



Economic Causes of Female Suicide Terrorism: Perceived Versus Actual

Seung-Whan Choi

Summary by Hayden Lucas, University of Arkansas

Summary

This study focuses on suicide attacks committed by female Muslim bombers in order to further examine the relationship between the economy and terrorism. The author argues that Muslim women might be more inclined to engage in acts of suicide terrorism due to perceptions of national economic conditions, rather than actual economic conditions. In other words, when Muslim women feel strong emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, hopelessness, etc.) about their country's economy, or feel that their national economy is weak, they may be more likely to engage in suicide attacks.

Methods

The author provides a statistical analysis of 4,495 incidents of suicide terrorism (224 female bombers and 4,271 male bombers) from 1981 to 2015. This includes instances of suicide bombings and related data from various open sources; however, the primary data come from the Suicide-Attack Network Database (SAND).

Results

Muslim women are not using their own economic misfortunes to rationalize carrying out suicide attacks, but instead are participating in suicide terrorism for more subjective reasons (e.g., when they perceive that their national economy is unstable). In addition, the author suggests that female suicide bombers are more susceptible (compared to their male counterparts) to being recruited or used by international terrorist organizations. Another possible motivator is that Muslim women may be more likely to engage in suicide terrorism when their homeland is under foreign military rule.

Implications

Terrorist organizations will often use propaganda to distort objective economic situations to influence people's perceptions of the national economy. In doing this, these organizations are able to more easily manipulate women into becoming suicide attackers. Knowing this recruitment tactic and uncovering how women (who have been shown to be more successful in attacking, gaining publicity, and causing emasculation to men after the attack) will be useful in future counterterrorism research. Law enforcement should also pay careful attention when it appears that terrorist groups are purposefully distorting media to show more economic hardship than is

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