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Scholars and the media largely treat terrorism as male dominated. This thesis contends that there is value in investing time to identify gendered bias, and examines women's involvement in terrorist networks in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Colombia. While there are fewer occurrences of women in terrorism than men, statistics may not accurately reflect the true number of women involved in terrorism because many interactions and events go unreported. The long history of women in terrorism and evidence of their significant roles in terrorist organizations is indicative that the female terrorist may be underestimated because of her gendered role in society. The popular belief that women join terrorist organizations due to coercion or use of force is controversial. This study indicates women in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Colombia joined voluntarily and that women's gendered roles are temporarily set aside during war. The unintended consequence of bias influences perception of female terrorists that women are naturally weak, passive, and incapable of violence and hinders advancing gender role equality that can act as a deterrent to terrorism.

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Nurturer, Victim, Seductress: Gendered Roles in Terrorism
By
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Commander, US Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial

satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign

Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are

not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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Abstract

Scholars and the media largely treat terrorism as male dominated. This thesis contends that there is value in investing time to identify gendered bias, and examines women's involvement in terrorist networks in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Colombia. While there are fewer occurrences of women in terrorism than men, statistics may not accurately reflect the true number of women involved in terrorism because many interactions and events go unreported. The long history of women in terrorism and evidence of their significant roles in terrorist organizations is indicative that the female terrorist may be underestimated because of her gendered role in society. The popular belief that women join terrorist organizations due to coercion or use of force is controversial. This study indicates women in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Colombia joined voluntarily and that women's gendered roles are temporarily set aside during war. The unintended consequence of bias influences perception of female terrorists that women are naturally weak, passive, and incapable of violence and hinders advancing gender role equality that can act as a deterrent to terrorism.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Perceived less gender neutral than gender specific, terrorism is male dominated. Women have long taken part in terrorist acts and terrorist organizations, but largely went unnoticed except for the sensational and highly propagandized acts of a few.[1] Research assumes women are nurturers by nature and casts them according to culture and circumstance into gender roles, such as the caretaker (wife/mother/daughter), the victim (widow), and the seductress. Terrorist groups exploit these gender role assumptions and biases to increase lethal effect by reducing distance to targets or by capitalizing on the propaganda of the deed. Gender bias hinders how researchers think of those assumed to be nurturers, victims, or seductresses, despite the potential for untold violence. Because of those assumptions, the research tends to focus on gender roles and motivation rather than the violence women terrorists enact. The belief that they are incapable of violence outside of certain conditions allows women terrorists the opportunity to exploit bias through more emotive effects or undetected activity.

One example of a biased scenario is when military members barge into a house, seize a male suspected terrorist, question the wife, and then leave her to care for the crying children. The woman may seem like an innocent caretaker, but she could be a mastermind of terrorist cell logistics, finances, and point-of-contact databases. The woman's relationship with a terrorist in this example should trigger researchers to view her not through gendered stereotypes, but as a potential terrorist. Gender bias analysis reveals the importance of understanding gendered role significance. The failure to

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1. Some of the noted women include Vera Zasulich, Leila Khaled, Ulrike Meinhoff, and Wafa Idris. Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank, "Women's Involvement in Terrorism," *Gender Issues* 28 (2011): 22-33.

conduct gender bias analysis allows women terrorists to exploit the opportunities for terrorist activities created by biased thinking that women are incapable of violence.

By conducting gender bias analysis, this study identifies the biases that exist in female gender roles and the implications they have when stereotyped categories overlook the violent potential of women terrorists. Examination from historical and stereotypical perspectives yields a better understanding of women in terrorism, highlights the gaps created by bias, and dispels the myths of the gender roles. Most studies find that women tend to become more deadly when the socio-political environment is so pervasively violent that women feel they have few other options, but discount the innate capacity women have for violence. This thesis expands the theory posited by Jessica Davis, that the stereotyping of women creates biases that tend to further exclude the female propensity for violence in patriarchal society.[2] Gender bias diminishes over time within the terrorist organization, as noted by the increased recruitment of women, but increases outside the organization, as evidenced by media portrayals.

The rest of this thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 defines terrorism, develops a framework of culture, and presents the reader academic perspectives on biases of women in gendered cultural norms. A discussion on culture frames barriers of entry for women into terrorism and helps identify the sources of bias. Chapter 3 provides a brief history of terrorism to indicate how long the method of struggle has been employed, and at what point women became involved. The primary focus is historical motivations for terrorism, in particular, those motivations that Mia Bloom calls the 5 Rs. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 examine women in terrorist organizations through historical case studies that

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2. Jessica Davis, *Women in Modern Terrorism: From Liberation Wars to Global Jihad and the Islamic State*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 79.

challenge the perception of the gender role assigned. Articulated through examples from the conflicts in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Colombia, the case studies typify bias roles, but are not exclusive to the particular role. Each case is structured from the background of historical violence in the region which gave rise to a terrorist organization, followed by the gender role discussion. The unique environment in each case gave rise to violence which precipitated women's involvement. The gender roles are examined through a combination of culture and complex environment as well as individual motivations of women in the terrorist groups. The discussion in Chapter 7 synthesizes and concludes the findings of the case studies to show common trends and traits, and questions for future research on this topic.

Chapter Two: What is Terrorism?

The first step in addressing gender bias in terrorism and the role that women play, begins with an understanding of terrorism. Terrorism has different meanings to different audiences. The term evokes a mode of warfare, political violence, insurgency, struggle, or even chaos. Many authors write essays, articles, and publications on the subject, but do not agree on a singular definition. Most scholars and the government agree that terrorism includes elements of violence, fear or intimidation toward civilians, and a political purpose. To eliminate ambiguity, the definition used here is that of the United States Department of State (DOS), which defines terrorism as "an activity that (1) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life, property, or infrastructure; and (2) appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, kidnapping, or hostage-taking."[3] A terrorist is a person who commits an act of terrorism. The term is gender neutral, but bias often conjures images and thoughts of men and not women when thinking of terrorists.

Terrorism is often associated with violence committed by marginalized groups attempting to gain power or influence. Political, religious, ethnic, or ideological interests often motivate terrorist groups. However, if the old adage of "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" has merit, then the terms terrorist and terrorism are relative to the individual. Despite the DOS definition, activists and their supporters rarely use terms such as terrorist and terrorism to describe themselves and their actions. The terms are dependent on one's view of the world. If the user views the world as peaceful,

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3. Executive Order no. 13224, *Federal Register* 66, no. 186 (September 23, 2001): 49080.

violent acts appear as terrorism. If the worldview is one that is at war, violent acts may seem legitimate. This worldview is common in communities where religious activists incite violent expressions of change in social, political, and ideological circumstances.[4] The perception within the group becomes one of activism to alleviate oppression.

Culture

To fully address women's roles and the nature of gender biases in terrorism, the complexity of the environment in which female terrorists act must be determined. First, gender is defined in many ways, and the definition in this thesis is beyond biological sex to a more holistic approach. According to Richard Strickland and Nata Duvvury, "gender is determined by the composite of shared expectations and norms within a society concerning appropriate female and male behaviors, characteristics, and roles. Gender and gender roles are culturally specific, learned, changeable over time, and influenced by variables such as age, race, class, and ethnicity."[5]

There are social characteristics assumed of genders. Those characteristics perceived as masculine are strength, virility, rationality, independence, aggression, risk-taking and the ability to protect.[6] Those characteristics perceived as feminine are physical weakness, emotion, passivity, innocence, risk-averse, and maternal.[7] Culture, on the other hand, can be seen through one of two perspectives: the competences, practices, and justifications used to make sense of people's actions; or the beliefs, values, and identities

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4. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003), 6.
5. Richard Strickland and Nata Duvvury, *Gender Equity and Peacebuilding: From Rhetoric to Reality* (Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women, 2003), 5, https://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-equity-and-peace-building-from-rhetoric-to-reality/ (accessed November 27, 2017).
6. Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War, and Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 6.
7. Ibid.

that motivate people's behavior.[8] Culture is multidimensional.

For instance, Russell Howard wrote that al-Qaeda's (AQ) culture was built on Sunni traditions, centuries of perceived humiliations, memories of past glory, and present political grievances.[9] Recalling the persecution of Muhammed by the Meccans, AQ's historical perspective reflects victimization and humiliation to justify its pursuit of an ideal world, the Abbasid Caliphate.[10] Inspired to wage a religious war by three events, the Sykes-Picot agreement, Israeli statehood, and Israeli War, followed by perceived U.S. occupation of the Arabian Peninsula, AQ linked geographic interpretations and ideological foundations to a cultural rhetoric of betrayal.[11] Where some cultures view death with sadness, the culture of AQ supporters view dying for their cause, including through suicide bombing, as a mark of bravery and a way into paradise. Martyrdom as a tactic was a component of AQ culture to return to the glory days of Islam, thus suffering in the present was irrelevant to the perspective of the sustained effort to restore the Caliphate.[12]

As seen through the al-Qaeda example, geography, economics, religion, and ethnicity are significant influences that add to the complexity of the culture and enable violent struggle. Social behaviors, myths, habits, and historical traditions that condone, sanction or justify the use of violence can facilitate the development of terrorism as a political norm.[13] Scholars attribute higher levels of terrorism to certain demographic and cultural factors where aggression and violence are the preferred method of conflict

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8. Javier Polavieja, "Capturing Culture: A New Method to Estimate Exogenous Cultural Effects Using Migrant Populations" *American Sociological Review* 80 no. 1 (2014): 169.
9. Russell Howard, "Strategic Culture," *JSOU Report* 13-8 (December 2013): 55.
10. Howard, 59.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid, 73.
13. Juergensmeyer, 6.

resolution. Terrorism often arises out of a culture of alienation and grievance which approves of radicalization and extremism.[14]

Another way to express cultural norms are through the societal standards of gender roles. Mary Hogue defines the differentiation as sexist ideology, or "the endorsement of gender norms that prescribe differences for women and men."[15] The sexist ideology is often part of a traditional standard, embedded in patriarchal culture, where the domestic sphere and its boundaries are a type of control.[16] Tradition often recognizes women's social power within a domestic range, but still controlled by male relatives. In his study of economic, political, and social factors, Kristopher Robinson found that nations that allow women the freedoms and resources to work outside the home in significant numbers subsequently experience less terrorist violence.[17] This furthers the theory that the permissibility of the operating environment for terrorism is tied to the socio-political influence of women in that society, as indicated by their presence in politics and the workforce.

Stereotypes and Bias

When society cannot understand the roles that cultural norms assign, there is a tendency to resort to stereotypical explanations. Stereotypes are widely held, oversimplified ideas of a type of person or thing, and form the basis of bias, the prejudice toward or against something or someone. There is no evidence to suggest that women

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14. Aneela Salman, *"Impact of Gender Inequality and Religion on how States Experience Terrorism"* (PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 2013), 75.

15. Mary Hogue, "Gender Bias in Communal Leadership: Examining Servant Leadership," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 31, no. 4 (2016): 841.

16. Tamara Herath, "Women Combatants and Gender Identity in Contemporary Conflicts: The Case of the LTTE" (PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics, 2014), 198.

17. Kristopher Robinson, "Unpacking the Social Origins of Terrorism: The Role of Women's Empowerment in Reducing Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (2010): 736.

terrorists are fundamentally different than male terrorists in terms of recruitment, ideology, and brutality, yet gender matters in the theory and practice of security studies. Research shows that greater gender equality contributes to peace within states while gender inequality leads to more intrastate conflict.[18] However, when postulating gender inequality, it is imperative not to slip into generalist conceptions of gender. The simplistic analysis of the peaceful woman disempowers them and denies them agency and voice. Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry argue that previous studies of women in terrorism portray them as helpless victims, irrational deviants, fanatical contenders, or heartless whores.[19] Other research reflects the sexist notion that "terrorism is not women's work."[20]

Stereotypes at the social and individual levels are amplified in the portrayal of women in the media. The media frames information to cue the audience to put events, issues, or actors into a contextual framework through the use of topics, sources, language, and visuals.[21] Through such a crafted framework, the media perpetuates the narrative of stereotypes in the way it portrays women. Brigitte Nacos found that female terrorists are portrayed by their physical appearance, family connection, relationship to a terrorist, feminist agenda, or comparative toughness to men.

Conflicting views of the same event in different cultures illustrate how media frames perception and drives sexism. In a newspaper article about the first female suicide bomber, she was described as "an attractive, auburn haired graduate who had a loving

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18. Salman, 10.
19. Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, Ltd., 2007).
20. Salman, 30.
21. Brigitte Nacos, "The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Pattern in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): 436.

family and likes to wear sleeveless dresses and makeup."[22] News stories about male terrorists typically give details about hair color only in the context of a perpetrator's description. Many journalists, including the editor of an Egyptian weekly, wrote that the bombing was monumental in shattering a glass ceiling and it "elevated the value of Arab women and, in one moment, and with enviable courage, put an end to the unending debate about equality between men and women."[23] Conversely, Stephanie Shemin condemned the bombing in the *Chicago Tribune* as a strategy to advance women's rights, and recommended "peaceful resistance and civil disobedience" instead.[24] Shemin argued that leadership serves women better than bombing, because violence as a form of social liberation in national liberation struggles does not advance women's rights. The media framed the information to shape the audience perspective and further drive bias in how women should act in a male-dominated society.

The media first coined the term, "Black Widows" in a report on Chechen female terrorists. The media perpetuated the image of a revenge-seeking widow, dressed head-to-toe in black, who turned to terrorism to avenge her husband killed by the Russian army.[25] The Black Widow idiom was a catchy phrase but not necessarily accurate. The media ignored that not all women were motivated by personal grievances. The reporters' references and exploration of family background was used to explain the women's violent actions in Chechnya, overlooking the political aspect of the women's violence.[26] The tendency of the media to portray, or stereotype, women as victims rather than

22. Ibid, 438.
23. James Bennett, "Arab Press Glorifies Bomber as Heroine," *New York Times*, February 11, 2002.
24. Stephanie Shemin, "Wrongheadedness of Female Suicide Bombers," *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 2002.
25. Nacos, 436.
26. Ibid, 440.

perpetrators of violence was an opportunity for the Chechen fighters to further exploit Black Widows for media attention, a key component of terrorism.

In summary, terrorism is a violent act to human life, property, or infrastructure for the purpose of intimidating a civilian population or influencing a government. The influence of culture and gender are related to the perception and interpretation of violent acts. Stereotypes and bias frame researchers' perceptions and media can shape or perpetuate biased thinking through framing. To understand why women become involved in terrorism, it is critical to determine their real motivations.

Chapter Three: Motivation

Historical examples are useful in framing perspectives on motivations that compel women to become involved in terrorism and the gender roles cast upon the women participants. In fact, terrorism as a form of political or religious violence can be traced back for centuries. David Rapoport traces religious terrorism to the Jewish Zealots against the Romans in the 1st century.[1] The Zealots saw themselves as revolutionaries who were able to compel land redistribution through emotional affects. At the same time, the Sicarii assassinated prominent Jews regarded as apostates. Combining both religious and political purposes, the Assassins (also known as Ismailis-Nizari), engaged in a struggle to purify Islam through public assassinations and armed revolution in the 11th century.[2]

In other work, Rapoport describes modern terrorism in terms of four waves, an anarchist wave from 1880-1914, an anti-colonial wave from the 1920's through the 1960's, a new-left wave from the 1960's through the 1990's, and a subsequent religious wave that began with the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and continues today.[3] Women had roles in terrorist organizations throughout the time periods, though scholars, such as Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank, point out that the leadership roles were primarily in left-wing, revolutionary bands. Right wing groups, such as white supremacists, treat women as lesser members. Religious inspired terrorism often makes even less use of women, and in the case of Islamic inspired terrorism, only after

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1. David C. Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *The American Political Science Review* 78 (1984): 658-677.
2. Ibid.
3. David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* ed. Audry Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46-72.

participation is endorsed by religious authorities.

One of the first modern terrorism organizations, Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), emerged in Russia in the 19th century and conducted a terror campaign against key leaders, much like the activities of the Assassins. Vera Zasulich, a member of Narodnaya Volya and first known female terrorist, attempted to assassinate the St. Petersburg governor general in response to his flogging of a political prisoner. Although unsuccessful in the assassination, Zasulich denounced the governor's injustices during her trial, and garnered sympathy and notoriety as a virtuous assassin.[4] Among the most influential members of People's Will was Vera Figner, who planned and executed the subsequent assassination of Czar Alexander II and further elevated the notoriety that she and the 26 other women of Narodnaya Volya earned, proving inspirational to future revolutionaries.[5]

The 1968 El Al hijacking in Israel marked a shift from anti-colonial terrorism of the second wave to international terrorism targeting representatives of Western power.[6] One of the first skyjackers, Leila Khaled, became a heroine and symbol of Palestinian resistance. The third wave also marked a period when young, educated, middle-class women assumed leadership roles in terrorist organizations, including the Red Brigades in Italy, Baader-Meinhoff Gang in Germany, Weather Underground in the United States, and Shining Path in Peru.[7]

The fourth wave of terrorism is characterized by its cause and weapon of choice.

4. Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank, "Women's Involvement in Terrorism," *Gender Issues* 28 (2011): 24.

5. Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 33.

6. Beverly Gage, "Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98 (June 2011): 90.

7. Weinberg and Eubank, 27-33.

Both religion and nationalism fueled terrorism in the 1980s. Two events are largely regarded as the impetus for the fourth wave: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan produced a call for jihad by Sunni Muslims; and the Iranian Revolution, which incited militancy by Shiite Muslims.[8] Nationalism, combined with religious concern, fueled by discriminatory practices, were also catalysts to violence in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, Palestine, and Lebanon. The weapon of choice in each location was suicide bombs. This was evidenced in women's participation in suicide bombing as early as 1985, when Sana'a Mehaidli, the first female suicide bomber, detonated herself inside a car full of explosives during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon.[9]

Jessica Davis showed that organizations generally do not employ female suicide bombers until an average of 13.5 years after the organization's establishment.[10] The research suggests that women's inclusion is out of necessity when the male recruiting base experiences pressure, such as extended conflicts. Cindy Ness argued that the inclusion of women "came about in response to logistical demands: the mounting number of casualties, the intensified crackdowns by government, and ability to escape detection more easily than men."[11] Davis' research also implies that incorporating women in national liberation movements conveys a message that women are equal. The message arose as part of the ideological social movement of some groups to recruit more women. Framing an independence struggle with women's emancipation struggle, or struggle for equal representation, enables groups to utilize existing gender norms to strategic and

8. Weinberg and Eubank, 34.
9. Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 143.
10. Jessica Davis, "Evolution of Global Jihad: Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36 (2013): 284.
11. Cindy Ness, "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): 357.

tactical benefit. Other motivational factors that affect whether groups will employ women include the culture of the region, women's roles in society prior to the conflict, and the region's history of women in terrorism.[12] The barriers to entry into terrorist organizations, therefore, are more difficult for women than they are for men. Because women are less likely to engage in terrorism without the structure of a group, individual motivations often create the connection.

Individual Motivations

The motivation and logic that drives a terrorist to action is rooted in a complex continuum from positive to negative. There is no single profile of a terrorist, as cultural values, demographic data, and terrorist group behavior each factor to a causal pathway. A strong belief in a cause can be that which is worth fighting. It is the strongest positive motivation, for which true believers would pay any price to accomplish their goal. The Tamils in Sri Lanka had this type of belief in a cause, for an independent Tamil state. Inspiration for terrorists today comes from predecessors such as Zasulich and other notable men and women regarded as heroes. A family tradition of revolution or martyrdom is an honorable aspiration when a culture for it exists. A history of personal or systemic injustice is another driver of terror, as exemplified in Chechnya, where a long history of violent oppression exists.

Mia Bloom refers to the motivations to commit terrorism as the five R's: *revenge* for a family member's death, *redemption* for past sins, *relationships* with terrorists, a means to earn *respect*, and as a result of a *rape*.[13] A more detailed discussion of Bloom's

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12. Jessica Davis, *Women in Modern Terrorism: From Liberation Wars to Global Jihad and the Islamic State*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 136.
13. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 235.

five R's provides a framework for understanding what motivated the women in the subsequent case studies.

Revenge is a significant influencer as a result of the personal loss of a loved one. Some women seek vengeance through suicide attack. Evidenced by the regularity of family members in Sri Lanka and Chechnya who subjected themselves to suicide bombs, Bloom cites revenge in response to their outrage.[14] Bloom discusses that widowhood may sever the woman from society, leave her with a sense of hopelessness, and inspire her to get involved. In Chechnya, when an injustice is done to a woman, revenge is the cultural norm. While revenge is usually cast upon the individual involved, years of war have generalized the concept and revenge is directed toward all Russians. Similarly, in 2004, when Reem Riashi blew herself up in Gaza City, Hamas' spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin said:

> The fact that a woman took part for the first time in a Hamas operation marks a significant evolution for the Izz Eddin al-Qassam brigades. The male fighters face many obstacles on their way to operations, and this is a new development in our fight against the enemy. […] This is revenge for all the fatalities sustained by the armed resistance.[15]

Redemption is related to the need to wipe away past sins. Redemption is often sought in the form of martyrdom, and often related to rape. Women may also consider martyrdom an option if caught in an illicit relationship.[16] In Islamic culture, a shahida (female form of martyr) is transformed from being an embarrassment to her family to a source of pride upon death.[17] Wafa Idris, a Palestinian woman who perpetrated an act of suicide terrorism, allegedly sought redemption to erase the stigma of being barren, unable

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14. Bloom, *Dying to Kill,* 87.
15. Ibid, 151.
16. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 235.
17. Ibid.

to fulfill her gender role as a mother. Her death resulted in clerics' permission for all

women to participate in jihad and the right to become martyrs following an editorial

entitled, "It's a Woman!" in the Egyptian Islamist weekly *Al Sha'ab*:

> It is a woman who teaches you today a lesson in heroism, who teaches you
> the meaning of Jihad, and the way to die a martyr's death. It is a woman
> who has shocked the enemy, with her thin, meager, and weak body. … It
> is a woman who blew herself up, and with her exploded all the myths
> about women's weakness, submissiveness, and enslavement. … It is a
> woman who has now proven that the meaning of [women's] liberation is
> the liberation of the body from the trials and tribulations of this world …
> and the acceptance of death with a powerful, courageous embrace.[18]

Bloom suggests the single best predictor that a woman will engage in terrorism is

her relationship with a terrorist. As in the case of the LTTE, relationships were formed to

deliberately construct cohesive networks. A relationship can provide an entrance into an

organization, where the known member can vouch for reliability.[19] Marriage to a terrorist

further binds women into an organization, forced to perpetrate or be subjected to acts of

violence. In some cultures, Bloom explains, "men dictate women's actions and maintain

the power of life or death over them."[20] However, Bloom's explanation suggests that

women are helpless to their circumstance and commit violence against their will.

Women frequently seek respect from the community, which is often seen in the

form of martyrdom. It may be less altruistic from the individual's perspective, as the

pursuit of honor offers an opportunity to impress a wide audience. Bloom suggests that

the symbolic act of suicide bombing may be a powerful incentive for individuals who

perceive that their lives have little significance otherwise.[21] In death, women bombers

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18. Cited in Middle East Research Institute, "Wafa Idris: The Celebration of the First Female Palestinian Suicide Bomber – Part II," https://www.memri.org/reports/wafa-idris-celebration-first-female-palestinian-suicide-bomber-part-ii#_edn1 (accessed December 16, 2017).
19. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 236.
20. Ibid.
21. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 88.

can be highly revered, as was Dhanu in Sri Lanka and Wafa Idris in Israel. The desire to win respect of family and friends can "lure women into violence and instill in them a sense of purpose."[22] Respect does not necessarily come in the form of death, as illustrated by Leila Khaled, who was caught after attempting to hijack an El Al flight. Khaled told reporters, "We [Palestinians] are under attack, [and] women are ready to sacrifice themselves for the national struggle for the respect of just rights."[23] According to Bloom, men gain status, or respect for sustained militancy, where women gain respect when they go beyond what is expected, and achieve martyrdom or carry out heroic acts.

Rape as a motivator is similar to redemption, but sexual violation provides a higher level of motivation, especially when sexual purity forms part of an individual's and family's honor, as it does in Sri Lanka.[24] Similar to gender based violence in other conflicts, rapes committed against women in Sri Lanka carried a dimension of ethnic violation because women's bodies and their virtue symbolize the nation's honor. Some female terrorists understand rape as a motivator which leads them to perpetrate sexual violence on other women. The victims often become unintended recruits of their attackers.[25]

This thesis suggests a sixth R, responsibility, may also explain women's motivation. Female-headed households are subjected to economic constraints when conflict changes gender role situations. Laws, cultural norms, customs, family traditions, and religious practices can interfere with women's economic opportunities.[26] This is

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22. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 236.
23. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 146.
24. Tamara Herath, "Women Combatants and Gender Identity in Contemporary Conflicts: The Case of the LTTE" (PhD dissertation, London School of Economics, 2014), 162.
25. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 237.
26. Kathleen Kuehnast, Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, and Helga Maria Hernes, *Women and War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2011), 91.

especially true in patriarchal structures, where women's roles are often in unpaid domestic duties. However, during conflicts when men leave home to engage in war, women who traditionally stay home to tend to family and caregiving assume tasks otherwise assigned to men, including earning income. Women actively participate in war and assume various roles from combatant to spy, logistics supporter (cook or nurse), or sex partner. Just as men, active participation provides employment and even educational opportunity, in the case of logistics and administration duties.[27]

In summary, David Rapoport traced the roots of terrorism as far back as the 1st century and concluded that trends in terrorism occur in waves, and women have long taken part. The six R's explain the individual motivations that compel women to terrorism. Both the socio-political and psycho-social motivations of culture and circumstance are a starting point to understand women in terrorism, but are inherently limited because those motivations alone do not explain elements that differ significantly from men. The in-depth case studies show women have more agency than acting out as a response to negative circumstances.

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27. Ibid, 95.

Chapter Four: Case Study Gender Role - Nurturer

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) revolutionary movement is notable as the longest running and most dangerous terrorist group, who fought an ethno-nationalist civil war against the Sri Lankan government from the 1970s until 2009. The people of Sri Lanka have a long history of ethnic influence by colonizers and state oppressors, which previously were indistinguishable. Tamils and Sinhalese had arbitrary distinction prior to Portuguese and Dutch colonization at the turn of the 16th century.[1] At that point, colonizers required the inhabitants to register their ethnicity which fueled rivalries, created competition over resources, and split the communities.[2]

British occupation in the 19th century further drove the communities apart by focusing agricultural development in primarily Sinhalese regions.[3] Without agriculture, Tamils took advantage of education and civil service employment opportunities. They sent their children overseas for education, who then returned to fill staff positions in law firms, hospitals, and other upwardly mobile positions.[4] The availability of employment in Sinhalese regions meant many Tamils migrated out of historically Tamil regions. The ethnic balance further changed when the British imported indentured Tamil migrants from India to work the coffee and tea plantations, doubling the Tamil population. Rising Tamil populations, especially in Sinhalese communities, fueled Sinhalese resentment.

Anti-Tamil rhetoric began almost immediately following Sri Lankan independence from colonial rule in 1948. Sinhalese nationalism dominated the political

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1. Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 143.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, 144.

agenda in the 1950s. The national language and religion changed. The intended

consequence was to force out English speaking Tamils from civil service, positions of

authority, and also limit university attendance. Civil disobedience in the 1960s gave rise

to violent protests for equal rights in the 1970s. Several separatist political parties

formed, one of which was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) revolutionary

movement. Emerging as an ethno-nationalist insurgent group, the U.S. Federal Bureau of

Investigation described the LTTE among "the most dangerous and deadly extremists in

the world."[5] The group assassinated some of Sri Lanka's leading government and

military officials, as well as India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and over 70,000 Sri

Lankans on both sides of the conflict died between 1983 and 2008.[6] Of particular interest

to the U.S. was the inspiration LTTE provided to other terrorist networks, and the

operatives within the U.S. who raised money to fund the terrorist campaign. The LTTE

disbanded when its founding member, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, was gunned down by the

Sri Lankan army in 2009.

The LTTE was made up of two wings, a military and political wing, and included

a naval unit (Sea Tigers) and suicide squad (Black Tigers). The Women's Front of the

LTTE, later called the Women's Wing, or Birds of Freedom, had a separate but parallel

structure to that of the men. While the political wing performed administrative tasks and

promoted social awareness on women's empowerment, the military wing engaged in

combat operations, and the suicide units conducted suicide strikes.[7] The military wing

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5. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Taming the Tamil Tigers: From Here in the U.S.,"
https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2008/january/tamil_tigers011008 (accessed December 2, 2017).

6. Ibid.

7. Sara Dissanayake, "Women in the Tamil Tigers: Path to Liberation or Pawn in a Game?" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 8 (August 2017): 2.

had a heavy weapons unit, as well as anti-tank and anti-aircraft units. Female combatants made up approximately 20-30% of the LTTE's core combat strength.[8]

Gender Role

Female gender roles in Sri Lanka are rife with contradiction. On one hand, women of high socio-economic status are not bound to the same generations-old cultural boundaries as those of lower status. While women have been in politics, generally they enter following the death of a male family member.[9] This dynastic approach is illustrative of Sri Lanka's Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayaka, and her daughter Chandrika, eventually elected President. However, the roles of women in power are limited and most Tamil women live in a society that sees their role primarily as nurturers: wives and mothers.

The LTTE recognized Tamil women's potential beyond the narrowly constructed gender role of reproducers, to include them in a wider social context of a combatant.[10] Tamil society holds a high value of female sexuality with a cultural belief that it holds hidden powers. The LTTE based its women combatants on the image of a masculine warrior in a feminine guise, and placed her in a role of a protector, combining the cultural ideology of the "mother" with a modern concept of the female combatant, trained to the same skill level as men in guerilla warfare. At the heart of that power is the highly valued female sexual purity.

One of the factors that contributed to women joining the LTTE were the forced

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8. Miranda Alison, "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security," *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 4 (2004): 450.
9. Tamara Herath, "Women Combatants and Gender Identity in Contemporary Conflicts: The Case of the LTTE" (PhD dissertation, London School of Economics, 2014), 40.
10. Herath, 45.

expulsions that occurred over the decades where millions of people were displaced. The loss of homes led to feelings of helplessness and broken families, and influenced a nationalist environment. The house in Tamil culture represents female moral virtue, modesty, and social respectability.[11] Displacement as a result of prolonged war caused changes in the familial structure within the home, where the male "protector" was no longer the provider or head of household. The decline in the importance or presence of a head of household and control over children, combined with hopelessness, were often catalysts to join the revolutionary movement to change one's social position.

In what would seem a sharp contrast to terrorist activities, the LTTE adhered to a strict moral code. They enforced family roles, but they also provided opportunities for women combatants to challenge gender roles which were otherwise constrained in civic society. This is an important factor, as LTTE relied on the community for logistical support and new recruits. The LTTE required women combatants to maintain familial identities to dispel social taboos concerning associations with men. For example, culturally, they referred to each other as brother or sister, creating a natural hierarchy of a family unit. Combatants were not permitted to engage in premarital sex, nor permitted unchaperoned visits if romantically linked, as those in relationships were expected to behave the same as in Tamil society. As one LTTE combatant noted, "We feel that person who is morally good only can be a brave fighter, [a] good fighter, [a] good leader, [and a] good cadre."[12] The LTTE linked moral conduct to fighting ability and simultaneously reinforced society's dominant view of patriarchal control over feminine virtue.

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11. Herath, 92.
12. Ibid, 139.

Understanding women in the nurturer gender role opens a new perspective in how women suicide bombers can be successful in revolutionary organizations such as the LTTE. The very nature of the mission reveals an act differentiated from other forms of violence; one that is "actor-based" instead of "act-based."[13] The view of women as caregiver made it easier for women to get closer to high value targets, including Dhanu (Thenmozhi Rajaratnam), the female suicide bomber who killed Rajiv Gandhi as she bent to touch his feet.[14] The significance of the bombing transcends the death of the Indian Prime Minister, to the LTTE's ability to exploit the element of surprise with an ordinary teenage woman, during a period when women were rarely employed.

The attack on Rajiv Gandhi was followed by other female Black Tiger attacks introducing new tactical innovations, such as bra, underwear, and pregnancy bombs to disguise the explosives.[15] By feigning pregnancy, suicide bombers were able to reach hard targets, but the challenge to Sri Lankans was a violation of reverence for motherhood, a gender role created by nature to protect. The pregnancy disguise was not new, however it broke the social norms of society and made the terrorist act harder to accept. Because suicide bombers believed they were saving the Tamil nation, their violence was viewed by citizens as acts of heroism.[16] The Black Tigers were thus gender labelled in terms of their moral virtue, "Armed Virgins," based on the assumption of their purity.

In Sri Lanka, virginity is linked to chastity and, consequently, a woman's virtue

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13. Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3.
14. R. Kim Cragin and Sara Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 55.
15. Dissanayake, 5.
16. Herath, 154.

and morality. The LTTE rejected the social out-casting of rape victims, and instead took an ambivalent position. Virginity and sexual purity in society was contradicted in LTTE by the acceptance of rape victims without any stigma attached. This non-judgmental view and group support created a sense of loyalty among women combatants, as well as a newly established sense of physical and emotional strength. Part of their new identity was then to avenge their sexual violation. Through suicide attacks, sexually violated women could achieve purification and shift the gender role paradigm to one of equality as a suicide bomber and successful combatant warrior. It is important to note, however, that not all suicide bombers were sexually assaulted. Suicide bombing as a self-sacrifice was culturally acceptable in Tamil, but viewed differently by gender. Female suicide bombers were viewed as selfless givers where male suicide bombers viewed their self-sacrifice as an honor gained vice a sacrifice. The masculine gender role tied the act to receiving, vice the feminine nurturer gender role that tied the same act to giving.

The Women's Front of the LTTE originally had to prove themselves as competent fighters for acceptance by their male combatant counterparts, but by the 1990's there was a greater perception of equality.[17] The notion of women fighting challenged traditional roles, but Vellupillai Prabhakaran, the founding member of the LTTE, promoted the idea of women fighters as Armed Virgins to keep within the patriarchal values of purity.[18] This view allowed women to join the LTTE and become equal members of the revolutionary group. As equal members, leadership was part of the natural progression for women with combat experience. Despite fewer combat units led by women than by men, Tamara Herath asserts the opportunity was achievable regardless of social

17. Herath, 204.
18. Ibid, 206.

perceptions of gender role.[19]

Roles for women in LTTE were more limited at the strategic level, where decisions affected the revolutionary movement. The view that women combatants of the LTTE "are still not ready for such a political role" maintained the male perception that women have limited abilities as political representatives, even in an organization that challenged the societal norms.[20] Despite the lack of women in political positions, women combatants held powerful leadership roles within the organization and community. The LTTE perceived "the struggle for independence is the frame, base or the background for the struggle for rights of women," tying the liberation of the state to the liberation of women.[21] Like other left-wing groups, they claimed women's participation was imperative for the Revolution to emancipate society, as well as liberate the homeland.

The combatant women of LTTE had the reputation that they were more violent and frightening than their male counterparts. Miranda Alison explained that women had to be tougher, more ruthless, and less-sympathetic to compete for status.[22] Alternatively, it was only a perception that they were more violent, suggesting the persistent underlying gender role bias and expectation remained, and women's involvement in terrorism and violence continued to be more shocking than men.

In this case study, the evidence confirmed that the stereotyping of women into the gender role of nurturer increased the Sri Lankan women combatants' lethality where the LTTE exploited bias. As a left-wing nationalist group that represented an oppressed population, the LTTE linked women's equality to political, economic, and social freedom

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19. Herath, 209.
20. Ibid, 207.
21. Ibid.
22. Alison, 457.

from the Sinhalese government. Religious and ethnic identities overlapped and created an environment wrought with divisiveness. The protracted war enabled the LTTE to employ women and new methodologies, including suicide bombing, which provided lethal and liberating effects, where women were cleansed, feared, and revered. Given the contentious environment, their individual reasons to join were explained as motivated by a sense of relationship or revenge, but research lacked the breadth of alternative motivations for violent women. Women in the LTTE were dedicated to their political cause, and motivated to kill and die for it.

Chapter Five: Case Study Gender Role - Victim

The wars in Chechnya began, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as Chechnya fought for independence from Russia. The first Chechen War officially started in 1994, ended in 1996, and started again as the Second War in 1999. Another ten years of war left Chechnya wrought with instability, and devastated the country as much as its people. Chechnya is a predominantly Muslim region in an isolated area in the Northern Caucasus, historically subjected to violent invasions and domination since the 16th century. The resistance to Russian colonial forces and Christian proselytizing began in the 18th century. While the opposition was fierce, the region fell to annexation under Catherine the Great's Russian empire in 1859.[1] Following the Nazi occupation in World War II, Joseph Stalin accused the Chechens of collaborating with the Germans and deported hundreds of thousands of Chechens from their ancestral lands to Siberia and Kazakhstan, with a goal "to physically exterminate the Chechen people."[2] The survivors returned after Stalin's death, as did the culture of xenophobia and nationalism after centuries of fighting to retain their homeland.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chechnya followed the Baltic countries of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania in a quest for autonomy. Chechen nationalists drove out the Russian KGB and declared independence, which caused fear among the ethnic Russians in Chechnya. When they fled the region, an economic and industrial crisis ensued. Russia declared a state of emergency and tried to force the Chechen President to disarm and surrender, followed by Russia's order of an aerial assault on the Chechen

1. Elena Pokalova, *Chechnya's Terrorist Network: The Evolution of Terrorism in Russia's North Caucasus* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015), 7.
2. Pokalova, 16.

capital, Grozny.[3] The Chechen air combat capability was destroyed on the ground, but many Chechens were former members of the Red Army and able to use their training and equipment for the urban ground war that followed.[4] Media reports indicated that the Russian forces showed no mercy to civilians, and by August 1996 the First Chechen War ended at the Battle of Grozny with a ceasefire. The civilian death toll was estimated at 100,000, in addition to over 200,000 injured, and 500,000 displaced.[5] Both sides claimed victory.

The First Chechen War was a nationalist movement, not religious based, but foreign money from religious backers to support the war efforts complicated politics and religious matters. Under pressure from Islamists, the Chechen President declared Sharia law to control the anarchy and lawlessness that followed the first war.[6] In a move to reunite former Chechen territory, rebel leader Shamil Basayev led a group of militants into neighboring Dagestan, which reignited tension with Russia.[7] Peace between Russia and Chechnya was short-lived.

The Second Chechen War broke out in 1999, as a counterterrorist operation, when Vladimir Putin led an aerial bombardment and ground war in Grozny as a response to the militants in Dagestan.[8] Over the next ten years, Chechens numbering in the tens of thousands were bombed, tortured, arrested, or just disappeared. Mia Bloom quotes an Amnesty International annual report describing the violence, "There were frequent

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3. Pokalova, 26.
4. Edward Lengel, "Taming Chechnya," *Military History* (November 2014): 40.
5. Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 40.
6. Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006): 445
7. Ibid.
8. Pokalova, 103.

reports that Russian forces indiscriminately bombed and shelled civilian areas. Chechen civilians, including medical personnel, continued to be the target of military attacks by Russian forces. Hundreds of Chechen civilians and prisoners were extra judicially executed."[9] The result of the violence was the employment of suicide terrorism against government targets beginning in 2000, with the heaviest fighting and the most suicide bombing employed in 2003.

The Chechen insurgents' motivations were primarily nationalist and separatist. The goal was the withdrawal of all Russian military and security forces from Chechnya, end armed conflict, amnesty for prisoners of war, and freedom to establish an Islamic state (although war's end and freedom from occupation took precedence).[10] The latter transitioned as an emphasis during the 1990s. Historically a Sufi region, an imported Salafi version of Islam, Wahhabism, gained influence through financial rewards to the clerics and constituents in Chechnya.[11] Wahhabism is similar to that practiced by al-Qaeda, in that it supports a terrorist ideology which glorifies martyrdom and promotes jihad to create a global caliphate. Wahhabism and terrorism, used interchangeably in Russia, resonate with Chechens who have been traumatized by their personal war experiences.

The culture and lifestyle of Chechens are distinct from Russia in that they are traditionally organized around closed circles of tribal allegiances stemming from a commonality of clan and territory.[12] Historically, as a societal patriarchal structure,

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9. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 42.
10. Speckhard and Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr," 440.
11. Ibid, 445.
12. Nino Kemoklidze, Victimization of Female Suicide Bombers: The Case of Chechnya," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2009): 183.

women were only permitted intertribal marriages as part of an economic or political exchange between clans. Similarly structured during the war, fighting units were male dominated, with women serving in subservient and traditional roles such as cooking, cleaning, and nursing the wounded.[13] Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank note that women tend to be late-comers to terrorism, which suggests that women were not seen as influential in the Chechen nationalist movement.[14] Further, Chechen women defied the gender stereotype as they took on increasingly important roles in combat as the conflict transitioned from a nationalist to a conservative religious cause. Some women learned to shoot guns and plant land mines, however, most women who joined the terror organizations in Chechnya took on traditional Arab roles and dress, which are not indigenous to Chechnya. The ideology of the insurgent movement was dependent on the unifying power of the symbols of Islam, characteristic of the Second Chechen War.

The fighters united around the leadership of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (CRI) as the self-proclaimed state and ultimate authority over all Chechen rebels.[15] A cell structure, as opposed to hierarchical structure, allowed for more resiliency and adaptability, but less centralized control. Their tactics were predominantly insurgent activities, including ambushes, raids, assassinations, and bombing, which relied on propaganda effects. The most effective were those carried out by the Black Widows.

Gender Role

After years of war, cast in the gender role of passive victim, the theories for why

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13. Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "Black Widows: The Chechen Female Suicide Terrorists," in Yoram Schweitzer ed. *Female Suicide Terrorists* (Tel Aviv: Jaffe Center Publication, 2006), 11.
14. Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank, "Women's Involvement in Terrorism," *Gender Issues* 28 (2011): 40.
15. Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, Chechen Rebel Groups, https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/chechen-rebels-groups-cri (accessed December 16, 2017).

women participated in the Chechen Wars vary as much as the theories regarding the type of participation. Research shows women's involvement ranged from the recruitment process to combatant attacks. The Chechen norms of appropriate conduct were based on a strict separation of male and female activities and spaces, where women were not only subordinate to the men, but also to any senior women in the household, including the mother-in-law.[16] Because the violence persisted through various phases of war beginning in 1994, it was difficult to determine when the war ended, peace began, and the next phase of war began. The brutality of the war made it particularly dangerous for men to go outside and forced women to become the primary breadwinners, in addition to their expected duties of all the housework and care for children. But like many other conflict-ridden zones, Chechnya is economically depressed and employment opportunities are limited, which lends itself to high crime rates. Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova cite the resulting social alienation, frustrated opportunities, despair, hopelessness, and lack of alternative courses of action as reasons for becoming involved in terrorist activities.[17] While these motivations seem gender neutral, the circumstances, and the horrors of conflict, and the loss of male family members, engendered women into the role of the helpless victim.

Unconfirmed rumors of female snipers appeared in the Russian press in 1994, but women were not employed as suicide bombers until 2000, when Khava Barayeva drove a truck loaded with explosives into a Russian police base.[18] The success of that attack led

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16. Alice Szczepanikova, "Chechen Women in War and Exile: Changing Gender Roles in the Context of Violence," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 5 (2015): 757.
17. Speckhard and Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr," 452.
18. John Reuter, "Chechnya's Suicide Bomber: Desperate, Devout or Deceived," *Jamestown Foundation* (2004): 6. https://jamestown.org/report/chechnyas-suicide-bombers-desperate-devout-or-deceived/ (accessed December 18, 2017).

to more women suicide bombers, who perpetrated 22 of 27 attacks between 2000 and 2006.[19] Shamil Basayev coordinated a special unit called the Riyad us-Saliheyn Martyrs Brigade, or Islamic Brigade of Shahids, who were widely known following an attack at Moscow's Dubrovka Theater in 2002.[20] The attack received international media attention, as almost 900 people were held hostage for three days, by 41 terrorists, including 19 Black Widows. Russian forces took control of the building using lethal gas, as the Black Widows deployed their bomb vests.[21] The event ultimately killed 129 people.[22] It also achieved the terrorists' goal of reminding the Russian public of the war in Chechnya. The attack was the genesis of the theories about Black Widows as perpetrators of violence.

Russian propaganda played a key role in distorting the role of Chechen women terrorists; the propaganda portrayed the women as victims, not as insurgents for state independence. The Russian media devised the "Avenger Theory" following the Moscow Theater bombing, to imply that the women were crazed and lured into the terrorist organization.[23] Other Russian journalists asserted a "Zombie Theory," that women were drugged to perform the acts against their will.[24] The former theory holds merit, as grief is a powerful motivator, but it is not specific to women, especially given that half the terrorists were male. Chechen culture teaches the duty to avenge the death of a family member with seven rules under specific conditions, however, the rules fall to the wayside

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19. R. Kim Cragin and Sara Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 59.
20. Pokalova, 114.
21. Pokalova, 125.
22. Ibid, 128-129.
23. Caitlin Toto, "Behind the Veil: A Study of Chechen Black Widows' Web," *Elements* (Spring 2015): 25.
24. Ibid.

as trauma mounts and generalized revenge becomes permitted.[25] This may account for why Chechen women alone carried out 55% of all suicide attacks and were involved in 81% of the total.[26] There is no data to support the latter zombie theory. While the intent of the Russian media was to discredit the Chechen's use of suicide bombers, the terrorists benefited in that the Black Widows created fear in the media, and their effective suicide attacks equated to more money from outside donors to further their cause.

Traumatic experiences in Chechnya are not uncommon, as violent death among family and friends continues to afflict most Chechens.[27] Speckhard and Akhmedova's study of terrorism in Chechnya concludes that trauma is the strongest catalyst to deep psychological and behavioral changes that lead to the choice of suicide terrorism.[28] The tactic was initially used at military establishments and then increasingly soft targets, including civilians. The Chechen Black Widows were especially adept at using the media to amplify the horrors of the Chechen War by garnering increased attention at deadly events such as the Moscow Theater. Although the practice of suicide terrorism does not have popular support in Chechnya, the ideology of dying for a cause resonates.[29] For Black Widows, there exists a dichotomy between the hope of achieving social justice on an organizational level and revenge from trauma on a personal level.

Nationalism drew Chechen women to the insurgency. A shahida explained the

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25. The seven rules of revenge include: 1). Murder should be punished with murder; 2). Only males may revenge, females are only allowed if there are no males in the family; 3). Two males should be killed for the murder of a female: the murderer and murderer's family member; 4). Revenge should only be directed to the murderer; 5). Revenge is not limited by time; 6). Revenge can be averted if respected elders intervene to ask forgiveness and reach an agreement; 7). Revenge does not mean the avenger should kill himself while committing murder. Speckhard and Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr," 467.
26. Speckhard and Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr," 468.
27. Ibid, 455.
28. Ibid.
29. Robert Kurz and Charles Bartles, "Chechen Suicide Bombers," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 4 (2007): 535.

Black Widows' willingness to self-immolate as a way to publicize innocent Chechens

dying, and "therefore, we have chosen this approach… if we die, others will come and

follow us—our brothers and sisters who are willing to sacrifice their lives, in Allah's

way, to liberate the nation."[30] Her statement confirms that nationalism was as significant

a motivator for Black Widows to join the insurgency in the name of independence as

revenge and trauma.

In this case study, Black Widows proved particularly lethal as perpetrators of

violence in the Chechnya wars, and confirmed the thesis that stereotyping of women

created a bias that further ignored the propensity for female violence. As a nationalist

group that represented an oppressed population, the Chechen terrorists linked

independence from the Russian government to political and religious freedom. Religious

and ethnic identities overlapped and created an environment wrought with divisiveness.

The protracted war enabled the Chechens to employ women and new methodologies,

including suicide bombing, which had lethal and emotive effect. Women's psycho-social

motivations for joining stemmed from a sense of relationship to the organization, revenge

for the dead, and socio-political factors such as the war-torn environment. The

destruction and violence from the war touched every social circle. Women were equally

motivated to join terrorist organizations as men, and studies show that they effected more

lethal attacks.[31] While both men and women were victims of war, media and research

bias existed where women were only considered in gendered roles as victims and not as

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30. Bloom, *Bombshell*, 52-53.
31. Speckhard and Akhmedova, "Black Widows," 4.

violent actors. Black Widows took the opportunity to break patriarchal norms to break

gender roles and take revenge for themselves, their family members, and their nation.

Chapter Six: Case Study Gender Role - Seductress

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a leftist guerilla group formed in the 1960's to defend the rights of the poor, engaged in armed conflict for over 50 years. The conflict stands as one the longest running civil wars in recorded history, but civil unrest in Colombia dates back centuries. Spain colonized Colombia in the early 16th century, and powerful elites ruled until widespread civil unrest from the lack of representation helped Colombia achieve independence in 1819.[1] Even after independence, struggle continued between the two primary political parties rooted in political and social inequality, as the majority of society was rural, and the economy based on coffee and mineral exports.[2] The inability of the parties to compromise, and inequality among the social classes, eventually erupted in chaos.

The violence that began in 1948, and ensued over the next decade, became known as the bloodiest period in Colombian history, and is referred to as La Violencia.[3] Members from both political parties agreed to form a bi-partisan government, the National Front, which outlawed all other political parties and stipulated power to alternate between liberal and conservatives regardless of election results.[4] Policies which favored the ruling class and large land owners forced workers from their farms to the cities to form cheap labor pools. The resultant social movements, including the Colombian Communist Party (PCC), arose from the discontent to oppose state sponsored oppression and call for improved working and living conditions.[5] The PCC joined forces

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1. Sean McCarthy, "Colombia FARC: Understanding a Revolutionary Movement," *FAOA Journal of International Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2014): 19.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

with other guerilla leaders and eventually became known as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolutionarias de Colombia (FARC).

The FARC established itself from the disenfranchised agrarian poor, but structured itself like a sophisticated military organization. In 1978, when the FARC allowed units to extract rent from the growing coca economy, the force expanded to include women.[6] The FARC converted from a peasant self-defense force to guerilla, expanded territories outside the traditional self-defense area, and proclaimed itself a "people's army" to provide social services and public order where government services were not available.[7] Commanders reported to different levels in its hierarchy, and activities were ruled by statute, disciplinary rules, and command norms. While the FARC was primarily a military organization, a political wing was a subordinate unit in its leadership. The FARC claimed to fight for a democratic regime with social justice and human rights, in a society that included the marginalized sectors of the political process, and provided for land reform. Despite some argument the Colombian conflict was about the coca trade and that the FARC lost some of its ideological principles, ideology was still an important organizing principle that motivated fighters.

Gender Role

Colombian women are highly sexualized at a young age in the macho culture, which often leads to gender based abuse, particularly in rural areas. One study suggests that six women are victims of intra-family violence every hour.[8] Sexual abuse is

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6. Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Francy Carranza Franco, "Organizing Women for Combat: The Experience of the FARC in the Colombian War," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17 (2017): 773.
7. Rahel Kunz and Ann-Kristin Sjoberg, "Empowered or Oppressed? Female Combatants in the Colombian Guerilla: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forced of Colombia-FARC," Conference Paper, International Studies Association, 2009, 10.
8. Kunz and Sjoberg, 19.

common, as are illegal abortions, perhaps due to a largely conservative Catholic society

that opposes the use of contraceptives and legal abortions.

The climate of violence from decades of armed conflict affected women in

particular. Rahel Kunz and Ann-Kristin Sjoberg discuss a study between January and

September 2003 where more than one woman died daily as a result of political murder or

execution, more than one woman forcibly disappeared every two weeks, and one socially

marginalized woman died monthly.[9] While the study did not indicate if the women were

civilians or combatants, one can draw a correlation from the increased gender based

violence to the increased recruitment of women in the FARC. Escape from family abuse

(including sexual abuse), escape from traditional gender roles, a search for adventure,

familial obligation, dedication to the cause, and protection were the primary influences

given as reasons to join FARC. The reasons also align with Bloom's motivations of rape,

relationship, and respect, as well as this thesis' sixth R, responsibility.

A testimony from one FARC member describes what many women experienced:

> My father [sexually] abused me from the age of five. He didn't want me to
> study or talk to anyone. Just work milking the cows. My mother knew
> nothing. He gave the orders. My father came looking for me but I didn't
> go back. The FARC gave me an AK-47 with three ammunition magazines,
> clothes, and boots. He [the father] couldn't hurt me anymore.[10]

Participation in the FARC enabled women to replace familial gender-based violence for a

non-gendered combat role. The gender role of seductress, as seen by the father, was

actually a child victim motivated by rape to join a terrorist organization. The research

does not indicate whether the girl's incentive to carry an AK-47 originated from her

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9. Kunz and Sjoberg, 20.
10. Amnesty International, "Colombia: 'Scarred Bodies, Hidden Crimes': Sexual Violence against Women in the Armed Conflict," (October 2004): 10, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/040/2004/en/ (accessed December 16, 2017).

desire to take revenge on her father, or to intimidate the civilian population and affect the conduct of the government—by definition, the intent of a terrorist organization.

An estimated thirty to forty percent of FARC members were female combatants.[11] The exact data about female combatants is difficult, as representation of armed Colombian women includes a wide variety of tactical, recruitment, support, and combat roles over the last 50 years of conflict. One woman, Sandra Sandoval, joined a local FARC militia when she was seventeen. When she heard rival militias were coming after her, she left behind an infant daughter and escaped into the jungle. She rose to the level of Commander within the FARC and used her position to help communities get resources to build schools and roads.[12] Her escape to the FARC was a direct result of the high number of gender based abuses common in Colombian society. She further challenged the nurturer gender role through her willingness to leave her child behind and engage in militia activities.

"The political ideology is what drives women to join FARC," as they claim to be a feminist organization.[13] Olga Lucía Marín (war name for Liliana López Palacios), a FARC Commander, stated that the FARC's official policy was that women have the same rights and duties as men.[14] Further, she said women enter the FARC because they see guerrillas as "superpowerful, emboldened women playing a different role than the rural

11. Jacqueline O'Neill, "Are Women the Key to Peace in Colombia," *Foreign Policy* (April 20, 2015), http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/20/are-women-the-key-to-peace-in-columbia-farc-talks/ (accessed November 15, 2017).
12. Megan Alpert, "What Happens to Colombia's Female Guerillas after the FARC Deal?" *The Atlantic* (September 2016), https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/09/farc-deal-female-fighters/501644/ (accessed November 15, 2017).
13. Olga Lucía Marín, "Woman and Revolution," Antonio Nariño Front of the FARC-EP blog, frentean.blogspot.com (posted March 2011), https://www.marxists.org/espanol/tematica/mujer/autores/marin/2011/mujeryrev.htm (accessed December 8, 2017).
14. Kunz and Sjoberg, 11.

society could impose on them."[15] FARC women fought for equality as part of the revolutionary struggle, and within the organization women received the same political, military, and cultural training as men and fulfilled command and representational functions according to their abilities.

Support and warfighting roles within the FARC were less gendered than in Colombian society, but still represented an inequality within the operational structure. Training appeared to be non-gendered, including military, physical and weapon handling, combat, and enemy evasion, though there was still a difference in the roles women took in top leadership of the FARC. Despite its claim of equality, a woman never held a Secretariat position. Support roles performed by women included communications, finance, nurses, educators, and intelligence. Lesser publicized, women provided sexual services to male FARC members, of both high and low rank. Sex with comrades was viewed as a "revolutionary duty."[16] According to interviews conducted by Yvonne Keairns in Colombia with female soldiers, women recognized power differentials between men and women and agreed to sexual relationships for benefits such as increased food, better living conditions, and other privileges.[17] While women were able to escape the gendered seductress role in Colombian society, they still turned to gendered roles to gain advantages.

After three years of negotiations, the FARC completed peace negotiations with the Colombian government in 2016. Comprised of more than 40% women, the FARC

15. María Paula Suárez Navas, "The History of Women in the FARC told by a Former Feminist Guerrilla," https://www.publimetro.co/co/noticias/2017/09/28/la-historia-las-mujeres-las-farc-contada-una-exguerrillera-feminista.html (accessed December 8, 2017).
16. Kunz and Sjoberg, 27.
17. Yvonne Keairns, "The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers: Colombia," Quaker United Nations Office (January 2003): 3, http://www.quno.org/resource/2003/1/voices-girl-child-soldiers (accessed December17, 2017).

peace delegation was a close representation of the gender composition of FARC as a whole.[18] Alexandra Nariño (war name for Tanja Nijmeijer), a member of the FARC's political wing to negotiate the final peace, pointedly said in an interview, "to think that the FARC-EP is engaged in dialogue with the government because we have almost been defeated is to ignore its political and military background."[19] The strategic environment and complexities of the war were key tenets of the peace dialogue, as was the essential requirement for social justice.

Since then, Colombian women found that war termination did not provide the gender equity found in the FARC. Terrorism created the impetus to change the government's policies, but did not necessarily influence the civilian population. Post-conflict reintegration programs such as the Colombian Reintegration Agency often guided women into traditional gendered domestic careers, such as cooking or tailoring.[20] The former leadership roles and the security of rifles were exchanged for a culture that expected women to care for her feminine beauty, children, house, and a man that sees her as "damaged goods" because of her guerilla past.[21] The feelings of lost equality on the path to reintegration is rife with contradiction.

After leaving the organization, a former FARC combatant said, "The government projects the idea that we were brought to join armed groups by force. That we had to be the lovers of the combatants and the commanders. That we slept with everyone. It's making us into idiots. It's saying that women don't have the capacity to think and make a

18. Journal of International Affairs, "Prospects for Peace: Negotiations with FARC. An Interview with Alexandra Nariño," *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2014): 225.
19. Ibid, 222.
20. Alpert, "What Happens to Colombia's Female Guerillas after the FARC Deal?"
21. Ibid.

decision."[22] Motivated to terrorism for the cause, the female combatant makes the argument clear that women in the FARC have agency and make choices. The FARC was a source of family, protection, and discipline for some, and terror for others. Yet the assimilation into society presented similar challenges for each that drove women into the guerrilla life. The negotiations of the FARC to end the war present cultural dissonance where women were elevated to positions as key members of the peace dialogues, but upon conflict termination returned to debased positions within society. Society stigmatized women as warfighters but both encouraged and prevented the women from assimilating back into traditional gender roles.

Female combatants personal accounts of life in the FARC confirmed the stereotyping of women, which further excluded the propensity for female violence. Colombian women combatants trained and fought alongside their male counterparts, and were as lethal as the men, despite the seductress gender role. A left-wing group that represented an oppressed population, the FARC linked women's equality to political, economic, and social freedom from the elitist Colombian government. The protracted conflict created the need for combatants, when FARC's network subsequently expanded to include nefarious actions, like drug trafficking, to finance the war efforts.[23] The FARC's socialist ideology dictated institutional wealth and equality, which was particularly liberating for women. The women of FARC operated outside the stereotype of the gendered role, given the contentious environment. Their individual reasons to join were often motivated by a sense of personal security, relationship or revenge, but a characterization as victim ignores the political violence they perpetrated.

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22. Ibid.
23. McCarthy, 20.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

Terrorism is both political and social in terms of origin, dynamics, and consequences.[1] The predictors of participation are socio-political and psycho-social, not static or geographic factors. As Beverly Gage suggests, there are lessons to learn from studying the history of terrorism, that strategies aimed at containing violence will likely fail without attention to resolving the political and social conflicts at stake.[2] The case studies from Sri Lanka, Chechnya, and Colombia highlight some trends in socio-political and psycho-social violence that point to gender bias created in society. Failure to understand how cultural norms drive gender roles leaves researchers susceptible to the same biases as the terrorist organizations they study, a point supported by Jessica Davis' work. Using gender bias analysis to study these cases revealed the research bias that women are victims, and that much research is incorrectly focused on the conditions that compel women to violence. The consequence of overlooking women as perpetrators of political violence motivated to kill and die for their cause denies them agency, and the capability for violent actions beyond their social conditions.

A study of the socio-political trends for the third wave of terrorism, as described by Rapoport, showed a common trend of similar character, with similar activities, driven by similar group motivations. Third wave groups like the LTTE and FARC displayed profoundly left-wing aspirations, and nationalism served to react to religious purposes in the fourth wave as in Chechnya.[3] Both the LTTE and FARC represented an oppressed

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1. Kristopher Robinson, "Unpacking the Social Origins of Terrorism: The Role of Women's Empowerment in Reducing Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (2010): 751.

2. Beverly Gage, "Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field" *Journal of American History* (June 2011): 93.

3. David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, ed. Audry Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 47.

population and sought equality for its people. They employed "theatrical targets" such as

high profile kidnappings and assassinations instead of the more military targets sought in

the second wave, as they were more often "punishments."[4]

Religious and ethnic identities often overlap, as identified in both Sri Lanka and

Chechnya. The Buddhist Sinhalese tried to transform the country and the response among

the Hindu Tamils was to create a separate secular state. Similarly, the Muslim Chechens

wanted to create a separate state after the independence action in the Baltics. Their

revolution started as one of independence but overlapped with religion until Islam

became a critical igniting spark for a terrorist rebellion.

The period of women's rights movements across the world reignited and

expanded the roles of women in terrorism, particularly during the third wave. Restricted

to the role of messenger and scout during the second wave, women once again took roles

as leaders and fighters.[5] However, the number of revolutionary organizations where

women combatants reached higher levels of leadership remain limited. As seen in the

FARC and LTTE, women combatants appeared to gain a certain level of leadership

where they became commanders of units, including fighting units and supporting units,

but rarely held positions at the very top of the organizations.

FARC's Olga Lucía Marín wrote, "It is impossible to talk about the revolution,

without mentioning the participation of women. She has always been present for

freedom, independence, and social justice."[6] Her quote implies the agency of women in

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4. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 57.
5. Ibid, 56.
6. Olga Lucía Marín, "Woman and Revolution," Antonio Nariño Front of the FARC-EP blog, frentean.blogspot.com (posted March 2011), https://www.marxists.org/espanol/tematica/mujer/autores/marin/2011/mujeryrev.htm (accessed December 8, 2017).

terrorism. That women become combatants contradicts the stereotype and gender role of women as more peaceful than men. It also dispels the victimization theories that may explain the growing international awareness of women in terrorist organizations, yet women are still ignored in most conflict analyses. The victimization discourse is more often evaluated by gender which further instantiates the representation of women as victims, particularly in Chechnya.

The preponderance of media and research material on women combatants in Chechnya focus on suicide bombing, unsurprising, they were almost exclusively considered suicide bombers, Black Widows, as were the Black Tigers of the LTTE. The fundamental difference was community support for the martyr's actions. The Tamils viewed martyrdom as an act of heroism that restored virtue; the Chechens did not condone self-immolation but viewed it as an act of revenge. The similarity resides in the employment of women as suicide bombers for propaganda of the deed and as a requirement when the organizations needed more fighters. Evidenced in the three case studies, as the requirement for additional forces became apparent and the traditionally patriarchal structure began to collapse, the groups looked to women to fill the void. Women remained in traditional roles during the beginning of the wars, but as the men were killed, women assumed a more central role in society and within the terrorist organizations. While there is some indication that women had combatant roles within the Chechen terrorist organizations, most evidence supports their use only as suicide bombers. The structure of the organization, as well as that of the society, were the predominant factors that kept Chechen women from leadership roles, and steered them from the margins toward suicide bombing, as a method of inclusion.

In each of the patriarchal societies studied in this thesis, women were subjugated within society, and their desire for empowerment to better their personal situation influenced their participation. Among the many barriers to entry, the insurgency groups included women in the conflicts out of necessity, when the male recruiting base experienced pressure. Nevertheless, women were able to utilize existing gender norms to a strategic and tactical benefit. Incorporating women in national liberation movements conveyed a message that women were equal, and was part of the ideological social movement of the LTTE and FARC to recruit more women. The independence struggle for the Tamils framed the women's emancipation struggle, as did the FARC's struggle for equal representation. Yet post-conflict, societal equality was not met. Future research needs to address why the movements did not ultimately lead to greater equality.

The socio-political dynamics of the three organizations were similar, as were the psycho-social factors of the women within the organizations. Speckhard and Akhmedova studied the motivations of suicide terrorists in Chechnya and found that factors are individual and group based for both men and women, which include: living in a conflicted area or war zone; suffering a personal trauma, primarily the death of a close family member; exposure to or seeking out militant groups; and a resonating message, meaning in life, brotherhood, or need for revenge.[7] The results of their research similarly apply to those in the FARC and the LTTE. Further, personal grievances, such as rape, can play an important role for women as it does for men. As was shown in the LTTE and FARC case studies, the groups provided women a base of personal security as well as an outlet for revenge. However, the studies imply that sociological and cultural factors drove

7. Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006): 440.

women to act out in violent ways within the terrorist organizations—without consideration that women may naturally act violent and they were opportunistic of the conditions. The very concept of revenge connotes the capacity for violence.

Women stepped out of biased gender roles during wartime; however, upon the end of combat action in Sri Lanka and Colombia, they returned to the status quo within their societal norms. Since the conclusion of the wars, women continue the struggle for equality and are affected by a surge of gender-based violence. As post-war combatants, they no longer fit into the gendered role of wife because they are no longer seen as passive, and so are hesitant to discuss their experiences. Colombian women were initially attracted to the ideology of FARC to escape gendered roles, yet post-war are subjected to sexual violence, and stereotypical social roles. Indicative of the media exacerbating the seductress gender bias, a current public service campaign in Colombia reads like a lipstick ad, "Guerrillera, feel like a woman again. Demobilize."[8] Reintegration packages, which pay lump sums to demobilized fighters according to rank in the FARC, do not always address the leadership roles of women, and often recreate the gendered stereotype women joined the FARC to escape.[9] Without equality in post-war reintegration, countries risk recidivism and reintegration into criminalized activities.

A better understanding of the gendered roles of women in terrorism and society highlights the gaps created by bias. Women can be powerful agents of change both in war and peace. They play critical roles in detecting early signs of radicalization to intervene

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8. Megan Alpert, "To Be a Guerrilla, and a Woman, in Colombia," theatlantic.com, posted September 28, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/09/farc-deal-female-fighters/501644/ (accessed November 15, 2017).
9. Jacqueline O'Neill, "Are Women the Key to Peace in Colombia?" foreignpolicy.com, posted April 20, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/20/are-women-the-key-to-peace-in-colombia-farc-talks/ (accessed November 15, 2017).

before men and women become violent, and delegitimize extremist narratives. With a

demand for equal justice for women and their increased role in countering terrorism, the

stage is set in the international legal system. The starting point was the adoption of UN

Security Council Resolution 1325, in 2000, and subsequent resolution UNSCR 1820,

passed in 2008. Continued efforts to effectively integrate women's roles into countering

terrorism and violent extremism, UNSCR 2242, adopted on October 13, 2015 *urges*

member states and the United Nations system to ensure the participation and leadership

of women in peacekeeping operations.[10]

In war, as in peace, gendered perspectives require further analysis. Women in

Chechnya were able to address the dire humanitarian situation after the First Chechen

War, but were excluded from the official negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction

process. The peace-building efforts reflect women's standing in the broader context of

Russian socio-political society. The initiatives were marginalized as were their position in

society. Future research is needed to examine how much the perceived rights of women

impacted the number of women who joined the insurgency. Also the case in Sri Lanka, a

former female LTTE combatant asserted, "Life is never the same for a female combatant

in pre- and post-conflict scenario. These women barred from peace negotiations with full

cognizance that they had sacrificed their lives for a cause. Is it not a conspiracy?"[11] An

answer to the combatant's question requires further research. Did Prabhakaran's

calculating employment of women as suicide bombers preclude the need to integrate

them into the higher echelons of the LTTE organization to maintain an all-male

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10. UN Security Council, *Resolution 2242*, adopted at 7533rd meeting, October 13, 2015.
11. Seema Shekhawat and Bishnu Pathak, "Female Combatants, Peace Process and the Exclusion," in *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration* ed. Seema Shekhawat (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 55-56.

leadership structure?

Conversely, the FARC integrated women into the peace process in the same proportion as in their combatant ranks. Alexandra Nariño explained, "We will simply continue negotiating and trying to make [President Juan Manuel Santos] understand that the guerrilla's proposals are based on the proposals made by the population, which makes it necessary for his government to listen to them."[12] Nariño was one of the members of FARC's political wing to negotiate final peace for Colombia in 2016. Comprised of more than 40% women, the FARC delegation was a close representation of the gender composition of FARC as a whole. A dichotomy exists in the changing gender roles in war and peace. The stature of Nariño within the organization demonstrated the ability of women to rise out of gender roles, and their importance within the organization despite societal perception or where biases of those perceptions may dictate. Societies naturally assume gendered and biased views of women as peaceful. Future research should examine the longevity of groups once they incorporate women as combatants, to determine the rate at which gendered organizations realize negotiated settlement. This thesis showed despite the socio-political environment, psycho-social conditions, and stereotypes, women will turn to violence to maintain the virility of a political cause.

In conclusion, terrorism has largely been treated as male dominated instead of gender neutral. Previous research indicated that women tend to become violent when the socio-political environment is so pervasively violent that women feel they have few other options. While there are fewer occurrences of women in terrorism than men, statistics may not accurately reflect the true number of women involved in terrorism as the onerous

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12. Journal of International Affairs, "Prospects for Peace: Negotiations with FARC. An Interview with Alexandra Nariño," *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2014): 223.

process to detail military and police engagements leaves many interactions and events unreported. The long history of women in terrorism and evidence of their significant roles in terrorist organizations is indicative of the fact that female terrorists may be underestimated. The popular belief that women join terrorist organizations due to coercion or use of force is disproven by studies to the contrary, that indicate women join voluntarily.[13] The case studies showed that women's gendered roles were temporarily set aside during war and equality to fight for a cause within the terrorist organization was a motivating force. Further, the case studies showed that while personal and group motivating factors were present, those factors alone are not enough to state definitively that women would not turn to violence otherwise.

One can conclude that terrorism is not something different for each group but is an evolution. While gender equity rights consistently reduce terrorism, greater levels of women's rights are associated with fewer terrorist attacks.[14] Further, women's rights in society can act as a deterrent to terrorism, but making those advances requires the concession and elimination of the stereotypes that women are naturally weak, passive, and incapable of violence.

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13. Miranda Alison, "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security," *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 4 (2004): 454.
14. Aneela Salman, *"Impact of Gender Inequality and Religion on how States Experience Terrorism"* (PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 2013), 72.

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Vitae

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