

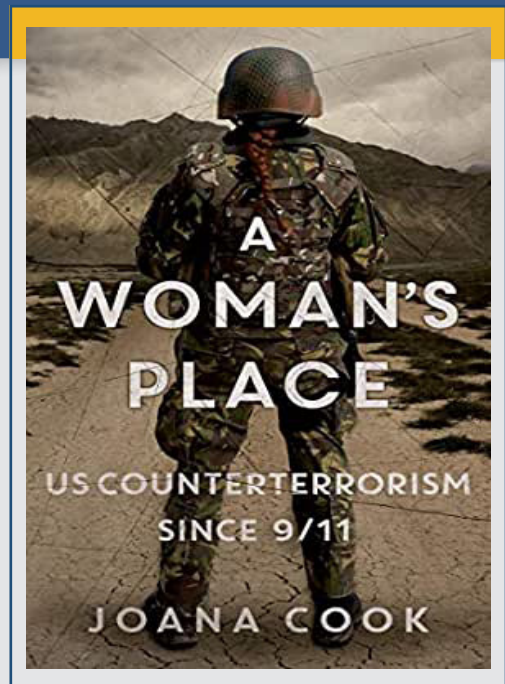
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BOOK REVIEW



A WOMAN'S PLACE: US COUNTERTERRORISM SINCE 9/11

Joana Cook



Book Review

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Book Review

A WOMAN'S PLACE: US COUNTERTERRORISM SINCE 9/11

Joana Cook highlights that women are linked up with terrorism and counterterrorism, providing a detailed description of women's visibility in the US patriotic counterterrorism speeches, with a special attention attached to presidential speeches about women's contributions to counterterrorism through the administrations of Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump. Cook also provides a trajectory of women's participation in counterterrorism initiatives following the 9/11 Attacks of 2001. The US administration has set women's status in Afghanistan as a gauge of success. Equally important, Cook discusses that it is critically important not to create any gray and foggy areas between the efforts made for woman empowerment and the goals set for counterterrorism, noting the overlap between these two areas, especially with regard to the exploitation (grievance) of Afghan women to support the cause of war.

INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

Cook discusses how the Trump Administration interest in counterterrorism dwindled vis-à-vis the interest of the Bush and Obama Administrations, and points to many important developments, with many developments coming into play, such as the Women Peace and Security Act of 2017, which increased funding for relevant activities in the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the United States Agency for International Development. Cook takes an overview of the situation of ISIS and Al-Qaeda in countries targeted by counterterrorism efforts.

Cook also surveys the policies and practices of Department of Defense, State Department and USAID in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and assesses the role of women and gender in US counterterrorism initiatives. Cook collects, investigates and analyzes women's counterterrorism efforts, while highlighting the factors contributory to women's participation in such agencies. Cook also sheds light on the discourse and practice relating to terrorism, and insists that official counterterrorism speeches relating to women have a special impact on peoples. Cook does not provide explicit definitions of the basic terms used such as 'terrorism' and 'counterterrorism'; rather, Cook is more concerned with how such terms are used and interpreted. Cook also encourage governments to increase political, social, cultural and economic initiatives; war is reduced helpless to nip terrorism in the bud.

Cook believes that there is a paucity of field investigations in the main critical areas of feminist security research studies; she discusses the contributions of women as security activists in Iraq in units, such as the Lionesses Team, and explains the controversy in their activities related to counterinsurgency efforts to achieve stability and counterterrorism. Cook lists national action plans on women, peace and security, and other initiatives, such as provincial reconstruction of human terrain ecosystems, women's participation teams and cultural support teams.

Cook explains the impact of female security workers who have been trained and supported by the United States in Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan. Cook also takes

into account the militant women's activities in Al-Qaeda and ISIS to investigate the extent of influence on the defense efforts between 2001 and 2019. Cook identifies seven scientific areas in woman-centered counterterrorism speeches: 1) Security Professionals; 2) Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation and Reconstruction; 3) Women's Rights, Empowerment and Equality; 4) Women's Societal Impact; 5) Women's Activities in Local Areas; 6) Victims of Terrorism; 7) Female Terrorist Activists.

HOLISTIC REVIEW

With the 9/11 Attacks of 2001 replayed and the dire consequences retold, Cook remarks the dearth of research studies on women's counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and other countries. Women's involvement in terrorist movements has not ballooned into existence overnight; women made up half of the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) relied heavily on women in launching terrorist operations. Women have carried out more than three hundred terrorist attacks as mandated and commissioned by terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Somali Youth and the Pakistani Taliban. Globally, women accounted for no less than 13% of 41,490 individuals who joined ISIS.

Cook discusses the evolution of the participation of women and their prominence in the frontlines of the counterterrorism projects in the US administration since 2001; Cook also takes into account the main factors that made women at the forefront of the main centers and how their counterterrorism speeches and practices as of the Second World War are remarkably visible.

Cook also provides a methodological reference for understanding and assessing women's partnership in all aspects of security, especially those relating to gender-based roles and counterterrorism. Cook believes that the most important features of the third millennium are the notorious increase in violent extremism and terrorism, and the greater influence of women in political violence, whether in joining terrorist groups or in counterterrorism in general, especially with the huge funds invested in counterterrorism. As estimated by the US Department of

Defense. The budget allocated for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq between 2001 and 2016 is about \$ 1.6 trillion.

Cook also investigates the changes that happened to institutions with the inclusion of women in such programs. The direct war on terrorism prompted Americans to engage with the population of the targeted countries, taking into account the cultures and local perceptions of women. To well approach women in Iraq and Afghanistan, American women have been engaged in the frontlines of these conflicts through cultural and economic support to create security, and have been employed to change the strength of military interactions with the civil society because it would not accept foreign men approaching women.

Cook provides a thought-provoking methodologically conducted analysis of the policies, speeches and initiatives about feminist security research studies and foundational standards since the 9/11 Attacks of 2001; she provides a special view of many counterterrorism activities from a gender-based perspective. On the flip side, she overlooks important topics, such as the impact of international policies and interests, invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, war on terror and modern terrorism. Cook calls for other research studies to be conducted on such mooted issues.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

Cook walks the reader through six main chapters. Chapter One discusses various research studies on terrorism: women, peace and security, feminist security studies on security and intelligence and studies of terrorism concerned with women and their impact on terrorist

groups. Cook also explains how each president will articulate his counterterrorism approach and the tasks that women have been entrusted with in each respective administration.

Chapter Two reviews the main speeches of the Bush and Obama Administrations related to women and counterterrorism, and how the Department of Defense, the US State Department, and the US Agency for International Development have interpreted these gender-based tasks. Former President Bush has focused on three specific speeches related to counterterrorism: war on terror, democracy promotion and conditions favorable for terrorism. It is quite certain that women are very influential in the military efforts to promote democratic rights, equality, education, health and employment. Under President Obama, the United States continued its war on terror, emphasizing the promotion of the US values, attempting to target the fundamental grievances that might lead citizens to involve in violent extremism.

Chapter Three discusses the Department of Defense as it has deeply framed the impact on security counterterrorism efforts and the broader security efforts and the radical impact of women and the US President in supporting and engaging in counterterrorism efforts, such as the Lionesses' Team to accommodate interaction with women in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chapter Four examines some American programs and the engagement of women. Both counterterrorism programs and women have a long-shared history. The United States sought to pay a special attention to the





Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), which was established in the aftermath of the 9/11 Attacks of 2001, focusing on empowering women as an essential partner. Chapter Five analyzes the development of women participation in counterterrorism speeches and practices at USAID. Despite the Agency's constant urge for women to contribute to security for democratization and poverty reduction to better address fundamental terrorism-related grievances, a reluctance to recruit women in counterterrorism efforts is glaringly noticeable.

Chapter Six highlights the important changes that have come to prominence since 2017 with former US President Donald Trump and the defeat of ISIS, and the significant transformations in women's engagement, whether with terrorist groups or with counterterrorism forces. This chapter brings us back to the initiatives between 2001 and 2017, and takes into account the lessons learned from the current administration. It also discusses the counterterrorism approach taken by the Trump Administration and analyzes the main strategies and data formulated by the Trump Administration, with a special attention to the main areas and the insights learned from the Bush and Obama Administrations to assess the importance of these aspects for women.

WOMEN AND TERRORISM

Feminist extremism in terrorism and political violence often remains ambiguous in government departments and among experts, while feminist security studies are still a relatively limited field; however, they are in a steady development to be a logical and realistic response

to binary line of thought in relation to gender-based roles in security.

Throughout history, women have been viewed as peaceful and passive beings, and men have been viewed as violent, strong and influential. As feminists try to challenge and change these traditional dualities, Cook remarks that such a gender-driven perception of the contribution of both men and women also dominates global politics with regard to international relations between countries. The perceived organic traits dominate our judgments in men and women, and their respective place in societies. Chapter One examines how women were included in security structures, leading up to their emergence in the frontlines of global politics.

Although there appears to be great belief among experts in the capacity of women to carry out terrorist acts and to engage in violence like men, there is still a lack of understanding of the impact of women in counterterrorism. Muslim women are often seen as the 'missing link' in Britain's anti-extremism and counterterrorism projects. This is due to the failure of specialists (academics) and decision-makers to accurately shed light on this phenomenon. This missing link is what prompted the author to write this book.

BETWEEN BUSH AND OBAMA

Terrorism remained a major foreign policy and security concern in the United States between 2001 and 2017. It was developed in a comprehensive approach distributed among the various institutions, piquing interest in the efforts of women, especially with regard to the promotion



of democracy, development and humanitarian aid. Since development is an essential component of security, efforts to combat violent extremism have gained more attention, prompting the USAID efforts to contribute to security and developing a long-term plan to combat violent extremism. As such, officials internalized the effects of development, democracy, and women's empowerment in support of their counterterrorism efforts.

Chapter Two provides an overview of how terrorism has evolved under the Bush and Obama Administrations, how both developed their counterterrorism strategies and how women have become an important phenomenon in these administrations. Chapter Two provides a summary of the key speeches about women during the Bush and Obama Administrations. To understand the speeches and initiatives in the US Department of Defense, the US State Department and the US Agency for International Development, and their contributions to the security counterterrorism strategy, Cook highlights the emergence of women in the frontlines over the sixteen years (2001-2017) of the counterterrorism speech and associated practices under the Bush and Obama Administrations. Cook also points out that the plans adopted to empower women have sometimes sustained resistance from the aforementioned administrations and agencies, due to the domination of traditional gender-driven visions.

Cook emphasizes three main aspects that relate specifically to women: 1) women security experts; 2) women's rights, empowerment and equality; 3) oppression of women. The Bush Administration has recruited all government institutions to the international fight against

terrorism and the elimination of terrorist groups, while also addressing the negative circumstances underlying the fragile conditions, such as abject poverty, hunger, marginalization and backwardness, which helped these groups to snowball into reality. It also focused on the efforts to promote democracy, human and economic development. Cook also explains how Al-Qaeda and ISIS have paid great attention to development efforts for women, especially in the areas they ruled and controlled their wealth.

Cook believes things have not changed much since Barack Obama has taken up the office in January 2009. His counterterrorism approach was characterized by continuity and some transformation, punctuated by important events, such as the killing of Osama bin Laden, May 2, 2011, the Arab Spring and the emergence of ISIS. The Obama Administration also oversaw the nation's first National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security in 2011, which expanded speeches on women and security across the country. The 2011 National Counterterrorism Strategy highlighted Obama's policy of dismantling dangerous networks and reducing the possibility of them gaining a foothold, while preserving the freedoms and ideals adopted by America, and on recruiting all state institutions and joining forces to counterterrorism, thus ensuring successful preventive methods in time and space favorably.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

The Ministry of Defense remains the most associated agency with counterterrorism activities. It has placed

a special attention on women security activists in the Special Defense Forces, in the partner forces and in allied societies; it has also focused on women as a potential security threat to the West and the targeted countries. Although the Ministry of Defense is an ally and supporter of women, women's participation in the Ministry of Defense been limited for decades.

Chapter Three highlights that the conservative environment that America faced in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen had a clear impact on this development. The army forces were forced to adapt to reality, and women were given a wider space than the tasks and duties there. While the social contribution of women to terrorism was one of the main features that should be understood and assessed; understanding the reasons pushing women to join terrorist groups was shrouded in ambiguity, and understanding the push and pull factors that incite women to adopt these positions has also come into play. For instance, the case of Iraq indicates that sexual and male violence against targeted women may be used to force them to carry out suicide attacks. Unlike previous jihadist groups, ISIS attempted to mobilize and give women important duties, making the Ministry of Defense increasingly interested in learning about their efforts and their impact. The Ministry has received severe criticism regarding the management and facilitation of the issue of women; the need to work out new solutions and strategies in which women can invest in important and sensitive positions has come into play.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

It is clear that women have received a broader consideration by the US State Department for their efforts and practices. The contribution of women in all agencies, such as police, community and family programs has been important in countering violent extremism. This scope was also supported by the long institutional history of the United States, which focused on developing and promoting women's programs, which was evident in the establishment of the International Coordinating Office to approach women's issues in the aftermath of the Fourth World Conference in 1995; women's rights and status were a global concern. Whereas the counterterrorism initiatives linked to the Ministry of Defense include other areas, such as development and women's contribution to realizing community peace, the Office of Counterterrorism has begun to develop internal strategies for women's participation in operational efforts.

Chapter Four explains that, shortly after the 9/11 Attacks of 2001, women had a wide presence in the programs of the US, relating to women's rights and empowerment in society. Former President Bush emphasized these as important political concerns for consolidating democracy

and addressing the drivers of terrorism. For example, Yemen was highlighted as a country that lacks a strong central government responsible for Yemenis; women in Yemen have been reduced to the nadir of their status. Therefore, the political empowerment of women, the fight against illiteracy and the encouragement of employment have become prominent topics in MEPI programs in Yemen in particular. While recognizing that these efforts have contributed to mitigating residents' frustration and clamping down on the additional threats of extremism, many of these programs have been directly framed by CVE agencies.

Al-Qaeda and ISIS began to pay attention to the exemplary contribution of women and to similar speeches on women's rights, which led to the recruitment of large numbers of women. To address this development, there was an organized coordination between the Department of Defense and the US Agency for International Development, as the two sides worked in tandem on efforts related to women and security. This created joint programs, such as the Iraqi Women's Participation Program; while, in the case of Yemen, we have seen defensive considerations take precedence.

THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) operates under the political direction of the central government; the USAID is primarily mandated with eliminating abject poverty and consolidating democracy. The USAID traditional humanitarian and development efforts are distinguished from US foreign policy efforts related to security and defense. This shift began with the Bush and Obama Administrations, which sought to coordinate and facilitate development efforts in line with the US foreign policy and security objectives.

Even if not explicitly stated, the USAID has performed a clear function in preventing extremism and conflict, and has contributed to stability, reconstruction and governance. Chapter Five highlights that a clear interest in women has begun in counterterrorism and combating violent extremism; the spotlight is still placed on countries, such as Yemen, that were ranked as the most vulnerable to extremism, or were ranked in terms of their contribution to combating extremism.

The USAID active efforts to stabilize troubled countries, such as Iraq have increased the internal response to humanitarian aid and development factors, imposing relative stability, counterinsurgency and reconstruction. To increase stabilization efforts relating to education and empowerment of women, the USAID coordinates its



responsibilities with the Ministry of Defense to address new security challenges. However, this development brought new differences and challenges as a result of political, social and cultural considerations. Taken together, the author raises a number of questions about how women can be involved in combating violent extremism: Should women's rights and empowerment efforts be linked to counterterrorism? Should we pay attention first and foremost to combating violent extremism? Should priority be given to reconstruction and democracy, or should we pay attention to the security aspect? How do the USAID activities impact its staff, especially the women working on the frontlines? Such activities are not seen as helpful and unique to security priorities; rather, there was resistance and reluctance from some circles to engage in development, which has been especially designed to combat violent extremism and terrorism. However, women's rights did face some uneasiness by the Ministry of Defense, whether in terms of the perception of women's duties or how the plans were implemented.

As al-Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliated groups are increasingly becoming more regular in development activities, women have become more targeted in these activities. While there was evidence that the USAID is making efforts to better understand the drivers of women's participation in violent extremism, there is a paucity of explicit research, or visibility, in the USAID programs.

FUTURE COUNTERTERRORISM

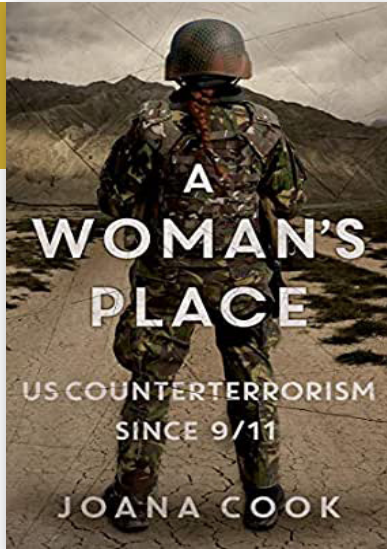
Trump Administration is a continuation of the policies established by former US administrations. Akin to Bush and Obama, the rhetoric of domestic, security and foreign policy and procedures used by Trump affect the viability

of the international security plans of the United States.

Cook believes that counterterrorism no longer occupies the centerpiece among the priorities of the US national security. It was overshadowed by the conflicts of the great powers, represented by the United States, Russia and China, and other prominent measures, such as Trump's position on the Iran nuclear deal, and hesitation in confronting North Korea and its nuclear program, while trying to enter into direct discussions on nuclear disarmament. Trump has also been interested in building a separation wall along the US-Mexico border, claiming that Mexicans sneaking into the US-Mexico border are drug dealers, perpetrators and rapists.

In addition, Trump shed light on the gender-driven language to achieve his policy goals and to mobilize support for what he termed as a national security crisis; the debatable issue of the US-Mexico border wall has also brought about disagreements in congressional funding. To win the approval of many Americans, Trump also invested in hate speech toward Muslims and immigrants, drawing on the historical identity of America. Although the policy pursued by Trump Administration across the region was riddled with mystery, it constantly remained focused on major issues, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, against a blurry backdrop of awkward stability with the US influence in conflict areas fading away.

There has also been a noticeable paradigm shift in the interest aroused by the administrations and agencies at the forefront of US foreign policy and security efforts, showcased by increased investment in the US Department of Defense, along with the State Department and USAID budgets. As key diplomatic posts abroad remained vacant, negative impact on such agencies will be much felt.



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