linked with terrorism in general, read jointly with the male one, despite some differences. Female terrorism is surely not completely different from male terrorism: just like men, women have ideologies, experience traumas and become radicalized, too. However, it is important to underline how female terrorism, although part of general terrorism, must be studied with some important considerations. Considering this, it seems appropriate to analyze some data that emerged from the study reported in the previous chapters.

Primarily it is important to point out the question of roles attributed to women in terrorism. Although terrorism does not have a gender matrix, what emerged from this thesis highlighted a series of recurring roles attributable to women. Certainly, the first factor that influences the assigned roles is the environmental and social one. Analyzing the cases of the women reported in Chapter One, a curious trend emerges. The women who played a leading role, as seen in ETA with María Dolores Gonzales and María Soledad Iparriguirre Guenechea, in PIRA with Mairéad Farrell, and in the Red Brigades with Margherita Cagol, appear linked to a more progressive environment, in which the female role is emancipated. On the contrary for what concern women grown on more-close environment, such as Iraq, or countries where women are not yet socially perceived as equal to men, roles tend to be relegated to the suicide bomber (with some exceptions, like for Ahlam Tamimi). Although even in this last case the will to be a terrorist is a voluntary gesture, in most cases roles linked with conservative countries, tend to be relegated to the margin of the terrorist formations, mirroring the society they represent.

Where society is more developed, women have a greater capacity for initiative, they have strategic skills, they believe in their cause and can be at the head of extremist groups in order to better manage it. Whereas, on the other hand, the social system is more closed, we will find a greater presence of women in active roles in terrorist actions (suicide bombers, active acts), often as a result of psychological motivational and cultural levers, linked to their environment. The environment shapes women's minds, which being in a system in which where they could potentially lose their dignity due to mistreatment, rape or other conditions, linked to the local culture, can believe in revenge, in the sense of social redemption, and suicide, as the only way out from a life as an outcast.



How many women have had an active leadership role in the organization and strategy of terrorist groups? And how many in the development of the connected ideology? Before answering this question, it is necessary to distinguish between:

- *Ideology*: elaboration of a political or philosophical thought which inspires an action;
- *Strategy*: planning of a series of acts that together lead to the pursuit of an objective;
- *Tactics*: implement all military operations in order to achieve a functional objective to the strategic one.

Few times women have contributed to the development of a terrorist "ideology" (as PIRA and Red Brigades), sometimes women have had the opportunity to contribute to the "strategy" (as Mairéad Farrell and Boko Haram) and in most of the times, the woman had a "tactical" role and the executive role (as suicide bombers).

Another topic that must be addressed at the conclusion of this research, is certainly an analysis of the theories studied. First of all, it is important to underline that all the sociological theories included in Chapter Two, have been included in order to analyze the complexity of the world of female terrorism, and for this reason they tend to be specifically focused on the female matrix of this phenomenon. Other more generic theories, albeit very interesting and comprehensive on the theme of terrorism in general, have not been included, due to the desire to include theories as specific as possible. Despite this, more generic theories have also been included, which are however useful for the purpose of the thesis.

During a deep examination of the sociological theories, it can be noted that all of them include three main categories: the role of personal experiences, ideology and the environmental factor. Although these categories may not all be present in the same theory, all theories include at least one.

It is also important to note how stereotypes about women becoming a terrorist only if forced, are linked to a long series of beliefs and theories that associate women with peace and men with war. In particular, according to Jill Steans<sup>276</sup> women were represented for a very long time as in a "special relationship to peace". Deriving from this, there are two theories that confirm this type of belief, both categorized as *feminist standpoint theories*, that would provide the theoretical foundation for the feminine-women-peace nexus.

The first is the one influenced by the *Marxism ideology*<sup>277</sup>, and record its main points in:

- a. Gender understood as a social position
- b. Gender understood in terms of social subjugation

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<sup>276</sup> Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations*, pp. 95-115, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2019;

<sup>277</sup> Ivi, pp. 97-98;

The second one includes a number of variants basing them all on the *psycho-analytical feminist thought*, identifying its main points in:

- a. Women's socio-psychological differences
- b. The role of mother gives women a more empathetic way of perceiving the world and humanity
- c. Empathy and emotionality prevail on reason

The feminist standpoint theory was criticized because of its reinforcing of stereotypes towards women as their supposed inability to take rational decisions, because of how the role of the woman is portrayed, because of essentialism and because of the duality between female\peace against men\war<sup>278</sup>. This last point tends not only to give a sweetened vision of women, but also a distorted vision of men.

To conclude, female terrorism cannot be categorized as a gender terrorism nor can be considered a separate branch of terrorism. Despite this it is important to note how often the roles between women and men are not equal, even within extremist groups and how the surrounding environment creates the conditions for the roles attributable to them. There is no gender terrorism, but certainly women have given a specific characterization to terrorism, and in this sense, it is important to study its genesis and development in order to act and reduce, specific social or personal factors that can feed it.

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<sup>278</sup> Ivi, 100-101;

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## Abstract

La tesi dal titolo “Women and Terrorism: expressions and dynamics of female radicalization” si propone di essere una ricerca sociologica sul complesso argomento della radicalizzazione femminile, approfondendo le cause, le dinamiche e gli esempi che accompagnano il tema. La spinta verso l’esame di questa materia proviene principalmente dalla volontà di voler mettere in discussione un’ipotesi largamente diffusa, che vede la radicalizzazione femminile come diretta emanazione di coercizione maschile, evidenziandone le criticità attraverso l’analisi di casi specifici e teorie sociologiche. Questo studio vuole inoltre analizzare la capacità delle donne di avere ruoli attivi e consapevoli all’interno di operazioni e gruppi radicali, superando lo stereotipo che vede le donne in uno “speciale” rapporto con il bene, poiché madri, femmine e “propense alla sensibilità”<sup>279</sup>.

La ricerca si apre con il Capitolo 1 dal titolo “The different women of the terrorist world”. L’intento del capitolo è di esaminare diversi casi specifici guidando il lettore al paragone tra le storie, cercando di sottolineare eventuali analogie e differenze. In queste prime pagine vengono illustrate le dinamiche e le storie di donne violente, che sono state coinvolte nel terrorismo, articolato in diverse matrici. I dati raccolti in questo capitolo si basano principalmente sull’analisi dei libri “Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist”<sup>280</sup> di Mia Bloom e “Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore”<sup>281</sup> di Sofia Cecinini. Il percorso si struttura in ordine cronologico e si apre con l’analisi di ETA, gruppo terroristico attivo nel Nord e nel Sud della Francia tra il 1959 e il 2018. Il gruppo nacque come un movimento di opposizione studentesco al regime oppressivo del generale Franco, che in seguito rivendicò l’indipendenza dei territori baschi. Ben presto la divisione si evolse, trasformandosi in una protesta armata, dopo che la repressione verso i baschi e la loro cultura divenne più oppressiva. Le donne entrarono a far parte di ETA tra il 1975 e il 1978. Tra le donne descritte si ricordano María Dolores Gonzales e María Soledad Iparriguirre Guenechea, entrambe divenute leader della formazione terroristica.

Successivamente si passa a PIRA, gruppo violento nato intorno al 1969 con l’intento di riunire il Nord e il Sud dell’Irlanda, con l’estromissione del dominio inglese. Sebbene nel caso di questo gruppo, il ruolo della donna non fosse centrale ma soltanto di supporto, ho deciso di narrarne alcune eccezioni. Tra le donne note che hanno fatto parte di PIRA non può essere non menzionata Mairéad Farrell, modello per le generazioni terroriste a venire. Mairéad trascina con sé anni di violenza e sofferenza, che culminano quando a 19 anni viene arrestata nell’intento di porre una bomba al Conway Hotel, a Dunmurry. Il suo apporto eroico si sviluppa proprio in prigione, dove inizia una serie di battaglie per l’ottenimento di maggiori diritti per i detenuti. Il suo coraggio ispirò molti membri di PIRA tra cui Siobhan la cui storia segue quella di Mairéad nel capitolo.

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<sup>279</sup> Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations*, pp. 95-115, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2019;

<sup>280</sup> Bloom Mia, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist.*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012;

<sup>281</sup> Cecinini Sofia, *Le Sanguinarie: Storie Di Donne e Di Terrore*, LUISS University Press, Roma, 2018.

Si passa poi alla trattazione del caso delle Brigate Rosse, gruppo terroristico italiano di forte matrice comunista, attivo dal 1970 al 1980, durante quelli che vengono ricordati come anni di piombo, contribuendo alla narrazione politica della strategia della tensione. Le donne che fecero parte delle BR furono molteplici, ho deciso quindi di concentrarmi sulle personalità di Margherita Cagol, Susanna Ronconi, Angela Augusta “Vai”, Nadia Ponti e Anna Laura Braghetti, rilevanti non solo per la loro efferatezza e ferocità, ma anche per la varietà di ruoli ricoperti e per la diversità di ragioni che le portarono a diventare terroriste.

Un altro gruppo di cui ho affrontato la trattazione è quello delle Tamil Tigers, fondate nel 1976 con l'intento iniziale di creare lo stato indipendente di Tamil Ealem e trasformandosi successivamente in un gruppo terroristico, già a partire dal 1983. La divisione femminile chiamata “Freedom Birds” nascerà solo nel 1984, con lo scopo di minimizzare le discriminazioni contro la popolazione dei Tamils. Anche in questo caso ben presto le rivendicazioni si declineranno in matrice terrorista attraverso una serie di attacchi perpetrati da donne. Un percorso simile ma differente è quello di Sendero Luminoso, nato verso la fine degli anni 60 come movimento studentesco e poi trasformatosi in una organizzazione violenta, volta a trasformare il Perù in uno stato moderno, glorificando al contempo la popolazione Inca. In questa formazione il ruolo delle donne appare fondamentale e maggioritario. Edith Lagos, Laura Zambrano Padilla e Brenda Perez Zamora sono solo alcune delle molteplici donne che hanno partecipato al gruppo come leader, evidenziando una tendenza propensa a ruoli di leadership femminili, al contrario di molte altre formazioni terroristiche.

Si passa poi all'analisi della vita di Ahlam Tamimi, mente dietro il massacro del ristorante Sbarro nel 2001 che vide la morte di 15 persone per poi giungere alla trattazione del fenomeno delle “Black Widows” di Dubrovka, attive già nel 2000. Il capitolo si conclude con l'analisi di Jemaah Islamiyah, gruppo del Sudest asiatico, delle terroriste irachene e infine con il gruppo di Boko Haram, formazione terroristica del Camerun.

Il Capitolo 2 enuncia le principali teorie sociologiche riguardanti il terrorismo femminile e non. La scelta delle teorie inserite non è casuale, la selezione è ricaduta infatti su quelle teorie che meglio sembravano accreditare la mia tesi secondo cui la donna che diviene terrorista è una donna che deliberatamente sceglie questo percorso e che non è, per lo meno nella maggior parte dei casi, costretta da un uomo. Questa tesi vuole essere inoltre una finestra sulle molteplici ragioni che guidano una donna alla radicalizzazione, sottolineando il fatto che tali motivazioni non siano tanto diverse da quelle che portano gli uomini a intraprendere la stessa strada. In questo capitolo compaiono la teoria di Anne Speckhard, estrapolata dall'analisi dei due articoli “*The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*”<sup>282</sup> e “*Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq*”<sup>283</sup>, identificando la tendenza a diventare una donna kamikaze nella sinergia dei quattro fattori di: motivazioni personali, situazioni politiche-

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<sup>282</sup> Anne Speckhard, *The Emergency of Female Suicide Terrorists*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, 2008, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>;

<sup>283</sup> Anne Speckhard, *Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq*. Routledge in “Democracy and Security”, 2009, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419160902723759>;



sociali, l'entrata in un determinato gruppo e l'ideologia, che giustifica i mezzi per ottenere dei cambiamenti radicali.

Un'altra autrice che ha analizzato questo fenomeno è *Martha Crenshaw*, della quale ho cercato di ricostruire il pensiero tramite l'articolo "*Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of «Suicide Terrorism»*"<sup>284</sup>, che tratta il tema del terrorismo suicida nella sua matrice più generale. La teoria si basa sulla credenza, da parte di Crenshaw, che il cammino verso il terrorismo, sia segnato da una serie di passaggi: la ricerca di significato degli individui, l'ideologia che tende a razionalizzare pensieri e comportamenti, l'entrata in gruppi radicali, che canalizzano l'ideologia verso atti e routine specifiche e la ricompensa da parte della società, per l'obiettivo raggiunto.

Successivamente esamino il pensiero di McCauley e Moskalenko tramite l'articolo di Alessandro Orsini "*What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA Model*"<sup>285</sup> e il libro "*Friction*"<sup>286</sup>, redatto dai due studiosi. Il fenomeno della radicalizzazione viene in questo caso scomposto in tre passaggi: radicalizzazione individuale, radicalizzazione di gruppo e radicalizzazione di massa. Per quanto riguarda la radicalizzazione individuale, gli autori individuano sei possibili meccanismi di approccio: risentimento personale, risentimento di gruppo, "slippery slope", amore, ricerca di status attraverso il rischio e "unfreezing". La radicalizzazione di gruppo può invece essere ottenuta tramite tre categorie: la polarizzazione di gruppo, la competizione di gruppo e l'isolamento di gruppo. Infine, la radicalizzazione di massa viene concepita come il risultato di "Jitsu Politics", odio e martirio.

Prendendo come base l'articolo di Orsini<sup>287</sup>, introduco l'originale teoria dell'autore stesso sulla radicalizzazione, il modello DRIA, per poi utilizzare il medesimo articolo per la trattazione della "Motivational Imbalance Theory" di Kruglanski, Bélanger e Gunaratna<sup>288</sup>. Il modello DRIA approfondisce una teoria innovativa sull'origine della radicalizzazione, che fonda le sue basi in: disintegrazione dell'identità sociale, ricostruzione dell'identità tramite un'ideologia radicale e alienazione dal mondo circostante. La Motivational Imbalance Theory invece, parte dalla perdita di significato dell'individuo, che deve ricercare il proprio essere in: bisogni, narrazioni e reti sociali.

Altre teorie proposte includono "The Four Rs Plus One" di Mia Bloom<sup>289</sup>, la teoria di Leah Windsor introdotta nell'articolo "The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities"<sup>290</sup>, lo studio condotto da Lauren R. Shapiro e Maire-Helen Maras nell'articolo "Women's

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<sup>284</sup> Martha Crenshaw, *Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of "Suicide Terrorism"*, in "Political Psychology", Vol. 20, n. 3, pp. 359-364, 2009, available on [https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655399?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A915073461b5cfb7675e59b46d0a20c04&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655399?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A915073461b5cfb7675e59b46d0a20c04&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents);

<sup>285</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 2020, p. 14, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>286</sup> Clark, McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko. *Friction. How Conflict Radicalizes them and Us*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, 2017, pp. 22-36;

<sup>287</sup> Alessandro Orsini, *What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669> (viewed on February 28, 2021);

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.*;

<sup>289</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 233-249;

<sup>290</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States”<sup>291</sup> e la ricerca di Clara Isabel Morgades-Bamba, Patrick Raynal and Henri Chabrol dal titolo “Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women”<sup>292</sup>.

Il terzo e ultimo Capitolo, infine, analizza il caso studio di Wafa Idris, una giovane ragazza nota per essere stata la prima donna palestinese a diventare una terrorista suicida. La vita di Wafa Idris è una vita travagliata e segnata dall’odio degli Israeliani verso i Palestinesi, che la donna sperimenta già in tenera età, insieme a diverse esperienze traumatiche personali, come l’impossibilità di avere figli. Questo capitolo conclusivo narra dapprima la vita della terrorista, una vita difficile e segnata da violenza, per poi accingersi all’analisi delle cause che hanno spinto la giovane a diventare violenta, commettendo un atto suicida a fine terroristico. Il caso studio si serve dell’applicazione di alcune teorie precedentemente analizzate nel Capitolo 2, allo scopo di comprendere nel profondo le cause della radicalizzazione. In particolare, vengono applicate le teorie di McCauley e Moskalenko<sup>293</sup>, Mia Bloom<sup>294</sup>, Leah Winsor<sup>295</sup> e la “Motivation Imbalance Theory”<sup>296</sup> di Kruglanski, Bélanger e Gunaratna. Wafa Idris cresce

Il capitolo 3 è una finestra sulla vita di Wafa, e le cause che l’hanno portata a diventare una terrorista. L’analisi della vita della giovane, attraverso il confronto con le teorie sociologiche, risulta essere tanto efficace quanto adatta alla dimostrazione che la radicalizzazione femminile avvenga per cause non correlate alla coercizione maschile e che le donne possano essere tanto spietate quanto gli uomini.

Wafa Idris cresce in un campo profughi a West Bank, dopo che la sua famiglia venne costretta a lasciare la città palestinese di Ramallah in seguito alla guerra arabo-israeliana del 1948. La ragazza viveva in una casa di tre camere con la madre, un fratello, la moglie di lui e i loro cinque figli. Il terrorismo è sempre stato una costante nella vita di Wafa in quanto i suoi tre fratelli facevano parte del gruppo di Fatah, una fazione correlata a Yasser Arafat. Uno dei due, Khalid, fu imprigionato dagli israeliani per dieci anni.

Tra i molteplici traumi che hanno segnato la vita della giovane, compare anche il divorzio ottenuto per volere del marito. Dopo aver avuto un aborto spontaneo venne comunicata dai medici l’impossibilità per la donna di avere figli; oltre a determinare un dolore incolmabile per lei, comportò anche la fine del matrimonio tra i due.

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<sup>291</sup> Lauren R. Shapiro and Marie-Helen Maras, *Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States*, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, vol. 42, 2019, p. 89, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1513694> (viewed on March 15, 2021);

<sup>292</sup> Clara Isabel Morgades-Bamba, Patrick Raynal & Henri Chabrol, *Exploring the Radicalization Problem in Young Women*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, Vol. 32, n. 7, 1439-1457, 2020. Available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1481051> (viewed on March 17, 2021);

<sup>293</sup> Clark, McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko. *Friction. How Conflict Radicalizes them and Us*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, 2017, pp. 22-36;

<sup>294</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorist*, Hurst Publisher, London, 2012, pp. 233-249;

<sup>295</sup> Leah Windsor, *The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities*, in “Terrorism and Political Violence”, Vol. 32, n. 3, 2020, available on <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457> (viewed on March 23, 2021);

<sup>296</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Rohan Gunaratna, *The Three Pillars of Radicalization. Needs, narratives and Networks*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2019;

Nelle cause attribuite in seguito al suicidio della donna, appare anche il suo lavoro. Wafa era in effetti un medico volontario, spesso coinvolta nel soccorso di suoi connazionali sulla Striscia di Gaza. Le scene che vedeva ogni giorno erano raccapriccianti, e colpivano ogni età. La ripetuta violenza sui suoi compatrioti potrebbe essere stata una degli elementi determinati per la partecipazione alla divisione delle Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, che rivendicarono l'attacco.

Il suicidio terroristico di Wafa Idris prese luogo a Gerusalemme nel 2002, uccidendo un uomo e ferendone 140.

L'analisi della storia alla luce delle teorie evidenzia una serie di punti di contatto.

Esaminando la teoria di McCauley e Moskalenko, le cause che avrebbero portato la giovane al terrorismo sembrano convergere nella categoria di "Radicalizzazione di tipo individuale", in particolare nei sottogruppi di "risentimento personale", "risentimento di gruppo" e "unfreezing".

"The Four Rs Plus One" di Mia Bloom riscontra analogie con la biografia di Wafa nelle categorie di "revenge", "redemption", "relationship" e "respect". In particolare "la vendetta" può essere colta nell'odio radicato del rapporto israelo-palestinese, la "redenzione" nell'ingiustificata colpevolezza attribuita a sé stessa dell'impossibilità di avere figli, la "relazione" nel legame con il terrorismo attraverso i suoi fratelli e il "rispetto" derivante dal prestigio di essere una donna che si immola per una nobile causa.

Passando alla teoria della Windsor, l'atto viene giustificato dalle motivazioni di "potere", "genere" e "giovinezza" per quanto riguarda i fattori individuali, cause di "legami forti e deboli" nella categoria di "forze sociali" e infine l'ambiente natale predisposto all'aggressività, rientrante nell'area di "relazioni internazionali".

L'ultimo concetto trattato nel Capitolo 3 è la "Motivational Imbalance Theory", applicata al case study. Il pensiero di Kruglanski, Bélanger e Gunaratna fornisce ulteriori spunti, in chiave sociologica, all'esame della biografia della donna. La teoria esplora i temi dei bisogni, della narrativa e delle reti alla luce del caso studio specifico.

I risultati di questa ricerca hanno evidenziato una serie di elementi, alcuni già ipotizzati all'inizio della ricerca, altri scaturiti durante il percorso.

In primo luogo, il terrorismo femminile non sembra risultare una branca di terrorismo a sé, bensì comunque connesso al terrorismo in generale. Al pari delle motivazioni maschili, anche le donne si avvicinano alla radicalizzazione per una serie di cause diverse, che possono convergere con l'ideologia, la ricerca di consenso e la ricerca di significato. Sono pochi gli esempi di terrorismo nato come rivendicazione del femminismo.

Anche i ruoli non sembrano divergere di molto da quelli ricoperti dagli uomini: sebbene non siano molti gli esempi di ruoli di leadership al femminile, essi sono comunque presenti, insieme ad una varietà di altre cariche, includendo ruoli di elaborazione dell'ideologia, ruoli strategici e ruoli funzionali. Essi risultano tanto diversi quanto connessi all'ambiente circostante: laddove vi è un ambiente più progressista, risulta più semplice che le donne possano ricoprire anche ruoli di comando, laddove invece l'ambiente risulta essere più conservatore

e retrograda, anche i ruoli risultano uno specchio di tale condizione. Ciò che vuole essere dimostrato è che le donne non sono mai completamente succubi: nonostante possano essere vittime di stupri o violenze psicologiche, scelgono comunque autonomamente nella maggior parte dei casi di diventare terroriste. Infine, bisogna considerare, che proprio a causa degli stereotipi attribuiti alle donne, queste ultime sono state in passato meno soggette a controlli rispetto agli uomini, portando a diversi mancati arresti da parte delle forze dell'ordine. Tra le donne scampate alla giustizia si ricordano quelle ragazze suicide che utilizzarono la tattica della finta gravidanza come espediente per nascondere esplosivi, allo scopo di commettere atti estremi. Appare quindi evidente la necessità di considerare le donne al pari degli uomini, anche quando si tratta di terrorismo.