WOMEN SUICIDE BOMBERS:
AN INVISIBLE OR VIABLE THREAT?

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the use of women as suicide bombers to determine if women are an effective tactic of warfare employed by terrorist organizations. Specifically, the principles of war originally introduced by Carl von Clausewitz that have since been adopted by modern Western militaries will serve as the framework from which to evaluate the effectiveness of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare. The employment of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare will clearly delineate suicide terrorism as a tactic and not as an ideology, free from the bounds of morality. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealem in Sri Lanka and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Palestine are the two terrorist groups that will be examined using the Canadian Forces' Principles of War for they have both employed women as suicide bombers during their operational campaigns. Of importance will be the discussion surrounding the socially constructed roles of women within patriarchal societies and associated gender biases from which women suicide bombers tend to emerge. An historical perspective on the history of suicide terrorism to include the wave of women as suicide bombers, a woman's role within a terrorist organization and potential motivations will also be presented. The results of the analysis for both organizations suggests that the use of women as suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare was indeed effective in accordance with the principles of war. In particular, the study indicates that at certain times, in certain places, under certain conditions, women have the competitive advantage as an invisible, yet viable threat as a suicide bomber.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to the Combat Terrorism Centre, an independent research institute at West Point Military Academy in the United States, there were 1,944 suicide attacks that took place between 1981 and 2008.[1] Of those attacks, women represented nearly fifteen percent of the overall number of suicide bombers around the world including those intercepted in the final stages before the attack.[2] While men continue to dominate the spectrum of suicide terrorism, the inclusion of women employed as suicide bombers by terrorist organizations remains a challenging, yet fascinating field of study.

The challenge with the study of women in suicide terrorism is directly related to the fact that the end state often results in the woman killing herself which means that researchers will never know the exact details regarding the attack. As a result, the literature regarding women suicide bombers remains largely descriptive, plagued with speculation and supported with limited empirical evidence. For those women who survived the attack or whom were caught, the challenge lies in the fact that even though they survived, we may still never get the answers. For example, it has been documented that women in Israeli prisons have changed their stories as they are interviewed by various reporters and as time goes on, the story changes.[3] In addition to the difficulties

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[1] Assaf Moghadam, "Shifting Trends in Suicide Attacks," *CTC Sentinel* 2, iss 1 (January 2009), 11. Available from http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/CTCSentinel-Vol2Iss1.pdf; Internet accessed; 20 April 2011.

[2] Moghadam, "Shifting Trends in Suicide Attacks," Internet accessed; 20 April 2011.

[3] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 156.

associated with the lack of practical evidence, the sample set for the actual number of women who have conducted suicide attacks is indeed smaller than that of men. Notwithstanding these limitations, this paper will attempt to make tentative conclusions regarding the use of women as suicide bombers.

For the purpose of this paper, terrorism will be used in the context as a tactic of warfare versus terrorism as an ideology. Specifically, the use of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare will be explored to determine if women are indeed an invisible or viable threat. Looking at terrorism from a tactics point of view enables us to draw upon military doctrine such as those proposed by Carl von Clausewitz to assess warfare tactics within the spectrum of conflict. The grounding of suicide terrorism within a doctrinal framework will reinforce the relevance of these concepts when referring to terrorism as a tactic of warfare. Although the work of Clausewitz and the applicability of his theories to modern warfare is an issue of debate among academics and military strategists alike, the doctrinal tenets proposed by Clausewitz remain relevant in the manner through which warfare is assessed today. As such, this paper will use Clausewitz's doctrinal concepts as the point of departure for discussions regarding suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare.

It is with intention that this paper will refer exclusively to suicide bombers as women and not as females. The reason for this distinction is based on "gender" versus "sex." The designation of "male" and "female" is derived purely from science in that human beings are born either as male or female – it is our sex, given to us by nature and technically cannot be altered. "Men" and "women," however, are gender related terms that are socially constructed. From the social studies of human behaviour, the gendered roles of men and women are defined; attitudes toward each gender are distinguished and

stereotypes and perceptions are developed. Recognizing that gender biases are derived as a result of social conditioning within specific societies, the societies from which women emerge as suicide bombers will play an important role in assessing the effectiveness of women suicide bombers.

With a clearer understanding of the challenges associated with the study of suicide terrorism, the distinction of terrorism as a tactic versus an ideology and greater appreciation for the gendered nuances associated with suicide terrorism, we can begin to understand the significance of women suicide bombers. As such, the purpose of this paper is to address the effectiveness of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare; independent of moral judgment and free from ideological influences.

The principles of war theorized by Clausewitz that have since been interpreted and incorporated as doctrine in modern Western militaries will serve as the framework for this analysis. The Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Palestine will serve as case studies for they have both employed women as suicide bombers in support of their operations. The application of the modern principles of war against these two organizations that employed women as suicide bombers will serve as the analytic tool from which the effectiveness of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare will be assessed.

In order to gain a greater appreciation for the complexities surrounding terrorism and suicide bombers, this paper will commence by first framing the terrorism phenomenon. Chapter Two will address the difficulties in defining terrorism, introduce suicide terrorism as one of the tactics used by terrorist groups and will conclude with the emergence of women as suicide bombers. Chapter Three will build upon the introduction

of women onto the world stage as suicide bombers and will briefly provide a history of "firsts" of women bombers. This chapter will further expand upon the various roles of women in terrorist organizations from which they can emerge as agents of violence and will attempt to provide brief insights into the theories regarding the many motivations as to why women become suicide bombers.

Chapter Four will return to Clausewitz to further develop the debate regarding his work and its applicability to modern warfare. It is in this chapter that recognition of terrorism as a tactic from which the relevance of doctrine is incorporated, that we are able to draw upon Clausewitz's principles of war and their interpretation as doctrine in three Western militaries today – the United States Military Services, the British Defence Force and the Canadian Forces. The Canadian Forces' principles of war, underpinned by Clausewitz's original theories will be selected as the framework from which to conduct the analysis to determine the effectiveness of women suicide bombers as a warfare tactic.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six will evaluate the use of women suicide bombers by the two terrorist organizations – the LTTE and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in accordance with the principles of war that govern the conduct of warfare. The results of these analyses will be highlighted in Chapter Seven to include a brief discussion on the operational similarities and differences of each organization. This section will also aim to provide tentative conclusions regarding the effectiveness of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare.

Chapter Eight will summarize the findings of the analysis conducted, reinforce generalized conclusions on the effectiveness of women suicide bombers and make recommendations for areas requiring additional study.

CHAPTER TWO

FRAMING THE TERRORISM PHENOMENON

Defining Terrorism

"I can't define it but I know when I see it…"[4]

In light of approximately two hundred extant definitions of terrorism, there is no one widely accepted or agreed upon designation of this phenomenon.[5] Governments, individual agencies within governments and private companies have each developed and adopted their own definitions of terrorism while academic experts have proposed and analyzed dozens of definitional constructs.[6] Irrespective of the disparities, when an act of terrorism has been committed and broadcast in the comfort of your home – authors, scholars, and indeed society know exactly what terrorism is despite the lack of consensus regarding its definition.

In his book, *Inside Terrorism*, Bruce Hoffman dedicated his entire first chapter in describing the phenomena of terrorism and offered that one of main reasons as to why terrorism is so difficult to define is because the meaning of the term has changed so frequently over the past two hundred years. The understanding of terrorism has been consistently used to accommodate political discourse and has proved increasingly elusive

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[4] Maria Alvanou, "Criminological Perspectives on Female Suicide Terrorism," in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 98. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Femalesuicidebombers Jaffee_ Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

[5] David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader* 3rd ed. (Milton Park: Routeledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 10.

[6] Gus Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism: Concepts and Controversies* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2008), 6.

in construct of a consistent definition. Despite the lack of unanimity on what kind of

violence constitutes an act of terrorism, there is conformity that "terrorism" is a

pejorative term with intrinsically negative connotations.[7] Robert Pape, author of *Dying to*

Win, states that terrorism, "…involves the use of violence by an organization other than a

national government to intimidate or frighten a target audience," with a view, "…to gain

supporters and to coerce opponents."[8] Appreciating the challenges associated with

achieving a common definition of terrorism, this paper will recognize the works of

Hoffman and will define terrorism as, "…the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear

through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change."[9]

Terrorism continues to be used throughout the spectrum of conflict worldwide

and the tactics of terrorism are similar to those tactics employed throughout the history of

mankind. From the battles of antiquity when Emperor Julius Caesar reigned to expand

the Roman Empire to the conquests of Genghis Khan to the global war on terrorism in the

twenty-first century, the deliberate use of terror as a tactic of warfare to inflict fear in the

pursuit of political change continues to be extremely effective. In Jonathan White's

book, *Terrorism – An Introduction*, he offers that there are six terrorist tactics: bombings,

hijacking, arson, assault, kidnapping and taking hostages.[10] Suicide bombings have thus

emerged from bombings as a tactic of warfare.

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[7] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism: Revised and Expanded Edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 23.

[8] Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 9.

[9] Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism: Revised and Expanded Edition…*, 40.

[10] Jonathan R. White, *Terrorism: An Introduction* 3rd ed. (California: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), 16.

Suicide Terrorism – The Worst Kind

With an accepted definition of terrorism, the phenomenon of suicide terrorism can now be introduced and explained. The challenges associated with defining terrorism equally apply to suicide terrorism and as a result, research continues to be plagued by the lack of a common definition of the concept, according to Martha Crenshaw.[11] The Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) defines suicide bombings as an, "operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator… [Aimed at] striking a blow to public morale."[12] Hoffman complements these definitions and agrees that suicide terrorism distinguishes itself from all other forms of terrorism because the perpetrator's own death is an essential requirement for the attack's success.[13]

Synonymous with suicide bombers is the idea of martyrdom. Martyrs are often celebrated for having died for their faith. The difference between Assassins of the past and suicide terrorists today is that the Assassins killed specific individuals whereas, suicide bombers today, generally kill random people whose only misfortune was being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

The dawn of modern suicide bombings is generally dated to 23 October, 1983 when the terrorist organization Hezbollah launched a suicide attack on the United States Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, that killed 241 Unites States Marines and fifty-eight

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[11] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 135.

[12] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 10.

[13] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism: Revised and Expanded Edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 132.

French nationals.[14] After the success of this and similar Hezbollah suicide attacks, other

terrorist organisations started to adopt this tactic: the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka in 1987,

the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas in Israel in 1994, the Kurdistan Workers Party in

Turkey in 1996, and al-Qaeda in 1998. Above all, the suicide terror attack against the

United States on 11 September, 2001 catapulted suicide bombings into a global threat

because it showed how easy it is for terrorists to operate in a free and democratic

environment.[15]

　　　　Suicide terrorism is an emotionally laden term commensurate with negative

connotation that contributes to the difficulties in determining its precise definition. Yet,

when a suicide bomber strikes, regardless of the lack of definition, it can be derived that

the suicide attack is indeed terrorism at its best and of the worst kind.

Power of Suicide Bombers

　　　　"…the Scuds of Saddam [in 1991] never caused as much psychological damage

as suicide bombers have."[16] It is widely recognized that suicide terrorism is specifically

designed to have far reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victims or

object of the terrorist attack by instilling fear within, and thereby intimidating, a wider

"target audience." The enduring mental effects of suicide terrorism coupled with the

publicity generated by their violence enable terrorists to obtain the leverage, influence

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[14] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1023.

[15] David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader* 3rd ed. (Milton Park: Routeledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 18.

[16] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism: Revised and Expanded Edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40.

and power they would otherwise lack to effect political change. Terrorists do not limit the influence of their violence and rely on the media to amplify the terror-producing effects to society at large far beyond the actual victims.[17] Suicide terrorists invoke the psychological effects of fear and helplessness necessary to influence a target audience and serve as one of the reasons why suicide bombers continue to be used as a weapon of choice in effecting political change.

The suicide terrorist is the "ultimate smart bomb," a human missile where the human being has the flexibility to reach the designated target and the power to decide the time and location of detonation.[18] Controlled timing, controlled access and controlled detonation are what make the human smart bomb lethal in its employment. Lethal, effective and capable of yielding devastating results are only a few of the reasons why terrorist organizations continue to employ suicide terrorists to affect strategic goals.

Suicide operations are simple and low risk in that they require neither an escape route nor a rescue mission because one of the criteria for success is determined by the fact the perpetrator kills him or herself. They are recognized amongst terrorist organizations as low-cost and low-technology operations that are capable of yielding spectacular results. A suicide bomber's weapon is made of nuts, bolts, metal shards, screws and ball bearings packed together with a homemade explosive and then strapped to the body of a terrorist and dispatched accordingly. For approximately one hundred and

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[17] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1029.

[18] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism: Revised and Expanded Edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 132.

fifty dollars, the ultimate human smart bomb can easily guide its ordnance within close proximity of the designated target.[19]

A highly adaptable and controllable tactic, suicide bombings are of instrumental value to an organization.[20] The guarantee of random mass casualties and the extensive physical and psychological damage that follows a suicide bombing continues to entice terrorists to employ suicide bombers. The immense impact that suicide bombings have on the global population through the media frenzy that bombing operations solicit indirectly becomes the voice of the terrorist organization that can solicit international support and sympathy.

The power of suicide terrorism cannot be underestimated. A suicide bomber can gain access to high value targets, randomly kill innocent people; terrify a populace all the while signaling resolve and dedication to a cause.[21] Common wisdom holds that such a strategy is extremely difficult to deter because of the perpetrator's willingness to die.[22]

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[19] Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The Atlantic Monthly* (June 2003): 42.

[20] Martha Crenshaw, "Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of "Suicide Terrorism," *Political Psychology*, Volume 3, no. 3 (2009): 160.

[21] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 60-65. Premier Rajiv Gandhi of India was killed by a female suicide bomber in 1991 followed by President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993. Suicide attacks against the Israeli population in cafes, bus stops, restaurants and shopping districts have resulted in the random killing of hundreds of innocent Israelis throughout the second intifada. Cause for action has been attributed to nationalism and recognized independence.

[22] Martha Crenshaw, "Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of "Suicide Terrorism," *Political Psychology*, Volume 3, no. 3 (2009): 141.

While it is not only difficult to deter the perpetrators from conducting these attacks, the

employment of women as the perpetrator gives rise to another dimension in the use of

suicide attacks as a tactic within the spectrum of conflict.

Rise of Women in Suicide Terrorism

The description of suicide terrorism as "a synthesis of war and theatre" serves as a

perfect stage for the entry of women as combatants into what was once a male-dominated

arena.[23]

The emergence of women as suicide bombers is evidence that there is no longer a

standard profile – we cannot generalize or type cast a suicide bomber. Today, suicide

bombers are young, old, educated, uneducated, married, single, male and female.   The

daring terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 further illustrated the complexity of

suicide terrorism and emphasised the lack of resources focusing on the role of women

within terrorist organizations.[24]

Women who were once regarded only in support roles either as logisticians,

intelligence gatherers and arms smugglers have risen as operational leaders and fighters

within various terrorist organizations. The marked increase in the number of women

becoming involved in terrorist activity demonstrates a shift in the nature of terrorism. In

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[23] Debra D. Zedalis, "Female Suicide Bombers." The Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, (June 2004). Available from http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location =U2&doc= GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA424180; Internet; accessed 20 January 2011.

[24] Suzanne Graham, "Mother and Slaughter: A Comparative Analysis of the Female Terrorist in the LRA and FARC," Available from http://www.jutaacademic.co.za/ africanpolitics/ chapters/chapter10.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

certain terrorist groups, the roles played by women have changed and are more visible than ever before.[25]

The Council on Foreign Relations reports that women performed about one-third of the suicide missions within the ranks of the LTTE from 1983 to 2009 and two-thirds of the attacks within the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) from 1996 to 1999.[26] Women suicide bombers have been carrying out aggressive attacks against Russia since 1999 as part of Chechen Black Widows.[27] In 2002, women joined the ranks of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Palestine and have conducted a series of successful suicide missions against Israel and as recently as December 2010, a woman Taliban suicide bomber detonated her vest killing forty two Pakistani civilians at a World Food Program distribution point.[28]

The success of these and other suicide attacks by women is indicative that there is not only precedence for the participation of women in both secular and religious-based terrorism but that there is an appetite to continue to employ women as suicide bombers. The steady increase in the use of women suicide terrorists also indicates that analysts and leaders failed to anticipate the emergence of women as violent militant actors.[29] The use

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[25] Graham, "Mother and Slaughter: A Comparative Analysis of the Female Terrorist in the LRA and FARC…"

[26] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 25.

[27] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1028.

[28] Bill Roggio, "Female Suicide Bomber Kills 42 People in Pakistan's Northwest" *The Long War Journal*, (December 2010). Available from http://www. Longwar journal.org/archives /2010/12/female_suicide_ bombe_4.php#ixzz1FV1vEVNV; Internet; accessed 2 March 2011.

[29] Karla Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, (2007): 113.

of women bombers exacerbates the already potent psychological effect of suicide

terrorism by creating a more horrific impact because a woman blowing herself goes

against the fundamental notion that women are the givers of life and not the takers of life.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN AS SUICIDE BOMBERS

"[W]hat has to do with war, must be assigned to women also, and they must be used in the same ways."[30]

A History of "Firsts" for Women as Suicide Bombers

The plight of women in an otherwise male-dominated world – the world of warfare has reached a turning point in the use of women as suicide bombers by terrorist organizations in their attempt to affect political change. While women have always played a role in warfare, the opportunity afforded to them as suicide bombers and the success they continue to achieve is a key reason why they remain a legitimate threat to society.

The rise of women as suicide terrorists did not happen instantaneously, but rather, women arrived onto the stage of conflict in successive waves. The underpinnings of these waves were mostly from patriarchal societies where women have been relegated to the traditional roles of care giver and home maker.[31] The first wave of women bombes occurred in Lebanon in the mid 1980s – they were secular members of the communist Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) who conducted suicide car bomb attacks against the Israeli military and the Israeli supported South Lebanon Army from 1985-

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[30] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 7.

[31] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 399.

1987.[32] Khyadali Sana was the very first successful female suicide bomber of modern terrorism. On 9 April 1985, at sixteen years of age, Sana drove a car filled with explosives into an Israeli Defence Convoy killing two Israeli soldiers. The impact of this operation was felt worldwide and the success of the first female suicide bomber would set the conditions for a wave of women to follow.

One of the most high-profile political assassinations in modern history occurred at the hands of a female terrorist and marked the second wave of female suicide operatives. On 21 May 1991, Tamil Nadu, a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. In placing a wreath around his neck at a political rally, she bent down to touch his feet as a sign of respect and detonated a suicide belt hidden beneath her clothes.[33]

From 1996-1999, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) carried out a series of attacks against Turkish military and police targets using female suicide bombers. The first female PKK suicide bomber killed six Turkish soldiers and injured thirty people.[34] PKK operatives strapped their explosive devices to their stomachs to give the appearance of being pregnant. Time and again, this tactic proved extremely effective and became the standard from which to conduct suicide attack operations for the PKK.

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[32] Fred Burton, and Scott Stewart, "On the Cusp: The Next Wave of Female Suicide Bombers?" *Strategic Forecasting* (September 2007), 2.

[33] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 1.

[34] Clara Beyler, "Chronology of Suicide Bombings Carried out by Women," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*. (December 2003). Available from http://www. ict.org.il/articles/tabid/66/ articlsid /645/default.aspx; Internet; accessed 16 January 2011.

The infamous Chechen "Black Widows" have been aggressively involved in

suicide attacks against Russian military targets in Chechnya and against civilian targets in

Russia from 2000 to 2004. On 9 June 2000, Hawa Barayev, a young Muslim woman

drove into a building housing Russian Special Forces, killing twenty-seven soldiers.

Women militants played visible roles in the dramatic Chechen hostage operations during

the October 2002 seizure of a Moscow theatre and again during the September 2004

seizure of a school in Beslan.[35] Throughout the war, there were a total of 110 suicide

bombers, forty-seven of whom were women of which twenty-five were considered

successful.[36] The continued employment of women suicide bombers as an operational

tactic in support of the Chechen conflict is illustrative of the wave of women that were

emerging from other societies to support their cause as suicide bombers.

Although the second *Intifada* began in September 2000, Palestinian militant

groups only started using women as bombers in 2002 when Israeli security forces

instituted severe security measures that prevented most of the male suicide bombers from

reaching their targets. Wafa Idris became the first female suicide bomber to attack Israel

during this period on 27 January 2002, when she boldly walked into a shopping district

on Jerusalem's Jaffa Road and blew herself up. She killed one man and wounded ninety

people.[37] Following her attack, seven other Palestinian women committed successful

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[35] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1028.

[36] Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "Black Widows: The Chechen Female Suicide Terorrists," in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 63. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Female_suicide bombers_Jaffee_ Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

[37] Maria Alvanou, "Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism and Honor Culture," *The Homeland Security Review* 2, no.1 (Winter 2008): 8.

suicide attacks. The fact that Palestinian women were being employed as suicide

bombers in another society in support of a different cause signifies a trend in the use of

women as suicide attackers.

The coalition war in Iraq did not escape the wave of suicide bombers and faced

the troubling development of suicide terrorists. From 2003 to 2006, the rate of female

suicide bombers in Iraq was relatively low with only five attacks in three years. In April

2003, the first two female Iraqi suicide bombers blew up their car at a coalition

checkpoint and killed three soldiers.[38] In 2007, the increase was exponential. Nearly

fifty women conducted suicide attacks in Iraq with more than twenty occurring in 2008

alone.

This section has revealed many firsts in the evolution of women as suicide

bombers and also suggests that the concept of women suicide bombers has gained

widespread acceptance within terrorist communities. Although the motivations of suicide

attackers vary greatly, women bombers continue to be a troubling development for

society. While there is indeed a natural desire to deter women from participating in such

violent tactics, there is little evidence to suggest that the wave of women suicide terrorists

in the twenty-first century will be any different from those who have gone before. The

only question that remains certain is who will be the next first woman suicide bomber to

make history?

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[38] Ali Farhana, "Dressed to Kill: Why the Number of Female Suicide Bombers is Rising in Iraq," *Newsweek* (July 2008). Available from http://www.rand.org/commentary v /2008/07/30/NW.html; Internet; accessed 6 March 2011.

The Power of Women as Suicide Bombers

The employment of suicide bombers is a powerful weapon of warfare as it maximizes target destruction and instils fear. A successful suicide bomber not only kills the designated target, the psychological impact of a suicide attack is often overwhelming because the attack instils panic, shock and trepidation. Add a woman to the equation and the shock value and psychological impact is much higher.[39] Simply stated, the social conditioning of women as non-threatening and non-violent members of society is what actually empowers their effectiveness. Their effectiveness results from an important nexus: the ingenuity and capabilities of women attackers themselves, the rational calculations of the terrorist organization and the short sightedness of security officials in prosecuting women.[40] The paradigm of using women as suicide attackers is that their potential is often ignored and diminished and as a result their attacks are almost always unanticipated, underestimated, and highly effective. In other words, women bombers are able to achieve a level of unprecedented surprise that is not only valuable; this element of surprise is consistent with Clausewitz's principles of war.[41] The ability to gain the advantage by achieving surprise is what contributes to their effectiveness and why women continue to be employed to carry out suicide missions.

Women of patriarchal societies are often seen as having a lower social status than that of its men. They are primarily viewed as mothers and care-givers within the family

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[39] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 401.

[40] Karla Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, (2007): 122.

[41] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 145.

unit and are not always afforded the liberties of being an equal partner based on the social stereotypes of the woman's role within their society. Women within these societies often assume a level of invisibility because of their lower social status.[42] Her level of perceived invisibility that is directly attributed to her lower social status allows her to navigate society without suspicion, while simultaneously amplifying her ability to achieve the element of surprise, making her the ideal stealth weapon of warfare.

The superior effectiveness of women as suicide terrorists provides an unparalleled media dimension that male suicide bombers are not always able to achieve. The research conducted for this paper did not reveal evidence to support the actual numbers regarding the reporting of women versus men as suicide bombers. The study only provided generalizations that women suicide bombers tend to garner significantly more media attention than men because the "thought of those who bring forth life actually destroying it is disturbing."[43] The idea of women acting as agents of violence runs completely counter to the social expectations of femininity. Media images of women terrorists serve as powerful propaganda tools for the terrorist organizations attracting widespread publicity, garnering sympathy for the cause while disseminating the organization's message to a wider audience. The level of global media attention that women bombers are able to obtain further contributes to their level of effectiveness for terrorist organizations, thus the probability that terrorist groups will continue to employ women as a weapon of warfare remains likely.

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[42]Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1045.

[43] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 401.

It appears as if the use of women as suicide bombers is an efficient weapon that also has the ability to achieve a tremendous level of surprise. Women within traditional societies are often viewed as having a lower social status than men whose roles should be limited to that of care-giver and home-maker. In addition, her lower social status lends itself to a degree of invisibility. As an "invisible" woman within her society embracing the role of a suicide bomber, the level of surprise that she is able to achieve is directly attributed to the fact that she has fulfilled a role outside the accepted norms of her society. The follow-on media frenzy of her attack coupled with the level of surprise she has achieved indicates that women have the potential to be more effective than their male counterparts. For these reasons, women suicide bombers will continue to be a viable threat to society and they will continue to be employed by terrorist groups.

From Womb to Warrior – The Role of Women in Terrorist Organisations

The role of women within terrorist organisations varies greatly and, while the world audience may only be subjected to the roles of the woman suicide bomber, a woman has the potential to assume myriad roles within a terrorist movement. For the purpose of this essay, this section will explore the roles of women as supporters in a logistics capacity, operational facilitators in their capacity as recruiters and as an agent of violence as a suicide bomber.

The success of terrorist organisations is greatly dependent on their ability to conduct and sustain logistic operations. For suicide bombing operations in particular, the manner in which explosive materials are sourced, financed, transported, prepared and employed for a specific operation is dependent on a sound logistics plan. In their book

Women as Terrorists, Kim Cragin and Sara Daly studied twenty-two terrorist and insurgent groups and found that twenty-one of those utilized women as logisticians.[44]

Practical experience through actual operations has demonstrated that women are simply more effective than men in these supporting activities.[45] For example, in direct support of funding terrorist organisations women of the West Bank have been instrumental in assisting with the management of "charitable organisations" as a cover for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to solicit funds.[46] According to Israeli security authorities, approximately twenty-five Palestinian women were arrested over a six-month period during the al-Aqsa *Intifada*, each trying to smuggle more than ten thousand US dollars into the Palestinian territory.[47] Beyond the movement of money, messages, and weapons, women have also assisted in the building of improvised explosive devices and in the case of Palestinian women, suicide belts.[48] Without funding, without communications and without weapons, a terrorist group may be rendered ineffective. However, the employment of women to sustain the logistic line of operations demonstrates their continued effectiveness and value to the terrorist organisation.

Within the context of an operational facilitator, the major roles women play in this movement are as recruiters. Cragin and Daly reveal that from the twenty-two terrorist

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[44] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 21.

[45] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 14.

[46] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 399.

[47] Cragin and Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs…*, 25.

[48] *Ibid*., 27.

and insurgent groups studied, only seven utilized women as recruiters suggesting that the

this role may be of less significance than the logistics role.[49] Cragin and Daly offer that

the lack of female recruiters may be attributed to the fact that terrorist groups are

comprised mostly of men, hence, it is logical that men would recruit other men. Despite

the smaller proportion of women employed as operational facilitators, their role should

not be underestimated. As an operational facilitator, women are empowered to conduct

recruitment via face-to-face operations, propagandist operations via the Internet and

recruitment through their natural influence as women within their society.

Women recruiters serve as strong role models for other women who may seek to

emulate a heroine's actions. In the case of the LTTE, women have been known to recruit

other women and influence them to join – giving up all freedoms for their cause. While

the research conducted did not provide specific examples per se, the fact that the LTTE

has an estimated four thousand women as part of its fighting cadre suggests that women

may have played a role in recruiting other women. In the case of propagandist

operations, the Internet has created transnational opportunities for women and has

become a critical arena for propaganda dissemination, and solicitation for participation.[50]

While the Internet may be used as a transnational tool for recruitment though Internet

chat rooms and funding solicitation through website propaganda, the LTTE Women's

Front has used traditional propagandist techniques with success. In support of

propagandist operations, the LTTE issued leaflets and materials on atrocities suffered by

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[49] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 39.

[50] Karla Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, (2007): 115.

the Tamils at the hands of the Sri Lankan government. The intent of the propaganda was to showcase how the occupation was making their land worse and to encourage people to come together to fight back.[51] Although the Women's Front of the LTTE did not rely solely on propaganda for recruitment, the leaflet campaign conducted by LTTE contributed to the recruitment of new fighters within the group.

Women as natural recruiters do not directly facilitate the recruitment of new members into terrorist groups, nor do they function as propagandists. In their ability to share stories of what has happened within their communities where conflict has endured for many generations, their natural influence compounded with their moral weight that is perceived as honourable and principled has been recognized as an unintended yet powerful recruitment tool.[52] This phenomena is particularly evident among Palestinian women who encourage their youth to engage in terrorism against Israeli civilians. A woman's role in training her children is further justified in the Hamas charter, "…and of training her children to perform religious obligations to prepare them for the *jihadic* role that awaits them."[53] The jihadic role that is inferred in this statement and supported by mothers, sisters and wives within the Palestinian community is that of martyrdom. When a Palestinian man or woman martyrs him or herself, women celebrate. These celebrations serve as potential indicators to their families, specifically their children that killing oneself in the name of Islam and in pursuit of a Palestinian state is an honourable

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[51] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 46.

[52] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 405.

[53] Cragin and Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs*…, 51.

and desirable act. In her natural role as a female within her society, a woman without

actually knowing it may be capable of indoctrinating their children with feelings of hate

and animosity which could inadvertently influence their children's decision to accept the

ideologies of suicide terrorism.[54] In essence, it appears that from the indirect influence of

a woman there is potential to develop a culture of martyrdom, from which a suicide

bomber is capable of emerging.

The long term survival of a terrorist group is often dependent on female

participation in their ability to conduct direct attacks, such as suicide missions or in their

ability to the fill ranks as warriors themselves. Not only are women deemed necessary

for the survival of a terrorist organisation, using women provides militant organizations

with a larger pool of operatives from which they can recruit terrorists.[55] In the case of the

LTTE, women have been actively involved since 1986. However, in June 1990, the

LTTE suffered significant losses in the battle at Elephant Pass and as a result; women

were called to action to replace losses.[56] The continued survival of the LTTE and their

ability to conduct successful operations indicate that their survival may have been

attributed to the recruitment and employment of women. To date, the LTTE continues to

be recognized as the terrorist organization that has employed the largest number of

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[54] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1031.

[55] Lindsey A. O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" *Security Studies* 18, (2009): 699.

[56] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 401.

females both as suicide operatives and as fighting warriors.[57]

In 2009, Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, from the Department of Psychology at Lancaster University conducted a critical review on fifty-four publications on female terrorism and derived the following information regarding the roles of women in terrorist groups.

Table 3.1: Role of Women in Terrorist Organizations

Group	Sympathizers	Spies	Warriors	Warrior Leaders	Dominant Forces	Suicide Bomber	Growing Participation
LTTE	X	X	X	X	x	X	X
IRA	X	X	X	X	x		X
Palestinian	X	x				X	X
Chechen	X					X	X
Al Qaeda						X	X

Note: **X** = Women are often found in these roles within the group.
x = Women positioned in these roles are typically exceptional and rare.
Source: Jacques and Taylor, "Female Terrorism: A Review," 508.

While the evolution of the role of women appears to progress from sympathiser to suicide bomber, the categories of operational supporter, facilitator and suicide bombers appear to encompass the distinct roles laid out by Jacques and Taylor. Operational supporters may include the role of sympathisers and spies, operational facilitators can also include sympathisers, spies, warriors, warrior leaders, and dominant forces while suicide bombers themselves can be considered the agent of violence. In regards to the recruiting role women play in terrorist groups under the umbrella of operational facilitator, the continued growth and participation may serve to capture the elements of

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[57] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 63.

this important role of women in terrorist networks.

As indicated in the previous section, women suicide bombers are considered to be extremely effective as agents of violence within a terrorist organization. Women suicide terrorists are capable of achieving an element of surprise because they are often perceived as non-violent and non-threatening. As suicide bombers, women are no longer defined according to the gendered roles and are able to pursue opportunities other than the limited ones normally associated with traditional societies.[58] Evading the traditional roles within their society, women suicide terrorists may be regarded upon as strong role models for other women who may seek to emulate the martyr's actions. The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in the Palestinian territories has illustrated a departure from their traditional roles by taking up arms as suicide bombers during the second *Intifada*. Celebrations to honour the female martyr have served as one of the many reasons that have influenced other women to escape their traditional roles and be willing to die for the cause.

While this analysis was limited to role of women as supporters, operational facilitators and agents of violence within a terrorist organization, these roles are not exhaustive for there is multitude of roles for women in terrorist organizations. Based on the research conducted, these specific roles served to demonstrate the potential evolution of women and options for participation of women within a terrorist organization. As operational supporters, a woman's role may be regarded as essential in securing the lines of logistics necessary to support terrorist operations. As operational facilitators, their active role in recruiting through direct contact or propaganda may be considered

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[58] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 400.

necessary for the survival of the organization. Accidental or unintended recruitment indicates that women, without even knowing it, possess the power of influence in their daily speak by sharing their stories and demonstrating their support for suicide operations by openly celebrating martyrdom. As an agent of violence, a woman has made her final decision to partake in suicide operations. As evidenced in the LTTE and within the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, irrespective of their motivations, terrorist groups appear to have recognized and embraced the role of women in suicide operations.

Motivations for Women

The research conducted for this paper has indicated that the motivations of female suicide bombers appear to be as vast and varied as the profiles of the women who commit them. As argued by Martha Crenshaw, the Lead Investigator with the National Center for the Study of Terrorism, motivational theories regarding female suicide bombers continue to be highly contextually dependent because critical information is lacking.[59] Recognizing the challenges associated with determining the motivations behind female suicide bombers, this section will attempt to capture the scholarly works of those who have conducted studies with a view to extrapolating common themes associated with motivations for female suicide bombers.

In Crenshaw's essay, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism," she offers a critique of the literature and conclusions that have been put forth by other scholars within this field of study. Barbara Victor, the author of *Army of Roses*, and Mia Bloom, author of *Dying to*

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[59] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 154.

Win, concluded that personal problems such as divorce, infertility and loss of family honour attributed to the wave of female suicide terrorists in the Palestinian Territories during the second *Intifada*. Both agree that the exploitation of personal suffering and despair within marginalized Palestinian society exasperated by male relatives who pushed them to redeem their family names, is what caused women to participate in suicide operations.[60] Bloom and Victor also suggest that women in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, and Chechnya attribute their participation in suicide operations on the fact that they too experienced personal trauma in the form of rape or sexual abuse by representatives of the state or by the insurgents themselves and their acts of suicide terrorism were also motivated with a the aim of redeeming family honour. Crenshaw argues that the evidence in support of this charge is weak and its fragility is further supported by Anne Speckhard, an expert on terrorism and Khapta Ahkmedova, an expert in suicide terrorism psychology.

Following a series of interviews conducted in Chechnya, Speckhard and Ahkmedova found that Chechen women did not act in order to redeem their honour, nor were they coerced. They concluded that "the importance of traumatic loss and avenging deaths of family member likely plays the greatest role in women's decisions to become martyrs."[61] In fact, Speckhard and Akhmedova found nationalism, trauma and revenge to be much greater motivators and believe that if trauma and desire for revenge were not

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[60] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 156.

[61] Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay…," 157.

present, then these women would never have chosen to become human bombs.[62]

A study conducted by Arie Kruglanski and a team of colleagues at the University of Maryland proposed that, while the classification of terrorist motives into personal, ideological and social is indeed helpful, it is not sufficient. Kruglanski offers that explanations to date regarding suicide terrorism are descriptive rather than analytic and proposes that the "quest for personal significance" may be the overarching motive for suicide terrorism.[63] The quest for personal significance is based on human behavioural and motivational theory and suggests that, "self-transcendence is the essence of human existence." Simply stated, the willingness to die in an act of suicidal terrorism may be motivated by the desire to live forever. The idea of living forever – transcendence is extended to the concept of martyrdom in that a martyr pays 'only' with his life but obtains eternal fame and recognition in return.[64] The final analysis suggests that suicide terrorism represents the quest for personal significance and can be equally applied to both men and women.

Congruent with Kruglanski's theory, Speckhard rationalises that women in traditional societies have very few roles in which they can reach equal personal significance. Opportunities for transcendence for women in these societies are extremely

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[62] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1036.

[63] Arie W. Kruglanski, "Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance," *Political Psychology* 30, no.3 (2009): 335.

[64] Kruglanski, "Fully Committed…," 337.

limited. Hence, the glorification of martyrdom through suicide bombings that may

enable a woman to achieve personal significance coupled with the idea of transcendence

may be a key motivator that supports why women engage in suicide bombings.[65]

Additionally, Crenshaw's theories support the idea of transcendence in her explanation

regarding motivations for female suicide bombers:

> …the suicidal act is not just about dying and killing. The expectation of gaining
> status and respect as a martyr for the cause is important, so that the individual
> action is linked to anticipation of both popular approval and collective political
> success…Sacrifice for the cause is both personally redemptive and a mark of
> honour, a way of becoming a hero and part of an exalted elite.[66]

In 2008, Jacques and Taylor conducted a study to analyze the motivations and

recruitment of female suicide terrorists. Based on biographical accounts of thirty female

and thirty male suicide terrorists, a log-linear analysis based on code assignments for

recruitment, motivations, and outcome of attack found that female suicide terrorists were

more likely to be motivated by personal events whereas males were more motivated by

religious/nationalistic factors.[67] While Jacques and Taylor were successful in deriving

some initial conclusions, their results yielded the need for continued research into female

terrorism.

Therefore, in 2009, Jacques and Taylor conducted a critical review of fifty-four

publications on female terrorism with the aim of identifying trends and commonalities

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[65] Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 1036.

[66] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 157.

[67] Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, (2008): 304.

that should assist in building cumulative knowledge in this field of study. They derived

the following information regarding female motivations and the frequency with which

authors had cited these reasons as motivational factors for female participation in suicide

terrorism.

Table 3.2: Women Motivations and Frequency in Literature

Motivation Category	Example Motivations	Frequency of Mention in Literature
Social	Gender equality Education/career needs Humiliation and repression Family problems	34
Personal	Personal distress Monetary worries Social outsider	18
Idealistic	Religion Nationalism Commitment to cause Wish for martyrdom	15
Key Event	Loss of loved one Specific humiliating instances Displacement Other negative event	12
Revenge	Vengeance Anger	4

Source: Jacques and Taylor, "Female Terrorism: A Review," 506.

It is evident from the numbers regarding frequency of mention in literature that

that there is indeed a small and limited sample from which to derive empirical data in the

analysis of women as suicide bombers. The challenge rests with the fact that one of the

criteria for success for a suicide bomber is that they kill themselves during the attack.

Recognizing that researchers cannot interview suicide attackers who kill themselves, the

data will be restricted to interviewing those who "failed" in their attempted suicide attacks. As such, data gleaned from "failed" attackers will be constrained in its analysis because it can only serve as speculative in the case of deriving motivations for successful suicide bombers. The same problem is recognized in the case of men as suicide bombers. Despite this limitation, Jacques and Taylor's findings indicate that a woman's social circumstances appear to be the main reason to motivate her to participate in suicide operations with revenge cited as the least likely reason. Additionally, their study reveals that there remains myriad reasons that affect and influence a woman's decision to become a suicide operative. Jacques and Taylor concluded that with an increase in women's participation, "women in terrorism needs to move from a description of events to an explanation in order to avoid "conceptual mire" that has already "bogged down" research on terrorism in general."[68]

Clara Beyler of the International Center for Terrorism concluded from her study that it is difficult to make generalizations because women suicide bombing is too recent, the attacks are too few, not enough research has been undertaken and the sample set is small.[69] Echoing Beyler's concern, Crenshaw states that, "empirical research in this area of human behaviour is admittedly difficult and unavoidably incomplete."[70]

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[68] Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, "Female Terrorism: A Review," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, (2009): 511.

[69] Clara Beyler, "Chronology of Suicide Bombings Carried out by Women," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*. (December 2003). Available from http://www. ict.org.il/articles/tabid/66/ articlsid /645/default.aspx; Internet; accessed 16 January 2011.

[70] Martha Crenshaw, "Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of "Suicide Terrorism," *Political Psychology*, Volume 3, no. 3 (2009): 361.

In the end, individuals are motivated differently. Regardless of the disparities regarding motivational theories for suicide terrorism, the juxtaposition of competing hypotheses is indicative of the requirement for additional studies to be conducted regarding both women and men in suicide terrorism. As long as women and men successfully kill themselves during the attacks, the data will remain ever incomplete and the challenges in determining their motivations will remain ever the same.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR AND THE WARFARE OF SUICIDE BOMBERS

Carl von Clausewitz, the great military strategist, is renowned for his theories regarding war and its direct link to policy. Although Clausewitz recognizes that war is "but a serious means to a serious end," he remains consistent in his writings and emphasizes that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means."[71] The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it – from war, the tactics of warfare are derived and become the tools with which wars and conflicts are fought. Applying Clausewitz's theory of war to our definition of terrorism, it can be derived that a suicide bomber is but one tactic of warfare employed by terrorist groups in the quest for political change.

The Principles of War were tenets originally proposed by Clausewitz in his essay *Principles of War* which provided guidance on the tactics of combat, scale of combat and general principles of strategy. His essays further emphasized warfare tactics that included the defence, the offense, the use of troops and the use of terrain, to name a few. Clausewitz's theories on war were based on conventional, state-on-state conflicts, and his Principles of War were designed to enable commanders to win successive decisive battles on a defined battlefield. In the case of a terrorist group that is recognized as a non-state actor whose conflicts are often non-conventional, regularly extending beyond the borders of a defined state – could Clausewitz's basic Principles of War be one of the reasons why

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[71] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* ed and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

terrorist groups employ suicide operatives, specifically women suicide bombers as a

tactic of warfare?

The interpretations of Clausewitz's work in the twenty-first century are not

without critique and debate. Critics of Clausewitz such as British strategist, Basil Liddell

Hart argued that Clausewitz's work was "morally repellent" and "dangerously

outdated."[72] Hart is supported by British strategist John Keegan and Israeli military

historian Martin Van Crevald who argue that Clausewitz "missed the point altogether"

and perhaps *On War* has "lost its analytical edge."[73] This being stated, for some scholars,

such as Dr. Antulio J. Echevaria II, Director of Research at the United States Army War

College, the principles of war and strategies outlined by Clausewitz in his book *On War*

remain indispensable in guiding the conduct of contemporary warfare. Echevaria argues

that Clausewitz's principles of strategy serve as universal body of knowledge from which

objectivity is derived in the conduct of modern war.[74] Strategist Colin Gray also agrees

and describes Clausewitz's insights as "intellectually inescapable" that can be equally

applied in contemporary conflicts. Michael Howard, author of the Princeton Edition of

On War states that his work "remains a measure of his genius, although the age for which

he wrote is long past, he can still provide so many insights relevant to a generation."[75]

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[72] Paul Cornish, "Clausewitz and the Ethics of Armed Force: Five Propositions," *Journal of Military Ethics* 2, no.3 (2003): 215.

[73] Cornish, "Clausewitz and the Ethics of the Armed Force…," 215.

[74] United States Army War College, "Clausewitz and Contemporary War – Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria, Director of Research," Available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= otJp3Qt 7Vuw; Internet; accessed 18 April 2011.

[75] *Ibid*., 214.

While there is indeed room for objectivity and criticism in assessing Clausewitz's work, his ideas regarding strategy and the Principles of War have been prominent in the evolution of twenty-first century military theories. Interpretations of his classical works have also influenced the development of the principles of war recognized by today's modern militaries. Specifically, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada have exercised objectivity in the development of their respective doctrinal principles of war in accordance with the table below.

Table 4.1: Doctrinal Principles of War for the US, UK and Canada

United States Forces	British Defence Forces	Canadian Forces
Objective	Selection and maintenance of the aim	Selection and maintenance of the aim
Offensive	Maintenance of morale	Maintenance of morale
Security	Offensive action	Offensive action
Surprise	Security	Security
Mass	Surprise	Surprise
Economy of force	Concentration of force	Concentration of force
Manoeuvre	Economy of effort	Economy of effort
Unity of command	Flexibility	Flexibility
Simple	Cooperation	Cooperation
	Sustainability	Sustainability

Source: Department of Defense, *United States Army Field Manual 3-0*
        Ministry of Defence, *British Defence Doctrine*
        Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army*

While it is recognised that there are slight variations amongst the principles of war adopted by each country, there are a greater number of similarities vice differences indicating a level of common understanding. From this table, the Canadian Forces' (CF) Principles of War will be used as the framework from which to conduct an analysis of the use of women as suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare. Specifically, the CF's modernized Principles of War will be applied to both the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs

Brigade – modern terrorist groups to determine if the use of women suicide operatives as a warfare tactic meets the criteria for the principles of war.

To better understand the exact meaning of each principle, the following table provides the definition of each principle of war that will be applied in the analysis of terrorist organizations and their tactical employment of women as suicide bombers.

Table 4.2: Definitions of the Canadian Forces' Principles of War

Principle of War	CF Definition
Selection and maintenance of the aim	A single, unambiguous aim is the keystone of successful military operations. Selection and maintenance of the aim is regarded as the master principle of war.
Maintenance of morale	A positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, perceptions of worth and group cohesion.
Offensive action	The practical manner in which a commander seeks to gain advantage, sustain momentum and seize the initiative.
Security	The provision and maintenance of an operating environment that affords the necessary freedom of action, when and where required in achieving objectives.
Surprise	The consequence if shock and confusion induced by the deliberate or incidental introduction of the unexpected.
Concentration of force	Involves the decisive, synchronized application of superior fighting power (conceptual, physical, moral) to realise intended effects when and where required.
Economy of effort	The judicious exploitation of manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of objectives.
Flexibility	The ability to change readily to meet new circumstances – comprises agility, responsiveness, resilience, acuity and adaptability.
Cooperation	Entails the incorporation of teamwork and a sharing of dangers, burdens, risks and opportunities in every aspect of warfare.
Sustainability	To generate the means by which fighting power and freedom of action are maintained.

Source: Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land
Operations – Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army*

From these definitions, the modern principles of war can now be applied to two modern terrorist groups, the Tamil Tigers and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to assess if the use of women as suicide bombers by terrorist groups in non-conventional warfare meets the spirit of the principles of war originally designed to guide commanders in the conduct of conventional warfare.

CHAPTER 5

THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM

Background

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, (LTTE) or Tamil Tigers was a secular

separatist terrorist organization in Sri Lanka whose political goal was the establishment

of an independent state of Tamil Eelam.[76] From 1983 to 2009, the Tamil Tigers fought

for independence from the Sinhalese majority and are recognized as the frontiers in the

innovation of suicide tactics, such as suicide bombings and women assassination squads.

The LTTE began recruiting women in 1979, established the first female training camp in

1984 and by 1986; the LTTE emerged as one of the most powerful and radical of the

Tamil terrorist groups.[77]

At the time, Tamil women were an oppressed minority who had little to gain from

international struggles if they were to help overthrow a repressive external power only to

be repressed by an internal state. Women were drawn to join the Tamil Tigers as they

saw this as an opportunity to expand the confines of their restrictive gender roles through

participation in a domestic terrorist organization that challenged the status quo. In turn,

the LTTE incorporated women into all levels of its structure establishing their own

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[76] Arjuna Gunawardena, "Female Black Tigers: A Different Breed of Cat?" in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 81. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Female_suicide bombers_Jaffee_ Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

[77] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 60.

female leadership hierarchy in 1989, and trained women for command as well as combat.[78]

During the period of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from July 1987 to March 1990 – there were no suicide bombings conducted by the Tamils.[79] Following the withdrawal of Indian Forces from Sri Lanka, an outbreak of hostilities between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government led to the resurrection of suicide bomber tactics by the LTTE and the term "Black Tiger" came to be used.

Within the regular LTTE militia, the women's branch was called the *Suthanthira Paravihal* (Freedom Birds) and at the peak of operations, women warriors comprised one-third to one-half of the LTTE's key weapon, the elite commando unit known as the "Black Tigers" – the suicide squad.[80] Acceptance of women by their male comrades during the Tamil conflicts led to other innovations of warfare tactics. For example, the LTTE developed the first suicide belt, designing it for women to make them appear pregnant and has continued to be used by other terrorist organizations such as the PKK, the Chechen "Black Widows," and the Palestinian al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.[81]

Even though the Tamil Tigers were not the first group to utilize women bombers, they were recognized as one of the most prolific with about one-third of all suicide

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[78] Laila Bokhari, "Women and Terrorism – Passive or Active Actors? Motivations and Strategic Use," in *Suicide as a Weapon* (Turkey: IOS Press, 2007), 58.

[79] Arjuna Gunawardena, "Female Black Tigers: A Different Breed of Cat?" in *FemaleSuicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 85. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Female_suicide bombers_Jaffee_ Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

[80] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 62.

[81] Kristal L. Alfonso, "Femme Fatale 2010," *Air and Space Power Journal* (Fall 2010): 63.

operations being conducted by women.[82] The 1991 assassination of former Indian Prime

Minister Rajiv Gandhi by the Tamil's first female suicide bomber, Thenmuli Rajaratnam

was the LTTE's most famous effort.[83] Following this successful mission, women of the

Black Tigers continued to participate and volunteer themselves for suicide missions and it

is estimated that thirty to forty percent of the LTTE's suicide terrorist operations has been

carried out by women.[84]

Women, who were part of the Black Tigers, were selected, trained and employed

by the LTTE. The LTTE leadership employed women as a tactical weapon of warfare in

their fight for territorial integrity. The reason why the LTTE continued to employ

women with a high degree of success will now be examined against a modern set of

principles of war.

Principles of War and the Black Tigers

The Canadian Forces doctrinal Principles of War will now be applied to the LTTE

to determine if the use of women as suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare to achieve

political goals can be attributed to the principles of war. Regarded as the master principle

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[82] Audrey K. Cronin, "Terrorists and Suicide Attacks," in *Focus on Terrorism*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 85.

[83] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 137.

[84] Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (May 2005): 363.

of war – selection and maintenance of the aim is key to successful military operations.[85]

In the case of the LTTE, their quest for independence of Tamil Eelam, in the north eastern part of the island was the driving force behind the Tiger movement.[86] As part of their campaign plan, the LTTE adopted women suicide bombers as one of their tactics to engage and kill designated military and political targets. The aim of a particular mission for a woman bomber was clear – kill the assigned military or political target. The Black Tigers proved to be extremely successful in maintaining the aim of their assigned missions as evidenced in the assassination of two heads of government – Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India in 1991 and President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka in 1993 as well as several prominent political and military figures.[87] In pursuit of their designated targets, as of July 2006, the LTTE had deployed a total of 177 suicide bombers, sixty-five of which were women.[88] The successful suicide attacks conducted by women resulting in the killing of their assigned targets were indicative of their ability to meet the first principle of war – selection and maintenance of the aim.

The second principle of war is recognized as maintenance of morale which is derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and

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[85] United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *British Defence Doctrine* (2008). Available from http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/CE5E85F2-DEEB-4694-B8DE-4148A4AEDF91 /0/20100114jdp0_01_ bddUDCDCIMAPPS.pdf; Internet; accessed 15 March 2011.

[86] *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, vol 2., "Tamil Tiger in Terror in Sri Lanka," 472.

[87] *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*…, 472.

[88] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 67.

values, and group cohesion.[89] For the female suicide terrorists of the LTTE, one source

of inspiration was indeed the founder of the Tamil Tigers, the charismatic military

commander, Velupillai Prabhakaran who was recognized as a disciplined, dedicated

leader and self-taught military genius.[90] Revered by all members of the LTTE, he

remained their leader until 16 May 2009 when he was killed by the Sri Lankan Armed

Forces.[91] Throughout his twenty-six year tenure, he may be regarded as the source of

political and military inspiration for the female suicide squad. The Tamil's campaign for

recognized independence was shared by everyone within the organization; they trained

and took up arms against the Indian Army and Sri Lankan militaries during a prolonged

civil war. The fact that the women Tamils trained and fought for a cause is indicative that

they did indeed share a sense of purpose which contributed to their maintenance of

morale.

Women were equally welcomed into the LTTE, they were granted their own

leadership structure, trained as warriors and suicide bombers and women also took the

lead in assassination plots against more than a dozen public figures.[92] Despite the strong

patriarchal society of the Tamil culture, women within the LTTE were considered equals

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[89] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations – Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[90] *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, vol 2., "Tamil Tiger in Terror in Sri Lanka," 472.

[91] Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Available from http://www.globalsecurity.org /military/world/para/ltte.htm; Internet; accessed 14 March 2011.

[92] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 63.

with their male counterparts.[93] As such, the traditions, training and tribulations were felt

by all members of the LTTE including women, thus contributing to the group cohesion.

Therefore, maintenance of morale for female suicide bombers within the LTTE was

achieved based on the fact that they had a charismatic leader as a source of inspiration;

they shared a sense of purpose with their male counterparts in their belief for

independence and the integration of women into the LTTE as warriors, leaders and

specifically suicide bombers can be seen as contributing to the group cohesion.

Offensive action is the third principle of war and is described as the manner in

which a commander seeks to gain advantage and seize the initiative.[94] Throughout the

conflict, the leadership sought to gain the advantage by taking offensive action using

various means. The LTTE fought like a professional military when their strength was

high, employed insurgency operations against the Sri Lankan populace as the situation

required and deployed female suicide bombers against specific targets.[95] The successful

deployment of women as suicide bombers from the LTTE against dedicated targets is

indeed offensive action. Even though offensive action had been taken, in accordance with

the definition of this principle of war, the outcome must have resulted in gaining an

operational advantage. From the perspective of the LTTE, the operational advantage was

gained through the effects of psychological warfare. Each time the LTTE deployed a

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[93] Arjuna Gunawardena, "Female Black Tigers: A Different Breed of Cat?" in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): X. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Female_suicide bombers_Jaffee_Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

[94] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations – Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[95] *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, vol 2., "Tamil Tiger in Terror in Sri Lanka," 475.

woman suicide bomber who successfully killed her designated target; fear was created among Sri Lankan political and military leaders.[96] The creation of fear and uncertainty in "rendering one's enemy ineffective" speaks directly to the operational advantage gained by the LTTE from the psychological aspect of warfare.[97] While the deployment of women suicide bombers can be considered offensive action, the physical effects of the suicide bomb was not the entirely the operational advantage gained. It was indeed the psychological effects of fear that women suicide bombers created amongst the political and military leaders compounded with the physical destruction of their suicide attacks enabled the LTTE to gain the operational advantage. Thus, in terms of the third principle of war, women suicide bombers were successful in achieving offensive action in the conduct of their suicide attacks and gained the operational advantage by way of psychological warfare by instilling fear amongst its adversary.

Security is defined as the provision and maintenance of an operating environment that affords the necessary freedom of action to achieve objectives.[98] Despite the stereo-type casting of women as the gentler, non-threatening, weaker sex – the universal cultural perception is that women tend to be non-violent in character, and traditionally described as "the givers of life" rather than "the takers of life."[99] Therefore, based on their gender

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[96] *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, vol 2., "Tamil Tiger in Terror in Sri Lanka," 474.

[97] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 77.

[98] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[99] Arjuna Gunawardena, "Female Black Tigers: A Different Breed of Cat?" in *FemaleSuicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 87. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Female_suicide bombers_Jaffee_Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

alone, women suicide bombers appear to be able to manoeuvre without suspicion within their operating environment in order to reach and secure the objective. For example, Dhanu, the woman who assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandhi moved freely about her environment and was able to secure her position next to him before she detonated herself. In spite of the security measures that were established to support this event – the fact that Dhanu was a woman who was perceived within her society as non-threatening, her ability to exercise freedom of action in securing her position next to the target was based on her gender. Dhanu inherently secured her freedom of action to prosecute the target because she was a woman. The freedom of action that women were able to secure based on gendered social conditioning supported the LTTE's employment of women as suicide bombers consisted with the principle of war – security.

In Clausewitz's book *Principles of War*, he writes that one of the strongest weapons of the offensive is the surprise attack.[100] The element of surprise should not be underestimated for it is capable of achieving effects at the physical, moral and psychological level. Surprise continues to be a core element of modern warfare and is defined as the consequence of shock and confusion introduced by the deliberate introduction of the unexpected. The LTTE devoted a league of women to train to conduct suicide attacks. As indicated above, while society perceives women to be non-violent in nature, patriarchal societies further compound this stereotype with the fact that women are seen as subordinates within its social hierarchy. Hence, when the LTTE

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[100] Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, ed and trans. Hans W. Gatze. (Pennsylvania: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1942), 26.

deliberately decided to deploy women on suicide missions, and they succeeded – women suicide bombers have achieved an element of surprise.

The results of women suicide bombings are generally described as shocking and unexpected which is congruent with Clausewitz's definition.[101] In addition to the element of surprise that women are able to achieve based on the fact that their society does not expect women in particular to blow themselves up, the potential for psychological impact is also high. Fear often results for members of the targeted civilian population following a suicide attack. Although the actual physical destruction may be limited to killing the designated target, the psychological effects of women suicide bombers have the potential to reach well beyond the target and into society as a whole. Therefore, when women of the LTTE were employed as weapons of warfare as suicide bombers, they were successful in achieving shock and confusion – the elements of surprise because their attacks were not only unexpected but the potential to achieve psychological effects was also high. For this reason, women suicide bombers continued to be employed as tactic of warfare within the LTTE.

The concentration of force as a principle of war involves the decisive, synchronized application of superior fighting power either conceptually, physically or morally to realize intended effects.[102] One example of superior fighting power may be the synchronized application of air, land and sea assets combined to produce overwhelming effects against an adversary both physically in the destruction of its

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[101] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 1.

[102] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations – Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

capabilities such as tanks and aircraft and morally through the deaths of the adversary's comrades. In the case of women Tamil Tigers, as "individual" suicide bombers – conceptually, physically and morally, they do not meet the spirit of the intended definition of a concentration of force. While women suicide bombers do not represent a concentration of force in a classical sense, they do represent a force that is capable of realizing intended effects. The successful assassination of heads of state, military and political figures throughout the LTTE campaign indicates that the employment of women as suicide bombers was indeed a force that could be applied to achieve deliberate effects. Although the use of women suicide bombers is not considered a concentration of force, they are regarded as an economy of effort for the LTTE which is precisely the next principle of war to be discussed.

Economy of effort is the judicious exploitation of manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of objectives.[103] The employment of women suicide bombers as a tactical weapon may be considered an economy of effort because in most cases, when suicide attacks are launched it is normally just one person who acts the suicide bomber. With regards to materiel required for the operation, a human bomb is relatively "cheap," as the bomb components are easily made from readily available supplies such as nails, gunpowder, a battery, a switch and a short cable, mercury from a thermometer, acetone to include the cost of a seamstress to make the belt or vest that will be used. In all, it generally costs about one hundred and fifty US dollars to make a bomb.[104]

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[103] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations – Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[104] Nasra Hassan, An Arsenal of Believers: Talking to the "human bombs," *The New Yorker* (November 2001): 39.

Timing is everything when it comes to suicide operations against a specific target. For women Tamil bombers, the success of the operation was usually dependent on timing, if the bombers did not reach the designated target within the timeframe allotted, there was potential for failure. However, the freedom of movement afforded to women suicide attackers based on their gender alone enabled them to easily manoeuvre in the vicinity of their target and allowed them to meet the predetermined timings necessary for a successful attack. A one-woman operation, with a relatively cheap bomb belt that can easily manoeuvre about the battle space for a timely engagement of her target suggests that the employment of women suicide terrorists as a tactical weapon meets the criteria for economy of effort.

The freedom of action afforded to Tamil women as suicide bombers also gave them a level of flexibility congruent with the principle of war.[105] Flexibility is defined as the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances and comprises agility, resilience responsiveness, acuity and adaptability. The women of the Black Tigers were trained to meet and overcome the challenges associated with any changes to the mission and were recognized as having perfected the art of suicide bombings.[106] The fact that the Black Tigers were renowned for having mastered this tactic of warfare suggests that they had to adhere to the principle of flexibility, for even the best laid plans often do not survive first contact. The success of the women within the suicide squad may be considered a direct

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[105] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[106] *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, vol 2, "Tamil Tiger in Terror in Sri Lanka," 477.

result of their ability to remain flexible, responsive, resilient and adaptable in the conduct of their missions. In essence, suicide is a flexible technology.[107]

Cooperation as a principle of war entails the incorporation of teamwork and a sharing of dangers, burdens, risks and opportunities in every aspect of warfare.[108] The designated women of the suicide squad trained together, lived together and fought together.[109] They were an elite team who shared the dangers of the suicide missions, its inherent risks and were trained to choose death over capture.[110] Their commitment to death at all costs either as a suicide bomber or by taking the cyanide capsule if captured was indicative of their level of loyalty and cooperation achieved within the LTTE. From the dangers associated with a designated suicide mission to the risk of being captured to the opportunities afforded to Tamil women, suggests that they have been able to achieve a high level of cooperation consistent with the principles of war.

The final principle of war to be discussed is sustainability – to sustain a force is to generate the means by which fighting power and freedom of action are maintained.[111] In order to generate fighting power and freedom of action, one must generate personnel to join the organization. For the LTTE, the assimilation of women at all levels contributed

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[107] Special Report on Suicide Terrorism. "Martyrdom and Murder." *The Economist*. (January 2004): 21.

[108] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[109] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 67.

[110] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 21.

[111] Department of National Defence, *Conduct of Land Operations…*, 10.

to the sustainment of personnel after thousands of men died in battle.[112] Had the LTTE

not recruited and integrated women into all aspects of the organization, they would not

have been able to sustain their operations for the length of the conflict. It is estimated

that the cadre of women represented twenty to thirty percent of the LTTE's combat

strength and that at least one third of the Black Tigers were indeed women.[113] As women

suicide bombers, their bodies employed as human bombs may be considered as one of the

means by which the LTTE derived and sustained its fighting power over the years. By

virtue of their gender and the associated cultural perceptions that women were considered

non-violent, female suicide attackers of the LTTE were able to manoeuvre without

suspicion and without confrontation within their society. As women of the Black Tigers,

freedom of action for the LTTE was sustained through the employment of women thus

meeting the criteria for the final principle of war.

     In summary, the application of the modern principles of war as an analytical tool

to assess the use of women as suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare indicates that women

suicide bombers meet all but one of the principles of war – the concentration of force.

Irrespective of their individual motivations, reasons and justification for participating in

suicide terrorism, the analysis suggests that the employment of women as suicide

bombers meets the criteria that govern the conduct of war. As such, their employment as

a tactic of warfare by an organization to meet political objectives appears to be

rationalized under the framework of the principles of war.

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[112] Laila Bokhari, "Women and Terrorism – Passive or Active Actors? Motivations and Strategic Use" in *Suicide as a Weapon* (Turkey: IOS Press, 2007), 57.

[113] Arjuna Gunawardena, "Female Black Tigers: A Different Breed of Cat?" in *FemaleSuicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 83. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Female_suicide bombers_ Jaffee_Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

CHAPTER SIX

THE AL-AQSA MARTYRS BRIGADE OF PALESTINE

Background

The Palestinian al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade emerged at the beginning of the 2000 Palestinian *Intifada* to conduct attacks against Israeli targets with the aim of eliminating Israel's presence in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem in order to establish a recognized Palestinian state.[114] The brigade is a network of West Bank militias affiliated with the late Palestinian leader, Yasir Arafat's Fatah faction and has been one of the driving forces behind the Palestinian intifada. While the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade commits to the same sort of suicide bombings associated with Muslim fundamentalist groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the group's ideology is rooted in Palestinian nationalism and not religious extremism.[115] Although the group initially vowed to target only Israeli soldiers and settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in early 2002, the brigade began terrorist attacks against civilians in Israeli cities and was recognized on the United States' list of foreign terrorist organizations.[116]

Also recognized as a patriarchal society, in January 2002, Palestinian women found a niche for equality in a call to support the second *Intifada* with an invitation to join the ranks of men to use themselves as human bombs in the conduct of suicide attacks

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[114] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 122.

[115] Holly Fletcher, "Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade." *Backgrouder*, (April 2008). Available from http://www.cfr.org/israel/al-aqsa-martyrs-brigade/p9127; Internet; accessed 17 March 2011.

[116] Fletcher, "Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade," Internet; accessed 17 March 2011.

against the Israelis.[117] The call came from their leader, Arafat who was losing public

support and needed to increase the masses necessary for military operations. Thus, on 27

January 2002, Arafat spoke to over one thousand Palestinian women at his compound in

Ramallah and told them, "Women and men are equal. You are my army of roses that will

crush the Israeli tanks…*Shahida* all the way to Jerusalem."[118] Until that time, there was

no such feminized version of the masculine form of the Arab word for martry, *shahide*.

Arafat's speech opened the doors for entry of women as operative within ranks of the al-

Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Following his speech on the very same day, Wafa Idris became

the first Palestinian woman to perpetrate an act of suicide terror. She would not be the

last.[119]

According to a study conducted by Yoram Schweitzer, of the Jaffee Centre for

Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, between January 2002 and May 2006, sixty-

seven women attempted to carry out suicide bombings against Israel, with eight actually

being successful.[120] Although the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade assisted women with the

conduct of suicide attacks, consistent with its traditional society – women were not

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[117] Maria Alvanou, "Criminological Perspectives on Female Suicide Terrorism," in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 97. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Femalesuicidebombers Jaffee_Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

[118] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 132.

[119] Mia Bloom, "Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend," *Daedalus* 136, no. 1 (Winter, 2007): 97.

[120] Kim R. Cragin, and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 61.

historically welcome in the ranks of the fighters of the Fatah.[121]

Suicide attacks against Israeli civilians were also justified by Palestinians as absolutely necessary because every Israeli baby would eventually become a soldier within the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) to fight against the Palestinians. Hence, the Palestinians rationalized that by killing the Israeli population through suicide attacks, the Israelis could no longer have babies to grow up and join the ranks of the IDF.[122] Lastly, the Palestinians recognized the enormous psychological effects of suicide attacks on the Israelis, and felt they were achieving a balance of terror by instilling fear and disrupting the daily lives of Israelis through the threat of use of suicide terrorism.[123]

For the Palestinians who did not have any conventional means at their disposal to confront Israeli forces, suicide bombers, specifically women suicide bombers had become the Palestinians' tactical weapon of warfare.[124] An assessment of the use of women as suicide bombers to achieve a recognized Palestine state will now be conducted to determine if their employment can be rationalized within the framework of the principles of war.

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[121] Clara Beyler, "Chronology of Suicide Bombings Carried out by Women," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*. (December 2003). Available from http://www. ict.org.il/articles/tabid/66/articlsid/645/default.aspx; Internet; accessed 16 January 2011.

[122] Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (May 2005): 365.

[123] Anat Berko, *The Path to Paradise: The Inner World of Suicide Bombers and their Dispatchers*, trans. Elizabeth Yuval (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007), 9.

[124] Martha Crenshaw, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay" *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 2007): 141.

Principles of War and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade

Similar to the Tamil Tigers in their quest for recognition and independence, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade was motivated by nationalist ideals and not by religious extremism. In the case of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, their common goal was to expel Israeli forces out of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and establish a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.[125] For those women charged with carrying out a suicide attack, every deployment had a specific target that was selected in an attempt to secure their final political objectives. As women operatives, it was their responsibility to ensure that they met the target and prosecuted it accordingly. The targets for the Martyrs Brigade included both Israeli civilians and members of the IDF. The targeted attack areas were mostly places where Israeli civilians gathered and included shopping districts, restaurants, supermarkets, bus stops, check points and areas where there were higher concentrations of IDF.[126] Regardless of the target, the effects of a suicide bombing often generated the same result of fear, shock, and confusion. The continued success of women bombers in their ability to meet the aim of each operation and prosecute their designated targets suggests that their employment met the first principle of war – selection and maintenance of the aim.

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[125] Fletcher, Holly. "Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade." *Backgrouder*. (April 2008). Available from http://www.cfr.org/israel/al-aqsa-martyrs-brigade/p9127; Internet; accessed 17 March 2011.

[126] Karla Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30 (2007): 116.

The maintenance of morale, the second principle of war, can be considered essential in the execution of successful suicide attacks. As citizens of an occupied territory their universal belief and will to expel Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and West Bank was their shared sense of purpose.[127] Women within the Palestinian society were encouraged and endowed with legitimacy to partake in the struggle against Israeli forces. The issuing of a *fatwa*, or edict from the High Islamic Council in Saudi Arabia decreeing that "…women should join men as suicide martyrs," may be considered the authority for women to become suicide bombers.[128] Subsequently, Arafat's plea to the women of Palestine stated:

> …You are the hope of Palestine. You will liberate your husbands, fathers, sons from oppression. You will sacrifice the way you, women, have always sacrificed for your family.[129]

Affirmation from the High Islamic Council combined with Arafat's invitation and expectation for women to become suicide bombers can be considered the power from which the maintenance of morale was derived from a political perspective. As such, maintaining morale for women of the al-Asqa Martyrs Brigade was achieved via the support of political leaders, the religious institution and from their shared sense of unjust occupation by Israeli forces, thus satisfying the conditions of the second principle of war.

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[127] Margaret Wente, "Yasser Arafat's Schoolgirl Killers," *Globe and Mail*, 4 April 2002.

[128] Pamela L. Griset and Sue Mahan, *Terrorism in Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc, 2003), 158.

[129] Maria Alvanou, "Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism and Honor Culture," *The Homeland Security Review* 2, no.1 (Winter 2008): 1.

A suicide attack, by extension is offensive action. As a principle of war, offensive action seeks to gain an advantage, sustain momentum and seize the initiative.[130] In the case of the women suicide terrorists of Palestine, their suicide missions were indeed offensive action, however, their ability to gain physical advantage over the Israeli conventional forces is debatable. Although the suicide bombers did not gain a physical advantage over the Israeli conventional forces, they did gain a psychological advantage over the Israeli civilians who were often the intended target set. Suicide terrorism creates psychological effects that extend beyond physical forces by instilling fear, paranoia and shock – the use of female attackers exacerbates the already potent psychological effect of suicide terrorism.[131] The use of women as suicide bombers was not only successful in gaining the advantage to secure access to targeted Israeli civilians, but by creating fear among the Israeli population, they too gained a psychological advantage. In her book *Dying to Kill*, Mia Bloom wrote that, "…the Israelis feared going to public places, going shopping or going out to eat; the suicide bombings have changed Israelis' lifestyles and assurance of security."[132] The fact that women suicide bombers had the ability to alter an Israelis' lifestyle because they feared for their personal security is evidence that women were successful in gaining a psychological advantage. Therefore, it can be deduced that

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[130] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[131] Katharina von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 398.

[132] Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 36.

women as suicide terrorists fulfilled the requirements necessary for offensive action within the context of the principles of war.

Security is the provision and maintenance of an operating environment that affords the necessary freedom of action to achieve objectives in relation to the principles of war.[133] The Palestinians currently live in designated territories and are unable to manoeuvre freely into Israeli territory – their apparent operating environment because entrance into Israel is controlled by the IDF. During the second *Intifada*, as Israeli forces began to search Palestinian men with greater vigour, access into Israeli territory was often denied; hence men were not afforded the freedom of action to achieve mission objectives. As a consequence, women within Palestinian society stepped forward to join the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade which was perceived by some as a shift in terrorism tactics.[134]

Within the traditional Muslim society, women were not perceived as violent or threatening, thus based on this gender-bias, women were sometimes granted access into Israel before their male counterparts. The ability of women to gain access to the operating environment may be viewed as acquiring the freedom of action necessary to accomplish objectives. Thus, the employment of women suicide terrorists by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade was deemed necessary to achieve the level of security required to prosecute designated targets. In essence, it was not the security of the operating environment that enabled freedom of action; it was the woman who had access to the

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[133] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[134] Audrey K. Cronin, "Terrorists and Suicide Attacks," in *Focus on Terrorism.* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 86.

operational environment that served as the security for freedom of action to achieve operational objectives. In this regard, based on a social gender bias, women served as the vehicle from which security was achieved in accordance with the principles of war.

Surprise as a principle of war rests on the consequence of shock and confusion through the deliberate introduction of the unexpected.[135] One of the most significant advantages held by women bombers is that their potential to kill is often denied, ignored, and diminished and as a result, they are almost unanticipated, underestimated and highly effective.[136] Attacks conducted by women from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade achieved the element of surprise because their targets were everyday people conducting everyday business; often occurring in the most public places. The Martyrs Brigade conducted suicide bombings in shopping districts, at Israeli checkpoints, bus stops, supermarkets, and malls – locations where normal activities took place by normal, unexpected citizens.[137]

During the second *Intifada*, the frequency of suicide attacks had created a heightened sense of fear and insecurity among the Israelis and the social perception remained that Palestinian men were seen to be the violent actors in this conflict. Therefore, when women of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade decided to blow themselves up

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[135] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations – Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[136] Karla Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30 (2007): 122.

[137] Claudia Brunner, "Female Suicide Bombers – Male Suicide Bombing? Looking for Gender in Reporting the Suicide Bombings of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict." *Global Security* 19, no.1 (January 2005): 32-35. On 27 January 2002, Wafa Idris blew herself up in a shopping district on Jaffa Road, Jerusalem killing three and wounding at least thirty others. Darin Abu Aysheh conducted her suicide attack at the Israeli checkpoint on 27 February 2002 wounding four civilians. Ayat al-Akhras detonated her suicide bomb in a Jerusalem supermarket on 29 March 2002 killing two IDF and wounding at least twenty-two other IDF.

in public venues killing innocent people, there was not only a deliberate introduction of the unexpected that created shock and confusion but the level of surprise achieved was further amplified. The Israelis did not expect women to pick up arms and fight as human bombs. Hence, when Palestinian women did take action as suicide bombers against Israelis going about their normal lives, they were able to achieve a greater level of surprise than that of Palestinian men because the bold gesture of a suicide attack by a woman in a public setting was all the more unexpected. The employment of women as suicide bombers was able to achieve greater levels of surprise than that of the men because the diminishment of a woman's potential as a suicide bomber is what empowered her to be the most unexpected, and yet the most effective. For these reasons, the use of women as suicide bombers met the conditions for surprise in accordance with the principles of war.

Concentration of force is defined as the decisive synchronized application of superior fighting power (conceptual, physical and moral) to realize intended effects. This was not an option for the Palestinians as they did not have any means from which to generate a conventional military necessary for the conduct of warfare against the Israelis. Unlike the Israelis who had fighter jets, rockets and tanks, the Palestinians only had human bombs as their weapons of warfare.[138] Despite the fact that women suicide bombers were extremely effective in securing freedom of action and achieving superior

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[138] Maria Alvanou, "Criminological Perspectives on Female Suicide Terrorism," in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality,* ed. Yoram Schweitzer, Memorandum no. 84 (August 2006): 97. Available from http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2009/ 12853/pdf/ICSS.Femalesuicidebombers Jaffee_Center_Aug06.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 January 2011.

levels of surprise, a lone female suicide bomber did not have capacity to achieve superior

fighting power in accordance with the definition of the principles of war.

However, a lone woman suicide bomber who can kill innocent civilians, induce

shock and confusion and instil fear within a society may be defined as the essence of

economy of effort in relation to the principles of war. Economy of effort is the

exploitation of human power, personnel and time in relation to the achievement of

objectives.[139] From a tactical perspective, if the intended effect is for the woman to blow

herself up and kill Israeli people is indeed achieved, then irrespective of the morality of

the act, the exploitation and use of this one woman satisfies the first criteria for economy

of effort. With respect to materiel for the bomb, studies reveal that the cost of a human

bomb is relatively cheap weapon to make – the same ingredients used for the Tamil

Tigers were the same for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. For approximately $150 US

dollars, a human bomb could become a lethal weapon of warfare.[140] Timeliness is the

third element regarding economy of effort and for a suicide bomber, time can be seen as

on being on their side because they are in control and they normally chose the time of

detonation. For the random victims going about their daily lives, there is no good time to

face death with a suicide bomber. As such, the use of women suicide bombers by the al-

Aqsa Martyrs Brigade was seen as maximum "bang for your buck." In other words, a

woman satisfies the requirements for economy of effort because she is the right woman,

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[139] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Conduct of Land Operations –Operational Level Doctrine for the Canadian Army* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 10.

[140] Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The Atlantic Monthly* (June 2003): 39.

at the right place, at the right time with the right motivation to achieve significant effects

in killing Israeli civilians causing shock, fear and confusion.

While it is recognized that economy of effort may be applied to men as suicide

bombers, the advantage of women is that they are able to achieve greater levels of

surprise. A woman's suicide attack is even more unexpected than that of a man because

of gender biases associated with the expected roles of women and men in warfare.

Women are expected to assume supporting roles while men are expected to be the

warriors. When the roles are reversed and women become warriors, especially women

from a patriarchal society, their suicide attacks are even more surprising, hence, more

effective because they were most unexpected.

Flexibility as principle of war is the ability to readily change to meet new

circumstances comprising agility, responsiveness, resilience and adaptability. For the

women of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade equipped as human bombs, their ability to

manoeuvre within the environment by successfully crossing into Israel and the agility

with which they reached their targets illustrates a degree of flexibility. On 12 April 2002,

Andalib Suleiman Takatka, a member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade crossed into Israel

and made her way to a market bus stop in the city of Jerusalem and detonated a belt full

of explosives killing six people and wounding sixty to ninety others.[141] Although the

entire details of her mission remain unknown, Takatka's ability to gain access into Israel

by clearing Israeli security checkpoints, travel without restriction to the designated target

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[141] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 128.

area and carry out her suicide mission may be seen as a measure of the flexibility offered by a woman in the conduct of suicide bombings. In regards to suicide bombings described as a "flexible technology," Hoffman offers that the technology being employed is indeed the "human missile," and the flexibility lies within the human's ability to choose the path with which to reach the target, to choose the designated target, and to choose the time and location of detonation.[142]

Aayat al-Akhras, another suicide bomber of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade demonstrated the flexible technology of the "human missile" in her choice to enter Jerusalem from the West Bank by scrambling across unguarded piles of rocks and taking a taxi to the desired location – a supermarket in Kiryat. Upon entering the supermarket, Akhras chose to whisper a warning to two Arab women selling produce which led to the security guard growing suspicious resulting in the security guard pushing her outside.[143] At this point, the situation had changed and Akhras had to adapt to this new circumstance as she could no longer detonate herself inside the supermarket. As a "human bomb," Akhras demonstrated flexibility in her ability to effect a last-minute change by blowing herself up outside the market killing the guard and a young woman named Rachel Levy while injuring twenty-eight others.[144] While these two examples are not exhaustive, they do provide support to the flexibility principle of war offered by women in the conduct of suicide bombings.

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[142] Special Report on Suicide Terrorism. "Martyrdom and Murder." *The Economist*. (January 2004): 21.

[143] Margaret Wente, "How Martyrs are Made," *Globe and Mail*, 11 October 2003.

[144] Margaret Wente, "How to Make a Martyr," *Globe and Mail*, 8 February 2003.

"At each moment in history…each society has a definite aptitude for suicide."[145] The aptitude of a society to conduct successful suicide operations can be directly linked to a society's ability to cooperate. In this regard, cooperation as a principle of war with respect to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade will focus on the role of the Palestinian society and its support towards women as suicide bombers. The first step towards this level of cooperation to support women as suicide bombers came directly from the leader of the Palestinian people, Arafat himself. Arafat's plea to the women of Palestine to sacrifice the way women have always sacrificed for their families has been referred to as the chapter that changed the face of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the one of Palestinian women's "martyrdom operations."[146] In his public appeal to the women of Palestine to fight for the independent Islamic state of Palestine, Arafat indirectly legitimized the use of women as suicide bombers and insinuated a message to the entire Palestinian population to cooperate in the incorporation of women as part of the fight for freedom.

Consequently, on that same day, Wafa Idris became the first Palestinian women to partake in a suicide bombing, killing herself and an elderly man, and wounding over one hundred people in a Jerusalem shopping street.[147] Following this attack, there seemed to be space for women within the national struggle for freedom and the so-called, "daughters of Palestine" had a new idol with whom to identify.[148] Idris became a "hero"

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[145] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 1.

[146] Maria Alvanou, "Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism and Honor Culture," *The Homeland Security Review* 2, no.1 (Winter 2008): 1.

[147] Claudia Brunner, "Female Suicide Bombers – Male Suicide Bombing? Looking for Gender in Reporting the Suicide Bombings of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict." *Global Security* 19, no.1 (January 2005): 33.

[148] Claudia Brunner, "Female Suicide Bombers – Male Suicide Bombing…," 32.

in the eyes of the Palestinian people and a cult of martyrdom had emerged where women

who offered their life for the cause was seen as the most profound act of selflessness.[149]

The designation of Ayat Akhras as "Palestine's Bride," after her suicide attack that killed

herself and two other young people also serves as evidence of Palestinian's acceptance of

women suicide bombers and illustrates society's ability to cooperate to enable these types

of operations.

       Subsequent suicide attacks conducted by women resulted in public celebrations,

the distribution of posters and flyers and the making of songs dedicated to women

martyrs. These serve as support of the Palestinian's society for women suicide bombers.

Although eight Palestinian women carried out suicide missions from January 2002 to

September 2004, the populace least embraced the bombing conducted by Reem al-

Riyahsi – the only female bomber sent by Hamas to date who was a mother of two

children.[150] The disapproval of al-Riyahshi's suicide attack stands as an indication that

although Palestinian society has widely embraced the use of women as suicide bombers,

there are limits to what it will tolerate where women are concerned.[151] In summary, the

affirmations made by Arafat to invite women to fight for their state, the celebration of

female martyrdom and the propaganda generated in support of Palestinian women as

suicide bombers is indicative of the cooperation within Palestinian society as a whole and

its willingness to support women as suicide bombers.

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[149] Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (May 2005): 367.

[150] Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 128.

[151] Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (May 2005): 367.

Sustainability is the principle of war by which fighting power is generated and freedom of action is maintained. It was recognized in Chapter Three of this paper that women play a variety of roles within a terrorist organization ranging from supporters to operational facilitators to agents of violence and that these roles often contribute to the ability of a terrorist group to sustain its operations. Compared to other Muslim societies, Palestinian women appear to have more opportunities and freedoms than women in other fundamentalist countries – they can vote, hold office, drive cars and own property. Even though they are afforded these liberties, their voice remains small in what is still a primarily patriarchal society. As such, the role of women within the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade has been limited to that of suicide terrorists as women are not welcome in the ranks of the fighters.[152]

Since January 2002, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade sometimes in conjunction with other Palestine terrorist organizations has taken responsibility for seven suicide bombings conducted by women against Israel.[153] From 2002 to 2004, this organization only employed women as suicide attackers and the research conducted did not provided evidence of women employed in any other role except that of a suicide bomber for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Despite the freedoms afforded to Palestinian women compared to Muslim women of other countries, the role of Muslim women in Palestine remains rooted

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[152] Clara Beyler, "Messengers of Death – Female Suicide Bombers," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*. (December 2003). Available from http://www. ict.org.il/articles/tabid/66/articlsid /66/default.aspx; Internet; accessed 16 January 2011.

[153] Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (May 2005): 367.

in conservatism and has not lent itself to the full integration of women into other roles within the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. However, the ability of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to "operationalize" women to become agents of violence in the conduct of seven suicide attacks can be seen as a means by which fighting power has been generated in support of sustainment operations. Although sustainability as a principle of war is also defined by freedom of action; the traditionalist nature of the role of women in Palestine does not support the employment of women except that of a suicide bomber. As such, the employment of women as suicide bombers in support of sustainability as a principle of war is limited to their ability to generate fighting power as a human bomb.

In summary, the principles of war used to analyze the employment of women by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade as suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare has revealed that women meet all but one principle of war – the concentration of force. The analysis has also indicated that contrary to the LTTE where women were seen as essential to the sustainability of the organization, in the case of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, there was very little evidence suggesting that women attributed to the sustainment of the organization because the Palestinian woman's role was limited to that of a suicide attacker. Despite this disparity, the examination still suggests that the employment of women as suicide bombers as a tactic is consistent with the principles of war that govern the conduct of warfare.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Using the modern principles of war as a framework for analysis derived from the work of Clausewitz, two organizations were studied to determine if the employment of women as suicide bombers as a tactic was indeed consistent with the principles of war that govern the conduct of warfare. This chapter will highlight the operational similarities and differences of the respective organizations, provide the results of the analysis conducted and will endeavour to draw generalized conclusions.

Operational Similarities

Fighting for an independent state was the political cause of the Tamil Tigers and freedom from Israeli occupation and recognition of a Palestinian state was a political goal of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. In both cases, the use of women as suicide bombers in the fight for political change was underpinned in reasons for nationalism and not religious ideologies. Regardless of their diverse political agendas both in time and space, the use of women as suicide terrorists proved to be an effective tactical weapon that was common to the two organizations in their pursuit of political objectives.

The LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade were similar in that they also employed women as suicide bombers from within patriarchal societies where the role of women was extremely conservative and often limited to that of the care-giver, the house wife and the bearer of children. Despite these traditional societies where women were frequently "seen as invisible," the use of women as suicide bombers brought the face of a

woman to what was traditionally known as a man's domain. The paradox lies in the fact that the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade rationalised the extension of the role of a man to that of a woman – as a suicide terrorist, a woman could step outside her normal duties and fight as an equal alongside her male counterparts. The fact that these organizations within traditional societies were able to rationalize the use of women as suicide bombers suggests that they were convinced of their utility and effectiveness as weapons of warfare.

From the evolution of the employment of women as suicide terrorists emerged a society that embraced and accepted this phenomenon. Women of the Black Tigers were often revered as heroes and honoured for their brave actions in the name of their political cause. For the women of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, they too were idolized and celebrated as martyrs dying for their beliefs. The fact that both societies honoured the phenomenon of women as suicide bombers served to support the continued employment of women in this role because they were proving to be an effective tactic in support of a political goal.

The similarities showcase that the employment of women as suicide bombers were a viable tactic that achieved a level of effectiveness that could not be overlooked. As a result, the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, with the support of their people continued to use women suicide bombers as weapons of warfare in their quest to achieve political goals.

Operational Differences

One of the most prominent differences between the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade is the targeting methods used by each group. The LTTE were normally committed to targeting a specific individual or group of individuals that were either military in nature or of a political party. However, this was not always the case and suicide attacks did take place against innocent civilians as witnessed during the Dehiwala Train Bombing and the Colombo Central Bank Bombing.[154] In spite of these and other attacks, the standard operating procedures of suicide bombers for the LTTE were normally aimed at a specific military or political target set. On the other hand, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade is one of the only terrorist groups who have used civilians to target other civilians. All seven suicide attacks perpetrated by women of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade have been in public locations where innocent civilians have been victims of a so-called target set.[155] Although the target set varied for each group, the use of women as suicide bombers to reach the designated targets was the same because both organizations recognized the value of a woman as the attacker to achieve the desired end result.

The second distinction that sets these two terrorist organizations apart is the fact that the LTTE welcomed women within all ranks of the Tamil Tigers, whereas the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade limited the role of women to suicide bombers only. It is estimated

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[154] Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Available from http://www.globalsecurity.org /military/world/para/ltte.htm; Internet; accessed 14 March 2011. The Colombo Train Bombing took place on 24 July 1996 and resulted in sixty-four civilian deaths and wounding four hundred. On 31 January 1996, the LTTE conducted one its deadliest suicide attacks on the Central Bank in Colombo that resulted in the death of ninety-one people while injuring fourteen hundred others.

[155] Claudia Brunner, "Female Suicide Bombers – Male Suicide Bombing? Looking for Gender in Reporting the Suicide Bombings of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict." *Global Security* 19, no.1 (January 2005): 34.

that while women have accounted for approximately five thousand of the fifteen thousand Tamil warriors, only the elite were selected and trained to become women suicide terrorists.[156] Throughout their campaign, the LTTE deployed over 170 suicide bombers of which at least one third were women.[157]   Conversely, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade did not welcome women into the ranks of fighters and restricted their role to suicide bombing operations. As a result, the numbers of women used to support and participate in suicide attacks are significantly smaller for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade than those of the LTTE. Even though only eight women from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade have been successful in carrying out suicide attacks, the Martyrs Brigade have recruited over forty women and Israeli security forces have imprisoned close to twenty women for attempted suicide attacks.[158] Despite the difference in the number of women that have been used for suicide attacks, the fact that both organizations continued to recruit and deploy women as suicide bombers throughout their campaigns serves as a testament of the effectiveness of woman as a tactic of warfare in the form of a suicide bomber.

Notwithstanding the operational differences within each of these organizations, the common denominator rests with the use of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare to achieve political gain.

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[156] Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Group* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 62.

[157] Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism...,* 62.

[158] Karla Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30 (2007): 116.

Analytical Results

The analysis of women suicide bombers was undertaken with the understanding

that there is a limited sample set from which to derive solid evidence and conclusions.

Between 1985 and 2006, women were responsible for attempting 220 suicide attacks,

whereas men accounted for over one thousand attempted suicide attacks during the same

time frame.[159] The fact that a successful suicide operation normally results in the attacker

killing themselves, coupled with the smaller number of women actually attempting to

partake in suicide operations attributes to the reasons why empirical evidence is

extremely difficult to obtain. Researchers are restricted to developing theories and

hypotheses surrounding women suicide bombers based solely on interviews with women

who have survived the attacks or with those who have been imprisoned trying to do so.

Notwithstanding these limitations, women remain a viable threat in their employment as

suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare for organizations seeking to achieve political gain.

As a result, there stands a requirement to continue to conduct studies regarding the use of

women as weapons of warfare.

The use of women as suicide bombers by the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs

Brigade suggests that the employment of women suicide bombers as a tactical weapon is

consistent with the principles of war that govern the conduct of warfare as indicated in

Table 7.1.

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[159] Paul Serluco, "Suicide Bombers," *Homeland Defense Journal* (May 2007): 14.

Table 7.1: Results of Principles of War Analysis

Principles of War	LTTE – Female Black Tigers	al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade
Selection and maintenance of the aim	X	X
Maintenance of morale	X	X
Offensive action	X	X
Security	X	X
Surprise	X	X
Concentration of force	Not applicable	Not applicable
Economy of effort	X	X
Flexibility	X	X
Cooperation	X	X
Sustainability	X	X (limited)

Results of the principle of war analysis have revealed that women within the

Tamil Tigers met all the elements of the principles of war with the exception of

concentration of force. The same condition regarding concentration of force holds true

for the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. A lone woman, nor could any one man generate the

superior fighting power that is required for a concentration of force as this capability is

often derived from the combined effects of air, land and sea firepower assets. Simply

stated, a force of one cannot generate a concentrated force necessary to achieve superior

fighting power as defined by the principles of war. Notwithstanding this result, the

employment of Tamil women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare in support of a

political end met the parameters of all other principles of war.

In both cases, women truly represented the ultimate economy of effort in the

multiple effects they were able to achieve. From a physical destruction perspective,

women suicide bombers who were successful in killing the target achieved the desired

physical effect. From a psychological point of view, women suicide bombers were

effective in instilling fear among a target population because their unexpected attacks

often left behind feelings of shock and confusion. As a result, a woman's ability as a suicide bomber to achieve both physical and psychological intended effects has proven commensurate with the principles of war regarding economy of effort.

The analysis also revealed that the ability of women suicide bombers to sustain the force within the Martyrs Brigade was extremely limited as they only welcomed women as suicide bombers and not as fighters. There was little evidence reporting exactly why women were only used as suicide bombers and not as fighters – the literature only provided speculation that was attributed to the traditional roles of women within the patriarchal Palestinian society. In all other areas, the women of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade deployed as suicide bombers equally met the principles of war as compared to the Tamil Tigers.

Whilst this paper has solely focused on the employment of women as suicide bombers in accordance with the principles of war in the conduct of warfare – it is recognized that the employment of men as suicide bombers may also meet these conditions and potential to achieve the same effects. As such, the question arises – is there really a difference between men and women suicide bombers?

According to Clausewitz, "one of the strongest weapons of offensive warfare is the surprise attack."[160] The distinction between men and women as suicide bombers lies in the element of surprise within the principles of war and this analysis suggests that women are able to achieve a greater level of surprise than men. Women who have been employed as suicide bombers have mostly been generated from societies where women

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[160] Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, ed and trans. Hans W. Gatze, (Pennsylvania: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1942), 26.

are not granted equal rights as their male counterparts. They are generally seconded to the role of care-givers for the family and are often bound by the traditions of a patriarchal society. As a result, when a woman is employed as a weapon of warfare as a suicide bomber, it is indeed unexpected and comes as a surprise that a conservative society would employ a woman in a perceived equivalent role to that of a man. As such, when women take up arms in the form of a human bomb to fight for a cause, not only do they transcend the boundaries of their conventional society, they inherently gain a competitive edge in the ability to achieve an enhanced level of surprise over their male counterparts because it is an unexpected role for them to fulfill within their conformist society.

It is this tactical advantage, this competitive edge through the unexpected role that she plays as a suicide bomber that enables women to achieve a superior level of surprise that distinguishes her from male suicide bombers. It is a woman's ability to achieve a greater level of surprise that enables her to be one of strongest weapons of offensive warfare and contributes to her continued and effective employment as a suicide bomber.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

In the early 1980s, Crenshaw noted that there was "considerable speculation about the prominent position of women in terrorist groups."[161] Today, women in terrorist groups have indeed evolved in their roles as logistical supporters and facilitators to those in positions of prominence such as highly effective suicide bombers. This paper has demonstrated that the use of women suicide bombers is mechanically simple, tactically efficient and possesses high-symbolic value that serves the political interests of various terrorist organizations.

Recognized as one of the tactics employed by terrorist groups, women suicide bombers were defined as a tactic of warfare and not as an ideology of terrroism. Framed as a tactic of warfare, this paper relied on classical military doctrine, such as the work of Clausewitz as the point of departure from which to discuss the relevance suicide bombers as a tactic. Clausewitz's theorized Principles of War that have since been interpreted by modern Western militaries were considered and the Canadian Forces' Principles of War served as the analytical framework from which to assess the effectiveness of women suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare.

The use of "women" versus "female" throughout the paper was deliberate and allowed for the exploitation of gender social biases that were of particular importance in discussions regarding women suicide bombers who have emerged from patriarchal

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[161] Brigette L. Nacos, "The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Patterns in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (February 2005): 438.

societies. As such, the use of women suicide bombers from the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, descendents of traditional societies was analyzed in accordance with the principles of war that govern the conduct of warfare.

Identified by terrorism researchers and experts such as Crenshaw, Ness and Alvanou, this paper also acknowledged the challenges associated with the limited amount of empirical data regarding suicide attacks because one of the criteria for success of a suicide bomber is to kill them self. Based on numbers alone, there are simply less women who conduct suicide attacks, therefore, the sample set is purely smaller than that of men. Therefore, it is recommended that additional empirical studies be conducted in order to reduce the amount of speculation in relation to the amount of available evidence.

Despite the challenges associated with the limited amount of available data and small sample set, the study did provide information from which tentative conclusions could be derived. The results of the analysis revealed that women from the LTTE and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade met all but one principle of war – the concentration of force. A lone woman simply cannot generate the fighting power necessary to achieve a concentration of force as this fighting power is normally generated from military firepower assets. The study also exposed a significant discrepancy in the manner in which the LTTE and the Martyrs Brigade sustained their force through the employment of women. While women within the LTTE were employed in a variety of roles comprising approximately one-third of their entire fighting force, women in the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade were not welcome in the ranks of fighters and were only employed as suicide bombers. In meeting all but one principle of war, this analysis suggests that women suicide bombers are an effective tactic governing the conduct of warfare and

supports the various reasons why organizations continue to use women bombers as weapons of warfare.

In accordance with the principles of war, it was recognized that the same conclusions regarding the effectiveness of men as suicide bombers as a tactic of warfare could also be derived. However, the greatest tactical advantage of women suicide bombers was identified as their ability to achieve the element of surprise which was directly attributed to the gender biases derived from the socially constructed roles of women in society.

Women suicide bombers defy the gender stereotype of women as non-violent, non-threatening and the givers of life rather than the takers of life. These stereotypes and the socially constructed roles of women are even more prominent in conservative societies where women are seconded to traditional care-giving, child-raising and house-keeping duties. Congruent with conformist societies, women are often viewed as "lower" than men in terms of social status. Therefore, when a woman from a patriarchal society steps beyond the confines of her designated role and chooses to become a suicide bomber; the effects of her blowing herself up are compounded even more because her act has completely transcended the normal boundaries of her accepted role in society. Society does not expect her to assume the role of suicide bomber in support of a political cause, but when she does, she also achieves a greater level of surprise than that of a man. It is from this unexpected role of a woman in a patriarchal society that she gains a tactical advantage, a competitive edge over her male counterpart. This competitive advantage gained in the level of surprise that a woman suicide bomber is able to achieve over that of a man contributes to her enhanced effectiveness as a weapon of warfare.

In conclusion, while the participation of women in suicide bombings has changed the face of the conflict, its ever lasting effects remain universal. Under a gendered veil of subordination, when women transcend the bounds of their patriarchal societies as weapons of warfare – this paper has showcased that women suicide bombers are indeed an invisible and viable threat.

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