

Terrorism did not begin in a vacuum. Many Americans became acutely aware of modern terrorism after the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and after the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Yet, modern terrorism began decades, even centuries, before these events. Terrorism, at least from the Western perspective, grew from the French Revolution (1789–1799), and the word was originally used to describe the actions of a government, not of a band of revolutionaries. Terrorism developed throughout the nineteenth century, changing forms and ideology. The meaning of terrorism changed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well. As Christopher Hewitt (2003, pp. 23–45) observes, the definition of terrorism and antiterrorist policies changes with political tides. The political atmosphere, in turn, changes with history.

The Origins of Terrorism in Western History

The meaning of terrorism has changed with political tides in Western history. Terrorism began as government repression in France, but the French transformed its meaning by referring to Spanish guerrilla tactics in the Napoleonic Wars. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the word was used to describe the actions of revolutionaries. Nationalists copied revolutionary tactics in the early twentieth century, and they were deemed to be the new terrorists. The meaning of terrorism came full circle when Communists in the Soviet Union used terrorism to subjugate the population. After World War II, terrorism appeared in anticolonial movements, political extremism, and religion. All the differing forms of revolution and violence resulted in changing definitions and multiple policies.

The birth and evolution of the Western democracies also gave rise to a paradox, the relationship between democracy and terrorism. F. Gregory Gause III (2005) points to a variety of studies about this relationship, and he comes to a depressing conclusion: Terrorist attacks occur more frequently in democracies than in countries with any other form of government. Citing U.S. State Department statistics between 2000 and 2003, Gause finds that of nearly 530 attacks, almost 390 occurred in countries practicing full or limited democracy. This democracy factor would come into play in the nineteenth century and continue into the twenty-first century (see the following “Another Perspective: Terror and Democracy” feature).



ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Terror and Democracy

Many terrorism analysts believe that terrorists need democratic states to function. Totalitarian states, they argue, make it impossible to engage in covert activities. Terrorists need freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and freedom of action. Jenny Hocking (2004) takes the opposite view. In reaction to a terrorist attack in Bali, Indonesia, in 2002, the Australian government followed the path of the United States, Hocking

says. Political rights have been trampled in the name of the war on terrorism. A counterterrorist network has invaded civil liberties in Australia, and the Australian Intelligence Security Service has been given permission to pry into the lives of law-abiding citizens. Terrorism is a threat, but overreaction to it also threatens democracies. The internment of terrorist suspects without charge or trial is a greater threat than terrorism.

Two Views of Prison Radicalization

As demonstrated by the previous section, several scholars and practitioners in the field of terrorism believe radicalization is the beginning of a process that may lead to extremist views and political violence. This discussion has overflowed into studies of prison systems. Many people believe that prisons are academies for crime; that is, less experienced inmates learn how to become more effective criminals from older inmates. A similar argument is applied to terrorism. Terrorists must be separated from the general population. Otherwise, they will convert inmates from the general population and transform them into fellow terrorists. In other words, prisons run the risk of becoming schools for terrorism.

Many scholars are leery of such simple generalizations, but they do believe that prisons present opportunities for radicalization. Excellent researchers, such as Mark Hamm (2007 and 2009) have uncovered processes and stages for conversion to, immersion in, and acceptance of violent radical philosophies or religions within prison walls. Such research is more sophisticated than generalizations about terrorist schools. However, other scholars and practitioners find little or no evidence for prison radicalization.

The Process of Radicalization in Prison

Recent reports suggest that groups are being radicalized in prison, and Mark Hamm (2007) has conducted a definitive study of prison radicalization in the United States. The process in prison usually involves a charismatic leader who gathers a number of individuals in an entourage. A leader will often target selected prisoners for a group or will dominate new inmates, intimidating them until they join the group. Hamm maintains that this recruitment is similar to procedures used by street gangs.

Terrorists also use recruiters who are not incarcerated. This is most frequently associated with religion, and the person who recruits and radicalizes potential terrorists may be a visiting chaplain. A chaplain has access to prisoners and may claim freedom of religion while delivering a radical message. Hamm says militant chaplains also distribute radical literature in the form of religious works.

Most of the people who enter prison have to adjust psychologically to the loss of freedom, constant monitoring, and threatened violence from other prisoners. This frequently leaves a new inmate, especially someone in prison for the first time, in a state of crisis. Recruiters for a radical cause often recognize differing types of crises, and they try to bring individuals to the radical cause with strategies that match the psychological state of the person they hope to entice.

Hamm found five common patterns of converting people to violent radical causes. The first contains people in crisis, who will respond to religious overtures for emotional support. A second involves people seeking protection in the prison environment. These people will convert because the radical group offers safety. The third group of potential converts—Hamm calls these people searchers—have had little exposure to religion, and they are fascinated by both the multiplicity of religious expressions inside prison and the feeling of belonging among members of the group. The fourth involves a personality that is common in prison—manipulating people for personal gain. Finally, Hamm classifies chaplains from the outside as free-world recruiters.

Behind almost every conversion, according to Hamm, lies a friendship or kinship link, but sometimes, a new inmate simply meets somebody in the yard and converts to a new faith. Radicalization tends to take place among two factions and three major groups. The first faction involves various Muslim groups who use cut-and-paste

governments with strong religious minorities experience attacks more frequently than democracies, and they think that Pape missed this point because he used different variables in his research model.

In contrast to Pape, Wade and Reiter believe that Islam is an important factor in suicide bombings, but these are not simply attacks developed to use against the West. They found that Muslim states suffer more suicide attacks than Western states, and more Muslims are targeted in suicide attacks than any other group. A democracy occupying a foreign land with a different religion has little to do with these attacks, they argue. The presence of Islam is more important, and past experience with suicide bombing makes the tactic more acceptable and more likely.

Models for Suicide Bombing

There is a debate about modeling attacks. Rohan Gunaratna (2000) suggests that it may be possible to model some precursors of suicide bombings. After examining suicide attacks between 1983 and 2000, Gunaratna sees three things that all attacks have in common: secrecy, reconnaissance, and rehearsal. He believes that local groups operate in secret to prepare the bomber and the target area. Because locals can blend in with the surroundings, they provide supplies and information. They also conduct the initial scouting or reconnaissance of the target. A support group far away from the target can rehearse the attack in secrecy; the better the rehearsal, the greater the chance of success. The bomber usually conducts the final reconnaissance during the operation, but he or she can detonate the bomb in case of discovery. These factors could serve as the basis for a model.

Another school of thought suggests that models may exist, but there are so many factors that a single set of precursors cannot exist. Audrey Cronin (2003, pp. 6–8) believes that different styles of bombings emerge from different places. The Hamas model, patterned after the actions of Hezbollah, uses a professional group to plan and execute the attack and a support group to prepare the attacker. For many years, researchers believed that this was the only model for suicide bombing (Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2001).

Cronin finds, however, that different models have emerged over time. The LTTE trained suicide bombers from an early age. The PKK leadership coerced victims to take part in suicide bombings. The September 11 suicide attacks defied the previous models, and bombings in Chechnya represent a different combination of social and psychological factors. There is no single model for suicide bombing.



**Self-
Check**

- > Why is suicide used as a weapon?
- > What do empirical studies suggest about suicide terrorism?
- > How might suicide terrorism be stopped?

Tactical Misunderstandings and Gender

Criminologists frequently complain that females are often ignored in the study of crime, unless the study focuses on victimization. Researchers have said the same thing about the study of gender and terrorism (Oliverio and Lauderdale, 2005; Sjoberg, 2009). The main reason for this is a cultural stereotype that brackets women in traditional roles. Many researchers and the general public do not envision women performing the “male” terrorist tasks (Neuberger and Valentini, 1996, pp. 28–36; see

also Maleeha, 2012). These attitudes ignore reality. Women have been and remain active in terrorist causes, and their role is increasing. They increase the tactical effectiveness of terrorist groups and the complexity of counterterrorism efforts.

Tactical Roles and Organization

Margaret Gonzalez-Perez (2008) found that the role of women in terrorist groups is more closely related to the political orientation of an organization than to its tactics. She examined 26 terrorist organizations that emerged in the decades after World War II. She separated these groups into those with an international focus and those that embraced domestic issues. (Gonzalez-Perez uses the term *international focus* to refer to terrorist groups operating in multiple countries and the term *domestic issues* to refer to groups within a single country concerned with political or social problems.) Her findings indicate that political and social ideology is closely related to the roles women play in terrorist groups. She says that paternalism, religious traditions, and political orientation are the dominant influences in the process.

Gonzalez-Perez says that women are more attracted to domestic terrorist organizations than to international groups. The reason, she believes, deals with the purposes of the respective groups. Domestic organizations are focused on revolution and social change. Women are attracted to such groups because they have a chance to redefine their roles, and males and females welcome them because they want the same change. Some groups even have a feminist agenda. Women also have opportunities for leadership in revolutionary groups. International terrorists resist outside forces such as capitalism and imperialism. They try to defend a traditional culture that limits the role of women. Yet, women also emerge in traditional organizations when there is a need to recruit personnel and when terrorism becomes a popular means of social expression.

Gathering data from a variety of geographical areas, Gonzalez-Perez offers a strong argument. After examining domestic and international terrorism in the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe, her data show that women in domestic groups gravitate toward combat and leadership. The same findings reveal that women in international groups are given more limited roles. International terrorists tend to employ women as supporters, sympathizers, and spies. They seldom receive combat or leadership positions. This pattern remains constant even in social systems that emphasize male dominance. For example, she says that one would think that the machismo influence in Central and South America would blunt female leadership and combat roles, but the opposite is true. Most Central and South American groups have a left-wing revolutionary focus. Women move into active roles because the groups are seeking to restructure their culture and political structure. Every geographical area that she studied produced a common trend: Domestic groups emphasized the role of women even when the group had no stated feminist agenda.

Cindy Ness (2005) offers a similar argument after examining the behavior of women in secular and religious terrorist groups. Using the groups Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE), Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, Ness argues that modern terrorism began around 1968. Females played an immediate role. Women were relegated to support and service in religious terrorist groups, but they developed combat and leadership positions in secular organizations. Ness argues that this has been fairly constant since the spread of ideological terrorism after 1968. She points to Ulricke Meinhof and Leila Khalid as examples of female participation in revolutionary terrorism. Both women not only served as combatants, they were also leaders and served as inspiration for supporters. Unfortunately, Ness believes, most terrorism analysts have ignored the role of women in revolutionary groups.

international focus:
Gonzalez-Perez uses the term *international focus* to refer to terrorist groups operating in multiple countries.

domestic issues:
Gonzalez-Perez uses the term *domestic issues* to refer to groups within a country fighting to change the social or political structure of that nation.

Ulricke Meinhof:
(1934–1976) co-created the German Red Army Faction with Andreas Baader in 1970. She was the co-leader of the group. Arrested in 1972, she committed suicide in prison.

Leila Khalid: (b. 1944) was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In 1969, she was part of a team that hijacked four aircraft that were destroyed after the passengers and crews disembarked. Arrested in 1970 after another attempted hijacking, she was released as part of a prisoner exchange.

Religious terrorist groups began to emerge in the 1980s while nationalistic and ethnic groups continued to operate. Ness says the roles of women followed a similar path in each of these movements. Conservative male-dominated religious terrorists relegated females to secondary status. Ethnic and nationalistic groups also limited the roles of women. Given the fact that revolutionary groups offered more opportunities for women, one would expect that females would not be as active in religious and nationalistic movements. However, the opposite was true. The reason, Ness explains, is that these movements appealed to a wider audience. Revolutionary groups attracted women, but the groups were small, and so were the number of supporters. Religious and ethnic nationalists recruited from a larger pool of supporters than the earlier left-wing groups. Even though the roles of women were more limited in the traditional groups, there were more women available to work in them. Therefore, Ness explains, more women were involved in traditional movements.

The number of women attracted to religious terrorist organizations also suggests that their roles will expand. Ness believes that because they are so numerous, they will increasingly receive combat assignments. Aside from all of the traditional restrictions of male-dominated religious hierarchies, terrorist groups need personnel. When women are available, they are given combat assignments as the need arises. Ness does not know if this practice will extend to leadership. There is no reason to automatically believe that religious groups will continue to limit the opportunity for female leadership. Women may begin organizing and taking leadership roles, or they may take charge out of necessity when male leaders are captured or killed.

Tactical Considerations

Groups with diverse missions tend to recruit and operate in different ways. Ideology draws certain types of recruits to a movement, and it influences the tactics terrorist groups employ. For example, a revolutionary group trying to overthrow a government and win popular support is not likely to attack with a nuclear weapon. The reason is clear: If political terrorists were to use a nuclear weapon, the public would unite against them, placing the terrorists at a disadvantage. Small groups cannot achieve their objectives against a united mass of people. Religious terrorists, on the other hand, might be tempted to detonate a nuclear device. They have no concern about popular support, and if they lose, they believe a deity will call new followers to carry the struggle forward. Ideology and mission affect operations.

When suicide terrorism reappeared in the 1980s, audiences were appalled. They wondered why a grown man would strap on a bomb and kill himself. Terrorists took advantage of this, and suicide bombings increased. As such attacks became more routine, audiences grew accustomed to seeing suicide bombers. Some terrorist groups, seeking increased psychological impact from suicide attacks, sought new types of bombers. They began using women. Both researchers and the public believed women were manipulated into the act (Deylami, 2013). They refused to accept the idea that women might be devoted to a cause and motivated to sacrifice their lives (Nacos, 2005).

Overlooking Female Terrorists: A Tactical Mistake

If women have been terrorists throughout history, one wonders why their role has been overlooked. Alisa Stack-O'Conner (2007) says female terrorism has been ignored for the same reason that female criminality has been underplayed. Researchers

do not tend to think of women as terrorists or criminals, and when they do look at females, researchers usually see them as victims. In addition, law enforcement officers do not tend to arrest females.

Other scholars argue that women have been overlooked because it is generally assumed that terrorism is a violent male occupation. Americans like to think of female terrorists as an aberration, according to Cindy Ness (2005), and American popular culture does not accept the idea that females are terrorists. When females are used as attackers or suicide bombers, Katharina von Knop (2007) believes, they are following a male model instead of assuming roles they would define on their own. Von Knop believes that women have a greater role to play in leadership and maintaining organizations. They do not need to imitate males, von Knop argues. Female warriors differ from their male counterparts. Research from the International Crisis Group (ISG; 2009) in Kyrgyzstan suggests that this is correct. The ISG found that when women move into radical religious groups on their own, they seem to create organizations that provide social organization and sustainability.

Laura Sjoberg (2009) takes the argument further. She is extremely critical of the scholarly literature on women and terrorism. For the most part, her research shows, studies of women in terrorism are generally ignored, and when females are discussed, it is in gendered terms. They are not "terrorists," they are "women involved in terrorism," she says. There are exceptions but most scholars and analysts conclude that women play some type of nebulous role in terrorism. They cannot define the role, and they do not seem to care to do so. Media presentations follow the same tack. Women are neither significant nor worthy of analysis.

Sjoberg vehemently disagrees with such characterizations. Women, she writes, do have a special place in terrorism; women are terrorists in the same way that men are terrorists. There are terrorists who happen to be women, and they have been around for quite some time. There is also no feminist perspective on terrorism; rather, there are feminists who study terrorism in a variety of ways. Sjoberg says that scholars and other researchers are reluctant to study political and criminal violence among women because doing so violates idealized notions of womanhood. Their behavior should be studied from a variety of feminist perspectives, Sjoberg concludes. Such studies would enrich the field.

Sjoberg has a point. Women are playing an increasing role in terrorist operations in all types of organizations. Groups with revolutionary or feminist objectives give them leadership and combat roles. More traditional groups relegate women to support roles, but they are being employed more frequently in tactical operations. Even the most traditional terrorist groups find that there are tactical advantages to using women. In Central Asia, women have even developed their own paths to terrorism, and they sustain them without assistance from groups dominated by men. Finally, while gender-specific roles exist, Sjoberg is correct. There are both men and women who happen to be terrorists. Each gender can be deployed with certain tactical benefits.

Analysts and researchers who assume that female participation in terrorism is an abnormality fail to grasp the nature of terrorism (Nacos, 2005). This leads to tactical and strategic mistakes. For example, popular assumptions suggest that terrorism in Central Asia is an expression of masculinity in a society where females are repressed (Deylami, 2013; Poloni-Staudinger and Ortbals, 2014). Therefore, women in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be rescued. Conversely, when female political leaders in the United States respond to terrorism, voters tend to think they are less effective than males making similar decisions (Holman et al., 2011). The false assumption in such cases is that women cannot effectively respond to terrorism.

Women play important roles in terrorism. Research should focus on the types of functions they perform and methods for countering them. Most counterterrorist tactics focus on methods to prevent young men from joining terrorist groups. The same attention should be focused on young women. Anything else is a tactical miscalculation.



Self-Check

- > What roles do women tend to play in differing types of terrorist groups?
- > Why do Americans generally ignore female terrorists?
- > Why have researchers in general failed to study the roles of women in terrorist groups?

Emphasizing the Points

The tactics of terrorism are straightforward and simple, but they are employed in innovative ways. The study of terrorism is complex as a result of tactical innovation. Force multipliers—technology, transnational support, religion, and the media—enhance the power of terrorist groups. Technological attacks can be made more effective by using WMD, cyberattacks, and/or economic targeting. Suicide bombing has become a particularly terrorizing tactic, but there is no single explanation for either understanding or preventing it. It is important to understand the tactical impact of gender on terrorism, but research on women's roles has been neglected, which leads to strategic and tactical mistakes.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- The six basic tactics of terrorism are bombing, arson, hijacking, assault, kidnapping, and taking hostages. Terrorists employ these tactics in a variety of ways.
- Force multipliers increase terrorists' attacking power without increasing personnel.
- Force multipliers include technology, transnational support, media coverage, and religious fanaticism.
- Technology can enhance striking power when it is employed as a weapon or when it becomes the target of an attack. Any form of technology may be used. Cyberterrorism is a growing threat. Computer systems can be infected, or data can be stolen. Terrorists or other enemies might attack computer controlled systems to cause a catastrophic failure in the economic sector or infrastructure.
- Technology also increases the lethality of potential weapons, giving them the potential for mass destruction. Biological agents include bacterial and viral weapons. There are four types of biological agents: (1) natural poisons, or toxins that occur without human modification; (2) viruses; (3) bacteria; and (4) plagues. There are four types of chemical agents: (1) nerve agents, (2) blood agents, (2) choking agents, and (4) blistering agents. Radiological weapons are closely related to chemical weapons, and they could be used by dispersing high doses of radiation in a conventional manner.
- Nuclear terrorism involves the potential employment of a nuclear bomb. There are two methods for constructing a nuclear device. The simplest method is to use HEU in a homemade bomb. The other method would be to gain control of an existing device. Some scholars and analysts believe that this will not happen, and others think that it will. Regardless, the United States is not prepared for