



RESEARCH PAPER

Reviewing Literature and Exploration of Dimensions of Terrorism: An Examination of the Involvement of Females with Special Reference to Trends, Activities, Motives, and Roles

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ABSTRACT

Subsequent to the era of Cold War the phenomenon of terrorism captivated the attention of scholars and researchers as the terrorism has not been remained within the boundaries of a single state, but in fact, the whole globe had been frightened of it. Particularly, after the occurrence of 9-11 the literature dramatically has been developed on the subject. This meticulous paper is an endeavor to shed light on different dimensions of terrorism by digging out existing research conducted on the phenomenon. The qualitative method is used in this research. Explicitly examining the involvement of females in violent operations, conventional concepts developed about females and their unconventional activities, the motives to engage them in terrorism, and roles which they perform in extremist organizations, the study is a significant contribution in the field. This research recommends that gender-sensitive counterterrorism initiatives should target the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women, extremism-causing factors can be mitigated by addressing gender inequality.

KEYWORDS Terrorism, Radicalization, Violence, Females

Introduction

Subsequent to the era of Cold War the phenomenon of terrorism captivated the attention of scholars and researchers as the terrorism has not been remained within the boundaries of a single state, but in fact, the whole globe had been frightened of it from Asia to Europe and from America to Australia terrorist activities have been noted at high and low intensity (Muzaffar & Khan, 2016). Particularly, after the occurrence of 9-11 the literature dramatically has been developed on the subject as the super power of the time (U.S) has been affected from the danger of terrorism. The events of 9-11 converted the research from proxy and civil wars, inter-state conflicts, and cold war era to terrorism, extremism and radicalization and their causes; enablers; and events related to the phenomenon. This meticulous paper is an endeavor to shed light on different dimensions of terrorism by digging out existing research conducted on terrorism. Various aspects related to this phenomenon discussed in previous work have been explored and explained.

Some researchers focused on sociological factors, for example, in-group cohesion and identity crisis while, the others have examined the psychology of terrorists and pointed out people get engaged in terrorism for the reason that they are emotional vulnerable or mentally deranged. A bunch of scholars threw the light on economic enablers and argued financial instability and poverty are activated behind the

involvement in violent operations (terrorism) and some of academicians explicated the technological drivers as role of social media and online propaganda by terrorist organizations. A vast literature has been produced on the tendency of terrorism and revealed that radical ideologies (radicalization) is a key force that pulls or push people to the path of terrorism. The factors contributing to develop radicalized ideas and beliefs as well remained popularized under academic debates. This scrupulous inquiry endeavors to illuminate numerous dimensions of terrorism excavated and expounded in literature as discussed previously that this phenomenon is multi-faceted. By examining the involvement of females in violent activities of terrorist groups this study explicitly highlights conventional concepts established through literature and media (sign of delicacy, beauty, and softness) about women and their unconventional activism (violent, brutal, and ruthless) in contemporary era. The research particularly seeks to allude the motives as gender equality, reclamation of honor/purpose, alignment with group objectives, and personal influence/experiences that motivate women to engage in terrorism. The recruitment of females by extremist organizations to perform exclusive roles to carry out violent operations on ground as sympathizers, spies, warriors, leaders, and suicide bombers is likewise profoundly contemplated in this exploratory and explanatory paper.

Literature Review

Terrorism arises from the existence of aggrieved groups, according to Ali Khan's 1987 definition of terrorism. Two fundamental traits are shared by these resentful groups: they have particular political goals and consider violence to be an unavoidable way to accomplish them. The primary characteristic that sets terrorist violence apart from other types of criminal activity is its political component (Khan, 1987). Without trying to provide a long explanation for the definition I use, let me just state that I define terrorism as politically motivated violence against non-combatant or symbolic targets that is intended to spread a message to a wider audience. The intentional targeting of innocent people in an attempt to send a message to a different party is a crucial aspect of terrorism (Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018; Richardson, 1999).

Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted, said Walter Laqueur in 2002. In 2005, Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez put it this way "Terrorism is the organized use of violence against civilians or their property, the political leadership of a nation, or soldiers (who are not combatants in a war) for political purposes (Fernandez, 2005). It is the use of violence or the fear of violence to purport a change in politics, religion, or ideology, according to Schmid's 2011 exploration of the term. It can only be carried out by undercover agents or non-state actors acting on behalf of their respective governments. It targets a wider range of people in society and touches more people than just the immediate target victims. It is mala prohibita, or a crime that is prohibited by law, as well as mala se, or a crime that is immoral or wicked in and of itself (Karamat, Muzaffar & Shah, 2019; Schmid, 2011). The United States Department of State defines terrorism as follows: terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (U.S. Department of State, 2007). This definition is found in Title 22 of the U.S. Code, Section 2656f (d). "Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terrorism the general public, a group of persons, or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, regardless of the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious, or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them," the United Nations General Assembly stated in 1994, however, in reference to terrorism. However, as Angus Martyn writes in a briefing document for

the Australian Parliament, the international community has never succeeded in developing an accepted comprehensive definition of terrorism (Martyn, 2002). It means, there is no universally accepted description of terrorism but it is clear in above all definitions that the violent acts, upon innocents, to make the government or population terrified, to achieve political; ideological; religious; or personal aims, are considered terrorism.

Reviewing Literature on Terrorism in Post-Covid 19 World

By examining the past actions of terrorists in similar situations, Ackerman and Peterson contribute to the current understanding of terrorist psychology and ideology. They contend that "relatively few observations of terrorist behavior have been noted about change in their thoughts and activities in post-COVID 19 world" (Ackerman and Peterson, 2020). In his investigation of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on violent extremism and terrorism in the West, Marone focuses on terrorist actions and specifically tries to use a terrorist attack cycle model. He looks at hate during the coronavirus era and investigates how the pandemic has affected the rise in terrorist incidents (Yaseen, Jathol & Muzaffar, 2020; Marone, 2021). Mehra endeavors to understand political violence and terrorism that how these processes are borne, grown, transformed, and demise through a life cycle (Mehra, 2020). Python, et al explore and predict about the expansion of non-state terrorism worldwide (Python, et al., 2021). Morgan, et al after a profound research provide global terrorism index and allude "current trends in the GTI which are consisted of impact of social media and technology on terrorist events and radicalization, and develop a strong link between terrorism and organized crime (Morgan, et al., 2021). Schmid et al. reflect on the current status of terrorism studies research. The findings of a survey they conducted on how scholars assess the present level of scholarship in the field of counterterrorism studies are included in their study. A sampling of academic, governmental, and intergovernmental definitions of counterterrorism tactics is provided in an appendix. The most significant literature on terrorism in their research is also included in a supplemental explanatory bibliography (Schmid et al., 2021)." Combs identifies and highlights terrorism, reactions to it, and contemporary patterns that influence this phenomenon's future. He provides the most important principles, the most recent statistics, and a variety of case studies to demonstrate effective analysis of terrorist activities while taking a historical perspective on terrorism and examining it as a type of political violence (Combs, 2022). Godefroidt reveals the ways in which terrorism affects people's political beliefs. Over the years, his study has focused on "325 studies conducted between 1985 and 2020 on more than 400,000 participants," offering a meta-analysis of the literature on terrorism. According to his research, there is a slight but significant correlation between terrorism and outgroup rivalry, political conservatism, and rally "around the flag effects." While he notes that research on non-Islamist violence or non-Western contexts is necessary, his study concentrates on Islamist violence (Godefroidt, 2023). Brzuszkiewicz discovers about The unfolded terrorist threat in 2023, he explicates that "this threat is characterized by new levels of unpredictability because of two key factors: the first is the bipolarity of the threat; the second factor that makes this threat explicitly unpredictable is the ideological fluidity (Brzuszkiewicz, 2023)." Huda endeavors to indicate in her research various enablers and drivers of radicalization that are activated on domestic, regional, and international level focusing on Muslim and Pakistani society (Muzaffar, Yaseen & Rahim, 2017; Huda, 2022).

Exploring Dimensions of Terrorism in Literature

Although, a profound contemplation on the term 'terrorism', has been noticed in the literature, but because of the need of the research and the seriousness of the subject,

various dimensions and facets of this phenomenon, have been explored by many of the researchers. Tore Bjørgo in his book, highlights the root causes of terrorism, he also gives suggestions for the reduction in the tendency of growing terrorist activities (Bjørgo, 2004). Horgan describes about the psychological condition of terrorists, he also excavates, what kind of mindset accepts the terrorist's ideology (Horgan, 2005). In another paper, Taylor and Horgan provide a conceptual framework, through which the terrorist's psychological process can be handled and his psychological issues can be addressed (Taylor & Horgan, 2013). Stout expresses his interest in comprehending the psychology of terrorism in his book, *The Psychology of Terrorism: Theoretical Understandings and Perspectives* (Stout, 2002).

Horgan and Taylor in their book, explain the coming future of terrorism, they try to find out that either it will increase or decrease (Horgan and Taylor, 2006). Crenshaw explores the different theories of terrorism, as well as, she determines its instrumental and organizational approaches (Crenshaw, 1988). In another book Crenshaw gives her focus to the terrorist's agenda in the 21st century (Crenshaw, 2000). Sageman elucidates the networking of terrorist organizations, he gives a comprehensive detail that how the linkage is developed between these organizations at national; regional; and global level (Sageman, 2004). Hine and Montiel highlight the role of poverty in terrorism, they throw light on the terrorist activities in developing nations, they also discuss, because of poverty, how people to meet with their basic needs and engage in violent actions (Hine and Montiel, 1999). Goodwin, et al find the role of emotions, they excavate that how politically sentiments are triggered to gain political goals in different movements [terrorist or social] (Goodwin et al., 2001).

Mackie, et al discover about those inter-group emotions, which persuade a person towards violent acts, how a person identifies himself with a particular group, how his emotions get radicalized, and how he becomes ready to die for his group (Mackie et al., 2000). Royzman, et al find that among all emotions, hate is the main, which makes a person radicalized and he moves towards violent (terrorist) actions (Royzman, et al., 2004). To make a clear understanding of the relation between hate and terrorism, the research of Sternberg is important, he from top to bottom, explains the duplex Theory of Hate, its development, and its application in terrorism, massacres, and genocide (Sternberg, 2003). In fact, hate against any aspect of society (culture; civilization; religion; sect; economic or political system), converts an individual or a group into radicalized, and that particular individual or group starts violent (terrorist) activities for an undemocratic change.

Material and Methods

This research has employed qualitative methodology to investigate *Reviewing Literature and Exploration of Dimensions of Terrorism: An Examination of the Involvement of Females with Special Reference to Trends, Activities, Motives, and Roles*. This research various sources are used, such as literature review, research paper, reports, and books have been reviewed for the purpose.

Radicalization as a Significant Aspect Contributing to Terrorism

In current literature, one of the fact, which has been explored by the scholars and researchers is that radicalization is the major cause of contemporary terrorist phenomenon. Prior to go in further discussion, it is significant to understand this terminology 'radicalization'. In 2008, the UK Home Office, the parent agency of MI5, stated that "the process by which people come to support terrorism and violent

extremism and, in some cases, then join terrorist groups." According to Wilner and Dubouloz (2010), radicalization "is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice." While the majority of scholarly literature focuses on radicalization into violent extremism, radicalization can be both violent and nonviolent," according to Borum (Borum, 2011). Researchers and practitioners have stressed that radicalization leads to violence and, in certain situations, ultimately to terrorism, but whether it is violent or not is a different matter.

According to McCauley and Moskalkenko's research, radicalization is a feature of growing intensity in attitudes, actions, and beliefs that promote violence and conflict between groups, among individuals, groups, and the general public (McCauley & Moskalkenko, 2008). Roy J. Eidelson and Judith I. Eidelson argue, "superiority, distrust, injustice, vulnerability, and helplessness (J. Eidelson and I. Eidelson, 2003)", are 5 beliefs, when develop, lead to violence. These beliefs turn a person into radicalized ones and that person moves towards terrorist organizations because these terrorist organizations further fortify his or her beliefs and ultimately, he or she wishes to take undemocratic change in society through violent actions.

Baylouni explores, "not terrorist organizations make a person rigid, violent, extremist, and terrorist, but his or her own emotions (radicalized views; beliefs; feelings);, his financial circumstances (poverty), or political agendas of different parties force a person to go towards violent actions (Baylouni, 2004)." McCauley & Moskalkenko excavate that there are 3 levels of radicalization, individual; group; mas/public level: and at these 3 levels, 12 mechanisms work, 1) Victimization on an individual basis, 2) Political grievance, 3) Signing up for a radical group the perilous path, 4) Signing up for a radical group the strength of love, 5) Extremity change inside "Groups" of like-minded individuals: 6) Strong unity in the face of threat and isolation, 7) Bidding for the same foundation of support, 8) Bidding against state power condensation, 9) Fissioning, or "Mass," within-group competition: Political jujitsu, 11) Discrimination, 12) Bereavement (McCauley & Moskalkenko, 2008).

The literature on radicalization, suggests that there is a sense of urgency and emergency in radicalized population, they do not agree for any type of compromise, they wish to bring undemocratic change, and they consider violent means legitimate to use on soldiers as well as on civilians, for this change. These violent actions are called terrorist activities in lay language, in media, and in literature. When radicalized people convert into terrorists, they commit extreme cruel acts, they adopt different sadistic tactics under the umbrella of any terrorist organization. These tactics may include time bombs, car bombs, belt bombs, and suicide attacks (Bloom, 2005). In contemporary era, unfortunately, the most terrorist organizations are utilizing females in their violent activities, in particular, for suicide attacks, simply, because females can deceive the security easier than their male-counterpart.

Growing Trends in Involving Females in Terrorism in Late 2000 Era

Even while the literature on terrorism has advanced significantly in the twenty-first century, many aspects remain unexplored. For example, despite estimates that women make up 30% of terrorists worldwide, very little research has been done on them. According to Harmon, "30% of international terrorists in the late 2000s will be female" (Harmon, 2000). According to Witlox (2012), there is a "systematic underestimation of the new danger of the female terrorist." Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor's study identifies

seven research areas that dominate the literature on female terrorism: 1) Overviews of the past; 2) Perception; 3) Studies of feminism and gender; 4) Motivation; 5) Hiring; 6) Roles; and 7) Environmental Facilitators (Jacques and Taylor, 2009). According to Katharina Van Knop, the rise in female terrorism can be attributed to the increased motivation of women to participate in political violence and the increased incentives for groups to recruit female agents (Van Knop, 2007). According to Farhana Ali, the increase in female terrorist activity started in 2000 and is probably going to continue (Ali, 2006).

Conventional Concepts and Nonconventional Activities of Women in Contemporary Terrorism

Women are generally perceived as victims of violence rather than as those who do it. As Nacos notes, women typically don't fit the conceptual profiles that academics develop for a "typical" terrorist (Nacos, 2005). In fact, when, today, a lay man thinks about a terrorist, an extreme horrified picture of a beard cruel man with gun or suicide jacket, comes in front of his eyes. He is unaware that females, with soft skin, innocent face, flimsy lips, and sparking eyes, are committing terrorist acts, including suicide attacks. However, since Aristotle's day, women have been viewed as the weaker sex and are expected to reside in the home, while men are thought to be the ones who use violence in public. Women are not supposed to be violent because the spheres are equally constrained, but this does not mean that they are not. By simplifying the argument, Sean French makes it easier to understand. One could argue that humans are both a part of nature and society; they are subject to natural laws, have rights and responsibilities as citizens, have instincts, and have free will (French, 1996).

In recent world, this particular argument has been proved correct, because a huge strength (30 to 33%) of terrorists are comprised of females as explained in literature explored above.

Even though, in current time, there is a prevailing concept, females are the victim of violence and they cannot commit terrorist acts, they cannot be the perpetrators. The contemporary media also make them digestible to society. Media sources share details on the female terrorist's age, family, education, and socioeconomic background in order to elicit empathy from viewers—something that has never been observed in the case of male terrorists. Female terrorists are frequently portrayed in literature and the media as defenseless, heartbroken people who are motivated to commit acts of violence more by passion than by reason. Because of how strongly this "framing" is used, women who have freely decided to be terrorists are usually written off as flawed or abnormal (Jacques & Taylor, 2013).

It is assumed that no "normal" woman would ever participate in the "masculine" arena of terrorism unless she was persuaded to do so by a male influence or an emotional trigger (Von Knop, 2007). In actual, media gives emphasis more on the beauty of the female terrorist rather to highlight her violent actions, Dan Berkowitz describes about female terrorists, females as, "warrior" who is "deadly, intelligent, attractive, and sexy" (Berkowitz, 2005). "If one takes the news at face value, female terrorists are always attractive, trim, and pleasant," Nacos says (Nacos, 2005)." This explanation of a terrorist by media, conceals the brutal activities of the females and generates a soft corner for her among audience.

Key Motives as Motivational Force for Engagement of Females in Terrorist Operations

Although, some females probably are entitled to gain public empathy but in most cases it has been found out by the literature that the females also are motivated and recruited as their male counter-part. In frequent, the researchers explore 4 motivational factors, through which, females are engaged in violent activities.

- Motive One) Gender Equality: According to Nacos, the ideology of female terrorists is still often explained by contemporary news as the manifestation of gender equality or the fight for gender equality (Nacos, 2005).
- Motive Two) Honor/Purpose Reclamation: First, Von Knop finds that, a desire to regain their personal or family honor drives many females to terrorism (Von Knop, 2007). When women lose their virtue due to infertility or rape, their community does not view them as female. As a result of marginalization, women may seek refuge in a terrorist organization, Van Knop concludes. According to Von Knop (2007), these organizations provide these women with two advantages: they welcome them when they have no other options in society and they enable them to reclaim their honor by performing acts of terrorism.
- Motive Three) Orientation with Group Objectives: Women also join terrorist groups only because, like men, they share beliefs that align with the group's doctrines or philosophy. In order to protect their own cultures and beliefs against the encroaching and increasingly intrusive Western culture, Christine Sixta reveals that terrorists [females] seek social transformation (Sixta, 2008). Martin examines how the view of "outsiders" and the expectation that they pose a threat to the existence of a group or culture are key cultural factors that influence terrorism for terrorists of any sex (Martin, 2002).
- Motive Four) Individual Influence/Experiences: Individual experiences might compel both men and women to associate with terrorist organizations. The cause of a terrorist organization may inspire or affect an individual, or these experiences may be identified as a unique significant event. Many personal factors are unisexual, however some can be sex-specific, according to the literature. Female recruitment and involvement in terrorist groups is directly linked to a male influence that motivated them to do so, as Cunningham finds (Cunningham, 2007). According to Fink et al. (2013), women can be persuaded or encouraged to engage in terrorism by male family members, just like some of their male counterparts. Sage contends that something genuinely unusual must have happened for a woman to turn into a terrorist, and that this event is best understood as a personal experience (Sage, 2004).

For instance, Matthew Dearing points out that a woman's decision to join a suicide mission might be significantly influenced by her psychological reactions to traumatic experiences, such as rape or death in the family (Dearing, 2010). According to Fink et al., women are motivated by some of the same causes that lead men to commit acts of terrorism: dissatisfaction with sociopolitical circumstances; sorrow over a loved one's passing; actual or perceived humiliation on a political, psychological, physical, or personal level; fervent adherence to a religious or ideological belief or beliefs; a desire to reap financial rewards; or a desire to bring about drastic changes (Fink et al., 2013). Jacques and Taylor outline important instances. A person's psychological reaction to uncontrollable events and circumstances may serve as motivation for suicide terrorism, as demonstrated by the lives of terrorists. According to Jacques and Taylor (2009), people of any sex can be motivated by the loss of a loved one, shame, and/or exploitation. Degradation or humiliation at the hands of the "enemy" is cited by Victor as a trigger for traumas that motivate action (Victor, 2006).

Recruitment of Women for Violent Acts in Different Roles

When females are motivated towards violent activities, they play a vital role in the terrorist organizations. There are five fundamental roles that Jacques and Taylor examine: 1) Suicide Bombers 2) Detectives 3) Warriors 4) Leaders and 5) Sympathizers. (Jacques & Taylor, 2009).” However, in past, the role of females in terrorist organizations was limited and they only participated in non-violent activities as Cunningham explains, In the past, female terrorists rarely engaged in activities beyond gun-running, fugitives' harboring, fund-raising, and information gathering. These occupations kept women away from violence while lubricating the terrorist apparatus and allowing it to function smoothly (Cunningham, 2007). In the contemporary era, females take a part in violent operations. They as, leaders, suicide attacker and warrior, perform their duty. Raghavan and Balasubramanivam denote, many terrorist groups began using ladies for suicide bombs and "frontline duties" starting in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Raghavan & Balasubramanivam, 2014).

Hearne explains that the role of female terrorists has changed from what was previously observed to something more active, possibly tougher, more fanatical, more loyal. She also notes that female members of violent extremist groups now directly carry out attacks, such as suicide bombings, which has caused widespread incredulity and increased media attention (Hearne, 2009).

According to data from Jacques and Taylor's literature assessment on female terrorism, terrorist organizations frequently hire women as leaders and fighters. According to Jacques and Taylor (2009), leftist organizations tend to utilize females as warriors and warrior leaders more than religious groups. The researchers list a number of possible pathways for female terrorists to advance to senior roles.

In fact, popular characters such as Ulrike Meinhof of Germany's Red Army Faction and Fusako Shigenobu of the Japanese Red Army are often the focus of literature associated with female terrorist commanders.

Conclusion

This research was an endeavor to illuminate the aspects of terrorism and female involvement in the process. It has been argued that after the era of Cold War the phenomenon of terrorism captivated the attention of scholars and researchers as the terrorism has not been remained within the boundaries of a single state, but in fact, the whole globe had been frightened of it. Particularly, subsequent to the occurrence of 9-11 the literature dramatically has been developed on the subject. This meticulous paper also scrutinized various dimensions of terrorism by digging out existing work conducted on the phenomenon. Explicitly the paper examined the involvement of females in violent operations, conventional concepts developed about females and their unconventional activities, the motives to engage them in terrorism, and roles which they perform in extremist organizations.

Recommendations

- Gender-sensitive counterterrorism initiatives should target the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women.
- Extremism-causing factors can be mitigated by addressing gender inequality and advancing women's rights and empowerment.

- Promoting nonviolent solutions and preventing radicalization can be achieved by involving women in community-based projects and counter-narratives.
- Analyze how women's participation in terrorist actions is influenced by established gender norms and expectations.
- To analyze the ways that conventional gender norms and expectations influence women's participation in terrorist operations.

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