

## WOMANHOOD AND TERRORISM: A PARADOX OR AN APHORISM?

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*"A woman is often perceived as a victim of violence or of society, as widows or mothers, or as passive supporters – part of a support network. She symbolises the guardian of tradition, a symbol of motherhood and life. How can she then, seemingly contradictory to this, give her life to violence and death?"<sup>1</sup>*

### **ABSTRACT**

The interests of begetters of humanity, traditionally symbolizing and idolized to be the peace-lovers and violence-haters, have been dynamically expedited in the aftermath of first acquaintance with the concept of "feminism". Idealistic human roles of "nurturers", "pacifists", "guardians", and "protectors" of humanity in addition to the celebrated values of "passivity" "sensitivity" were constrained to the recognition of being gender-identical. Lamentably, wholly disavowing, the assumption of barbaric and savagery robes which the so called Peace-loving gender could ever embrace, proved to be a tremendous collapse on part of saviours of human security. The hardcore radicalization of "feminism" massively aided in the construction of male-counterparts as exterminators of humanity.

Needless to say, realization of industrious involvement of women in contemporary terrorism and militancy was an eye-opener for the intelligence agencies around the globe, inducing counter-terrorism centres to frame gender-neutral counter-terrorist policies. For centuries, gender had been exceedingly overlooked in the literature and language of terrorism. The societal myth- 'Women are not violent' needs to be reconsidered comprehensively and without more ado.

This paper, therefore, primarily aims at addressing the issue of aggressive involvement of women in Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE), AL-Qaeda, & Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the social and psychological factors leading to the escalating participation of women in terrorist-activities, employment of women in terrorist organisations, Adopting Gender-Sensitive and Human Rights-

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<sup>1</sup> Melissa Martin, *Women's participation in terrorism, conflict and violent extremism: Gender equality or pure pragmatism?*, Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security, Charles Sturt University Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hrlc/documents/student-conference-2014/m-martin-ms-nottinghamstudentconference.pdf>, Retrieved on: October 15, 2016 at 10:30 hours.

Compliant Approaches, examining the gendered terrorist stereotype, Exploitation of Women terrorists and Women's Role in Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization leading to terrorism (VERLT) and critical analysis of existing international conventions and trans-national treaties pertaining to terrorism. Lastly, making recommendations and suggestions to limit the afore-mentioned menace and highlighting the pressing need for enlarging the role of women in counter-terrorism policies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The interests of begetters of humanity, traditionally symbolising and idolised to be the peace-lovers and violence-haters, has been dynamically expedited in the aftermath of first acquaintance with the concept of "feminism". Idealistic human roles of "nurturers", "pacifists", "guardians" & "protectors" of humanity in addition to the celebrated values of "passivity" and "sensitivity" were constrained to the recognition of being gender-identical. Lamentably, wholly disavowing, the assumption of barbaric and savagery robes which the so called Peace-loving gender could ever embrace, proved to be a tremendous collapse on part of saviours of human security. The hardcore radicalization of "feminism" massively aided in the construction of male-counterparts as exterminators of humanity. For centuries, gender had been exceedingly overlooked in the literature and language of terrorism. Needless to say, realization of industrious involvement of women in contemporary terrorism and militancy was an eye-opener for the intelligence agencies across the globe, inducing counter-terrorism centres to frame gender-neutral counter-terrorist policies. The societal myth- 'Women are not violent' needs to be reconsidered comprehensively and without more ado. The critical role of women in 3P's, namely, promoting, perpetuating and preventing terrorism has largely been a constricted area of research, owing to the gender-stereotype acceptance. Therefore, women's role not only as supporters or proponents, but also as opponents needs to be examined exceptionally well and in a very impactful manner.

## 2. EVOLUTION OF WOMEN AS BANEFUL WEAPONS OF TERRORISM

From times immemorial, women have been labelled and stamped to be the inferior part and subordinate class in comparison to men. The line of business of terrorism as "male-dominant", is a stereotype stuck to the minds of rank and file. As Jean Bethke Elshain aptly remarks, "Certainly when most of us think of 'terrorists' we do not see 'women'."<sup>2</sup> The populace viewpoint as formed from the

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Stanski, *Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology : A case study of women who join the revolutionary armed forces of colombia (FARC)*, [https://www.academia.edu/148962/Terrorism\\_Gender\\_and\\_Ideology\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Women\\_who\\_Join\\_the\\_Revolutionary\\_Armed\\_Forces\\_of\\_Colombia\\_FARC\\_](https://www.academia.edu/148962/Terrorism_Gender_and_Ideology_A_Case_Study_of_Women_who_Join_the_Revolutionary_Armed_Forces_of_Colombia_FARC_), Retrieved on: October 15, 2016 at 10:50 hours.

"media's depiction" of terrorist activities seems to be detachment of women from terrorism. The need of the hour is to ultimately realize and scrutinize vigorously as to the rationale behind the ever-increasing participation and strategic use of fairer sex in terrorism. As stated by Mia Bloom, "The idea that women don't engage in violence, I think, is one of the things that terrorist groups hope we continue to believe so it does have that shock value."<sup>3</sup> The following organisations have indoctrinated women to their domain, elucidating upon their evolution as baneful weapons of terrorism, incessantly working against the extinction of human race and humanity thereof:

### **2.1. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has remained a predominant separatist organisation which battled for a self-governed and sovereign Tamil State in North-Eastern regions of Sri Lanka. The Tamil Tigers tremendously inducted females as warriors to combat the Sri Lankan Govt., thereby robustly confronting the traditional psyche of gender involvement in political violence. In 1983, the Vituthalai Pulikal Munani, i.e., Women's Front of the Liberation Tigers had been noticeably, but distinctly founded.<sup>4</sup> Besides acting as combatants, they played an exceptionally imperative role in the form of providing services such as information collection, medical care, recruitment, propaganda. Thiranagama observes: '*One cannot but be inspired when one sees the women of the LTTE in the night with their AKs slung over the shoulder ... One cannot but admire the dedication and toughness of their training ... One could see the nationalist fervor and the romantic vision of women in arms defending the nation.*'<sup>5</sup> Female soldiers comprised one-third of the total Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) combat strength in addition to 30% to 40% suicide attacks which had been carried out. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) female soldiers have been characterized as 'the most fierce, extremely disciplined and courageous women combatants in the world'.<sup>6</sup>

### **2.2. Al Qaeda & Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**

The widening horizons of technology have fostered enormously the bloodthirsty AL Qaeda & the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria i.e. ISIS in recruiting women in substantial numbers via internet. Women through the social media platform sense as if they are approaching towards equality with men, as the

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<sup>3</sup> Nina Porzucki, *What motivates women to commit acts of terror?*, PRI's The World, December 31, 2013

<sup>4</sup> Peng Wang, *Women in the LTTE: Birds of Freedom or Cogs in the Wheel?*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 100-102 (March 2011)

<sup>5</sup> Erin Alexander, *Women of War: The Female Fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*, VOL. 7 NO. 2, 1-2 (2014)

<sup>6</sup> Wang, *supra* note 4.

opinions expressed in this regard receive equivalent respect from such organisations, which otherwise would have been a mirage due to the conservative society. To exemplify, a great deal of Muslim women had been lucratively recruited by a member of Hofstad group by means of online chatting, on the pretext of an educational group run by a woman. Eventually guiding them into extremism, they then aspired aggressing a Beslan kind of attack in Netherlands.<sup>7</sup> The afore-mentioned organisations have brought out online magazines eulogizing and lauding the roles of women in jihad in addition to entering into marital relations, therefore, extending the number by providing a safe 'jihad womb'. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has established a de facto state, by declaring its caliphate and has on a regular basis demanded adherence from Muslims far beyond the territory it currently controls. Consequently, several young women influenced under the sadistic propaganda via social media, have fallen prey to it. Shannon Conley, an American native, for instance, made all efforts to shift herself and carry material aid to Syria, in subsequence of falling in love via Skype with a saviour involved with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).<sup>8</sup> Estimations reveal that, in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), out of the total western recruits, 10 % are female, whereas in France, out of 350 French Nationals allegedly 63 are women, or just below 20 percent.<sup>9</sup>

The wedding certificate issued by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which recently surfaced on internet, allows jihadi brides to accomplish suicide missions, without any prior permission of husband, thus indicating to the fact that these brutish organisations would radically employ women to execute the dastardly lethal attacks. Under the heading 'Conditions of Wife' it enunciates: *'If the Prince of believers [Baghdadi - leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)] consents to her carrying out a suicide mission, then her husband should not prohibit her.'* For that matter, Al Qaeda in Iraq, greatly equipped women to effectuate the horrid of suicide bombings, as they knew, it was much easier for women to break through security checkpoints.<sup>10</sup> In 2011, Al Qaeda initiated the circulation of an online magazine, namely, Al Shamikha ("Majestic Women"), which instigates and encourages women to take part in

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Anne Speckhard, *Female Terrorists in ISIS, Al Qaeda and 21st Century Terrorism*, TRENDS Research & Advisory (June, 2015), <http://trends-institution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Female-Terrorists-in-ISIS-al-Qaeda-and-21st-Century-Terrorism-Dr.-Anne-Speckhard11.pdf>, Retrieved on: October 20, 2016 at 23:00 hours.

<sup>8</sup> Snezana Farberov and Daniel Bates, *American nurse who was arrested for trying to join ISIS set her Facebook profile to 'slave of Allah': Denver teen also wrote that U.S. women dress like s\*\*\*\*' after she was seduced by a Syrian militant*, Mail Online, July 2, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Jayne Huckerby, *When Women Become Terrorists*, N.Y., Times, Jan 21, 2015, at A27.

<sup>10</sup> Speckhard, *supra* note 7, at 6.

warfare jihad. The following year, it founded a Burka Brigade, inducting female terrorists to accomplish Western target attacks.<sup>11</sup>

Intelligence services disclosed, that approximately 600 British Muslims have entered the territory of Syria with the object of fighting, out of which, 60 are young women. As Adolf Hitler had arranged V weapons, similarly, Islamic States are exploiting young women and it appears as if their loyalty towards ISIS leaders outdo the allegiance that their husbands have for the same.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, for the first time women carried out a suicide attack for Al-Qaeda, killing 5 men. Abu Mussab al- Zaraqawi is recognized as the person to commence the recruitment of female jihadists to Al-Qaeda, and it is he who laid the foundation for the dynamic role of women in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the contemporary epoch. Almost 10000 pro-ISIS tweets on a daily basis appear which are updated by women who have been enlisted as members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) from western societies. Unequivocally, it can be construed that female recruits of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are endowed with a high-flying role on social media, unlike Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

The one similarity to describe the entire Islamic organisations is the golden thread that seeps through it, is the ideology they adhere to. Be it, Al Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or Hezbollah, all revolve in and around the concept of Salafi Jihadism. This serves as the basis of all the organizational philosophies. Salafism is a call for return to the beliefs, practices and sincerity of early Islam,<sup>13</sup> whereas Jihad refers to a physical warfare or armed struggle.<sup>14</sup> Women largely remained isolated from the jihadist battlefield in 1980's and 1990's. The chief ground for Jihad, during this period, was set in Pakistan, Sudan and Afghanistan. Only when, in 2004, the focus of movements reverted to Middle East, status of women appreciably transformed. <sup>15</sup> Therefore, while the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been flushed out successfully by 2009, Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are contemporary terrorist organisations increasingly boosting the male counterparts to robustly associate with them in the current climate, paving the path for extermination of mankind.

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<sup>11</sup>Dean C. Alexander & Robert Ceresero, *How Female Terrorists Use Preconceptions to their Advantage*, Security Magazine, September 1, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Vernaik & Jay Akbar, *Is ISIS about to send women to die on suicide missions? Chilling fanatic wedding certificate states jihadi brides can carry out bombings without husband's permission*, Mail Online, May 13, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Jessica Stern & J.M. Berger, *ISIS THE STATE OF TERROR*, 263-264 (1st ed. 2015)

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 271.

<sup>15</sup> Katharine Gorka, *Women and Jihad*, The Cipher Brief, APRIL 15, 2016, <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column/strategic-view/women-and-jihad-1089>, Retrieved on: October 16, 2016 at 09:00 hours.

### 2.3. Chechnya's Black Widows

This organisation had been invented specifically for women to take vengeance against those who neutralized their husbands and brothers in Russian conflicts that took place in 2000. Owing to this fact, they are titled as 'Black Widows'.<sup>16</sup> 'Moscow Theatre Hostage Crisis' and 'Day of Knowledge' are two cardinal incidents actualised by Chechens. In 2002, 130 men, women and children had been made hostages in a theatre by 19 black widows. Subsequently, in 2004, 1200 students, parents and teachers had been taken in hostage situation, for a prolonged duration of 52 hours at a school in Beslan, followed by a gun battle, ultimately leading to demise of 330 hostages and approx. 32 terrorists. It is believed that 42 % of the 200 Chechen suicide bombings have been consummated by women.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. WHAT INCITED THE “PACIFISTS” TO BE “WARMONGERS”: WHY WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN TERRORISM?

As rightly observed by Mia Bloom, "It's true that some women are coerced, but the truth is that motivations vary from terrorist group to terrorist group."<sup>18</sup> In her book, "Bombshell: The Many Faces of Female Terrorists", elucidated the five R's as to why females participate or take resort to terrorism and suicide bombings--redemption, revenge, relationship, rape and respect.<sup>19</sup> Rape and terror of rape are the capitally highlighted reasons for venturing into the arena of terrorism, due to the fact that some women have had psychologically painful and perturbed past. The widely known "Jihad Jane", namely, LaRose had been repeatedly raped by her father while she was at a young age, forcing her to be runaway, and eventually was lured by her internet lover to fit herself in Islam and to wear the mask of an assassin.<sup>20</sup> Another theory, in this context, is assassination of Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, which is believed to be carried out by a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who had been allegedly gang-raped by the Indian Peace Keeping Forces, while in Sri Lanka.<sup>21</sup> There could

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<sup>16</sup> Brian Glyn Williams, *The Brides of Allah: The Terror Threat of Black-Widow Suicide Bombers to the Winter Olympics*, THE HUFFINGTON POST, April 14, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Kerry Lay, 'Women as Terrorist' *An Insoluble Paradox ;The Absurdity or The Threat ?*, Canterbury Christ Church University School of Law, Criminal Justice & Computing, <http://library.college.police.uk/docs/theses/LAY-Women-as-Terrorists-2015.pdf>, Retrieved on: October 20, 2016 at 14: 55 hours.

<sup>18</sup> Penn State, *'Bombshell' explodes myths of female terrorist motivation*, The University of Pennsylvania, February 21, 2011 (last updated Aug. 25, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> Speckhard, *supra* note 10, at 8.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Caryl, *The Truth about Dhanu*, The New York Review of Books, (Oct. 20, 2005), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2005/10/20/the-truth-about-dhanu/>, Retrieved on: October 20, 2016 at 23:45 hours.

be a mixture of reasons as to why raped-women join militant organisations, out of which, motive of revenge, antagonism, and the belief that in subsequence to the horrific incident their future sight is bleak, are some primary ones. Many Women who allied with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) previously had been methodically and consistently subjected to sexual violence by the Sri Lankan forces which had provoked them to retaliate in a systematic manner and guard against such intrusion of privacy.<sup>22</sup>

Besides that, female fanatics carry out the religiously-impelled-terrorism, which does not restrict itself to any boundary specifically and pushes the inner will cogently to impose terrifying effects on humanity. In addition to it, the women are motivated or drawn towards barbaric organisations like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and AL-Qaeda by no distinct reasons as men are, such as: inequality, alienation, adventure or due to appeal of the cause.<sup>23</sup> The specific factors, that induce women to affiliate with terrorist organisations, are to be paid additional diligence. European women lucidly mentioned how alienation and limitations on religious freedom and practices back home, provoke people to indulge in wrongful activities. For instance, prohibiting wearing of burqas had intensely geared up women to take up part in the terrorist group.<sup>24</sup>

While on the other side, there is sensitive group of some women who associate themselves to seek personal prominence, significance, fulfil life purpose, or some who are disturbed by the circumstances faced-off by the Muslim fraternity, disgruntled by foreign policies directed towards Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Another group may be hard-pressed by psychological force aiming to take revenge, which could be due to diverse reasons. To mention a few, death of a loved one/ or family members in conflict zones or traumatised caused due to often heard violence taking place in the community. For instance, Palestinian Arin Ahmed, instantaneously abandoned her studies and volunteered to carry out a suicide mission, following the death of her militant lover by an Israeli missile.<sup>25</sup>

Other probable reasons within this ambit are the enthusiasm of martyrdom, need for security, need for female emancipation and liberation.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, we need to consider the passionate involvement of women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Gunawardena (2006) reveals that the selfless sacrifice of the Women bombers is 'almost an extension of the idea of motherhood in the Tamil culture'.

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<sup>22</sup> Wang, *supra* note 4, at 103.

<sup>23</sup> Huckerby, *supra* note 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> Speckhard, *supra* note 7, at 8.

<sup>26</sup> Wang, *supra* note 6, at 104.

On various levels, it has been argued that one of the primary motive of women to join the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was to break-free from the shackles of restrictions and conservative roles and status allotted to women under Tamil traditions, and show up equal participation for the cause, which in return would infuse in them a sense of honour and pride and promote equal-gender ties.<sup>27</sup> Cunningham quoted that personal reasons too were influential. These social and psychological grounds have been analogous to Palestinian female terrorism. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) widely used leftist ideology and feminism to induct more female terrorists.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. FEMALE RELIANCE OF MALE DOMINATED TERROR GROUPS: A GLANCE AT IMPERATIVE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN**

As rightly observed by Mia Bloom "Groups have found it very effective to use women as propaganda tools, especially to appeal to men," "The message is if you don't step up, you're not a man."<sup>29</sup> Plethora of reasons and justifications have been put forth by several groups embedded in terrorism for encouraging, employing and defining the role played by female terrorists. A detailed and exhaustive analysis of the different facets of involvement of women in terrorism has been explained below:

**(1) The Recruiter** - Indubitably, the design to use women as recruiters, have tremendously assisted the terrorist organisations, especially in societies where in lower status is accorded to their gender. Efficaciously, they are used as instruments to shame some men, abstaining to take up the cause. More dominant influence is exercised, owing to the reason that, women are generally restricted to household activities in the conservative societies, and thereby, breaking the tradition and utilizing the "inferior" sex, they endeavour to mortify and embarrass male gendered families.<sup>30</sup> Mr Prabhakaran, leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), considered women's tactical advantages a critical factor, thereby, creating 'Freedom Birds' by breaking the conventional ideology and ensuring gender-equality.<sup>31</sup> With the firm conviction, terrorists in Pakistan, wittingly indulge in recruitment of young girls through their religious schools (Madrassas), anticipating that at the end they would take charge of entire family through these extremist women.<sup>32</sup>

**(2) The Spy** - Societal gender-stereotyping and feudal customs such as, Purdah System, has been an enormous hindrance, especially for security agencies to inspect aggressively the women observing the

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<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 104.

<sup>28</sup> Cagla Gul Yesevi, *Female Terrorism*, edition vol.10, No.14, 585-586 (May 2014).

<sup>29</sup> State, *supra* note 18.

<sup>30</sup> Lay, *supra* note 17, at 26.

<sup>31</sup> Wang, *supra* note 26, at 104.

<sup>32</sup> M. Bloom, "Bombshells: women and terror", *Gender Issues* 28 (2011), at 14.



same. Taking advantage, women often emerge triumphant in gathering intelligence reports, serving as decoys, bypassing security checkpoints. Less suspicion being casted upon women, in turn has directed men to dress as women, as testified by the Somali Islamist suicide bomb, in which he disguised himself with a veil, ultimately leading to catastrophic death of 24 people, of which three represented the government as ministers.<sup>33</sup>

**(3) The Sympathiser** - Initially in the organisational fold, their role had been earmarked to the extent of providing passive support. With time, active participation showed by women widened the scope of their activities to be accomplished in near future. As sympathisers, they offer essential logistical support, devote time and shelter co-members by acting as safe havens.<sup>34</sup> Whilst, some research reveal of women not overpowering men to occupy the leadership positions, but there have been instances, in which specific mention of females taking lead has been done.<sup>35</sup> By maltreating the gender cliché of curtailed danger assessments, they possess the ability of opening bank accounts, in order to abate the financial stress by effecting trans-border transactions.<sup>36</sup> They effectively indulge in marketing ideologies and organisations that fuel terrorist sadism.<sup>37</sup>

**(4) The Warrior and Dominant Force** - The cardinal reason for the emergence of distinct women-wing as a valiant and gallant force in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was the impetuous decline in the male soldiers in the period 1980-90.<sup>38</sup> Though, rarely have they been able to procure leadership positions, but on battlefield they breath fire with equal strength as that of men. Furthermore, Hearne depicts that women have cropped up to be more fanatical and steadfast to their objective. They have developed themselves to create ideologies, inspire hoi polloi, invent bombs and contrive top-level strategies, manifesting itself from the functioning of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and

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<sup>33</sup> Feisal Omar and Abdi Sheikh, *Somali Islamist insurgents kill general with suicide car bomb*, Reuters, September 18, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-blast-idUSKCN11O0EV>, Retrieved on: October 20, 2016 at 14:50 hours

<sup>34</sup> Lay, *supra* note 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Tender Hand of Death, Women Terrorists*, April 18, 2007, <http://arhiva.dalje.com/en-world/women-terrorists/36455>, Retrieved on: October 18, 2016 at 12:20 hours.

<sup>36</sup> Ellie B. Hearne, *Participants, Enablers and Preventors: The Roles of Women in Terrorism*, December 2009, [http://www.bisa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_bisa&task=download\\_paper&no\\_html=1&passed\\_paper\\_id=95](http://www.bisa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_bisa&task=download_paper&no_html=1&passed_paper_id=95), Retrieved on: October 21, 2016 at 12:15 hours.

<sup>37</sup> *Different Roles of Women in Countering Violent Extremism*, Hedayah, Global Center on Cooperative Security, February 2015, [http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WomenCVE-Project\\_Desc\\_Feb2015\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WomenCVE-Project_Desc_Feb2015_FINAL.pdf), Retrieved on: October 20, 2016 at 15:20 hours.

<sup>38</sup> Peng Wang, *supra* note 4, at 102

Chechen Black Widows case. Moreover, aspiring their sons to stand up for their cause, make sacrifice and be labelled as "martyrs" have been the hallmarks of the thought of these women<sup>39</sup>

## 5. VIELED EXISTENCE DESPITE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT: PLIGHT OF JIHADIST BRIDES

The duplicitous and hypocritical stance of existing "male-driven" terrorist groups becomes perceptible and evident from the factum that despite their dependence upon jihadist women, they, in due course, resort to suppression and exploitation of these women in the forename of jihadist ideological matrix itself. The Islamic fundamentalist political group, Taliban, which held power in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, promulgated and ultimately undertook an ideology which withheld the cherished philosophy of equality, thereby sadistically suppressing, oppressing and exploiting Islamic women to an extent which bottled up the ambit of their humane existence. Forbidding the women to work, receive any education, photographed, or get filmed, the Taliban fundamentalists insisted upon the movement of women in burqa, covered from head to toe and their prohibition from appearing in public gatherings.<sup>40</sup> The afore-stated guidelines, violations of which were punishable with whipping and execution,<sup>41</sup> designed at isolating women and making them an undetectable and veiled part of the society. The contemporary eon, witnessing the reign of jihad propagating terror groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) believing in the imperativeness of jihad-feminism, has been a hapless spectator of atrocious mistreatment of these women at the hands of these jihad fundamentalists themselves. Elucidating upon the role of women, a Manifesto, titled "Women of the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case study", drafted by the al-Khansaa Brigade, a female-militia setup of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), envisions the role of women as being the one inferior to that of men, despite having had an estimation of 500 European Muslim girls making the journey abroad from their homes to join ISIS.<sup>42</sup> Enforceable rules include the requirement that all females dress only in black, including their shoes, cover every inch of their bodies, and wear gloves to cover their hands and fingers, mandating a ban on the fashion shops.<sup>43</sup> The manifesto states that a girl can be married at the age of nine, and urges that all girls be married by

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<sup>39</sup> Lay, *supra* note 17, at 26

<sup>40</sup> Mah Rukh Ali, *ISIS AND PROPAGANDA: HOW ISIS EXPLOITS WOMEN*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Isis%20and%20Propaganda-%20How%20Isis%20Exploits%20Women.pdf>, 2015, Retrieved on: October 27, 2016 at 12: 15 hours.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, Ross Frenett, *Becoming Mulan? Female western migrants to ISIS*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015, [http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISDJ2969\\_Becoming\\_Mulan\\_01.15\\_WEB.PDF](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISDJ2969_Becoming_Mulan_01.15_WEB.PDF), Retrieved on: October 22, 2016 at 15:45 hours.

<sup>43</sup> Jamal Abdul-Amil, *ISIS 'Manifesto' Spells Out Role for Women*, The Atlantic, March 8, 2015.

the age of 16 or 17, while they are still "young and active".<sup>44</sup> The depravity and degeneracy of this delusional Islamic world becomes palpable with the infliction of the brutalities of rape and sexual slavery upon the jihadist brides. Using religion to justify the horrendous treatment meted out to women, ISIS fighters claim: "women will become Muslim if 10 fighters rape her"<sup>45</sup> A United Nations unit of sex crime investigators, headed by Zainab Bangura has probed the world's war zones for evidence of forced marriages, slavery and mass rape since 2009.<sup>46</sup> Speaking with Middle East Eye, Zainab Bangura revealed: "After attacking a village, the fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) splits women from men and executes boys and men aged 14 and over. The women and mothers are separated; girls are stripped naked, tested for virginity and examined for breast size and prettiness. The youngest, and those considered the prettiest virgins fetch higher prices and are sent to Raqqa, the IS stronghold."<sup>47</sup> 19 female prisoners, as claimed by a Kurdish official, were executed by ISIS for refusing to practice 'sexual jihad'.<sup>48</sup> The plight of women, owing to the mandates of these jihadists ultimately recruiting the fairer sex for executing its strategic tactics, is pitiable, deplorable and wretched on account of the psychological, material, and sexual atrocities that they are victimized of.

## **6. UNDERSTANDING, ENGAGING & EMPOWERING WOMEN IN COUNTERING VERLT**

*"Through their influence on the family, community and Government, women can play a positive and proactive role as agents of change to build resilience to radicalization, violence and conflict."*<sup>49</sup>

Women persist to be an unexploited source of countering terrorism. Snubbing extremism and radicalization, necessitates involvement of women considering their engagement at various levels such as, in family, community, governments and law-enforcement agencies. Regrettably, in terms of terrorism, they have solely been considered as 'victims', and not beyond it. Meagre representation of women in safeguarding and policing has remained a major cause of failure in detecting women extremists. Out of the whole Pakistani Police force barely 0.89% happens to be women. Consequently,

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<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Anthony Bond, ISIS terrorists told 'women will become Muslim if 10 fighters rape her', Mirror, October 9, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> James Reini, *Q&A: Probing Islamic State's sex atrocities with the United Nations*, Middle East Eye, May 18, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> Cormac Fitzgerald, *ISIS executes 19 female prisoners for refusing to practice 'sexual jihad' - Kurdish official*, News Middle East, August 6, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> *CTED OPEN BRIEFING "THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN COUNTERING TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM"*, Peace Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, <http://peacewomen.org/node/92516>, Retrieved on: October 18, 2016 at 18:00 hours.

with the already existing phenomenon of less suspicion on women due to the pseudo stereotyping, it advances the diminished chances of security checking, thereby, embracing more of escape clauses. Especially, in gender marginalised societies female police officers play a considerable role in preventing violence through or by women, as in the prohibitive cultures, only women are allowed to interact freely with women. Another door which opens via interaction among women is that female victims are able to report and elaborate upon their worsening conditions, thus assisting the intelligence agencies to frame effective policies.<sup>50</sup>

The UN Security Council has approved various resolutions in context of the role of women in conflict resolutions, peacemaking but the same have not been vigorously explored specifically in field of counter-terrorism issues.<sup>51</sup> However, it has been realized that women play an extremely imperative role both in tapping at a premature stage signs of radicalization and interposing before their dear-ones turn violent.<sup>52</sup> United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325, accounts that in conflict-ridden areas women have triumphantly been able to alleviate violence, and restructure the resiliency of affected communities.<sup>53</sup> UNSC resolution 1325 is path-breaking document that proved to accord international recognition to the vital role of women in peace-building and resolving conflict issues. Global programs embodying women as the principal players in restoration and maintenance of peace and security have yielded promising and prolific outcomes.<sup>54</sup>

Women being idealised as influential mediators, persuade their surroundings, thus, acting as positive agents for counter terrorist agencies. Empowering Muslim Women initiative, for instance, has facilitated women to address certain misconceptions persisting against them in society. This enterprise to prevent extremism has allowed these women to become mentors for other young girls and women. Many alike worldwide programmes have been activated such as, in Saudi Arabia, Best Mother Award Programme<sup>55</sup> has enabled the women to ensure a conducive environment for bringing up the children of terrorists. On the other side, such steps allow terrorist parents to fall back on recidivism. In counter-

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<sup>50</sup> Lay, *supra* note 17, at 33.

<sup>51</sup> *Women and Counter Terrorism*, Global Center, <http://www.globalcenter.org/topics/women-and-counterterrorism/>, Retrieved on: October 22, 2016 at 11:20 hours.

<sup>52</sup> *Supra* note 37

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> Krista London Couture, *A Gendered Approach to Countering Violent Extremism*, Foreign Policy at Brookings, July 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Women-CVE-Formatted-72914-Couture-FINAL2.pdf>, Retrieved on: October 22, 2016 at 12:35 hours.

<sup>55</sup> Annie R. Jerard, *Terrorist Rehabilitation and Counter-Radicalisation, New approaches to counter-terrorism*, at 74, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Routledge publications, 2011

terrorism wars, ignorance of gender signifies, leaving out a massive part of war and peace arenas in which these women's lives are impacted in many micro and macro ways.<sup>56</sup>

On September 9, 2015, The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) conducted first of its open briefing on "The Role of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism". Prof. Jayne Huckerby of Duke University highlighted that women play three kind of roles in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) : as plotters of terrorism, as agents who counter CVE and terrorism, and as victims of terrorism. On a similar stance, Sureya Roble-Hersi from Kenya pointed out that women indeed possess enormous information with regards to mounting extremism and violence in their communities but are too scared to share it. For instance, reports indicate that Kenyan women, in particular, have the requisite knowledge of their close-ones joining the terrorist outfit Al-Shabab, but the fear in them, restricts to report the same. Women is a great resource to encourage the spirit of tolerance through their networks but to achieve the same, first they have to be empowered to profess for peace and moderation. Pastor Eshter Ibanga underlined that *"in Nigeria, as well as most African nations, the involvement of women in security issues is seen as an alien culture but also taboo and sometimes quite offensive to men."*<sup>57</sup>

Violent Extremism unquestionably affects the women worldwide in huge volumes; therefore, enactment and enforcement agencies require the addressing of the issue of inequality in participation of the same, to deliver practical effect to the counter-terrorist policies. The panel emphasized upon the need for involvement of women in all areas of decision making and be bent upon to construct a cohesive community, thereby, echoing a number of suggestions contained in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325. Hanaa Edwar (Iraqi Women's Network) highlighted and accentuated upon the need for the governments across the world to incorporate women in anti-terrorism and CVE strategies.<sup>58</sup> Morocco's Program for Imam, the UK's education and training program and Bangladesh's education and micro-credit programmes are specific programmes striving for the empowerment of women, to flush out extremism and violence,<sup>59</sup> staunchly supporting the ideal stated by Imam Fatimah Nezza (Morocco): *"If you train a man, you train one person. If you train a woman, you train an entire community"*

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<sup>56</sup> Fionnuala Ni Aolain, *Counter-Terrorism Committee: Addressing the Role of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism*, Just Security, September 17, 2015. <https://www.justsecurity.org/25983/counter-terrorism-committee-addressing-role-women-countering-terrorism-violent-extremism/>, Retrieved on: October 24, 2016 at 14:50 hours.

<sup>57</sup> *Supra* note 49

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> Couture, *supra* note 54.

SAVE (Sisters against Violent Extremism) is an initiative of the NGO, namely, Women without Borders. It is stated to be the first in the world, female counter-terrorism forum, wherein, steps to prevent extremist terrorism are adopted and it voices the concern with regards to the participation of women in counter-terrorism policies and peace building debates. It reinforces the belief of mothers being the first line of defence in the prohibition of extremist terrorism. They engage in organising workshops to impart education to mothers in order to identify if any family member is travelling down the path of extremism.<sup>60</sup>

Lifting status of women economically, empowering them socially and politically via schemes has shown significant results. The same has been drawn from the experience of Bangladesh and Morocco, wherein women immensely aided and exercised potent influence in Countering violence and extremism. The fulfilment of above requirements enable women to imagine beyond the basic necessities such as shelter, food, clothing, thus enforcing them from within to sustain the standard and impart lessons to their community to achieve the same.<sup>61</sup> CVE programs primarily focussing at family ties and relationships are gaining much popularity, especially which are aimed at mothers. These programs testify *"if extremism can start with a family's involvement, it can end that way, too"*.<sup>62</sup> Whilst terrorism does not identify gender, but counter-terrorism does and for that reason, in cooperation both the sexes can play a remarkable role as counter-terrorist agents. In depth research and policies authenticate the fact that women empowerment and gender equality indicator remain to be instrumental gauges in conflict prevention and peace-building.<sup>63</sup>

*"There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me."*

----Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In lieu of the afore-enunciated predicament, the perspective of gender in terrorism inevitably shall be unwrapped exigently, in order to enact a comprehensive approach towards the prohibition and quelling of the menace. Following are some imperative suggestions:-

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<sup>60</sup> Abigail Pesta, *The girls of jihad and the secret weapon one woman is using to turn them back*, N.Y. TIMES, April 20, 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Couture, *supra* note 54.

<sup>62</sup> Hearne, *supra* note 36.

<sup>63</sup> Couture, *supra* note 54.

1. Ground-breaking and intensified training shall be imparted to women to equip them to discover elements of extremism within the family at a pre-natal stage. To make it successful women shall be empowered impressively to speak up in patriarchal communities in context of these issues.
2. Mass awareness programmes and exhaustive research in realizing the imperative role of women in arena of terror, undoubtedly must be taken up, thereby, giving path to abandonment of social stigma connected with terrorism imbining women.
3. Incessant efforts to raise socio-economic standing of women have to be made, which would take in two-fold advantages, of influencing women to desert terrorism, and inducing ordinary women to work for further social and economic amelioration.
4. Every country while devising legislations, shall acknowledge that countering terrorism and violent extremism proceeds to embrace concepts of: poverty alleviation, development, gender-equality, blocking extremist messaging etc. Further, assure that in the drafting process women are aptly represented as they furnish valuable inputs which need to be considered on a priority basis.
5. Beefing up intelligence agencies technology and expertise, in order to identify the vulnerable group at a premature stage and to readily take up measures to forestall the sadistic propaganda and recruitment via social media networking websites.
6. Unenforceability of documentations like ISIS Manifesto, curbing freedom of Islamic women, shall be pressed upon since the existing international covenants granting basic human rights and freedom to women have an overriding effect.
7. An international mechanism is imperative to be set up by United Nations so as to check the practice of “sexual jihad” and counter sexual atrocities being committed against jihadist women by ISIS fighters.

*“Including women in the security arena is a great challenge, but times of crisis are also often times of opportunity. This is our moment as women to exercise our smart power and meet global challenges with competence and confidence.”*

**----Edit Schlaffer**