



Degree Program in International Relations

Thesis presented for the attainment of the Master's degree in Political Science,  
specializing in International Relations, Major in Security.

**Modern Terrorism: Why and How Are Women Increasingly Involved  
in Terrorist Organizations?**

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*На моите родители, Васе и Димче,  
за довербата и вербата.  
Оваа и секоја следна.*

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*List of Abbreviations*

*Only abbreviations used more than once are included*

- AQAP** al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula
- AQI** al-Qa'ida in Iraq
- BH** Boko Haram
- BIH** Bosnia and Herzegovina
- BW** Black Widows of Durbrovka
- EIJ** Egyptian Islamic Jihad
- ETA** Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
- EU** European Union
- GIA** Armed Islamic Group
- GSPC** Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
- IAI** Islamic Army in Iraq
- ISIL** Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
- ISIS** Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
- JRF** Jihad and Reform Front
- LTTE** Tamil Tigers
- MSC** Mujahidin Shura Council
- OSCE** Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- PW** People's Will
- RAF** Red Army Faction
- TO** Terrorist Organization

## Glossary

**Alim** (plural *ulama*): A scholar, someone who is knowledgeable. In the plural, the term describes a class of Islamic legal scholars. The *ulema's* training in Islamic law makes them authoritative interpreters of the Islamic scriptures and a source of jurisprudence. In the modern period, the traditional educational system of *ulema* has been undermined, and a new category of self-proclaimed *ulema* with non-traditional religious training has emerged.

**Ayatollah:** Literally means “sign of God.” The term refers to one of the highest ranks given to Shi’a clerics. An expert in Islamic Law.

**Bidah:** a type of innovation, creation, or change in the religious, political, or social field, which is deemed to deviate from the Islamic principles and is therefore regarded as sinful.

**Caliph** (Khalifa): the spiritual and political leader of the Muslim community (*ummah*) and Muslim nation

**Caliphate** (Khilafa): An Islamic system of governance headed by the Caliph, it also refers to the area ruled by the Caliph.

**Dar al-salaam/Dar al-harb:** Dar is the home or domain. Dar al-salaam means the “house of peace”. It corresponds to a domain that is under Islamic rule. In contrast, dar al-harb refers to the house of war, which comprises all the areas outside Muslim rule and therefore potentially in conflict with the Muslim land.

**Deobandi:** A reform movement that began at the Dar al-Uloom madrasa in Deoband (India) in 1866. Stresses the direct implementation of the Koranic recommendation. It also advocates a purification of Islam from the influence of the West and from material pleasures more generally.

**Fatwa:** An Islamic religious ruling or edict. It is an opinion on Islamic law traditionally given by members of the *ulema* known as *mufti*.

**Fiqh:** An upheaval, strife, or any period of civil violence. The turbulent political history of Islamic empires led religious authorities to stress doctrinal imperatives to avoid *fitna*.

**Halal:** Lawful and permissible according to Islamic Law.

**Haram:** That which is forbidden according to Islamic Law.

**Hijab:** It commonly refers to the type of head covering worn by Muslim women. In the Koran, the term *hijab* indicates firstly a spiritual veil that provides privacy. In the context of contemporary Islamism, it is perceived as a sign of political and religious militancy.

**Hijra:** Migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in AD 662, as Meccans refused to recognize his authority.

**Hizb:** In the contemporary context, hizb also means a political party (e.g. Hizbollah – Party of God)

**Ijmaa:** Refers in its broadest sense to the full consensus of the Muslim community (um-mah) and in its narrower sense to that of the Islamic scholars (ulema). Such agreement by consensus can constitute a source of Islamic Law (Shari'a).

**Imam:** In the modern context, the spiritual leader of a Muslim community or of a mosque. In some parts of the Muslim world, it is equivalent to the term mullah.

**Islamization:** A process through which a Muslim community increasingly uses Islamic law and principles as the basis for organizing all relevant aspects of individual and communal life.

**Jihad:** The Arabic noun for “struggle,” which is also commonly used with the meaning of Holy War. Islamic doctrine refers to jihad not only as a physical struggle in defense of the Islamic faith and the ummah, but also as an individual or communal quest for self-betterment and the good Islamic life.

**Kafir** (*plural kuffar*): In the Islamic doctrine it designates the person who rejects Islam, the unbeliever. By extension, it implies a willful covering up of the Islamic truth that leads to disbelief (kufr)

**Majlis al-shura:** An advisory or consultative council. Historically, a majlis al-shura selected the incoming Caliph for the Islamic community.

**Mujahid** (*plural mujahidin*): An Islamic fighter, usually one involved in jihad. In the contemporary context, this title is commonly claimed by armed Islamic groups throughout the Muslim world.

**Muslim Brotherhood:** An Islamist movement founded by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. The Muslim Brotherhood was the first modern mass-based movement seeking to bring Islam to the center of a modernized political and social sphere.

**Qadi:** A judge or magistrate of Islamic Law

**Salafi:** Derived from the noun Salaf, meaning a predecessor or ancestor, the term Salafi applies to the dominant Sunni Islamist trend of the twentieth century. It is a movement that takes the uncorrupted practices of the first generation of Muslims as the example to follow for contemporary Muslims. Although the Salafi movement generically stresses a return to the fundamentals of Islam, different trends within it draw different conclusions regarding what this return actually means in practice.

**Shahid:** Literally a witness.

**Shari'a:** The principles of law that are derived from the Koran and the Sunnah. It is meant to regulate the public and private lives of those who choose to live as an Islamic community.

**Shi'a:** A collective noun designating the partisans of Ali (shi'at Ali), the fourth Caliph. This branch of Islamic only recognizes Ali and his descendants as the legitimate successors to the Prophet.

**Sufi:** A Muslim mystic following the inner dimension of Islam, Sufism. Sufis are generally condemned by Islamist movements for promoting what Islam considers to be heterodox Islamic practices.

**Sunni:** the largest Islamic denomination, with approximately 85% of all Muslims.

**Takfir:** The act of designating a Muslim or group of Muslims as kafir.

**Ummah:** short for ummat-al-mu'minin, the Islamic community or the Muslim people. As a community of beliefs designed by adherence to the Islamic faith and Islamic practices, the ummah transcends modern state institutions and boundaries.

**Wahhabi:** an ultra-orthodox Sunni movement started by the Islamic scholar al-Wahhab.

**Zakat:** a type of almsgiving that constitutes one of the five pillars of Islam. It is regarded as a means of spiritual betterment, as it contributes to the improvement of the Islamic community by redistributing wealth.

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## *Abstract*

Terrorism, the biggest threat to modern societies, has evolved and been incorporated into the lives of many throughout the world. Therefore, the main aim of this dissertation is to explore the factors that contribute to the increased involvement of women in terrorist organizations, and how these phenomena contribute to the modern terrorism that the world is facing today. On top of that, women in political violence are often neglected under the lens of scholarship and underestimated as being portrayed as suicide bombers by the wider population. The truth is quite different, and this research attempts to uncover it.

By implementing primary and secondary data from the existing literature, interviews, and testimonies of former members as well as international organizations dealing with the issue, the dissertation explains the patterns that women follow throughout their terrorist journey. Explanatory factors reach from the traditional model of women's participation in terrorist organizations to a pragmatic inclusion at all levels and grounds. Finally, the dissertation proposes an original theory that contributes to existing literature by proposing an inclusive approach to the radicalization process.

## Introduction

*No Religion is responsible for terrorism. People are responsible for violence and terrorism.*

*- Barack Obama*

This research is based on the following theoretical premise: terrorism is a broad-ranging threat, with its nature and motivations varying based on the aim of the acts. The methods and perpetration are adapted to the challenges, and the ultimate goal is to achieve a certain objective on a political or sociological level. It also recognizes, at the same time, that the pathway from extremism to terrorism is the radicalization process, individual/group/mass, as the only way out or necessary path in order to change the primary trigger. To this effect, the combination of searching for purpose and social experiences seems to be increasingly relevant, especially for the growing involvement of women within terrorist organizations.

This work raises two fundamental questions as divers of the research: first, why and how are women increasingly involved in terrorist organizations? Second, what are the roles played within the terrorist organization from a behavioral point of view and under a criminological lens? These questions are driven by the lack of empirical research on the topic and/or undermining the role of women within those organizations, often referred to as meaningless or minor. It shall consider existing literature and case studies from a diachronic perspective, as well as interviews conducted with a large scope of human species relevant to the research. Furthermore, the significance of the work is driven by the exceptional approach of observing the same phenomenon from different perspectives, from law enforcement, perpetrators, victims, and the academic field.

Terrorism as an act of spreading terror and violence has been present throughout history, at all stages of human development and different political orders. Times are changing, and challenges also, a need for adaptability for both perpetrators and law enforcement emerges parallelly. In particular, the mainstream discussion on terrorism is focused and driven by the stereotypical conception of a terrorist as a middle-aged man with a beard and darker skin, even though that type is partially applicable and only for the fourth wave of terrorism. Still, due to globalization and mass media, this is the most spread misconception of terrorism. Nevertheless, the role of

women in terrorist organizations tends to remain significantly underestimated and underexamined. When women's participation is addressed, it often refers to motives driven by men, framed in relation to male figures, excluding women-driven context. Moreover, a common assumption in theory is that women are getting radicalized due to motives based on their relationship with a man or men being the trigger for their radicalization, for instance, an act of revenge for the death of a loved one that has been part of an extremist, separatist, and terrorist group prior to her membership. Taking that into account, the present research presents a comprehensive analysis of the different roles of women within the terrorist organizations, particularly over the last 40 years. Moreover, it highlights remarkable cases demonstrating multiple roles and activities that women played throughout the years, especially those that were overlooked or unrecognized as relevant for the development of terrorism and radicalization worldwide. Furthermore, the latest increase in women in such organizations can, to some extent, be attributed to the modernization and globalization of terrorism. The organization themselves have increasingly recognized the urgent need to take actions of inclusion, especially during the fourth wave also known as religious terrorism. Therefore, organizations consequently intensified the female-targeted approach. For instance, al-Qaeda launched a website addressed to women, which, alongside content on skincare and cooking, provides guidance on "tips and tricks" on how to marry a jihadi fighter and raising children based on the ideology of the organization.<sup>1</sup> Exactly this is the main aim of the research, to show and present how all of these small steps led to the current status of women within terrorist organizations (TO), and how this is related to the radicalization theory put forward.

### Thesis Outline and Relevance

The relevance of this thesis consists in the wide applicability to the process of radicalization, supported by the multiple pillars, not only for the female radicalization and terrorism analysis, but also in order to understand the reasoning behind the global fear. Since 9/11, media intensively broadcasted every terrorist attack worldwide, even though terrorism has existed centuries before. The answer to the question "What made terrorism so relevant [global spread] and irrelevant [ineffectiveness] at the same time" is woven in the process that includes women as main actors. Therefore, the research aims to analysis women's radicalization and participation in those organ-

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<sup>1</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). "Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists" – University of Pennsylvania Press

izations by observing the motivation, process of radicalization, and entering the organization, personal socio-economic background, and group structure. Even though TO have plots all around the globe, decentralization is one of the main features of their organization nowadays. Still, due to the development of the intelligence services, they struggle to carry out an action without being caught. The introduction of women as perpetrators has served as a secret weapon against predictability.

First of all, women's participation in any kind of political organization has been underestimated, especially in terrorist organization. Therefore, between 1970-2000 in a range of 30 years only 42 articles on women and terrorism were published<sup>2</sup>, regardless of women's involvement in political violence throughout history. The first changes occurred after 9/11, while in the 10 years after, 619 articles were published. Yet, the increase of this number is also due to a general expansion in research on terrorism worldwide.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, this dissertation, provides an alternative approach by explaining the female participation, including personal statements of women that found themselves in terrorist organizations and afterwards contributed to the activities and psycho-sociological explanation of the reasoning behind women's participation.

Secondly, the relevance of the work is woven in its wide inclusion of the whole phenomenon. Unlike the majority of the existing literature,<sup>4</sup> the research shall focus on the broader role that women play within these organizations. The main issue roots from globalization and the power of mass media, since the pattern became well-known, worldwide, after global newspapers has been intensively reporting on women who perpetrated bomb attacks, like the one in Moscow in 2010.<sup>5</sup> The media coverage is five times higher when women perpetrate a bomb attack competing to when men are perpetrators.<sup>6</sup> While women are labeled as yet another suicide bomber, the extremist or terrorist groups is using the advantage to spread the message to the wider population, by selling the sensation, both, geopolitically and socially.

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<sup>2</sup> Margolin, Devorah and Joana Cook (2024) 'Five Decades of Research on Women and Terrorism,' Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.

<sup>3</sup> ibis

<sup>4</sup> Narozhna, T. & Knight, W. A. (2016). "Female Suicide Bombings: A Critical Gender Approach". University of Toronto Press

<sup>5</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). "Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists" – University of Pennsylvania Press

<sup>6</sup> Ibis.

Thirdly, a critical gap that the dissertation aims to fill is the predominant focus in existing literature on *Why* women become radicalized, but not on *how*, generally explained by short-term membership within the organization and driven by John Horgan's IED model.<sup>7</sup> The work shall give the answer on how women are becoming terrorists, reconstructing the pathway that led them to terrorism. Indeed, the proposed method shows a significant increase in the effects of terrorism on all levels of influence. Often underestimated, women contribute in both, increasing the targeting of civilians and increasing the numbers of members.<sup>8</sup> The milestone of research of women in terrorism is the emergence of ISIS in 2014, raising global awareness about the complexity of women's involvement beyond supportive roles<sup>9</sup>. Still, mainly data is based on qualitative secondary sources, avoiding the truth of the systematic underestimation of women's participation. Perhaps, the assumption highlights not only the poor integration of women in literature, but also the fact that many scholars writing about women and terrorism appear to originate from other fields such as criminology and policy studies. As a result, articles on women and terrorism, often, focus less on the question of *How* and *Why* women become involved in terrorism and more on theoretical issues, driven by stereotypes, such as gender roles.<sup>10</sup>

Fourthly, the thesis provides an in-depth analysis by utilizing primary sources and testing the hypothesis in different scenarios, from a perception of law enforcement agents that had worked with deradicalization programs and offenders, with victims of the movements, and former members of radical organizations. Its analysis covers existing interviews, publicly accessible, their testimonies, with a combination of new interviews with a larger scope of actors in counterterrorism.

Lastly, it takes into account that radicalization could be defined as the process or pathway by which an individual, group of mass comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social or religious ideas that reject or undermine that status quo, which leads to terrorism.<sup>11</sup> Being radicalized does not mean being terrorist, but to become a terrorist you must be radicalized, otherwise

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<sup>7</sup> Horgan, J. (2005). "Theory of Psychology of Terrorism" - Routledge

<sup>8</sup> Porat, D. (2022). "The Hijacking of El Al Flight 426: The advent of Air Terrorism". *Journal of Contemporary History*. p. 1072 -1088.

<sup>9</sup> Margolin, Devorah and Joana Cook (2024) 'Five Decades of Research on Women and Terrorism,' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, J. West, L. & Amarasigam, A. (2021). "Measuring impact, Uncovering Bias? Citation analysis of Literature on Women in Terrorism". *Perspectives on Terrorism* n. 15

<sup>11</sup> McCauley, C. & Moskaleiko, S. (2011). "Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us" – Oxford University Press. New York.

we are talking about unconscious crimes, and terrorism is not one of them. In criminal law[s], there is a regulation of two types of crimes: “*conscious crime*” actions where the perpetrator is aware of their actions and primary intent, on the one hand, and “*unconscious crimes*”, on the other hand, committed while the person is in a state of unconsciousness. Therefore, based on the existing literature, case studies under observation and primary investigations followed by interviews conducted, shall propose an original theory named “Purpose to Pathway theory” applicable to both genders. Taking into account the broad spectrum of theories on radicalization, from 2000s up until now, it’s challenging to single out one theory of radicalization that exclusively applies to both targeted groups. Hence, radicalization theories are developed based on observation of cells of terrorist organizations or plots<sup>12</sup>, and female members are undermined, or the observation on participation is limited to certain roles without highlighting the process of how they got radicalized.<sup>13</sup>

The *Purpose to Pathway Theory*, presented as the conclusion of this analysis, is based on three main pillars of radicalization, psychological, sociological, and criminological reasoning. While scholars, typically, distinguish radicalization theories between those that prioritize ideology and those that do not, the *Purpose to Pathway Theory* seeks to merge both perspectives, identifying ideology as a landing point at the staircase toward terrorism. Under the theory, ideology observes individually and is not applicable to general concepts. Thereby, ideology emerges at the beginning of radicalization as a motivation for the radical, through the process of radicalization as solution for obsession with purification. For others, it could come *a posteriori* or after the attack, as a justification for the actions. According to the theory, based on the cases under observation, and what all observed cases have in common, the need to find its purpose in critical situation from a personal perspective is central, and an attack or violent opening serves as a step towards achieving the life goal, the purpose of life. The core of the theory is based on the Maslow pyramid, also known as the hierarchy of needs, which explains the motives for human behavior, or how and why people decide to take certain actions. The *Purpose to Pathway* theory is a set of five needs that are subdivided into three sections: *basic needs, psychological needs, and self-fulfillment needs*. According to the theory, radicalization is defined as a process through which an

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<sup>12</sup> Silber, M. & Bhatt, A. (2007). “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat”. New York City Police Department.

<sup>13</sup> Segeman, M. (2004). “Understanding Terror Networks” – University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

individual, group, or mass adopts radical and extremist beliefs as a direct consequence of unmet needs of different levels, which may result in developing a willingness to use violence to achieve a political, ideological, or religious goal, where ideology serves as a justification for the actions.

## Literature review

Terms women and terrorism are not often going together, definitely not in mainstream literature on terrorism and international security. The involvement of women in terrorism has been overlooked in leading terrorism studies, regarding radicalization and participation, often due to the traditional perception of what constitutes political violence. Nonetheless, from a historical and contemporary perspective, women were always there, playing vital roles, ranging from guiding an extremist movement, supporting and propaganda, to direct operators. By following the logic of disconfirmation, this literature review shall locate the gap that existing studies fail to explain, therefore provide an alternative approach to the phenomenon.

Hence, modern terrorism was introduced by the first forms of radical revolutionary anarchist movements perpetrated by women,<sup>14</sup> yet, Vera Zasulich is not a founder of anarchist terrorism. The whole period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century has been followed by the shared struggle.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, women start to take action to improve their situation by joining extremist movements. However, there is not a single comprehensive public database that can prove the quantitative involvement of women in extremist or terrorist organizations, neither at that specific period of time, nor today. Scholars, such as Geifman<sup>16</sup> attempt to estimate the number of women who took part in the Russian revolutionary movement, still, those numbers are based on analyzing individual cases but not on a dataset of recorded membership. One of the main reasons for this result, and the relatively unchanged current status, is the secretive nature of the phenomenon. Information on terrorism and the composition of the TO is part of classified information of law enforcement agencies, which limits both the quality and quantity of the scope of research.

For instance, Abidor<sup>17</sup> and Andrew<sup>18</sup> illustrate the rise of women's involvement in the first wave of terrorism as active actors, rarely perceived as such, figures like Zasulich and Kaplan disrupted normative assumptions on women's participation. On the other hand, Gief-

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<sup>14</sup> Repoport, D. (2022). "Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present" – Columbia University Press, New York.

<sup>15</sup> Abidor, M. (2016). "Death to Bourgeois Society: The Propagandist of the Dead" – Yala University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Giefman, A. (1995). "Thou shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917" – Princeton University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Abidor, M. (2016). "Death to Bourgeois Society: The Propagandist of the Dead" – Yala University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew, C. (2018). "The Golden Age of Assassination: Anarchists, Revolutionaries and Black Hand 1880-1914). Secret World: A History of Intelligence, Yale University. p. 425-448

man<sup>19</sup> argues that female participation serves as totem, often being romanticized in revolutionary narratives. Moreover, women's involvement has been correlated with previous activity of men, interpreting women's political violence as a duty or revenge<sup>20</sup> or a victim of manipulation.<sup>21</sup> The truth is women's involvement as a whole, and the roles that they are playing were systematically downplayed.

A key milestone in the research on women in terrorism is the emergence of Mia Bloom as a leading scholar, proposing a sophisticated, inclusive, and wide-ranging approach to female involvement. In *Bombshell*<sup>22</sup> she established a benchmark for future analysis on the field, setting the bare minimum in the study of women's role in terrorism. What sets her apart is that she conducted ethnographic research, prioritizing to unfold that are the motives of women to be part of terrorist organizations, and how terrorist organizations profit from it. Based on the hypothesis of the thesis, the only criticism that could be given is the limitation on the motivation, again, relating to another man being a trigger for women to get radicalized.

Another significant step forward is the emergence of feminist driven research, which starts to reshape the study of political violence. Many<sup>2324</sup> apply a critical gender lens on terrorism, prioritizing women as a main subject of research, yet not enough compared to the rest of the literature.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the leaders in radicalization theories rarely distinguish between genders in their models<sup>262728</sup>. The same assumption is woven in *Small Arms*<sup>29</sup>, exploring the motives for increasing involvement of marginalized groups within terrorist organizations.

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<sup>19</sup> Geifman, A. (1995). A. (1995). "Thou shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917" – Princeton University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Novak, D. (1854). "Anarchism and Individual Terrorism" – The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science. p. 176-184

<sup>21</sup> Jensen, Richard B. (2013). *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism* – Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>22</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists* – University of Pennsylvania Press

<sup>23</sup> Garcia, Maria I. (2024). "The Deradicalization and Disengagement of Terrorism" – Perspectives of Terrorism

<sup>24</sup> Speckhard, A. (2008). "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists" – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism

<sup>25</sup> Margolin, Devorah and Joana Cook (2024) 'Five Decades of Research on Women and Terrorism,' Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.

<sup>26</sup> Segeman, M. (2004). "Understanding Terror Networks" – University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia

<sup>27</sup> McCauley, C. & Moskaleiko, S. (2011). "Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us" – Oxford University Press. New York.

<sup>28</sup> Moghaddam, Fathali M. (2005). "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration" – American Psychologist. Vol. 60. P. 161-169

<sup>29</sup> M. Bloom & J. Horgan (2019). *Small Arms: Children and Terrorism* – Cornell University Press

Despite the increase and growth, several literature gaps remain. Firstly, this work brought to light a significant scarcity of articles based on testimonies, first-person narratives, ethnographic research, and longitudinal studies from a female perspective. For example, articles such as *The Terrorist's Son*,<sup>30</sup> *Agent Storm*<sup>31</sup> or *I Was Told to Come Alone*<sup>32</sup> are extremely rare, still necessary in order to prove the original insight of the terrorism and terrorist organizations. At the same time, testimonies often appear on digital platforms, or statements in the form of interviews framed around a specific topic or designed in a form to answer a particular question under observation. As a result, is challenging to use, interpret or reframe those statements in a different way or context, without making personal assumptions.

An important aspect is the geopolitical background of the scholars or narratives presented in the interpretation of an event. The distinction between a terrorist organization and a liberation movement is often fluid, sharpened and shaped on geopolitical interest and political recognition. For instance, not covered by this work, UCK is the most common terrorist organization suited in the Macedonian soil,<sup>33</sup> while the same organization is celebrated as liberation movement with heroic characteristics in Kosovo and Albania.<sup>34</sup> The same trend, in a different form, is also present in the more complicated area, the Middle East. Resulting with a clash between the notions of terrorist and classification as one in the West with the self-reflection, especially women, thereby, figures like Mariam Farhat also known as the *mother of Martyrs*<sup>35</sup> and Leila Khaled<sup>36</sup> had own story to tell. Those types of testimonies offer anecdotal but not coherent and systematical data for future analysis.

Furthermore, during the fourth wave of terrorism and increase of feminist scholarship contribute for rising question on international level on gender – blindness of counterterrorism policies. Reports from UN and European Commission stressed the urgency of the need to adopt a gender -sensitive approach on de-radicalization and general regulation. One of the questions that is touch my work is “How much we actually know about wives of foreign fighters, how coun-

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<sup>30</sup> Ebrahim, Z. & Giles, J. (2014). “The Terrorist’s son: A Story of Choice” – TED.

<sup>31</sup> Storm, M. (2015). “Agent Storm: My Life Inside al Qaeda and the CIA” – Atlantic Monthly Press

<sup>32</sup> Mekhennet, S. (2017). “I Was told to Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad”- Henry Holt and Co.

<sup>33</sup> START (2025). “Global Terrorism Database” – Department of Homeland Security Emeritus Center of Excellence led by the University of Maryland.

<sup>34</sup> Lellio, Di A. & Schwandner S. (2006). “The legendary commander: The construction of an Albanian master narrative in post war Kosovo” – Nations and Nationalism. p. 513-529

<sup>35</sup> Yardley, M. (2013). “Mother of Martyrs” – The New York Times.

<sup>36</sup> Etachfimi V. (2016). “I Had to Be the Voice of Women’: The First Female Hijacker Shares Her Story” - VICE

tries are treating them and what time of approach they adopt after women came back from the conflict zone”. In the matter of fact, is not a crime to marry a terrorist, but is a crime to “marry” terrorism. This concept is also overlooked in mainstream radicalization and de-radicalization theory

### Approach and Methodology

From an analytical perspective, modern terrorism goes deeply into the historical development of the phenomenon of terrorism by examining the four main waves of terrorism that the world has witnessed so far. The development of these waves is driven by the evolving strategies behind the use of terror and the combination of geopolitical challenges and personal struggles of the members. The standardized model, adopted by the dissertation, shall present a comprehensive explanation and examination of the increasing involvement of women in notable terrorist organization throughout history, primarily focusing on why and how they become one of them. Moreover, on a horizontal level of analysis, the research concentrates on the second research question, in precise, what is the role that women are playing within these organizations. In this way, the dissertation strives to be comprehensive, including both quantitative perspectives, in terms of increasing numbers of women in terrorist organizations, and qualitative perspectives, the positions that women are holding within those organizations. Therefore, the work shall analyze, diachronically, women’s activities in the well-known terrorist groups, but also shall take into consideration the contribution to the organizations by examining primary sources and testimonies. On the other hand, the scope of analysis includes literature not only from mainstream scholars and experts in radicalization processes and global counterterrorism narratives, but also from experts specialized in notable groups or movements. Lastly, the theory of radicalization proposed by the research, *the Purpose to Pathway Theory*, is given to professionals from the region of particular interest for criticism on the application of the theory and inclusion.

The object of the research is the phenomenon of female radicalization as a relevant variable that contributes to the increase of terrorism worldwide, the theory behind and the global narrative. There is still an existing gap in the research on women in terrorism that the dissertation aims to fill. From the early stages of terrorism development, up until now, in every single terrorist organization, there is participation of women, actively or passively. Without any doubt, the

female perspective was undermined, not that it wasn't present, but was rarely covered by academia.

While the subject of the work is motivated by the women's participation, the triggers that lead them to perceive the organization as the place where they can express their interest, the need for women to take part of an extremist organization, terrorist, or radical organization, but also the need of organization to recruit and have women within their members. The observation of the subject shall be present through the lenses of criminological, sociological and psychological aspects.

The aim of the work is to unfold women's participation in terrorism as an underestimated topic of research. Driven by the research questions, the thesis shall give an overview of the trends in terrorism through the years, provided by the historical overview of the development of terrorism also known as waves of terrorism, highlighting the emergence of women followed by the question "Were they always present but never emphasized as important, or have they emerged now together with mass media?". Secondly, it analyzes the patterns of radicalization and women's participation in the most notable terrorist organizations. Thirdly, to give a critical overview of radicalization processes and female terrorism under existing theory, it identifies the gaps and processes that are crucial to the increase of women in terrorism. Fourthly, to present the two sides of women's radicalization, a more important role is accorded to women in terrorist organizations, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The approach is comprehensive and inclusive, in order to understand the reasons behind the increasing numbers in these organizations. Fifthly, it studies cases of significant importance to showcase the reality of female terrorism, which will later provide the research with the foundational framework for the development of the theory. Finally, the goal of the work is to make a contribution by developing an original theoretical approach of the patterns that take place in the field of terrorism.

The first research question is: *What are the roles played within the terrorist organizations from a behavioral point of view and under a criminological lens?*

The first question therefore, concentrates more on the practical challenges, such as defining the roles and positions that women are holding in the organizations. The hypothesis is based on the negation of the narrative that women are suicide bombers or [and] have minor responsibil-

ities. Therefore, H<sup>1</sup> states that women in various terrorist organizations hold diverse roles beyond suicide bombers, including being leaders, logistics, intelligence, and recruitment, which are often overlooked in traditional security assessments. H<sup>0</sup>, in return, assumes that women in terrorist organizations serve as support to the men that introduce them into the organization, and that there is no significant role of women that contribute to the activity of the organization. Therefore, the core theory that research shall implement is Sociological institutionalism, explaining the relationship between actors, victims, and suspects, as well as social triggers, gender roles, and the need for self-fulfillment.

The second research question is: *Why and How are women increasingly involved in Terrorist Organizations?*

The complexity of the topic in practical terms is even more complicated than putting the theory together. For that reason, the second research question is driven by three hypotheses: H<sup>1</sup> starts from the idea that women increasingly join terrorist organizations due to a combination of ideological and sociological motives that contribute to finding the purpose of life as an ultimate goal. H<sup>2</sup>, on the other hand, assumes that women are increasingly numerous due to opening of the organization towards recruiting women as stealth weapons, generally characterized as victims of crime, but not as perpetrators. As a result, terrorist organizations profit from an absolute advantage, due to women's unique features and chameleon strategies, the moment in which perpetrators look and act the same as the victims. H<sup>0</sup>, however, assumes that women have always been part of the organizations, so that there is no significant relationship between the personal need of self-fulfillment and the organizational need for recruitment. The only difference is that today these effects are perceivable due to globalization dynamics and feminist approaches of defining narratives. Compared to others, its relevance for academic sociological scholarship and its widespread applicability to the theory of radicalization. Case studies provide in-depth knowledge that forecasts the reality of radicalization, especially if the goal is the prevention of radicalization and effective deradicalization. Moreover, the proposed deradicalization strategy is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses on the "full-treatment". This theory was developed in Sri Lanka on the members of the Tamil Tigers, as the only mathematically proven method of deradicalization, measured by extremist narratives and compared with the rest of the community

members that had never carried out an attack or had been radicalized, enriched by local strategies and practices used by the institutions that deal with foreign fighters.

### **Outline of the thesis:**

The introduction of this work aims to address the research question, supported by the hypothesis tested throughout the study. By identifying a gap in the research, primarily driven by male-centered literature and mainstream scholarship, this chapter critiques and disagrees with the existing literature, offering an alternative approach, as it only acknowledges the presence of women without adequately exploring their roles.

The One chapter of this work discusses the origins of modern terrorism by providing a brief historical background related to the questions raised by the research. Since terrorism is a broad and complex concept, the thesis will explain its development in chronological order, within a conceptual framework, and identify factors that led to the initial appearance of women. Furthermore, this chapter aims to address the main sub-questions concerning the rapid increase in female participation over the past 30 years: First, how religion as a shared value influenced involvement in extremist groups; second, why global jihad poses a decentralized threat; and third, what role women play once they are involved in religious terrorist organizations.

Chapter two of the research aims to address the first research question. It examines the role of women radicalization, of RAF, Red Brigades, Tamil Tigers, Black Widows, ETA, ISIS, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda along five different variables - the structure, personal roles, and pathways of radicalization through different ideologies, and strategies of maintaining the female members within the organization, and lastly legal gap of coverage the female presence. Each of these specific variables shaped the role of women to a certain degree.

Chapter Three of the work addresses the second research question. Since the concept of female terrorism is broad and complex, the dissertation will address the theoretical explanation of female radicalization through a critical review of existing literature. Women's participation in terrorist organizations shall be analyzed in both directions, from the need of organizations to recruit women and from women's need to join the organization. Significantly more importantly, the chapter answers the question "How do women become terrorists?" by empirical observation of the logic of functioning.

The fifth chapter remarks on the unique research, presenting empirical findings conducted with interviews. It examines the information given by incarcerated terrorist offenders who presented their narratives, understandings, and explanations of the research questions under observation. The findings are then analyzed through relevant theoretical frameworks to assess their alignment with existing literature and evaluate their support for the research hypotheses.

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Chapter One:

**ROOTING MODERN TERRORISM**

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## I. Chapter One: **ROOTING MODERN TERRORISM**

From hijacked planes, car bombs, mass shootings, explosive belts, vehicles, to women used as an ultimate weapon... It's almost impossible to finish the list of the means of terrorism; even more, day by day, the list is enlarging. Still, there is no unified definition of "what terrorism is", nor that countries on a global level agree on the use of one singular definition that will help combat the threat. Mainly, the lack of a standardized definition is due to geopolitical and historical reasons, as well as the perception of what terrorism includes, what is justifiable as a liberation movement, and what is not. As the research progressed, it became clear that the notion "terrorist act" is followed by a political recognition as such. Therefore, labeling an organization as "terrorist" is based on the nature of the actions perpetrated. The dissertation shall use the definition of terrorism that refers to <<An act of terror, mass spreading of fear and violence, thereby targeting civilian and non-civilian population, in order to achieve certain political, ideological and/or religious goal>>. While terrorism shares some of the features with ordinary crimes and traditional warfare, such as *modus operandi*, it does not fit in either category, especially after the emergence of the internet and globalization of terrorism. In modern words, terrorism shall be defined as a hybrid threat, an ultimate combination of both the use of traditional means and advanced techniques for recruitment, organization, and perpetration.

As Stohl stressed, it is crucial to understand that there is a difference between victims of the violent act (referring to a terrorist act) and the targets (the audience of that violent act)<sup>37</sup>. Terrorist Organizations are primarily interested in targets, those who are competent to satisfy the organization's requirements or needs, or to put pressure on the relevant ones. These notions are woven into Walter's pillars of terrorism, consisting of three parts: the act or threat of violence, the emotional reaction to such an act or threat, and the social effects resulting from the act and reaction.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, terrorism is a far more complex phenomenon than violent crime, as it affects all dimensions of human existence: physical, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects. On the other hand, the perpetrators are the central focus of the scholarship debate, based on the

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<sup>37</sup> M. Stohl (2013) "The Politics of Terrorism" *Third Edition, Revised and Expanded*. Department of Political Science at Purdue University – West Lafayette, Indiana

<sup>38</sup> Eugene V. Walter (1969) "Terror and Resistance". Oxford University Press – New York

rationality of human behavior. Many scholars<sup>39</sup> seek to understand the reasons why a rational man can accept both the risks and costs of joining a terrorist organization and ultimately carrying out an act. The answer lies in the process of radicalization, the pathway through which an individual moves from personal or social dissatisfaction to the decision to carry out an attack. In other words, the process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme, political, social, or religious ideas and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo, that trigger the satisfaction position. According to A. Orsini, radical refers to a person harboring a deep-felt desire for fundamental sociopolitical changes, and radicalization is the process of growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with or pose a direct threat to the existing order.<sup>40</sup>

Not all the radical ones become terrorists, nor are all terrorists radicalized – especially those who were forced to participate in suicide bombings. The difference between those who got radicalized and did not perpetrate an attack, and those who did, is the type of radicalization or the level of radicalization.<sup>41</sup> As a result of this, scholars developed two different types of radicalization theories. On one hand, cognitive radicalization or the process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new source based on a belief system that is completely different. On the other hand, violent radicalization requires action to occur when an individual takes the additional step of applying violence to further the view derived from cognitive radicalization.<sup>42</sup> Regardless of the theoretical lens, scholars examining radicalization mostly agree on the existence of both cognitive and violent radicalization, with a difference in the shift from one to another or the title used for the terms. But why is it important to address radicalization before discussing terrorism? Radicalization serves as the fuel for terrorism; without it, a terrorist act may resemble an ordinary violent crime, lacking the pillars of the act.

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<sup>39</sup> See also: Wiktorowicz, Q. (2005) “Radical Islam Rising” Muslim extremism in the West. *Rowman & Littlefield Publishers*; Crenshaw, M. (1981). The causes of terrorism. *Comparative Politics*.; McCauley, C., & Moskalenko, S. (2011). *Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us*. Oxford University Press and others.

<sup>40</sup> Alessandro Orsini (2020) “What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 5 (2020): p. 921–940

<sup>41</sup> Preesman, A. (2021) "Female Suicide Bombers: An Uncomfortable Truth" King's Collage - London

<sup>42</sup> Borum, R. (2011) “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security*

As John Horgan noted, “there is no standardized model of radicalization, nor a specific pathway that individuals follow before becoming terrorists, but they certainly do get radicalized.”<sup>43</sup> The process of one individual through a particular pathway does not automatically imply that another will follow the same trajectory; each case must be analyzed individually, following its own context. A key shortcoming lies in the fact that many theories on radicalization were developed during the last wave of terrorism, often referred to as religious terrorism. The world of researching terrorism is split into two: the research on terrorism before 9/11 and after. As many would say, before 9/11, there were only a couple of scholars who were observing terrorism and specialized in the subject; however, in the aftermath of the attacks, thousands of new experts emerged in the field. As a result, the literature on radicalization and terrorism in the past 25 years is far more extensive compared to previous decades, mainly due to the surge in research on the event that changed the course of history forever. Precisely, over 3.335 compulsory articles were published in the next fifteen years after 9/11<sup>44</sup> mainly analyzing the motives and pathways of religious terrorists. In this context, the need for the dissertation is driven by the evident research gap, demonstrated by the fact that only 661 articles on women and terrorism have been published in the last five decades.<sup>45</sup>

The historical overview of terrorism's development over the ages is often contextualized through Rapoport's Four Waves Theory, which offers a timeline of key events that marked specific periods in the history of terrorism. In fact, this research has also served as the starting point for the section's discussion, enriched with a historical analysis of the events. Although there is a research gap concerning women's involvement in radical and violent organizations, especially terrorist groups, an in-depth analysis of the waves of terrorism can serve as a foundation for understanding women's participation. Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of female terrorism cannot be examined in isolation from its broader historical and socio-political context. Exploring the de-

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<sup>43</sup> Alessandro Orsini (2020) “*What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model*,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 5 (2020): p. 921–940

<sup>44</sup> Vargani, M. Iqbahar & G. Barton (2018) "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence about Radicalization Into Violent Extremism" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*

<sup>45</sup> Margolin, D. & Cook, J. (2024) " Five Decades of Research on Women and Terrorism" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*

velopment of terrorism helps uncover the evolving motives, different radicalization strategies, operational roles, and ideology behind.

### 1.1 First Wave: Anarchist Terrorism (1880s – 1920s)

The persistent gap between historical truth and public perception is woven through the constant misperception of terrorism as a modern threat. The deepest roots of terrorism date back to ancient times<sup>46</sup>, but the perception of it as such developed much later, as the literature describes it as “The First Wave” of terrorism. Before the eighteenth century, history was repeated, religion was the primary fuel of every terror campaign.<sup>47</sup> On top of that, terms such as Assassins<sup>48</sup> and Zealots<sup>49</sup> are two well-known examples of ancient sacred terror, still used as main terms to describe the contemporary terrorist. Nevertheless, the dominant difference between modern religious terrorism and the primitive form of religious terrorism is in the spread of terror, the (de)centralization of terror, and the victimology of the target.<sup>50</sup>

At the early stages, the progress of terrorism as recognized today began in the nineteenth century on Russian soil. After the assassination of the Empress Elisabeth and President McKinley<sup>51</sup>, one of the most popular German newspapers noted, “society... dances on a volcano” and that “a very small number of unscrupulous fanatics terrorize the entire human race”<sup>52</sup>. Seems like nothing has changed since then, but the globalization of terrorism. The seeds of modern terrorism were planted in 1879, when the first wave began in Russia, spreading the ideas of anarchist terrorism around the globe. The first official act represents the revolutionary reaction to oppressive state structure, concentration of power, and monarchy. The revolt rose to the level where individ-

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<sup>46</sup> The clearest indications of early uses of terrorism in ancient times came from the internal politics of Rome during some periods of the Republic, Jewish revolts in the Eastern Mediterranean first against the Seleucid Greeks and then against its incorporation into the Roman Empire, and battles between different factions in the Eastern Roman/Byzantine Empire – James M. Lutz & Brenda J. Lutz at *Terrorism: Origins and Evolution, chapter Terrorism in the Ancient World*

<sup>47</sup> Rapoport, D. C. (2022). *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press

<sup>48</sup> Assassins started emerging in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. The first forms occurred in Persia (current Syria), and the main motivation was political and religious ideology

<sup>49</sup> Zealots (Sicarii) emerged during the 1<sup>st</sup> century in modern-day Israel/Palestine on religious-nationalist ideology

<sup>50</sup> Thackeray, J. 1927. *The Jewish War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

<sup>51</sup> The International Conference of Rome for the Social Defense Against Anarchists was held between 24 November and 21 December 1898 following the assassination of Empress Elisabeth of Austria by Luigi Lucheni on the promenade of Lake Geneva on 10 September 1898.

<sup>52</sup> Dutton, William S. 1960. "One Thousand Years of Explosives: From Wildfire to the H-Bomb." In Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 5-6. Philadelphia: John C. Winston

uals took concrete action with the aim of rebellion and personal validation as equals with others. Undoubtedly, the founder of today's modern terrorism is the first formal terrorist group, *Народная воля*, also known as *People's Will*,<sup>53</sup> operating as a counter-reaction to Czar Alexander II's attempts to make Russia more like Western Europe.<sup>54</sup> The motivation is purely ideological, and ideology serves as an *a priori* trigger for the cognitive opening of the individual, based on political motives. As T. Parker and N. Sitter emphasized, anarchist terrorism is a broader revolutionary wave, unlike the nationalist or religious terrorist or organization, which is often motivated by the vision of a stateless, classless society, encouraged by ideologies and political thinkers.<sup>55</sup> Apart from this, English political philosopher Tomas Hobbes<sup>56</sup> argued that an effort to overthrow a government requires three conditions: discontent, hope for success and transfer of legitimacy.<sup>57</sup> Thereby, the genesis of Russian terrorism, represented by the actions of the PW, confirms Hobbes' observation.

On the organizational level, the roles were equally divided between the members; the recruits came from the middle and upper classes, were well-educated, and with wealthy backgrounds. The age structure was under 40, mainly youth, characterized by high political confidence and physical capabilities to carry out the actions, crucial for Hobbes' theory. These features remain important and relevant for recruiters up until now.<sup>58</sup> In the blink of an eye, various populist groups and radical movements start to emerge across the globe, marking the beginning of the "Golden Age of Assassination"<sup>59</sup>. The period during which radical political dissatisfaction was shown through a noticeable rise in assassinations of decision-makers, political figures, monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers. Additionally, brutality is the primary feature of these attacks, not as a reflection of the perpetrators' cruelty but as a means of conveying the message to those who need to hear it. Some may argue that brutality has been used similarly to how the me-

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<sup>53</sup> Jensen, Richard B. 2013. *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibis*.

<sup>55</sup> Tom Parker & Nick Sitter. 2015. "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's." *Terrorism and Political Violence*.

<sup>56</sup> Tomas Hobbes - was an English philosopher, best known for his 1651 book *Leviathan*, in which he expounds an influential formulation of social contract theory.

<sup>57</sup> Fornäs, J., Fredriksson, M., & Stead, N. (2014). Culture Unbound Volume 6, Editorial. *Culture Unbound Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 6(1), 7–11

<sup>58</sup> Andrew, Christopher. 2018. "The Golden Age of Assassination: Anarchists, Revolutionaries and Black Hand 1880-1914." In *Secret World: A History of Intelligence*, by Christopher Andrew, 425-448. Yale University Press

<sup>59</sup> The Golden Age began in 1878 with these forms of anarchist terrorism by using systematic terror for political ends. - Christopher Andrew at "*The Secret World: A History of Intelligence*"

dia is used today for effective message transmission, as they aim to express the need for the attack and, often, the subsequent demands. On the individual level, many historians consider the Russian populist Vera Zasulich's assault on General Trepov on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1878, as the spark that ignited a wave of assassination attempts around the globe,<sup>60</sup> not only in Russia. Although she is often described as a "lone wolf" her contribution to terrorism as a whole is significant for defining an act as a terrorist attack, and defining self-identification as a crucial feature for a radical one. When asked why she had thrown her pistol to the ground instead of killing him [General Trepov], she responded that she was a "terrorist, not a killer".<sup>61</sup> Not only that this mark a significant moment in history, the first forms of radical self-identification, but it also opens the legal debate of criminalizing an act as a specific act of terrorism.

From a historical point of view is hard to define her as lone wolf terrorist, not only because the term did not exist in that period, but also because often attacks were related to a movement or ideology, before or after the attack. Indeed, the form of it exists. The view on individual terrorism differs in the literature; however, Petar Kropotkin's approach stresses the importance of the individual's commitments for the best of the group or the movement. The answer to the need for violence or moral justification in his book, published in 1890, *Anarchist Morality* that clarifies people into two different groups: on one hand, in today's words, ordinary people, and on the other hand, the tyrants.<sup>62</sup> This narrative is still present, nowadays, authors such as F. Moghaddam, M. Sageman, J. Horgan, S. Moskalenko, and others<sup>63</sup> are using the notion of US vs. THEM to depict the difference between two different categories of people. The division is rooted in the motivation for radicalization, woven into the social struggle; therefore, terrorism blooms in particular circumstances. According to Kropotkin, in order to understand anarchist terrorism, you need to understand the social background of the terrorist and their personal struggle, which later reflects on the spread of the struggle to the one who is (in)directly responsible.<sup>64</sup> Af-

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<sup>60</sup> Vera Zasulich, a young Russian revolutionary, shot General Fyodor Trepov, the Governor of St Petersburg, in retaliation for his torture of the Tsarist regime's many political prisoners. Trepov was wounded in the attack, while Zasulich was soon arrested and put on trial - Jay Bergman at "*Vera Zasulich: A Biography*" by Stanford University Press (1983).

<sup>61</sup> Ulam, A. (1977). In *The Name of The People*. New York: Viking Press.

<sup>62</sup> Kropotkin, P.(1887) *Anarchist Morality*. Freedom Press

<sup>63</sup> Orsini, A. (2020). What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 46(1), 68–100

<sup>64</sup> Rapoport, D. C. (2022). *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press

ter the assassination of Empress Elizabeth, he quotes “she is the victim of the social struggle”, stressing the importance of victimization as another relevant factor contributing to the process of radicalization.<sup>65</sup>

As stated before, one of the main features of the first wave of terrorism was the phenomenon of “propaganda of the deed”<sup>66</sup>. The core of the movement was first outlined by the Italian socialist Carlo Pisacane, 1857, by rejecting the “propaganda of the idea,” he attempted to explain the ways citizens could contribute to the social changes and revolution. He stated, “Ideas result from deed, and people will not be free when they are educated but educated when they are free.”<sup>67</sup> locating the motives for the social movement in the system’s structure. The transition from social theory to terrorist sub-ideology was formalized a decade after by Mikhail Bakunin and Sergey Nechayev, who called for direct actions over pointless propaganda. In modern terms, the call for action has meaning in many radicalization theories, the transition from cognitive opening to violent opening,<sup>68</sup> or the transition from solidification of categorical thinking to terrorist act and sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms.<sup>69</sup> The trend has not been absent in the rest of the world; many have started to justify their acts of terror through, perhaps, the ideology of propaganda of the deed. Thus, in 1887, Alexander Berkman attempted to murder Henry Clay Frick<sup>70</sup> unsuccessfully, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries,<sup>71</sup> marking one of the first cases of anarchist terrorism on American soil. In the same year, 1893, Western European states experienced the first emergence of radical anarchism, when Santiago Salvador<sup>72</sup> prepared a bombing attack in

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<sup>65</sup> Brian, F. (2012). *Terrorism, Crime, and Public Policy*. American University, Washington DC

<sup>66</sup> Propaganda of the deed, also known as propaganda by the deed, is a type of direct action intended to influence public opinion. The action itself is meant to serve as an example for others to follow, acting as a catalyst for social revolution, read more at *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1962), page 20 by G. Woodcock.

<sup>67</sup> Marriman, John M. (2016). *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de- Siecle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror*. Yale University Press.

<sup>68</sup> M. Silber & A. Bhatt. 2007. *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. New York: New York City Police Department.

<sup>69</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam (2005) “ The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration” - Georgetown University

<sup>70</sup> Alexander Berkman was a Russian–American anarchist and author, a leading member of the anarchist movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, famous for both his political activism and his ideological writing. In 1892, undertaking an act of propaganda of the deed, he made a failed attempt to assassinate businessman Henry Clay Frick during the Homestead strike, for which he served 14 years in prison.

<sup>71</sup> Beverly, G. (2009). *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror*

<sup>72</sup> Santiago Salvador Franch was a Spanish anarchist terrorist, known for carrying out the Liceu bombing, which killed at least 20 people. During his imprisonment, he falsely converted back to Catholicism in order to get preferential treatment. After he was sentenced to execution, he renounced his conversion and proclaimed his loyalty to anarchism.

Barcelona<sup>73</sup> and Auguste Vaillant<sup>74</sup> did the same at the French National Assembly.<sup>75</sup> With the same pace, the trend persisted in the next decades, until the 1920s; however, one of the labeling events is the assassination of the American president William McKinley by Leon Czolgosz, an event still under constant discussion.<sup>76</sup>

## 1.2 Second Wave: Anti-Colonial Terrorism (1920s – 1960s)

In this part of history, acts of terrorism have become woven into the lives of many, making it difficult to distinguish the clear line between terrorism and revolutionary politics. Years later, many organizations are recalling the motives of the second wave as a justification for the acts; moreover, the title “Liberation Army” is widely used as a synonym for the aim to reclassify the acts from terrorism to liberation based on the right of self-determination. The discussion of the right of self-determination began with the statements of world leaders, later on a significantly polarized world, and the division between those who support Eastern and Western politics. Firstly, in 1914, Lenin published his work "*О праве наций на самоопределение*"<sup>77</sup> which speaks about the formation of states and the right of peoples to establish their sovereign states, but at the same time places emphasis on multinational states. On the other hand, in his fourteen-point speech, four years later, W. Wilson promoted the concept of self-determination as a right of the national groups to choose their own sovereignty and political status. Such a position was taken partially or selectively by many, considering only those parts that are beneficial for the affected groups. It should be noted that the initial narrative behind it was also selective. For the sake of truth, Robert Lansing made a crucial clarification of the issue:

«When... President [Wilson] talks of “self-determination.” what unit has he in mind? Does he mean a race, a territorial area, or a community? Without a definite unit which is practical, application of this principle is dangerous to peace and stability ... The more I think about the President’s declaration as the right of “self-determination,” the more convinced I am of the danger of

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chism. Salvador was garroted in El Reval, where his body was displayed as a warning to other would-be anarchist terrorists.

<sup>73</sup> Law, Randall D. (2009). *Terrorism: A History*. Polity Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom

<sup>74</sup> Auguste Vaillant was a French anarchist and the perpetrator of the dynamite attack on the French Chamber of Deputies on 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1893. The bomb did not cause any victims, but spread terror by sharing the message of the capabilities of the anarchism.

<sup>75</sup> Abidor, Mitchell. 2016. *Death to Bourgeois Society: The propagandist of the Deed*. Yale University Press.

<sup>76</sup> Rauchway, E. (2004). *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodor Roosevelt’s America*

<sup>77</sup> Vladimir Il’ich Lenin (1946) "*О праве наций на самоопределение*" published at ОГИЗ, Гос. изд. полит. лит.-ры, 1946

putting such ideas into the minds of certain races. It is bound to be the basis of impossible demands at the peace conference and trouble in many lands.»<sup>78</sup>

Hence, such geopolitical changes contribute to the emergence of many radical and terrorist groups, marking the beginning of anti-colonial terrorism. Unlike the first wave, in the second wave of terrorism, groups no longer trained one another; individuals did not leave one group to join a foreign one, nor was there an exchange of knowledge.<sup>79</sup> The key reason for the diametrically opposing development of the phenomena is the core motives behind the radicalization of the terrorist groups or the ideology. Previously, as many would agree, the cause of the suffering came from a homogenic group, such as political elites and the oligarchy, and then the pathway for resistance was similar. As Rapoport emphasizes, national-territorial struggles serve as a trigger that ignites the propellant for the actions of liberation, opposing the rule of foreign occupation forces or the colonial power to establish or build a sovereign national state. Among those were numerous radical organizations that used terror as a method of liberation.<sup>80</sup>

Although it is difficult to identify an event that marked the beginning of anti-colonial terrorism, historical literature suggests that the formation of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) could have inspired others to take similar actions. In early January 1919, the newly established IRA carried out the murder of two Royal Irish Constabulary officers, using terrorism and guerrilla tactics, and signaling the start of the second wave. Soon after, the organization realized that it was easier to target police officers than prominent figures, given the greater number of police and their relative lack of protection, with a similar societal effect, terrorizing the population through the threat of attacking state-protected individuals<sup>81</sup>. From a sociological perspective, this reflects a shift from the first wave to the second. The targets no longer need to be direct causes of the conflict but can instead symbolize those causes or the system they support. These trends quickly lead to a rise in casualties and an escalation in the scale of operation, with changes in the nature of warfare, a shift from pistols to urban bombings.

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<sup>78</sup> Robert Lansing served as U.S. Secretary of State from June 24, 1915, until February 13, 1920 (Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State). Read more at: David C. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” *Anthropoetics* 8,

<sup>79</sup> Rapoport, D.C. 2022. *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>80</sup> Ibis.125

<sup>81</sup> Ibis. 125

On the contrary, terrorist organizations started to incorporate violent actions with hybrid tactics, mainly “hunger strikes”. In the first wave, those methods were used as a form of protest or *a posteriori* justification of the acts by demanding reclarification of their status as prisoners of war.<sup>82</sup> Recognition has both internal and external uses, legitimizing their actions in the eyes of their members and transmitting the political message to the broader public. In the second wave, hunger strikes began to spread to many organizations to internationalize the act. For instance, Thomas Ashe and Trencé MacSwiney<sup>83</sup>, The Lord Mayor of Cork, initiated a hunger strike in order to demand prisoner-of-war status; both died after being force-fed by prison guards, significantly contributing to attracting international attention. As a result, American firms and entities threatened to boycott British goods, numerous protests emerged in Germany and France, and several Latin American countries sent appeals to the Pope seeking immediate intervention.<sup>84</sup>

Similar patterns were also present in the Levant and across parts of Asia, particularly in the countries that for centuries had experienced frequent changes in rulers or constant occupation by various foreign powers. In the aftermath of the First World War, acts of political violence and forms of terrorism appeared as resistance against colonial authorities and their governance. Therefore, in 1926, the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) launched a violent campaign against the Dutch rule. The PKI sought to leverage its exchanges of knowledge with the Moscow communist organization; however, these efforts failed to secure assistance, mainly due to its perceived relation or association with bourgeois nationalism.<sup>85</sup>

In Africa, British colonial authorities observe the Mau-Mau as nothing more than anarchic hysteria, refusing to recognize it as a legitimate national liberation movement<sup>86</sup>. However, the movement prepared one of the most infamous incidents, when in 1953, Mau-Mau carried out the Lari massacre, where eighty-four civilians were killed and thirty-one horribly mutilated with Knives.<sup>87</sup> Still, the organization has many shortcomings that result in a decline of its power, such as a lack of a unified strategy, centralized command, and international support. Despite having

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<sup>82</sup> Ibis. 117

<sup>83</sup>Power, Ed. "What Terence MacSwiney's body went through during his 74-day hunger strike" The Irish Times. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/what-terence-macswiney-s-body-went-through-during-his-74-day-hunger-strike-1.4387598>

<sup>84</sup> Ulick O'Connor, *Michael Collins and the Troubles* (Mainstream, 2001), 124.

<sup>85</sup> Rapoport, D.C. 2022. *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 35

<sup>86</sup> Alpert, C. J. (1954) “Kenya’s Answer to the Mau Mau Challenge” *African Affairs* no. 212. p. 242

<sup>87</sup> Ibis. 35

approximately 12,000 fighters, the organization lost its key leader in the aftermath of the massacre. Meanwhile, the colonial security forces successfully developed an effective apparatus that combat the movement, which resulted in around 11,000 Mau-Mau casualties ten years later.<sup>88</sup> After countries became independent, former members of the organization were honored as heroes of their roles in the liberation struggle.<sup>89</sup> However, the main political power remains in the hands of European-educated Africans who had avoided any direct involvement in the violence during the resistance.

In the holy land, two radical organizations marked the period of anti-colonial terrorism. The first major event is the bombing at the King David Hotel, summer 1946, when Irgun bombed the British administrative headquarters, killing ninety-one people of various nationalities and injuring around fifty.<sup>90</sup> As Rapoport stressed, ironically, although the attack injured British public opinion, it also convinced the government that the Mandate's political status had to be reconsidered, and partition offered.<sup>91</sup>

### 1.3 Third Wave: Left-wing Terrorism (1960s – 1990s)

For the first time in history, research on terrorism and political violence began to be assessed through objective parameters and quantitative data. Many scholars argue that left-wing terrorism, also known as the third wave, was a direct consequence of the Cold War, being sponsored by one of the sides. The culmination of the second wave of terrorism overlapped with the peak of the Cold War, thus, a significant interconnection between these two phenomena is real. Therefore, left-wing terrorism emerged primarily in developed and developing countries, such as Italy, Germany, the UK, and Southeast Asia, compared to the second wave.. However, from a sociological perspective, the notion of relevance of individual motives, methods of radicalization and the ideological pillars of the organizations, many of these claims lose explanatory strength. For the purposes of this study, and in the interest of avoiding bias, all forms of generalization regarding these events will be excluded.

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<sup>88</sup> Rosberg, C. & Nottingham J. (1966) "The Myth of Mau Mau, Nationalism in Kenya" Stanford University Press, Stanford

<sup>89</sup> Marshall S. Clough (1998) " Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics" – Lynne Rienner Publishers

<sup>90</sup> Rapoport, D.C. (2022). Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 154

<sup>91</sup> Ibis. p. 154

Regardless of the demographic structure, the average age of individuals that joined radical organizations during this period is the “golden mean” of early adulthood, between 25-35 years old. Disputing the assumption that terrorism is attractive to immature youths with radical revolutionary ideas. Indeed, radical groups during the third wave, in the majority of cases, originated as an underground student movement that developed its ideology and changed the strategy from cognitive resistance to violent radicalization. Still, their use of violence was selective, with a lower number of harmed innocent civilians while targeting individuals perceived as accountable for the national or community struggle.<sup>92</sup> Another similarity between the organizations was the emergence of symbolism as a defining feature of all organizations, evident in the in-depth analysis of groups’ manifestos. Leaders of certain organizations were glorified as heroic figures, a motivation for others to join the organization, to justify the action, or to speed up the radicalization for some.

Another defining feature of organizations is the way of choosing names. Separatist groups, generally, included the name for the nation they intend to create as the final goal of the organization, for example, the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), Red Army for the Liberation of Catalonia, Quebec Liberation Front. On the other hand, national revolutionary patterns were more complicated due to the complex historical background, or the state already existed, organizations frequently used a national hero’s name.<sup>93</sup> For instance, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were named after Augusto Sandino, who led the fight against U.S. Marines in the 1920s.<sup>94</sup> Some other prefixes used incorporated in group names were “revolutionary” or “revolution”, such as “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia”, the “Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union”, and the “Nicaragua Revolutionary Democratic Alliance”<sup>95</sup>.

On an operational level, bombs became the most used weapon between 60s and 80s. therefore, from the year of the European student protest, 1968, until the late 90s, in a total of 2,287 terrorist incidents motivated by leftist ideology, 65 percent involved the use of bombs.<sup>96</sup> Organizations often choose bombs because they are cheap, often made by individuals trained for

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<sup>92</sup> Rapoport, D.C. (2022). *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 163

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p.169.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* p. 170

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173

<sup>96</sup> The figures come from the RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorist Incidents. Most of the 8,008 incidents are unclaimed. Databases classify an event as a bombing when the attack is on facilities and buildings.

that, easily hidden, and even easier to transfer from one location to another. The size of the bombs varied for the purpose that they were used for, from less than a kilogram to a couple of kilograms. In terms of financing the groups, they started perpetrating petty crimes and evolved in bank robbing and kidnapping as a source of revenue.<sup>97</sup> Victims of kidnapping were result of a detailed analysis of their profiles; most efforts target wealthy businessmen, people in power or their relatives. Basque terrorist in a decade kidnapped over seventy people and none of them was a foreigner. On the other hand, Irish terrorist enlarges the scale including foreigners, for example in 1983 they even kidnapped a racehorse<sup>98</sup>, but the owner refused to pay a ransom. <sup>99</sup> However, negotiating with governments is much more difficult than negotiating with private entities, often including involvement of law enforcement entities, slower communication for exchange and higher risk. As a result, terrorist organization choose to perpetrate quicker incidents, as bombings for more efficient and effective outcome.

Women became very important again, from the bottom to the top levels of the organization. As an illustration, Fusako Shigenobu founded the Japanese Red Army, Ulrike Mainhoff was a top-tier leader of Red Army Faction, Norma Arrostito founded the Argentine Montoneros, and Mara Cagol changed the track of Red Brigades. On top of that, women's presence increases on a qualitative level as well, knowing that half of Uruguay's Tupamaros and a third of West Germany's terrorist were women, with specially dedicated brunches for gender issues.<sup>100</sup> Paradoxically, organizations deny involvement or support towards feminism. For example, Spain had a feminist movement but ETA "was not . . . really open to feminism. [ETA] . . . is based on a 'machoistic' mentality which is indifferent to the aspirations of women in the movement when they talk of reestablishing new relations with men."<sup>101</sup> Religious norms were also suppressed. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) initially involved very few women, but in 1989 the organization began to operate in cities, where women were less restricted and educated; therefore, indoctrination went

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<sup>97</sup> J. Adams, (1989) *The Financing of Terror* - New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 94. For a good discussion of various problems associated with allowing corporations to pay ransoms to get hostages released, see Brian M. Jenkins, "Should Corporations Be Prevented from Paying Ransoms?" RAND Paper Series, RAND Corporation, 1974

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Alderson (2008) "The Truth About Shergar Race Horse Kidnapping," *Telegraph*. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1576718/The-truth-about-Shergar-racehorse-kidnapping.html/>

<sup>99</sup> Ibis. p.192

<sup>100</sup> Rapoport, D.C. (2022). *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>101</sup> Michel Wieviorka (1997) "ETA and Basque Political Violence," in *The Legitimation of Violence*, ed. David Apter - New York: New York University Press, 1997, p. 336.

smoothly. By the year 1993, one-third of PKK members were females, making the organization seem more revolutionary than separatist.<sup>102</sup> As established earlier, for the first time in the history of research on terrorism and political violence, statistics have been compiled. In total, the wave contained 404 groups, from which more than half were classified as “separatists”,<sup>103</sup> in numbers 212 groups, and 192 “revolutionaries”<sup>104</sup> groups.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, the accuracy of these numbers remains uncertain, as registration practices vary significantly around the globe.

#### 1.4 Fourth wave: Religious Terrorism (1980s – ongoing)

Unlike the other period, where a time gap existed between an activity, system, or a triggering political event and the emergence of terrorist activity, the fourth wave unfolded much faster with the incorporation of many personal motives and socio-psychological reasons. While region, mostly Islam, emerged as the core for the ideology of the organization used to legitimize widespread violence, terrorist organizations related to other religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Sikhism, also appeared during the fourth wave. However, these terrorist organizations were less resilient, centralized with weaker organizational structure, and lacked global influence. Among the most notable features of Islamic terrorism was the transnational composition of its members. Unlike the terrorist groups of the first three waves, which were typically composed of members sharing a common national identity, Islamic terrorist organizations in the Fourth Wave attracted individuals from multiple countries who united around a shared ideological objective

##### 1.4.1 Global Jihad

The motivation for an in-depth analysis of global jihad as a significant period in the history of the fourth wave is driven by the countless misconceptions and the frequent misuse of the term in

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<sup>102</sup> Aliza Marcus, (2007) *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* - New York: New York University Press, p. 172–78.

<sup>103</sup> Separatist groups: *organizations that use or advocate violence to achieve political independence or autonomy from a specific region or ethnic group. Therefore, separatist terrorism is violence by groups seeking secede from an existing nation-state and establish a new, independent homeland from their ethnic or national community.* Martin, Gus (2020). *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (7<sup>th</sup> ed)

<sup>104</sup> Revolutionary groups: *Organizations that aim to overthrow or fundamentally transform the existing political, social, or economic system, often through violent means, by rejecting the legitimacy of the current government or structure. Therefore, revolutionary terrorism is the use of violence to frighten those in power and their supporters in order to bring about political change.* Hoffman, Bruce (2017). *Inside Terrorism* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), Columbia University Press.

<sup>105</sup> S. Jones & Martin Libicki (2008) "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons from Countering al- Qa'ida" - CA: RAND Corporation. Also find more at: Rapoport, D.C. (2022). *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 354

a strictly negative context, often without direct connection to the core pillars of global jihad. In the years following the well-known September 11 attacks, the term has become widely used in both academic and non-academic literature. For instance, often, the terms jihadist and terrorist are used as synonyms even though they have a significant difference, due to the contemporary era in which religious terrorism is most widespread<sup>106</sup>. The dissertation shall implement efforts to avoid religious interpretations of the term, and other similar terms, still giving the context on how the term has been used; therefore, the analysis of terrorism as such, and global jihad is evidence-based and grounded on the application of the scientific method.

First of all, Jihad means “to strive” or “to struggle” in Arabic.<sup>107</sup> Literature agrees on the division of the use of the terms, once involving an outwardly directed struggle against oppression and tyranny,<sup>108</sup> and an inwardly directed personal struggle for holiness.<sup>109</sup> In the context of the development of the fourth wave, the use of terrorism is a basis for restoring the caliphate, as a result of the nexus of global jihad and Islamic Radicalism. Terrorist organizations are prioritizing the global jihad as a core for the ideology, at the same time, encouraging many to follow and practice the ideology throughout justification based on “regaining” what was theirs or divine by Allah; therefore, the “jihad” is glorified as the method of resocialization.

In the given frame, global jihad has been defined as defensive Islam<sup>110</sup> based on radical Salafi-jihadism or takfiri doctrine<sup>111</sup>, with a single aim of re-establishment of the caliphate. The need to restore the Caliphate has a deep history, as it was abolished during the Atatürk İnkıla-

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<sup>106</sup> Taufik, A. (2023) “Jihad and Social Change” – *Asyahid Journal of Islamic and Quranic Studies*. p. 5 (2)

<sup>107</sup> Al-Farag, Muhammad Abd-al-Salam. (2009) “The Call to Jihad” – *Islamic Radicalization and Global Jihad*. Jan 6<sup>th</sup>. p. 1-36

<sup>108</sup> Mirbagheri, S. M. Farid (2012). “The Question of Jihad” – *War and Peace in Islam*. Palgrave Macmillan – London. P. 115-118

<sup>109</sup> Al-Farag, Muhammad Abd-al-Salam. (2009) “The Call to Jihad” – *Islamic Radicalization and Global Jihad*. Jan 6<sup>th</sup>. p. 1-36

<sup>110</sup> The Qur’an (22:39) allows the use of force in self-defense: ‘Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom fighting is launched, because they have been wronged.’ Verse 22:39 is written in passive tense, ‘against whom fighting is launched’, and therefore indicates that permission is given when Muslims are ‘wronged’, i.e., attacked. – Niaz A. Shah (2013) “The Use of Force under Islamic Law”, *The European Journal of International Law* Vol. 24 no. 1

<sup>111</sup> Al-Hazimi introduced a doctrine known as takfir al-'adhir, meaning “excommunication of the excuser.” Derived from a strict reading of “the third nullifier,” it stipulates that anyone who “excuses” the unbelief of an unbeliever has committed unbelief oneself and is therefore subject to takfir - See al-Bin‘ali’s letter to the Delegated Committee, dated February 13, 2016.

pları<sup>112</sup>. Many groups attempt to “reanimate” throughout the years, one of the most notorious is ISIS, together with OQAP and IS-Khorasan.<sup>113</sup> Such challenges started immediately after Muhammad's death (632 AD), which left many questions open, such as “Who should be the successor?” and “What type of governing system should the caliphate have?”.<sup>114</sup> Mohammed's heirs establish the title Caliph, meaning “successor”, in contrast different from Mohammed's path, the caliphs are chosen one by one based on affiliation with the prophet and personal qualities, marking the Rashidun era<sup>115</sup>. Those questions are still attractive for terrorist organizations, primarily using the interpretation as the basis for the justification of the need to shed blood. In the context of the dissertation, the re-establishment of the caliphate became relevant with the emergence of radical religious organizations that based the radicalization ideology on the pillars of global jihad.

Thus, there have been four distinct waves of global jihad over the past 40 years, each with its own crises and ideological answers.<sup>116</sup> According to the analysis by Robinson, the global jihad should be perceived as a “movement of rage.”<sup>117</sup> The first wave, also known as the international Jihad, started with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, the occupation of the Muslim land as a holy concept became one of the initial triggers for cognitive opening. At the same time, Abdullah Azzam<sup>119</sup> started advocating his theory of radicalization based on the systematic problems faced by the Muslim world, such as the occupation of historical land by for-

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<sup>112</sup> Atatürk İnkılapları refers to the reforms implemented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This reform, enacted in March 1924, marked the end of the world's last widely recognized caliphate and was part of a larger series of secularizing reforms aimed at modernizing the Republic of Turkey.

<sup>113</sup> The Islamic State – Khorasan Province is a regional branch of the Salafi jihadist group Islamic State active in Central and South Asia, primarily Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan

<sup>114</sup> Al-Farag, Muhammad Abd-al-Salam. (2009) “The Call to Jihad” – Islamic Radicalization and Global Jihad. Jan 6<sup>th</sup>. p. 1-36

<sup>115</sup> The Rashidun, also known as the Glory Days of Islam, is a title given from the reigns of the first caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) for the period of governance in Sunni Islam from the death of Muhammad to the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate.

<sup>116</sup> Robinson, Glenn E. (2020). “Global Jihad: A Brief History” – Stanford University Press, Stanford California

<sup>117</sup> Movements of rage are distinctive because of their unique combination of nihilistic violence and millenarian ideologies designed to rid society of western cultural contamination - Glenn E. Robinson at “*Understanding stochastic violence*”

<sup>118</sup> Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979, by troops from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union intervened in support of the Afghan communist government in its conflict with anti-communist Muslim guerrillas during the Afghan War (1978–92) and remained in Afghanistan until mid-February 1989.

<sup>119</sup> Abdullah Azzam is a Palestinian Jordanian Islamic jihadist and theologian, ideologue, and spiritual leader of the first forms of global jihad, at the same time, mentor and teacher of Osama Bin Laden. 'Azzam was also primarily responsible for the theological justification of a "cult of martyrdom" that informs many jihad groups.

eign powers, present in Afghanistan, Palestine, and Central Asia<sup>120</sup>. He promoted the notion of al-Qaeda Sulba (Arabic: قاعدة صلابة)<sup>121</sup> as a strategy to build a jihadi international of solid warriors of Islam to liberate Muslim historical land, with a cooperation of the local communities as they are progressing.

On the contrary, the second wave is shifting the focus to the far enemy, precisely the United States of America. Authors agree on the milestone of the “America First”<sup>122</sup> terrorism is the rejection of the proposal by Osama Bin Laden<sup>123</sup> for a religious mobilization of the Saudi Arabians after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, the immediate crises were the impending defeat of once promising local jihads in Egypt and Algeria,<sup>125</sup> and secondly, the US military involvement in the Gulf War, following the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion. However, the systematic crisis was the durability of apostate regimes throughout the region, kept in power by a ‘far enemy’, usually, the US. In order to liberate the region and defeat the near enemy, groups [primarily al-Qaeda] need to drive out the US from the Middle East. Thus, numerous terrorist attacks organized, motivated, or inspired by al-Qaeda start to emerge, not only on the territory of the US,<sup>126</sup> but also in countries that stand by its alliance.<sup>127</sup>

The third wave was expected to come sooner or later, which is why it’s intertwined with both the second wave and the fourth wave in terms of time. The starting point is the US invasion

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<sup>120</sup> Hegghammer, T. (2020). “The Caravan: Abdallah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad” – University of Oslo – Oslo.

<sup>121</sup> read Global Jihad: A Brief History - Glenn E. Robinson (2020) chapter 1, “*The Jihadi International, 1979-1990*”

<sup>122</sup> America First is a concept given in the book *A Brief History: Global Jihad* by Glenn E. Robinson for the period of time between 1996 and 2011, marking the era of Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden leadership.

<sup>123</sup> Robinson, Glenn E. (2020). “Global Jihad: A Brief History” – Stanford University Press, Stanford California

<sup>124</sup> An international conflict that was triggered by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Iraq’s leader, Saddam Hussein, ordered the invasion and occupation of Kuwait with the apparent aim of acquiring that nation’s large oil reserves, canceling a large debt Iraq owed Kuwait, and expanding Iraqi power in the region. It was the first major international crisis of the post-Cold War era, and the U.S.-led response would set important precedents for the use of military force over subsequent decades.

<sup>125</sup> Evera, Stephan V. (2005). “On Every Front: A Strategy for the War on Terror” – How to Make America Safe: New Policies for National Security. The Tobin Project – Cambridge. p. 47-58

<sup>126</sup> Even though there were many, the milestone for the “*War on Terror Campaign, launched by the US Government*” is the 9/11 attack, when nineteen terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners, crashing the first two into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the third into the Pentagon

<sup>127</sup> Bali Bombing (2002); Casablanca Bombings (2003); Madrid Train Bombing (2004); London Bombing (2005); Charlie Hebdo Attack (2015) etc.

of Iraq in 2003 and the actions by the “Coalition of the Willing”,<sup>128</sup> but the time for practical steps came 8 years later with the Syrian civil war in 2011. According to Robinson, the broader systemic crises for the third wave ideologues were the durability of apostasy and human sin and iniquity, which could only be addressed through the construction of a puritanical state under Islamic Law (shari’ah). At its foundation, the Caliphate aspires to govern territory following the religious principles, and the 2014 declaration of the Caliphate marked the epitome of Global Jihadism. It is necessary to acknowledge that the Caliphate [Islamic State] functioned as a de facto state, possessing the core elements of governance, including logistical infrastructure, institutions, local authorities, and official documentation.<sup>129</sup> For instance, in the beginning of June 2014, ISIS began distributing the so-called *Wathiqat al-Madinah*<sup>130</sup> (the Bill of City), using the door-to-door distribution as a sort of official confirmation of the new authorities. Although the document contains twelve articles, five stand out as particularly significant for the relevance of the thesis:

*Article 1: Right to justice and due process within the Islamic Law*

*Article 2: Right to security of person and property*

*Article 3: Duty to fulfill the obligation required by Islam, including abstention from alcohol and drugs*

*Article 4: Duty of exclusive allegiance and duality of the Islamic state*

*Article 5: Allah, Allah, in modesty and wide loose jilbab, stay in your homes and do not leave them, only in case of necessity. That is the guidance of the mothers of the Believers and the dignified female companions, may Allah be content with them.*<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> On 18 March 2003, the State Department made public a list of 31 countries that participated in the US-led coalition: Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. – S. Steve at “US says ‘coalition of willing grows’” at BBC News 21 March 2003

<sup>129</sup> Gerges, Farwaz A. (2014) “ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism” – Current History. p. 339-343

<sup>130</sup> *Wathiqat al-Madinah*, or the Bill of the City, is a legal document that asserted the presence of ISIS in Mosul and other cities, therefore, conveyed the organization’s seriousness in governing the city in accordance with strict Shari’ah Law. The following are some of the significant points related to Hisba included in the 12-article document. A copy of the original document can be found in Appendix A

<sup>131</sup> Aqeedi, Rasha A. (2016). “Hisba in Mosul” – George Washington University, Washington DC. The original sample is available in the appendix.

Article 5<sup>132</sup> constitutes a crucial element in the analysis presented in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, perhaps one of the rare legal documents that emphasize the official role of women within the Caliphate, particularly concerning governance and their contribution to the state. Testimonies from women, presented in detail later in the research, showcase the initial phase of the Caliphate's rule and the treatment of women.

Lastly, the fourth wave of the global jihad emerged as the solution for the desperation following the collapse of the Taliban regime, inefficiency of the centralized model of global jihad, or the one moderated by a single leader of an organization. Perhaps, the deaths of hundreds of foreign fighters, by size, as the largest population of members,<sup>133</sup> became the breaking point for the ideology and the approach.<sup>134</sup> In response, Abu Musab al-Suri,<sup>135</sup> the revolutionary ideologue of al-Qaeda, succeeded in developing a completely new approach towards new radicals, which would survive without having a leader. The core of the wave is what we are experiencing today, widespread decentralization of ideology, inspired by the caliphate, cognitively radicalized, with clear evidence in the states. Moreover, he promotes the concept of networking-based terrorism, based on the efforts of individuals or small autonomous cells. As Robinson emphasized, the most repetitive message in the 1,600-page book is “system, not organization.” Thus, the operational core of this strategy is the so-called *jihad fardi*<sup>136</sup>, a form of stochastic terrorism in which

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<sup>132</sup> Note that in the original document (*see Appendix A*) this article is assigned a different numerical designation.

<sup>133</sup> About 30,000 fighters from at least 85 countries have joined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as of December 2015. Although the great majority of ISIS recruits come from the Middle East and the Arab world, many foreign fighters also come from Western nations, including most members of the European Union, as well as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

<sup>134</sup> Benmelech, E. & Klor, E.F (2018). “What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS – Terrorism and Political Violence. p. 1458-1481

<sup>135</sup> **Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar** is a notable member of Al-Qaeda, ideologue and the writer of the 1,600-page book *The Global Islamic Resistance Call (Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah)*. He is considered by many as 'the most articulate exponent of the modern jihad and its most sophisticated strategist

<sup>136</sup> Jihad fardiyah refers to the practice of individual jihad. The idea of jihad fardiyah was proposed by Al-Qaeda (AQ) ideologues Abu Musab al-Suri and Abu Qatada al-Filistini. Al-Suri campaigned for decentralised, “non-hierarchical networks”, as he believed organisations restricted the growth of the jihadi movement. Similarly, al-Filistini argued that individual jihad is obligatory for all Muslims, and “did not require the permission of their organisation”. Both believe that jihad goals are best achieved through qital nikayah (repeated strikes to weaken the enemy), achieved more easily through isolated individual cells. Though the size of cells is never explicitly stated, they usually range from one to five members in practice.

self-radicalized individuals carry out attacks inspired by the core of the ideology, not directed by the leaders.<sup>137</sup>

### 1.5 Conclusion and Identifying the Gap

In conclusion, the historical overview highlights the existing research gap, both from a theoretical perspective of the theories that cover the radicalization process, and how selective they are, to quantitative analysis of female involvement in political violence and terrorism. Indeed, the social-political position of the researchers appears to be significantly influential in the choice of the theoretical framework and the narratives, especially for the early stages of research. Selectivity characteristics are common in the research of the phenomenon. As Rapoport demonstrated, understanding and defining an act of terrorism requires a detailed, comprehensive analysis of the global political context before and during the event, its historical roots, the factors that led to the attack, and the personal pathway from radicalization to terrorism. All these concepts of analysis have been identified by numerous researchers and approaches outlined in the literature review.

Nonetheless, throughout the studies and research on the topic, various works appear to focus on a particular analysis, selectively choosing certain aspects of the act. Regarding the dissertation focus, these observations are either carried out by a female researcher with a feminist focus or are partially mentioned in mainstream literature. This is the aim of the thesis to find the truth of women's participation in political violence from its roots in order to find how and why women become increasingly involved. Indeed, women have always participated in terrorism, and terrorism is not a threat to modern society. Perhaps, terrorism began with women's activism, since Vera identifies herself as one. Unquestionably, women have always been present, increasingly or decreasingly, and they contribute to all the waves of terrorism throughout history. What is certain is that women join organizations in accordance with ideology, very often when it guarantees a sort of social or personal improvement or changes the status quo. Often, terrorist organizations occur as providers of the needs the women seek or their ultimate goal, whatever it may be. Sometimes it was human rights, revenge, restoring reputation, national liberation, or equality. Regrettably, very little is known about the process of radicalization through which women joined in the early stages. Paradoxically enough, during the last wave of terrorism, the number of terrorists on a

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<sup>137</sup> Adlini, Ilma G. & Nurrisha I. (2025). "From Jihad Tanzim to Jihad Fardiyah: The Renewed Emphasis on Individual Jad among Pro-IS Militants in Indonesia – Counter Terrorism Trends and Analyses

global level increased, but at the same time number of research, however, it seems as if they do not give the desired results, especially in terms of prevention and de-radicalization strategies.

### 1.6 Problems and Hypothesis Statement

Chapter 1 is not sufficient to answer both research questions of the dissertation. At most, it provides only the core for the answer to the second question, titled “Why and how are women increasingly involved in terrorist organizations?” The main problem lies primarily in the obvious research gap and the need for explanatory extension. Women were excluded from the representative samples while developing theories of radicalization, or they were undermined as less important due to their evident lower participation compared to that of male cohorts. For instance, the problem also extends to the legal level. Through a brief analysis of legal frameworks of the developed countries around the world, the dissertation concludes that main pathways through which women started the radicalization are not incriminated. It is not a crime to marry a terrorist, but it is a crime to marry terrorism. However, marriage is one of the main reasons for the radicalization of women during the fourth wave. Mainly women from Western Europe or North America who became radicalized or engaged in any type of act of political violence and terrorism were married to a terrorist. Those practices were evident during the ISIS era. During the third wave, women were the faces of terrorism. As Mia Bloom argues, when observing the profiles of women responsible for the bloodiest massacres of that part of history, one would not assume they had any relations with violence. Those women were perceived as attractive and charismatic, using those features to spread ideology and recruit new members. In the time of the second wave, such discussions were rare, particularly considering that in many countries, human rights and women's rights were not yet recognized as equal.

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**Chapter Two: A SOCIOLOGICAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL  
ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ROLES WITHIN TERRORIST  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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## 2. Chapter Two: A SOCIOLOGICAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ROLES WITHIN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

The following chapter addresses the first research question, focusing on the roles of women within the terrorist organizations. Contemporary perception often limits women's perception to that of suicide bombers, a view that could not be further from the truth. To counter this misconception, the dissertation examines some of the most notable terrorist organizations since the emergence of reliable databases and scientifically verified evidence. Moreover, women's participation in terrorism and political violence can be broadly divided into two periods: traditional participation and modern "usage". In the golden era, between the 1970s and 1980s, many women were involved in terrorism, mainly starting their careers in student movements and reformist protests. Figures such as Ulrike Mainhof and Astrid Proll in Germany came to symbolize an entire era of women's involvement, an era of women being leaders, chief coordinators, and strategic planners. However, the role of women in terrorism has changed profoundly, especially during the second period. Today, women operate across all functions, roles and levels, from recruiters, logisticians, combatants, to ideologies.

### 2.1 Roles and Functions of Women within Terrorist Organizations

Although often stigmatized, women have been present in nearly every terrorist organization throughout history, including groups and organizations that initially rejected female participation, working and operating as providers for logistical and strategic support. Paradoxically, this phenomenon includes Osama bin Laden himself, a man who changed the course of the history. According to P. Bergen's research of family journals and declassified information in his book "The Rise and Fall of Osama bin Laden", al-Qaeda and its leader heavily relied on the intellectual and linguistic skills of his educated wives. In one of the 220 pages handwritten notes that CIA seized, bin Laden second wife Siham Sabar <sup>138</sup> wrote that she spent many hours on her husband's public pronouncements. In one of her letters to her son she wrote, "I write this letter in haste; I am busy with your father working on the public statements." In another letter to her-son-in-law she stated, "I was preoccupied with drafting of the public statements until I was exhausted and fell

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<sup>138</sup> Also known as Siham bint 'Abdallah or Umm Khaled mother of Khaled, born in Saudi Arabia, and mother of Khalid bin Laden, Sumaiya bin Laden, Miriam bin Laden, Khadija bin Laden. Read more at: N. Lahoud (2020) What the jihadis left behind available on: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n02/nelly-lahoud/what-the-jihadis-left-behind>

asleep”.<sup>139</sup> Those rhetorics continue in other organization, while some are directly involved in violent acts such as suicide attacks, others act as recruiters, propagandists, or leaders. The following section analysis the most notable groups, women within those organizations, and role that they played in depth.

## 2.2 Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)

In the aftermath of the Second World War, profound political transformations occurred across Europe, followed by a concentration of power among influential individuals at the top of the state, resulting in the creation of fertile ground for radical organizations. Among the most notable forms of radicalization and extremism was the far-left radicalization, frequently inspired by Soviet proxies. One of the first groups to be internationally recognized as a terrorist organization was Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, also known as ETA<sup>140</sup>, a Basque group with a Marxist-Leninist faction. Besides its leftist ideology, the organization should be recognized as a politically motivated group, since its formation's aim is based on the political goal of recognizing Basque independence within Northern Spain and parts of South France.<sup>141</sup> The group was born following the weakening of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV)<sup>142</sup> and the strengthening of Franco's regime<sup>143</sup>. The inner rift in the PNV has been a result of a clash of ideas among the youth of the party that resulted in the creation of ETA on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1959.<sup>144</sup>

As the suppression of their existence grew, so did the brutality and tactics change rapidly. The violent campaign has led to more than 820 deaths in a period of 40 years, including remark-

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) refers to 'Basque Homeland and Liberty' or 'Basque Country and Freedom'. ETA, which is pronounced "etta," has often used violent means in its goal of creating an independent Basque homeland. The organization has been responsible for more than 1,600 attacks that have resulted in the deaths of 843 people as of 2010. The group agreed to a permanent ceasefire in 2011 and formally disbanded in 2018. *Read more at EBSCO by Eric Bullard, 2025.*

<sup>141</sup> J. Argomaniz & A. Vidal-Diaz. 2015. Examining Deterrence and Backlash Effects in Counter Terrorism: The Case of ETA. *Terrorism and Political Violence.*

<sup>142</sup> The Basque Nationalist Party (Original language Euzko Alderi Jeltzalea; Spanish: Partido Nacionalista Vasco), a political party of Basque nationalist ideology, both active in Spain and France.

<sup>143</sup> Francisco Franco was a Spanish General and Dictator who established the so-called Francoism. Under Franco's regime, the right to individual and collective identity was severely restricted. National identity was rigidly defined and enforced through censorship, suppression of regional languages and cultures, and the promotion of a singular, unified Spanish identity centered on Catholicism and Falangism. Regional identities, languages (like Catalan and Basque), and cultural expressions were actively suppressed. Women's roles were also rigidly defined within a patriarchal, Catholic framework, limiting their autonomy and self-expression

<sup>144</sup> Garmendia, J. Maria (1980). *History of ETA* (original language: *Historia de ETA*) – Haranburu

able members of the government, their families and relatives, civilians, but also its members<sup>145</sup>. The politically motivated murders include: the assassination of the prime minister, Carrero Blanco, only six months after his mandate, by carrying out a bombing in front of San Francisco de Borja Church.<sup>146</sup> Javier Ybarra and Ignacio Uria Mendizabal, members of the leading political parties, judges who convicted ETA members, university professors, journalists, and so forth.<sup>147</sup> Recruitment process and radicalization have been widely spread among young Basques, woven into the nationalist narratives as a justification for the acts of the organization and the promise of liberation. On the other hand, they use traditional means of fighting, usually car bombings, classic assassinations, shooting, kidnapping, robbery, extortion,<sup>148</sup> or blackmail.<sup>149</sup>

According to Carrie Hamilton, one of the few scholars to conduct ethnographic research on the role of women in ETA, including firsthand interviews with former female members, women constituted what she describes as a “revolution within the revolution.”. During the increasing growth of women's active membership, the organization developed the concept of masculinization, a concept that contradicts itself. It's important to highlight that the answer to the question “Why” women join ETA as a terrorist organization often, is correlated with a third person or event, generally a suffering mother of a dead activist, sister, or spouse, a female student who has been imprisoned.

This phenomenon is mostly present among active members and perpetrators, while ideologues' motives are driven by the need for self-actualization and social accomplishment. The presence and contributions of women within the organization are frequently denied or overlooked, particularly because they were seldom visible at public events and rarely recognizable to the broader public, including the Basque community itself. During the 1960s, in the time of the Spanish economic boom, the general status of women on a national level improved.<sup>150</sup> More and

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<sup>145</sup> BBC News, What is ETA?, last modification on April 8, 2017, available on <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11183574> (viewed on June 18, 2025)

<sup>146</sup> Jong, Michiel D. (2016). “Spanish Security Forces, Anti-terrorism and the internal and External Security of Spain, 1959 – 1992”. Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies. p. 325-349

<sup>147</sup> Ibis. p. 325- 349

<sup>148</sup> Extortion or blackmail in the ETA radical language refers to a “revolutionary tax” demanding money from a business owner in the Basque Country or elsewhere in Spain, under threats to him and his family, up to and including death threats.

<sup>149</sup> Ruiz, Diego M. (2004). “Ethnicity and Violence: The Case of Radical Basque Nationalism” – The London School of Economic and Political Science – London

<sup>150</sup> Cavallaro, María E. (2008) . *Los orígenes de la integración de España en Europa: Desde el franquismo hasta los años de la transición*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia. Also at: The Persistence of the Myth: Europeanism in Spain

more women entered the job market, gained social standing, and became increasingly involved in public life. This period also marked the tenth anniversary of ETA's activities. While the number of female members in the organization was growing, their roles remained secondary, such as providing assistance rather than holding significant responsibilities in leading positions, logistics, and decision-making. Nevertheless, women's participation in the organization became progressively more noticeable with the emergence of two female members.

### 2.2.1 *María Dolores Gonzales*

María Dolores González, widely known as “Yoyes” was born in the province of *Guipúzcoa* under Francisco Franco's dictatorship. She began the process of radicalization after coming into contact with ETA members of the youth movement who circulated their ideology among friends and family. At the age of seventeen, in 1971, she joined ETA as a committed supporter of the organization's ideology. A few years later, in 1973, following the death of her boyfriend, Jose Etxeberria, also a member of the organization, who was killed when a bomb he was carrying unexpectedly exploded, she became a full member of ETA.<sup>151</sup> That year, *Yoyes* joined military training at a camp in Southern France. Demonstrating both physical skills and intellectual capacity, she quickly earned the respect of her older male peers. These labels enabled Dolores to rise in the top ranks of ETA, ultimately becoming one of its most prominent leaders and symbolic figures. However, the process of disengagement began between 1979-1980, after the death of her mother and the killing of *José Miguel Beñaran Ordeñana*, known as *Argala*, a senior ETA figure.<sup>152</sup> Gonzales left the organization and lived in exile in Mexico for five years, where she started a family and started her studies.

In 1985, she returned to Spain, re-engaging with the organization at a reduced capacity, working as a spy. Nevertheless, *Yoyes'* return was short-lived. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1986, Dolores was assassinated in the main square of Ordizia, shot in front of her three-years-old son, carried out by members of the very organization she had once led.<sup>153</sup>

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from the Late Francoism to the Outbreak of the 2008 Economic Crisis (Chapter 6) by Maria Elena Cavallaro, 24 January 2019

<sup>151</sup> Cecinini, S. (2018). “Le Sanguinarie: Storie di donne e di terrore” – Luiss University Press

<sup>152</sup> Ibis. p. 87

<sup>153</sup> *Yoyes - Woman leader of ETA, Witness - BBC World Service*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04k5kd7>

### 2.2.2 *María Soledad Iparriguirre Guenechea*

Named *Amboto*, Maira Soledad Iparriguirre Guenechea was the second and the last woman leader of ETA. *Amboto* first contact with the organization came through her own family, who had held a safehouse for ETA since her birth. Consequently, she was exposed from an early age to the organization's ideology, motives, and activities, which resulted in passive radicalization that developed subconsciously in the first place. This phenomenon is similar to children born under the ISIS regime, where people learn to live their lives under a certain radical ideology. One of the key triggers for her cognitive opening emerged at the age of twenty, when police raided her family home and found 8,000 kilograms of dynamite, smuggled from France for ETA's planned operations in Spain.<sup>154</sup> During the same police operation, her boyfriend José Manuel Aristimuño was killed. This marked an important shift from cognitive to violent radicalization as she became one of the group's bloodiest members, killing more than 14 people in the first decade of her membership, including accusations of her participation in the assassination attempt on King Juan Carlos

*Amboto* joined the ETA's Madrid commando unit in the early 1990s, overseeing the ETA's "legal commandos". Based on the latest testimonies of ETA prisoners, in the same period, she increasingly started to be involved in the recruitment, training, and indoctrination of new members, providing financial support, money, and weapons. In early 2000, she became the second female leader of the organization and one of the four people in charge of ETA's military operations. Her time in this role was brief, on October 4th 2004, *Amboto* was arrested, together with her partner at that time, Mikel Albizu, and was later sentenced to 20 years in prison. In contemporary literature, she is observed as a terrorist by vocation, as someone who walked the perfect pathway. She went from a courier of ETA, a beginning executor, an active recruiter, and head of the organization.<sup>155</sup>

### 2.3 Red Army Faction (RAF): Female Leadership

Perhaps, the RAF is the founder of the modern approach of women's inclusion in terrorist and extremist organizations, or at least, one of the most progressive in terms of inclusion in leading positions. The Red Army Faction, also known as the Baader-Meinhof Group or Gang, is a far-left militant group founded in West Berlin (current Germany) in the beginning of the 1970s. The or-

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<sup>154</sup> El Mundo (2004) "'Anboto', la earra más sanguinaria". El Mundo. Available at: <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/10/03/espana/1096796889.html>

<sup>155</sup> S. Cecinini (2018) "*Le sanguinarie: Storie di done e di terrore*" - Luiss University Press, Rome. p. 91

ganization based its pillars on communist and anti-imperialist urban guerrilla ideology, emphasizing the armed resistance against what it considered a fascist state. While establishing the name, as Wagner in his testimony stated, the RAF used the Marxist-Leninist term “faction”<sup>156</sup> as a defining feature of the organization.<sup>157</sup>

Until 1998, when the group formally dissolved, a total of 34 people died and 230 individuals were wounded in that time frame, including members of the organization. On the other hand, the material damage was even higher, resulting in over \$500 million Deutschmarks, including \$7 million DM that were seized during 31 bank robberies. For the same reason, the German Court sentenced over 1,000 people connected in some form to the organization, preparation, and conduct of the RAF’s attacks. Based on the recording of the German Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*<sup>158</sup>), five hundred and seventeen were sentenced for direct membership in the organization and nine hundred and seventeen for supporting, passively or actively, the RAF.<sup>159</sup>

Indeed, RAF represents a whole new chapter in the history of women and terrorism; the organization itself was based on the ideology proposed and led by women. Although often in the literature is present the misconception that Mainhoff is the founder of the organization due to her public appearance and predominance, yet women were the “brains” of the top of the organization. Without any doubt, this is the beginning of the public appearance of women as members of such organizations, the feelings were mixed from those who are shocked to those who perceive them as heroines, leaders for the new society. The public shock at women’s participation in such violence is based on the equation of purposeful and systematic violence with masculinity. At the same time, the period between 1970s and 1980s was followed by an increase in women’s participation, which was not in accord with the prevalent perception of women as peaceful and nurturing. On

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<sup>156</sup> A political faction is a group of people with a common political purpose, especially a subgroup of a political party that has interests or opinions different from the rest of the political party. – Read more at *Factions: A Comparative Analysis* by Ralph W. Nicholas in the book *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power* (2004)

<sup>157</sup> Wagner, Rolf C. (1998). “We are Not Political Idiots!” – Thoughts on the End of the Red Army Fraction. Jungle World via Hartford Web Publishing

<sup>158</sup> *Bundeskriminalamt* – is the federal investigative police agency of Germany, directly subordinated to the Federal Ministry of the Interior. It is headquartered in Wiesbaden, Hesse, and maintains major branches in Berlin and Bonn.

<sup>159</sup>Peters, B. (2004) *Todlicher Irrtum: Die Geschichte der RAF* – Argon, Berlin Germany

the other hand, members of those organizations, women, understood their actions as a means of liberation from restrictive gender norms.<sup>160</sup>

RAF is well known for its female inclusivity, alongside the mainstream faces, female units and commands include names such as Ingeborg Barz, Monika Berberich, Petra Schelm, and Ingrid Schubert. One of the co-founders of the organization, Ingeborg Barz, had a particularly remarkable story. Frustrated with the German political system at that time, she and her boyfriend chose to go underground, eventually to establish the RAF. After a couple of years of successful terrorist career, in 1972, she disappeared under mysterious circumstances.<sup>161</sup> Theories range from police reports referring to possible execution by members of the organization after attempts to leave the organization, to testimonies of former members that she went undercover.<sup>162</sup> Monika Berberich, in contrast, remained loyal in her commitment to the RAF's ideology and approach, despite multiple arrests, imprisonment, and persecution.<sup>163</sup> Petra Schelm served as operations leader of RAF, overseeing internal operations and coordinating external trainings, including a specialized operation training in Jordan with the PFLP. Or Ingrid Schubert, who represent another archetype within the group: she played a technical role, rather than providing financial and logistical support, getaway driver during robberies, than being involved in the organization's decision making.<sup>164</sup>

### 2.3.1 Ulrike Mainhof & Gudrun Ensslin

Ulrike Marie Meinhof was not only the core figure within the organization, but also a symbolic face of an entire era, often described as the first widely recognized female terrorist commander. On an ideological level, she was the author of the RAF manifesto "*Konzept der Urban Gueril-*

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<sup>160</sup> Melzer, P. (2015). "Introduction: An Excess of Women's Emancipation, Gender, Political Violence and Feminist Politics". *Death in the Shape of a Young Girl: Women's Political Violence in the Red Army Faction*. New York University Press, New York

<sup>161</sup> Becker, Jillian (1978). *Hitler's children: The story of the Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang* (3 ed.). London: Joseph p.: 240

<sup>162</sup> Kraushaar, Wolfgang (2010). *Verena Becker und der Verfassungsschutz* (1 ed.). Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, p. 37

<sup>163</sup> Monika Berberich has never distanced herself from the objectives and methods of the RAF. In 1995 she gave an interview to the BBC in which she characterised contemporary Germany as a "fascist state". Read more at: Michael Siedler (2008) *Diplomarbeit - Die RAF im Spiegel der Literatur und der westdeutschen Berichterstattung*. Universität Wien. p. 41.

<sup>164</sup> Becker, Jillian (1978). *Hitler's children: The story of the Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang* (3 ed.). London: Joseph p.: 103-104

*la*”<sup>165</sup> which outlined the RAF’s ideology, principles, organizational pillars, foundational structure, symbols and its insignia. In the contemporary literature, Mainhof is frequently portrayed as both an operational leader and strategic visionary, together with her cohort Gudrun Ensslin the intellectual head of the organization. <sup>166</sup>Although Mainhof wrote the manifesto, Ensslin played a significant role in setting its ideological pillars and shaping its core concepts. The pathway towards their radicalization began in 1968, as a consequence of the political events on a national level and international scene. <sup>167</sup>After they were arrested and imprisoned in Frankfurt for their involvement of the Shopping call arson following an anti-genocide protests for the Vietnam War. At that time, Mainhof was working as journalist for left-oriented newspaper, covering current events with evident sympathy toward the protest movement. Soon after their release, Meinhof and Ensslin began close collaboration, developing the organization’s ideology with the support of family and friends. Perhaps one of the more striking similarities between them lies in their deaths, both committed suicide in prison, after prosecution and imprisonment.<sup>168</sup>

### 2.3.2 Astrid Proll

Astrid Huberta Isolde Marie Luise Hildegard Proll, one of the rare alive, deradicalized and disengaged members of RAF. As a student, she joined many activist groups as a resistance of war and genocides around the world, including the German Student movement in 1968. She meets the founders of the organization through her brother, German writer and activist Thorwald Proll. The process of radicalization for her started as a combination of group grievance and slippery slope, being involved in firebombing in Frankfurt, but also often serving as a getaway driver for Andreas Bader. In 1973, at the age of 26, she escaped to London, where she married in order to reclaim her identity.<sup>169</sup> Only five years later, Proll was discovered and arrested by British police, after she return to Germany to fight her case at her homeland, being sentenced to five and a half years imprisonment on account of bank robbery and false documents. Times have changed and so-eventually-has Astrid Proll. She did not rejoin the organization; instead, she went on with her

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<sup>165</sup> The Concept of the Urban Guerrilla, a response to an essay by Horst Mahler, that attempts to set out more correctly their prevailing ideology.

<sup>166</sup> Cecinini, S. (2018). “Le sanguinarie: Storie di donne e di terrore” – Luiss University Press. p.85

<sup>167</sup> Ibis. 85

<sup>168</sup> Wunderlic, D. (2007). “Portrait: Ulrike Mainhof (1934-1976). Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20070911035753/https://www.powercat.de/portraits/meinhof.html>

<sup>169</sup> Regina v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, ex parte Puttick. Court Decision available at: <https://uniset.ca/other/cs4/puttick2.html>

life, enrolling in university at Humburg after she became a picture editor for magazines and newspapers, including her own art exhibition entitled *Pictures on the Run* inspired by the gang.<sup>170</sup>

#### 2.4 Red Brigades: Women as An Ace Up One's Sleeve

The wounds and reminiscences are still present in the memory of many on the Italian soil, from what was often referred to as “*il terroristi rossi*”. As the name is already giving a clue, the Red Brigades are a far-left terrorist organization, established in the early 1970s, based on “pedagogy of intolerance.” Indeed, numerous groups have adopted the widely accepted Marxist-Leninist ideology, especially in the 1970s and 1980s in Central and Western Europe; however, the RB attempted to stand out. In pursuit of an accurate understanding, RB consistently highlighted, throughout frequent documentation and public statements, that they do not represent just one more radical group promoting leftist ideals. Based on the testimonies, the group met for the first time at a conference in August 1970 in Pecorile, where they discussed the pillars of the organization and the approach to achievement. As Orsini in his book “*The Anatomy of the Red Brigades*”<sup>171</sup> explains, the specific type of brutality is one of the main features of the organization. They neither concealed nor attempted to obscure nature, the brutality of nature, of their language, and conduct. Based on Martin’s analyses, BR perpetrated over 14,000 acts of violence only in the first ten years, a number that increased over the years. On the other hand, based on the statistics from the Ministry of Interior of Italy, a total of 75 people have been victims, mainly murdered by the BR.<sup>172</sup>

In fact, women in radical organizations were seen as an element of destabilizing the state’s security in its socio-cultural sector, as they sought to break the internal cohesion of traditional society.<sup>173</sup> At that time, country faced conservative period, with even more conservative media and press, which framed the women activism in BR in the patriarchal paradigm, describing such an action as driven by love or madness, unpolitical, motivated by private interests. Those narratives also oversimplify women’s decision-making processes, both in terms of joining an organization and participating in individual actions.<sup>174</sup> Conversely, in the aftermath of BR,

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<sup>170</sup> Proll, A. (1998). “Baader Meinhof: Pictures on the Run 67-77” - Scalo Verlag Ac

<sup>171</sup> Originally published in Italian as Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomia delle Brigate rosse: Le radici ideologiche del terrorismo rivoluzionario*, by Rubbettino Editore S.r.l Viale Rosario Rubbettino n. 10 88049 Soveria Mannalli, Italy

<sup>172</sup> Gus, M. & Augustus C. (2003) “Understanding Terrorism” – Sage Publications, New York City

<sup>173</sup> R. Tarasiuk (2024) “Women in the Red Brigades” – University of Siedlce, Poland – Institute of Security Studies

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* p. 141

former members of the organization have continue to present their personal view on organization's ideology by publishing autobiographical books, giving press interviews, or documentary films. Women took significant part of it.

#### 2.4.1 Margharita Mara Cagol

Margharita Mara Cagol, women that sacrifice her life for the ideology. Her death change the path of the organization, not only in more violent manner but also by increasing number of female fighters. Mara's process of radicalization begins during student years; two events transformed her from a cognitive radical to a violent radical: joining left-wing student movement and her relationship with Renato Curcio. Cagol and Curcio started to publish a revolutionary journal in 1967, titled *Lavoro Politico*, which set up the ideological foundation for individuals and groups, including Metropolitan Political Collective, the antecedent organization of BR.<sup>175</sup> After the formation of the organization, her role, withing the *Direzione Strategica*, was connected with decision making function in planning of specialized strategies, combat tactics, and leading executive areas liked to the ideological role. Moreover, in the first three years of BR, she was in charge of developing directions of the organization as well as its ideological base.<sup>176</sup> After her death, not only that the number of women in the BR started to increase significantly, but also the group started the bloodiest era of its existence.

#### 2.4.2 Barbara Belzerani

One of the last leaders of the BR was also held by women. Women known as *primula rossa* (*scarlet pimpernel*), Barbara Belzerani, got radicalized as a student, firstly joining the student movement and Potere Operaio.<sup>177</sup> In 1975, Barbara joined the BR, taking a combat pseudonym Sara, that helped her to climb towards leadership positions. Her positions were always violently

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<sup>175</sup> Post, Jerald (2007). *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to al-Qaeda*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press. p. 320.

<sup>176</sup> Leadership roles, although considered the least common among women in terrorist groups, were held in leftist organizations by: Augusta La Torre Guzman in the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso, Bernardine Rae Dohr in American Weather Underground, Ulrike Meinhof in the West German Rote Armee Fraktion. After the murder of Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin in prison in 1977, the leader of the 'second generation' of the Red Army Faction was Brigitte Monhaupt, a graduate of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Munich, who was arrested in 1982 and sentenced in 1985. The leadership role in the Japanese Red Army was held by Fisako Shigenobu, a graduate of Meiji University, who cooperated with the Palestinian national liberation movement, mainly with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in which women also played a significant role

<sup>177</sup> Potere Operaio was an Italian extra-parliamentary left-wing group active between 1967 and 1973. Potere Operaio aimed to distinguish itself through a theoretical-political analysis aimed at clarifying the so-called "mass line," connecting with workers' struggles with a view to building an organization autonomous from the left-wing working-class parties.

radical, often choosing to fight before negotiation, as a matter of decision she remained in *Partito Comunista Combattente* (Fighting Communist Party). She was part of the leading unit responsible for organizing, managing and kidnapping of Aldo Moro on March 16, 1978. Based on police transcripts, the investigation found out that her car, a Fiat 128, was facing the direction from which Moro's escort was supposed to approach. On top of that, Mario Moretti stated that she played a crucial role, during kidnapping and after. At the crime scene she held a Scorpion rifle, in order to defend her cohorts during action, but also during Aldo Moro's stay at *prigione del Popolo* (People's prison) she support the group logistically with providing accommodation and technical support.<sup>178</sup>

Even though this was a milestone moment for the organization, beside the intensive investigation and prosecution, she continued orchestrating the BR. She was one of the last arrested from the whole group by being extremely careful of her routes of transportation, public appearances and communication. Barbara was caught on a bus in Ostia, by civil investigators, after tip-off from a customer in a restaurant where she spent quite a time before.<sup>179</sup> After being imprisoned for life sentence in the so called "Moro trial", she proposed an end to the armed action and the beginning of a critical reflection on them, doing beyond the logic of repentant and distanced.

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## 2.5 Tamil Tigers 1976: Chameleon Strategy

What captured global attention was not only the rise of a new and previously unfamiliar form of terrorism, at the same time, milestone in the process of deradicalization. Beneath the headlines and political rhetoric, this moment exposed a more complex reality, the one in which women were not merely victims or bystanders, but among the most outspoken and active perpetrators. The establishment of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers<sup>181</sup>, marked the bloodiest period of East Asian history. The organization ideology was rooted in a socialist framework with a distinct nationalist twist: the liberation of Tamil Eelam as a collective duty of all members of its society, promising national freedom, community solidarity

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<sup>178</sup> M. Moretti, C. Mosca, R. Rossanda (1994) *Brigate Rosse. Una storia italiana*, Milano, p. 25

<sup>179</sup> *Libertà condizionata per la Br Balzerani*, "Corriere della Sera" 18 Dicembre 2006. [https://www.corriere.it/Primo\\_Piano/Cronache/2006/12\\_Dicembre/18/balzerani.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2006/12_Dicembre/18/balzerani.shtml)

<sup>180</sup> R. M. Tarasiuk (2024) *Women in the Red Brigades, De Securitate et Defensione. O Bezpieczeństwie i Obronności* 10, no. 2: 146

<sup>181</sup> Original name: தமிழீழ விடுதலைப் புலிகள் [*Tamilīla viṭutalaip pulikal!*]

through personal sacrifice until the nation completes the mission. According to the Institute for Strategic Studies, the LTTE was the first insurgent group to integrate concealed explosive belts and vests into its strategy and suicide tactics. Perhaps, LTTE is one of the greatest organizations in terms of structure and organization, having specialized units. For instance, newly formed unit in 1980, entitled the Black Tigers, composed of 378 members, include 1/3 female fighters, more precisely, 274 men and 104 women. According to the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defense this trend is also present throughout the whole organization, where female fighters are typically under age of 25, often joining at 18.<sup>182</sup> As non-other, LTTE fighters trained women for frontline combats and suicide bombers, being included in a large scale of attacks: 1985 attack in Anuradhapura – 146 civilians killed; 1987 massacre in Aranthalawa – 34 novice monks died; 1990 mosque attack during prayer – 147 men and boys lost their lives. Those attacks were possible due to LTTE global influence, with representative offices in 40 countries and large diaspora that provided financial support and logistics.<sup>183</sup>

In multiple occasions, members of the LTTE, proudly shared details how the camps look like. In one of latest reports in *The Guardian*, a former fighter described LTTE camps as interdisciplinary, focusing not only on ideology and physical skills but also on building that terrorist fighter mindset. In another interview by a 20-year-old *Malati*,<sup>184</sup> reveal the complex motivation and narratives surrounding female participation, expressing pride in her combat role:

«I feel satisfied when I kill the enemy. The hardest part is facing the shelling on the battlefield. Women and children suffer the most in war—that is why women make better soldiers. I'll think of becoming a mother after we get our homeland. »

She believed her opinion on female suicide bombers is a shared value of the organization, especially regarding those who sacrificed their lives for the homeland. On the question how she feels about the leader, she described him as “commander, leader, mother, father, everything to me”. For instance, Tamalini, one of the most prominent female commanders of the organization, stated that there is no space to talk about terror “the international community has got it wrong, LTTE is fighting against state terrorism by the Sri Lankan Army”

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<sup>182</sup> K. M de Silva (2005) “A History of Sri Lanka” Penguin Education Books

<sup>183</sup> G. Weiss (2012) “The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers” - Bellevue Literary Press

<sup>184</sup> The name Malati is used as a pseudonym; her real name is not disclosed in this thesis.

### 2.5.1 Thenmozhi Rajaratnam

Thenmozhi Rajaratnam, real name under pseudonyms Dhanu, Kalaivani Rejaratnam, Gayatri, Anbu an elite member of suicide unit, Black Tigers.<sup>185</sup> Her family, in particular her father, was part of the LTTE; therefore, the process of indoctrination began early in her puberty. Thenmozhi was born in 1969, during an intense period of ethnic tension and state repression, especially regarding social inclusion and national equality. The moral engagement was characterized by frequent army raids, disappearances and violence in a strong community that justified the action and normalized terror narratives in the name of resistance. More and more often, LTTE campaign took over her and her peers by glorifying fighters, especially women, martyr funerals, propaganda posters, Tamil schools and youth programs become an indoctrination space and potential recruitment centers. The culmination of her radicalization was followed by the attack on the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1991, during an election rally in Tamil Nadu.<sup>186</sup> She used the opportunity to hide in the supporters, wearing a explosive belt under her clothing. As she bends forward, garlanding the president, she detonated the bomb, killing herself, Rajiv Gandhi and 14 other people nearby. The attack was perceived as more than personal sacrifice but rather an instrument for delivering the message for the collective struggle.<sup>187</sup>

### 2.6 Hamas 1987: Under the veil

Hamas<sup>188</sup> or the Islamic Resistance Movement was found by the Palestinian Islamic Scholar Ahmed Yassin in 1987, that emerged from *Mujama al- Islamiya* (Islamic Centre)<sup>189</sup> and has been active at the same time with Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Its ideology is based on a combination of radical nationalism and radical Islam. The first big changes started with the arrested of the leader, in 1989, sentencing him with life imprisonment. For the first time in 1991, Hamas organized in armed militia called the Al-Qassam brigades, resulting with condemned of

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<sup>185</sup> Gopal, N. (2016). "The Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi." Penguin UK. p. 36

<sup>186</sup> Swamy, N. (2022). "Father of Rajiv Gandhi's assassin Dhanu was a fan of Nehru" – South First. Available at: <https://thesouthfirst.com/tamilnadu/father-of-rajiv-gandhis-assassin-dhanu-was-a-fan-of-nehru/>

<sup>187</sup> Bloom. (2011). "Bombshell: The Many Faces Of Women Terrorists" - Viking

<sup>188</sup> The Arabic word *hamās* (حماس) which itself means "zeal", "strength", or "bravery". It was used for the first time on 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1988, in the Covenant of Islamic Resistance Movement

<sup>189</sup> Arabic: *المجمع الإسلامي*: was an Islamic charity founded in 1973 in Gaza by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who had been involved with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian branch. Mujama established clinics, blood banks, day cares, medical treatments, soup kitchens and youth clubs, and extended financial aid and scholarships to young people seeking to study in Saudi Arabia and the West. In 1979, Israel recognized Al-Mujama' al-Islam as a charity, allowing the organization to set up the Islamic University in Gaza (IUG) and build mosques, clubs, schools, and a library in Gaza. **Read more at:** "How Israel Helped to Spawn Hamas" – The Wall Street Journal by Andrew Higgins

1993 Oslo accords between PLO and Israel. From these accords the PLO officially dropped their official stance of armed resistance against Israel. However, Hamas increase its military ambitions by new requirements including Yahya Ayyash, chief bombmaker, and use the same in Mehola Junction bombing in April 1993. By analyzing the Charter of Hamas, is more than evident that Islam is the main pillar of the organization, governing all aspects of life, from political, social, legal and personal. At the same time, liberating the historic Palestine as a religious duty, legitimizing the jihad as the only solution for the resistance. As the son of one of the leaders of organization, Mosab Hassan Yousef stated “When you recruited people by the name of the nation and the name of the God, you can grow like wildfire”<sup>190</sup>

### *2.6.1 Mariam Farhat*

The story of Maryam Mohammad Farhat is woven in many others, being the *Umm Nidal* (Mother of Martyrs) gave her rare status for women within Hamas. She was born as Palestinian, being indoctrinated at a young age but her radicalization process emerged as her sons joined the organization. her first documented public appearance occurred in March 2002, while she was advising her son, Muhammad, only couple of minutes before he carried out an attack in Atzmona that resulted in the death of five people. The organization profit on this event, portraying her as a role model for how mothers should raise their children in accordance with the Hamas ideology. Mariam often demonstrated a willingness to speak publicly. In 2002, she gave interview, that was published in both the Israeli-Arab Kul Al-Arab weekly and the London Arabic-language daily, Al-Quds.<sup>191</sup>In a couple of sentences, she revealed the ideology that justify the action, according to her statements:

«**Interviewer:** "Umm Nidal is a woman who voluntarily sacrificed her sons for the sake of resisting the occupiers. This woman always declared loud and clear: 'My sons did not commit suicide. My sons went and fought. None of them intended - even accidentally - to kill civilians, children or the elderly. They all resisted and confronted the enemy. They had achievements and they were martyred.'"

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<sup>190</sup> Interview of Mosab Hassan Yousef (Born in the West Bank, 5 May 1978, to a Hamas founder): My Father Founded Hamas, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHvtdNogCM8>

<sup>191</sup> The Jewish Post “Umm NidalFarhat: "I Always Longed To Be The Mother Of A Martyr”. Available at: <https://www.jewishpost.com/archives/news/vmm-nidalfarhat-i-always-longed-to-be-the-mother-of-a-martyr.html>

"Umm Nidal is with us today, because she is presenting herself to the world in a new capacity, as a candidate for the Palestinian Legislative Council."

[...]

**Umm Nidal:** "I protect my sons from defying Allah, or from choosing a path that would not please Allah. This is what I fear, when it comes to my sons. But as for sacrifice, Jihad for the sake of Allah, or performing the duty they were charged with - this makes me happy."

**Interviewer:** "What duty is this?"

**Umm Nidal:** "The sacred duty, Jihad for the sake of Allah. It is a sacred duty - one of the duties of Islam, which cannot be abandoned. We would be sinners if we did."

[...]

"I prepared all my sons for Jihad for the sake of Allah, whether by carrying out an attack, or by any other form of Jihad. I prepared myself for this. He who chooses a difficult road must be ready to bear the consequences."

[...]

"Some people may consider this a tragedy, but by Allah, it is a blessing. When I hear about Muhammad's martyrdom..."

**Interviewer:** "Tell me about the operation that Muhammad carried out."

**Umm Nidal:** "Allah be praised, his operation was a large and successful one - one of the most successful operations of the first and second Intifadas."

[...]

**Interviewer:** "Thousands of viewers, sitting at home, are worried that they are about to hear that Muhammad went to blow himself up among civilians - women and children. I'm sure that they are waiting to learn what Muhammad did. Did he set out to kill children, women and civilians - or what? In such a case, he might lose their sympathy. Go ahead."

**Umm Nidal:** "Muhammad carried out his operation at a military academy. They were all soldiers. But on the issue of women and children - no one should blame us. These are war necessities."

"We have never targeted women or children, but if they come in the way of an operation - it is considered a war necessity."

[...]

"He cut the fence with a pair of cutters and entered with his weapon. Death lay in wait for him everywhere..."

**Interviewer:** "So he did not blow himself up?"

**Umm Nidal:** "No, this was not a bombing operation. He carried a regular weapon - a Kalashnikov - and hand grenades. He went in. There were several rooms. He went from room to room and shot them. He continued for 22 minutes, during which he was in total control - until he ran out of ammunition. If he had had more ammunition, he would, of course, have kept fighting."

[...]

"Allah be praised, there were many casualties. About ten soldiers [were killed], but Israeli radio always conceals the [true number of] casualties.

"The operation was very successful, Allah be praised. Ten soldiers were killed and 23 injured."

**Interviewer:** "The fatalities of the occupying enemy are more important to you than your own loss - and I don't mean this negatively. But you focus on the operation's outcome, not on your son's life."

**Umm Nidal:** "Of course. I was hoping he would be martyred. If he had come back... True, there was no coming back from this operation. Martyrdom was inevitable in this operation. He entered the settlement, and there was no way he could have come out. His martyrdom was inevitable.

"I waited impatiently to hear the operation's outcome. I had not even hoped that he would kill more than two soldiers. When a martyrdom-seeker enters a settlement, it's a triumph. It is a very difficult thing to do. The settlements are heavily fortified. It is difficult for a martyrdom-seeker to enter them.

"When I heard the outcome of the operation... True... True, I was sad about my son. This is something that cannot be ignored." >><sup>192</sup>

## 2.7 Al-Qaeda 1988: The Roller Coaster of Narratives

Al-Qaeda was a terrorist organization developed much earlier, before the infamous 9/11. Many scholars agree that the organization was formed as a consequence or aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan war by a group of former mujahideen. Those veterans include Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Mohammed Rabie al-Zawahiri in 1988, who established the first training camp titled the

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<sup>192</sup> *Dream2 TV* aired this interview on December 21, 2005. Written form available at: <https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-legislative-council-candidate-and-mother-three-hamas-terrorists-umm-nidal-farhat> ; To view this interview, visit: <http://memritv.org/clip/en/980.htm>.

base, later accepted as *al-Qaeda*.<sup>193</sup> The organization had a “clear” goal from the very beginning, to fight the far enemy instead of the near enemy, as a necessary step in order to improve the status of those whom they support and represent. Without a doubt, al-Qaeda has changed history not only in terms of combat terrorism, but also in treating security as a whole. Life wasn’t the same before and months after 9/11, from airport security checks, permits for bringing liquids, to reconnaissance techniques.

The milestone for the organization was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. With a network of thousands of Muslims around the world that got radicalized after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, bin Laden was looking for a new cause to continue his mission. However, due to the outnumbered military capacity of Saudi Arabia and unpreparedness to defend itself and its oil fields, Saudi Arabia’s Royal Family turned to the United States for its protection. At the same time, they rejected Osama’s proposal to provide approximately 5,000 fighters for defense if needed. A decision that was perceived as a personal humiliation and a betrayal of Islam. Bin Laden could not imagine the United States defending the holy land, the cities of Mecca and Medina. Immediately after the rejection, he fled to Pakistan, and in 1994, his home country stripped him of his citizenship.<sup>194</sup> After relocating to Sudan, al-Qaeda began its journey to become a global force. Initially, he was wealthy enough to fund the organization himself, but as the organization expanded and the Saudi authorities froze his assets, he set up construction companies and firms to work with the Sudanese government. At the same time, he encouraged others to do the same in order to increase the budget for more ambitious plans. To boost international recruitment, al-Qaeda launched a weekly magazine called *Newscast*, reporting on Islamic affairs and promoting jihad.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, the organization supported other foreign Islamic groups by providing them with finance and training. All of this contributed to building al-Qaeda as an organization that is well-structured with thousands of radicalized members around the globe ready

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<sup>193</sup> Klausen, J. (2021). *Western Jihadism: A thirty – Year History*. Section 2: The Founder. – Oxford University Press – Oxford UK. p. 47

<sup>194</sup> Bunel, P.-H. (2004). The Origins Of Al-Qaida. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 8(2), 53–59. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48504792>

<sup>195</sup> ABC News (2005). “ Terrorist Propaganda Tool: Alleged Al Qaeda Newscast on the Internet” Available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/Investigation/story?id=1164648>

to fight. From the 1990s until the 2010s,<sup>196</sup> al-Qaeda was behind numerous attacks in many countries, not only as the direct planner and perpetrator but also through command-and-control operations, suggested or endorsed, or inspired attacks.<sup>197</sup>

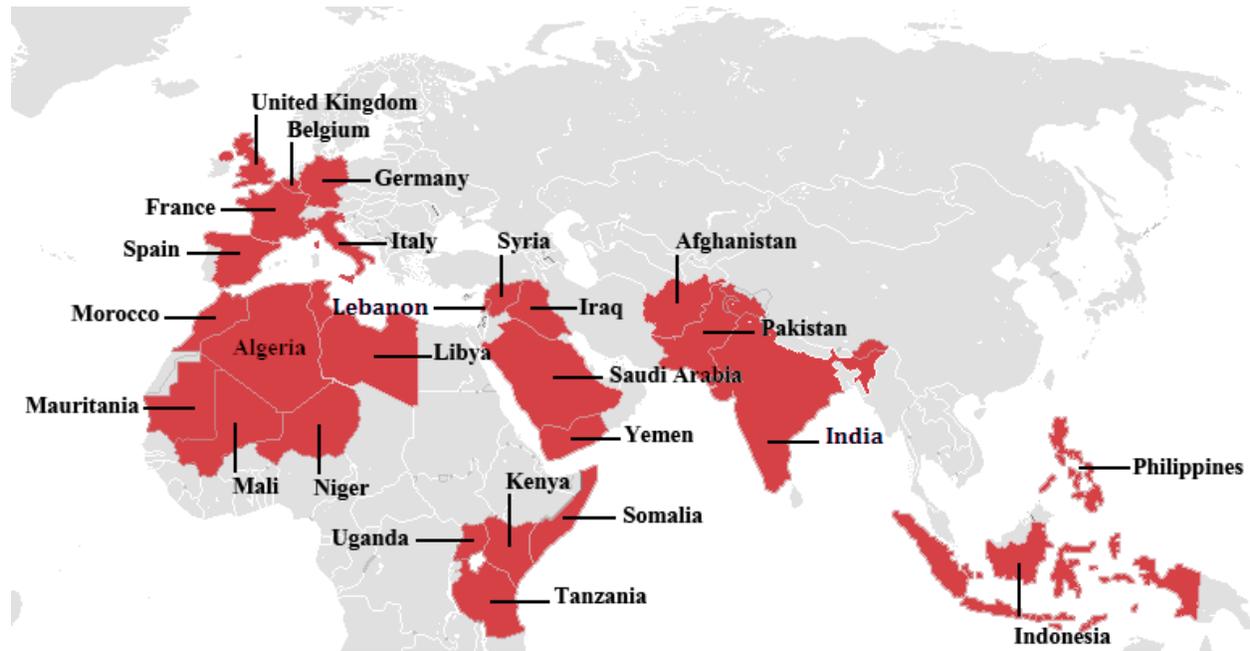


Figure 1: The Main countries of activity of al-Qaeda<sup>198</sup>

Regarding female participation, a branch of al-Qaeda Central (AQC) that operated in Iraq, titled al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), recruited and had the largest number of female fighters. Women, indeed, participated as fighters from the very beginning of the war in Iraq in 2000s, mainly as suicide bombers. As a matter of fact, the very first suicide attack in Iraq was perpetrated by women, who blew themselves up in 2003 on behalf of a group of supporters of Saddam Hussein.<sup>199</sup> Based on the reports of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, in the period between 2004 and 2008, women part of

<sup>196</sup> Rabasa, A., Chalk, P., Cragin, K., Daly, S. A., Gregg, H. S., Karasik, T. W., O'Brien, K. A., & Rosenau, W. (2006). Al-Qaeda's Ideology and Propaganda. In *Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 1, The Global Jihadist Movement* (pp. 7–22). RAND Corporation. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg429af.10>

<sup>197</sup> Silber, M. (2012). "The al-Qaeda Factor. Plots Against the West" – University of Pennsylvania Press – Philadelphia

<sup>198</sup> News World (2013). "Al-Qaeda around the world". Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13296443>

<sup>199</sup> Eggert, J. P. (2015). Women Fighters in the "Islamic State" and Al-Qaida in Iraq: A Comparative Analysis. *Die Friedens-Warte*, 90(3/4), 363–380.

AQI were responsible for 32 suicide attacks,<sup>200</sup> or in the period until 2011, a total of 62 attacks were perpetrated by women.<sup>201</sup> Thus, AQI realized that women were much more effective as attackers, not only due to women's social status, but also because they could get close to the target using the so-called chameleon strategy. In an interview with LTTE leaders, Mia Bloom emphasizes the position of the leaders on women's increased involvement, saying, "women are more expendable." AQI adopted a similar strategy, recruiting women in a larger scale of roles, as recruiters and online ideologues, attackers, or backup planners.<sup>202</sup> Those trends are also driven by the fact that women, especially those from the Western world, often speak at least one foreign language, including English, Russian, and Hebrew, which is useful for the preparation and recruitment of new members. Women recruit both men and women. Male recruits are the targets that are challenged as not manly enough if they do not follow the jihad or fit the frame of what a Muslim man should be. And women's recruitment process is motivated by following Allah's will to live a life as a person committed to God. These practices were taken seriously by the central organization, and the command took steps to increase female participation. Consequently, in August 2004, al-Qaeda launched its very first female magazine<sup>203</sup>, designed to attract female recruits and consolidate their role with the movement, entitled "*al-Khansa*".<sup>204</sup> Even the wife of the leader of Al-Qaeda came out with an open letter encouraging women to become jihadists, even suicide bombers. The latest innovation was the launching of the Al-Shamikha, online website dedicated to female jihadi online education. The magazine's preamble quote:

*«Because women constitute half of the population - and one might even say that they are the population since they give birth to the next generation - the enemies of Islam are bent on preventing the Muslim woman from knowing the truth about her religion and her role, since they know all too well what would happen if women entered the field of jihad... The nation of Islam needs*

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<sup>200</sup> Dearing, Matthew P. (2010). "Like Red Tulips at Springtime: Understanding the Absence of Female Martyrs in Afghanistan" – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 33/12. p. 1079-1103

<sup>201</sup> Davis, J. (2013). "Evolution of the Global Jihad: Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq." – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 36/4. p. 279-291

<sup>202</sup> Von Knop, K. (2007). "The Female Jihad: Al-Qaeda's Women. – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 30/5. p. 397-414

<sup>203</sup> Cunningham, Karla J. (2008). "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihad Movement." – Cindy Ness, Female Terrorism and Militancy. Agency, Utility, and Organization. Routledge. p. 84-99.

<sup>204</sup> Al-Khansaa (Original language: الخنساء) was an online women's magazine launched in 2004 by a Saudi branch of al-Qaeda. The magazine was named after Al-Khansaa, an Arab poet.

women who know the truth about their religion and about the battle and its dimensions and know what is expected of them»<sup>205</sup>

Inconsistently, al-Qaeda's stance on women has shifted significantly over the years. At the beginning, the organization denied and rejected any female-driven narratives, with the stand that women do not belong in the war. Later on, however, it began to emphasize the recruitment and female fast mobilization. It remains difficult to determine whether this shift is due to the broader global female narratives or by the organization's own realization that women represented a crucial position for the success of the future attacks.

### 2.7.1 Aafia Siddiqui

Among others, al-Qaeda aimed to recruit highly educated individuals that would serve as logistical support and fundraisers, especially women who are well-influenced in the environments targeted by the organization, one of them is Aafia Siddiqui. She is a neuroscientist who studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US, holding multiple degrees. After she finished her education, she returned to her homeland, Pakistan, and married a relative of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Remains unknown if she was radicalized before her marriage or not, but for certain, she significantly contributed to many missions perpetrated by Al-Qaeda.<sup>206</sup>

During the "War on Terror" investigation and the interrogation of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, her name was mentioned as related to funding al-Qaeda operations. Based on the dossier, she helped and assisted in buying and transferring \$19 million worth of diamonds to Liberia.<sup>207</sup> After being arrested and prosecuted in the US, she continued denying her involvement and the acts. Siddiqui told the judge that she would not cooperate with her attorneys and wanted to fire them.<sup>208</sup>

## 2.8 Black Widows 2000: Revenge or Ideology

A female-led organization that spread fear and terror, the Black Widows (BW) marked a whole era in Russian history. *Чёрная вдова*, is a term given to the female suicide bombers unit that has

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<sup>205</sup> Huffpost (2011). "Al-Shamikha, Al Qaeda Women's Magazine, Launches: Report" - *Al Qaeda Launches Women's Magazine*. Available at: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/al-shamikha-al-qaeda-womens-magazine\\_n\\_835572](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/al-shamikha-al-qaeda-womens-magazine_n_835572)

<sup>206</sup> Von Mittelstaed, Von. J (2008). "The Most Dangerous Woman in the World" – Spiegel International. Available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/america-s-most-wanted-the-most-dangerous-woman-in-the-world-a-593195.html>

<sup>207</sup> AP staff (2004). "Al-Qaeda bought diamonds before 9/11". USA Today. Associated Press, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>208</sup> Bone, J. (2010). "Aafia Siddiqui demands no Jewish jurors at attempted murder trial". The Times. London.

been active since the beginning of the early 2000s. The social status of women inspired the name; they were wives or close relatives of men who died at the hands of Russian forces, and in revenge, they blew themselves up. Overall, women have been involved in 81 percent of all the terrorist attacks prepared by Chechen groups, including twenty-two of the twenty-seven suicide attacks.<sup>209</sup> Among these, two attacks are particularly essential: the siege of Dubrovka and the Moscow bombing. Although the organization is guided by jihadi ideology with a narrow radicalization framework, its activities are deeply intertwined with the broader struggle for Chechen independence.

Marital Status	Education Completed	Economic Status	Previous Religiosity	Relation to Wahhabism	Trauma*
13 – single	17 – high school	2 – poor	22 – secular Muslims	19 – connected after traumas	12 – more than one family member killed
3 – married	1 – college	14 – middle	4 – traditionally religious	7 – connected through family	4 – father or mother was killed
4 – divorced	5 – university	9 – good			6 – brother killed
5 – widowed	3 – in college	1 – high			1 – husband killed
1 – remarried					3 – family members arrested or disappeared after arrest
					2 – general societal traumas

Figure 2: Demographic Data, Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists 2000-2005 (n=26)<sup>210</sup>

Most of the women in the BW, radicalized by themselves after surviving trauma or loss of a loved one. Even though the range of ages of female suicide bombers is wide spanning from early teenage years to mid-fifties, according to the findings.<sup>211</sup> The vast majority have at least a high school diploma and are of the middle class, excluding the possibility that they were not aware of the process of radicalization or the act of terrorism. Moreover, radicalization is a reflection of the experienced trauma, particularly when institutional systems fail to provide adequate support in the aftermath of these events.

<sup>209</sup> Speckhard, A. & Akhmedova, K (2006). “The Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists” – Schweitzer ed. Female Suicide Terrorist. Tel Aviv, Israel

<sup>210</sup> Speckhard, A. & Akhmedova, K (2006). “The Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists” – Schweitzer ed. Female Suicide Terrorist. Tel Aviv, Israel

<sup>211</sup> Ibis. 66

### 2.8.1 Dzhennet Abdurakhmanova & Maryam Sharipova

Dzhennet and her cohort, Maryam Sharipova, are two women behind the Moscow metro station bombing in 2010. On one hand, Dzhennet was only seventeen years old when she carried out the attack using an explosive belt, as a reaction to the murder of her husband, Umalat Magomedov, a high-level *jihadi* commander of Shariat Jamaat.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, the organization network supported her throughout the preparation by supplying equipment and strategic preparation. Photographs that later circulated online showed that Dzhennet was familiar enough with weapons and possessed them prior to the attack, confirming the notion that she had also undergone radicalization prior to the attack.<sup>213</sup> On the other hand, Maryam Sharipova held a master's degree in mathematics and computer science, challenging the present assumptions that women in radical jihadi organizations had educational deprivation as an explanation of radicalization. Her family rejected claims of her ideological involvement prior to the attack, despite the fact that she was raised in a religious household. Sharipova was also married to a militant named Magomedali Vagabov, unlike Abdurakhmanova, her husband appears to still be alive. Therefore, the exact trigger of the attack is still unknown, but her father, in an interview with Novaya Gazeta newspaper, said:

«I completely exclude the possibility that somebody brainwashed her," he said. "She had a degree in psychology herself...

...There are many questions about it, and there are no answers," he said. "She was raised as an ordinary mountain girl. My daughter was very religious, but I did not see any indications of radicalism in her»<sup>214</sup>

Fusion between Dzhennet and Myriam demonstrates that there is no single profile by which women engage in terrorism. Rather, they exhibit diverse personal backgrounds even when women participated in joint attacks.

### 2.9 ISIS 2014: Fusion of active and passive membership

Terrorism reached its peak during the years of ISIS's intense presence around the globe. Not only is the unseen organizational structure a factor, but also the approach and methodology of re-

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<sup>212</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). "Bombshell: Many Faces of Female Terrorism" - Hurst Publishers. p. 10

<sup>213</sup> Guardian, (2010). "Moscow suicide bombings: how the internet has changed the face of terrorism". Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/04/dagestan-dzhennet-abdurakhmanova-moscow-bombs>

<sup>214</sup> ABC News (2010). "School Teacher Was Second Moscow Bomber". Available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/International/school-teacher-moscow-bomber/story?id=10296748>

cruitment and radicalization, which serve as a potent weapon. At the same time, many countries have begun to prevent the recruitment of their citizens by criminalizing various forms of foreign fighting and increasing penalties. Indeed, there are a couple of names that are related to what has been recognized as ISIS or just the Islamic State. The organization is known under the names Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Daesh (original language: داعش, *Dā'ish*<sup>215</sup>). Based on its postulates is a state (unrecognized quasi-state) that shall follow the rules of Sheri'a law and work under military order. ISIS emerged from earlier jihadist movements in Iraq, with its origins traced back to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, known as the “Green Man”. Paradoxically, he spent first half of his life being inclined in petty crimes, drug consumption and gangs, after he got arrested. During his stay at Jordan prison, he gain prominence among fellow inmate by demonstrating increasing religiosity and knowledge, giving faith for justices to other prisoners he established himself as a leader. Soon after, he joined an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan with aim to meet Osama. Even though he was rejected, he continues his radicalization on higher level by building his own network of jihadist. In 2002, he moved to Iraq, where he consolidated his influence on the camps in that area and established the pillars of what later became the Islamic State.

From 2013 to 2019, ISIS worked under led of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who declared himself as the Caliph of the territories that belong to Iraq and Syria. He was supported by two operational leaders: Abu Muslim al – Turkemani, responsible for Iraq and Abu Ali al – Anbari responsible for Syria.

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<sup>215</sup> The term “Daesh” is strategically a better choice because it is still accurate in that it spells out the acronym of the group’s full Arabic name, al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham (original language: الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام). Yet, at the same time, “Daesh” can also be understood as a play on words — and an insult. Depending on how it is conjugated in Arabic, it can mean anything from “to trample down and crush” to “a bigot who imposes his view on others.” - The Boston Globe, October 09, 2014 by Zeba Khan

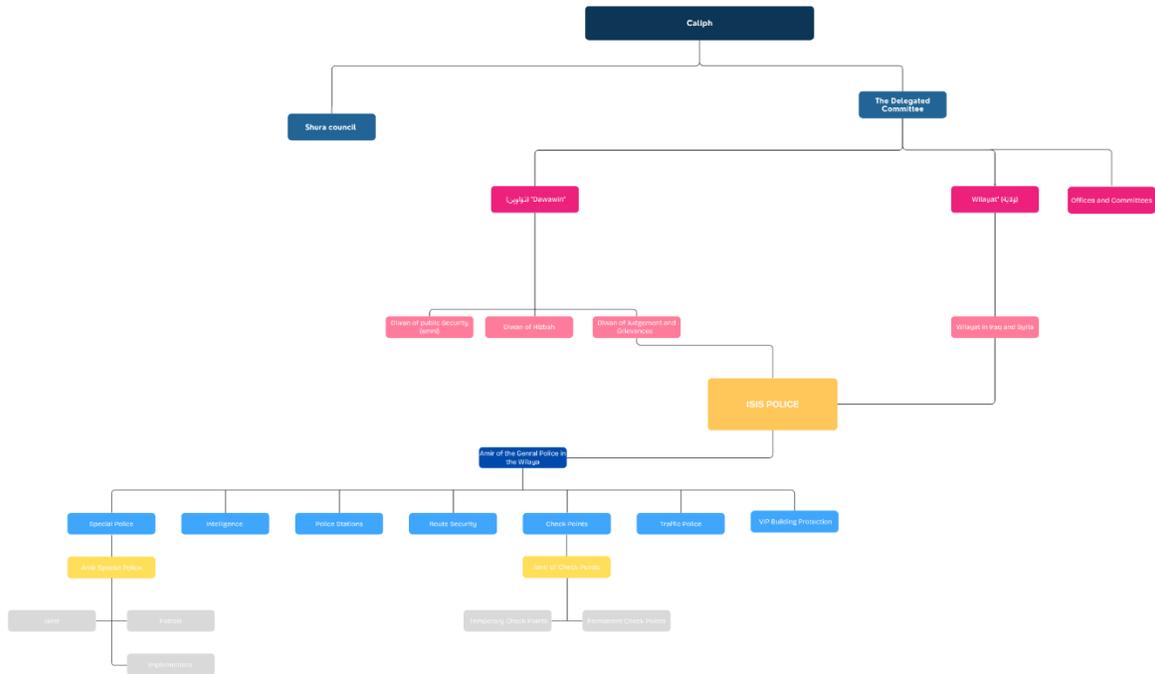


Figure 3: Administrative Organization of the Caliphate<sup>216</sup>

Under their supervision, each operated a cabinet of senior officials and a system of local *emirs*, who governed semi-autonomous provinces. The administrative apparatus included councils dedicated to finance, military operations, legal affairs (including judicial rulings and executions), foreign fighter integration, security, intelligence, and media dissemination. A *shura* council was tasked with ensuring compliance with the group’s interpretation of Islamic law. Despite al-Baghdadi’s rhetorical openness to criticism, famously urging his followers to “advise me when I err”, in practice, any form of opposition or contradiction was swiftly eliminated.<sup>217</sup>

ISIS armed capacity ranges from tens of thousands to as many as 200,00 fighters.<sup>218</sup> According to the UN reported, more than 15,000 foreign fighters joined IS from all around the world, approximately 80 countries.<sup>219</sup> The process of recruitment was a fusion of ideological need and social obligation based on religious narratives, established of the Islamic Caliphate. As all states, the need of women increases, thereby, women become increasingly visible in both

<sup>216</sup> Yayla, A. & Speckhard, A. (2016) “ISIS Defectors: Inside Stories of the Terrorist Caliphate” - Advances Press

<sup>217</sup> American Islamic College Lecture Series: How ISIS Changed the World Again – by Dr Robert Pape. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v39-PqX99I4>

<sup>218</sup> Weaver, Mary Anne (2015). "Her Majesty's Jihadists". The New York Times.

<sup>219</sup> The Guardian (2015) “Foreign jihadists flocking to Iraq and Syria on 'unprecedented scale' – UN”. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/30/foreign-jihadist-iraq-syria-unprecedented-un-isis>

propaganda and recruitment strategies. Thousands of women fled to ISIS in order to supported the fighters, join a family member or marry someone. In majority of the cases, they were age between 15-30-years-old but in some particular cases older women did the same.<sup>220</sup>

### *2.9.1 Samantha Sam Sally*

Samantha Sam Marie Sally is a clear example of a Western woman who joined her husband in his life under the Caliphate. Born and raised in the US, her childhood was more than difficult. In one of many ceremonies, also confirmed by her sister, she stated that they had a difficult time, being sexually abused by a family relative. Her family and friends describe her as a free-minded person, hazarder, someone who is not afraid to endure life. After she got divorced from her first husband, with whom she had her son Matthew, she started dating Moussa Elhassani, a Moroccan citizen who moved to the US at the beginning of this century.<sup>221</sup> In 2012, they got married. Soon after, she said that he struggled with drug consumption and overdosing, but he was always okay with her son and later their children. In 2015, he promised that they would start a new life and that they need to sell everything that they have in order to begin the new life. The initial plan was to spend a 10-day vacation in Turkey and afterward visit his family in Morocco. However, according to her testimony, once they arrived in eastern areas of Turkey, for her unknown, her husband took their daughter and felled towards the boarder, carrying all their money and belongings. She claims that she followed him in order to take her daughter back, but soon after she realized that they had crossed into Syria and were headed to Raqqa, the so-called capital of ISIS.<sup>222</sup> She later described life under the caliphate as harsh, with multiple killings in front of her eyes on a daily basis, bombings, and massacres. After some period of time, Moussa enslaved two Yazidi girls at the ages of 14 and 17 to help her with the house and to be concubines. She claims that she treated them well, even took care of them, and organized their escape together with hers. How-

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<sup>220</sup> Channel 4 News (2019) “On the trail of women ‘lured to ISIS-territory’ from the UK and elsewhere” - Thousands of fighters have been killed and thousands are on the run, most recently after the Kurdish forces captured the town of Al-Shafa. But what is happening to the women from around the world who say they travelled there in the promise of a pure Islamic life? Some volunteered. Others say they were duped. Hundreds now find themselves with children, unwanted by the countries of their birth. Are they prisoners of war or refugees? Or both? A group of them, some from Britain, spoke to independent film-maker Jana Andert in this exclusive report for Channel 4 News by Darshna Soni. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-9tw2JAZFI>

<sup>221</sup> Nick Paton Walsh & Salma Abdelaziz (2018). “Beaten, tortured, sexually abused: An American ISIS widow looks for a way home” – CNN News. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/19/middleeast/syria-us-isis-bride-intl/index.html>

<sup>222</sup> Ibis.

ever, her husband raped them repeatedly. In 2017, she managed to escape the house to Kurdish government territories with her children and the two Yezidi girls.<sup>223</sup> Soon after the authorities took her in custody and she was deported to the US, her soon return to his biological father, and the two girls united with their families. In her statement, she additionally testified:

◊**Interviewer:** Did you know that you are in Syria?

**Samantha:** Yeah, yeah, I knew I was in Syria

**Interviewer:** What is your stand on the videos of Matthew (*paraphrased*)

**Samantha:** It's propaganda. It's the way it's meant to look.

**Interviewer:** Do you accept that the choices you made put your children through some of the worst experiences you can imagine for a child to have for years?

**Samantha:** I accept that I was unable to make the decisions to protect them better. >><sup>224</sup>

She is also known as the mother of Matthew, the child featured in numerous propaganda videos broadcast by the organization. These videos ranged from the group's ideology messages to demonstrating weapon construction.<sup>225</sup>

## 2.10 Concussions and Identification of the Gap

This chapter has tried to show how the most notable terrorist organization in the last century developed strategies for the recruitment of female fighters and the roles that women played within that organization. Unquestionably, women in all observed terrorist organizations hold diverse and significant roles beyond suicide bombers. During the third wave of terrorism, it was typical that women appeared mainly in the leadership positions, yet their participation was often less present in a quantitative sense. In other words, they were represented in quantity, but not in terms of numbers. However, this trend has shifted in the last few decades. Not only that the number of women increased, but so too has the diversity of their roles. Paradoxically, the religious terrorist

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<sup>223</sup> Baker, Josh. "I'm not a monster". BBC News. All the episodes of the podcast are available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/extra/ggkz0ug4ff/im-not-a-monster>

<sup>224</sup> Baker, Josh (2020). "Return From ISIS" – Frontline. Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/return-from-isis/>

<sup>225</sup> Baker, Josh (2022). "How a 10-Year-Old Boy Was Forced To Join ISIS"- Investigators. VICE News Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5bOIKpT6\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5bOIKpT6_A)

organizations publicly obscure women's roles, while internally promoting the recruitment process as essential for the global jihad. At the very beginning, women become involved in violent extremism as either a direct influence of an ideology they personally had adopted or indoctrinated by a close relative. For example, the case of Maria Dolores from ETA. On the other hand, nowadays, women become involved in violent extremism as a consequence of external triggers, sometimes even events against their will, often resulting with suicide bombings. There is a wide discussion of the women from Western countries who joined ISIS regarding the motives or consensus to be part of the organization; their lawyers claim they were forced to stay. Nevertheless, numerous testimonies from girls and women belonging to the Yazidi ethnic group reveal that they were far more frequently victims of jihadists' wives, taken as sexual slaves in Iraq and Syria. They were predominantly abused, exploited for home labor, and subjected to daily violence. Those testimonies partially challenge the narratives portraying women who traveled to ISIS as either entirely innocent or as unaware of the organization's mission. For example, the case of the American woman, Sam, who claimed to have no involvement in the activities in Iraq, was sentenced in the United States. However, her family, also including her ten-year-old son, who was present with her at that time and a direct witness to her involvement, stated the opposite.

What remains unclear, yet, are the phases of women's radicalization and whether the current de-radicalization programs developed on male-driven analysis are effectively applicable to women as well. On top of that, a large proportion of women in the last period of time denied all allegations of involvement in a terrorist organization after their capture by law enforcement agencies. They are not as proud of their acts as women during the third wave. This phenomenon can be explained by the legal gap, actions are carried out in a foreign country, different than the one in which these women were prosecuted, making the prosecution process harder.

## **2.11 Problem and Hypothesis Statement**

While women's involvement in terrorist organizations has continuously grown, academic research remains limited in the comprehensive understanding of their roles. It is unknown if the roles in the first decades were limited to the one of leadership or undermined as the last important for literature. Indeed, media coverage is always larger with a woman perpetrates an attack compared to a man. However, without knowing the exact scope of activities and the pathway of radicalization, it would be impossible to develop policies or resocialization strategies.

Moreover, existing de-radicalization programs and legal approaches are largely male-driven models, which limit their effectiveness when applied to women.

To address the first research question of this dissertation and considering the research conducted and discussion above, the following hypotheses emerge: Besides mainstream focus, women in terrorist organizations hold diverse and significant roles beyond suicide bombers, from leaders, logistical support, combatants, intelligence, recruiters, to strategic planners and prosecutors. Those roles are not specific to any organization, but rather some highlighted specific roles as more present than others. Terrorist organizations have always recruited women as crucial for the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization, as women are harder to be detected and can more easily get out of the procession

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Chapter Three:

**TERRORIST PARADOX: WOMEN AS STEALTH  
WEAPON**

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### 3. Chapter Three: **TERRORIST PARADOX – WOMEN AS STEALTH WEAPON**

This chapter is dedicated to addressing the second research question, titled *How and Why Women become involved in terrorism*, with the broader aim to discover the process of radicalization behind. While the majority of radicalization theories concentrate on explaining why individuals become terrorists, it is likely to undermine the importance of how they got radicalized and involved in terrorism. That being said, John Horgan's IED<sup>226</sup> model mainly focuses on the process and steps toward radicalization rather than the motivational dimension.

Furthermore, this chapter is driven by the conceptual findings established in the previous two chapters, while simultaneously analyzing them in order to provide an answer to the research question. The first section introduces the existing theoretical framework related to female radicalization as a theoretical concept. These approaches will serve as a starting point for the final chapter and conclusions. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 will analyze the sub-questions related to the second research question, while reflecting on the findings from the previous chapters.

#### 3.1. Radicalization Process and Female Terrorism under Theory

The number of theories that address the second research question is significantly smaller than that of the mainstream literature. Nevertheless, some scholars developed neutral approaches that can serve as an explanation of the female radicalization. Regarding female-driven theories, the milestone is set by Mia Bloom's Four + One Theory, developed in the book *Bombshell*.<sup>227</sup> According to the author, the theory intends to explain the deepest roots behind female radicalization, or why women would join a terrorist organization, or why organizations need women. The first R stands for revenge, a situation when a women want to take revenge after her loved one suffered for the perpetrator of the struggle, in the majority of the cases those individuals were already part of a radicalized organization, such as Maria Dolores from ETA. The second R stands for redemption, reflecting the desire to wash away the past "sins" by committing an act perceived as rational in the society where women belong. The organization also used this strategy to convince women that the only way out is through suicide bombings. The third R stands for respect, widespread motivation in all the ways throughout history. Perhaps, the purest reason to join the organization, simply because women want to show that they are equally dedicated to the ideolo-

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<sup>226</sup> Horgan, J. (2014). "The Psychology of Terrorism" – Routledge, London UK.

<sup>227</sup> Bloom M. (2011). "Bombshell: The Many Faces of Female Terrorists." - Hurst Publishers, London UK

gy same as their male cohort, to be equal or enough. In these cases, when it comes to the roles, women are mainly the leaders of ideologies of the organization. The fourth R stands for relationship and has been particularly common during the third wave of terrorism. Observing the organization, each female member has at least one person who was a member of the organization, a family member, friend, or loved one. They significantly help speed up the process of indoctrination

The plus one is for rape. It is most likely for women to join a terrorist organization if they have been raped by an occupying force, a practice present in Iraq by US forces and in Sri Lanka. Terrorist organizations are the only ones that embrace women to join the organization, or in their words, to have a purpose after the rape. According to the leaders of organizations, “They [women] can’t have a normal life afterward, but they can become martyrs by blowing themselves up in the name of the organization.”<sup>228</sup> In conservative societies, this motive is more common, as women face limited opportunities for reintegration in society.”

Anne Speckhard, on the other hand, focuses on female suicide bombers and the motives to do so. According to her article “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,”<sup>229</sup> women suicide bombers are emerging in two scenarios. Firstly, in a conflict zone driven by nationalistic motives, trauma or rage for a person who was killed or died for the organization or a movement. This theory is followed by the glorification of martyrdom by the organization. And secondly, non-conflict zones, as a consequence of social trauma or the feeling of unbelonging in society. This is a trend present in Western society among a third generation of immigrants that, besides the qualification, are not accepted in society as their native peers, resulting in a revolt and desire for revenge to those who contribute to the inequality.<sup>230</sup> The analysis provided in this article also helps to understand the reality behind the suicide bombings, taking into consideration that, in reality, the number of women who commit suicide attacks compared to the total number of suicide attacks is low in proportion. The detailed information of the phenomena is available in Figure 3, the highest number is measured in Chechnya due to the black widow's ideology, where wives, sisters, or daughters of men killed will prepare suicide bombings.

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<sup>228</sup> Bloom, M. (2005). “Dying to Kill: the Allure of Suicide Terror” – Columbia University Press, New York, USA

<sup>229</sup> Speckhard A. (2008). “*Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists*” - Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibis*. p. 1005

**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>

Figure 4. Female Suicide bombings globally by country of origin of the attacker.<sup>231</sup>

Additionally, Social Learning Theory examines the women’s radicalization in ISIS and was developed by Lauren R. Shapiro and Maire-Helen Maras. The theory gives explanations of the three main reasons.<sup>232</sup> Firstly, differential association, when a female fighter was in relation to the organization through another member of the association. The second factor is acceptance of the acts perpetrated by the organization by social affiliations, reinforcing their feelings and perception for good and bad. Thirdly, imitation of modeled behavior, women tend to follow the same patterns as others that walked their way.<sup>233</sup>

Without doubt, radicalization of women can be exemplified also by some of the mainstream theories such as F. Moghadam's staircase of terrorism,<sup>234</sup> knowing that women also follow certain pathway that leads them to the act of terror, sometimes skipping floor(s) by still arriving in the final destination. The one factor that is generally missing is the replacement of aggression in an equal manner as men would, but taking into consideration the testimonies from Iraq, perhaps

<sup>231</sup> Ibis. 1006

<sup>232</sup> Shapiro, R. Lauren & Maras, Marie H. (2019). “Women’s Radicalization to Religious Terrorism: An Examination of ISIS Cases in the United States”, in “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, vol. 42.

<sup>233</sup> Ibis. 91

<sup>234</sup> Moghaddam, Fathali M. (2005). “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration” - *American Psychologist*, Vol 60(2), Feb-Mar 2005, 161-169

versions exist. Furthermore, Marc Segemen stated that family and friend bonds come before any other ideological engagement.<sup>235</sup> Indeed, almost all the female members in Hamas had at least one person who was a former member of the organization, or the leaders of RAF joined the organization together with their male friends. For instance, Aafia followed the radicalization pathway proposed by Silber and Bath in the Four-Phase Radicalization<sup>236</sup>. She went from pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization. In contrast, Astrid Proll's involvement in the RAF illustrates "slippery slope" radicalization<sup>237</sup>, where she went from a naïve assistant, offering a friend a lift, to being a top-tier terrorist.

### *3.1.1 Why Terrorist Organizations Need Women*

Almost every paper or book about terrorism speaks about the fact that the world changed after 9/11, indeed, that also implies the research of female terrorism. Despite women's active and supportive participation in terrorism and political violence, it is often repeated that they are overlooked, under-analyzed, and academically ignored in research that has often taken a gender-blind approach. That being said, the dissertation focuses on a combination of the case studies and criminal-sociological analysis, in-depth observed in the previous two chapters. Thus, the following section aims to discover why these patterns are becoming more common, as well as why terrorist organizations are recruiting women more frequently than ever before. Furthermore, how this phenomenon has influenced the emergence of terrorism, whether it is different from when men carry out terrorist attacks, or not.

As the world changed its approach toward terrorism and national protection, terrorist organizations were forced to adapt to the new methods and rules of the "game". As it became more difficult for men to conduct an operation, especially to avoid being detected by the security services, the organization realized that women could become a stealth weapon. States in order to prevent potential threats, often create profiles of individuals based on intelligence information. Visas for those who fit into the profiles are frequently denied. Women, however, are rarely found in the profiles of potential terrorists. As the previous chapters demonstrated, radical organizations often recruit women who are highly educated, typically abroad, with a clean record, and therefore speak multiple languages. Those characteristics make them harder to detect as potential rad-

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<sup>235</sup> Sageman, M. (2005). "Understanding Jihadi Networks" – Strategic Insights, 4

<sup>236</sup> Silber, M. (2012). "The al Qaeda Factor. Plots Against the West" – University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia

<sup>237</sup> McCauley, C. & Moskaleiko, S. (2011) "Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us" - OUP USA

icals. In contrast, when women come from less privileged backgrounds, such as having a member of the family who was part of a movement or organization, recruitment is based on their role as mothers. For instance, in the practices of Hamas, female spies often brought children with them while entering Israeli checkpoints, therefore acquiring the title of “*umma*”. The same adjective is present among those women who are part of the online radicalization. Analyzing the social media profiles of women who engaged in online radicalization and those who have given their lives for the organization, *umma* is the most common pseudonym. One of them, Mariam Farhat, a mother of two, operated as a transition between Palestine and Israel in the process of preparation for an attack for months. Knowing the fact that controls at the checkpoints are much weaker, she not only uses the position for the transfer of information but also for smuggling goods and assets.<sup>238</sup> One of them, Mariam Farhat, a mother of two at that moment, operated as a transition between Palestine and Israel in the process of preparation for an attack for months. Knowing the fact that controls at the checkpoints are much weaker on women, she not only uses the position for transferring information but also for smuggling goods and assets.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, women and children are better accepted in societies, in terms of their access to critical infrastructure, crossing borders, and entering institutions, compared to men. Mia Bloom named the same strategy as the chameleon strategy, blending in, making the suspect hard to identify among the potential targets.<sup>240</sup>

Despite the fact that terrorist organizations rarely, directly, and publicly state their positions on the roles of women within the organization or the need for recruitment, their passive actions speak louder. For instance, it is well-known that before Bin Laden was killed, al-Zawahiri's wife issued an open letter stating that women could increase their participation, especially as suicide bombers, and they are more than welcome to do so. Moreover, according to terrorist leaders<sup>241</sup> women are often perceived as a comparative advantage, more expendable, and easily manipulated.<sup>242</sup> However, these positions represent merely the perspective of the leaders and should not be

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<sup>238</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). “Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists” - Hurst Publishers

<sup>239</sup> W. Yardley (2013) “*Mariam Farhat, Known as ‘Mother of Martyrs,’ Dies at 64*” The New York Times

<sup>240</sup> Bloom, M. & Horgan, J. (2019). “Small Arms: Children and Terrorism” - Cornell University Press.

<sup>241</sup> LTTE members, especially the leaders, became aware of how costly it is to sacrifice human life as suicide bombers, thereby reducing the number of their high-level soldiers, they began to increase the number of women to fill the existing gap. More on the topic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lam-L0fysaE>

<sup>242</sup> Perez, Margaret G. (2008). “Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Groups. - Routledge London.

taken as an objective truth applicable to other cases. Findings in Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated that many women enter the organization voluntarily, thereby challenging the narrative presented by the leaders. For instance, these positions cannot adequately account for figures such as Mara Cagol or Samantha Sally, where one was committed to ideology and the second one seeks status and hazard.

Today, one of the key features of the increased number of women in terrorist organizations is the fact that women have either time or higher media coverage than men when perpetrating an attack. Hence, terrorism seeks not only to impose harm and terror, but also to generate fear within a broader population capable of putting pressure on those in charge, thereby achieving the main goal. Since women have higher media coverage, organizations use the advantage to disseminate the message more effectively and efficiently. In fact, when the Moscow subway was attacked on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the story was everywhere, from CNN, BBC, and all the European newspapers and media. Footage of the attacks is still available online. However, just a couple of days after, there were three more attacks perpetrated by male bombers, but the media coverage in public interest was much lower and far less effective. The same applies to the siege of the Dubrovka theater; almost half of the terrorists who carried out the attack were women, and the public knew that they were ready to die and blow themselves up.

Indeed, men terrorists are more skilled in terms of physical abilities, but women terrorists have so-called special skills, or gender-specific skills. Such skills and abilities have a wide range, from simply being a woman, concealing explosives under a fake pregnancy, or exploiting garments like a burqa and s'aree in order to cover assets and goods, to soft skills, like creativity, innovation, detailed planning, and so on and so forth. For instance, during the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Kalaivani Rajaratnam dressed in a traditional s'aree, using the chameleon strategy, approached the Prime Minister. She carried an explosive device hidden under her clothing, pretending to be pregnant. After placing the garland around his neck and bending to touch his feet as a manner of respect, she blew herself. Concomitantly, in the failed assassination attempt on Sarath Fonseka, the perpetrator, a woman in her 20s from February 2006, faked her formal regular medical check-up at a military medical center, pretending to be pregnant, and meanwhile ensuring that she was not suspected by the guards as a potential threat. Four months later, in May same year, when the Marshal was supposed to be in the same location, she entered the hospital

and failed to assassinate him. Such an example, prove the women capability and unique skill of long-term planning, essential for successful attacks nowadays. <sup>243</sup>

At a certain moment, in the beginning of the early 200s, organizations started to change the approach towards women in radicalization, especially online radicalization. In 2004, for the first time in the history of modern terrorism, the infamous al-Qaeda launched a website called *Al-Khansa*, a web-based magazine for female jihadis. <sup>244</sup> The website included everything, from hijab-based fashion advice to tips and recipes to tips like “While your man is on jihad, don’t blow all the cash, make sure to pay the bills and take care of the household”. On the other hand, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a popular imam and modern influencer in the Islamic world, started an online mission of preaching, saying that if you look at the Qu’an carefully, a woman’s obligation to jihad is the same as a man’s. He called for more women to be involved in jihad, even children, too, because if it’s a defensive jihad, everyone must get involved. <sup>245</sup> One of the last innovations based on the online radicalization of the Islamic Terrorist organization is the website named *Al-Shamikha* (شامخة), referring female name for high value. The website gives advice for women, encouraging them to marry jihadists and raise their children to ensure the next generation of jihad continues. It also included beauty tips, skincare routines, ways of styling hijabs, and reasons with they should where burqa, not only for religious reasons but also to prevent wrinkles and protect their complexion. <sup>246</sup>

In brief, women in terrorist organizations can be considered as the future for operational and symbolic success. Firstly, women are *harder to trace* or *less detectable* as potential threats, which enables them to approach targets closely. Secondly, their participation *significantly contributes to the fighters’ deficiency* within the organizations, both in a passive and active sense, and quality and quantity. Thirdly, media coverage is higher when women execute attacks, and the dissemination of fear is amplified rapidly. Fourthly, women have *gender-specific skills* and opportunities that men do not have, rooted in women’s nature and social norms, allowing them to

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<sup>243</sup> H. Ingram, C. Whiteside & C. Winter (2020) “Women in the Islamic State” *The ISIS Reader: Milestone Texts of the Islamic State Movement*. Pages 199-214.

<sup>244</sup> G. Weimann & B. Hoffman (2006) “The New Areas, the New Challenges” *Terror on the Internet*. US Institute of Peace Press.

<sup>245</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). “Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists” - Hurst Publishers

<sup>246</sup> Cruikshank, P. (2013). “Cover Page of *Al-Shamika*” – Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Combating Terrorism, New York, US.

exploit these roles in the name of the ideology. Last but definitely not least, women have a more salient influence on society for both women and men. Women involved in recruitment provide a base for self-identification for other women, while changing the men and social roles, thereby magnifying the impact of their actions.

### *3.1.2 Why Women Need to Join Terrorist Organizations*

On the contrary, motives for female radicalization are completely different than the needs of the organization to recruit them. The process of radicalization is strictly related to their life conditions, and social conditions significantly contribute to the process. Women who are raised or born in a warzone, an abusive household, or who inhabit a society where personal values, customs, or practices contrast with mainstream ones are more likely to get radicalized. The role of women during wartime has significant importance, from the violation of basic rights to the enormous impact on physical and mental health. Wars disrupt the social structure of society, and on the front line, women frequently find themselves in unenviable positions, facing various forms of violence, including sexual assault, exploitation, and discrimination.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, women have been targeted during wartime for many centuries, from the rape of Nanking in 1936 to the atrocities committed in Bangladesh in 1971 and Iraq in 2003. Year by year, women increase the radicalization as a direct consequence of those infamous trends. War also influences the employment rates and social inclusion. For instance, in the MENA region, women and youth unemployment rates range between 25% and 60%, which leads them towards violent extremism and radicalization.<sup>248</sup> As the examples in the previous chapters showed, after a political change or destabilization, the number of those who undergo radicalization almost always increases. That narrative also applies to women.

One of the greatest contributions to the research on the motives and needs for women to join terrorist organizations is M. Bloom's Four plus one model. Firstly, many female bombers in the late 80s and 90s were seeking to *redeem* themselves for past mistakes. Some of them were ashamed because of their infertility, others had extramarital affairs or had a child out of wedlock. Even, sometimes, women's family members were accused of collaboration with the enemy, cases present in Palestine, where the only way out is to become a martyr. Secondly, *revenge* is one of

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<sup>247</sup> Muscati, S. (2012). "Women and Armed Conflict" – Human Rights Watch, 250 Fifth Avenue, 34<sup>th</sup> Floor New York.

<sup>248</sup> Bourekba, M. (2020). "OVERLOOKED AND UNDERRATED? The role of youth and women in preventing violent extremism" – CIDOB.

the most present reasons for radicalization, when a loved one dies in a terrorist organization, women avenge the death by joining the same terrorist organization. Mainly they are avenging the death of a father, brother, or husband, thereby the attack becomes personal. Thirdly, in the regions and countries where women's rights are underestimated and unrespect, knowing that they would never fulfill their dream to become someone they are joining a terrorist organization. This act seeks *respect* for their commitments to society and equality as the one of a man. Fourthly, almost all of the analyses of the cases where women were involved in terrorism present the *relation* with someone from the organization, so-called linkmen. This also makes it easier for the group to trust the new requirement. Lastly, the "plus one" refers to *rape* as the most common spread of violence during a war period, and often the top reason for female suicide bombers to join a terrorist organization. The mean of rape against women is used in various versions. From punishment and a tool for changing demography in a specific region to using women as a link between information and the source, they are raped in front of their men, so the man will give up the information to the soldiers.

On the other hand, the existing literature fails to fill the significant gap related to the voluntary motives that drive women to join terrorist organizations or any other violent organization with ideological narratives. Without doubt, men play a crucial role in the overall process of radicalization, either passively or actively. Still, a significant proportion of women decided or chose to join these organizations willingly, based on their own accord. Even nowadays, during the fourth wave, when female involvement reached its highest peak, women consciously get involved. For example, according to Samantha's family, she was fully aware of the reasons behind the apparent trip to Turkey with her husband and children and she did it on purpose. Unquestionably, during the third wave, the majority of women participating in terrorist organizations confirmed, throughout testimonies and interviews, that they believed in the ideology and they were willing to contribute to achieving the goal of the organization. Looking further back, the first recorded terrorist, Vera Ivanovna Zasluch, explicitly self-identified as one, refusing to be defined in any other way but being a terrorist.

### 3.2 How Women Become Terrorists

The pathway from radicalization to terrorism, for both women and men, is driven by personal features, characterized by heterogeneity. Yet, analyses from the previous chapters show common

factors that explain the process of how women become terrorists, while also considering the motives for the organization and women to get involved in political violence. In all the cases under observation, women face a trigger that contributes to the process, and those triggers range from personal, political, social, economic, and ideological. Also, an event can be defined as a trigger for reconsideration of personal beliefs and behavior. Repeatedly, women were exposed to an ideology, before the trigger happened, and thereby the trajectory after the trigger is often predictable. Either the person was living in a community where a radical group was active, or they knew or heard about it. A similar dynamic is captured in Silber and Bath's four-phase model, in their words, the transition from *pre-radicalization to self-identification*. In the given framework, processes of radicalization and indoctrination that resonate with the individual's needs are the most efficient. Based on the findings, the pathway through which women become involved in terrorism can be explained by three factors: *accessibility* to radical ideology, *problem-solving mindset* proposed by organizations, and personal and social *achievement* as a final goal.

Globalization significantly contributes to the accessibility of radical ideology. If decades ago, individuals were forced to travel miles in order to receive training or to attend a camp of an organization, nowadays, radical ideologies are accessible from the individual's personal space, home, or even phone. Every other article on terrorism and online radicalization talks about the website where you can learn how to make a bomb or perpetrate an attack. And in reality, law enforcement experts are saying that shutting down those websites is not efficient anymore, as they will turn down the website, the organization immediately launches three more. Even more concerning is the shift in radicalization from websites towards private channels, including encrypted personal accounts and networks. Twitter used to be one of the main places for finding people related to the organization that promotes a certain ideology. Many women from Western countries get involved by meeting someone [generally another woman], by watching videos that glorify the organization.<sup>249</sup> This trend of communication and the new type of radicalization illustrates that decentralized networks are more resilient and effective than having on centralized organization. This was an approach proposed during the last sub-wave of the religious terrorism.

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<sup>249</sup> Interview with Teen ISSI recruiter by Crime Beat TV. Full Video Available at: Wives of ISIS at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pH9V1Ro7-OE>

Secondly, terrorist organizations are emerging as a solution to the problem that women are facing. And this applies to all the waves of terrorism, from anarchist terrorism with women were suffering together with the rest of the society, to the religious terrorism where women were often direct victims of war, abuse, or the system. As the former jihadi Tania Joya stated, “I believe that radical Islam will solve the cultural and sociological problem.”<sup>250</sup> At the same time, girls and women who were rape during wartime find a way out of the given label by joining an organization and blowing themselves up in the name of the ideology. Others were unsatisfied with the treatment of the specific group by the mainstream and again, organizations such as RAF, or BR were proposing social change with would reject the status quo.

Achievement emerges as a desire once other fundamental needs are satisfied, motivating individuals to find the purpose of their lives, to seek a higher goal, personal or for the community they belong. For example, bin Laden was looking for achievement when he established the pillars of al-Qaeda, or Dzennet, that perpetrated the attack as a quest for recognition as a heroine of her society, an act that symbolized loyalty to her husband and the ideology. Yet, an essential question emerges: Why would a rational individual decide to pursue the goals through acts of terror? The organization still operates with a rigid hierarchy, with strict rules that are linked to rights and obligations for those who are part of the movement. For example, in ISIS, male foreign fighters were promised wives who would raise their children according to the jihad, ensuring personal fulfilment and achievement of the ideological goal.

Finally, the process of deradicalization and disengagement often is different for women, compared to men. Research showed that the majority of women who once got radicalized can find a way to a successful and profound transformation of their values and patterns. For instance, Astrid Proll, the former member of the RAF, rebuilt her public appearance as well well-known photographer and author. While Tania Joya, a former member of ISIS and wife of one of the organization's leaders, today leads a counter-radicalization advocacy organization.

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with Tania Joya, a British American former jihadi and current counter-extremism activist, by Clarion Project. Full Video Available at: The Radicalization of Tania Joya - The Psychology of Terrorism at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIKv611cvko>

### 3.3 Concussions and Identification of the Gap

Roadway towards radicalization for women is different than the one that man goes through. They are exposed to different factors unique only for women that make them more vulnerable to radicalization. Perhaps, organizations, in the last period of time, realized that in order to be a step ahead of law enforcement organizations, they must mobilize women as the secret weapon of terrorism in the contemporary world. They [terrorist organizations] need women in all roles and levels, as logistic support, recruiters, operational leaders, wives, combatants, first line fighters, but in quantity as well. On the other hand, women have both personal and social need to join the organizations. Besides being triggered by an unfortunate event or trauma, often, women decide willingly to join the organization in order to fulfill a deeper need for self-actualization. At that moment, organizations are emerging in their lives as the solution for the problem they have, and the pathway to a violent organization is driven by the accessibility, problem-solving approach, and the achievement they would have by joining the terrorist organization.

In the existing literature, there is significantly less research and theory of voluntary radicalization driven by the need for self-actualization for women or purely ideological reasons. The reason for the research gap can be located in the fact that women often joined organizations hand in hand with a male cohort. This approach contributes to the general misconception that women's involvement, usually, is a result of male influence, rather than being driven by personal motives or ideology. That being said, the following chapter of the dissertation seeks to address the existing research gap by developing an original theory.

### 3.4 Problem and Hypothesis Statement

Regarding the second research question, the analysis indicated that a steep increase in women's involvement in terrorist organizations is a result of a multidimensional complex of factors that contribute to the outcome. On one hand, female participation is a result of the open gate from the leaders of the organization due to the urgent need for recruitment, as women emerge as a stealth weapon in terrorism. And on the other hand, women increase voluntariness involvement as a result of accessibility and attractiveness of the organization, as well as social and personal traumas driven by wars, abuse, occupation, and so forth.

However, the dissertation highlights the fact that women have always been present in political violence, but their presence has never been emphasized as significant for the ideology or

the common goal. That fact is proven by the amount of research and publications on the topic before and after 9/11, the amount of testimonies by women combatants, and the general approach by the organization's leaders.

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Chapter Four:

**THE PURPOSE-TO-PATHWAY THEORY  
OF RADICALIZATION**

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#### 4. Chapter Four: **THE PURPOSE-TO-PATHWAY THEORY OF RADICALIZATION**

The final chapter is the most essential, proposing a solution to the existing research gap and suggesting an original theory of radicalization based on the findings and the theoretical framework. This theory is based on all the cases analyzed in the dissertation, experiences shared by the former theories, and the extended literature noted below. Throughout the analysis, one of the central challenges was to find the answer to the question of why and how women are increasingly involved in terrorist organizations, which is not driven by mainstream literature. Therefore, the research develops its own standing based on the existing scholarship while extending toward a comprehensive extension based on psychosociological factors. Unquestionably, based on the previous chapters, terrorists are highly educated, economically stable, do not have mental disorders, and rarely have minor sociopathic traits. On top of that, both male and female terrorists almost always take responsibility for their actions. Even in extreme cases, such as suicide bombings, they [terrorists] were conscious of the action that they were taking, based on the testimonies of their family members and organization leaders. They accept the risk and the act, believing it to be the right decision at that moment, taking into consideration the circumstances around and their ideological conviction. Still, cases of forced participation or coercion are extremely rare, only in cases of kidnapping and detention of enemy combatants. That being said, at the moment of accepting the radicalization and their radical pathway, individuals perceive terrorist ideology or approach as suitable for fulfilling the unmet needs. On top of that, the organization's structure and strategies serve as a pipeline from position A to position B.

##### **4.1 Purpose-to-Pathway Theory: Radicalization as a method for fulfillment**

Purpose-to-Pathway Theory is an original theory developed throughout the research as a proposed solution to the existing research gap based on the analysis of case studies. The core of the theory is based on the Maslow pyramid, also known as the hierarchy of needs, which explains the motives for human behavior, or how and why people decide to take certain actions. The original theory was a set of five needs that are subdivided into three sections: *basic needs*, *psychological needs*, and *self-fulfillment needs*. According to the theory, radicalization is defined as a process through which an individual, group, or mass adopts radical and extremist beliefs as a direct consequence of unmet needs of a different level, which may result in developing a willingness to use violence to achieve a political, ideological, or religious goal, and ideology serves as justification for the actions. Terrorists cannot be framed in a profile, as an ideological group or

mess that is more likely to become one based on their background, but rather as a vulnerable category that is on the margin as a consequence of triggers, events, and unmet needs.

It's important to note that the hierarchy of needs and the hierarchy of roles within the organizations share common features. Individuals who got radicalized triggered by lower needs are in operational roles in the organizations, and as the trigger or need is greater or higher on the pyramid, the position in the hierarchy of the organization increases. In the majority of cases, if the individual aims to fulfill the self-actualization needs are more likely to emerge as leaders or founders of a radical or terrorist organization.

Firstly, in the war zones, countries under occupation or regime, basic needs often suffer. In the context of the theory, those needs include physiological needs like food and water, and safety needs, like security and safety. As people are making decisions from a position of seeking needs, when individuals live under conditions of extreme threat like danger, famine or torture, they are more likely to join a terrorist organization in order to find a solution for the status quo. At the same time, these organizations are in a favorable position, thanks to foreign financial support and a tight organizational structure, which provides them with what they need and justifies it by their ideology. People are accepting the ideology, meanwhile, developing a special mindset different from the mainstream, where the acts of the organization are defensive. For example, during the Syrian Civil War, the number of radicals increased that resulting in wide radicalization and recruitment from ISIS.

Secondly, individuals who already satisfy the basic needs or are in a comfortable position will seek identity, belonging, connections, or love, but also prestige and a sense of accomplishment. In the existing theory, according to Sageman, friends and family bonds come before any other ideological engagement. This type of radicalization mainly applies to individuals whose parents have emigrated to a foreign country, they weren't accepted by the remaining society, or failed to assimilate. As a consequence, they develop a binary mindset, which leads them to the adoption of the "Us vs Them" notion. In this category belong, also, those who hold different political opinions from the majority, such as far-left or far-right. Radicalization begins with individuals joining peers who share the same interests, opinions, and values in order to achieve the common goal. For instance, ETA and RAF fighters shared personal and group grievances, combined with a close link with former or active members of the organization, before indoctrination.

Thirdly, and the highest motives or factors contributing to the process of radicalization are the need for self-actualization fulfillment. One of the greatest examples in the history of terrorism is Osama bin Laden as a male figure who came from a privileged background, and got radicalized after the humiliation of his capacities, and the rejection of his proposal by the Saudi royal family. The same applied to Mara Cagol, who claimed that the system is taking her far from the utopian society, and society must go through a change. Or Mariam Farhat, who became known as the umma of Hamas, after publicly supporting her son's involvement in violent acts against Israel.

On the other hand, once the individual acknowledges their unmet need, the reasons and factors, they seek to take action in order to change their current status and sociological position. That being said, the Purpose-to-Pathway Theory aims to answer the second raised question: *how individuals become terrorists*. In compliance with the findings, the process of radicalization is based on the methods that organizations are using in order to recruit new members. The three-S model is based on *strategy, support, and structure*, where organizations use the current mental, psychological, and sociological positions of individuals that seek fulfillment of unmet needs.

Terrorist organizations actively supply the missing needs, whether it's food, water, protection, emotional belonging, affirmation or recognition. They fill the gap that triggered radical openness. On the basic need with food and shelter in survival zones, emotional validation and peer bonding at the psychological need, and glorification of the acts as heroic or divine at self-fulfillment needs. The first S stands for *strategy*, and is tightly linked with the organization's public appearance, especially after a triggering moment or event that challenges the existing norms. At the same time, reframing personal or group aspirations as a shared mission, proposing a certain radical pathway towards the goal. They also provide examples of charismatic leaders that serve as role models for the new members or giving them a sense of belonging and understanding. Women, especially, are looking for peer connection and belonging. Nowadays, the internet, as the largest platform for radicalization, helps, on one hand, recruiters to appear immediately as a link-man to the organization, and on the other hand, individuals to find the most suitable ideology for their radical stance. The second element, support, directly influences the trigger that leads to radicalization, either as a supply for the basic needs, or at its higher level by giving a relevant and applicable plan for achievement, supported by an ideology that is aligned with the

struggle. Lastly, the rigid structure that all the organizations have offers a guarantee for achievement. Unlike the uncertain social paths, each duty and task is linked to an award, material or spiritual, driven by ideological beliefs. For instance, women who join ISIS were promised Allah's mercy and economic stability provided by their husbands, who must do so according to the Sheri'a. In contrast, ISIS offers wives and sexual slaves to the foreign fighters in order to achieve the goals of the jihad.

#### **4.2 Criticism: External Perspectives on the Proposed Theory**

The following section is dedicated to critics of the theory developed by the dissertation. In order to evaluate the applicability of the theory developed in this chapter, the research included comments from experts to review and comment on the framework and its suitability. Their contributions represent diverse perspectives and offer constructive criticism, considering the broader field they come from. Professor Dragana Batic is a Doctor of Psychological Science and a professor at the Faculty of Security, with expertise in Psychology of Criminal Behavior, Psychology of Communications, and Intelligence Analysis; also, she specializes in Forensic Psychopathology. Her expertise extends to restorative practices, resocialization, and rehabilitative interventions in custody, with a focus on women. Professor Dr. Corentin Sire is a Doctor of Criminology and History at the Universities of Montreal and Caen. He is also a graduate of Sciences Po Bordeaux and Cardiff University. His research interests belong to the field of critical terrorism studies, in which his main focus is counterterrorism cooperation, questioned from historical and conceptual perspectives. Currently working as a lecturer at European School of Political and Social Science in Lille, France in the field of Terrorism and Counterterrorism.

##### *4.2.1 Professor Dr. Dragana Batic*

The master's thesis deals with an unusual phenomenon that is poorly studied in criminology, sociology and psychology, which is the role of women in terrorist organizations, with an emphasis on their motivation for participating in the organization and execution of terrorist attacks. It starts from the fact that in recent decades, the number of women has been growing, for whom there is an opinion that they are more victims than perpetrators and that they are mainly influenced by men, especially those close to them. The author starts from the position that women have always been present in terrorist organizations, they have just not been exposed and that the opinion that they are engaged only as suicide bombers is far from the truth. On the contrary, they play an ac-

tive role, get involved consciously, take responsibility for what they do, believe in the ideology of the organization and are its significant part.

In order to fill the gap in research on women in terrorist organizations, the author offers her own theory called The Purpose-to Pathway Theory of Radicalisation which attempts to explain women's participation, through the theory of the hierarchy of needs of psychologist Maslow, using case studies of famous female members, from different historical periods of terrorism. Organizations use women as a hidden tool, are more open to accepting them as equal participants and even as leaders of the organization. Based on the research, the author comes to the conclusion that women are more vulnerable to radicalization, it is more accessible to them because of the Internet, and they also look up to charismatic female leaders. The radicalization of women is observed as a result of several aspects; social factors, personal traumas, growing up in a military environment, abuse, exposure to losses of close people... The finding is that terrorists in general, including women, are educated, economically stable, do not have mental disorders and have weak psychopathic traits.

In the proposed theory, motivation takes a central place, i.e. finding the meaning of life in terrorist activities, which is justified by the adopted ideology. Terrorist ideology fosters an approach to satisfying the unmet needs of the individual at different levels: not only basic needs, but also the need for self-actualization: glorifying deeds as divine and heroic. Organizations offer a structure that is more organized and more feasible than unorganized society. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the role of the organization corresponds to the hierarchy of needs of the individual. If a person's basic needs are not satisfied, he/she is at a lower level in the organization's hierarchy, and vice versa, those who are at a higher level of the hierarchy satisfy the need for self-actualization. Based on the theory, the recommendations given are applicable and would act preventively in any society. If society made an effort to satisfy unmet needs, especially among vulnerable groups, there would be a greater likelihood that they would not radicalize in search of their satisfaction.

In my opinion, the Theory of Radicalization's purpose-to-pathway theory is based on psychological motivation as crucial for radicalization, and does not neglect social and family circumstances. This suggests that the author recognizes that only through intercorrelation between all these factors can the question she herself poses, perhaps be answered approximately: "Why

would a rational person achieve their goals through acts of terror"? Including the readiness for aggressive action and the role of aggression might provide a more complete answer to this question. I believe that in the future, research on this aspect of terrorism will be of crucial importance for its explanation, especially among women.

The case studies in the master's thesis are based on literature that uses data obtained from close people who knew the women terrorists well, interviews with them, and biographical data. This is not surprising given that women involved in terrorism themselves are difficult to reach, and it is generally known that the deradicalization process is difficult because they do not want to give up their views and values and are not ready to talk to someone from the outside. The theory would be better supported by qualitative research that would include at least a few of the women participants in terrorist organizations. Also, interviews with professionals who have been in contact with them (psychologists, psychiatrists, prison staff) would contribute to supporting the theory. It is recommended that this solid theory be tested in the future by both the author and other interested researchers.

#### 4.2.2 Dr. Corentin Sire

This work is very rich and dense in terms of empirical case studies and comparative research, which deserves to be lauded. But as my task here is one of scientific *critique* (which is not about *criticism*, but rather about feeding the intellectual debate), then I shall instead focus on the disagreements to which my own approach to “terrorism” may lead. These are not to be understood as “shortcomings” in this research work, but rather as differences in terms of scientific language: in that, I hope that this short review may also be useful to suggest additional elements or perspectives that could complement (but not invalidate) the questions at stake.

In accordance with the now well-established field of *Critical terrorism studies*, I am very critical towards the concept of “terrorism<sup>251</sup>”. Not only is the concept still undefinable in a universal and fully consensual way<sup>252</sup>, but the label is also highly polemical and politically charged,

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<sup>251</sup> Jackson Richard, Breen-Smyth Marie et Gunning Jeroen, 2009, « Critical Terrorism Studies – Framing a New Research Agenda », *Critical Terrorism Studies – A New Research Agenda*, R. Jackson, M. Breen-Smyth et J. Gunning éd., London ; New York, Routledge, p. 216-236.

<sup>252</sup> Surely, abstract definitions of what “terrorism” is do exist and are rather common in positivist terrorism studies. But they do not tell us who, in practice, will have to be studied or combatted as “terrorists” – or rather, the broadness of such scientific definition cannot explain in return the usual selectiveness and partiality in the application of the label “terrorist”.

so that any review of its history can only lead to the conclusion that “one (wo)man’s terrorist is another (wo)man’s freedom fighter” – a claim still largely perceived as heresy within the field of traditional terrorism studies, even though historical cases of the French resistance, of the South African anti-apartheid movement, or of anticolonial movements (among so many other examples), have all been framed as “terrorists” despite the fact that the legitimacy of their cause is now largely acknowledged in most histories<sup>253</sup>. From that, it follows that “terrorism” can, in my opinion, hardly be studied as a brute and objective fact, but rather as a social construct<sup>254</sup>. Surely, the violence usually called “terrorism” deserves to be studied, and its gravity should not be denied – but the concept of “terrorism” is a political rather than scientific concept, which does not add much to our understanding of the issue, and rather brings additional confusion.

The consequence here is that any notion of “female terrorist” is doomed to be equally ambiguous as the concept of “terrorism” itself, and depending on how it is defined, the idea of an increase in the phenomenon can be discussed. Here, the all-encompassing aspect of the concept of terrorism may blur the topic: can we really compare groups which are guided by misogynistic ideas, with those who instead promote a progressive conception of feminism and gender? Apart from the (again, partial and debatable) application of the label “terrorist” to these groups, what do they have in common? Hence, can they really be compared if the aim is to understand how women evolve within radical militant groups? The same conclusion follows for the concept of radicalization: depending on how it is defined (as well as the related concepts of extremism, radicalism and terrorism), what radicalization is or not can be debated – in particular when it comes to determining the balance between its two core aspects, violence and ideology (is that ideological radicality, or the propensity to resort to radical acts, which makes someone “radical?”)<sup>255</sup>.

With these elements in mind, I cannot really take position toward the present theory in traditional terms (I cannot “invalidate” it, in a positivist fashion) because, again, we do not speak the same language. On its own positivist terms, this theory sounds very coherent and useful – but as a postpositivist, I am not the most qualified terrorism researcher to judge it.

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<sup>253</sup> Ditrych Ondrej, 2014, *Tracing the Discourses of Terrorism: Identity, Genealogy and State*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Erlenbusch-Anderson Verena, 2018, *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire*, New York, Columbia University Press.

<sup>254</sup> Benigno Francesco, 2017, *Words in Time: A Plea for Historical Re-thinking*, Londres, Taylor & Francis.

Staub Jørgen, 2009, *A Linguistic Turn of Terrorism Studies*, Danish Institute for International Studies.

<sup>255</sup> Neumann Peter R., 2013, « The trouble with radicalization », *International Affairs*, vol. 89, n° 4, p. 873-893.

From a critical and postpositivist perspective, however, the question of “women as terrorists” deserves attention not so much as a tangible phenomenon, but rather as a discourse: where does the idea of female terrorism come from, and what does it tell us about dominant conceptions of terrorism and of gender? Thus, it is interesting to note that almost the same patterns have been observed in discourses regarding the women who joined radical anarchist movements at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in recent discourses about women who joined ISIS<sup>256</sup>: their tendency to resort to violence is perceived through gendered lenses (either as something all the more so heroic since they are women – from their partisans’ perspective – or as something all the more despicable since they are women – from their opponents’ perspective), while their engagement is depoliticized (women would be naïve, manipulated, in love, etc. – in short, deprived of any kind of political agency). To put it differently: in most discourses, the topic of “women terrorists” is considered shocking because it is perceived as a contradiction in terms – either these women would not truly be terrorists (the real “terrorist” being the man who manipulated them) or they would not truly be women (since the monstrosity of their “terrorism” would be incompatible with the prevailing patriarchal conception of femininity). In all cases, women are, again, deprived of their political agency.

Taken as a discourse, the issue of “female terrorism” is indeed far from new, and is remarkably stable. With this in mind, it may lead to a discussion regarding the sources used in this thesis: who is at the origin of the discourses or reports about the various cases of female terrorism that have been studied here? Are these primary sources really free from these usual gendered biases when it comes to the topic of female terrorism? And if not, then can the topic really be studied without primarily having a critical discussion about how reports on female violence are produced?

Besides, and still in coherence with my critical-conceptual approach, the “four waves model” is, I think, problematic. Surely, Rapoport’s model is largely dominant in traditional ter-

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<sup>256</sup> Boutron Camille, 2020, *Les récits médiatiques du terrorisme au féminin - Le cas du « Commando de Notre-Dame »*, Note de recherche, IRSEM.

Hilbrenner Anke, 2016, « The Perovskaia Paradox or the Scandal of Female Terrorism in Nineteenth Century Russia », *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*. *Pipss.org*, vol. , n° Issue 17.

Siljak Ana, 2022, « “The Beauteous Terrorist”: Russian Women and Terrorism in Literature at the Turn of the Century », *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Terrorism*, C. Dietze et C. Verhoeven éd., Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 275-291.

rorism studies; yet its partiality and its western-centrism have been criticised<sup>257</sup>. The consequence of using it as a historical framework for building the present theory, is that it perpetuates the same biases. In particular, state violence or far-right violence, whose “terrorist” nature has also been discussed, risk being left aside. Regarding far-right violence, this is quite an issue: the risk is to overlook the equally important topic of women as *victims* of terrorism – not as victims like any other victim, but as victims *precisely because of their status of women*<sup>258</sup>. If the obvious increase in Incel violence is included in the definition of terrorism, then it may seriously challenge the initial hypothesis of an increase in the place of women in terrorist organisations.

This all bring us back to the initial question: what is “terrorism”? In my opinion, the concept cannot be otherwise but flawed, and the problem of using it is that any theory based on this concept will be elaborated on the ground of inevitably debatable definitions (of terrorism, but also of radicalization and of the notion of “female terrorism”, with the question of where the line stops – are sexual slaves, returning mothers from ISIS, those relegated to subaltern and purely nonviolent everyday tasks, also to be studied as “terrorists” since they are part of a group deemed “terrorist”?).

That being said, it must be emphasized that including the idea of “women as terrorists” in the study of terrorism is nonetheless of interest: it can help avoiding the usual denial of gender in traditional approaches to terrorism, which is a serious blind-spot if a phenomenon such as “terrorism” is to be efficiently combated while respecting basic human rights and democratic norms<sup>259</sup>. But it may also have ambivalent consequences: just like the label of “terrorism” has the usual consequence of depoliticizing and homogenizing a variety of political causes which, for

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<sup>257</sup> Khan Rabea M., 2023, « The coloniality of the religious terrorism thesis », *Review of International Studies*, p. 1-20.

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<sup>258</sup> Gentry Caron E., 2015, « Epistemological failures: everyday terrorism in the West », *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, vol. 8, n° 3, p. 362-382.

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<sup>259</sup> Gentry Caron E., 2020, *Disordered Violence: How Gender, Race and Heteronormativity Structure Terrorism*, 1st edition. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Jacques Karen et Taylor Paul J., 2009, « Female Terrorism: A Review », *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 21, n° 3, p. 499-515.

some, would have deserved to be discussed (that is: *politically* discussed and debated, rather than being reduced to a simple set of criminal and barbaric acts), here a theory of women's terrorist engagement may also have the drawback of depoliticizing, once again, feminine activism, hence denying women's ability to act as political actors.

Again, these elements do not discard the (very interesting) theory at stake here: simply, these are, I think, important aspects to be kept in mind and discussed in any research that tackles the ambiguous notion of "women terrorists". Thank you for this work, which, I hope, will contribute to stimulating this much-needed consideration of gender in mainstream terrorism studies.

#### **4.3 Policy Recommendations: An Extension of the Purpose-to-Pathway Theory**

Despite the developed theory, the research proposes policy recommendations that may appear as an extended version of the prevention and de-radicalization programs. On top of that, they are not gender exclusive; therefore, they are applicable to both women and men involved in radical organizations and political violence. Radicalization is not only the process that leads to terrorism in which innocent victims are suffering, but also the system as a whole, society, and shared values, including human rights. Especially if systematic aggression is allowed by the governing system, the population tends to divide and go to its extremes, resulting in mass bloodshed. Therefore, the following section suggests a series of policy recommendations for the prevention of radicalization and de-radicalization programs for former radical fighters.

For clarification, people tend to choose what appears to be easier or closer to their personal values. Not all the people who cannot meet their needs will get radicalized, and vice versa. However, as the bathtub theory explains, the threshold for taking action that leads towards radicalization is different for one individual from another. Triggers contribute to the "water" levels, and factors such as social cohesion and belonging, inclusion, economic stability, social support, and effective prevention increase the level of threshold. The cost of terrorism will always be higher than the cost of developing prevention programs by the national and international community.

1. Terrorism and radicalization should no longer be perceived as the greatest threat in the contemporary world. Instead, by fostering open discussion on how to identify or acknowledge early signs of radicalization and the techniques that organizations are using

to exploit individuals' personal traumas and struggles for the purpose of the organization. prevention of violent radicalization is far more effective when addressed in its early stages. Therefore, national prevention policies for radicalization and extremism should be shaped according to the pragmatic status of society, irrespective of religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, or race. Research shows that educating the public on such a sensitive topic is the most effective and efficient form of prevention. Society must be a network of people that will prevent any kind of harmful behavior towards others.

2. The second recommendation, in the spirit of the first one, is an early warning system for the detection of potential radicalization of marginalized groups of sensitive individuals. In practice, terrorist leaders are invested in responding to the needs of the streets, individuals, or communities, often emerging after a traumatic moment or potential trigger for radicalization. If a small plot of radicals with similar ideology occurs, the organization will respond with a solution for the reasoning of cognitive opening to a certain ideology, or an isolated incident. According to Silber, those people emerge as a “fixer”, someone who knows someone who can get you into a terrorist organization. The early warning system will not only detect those people as potential radicals, by giving an alternative solution will make terrorism less attractive as a solution to their problems. By focusing on building a healthy environment and providing alternatives, the system will encourage people to take into consideration life outside of that ideology. This practice is similar to the European early warning system for pedophiles and sex offenders.
3. Thirdly, the world currently lacks a unified system of prevention for radicalization, a system that will ensure that all countries are on the same page when it comes to preventing political violence and terrorism. The network, Global Radicalization Awareness Network (GRAN), would be based on multi-agency coordination, including various sectors such as governmental bodies, law enforcement, civil society, and local communities. Moreover, this approach could improve the inclusion of affected stakeholders at all levels, meanwhile ensuring that resources, expertise, and necessary information are shared. The action under the umbrella of the GRAN system would be framed in the concept of answering challenges, from addressing radicalization in prisons as a sub-hub of radicalization to a system of finding alternatives, such as jobs and hobbies for the people that went through cognitive radicalization.

4. The third recommendation is precisely oriented to women's radicalization during wartime and afterward, stressing the importance of women's empowerment. Although International organizations and non-governmental organizations are providing various training and offering post-war support services for women affected by conflicts, current commitments were not enough. Efforts should be incorporated at the national level, by collaboration among governments, and civil society, and institutions to build national frameworks to create safer environments for women to promote their rights. By recognizing women's rights as the core of the programs of the national and regional agenda, the status would be improved immediately. In simple words, women's empowerment is a mechanism for promoting equal rights, especially in building social and political decision-making processes, and therefore avoiding radicalization. As proposed by Marta Verginella, a scholar from the University of Ljubljana, women should include and participate as "cross-boundary" mediators. When political tensions between countries are high and frontiers are not yet outlined, women shall take the role of mediators.
5. Due to the increasing online radicalization, the fifth recommendation suggests making the Internet a safer place and regulating and limiting the materials available. As the dissertation has already emphasized, the Internet and online platforms have become one of the main objectives for radicalization. Before strengthening regulations, people should increase their personal awareness of the importance of social media and its presence. As Silber and Bhatt emphasize, the internet today is the hub for radicalization, on one hand as a tool for direct access to jihadi documents and on the other hand as a place for meeting new people. In the case of female terrorism, they often use the internet as a tool to challenge the masculinity of men, by provoking that they are not manly enough to join the jihadi movement, often based on social gender norms.
6. National policy makers must recognize grievances that drive women and men to join extremist groups, such as a lack of social inclusion, political involvement, economic opportunity, and post-traumatic rehabilitation. If countries started to invest in the prevention of emerging triggers, they would lower the possibility of emerging radicalization. Studies show that women are more likely to join a radical organization if a member of their family or a close friend is participating in one, compared to men. However, countries underestimate women's contribution, both when it is considered as supportive [passive] or com-

bating [active], which leads to an increase. In contrast, if policymakers regulate women's status, contribution, and performance within a legal framework, the regulation will act as a preventive mechanism.

7. De-radicalization programs should be based on an interdisciplinary approach, where former radicals will work on building new patterns in multiple segments of their life. The isolation and pure imprisonment will not, for certain, give the expected outcome. For instance, the lessons from the de-radicalization program in Sri Lanka could significantly contribute to developing national de-radicalization programs worldwide. The program is not only a lesson on deradicalization, but rather a long-term process of building new personal and group value systems, habits, and routines that will higher the threshold of resistance to triggers.
8. Eight recommendations are to focus on encouraging society to build a network [peer rehabilitation] of support and belonging for former radicals and extremist activists. The program will leverage community engagement and develop a new healthy environment, which will focus on inclusion and mutual support. The networks include activities such as sports, group activities, hobbies, and peer mental support, fostering positive social bonds. For the individuals, in order to pursue stable, constructive and balanced lives it is essential to develop a new sense of belonging and strengthen the current motivation
9. Last but not least, reintegration into society must be taken on an institutional level. Individuals should be equipped with practical skills that enable them to meet the needs they suffer from and adapt to the new environment. Especially foreign fighters are struggling to find a stable job and income after years at the battlefield and imprisonment, which leads them to the margins of society again. Isolation of any kind must be avoided by any cost, as it increases the likelihood of relapse into violent behavior by facing the same trauma again. Comprehensive programs should include experts from different fields such as psychologists, educators, social workers, NLP trainers, and theologians.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The starting point for this dissertation was the rapid increase of women's involvement in terrorist organizations and political violence, which raised two questions established as the research questions of the dissertation. Therefore, the findings and conclusions of the research are closely related to the motives of the observation, and are divided into sections as the dissertation is divided into chapters. Chapter 1 is not sufficient to answer both research questions of the dissertation. At most, it provides only the core for the answer to the second question, titled "Why and how are women increasingly involved in terrorist organizations?" The main problem lies primarily in the obvious research gap and the need for explanatory extension. Women were excluded from the representative samples while developing theories of radicalization, or they were undermined as less important due to their evident lower participation compared to that of male cohorts. For instance, the problem also extends to the legal level. Through a brief analysis of legal frameworks of the developed countries around the world, the dissertation concludes that main pathways through which women started the radicalization are not incriminated. Is not a crime to marry a terrorist, but it is a crime to marry terrorism. However, marriage is one of the main reasons for the radicalization of women during the fourth wave. Mainly women from Western Europe or North America who became radicalized or engaged in any type of act of political violence and terrorism were married to a terrorist. Those practices were evident during the ISIS era. During the third wave, women were the faces of terrorism. As Mia Bloom argues, when observing the profiles of women responsible for the bloodiest massacres of that part of history, one would not assume they had any relations with violence. Those women were perceived as attractive and charismatic, using those features to spread ideology and recruit new members. In the time of the second wave, such discussions were rare, particularly considering that in many countries, human rights and women's rights were not yet recognized as equal

Chapter 2 shows how the most notable terrorist organization in the last century developed strategies for the recruitment of female fighters and the roles that women played within that organization. Unquestionably, women in all observed terrorist organizations hold diverse and significant roles beyond suicide bombers. During the third wave of terrorism, it was typical that women appeared mainly in the leadership positions, yet their participation was often less present in a quantitative sense. In other words, they were represented in quantity, but not in terms of numbers. However, this trend has shifted in the last few decades. Not only that the number of

women increased, but so too has the diversity of their roles. Paradoxically, the religious terrorist organizations publicly obscure women's roles, while internally promoting the recruitment process as essential for the global jihad. At the very beginning, women become involved in violent extremism as either a direct influence of an ideology they personally had adopted or indoctrinated by a close relative. For example, the case of Maria Dolores from ETA. On the other hand, nowadays, women become involved in violent extremism as a consequence of external triggers, sometimes even events against their will, often resulting with suicide bombings. There is a wide discussion of the women from Western countries who joined ISIS regarding the motives or consensus to be part of the organization; their lawyers claim they were forced to stay. Nevertheless, numerous testimonies from girls and women belonging to the Yazidi ethnic group reveal that they were far more frequently victims of jihadists' wives, taken as sexual slaves in Iraq and Syria. They were predominantly abused, exploited for home labor, and subjected to daily violence. Those testimonies partially challenge the narratives portraying women who traveled to ISIS as either entirely innocent or as unaware of the organization's mission. For example, the case of the American woman, Sam, who claimed to have no involvement in the activities in Iraq, was sentenced in the United States. However, her family, also including her ten-year-old son, who was present with her at that time and a direct witness to her involvement, stated the opposite.

Chapter 3 focuses on the second research question. The analysis indicated that a steep increase in women's involvement in terrorist organizations is a result of a multidimensional complex of factors that contribute to the outcome. On one hand, female participation is a result of the open gate from the leaders of the organization due to the urgent need for recruitment, as women emerge as a stealth weapon in terrorism. And on the other hand, women increase voluntariness involvement as a result of accessibility and attractiveness of the organization, as well as social and personal traumas driven by wars, abuse, occupation, and so forth. However, the dissertation highlights the fact that women have always been present in political violence, but their presence has never been emphasized as significant for the ideology or the common goal. That fact is proven by the amount of research and publications on the topic before and after 9/11, the amount of testimonies by women combatants, and the general approach by the organization's leaders.

In the last chapter of the research, the dissertation illustrated an alternative approach to the process of radicalization by establishing an original theory titled *Purpose-to Pathway theory*.

At the core of the theory is Maslow's hierarchy of needs in order to explain how unmet needs at different stages and levels lead the individual toward radicalization and extremism. Radicalization is framed broadly and is not a result of a fixed profile of potential or former terrorist, but rather as a process that emerged from vulnerability, traumas, external and internal triggers, and social exclusion.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"We will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights."*

*Kofi Annan (former UN Secretary-General)*

The research on modern terrorism began as curiosity on how and why modern terrorism is shaped today, and which factors contributed to the development of the phenomenon, with a special focus on the role of women within the terrorist organizations. Based on the initial research and the existing literature, two main questions arise: *What role are women playing within the terrorist organizations? How and why are women increasingly involved in terrorist organizations?* Since the notion is complex, this dissertation has been divided into four chapters, dedicated to different spheres of the topic. Therefore, the first chapter presents a historical overview that will lay the groundwork for understanding the pillars of modern terrorism, thereby providing necessary information related to the factors that contribute to the increase in women's participation. The second chapter was dedicated to the first research question, analyzing different organizations and case studies from a different period of history, including first-hand sources and testimonies. Those findings are later used in all chapters as starting points for the conclusions and the development of theory. On the other hand, chapter three investigates the relationship between women and terrorism, using a cross-examination of the factors. On one side, why do terrorist organizations, suddenly and increasingly, need women, and why are women motivated to join terrorist organizations? Yet, the question of radicalization is incomplete without considering the pathway women are going through; therefore, a subsection investigates the radicalization process in isolation. The fourth chapter serves as the conclusion of the research and an answer to the observed research gap, proposing and developing an original theory, entitled "The Purpose-to-Pathway Theory". Theory is developed on a comprehensive analysis and long-term observation of the phenomenon, using primary and secondary sources from the field.

Starting from the beginning of the dissertation, as anticipated, Chapter 1 analyzed the four waves of terrorism, in a chronological order from the mid-1800s until recent years. Chapter one is mainly based on the David Repoport book "*Waves of Global Terrorism*" published in 2022, an extraordinary contribution to the research on terrorism and political violence. As the author divided modern terrorism into four sections, this dissertation does too. At the same time,

extending the research on the relevant question by a historical overview of the significant organizations, structures, and strategies developed throughout history. The first wave, also known as anarchist terrorism, emerged as a reaction to the Russian modernization program and centralization of power in a tiny group of people. The revolt and terror, in the blink of an eye, spread around the globe. Many royal families, heads, governors, and bourgeoisies suffered as a result of the anarchist movements. Organizations exchanged knowledge and equipment with one another, sharing the same ideological goal. This wasn't the case during the second wave, which emerged as a result of colonial and post-colonial liberation movements. Many countries under occupation or colonial power unify their national human efforts of liberation using violence as a mechanism for liberation. The enemy shifts from a selected group of people to a larger population, when the organizations realize that they no longer need to attack in person in power, but rather an individual or group, sometimes even an institution, that is representing the enemy, yet with the same effectiveness. During the third wave, politics and political ideology played the most crucial role. During the period of the Cold War, left-wing terrorism in the developed countries rose quickly and significantly. Organizations were developed in close ties with the student movements or resistance movements, especially around the famous 1968. For the first time in history organization started to use irregular means of terrorism, including small-scale crimes, sabotage, violence against civilians, hostages, and so forth. Without a doubt, religious terrorism and the most developed type of terrorism, the largest in size, with it comes in single organizations and the number of fighters, including women, in passive and active roles, as well as the number of casualties. Moreover, in literature, the fourth wave is often divided into sub-waves of global jihad that illustrate each phase by its own features.

Second chapter, throughout case-studies, illustrated the role of women in the most notable organizations, presenting insightful information regarding the process of radicalization, indoctrination, and de-radicalization, if happened. The core aim of the second chapter was to attempt to provide an answer to the first research question and to establish knowledge for the following analysis. In order to do so, dissertation observed multiple organizations and individuals, ranging from ETA to ISIS. To clarify, women, indeed, participate in terrorism, political violence and violent extremism even before the emergence of the analyzed cases. However, due to lack of scientific, qualitative and quantitative evidence, the dissertation avoided to include in the case-studies section. In the existing literature, scholars, often, are diving the women's involvement in

two periods: qualitative period – mainly in the first three waves, where women emerge as leaders or ideologies of the organizations; quantitative period – from the last decade of the left-wing terrorism up until now. In fact, during the last three decades women have been active in multidimensional roles, much more often as direct perpetrators of terrorist acts, and in a larger number. For instance, as rarely known fact, according to P. Bergen's research of family journals and declassified information in his book "The Rise and Fall of Osama bin Laden", al-Qaeda and its leader heavily relied on the intellectual and linguistic skills of his educated wives. In quantitative sense, BW is the unit with one of the highest number of women as members in the organization, but also highest number of women combats. In a chronological order, ETA was one of the first groups that publicly announce women as a leader. Maria Dolores Gonzales, dedicated her life after a personal trigger to the organization, suppressing her male cohorts in all levels of ranking during her camp in South of France, which result in gaining respect and dignity among the members. On the other hand, Maria Soledad, was exposed to radical ideology from her early age, due to family involved in ETA. Her radicalization process was a consequence of early indoctrination and violent opening after the loss of her boyfriend Jose Manuel.

On the contrary, the majority of the female members of RAF, consciously and willingly accept the ideology, including the top-tier leader such as Ulrike Mainhof and Gudrun Ensslin. Due to the ideology of the organization, women were portrayed as equal, internally and externally, especially due to their significant contribution in Ulrike Mainhof and Gudrun Ensslin developing the ideological framework and establishment of the pillars of the group. Moreover, Ulrike Mainhof and Gudrun Ensslin wrote the manifesto of the organization and were in charge of recruitment and strategical development of the group. On the other hand, Astrid Proll, one of the most notable members of the RAF, fell in radicalization as a result of slippery slope radicalization. Indeed, she was aware of the ideology, strategy, actions and approach of the organization, perhaps cognitively radicalized, but the turning point for her involvement was the lift she gave to a peer during an escape from the police. Regarding BR, women participate in qualitative and quantitative sense, especially after the death of Mara Cagol. On the other hand, women started increasingly to self-identify as terrorist, look at the figure of Mara Cagol as role model for resistance. Another crucial feature of female member of BR was the brutality and non-negotiable manners of perpetrating the attacks, which was also a personal characteristic for Barbara Belzerani. In the second half of the 70s, LTTE begun the open call for female recruitments, stressing

the importance of standing by the national interest, and the loss of life for the liberation is a personal heroic award. Furthermore, the LTTE is the founder of the chameleon strategy, also known as the blending in approach. Strategy is based on the idea that the attackers should look like the victims, or as close as possible; therefore, they will be harder to detect by the law enforcement institutions. For instance, Thenmozhi used the same strategy in the suicide attack that she carried out, killing fourteen people, including herself. Alongside others, Hamas is one of the first organizations that based its ideology closely related to Sharia law, and the implementation of it. Justification and glorification of the jihad was set as core principle for the organization, and promoted by its members. The most well-known, Mariam Farhat, often called umma, publicly supports the actions of her sons in perpetrating bloody attacks in Israel. She proudly glorifies the means, which significantly contribute to shaping the public opinion on ideal role model of women in religious terrorist organizations. Without a doubt, Aafia Siddiqui reshaped the perception on al-Qaeda due to her master mind logistical and financial support for the group. However, al-Qaeda as an organization deserves a separate section for how much they [al-Qaeda] contribute to the increase of female participants. They were the first organization that used internet to promote radicalization to women in an attractive way, by websites and forms specially dedicated for women, but at the same time, to use women as recruiters for male fighters, challenging the social norms. Those patterns were also, later used by ISIS in 2014. On top of all those diverse roles, women emerged as suicide bombers as well. Black Widows unit is a complex combination of revenge and ideology, knowing that women who joined the organization and died for it, were motivated by the loss of husband, brother or father, yet, support the broader ideology that organization promoted. Women contribute as half of the members who carried out the siege of Dubrovka theater, 2003, all of them on ready to blow themselves up wearing explosive belts. However, the organization knew that a singular perpetrated attack, only by women, would attract more public attention, resulting in a faster spread of fear and terror to the wider public. Therefore, in 2010, Dzenet and Mariam carried out Moscow subway attack killing more than forty people and injuring dozens more. Last but definitely not least, ISIS changed the trajectory of women involved as a whole. Thousands of women flee to Raqqa to join their families, that results in a high number of women rapidly radicalized and indoctrinated. They [ISIS] used women from logistical support to ideological educators for the next generation of jihadists. Political opinions and legal regulations on the matter are diverse. Is not a crime to marry a jihadist, but it is a crime

to ‘marry’ jihad, or to dedicate your life to the ideology. This results in an open gap concerning how women's participation in ISIS should be treated after returning to the homeland. A remarkable example is the case of Samantha Sam Sally, an American who currently claims innocence regarding her role in ISIS, despite her family, including her underage son who was in ISIS, doubting the credibility of her testimony.

Chapter three is dedicated to the second research question based on the findings from the previous two chapters and the provided literature. The reason for the increase in female participation is due to the combination of the need of organization to recruit women and the women’s need to join a terrorist organization. The reasons behind the shift in opinion of the organizations to recruit more women is due to the fact that women in terrorist organizations can be considered as the future for operational and symbolic success. Firstly, women are *harder to trace* or *less detectable* as potential threats, which enables them to approach targets closely. Secondly, their participation *significantly contributes to the fighters' deficiency* within the organizations, both in a passive and active sense, and quality and quantity. Thirdly, media coverage is higher when women execute attacks, and the dissemination of fear is amplified rapidly. Fourthly, women have *gender-specific skills* and opportunities that men do not have, rooted in women’s nature and social norms, allowing them to exploit these roles in the name of the ideology. Last but definitely not least, women have a more salient influence on society for both women and men. Women involved in recruitment provide a base for self-identification for other women, while changing the men and social roles, thereby magnifying the impact of their actions. On the other hand, besides women being radicalized as a direct consequence of male factors, as Mia Bloom explains, relationship, revenge, redemption, respect, and rape, women showed interest in political violence, voluntarily was well. This trend is present nowadays during the fourth wave, when female involvement reached its highest peak; women consciously get involved. For instance, based on the interview with Samantha’s family, she was fully aware of the reasons behind the apparent trip to Turkey with her husband and children, and she did it on purpose. Unquestionably, during the third wave, the majority of women participating in terrorist organizations confirmed, throughout testimonies and interviews, that they believed in the ideology and they were willing to contribute to achieving the goal of the organization. Regarding to the sub-question of how women are getting more radicalized, the dissertation illustrated common patterns that describe the pathway toward radicalization and terrorism. Based on the findings, the pathway through which women be-

come involved in terrorism can be explained by three factors: *accessibility* to radical ideology, *problem-solving mindset* proposed by organizations, and personal and social *achievement* as a final goal. With the shift towards decentralization of radicalization and the emergence of the new hub, the virtual space, exposure to radical ideology becomes more accessible. The radicals no longer need to travel to a foreign country in order to receive training; today, that is available from the comfort of their homes, especially women. Online magazine and website, dedicated to women jihadists, significantly contribute to the increase in the trend. Moreover, the proposed approach by the organizations, so-called problem solving, at first glance, according to women, is all they need. Problem-solving mindset gives opportunity to women to begin a new life, thereby, as the trauma is bigger, the commitment is deeper. On top of that, women have to justify their willingness and glorify the ideology by the proposed achievement, personal or group.

Last of four, the fourth chapter is the most significant part of this dissertation, as it proposes a solution for the existing research gap regarding the process of radicalization. Throughout the analysis, one of the central challenges was to find the answer to the question of why and how women are increasingly involved in terrorist organizations, which is not driven by mainstream literature. Therefore, the research develops its own standing based on the existing scholarship while extending toward a comprehensive extension based on psychosociological factors. Without a doubt, based on the previous chapters, terrorists are highly educated, economically stable, do not have mental disorders, and rarely have minor sociopathic traits. On top of that, both male and female terrorists almost always take responsibility for their actions. Even in extreme cases, such as suicide bombings, they [terrorists] were conscious of the action that they were taking, based on the testimonies of their family members and organization leaders. They accept the risk and the act, believing it to be the right decision at that moment, taking into consideration the circumstances around and their ideological conviction. However, unquestionably, cases of forced participation or coercion are present but extremely rare, only in cases of kidnapping and detention of enemy combatants. That being said, at the moment of accepting the doctrine and their radical pathway, individuals perceive the terrorist ideology or approach as suitable for fulfilling the unmet needs. On top of that, the organization's structure and strategies serve as a pipeline for achievement. According to the *Purpose-to-Pathway Theory*, radicalization is defined as a process through which an individual, group, or mass adopts radical and extremist beliefs as a direct consequence of unmet needs of a different level, which may result in developing a willingness to

use violence to achieve a political, ideological, or religious goal, and ideology serves as justification for the actions. On the contrary, the pathway is explained through the three-S model that is based on *strategy, support, and structure*, where organizations use the current mental, psychological, and sociological positions of individuals who seek fulfillment of unmet needs. The first S stands for *strategy*, and is tightly linked with the organization's public appearance, especially after a triggering moment or event that challenges the existing norms. At the same time, reframing personal or group aspirations as a shared mission, proposing a certain radical pathway towards the goal. They also provide examples of charismatic leaders that serve as role models for the new members or giving them a sense of belonging and understanding. Women, especially, are looking for peer connection and belonging. Nowadays, the internet, as the largest platform for radicalization, helps, on one hand, recruiters to appear immediately as a link-man to the organization, and on the other hand, individuals to find the most suitable ideology for their radical stance. The second element, support, directly influences the trigger that leads to radicalization, either as a supply for the basic needs, or at a higher level by giving a relevant and applicable plan for achievement, supported by an ideology that is aligned with the struggle. Lastly, the rigid structure that all the organizations have offers a guarantee for achievement. Unlike the uncertain social paths, each duty and task is linked to an award, material or spiritual, driven by ideological beliefs. For instance, women who join ISIS were promised Allah's mercy and economic stability provided by their husbands, who must do so according to the Sharia. In contrast, ISIS offers wives and sexual slaves to the foreign fighters in order to achieve the goals of the jihad. Lastly, theory is given to experts in the field to give criticism on the applicability and methodology of the developed theory. Findings for the feedback are available in section 4.2 of the fourth chapter. To conclude, the dissertation provided a list of policy recommendations that will complement the research. Firstly, national prevention policies regarding the prevention of radicalization should prioritize early detection through public dialogue, mass education, and campaigns, based on an inclusive approach of co-understanding and co-operation. Secondly, countries should establish an early warning system for the detection of potential radicalization among fragile individuals, providing alternative solutions that would make terrorism less attractive. Thirdly, the form of the Global Radicalization Awareness Network should be used as a bridge between international efforts, encouraging resource sharing, coordination, prevention, and cooperation. Fourth, women's empowerment must be institutionalized at national level to reduce vulnerability to radicalization. Fifth, the in-

ternational community should invest in regulating the legal gap in terms of the regulation of the internet as a potential hub, raising public awareness of the consequences of online radicalization. Sixth, national policies must address the social, economic, personal and political grievances that contribute to the radicalization, especially regarding women and sensitive political periods, such as war. Seventh, de-radicalization programs must adopt an interdisciplinary approach based on the re-establishment of new patterns and improving the general well-being. Eighth, national institutions should establish community-based peer rehabilitation networks for former radicals, supported by the local community. Ninth, challenging the existing reintegration programs, upgrading the methods of reintegration, and adapting to the current society, providing practical skills and psychological support, such as NLP. These policy recommendations are based on the practices observed throughout the analysis, and in support of preventing even higher involvement of women in terrorism in the future.

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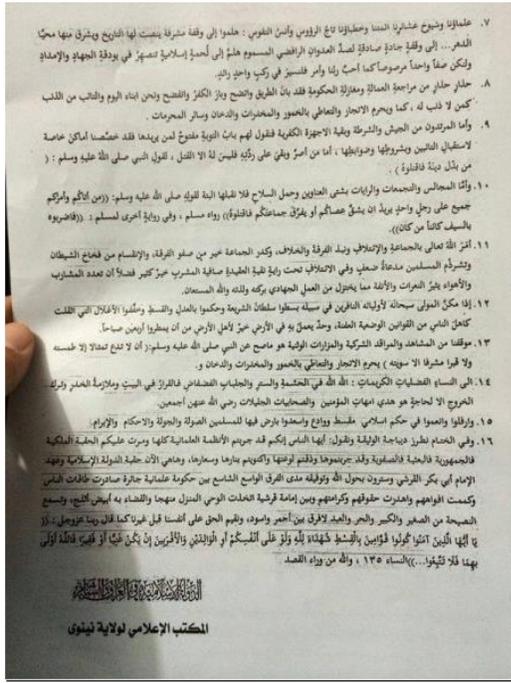
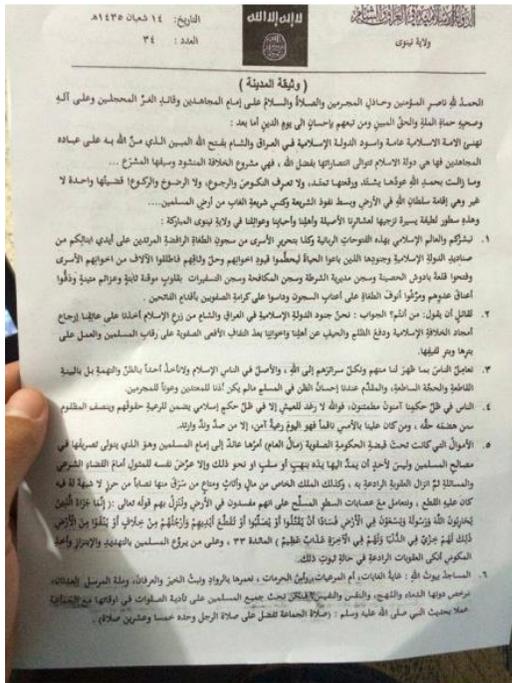
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APPENDIX



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