

Women Terrorism: A Case Study of Sri Lanka

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 19 February 2018

Keywords

Science and technology, female terrorism, chechanya, counter terrorism. ISIS, LTTE

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ABSTRACT

Brian Michael Jenkins believes that "Terrorism is theater" where terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead". It is a clear indication of promotion of the terrorism and this theatre could become more sensational the task is taken by women terrorists. This research paper historically take into account terrorist attacks and moreover focuses on psychological aptitude and motivations that why women are attracted in this destructive sphere of lives and property.

INTRODUCTION

'A woman is often seen as a victim of violence in society, whether in the form of widows or mothers, or as passive supporters it is a part of a support network. She symbol of the tradition and values and, as symbol of motherhood and life. How can she then, seemingly contradictory to this, give her life to violence and death?' (The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2005).

Nowadays Terrorism has engulfed the entire world and has affected every aspect of society. In 1983, the Argentinean sociologist Georges-Abeyie noted that women have traditionally played a minor role in terrorist violence, but that an increase in female participation could be expected in the future.¹Cunningham prediction appears to have been accurate, with female participation in terrorist activities now widely perceived as having increased regionally, nationally, internationally, logistically, ideologically".² **science and technological** development does not make any difference between male counterparts in terms individual motivations. Women move out of motivations inside conflict zones of trauma, revenge, nationalism, expression of community outrage then there is a feeling of alienation, illegitimate behaviour of the state to its citizens, marginalization and negative self-identity. Terrorist groups find it to easy to use female bombers as they receive more media attention this increase sympathy for the terrorist cause and are subcient cause to pass security measures more easily than men, and are more available because they are rarely in leadership positions.

TERRORISM

Before discussing it further it becomes pertinent to know what generally the terrorism is? Terrorism can be understood as a violent means aimed at triggering political change by affecting a larger audience than its immediate target *that is to be examined using both problem-solving and critical theory and focusing on its socio-historical context in an analysis embedded in broader social and political theory that acknowledges a normative role to theory* (Toros & Gunning). With the definition, terrorism is a term related to certain actions

and means, but 'terrorist' is rejected as a label for a group or individual on the basis that it would reduce human beings to their action(s) and thus ignore other key elements constituting the individual or social group. This approach allows for the term to be kept, while at the same time critically engaging with how it is.

The term terrorism could be perceived as *a violent means which is aimed at triggering political change by affecting a larger audience than its immediate target.*

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE AND A FEMALE TERRORIST

Ebohon (2006:137) has noted that a woman is "the feminine component of the human species who apart from serving as vehicle for nurturing human life is also a producer, a consumer and equally endowed agent for fostering a wholesome political, social and economic development in society."

With the modern science and technological advancement in the society women role is no more different from other human being found that they what human supposed to do with some physiological exception. According to theory of existence when women choose to violent means as a mean to fulfill her objective the violence could be viewed in terms of tendencies patriotic or rebellious depending upon the person and circumstances. Freedom Movement of India is a good example of it.

WOMEN AND TERRORISM

"Women terrorism has been apparent and dangerous phenomenon that it is not be ignored or forgiven as it is used to be in the past". (O'Connor, 2007, p.95). When one talk of new human security approach, the potential threats originated by the women, namely female terrorists, should be given more attention. The appealing factor is terrorist organizations have been using physical appearances of women as terrorists. Members of terrorist groups believes that women could be easily exploited and hence women have been considered as impeccable, sinless, defenseless, and fragile. Terrorist

organizations have proposed a new identity to women as being victim traditional norms and values. As such women sacrifice themselves for the very cause of their groups seen in this perspective women have become a propaganda tool to attract new recruits to join for their objective. Moreover, there is another aspect of this vital issue. It is basically the human security which deals with the dignity of human beings. At this point, it is important to highlight that terrorism; terrorist organizations severely hampered the pride, honor, dignity and also livelihood of female terrorists. One of the dimensions of this event is that some women have been disgraced because they were raped, for example Chechen female suicide bombers. The other dimension is that they have been perceived physically or physiologically weaker than men in the battle ground. Female terrorists are not regarded eligible to fight in the battle ground. In that sense, terrorist groups by stressing women's dishonoring because of rape and physical weakness in the battle ground have been forcing women to become suicide bombers, local spies and associates etc. There are many reasons behind why a person becomes a terrorist. For example, family factors, the social environment, religion, being born in refugee camps, imprisonment, feeling a victim, desiring to be a hero, feeling hate and anger (Post, Sprinzak, Denny, 2003, pp. 171-177). As Stahelski (2004) states terrorists were made, not born. Many psychological and social attributes contribute to the construction of a terrorist. It could be stated that feminism helped construct a new identity for women. According to Robert Derry (2008), maternal ethics are an approach to formulating ethical theory by holding the mother-child relationship to be central. Maternal ethic presented women as mothers for peace. But this does not happen her sentiment becomes victim of self image. There are two dimensions of being a female terrorist. First, female terrorists, in a way, gain recognition when they feel useful by participating in terrorist acts. Second possible dimension that should be presented more pessimistic approach when women take in terrorist acts, they have been still disgraced and subjugated. As a result of this, they have been forced to take violent method.

Researchers at the University of Miami have found in the study '**Women's Connectivity in Extreme Networks**' has been published in the journal Science Advances and involved researchers analysing data from 40,000 suspected terrorists. Using a computer based software system; the team identified 24,883 men and 16,931 women whose online behaviour indicated they played a role in ISIS. They monitored the Russian social media site Vkontakte which is less strict on removing contested social media use than other social media sites such as Facebook.

WHY WOMEN BECOME A TERRORIST?

The cause could be "nationalistic, economic, social, religious and personal rewards". Researchers believe there are "few differences between a woman a man and carrying out such a goal. It may be a deceptions or surprise, but encouragement is the same: they do believe, they are committed, they are nationalist, and this is combined with a religious duty.³". Today religious terrorism we find has taken foot in organizing violence and BEHAVE the moral justification for committing seemingly immoral acts. Nationalistic fanatics court suicide bombers and use rhetoric to stir up feelings of patriotism, hatred of the enemy, and a profound sense of victimization. Suicide bombers then see their own actions as being driven by a higher order; they believe their sacrifice will provide rewards for them in the afterlife.⁴ Devout Muslims believe that, in death, every martyr,

male or female, is welcomed by a minimum of 70 apparitions (*houri-el-ein*) of unnatural beauty who wipe away the martyrs' sins, open the gates of heaven, and provide them with all the pleasures that God has given to mankind.⁵ Beyond religious and patriotic motivations, suicide bombers may receive large sums of money, improve their family's social status, and enhance their reputation. After their death, their families are showered with honor and receive substantial financial rewards.⁶ Additionally, suicide bombers expect to be admired and envied by those left behind. Photographs capture them in heroic positions, and these photos will be used as recruitment posters. In fact, a "study of world attitudes by the Pew Research Center showed ever-rising support for 'martyrs,' and recruiters tell researchers that volunteers are beating down the door to join."⁷ Finally, many terrorists groups deliberately are targeting women for strategic purposes because female suicide bombers receive more media and social media recognition not only with in state but all over the world. A very recent example of this sort was the death of a 3 year boy Aylan Kurdi whose drowned image represent tragic plight of the Syrian refugee crisis.⁸ Research has shown that "public beliefs of the level of terrorism in the world appear to be determined not by the intensity of violence, but rather by the quality of the incidents, the location, and the degree of media coverage." The critics have analyzed the news of the first Palestinian female suicide bombing which attracted great recognition. Women who kill or threaten to kill are hot news. This is a kind of reaction that knows no state or religious boundaries."¹⁰ "if this is a general tendency when the catastrophe would leads to more women following suit and would attract disproportionate publicity."¹¹ This disproportionate publicity, in turn, may arouse worldwide sympathies for suicide bombers and can also serve as a terrorist recruitment tool.

FEMALE TERRORISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

As Deborah Galvin (1983) mentioned that male and female terrorists do not have much in common when psychological background are taken into consideration.

She alleged that there had been many variables affecting females in general; these were penis envy, fear of dependency, feeling of powerlessness, unfamiliarity with game-playing, the propensity for sacrifice and psychological self-sacrifice. The main theme related to female terrorism could be the equal treatment. However, it should be pointed out that a woman destroys herself, her features of being woman. Galvin stated that terrorism has been male-dominated activity; it is related to struggle for power. Fighting has been considered as the entering in to state of manhood. She explained that the game of terrorism was a male game played according to male rules. Female terrorists deal with every aspect of terrorism. Feminine characteristics do not inhibit their adaptation to the more brutal terrorist roles and activities. It should also be noted that element of surprise was attached to female terrorists. Many people do not expect any violent act coming from women. They were considered as nonviolent, fragile and victim-like. It is obvious although some terrorist groups banned love affairs, women frequently used for sexual purposes. It was stated that terrorism has been a male game and in turn, sex is used to create and maintain male supremacy and female dependency (Galvin, 1983, pp.21-31). This is an element of surprise when we see from the childhood, guns when are given to boys to fight and dolls are given to girls to nurture. This all indicate that women feel powerless, have propensity to sacrifice, feel humiliated and are subordinated to change the rules of the game. One should also note that the nature of terrorism is

masculine and women are given also sexual roles. This situation has further indicated female subordination, suppression, fragility and humiliation.

Stahelski (2004) proposed, "Many researchers alleged "father factor" as an important indicator for a person to become a terrorist. Father factor was explained with the absence, economic or social impotency, or remoteness of a father. Also, it was stated that cult model is applicable to terrorist organizations. Most cults centered on charismatic leader. Usually, these charismatic leaders have been men. God-like position of these male leaders attracted female terrorists and help to construct their female terrorist identity."

O'Rourke (2009, p.681) states, "female attackers were driven by the same general motives and circumstances that drive men. Moreover, O'Rourke remarked that women attackers upheld, rather than eschewed their societies' norms for gender behavior."

SOME MAJOR ATTACKS BY FEMALE TERRORISTS

"History has recorded that women terrorism existed as early as the 11th century. The Assassins (*Ismalis-Nizari*), Muslim fighters, adopted suicide bombing or human bomb as a cause to promote Islam" These executors perceived their sacrifice of lives as an acts of martyrdom for the glory of God.(ALLAH)"

One of the first well-known cases of women involved in terrorism could be traced the assassination of Tsar Alexander 2nd of Russia in 1881. On the thirteenth of March of that year, Tsar Alexander 2nd was going from the Michaelovsky Palace to his Winter Palace in St. Petersburg when his carriage was attacked by multiple bombs. Sophia Perovskaya started the attack by signaling fellow members of the radical revolutionary group known as Narodnaya Volya, or the People's Will.¹² Sophia Perovskaya a member of the executive committee of the organization consisted of revolutionary professionals that promoted social and democratic reforms for Russia. 10 of the original 29 members of the executive committee were females, and eleven terrorist attacks were conducted by women from 1905 -1908.¹³

The "Black Widows" are a female terrorist organization that provided support in the struggle for Chechen freedom movement.¹⁴ It is widely believed that the term Black Widows comes from the fact that many of the women are widows or family members of individuals killed by the Russian military in Chechnya.¹⁵

The attack in 1985 when a 16-yearold girl, Khyadali Sana, drove a truck into an Israeli Defense Force convoy and killed two soldiers. Since then, women have carried bomb-laden vehicles, bomber "bags," and strapped massive explosives and metal implements on their bodies in Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, Israel, and Turkey to promote the terrorist objectives.

Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP/PPS), the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Chechen rebels, Al Aqsa Martyrs, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and, most recently, Hamas are many in this listing of organized feminine terror. Take the case of LTTE which has committed the most attacks the first LTTE suicide bomber, Dhanu, successfully assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 26 May 1991.

THE LTTE AND FEMALE TERRORISM

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE) have more often used women as suicide bombers the LTTE was created in 1976 to form independent Tamil state in north and east of Sri Lanka.

During British rule, Tamils were favored cases and they had good education but they were kept aloof from the government activities since independence. The LTTE's most spectacular terrorist operation was the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Sri Lankan president Premadasa in 1993. Tamilian traditions do favours active, public roles for women in the conflict. Furthermore, the LTTE began to involve females with leftist ideology and feminist thought. It has also been alleged that the LTTE was greatly influenced by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine it is surprised to note that both organizations were trained in Lebanon in 1977 and 1984. It has also been alleged that Leila Khalid's operations inspired the LTTE's decision to employ women (O'Connor, 2007, pp. 44-48). Peter Schalk stated that the embodiment of an LTTE female warrior as a kind of "secluded armed virgin" (Ness, 2008). Adele Balasingham (2001) stated that female revolutionary was considered as the redemption of the collaborative life at the coast of individual life that martyrs were honored. He mentioned that female martyr was a wholly willing subject. Moreover, it was stated that the LTTE female militants hold the innate qualities attributed to femininity (Ness, 2008, p.364). The LTTE allowed active female fighters to meet with the press, publish books, and make films about them (O'Connor, 2007a, p.97).

Cunningham (2003) tried to point out the objectives behind the female terrorism. One was personal motives. It was claimed that women being a victim of rape was influential factor to participate in the LTTE. Moreover freedom and liberation were considered as key themes at both collective and individualistic levels. These themes were quite related to the ideology of the LTTE. Lastly, sacrifice was also considered as an important factor. Cunningham pointed out that female sacrificed themselves for their family and for their male children. It was added that sacrifice was accomplished if a woman has been unable to undertake her role as a wife and mother within the society because of the rape. Rape was considered as individual or collective shame of dishonor by Sri Lankans and could be overcome through female suicide terrorism (Cunningham, 2003, p.181). These social and psychological causes are similar to Palestinian female terrorism. The LTTE have used leftist ideology and feminism as a tool to acquire more female terrorists as the RAF.

FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS

A suicide bomber is one who is someone willing to die for a cause, what is a suicide bomber? The Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) defined suicide bombing as an operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator. The terrorist is fully aware that if she/he does not kill her/himself, the planned attack will not be implemented.¹⁷ "Suicide bomber" is an emotionally-laden term. Some describe these individuals as "homicide bombers" or "suicide terrorists" to emphasize the murder and terror brought about by this act; others deem these individuals as "martyrs" who have died for their faith.

The use of women terrorists as suicide bombers poses conflicts with some fundamental religious leaders' faiths, while

servicing the tactical need for a stealthier weapon. In January 2002, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, "categorically renounced the use of women as suicide bombers."¹⁸ In March 2002 after the second Fatah bombing, he reported that "Hamas was far from enthusiastic about the inclusion of women in warfare, for reasons of modesty." That position dramatically shifted on January 14, 2004, when the first Hamas female suicide bomber struck. Why was she used? To Yassin challenges women as a significant evolution in our fight. The male fighters had to face many challenges, so women can be used to carry the work assigned to them. He concluded his statement by noting that "Women are like the reserve army—when there is a necessity, we use them." Women has become as a tool as a weapon of following reason:

- Tactical advantage in carrying out severs attacks with element of surprise and deception.
- Increased number of combatants.
- Increased publicity because the greater the publicity is given higher will be the possibilities that the number of new recruits will support organizational causes.
- Last but not the least psychological factor is behind the motivation and thus become the game to luring the others easily.

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CONCLUSION

The women role in terrorism and counterterrorism has become a complex problem to integrate a gender perspective to address armed conflict and terrorism issues. Developing on the women, peace, and security agenda, the United Nations and stakeholders has shown great concern in addressing gender and armed conflict topics at the local, regional, and international levels. Moreover, civil society and other actors on the ground have great responsibility to assist counterterrorism practitioners in developing policies and programs that do no harm to society or state as they are often better placed to evaluate the local impact on communities.

The important role of women played by in promoting and addressing peace and security issues and encouraging their participation in all levels of decision-making in the conflict prevention, armed conflict, and post conflict phases have to be evaluated seriously hence the role of UN and international community becomes important.