Silenced Sacrifice: Unveiling the Phenomenon of Female Suicide Terrorism in Palestine

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SILENCED SACRIFICE: UNVEILING THE PHENOMENON OF FEMALE SUICIDE
TERRORISM IN PALESTINE

1. **Introduction**

Since 9/11, a lot of attention has been given to movements that use extreme violence as a means to reach their goals. One of the most extreme portrayals of such violence is suicide terrorism. This phenomenon of willingly sacrificing one's life to gain maximum attention and spread fear into the life's and minds innocent civilians has challenged the media, researchers, and policymakers to attempt to understand what drives these movements. Not only in literature, but also in international politics this focus was apparent. This is well illustrated by the foreign policy of the United States, when Bush announced the "war on terror" to protect the US for future attacks. An intriguing aspect of violent extremism within social movements, is the role women play within these organizations. Their involvement in political violence is not a recent phenomenon, contrary to the common perception that war and violence are male entities (Bloom, 2012; Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017; Woodward & Duncanson, 2017). In modern terrorism, the role of women has been expanding over time as they began to take over these traditionally male roles (Bloom, 2005). The number of female suicide attackers increased from only eight in the 1980s to over a hundred since 2000. Due to this growing number, much attention has been given to the individual motivations of female suicide terrorists in academic literature. Scholars researched what drove those women, mothers, daughters, and children to commit such a horrendous act. Despite their increasing influence, people are still surprised and shocked to learn about their involvement in political violence. This thesis is written to seek an answer to the following question:

Why do terrorist groups decide to employ female suicide bombers?

In an attempt to seek for an answer to this question, this study contributes to the research on the involvement of women in terrorist organizations. Whereas many scholars tried to answer this question from the individual perspective, I will approach it from the organizational view. Even though a lot of literature offers strategical or ideological explanations for female suicide terrorist, not much research looks into the increased internationalization between groups in terms of contact and exchange of experiences. By filling this gap in the literature, the understanding of mechanisms behind the employment of women as suicide terrorist is hopefully increased. As a result, further research can be carried out to develop this theory further, and perhaps even contribute to policy implementations.

First, existing literature will be reviewed on suicide terrorism as a tactic and the most prevalent explanations for employing women as terrorists. Second, a theoretical framework will

be presented from which three hypotheses derive. Additionally, a conceptualization of important variables will be given. Third, the methodology is presented in which the research design will be explained and where Palestine will be introduced in the case selection. Moving on to the analysis, where a congruence analysis will be carried out. Therefore, the three hypotheses which derived from the theoretical framework will be tested with secondary data which has been gathered from existing research. Lastly, the findings will be discussed and the research will be concluded with an attempt to answer the research question.

2. Literature Review

Social Movement Tactics

Social movements can opt for a wide range of tactics to mobilize public opinion or to change the status quo. These tactics can differ widely in terms of how radical they are and the reasoning behind them that drives social movement actors (Della Porta and Diani, 2014). Tactics, as the term will be used in this thesis, are forms of collective action carried out publicly, through media channels, on the streets, and thus ranging from being almost unnoticeable, to taking down cities, causing injuries, or in the most extreme case leading to deaths (Larson, 2013).

In the literature, these different forms of tactics are categorised in two strategies a social movement can employ: a violent or a non-violent one. The question which then arises is, which strategy is the most effective in achieving a political goal? In deciding which tactics are best suited for a particular social movement, there are several aspects to consider; the group identity, the goal of the social movement, and who the opponents are (Larson, 2013). The key challenge a movement often faces is the necessity of finding a way to overcome the powerlessness which has put them in the position of political impotence. To avoid this powerlessness, groups have to move around the standard channels of decision-making and try to seize an opportunity in which they can advocate for their goals. Even the most successful tactic is likely to eventually be countered by a movement's opponent if innovation is not present (McDoug, 2013). Therefore, a movement should adapt its tactics over time.

From innovation to radicalization

For some movements, tactical innovation escalates and steers from nonviolent to increasing violent repertoires of action. This is a complex process which happens over time (Bosi, 2015). Sometimes when a movement feels that non-violent tactics are no longer effective to achieve their goals, they can turn to violent tactics as a means of tactical innovation. In studying violent human conflict, the phenomenon of political violence is widely examined within several disciplines and subfields, hardly limited to terrorism studies. Political violence is a very ill-defined term due to the broadness and variance of the concept. Kalyvas (2019) defines violence as the actual infliction of physical harm, with death being the most extreme form. Likewise, political can be thought of as 'an action that explicitly and directly aims to impact governance' (Kalyvas, 2019, p. 13). A special kind of political violence is terrorism. According to Sánchez-Cuenca and de la Calle (2009), terrorism is a form of political violence which can be carried out by various actors. Preconditions are that there is a distinction made between the target of

violence and the audience, and that the reason for being violent is to spread fear amongst society. The process of radicalization towards any form of terrorism is a process that proceeds in phases over time. .

Suicide bombing as a tactic

As previously mentioned, a social movements has a handful of tactics at its display to get their goal across. One of the most shocking and horrifying acts of terrorism is arguably a suicide attack. It breaks many normative and social taboos and has led many scholars to study the rationality behind the act (Pape, 2005; Bloom, 2005; Ganor, 2001). If the goal of a movement is to inflict terror upon society, the movement can be categorized as a terrorist organization. These terrorist organizations often have a rationally calculated strategy in mind when they produce a plan of action against their enemies (Bloom, 2012).

On the one hand, there is literature in which scholars predominantly focus on the individual motivation and rationality that drives the perpetrators (Altran, 2003; Reuter, 2004). Often the conclusion was that the bomber suffered with feelings of pride, anger, revenge, or seeked personal glory (Atran, 2003; Reuter, 2004). Specifically on women, the individual motives that are often identified are coercion and oppression. Because this thesis is focused on the group-level, I will not expand on the individual motivations of the suicide attackers. However, it is important to point out that suicide terrorism is both a personal and a group process. At the one hand, the individual undergoes a complex personal process up until the act. On the other hand, they need organizational assistance and the organization needs the individual (Ferber and Schweitzer, 2005).

On the other hand, scholars have explained the employment of female suicide bombers by looking at strategic motivations, rather than categorising suicide attacks as senseless, irrational acts of violence (Pape, 2005). Robert Pape (2005) is one of the most influential scholars in this strategic approach. In his work, he argues that 'coercion is the paramount objective of suicide terrorism' (Pape, 2005, p. 11). By coercion, he means the desired effect of the perpetrators is to coerce a government to change its policy, or to withdraw forces of democratic states from the territory the terrorist consider their homeland. Mia Bloom (2004; 2005) expands on this logic by arguing many groups turn to suicide attacks to 'beat' their political opponents. To make this more concrete, this means gaining members, funding, and gaining political and societal support (Bosi, della Porta, and Malthaner, 2019). It is therefore argued that women are being employed to increase the tactical advantage of the terrorist organization. Other than the tactical advantage of using women as suicide bombers, an

increasing amount of scholars argue group leaders employ women for their use in propaganda and media campaigns. They suggest that it draws a lot of media attention. According to gendered perceptions, women are unexpected actors on the front lines of violent conflict. Therefore, if even they participate it signals the seriousness of the situation (Loken, 2018; Viterna, 2014). As a result, grievances are legitimized visually, and it might lead to an increase in popular support (Loken, 2018, p. 2). Contrastingly, the inclusion of women in political violence does not always lead to an increase in popular support.

3.Theoretical Framework

In the upcoming section I will explain what theories have been developed on why women are employed by groups as suicide bombers, based on the literature that exists today. Female suicide bombers are quite unique within the concept of terrorism and violence in general. However, as the literature review suggests, women can engage in violence in the same way as men (literature), but the result of female suicide attacks is often far more lethal (O'Rourke, 2009). Many scholars have aimed at studying why women decide to join a terrorist group, the events that lead to this decision, and how they eventually become a suicide bomber. However, the amount of research on the role of women in terrorist organizations remains limited. Furthermore, there is no single theory that would explain why groups decide to employ female suicide terrorists. Rather, the motivations vary per organization and case. Therefore, this study examines various theories and investigates which is best applicable to the selected case. First I will offer a conceptualization of terrorism and suicide attacks before moving on to the theoretical framework.

Conceptualization Terrorism

Terrorism is a topic that has been extensively studied in the last two decades. In the 21st century it became a significant global issue, threatening national security, international stability, and human lives. Because it is such a multi-faceted issue, the literature has been shifting its focus over time. Early studies mainly focussed on the historical aspects of terrorism. For example, Fischer, Halibozek, and Walters (2013) offer a cohesive overview of international terrorism in the modern age from a historical point of view. They argue the term terrorism was coined in the 18th century in France. From 1789 to 1794, members of the Jacobin Club, a radical society of French revolutionaries, promoted the Reign of Terror to reach political transformations (p. 403). This thesis however, will focus on modern terrorism taking place in the last decades of the 20th century until today.

From the 1970s until today there are three events which can be considered as landmarks for studies of terrorism. Up until the 1970s, research on terrorism was incorporated in insurgency studies. This changed however, when in 1972 the Munich Olympics were attacked and terrorism was viewed as an international threat (Chenoweth & Gofas, 2019). This was the first wave of terrorism within the research which now stood on its own as a field of study. The second landmark for terrorism studies is the end of the Cold War. This sparked many armed conflicts in the Balkans and post-Soviet areas and led to an influx of studies on civil war and

ethnic conflict (Chenoweth & Gofas, 2019). The third wave of terrorism studies emerged after the events of 9/11. The bombings of the Twin Towers resulted in a renewed attention for terrorism related literature and established terrorism as a distinct field of research. There is no consensus on what exactly terrorism is and how it should be defined. Conceptualization of the term often includes the use of violence, and the fear thereof, targeted at civilians to obtain political goals and disrupt society (Dorit, 2007, p. 938). The military however, does not specify that this violence must be targeted at civilians (Bloom, 2012). Furthermore, most definitions include the non-state character of the perpetrators of violence (Enders and Sandler, 2012).

According to Pape (2005), terrorism has two main purposes. The first is to gain supporters for the cause of the movement, the second is to coerce opponents. When the opponent is the state, the desired outcome is a change of policy for example. Sometimes terrorism can also be directed at other rival groups within the same movement. In this case, both seek for support and try to achieve this by competing with one another (Pape, 2005, p. 9).

Conceptualisation Suicide Bombing

Suicide terrorism is a topic that falls under the broader studies of terrorism and therefore faces the same challenges and similar debates within literature. The first debate upon which scholars disagree, is how to define the concept of suicide terrorism. Concerning terminology, some are using the more normative and neutral term 'suicide attack' or 'suicide bombing'. Others opt for the term 'suicide terrorism' which categorizes the phenomenon within terrorism as umbrella concept. This key difference is visible in the analyses of studies where scholars have included state actions of terrorism, such as the kamikaze pilots of Japan in the Second World War (Singh, 2019). Scholars that opt for the terms 'suicide attack' or 'suicide bombing' also disagree amongst each other. The argument here is that all suicide bombings are suicide attacks, but not all attacks have to be categorized under bombings. An alternative would be 'suicide mission' (Singh, 2019). As far as terminology concerns, there are thus various options and the position of the author within the debate is revealed by the term of choice.

Zooming in on its definitions, a twofold argument can be made. The first approach which scholars like Bloom (2005) and Ganor (2001) take, argues that the death of the perpetrator should be a critical precondition in the conceptualization of a suicide mission. Therefore, the success of the mission is dependent on the death of the perpetrator(s) (Singh, 2019). Contrastingly, a more moderate stance can be taken as well. Pape (2005) argues that the death of the attacker is not what determines the success of the mission. Rather, the expectance

that they will not survive due to the methods that are being employed is enough to qualify as a suicide mission. The risk of taking this moderate stance is that it might blur boundaries between a high-risk mission and a suicide attack. When one collects data to conduct an analysis, the pond out of which they can select increases. I will use the terms 'female suicide bomber' and 'female suicide terrorist' in my thesis, depending on the context.

Theory and Hypothesis 1: Strategic

Robert Pape (2003) argues that terrorist organizations decide to employ suicide bombers as a tactic in general, because it is strategically most effective. His key conclusion is that religion is rarely the root cause of suicide terrorism, and that the driving force is rather the desire that modern democracies withdraw their military forces from territory that the terrorist consider their homeland (Moghadam, 2006). Pape (2003) identifies an attack effective when states are forced to make territorial or political concessions. Furthermore, he emphasises that this foreign occupation by democratic states triggers suicide bombings because it enlarges their wish for self-determination.

As the study performed by O'Rourke (2009) confirms, female suicide terrorists are more effective in terms of casualties. This is, according to her, the main reasons for groups to employ them. The causes of this superior effectiveness derive from gendered norms in society, specifically those in the societies were the attacks take place. There are three ways in which this can be illustrated; women experience less suspicion, they are better able to hide explosives; and they face fewer security measures (O'Rourke, 2009). First, women are better able than men to hide explosives. In societies such as in Palestine, where it is common for women to wear loose, full-body covering clothing, these conditions enable them to hide explosives extremely well (O'rourke, 2009). Second, female suicide terrorist often wear an explosive belt around their waist, feigning a pregnancy. Bloom (2011) gives many examples in her book 'Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists'. One of those includes the example of Hanadi Jaradat, a law student who killed 19 civillians in Israel. She wore an explosive belt around her waist to a restaurant, feigning to be pregnant. Finally, women are far more lightly exposed to security checks. This is illustrated by two bombings in Baghdad, Iraq in 2008. Here, two women killed dozens of people at a market. The women were labelled by Iraqi authorities as being mentally disabled, however, an interview with a witness by journalists of the New York times suggests

this was not the case. Rather, the women had not been searched at the checkpoint where they conduct security checks looking for explosives (Farrell and Al-Husaini, 2008).

Theory and Hypothesis 2: Media strategy

The second theory that could possibly explain the recruitment of women as suicide terrorist, is the desire of terrorist groups for media attention (Davis, 2013; Bloom, 2005, 2011). By including women they garner increased attention in both domestic and international media outlets. In this way, they hope to spread their message when other methods have failed to do so (Bloom, 2012). When stories arise of young women and girls blowing themselves up, sacrificing their lives for the Palestinian cause, it draws attention to the desperation of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, by seeking out media attention they wish to influence public opinion. According to Bloom, a terrorist attack carried out by a women gets eight times as much attention as a similar attack carried out by a men (Bloom, 2012, p. 128). This attention derives from the media's urge to report on unconventional events that differ from the norm. When women are involved in terrorism it stimulates public debate. Terrorist groups can use the attention to their advantage in their propaganda campaigns for example. The coverage gives them a platform on which they can plead for their cause and garner support. An twofold effect can be noted; on the target population and on potential recruits (Bloom, 2012; Martin and Pedahzur, 2017).

Theory and Hypothesis 3: Learning

Other than the strategic advantage of female suicide terrorists, there are alternative explanations for their deployment. Depending on the sort of organization that is behind the attack, ideology can play a role in the decision to employ female suicide terrorists or not (Pape, 2005; O'Rourke, 2009; SCHOLARS). Within terrorist organizations two distinctions can be made; between a secular and a religious terrorist organization. According to Pape (2005, p. 210) only 57 percent of perpetrators, regardless of their gender, were part of a secular organization. Therefore, 43 percent was part of a religious organization. These numbers imply that suicide terrorism is not per se a religious phenomenon.

For a long time, religious organizations discouraged the use of female suicide terrorism. Muslim ideology states that use women in jihad is regarded as a radical change in Islam (Ness, 2008). It is therefore puzzling why Muslim organizations such as Hamas in Palestine ultimately decided to employ women to carry suicide bombs, considering their long-standing belief that women's role within the organization should be supportive only. A theory that could explain

the growing number of female suicide terrorist in religious organizations, is that groups and their leaders have undergone a learning process (O'Rourke, 2009; Zedalis, 2004). Due to the increasing globalization of terrorism from non-state actors, it has become way easier to share tactics and strategies with other groups (Zedalis, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, groups simply learned from examples that it was more effective to employ women as suicide terrorists as well, so they were willing to set aside their ideology or mend it to their liking. Thus, despite the seemingly ideological restraints, groups turn the moral justification around. Instead, they proclaim their sacrifice will provide them rewards in the afterlife for both men and women (Zedalis, 2004).

This theoretical framework flows into three hypothesis:

H1: Terrorist groups employ female suicide terrorists due to their strategic advantage over men.

H2: Terrorist groups employ female suicide terrorist as part of their media strategy.

H3: Terrorist groups employ female suicide terrorists due to increased internationalisation between groups, which allows them to learn from each other.

4. Methodology

The broader topic of this thesis is the motivation of social movements to employ female suicide bombers. More specifically, it will study this phenomenon trough the case of Palestine and the female suicide bombers that are employed by Palestinian terrorist movements. Therefore, the different theories will be contested with each other to explain why Palestinian terrorist groups turned to this specific tactic

4.1 Research Design

The research design that will be used in this thesis is a congruence analysis, attempting to reveal which of the selected hypothesis that derived from the theory is best for explaining the deployment of women as suicide bombers in Palestine. A congruence analysis is a small-N research which looks at one, or several cases to gather empirical evidence. This evidence is used to test the relative strength of the various theoretical approaches which have been selected, and if the hypotheses will be proven by the data that is found (Blatter and Haverland, 2012, p. 144). The independent variables (IVs) for this research are the strategic reasons for employing women, the media strategy, and the ability to learn from other groups. The dependent variable (DV) is the decision of groups to employ female suicide bombers. Congruence analysis is well applicable to this thesis, because it offers a context-specific operationalization of these variables (Blatter and Haverland, 2012).

4.2 Case Selection

To test my theories, this research will focus on the Palestinian suicide bombings which took place during the Second Intifada, between 2000 and 2005. The reason why this case is selected for my research, is because Palestine saw a relatively large number of suicide attacks within this period compared to other regions. Therefore, many studies also focused on Palestine which has resulted in a rich empirical basis for further studies. Additionally, Palestine served an pioneering role for women in terrorism; considering the ideological environment and societal expectations of women in this area.

4.3 Data Collection

For this thesis secondary sources have been examined. These include academic articles and handbooks which give an overview of the conflict in Palestine, how suicide bombings emerged as a tactic for social movements within the conflict, the influence of ideology and the role of women within the conflict. Important works are that of Robert Pape (2005) on the strategic

reasons of suicide bombings, and the work of Mia Bloom (2005, 2011) who has extensively researched the role of women in conflict. Primary sources such as interviews are very difficult to obtain. With suicide bombers themselves for obvious reasons, therefore only interview data with family members is available. However, since my research does not focus on the individual motivations for suicide bombers but rather examines the organizational level motivations, these interviews were not relevant for my analysis. Instead, the theories of O'rourke (2009) and Zedalis (2004) have been used to build my arguments upon. Consequently, quantitative data generated from a study performed by O'rourke (2009) has been used to support the strategic advantage argument. Lastly, an interview statement has been used to support the learning theory.

4.4 Operationalization

The first hypothesis will be tested by the strategic advantage theory. If the theory is correct, female suicide bombers should have more effective attacks compared to their male counterparts, in terms of higher lethality rates and lower ineffectiveness (zero victims). Because I have not conducted a statistical analysis myself, I have utilized O'Rourke's (2009) research as a secondary source for this data. She conducted a quantitative analysis in which she included five short case studies of female suicide attackers. The data is gathered from a database in which all known female suicide terrorist attacks are documented between 1981 and July 2008. The database is created by the Chicago Project on Security and Threaths (CPOST) and contains information on each attack and demographic information on all known male and female suicide terrorist. The availability of the demographic data varies per case and is dependent on journalistic and academic coverage of the region where the attack took place. Additionally, O'Rourke (2009) used a database of all Palestinian suicide terrorists which was provided by Ami Pedahzur, at the time a professor in the Department of Government at the University of Texas.

The third and final hypothesis will be tested by the learning theory. According to this theory, groups employ female suicide terrorists despite an Islamic ideology because they have observed it works. The indicators for this hypothesis are sources confirming that interaction and exchange of information was present between terrorist organizations. In a research paper by Zedalis (2004), this learning theory is supported by interview data. She has collected statements of female mujahedeen of Al Qaeda that were given in an email interview for Asharq Al-Awsat, an Arabic international newspaper.

5. Analysis

5.1 Background on Israel-Palestine

Before conducting a comprehensive analysis about the Palestinian female suicide bombers, it is important to elaborate on the historical background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is a heavily studied case and is often portrayed in media all over the world. Yet, it is also plagued by controversy and polarity. For my thesis, I have attempted to remain unbiased and impartial in describing the conflict. However, no academic is completely free of bias since research is (partially) based on sources which reflect the thoughts of other researchers. The following summary is based on the book written by Gregory Harms and Todd Ferry (2017), *The Palestine-Isreal Conflict: A Basic Introduction.* For a more in-depth analysis of the conflict, I recommend reading their work, since this thesis will not cover all aspects.

The Palestine-Israel conflict is set in the Middle East, involving two large groups; Arabs and Jews. A misconception surrounding this conflict that many people believe today is that these two groups have been fighting for a thousand years already (Bloom, 2012; Harms and Ferry, 2017). This is however not the case. For a long time, the Arabs and Jews recognized and respected each other. This mutual respect crumbled in the late eighteenth century. Around this time the Europeans had penetrated the Middle East. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, the Middle East are '*the countries of northern Africa and southwestern Asia that are on or near the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea: the Near East'*. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The people we classify as Arab are those who speak the Arab language, and have grown up in and identify with Arab culture. A Jew is a person who believes in the Judaist principles and who might have ethic roots to an original population group from Canaan/Palestine (Harms and Ferry, 2017). Since the end of the nineteenth century, Arab nationalists and Israeli Zionists started a battle for the political control of Palestine. When the first World War came to an end and the Ottoman Empire had collapsed, British troops controlled the territory and aimed to establish peaceful cohabitation between both groups. However, Arab nationalist actively rebelled against the British imperialism and Zionist occupation. In 1948, the Zionist overcame the opposition and the State of Israel was established. This resulted in the first Arab-Israeli War,

in which Palestinian guerrilla groups battled against the Jewish state. In 1967, Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza. This meant even more Palestinians were placed under Israeli occupation and frustrations increased, eventually leading to the 'First Intifada'. This was a series of non-violent protests and civil disobedience performed by Arab civil movements in Gaza. These tensions were tempered by the negations of the Oslo Accords. These negotiations mainly entailed matters such as Jewish settlements which the Palestinians wished to see dismantled, the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and the status of East Jerusalem (Hasso, 2005). However, when the Palestinians felt the execution of the Accords were stalled, and the Camp David Summit in 2000 had failed, a 'Second Intifada' erupted. Contrary to the first series of protests, the Second Intifada appeared much more violent, illustrated by acts of resistance that included stone-throwing at Israeli authorities (Johnson and Kuttab, 2001). Moreover, it was during the Second Intifada when these armed attacks resulted in the first suicide attack carried out by a women. On January 27, 2002, the first female suicide bomber Wafa Idris killed one Israeli and wounded over a hundred people (Schweitzer, 2006).

5.2 Analysis Strategic Hypothesis

If the theory arguing women have a strategic advantage is correct, female suicide bombers should have more effective attacks compared to their male counterparts. This advantage will be measured in terms of higher lethality rates and lower ineffectiveness (zero victims). O'Rourke (2009) begins her analysis by measuring the average number of casualties per individual attack carried out by different groups.

Table 1 *Average Casualties per Individual Attack by Group*

	Lebanese	PKK	LTTE	Chechen	Palestinian	Total
Female	2.3	2.3	12.1	20.9	3.4	8.4
Male	3.3	1.4	10.4	13.3	4.0	5.3
Percentage (Female: Male)	70%	164%	116%	157%	85%	158%

Note. Reprinted from *"What's special about female suicide terrorism?"* by L. A. O'rourke, 2009, Security Studies, *18*(4), p. 687.

As table 1 above suggests, women indeed hold a strategic advantage over men. Firstly, the average number of victims as a result of an individual female suicide attack (FSA) is 8.4, compared to 5.3 for a male suicide attack (MSA) carried out by an individual. Zooming in on Palestine however, we observe that the MSA was more effective in terms of casualties. An explanation would be that in Palestine, the first female suicide attack did not occur until January 2002, whereas the first male attack was already carried out in 1994 (Hasso, 2005). Female suicide terrorism often comes later in suicide campaigns, and therefore the data should be controlled for time. O'Rourke therefore performed the following statistical analysis: 'To test for the effect of gender on lethality controlling for time, I ran a negative binomial of the 498 attacks within the groups that employ women. I then used CLARIFY statistical software to estimate the number of predicted casualties for men and women in individual attacks using the data for each conflict with a Monte Carlo simulation, controlling for time by setting it to the mean year of the conflict' (O'Rourke, 2009, p. 687).

Table 2 *Negative Binomial Predictions of Average Casualties per Individual Attack by Group*

	Lebanese	PKK	Tamils	Chechen	Palestinian	Total
Female	5.3	4.7	7.9	18	9.2	8.0
Male	3.4	2.9	4.9	11.3	5.8	5.0
Percentage (Female: Male)	156%	162%	161%	159%	159%	160%

Note: The Prob > chi2 value is 0.000, the Log likelihood is -679.94554, alpha $= 0$, and the LR chi2(3) is 14.43. All coefficients were statistically significant.

Note. Reprinted from *"What's special about female suicide terrorism?"* by L. A. O'rourke, 2009, Security Studies, *18*(4), pp. 688.
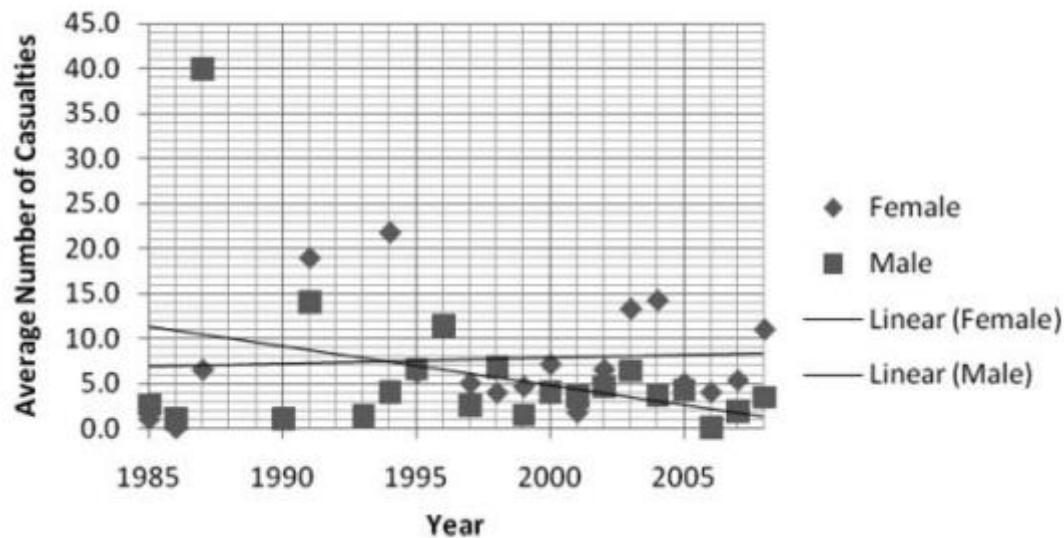
Figure 1 *Scatterplot of Average Number of Casualties by Gender over Time*

Note. Reprinted from *"*What's special about female suicide terrorism?" by L. A. O'rourke, 2009, Security Studies, *18*(4), p. 688.

Now that there has been controlled for time which can be observed in Table 2 and Figure 1, women became significantly more effective in Palestine (9.2 casualties trough a FSA compared to 5.8 casualties through a MSA). This would confirm that because women were deployed after already eight years of suicide attacks in Palestine, the lethality of the attacks in Palestine was impacted negatively.

5.3 Analysis Increased Publicity Hypothesis (Greater publicity = larger number of recruits)

The second theory that could explain female suicide terrorism is the increased publicity theory. Greater publicity means more attention to the cause of a group, and therefore could lead to a larger number of recruits. According to Mia Bloom, a terrorist attack carried out by a women gets eight times as much attention as a similar attack carried out by a men (Bloom, 2012, p. 128). I argue this is due to the element of surprise that is often associate with women engaging in acts of violence. In the context of Palestine, the bombers are often portrayed as beautiful young women with various backgrounds; an ambulance worker, a seamstress, college students, a law school graduate, and so forth. This implies that those women were not at all misfits or outcasts, but rather young women who died because they believed in the cause. This could mobilize other women in similar positions to do the same (Bloom, 2005)

5.4 Analysis Learning Hypothesis

For the learning theory to be confirmed, I had to look for data that would confirm contact between different terrorist organizations exchanging information. Because my research is conducted within the timeframe of 2000-2005, the role of social media was not as prevalent as it is today. Recent reports indicate that many terrorist groups today use social media and the internet to organize and communicate with other groups. (Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, 2022). Hamas has used social media to inspire violence to other terrorist organizations. However, I did find a mention of an email interview with the leader of the female mujahedeen of Al Qaeda in March 2003 (A Mujahedeen refers to someone who is engaged in performing jihad). In this interview, she told that her instructions came from both Al Qaeda and the Taliban, through the internet. Furthermore, the women stated that the organization was planning 'a new attack which would make the United States forget September 11, and that the idea came from the martyr operations carried out by the Palestinian women.' (Zedalis, 2004, p. 11). Zedalis (2004) therefore argues that female suicide bombing can count on financial and organizational support of a global terror network.

Although Pape (2005) argues strongly for the strategic advantages of suicide attacks, and claims every suicide campaign between 190 and 2003 was carried out with the motivation to end foreign occupation (p. 9). This is however, a far too narrow view. Many suicide attacks are perpetrated by religious organizations with an ideological mission. Often religion is invoked as

5.5. Discussion

The research question of why terrorist groups employ female suicide terrorists is a complex phenomenon that requires a meticulous analysis. In order to answer this question, the results of the congruence analysis will be interpreted in this section. One of the key arguments supporting female participation in suicide terrorism is the strategic advantage they possess. A quantitative study conducted by O'Rourke (2009) confirms this argument, as it reveals that women tend to lead to more lethal attacks compared to men. The perception that women are less suspicious makes them less likely to be targeted by security checks, thus enhancing the success rates of their attacks. Given that the statistical analysis supports this theory, it can be considered the strongest explanation for the research question at hand.

However, it is important to note that the other theories examined in the analysis should not be dismissed but rather viewed as complementary to the strategic advantage theory. The media attention garnered by female suicide attacks is a crucial factor for group leaders. The involvement of women challenges conventional gender roles, increases public interest in the cause of the terrorist movement. It can be argued that the media acts as a shock amplifier, projecting images of the group that can be utilized for propaganda purposes. Additionally, the interview with the female mujahedeen of Al Qaeda suggests that other groups have indeed learned from the tactics employed by Palestinian women, and vice versa. This process highlights the dynamic nature of terrorist tactics in general.

The findings of the congruence analysis indicate that strategic advantages play a significant role in the decision to employ female suicide terrorists. The statistical evidence supports the notion that women's perceived lower level of suspicion can increase the lethality and success rates of attacks. This aligns with the strategic objectives of terrorist groups, who seek to maximize the impact and effectiveness of their actions.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the motivations behind employing female suicide terrorists are not solely driven by strategic considerations. The media attention garnered by female suicide attacks serves as a potent tool for terrorist groups. By challenging traditional gender roles and generating increased public interest, the involvement of women in these attacks enables groups to gain visibility and shape public discourse in favor of their cause. The media acts as a platform for propagating the group's message and amplifying their impact.

Furthermore, the exchange of tactics and strategies between different terrorist groups, as evidenced by the interview with the female mujahedeen, underscores the dynamic nature of terrorist activities. Groups learn from one another, adapt tactics, and adopt successful methods employed by others. This adaptive process reflects the evolutionary nature of terrorism and the continuous innovation within the field.

To conclude, the results of the congruence analysis shed light on the reasons behind the employment of female suicide terrorists by terrorist groups. The strategic advantage theory, supported by quantitative evidence, suggests that women's perceived lower level of suspicion contributes to more lethal and successful attacks. However, it is essential to recognize the complementary role of other factors, such as media attention and the dynamic nature of tactics and strategies. The media amplifies the impact of female suicide attacks, challenging gender norms and generating public interest. Additionally, the exchange of tactics between different

groups demonstrates the continuous adaptation and innovation within the realm of terrorism. By considering these various factors, a more comprehensive understanding of why terrorist groups employ female suicide terrorists can be achieved in future research.

6. Conclusion

This paper was written to explain what the motivations are for terrorist groups to use female suicide terrorists by posing the question: 'Why do terrorist groups employ female suicide terrorist?' This phenomenon was analysed in the context of the Palestine suicide bombings during the Second Intifada between 2000-2005. Here, the Palestinian terrorist movements first started employing women as suicide terrorists (Schweitzer, 2006). The theory offers various explanations for this strategy. First, the strategic motivations are explained. Examples of strategic advantages female suicide terrorist have are: women experience less suspicion, they are better able to hide explosives; and they face fewer security measures (O'Rourke, 2009). Second, the advantage of employing women as terrorist in the media is examined. Terrorist organizations hope to attract more media attention in both domestic as well as international media outlets. The aim here is to attract more supporters for their cause and to increase the impact of the attack (Davis, 2013; Bloom, 2005, 2011). Finally, I argue women are employed as a result of terrorist groups learning from other groups that this tactic is effective (O'Rourke, 2009; Zedalis, 2004). They are even willing to set aside their ideology if including women means their attacks will be more effective. Considering the result of the analysis, it can be concluded that there is not one single explanation that completely describes why terrorist groups decide to employ women as suicide terrorists. This study has focussed on Palestine, therefore I cannot generalise the outcome of my analysis for all terrorist groups. Even within my case, not one single theory completely explain female suicide terrorism in Palestine.

Several parts of the research should be critically assessed. Firstly, the availability of sources was rather limited. I was not able to directly interview (female) members of terrorist organizations, especially not people who attempted to perpetrate a suicide attack. Adding on, some interviews were only available in Arabic and therefore not usable for my research. Secondly, because my time frame is between 2000 and 2005, several aspects of the Learning Theory were not analysed, including the role of social media which allows information to spread rapidly. Further research could investigate what the effect of social media is on the employment of female suicide bombers.

This research is an addition to the existing literature on terrorism studies and the role of women within political violence. It expands on the works of Pape (2005), Bloom (2012), O'rourke (2009), and Zedalis (2004) who each have put emphasis on a different motivation for terrorist groups to employ women. Furthermore, by focussing on the role of women I have observed that despite the larger roles they are playing in terrorism today, this is not the result of increasing equality. They are needed when men no longer produce the desired effect of terror in the media for example. As Mia Bloom (2012) argues, we should aim to demobilize women and create pathways for their exit from terrorist organizations.

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