

Criminological Perspectives on Female Suicide Terrorism

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Following the terrorist strikes that shook the United States on September 11, 2001, the phenomenon of suicide attacks became a topic of particular interest to terrorism analysts, psychologists, government officials, and much of the general public in various regions of the world. Special attention has turned to the use of women as suicide attackers, as it appears to be a broadening trend among Chechen and Palestinian groups.¹

Yet despite the media sensation that it created, the phenomenon of female suicide terror has not earned widespread attention in the academic literature, and to date only a handful of scholarly articles have been published on the subject. Most studies are oriented towards the issue of suicide terrorism in general and then concern themselves with particular interpretations that touch on religious, cultural, or psychological dimensions. In addition, the majority of academic approaches are derived from theories of collective violence in the field of political science, with others emerging from the disciplines of psychology, international relations, religion, and economics. Among this plethora of studies, a further methodological question can be put forward: What has criminology to offer in the study of terrorism? And beyond that, what about female suicide bombers is worth examining?

Criminology and the Study of Suicide Terrorism

Perhaps predictably, the fields of study that until now have dealt with terrorism have been largely confined to their own theoretical perspectives: political scientists focus particularly on the relationship between terrorism and the state, policy programs, and political institutions; international studies scholars investigate the subject in terms of the complicated interfaces between nations and other localities; and psychologists try to explain the inner world, thinking, and motivation of terrorism's physical

actor. Moreover, suicide missions, like terrorism in general, have been discussed and analyzed as a mode of warfare, a method of struggle, a strategy of insurgency, and a form of political protest, with all these ever challenged by the same question of “terrorism or freedom fighting,” accompanied by the ongoing problem of what constitutes terrorism or what defines its absence.²

The semantic and political controversies aside, there is no question that the threat or use of murder, injury, or destruction are all crimes, committed to coerce the government or other target groups into conceding to the demands of the said terrorist(s). In particular, the suicide attack is a bloody and intensely violent act of homicide, often resulting in multiple fatalities and numerous injuries. Thus more than the source of tremendous horror, it is above all a crime. Yet few scholars³ have taken the issue of suicide terrorism to the fore of the criminological debate and they are indeed a minority within criminology’s limited contribution to the study of the general phenomenon of terrorism.⁴ This is surprising because the *raison d’être* of criminology is to address criminal behavior; breaking of laws has long been the central concern of criminology, and a suicide mission – even if not labeled as terrorism – is closely related to legal transgression.

Criminologists relate to the notion of a crime with reference to its legal context, that is, as a violation of a law, and eschew the non-technical, frequent usage of “crime” to mean any evil act. Here the advantage of criminology over other disciplines is that the controversial ethical dimension in terrorism’s ideological construction has little meaning whatsoever. A suicide attack as a method of intentional killing of others is legitimately researched in depth as homicide, overcoming arguments of a “just cause.” While terrorist organizations usually describe themselves as national liberation movements, fighters against social, economic, or religious oppression or a combination of these,⁵ the validity of their argument has little to do with their violent act.⁶ Some groups undoubtedly do fight for self-determination or national liberation, but not all resort to terrorism. Some groups are both terrorist and liberationist; some are either and some are neither. But what is important is whether their missions violate international law or the law of the territory where they operate and concentrate their activities. In such a case, regardless of any potential virtue or justification, they can be more than legitimately considered the object of criminological research.

Suicide bombings, apart from the particular national homicide law they violate (depending on where the attacks occur), also fall into the category of crimes against humanity. Although the definition of this term might differ slightly from treaty to treaty, all treaties condemn the deliberate, widespread, or systematic killing of

civilians by an organization or government.⁷ Unlike war crimes, crimes against humanity may be committed in times of peace or in periods of unrest that do not rise to the level of an armed conflict.⁸ The most recent definition of crimes against humanity is contained in the Rome Statute of the ICQ, which entered into force on July 1, 2002. The statute defines crimes against humanity as the “participation in and knowledge of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population,” and “the multiple commission of [such] acts...against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such attack.” The statute’s introduction defines “policy to commit such attack” to mean that the state or organization actively promoted or encouraged such attacks against a civilian population. The elements of the “crime against humanity of murder” require that: (1) “the perpetrator killed one or more persons” (2) “the conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population” and (3) “the perpetrator knew that the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.”⁹

The suicide mission, moreover, from a criminal law perspective, is a murder act with a particular *mens rea*: the willingness to kill combined with the willingness to die,¹⁰ with the latter expressed as the specific operational method to accomplish the first objective. We are actually dealing with a combined violent act, one of special characteristics. This is why the component element “suicide” may be misleading, because the main objective of the mission is not suicide but mass homicide, albeit carried out by means of self-destruction designed to inflict lethal harm on others.¹¹ The suicide terrorist actually becomes a human time bomb in order to hurt others and clearly needs to be distinguished from an ordinary person who entertains suicidal tendencies.¹² For the suicide bomber, it is not the determination to kill him or herself, but rather the determination to kill the enemy that is the driving force.¹³

Female Suicide Terrorism

But what is so special and particular about women suicide bombers? Why should any research on suicide terrorism be focused on them? Apart from women’s seeming innocence and assumed aversion to violence – which are the key reasons terrorist groups use them in order to bypass security measures and easily avoid detection – from an operational point of view there doesn’t seem to be any other difference between female and male perpetrators. Irrespective of the perpetrator’s gender, the definition of a suicide attack remains the same: 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.”¹⁴

Still, there is an additional “bonus” of female suicide terrorism: many organizations deliberately recruit women for strategic purposes, because female suicide bombers receive even more media attention than their male equivalents. Women who kill or threaten to kill are “hot news.” It is a reaction that knows “no state or religious boundaries.”¹⁵ Their media shock value is a lot higher than that of men, and as research has shown, “public perceptions of the level of terrorism in the world appear to be determined not by the level of violence, but rather by the quality of the incidents, the location, and the degree of media coverage.”¹⁶ While generally with suicide attacks the terrorists put together an operational “package that is so spectacular, so violent, so compelling, that the [media,] acting as executives, supplying the cameras and the audience, cannot refuse the offer,”¹⁷ making the suicide bomber the ultimate victim of the act while claiming moral high ground,¹⁸ there is an additional value when the perpetrator is a woman. People around the world try to comprehend the motivations of such an act, and the underlying message is that the present environment these women lived in must have been so humiliating that death is preferable to life under such conditions,¹⁹ even for those creatures that are programmed by nature to breed and sustain life. The fact that the attacker was willing to cast her own life with those of her victims permits a sympathetic audience to balance out and “soften” the crime.²⁰ This position does indeed earn sympathy:²¹ suddenly the media finds superficial similarities between perpetrator and victim, implying some sort of commonality.²² If “terrorism is theatre,”²³ then the play particularly hits the box office when women are starring.

But criminology has more reasons to deal with women suicide terrorists than their great echo effect in the media. Criminology is an applied discipline that searches for the causes of crime in order to eradicate the problem. What is unique to it and indeed is its defining characteristic is the central question about the causes of crime and the ultimate focus on the offender, rather than on mechanisms of discipline and regulation that go beyond the limits of the field of crime. The actor, the offender, the criminal is the key in interpreting, analyzing, and ideally combating the crime. Gender and its social implications are an important factor of every person’s activity and as a result, also of the illegal actions attributed to a deviant person.

It is an established fact that males and females differ biologically and undergo diverse and different sociological influences too, such as gender-specific role playing that appears to be rooted within most families and societies. Though

quite provocative, the idea that “the enemy is within every woman, but is not her reproductive biology, rather it is the habit regarding it into which she has been led by centuries of male domination”²⁴ is not that distant from reality.²⁵ The unequal position of women in society due to social oppression and economic dependency on men and the state, especially in the environments where female suicide terrorism occurs, has to be examined. Feminist perspectives over the past thirty years have not only added some new topics under the criminological umbrella; they have challenged the theories, concepts, methods, and assumptions of most of the people already involved in the study of crime. Most theories of criminality have been developed from male subjects and validated on male subjects. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this methodology, the problem is that these theories have been extended generally to include all criminals, defendants, and prisoners. It was assumed that the theories would apply to women; yet most do not appear to do so because they do not consider the special circumstances of female reality. Social and economic conditions, environmental influences, cultural traditions, and physiological factors must all be taken into account when dealing with female criminality and female suicide terrorism.

The problem of suicide “martyrs” is particularly difficult to understand. The perpetrators are willing not merely to risk their lives, but to commit themselves to die for their cause. It is this apparent readiness to sacrifice oneself that makes the threat of suicide terrorism so large and so incomprehensible, as most of us cannot imagine ourselves committing any such act. Suicide bombings seem to epitomize the violence of irrationality. They are a form of an extraordinary self-immolation, an act that operates against the most basic of all human instincts, self-preservation. When women are involved, the issue becomes even more perplexing, especially when these women were brought up in a cultural environment that dictates their roles as mothers and submissive creatures. We are more used to mad, bad, ruthless, male terrorists, though their actions as suicide bombers defy our understanding; on the other hand, women exploding themselves totally destroy their traditional gender roles of nurturing caregivers.

There is a major question about the interpretation of female criminality, which doesn’t extend much beyond the early theories of the experts in delinquency.²⁶ In fact, we still tend to attribute female deviant behavior to particular biological or psychological traits and ignore interactioning and sociological parameters. A common image of the deviant woman as “non-woman” – masculine or unfeminine – is the most popular when discussing the feminine role in terrorism and political

deviance. The female terrorist, engaging in illegal activity, traditionally considered the domain of men, purportedly engages in this activity because she is in essence masculine and thus often portrayed as unisexed, unattractive, and unnatural. This is especially so when she does not engage in sidekick activity, but contributes actively and essentially to the terrorist group operations.²⁷ Female terrorists have traditionally been described as cruel, crueler in fact than their male comrades.²⁸ Even today, women are generally measured as deviant according to attitudes that derive largely from classical Greece, Rome, and medieval Europe, be they of pagan mythology or Judeo-Christian theology.²⁹ The mega-proportioned violence of suicide attacks is a further challenge to break stereotypes and discover how given their boundaries, role, and function in society women can indeed commit the same criminal acts as men, even the most hideous ones.

Just as women's roles in societies have customarily been distinguished from men's roles,³⁰ so too their roles in warring have also been clearly delineated with unmistakably demarcated boundaries. Society, through its body of rules and its numerous institutions, has conventionally dictated the female roles within the boundaries of militancy. Though nationalist movements invite women to participate, "on the other hand they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse."³¹ Assisting in subordinate roles has always been welcomed and encouraged, but actually active fighting in the war has not. Thus women have had to demand to be integrated in all aspects of war, including frontline fighting.³² In the context of wars and conflicts, women have tended to be classified within the single category "women and children," as the vulnerable victims who suffer under violence with no means of defense. Yet women are not necessarily vulnerable and certainly have needs, experiences, and roles in war that differ from those of children.³³ Furthermore, women have been and are actively engaged in many armed conflicts around the world, playing their own part in wars throughout history.³⁴

So the question remains, what leads women to support and join violent organizations and commit atrocious acts? Paraphrasing Simone de Beauvoir, women suicide bombers are not born; they are made. Suicide terrorism is a social fact in the Durkheimian sense, and it ought to "be explained not as an individual psychological aberration but as the product of specific social conditions."³⁵ Rather than trying to figure out what kind of woman becomes a suicide bomber, it may be more useful to consider the factors that attract these people to this horror-spreading activity.

One can examine the processes by which a woman might be encouraged to fulfill a specific role. It is furthermore essential to link the female presence in terrorist groups to social developments of particular interest to women in the societies where the terrorist groups recruit and operate. Some groups espouse ideologies that inhibit women from joining them while others do not,³⁶ and in some cases female suicide terrorism has not been welcomed by terrorist groups themselves.³⁷

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict represents an opportunity and example to study female suicide terrorism in the context of an ongoing conflict and within the terms of a patriarchal society. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip launched a campaign of suicide attacks as part of their operational tactics since 1993 and especially after the start of the al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000. The volume of terrorism perpetrated against Israel during the first two years of this intifada was unprecedented in the country's history³⁸ and was a seismic shock to most observers. After January 2002 with the self-detonation of Wafa Idris,³⁹ Palestinian women have heightened their involvement in the conflict⁴⁰ by joining the ranks of men who use themselves as human bombs and commit acts of suicide bombing. In the framework of the second intifada, women have proven to be a valuable and precious weapon in the fight against Israel. It is no exaggeration that they have become critical components of the new Palestinian human precision bomb⁴¹ that operates against the undeniable military supremacy of the Israelis. On the Palestinian streets suicide bombings carried out by women are deemed as a response weapon to the enemy's structured armed forces: "The Israelis have women in their army. We do not have F-16s, rockets or tanks. But these girls are our rockets. It's OK for our girls to fight the Jews."⁴² Though not necessarily with the conscious goal of breaking down gender roles, the female suicide bombers have nonetheless found themselves challenging traditional cultural standards of Palestinian society.⁴³ Given the specific traits (social-cultural-religious) of Palestinian society and the intensity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the question is what drives the female involvement in suicide attacks. How is it that Palestinian women, brought up and living in a patriarchal society with strong and growing Islamic influence and predetermined careers as mothers and breeders and who are minimally represented in "common" criminality, engage in this type of violent and deadly activity?

Conclusion

Aristotle argued over 2000 years ago that it was legitimate to resist tyranny, yet he provided no arguments as to which means were legitimate.⁴⁴ Until today, although

we still cannot agree in defining legally what activity can be characterized as “terrorism,” we can all repeat the famous words, “I can’t define it but I know when I see it.”⁴⁵ Most important, we all feel the need to explain it and finally combat it. Yet human bombs, this fashionable weapon of today’s terror campaigns, pose an extra difficulty, as they are perceived by many as most difficult to prevent and repel: how can someone actually stop and deter a person who is not afraid of giving up life? The appearance of women in this kind of murder activity has complicated the question, as their gender makes it quite difficult to detect let alone understand them, due to existing images and perceptions about the female role in society and crime.

Usually security services, policymakers, and analysts have little conceptual understanding of how the factors contributing to terrorism, as well as the various social parameters, actually affect the individual terrorist. Instead they seem to believe strongly that hard-line policies will prevent terrorism because terrorists want to avoid high costs. The prescriptions dictated by this approach are quite attractive, because they are conventional, compatible with the existing political doctrine, and relatively easy to implement. Few efforts have been made thus far to devise an analytical framework for understanding the processes and factors that underlie the development of the suicide bomber and the execution of suicide bombing attacks, and even fewer about the female actors. Yet to date the approach has contributed little in combating suicide terrorism, where the perpetrators clearly are oblivious to the physical cost of their actions.

If multiple factors are likely to underlie any one observation,⁴⁶ this undoubtedly applies to suicide terrorism, which is a complex phenomenon not caused by one single factor and not to be adequately explained by one overarching motivation. In order to understand it there is a need to appreciate the ethnic, religious, political, social, and economic context in which it takes place.⁴⁷ If perceived as a crime, then any factor that affects or concerns the perpetrator also has to be analyzed in order to break down the pattern of deviance and deter it adequately.

Gender is one of these crucial factors, so the female participation in suicide terrorism merits special research, since the cultural, social, and religious standards in the terrorism arenas put women in a very different position than that of men. They are “special” deviants, not because the operational method of their self-immolation differs from that of men, but because their womanhood plays a key role in the way the whole social environment influences them. It is the specific province of criminology, which involves studying the manifestations of crime and social control in relation to law as well as the conditions, processes, and implications at the societal level, that

contributes to identifying and analyzing female suicide attacks. Thus, criminology can offer valuable explanations to the formidable goals of counterterrorism, which in turn will be better able to try to combat or modify the special characteristics of this form of female criminal behavior.

Notes

- 1 In the past groups such as the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have also had their suicide missions carried out by female perpetrators. Actually, one of the most infamous terrorist attacks, the suicide operation in 1991 that killed Rajiv Gandhi in India, was staged by an LTTE woman. See Radika Coomaraswamy, "Women of the LTTE: The Tiger's and Women's Emancipation," *Frontline*, January 10, 1997, pp.61-64; Dexter Filkins, "Shri Lanka Women at War: Tamil Rebel Group is Now One-Third Female," *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), March 13, 2000; Adam Dolnik, "Die and Let Die: Exploring Links between Suicide Terrorism and Terrorist Use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Neuclear Weapons," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (2003): 24; and Yoram Schweitzer, "Suicide Terrorism: Development and Main Characteristics," in ICT, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, pp. 82-83.
- 2 It is a known and over-discussed fact that there is no uniform definition of terrorism and no universal consensus about it. As a sample, see the US State Department definition, Title 22 of the U.S. Code, Chapter 38, Section 2656f (d): "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience"; the FBI definition: "unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives"; and the United Nations definition: "any act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act," Article 2(b) of International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, May 5, 2004.
- 3 See Mathieu Deflem, ed., *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Criminological Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004, which is one of the few published criminology works on this subject.
- 4 Although the research literature on terrorism has expanded dramatically since the 1970s, adequate work has not been done by criminologists or appeared in criminology journals.

- 5 Ariel Merari, "Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5, no. 4 (1993): 213-51, especially, p. 225.
- 6 Even Amnesty International unreservedly condemns direct attacks on civilians as well as indiscriminate attacks, whatever the cause for which the perpetrators are fighting and whatever justification they give for their actions. For example, see "Israel and the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian Authority: Without distinction: Attacks on Civilians by Palestinian Armed Groups," Amnesty International, July 2002, AI Index: MDE 02/003/2002.
- 7 One example of a definition is contained in article 18 of the Draft Code of crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind, drafted by the expert members of the International Law Commission. Article 18 uses a definition of crimes against humanity based on the Nuremberg Charter, but also takes into account developments in international law since Nuremberg. It sets out two conditions that must be met for acts such as murder, enslavement, mutilation, and rape to qualify as crimes against humanity. The first was that the act be committed "in a systematic manner or on a large scale," meaning that it must have been committed as a result of a deliberate plan or policy, usually resulting in repeated acts. The second condition was that the acts be directed against multiple victims, either "as a result of the cumulative effect of a series of inhumane acts or the singular effect of an inhumane act of extraordinary magnitude." See Article 18 – Crimes Against Humanity in chapter II, "Draft Code of Crimes Against the Peace and Security of Mankind" in the International Law Commission Report, 1996 at <http://www.un.org/law/ilc/reports/1996/chap02.htm#doc3> (accessed September 3, 2002).
- 8 But those who commit crimes against humanity, like war crimes, are held individually criminally responsible for their actions. Actually, crimes against humanity give rise to universal jurisdiction, do not admit the defense of following superior orders, and they do not benefit from statutes of limitation. International jurisprudence and standard setting of the last ten years have consolidated the view that those responsible for crimes against humanity and other serious violations of human rights should not even be granted amnesty.
- 9 Article 7(1)(a), "Finalized draft text of the Elements of Crimes Adopted by the Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court," November 2, 2000, U.N. Document PCNICC/2000/1/Add.2.
- 10 Simultaneous or contiguous suicide and homicide has also occurred in the past in a military context, for example when some 5000 young Japanese pilots in all died as kamikaze in the last ten months of World War II; see Walter Laquer, "Reflections on Eradication of Terrorism," in Charles Kegley Jr., ed., *International Terrorism*, New York: St. Martins Press, 1990, p. 209, and Harvey Gordon, "The 'Suicide' Bomber: Is it a Psychiatric Phenomenon?" *Psychiatric Bulletin* 26 (2002): 285.

- 11 Indicative is the deliberate effort to maximize human suffering not only in the immediate explosion but also in the minutes, days, and even years following it. Planners of suicide attacks in Israel, for example, have often packed explosives with foreign objects. Long after the attack, victims can still have pieces of shrapnel, nails, bolts, screws, ball bearings, and other projectiles that were built into the bombs embedded in their bodies. Another recent innovation is the addition of chemicals such as rat poison, which is an anti-coagulant and makes it much more difficult for rescue workers to stem the bleeding from injured victims. Over time, suicide attacks that incorporate such elements can be psychologically more punishing, not only to the victims but to the population at large. On this subject, see Tracy Wilkinson, "The World Lives Forever Scarred After Suicide Bombings in Israel: Survivors Labor to Recover Physically and Mentally; Some Still Have Shrapnel in Their Bodies," *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2002, p. A1.
- 12 On the "classic" characteristics of a suicidal individual, see Daniel S. and Neal M. Soss, "An Economic Theory of Suicide," *Journal of Political Economy* 82, no.1 (1974): 83-98.
- 13 See Raphael Israeli, "Islamikaze and their Significance," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 3 (1997): 104. This is why the term does not include self-inflicted deaths that occur without any violence directed outward, like hunger strikes or cult suicides; see Yoram Schweitzer, "Suicide Terrorism: Development and Main Characteristics," in *Countering Suicide Terrorism: An International Conference*, Herzliya, Israel: International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2001, pp. 75-76. Even if suicides do act as a form of protest, politically motivated suicide behavior is by no means a new phenomenon; acts of self-killing have been used as a methodical demonstration of commitment and unyielding form of protest. For example, Stefan Lux shot himself on the floor of the League of Nations in 1936 to protest against England's failure to act against Germany; Buddhist monks set themselves on fire during the Vietnam War to protest against the regime of South Vietnam; the same tactic was used by Jan Palach and Jan Zajic in 1968 to protest against the Warsaw Pact troops invasion. See Hala Jaber, *Hizballah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 76; Uzi Arad, "Do Nations Commit Suicide? A Middle Eastern Perspective" in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, p. 25; and Irwin Mansdorf, "The Psychological Framework of Suicide Terrorism," *Jerusalem Viewpoints* no 496, April 15, 2003, p. 3.
- 14 Boaz Ganor, "The First Iraqi Suicide Bombing. A Hint of Things to Come?" March 30, 2003; available from <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articleDet.cfm?articleid=477>; accessed September 5, 2003.
- 15 Melanie Reid, "Myth that Women are the Most Deadly Killers of All," *Herald* (Glasgow), January 29, 2002, sec. A, p.14, database on-line; available from Lexis-Nexis; accessed September 5, 2003.
- 16 Yonah Alexander and John M. Gleason, eds., *Behavioural and Quantitative Perspectives on Terrorism* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981), p. 8.

- 17 J. Bowler Bell, quoted in Brigitte Nacos, *Terrorism and the Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 51.
- 18 Avishai Margalit, "The Suicide Bombers," *New York Review of Books* 50, no. 1, January 16 2003, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15979#fnr1>.
- 19 Dolnik, "Die and Let Die," p. 21.
- 20 As Camus noted, "A life is paid for another life, and from these two sacrifices springs the promise of a value," in Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 169.
- 21 The "despair" element of suicide bombers is a basic reason for the sympathy of the public towards them. In this spirit Cherie Blair commented about Palestinian suicide terrorism in Israel: "As long as young people feel they have got no hope but to blow themselves up, you are never going to make progress," quoted in George Jones and Anton La Guardia, "Anger at Cherie Sympathy for Suicide Bombers," *Telegraph*, June 19, 2002.
- 22 Very indicative and enlightening on this argument is the Associated Press article by Celean Jacobson, "Mirror Images: Two Teenage Girls, Bomber and Victim," April 6, 2002, in which seventeen year old Ayat Ahras was compared to her Israeli female teenage victim.
- 23 Brian Michael Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict," in David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, eds., *International Terrorism and World Security* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p. 16.
- 24 S. Edwards, *Women on Trial* (New Hampshire: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 91.
- 25 Loraine Gelsthorpe and Alison Morris, *Feminist Perspectives in Criminology* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990).
- 26 Luisella de Cataldo Neuburger and Tiziana Valentini, *Women and Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).
- 27 It is clear that some women played an important role in the terrorist groups that were active during the 1970s. Whether in the Symbionese Liberation Army and the Weather underground in the US, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the Middle East, or the German Red Army Faction and the Italian Red Brigades, women have made headlines and attracted attention with their strong and active involvement in terrorism.
- 28 Notorious examples of this assumption have been the facts that Renata Chiari remained obdurately non-cooperative while her husband became a "super penitent" of the Walter Alasia column; Silveria Russo and Susanna Ronconi decided, against the opinion of the men, to form a female commando squad to strike a female prison guard in the Torino penitentiary; Mara Cagol against the opinion of her male comrades attempted to help her husband Renato Curcio escape from the Monferrato jail.
- 29 The dark ages and the witch hunt affected dramatically the feminine representation in crime and even in terrorism, since witchcraft was practically the only woman's crime for a long time. The "logical" relationship between being a woman and engaging in

witchcraft was quite direct: witches are women, hence all women are potential witches. This image of a witch remains a potent symbol, easily conjured up even subliminally as witnessed for example in the IRA's "Evil Sisters"; for more see de Cataldo Neuburger and Valentini, *Women and Terrorism*, pp. 32-33.

- 30 For example, during the first intifada, a discussion of women was conspicuously absent from the majority of the leaflets distributed by the Palestinians, since the uprising was articulated as a product of male agency. The leaflets were addressed to the "sons of Palestine," "cubs," and "soldiers of justice." The women were only spoken of as mothers; see T. Sherwell, "Palestinian Costume, the Intifada and the Gendering of Nationalist Discourse," *Journal of Gender Studies* 5, no.3 (1996): 301.
- 31 D. Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation," in P. Williams and L. Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post Colonial Theory* (London: Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 380.
- 32 Lucy Frazier, "Abandon Weeping for Weapons: Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers," www.nyu.edu/classes/keefer/joe/frazier.html, August 6, 2002.
- 33 Although in many conflicts children are coerced into taking on adult roles.
- 34 For more, see Charlotte Lindsey, "Women and War – An overview, 30-09-2000," International Review of the Red Cross, no. 839, pp. 561-79. Actually, it was the Second World War that highlighted women's role primarily in reservist or support units (including work in munitions factories) in the German and British forces and, in the case of the Soviet Union, their direct participation in the fighting as members of all services and units "constituting 8% of the total armed forces"; see Françoise Krill, "The Protection of Women in International Humanitarian Law," *IRRC*, no. 249, November-December 1985, pp. 337-63. Since then, women have assumed a much greater role and join the armed forces more frequently, voluntarily and involuntarily, performing both support and combatant roles. To give a few examples, in the United States military, "overall, 14% of active duty personnel are women," and of the US forces who served in the 1991 Gulf War, 40,000 were women, see Greg Siegle, "Women Critical to Success of US All-Volunteer Force," *Jane's Defence Weekly* 31, no. 23, June 23, 1999. It is estimated that a fifth of the Eritrean armed forces are female; see David Hirst, "Ethiopia: Human Waves Fall as War Aims Unfold," *The Guardian*, May 18, 1999, and up to a third of the fighting forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) involved in the civil war in Sri Lanka are women; see Dexter Filkins, "Sri Lanka Women at War," *Herald Tribune*, March 13, 2000. The role of the female suicide bombers of the LTTE has also underscored the horrifying extent to which women are prepared to take action in that ongoing conflict. Ironically, much of their "success" in hitting targets can be attributed to the fact that as women they can often get closer to their objective – possibly precisely due to the common perception that they are more vulnerable and therefore less likely to carry out such attacks.

- 35 Ghassan Hage, "'Comes a Time We Are All Enthusiasm': Understanding Palestinian Suicide Bombers in Times of Exigophobia," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 69.
- 36 An indicative example even in "conventional" terrorism can be the Basque organization ETA, which deliberately discouraged female involvement because women's place "was at home" and they "talked too much, especially to priests." See Robert Clark, "Patterns in the Lives of ETA Members," paper prepared for delivery at the Annual Conference of Europeanists, Washington, DC, April 1987, p. 7.
- 37 The Palestinian case is one of interest in this subject, as there was a whole debate on whether women were or were not allowed to carry out suicide missions. Maria Alvanou, "Hijab of Blood: The Role of Islam in Female Palestinian Terrorism," in *ERCES on line Quarterly Review* 1, no.3, (2004), available at <http://www.erces.com/journal>.
- 38 This is not the first time that Palestinian armed groups used suicide bombings to target Israeli civilians, although the scale and intensity of the wave of attacks was unprecedented. Between September 1993 and the outbreak of the clashes between Palestinians and Israelis in late September 2000, Palestinian groups carried out fourteen suicide bombing attacks against Israeli civilians, mostly in 1996-97, killing more than 120 and wounding over 550. Suicide bombing attacks against Israeli civilians in late February and early March 1996 killed fifty-six and injured more than 150. Five attacks in 1997 killed twenty-nine and wounded more than 200. The last suicide bombing prior to the al-Aqsa intifada was an attack in November 1998 that wounded twenty-four. There were no Palestinian suicide bomb attacks against civilians in 1999 or 2000.
- 39 On February 9, 2002, the *New York Times* reported that an Israeli government investigation concluded that Wafa Idris was in fact a suicide bomber. The investigation had been ordered since circumstances surrounding the attack were initially unclear, especially the question of whether Idris had attempted to plant a bomb and escape, or whether she had intended to die in the attack. For more on this issue, see James Bennet, "Israelis Declare Arab Woman was in Fact a Suicide Bomber," *New York Times*, February 9, 2002 (internet edition). Before that, in August 2001, a Palestinian woman subsequently classified as a would-be suicide bomber was caught while attempting to carry a bomb into Tel Aviv's central bus station; see Douglas Davis, "Report: Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers in Training," *Jerusalem Post On-line News*, August 6, 2001. Previously, Ataf Alian was apparently the first woman who (in 1987) tried to commit a suicide bombing in Jerusalem, according to an article of Zvi Barel, "Women's Work," *Haaretz*, January 23, 2004, p. B4.
- 40 Yet the story about female involvement in the general framework of Palestinian fighting comes from further back, even if with different forms and modalities. On August 29, 1968, Leila Khaled, a young PFLP activist, participated in the hijacking of the Rome-Athens flight. Arrested and then released in exchange with other prisoners, she lives in Damascus and is the mother of two children. In 1978, nineteen year old Dalal al-Mughrabi, close to the Fatah organization, was head of a group of eleven attackers (with

a second woman in the group) that hijacked an Israeli bus. The attack ended up with 39 dead and 72 wounded. Elsewhere in the Middle East, there is also a precedent for the use of female suicide bombers. On March 10, 1985, eighteen year old Sumayah Sa'ad drove a car loaded with dynamite into an Israeli military position in southern Lebanon, killing twelve Israeli soldiers and wounding fourteen others. Roughly two weeks later, on March 25, seventeen year old San'ah Muheidli drove a TNT-laden car into an IDF convoy, killing two soldiers and wounding two more. The two women were posthumously awarded the honouring title of "Brides of Blood" (*Arous ad-Damm*). For more, see Luca Ricolfi, Paolo Campana, "Suicide Missions in the Palestinian Area: A New Database," and Amir Taheri, *Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1987), pp. 126-29.

- 41 As one Palestinian trainer is quoted to have boastfully described them in Hala Jaber, "The Avengers," *Sunday Times* (London), December 7, 2003, sec. Features, p. 1, database on-line; available from Lexis- Nexis; accessed January 15, 2004.
- 42 A Palestinian teacher's opinion quoted in "Why Women Turn To Suicide Bombings," by Kevin Toolis, *The Observer*, October 12, 2003.
- 43 Frazier, "Abandon Weeping for Weapons: Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers."
- 44 Aristotle, *Politics*.
- 45 Borrowing Justice's Potter Stewart's famous words: "I shall not today attempt to further define [pornography]...but I know it when I see it," in *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, June 22, 1964.
- 46 Charles Ragin argues that most causal relationships are governed by equifinality rather than homogeneity: "Typically, there are several combinations of conditions that may produce the same emergent phenomenon," *The Comparative Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
- 47 John Horgan and Max Taylor, "The Making of a Terrorist," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 13, no. 12 (2001): 16.