

Gender Inequality, the Desire for Political Self-Determination,
And a Longing for Revenge:
Three Main Causes of Female Suicide Bombers



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Chapter 1: Three Main Causes for Female Suicide Bombers

Introduction

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 sent shock waves throughout the world, and although suicide terrorism was no new invention, it became a permanent part of the forefront of the American psyche. The attack on the world's most powerful nation shone the light on the third world and many questions arose with Westerners desperately trying to understand what could possibly explain such a ruthless attack on the lives of thousands of American civilians. However, at the time of the World Trade Center attack, suicide terrorism had been around for centuries, and these men were only a small fraction of a world wide phenomenon. Furthermore, since the 1980s, suicide terrorism had grown to include women and has been used by non-Islamic groups. As the newest development in suicide terrorism, the introduction of female suicide bomber has captured the imagination of individuals worldwide. The most puzzling of these cases take place in strictly patriarchal societies such as Chechnya, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Palestine. Individuals have begun to increasingly ask what drives these women, whom the world views as subservient and domestic, to suicide bombing.

Many different models have been proposed to answer this question. The most prevalent of which is a religious desire to be named a martyr. However, such a viewpoint takes a far too oversimplified approach to the situation. It reduces the suicide bomber to a mere religious fanatic with no ability to make a rational decision. Supporters of a second popular model known as the environmental model claim that poverty breeds terrorism. However, once again this is a simplistic view that overlooks the fact that many suicide

bombers in recent history have been middle to upper class individuals. Thus, there is no one causes for suicide terrorism. However, there is what scholars have come to call a “fatal cocktail,” a series of motivations that lead women into the world of suicide terrorism. After studying the terrorist groups in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Palestine, it has become apparent that there are three causes that are most prevalent in this phenomenon. The primary causes of female suicide bombers are gender inequality, a desire for national self-determination, and a longing for revenge.

In recent years, many scholars have begun to research and have completed field studies concerning the phenomenon of female suicide bombers. The most significant of these scholars is Robert Pape, the author of *Dying to Win*, who argues that a large majority of suicide bombings are caused by nonreligious circumstances, chiefly a desire for revenge that stems from the hardships brought on by foreign occupation. In her article, “Messengers of Death: Female Suicide Bombers,” Clara Beyler explores the women from all four of the selected areas and comes to the conclusion that much of what they do is born out of a desire for gender equality caused by the dichotomy present between the sexes in their respective cultures. Evelin Gerda Linder offers a fresh perspective on the role of humiliation as a leading factor in suicide bombing because it spurs a desire for revenge. In regards to the formation, training, and significance of suicide bombers, Debra D. Zedalis’ article, “Female Suicide Bombers” offers an all inclusive and rather concise study on the topic. Barbara Victor’s book, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, best addresses the causes of female terrorism in the region of Palestine, while scholars like Jessica West, Susan McDonald, Miranda Alison, Jessica Stern, Martin Van Bruinessen, and Christophe

Reuter effectively cover one or more of the causes in at least one of the selected areas. It was after surveying the evidence offered by these and several other scholars that the aforementioned “fatal cocktail” could be effectively arrived at and gender inequality, a desire for national self-determination, and a longing for revenge were most obviously the three primary causes of this phenomenon.

Defining Terrorism

Prior to beginning a serious study of terrorism, it is important to first define the term, and then to come to an understanding of how it may be differentiated from the concept of freedom fighters. According to the United States Department of Defense, terrorism is “the unlawful use of – or threatened use of – force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives.”¹ However, when this definition is taken into consideration, it appears quite simple to interchange the word with the use of the term freedom fighter, “a person who takes part in an armed rebellion against the constituted authority (especially in the hope of improving conditions).” Furthermore, it is described as “a relativistic local term” and the government being fought against is believed to be “oppressive and illegitimate.”² When these two terms are considered, it seems simple to believe the words are interchangeable, and to come to the conclusion that one man’s terrorist is essentially another man’s freedom fighter. However, there is one chief difference that highlights the disparity between the two concepts. A more specific and less perplexing way to differentiate between the two is through the definition provided by the scholar Boaz Ganor: “Terrorism is the intentional use of, or threat to use

¹ “PBS,” www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/alquaeda/glossary.html.

² “Dictionary by LaborLaw Talk,” www.dictionary.labortalk.com/Freedom_fighter.

violence against civilian targets in order to attain political aims.”³ Thus, it is the targeting of civilians that categorizes the use of violence as a terrorist act. Civilians are targeted in order to “produce psychological effects that extend beyond the attacks’ immediate victims.”⁴ Certainly one, of the most effective ways of causing these psychological effects is through the use of a suicide bomber, “a terrorist who blows himself up in order to kill or injure other people.”⁵

A General History of Suicide Bombers and the Recent Acceptance of Female Participation

Suicide terrorism has existed since the early eleventh century when the Islamic Assassins adopted suicide terrorism as a strategy to advance the cause of Islam. The suicide terrorists saw themselves as martyrs acting for the glory of Allah.⁶ In the early years and up until the late twentieth century, suicide bombers were easy to profile and detect. They carried backpacks or duffel bags with their bombs hidden within. The men were usually young, typically between the ages of seventeen and twenty, and unmarried. However, today there is no longer a clear profile. Today’s bombers are middle aged and young, married and unmarried, have children and are childless. The men now disguise themselves, and the old belief that the suicide bombers were made up of only the financially deprived has proven itself a myth, with some sons of millionaires becoming suicide bombers in recent years. Initially, suicide bombings were believed to be acts of radical individuals, but now it is known that organizations stand behind them giving them the financial support necessary to carry through with their violent acts. Furthermore, the

³ Boaz Ganor, “Defining Terrorism: Is One Man’s Terrorist Another Man’s Freedom Fighter?” *Israel’s International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism* (April 15, 2005).

⁴ Bruce Hoffman, “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 291, Number 5 (2003).

⁵ “Dictionary by LaborTalk,” www.dictionary.laborlawtalk.com/suicide_bomber.

⁶ Debra D. Zedalis, “Female Suicide Bombers,” *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy*, (2004).

use of humans as weapons is the most terrifying and efficient form of terrorism because, by strapping the bombs onto their bodies, the success of the attack is secured and it is lethally flexible in nature.⁷

The phenomenon of female suicide terrorists was introduced into the scene in the 1980s. The earliest known attack was completed by Khyadali Sana, a sixteen-year-old girl who drove a truck into an Israeli Defense convoy and killed two soldiers. Since this first attack, several ethnic groups and terrorist organizations have followed suit. They have carried out attacks in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Palestine.⁸ Women add to the psychological effects of terrorism by disguising themselves as pregnant women and concealing their bombs underneath their clothing.⁹

Terrorist organizations have begun to look to women for suicide bombings for several reasons. Among the most important are that the use of women has a tactical advantage that allows for a stealthier attack and capitalizes upon the element of surprise. They are aware of the gender stereotypes that would make women less susceptible to being caught by the authorities and there is also an apparent hesitancy to search women for weapons.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the introduction of women as suicide bombers appears to be unexpected and unprecedented in the Islamic world. However, upon further analysis other reasons for their entry into the once male dominated realm appear. Research shows that in groups within Turkey and Sri Lanka women had been allowed some level of participation within the terrorists groups since their very beginning. However, in Palestine and Chechnya the entrance of women into the terrorist world is a much more

⁷ Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," pp. 2-3.

⁸ Zedalis, "Female Suicide Bombers," p. 2.

⁹ Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," p. 2.

¹⁰ Zedalis, "Female Suicide Bombers," p. 7.

recent occurrence. Regardless of these differences, the patriarchal societies in which these women live in must be kept in mind. The dichotomy created by providing a domestic sphere for women and a public sphere for men has aided in making women eager to join in the “cause.”¹¹

A Brief Overview of the Involvement of Women in the Selected Regions

Chechnya: The Black Widows

The influence of female terrorists in Chechnya has been colossal and it is unique from all the other organizations in question because, by all accounts, it is a group solely made up of women. One of the biggest losses suffered by the Russian army in Chechnya was caused by a twenty year old woman.¹² The dominant female terrorist group is called the “Black Widows,” and is comprised of women whose husbands and loved ones were killed by Russian troops within the last ten years. The name “Black Widows” was first used in July of 2003 when a Russian woman, Zarema, was arrested for carrying a bomb within her bag. The woman admitted to being a member of the group and informed authorities that the group was out to wreak revenge for the murders of their family members. It is believed that “Most of the Black Widows have little knowledge of Islam and don’t know that killing innocents in the name of Islam is forbidden.”¹³ The group is trained by fighters of Shamil Basayev, who is known to have had contacts with Osama bin Laden. One of their most famous incidents was taking hostages in a Russian school. When the police broke in, three women set off their bombs, taking hundreds of lives with them and leaving the Russian public in shock.

¹¹ Clara Beyler, “Messengers of Death: Female Suicide Bombers,” *Israel’s International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism* (February 2003) pp. 1-17.

¹² Ibid. p.5.

¹³ Hamid Mir, “‘Black Widows’ Behind Belsan Tragedy,” *The Rediff Special*, September 8, 2004.

Sri Lanka: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

The Sri Lankan terrorist group known as LTTE, short for Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is a Marxist group that has been fighting the government since 1978 and is now estimated to have between ten thousand and eighteen thousand members. The LTTE is known for being one of the most effective guerilla organizations in the world. The organization is unique due to the “large number of women in every division, and many have risen up to command posts.”¹⁴ The LTTE has been responsible for many political assassinations, including that of Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, in 1991. Among group members there is an unprecedented willingness to die and unconcern for all human life.¹⁵ Women are said to participate in about thirty-to-forty percent of the group's suicide activities. The LTTE has been given the credit for close to two-hundred suicide attacks and are the leaders in this area amongst the other groups.

Turkey: Kurdish Workers' Party

The PKK, short for the Kurdistan Workers Party, was founded in 1978 by Abdullah Ocalan and began its terrorist campaign in Turkey in the early 1980s.¹⁶ The heavily nationalistic group has attempted a total of twenty-one suicide attempts, fifteen of which were successfully carried out. Its suicide terrorism campaign lasted from June 30, 1996 to July 5, 1999. The group turned to terrorism because it was facing military setbacks in Southern Turkey. Suicide bombings were chosen as a way to lift up the moral of the group.¹⁷ The PKK provided its female members with a lifestyle free from the

¹⁴ Beyler, “Messengers of Death: Female Suicide Bombers,” p. 3.

¹⁵ Harvey W. Kushner, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” *Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks: 2003), pp. 315-316.

¹⁶ Harvey W. Kushner, “Kurdistan Workers Party”, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks: 2003), pp. 209-210.

¹⁷ Yoram Schweitzer, “Suicide Terrorism: Development and Characteristics” *Israel's International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, (2004) pp. 1-4.

restraint and limited role offered them by the Turkish world. Thus, the group “replaced the family to which they could not or would not return to,” making them exceptionally loyal to the group and its leadership.¹⁸

Palestine

Palestine has the largest number of terrorist organizations out of the four regions being studied. However, the situation within Palestine seems to be the most difficult to understand. With groups such as Hamas, an obvious paradox arises: How can women participate in suicide bombings in fundamental Islam? However, the leaders of Hamas welcome female involvement and even offer women equal status when they choose to participate in suicide acts. In the 1970s, a Palestinian woman, Leila Haled, took part in some terrorist action, but it was not until 2002 that women had a place more equal to that of men. In Palestine, women began to take the initiative themselves; committing suicide terrorism came as a surprise many times to officials who had to begin to attempt to justify acts that had not been planned. Palestinian women volunteer on a freelance basis, and it is evident that environmental pressure had created a new woman – the suicide bomber. Other terrorist groups that support terrorism done by women in Palestine include the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Palestinian Liberation Organization, Palestinian Liberation Front, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad also support the rise of female suicide bombers. However, there are some terrorist groups will not allow women to become terrorists and will not support them at all in the endeavor.¹⁹

Importance of Understanding the Causes of these Events

¹⁸ Beyler, “Messengers of Death: Female Suicide Bombers,” p.4.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 5-6.

After this brief history of the various terrorists groups and their expanding use of suicide terrorism it is evident as to why the causes of the entrance of women into the field of suicide terrorism are a valuable area to study. Understanding the causes of this dangerous trend can help find long sought after solutions to one of, if not the, most dangerous and troubling issues of modern times. Studies have shown that it is the unprecedented level of commitment of the terrorists that allow the plans to work. However, the question then arises concerning why these members are so determined and committed to their cause that they would sacrifice their own lives. As the next section shall show, scholars have come to believe that “there are religious, nationalistic, economic, social, and personal rewards for suicide bombers.”²⁰

²⁰ Zedalis, “Female Suicide Bombers,” p.9.

Chapter 2: In Search of the Causes of Female Suicide Bombers

Introduction

Being that suicide terrorism is such a “hot topic” in today’s newsrooms, there is no denying that the rise of the female suicide terrorist has simultaneously captivated and appalled the world community. Many a debate has arisen in relation to the motivations behind the women who commit these heinous acts of terror. Emphasis has been placed on all aspects of the lives of these individuals in attempts to narrow down the possible roots of such behavior, and a myriad of causes have come into the forefront. The debate surrounding the rise of the female suicide bomber has centered itself on finding the proper relationship between these causes and deciding which ones play primary roles.

Survey of Literature

Chechnya: The Black Widows

In his article, “The Afghanisation of Chechnya,” Peter Brownfield argues that all Chechnya’s terrorist groups are fighting a war of secession that began in 1991 with the official fall of the USSR and Chechnya’s declaration of independence from Russia. However, Russia refused Chechnya its independence, and since then there has been civil strife, with Chechnya’s people continuing to fight for liberation. As a result of the war, “Chechnya is now a nation of warlords and anarchy.”²¹ This anarchy has caused over 100,000 Chechens to be killed and over 300,000 to be displaced out of population of 1.1 million. This translates into sixteen percent of the population being killed during the war. Furthermore, Brownfield indicates that religion is not a cause of terrorism in Chechnya

²¹ Peter Brownfield, “The Afghanisation of Chechnya,” *The International Spectator* (March 2003) Vol. 14, No. 52.

because the Chechens are not very religious and families and clans play a more important role.

This belief, that the family is more important in Chechen culture than religion, is reflected in the article, “Black Widows behind Beslan Tragedy,” by Hamid Mir. The Black Widows are a terrorist organization based in Chechnya composed primarily of women who have lost loved ones due to the activities of the occupying Russian army. In this article, Mir argues that the sole purpose of the Black Widows is to avenge the death of a husband or child. The group’s sole aim, in Mir’s theory, is “to wreak vengeance on Russians for their husbands and children.”²² Thus, according to Mir, it is a personal quest for revenge that fuels the suicide bombers present within the Black Widows.

Sri Lanka: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

In his article, “Soldier Girl? Not Every Tamil Teen Wants to Be a Tiger,” James A. Mitchell proposes that there is essentially one cause for the entrance of women into the world of suicide terrorism in Sri Lanka. Mitchell argues that young girls and boys are taken from their families at early ages and sent to training camps. It is at these camps that they are taught the mission at hand is a manifestation of devoted patriotism. The camp leaders use rhetoric that sparks passionate nationalism within the minds of the young people. The general theme of the speeches was to join the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and fight for the honor of the country. In fact, “Girls were told that they had no future in their country unless they fought and were willing to die in a war that had begun before they were born. Though they were children, they weren’t blind to what life had shown them. Tamils in the north suffered through dire poverty coupled with what many considered the institutional discrimination against a people. They were little more than

²² Mir, “Black Widows: Behind the Beslan Mask,” p. 2.

slaves, and many of the Tiger arguments, sadly, made sense.”²³ This heightened sense of nationalism was thus instilled through a series of indoctrinating speeches that made them believe that they were both fighting for their country and working towards greater personal glory.

Nomi Morris and Miriam Shahin offer a contrary view to that of Mitchell’s arguing that the “Tamil Tigers do not seek out specific candidates ... [and that] recruitment is broadly based and not coercive.”²⁴ They base this assessment on the fact that some young who have been trained by the Tigers have not remained with the group. However, Morris and Shahin propose that the desire to achieve the glorified status of a political and/or religious martyr is at the heart of the debate. Although, they claim that religion is not in the least a motivating cause and state that the truly religious person would not want to die, Morris and Shahin do concede that the Hindu belief in reincarnation is used as a way to perpetuate the idea that for every suicide bomber who dies another is born to take his place. This, in combination with the powerful propaganda administered by the leaders of the Tamil Tigers to the citizens of Sri Lanka, appeals to the young and their desire to live a meaningful life. The promise of glory is heightened through a ritual completed prior to each suicide mission. Morris and Shahin write, “Before a suicide mission Black Tigers go to a secret location to draw lots. The ‘winner’ is taken for a meal with Tiger leader Velupillai Prebakharan. Tiger journals publish photos of the auspicious meeting after the martyrdom. The dead are also glorified at large monuments. Their families are given special treatment for life. And each year in late

²³ James A. Mitchell, “Soldiers Girl? Not Every Tamil Teen Wants to Be a Tiger,” *The Humanist* (September/October 2006), Vol. 66 Issue 5, pp.16-18.

²⁴ Nomi Morris and Miriam Shahin, “The True Believers,” *MacLean’s* (March 18, 1996), Vol. 109 Issue 12, pp. 40-42.

November, the entire Tamil region marks Great Heroes week.” Thus, it is with these illusions that female and male suicide bombers alike decide to become what their fellow countrymen would call “martyrs.”

Miranda Alison’s article, “Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation of Tamil Eelam,” is aimed at shedding light onto the debate concerning the role of feminism in wars and nationalistic organizations through her study of the LTTE. Alison argues that there are several reasons why women choose to join the Liberation Tigers. She first states that it is a fact that the organization expects each family to give one member to the cause and that the loss of men through death and a variety of other reasons led to the necessity to recruit women into the movement. Alison lists five reasons for why women choose to join the ranks of the LTTE and sacrifice their lives as suicide bombers: (1) nationalistic sentiment, with many women already within the movement being insistent that the concepts of self-determination and freedom for the Tamil nation, and land rights for Tamils, are their main reason for having joined the movement; (2) suffering and oppression, which Alison views as the personal reasons hiding beneath the desire for self-determination; because their families have been injured through the oppression of the Indian government they also feel that they must avenge those they love and regain their dignity; (3) educational disruption and restrictions lead those who desire to continue their education but have been stopped by the ongoing discrimination of Tamils in institutions of higher education to join the LTTE; (4) sexual violence against women who have been abused by the chauvinistic Indian army, a sentiment especially strong in women who have been raped themselves; and (5) a desire for women’s emancipation with a

connection between the independence of women only being possible if there is an independent state.²⁵

Turkey: Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan)

In an article written for the *Economist*, "The Wrongs and Rights of Minorities," it is argued that the radical nature of the Kurdish minority in Turkey is rooted in the fact that the Turkish government and elite have not been able to face the ethnic diversity within their country. The state officially recognizes only three minorities, Armenian, Greek and Jewish. The Kurds have been the most bothersome of all the minorities in the region, although it is unknown what exact percentage of Kurds the Kurdistan Workers Party stands for. There are different levels of nationalistic emotion from the Kurds, and "the more extreme Kurds say they want their own homeland, 'Kurdistan'...The more moderate Turkish Kurds say they want to be allowed to speak their own language, to be taught it in school, and to hear it broadcast."²⁶ These feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalization are what to have led the Kurds to resort to such as drastic measures as suicide bombing.

In his article, "Between Guerilla War and Political Murder: The Workers' Party of Kurdistan," Martin van Bruinessen further elaborates on the point of view that it was indeed nationalistic motivations that led the members of the PKK, male and female alike, to join in the ranks of suicide terrorism. Van Bruinessen explains that Kurdistan has been made into a Turkish colony that possesses many attributes of the old feudal system, with feudal landlords, and a parallel integration into the Turkish state that has destroyed its national identity and subjugated the Kurdish people. It is due to these factors that people

²⁵ Miranda Alison, "Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Civil Wars* Vol. 6 No. 4 (Winter 2003), pp. 37-54.

²⁶ "The Wrongs and Rights of Minorities," *Economist*, Vol. 374 Issue 8418, (March 19, 2005).

are willing to join in support of the PKK, who also refers to itself as the ‘National Liberation Army.’ As the only organization to openly resist the Turkish army, the PKK gained support as the number of Turkish police increased in Kurdish areas and it appeared to be their only option in separating from the Turkish government.²⁷

Aliza Marcus, “Hearts and Minds in Kurdistan,” presents the guerilla warfare waged by the PKK to be, in part, a reaction to oppression. It is a movement meant to avenge the treatment of the Kurdish people put on trial in old age and being told their language did not exist and then being persecuted for their ethnic identities. The way the Turkish army handled the ethnic minority added to the increased support of the only group people viewed as truly helping their cause, the PKK. Marcus presents the aim of the government to be to eradicate the Kurdish identity and this is directly correlated to the increase in support for the PKK.²⁸

Palestine

In the article, “There are Many Reasons Why: Suicide Bombers and Martyrs in Palestine,” Lori Allen presents suicide bombing as a phenomenon that Palestinians have begun to view as ‘normal,’ even in the eyes of the children who have grown up in the midst of all of this violence. Allen cites harsh conditions and treatment from the Israeli army as key reasons for individuals choosing to join in the Palestinian groups. Thus, there is a clear political aim, “striking back at the Israeli occupation.”²⁹ According to this argument, living under occupation makes the native people begin to feel desperate and

²⁷Martin Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerilla War and Political Murder: The Workers’ Party of Kurdistan,” *Middle East Report* No. 153 (Jul-Aug., 1988), pp. 40-50.

²⁸ Aliza Marcus, “Hearts and Minds in Kurdistan,” *Middle East Report*, No. 163 (Mar.-Apr. 1990), pp.41-44.

²⁹ Lori Allen, “There Are Many Reasons Why: Suicide Bombers and Martyrs in Palestine,” *Middle East Report*, No. 223 (Summer, 2002), pp. 34-37.

“under conditions where getting from point A to point B is increasingly obstructed by an arbitrary power, martyrdom operations are one means of taking back control.” Other causes presented in the article are religion and conviction, which result in the courage necessary to actually complete the mission. Furthermore, the Palestinian people feel as if they are always in danger of being killed by the Israeli occupying forces, but as suicide terrorists they have the chance of “going out fighting” and with some dignity, in the eyes of the people of the movement.

In a complex and thorough study, Dr. Mohammed M. Hafez offers several reasons why Palestinians become suicide bombers. Hafez contends that “many individual bombers find in religion, nationalism, or community the inspiration to carry out a suicide attack.”³⁰ In Palestine, groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad are engaging in suicide terrorism because of the victimization felt among the people due to the way they are treated by the Israeli army and the ‘provocative actions’ taken by Israel. In addition, Allen argues that “under conditions of asymmetrical power, disadvantaged groups seek to protect their meager financial, material, and human resources, and place a premium on secrecy and organizational maintenance.” Thus, suicide terrorism allows for damage to be done to the enemy without the possibility of losing resources themselves. Adopting suicide terrorism for groups also spawns from the belief that taking action is the only way to work towards self-determination. It is by adopting this extreme motive that groups like Fatah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad may prove their dedication to fight for the nation’s freedom. Adding to these factors is the idea of religious redemption. According to the prophet there are several reasons justifying martyrdom, the first one being “remission of

³⁰ Mohammed M. Hafez, Ph.D., “Manufacturing Human Bombs: Strategy, Culture, and Conflict in the Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers” (April 4, 2005).

one's sin at the moment the martyr's blood shed." They may also enter into the highest gate of heaven, and intercede for seventy relatives in heaven. Overall, Allen makes it clear that the suicide bombers die for "God and country."

In the book *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, Barbara Victor concludes that there are several differences in the motives of male and female suicide bombers in Palestine. She found that the women who decided to become suicide bombers were all trained by a trusted, male family member and had personal problems indefensible within their cultural context. Victor argues that these women were taught that they would only be on an equal plane with men in paradise, and that is on the condition that they sacrifice their lives as martyrs. Overall, Victor concludes that there are over twenty motivating factors for female suicide bombers. Among them are religion, living in a culture of death where people are trained to kill at an early age, revenge, depression, desires for education, equality, independence, and martyrdom, divorce, domestic violence, financial difficulties, extremism, family honor, hopelessness, humiliation by Israeli soldiers, infertility, male bombers, marriage pressures, nationalism, oppression of Israel, pregnancy, rehabilitation victimization of women. She concludes that there is a "fatal cocktail of causes," which results from the combination of the religious desire to be a martyr along with economic and political oppression.³¹

Other Scholars

The preeminent scholar on suicide terrorism, Robert Pape, takes on a rather original and insightful approach in his view of the causes of suicide terrorism. In his book, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Pape argues that the

³¹ Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (United States: Rosdale, 2003).

“presumed connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism is misleading.”³² In order to complete his research, Pape compiled a list of 315 suicide bombings, every attack world wide from 1980-2003 and it is the first complete compilation of its kind. After an in depth analysis of terrorist organizations world wide, Pape concluded that religion was rarely the root cause and that it is instead a desire for foreign, occupying forces to leave their respective homelands. Pape highlights the Tamil Tigers, who are all Hindu but are Marxist group who adamantly oppose religion and desire for a free Tamil Eelam.

In a general overview of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism, Morris and Shahin concluded that it is not at all religion that sparks the desire within the women, and men, who join the terrorist organizations and become martyrs. Instead, they emphasize the importance of ‘nationalistic and ethnic aspirations.’³³ Furthermore, it is a personal desire for glory and a legacy that will be revered within one’s culture that adds to the desire for martyrdom. Under the assumption that many, if not all, suicide terrorists share a common mental state, Morris and Shahin argue that “an untimely death can be a romantic fate to those who are suitably primed psychologically.” Thus, they conclude that the “guerilla talent scouts” seek the most impressionable among the youth to train.

Dr. Evelyn Gerda Lindner argues that the main cause of terrorism is feelings of intense humiliation. Linder proposes that “ethnic, religious or cultural differences do not by themselves create rifts.”³⁴ Instead, these factors are meant to create a platform for cooperation and enrichment. However, when respect is absent one party feels victimized

³² Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York, 2005), p. 3.

³³ Morris and Shahin, “The True Believers,” pp. 40-42.

³⁴ Evelyn Gerda Linder, “Humiliation as the Source of Terrorism: A New Paradigm,” *Peace Research*, Vol. 33 No. 2 (2001), pp. 59-68.

and humiliated, and it is these feelings of inadequacy that lead to differences being highlighted and used to justify acts of terror.

In an in depth study of females in suicide terrorism, Debra D. Zedalis drew several conclusions concerning the motivations and causes of women who enter the terrorist world. Zedalis argues that the differences between male and female motivations to join terrorist organizations are few and far between. Both genders make the decision to become suicide bombers because of a desire for “religious, nationalistic, economic, social and personal rewards.”³⁵ Furthermore, both male and female terrorist believe and are committed to the cause and share in a sense of patriotism and religious duty. Religion provides moral justification, while nationalism is perpetuated through hatred of enemy and feelings of oppression. Furthermore, a suicide bomber of either sex is in the valuable position to enhance their families’ social status and their own reputations.

³⁵ Zedalis, “Female Suicide Bombers,” p. 9.

Chapter 3: Three Main Causes of Female Suicide Bombers: Gender Inequality, the Desire for Political Self-Determination, and a Longing for Revenge

The phenomenon of female suicide bombers has become increasingly prevalent in recent years. With women playing major roles in terrorist organizations in Turkey, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Palestine, it is evident that women are no longer merely mothers, wives, and sisters watching from the wings. Rather, they are center stage in the public arena. As a result of the new female presence in traditionally strictly patriarchal societies, many questions have arisen concerning the causes of the phenomenon. After a close evaluation of the literature, it has become apparent that female and male suicide bombers hold many similarities, indicating that the same desire for political self-determination and for revenge due to feelings of humiliation that drive male terrorists are two primary causes of suicide bombings orchestrated by females. Nonetheless, the first cause that will be discussed is what sets women apart from their male counterparts. For women, suicide terrorism is also motivated by a desire for gender equality. It is this factor that sets female suicide terrorists apart and has led to an increase in female suicide activity in recent history.

Gender Inequality

In societies where it is a well known fact that women are treated as an oppressed second class, suicide terrorism is appealing because it allows women to belong to a group where they are considered equal to men. Furthermore, many of the women involved in terrorist activities are members of ethno-national, political groups because they feel as if the only way to gain liberation for their sex is by first achieving the freedom of their home state. In her book, *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism*, Robin

Morgan illustrates the traditional treatment of women in countries where terrorism is the norm. Morgan writes that women are considered to be the “other” whose “own psychology, ethics, desires, and truths, go underground in her soul. She must deny and deny and deny them.”³⁶ This leads to obvious feelings of inadequacy that make the women even more prone to finding a release in the terrorist organizations, which, at least in rhetoric, promise their female members equality.

The promise of equality shared by the other three terrorist organizations is noticeably absent within the highly conservative and male dominated country of Palestine. However, the guarantee of glory is equally offered to the male and female suicide terrorists, so that they are promised equal status in death, if not in life. In a news report issued by the *Global Information Network*, Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas, the director of the Women’s Center for Legal Aid and Counseling in Jerusalem, was quoted as stating, “Palestinian society regards female suicide bombers the same way as they regard the men, which is they are heroines. They have sacrificed their lives for the public good. They have made a statement about the inhuman and intolerable situation.”³⁷ As a result, the number of female suicide bombers is expected to grow, in part, because many leaders have proposed that it is “an equal opportunity venture for all.” The martyrdom of Palestine’s most famous female suicide bomber, Wafa Idris, is a prime example of this, “A female member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council went even further and determined that ‘Wafa’s martyrdom has restored honor to the national role of the Palestinian woman; [she] has presented us with one of the most awe-inspiring portrayals in the long struggle

³⁶ Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (New York, 1989), p. 197.

³⁷ Fawzia Sheikh, “Mideast: Number of Women Suicide Bombers Expected to Grow,” *Global Information Network* (March 2006).

for national liberation.”³⁸

The state of affairs with Chechnya’s female terrorist organization, the Black Widows, is similar to that of the Palestinians in that the drive towards gender equality is buried beneath the animosity towards the Russian authorities and the deep desire for revenge amongst the women. However, it is also evident that the willingness to die among these women is a form of empowerment in a male dominated world. As will be illustrated later in the chapter, many suicide terrorists act due to a sense of despair and powerlessness. For female terrorists, they have not only been stripped of a voice due to their ethnic group being controlled or oppressed by a foreign government, it is also imposed on them by the limitations placed upon them by their highly conservative societies. In her study concerning the lack of a female voice in the realm of international relations, Jessica West uses the Black Widows as the exemplary group that struggles for its voice to be heard in a society where women are usually silenced. West writes, “The Chechen Muslim culture and national traditions strictly regulate social relations between men and women in a very patriarchal society. As such, women have been particularly targeted for rape by Russian soldiers, resulting in an inability of unmarried women to marry and a likelihood that married women will be divorced. It is in this context that terrorism has emerged.”³⁹ Thus, as West points out, while the voices of Chechnya’s women seem absent on the political stage, joining terrorist organizations empowers women and makes them feel as if they now have a voice that can make a clear statement and be undoubtedly heard.

³⁸ Yoram Schweitzer, “Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?” *Memorandum*, No. 84 (August 2006), p. 22.

³⁹ Jessica West, “Feminist IR and the Case of the Black Widows: Reproducing Gendered Divisions,” *Innovations: A Journal of Politics*, Volume 5 (2004-2005), p. 5.

Analogous to the case in Chechnya, is the situation in Turkey regarding the women active within the PKK. In her article, “Kurdish Women and Self-Determination,” Susan McDonald indicates that, “In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, a number of articles appeared in international law journals discussing the Kurds’ right to self-determination, secession, and the response of the international community to their plight. The voices of Kurdish women and their experiences are notably absent from this discourse.”⁴⁰ McDonald also places an emphasis on the fact that women have long been absent from international policy and their lack of a voice in the world stage causes the marginalization of the women question in countries like Turkey. McDonald notes, “Women have been active in struggles for equality in the developing world since the end of the nineteenth or early in twentieth century. Fighting against an oppressive ruling regime has taken precedence over these struggles...Women are asked to stand united with men in their common ethnicity and to set aside questions of gender equality.” Furthermore, Sara Akan, a representative of the Patriotic Women’s Association, a woman’s group in Turkey stated, “The Process of our people’s liberation determines the process of our women.”⁴¹

More specifically, the PKK has become a major player in the minds of Kurdish women who desire gender equality due to the fact that, Ocalan, the leader of the organization, compares the oppression of Kurdistan to that of women and called for a “double liberation.”⁴² In PKK camps, women were taught, trained, and fought on equal footing with men. This is an important fact when coupled with the manner in which

⁴⁰ Susan McDonald, “Kurdish Women and Self-Determination: A Feminist Approach to International Law” (2000), p. 135.

⁴¹ Ibid. p.135.

⁴² Ibid. p. 148.

Kurdish women are traditionally treated. Overall, they have been subjected to objectification and have been considered subservient like their female counterparts in the aforementioned countries. Kurdish women have never been permitted to express themselves in the private or the public domain and have been limited in their ability to determine their social, economic, and cultural development. Thus, it is no surprise that the Women's Association of Kurdistan, which is linked to the PKK, advocates liberation for Kurdistan and then a movement towards female liberation. It takes the firm position that no Kurdish women may even speak of gender equality before they have secured liberation for their ethnic group, thus providing even more of an incentive for women to take up arms and give their lives as suicide bombers for the PKK.

The group that best exemplifies the desire for gender equality as being a leading cause for females joining the ranks of suicide bombers is the LTTE, or the Liberation Tigers of Eelam from Sri Lanka. Like the Palestinians, females join the LTTE and voluntarily enter into the realm of suicide terrorism because they wish to be viewed as equal to men in heroism.⁴³ Furthermore, as is the case with the PKK, "women's emancipation is seen as symbolizing the emancipation of the nation."⁴⁴ A former LTTE member, given the pseudo-name "Tamilachi" in Miranda's article, spoke of the willingness of the women to fight and how they did so, in part, to earn the respect of the men in the ranks. LTTE women have become committed to women's rights, but it is clear that the liberation of women is second to and dependent on the liberation of the state. What sets the LTTE apart from the aforementioned terrorist organizations is its "official

⁴³ Sunila Abeysekera, "Nations: Women Soldiers On, Too: They Serve on Both Sides, and on the Front." *Asiaweek* (August 1997).

⁴⁴ Miranda Alison, "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security," *Security Dialogue*, Volume 35, Number 4 (2004), p. 455.

ideological commitment to women's liberation and its female cadres are seen to symbolize this."⁴⁵ According to Alison, the independence struggle frames the battle for women's rights in Sri Lanka because four out of the five aims formulated in 1991 include the state of women in Sri Lanka: (1) "to abolish oppressive caste discrimination and divisions, and semi-feudal customs like dowry;" (2) "to eliminate all discrimination against Tamil women;" (3) "to ensure that Tamil women control their own lives;" and (4) "to secure legal protection for women against sexual harassment, rape and domestic violence."⁴⁶ Rhetoric such as the one presented by the leaders of the Tamil Tigers, promising equal rights and an end to the oppression and discrimination towards women make the women within Sri Lanka more than willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the LTTE.

Desire for Political Self-Determination

As explained in the previous section of the chapter, the causes of gender inequality and the desire for political self-determination are virtually inseparable in the case of female suicide terrorists. With the introduction of the desire for political self-determination the causes for both female and male suicide terrorists become one in the same. For many females who make the decision enter into the world of suicide terrorism, it is a nationalistic drive and a desire for political self-determination for their people that lead them onto a path of certain death. Robert Pape argues, "that the cause is usually to push foreign forces from a homeland, in other words, that is nationalism that motivates suicide terrorism."⁴⁷ In an interview with the *American Conservative*, Pape stated, "every

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.455.

⁴⁶ Alison, "Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," p. 45.

⁴⁷ Clark McCauley, "The Politics of Suicide Terrorism," *The Middle East Journal*, Volume 59, Issue 4 (Autumn 2005).

major suicide terrorist campaign – over 95 percent of all the incidents – has had as its central objective to compel a democratic state to withdraw.”⁴⁸

According to Rona M. Field’s study on the politics of martyrdom, “identities cannot be separated from the concept of Otherness. This emphasizes the significance of the politics of memory by demonstrating that reference to national martyrs is the means whereby political leaders maintain the internal cohesion of the group (a process of convergence) and justify their antagonism vis-a-vis others (a process of differentiation).”⁴⁹ Thus, for the occupied areas in question, the use of suicide bombers is vital for the movement towards political self-determination. These violent and determined ethnic minorities illustrate how “majority rule works well only when minorities consider themselves part of the same body politic.”⁵⁰

Once again, the case of the Black Widows’ fight for national liberation is concealed just as a desire for gender equality is hidden under their fiery quest for revenge. However, it is an inescapable fact that these Chechen women are living within a state that has been fighting against Russia for its right to political self-determination for centuries. The conflict within Chechnya dates back to the Caucasian wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the first symbol in Chechen history of the ‘heroic struggle’ towards independence. All throughout Europe there was an increase in nationalism at the time of the First World War; in Chechnya it was no different. Following the war, there were uprisings against Soviet rule in 1922, 1924, 1925, and well into the 1930s. The brutal repressions of Stalin, especially during World War II when he

⁴⁸Quoted in Scott McConnell, “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism: It’s the occupation, not the fundamentalism,” *The American Conservative* (2005), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Rona M. Field, *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice*, (Westport 2004), p. 86.

⁵⁰ Egendorf, ed., *Terrorism: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego, 2000), p. 76.

made unsupported claims that the Chechens were aligned with the Nazis followed by the abolishment of the Chechen republic in 1944 and the deportment of roughly half-a-million people, added to the resentment. The long history of this intense struggle and Soviet policies toward the Chechen people have served to reinforce Chechen solidarity. However, the quest for self-determination entered its most heightened state with the disbanding of the Soviet Union in 1991. It was the immediate catalyst for the violence and civil war that the Black Widows grew out of. Gorbachev's reforms helped add to the nationalistic zeal when he emphasized glasnost and democratization. Chechens adopted the rhetoric of democratization as justification for their call for sovereignty and independence.⁵¹

In her analysis of the long struggle in Chechnya, Gail W. Lapidus argues "that the war in Chechnya was deliberately launched by the Russian leadership in the context of an ongoing struggle over Chechnya's ultimate political status and over the process by which it would be determined. The conflict turned Chechnya's claim to "sovereignty" on the question of whether, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Chechnya was automatically to be considered part of the Russian Federation, as Moscow insisted, or whether its membership in the federation required its formal and explicit consent."⁵² Thus, according to Lapidus, the true question is whether Chechnya will gain its sovereignty or remain "a quasi state, exercising de facto control over its territory but not recognized as an independent state by Russia or by the international community."⁵³ Consequently, the Black Widows are the product of this struggle. Amongst other reasons,

⁵¹ Gail W. Lapidus, "Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya," *International Security*, Volume 23, Number 1 (Summer, 1998), pp. 5-49.

⁵² *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

the Black Widows because their fathers, brothers, sons, and/or friends were killed in the struggle and they not only wish to avenge their death, but also take their place fighting in the struggle for true political self-determination. An example of this cause is the first female bomber in new phase against Russia. In January 2000, she “exploded herself against a Russian Army truck...to place the issue of Chechen independence on the front burner of international attention.”⁵⁴

The women of the PKK and the LTTE are much more evidently fighting for political self-determination. After an extensive study of several regions, Clara Beyler concluded, “In the case of the Sri Lankan and the Turkish organizations, the main and unique rallying criterion is the establishment of a land of their own, based upon a common nationality.”⁵⁵ In Turkey, men and women alike are drawn to the PKK because they are “seen as the only group that is concerned with and fighting for the Kurds.”⁵⁶ The Kurds feel as if they are fighting for their very ethnic identities against “the ban on the Kurdish language, Kurdish publications, Kurdish culture, and organizations,” and “the government’s refusal to recognize an ethnic Kurdish identity and continuing reports of army abuses in the southeast.”⁵⁷

Since Abdullah Ocalan founded the PKK in 1979, the organization “prepared for the armed struggle needed to separate Kurdistan from Turkey.”⁵⁸ The guerillas were trained in Syria and Lebanon with the support of Palestine. In the 1980s, the group established good relations with the Iraqi and Iranian Kurds, and in 1984 the PKK formed

⁵⁴ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York, Columbia University Press), pp. 127-128.

⁵⁵ Beyler, “Messengers of Death: Female Suicide Bombers,” p. 6.

⁵⁶ Marcus, “Heart and Minds in Kurdistan,” p. 42.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.42.

⁵⁸ Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerilla War and Political Murder: The Workers’ Party of Kurdistan,” p. 42.

the “Kurdistan Liberation Brigades and the “Front for the National Liberation of Kurdistan” in 1985. These groups consisted largely of PKK members, while the female members have a special branch in the Women’s Association of Kurdistan. Therefore, like the other oppressed regions in question, the case for the Kurds is one of desperation and hopelessness. There is a feeling that they have no other resort to turn to. It is as if the aggressive actions of the PKK are the only route being taken to independence and the young men and women are willing to join in and fight for the cause.

The case in the LTTE’s struggle in Sri Lanka is similar to what is happening in Turkey. The leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Eelam have also made clear, as the name suggests that the organizations main goal is to liberate the people of Tamil Eelam. In 1991, the aims of the organization were formulated and the primary goal was, “to secure the right to self-determination of the Tamil Eelam people and establish an independent democratic state of Tamil Eelam.”⁵⁹ In the case of female participation in terrorist groups and suicide missions, the LTTE was the leading organization. For the Tamil Eelam, women symbolize the ground on which nationalism and nationalist struggles are played out. ⁶⁰ Thus, as explained in the previous section, by the leaders of the LTTE offering women equality they are symbolically pointing towards the liberation of the Tamil Eelam state from the rest of Sri Lanka. In the article, “Politics-Sri Lanka: Tigers Forming a Shadow State,” Marwaan Markar-Macan argues that while the basic goal of the LTTE is to form a Tamil State, unity is, in part, formulated by placing the suicide bomber in a

⁵⁹ Alison, “Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam,” p. 45.

⁶⁰ Tahira Gonsalves, “Media Manipulations and Agency: Women in the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) of Sri Lanka,” *Ahfad Journal*, Volume 22, Issue 2 (December 2005), pp. 36-52.

place of veneration as if she, or he, was a Hindu god.⁶¹ A prime example of women joining the LTTE due to the desire for political self-determination is the Black Tigress, “Major Santnana...joined the Movement to fight and liberate the Tamils from Sinhalese dominance.”⁶²

Palestine’s fight against Israeli occupation is the most documented and well known struggle among the four territories being examined. In her book, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, Barbara Victor quotes Dr. Shalfic Masalqa in a simple, yet tells all explanation of the Palestinian mindset.

Our mentality is to sacrifice ourselves for the nation...The circumstances of occupation are horrible. They produce killing and suicide bombers. When they [the Israelis] change the Palestinian society will change as well. Because the circumstances have been so terrible for so many years, and because the psychology of the child is so different than the adult, so much more impressionable, we were left with this tragedy. Only if we allow the peace negotiations to proceed can our children have a chance at a normal life.⁶³

Therefore, Dr. Masalqa indicates that it is the Israeli occupation that causes suicide bombers to come about. Palestinians grow up under the harsh conditions of occupation and because of this they are prone to become suicide bombers. Dr. Iyad Sarraj elaborates on the matter in his analysis of Palestinian history from 1948, when Israel was granted statehood, to the first Intifada of 1987. He argues that the peace process following the Intifada only added more despair to the Palestinian people and he reiterates that it is the children growing up in such conditions that turn to suicide bombings. Dr. Sarraj states, “It is true that the failure of the Oslo peace accord created an atmosphere of such profound disappointment and despair that a large portion of the population believed that

⁶¹ Markar-Makar, “Politics-Sri-Lanka: Tigers Forming a Shadow Government,” *Refugees International* (March 2005).

⁶² Robert Pape, *Dying to Win*, p. 195.

⁶³ Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, p. 179.

they had nothing to lose and nothing to live for. Our nation has become one of anger and defiance. The struggle today is how *not* to become a suicide bomber.”⁶⁴ A great example of this cause is the story of the Palestinian bomber, Thouria, who stated she attempted a suicide attack “because I wanted to become a *shahida* and sacrifice myself for Palestine by killing many Jews... I calculated how many Jews I should kill for it to be considered a success, and for it to be worth my death. How many? As many as possible – wherever there was a crowd... I closed my eyes, and dreamed of injuring more than 100 or 200 Jews. A large number. I thought only of that. To sacrifice myself, and that hundreds of Jews would die.”⁶⁵

On behalf of women, Dalai Samaleh, a female politician from Nablus, says, “This [suicide bombing] was a reaction from all Palestinian women that this is their war against Israelis.”⁶⁶ Vera Bakoun, the dean at Bethlehem University, elaborates when she states, “It is the beginning. Other women will do the same...It is our right and our duty to fight in any way that men fight, they should be no difference. We are all victims of the same occupying force.”⁶⁷ Thus, Christoph Reuter is correct when he concludes that the key motivation behind Palestinian suicide bombers is neither poverty nor religious fanaticism. Rather it is the sense of powerlessness and “the thwarting of these expectations.”⁶⁸ He insists that the terrorist is not fanatical, instead she, or he, exhibits, a calculated rationality which has concluded that armed struggle is the only way to get back their dignity and independence.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, p. 233.

⁶⁵ Schweitzer, “Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?” p. 15.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁶⁸ Christophe Reuter, *My Life is a weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton, 2004), p. 10.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

There are several movements within Palestine that work towards the political self-determination of the state and are involved in by women. The first of these is the Intifada, which seeks to end Israel's military occupation of Palestine and "reaffirms the historic Palestinian assertion that the fundamental cause of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians is the persistent colonial denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination."⁷⁰ According to Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in June 1967...conformed to the general practice of imperialism in the Third World."⁷¹ This is because Israel has used the West Bank and Gaza as a "captive market" for goods and services and has turned the population into cheap laborers all the while diverting their water resources. It is because of this that the Palestinian resistance as a whole has been consistent with the plight of colonized people in general. Other organizations, or movements, fighting for the right to political self-determination include Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF). Even Hamas, which is known primarily for its affiliation with Islam and for this reason religion is seen as being at the heart of suicide bombings carried out by the group, was formed during the first Intifada, and the primary grievance of the group is that the Oslo Peace accords are not valid and that the state of Israel has no rights to exist. Similarly, the PIJ is also chiefly concerned with the invalidity of the peace accords with Israel. The PLF has three factions that carry the same name and is widely accepted as a secular group. The faction led by Abu Abbas is the pro-PLO faction, the "umbrella organization" for various Palestinian terrorists groups, and it was their chairman, Yasir Arafat, who

⁷⁰ Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock, ed., *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads*, (New York, 1990), p. 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

signed the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993. As the name suggests, it and its factions are aimed at the liberation of the Palestinian state.⁷²

A Desire for Revenge

A consequence of the detail that these political groups are in occupied areas is that the actions of the government or military officer's causes a passionate and blinding desire for revenge. For female and male terrorists alike, this wish for revenge is often spurred by feelings of humiliation or desperation. They wish to seek vengeance for the death of a loved one or for the oppression of their personal liberties and national identities. Many of the women in these areas have been raped and beaten by enemy soldiers, and, in many cases, they feel that the only vehicle they have for their voices to be heard and to reclaim their dignity is suicide terrorism.

According to Dr. Evelin Gerda Lidner's study, "Humiliation as the Source of Terrorism: A New Paradigm," it is human nature to "yearn for recognition and respect; their denial or withdrawal is experienced as humiliation...When respect and recognition are absent those who feel victimized by humiliation are prone to highlight differences, in order to justify rifts that exist or that are created."⁷³ She goes on to state that deprivation is transformed into a form of unbearable suffering that leads to a desire for retaliation and violent actions only when humiliation is introduced and then "humiliating the humiliator is a just and holy duty."⁷⁴ Finally, Lidner notes that "women have also started to feel that their lives and their dignity, expected to be protected by human rights, are also violated when humiliation is inflicted on them."⁷⁵

⁷² Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, pp. 160-161, 279-284.

⁷³ Lidner, "Humiliation as the Source of Terrorism: A New Paradigm," p. 59.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p.62.

When the suppressed desire for self-determination analyzed in the previous section is taken into account, it is clear that the refusal to allow the men and women of the various ethnic groups their independence is a form of humiliation in itself because it strips them of their national identity and right to govern over their own existences. Thus, all of the groups in question share a similar form of humiliation that generates terrorism within their respective regions.

The LTTE is most known for its quest for political self-determination for the Tamil Eelam people. However, the members of the organization the Liberation Tigers of Eelam have also had a history of conflict with the Indian government. In 1991, Rajiv Gandhi, the prime minister of India, was assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber, who is widely believed to have been female. It is widely believed that the attack was carried out in revenge for the Indian army's bush war against the LTTE on the latter's territory of Jaffna as part of India's role as a sponsor of the accord signed in 1987 with Colombo.⁷⁶ Another conclusion may also be drawn from this argument. India's involvement may also be viewed as another obstacle against the liberation of the Tamil Eelam people. This further adds to the feeling of helplessness and the degradation and humiliation experienced by the Tamil people. In effect, this led to acts of suicide terrorism like the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister.

The desire for revenge also plays an important role in the case of the PKK. Martin van Bruinessen argues, "About half of the approximately 250 "martyrs" the PKK claims were below the age of 22 when they were killed, and almost all were described as of very humble origins. These are precisely the groups most susceptible to rigorous

⁷⁶ S. Ramesan, "Politics-South Asia: India Pressed to Renew Role in Sri Lanka," *Global Information Network* (2003), p. 2.

indoctrinations and most receptive to the party's romantic doctrine of revenge.”⁷⁷

Although the years since van Bruinessen wrote the article in 1985 have witnessed a drastic changes, one aspect of the argument remains accurate. Suicide bombers are no longer merely the poor, uneducated, male and idealistic youth. They are now male and female, young and middle aged, rich and poor. However, the final point of van Bruinessen's argument remains true: the concept of revenge remains a central “doctrine” of the PKK and the majority of other terrorist organizations.

Furthermore, the treatment of the Kurdish ethnic minorities by the Turkish government adds to this rampant desire for revenge. Aliza Marcus reports the opinion of the Turkish sociologist, Ismail Besikic, in her article, “The aim of the state is still the same – to eradicate the Kurdish identity...but the policy has become ‘bankrupt’.”⁷⁸ This treatment of the Kurdish identity is a reflection of the way the Kurds themselves are treated by the Turkish government. By eliminating their ethnic identity, they are challenging the personal power and identities of the Kurdish people. The young people who joined the PKK in the 1990s were children during the brutal wave of repression in the late 1960s and 1970s. This meant they witnessed the humiliation and degradation of “old men put on trial who could only speak through a translator and they heard the judge say the Kurdish language does not exist. This is when they began to think of the problem.”⁷⁹ Thus, the members of the PKK are fighting not only for national liberation, but also for retribution. The men and women suicide terrorists wish to punish those responsible for the suffering of their personal and ethnic families.

⁷⁷ Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerilla War and Political Murder: The Workers’ Party of Kurdistan,” p.45.

⁷⁸ Marcus, “Hearts and Minds in Kurdistan,” p.42.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The third organization, the Black Widows of Chechnya, is defined basically as “women who have lost husbands and brothers, and are willing to kill themselves in revenge.”⁸⁰ These women have taken up arms because the men in their lives, whether it be husbands, brothers, or sons, have been killed by Russian soldiers and they wish to seek revenge in the only way they see possible. Moreover, “in Chechnya, human rights abuses and war crimes are not aberrations but tactics, an integral part of a war that, according to the American aid group, Refugees International, has killed or driven into exile nearly half the Chechen population.”⁸¹ An example of a Black Widow “is...Khaula Nazirov, a 45-year-old widow from Grozny, the Chechen capital. Her 18-year-old son, 16-year-old daughter, and some other relatives were also part of the operation. They attacked the school because Nazirov's husband was tortured to death in a Russian military camp five years ago, while some of her children's cousins were killed when Russian troops bombed a school in Chechnya some years ago.”⁸²

Some Chechen women are also taking up arms due to a much more personal form of degradation and humiliation. Chechnya is similar to Sri Lanka and Palestine on occasion due to the fact that it is one of the many places where gender based crimes are used by the occupying army in order to terrorize the civilian population. In his study on sexual violence used against woman in times of war, LaShawn R. Jefferson writes, “Rape has always meant direct physical harm, trauma, and social ostracism for the victim.”⁸³ For any woman rape is a horrible atrocity. However, when this is coupled

⁸⁰ “Europe: The Black Widows’ Revenge: Chechen Suicide Bombers,” *The Economist*, Volume 368, Issue 8332 (July 2003), p. 32.

⁸¹ Lindsey Hulsum, “The Conflict the West Always Ignores,” *New Statesman*, Volume 17, Issue 791 (2004), p. 24.

⁸² Mir, “Black Widows: Behind Belsan Tragedy,” p. 1.

⁸³ LaShawn R. Jefferson, “In War as in Peace: Sexual Violence and Women’s Status,” *Human Rights Watch* (2004), p. 1.

with a highly conservative Muslim faith, rape causes unexplainable humiliation and ruin, emotions that are so intense that they lead to acts of violence like suicide terrorism.

Women face degrading treatment by the Israeli army in Palestine. In her book, Barbara Victor presents the reader with an example of such humiliation with the story of a young Palestinian woman who was attempted to get a baby to an ambulance. Although the baby's breathing was failing and would certainly die without medical assistance, the Israeli soldiers told the young woman she could only get the baby to the ambulance if she kissed him. Then, "Darine (the girl) tried to reason with the soldiers, explaining that she was a Muslim woman whose head was covered and in her modest attire and deep faith it was a sin to allow a man to kiss her unless he was her husband, and even then never in public. Without warning, one of the soldiers ripped the *hijab* off of her head."⁸⁴ By forcing the young, Muslim woman to show her hair in public was not only a humiliating act, it also brought shame onto her. Actions such as these correlate with the involvement of women in suicide terrorism in search for power over their own bodies and the desire for regained self-respect.

Palestinian women also face a desire for revenge due to the taking of their loved one's lives by the Israeli Army. A prime example is the story of Abu Issa, who "after having been divorced by her husband, was a student at al-Najah University in Nablus, where she was a member of the Islamic Students Union. According to Palestinian sources, her former husband and her brother had both been killed in a clash with Israeli military forces just months after her divorce, and this is what motivated her to become a

⁸⁴ Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, p. 107.

shahida. After Hamas rejected her request to carry out a suicide bombing, PLO activists from the Balata refugee camp near Nablus granted it.”⁸⁵

Victor goes on to explain the state in which women live throughout occupied territories. She wrote, “For women throughout the Occupied Territories, victimization in every aspect of daily life-religion, politics, and the social structures of their own families and communities - becomes the final ingredient in the fatal cocktail.”⁸⁶ Three of the four regions are Islamic nations, meaning that women are subjected to the rule of their male relatives out of pure religious doctrine. Politically, women are subjected to the humiliation of soldiers.

The occupation of Palestine by Israeli soldiers and their mistreatment of Palestinians also adds to the desire for revenge against the occupiers. Jessica Stern devotes an entire chapter of her book, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, to the effect humiliation has on a people. Stern argues that “real or perceived national humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israeli policies, and often by Israeli individuals, has given rise to desperation and uncontrollable rage. Terrorist leaders have learned to harness this sense of outrage to encourage youth to murder Israeli civilians, creating a vicious cycle of atrocities on both sides.”⁸⁷ The despair and humiliation faced by Palestinians is so great that mothers openly display their joy when sons and daughters commit acts of suicide terrorism.

Ehud Sprinzak highlights Hama’s quest for revenge and states, “suicide terrorism has been allowed by Hamas leaders as a measure of tactical revenge for

⁸⁵ Schweitzer, “Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?” p. 15.

⁸⁶ Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*, p. 233.

⁸⁷ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, (New York, 2003), p. 32.

humiliating Israeli actions.”⁸⁸ One of the better examples provided by Sprinzak is the incident of February 1994. Beruch Goldstein, an Israeli physician and army reserve captain, massacred twenty-nine Palestinians praying at a Hebron shrine. This resulted in a mass calling for revenge in which “ Hamas vowed to teach Israelis a lesson they would never forget. The pledge was to put the Jews through a number of infernos of the kind experienced by the Herbonites.”⁸⁹

Dr. Eyad El Sarraj, a Palestinian and Muslim doctor, best exemplifies the way that a desire for revenge due to humiliation is prevalent in Palestine. Sarraj states, “ Let me tell you that the people who are committing the suicide bombings in this Intifada are the children of the first Intifada – people who witnessed so much trauma as children. So as they grew up, their own identity merged with the national identity of humiliation and defeat, and they avenge death as both the personal and national levels.”⁹⁰ During the first Intifada fifty-five percent of children watched their fathers by abused and humiliated by Israeli soldiers. Today the other regions, like Palestine, have a single signal of power – the martyr and almost all children aspire to be suicide bombers when they grown up. Sarraj also states the importance of young people feeling respected and since they are being humiliated in life by the occupying forces, they may as well be liberated in death. This feeling of humiliation is dissolved slowly as the suicide terrorists believe they belong to a group and are working for a powerful cause and turns into sincere anger and hate manifesting itself in acts of terror.

Conclusion

⁸⁸ Egendorf, ed., *Terrorism: Opposing Viewpoints*, p. 82.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ Eyad El Sarraj, “Suicide Bombers Dignity, Despair, and the Need for Hope.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* Volume 31, Number 4 (2002), p. 71.

A longing for gender equality, a desire for political self-determination, and a yearning for revenge spurred by feelings of humiliation are the three primary causes of female suicide bombers in Sri Lanka's LTTE, Turkey's PKK, Chechnya's Black Widows, and the several terrorist organizations in Palestine. It is the first cause, a longing for gender equality, that sets the female suicide terrorist most apart from her male counterparts. These motivations, although legitimate in many different cases, are not to say that the taking of civilian life to service a political agenda is a justifiable act. However, they do make it clear that the suicide bomber, whether male or female, is not an insane fanatic in most cases. Suicide bombers are individuals who have been either physically, psychologically, and/or emotionally oppressed and abused. They long for a voice of their own and often find themselves with no where else to turn. The desperate and alienated state they encounter leads them directly into suicide terrorism.

Chapter 4: Opposing Viewpoints

Section 1

Being that suicide bombers are no longer easy to characterize, and the very idea of a female suicide bomber is contrary to the typical stereotyped figure, there are instances in which feminism, desires for self-determination, and longing for revenge may not be among the primary causes of suicide attacks. There are examples of terrorism in which the terrorist herself has denied that one of these causes is at the heart of her actions. For example, in Rhiannon Talbot's article, "Myths in the Representation of Women Terrorists," it is argued that feminism is not at the center of a female's desire to become a suicide bomber based on the testimony of Leila Khaled, who helped a group of men hijack a plane in 1969. Khaled insisted that she did not consider herself a feminist, nor was feminism her motivation. Thus, Talbot concludes, "the supposition that women who terrorize are liberated from the traditional mores of their society is particularly Western."⁹¹ Talbot further argues the point by stating that, "feminist writers are quick to point out that feminism is not as popular a motive as the stereotype would indicate."⁹² Talbot claims that the act of suicide terrorism is essentially a woman fighting because she wishes to be a man, and no true feminist would do such a thing. Robin Morgan takes this argument further by contending that the idea that female suicide bombers are motivated by feminist ideals is "a barbarage of imbecilities."⁹³ Instead, Morgan argues that the female terrorist acts in order to fit into the male dominated world and fit her role as the self-sacrificing woman.

⁹¹ Rhiannon Talbot, "Myths in the Representation of Women Terrorists," *Eire Ireland*, Volume 35, Number 3/4 (2000), p. 4.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (Markham, 1989), p 195.

Similarly, there are some instances in which the desire for self-determination simply does qualify as a cause of suicide bombings. Theoretically speaking, if women and their male counterparts are choosing to become suicide bombers because they wish to overthrow the oppression of the foreign powers and become an independent self-governed people, a probable solution to such a problem would clearly be to institute a democratic government, one that represents the people and whose officials are elected by the populace. Thus, once this is accomplished, terrorism would no longer be an issue when it concerns groups of internal dissenters. However, according to David C. Rapoport, this is simply not the case and the democratic nations are more vulnerable to suicide attacks from internal rebels than non-democratic countries are. Rapoport argues that the right to vote and the freedom of speech do not necessarily guarantee that an individual will be properly represented or that her voice will be heard. Rapoport utilizes the United States of America as his primary example, writing:

The Weather Underground and related groups, for example, initiated a wave of terror in the 1960s. The Anarchists and the Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies, thrived from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1920s. After the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan had its heyday. And no country in the past one hundred and fifty years has had its head of state assassinated more often than we have.⁹⁴

Rapoport goes on to argue that it is the expectations of democracy, which fail when the person is not in the majority, that agitate citizens and lead to terror. Thus, just because a country does not violently stifle dissent does not mean that the risks of internal terrorist groups are low, and there are cases in which the desire for national self-determination is not one of the leading causes of suicide bombings.

⁹⁴ David C. Rapoport, "Democracy Encourages Terrorism," *Terrorism: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego, 2000), p. 74.

Section II: Alternative Viewpoints

There are also several other models for the primary causes of female suicide terrorism. Two of the most commonly argued are religious motives and economic hardships. In his article, "Religious Fanaticism Motivates Terrorists," Magnus Ranstorp contends that religious fanaticism is a principal motivation for terrorism. He argues that there has been an increase in religious acts of terror around the world, and even though the terrorists have "vastly different origins, doctrines, institutions and practices, these religious extremists are unified in their justification for employing sacred violence, whether in efforts to defend, extend or avenge their own communities, or for millenarian or messianic reasons."⁹⁵ He argues that this is most clear in Islamic groups because religion and politics cannot be separated in Islam. Instead of fighting the oppression faced by native people against foreign powers, Ranstorp argues that the terrorist organizations are fighting secularization and, as a result, they are acting in self-defense against those who are the sources of the evil. He argues that, "this is especially true against perceived colonialism and new-colonialism by western civilizations or against other militant religious faiths."⁹⁶ Thus, Ranstorp diminishes the battle between Jewish Kach and Islamic Hamas to mere religious differences, and writes, "both share a vision of a religious state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, a xenophobia against everything alien or secular which must be removed from the entire land, and a vehement rejection of western culture. The distinction between the faithful and those standing outside the group is reinforced in the daily discourse of the clerics of these terrorist

⁹⁵ Magnus Ranstorp, "Religious Fanaticism Motivates Terrorists," *Terrorism: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego, 2000), p. 60.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 65.

groups.”⁹⁷ Finally, Ranstrop argues that political motivations are ploys in the attempt for terrorists, like the female suicide bombers of Hamas, to promote their “sacred cause.”

David Bukay also explains the motivation behind the group Islamic Jihad as being a simply cut and dry situation: “Those who sacrifice their bodies for jihad win salvation.”⁹⁸ Thus, in Islamic practice the martyr is killed in jihad and is given a special status in paradise and on Judgment Day. The Islamic faith allows for the killing of all “infidels, unbelievers, and hypocrites – those who commit blasphemy or treason – are regulated to hell.”⁹⁹ Bukay argues that jihad is the duty of the Muslim and justified by the Koran, in “the verses revealed by Muhammad after his December 623 expedition to Naklah.”¹⁰⁰ Prominent scholars have identified the principle of *nasik wa-mansukh*, or abrogation, as placing a higher emphasis on violence and jihad. Thus, they would argue, these extremists feel that they are completely justified in their undertakings and relate Muhammad and his successor’s struggles from 626 to 740 with the present day situation. Furthermore, groups like Palestine’s Hamas claim that the jihad is a primary justification for terrorism. Bukay contends that for modern day Muslims, the Western political systems have become “the new Crusaderism” and they must be exterminated by jihad through warfare. Thus, although a suicide terrorist always has more than one cause, some scholars argue that the primary cause and chief justification lies in religion.

A second alternative model is concentrated on economics and views poverty as a chief cause for suicide terrorism. The scholar Allen Hammond recognizes this model as having an important relationship with the acts of suicide bombers around the globe.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ David Bukay, “The Religious Foundations of Suicide Bombings,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Volume 13, Number 4 (Fall 2006), p. 28.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p.31.

Hammond contends that there is an obvious correlation between an increase in economic problems and an increase in terrorism and that it is only through effectively addressing poverty that terrorism can be prevented. Hammond writes, “Growing poverty, desperation, and resentment...provide a fertile recruiting ground to supply troops for the Osama bin Ladens of the world.”¹⁰¹ Hammond notes that there is a growing wealth gap and environmental degradation is making resources scarcer. Furthermore, in countries like the Middle East there are still growing population which means that resources will be further diminished and tensions will be at an all time high. The lack of resources leads the inhabitants of these lands to move to the cities in droves and far faster than decent housing and water supplies can be provided for them. Hammond fears that these conditions, which are becoming apparent in many non-Western countries, may lead to the rise of terrorist movements as he argues they have in Palestinian refugee camps.¹⁰²

Section III

The presence of religion, especially the Muslim faith, in the activities of suicide bombers cannot be denied. The ghastly attacks of September 11, 2001, pushed such religious fanaticism into the forefront of the human mind. However, to argue that religion is a primary cause of suicide bombing is not at all logical when all of the evidence provided by the terrorist organizations themselves is taken into account. The leading argument used by scholars is Hamas, the Palestinian Muslim organization that holds up the jihad as their primary justification for the attacks. However, considering Hamas an organization of mere Muslim extremists is much too simplistic and narrow-minded a view. The reality of the matter is that jihad in its true form condemns the perpetrators of

¹⁰¹ Allen Hammond, “Economic Distress Motivates Terrorists,” *Terrorism: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego, 2000), p.78.

¹⁰² Ibid. pp. 78-79.

suicide to an afterlife in the fires of hell. In Islam, life is seen as a sacred gift and the taking of one's own life is a severe violation of Allah's law.¹⁰³ However, it has been established, things are not this simple in Islam and there are conflicts among Islamic groups concerning the status of the Jihad in religious theology and emphasis is placed on different passages to prove contrasting points of view on the Koran. Still, it is important to point out the absence of any religious doctrine in the Black Widows of Chechnya, the PKK of Turkey, and the LTTE of Sri Lanka. They are all clearly secular and religion is noticeably absent from their politically motivated organizations. Even in the case of Palestine, the PLO is clearly concentrated on liberation from Israeli forces and not on ridding the world of infidels.

However, the case of Hamas still poses the question of religion, and seems to promote the argument that religion could be, in at least some cases, a primary cause of suicide terrorism. It could be conceded that religion is among the secondary causes, but the reality is that the only reason religion has any place in Hamas is because, as Ranstop noted, the Palestinian state and Muslim religion are inextricably linked. This argument, however, makes evident that religion is only involved as a seemingly leading cause in Hamas because of its relationship to the political institution. Thus, if Hamas was not Muslim but still occupied and humiliated by Israeli forces there would still be suicide terrorism. However, if Hamas was still Muslim but not occupied there would be little cause for these terrorist activities to take place. Countless scholars have noted that the underlying reason behind Hamas' undertaking of jihad is because of the humiliation and

¹⁰³ Munaweer A. Anees, "Salvation and Suicide: What Does Islamic Theology Say?," *Dialog*, Volume 45 Issue 3 (Fall 2006), pp. 275-277.

oppression Palestinians face. Robert Pape provides support for this argument when writes in regard to the first Intifada:

We do know that Islamic fundamentalism did not play role in the initiation of the rebellion. The first Intifada was largely a spontaneous uprising of independent grassroots activists and was quickly supported by the main Palestinian nationalist organization, Fatah, a secular movement. The most important Islamist organization that has played a role in Palestinian politics and in suicide terrorism, Hamas, did not yet exist in 1987. One factor that probably did contribute significantly to the rise and persistence of the Palestinian rebellion was the increasing encroachment of Jewish settlers on Palestinian land.¹⁰⁴

The second alternative model, which is based on economic factors, is also flawed. Although it may have been true of the older terrorist model, the new terrorist defies all stereotypes and has come to include sons of millionaires. In his field work Bruce Hoffman discovered,

...contrary to popular belief, the bombers are not drawn exclusively from the ranks of the poor but have included two sons of millionaires. (Most of the September 11 terrorists came from comfortable middle- to upper-middle-class families and were well educated.) The Israeli journalist Ronni Shaked, an expert on the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas, who writes for *Yedioth Ahronoth*, an Israeli daily, has debunked the myth that it is only people with no means of improving their lot in life who turn to suicide terrorism. 'All leaders of Hamas,' he told me, 'are university graduates, some with master's degrees. This is a movement not of poor, miserable people but of highly educated people who are using [the image of] poverty to make the movement more powerful.'¹⁰⁵

Thus, although economic hardships may lead to acts of suicide terrorism poverty alone cannot stand as a leading cause. To be effective, terrorism must be a mass movement and terrorists are most certainly aware of this. When national pride is at stake, all the land's inhabitants join together. This is a fact proven time and time again throughout history.

¹⁰⁴ Pape, *Dying to Win*, p.48.

¹⁰⁵ Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism, pp. 2-3.

Thus, the rich and the poor come together and the money is provided for the cause, making suicide terrorism possible.

Women come into the picture because any act done by them in patriarchal countries can be viewed as political. Their joining a terrorist organization sends a message to other women and to the men around them. In a tragic sense, it is their way of claiming their right to a fruitful life. They are even less likely to be motivated by the religious system that has, in some cases, kept them oppressed. Furthermore, women have always possessed less economically than men, especially in cultures where suicide terrorism is most prevalent. Instead, women desire the liberation of their male counterparts so that she may also be liberated. They desire the return of their country's honor and pride as a sign of their own restoration and achievement of political rights. Thus, they are primarily motivated by their feminist desire, a desire further sparked by the aspirations she shares with her male counterparts, a yearning for self-determination and seeking revenge spurred by the humiliation caused by the foreign occupation. Robert Pape best summarizes this projection of the female sex's concerns onto the nation's liberation when he quotes Nanadini, a female LTTE fighter, when she describes how she views her organization. She states, "As Black Tigers, they are the physical embodiment of self-determination and liberation."¹⁰⁶ Thus, these organizations are, tragically, the female suicide bombers' only sense of hope.

¹⁰⁶ Pape, *Dying to Win*, p. 143.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The massive effect of the female suicide bomber on the public psyche simply cannot be overlooked. Something as innocent as a pregnant woman or a mother carrying a child could indeed be a mere decoy for a suicide attack. Thus, through the use of the element of surprise female suicide bombers provide terrorist organizations with a prime tactical advantage because of the hesitancy to check females for bombs.

However, it is the motivations of these attacks that lead women to these acts of desperation. With the examples of Palestine, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, and Turkey fresh in mind, it is evident that the religious and environmental models are far too simplistic to be considered primary causes of the suicide attacks. The Islamic religion believes in the sanctity of life and it is clear that these countries have national liberation and not religious freedom in the forefront of their minds. Furthermore, many of the suicide bombers have been proven to be from middle to upper class families, which obviously proves that economic hardship cannot be seen as a primary cause of suicide terrorism. The three causes that are most evidently the main examples of this phenomenon are gender inequality, a desire for national self-determination, and a longing for revenge. It is clear that the female suicide bomber is desperately seeking to regain self-respect and control, fighting off the male dominated world and the double humiliation that they are forced to overcome as both the second sex and members of an occupied region. They are, for the most part, in no way irrational and barbaric, and many feel as if they have made the most logical choice available to them in order to assert their strength and enable themselves to have a voice within their patriarchal societies. It is this “fatal cocktail” that

leads the women of the PKK, LTTE, Black Widows, and several Palestinian organizations to go above and beyond the call of duty for their national groups. Robert Pape best exemplifies this argument when he writes, “Most suicide terrorism is undertaken as a strategic effort directed toward particular political goals; it is not simply the product of irrational individuals or fanatical hatreds.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Pape, *Dying to Win*, p. 27.

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