



# Role of Women in the Threat Network

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## 1. Introduction.

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Nowadays, terrorist groups are aware of the important strategic value women have in terms of both violence and success. And also the versatility of roles they can perform thanks to their innocent image. Without forgetting that any act committed by a woman within this scope have a substantial impact in the media and social media of the whole world. This phenomenon is not new in history but it still astonishes us.

The generalized and expanded idea that women play an equal role to men in jihad has gradually been consolidated due to the huge number of terrorist acts that they have executed and will continue to execute.

The use of the internet (chats, forums, videocalls, communiqués, etc.) and new technologies has allowed women to be part of the struggle, express their growth and opinions, argue, be themselves and act freely.

It is undeniable the role that women play in these cases because in addition to being able to provide material (medicines, food and clothing), they can be used as bomb women or facilitators among others.

A clear example is the role that Wafa Idris made in 2002<sup>1</sup>. She was the first female suicide bomber in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Days after the explosion it was discovered that the suicide was a woman. With this motive the Egyptian Islamist weekly Al-Sha'ab published in an editorial titled "It is a woman" where it expressed the following

*"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 inscribed, in letters of fire, the battle of martyrdom that horrified the heart of the enemy's entity. 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."*

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<sup>1</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2002 she detonated a 22-pound bomb in the center of Jerusalem outside a shoe store on Jaffa Road. At the time of her death, she was a 28 years old and she lived in the Am'ari Refugee Camp in Ramallah.

## 2. The role of women.

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A few years ago, Daesh published a Manifesto detailing the norms of conduct of a society linked to a radical interpretation of sharia and how women should live in it. The role of women must be "sedentary", they said; Girls' education should not go beyond 15 years and they can get married after nine. They should not work unless it is imperatively necessary or go out to pray outside the home.

Now, in the eyes of extremists, women can fight. The change is justified by stating that the women had fought in the Islamic Golden Age and citing Prophet Muhammad's companions as examples. This change comes when the Islamic State has suffered two defeats in two of its last strongholds in Iraq and Syria, with the Iraqi forces recapturing the center of Hawija and the Syrian forces entering the city of Mayadeen. This has restructured the role of the women of the Daesh, who is desperate, needs more fighters and since the battle began in Mosul they have started asking all the women to fight.

Although the role that the organization in principle foresees for the woman is of mere consort restricted to the home, there are three exceptions that allow them to have a role outside the home: when they are called to a jihad for defensive purposes because there are not enough men to fight; to study religious sciences; and to work as doctors or teachers, but only when necessary. "Until now the women of the Caliphate have not had a combatant role, although many of them have received weapons training when they joined the group with the idea that they should be able to defend themselves during the absent of their husbands". The consequence is clear: as Daesh runs out of manpower, women get an increasingly active role on the fronts, including that of combatants.

Women play a key role in the recruitment strategy of the organization. Their presence - examined through the communications made in dozens of groups of the social network V Kontakte (the Russian transcript of Facebook) indicates that they do not win in number but "play a more central role in handling communications." "The quantitative analysis of the networks of followers of the Daesh points to a superiority of women in connectivity. This finding is associated with benefits to the network in terms of survival, maximization of communication efficiency and the mission of maintaining unity in the network.

In the last times Daesh has begun a word-of-mouth campaign to recruit local women in the Syrian capital of the Islamic Caliphate. The group has been using the image of the Western jihadist woman for their campaigns on social networks but Now the method to recruit is different, they are also using Word of mouth recruitment.

Wives, mothers and terrorists: this is the new profile of women in the Islamic State.

We can ask ourselves how does the Islamic State get the women of the West to join their ranks? With four promises fundamentally: emancipation, liberation, devotion and participation. They are a fundamental part of the rhetorical arsenal of the caliphate's captors but They are not enough by themselves, we must add the propaganda and personal circumstances. The sum of all this works. For example, currently 16 year old girls leave their home in Europe to become part of the Islamic State. And not only to fulfill the role of self-sacrificing woman and mother of a new generation of militants,

but to participate in the violence of the jihad. Thus, women are the object and subject of the terrorist group's call.

The key to the strategy of capturing the Daesh is that it manages to magnify the injustices (real or subjective) that have led a person to go through some type of identity crisis. At this time men are neither more nor less victims than women in the processes of radicalization and recruitment. In both genders is the "*humbug*" the propagandists of the organization exploit like no other group negative experiences (such as marginalization and uprooting) and counteract them with positive promises: companionship and a utopian national construction (the Caliphate).

Many of the sympathizers of the Daesh are attracted to them with variations of the promises made to women, which are these:

- Emancipation: the organization conveys the idea that the woman who joins them and contributes to their cause will put an end to the ills that afflict her as a result of marginalization and oppression.
- Liberation: the narrative of the Daesh represents women as if they were more oppressed in Western countries than in any other part of the world. They promise that when they get to their territories they will be freed from evils that humiliate them like the jobs that keep them "away from home".
- Devotion: theological imperative the greater the sacrifices and difficulties, the better.
- Participation: It is fundamental for the Daesh the notion that whoever wants to can participate in the organization, including what is related to violence.

On the other hand, sometimes the female suicide bombers are "sold" to terrorist organizations, drugged to perform such acts, and/or raped and blackmailed if they do not participate.

They start to use women in a 'multi-level' way because they have fewer and fewer male combatants left. They are suffering great losses among their ranks and that is why they start to use women also for this. That is why any girl (especially young girls) is a breeding ground for those false promises of the jihadists, and not just the Muslims.

The proportion of women who join the ranks of the extremist group has increased dramatically. But what is behind this Daesh strategy of attracting women into its ranks? Daesh has a double attitude towards women, on the one hand, those who are considered heretics treat them as if they were inferior beings, as merchandise that can be traded and given as a reward to the jihadists. On the other hand, Daesh has big plans for Muslim women who emigrate to their territory to have a fundamental role in the construction of the so-called caliphate. Currently there are many women who settle in European territory with their families to give a less aggressive appearance, they are less suspicious than men.

Boko Haram started using suicide women after they realized the power that gender and youth offer. It is the first terrorist group in history that uses more suicidal women than men, and is at the

forefront of using children as suicide bombers, they are easier targets and they can hide bombs much more easily with the naked eye. Women and children are much more easily influenced by Boko Haram than men, and are much more dispensable.

Recruitment and radicalization networks of Daesh have rooted in Europe and they attract young people who are educated and often born in European society, The arguments they use are the same as for men, but the networks are different.

The profile of these radicalized women is diverse, but with some common guidelines: they are very young (they are younger than men), the average is at 22 years old, they are mostly single, there is a significant percentage of women conversas, that is, without any type of Islamic cultural ancestry and that, in at any given moment, they convert to this religion and practically become radicalized. Here we must bear in mind that there is, because of the ignorance of religion, the captors and radicalizers see a vulnerability, they know that they are women who on the one hand have to demonstrate more and on the other hand, they do not know what the true spirit of the Islamic religion and radicalize them in the Salafist ideology, which is what inspires this type of terrorism.

We can not say that the participation of women in jihad is a new phenomenon and that role has changed over time. The fundamental tasks of women have been fundamentally that of support and mother and wife, wife of jihadist and mother of the future generation of jihadists, and their fundamental tasks were confined to the home environment. He also collaborated, in the particular way of understanding the jihad by Al-Qaeda, in small financing or logistical tasks, when passing information, etc. However, with the emergence of the Daesh the role evolves. As of 2013 they have joined the mobilization and have done so with force.

How does this recruitment of jihadist women take place? The social networks are very important, but we should not forget the prominence that physical spaces still have. At first, identification occurs through of social networks that is, for example, profiles on Facebook pages, profiles are captured that are proclives, have a more radical vision, ask questions or that they demonstrate a belligerent action. But to what extent are they able to continue advancing more and more? As it advances, they are retired to more private areas, such as a chat or a WhatsApp group and little by little they are subjected to a systematic exposure to the propaganda, viewing videos, audios, etc. The social networks themselves have opened the spectrum of recruitment, that is, before you had to be in the right place, at the right time, and relate to the right people. Right now, any person who at a given moment shows certain radical attitudes has just converted to Islam.

Women are more active in social networks and, moreover, more prone to "open up" in them, where they are very interactive and interact with their own feelings, which creates a lot of information and makes them more vulnerable in the face to its captors. To recruit women they often use the sentimental courtship. They look at "single women and young people" who do not have "backgrounds" so they do not appear on the police radar. They "seduce" but do not want to turn them into their partner, only into an instrument to kill.

The radicalization of women occurs mostly online, 90% of women have been radicalized through social networks and 80% with applications mobile instant messaging, the Internet opens the door for

women to access jihadist propaganda and is more receptive if the message is transferred by another woman.

The Daesh has managed to convey to Western women that being a jihadist is great, a direct and rapid message that reaches young Europeans and in the case of women, ideological motivations are less attractive than wanting to help other people.

Although the role of women in terrorism has been changing over the years, they have always been involved, from those who defend and support the actions of their husbands or children to those who act and take an active part in carrying out attacks, but the role of women is not the same as that of men. A woman is replaceable, more manipulable and they have realized that the attacks committed by women have a greater impact on the media. In recent years the role has changed and serve as recruiters, money reactors or activists in the front line, but are not considered leaders, but something dispensable.

We must bear in mind that currently the jihadist threat in Europe is mutating. If in recent months most of the attacks have been multiple attacks with a vehicle, bombs or assaults with a knife on the public highway, the German secret services now warn that the radical Islamists, in retreat in Syria and Iraq, are studying new ways to attack in the continent, resorting to biological weapons, drones with explosives or suicidal minors who have grown up in an environment of violence and strong indoctrination.



### 3. Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP).

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The face of terrorism is constantly changing. We have to change the mentality and stop thinking and expect terrorists to be men, dress in a certain way and only talk about a single issue. Just as society changes, the terrorism is changing and now the terrorist is also a woman.

Women are becoming key players in terrorism not only because of their ability to become warriors but because of their ability to recruit other members. Their ability to adapt to circumstances, to go unnoticed and to execute orders perfectly has allowed them to gain positions within this asymmetrical struggle.

The terrorist groups have realized that the use of women allows them to obtain a tactical advantage (element of surprise, stealth attack, discretion, etc.), increase the number of combatants, increase the impact in the media and generate terror and fear in the society. Also, it is a way to attract new recruits.

- Recruiters.

Women are not limited to performing only one function. They can be in charge of providing material or information, helping in operations, acting as facilitators or simply continuing with the most common activities (educating the children, the house, etc.).

However, there is a role in which the woman stands out and in the recruiting role of both women and men. And the areas where recruitment can be carried out are very varied, although it currently highlights its role within social networks.

The purpose of the recruiters is to convince by all means to their peers to leave everything to perform the jihad, to become jihadist warriors, to start a new one with a warrior who in the future could become a hero or to perform acts of suicide assuring them paradise and in exchange for economic remuneration.

Social networks provide a safe and quiet space to carry out their mission. Forums, chats or private groups of Facebook, Whatsapp or Telegram are the ideal places to carry out meetings to which they are invited by the recruiters. Furthermore you should not forget the meetings held in homes, mosques, associations or other environments where they are also used for this purpose.

The recruiters are able to transmit the message of an idyllic life project in the Caliphate so many times dreamed. The Caliphate offers them respect, offering them a way of life based on what was established by the Sharia as opposed to the crisis of values that is currently experienced.

In many cases, the women recruited are young, even minors, with low socio-labor expectations, dissatisfied with their current situation and users of social networks without supervision.

- Suicide bombers.

Suicide terrorism is being consolidated as a real tactic used by terrorist groups and in particular the use of women. Women suicide bombers have become a weapon that allows very low risk, the use of

simple mechanisms, causes significant damage and in economic terms is very cheap in addition to instilling fear. This phenomenon knows neither borders nor limits. It is a practice that has been used throughout the entire world.

Due to a series of characteristics that characterize them (discretion, unlikely to be suspicious, clothing they use, can more easily reach high-profile targets etc.) women have become silent weapons.

Do not forget that lethality of a suicide attack comes from the explosive that is used. The outbreak is the moment in which more deaths take place although fragment of the metal causes many victims that finally pass away days later. It should be noted that in confined spaces, a small amount of explosive could cause considerable damage.

The motivations leading women to commit these attacks are diverse. Some of them are members of terrorist groups that faithfully believe in what they are going to do, however, others are deceived or drugged into committing these attacks. Some of them are even not aware of the action they are going to execute. Some of the reasons that lead them to commit these attacks are for personal reasons, to avenge the death of a husband, a brother or a father.

The increase in female participation in this type of attack is driven by the benefit that terrorist groups obtain from each successful suicide attack. As the time passes, the number of female suicide bombers is increasing, and it is increasingly important to recognize and address this threat to the lives and interests of each nation.

The terrorist groups will continue to innovate in the tactics they use in their suicide attacks to cause more and more surprise and terror thanks to the enormous capacity they possess to re-invent themselves.

It should be noted that the use of women bombs can become a phenomenon that can spread throughout the world

- Kidnapping.

Kidnapping is another of the most profitable methods used by terrorist groups because it allows them to finance its terrorist activities, it has a great media impact and it is a way of generating terror among civilian population in the areas where they operate.

The reasons why kidnappings occur are diverse. The most significant is the fact that it is a reason to be able to negotiate with the Government, responds to their economic interests, advertising, presence in international media and allows nourishing the fighters of wives.

The main objectives indicated for the kidnapping are mainly Christian women or girls, although there are also Muslim women. In function of the terrorist group the kidnapping of men is also possible although until now, the most common action against them is murders.

Women and girls who are kidnapped can be treated differently depending on the use they want to give them and the terrorist group that holds them prisoner. Those that are going to be used for a negotiation will be treated in better conditions. Others will be brainwashed and trained to fight.

In particular, the case of the terrorist group Boko Haram is especially opposed to the education of women. According to their interpretation of Sharia, women must be at home raising children and taking care of their husbands, not at school learning to read and write.

The mass kidnappings of women and girls by Boko Haram are part of the terror that defines and identifies this group. This group has always abducted, however, as it needs more combatants it resorts to kidnapping. The abductees are used as soldiers, wives, currency or whatever is necessary.

- Women in Financial affairs.

The Muslim woman has always exercised a domestic activity unpaid or accounted for but that fed the family budget. Due to this natural knowledge and inherent in its role of managing a home, terrorist organizations decided that women played a role behind the battle scenario and therefore were included in the economic issues.

Islamic finance has included women relatively quickly because they have realized the importance they have within the Islamic society. This is joined by the incorporation of women into more specialized training.

The economic participation of women in lucrative work can be considered as the phenomenon of very important and profound change in the modern Islamic world.

- The temporary marriage.

Temporary marriage or “mut'ah” is allowed by Islamic law. It is an institution regulated by the Sharia or Islamic law that establishes that it is a contract and as such must meet certain validity requirements.

It allows a man and a woman to have a marital relationship for a certain time provided that there is no legal impediment for both to marry (as a family bond), and have determined a quantity of goods as a dowry. At the end of the period, they separate without having to resort to the divorce formula.

The terrorist groups have echoed this formula to be able to perform marriages in their own way. In some cases the marriages that the terrorists organize only last a few hours. This type marriage has been called “marriage of pleasure”.

Prostitution is prohibited by Islam, however, terrorists from groups such as Daesh, use this cynical figure that allows them to have sex.

- Hisba.

At present, the denomination “hisba” is used to refer to the “religious police” that acts under the religious motto of “imposing the law and preventing it from becoming corrupt”. The members of this police are Muslims who besides functions of police functions perform intelligence functions.

Within this police it is necessary to point out the relevant role that women play. They are in charge of watching that their peers dress according to Islamic attire, fulfill their duties as housewife and wife, the pray in the mosque and theft among others.

The offenders of the crimes collected in the Sharia can face penalties from 60 lashes or payment of a fine through amputation and stoning.

- Influence activities with women as target audience.

Terrorism knows no limits, as proof is the publication of magazines and videos directed only to the female sector.

As far as the magazines are concerned, they are usually written in English, aimed at Muslim women and encouraging them to spread the message of the group, reaffirming them in their beliefs and supporting them to carry out the holy war.

- One of the best-known publications is called "Sunnat E Khola" belonging to the terrorist group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It refers to a Muslim warrior of the seventh century called Khaula.
- Another of the well-known magazines is "Al-Ghurabaa" which is published by pro Al Qaeda and pro Al-Shabaab. In this case, the language used is Swahili.
- Another magazine is called "Al-Shamikha", which translates to "The majestic woman". It is published in Arabic by AQAP. On the cover is a woman wearing a niqab and an Ak-47 rifle. The colors of the cover are pink, white and violet.
- "Al-Khansaa" is a magazine aimed at women that was published in 2004 by AQAP.

Both the Dabiq and Rumiya magazines of Daesh and the Inspire publication of al-Qaeda encourage women to join the fight. They even cite examples of how women please their husbands. Some of them are the following:

- In number 11 of Dabiq, it urges women to care for their jihadist husbands. Women are the bearers of the future: the mothers of the "lion cubs".
- In number 12 of Dabiq, entitled under the name "Just Terror" advises women that "when her husband wants to marry another woman, it is not mandatory for him to consult her".
- The number 13 of Dabiq offers its readers advice on the correct ways to mourn the death of a husband (ihdad). And they recommend that widows should stop adorning themselves with jewelry "or anything else that has the purpose of beautifying themselves".

In any case, we cannot establish a unique pattern of a woman that is radicalized, that captures, that moves to the territories in which conflict to be part of these organizations or that decides to become a bomb woman because the motivations, the reasons and the indicators are diverse

## 4. Identified lessons.

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These are the lessons identified that have been extracted from the work done:

- The terrorist organizations are aware of the value that a female member and mediating their use are sending a message.
- The most significant manifestation of the incorporation of women into jihadist organizations is their role as suicide bombers. It is a tactical tool with strategic effects, very powerful and effective in mass media.
- Some women are attracted by radical Islam, by the violence that can be exercised and by giving their lives for the cause. Others have idealistic and altruistic reasons. And others aspire to be the women of the warriors who could be heroes; a financial motivation, as suicide bombers are assured that their families will be materially provided for after their death.
- Religious terrorism is a particularly potent form of violence; religion offers the moral justification for committing seemingly immoral acts.
- There is a clear financial motivation. The suicide bombers are assured that their families will receive economic assistance after their death and this fact gives them peace of mind to commit the attack.
- The use of women has a clear strategic advantage over the use of men: women can more easily evade detection and safety measures.
- The use of women suicide bomb allows to use weapons or small explosives, run low risks and economically it is cheap. It requires little or no training, leaves no trace and generates fear in the population in general.
- The success of suicide bombers depends considerably on the surprise in the attack and the access to the objectives. Both requirements have been more easily achieved through the use of women.
- The difficulty in combating this new terrorism, denominated by some authors as "just do it", lies in not being able to infiltrate or have informants, lacking information contracted in order to prevent attacks.
- Information is the most valuable for this kind of struggle.

## 5. Prospective.

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In recent years, the incorporation of women into terrorist groups has become a real, palpable and evident fact. Far from tending to diminish, it will continue to increase even with the incorporation of minors.

The escalation of recent attacks creates the need and urgency to develop new strategies and policies to avoid and deter these actions.

Taking into account the variety of roles of women can play within terrorist groups, this figure should be used to combat terrorism exercised by women. One could start with counter-narrative policies to stop the message thrown by recruiters.

In addition, it would be interesting to establish policies to empower women and avoid not only the capture of women but also the execution of attacks.

It would be necessary to design and implement an effective counterterrorism strategy based on reducing support for terrorist groups, blocking financing, preventing the transmission of terrorist propaganda through social networks.

The competent authorities should make the necessary efforts to be able to change the perspective and the prism of the society with regard to terrorism. In such a way that suicide bombers, regardless of gender, are considered by the society to be true murderers and their behavior can in no case be considered heroic.

It would be advisable to start working on policies to prevent the terrorism of minors because they are likely to have been raised in radical environments and are potential executors of attacks.

In the future women can go charging more relevant positions in operational tasks, as recruitment or as a source of intelligence.

The prevention of radicalization in Europe is a fundamental aspect of the fight against terrorism, especially for its ability to detect and prevent violence radicalization in young people.

Terrorists tend to be strategic so to fight against them you have to help women and girls and equip them with tools and means to avoid more victims.

## 6. Annexed.

YEAR	ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY	DETAIL
in the 1980s	Kurdish PKK		PKK starts using terrorist women
1985	Syrian National Socialist Party	Lebanon	A Woman detonated the explosives that filled her Peugeot with an Israeli military convoy in Lebanon and died along with two soldiers, in addition to leave a dozen injured.
2000	Chechen groups		Chechen groups began launching suicide attacks by women. So-called “black widows”. Involved in a series of spectacular terrorist actions.
2002	Chechen terrorists with links to the Al Qaeda network	Russia	40-50 heavily armed and masked men and women drove a bus to the theater and entered firing in the air. they had grenades, mines and improvised explosive devices tied to their bodies, and had deployed more explosives throughout the theater. The 40 terrorists and about 130 hostages died.
Between 2002 and 2005		Israel	women also took part in a wave of suicide attacks launched by Palestinian militant groups against Israeli targets
2005	Al Qaeda	Jordan	Al-Qaida sent four suicide bombers including a woman to attack weddings in luxury hotels in Amman.
		Iraq	Woman Suicide Bomb
		Iraq	Woman Suicide Bomb
2008	Al Qaeda	Iraq	Two women carrying explosives and causing an attack on a pet market in Baghdad. in which some 100 people died.
		Iraq	Four suicidal women cause 50 deaths in Iraq
2010	Islamists in the North Caucasus (black windows)	Russia	Two women explode in two Stations the Moscow metro and cause 38 dead and 65 wounded.
2014	Boko Haram	Nigeria	Boko Haram kidnaps 200 girls in northern Nigeria during an attack on a school.
2015	Boko Haram	Nigeria	A girl died when she detonated a bomb that killed at least five people at the entrance to the main bus station.
		Nigeria	At least 19 people were killed last Saturday when a bomb placed on the body of a 10-year-old girl exploded in a busy market
		Nigeria	22 dead in an attack committed by four suicide women in Nigeria. The terrorists detonated the explosives when they were intercepted by the security forces when they were preparing to enter and distribute themselves in different parts of the city

2016	Daesh	Morocco	Ten suspected attackers were arrested.
		Libya	A woman is used as suicide bomber.
		France	Three women arrested near Paris had been planning an attack on the Gare de Lyon.
	Boko Haram	Cameroon	24 people have died, after immolating two terrorists in a market and two suicide girls during a religious ceremony.
2017	Boko Haram	Nigeria	A triple attack by women kamikazes leaves 14 dead
		Nigeria	Five suicide women killed 17 people and injured 11 after immolated in the northern State of Borno.
		Nigeria	Three suicide bombers attacked the town of Shuwari in the state of Borno.
		Nigeria	three women would have been part of the command of nine suicide bombers that attacked Maiduguri causing the death to 11 civilians
		Cameroon	11 people lost their lives after immolating two suicide girls in a camp for displaced.
		Niger	Several terrorist kill nine civilians and kidnap dozens of women and girls.
		Chad	A group of terrorists kills nine civilians and kidnaps 40 women and girls.
	Daesh	Iraq	Two women immolate themselves together with Iraqi troops.
		Iraq	A terrorist with explosives dressed as a woman immolates in a camp for displaced people.





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