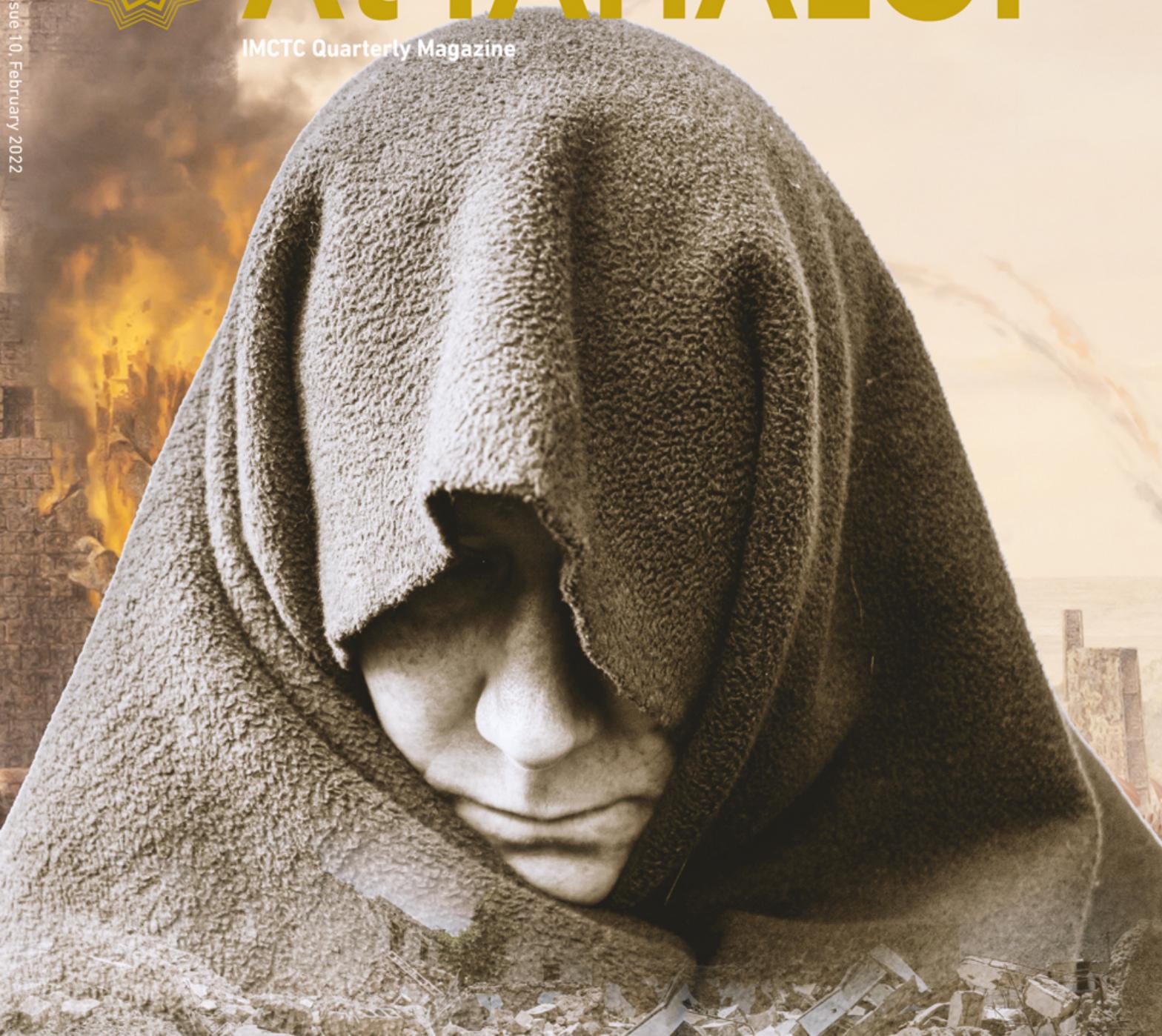




# AtTAHALOF

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**DUAL ROLES**

**FEMINIZATION OF EXTREMISM AND FEMINIS PROTECTION**



Tenth Issue | February 2022

# At TAHALOF

IMCTC Quarterly Magazine



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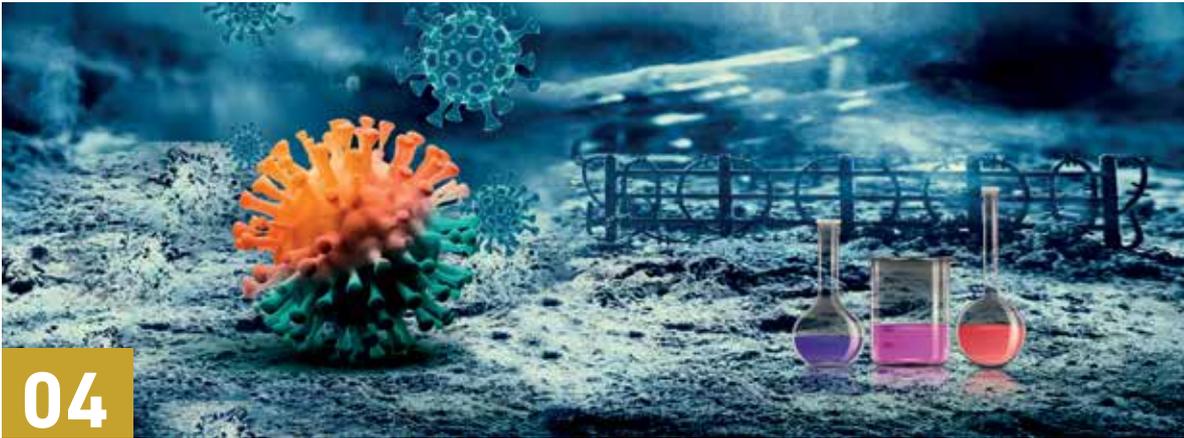
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# BIOTERRORISM

## DRAMATIC IMAGINATION AND REAL RISKS

■ FERNANDO MARTIN CHINNICI

The art of drama has been taken to task for disseminating the culture of violence, increasing crime rates, and instilling toxins in the minds of young people. Much has been said about the necessity of tightening control over dramatic works and censoring scenes that could negatively affect young people and society. Given the danger of such dramatic content, what is more dangerous is that it would be a source of inspiration for terrorist groups so they would plan and carry out their crimes, especially the ones related to bioterrorism. The threat here is far greater than conventional terrorist hazards.

■ Researcher in social anthropology and Islamic studies, Argentine.

### Different Models

Works of art that deal with bioterrorism tend to offer vivid examples for future terrorists, providing detailed plans of ways to obtain biological weapons, manufacture them, and use them to threaten, kill and terrorize human beings. Hence, there are substantial fears that extremist groups could utilize these implicit suggestions in dangerous terrorist operations, jeopardizing the security of the whole world. These risks have multiplied with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, which caused great material and human losses and panicked the whole world, demonstrating the vulnerability of countries in the face of these pandemics, and showcasing the potential horrors of bioterrorism.

### Concepts and Dangers

Categorized as the most lethal and detrimental type of terrorism, bioterrorism can be defined as the deliberate use of micro-organisms and their toxic secretions to spread diseases, cause mass killings, and permanently destroy the natural environment. According to the International Criminal Police Organization INTERPOL, bioterrorism refers to the deliberate release of viruses, bacteria or toxic substances to harm humans and the environment, and to serve political or social agendas to forcibly subjugate citizens and governments.

Bioterrorism is classified as the most dangerous and destructive type of terrorism. Terrorist groups may resort to accessible and low-cost biological weapons due to their ease of manufacture, low cost, and ability to proliferate. For example, a single bacteria cell can multiply to billions in a few hours. Besides, it is hard for traditional anti-terror sensing systems to detect these types of weapons which disseminate quickly whether by air, food or water. They can therefore cause extreme damage and great chaos, not just physically but also psychologically.

Reports indicate that terrorists are determined to use biological weapons in their criminal operations. Access to knowledge regarding the use of these substances has become available online, and terrorists have a secret communication network, such as the dark web, which enables them to purchase substances and share information related to bioterrorism. This has prompted the United Nations to confirm that the world is facing extremely complex security challenges represented in bioterrorism, which would result in significant diseases and fatalities, causing widespread disruption and anxiety, disrupting travel and commerce, and destroying international economy.

### Drama and Bioterrorism

There is an umbilical cord between bioterrorism and watching films and television serials that deal with crimes



of this kind. Much as they entertain people and provide them with pleasurable suspense, the content of these dramatic works can well be used for malicious purposes. For example, one movie revolving around the cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union narrates the story of a Soviet scientist who participates in creating a lethal microbe in a secret laboratory; he is coerced into committing this crime after members of his family have been kidnapped, with virtual threats of murdering them if he does not acquiesce. Fearing for his family, he is forced to participate in the manufacture of the microbe, which is consequently used by a criminal in a major terrorist operation. Likewise, in one third world country, an insurgent group carries out a biological attack on a car park, which would subsequently pave the way for the actual use of this weapon for terrorist purposes.

Such films and serials present examples of backward countries seeking revenge against developed countries in retaliation against years of oppression under colonization. Meanwhile, there are reports of conspiracies wrought in these developed countries which seek to establish their hegemony through launching orchestrated terrorist attacks. This explains the proliferation of cross-border espionage stories, and the extensive online content permeating social media, providing clear examples of this type of terrorism.

### Impending Danger

In the face of the repugnant threats of bioterrorism, we must instantly deal with this challenge, particularly in view

of the theories that attempt to explain the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic which has spread so quickly all over the world. At first, the idea of an epicenter in the Wuhan market and a possible jump of the virus from the animals traded there to humans was spread.

Then another pseudo-hypothesis circulated, which posulated on unfounded grounds that the virus had passed from bats to native animals and from the latter to humans in different contexts near that locality. More risky bets appeared, postulating for example that an involuntary escape originating in a laboratory was the cause of this event of global dimension, which is the very definition of biosafety deficiency. There also existed more evidence of possible unprecedented bioterrorist attacks worldwide in what came to be known as "biosecurity deficiency". Terrorist groups were thus instigated to explore the prospect of utilizing these viruses as biological weapons.

For example, groups affiliated to ISIS the terrorist organization launched campaigns promoting the use of biological weapons in retaliation against the massacres at the two mosques in New Zealand in 2019, described by the CNN as a carefully planned and unprecedented atrocity that shocked the usually peaceful nation. Shortly before the massacres, the said groups posted a detailed video clip which insinuated bioterrorist attacks like Hantaviruses that infect individuals' lungs in addition to cholera and typhoid. They also pointed out the methods of proliferating these clandestine weapons in targeted countries.



All these developments confirm that the world today is facing a severe bioterrorist hazard. Originating in some dramatic works, bioterrorism has deplorably become our fait accompli; it is inevitable then to agree on a prompt international preemptive action to forestall its occurrence.

### **Biosafety and Confrontation**

Laboratory biosafety describes the principles of containment, technologies and procedures applied to prevent unintended exposure to biological agents and toxins or their accidental leakage. As for laboratory biosecurity, it refers to the protection, control and accountability measures with respect to biological agents and toxins, to prevent their loss, theft, misuse, detour, unauthorized access and intentional unauthorized release.

The United Nations has been genuinely concerned about the threat to states and citizens if terrorist groups deliberately started to use biological agents in their operations. The Experts Meeting of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Biological and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction exhaustively explored this issue. These discussions come in response to the dire effects that can result from the misuse of these biological weapons that would turn human life into incessant terror, successive disasters, and permanent mourning.

Though terrorists will certainly continue to use traditional methods in their operations, the possibility that they would use biological weapons to cause mass destruction remains very likely in the near future, a fact that has been confirmed by most hypotheses and scientific studies in the field and by lived experience. Therefore, preserving the lives of human beings and the stability of countries in the long run must entail the imposition of a number of practical measures to counter this potential bioterrorism; most notably:

- Strict control of scientific research in biological laboratories so that they may not be misused by some individuals or groups.
- Stipulating rules that require scientific journals to assume their responsibilities towards research in the biological field, in order to avoid publishing studies that would ultimately endanger public health or national security.
- Creating databases that help predict potential bioterrorist threats and preventing the use of biological weapons against the state and its citizens.



- Establishing an epidemiological surveillance system and arming it with tools that would enable it to deal professionally with biosecurity issues.
- Reinforcing the capabilities of countries and health and social institutions in dealing with bioterrorist hazards, especially methods of prevention, preparedness, confrontation, and retaliation.
- Coordination of international efforts in dealing with biological hazards, and drawing integrated strategic plans to face this emerging reality.
- Providing drugs and vaccines that would treat the effects on human beings of a potential chemical or biological attack.

### **Necessity of Harmonization**

It is true that governments have to take legislative, regulatory and supervisory measures to combat potential bioterrorism and to monitor biological scientific research in laboratories. However, such measures must not interfere with the freedom of scientific research and the circulation of its results. This complex process of combating bioterrorism must go hand in hand with combating social, economic and political injustice. Millions of people die in poor countries because they do not obtain the minimum standards of care and treatment, while developed countries stockpile huge quantities of vaccines and patents in case of emergencies.

With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, bioterrorism regained its most powerful ability to intimidate people. Hence, threats to national security are no longer confined to the military or economic arenas, and it is thus incumbent upon us to take different measures to deal with these bioterrorist hazards through three key pathways:

- Preventing terrorist groups from accessing biological weapons;
- Being well-prepared, nationally and internationally, to deal with biological hazards upon their occurrence;
- Employing drama in the battle against bioterrorism to increase social awareness towards these hazards and towards the best ways to deal with bioterrorist attacks to minimize their catastrophic effects.

If drama may be a source of inspiration for terrorist groups, it can also inspire countries and their institutions to take necessary measures to counter the hazards of bioterrorism. ■



## ETHICS AND DARK SIDE OF RESEARCHING TERRORISM

### ■ DR. MOHD YAZID BIN ZUL KEPLI

**Researching** terrorism has never been an easy job. Terrorism can be defined as the premeditated use of or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups to attain political or social objectives by intimidating large audiences beyond the circle of the immediate victims of terrorist acts.

The study of terrorism is usually classified into four categories: (1) why terrorism occurs, (2) how terrorism works, (3) what its social and political effects are, and (4) how to effectively counter it. This article goes beyond those major questions to highlight the risks and challenges faced by researchers in the field. It is important to distinguish myths from truths when conducting research on this controversial topic.

### Difficulties, Challenges, and Impediments

Researching terrorism can be very risky. Admittedly, there are other risky areas of research including nuclear weapons, advanced weaponry including anti-ballistic missiles, radiation, biological hazards and other dangerous substances. Other equally dangerous fields are researches on drug cartels and the corruption of politicians. Despite that, research on terrorism entails its own set of risks.

There are many real risks that can exclusively be associated with researching terrorism. For example, a scholar critiquing Zionism might encounter dozens of problems; from the possibility of being assassinated by the Mossad, to the denial of promotion or funding for research, partly due to the strong lobbying from pro-Israeli lobbyists. This is unfortunate and counter-productive since the research might be constructive in nature, geared towards the good of everyone including Jews themselves.

Researchers focusing on terrorism in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region will also be blacklisted if their comments are perceived to be too critical or seem to be against the establishment. Genuine and constructive comments might be misinterpreted, and the consequences can be fatal.

The situation is not necessarily better in the western part of the world. Honest and critical comments unfavourable to Western governments combating terrorism can result in profiling, rejection of publications, and even blacklisting. For example, researchers will find that their criticism of the degrading approach adopted by France in its systemic association of Islam with terrorism can backfire.

There are numerous reasons why many researchers avoid conducting research on terrorism. The first one is the nature of the research issues. Some research issues, even published ones, might be of forbidden nature, prohibited, or dubious. They can be legal in one country and forbidden

■ Professor of Law at Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

in another. They might be legal yesterday and illegal today. Possession of questionable research issues is always risky. In many countries, emergency or security laws prevail over the standard provisions in legislation governing events pertaining to terrorism. In simple words, charges related to terrorism will be hard to refute.

### **Problems of Legal Interpretation**

Moreover, certain research issues might be legal, but exploring them might lead to suspicion, resulting in the profiling, investigation or arrest of the researcher. Due to lack of clear-cut regulations concerning research issues involving terrorism, there is a real risk that a genuine researcher might be implicated and prosecuted for criminal offense.

Despite the apparent huge amount of literature available on terrorism, a large chunk is second-hand material, unidirectional, biased, and unconvincing. One of the risky challenges in researching terrorism is the uncertainty surrounding the legal nature of the issue discussed. It is hard to possess, let alone publicize, and it differs in legality from one country to another. There are also real or perceived dangers associated with conflict zones, potential retaliation, and severe lack of statistical analysis and first-hand data.

Some publications are evidently illegal; e.g., a pamphlet promoting terrorists' propaganda which could be consulted by researchers from the police department, counter-terrorism units or the military to formulate a proper counter-terrorism policy. Due to the inadequacy of relevant legislation, researchers will remain liable for the possession of illegal subject-matter. Conducting empirical research that includes interviews with terrorists or suspects can also be dangerous. Terrorists and militant groups are wanted, and they are not waiting around to be interviewed. To get access to them, they must be convinced that the interview is not a trap. Therefore, they will most likely be the ones setting up the location for the interview, only to change it at the last minute to ensure their safety. However, this will put the

interviewer in a serious threat, and there is a real possibility that the interviewer might himself be kidnapped or killed.

### **Impartiality and Data Inadequacy**

Another major challenge for researchers of terrorism is the sensitivity of this area of research. Ideally, the research must be impartial. However, Dolnik (2011) warns that given the highly emotional and subjective nature of the terrorism phenomenon, available data tend to be strongly politically manipulated, requiring a higher standard of verification and objectivity to ensure the reliability and accuracy of findings.

Beside severe lack of statistical analysis and even first-hand data, the situation is exacerbated by weak research methodology and problems with finding reliable media sources due to media bias and inaccuracy. There is therefore an over-reliance on useless open-source documents.

Another challenge that researchers must be aware of is the psychological risk. Arguing against the mainstream or the officially accepted version can be very risky, even devastating, for a researcher. It might result in rejection of the request for funding, being blacklisted or even arrested.

A researcher or interviewer conducting empirical research might be blacklisted or targeted, not only by terrorists or militant groups, but also by the government or other interested parties. His writings might be deemed too controversial and provocative, and this can lead to labelling him as sympathizer of terrorists or militant groups, while in reality, he has been merely writing an objective and balanced report.

### **Conclusion**

The series of risks and challenges continues after the completion of the research on terrorism. In order to minimize the risks associated with researching terrorism, a researcher must ensure compliance with law and adherence to the ethical standards of research. More importantly, governments should ensure the existence of a proper legal framework regulating research on terrorism. In the end, a good research will be constructive and beneficial to everyone. ■



# DUAL ROLES

## FEMINIZATION OF EXTREMISM AND FEMINIST PROTECTION

**Women** and terrorism develop into different pathways; if women are the most impacted victims of terrorism, research-based indicators reveal the increased involvement of women in terrorist organizations. Taken together, it has become critically necessary to engage women in counterterrorism efforts. This special edition features in-depth analyses of relevant issues through seminal contributions made by four subject-matter researchers and specialists.

### Feminization of Violent Extremism

Lydia Amedzrator, researcher at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Ghana, examined woman involvement in violent extremism in Mali, identifying the various reasons why women joined the activities of violent extremist groups. Although they do not appear to be involved in frontline hostilities, women do vital intelligence, support, and logistics that furthered the strategic goals of violent extremist groups rampant in Mali.

Although such female contribution is seemingly petty, it significantly facilitates the tasks of violent extremism groups in such a fashion as to reduce risks. Many violent extremism groups feed on the social culture of women; they recruit females to operate in disguise across all community to gather intelligence. Many reports reveal that women contribute significantly to the violent activities of extremist groups, without having to leave their homes and join such groups in the battlefields of violent combat activities. Women also participate in demonstrations that fuel the issues

of violent extremist groups; some women plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs), manufacture small arms and light weapons, and supply materials used in weaponry.

Pascaline Compaoré, researcher in issues of peace, security and development, provided analyses of the impact of gender on violent extremism in Burkina Faso. Compaoré also showed an in-depth understanding of the role of women in such contexts. Compaoré concluded that violent extremism is being feminized across the Sahel region, particularly in Burkina Faso. The involvement of women in armed groups in the Sahel region has become a glaringly clear strategy that Boko Haram applies in the battlefields. Between 2011 and 2017, women carried out more than 430 suicide attacks in the Sahel region.

### Protecting Women from Extremism

Raby Idoumou, analyst on terrorism issues, monitored the support for woman engagement in the counterterrorism efforts made in the Sahel countries. Idoumou stressed that counterterrorism requires the engagement and empowerment of women in any community that is willing to be stronger in the face of hate speech and extremism that terrorist groups seek to fuel in various fashions, as concluded by the Sahel countries, making it a key bedrock in its strategic plans to counterterrorism.

The G5 Sahel has made great strides to empower women, and consolidate their engagement, presence and efficacy in the defense lines and security forces across the G5 Sa-



hel countries. It has become a deep trend and an urgent policy to make the human rights in the 5G Sahel countries in perfect harmony with the international humanitarian law and respond to the call of Rosemary Ann DiCarlo, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to strengthen the role of women in counterterrorism.

Fatima Musleh Al-Qahtani, advisor at the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue, addressed the issue of immunizing women from extremism and ideological deviation, stressing the importance of increasing efforts to prevent women from joining extremist groups, adopting their ideologies, or sympathizing with their actions. To this effect, women must be armed and equipped with the informed and disciplined thought; women must also be immunized against false and deviant beliefs. Women are best to observe any changes to child extremism in the early stages of adolescence, which make women at the frontlines to nip in the bud such negative potential wisely and firmly and prevent associated negative effects at the level of the individual and community. Al-Qahtani brought to focus the key outcomes of female empowerment, including:

- ◆ Assuming the responsibility of women for the ideological, psychological and social formation of own chil-

dren, and their integration into society to be part of the civilized fabric of Muslim societies, and an impenetrable wall against any potential deviation that could destroy the family and community.

- ◆ The engagement of women in the immunization of community; the responsibility of women is not limited to the family only, but includes various fields, as teachers, educators, media professionals, writers, counselors or advocates.
- ◆ Women offer a new vision in combating violent extremism, by engaging in the activities performed by men; their experience in policing has shown that they can have a deeper and more sincere impact.
- ◆ Enhancing woman contribution to serious debates in public or youth-oriented media to discuss the challenges related to extremism and associated causes, while proposing appropriate solutions to confront such fatal scourge.
- ◆ Women joining the institutions and committees concerned with combating extremism enrich counterterrorism efforts. Female leaders have demonstrated qualitative superiority, especially in their activity in combating female recruitment in terrorist groups. ■





## WOMEN PROTECTION AGAINST EXTREMISM AND IDEOLOGICAL DEVIANCE

### VITAL NECESSITY

#### ■ FATIMA MUSLEH AL-QAHTANI

**Extremism** per se is one of the notorious life-threatening evils that undermine communities, demoralize nations, fuel hate, discourage tolerance, cause bloodshed and violate privacy. Sadly enough, women have recently evinced greater involvement in such malice albeit more attributable to men; terrorist organizations have perniciously lured women into conflict – willy-nilly – either by encouragement, intimidation, coercion or otherwise expressed. Women initial contributions were limited to logistics and traditional jobs, acting as housewives, teachers, workers or nurses, who provide and cater for the everyday needs of men, creating an appropriate environment conducive for carrying out subversive tasks. Over the recent years, however, women have assumed more violent missions, such as carrying weapons and suicide operations.

■ Consultant at the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## Victimizer or Victimized?

Compelled to be involved in conflict and violent actions, women usually fall victim to such malice although they have close kinship – wives, daughters, or sisters. Admittedly, women involvement becomes more of subordination. In a similar vein, forced marriage of girls has contributed to the inclusion of women in the labyrinths of violence and terrorism; many female members were kidnapped and forced to stay in dank grottos, stashed away by such terrorist organizations. However, many women have joined voluntarily driven by various reasons: search for money, religious misunderstanding, oppression, humiliation or self-actualization, which they failed to satisfy in their realities.

## Involvement Reasons

Men and women equally share many common reasons that cause involvement in violent extremism, such as religious, psychological, social, economic and political motivations; however, the following special reasons push women into this precipice:

1. Women suffer violence, violation of rights, armed conflicts, intimidation, and domestic violence.
2. Harassment and cyberbullying in private and public places, and workplaces.
3. Human trafficking, and malicious practices, such as child marriage, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and child abuse.
4. Gender inequality, marginalization of women in society, failure to optimize their constructive efforts, leading women to prove their abilities, even by showing violence being their last-ditch attempt.
5. Rape and victimization of honor and sham; a research study conducted by the United Nations shows that 39% of the women involved were raped! This is one of the most common reasons forcing women to join terrorist organizations across areas of conflict.
6. Child marriage to extremists; some parents force their daughters to marry extremists. With forced marriage coming into play, such women continue their matrimony for fear of divorce, which becomes more of deviance.
7. Heated passion for religious harangue of such groups; a research study shows that about three thousand out of twenty thousand foreign fighters who joined ISIS were women. Such research studies were concerned with Western female fighters, and women in Western Asia and North Africa; most of them were attracted by the rhetoric of extremist groups.

## Development of Women Contribution

Extremist organizations and the tasks allocated to women have synchronically snowballed into wider development; such traditional minor tasks ballooned into life-threatening mission. In fact, women sometimes can do what men cannot; women co-authored the development of plans and means of implementation, contributing to luring new women and men. Unlike men, women have superior abilities to inflame emotions; women outdo men in recruiting youth through marriage.





Women better provide confidentiality of clandestine movements of materials and supplies; women can easily conceal themselves in disguise and are uneasy to track down. Infamously enough, women deceptively propagandize terrorism via various media outlets and the leadership positions women assume, such as providing training in armed battalions. Women have much contributed to creating a whole raft of websites to widely spread extremist ideology and drum up for the majestic mental image among young men and women for such organizations. Most infamously, women moved up the hierarchy to assume frontline positions to help funneling arms and carry out suicide missions; the chances of women to escape from the security forces are more fortunate than men.

A research study issued by the Counter-Terrorism Center, West Point, USA, August 10, 2017, shows that the suicide operations carried out by Boko Haram mostly instrumentalized women; the total number of suicide bombers sent by Boko Haram to hit 247 different targets was 434, of whom 244 were female suicide bombers (56%).

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2019 recorded an increase in female suicide attacks from 4 in 2013 to 22 in 2018, while it recorded more than 300 suicide attacks by women from 1985 to 2018.

The most pernicious task of women is to raise a future generation of terrorist extremists, indoctrinating extremist ideologies into the mindset of youth. Women bring up a generation that believes in such ideologies, which becomes frantically passionate for carrying out all the tasks assigned. Women become more dangerous when returning from strongholds of extremism and conflict areas, unaware of how much their ideologies have changed, which can be called covert extremism. Women still carry out their malice under a socially acceptable cover that is uneasy to bring to focus.

### Protection of Women

With this in mind, it is critically necessary to protect women and increase efforts to sensitize women to extremist groups, ideologies or sympathy for their actions. To this effect, women should be armed with orthodox thought as to be protected from ideological deviance. Beyond a shadow of doubt, protection of women is conducive for peace, stability, and prosperity of family and community. Women have a unique and sensitive position at home, making them at the frontlines to best observe the early stages of child extremism. As such, women, par excellence, can in no time intervene to confront such premature scourge sensibly and firmly, while preventing associated negative effects individually and collectively. With this in mind, the following can be reaffirmed:

1. Assuming the responsibility of women towards the ideological, psychological and social formation of own children, their integration into society, along with their interaction with social fabric constructively to be part of the civilized Islamic communities serves as an impenetrable wall against any deviance that could undermine family and society.
2. The responsibility of women is not limited to the family only; rather, it includes various areas, such as education, media, counseling, or advocacy. Combined together, protection of women resonates successfully with many groups in society.
3. Women offer a new vision in the fight against violent extremism, by working with men in tandem; female experience policing has shown that they can make a deeper and more sincere impact.
4. Women contribute to meaningful dialogues through public or youth-oriented media to discuss the problems related to extremism and root causes, and at the same time develop appropriate solutions to confront such scourge.



5. The participation of women in institutions and committees concerned with combating extremism contributes positively to fostering their awareness of the threats of extremism, various methods, manifestations, and innovative modalities; female leaders show qualitative superiority, especially in their engagement in combating female recruitment by terrorist groups.
6. Women can participate seriously in protecting society from extremism, when they are duly qualified by informing women of the psychological, social, economic and mental threats of terrorism, and clarifying the associated effects caused to individuals, families and societies.
7. The awareness of women of the indicators of ideological, psychological and social extremism enables them to take proactive action to prevent it inside and outside the family.

### Necessary Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the most important tools for enhancing communication and identifying signs of ideological deviance. It is important for dialogue to start and continue with the different stages of one's life development, as follows:

- A. Engaging with dialogues with children, by parents, teachers and educators, in such a manner that ensures proper upbringing and ideological immunity from extremist ideologies and deviant movements.
- B. Establishing the concept of dialogue in the family, making it the ideal solution to all existing and potential problems.
- C. holding dialogues with male and female students in schools and educational environments to provide a safe environment for expressing opinion, promote critical thinking, and identify the challenges they face to best support them.
- D. Entering in dialogues with the returnees from the conflict areas and those who have adopted ideological violence to find out the reasons for joining terrorist orga-

nizations. This also includes exposing their ideological fallacies and rehabilitating and integrating them into society.

### Conclusion

Feminist terrorism is a marked manifestation of terrorism in the Middle East and the entire world; feminist terrorism is more dangerous and pernicious to the structure of our societies, especially with the increased tendency towards violence, self-actualization sought by women, and the ability to assume leadership responsibilities that women could not exercise within own families or patriarchal communities. In addition, some western women in particular seek a sense of belonging, living in a homogeneous society, and in an environment in which they practice their most conservative beliefs freely without discrimination or exclusion. Being brushed aside into a partial eclipse, feminist terrorism has not received due attention by the authorities, at a time when women need greater awareness, and serious proactive policies; feminist terrorism is on the rise. Again, the strategy of terrorism has become more dependent on women in propagandization, putting pressure on the international community by placing women in the frontlines of subversive battles, while instrumentalizing them as combative tools and as time bombs.

With this in mind, all such negatives should be duly addressed; the ideologies that sully and tarnish the reputation of women must be debunked; grievances must be settled; women must be empowered to exercise their rights, fulfill their responsibilities in society without discrimination, psychological and social factors that extremist groups are concerned with to attract women must be confronted. When all such efforts come into play, feminist terrorism can be nipped in the bud in such a manner so that no more female terrorists can be involved in ISIS, Al-Qaeda or Boko Haram, who often end up either killed or captured, or reduced to refugees in camps without personal documents to prove their identities. ■



# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN MALI MAGNITUDE AND IMPACT

■ Lydia Amedzrator

Sparked by the Tuareg Rebellion, the 2012 Mali Crisis was escalated by the violent activities of a temporary alliance of separatist and violent extremist groups. The alliance however deteriorated over divergent interests. In 2017, however, Ansar Dine, the West African branch of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Katiba Macina and Al-Mourabitoune formed a new coalition known as the 'Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) (Support Group for Islam and Muslims).

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## WOMEN AND TERRORISM

JNIM intended purposefully to be re-strategizing and prioritizing, emphasizing that in spite of the propaganda by JNIM that it does not use women to play frontline roles, the seemingly 'passive' contributions that women make to the group has facilitated the group's strategic agenda. The participation of women has allowed the group to operate with minimum risks and maintain their influence in its operational areas.

The paper is divided into two main sections. The first section is an attempt to delve into the different roles that women play to facilitate the activities of violent extremist groups. The second section explores the question about the possible 'push' and 'pull' factors that increase the propensity of women to support the agenda of violent extremist groups.

The author believes gendered stereotypes depict women as inherently peaceful. These stereotypes do not take

into consideration the changing and diverse roles women play in conflict situations. Women have a great capacity to play crucial roles, as spies, informants and pressure groups, that serve the strategic interests of violent extremist groups.

## ACTIVE AND MULTIPLE ROLES OF WOMEN

Typically, because of the stereotypical assumptions that portray women as weak and passive, they are planted into society to provide intelligence to violent extremist groups (VEGs). It is easier for women to get into places where they can supply valuable information to VEGs without being suspected of engaging in any criminal act. There are reports that reveal that without leaving their homes to join VEGs in their bases, some women are making essential contribution to the violent activities of VEGs by collecting valuable information on the presence of international law enforcement agencies and planned offensives against VEGs.





Women are used as a pressure group to put pressure on government and other target audience. Usually, these women engage in demonstrations which promote the cause of VEGs. In the city of Kidal, for instance, which is accessible only by air, women are stationed at airports to demonstrate and sometimes throw stones at officials in order to sell the propaganda messages of VEGs.

### LOGISTIC GROUPS AND MOTIVATIONS

The involvement of women in the activities of VEGs come with low risks to the VEGs. Women who are deployed by VEGs are not easily suspected and their criminal activities are not easily detected. Some women are therefore involved in activities such as planting explosive devices in communities. Usually, the women who are involved in this activity are reported to be women who gather and crack stones for sale. Under the pretense of undertaking their economic activities, these women are employed to dig holes and plant bombs and IEDs (a growing tactic used by violent extremist groups to attack national and international forces) for the VEGs. More so, some women are caught carrying arms and ammunitions. In 2018, for example, it is reported that a woman was arrested by Mali's intelligence services for supplying fertilizer meant for the production of explosives to Katiba Macina, a VEG in Mali.

Therefore, it was very important to explain the phenomenon of women joining violent terrorist acts by extremist groups, as it is linked to the tendencies and motives, and it

is imperative to reveal such conditions and the social and family reasons that make women resort to this thorny path.

### FAMILY TIES

Most women become facilitators and sympathizers of VEGs because of their familial ties with some members of these groups. Sometimes their brothers, husbands, children and other close and long-distant relatives are members of these groups. It therefore becomes very difficult for them not to collaborate or protect members of these groups. There are other times when they are forced into collaborating with these violent groups.

Sometimes their close relatives – husbands, sons, and other members of their community – are kidnapped and they are asked to perform certain roles in order for their relatives to be released; namely, singing songs, accolades and preaching that celebrate martial values, stigmatize weakness and encourage men to demonstrate their bravery. In other cases, members of these VEGs take advantage of the ignorance of some women and men regarding their misunderstanding of the teachings of the Holy Quran. These women are indoctrinated with false teachings and are forced to support these groups.

### SURVIVAL

Due to the chaos and destruction that accompany the violent activities of these violent extremist groups, people lose legitimate opportunities for survival. In order to survive, some women are forced to collaborate with VEGs in

order to have access to welfare services provided by some of these violent extremist groups to the local communities. These welfare services provide the opportunities for some women to satisfy their basic needs. There are also reports of some girls whose applications to several state security services are rejected and they are forced to join these VEGs out of frustration.

Other girls are also reported to join these armed groups with the hope that when they survive, and a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) are conducted, they will get the opportunity to be integrated into state security services which was their original dream. In most cases, these dreams are left unfulfilled.

### **SOCIAL STATUS**

Due to the patriarchal nature of the Malian society, women are considered as subservient to men. Based on their social status, they can be used or forced to perform certain roles without their consent. There are certain clans who regard women as slaves 'koran sio'. So as slaves, they do not have any 'value' and can be violated and used to perform any activity. Women are raped and used as sexual objects because, according to the men (who abuse the women), women are second-class citizens.

These perceptions of women are carried by these violent extremist groups who display the same attitudes to women. It is reported that increasingly women and girls are being maltreated and shot indiscriminately by these VEGs.

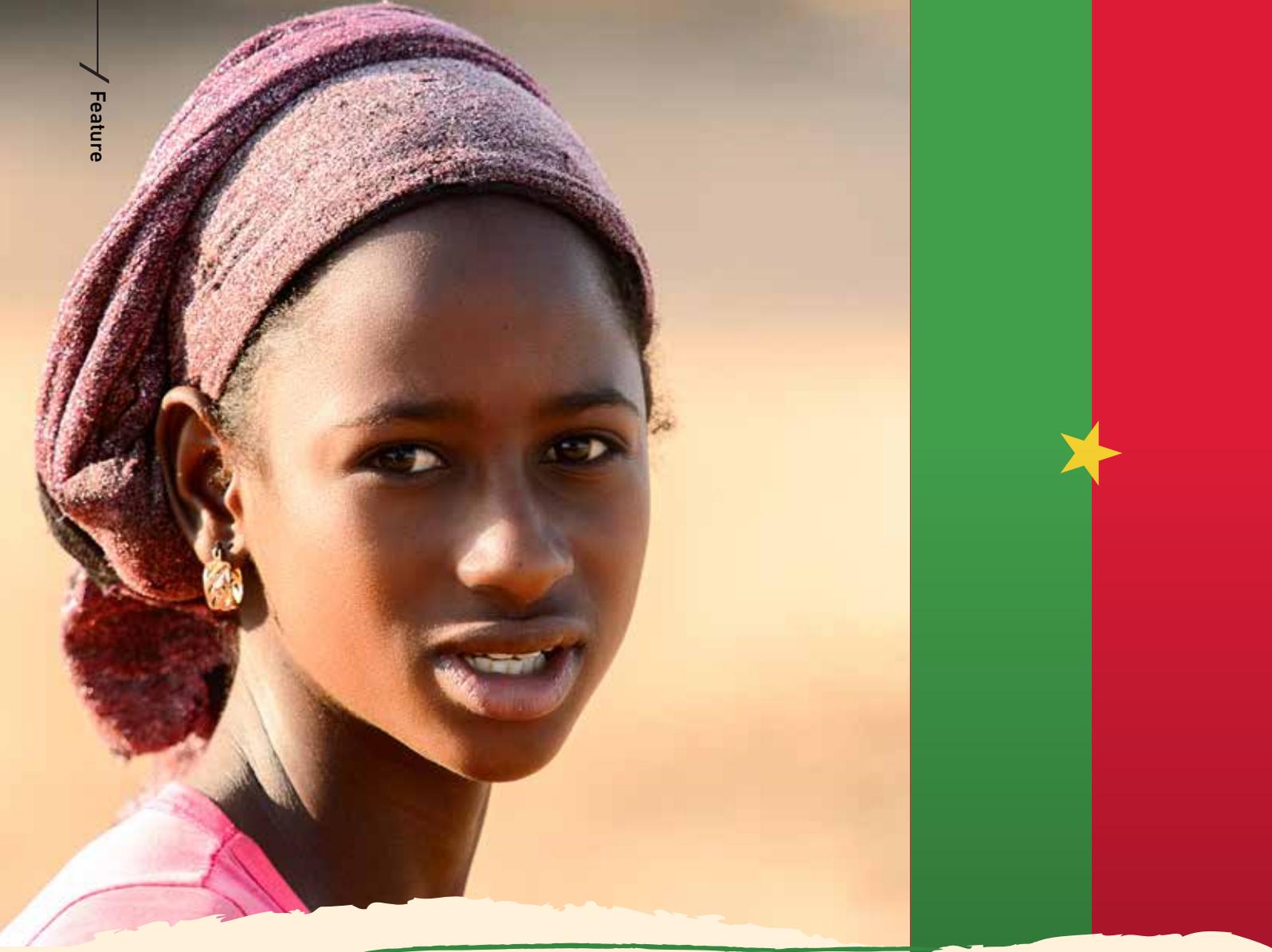
### **CONCLUSION**

Though they are yet to be seen performing frontline roles as combatants, women play active roles as informants, logisticians and pressure groups which have furthered the strategic goals of violent extremist groups in Mali.

This paper unpacks the various roles that women play and the various reasons that explain their involvement in the activities of violent extremist groups. To confront the growing threat from the role of women in the expansion of violent extremism, the government of Mali has put in place a number of policy interventions, namely the national policy for the prevention and the fight against violent extremism, national policy for transitional justice and the gender quota bill. Efforts by the various implementation committees of these national policies continue to produce uneven results.

There is the need for a strong partnership among government, civil society and other international stakeholders that moves beyond the rhetorical flourishes in these policies to ensure a rigorous implementation to better achieve the goals that enhance the status of women in Mali. ■





## THE ROLE OF GENDER IN VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN BURKINA FASO

■ PASCALINE COMPAORE

**Violent** extremism per se is a life-threatening and onerous global phenomenon, bringing about glaringly obvious effects across various countries, including the countries of the Sahel. The actions of extremist groups in the Sahel communities threaten social order; violent extremism is no longer short-lived and ephemeral; rather, it makes up a source of concern for the countries of Liptako-Gourma (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger). The secrets of the scourge have not yet been unlocked. Extremism was previously a dominantly patriarchal phenomenon. However, reality reveals that women have jostled for robust engagement in armed groups, which make it a mooted point for further research and investigation. Data constantly confirm that a spate of women have joined armed groups, as revealed by the OXFAM 2020 REPORT and the International Alert Report (DOGMATIC OR PRAGMATIC? VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND GENDER IN THE CENTRAL SAHEL). Therefore, it is unsurprising to argue that violent extremism is going into the feminization stage of the Sahel, especially Burkina Faso.

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## Women and Terrorism

If the involvement of women in armed groups in the Sahel seems to be a new phenomenon given the poor necessary data for such an issue before, it is a clear strategy applied by Boko Haram in battles. Women in the Sahel carried out more than 430 suicide attacks between 2011-2017, whether they did so voluntarily or not. Beyond a shadow of doubt, the presence and participation of women had a noticeable impact on the level of communication and propaganda for organizations to gain unprecedented social credit. One can easily understand the potential effects of this strategy for other armed groups in the Sahel, which have become an inspiration. This requires us to reconsider our situations and concepts about violent extremism.

## Impact of Women Participation

This article analyzes the impact of gender on violent extremism in Burkina Faso and learns about the relevant role of women, who are traditionally presented as the main victims of armed conflict. Research in specific areas, like the contribution of women in existing conflicts, may help us to understand the plans to exploit women in terrorist groups and construct a discourse that demythologizes misrepresentations. At THE LEADERS SUMMIT TO COMBAT ISIS AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM, October 2015, former US President Barack Obama stressed the following: We do not fight ideologies and doctrines with guns; rather, we fight them with better ideas and a more convincing and attractive vision. Therefore, a better understanding of women involvement in violent extremism can correct the perception of the situation of women and promote their role in preventing violent extremism.

Four main topics will be further explained to make it clearer: the impact of the deteriorating security environment on gender conditions in Burkina Faso; gender as the main vic-

tim of violent extremism; methods of women involvement in armed groups in Burkina Faso; women empowered as tools of peace.

## Impact of Deteriorating Security Environment on Gender Conditions

The security environment in Burkina Faso has sharply deteriorated, and insecurity has widely been rampant, whether related to deteriorating social and economic conditions, conflicts over territory and pastures, or tribal, sectarian, political and armed conflicts. Violent extremism mushroomed and gradually contributed to the loss of security in the coastal regions, then snowballed into other regions, especially the north, center, east and the Mohun belt region, where armed groups are wreaking havoc; part of the region has become under the effective control of terrorist groups, where victims suffer, survive or die.

In addition to the multifaceted armed violence, there are local and societal conflicts alongside threats of progressive radicalization of women. The common ground of all such forms of affliction is the use of violence. Such attacks affect the authority, stability and safety of the state, destabilize the country and threaten development projects. It seriously doubts the state's ability to guarantee its sovereign function throughout the region and to protect women from acts of violence.

## Gender as Main Victim of Violent Extremism

Over time, extremist groups developed their own strategic plans for violence. When the crisis broke out, extremist groups in Burkina Faso targeted the government representatives, community leaders and civilian victims; women were not within the reach of such groups at the time. December 24 of 2019 is a watershed day in the history of the absence of security in Burkina Faso; women became direct



targets of terrorists. The media reported that 31 women were killed in an attack on a military base in Arbinda. Since that date, women have become among the key victims of violent extremism.

The attacks of extremist groups have severely affected the livelihoods of women and children; they are the cause of huge losses in human, material, natural and financial resources, and remain the main cause of mass displacement of populations (IDPs and refugees). The impact of women on violent extremism is manifested in various direct and indirect forms. Notoriously, women were kidnapped or raped, sustaining forced marriage, sexual slavery, and murder. It is one of the main causes of the spread of psychotic disorders, with a significant impact on the changes that occur in society. This includes changing the code of dress, dropping out of school, and destroying some vital and practical activities. There are various other types of horrific practices, which is the most terrifying manifestations that women may be exposed to.

People fleeing in search of safety increases the vulnerability of poor groups, particularly women and children. The May 2020 study by Oxfam confirms this dire situation; women have identified so many priority needs, such as access to water, security, food, shelter, education, and the like. Against such a backdrop of chaos, insecurity becomes infamously rampant. All the actors and women who were consulted confirm the extent of the psychological trauma resulting from the increasingly worsening conflict driven by forced displacement and severe deprivation.

A major consequence of violent extremism in Burkina Faso is related to the disruption of the social order. In fact, many women have become widows. Accordingly, they are solely responsible for the family. The sudden change in social status resulting from violent extremism has dire consequences for women. The disintegration of the family resulting from the departure of men, who abandoned their families either voluntarily or by force, increases the fragility of the situation. Thus, women are constantly forced to perform dual tasks: the woman breadwinner of the family and the single mother.

Providing decent livelihoods prompts women to move to remote areas, which exposes them to all kinds of violence, whether in their villages, on the roads, or in areas of asylum. The increase in violence is taking a heavy toll on women. To make matters worse, sexual violence in particular has become a war instrumentalization and weaponization exploited by perpetrators of the violence, who are essentially unidentified armed groups seeking corruption in this

part of the region where insecurity is increasingly mushrooming.

Economically, the destruction of the economic and social fabric has a profound impact on the living conditions of women; the security measures and the security situation do not encourage the realization of economic activities. There is no need to acknowledge here that the new jobs for women imposed by conflicts are a new challenge that they must face, and that knowledge of the factors of women's involvement in extremist organizations enables the necessary measures to be taken to prevent such practices.

### Methods of Women Involvement in Armed Groups in Burkina Faso

The process of women's regular involvement in armed extremist groups in Burkina Faso is still an area of investigation and research. Since women are usually the key victims of conflicts, their involvement in armed groups rarely reserves due discussion. However, this topic needs further reflection and consideration, in light of the exaggeration of violence and the opportunities to exploit the status of women in recruitment.

We must always remember that women, like men, may perform serious and influential tasks in spreading or combating violence. For example, according to an article published online at OUAGA NEWS, here are more than 2,000 women in KOGI-WÉOGO self-defense groups; women perform various security functions related to association administrative services, interrogation and intelligence operations, logistical support and patrols. In return, women who decide to join or cooperate with extremist groups can perform the same or more tasks.

It may seem useful to consider the factors of radicalization; it may ignore the gender dimension, as it may be identical with men's factors. Besides social and cultural reasons and poverty factors, women may join armed groups for other reasons. Hence, the social and cultural reality and the security environment determine the methods of recruiting women into armed groups. Things may not be very different from other countries, as is the case in Nigeria and Somalia.

According to the International Alert Report, women can perform functions of support, mobilization, facilitation, translation and education. With notorious insecurity coming into play in some areas, women may join armed groups due to duress or the necessity of survival, according to the Oxfam Report. In fact, the humanitarian response is insufficient given the scale of the needs. The report mentions priority needs, such as security, water, food, shelter, education and the elimination of harassment. Such basic



needs, along with the increase in violence, are among the reasons that can contribute to the recruitment of women in Burkina Faso.

Such reasons, especially those related to the social status of women, are also among the factors that armed groups may feed on to consolidate their presence and spread in societies. Recourse to women helps in all cases. It is a war strategy that allows armed groups to easily infiltrate societies and move freely without arousing suspicion. At the same time, extremist groups are practicing a full-fledged process of social change. Finally, given the important impact of women in society, obtaining their support will be a success in the policy of spreading violence.

Although there is currently little regular involvement for women in terrorist organizations, the issue deserves special attention to better understand the whole process more deeply and to optimize contributory responses. Women are no longer seen only as victims or perpetrators of violence; they can even be made partners in peacebuilding. This approach would give women's contribution more recognition and legitimacy at various levels to better promote peace and security.

### Women as Peace Advocates

The number of women in Burkina Faso is more than half of the population (52.67%). At the same time, we find that

women are the largest part of the victims. Hence, it is necessary to better use the potential of women in combating fundamentalism and violent extremism to the fullest extent. Therefore, integrating the gender perspective into security policies in the Sahel is essential for development and provision of services, conflict resolution, protection of rights, justice, and peace building.

International bodies have considered the issue of women's position and function in political and social life; they have recognized that they assume an indispensable position in efforts to enhance social cohesion and local development issues. This also includes making their participation in political and public life a necessary precondition for economic growth and social progress.

There is a consensus in Burkina Faso that women can make a significant contribution to preventing and combating violent extremism, at the level of family, community and civil society organizations. It is related to prevention through early warning, community strategy, mainstreaming of the gender perspective in security methods, and security sector reform. It can also contribute early and with distinction to development, strengthening women's leadership and capabilities to be effective leaders, against extremism. Taken together, we support the principle of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which states explicitly: Peace is a far-fetched chimera without women. ■



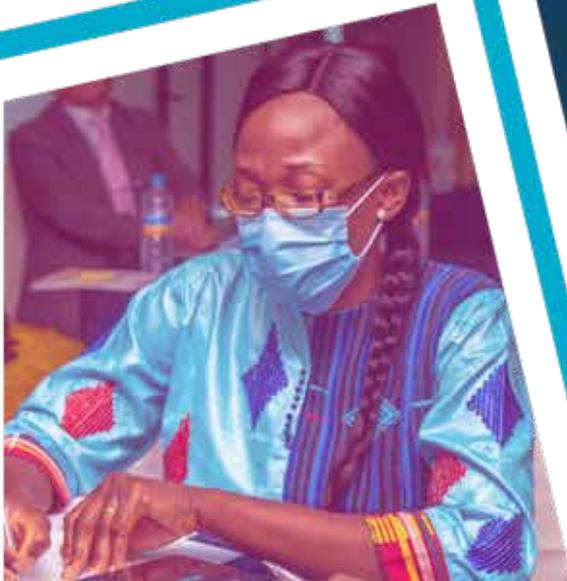
Colonel-Major Nana Sangaré



## FURTHERING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE SAHEL COUNTRIES

### ■ RABY IDOUMOU

**Beyond** a shadow of doubt, counterterrorism warrants the engagement and empowerment of women across all communities that seek to be immune to hate speech and extremism that terrorist groups fuel by various fraudulent fashions. To this end, the Sahel Group has adopted vital policies as an important counterterrorism strategy.



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## Colonel-Major Nana Sangaré

Amidst a wealth of highly experienced officers and experts in counterterrorism in the training halls of the Mohammed bin Zayed Military Education Complex, G5 Sahel Defense College in Nouakchott, Colonel-Major Nana Sangaré from the Republic of Mali was an accomplished speaker, showcased her experiences and expertise, par excellence, in counterterrorism across the Sahel countries. Colonel-Major Sangaré conducts daily exercises with her fellow officers from the Sahel countries at the Military College on analyzing and discussing information and the latest developments in the conflict with terrorist groups in various areas across the region.

Colonel-Major Sangaré is the first female officer in the Defense College in the Sahel region; she has achieved a highly esteemed rank and status motivated her great competence and perseverance. Of great note, the defense system of the Sahel countries gives no room to only singlehanded patriarchal positions without women; qualifications and efficient management abilities are key factors contributory to the leadership positions in the Sahel marked with internecine wars on terrorism for years. As such, gender-oriented politics has become an integral part of the long-term strategy of the Sahel countries in their counterterrorism efforts. Aminata Ndiaye, Gender Adviser to the Sahel Command, believes that the presence of women of army and security forces in the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) in areas targeted by terrorism, is a strong motivation for the local population to promote trust and cooperate with the armed forces and security.

Sangaré has engaged in counterterrorism war since early stages; in close cooperation with her national armed forces, Sangaré has successfully weathered the most difficult stages when terrorist groups took control of the north of the country. She has sustained deep experiences in counterterrorism in defense colleges in Mali, France, China and Morocco, before Sangaré was attracted to the Defense College of the Sahel countries in Nouakchott, Mauritania. Sangaré specializes in informatics and new technologies, which are considered today a decisive battleground against terrorism.

The G5 Defense Institute Project was first established in Mauritania in 2018; it has drawn wider support of France and other international partners since its inception. The Institute has trained the first cohort of 36 high-ranking officers in 2019. Today, they enjoy a common high military culture that enhances cohesion between the various coastal armed forces and the joint operation of military battalions.

In a video streamed live by the Sahel Group website to celebrate the counterterrorism contributions of women across the region in March 2020, Major-General Ibrahim Val Weld Al-Shaibani, Director of the Defense College of the Group of Five Countries, stated that Sangaré is more like a maestro

of an orchestra among her male and female colleagues who joined the College to further share experiences; Sangaré showcases the strength of women and their excellent presence in the military domain.

Sangaré has become a quintessential paragon of the Sahel countries in creating a new generation of military leaders in counterterrorism, not only to protect women from being victimized by the bloody violations of terrorist groups, but also to show that communities in the Sahel countries stand united against such extremist terrorist groups. The empowerment of women and engagement in the counterterrorism frontlines consider the ideology of violent extremist groups in Africa; such groups always seek by all means to attract female soldiers by deceptive messages that drum up for the empowerment of women and the improvement of their social and economic status, according to a research study developed by the United Nations Development Program in 2019.

## Shattering Illusion of Victimized Women

In the context of a multifaceted crisis in the Sahel-Saharan region, the G5 Sahel work in concert to best fulfill the tasks they are entrusted with to contribute to improving the living conditions of the population. Education, inter alia, constitutes a notorious challenge that must be addressed, especially education of girls alongside the increased participation of women in all aspects of social life due to their robust engagement in maintaining and consolidating peace and sustainable development.

Today, the Sahel countries are steadily making much headway on the path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Africa's Agenda 2063, and the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, agreed upon at the Summit of Heads of State of the African Union in Addis Ababa in 2014; they are agendas that prioritize the role of women as key partner in addressing the challenges that seem to be much targeted by terrorism across the communities of the Sahel countries.

In July 2015, the participants in the regional forum to enhance the position of women in the Sahel region, in N'Djamena, Chad, expressed their deep desire to develop women's social roles to protect women from being targeted by terrorist groups. This includes the fulfillment of greater responsibilities in civil society and the People's Assembly, which created a regional body at the Permanent Secretariat of the Sahel Group to follow up on women issues and ensure the implementation of relevant international conventions and covenants.

Major-General Mohamed Znaoui Sid Ahmed Ely, Head of Defense and Security Sector at the Executive Secretariat of the Sahel Five Group, believes that the Group has made



Rosemary A. DiCarlo

quantum leaps so far to empower women, such as appointing a female consultant in the Executive Secretariat, developing a policy on gender-oriented in the Group policies, introducing and heralding females into various positions, creating a platform for women in the Group, and the implementation of the women integration plan into the military and security corps. Enhancing the presence of women in the hierarchical positions of the defense and security forces of the Group of Five for the Sahel, including the joint force of the countries of the Group, is a deep trend and an urgent policy to conform human rights in the said countries to international humanitarian law, funded by the European Union (EU) at €30.000.000 and implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The trend of the Sahel countries to empower women is a serious response to the call of Rosemary Anne DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the United Nations, March 11, 2020, to strengthen the role of women at the core of the counterterrorism response.

### Setup of Military Leaders

It is noted that misogyny is at the core of the strategies of extremist groups. Therefore, women bear a great burden of violence; sexual slavery is the most notorious manifestation. Hence, empowering women and supporting their military presence on the front lines against terrorism was a powerful manner to express the strong cohesion of the African societies against extremism, and to dispel the stereotyped image of women that groups seek to propagandize.

The suggestion was made in a preliminary setup session hosted by the Defense College of the Group of Five for the Sahel in Nouakchott, attended by the heads of services in the military and security forces, and the joint force of the

countries of the Group, March 15, 2020, to enhance the presence of women in the bodies affiliated with the Group of Five for the Sahel, including the military and security forces, and the joint force of the Group, as a duty promoted by international agreements and United Nations recommendations to integrate women, which would be a strategic and practical advantage to counter terrorism and cross-border crime in the Sahel. The UN Resident Coordinator in Mauritania, Anthony Ohemeng Boamah, expressed his satisfaction with the interest of the defense and security forces and the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel in the presence of women in the hierarchical structures of the Group. Boamah further explained that such presence is a key factor contributory to integrating women into public life to better counter terrorism and transnational organized crime, in addition to being a duty provided for in international treaties and UN resolutions. He further stressed that the United Nations is keenly willing to further support Mauritania and the Group of Five for the Sahel as to achieve the goals of the Group: to establish peace and security and build a solid base for development in the environment of the Group and beyond.

The G5 Sahel Group, established February 16, 2014, based in Nouakchott, Mauritanian, represents a framework for regional and international governmental cooperation to counter terrorism, transnational organized crime, and human trafficking in the G5 Sahel Group (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad).

The heads of the five countries officially announced the formation of the joint cross-border force in Bamako, Mali, July 2, 2017, to streamline their efforts in combating security threats in the G5 Sahel Group. The formation of the joint military force

was approved by the UN Security Council in Resolution No. 2359, June 21, 2017, and was supported by France.

### Turning the Tables on Terrorism

Since the outset of the new millennium, and as a result of the strong blows directed at terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and the Middle East, especially Syria and Iraq, and due to the collapse of the situation in Libya, several groups found that heading to Africa may be a favorable opportunity to regroup and catch a breath, being enervated by the material and moral losses caused by the military strikes and the growth of awareness about the threats of terrorist organizations.

The poor education along with the fragile military coordination which the African societies are riddled with has been the main motive for the ubiquity of terrorist organizations in Africa, especially over the last ten years, for the emergence of extremist organizations such as Boko Haram in Nigeria (founded in 2002), and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which takes the desert between Mauritania, Algeria and Mali as the headquarters for own camps (established in 2007), the Ansar Al-Din in Mali (founded in 2011), ISIS (spread since 2015 in several African countries), and the Nusrat Al-Islam (founded in 2017), in addition to about fifty organizations of relatively different levels of strength and influence in various African countries. All such movements capitalize on illegal sources of funding, such as human trafficking, drugs, fraud, money laundering and ransom, according to the International Criminal Police (INTERPOL), and US State Department reports. Attacks take place almost daily in the G5 Sahel Group. In 2019, about 700 attacks took place, claiming the lives of more than two thousand victims, and hundreds of injuries, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Perhaps the challenges of combating COVID-19 pandemic required great efforts in the G5 Sahel Group, but counterterrorism remains the number-one concern for the G5 Sahel Group. Against such a blood-curdling backdrop of chaos, reports reveal girls being kidnapped, women raped and murdered in cold blood, causing a shock to the coastal population, as women are the poorest element in the war of extremist groups. It is clear that restoring the historical leadership role of women with robust engagement in the war on terrorism will turn the tables on the policies of combating extremism that mushrooms in Africa and the G5 Sahel Group. Weapons alone are inefficient, as the leaders of the G5 Sahel Group spelled out in the final statement of the French Pau Summit, January 2020, which gave a new vision to counterterrorism. The empowerment of women is one of the most prominent features. That is why Colonel Sangaré and her colleagues in the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel Group feel that their mission goes beyond their military field job to establish a new presence for women, contrary to the prevailing stereotype of women. ■



# RIGHTIST VIS-À-VIS LEFTIST EVOLUTION, HISTORY, TRAJECTORY AND GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS

■ Dr. Hicham Tiflati

A series of events in 2020 contributed to the growth of rightism and leftism, which were catapulted into the limelight of the political arena in Europe and North America. Again, with COVID-19 pandemic alongside the associated strict health laws equally contributed to increasing conspiracy theorists in societies marked with a close history of rightism and fundamentalist violence, including Qanon and Proud Boys as well as the opposition groups against the strict health measures imposed by their respective home countries to combat COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, global protests were staged against racial injustice under the banner of the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement that erupted in the USA, following the killing of the African-American George Floyd in public by policemen. Agitated as such, protesters took to the streets, and protested heated went viral globally. In response to such protests, the activity and violence of rightism and leftism increased online and offline across the USA and beyond into the entire globe.

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## Evolution and History

Poles apart, the rightist and leftist dichotomy as two basic terms came in circulation in France in the eighteenth century, when the whole world, especially Europe, was watching the French Revolution closely, with a pair of scrutinizing eyes tracking the development trajectory. With the tone set, terms such as rightist and leftist rose to prominence as political concepts, ballooning into the entire world.

The rightist and leftist dichotomy remains a heritage passed down and bequeathed to the French Revolution, or from the legacy of the French Constitutional Council, during the vote on the powers of the King on August 29 of 1789. The Constitutional Council had to discuss the veto right granted to the King. Upon voting, supporters of the royal veto (conservatives) were requested to stand to the right side of the hall, and opponents (modernists) were requested to stand to the left side of the hall. With the stage set as such, it became a new political divide. Following the adoption of the two said terms in French politics, rightists and leftists gained prominence throughout Europe, as two key references to political identity and descriptions of the political orientation of individuals and groups. Since then, the polemic (rightist and leftist) has become a challenge to political theorists.

However, the transformation of these two terms into basic, methodological, and official premises of political identity took more than a century. Of good note, the rightist and leftist dichotomy became institutionalized only in the first decade of the twentieth century, when they gained and formed clear-cut meanings. For instance, the opponents who broke away from the Communist Party were described as far-left or far-right deviants, especially opponents of Stalinism, when favouring far-left meant adopting a fundamentalist global workers' revolution, while favouring to far-right indicates the adoption of a manifestation of fundamentalist nationalist sentiment.

Such definitions were flexible and often changed to dance to the tune of the political situation and the ruling party. As such, we can distinguish between those who seek a literal framing of the meaning of -far-right and far-left, and those who are concerned with a historically essential interpretation of the basic meanings of the terms that have remained stagnant for centuries, taking into consideration new political definitions, such as conservative, liberal, progressive, reactionary. With this in mind, we can suggest that the terms far-right and far-left describe the national cultural orientation more than they describe the unchanging political scene.

It is almost impossible to recall the 1920s and 1930s in Europe without making references to -far-right or far-left as political identities. In the years between WWI and WWII, when

Europeans were grappling with the official policies of their respective countries, the use of the terms far-right and far-left was instrumentalized again as a tool to polarize the political spectrum and demonize political opponents. Both far-right and far-left became more fundamentalist, while the liberal center almost faded away.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Cold War increased the persecution of all the exponents of far-left. For instance, citizens would lose their government jobs, and they might be prosecuted if they disclosed their socialist or communist tendencies or declared their affiliation or sympathy with Eastern Camp. Such practices had a significant impact on the activity of the leftism. Meanwhile, conservative thinkers began to associate the growth of the liberal state with what they called leftism and affiliated communist associations, giving liberalism a negative colour.

During the Vietnam War, the two terms came back to the fore; making references to rightism and leftism became important when people voiced their differences about national policies at home and abroad. As such, rightism and leftism facilitated their debate and mooted discussions. Today, we can argue leftism refers to progressivism and liberalism, while rightism refers to conservatism and deviant patriotism. The center is still in constant change and development.

### Dialectics of Rightism and Leftism

The big question is: Why do most far-right parties reject the traditional (classical) distinction between (rightism and leftism), placing themselves off such a dichotomy? Subject-matter experts spell out that there are four key reasons why far-right parties seek to classify themselves off the scope of rightism and leftism:

1. The core ideology of each party, which believes that rightism and leftism are political opponents that should not be trusted and allied with.

2. The politics of far-right and the unilateral interpretation of the world, which believes it is illegitimate to have a dichotomy of rightism and leftism as they make up no political addition or any cogency.
3. Rejection of the negative connotation of the term far-right associated with racism and racial discrimination, encouraging them to learn about discrimination in its entirety.
4. Far-rightists define themselves as neither leftist nor rightist! This allows them to distinguish themselves from other political spectra and to claim that they do not belong to or pride themselves on the current traditional politics.

For instance, the French presidential elections in 2017 re-talked about this distinction and the dichotomy between rightism and leftism. Far-Right Leader, Marine Le Pen, claimed that these two terms are meaningless, and that the real division is between globalization and nationalists.

### Globalization and Extremist Nationalism

Since the terms rightism and leftism originated in France, it is not surprising that the schism between the two groups in this country is glaringly wide. Many politicians have made efforts to smooth away the dichotomy (rightism and leftism). They introduced higher patriotic and democratic principles. For example, former French President Charles de Gaulle challenged these two terms, seeking to overcome partisan divisions in French society and within his government, in the name of the greater good of the Republic.

Likewise, the Pen to the top Front Par-  
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the French far-right,  
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Charles de Gaulle Statue

dency should be understood in the context of the far-right party's aspirations to become an official government party acceptable to all French people, with all their orientations. Again, the struggle for this goal has become the party's strategic priority.

As such, Le Pen began a dual policy of demonizing her party, bringing it closer to public opinion, and recruiting outside the regular party lines, introducing a new division behind rightism and leftism, with globalization and nationalism as the defining line between them. It should be noted that far-right keeps the idea of leftism alive in politics and in the conscience of associated followers; the existence of far-right is associated with leftism, with continued threat to national and social peace.

### Threats and Political Violence

Contrary to many media reports published in 2020 and 2021, far-right extremists were not alone behind the violence and vandalism sustained by several Western countries. Far-left groups have also mushroomed widely to obstruct the protests of other dissenting groups. To better understand the potential threats to activists from the far-right and far-left and to learn about the interactions between such conflicting political movements, it is critically necessary to take note of the activities of such groups, not only in the public sphere, but also online, examining their extremist activities on the known platforms on which they operate actively.

Although extremists are in continued conflict, they often find a common enemy in a given centralized state, such as law enforcement agencies, central governments, and public buildings. In short, far-right and far-left groups come together on common grounds, manifested in nihilism and anarchism. The two said sides seek to achieve the maximum possible, even if it triggers a civil war; the chaos they orchestrate to cause is for them a prerequisite for civil war to erupt. For instance, the Youth Liberation Front in Portland describes itself as a decentralized network of independent youth groups, seeking in direct action to realize the complete liberation of state institutions from the tyranny of government and capitalism.

Far-right groups saw former US President Donald Trump as an important ally in the White House, deemed capable of restoring matters back to normal and eliminating (traitors) and the far-left. In 2019, Trump forced on the federal law enforcement agencies to ignore the activities of the rightists while to clamp down only on the leftist threat, which he considered the greatest malice facing the USA. Meanwhile the rightists were allowed to grow and recruit overtly in such an ominous fashion. The scale and severity of the threat became glaringly stark in the events of January 6, when the news headlines and social media splashed images of far-right groups, followers of the Keo Anon conspiracy movement and supporters of white supremacy storming Capitol Hill.

### Mutual Extremism

In global conflicts, it is critically important to best understand far-right activism, which claims to preserve identity and white culture or to counter the progressive leftists, in which activists see a destructive and rebellious force against traditional values and local culture. Despite the political differences, far-right and far-left remain similar psychological and behavioural characteristics, while far-right autocrats tend to strongly support the existing hierarchy, and far-left autocrats insist on strongly opposing the existing hierarchy. Both parties share a mental bedrock that makes them have more in common than the other way around. ■



# LIPTAKO-GOURMA CENTER OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

- MOHAMED AG AHMEDOU
- MASSIRE DIOP

The **Liptako-Gourma** region is known as the tri-border area for being shared among three countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. It covers an area of 370,000 KM2. The region has become a flashpoint of nonstop turmoil, conflict and violence, where several terrorist groups have been active, competing for self-assertion and gaining more territory and power.

The region has become a breeding ground for terrorist groups to emerge due to the protracted conflict between tribes and communities, along with poverty, drought, unemployment, corruption, the rugged geographical nature of the region, the poor government control over most of its territory, and the national porous borders. This has made the region a ticking bomb ready to explode and destroy the Sahel Region and beyond.



- Researcher specialized in terrorism cases of the Sahelo-Saharan Region, Mali.
- Researcher specialized in security cases of the Sahel Region, Mali.



### **Global Interest**

The Liptako-Gourma region attracts major global attention for its abundant mineral resources, which include gold, oil, uranium, and phosphate. Some researchers suggest that the region—and the Greater Sahara in general—shall only reach stability when Western and European interests are secured, posed by uranium and energy sources. However,

It has become an attraction to terrorist groups and their growth since the geographic vulnerability of the region, that prevails throughout the vast desert areas and the tropical areas covered with forests, allowed the presence of secure terrorist havens and lairs, which are hard to reach or fight.

Even with all the efforts exerted by the three countries, the money spent, and the programs implemented, the security of the region is yet compromised. Given the political crises and security vulnerability of the region, other crises emerge resulting from environmental factors, such as the scarcity of resources, drought, and poverty, which undermine any aspirations for stability and peace in the region.

### **Reasons for Turmoil and Violence**

The Liptako-Gourma region has long witnessed ethnic clashes and has survived spiraling conflicts due to disputes among communities; bloody clashes have erupted between the Fulani and Daoussahak ethnic groups in the Menaka region and lasted until the emergence of terrorist groups in the region in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The injustice, exclusion and marginalization felt by people have been exploited by terrorist groups to recruit them. They were provoked with the aim to protect their interests and settle accounts with their rivals in other tribes and communities.

With the emergence of terrorism in Niger and the prolonged conflict between Fulani pastoralist communities and other communities, such as the Tuareg people and the Songhai people, genocides were perpetrated in several northern regions, resulting in many casualties. Consequently, the Fulani ethnic group was persecuted on the pretext of counter-terrorism. The situation was exploited by ISIS former leader in the Greater Sahara Adnan Abou Walid Al-Sahraoui, who recruited the frustrated Fulanis as the armed wing of his group. The Songhai ethnic group also took part in this conflict, where some opposition members were accused of funneling arms for them. These armaments have fueled the clashes between the communities in feud and exacerbated the divisions between them.

The forest men and pastors in Burkina Faso have long marginalized Fulani youth in both Balé and Sanguié provinces. Accordingly, the conflict resulted in the emergence of groups armed for self-protection in 2015, such as the Koglweogo, Guardians of the Bush. While the Fulanis resorted to joining terrorist groups to protect themselves against violations committed by the army and other rival communities.

## Security Agencies

Regional states and international organizations have made attempts to establish peace in the region, but in vain; flames of violence were fierce and out of control. The situation required the deployment of security forces. Even though such forces carried out consecutive strikes on such terrorist groups, they still do not have the capacity to gain control and completely restore security. The forces include:

**First: French Operation Barkhane:** they are composed of four thousand soldiers, located in Gao, Mali. Ever since they started launching their operations in the Sahel Region in January 2013, they have struggling to put an end to the violent terrorism that has plagued the whole region, and fend off attacks by ISIS, and Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) in the Greater Sahara, who take innocent lives.

**Second: The UN Peacekeeping Mission:** they are concerned with the disarmament of terrorist and militant groups and stabilization in Mali. Despite the fact that the strength of the force stood at 15,000 soldiers, the UN Peacekeeping Mission was helpless to disarm the terrorist groups and restore peace and security across the region. However, the mission itself faced terrorist attacks, inflicting mass casualties. The mission has lost around 300 soldiers ever since its deployment, mostly killed in terrorist attacks.



**Third: The Sahel Alliance:** this joint force was created in 2017 by five coastal states: Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania, for security cooperation in the face of terrorist threats. The alliance was financially supported by France in order to achieve its goals. However, the desired outcome was not achieved due to funding constraints and a state of confusion and disharmony between the governments of the five states in facing the enemy.

**Fourth: The Takuba Task Force:** this force is comprised of special European forces from 13 states, including: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Mali, and Niger. So far, it only includes 600 soldiers from France, Italy, Estonia, Sweden, and the Czech Republic, in addition to Norway, which will soon join the force. This said force is responsible for accompanying the region's armies in extended combat operations around what is known as the Tri-Border Area: Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

Meanwhile, the Malian armed forces are under-equipped, and they endure considerable hardship protecting their locations against terrorist groups that move freely in such topography. The Malian forces constantly face violent attacks inflicting heavy toll. Moreover, most of their bases located within the cities are vulnerable too.

## Key Terrorist Groups

It is almost impossible to narrow down terrorist groups and accurately locate them since they are spread along the



three borders. However, three of them are the most prominent as follows:

- **The Dozos:** an armed group often accused of abusing the Fulani community. They have gotten out of control, recruiting many teens and minors, and often attacking armed forces instead of helping them to secure the region. They also launched several attacks on innocent citizens.
- **The Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM):** an armed group that merged into Al-Qaeda terrorist network in the Sahel Region in 2017. They are most active in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, and are the most active terrorist group in the region. They seek to establish their presence as an influential force and are substantially influenced by ISIS. Although the JNIM members are way less than ISIS, they have launched powerful attacks, inflicting many casualties among the Malian army and foreign forces. Observers reported that JNIM induces citizens by bribery and intimidation to assist them in their attacks.
- **The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS):** this ISIS branch emerged in the region under the rise of violence and terrorist operations, seeking to move its core from the Middle East to Africa. ISGS has been vigorously spreading in Mali and Niger since the fall of its alleged principality over Iraq and the Levant. They perpetrated many massacres against civilians, most notoriously in Ouatagouna and Karou, the Ansongo Cercle, in August 2021, as well as in Darey-Daye near the Malian border with Niger.

The aforementioned groups have been competing with one another in the Liptako-Gourma region to the extent of occasional bloody clashes, leaving many casualties behind. This rivalry started between ISGS and JNIM by the end of 2019 following the transition of combatants from the Macina Liberation Front of the Fulani ethnic group to ISIS, and the Amadou Koufa governance being declared unilateral,

aiming at the moderate application of the sharia, having no problem opening negotiations with Mali.

That was probably what prompted Al Naba' newspaper issued by ISIS to call Iyad Ag Ghaly and Amadou Koufa apostates and traitors. Observers assert that the next main attack on terrorist groups shall be carried out by Africa. However, it will not take place between governments of the region on the one hand and militant groups on the other. They will rather witness a bloody clash between those groups due to the rivalry between them, which may last for years.

### Terrorist Groups Funding

Over the course of time, terrorist groups have secured funding sources for their criminal activities, which include:

- ◆ Hostage-taking and ransom;
- ◆ human trafficking, blackmail, and robbery;
- ◆ exploiting non-profit organizations;
- ◆ levying taxes on citizens;
- ◆ illegal trade of oil, coal, diamonds, gold, and cryptocurrencies. Terrorist groups depend heavily on drug trade flows, which is very popular among terrorists in the region. They carry out trafficking operations at gold mines. They receive this revenue in cash or in kind, such as livestock, or sometimes people for recruitment or enslavement. All this income is designated to fund terrorist activities and support combatants and their families.

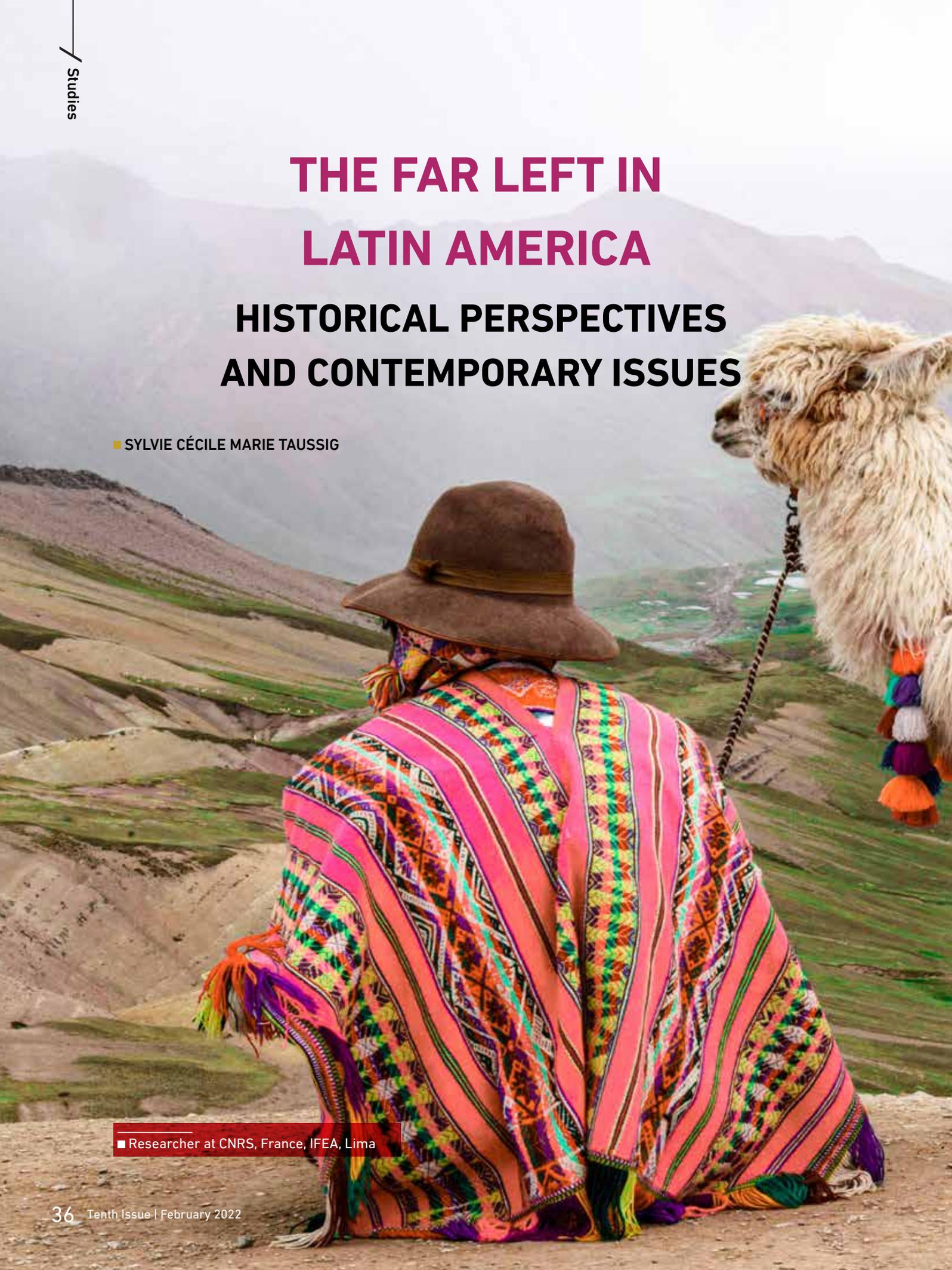
The approach preferred by states of the Liptako-Gourma region in counter-terrorism has not paid off on the ground, showing no sign of terrorist activity inhibition. In fact, the violence led by terrorist groups has vastly spread, which requires adopting a more comprehensive approach that relies on a strong country-level presence, specifically in remote areas, and providing basic services, such as water, healthcare, education, professional training, employment generation, and raising living standards for the youth and women. ■

# THE FAR LEFT IN LATIN AMERICA

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

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**Latin America** consists of nineteen countries, extending over a wide geographical region, from Mexico in the north to Chile and Argentina in the south. These countries have witnessed hugely different historical experiences, rich in their cultural and linguistic diversity. Although they differ locally and are not united politically or economically, Latin America with its geographical, historical, linguistic, religious, and political roots is politically acceptable; these countries also share several key factors, including poor governments. Most of the Latin American countries do not control their territories, opening Pandora's box for drug smuggling and trafficking and the outbreak of wars gangs. This makes it difficult to realize development, prosperity, and well-being. Social inequality is notoriously rampant, opportunities in the education and health sectors are unequal, and infrastructure is poor. Riddled with these challenges, the far left became the only political force that sought to establish unions and blocs that cross borders and bring together countries to form one political front.





## FAR LEFT IN TWO REALITIES

The reality of the far left in Latin America is different from what it is in Europe. The revolution, according to Marx and Lenin in the Soviet experience, depends on the conscious working class (the proletariat), and the establishment of socialism can only be the control of the working class over the means of production politically and economically, which is termed the tyranny of the class. Working class (dictatorship of the proletariat), the biggest challenge to the far left in Latin America is the low proportion of the working class, despite the efforts made in the interwar period by some countries to achieve industrial autonomy.

It must be pointed out that it is necessary to be patient in assessing this challenge in the countries of the Southern Cone. Like Argentina, Chile along with Brazil, which are characterized by what the Nordic countries call the informal economy, have economies shrouded in ambiguity, designed to exploit some of the gaps in the government systems for tax evasion, and other irregularities. However, it is sometimes subject to strict regulatory controls and standards in traditional structures, such as federations and unions. These economic practices prevailing in the countries with the informal economy did not receive attention in the Marxist theory according to the Soviet applications. Therefore, the theory was not fully applied; rather, the far left in Latin America relied on its own notions of the people

and populism, which, albeit ambiguous, is a defining line for them.

## INFLUENCERS ON THE FAR LEFT

### A. Cuban Revolution

The Cuban Revolution had a profound impact on the political culture of Latin America. The revolutionary war broke out on the continent according to the Foucauldian theory developed by the French thinker Roger Depres on the doctrine of armed guerrilla wars. Although the results of this inconclusive war, its ideologies mushroomed widely, the leaders became icons and sources of inspiration, especially Che Guevara, who was executed in Bolivia.

This type of revolutionary struggle was criticized and challenged, causing the fragmentation of the far left, and the emergence of Maoist groups that adopted a new theory based on the ideologies of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, and based on the model developed by the ideologies of the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong; it is more suitable for the conditions of Latin America in terms of the expansion of the oppressed peasantry.

### B. Cold War

Latin politics was affected by the conditions of the Cold War, and the direct and indirect interference of the United States of America in Operation Condor, in which the far-

right authorities in the Southern Cone of Latin America practiced political repression and assassinations to eliminate communism, which weakened the far left and changed the features of revolutionary ideological approaches.

### C. Social Influences

Among the influences on the change in the trajectory of the far left is the movement of exodus from the countryside and uncontrolled urban expansion, which created a huge popular sector suffering from neglect and exclusion, and an informal economy. These two issues are not compatible with the traditional far-left organizations and movements. The traditional left was previously indifferent to these social groups, and the new changes forced it to try to integrate them into its plans, without causing any clashes.

While the traditional leftists previously neglected the impact of indigenous societies and the class of forced laborers who do not own land, far left movements today consider the indigenous community and the neglected and oppressed class, with the importance of the working class, and classify them in the actors influencing the radical transformation, capable of causing a level of conflict with the middle classes on which liberal right governments depend.

### D. Nationalism

This includes the political factors, especially the American intervention, and the cultural factors, the most important of which is the eradication of indigenous cultures in some cases eliminating them, historical elements associated with the memory of the colonial history of the region, and economic elements. Combined together, they all made patriotism or nationalism a central focus of fundamentalist

revolutionary ideology. The left and the far left in Latin America had previously shown that the upheaval of the Cold War, an unbridled and inspiring nationalism, manifested itself in the long-forgotten ideals of Simon Bolivar; it was reformulated according to the fundamentalist ideology of the indigenous people of America, which calls for a return to America before Western colonialism.

## CONCLUSION

Latin American societies are deeply rooted in Catholicism; they are not purely secular societies, which compels the far left to adopt the Christian identity as a starting point for its struggle against colonialism and imperialist capitalism, unlike the general left who sees religion as the opium of the people. The militant Christian liberation ideology influenced and inspired the trend of political Islam; religion for them is the main engine for the fight against colonialism and global capitalism. In view of all these features, the far left gives priority to social goals before economic goals, and to voluntary work before forced work.

This article addressed the fundamentalist revolutionary leftist ideology of Latin America from a comprehensive view, historically, economically, culturally, politically, and ideologically to well understand the feasibility of the fields in which it operates, the issues it addresses at the continental level, and the challenges it poses to all countries of the world for being an inspiring and polarizing trend, since the Zapatista movement and the São Paulo Forum, which created the global ideological core of the far left: anti-imperialism, environmentalism, feminism, anti-colonialism, and Native American causes. ■



# FOREWORD



## WHEN WOMEN BECOME TERRORISTS!

**The theory** and stereotype premised on terrorism as a patriarchal phenomenon must necessarily be contested and challenged. Equally, it is critically important to analyze the involvement of women in terrorist organizations and better understand their assigned responsibilities. Taken together, such a precondition explains how and what women can contribute to counterterrorism efforts.

Within living memory, women have joined and supported violent extremist groups, serving as fighters, recruits, supporters, and fundraisers, while pooling subsidies. Women involved in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) accounted for about 40% across all operational functions, even in commanding combat units, while substantially contributed to raising the FARC military capabilities.

In a similar vein, women co-founded the German Baader-Meinhof Gang and the Japanese Red Army. Even when matriarchal leadership was in eclipse, they provided critically important practical support, including funneling weapons, recruiting fighters, pooling donations and spreading propaganda. For instance, women in Ku Klux Klan attracted more than half a million members between 1921 and 1931.

Over the past few decades, the involvement of women in violent and extremist organizations has snowballed into reality. Although such organizations are traditionally believed to be purely patriarchal, a closer examination reveals that women evinced robust engagement in about 60% of the armed rebel groups. In Sri Lanka, the all-female battalions of the Tamil Tigers in the 1990s gained a reputation for their fierce behavior and brutal battles.

The women involved in terrorist crimes are increasingly growing. For instance, the women arrested in Europe on charges of carrying out terrorist operations in 2016 increased up to 26%. Again, women made up about 13% of the foreign fighters returning from conflict zones. In 2017,

the Global Extremism Monitor one hundred suicide attacks, carried out by 181 women, accounting for 11% of the total terrorist operations in 2017.

In a similar vein, Boko Haram involved more than 450 women and girls – about 35% were teenagers – in suicide attacks between 2014 and 2018. Such attacks killed more than 1,200 people. These women now account for about two-thirds of the suicide attackers of Boko Haram.

Suicide attacks by women are more lethal than those carried out by men. As revealed by a research study conducted on five terrorist groups, the average number of victims in attacks carried out by women was 8.4 victims compared to 5.3 victims in attacks by men; attacks by women were less likely to bungle.

Although women's involvement in terrorism is not in its infancy, the experience of ISIS in recruiting, weaponizing, and instrumentalizing women in terrorist activity remains a major challenge. Research has estimated that the average number of women members of terrorist groups is between 10% and 15%. A research study conducted by the Netherlands International Center for Combating Terrorism in 2016 reveals that the women who joined ISIS from eleven EU countries accounted for 17%. Michèle Coninx, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the Executive Management of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTED), was quoted as saying that between 10% and 20% of Westerners who joined ISIS are women.

A recent report, based on the most detailed data available, revealed that the highest percentage of women among foreign terrorist fighters was in East Asia, (35%), Eastern Europe (23%), Western Europe (17%). Equally important, about 90% of the women who joined ISIS were motivated by passing passion and enthusiasm, without considering any legitimate grounds, reasoning, and logic. ■

**Editor-in-Chief**

# AtTAHALOF

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الائتلاف العسكري لمحاربة الإرهاب  
ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION

