



GENDERING RECRUITMENT INTO VIOLENT ORGANIZATIONS: LESSONS FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM OPERATIONS

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In this issue's featured roundtable, Amira Jadoon discusses the need for security policies that account for gendered dimensions of radicalization and recruitment.

Violent organizations require a diverse base of supporters willing to engage in violence or facilitate nonviolent activities. Some of these organizations recruit women to exploit outdated perceptions of violence as a male-centric phenomenon and gain tactical advantages over their adversaries. A host of factors determine the demand and supply of female participants in violent and nonviolent capacities. The demand for female recruits is often driven by organizations' operational imperatives. Women expand and diversify armed groups' human capital, contributing to fundraising, recruitment, or the conduct of violence. This enables organizations to achieve their short- and long-term goals.¹ Women are recruited through appeals to their personal grievances, ideological leanings, or socioeconomic needs.

The role of female participants in rebel groups is often neglected or overlooked. This is largely due to the fact that stereotypical views of women emphasizing their place as victims of terrorism continue to dominate discourse. Responding to the national security threats of the 21st century requires discarding obsolete characterizations and devising security policies that account for the gendered dimensions of radicalization and recruitment.

Why Do We Need a Gender-Specific Approach?

Deviating slightly in its focus from prior strategies, the 2018 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* emphasized the need to supplement America's well-established counter-terrorism architecture with a robust preventive architecture that impedes radicalization and recruitment. Prevention of radicalization and recruitment usually entails a suite of interrelated policy prescriptions and actions such as delegitimizing extremist ideologies via strategic communications, blocking online recruitment platforms, and reintegrating individuals into mainstream society.²

Accounting for the gender component in vio-

lent organizations' human capital and recruitment strategies is essential to preventing radicalization for three key reasons. First, unless preventive efforts address how armed groups diversify their human capital, the U.S. government runs the risk of neglecting important segments of the intended target audience and, as a result, wasting resources and compromising policy outcomes. Further attention needs to be paid to violent extremist organizations' processes of recruiting women as well as the specific circumstances that make their recruitment more likely.

Second, tracking developments in women's interactions with violence can provide insights about how groups may adapt their strategies and tactics in the future, especially in the face of counter-terrorism efforts. For example, addressing how groups that do not typically use female combatants do so out of necessity can shed light on how groups may respond to intensified counter-terrorism operations.

Finally, overlooking gender-specific factors and outcomes can have spillover effects in other realms, including, but not limited to, repatriation and prosecution of female perpetrators (as discussed in the Jessica Trisko Darden and Izabela Steflja piece in this collection) and building partner countries' capacity to adequately deal with terrorism and insurgency. In short, obsolete notions about women's recruitment into violence result in ineffectual national security policies that are riddled with perilous security gaps.

What We Know About Women's Recruitment in Violent Organizations

Despite mounting evidence that terrorist and insurgent groups recruit women to boost their long-term endurance and short-term effectiveness, women's association with political violence is still viewed as an aberration. Violent groups have successfully exploited this outdated view to skirt security measures and garner massive publicity. One tangible outcome of this has been the upsurge in

1 Martha Grenshaw, "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches," in *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, ed. David C. Rapoport (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 13–31; and Kevin Siqueira, "Political and Militant Wings Within Dissident Movements and Organizations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (2005): 218–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002704272865>.

2 *National Security for Counterterrorism of the United States of America*, The White House, October 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NSCT.pdf>.

the use of female suicide bombers by both secular and religious terror networks.³

Yet suicide bombings are not the only way that women contribute to armed groups. Several studies indicate that women are recruited into a range of noncombatant and combatant roles in an ideologically diverse universe of groups that includes the Tamil Tigers, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan.⁴ While it is important to understand the spectrum of roles women assume within armed groups, the discussion below pertains to individual and organizational factors that determine how women enter armed groups. In particular, this article discusses trends specific to Islamist groups.

Motivations and Demographics

Research shows that women usually join armed groups voluntarily. The underlying causes emerge as an amalgamation of individual motivations, organizational attributes, and broader environmental factors. Just as men join armed groups for a variety of reasons, researchers have found a wide range of motivations for women including personal grievances,⁵ religious and political ideological commitments,⁶ or socioeconomic needs.⁷

Overall, women's motivations to join extremist organizations are likely to be context dependent. Depending on the specific conflict and organization, Mia Bloom identifies several key drivers of women's involvement in terrorist groups (that are not neces-

sarily mutually exclusive), which she calls the "four R's plus one": revenge, redemption, relationships, respect, and rape.⁸ For example, while some female suicide attackers in the Israeli-Palestinian context were motivated by revenge,⁹ those affiliated with Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers sought to revolt against repressive state policies.¹⁰ Similarly, analyses of American and Australian female jihadists indicate that there is no discernable profile of a Western female jihadist.¹¹ The emerging consensus is that women generally radicalize for the same reasons that men do.¹² It is perilous to rely on any stereotyped assumptions about why women join radical groups.¹³

A recent study by Rachel Yon and Daniel Milton examines gender-specific demographic and radicalization metrics among 1,867 radicalized individuals within the United States between 1948 and 2016.¹⁴ They find that at least 10 percent of the cases consisted of females who participated in Islamist, far-right or far-left, and single-issue groups. Dissecting the data by gender and group ideology, the far-right and far-left categories had the highest percentage of female members at 22 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Their analysis also uncovered significant differences in marital status, where only 33 percent of women fell into the "single" category, compared to 53 percent of men. Marital differences were the most pronounced in Islamist and far-right groups. There are also important differences by education: Women tended to have higher levels of college or vocational schooling compared to men. Across all groups, less than 1 percent of women had any pri-

3 Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); and Jason Warner, Ellen Chapin, and Hilary Matfess, "Suicide Squads: The Logic of Linked Suicide Bombings," *Security Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 25–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2018.1508632>.

4 Alexis Leanna Henshaw, "Where Women Rebel: Patterns of Women's Participation in Armed Rebel Groups 1990–2008," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 39–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2015.1007729>; Miranda Alison, "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security," *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 4 (2004): 447–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0967010604049522>; Bloom, *Bombshell*; and Victor Asal and Amira Jadoon, "When Women Fight: Unemployment, Territorial Control and the Prevalence of Female Combatants in Insurgent Organizations," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* (2019): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0967010604049522>.

5 Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, eds., *Women, Gender, and Terrorism* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

6 Reed M. Wood and Jakana L. Thomas, "Women on the Frontline: Rebel Group Ideology and Women's Participation in Violent Rebellion," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 1 (2017): 31–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343316675025>.

7 Miranda Alison, "Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Civil Wars* 6, no. 4 (2003): 37–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369824042000221367>.

8 Bloom, *Bombshell*.

9 Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no. 4 (2008): 304–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100801925695>.

10 Miranda Alison, *Women and Political Violence: Female Combatants in Ethno-National Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2009).

11 Audrey Alexander, *Cruel Intentions: Female Jihadists in America* (Washington, DC: Program on Extremism, The George Washington University, 2016), <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/downloads/Female%20Jihadists%20in%20America.pdf>; and Michele Grossman, et al., *The Roles of Women in Supporting and Opposing Violent Extremism: Understanding Gender and Terrorism in Contemporary Australia* (Melbourne: Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, 2018).

12 Haras Rafiq and Nikita Malik, *Caliphettes: Women and the Appeal of Islamic State* (London: Quilliam Foundation, 2015).

13 Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, "The Gendering of Women's Terrorism," in *Women, Gender, and Terrorism*, ed. Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 57–82.

14 Rachel Yon and Daniel Milton, "Simply Small Men? Examining Differences Between Females and Males Radicalized in the United States," *Women & Criminal Justice* 29, no. 4–5 (2019): 188–203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2018.1543067>.

or military experience. In terms of participation in violent attacks, 60 percent of men took part in planning or directing an attack, whereas the percentage for women was at 40 percent, with the most pronounced differences within Islamist groups.

Overall, this first cut at understanding how the characteristics of violent group members differ by gender is instructive. It suggests that gender differences intersect with organizational traits such as a group's ideological orientation.

Organizational and Environmental Factors

Many studies show that certain ideologies are more likely to attract female recruits. In their analysis of 166 violent groups in Africa, Jakana L. Thomas and Kanisha D. Bond show that women's participation is higher for groups with gender-inclusive ideologies.¹⁵ Wood and Thomas extend this line of research further by examining how ideology affects groups' proclivity to recruit women into *combatant* roles.¹⁶ Examining a sample of 211 rebel organizations, they find that leftist ideologies, which generally tend to attract female recruits, are also more likely to employ women in combat roles. Prominent examples include the Central American Sandinista and Zapatista movements. Their analysis finds the opposite effect for Islamist groups, which suggests that women engaging in *jihad* predominantly serve in supportive roles. As individual case studies show, however, Islamist groups may call upon female combatants when it is deemed necessary for group survival.

Moving beyond ideology, other organizational characteristics can play a role in violent organizations' use of women on the frontlines. Angela Dalton and Victor Asal's analysis of 395 terrorist organizations around the world indicates that larger and older organizations are more likely to attract female combatants.¹⁷ Insurgent groups that control territory, as my research indicates, are also

more likely to recruit female combatants — for two key reasons.¹⁸ First, women can deepen groups' links with the communities within their territory. Second, recruiting women as fighters can boost groups' heightened operational needs to physically protect their home base. From a gender-specific, counter-terrorism perspective, this highlights the need to be attentive to a group's age and operational needs, which can increase its inclination to diversify its human capital.

As stated above, women's radicalization and recruitment is usually the result of an interaction between their personal motivations and their broader socioeconomic and political environments. A burgeoning line of investigation explores how the broader social and economic environment within states affects women's likelihood to join extremist organizations. While poor socioeconomic conditions may contribute to men's radicalization and recruitment as much as they do to women's, the effects are likely augmented by gender since conditions across the world do not affect men and women equally. For example, men generally tend to earn more than women and are more likely to own assets, whereas women are overrepresented in low-paying jobs.¹⁹ Such gender inequalities have implications for all political and socioeconomic factors that affect the lives of women, including their recruitment into violent extremist organizations.

Relatedly, several studies suggest that women are more likely to participate in violent groups in repressive societies where they are deprived of freedom, political empowerment, and social equality.²⁰ Studies also provide evidence that higher levels of women's social rights reduce female participation in armed violence.²¹ My recent coauthored research suggests that higher levels of unemployment within the female labor force can significantly increase the likelihood that violent organizations recruit female combatants.²² A lack of economic opportunities for women can lower the opportunity

15 Jakana L. Thomas and Kanisha D. Bond, "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations," *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 3 (August 2015): 488–506, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055415000313>.

16 Reed M. Wood and Jakana L. Thomas, "Women on the Frontline: Rebel Group Ideology and Women's Participation in Violent Rebellion," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no.1 (2017): 31–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316675025>.

17 Angela Dalton and Victor Asal, "Is It Ideology or Desperation: Why Do Organizations Deploy Women in Violent Terrorist Attacks?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 10 (2011): 802–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2011.604833>.

18 Asal and Jadoon, "When Women Fight."

19 Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Max Roser, "Economic Inequality by Gender," *Our World in Data* (March 2018), <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender>.

20 Farhana Ali, "Rocking the Cradle to Rocking the World: The Role of Muslim Female Fighters," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 21–35, <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol8/iss1/2>; and Anat Berko and Edna Erez, "Gender, Palestinian Women, and Terrorism: Women's Liberation or Oppression?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 6 (2007): 493–519, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701329550>.

21 Chandra Bhadra, Ava Darshan Shrestha, and Rita Thapa, "On the Edge: The Impact of the Insurgency on Nepali Women," in *The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Women in South Asia*, ed. Ava Darshan Shrestha and Rita Thapa (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2007).

22 Asal and Jadoon, "When Women Fight"; and Eileen MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First* (New York: Random House, 1991).

cost of joining a violent group and make them more tolerant of the costs associated with membership in that group. This line of research emphasizes the impact of social and political settings on human choices, including the willingness of women to pick up arms or support violent organizations.

Trends in Women's Recruitment Into Jihadist Groups

More recently, important developments in women's *jihad* in Islamist groups have drawn widespread attention, especially with the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which attracted unprecedented levels of female support.²³ Aligned with the broader literature on women's varied motivations to join armed groups, women joined the Islamic State due to personal grievances, a sense of isolation, commitment to supporting the caliphate, or a desire to seek adventure.²⁴ As discussed below, the potential of jihadist groups to cooperate (or compete) and the global nature of transnational networks such as ISIL means that trends in one region can trigger changes in another.²⁵

Women's contributions to *jihad* have generally been linked to domestic roles as mothers, wives, and sisters and to fulfilling essential support roles such as fundraising and disseminating the message of the organization.²⁶ While organizations affiliated with al-Qaeda have largely adhered to a gender-specific interpretation of female *jihad*,²⁷ organizations like ISIL have shown more flexibility when the exigencies of the group's survival have demanded it. ISIL's significant territorial losses in Iraq and Syria necessitated the mobilization of all Muslims to participate in active *jihad*, including women.²⁸ ISIL's

behavior aligns with the findings of prior research that shows how organizations may employ women as innovative actors when subjected to intensified security and counter-terrorism measures.²⁹

The proclivity of terrorist organizations to learn and adapt, combined with the global nature of transnational terrorist groups, means that changing tactics in one region can influence tactics in another. The Islamic State's shift in its attitude toward female combatants has likely shaped trends in female militancy elsewhere, especially where its global affiliates or women inspired by its propaganda are located. For example, the April 2019 Sri Lanka suicide attacks claimed by the Islamic State that killed about 359 people included a female suicide attacker.³⁰ In December 2016, Indonesian law enforcement arrested 27-year-old Dian Yulia Novi, who had committed to being a martyr for ISIL, on suspicion of plotting a suicide attack on the presidential palace in Indonesia.³¹ Such examples and broader trends of women's participation in active *jihad* highlight the necessity to broaden the gender component in the framework for preventing radicalization.

Emerging trends in Southeast Asian female militancy are of growing concern. An examination of recent data on female participation in militant groups illustrates the evolving gendered dimensions of radicalization and recruitment. My coauthored research on the arrests of female militants across the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia indicates that the total number of female participants in militant groups who were captured or killed steadily increased between 2014 and 2018. The majority (60 to 80 percent) consisted of women affiliated with the Islamic State.³² The trends in Southeast Asia coincide with shifts in ISIL's rheto-

23 Anita Perešin, "Why Women From the West Are Joining ISIS," *International Annals of Criminology* 56, no. 1–2 (2018): 32–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2018.19>.

24 Joana Cook and Gina Vale, *From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State* (London: ICSR, 2018), <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf>.

25 Tricia Bacon, *Why Terrorist Groups Form International Alliances* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); and Assaf Moghadam, *Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation Among Terrorist Actors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

26 R. Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009).

27 Katharina Von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 5 (April 17, 2007): 397–414, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701258585>.

28 Ruth Gan, et al., "Change Is the Only Constant: The Evolving Role of Women in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)," *Women & Criminal Justice* 29, no. 4–5 (2019): 204–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2018.1547674>; Charlie Winter, "ISIS, Women and Jihad: Breaking With Convention," Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, Sept. 13, 2018, <https://institute.global/policy/isis-women-and-jihad-breaking-convention>; and Charlie Winter and Devorah Margolin, "The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 7 (2017): 25–30, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-mujahidat-dilemma-female-combatants-and-the-islamic-state/>.

29 See also, Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 3 (2003): 171–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100390211419>.

30 Siobhan O'Grady, "The Sri Lankan Attackers Were 'Well-Educated.' Suicide Bombers Tend to Be, Experts Say," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/04/24/sri-lankan-attackers-were-well-educated-suicide-bombers-tend-be-experts-say/>.

31 Charlie Campbell, "ISIS Suicide Bomber Dian Yulia Novi Talks Jihad," *Time*, March 3, 2017, <https://time.com/4689714/indonesia-isis-terror-ism-jihad-extremism-dian-yulia-novi-fpi/>.

32 Amira Jadoon, et al., "Breaking the Glass Ceiling? Female Participation in Militant Organizations in Islamic State Affiliates in Southeast Asia," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming).

ric toward women's *jihad*. The group transitioned from forbidding women to participate in combat to calling upon them to engage in defensive combat in 2016 and asking them to actively engage in *jihad* for the caliphate by late 2017.³³

ISIL's proactive recruitment of women into *jihad* has impacted not only its global affiliates and supporters, but also other groups operating in the same ideological sphere. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, for example, released a propaganda publication in 2017 that openly solicited female participation in the group's operational activities for the first time in its history.³⁴ Despite espousing extremely conservative views toward women, the group has not shied away from the occasional use of female suicide attackers.³⁵ These trends are comparable to how groups in other ideological categories, such as left-leaning organizations, have a proclivity to recruit women.³⁶ They may also be linked to Muslim women's pursuit of more autonomy and liberation via participation in revolutionary movements.³⁷

The recruitment of women into *jihad* extends to the Western world. The number of Australian women known to have participated in terrorist activity in Syria, Iraq, or Australia was estimated to be around 40 in 2015.³⁸ Between 2014 and 2018, at least 33 different plots across France, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom involved female jihadists.³⁹ Jihadists' recruitment of Western women has also touched the American landscape, which has seen a marked increase in the number of legal cases with female involvement.⁴⁰ A study of 25 jihadist American women between 2011 and 2016 uncovered links to a range of groups, including ISIL, al-Shabaab, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda, where women's activities included plotting attacks, traveling overseas, and disseminating propaganda.

Across all these cases, social media platforms

emerge as a common operational space where women can support the jihadists' cause. Digital technologies not only allow jihadist groups to access potential female recruits and appeal to their personal or political and religious views. They also provide opportunities for women to engage in activities in novel fashions. Increases in women's recruitment via online platforms may also be symptomatic of jihadist groups' reliance on lone actors and autonomous cells.

Beyond Jihadist Groups

While these examples largely relate to violent Islamist groups, women's participation in violent organizations extends to far-right and far-left groups as well. The case of Beate Zschäpe serves as an illustrative example. Zschäpe was a former female member of a neo-Nazi terrorist cell sentenced to life in prison in July 2018 for multiple murders, bombings, and robberies.⁴¹ A variety of right-wing extremist organizations ranging from neo-Nazi groups to the Ku Klux Klan have been known to recruit women.⁴² The World Church of the Creator, a white nationalist group in the United States and overseas, has established several chapters specifically for women.⁴³ In their book, *Gender and the Radical and Extreme Right*, Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Hilary Pilkington argue that the growing appeal of far-right organizations to women may be rooted in the groups' increasingly moderate views on gender and sexuality, an attempt to appeal to a wider audience, and a reduced stigma for women joining such movements.⁴⁴ These examples demonstrate the active participation and recruitment of women along the entire spectrum of violent extremist organizations.

33 Winter, "ISIS, Women and Jihad."

34 Amira Jadoon and Sara Mahmood, "Militant Rivalries Extend to Female Recruitment in Pakistan," *Combating Terrorism Center*, Sept. 14, 2017, <https://ctc.usma.edu/ctc-perspectives-militant-rivalries-extend-to-female-recruitment-in-pakistan/>.

35 Asad Hashim, "Several Killed in Twin Attacks in Pakistan's Dera Ismail Khan," *Al Jazeera*, July 21, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/killed-twin-attacks-pakistan-dera-ismail-khan-190721063358029.html>.

36 Wood and Thomas, "Women on the Frontline."

37 Valentine Moghadam, ed., *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London: Zed Books, 1994).

38 Grossman, et al., *The Roles of Women*.

39 Robin Simcox, "The 2016 French Female Attack Cell: A Case Study," *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 6 (2018): 21–5, <https://ctc.usma.edu/2016-french-female-attack-cell-case-study/>.

40 Alexander, *Cruel Intentions*.

41 Philip Oltermann, "German Neo-Nazi Beate Zschäpe Sentenced to Life for NSU Murders," *The Guardian*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/11/german-neo-nazi-beate-zschape-gets-life-for-nsu-murders>.

42 Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, *Right-wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

43 George Michael, "RAHOWA! A History of the World Church of the Creator," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 4 (2006): 561–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550600880633>.

44 Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Hilary Pilkington, eds., *Gender and the Radical Extreme Right: Mechanisms of Transmission and the Role of Educational Interventions* (New York: Routledge, 2018).



Moving Forward

The research highlighted here provides abundant evidence that violent organizations actively recruit women. Furthermore, women often join by choice — which means that prevention efforts must be designed with women in mind. The perception of women as solely victims of terrorism (rather than autonomous actors who contribute to terrorist groups' objectives) is tenacious and one that the United States needs to move past quickly if it wishes to understand the evolution and trajectories of terrorism and political violence. To help prevent and reduce political violence and terrorism, policymakers need to incorporate insights about *how* and *when* women are recruited, and account for organizational and environmental factors that facilitate women's recruitment. Preventive policy responses should tackle specific ideologies of leftist or Islamist groups that not only appeal to women's motivations to join violent organizations but also shape the roles they play.

Within the national security and counter-terrorism realm, a wide variety of actors including community leaders, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector actors can leverage a more gender-specific understanding of women's engagement with political violence. Given the central roles played by women in their support of current and future generations of fighters, their recruitment of other women,⁴⁵ their increased operational space via online platforms, as well as their roles in combat, linking preventive measures to a gender-sensitive analysis is critical to the success of future counter-terrorism efforts. ●

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45 R. Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly, *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009); and Sjoberg and Gentry, eds., *Women, Gender, and Terrorism*.

