



'Women in modern terrorism, from liberation wars to global jihad and the Islamic State'

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BOOK REVIEWS

'Women in modern terrorism, from liberation wars to global jihad and the Islamic State', by Jessica Davis, Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland, 2017, \$37.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4422-7498-3

With recent Islamist inspired attacks carried out by women and their children in Indonesia and the conviction of a mother and her daughters in the United Kingdom *Women in Modern Terrorism* is a timely study of women in modern terrorist organisations. Throughout this book Davis dispels any misconceptions that female involvement in terrorism is an aberration or exception through detailed case studies. Using a mixed method approach and drawing from diverse theoretical disciplines Davis conducts an empirical study of women's role in modern terrorist organisations. Drawing evidence from suicide attacks carried out by women, Davis' main objective is to provide an authoritative account of women's involvement in terrorism which she achieves through a series of case studies outlining organisational and societal factors that contribute to women's involvement in modern terrorism.


In chapter one women's roles are explored from a group perspective, exploring why terrorist organisations use women across a range of capacities highlighting that while the use of women is not unusual, their incorporation into the decision making structures of groups is rare. Davis outlines organisational factors that lead to women being deployed as operatives arguing the capacity in which women are used provides insight into groups operating environment and strategic directions. In chapter two Davis explores the complexities around the individual radicalisation processes for both men and women highlighting two discernible differences that exist between the genders. Men are more likely to engage in these activities for risk and status, while women's involvement generally requires a social network or connection to facilitate access.

It is through case studies outlined across chapters three to seven Davis highlights the roles women have held in both secular and religious groups. Using these studies Davis demonstrates the range of external and internal organisational factors that influence women's level of participation. Throughout each chapter Davis contrasts two organisations to demonstrate that despite similar evolutionary processes and backgrounds, ideological foundations or common enemies there are organisational or societal factors that will influence when and how women are used in conflict. Using the differing approaches by Al Shabab and Boko Haram in their use of women, Davis demonstrates Boko Haram's high use of female suicide bombers reflects the limited value they place on women and their need to adapt their approach due to counter terrorism pressures and recruiting restraints. This is contrasted with Al Shabab whose use of women has been in facilitation roles rather than in tactical roles such as suicide bombers. This differing approach is argued to be a reflection of the conservative societal values of the communities in which they are based.

'Women in Modern Terrorism' demonstrates the consistent roles women have played in conflict across secular and religious groups. Through this analysis Davis provides evidence based conclusions to assist counter terrorism practitioners and further the field of women in terrorism studies.

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