

Two Women Suicide Bombings: Chechnya and Tunisia

Dr Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin



Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism

اسلام کے تھیولوجی آف کاؤنٹر ٹیررزم

“Woman blows herself up” has become the *sine qua non* title of choice for introducing a news article on female suicide bombing. Its perverse “short hand” grabs, captures and holds hostage the targeted audience, gaining their attention. When searching for additional information about the two most recent female suicide bombings, both articles started this way: “Woman blows herself up.” Both took place in capital cities – one in Grozny, Chechnya on November 17 and the other in Tunis, Tunisia on October 29. Then googling other articles surfaced starting with nearly the same phrase “Woman blows herself up” for other incidents as well which also took place in capital cities. There was Mogadishu, Somalia 2012, Dhaka, Bangladesh 2016 and Dushanbe, Tajikistan in 2005. A precursor to the spread of this copy-cat behavior in terrorism was encountered in the capital of Israel, Jerusalem with a series of female suicide bombings beginning in 2002.

Media plays into the hands of these terrorist organizations by presenting the women *as if* they were solo actresses, “a woman . . .”, the female version of the “lone wolf” or “lone feline” when in fact, they are deployed by terrorist organizations. They have been preyed upon by them and have turned them into predators murdering others. The theme of predator lurks behind the image of the animal – such as a she-wolf which happens to be the national symbol of Chechnya, deriving its power from the violent bonding of nature’s predilection for the cruelty of predator-prey. Nature is cruel but human beings do not have to be cruel. Held captive by the jihadi group the female suicide bomber is *shamed* into carrying out an attack though she may express bravado publicly. It is an act for the theater of terrorism.

Sexuality tinges the female suicide bomber by providing clever cover for the jihadi’s fierce hatred of the female in general and wish to annihilate her in order to free himself from the insufferable bond of the mother because in shame honor cultures and jihadi terrorist organizations are “hyper” shame honor cultures, it is psychologically taboo to separate from the mother. The bond is smothering and stifling causing huge unconscious buried rage which then finds solace with a like-minded group of men who hold sadistic fantasies that then are acted out through suicide bombings. Yet the mother should not be blamed because this is the upshot of having been raised in an environment where the female is THE object of abuse and the poison container for the clan, the tribe, the qabil (Somali) or the teip (Chechen) violent projections.

In the case of the Chechen female suicide bomber incident, it was reported that the group is affiliated with the Islamic State though there has been no confirmation. Mass numbers of Chechens went to fight in Syria. Now they are returning home. Kadyrov, who rules the country with an iron fist, mimicking Putin, has inadvertently raised the stakes by demanding strict adherence to Chechen traditions of honor and its severe ideologies. Gays have been persecuted under his reign. Chechen culture also has a violent tradition of females who targeted Imperial troops during the 19th century. They were known to grab hold of them, taking them hostage and hurling themselves together with the invading soldiers over the cliffs of mountainous Chechnya, thus committing murder-suicide, a precursor template of suicide bombing’s murder-suicide. (See Kobrin, *Maternal Drama of the Chechen Jihadi*, 2014). During the separatist terrorist events between 2000-2004 the notorious Black Widows carried out savage acts of terror, most notorious was the Moscow Theater Hostage event of October 2002 with 18 females.

While Kadyrov has managed to keep a lid on the violence, this month's suicide bombing seems to be signaling the uncapping of more to come especially for the northern Caucasus.

In the case of the Tunisian female suicide bombing, Mouna age 30, a former university English major, she blew herself up on Habib Bourghiba Avenue in front of the Tunisian national theater, echoing the Moscow Theater attack. She injured 29 including 10 police officers. Mouna was recalled by some who knew her as the sweetest girl, kind, generous and modest. Preyed upon by the jihadis, she became prey and then lethal predator, embodying the prey-predator syndrome. She was unknown to the security apparatus. It can be hard for military and police intelligence to grasp the ramifications of growing up female in a male dominated shame honor culture. At the most basic level these nice innocent young girls are particularly at risk to radicalize because they have been the object of chronic abuse. Their *unconscious* pent-up rage is great and it seeks to find an outlet. Mouna internalized male rage of the female as self-hatred and then merely projected out under the guise of a suicide bombing. The fit is like hand in glove. The shame honor world is a world in reverse as it is oriented toward death and dying. They love death and we love life.

One might think of the female suicide bomber "belt" as a metaphor for not only holding and bonding to the hard object of all the bombs but literally holding together all the violent emotionally lived beliefs, that are the radical ideologies and their sadistic fantasies. The ideologies harness the power of the perverse sadistic male fantasies whose driver is to eradicate the feminized Other.

Fantasies do not occur out of the clear blue. They have a long preceding history rooted in early childhood. Birds of a feather flock together, that is jihadis with similar violent fantasies come together to share in them and then act them out. The female suicide bomber is just another expendable object to be annihilated in this kind of mindset as are all the real victims who are injured and murdered. Indeed, one of the biggest problems with titling a news article – "Woman blows herself up" is that it shifts focus away from the true victims. This is the perversity of the act and its allure. In the meantime, there will no doubt be more articles bearing the title "Woman Blows Herself Up + fill-in the blank for the name of the country."

In order to deal with the root of terrorism, it is vitally important for the religious scholars to recognize and know this psychological terrain which is being manipulated by the jihadis who cling to perverse ideologies to justify their sadism. This psychological knowledge can help facilitate promoting a change in Islamic theology with a trickle-down effect into the respective cultures. The healthier the culture the healthier its people. No culture wants to see itself only be obsessed with death. The opposite of the death fusion is not the female suicide bomber but the life bearing mother.

Photo: Rediff