

# Explanations of Female Terrorism. Discourses about Chechen Terrorists in the Russian Mass Media: “Easy Girls”, “Coarse Women” or Fighters?

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Terrorism is a complicated phenomenon, which manifests itself differently in various socio-cultural, economic and political contexts. It is generally characterized as an illegitimate use, or threat of use, of violence against individuals, vital infrastructure in society, or buildings which is intended to achieve sociopolitical goals through fear and destruction involving expected and or unexpected consequences.

Our article will focus on female terrorism and the way it is framed in the Russian context. Moreover, we will review some ways of explaining women’s participation in Russian pre-revolutionary terrorism and in modern terrorist practices in post-Soviet Russia. We will discuss not only conclusions drawn by academics in their scholarly works, but also the paradoxes of public opinion and “common sense” that translate into judiciary practice and mass culture. Female terrorism is a challenge to many explanations of terrorism. Particularly, it is a challenge to the genderedness of terrorism. Thus, according to Sinelnikov, “terror is a masculine phenomenon... masculinity itself is actualized within the framework of practices of its political representations” (Sinelnikov 1998). The phenomenon of terrorism makes clear again that the concepts of maleness and femaleness are still not established once and for all, they are a result of the changes in culture and social relations. Obviously, horror and fear can be associated not only with male qualities.

## **Women and terrorism in the Russian revolution**

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, terrorist and revolutionary violence, which was, among others, inspired by Marxist ideas, played an important role in Russia. In some Marxist theory there is a belief that social problems could be solved by violence only, violence playing the role of the “midwife of history” (Shishkov 1990). In particular, terrorism became popular with revolutionary organizations in several countries in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and found a classical expression in the activities of the group Popular Will (Narodnaya Volia),<sup>1</sup> with which a women, Vera Zasulich, threw in her lot. She is known to

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<sup>1</sup> 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian revolutionary organization that regarded terrorist activities as the best means of forcing political reform and overthrowing the tsarist autocracy. Narodnaya Volia was organized in 1879 by members of revolutionary Populist party, Zemlya I Volya (“Land and Freedom”), who were disillusioned by the failure of their efforts to promote social revolution by agitating among peasants.

have shot at the St. Petersburg town governor and to have been acquitted by the court (Budnitsky 2000). According to Zhrebkina (Zhrebkina 1998), story of a female terrorist, Vera Zasulich, is one of overwhelming patriotic female passion, a protest caused by a distorted world view. Her act of terrorism was perceived as a heroic protest against social injustice. Public opinion transformed Vera Zasulich into a heroine and she acquired many followers. Nine of twenty-nine members of the Popular Will executive committee, that planned the assassination of government officials, were women, including Sofia Perovskaya, the first woman in Russia executed after a state trial. The 78 members of the fighting organization of socialist-revolutionaries who considered themselves the successors of Popular Will included 25 women.<sup>2</sup>

Studies of women's participation in terrorist organizations in Russia are rather few.<sup>3</sup> Knight, who analyzed the biographies of socialist-revolutionaries, came to the conclusion that many of them showed a tendency to suicide, and their participation in terrorist practice could be explained psychologically by a bent for death – "the act of terrorism was frequently an act of suicide" (Knight 1979). This approach ascribes the participation of women in terrorism to their mental pathology. In developing the psychiatric interpretation of terrorism as a special behavioral practice, researchers note that mental deviations in female terrorists can be a consequence of participation in terrorist activity (constant pressure, risk, fear, imprisonment). Budnitsky also notes that suicidal motives were characteristic of a considerable number of (male – V. Shch.) terrorists (Budnitsky 2000). What is neglected in these interpretations are the social and cultural explanatory factors, which will be pursued in this paper. They seem to be of vital importance, since it has been noted that the aspiration to self-sacrifice for the good of society arose with the expansion of women's access to education and participation in cultural and political life. The moral justification of acts of terrorism connected with risk to one's own life is bound here with the choice of individual destiny. Women and men of this new generation aspired to a better life for peasants and women, and rejected the foundations of the patriarchal family. Hundreds of young women joined the movement Popular Will from 1873 to 1877, disseminating socialist ideas among the peasantry. Only returning to a traditional family in the role of wife or mother could be an alternative to participation in the movement for many of them. Women from Popular Will were distinguished by their adherence to the organization. They never relaxed, and refused to recognize their [perceived] weaknesses or special needs. For example, Olga Liubatovich, when pregnant, carried heavy boxes with an explosive, and Sofia Perovskaya prepared dynamite in greater quantities and faster than men. Women virtually never tried to mitigate their fate and often assumed overall responsibility for other participants of the movement at proceedings.

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<sup>2</sup> See Latysheva.

<sup>3</sup> See Broido 1977, Engel 1983, Neuburger, et al. 1996.

## **Female terrorism in cultural representations**

Regarding Soviet historiography and political science, the subject of terrorism was taboo for serious monographic studies before the disintegration of the USSR. Articles on terrorism by Western imperialistic powers prevailed, while the Russian revolutionary terrorism of the beginning of the century was ideologically justified.

However, the topic of terrorism was considered in the cultural realm. The desire to represent the participants of the organization Popular Will on screen arose early in Soviet cinematography. Two directors – Pjotr Chardynin (“Sofia Perovskaya”, Dmitri Haritonov’s production, released on August 3, 1917) and Yakov Protazanov (“No blood, please”, Iosif Yermoliev’s production, released on May 30, 1917) – almost simultaneously produced biographical films about Sofia Perovskaya. While Perovskaya’s destiny became an occasion for creating a spectacular melodrama based on historical material for Chardynin, Protazanov asked the audience to consider whether a human being may be deprived of life for the good of the people, and answered in the negative (Ginzburg 1963). Also, gender was a topic there.

The Soviet cameraman Alexander Lemberg noted in his memoirs that, “Maria Goricheva, who starred in Chardynin’s version, had to create the character of a woman devoted to revolution on screen for the first time. The audiences that had a chance to see this film will never forget her face, which expressed the revolutionary’s dauntless courage and readiness to accept death for the sake of the forthcoming triumph of the people’s will” (Lemberg 1968). This perception is consonant with the rather influential ideas, widespread in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that terrorism is an inevitable companion of a revolutionary movement, identical to a form of revolutionary struggle, a function of revolutionary parties, and society’s self-defence against the tyranny of authorities, which was of importance for agitation. Men as well as women were considered part of this representing gender equality in revolution, but also portraying a women’s sacrifice as of particular historical and revolutionary significance and associating the female role as mother with a motherly devotion to the revolution.

The female terrorist character also appears in a similar analytical perception, from the viewpoint of the heroic protagonist, in another film version of Perovskaya’s life made in the 1960s. One can speak about some stability in selecting Perovskaya as a model biographic character in films about Popular Will members. The heroic and romantic character of Sofia Perovskaya is brightly presented in director Leo Arnshtam’s film (“Sofia Perovskaya”, 1967, Mosfilm). The plot of the film is based on the events that occurred on March 1, 1881: the murder of Emperor Alexander II by Popular Will members led by Sofia Perovskaya. The episodes that represent the sequence of the Tsar’s murder form a prologue to the film, which is followed, in accordance with the design solution of the picture, by scenes showing the attempt’s preparation, biographical scenes

about Perovskaya's life, and, finally, her execution and the execution of members of Popular Will's executive committee.

The film shows Perovskaya's doubts, her thoughts about the expediency of regicide and the consequences of a tyrant emperor's death. However, she has no doubt at all that the way and means of the struggle she has chosen are true or that she has a moral right to use terrorism and to execute the Tsar (she is absolutely convinced that such a right is given by virtue of being a struggle on behalf of the people). The tragic element of Perovskaya's heroism and the extent of her sacrifice are further emphasized by the fact that she is a woman, and a young one. This makes the sense of sacrifice on her part more significant and weighty in comparison, for example, with the lord of the empire who has already had time to live. Contemporaries compared the female type of revolutionary heroic pathos, or perception of this heroic pathos, to be exact, not simply with a religious cult, but with its especially exalted version – the Khlysty sect<sup>4</sup> in the context of honoring “live Holy Mothers” of the revolution and worshipping the revolutionary hero's female incarnations within a framework of terror mythology. Sofia Perovskaya was seen as one of such obviously “revolutionary Holy Mothers” (Mogilner 1999).

Motherhood, however, can be used in many ways: A mother could be the leader of a criminal or a terrorist gang. Thus, so the official version of the armed skyjack “for the purpose of fleeing from the USSR to a capitalistic country”, made in 1988 by the Ovechkiny family on the initiative of the mother and her two elder sons, called the perpetrators a “gang consisting of many people”, “armed gangsters”, “hijackers” (Gorchakov 1988) or a “group of criminals”, a “gangster group” (Yezhelev 1988). Interest in Ovechkiny revived 11 years after Denis Yevstigneyev's film “Mom” (1999). News media could then interpret the story as an act of terrorism, calling its participants terrorists (Bobrova 1999). However, the female image of mother-terrorist represented in the film is ambivalent. It generates no hatred. The author calls into question dogmas of common sense and the unequivocal stereotyped distinctions between “good” and “evil”. The viewer is led to sympathize with the unfortunate family and the mother's actions and the perception of what exactly is “good” and what is “evil” remains. An act of terrorism motivated by a craving for freedom appears more “acceptable” than the arbitrariness of officers representing law and order in the author's filmic interpretation. Female involvement in terrorism is presented as an extreme act of fighting for freedom and thus not to be totally condemned.

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<sup>4</sup> “Khlystovstvo” is a sect of spiritual Christians (‘khlysty’), which appeared in Russia in the late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, rejecting the Orthodox Church's rituals and requiring self-flagellation

### **Female participation in terrorism in printed mass media<sup>5</sup>**

We learn about acts of terrorism primarily from the mass media, which do not simply present us with the facts, but state definitions for us, and prompt conclusions, setting an event in an interpretative framework, explaining participants' motivations, and characterizing the participants. As we have already noted, women in the role of organizers or performers of acts of terrorism have played an ambivalent role in the representations of terrorism in historiographic as well as cultural writings.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenon of women participating in hostage taking in Moscow during a Nord-Ost performance (October 23/26, 2002) and then in acts of terrorism at the Tushino rock festival (Moscow, July 5, 2003), at Imbir restaurant (Moscow, July 10, 2003), in acts of terrorism on an airplane (in the night of August 24/25, 2004), and near Rizhskaya metro station (August 31, 2004), has been actively discussed in the mass media. But how have they been discussed? In order to answer this question, we have selected ten articles for analysis from *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* and *Arguments and Facts* published from October 25 to November 3, 2002, all of which mention female terrorists that participated in the hostage taking of the Nord-Ost musical comedy audience and actors; nine articles about acts of terrorism committed with the participation of women in Moscow in 2003, published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* and *Nezavissimaya Gazeta* between July 6 and 17, 2003; and fifteen articles about acts of terrorism committed by women in 2004 from *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, *Arguments and Facts* and *Nezavissimaya Gazeta*, published from August 26 to September 10, 2004. All the periodicals selected are market leaders of the printed mass media sector in terms of volume of circulation and popularity ratings. In our interpretation, we will lean on what Toulmin and Scriven have written on the analysis of discourses (Toulmin 1958, Scriven 1976), trying to reconstruct processes of communication in which the social construction of terrorism takes place, trying to "delineate the practice of institutions, organizations and relevant collective actors participating in these processes and the construction of gender that can be observed in these processes" (Meshcherkina 2002).

According to Jean Baudrillard, "media always appear on a scene in advance, before violence and terror start" (Baudrillard 1993). Therefore, while categorically condemning actions of terrorists of any sex and age as severe crimes against the life and dignity of peaceful citizens, we are convinced at the same time that an in-depth analysis, both of events themselves and of ways they

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<sup>5</sup> We thank P.V.Romanov for valuable remarks

<sup>6</sup> The following Soviet and post-Soviet films about female killers and female terrorists should be mentioned in the first place: "Tovarishch Yelena" (B.Mikhin, 1917), "Sorok Pervy" (Ya.Protazanov, 1927; G.Chukhrai, 1956), "Sofia Perovskaya" (L.Arnshtam, 1967), "Blokpost" (A.Rogozhkin, 1999), "Mama" (D.Yevstigneyev, 1999), "Golden Eye" (M.Campbell, 1995); see Turovskaya 1997.

are presented in the mass media, which strongly affect both the terrorists and the public, is required.

Moreover, in the following, we will analyze samples of representations of female terrorists in the Russian mass media and try to examine their symbolic meaning, discursive strategies as well as the ethical aspects discussed.

We will show that representations of female terrorists and male terrorists in popular mass media are essentially different. Women are portrayed as embodying a deviation in relation to men, as they show a failure of ethnic identity, fail to meet religious requirements regarding gender and deviate from a social gender norm.

### **“Experts” on female terrorists: ethnic origin, confession or economics?**

Let us take advantage of Scriven and Toulmin’s methods (Toulmin 1958, Scriven 1976) to analyse the initial phrases of Yamadayev’s article (Yamadayev, 2002): “Using a woman in war is a matter of great shame for a Chechen. If a man allows a woman to interfere in an everyday family fight, we say that he is not a man, he is worse than a woman.” The interpretation that we have taken from a detailed analysis of this text fragment is rather extensive.

The author uses the expression *for a Chechen* to express a generalized concept of ethnic origin; the use of the singular and the masculine form as grammatical gender (in Russian, Chechen has a masculine and a feminine form) enables the author to simultaneously rely on two mythologemes – “real man” and “Chechen people”. The text contains paired oppositions Chechen/other and man/not a man. The Chechen man is a key discursive code of this text, and the author implicitly speaks on behalf of the entire Chechen people irrespective of social and demographic data, including sex, place of residence, nationality, or subjective attitude of representatives of this ethnicity, i.e. particular Chechens, to hostilities.

The next component of the text is the verb *to use*, which is typically used with respect to technology or an object in Russian. It stresses an active role of the subject (the user) and a passive character of the object (the used) and the absence of free will, desire or choice by the object in this case. Familiar with the general plot and social context of the narration, we can further refine our question about the role of this verb in creating the sense of the statement: to use as who or what – a shell, a fighter, a cover, or an argument? Note that Chechen women are seriously involved in the war already anyway, but the author is suggesting that women are assigned a functional role in hostilities.

Another key code of the text is *woman* – a generalized concept stressing the universal nature of female essence. The author builds arguments on an obviously expressed opposition of men and women and clearly defined borders between men’s spheres of responsibility and those of women. He implicitly introduces the idea that this opinion is a unique and universal one, and that deviation would be pathological.

The use of the noun *war* shows us that the author considers war and acts of terrorism to be equivalent concepts. Terrorism is thus constructed as an act of war. Most likely, the author speaks about “war” in a broad sense, believing that this is a man’s business. In the main, he is questioning participation of women in any hostilities, including acts of terrorism, as fighters or in other functional roles. Since the act of terrorism is an act of war, it has some legitimacy: it is not denied or condemned, even subtly. It is not the act of terrorism itself, but involving women in an act of terrorism that is objected to. What is objected to, however, is the participation of women. According to the author, this is a *great shame*, with damage to traditional masculinity caused by actions that call into question traditional gender constructions.

The phrase *if a man allows a woman* implies that men should have agency and that leaving agency to women means “if a man does it, he is not a man”. What is implied here, too is that it should be the man who decides what is permissible for a woman. “Real men” are capable of doing that; those who do not, are not real men. However, men can also break the usual order, which is indicated by expressions such as *to have an oar on every man’s boat, to take part against the rules, to decide one’s role on one’s own, or to interrupt the process*. The author makes clear the role of men and women: woman is a dependent being, only man is independent, and therefore the man can violate customs to allow her to interfere or to involve her in man’s affairs.

What is also of interest is the representation of fights between husband and wife. Marital strife is presented as an everyday occurrence of physical violence with clearly delineated male and female roles. These modal determinants present physical violence as a habitual thing, an episode of daily life in Chechen society. Further, the implied sense of the message makes us understand that daily conflicts, which are a prerogative of men, are resolved from a position of strength and are, therefore, clearly resolved by and in the interest of men. Physical violence is not called into question. The author expressly relies on the assumption that Chechen culture is a culture where physical violence is an element of daily life that is “normal” and legitimate.

*We say about him* works as additional evidence of validity of the statement: the pronoun “we” should work in a manner suggestive of a simple man of the people, in the same way as references to experts (economists, psychologists, sociologists) would do if the text were addressed to the educated middle class. Joining “his people”, the author of the discourse knows the state of affairs and explains it to the readers, expressly resorting to the indisputable power of authority of popular wisdom and speaking on behalf of the majority. In doing so, it approves the Chechen tradition, which would never have approved involving women in war; however, it holds back the Chechen people’s opinion concerning the act of terrorism itself.

*He is not a man, he is worse than a woman* – This sentence, which indicates “doubts of man’s dignity”, brings the reader to the conclusion that

women's participation in war (including acts of terrorism) is illegitimate, and implicitly proceeds from the assumption that woman is unsuitable for this purpose. Woman wins on the semantic continuum "bad – worse" only when compared with a "wrong" man.

The article of Yamadayev under consideration can serve as a vivid example of negative and unethical tonality of a discourse. Yamadayev asserts that

Barayev<sup>7</sup> recruited his "women's battalion" one by one. They were mainly women whose minds were darkened by the deaths of their relatives, and private lives failed. There are also openly loose-living girls. They are like stray dogs in Chechnya. The former can be easily silenced by thoughts of revenge, jihad, or sacred war. Reputation prevents the latter from returning to normal life. (Yamadayev 2002)

The reasoning of the author, who assigns his own opinion the rank of a universal system, presents women as objects of action; terrorists are not a sign of resistance here, they are subordinate, obedient and passive individuals gathered and accumulated on the principle of "a single thread from everyone", and Barayev is an authoritarian and active ruler of a female terrorist "unit". The text relays misogynous and patriarchal beliefs, that the terrorists are unreasonable, mad, deviant people and derelicts.

Thus, stereotypical models dealing with the involvement of women in acts of terrorism are presented here in terms of moral and mental pathology; these models position them as the objects of a man's choice:

I will also tell you about Chechen women's obstinacy. Perhaps, it will be difficult to come to an agreement with them. However, these women make no decisions after all! They are merely meat with explosives hanging off them. (Yamadayev 2002)

Similar arguments are offered in the article characterising kamikaze women as part of the Barayev 'brand' of terrorism: "In the last two cases Barayev used kamikaze women, who drove mined 'Urals' to break into buildings. Both were guided by blood feuds."<sup>8</sup> Female terrorists function as auxiliary characters (occupying their traditional place) highlighting the man as a protagonist in the text. Barayev's masculine image is demonstrated as an image of an owner with a "brand" of his own and the right to use avenging women first in the heading and then in the text of the article. Their inferior position is stressed by the use of the verb 'to use' in relation to them.

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<sup>7</sup> Movsar Barayev is a fighter accused by special services of being involved in kidnappings and acts of terrorism in the Chechen Republic several times, who led the act of terrorism at the theater center in Dubrovka during the demonstration of the Nord-Ost musical comedy

<sup>8</sup> From Komsomolskaya Pravda's files: "Firmenny Znak Barayeva: on ispolzuyet zhenshchin-kamikadze", in: Komsomolskaya Pravda, 25 oktyabrya, 2002 ("Brand-name" of Barayeva: he uses kamikaze-women, in: Komsomolskaya Pravda, 25.10.2002)



Member of the Russian government, representative from the Chechen Republic, Akhmar Zavgayev has shared his thoughts about terrorists in the pages of Arguments and Facts. In his view, presented in an article entitled, "For whom Chechen women are fighting", "*our women have never participated in fighting on a par with men*" (Yeltsov 2002). We are offered a norm-setting masculine argument defining the identity of women in the Chechen culture. The author of the text presents himself as having an absolute knowledge of traditions, but closes his eyes to the fact that, when construction of gender identity (Zdravomyslova/Tiomkina 2001) has a special function under the conditions of a terrorist war. Female terrorists manage to elude the vigilance of special services and security guards exactly because the performance of such a role is not expected from women in our [Russian] culture, and this method has already been long and widely applied by various terrorist groups. We read in the same Arguments and Facts article:

It has always been considered a terrible shame for a Chechen woman to find herself in a crowd of unfamiliar men. Chechens have never had male suicide shahids,<sup>9</sup> let alone those of the female sex. From time immemorial, women have been engaged in housekeeping, leaving war to men. Our women never hide their faces and do not wear the dresses of terrorists. These terrorists hid their faces because they came from gangster families that have stained themselves with Russian and Chechen blood. (Yeltsov 2002)

An argument appealing to tradition carries the stamp of authority, and the trust of the audience is guaranteed by the modal determinants *always, never, from time immemorial*, which validate the statement and increase its level of persuasiveness and thoroughness.

In comparing home and war (women's and men's, private and public territories), responsibility for each of these territories is allocated on a gender basis, and gender distinctions consisting of unequal possibilities for men and women are created. According to a representative of the legislative power of Chechen society, Akhmar Zavgayev, the images of female Chechen terrorists cast doubt on their competence as women in this case, as their behavior does not match the gender norms created by the society. An image of a true Chechen woman, based on ideas of the female and the male that are traditional in the culture, is in contrast to the unattractive portrait of the terrorists. The two basic categories of gender and ethnic origin strengthen each other and create a context that ascribes specific roles to the female group in this discussion. The inconsistency of terrorists with the traditional ideal of femininity and the norms of Chechen culture can be interpreted in terms of a failure of both gender and ethnic displays (Zdravomyslova/Tiomkina 2001).

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<sup>9</sup> *shahid* is a religious term in Islam, a title that is given to a Muslim after his death, if he died after the fulfillment of religious commandment, or during the war for religion; female form *shahida*

Similar positions can be seen in an article entitled “Not only widows are present among them,”<sup>10</sup> the difference being that participants of the act of terrorism show a failure of religious, not ethnic identity:

Female fighters are a phenomenon that is not widespread in Chechnya. There exist two categories: ‘blood avengers’ and those working for money. ‘Blood avengers,’ who are usually fanatics, include widows of victims, devoted to ideas and to the principle of “a life for a life”. Female fighters working for money are usually far from the idea of blood feud and are absolutely non-romantic figures in contrast to how they are presented on TV. They are frequently not even Muslims.

A photo accompanies the article: women in veils and head-dresses decorated with Islamic symbols and grenade launchers in their hands. The text under the photo reads: “*Kamikaze women are the last argument of Muslim fanatics*”. The photo simultaneously functions as an illustration of the verbal text and a visual representation.

The text of the article illustrated by the photo reproduces a slogan that is characteristic of the mass media: “All Muslims are terrorists”, and simultaneously creates an image of calculating fighter women deviating from confessional norms. The author’s idea seems to be that all these women act for money rather than by the force of the Muslim faith. The article categorizes the female terrorists in two groups. The first group are women taking revenge for the killed “family bread winner”. This group seems to be the subject chosen as the “last argument” for the photo. Members of the second group are not part of a clan or religious fanatics; they are fighter women, a sort of Homo Economicus. Unlike those texts where an ethnic or confessional expert is the author of the discourse, the arguments seem to be more diverse here. However, they fit the habitual gender creation procedure, which implies that the female terrorist is a woman who has entered the men’s world, who deviates from the norm and who breaks with the social order. That is why she is assigned “natural” female qualities (emotionality) that distinguish her from “normal” terrorists. She is presented as a morally or mentally incompetent person, a selfish mercenary, not an element of the new technology of terrorist war, but the “last argument” of Islamic fundamentalists.

### **Sympathetic men and aggressive women**

Let us now present the basic conclusions from studies of other texts in the mass media, without focusing on the details of the procedure of the discourse analysis that underlies our conclusions. The issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* that is devoted to the hostage taking during the Nord-Ost musical comedy contains a variety of other materials about the women who are among the terrorists. The arti-

<sup>10</sup> “Osoboye mneniye”: Sredi nikh ne tolko vdovy (2002), in: *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 25 oktyabrya, 2002 (Separate opinion: “Not only widows are present among them, in: *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, 25.10. 2002)

cle “Literally”<sup>11</sup> presents the opinion of an FSB (Federal Security Service) psychologist:

All female terrorists do not control themselves. All of them are ‘blood avengers’. While one can come to an agreement with the men, it is virtually impossible with these women.

The arguments contained in the citation establish a perception context dominated by the thought that no common language can be found with the women not because of their firm beliefs; on the contrary, the terrorists are supposedly unable to assume responsibility for their acts, as if they are blinded and deprived of independent thought. Thus, a deviant image of the female terrorist is created, contrasting with the ‘norm’ in the text, that is with men who are inclined to come to an understanding and whose acts are regarded as based on rational motives, unlike women whose behavior is irrational.

Essentially similar positions concerning the particular irrationality of female terrorists are displayed in a Rossiiskaya Gazeta article as well:

There are about ten women among the terrorists. This circumstance strongly aggravates the situation from the viewpoint of experts in counter-terrorism. It has long been known from world practice that female terrorists are much more fanatical than men, they are very difficult to speak with, and they are much more difficult or, more frequently, just impossible to persuade. (Kozlova/Sharov 2002)

To increase the validity of the beliefs about female terrorists being fanatics, the author resorts to modal determinants: *from world practice, long been known, much more, more frequently, just impossible.*

The text popularizes a view that human behavior can be reduced to biology (without taking into account social factors) and encourages the reader to think that female and male characteristics differ in value. It posits a link between biological sex and psychological features of individual behavior. The author of the discourse does not appeal to ethnic or confessional tradition here, but focuses on the power dimension of relations between the sexes. Preservation of social order is thereby guaranteed. A woman who has assumed the “man’s” role of terrorist actually ceases to fit into standard norms, and her manifestation of “female” features and her gender display go beyond the norm, become non-accountable. People around her find themselves in a situation of gender failure in this respect. So female terrorists face doubts, on the part of society, about their social competence as women. This doubt is caused by the fact that their behavior does not fit into the gender display norms created by society (Zdravomyslova/Tiomkina 2001).

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<sup>11</sup> “Doslovno” (2002), in: Komsomolskaya Pravda, 25 oktyabrya, 2002 (“Literally” in: Komsomolskaya Pravda, 25.10.2002)

An article entitled, “I am an FSB officer. It was by chance that I attended the performance”<sup>12</sup> focuses on the greater aggression of female terrorists, which distinguishes them from their male counterparts:

Kamikaze women behave most aggressively. There are about ten of them. All are wrapped in explosives and beat the hostages. The men behave more quietly and exchange words very seldom.

This scenario reproduces the stereotype about the higher degree of women’s emotionality, similar to the previous case, which has become a commonplace both in academic discourse and everyday life (Ivanova 1999). Women are compared with sane, judicious and cool men, illustrating a certain “norm” of terrorism in both representations. However, the argument about the deviant behavior of women who have become terrorists in the second example is supported, firstly, by evidence of cruelty manifested by women, unlike men who are reserved and behave decently, and, secondly, by the status of the author of the discourse, who is an expert from the responsible official body in this matter.

Let us now turn to a characteristic method of validating the arguments under consideration, that is by increasing the veracity of the statements made, or by presenting matters as occurring spontaneously, naturally, and in an uncontrollable manner, beyond the will of the author of the discourse.<sup>13</sup> The title of the above-mentioned article stresses the spontaneity of the expert’s opinion, since the author “attended the performance by chance”.

Another comparison of female and male terrorists that comes out to the detriment of the ‘fair sex’ is contained in an article entitled “Chechens were joking and making advances to the girls at first...” (Levina 2002) where excessive aggression is once more the distinguishing characteristic of the female terrorists. The article cites the words of a released hostage:

What good guys Chechens are, they offered chewing gum and chocolates to us. How politely they treated the children. They were joking and made advances to the girls. A typical ‘Stockholm syndrome’... As regards the female terrorists with explosives wrapped around them, on the contrary, the children were even afraid to look at them, as they behaved so aggressively.

Strangely enough, male terrorists are not only portrayed as moderately aggressive, unlike the too aggressive women, but are also true gentlemen: they are generous, sympathetic and polite.

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<sup>12</sup> “Ya ofitser FSB. Na spektakle okazalsia sluchaino”, in: *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 25 oktyabrya, 2002 (“I am an FSB officer. It was by chance that I attended the performance”, in: *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 25.10.2002.)

<sup>13</sup> *Metodologiya issledovaniya politicheskogo diskursa: aktualniye problemy sodержatel'nogo analiza obshchestvenno-politicheskikh tekstov*, No.1. Minsk, Universitet, 1998. s.156 (“Methodology of researching political discourse: current problems of the content analysis of social-political texts”, Issue No.1, Minsk, State University of Belarus, 1998, p.156)

Another Komsomolskaya Pravda article states that female terrorists seem to be more dangerous, but nevertheless capable of negotiating and reaching a compromise, in comparison with men. The article contains an original strategic proposal to influence terrorists with reciprocal actions, namely, to place representatives of the same ethnic origin and sex as the terrorists among the hostages. An expert whose competence is confirmed by his vocational training is the guarantor of the truth of the newspaper's arguments here – this is “expert in group psychology” Vadim Gushchin:

Firstly, I am of the opinion that it makes no sense talking or negotiating with male terrorists. They are brainwashed, and nothing will stop them. One has to contact their women. Yes, women are more dangerous in this situation. If they are prepared for death, then it means that they don't need to live anymore. A woman will kill herself and Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, or anybody else who happens to be nearby without hesitation. However, if Chechen women and children can die during an explosion, it may stop her. The only thing that may be of value for a female terrorist is the lives of women and children from her tribe. (Gushchin 2002)

This is the same interpretation sometimes offered by representatives of force structures (armed services, law enforcement bodies and intelligence agencies, that wield the coercive power of the state), who tend to think that female terrorists are more dangerous when hostages are taken by an armed group. Evidence for this is in the title of McDonald's book “Shoot at Women First” (MacDonald 1982).

It follows from the text of the article under consideration from Komsomolskaya Pravda that although female terrorists pose a greater threat, even in comparison with brainwashed men, they still retain undoubted values – honoring women and children of their own ethnic origin. The discourse of the expert in group psychology puts down the Chechen nation, which is equated to a tribe whose representatives may therefore be treated using their own “primitive” methods. Thus, the uncontrollable violence of female terrorists, presented as irrational people focused on self-destruction (kamikaze), can only be stopped by the appearance of their “fellow tribesmen”, that is Chechen women and children.

An article with a headline containing an echo of Vladimir Putin's familiar expression “Drown in an outhouse!” , which occupies two newspaper pages, savors the image of a dead female terrorist, also repeatedly shown on TV:

Head thrown onto the back of a red seat, a young shahida is sitting. The face, which she had so carefully tried to hide, is open. A thin stream of blood has flowed from the mouth and dried up. (Zhdanov 2002)

The article is accompanied by a large color photo of the dead terrorist and the following caption: “*This shahida terrorist has remained seated on the second floor, in the fourth row*”.

Reports about death, accidents, and contract murders are becoming ever more popular on television and radio programs in Russia. Nobody asks the

reader and the spectator whether he or she wishes to see so much death in the package of information services.<sup>14</sup> The problems of ethical responsibility are solved differently – many newspapers never publish pictures of dead bodies while other editors are tolerant of shocking photos (Volek 2002) and have no such moral scruples. These images are repeated many times, just as

shots steadily come to mind (planes hitting the World Trade Center twin towers; the white panel of a torn poster on the captured building), becoming symbols of catastrophe and tragedy, which indicate the impenetrability of the surface of an event.<sup>15</sup>

Note that both the print media and TV have considered it acceptable and necessary to repeatedly show the photo with the image of the dead shahida. This photo was printed not only in a special issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* dated October 26, 2002, it was also reproduced in the subsequent two editions of the newspaper (Lobanova/Falaleyev 2002, Bobrovich/Stechin 2002). Replicating an image of the dead enemy worked as a sign of intimidation and penalty, a symbol of power confirming the state's victory in this case, but it was not the only effect. It is also a label, a brand that simplifies the understanding of the event, makes it flatter, more recognizable and clear, and prevents one from doubting the images and arguments.

### **Female terrorists in newspaper articles: eight months later**

An analysis of the print media following the Moscow acts of terrorism committed by women in 2003 (July 5, Tushino, Wings rock festival; July 10, Tverskaya-Yamskaya, Imbir restaurant) shows that the positions of the mass media in trying to explain and understand female terrorists' motivation remained virtually unchanged. "*After Nord-Ost*", *Nezavissimaya Gazeta* says, "*where aggressors included more women than men, Chechen women have become suicide bombers several times more*" (Ukolov/Plugatarev 2003). The print media have offered several further explanations for why women take part in terrorism.

One of the explanations focuses again on the shameful and loose reputation of the shahidas, which is of key importance for women who become terrorists. According to information provided by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* correspondents, who visited the homeland of terrorist Zarema Muzhikhoyeva (she committed an unsuccessful act of terrorism at the Imbir restaurant on July 10, 2003):

the girl was a girl of loose morals. Such behavior is equivalent to a death sentence for a Chechen women. Sooner or later, she would have been killed for libertinism anyway – they would have shot or drowned her. This is one fate of such women. But there is an alternative: Fighters use them in cases such as that on Tverskaya. (Kots/Velengurin 2003)

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<sup>14</sup> See Tokareva n.d.

<sup>15</sup> See White 1999, cited from V. Zvereva, 343.

A similar explanation is given in Rossiiskaya Gazeta for the behavior of another female terrorist (Mareta Duduyeva, committed an act of terrorism in Grozny, December 2000):

Loose moral behavior is an extremely shameful thing for a girl in Chechnya, and the shame could fall on the entire clan in case of publicity. Try to prove that she was not engaged in the oldest profession later on. (Borisov 2003)

Another explanation focuses attention on the fact that terrorism itself is a way of making money for women. The same issue of Komsomolskaya Pravda says:

The same Muzhikhoyeva undertook to commit the act of terrorism not because of conviction, but for a considerable sum in foreign currency – she was promised \$3,000 if she remained alive. (Baranets 2003)

From another point of view, women are involved in terrorist actions only as a duplicating, second-grade and inexpensive variant of men who are at the top of terrorist hierarchy. According to leading expert in anti-terror, Vladimir Lutsenko,

a kamikaze woman is a cheap and trouble-free weapon... Why exactly women? Male fighters are considered more expensive 'material', which can be used repeatedly in Chechnya. (Kredov/Sharov 2003)

Further, psychologists note the greater danger represented by female terrorists in comparison with men. They offer the psychological instability of women as one of the reasons for them to commit terrorist suicide. Komsomolskaya Pravda publishes the opinion of a psychologist:

Woman as a performer of an act of terrorism presents a greater danger. Men, who possess greater psychological stability on average, judge the surrounding conditions in a more sober way... According to data provided by researchers, a woman who is on the verge of achieving her goal rarely changes her decision under the influence of external factors. (Selivanova 2003)

A similar view is presented in a Rossiiskaya Gazeta article: "Another answer to the question why exactly women blow themselves up in our country. They are easier to intimidate, to dope, and to break psychologically" (Borisov 2003). Experts in terrorism assert, according to Nezavissimaya Gazeta, that a woman who has a weapon in her hands is more dangerous than her male counterpart (Ukolov /Plugatarev 2003). Finally, Rossiiskaya Gazeta says that "the most important thing is that a woman is easier to brainwash" (Kredov/Sharov 2003).

Supporters of this point of view attach special significance to the *revenge* of "black widows" as a deciding motivation of female terrorism: "*They have nothing to lose, and they are ready to take revenge, even at the price of their own lives*", Nezavissimaya Gazeta says (Ukolov /Plugatarev 2003). Commenting on

the motives of shahidas, Komsomolskaya Pravda offers a similar explanation: “*They took revenge for a brother’ or ‘they took revenge for their husband*” (Lobanova 2003c).

The models presented by the mass media following the act of terrorism in Tushino basically repeated those that followed the Nord-Ost incident, but differed in some respects in as they offered some additional explanations. A new interpretation of the female terrorists’ preparedness for death appeared in newspapers in connection with the later terrorist events. The explanation offered was the use of drugs:

The female terrorists were humiliated, raped, and forced to take psychotropic substances and drugs. Death becomes a desired outcome after such intensive courses of brainwashing. (Kredov/Sharov 2003)

“*Acts of terrorism are committed by drugged women*” (Stepashin 2003). These statements are confirmed in the following Komsomolskaya Pravda issue as well: “*Investigators from the State Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Russian Federation are assured that shahidas are stuffed with drugs (opiates) regularly added to food or juice*” (Gerasimenko 2003). However, these ideas are refuted by comments made by Alexander Ignatenko, a specialist in Middle Eastern and oriental studies, in the same edition: *A potential suicide attacker should not cause suspicion... If a person has been on strong drugs for several weeks, then he or she will hardly behave naturally* (Lobanova 2003a).

Nezavissimaja Gazeta now emphasizes the special role of blackmail in the motivation of women who are involved in terrorist actions: “*Others are transformed into kamikazes by recruiters, who menace them with the threat of violence against family members in case of refusal*” (Ukolov /Plugatarev 2003). The position taken in the citation calls into question the right of women to choose their own actions and focuses on the forced nature of women’s participation in acts of terrorism.

A further development of reasoning about terrorists, which takes a different approach, can be noted in a Komsomolskaya Pravda article, which informs us that: “*Slavic women can be used in acts of terrorism as well. One should not think that a shahida is always a woman with a strongly pronounced Caucasian appearance*” (Lobanova 2003b). This statement attempts to convince us that terrorism is not embodied only in persons of a particular “ethnic origin”, thus testifying to the existence of an ‘international face’ to modern female terrorism.

The articles in 2003 (which appeared in the press after the acts of terrorism in Tushino and on Tverskaya-Yamskaya) contained images, arguments, and ways of discussing the terrorism of “shahidas” that were already familiar to us, used methods of proving and refuting judgments in the form of expert’s comments claiming objectivity, and continued to give a tribute to stereotypes and standard gender ideas, confirming the earlier, 2002, mass media discourse models that have been reviewed in detail here. At the same time, new explanatory



concepts have appeared, too: women participating in acts of terrorism are fighters, however much they are declared marginal.

### **Models of information presented about acts of terrorism committed by “shahidas” in 2004**

The most important subject of late August and early September 2004 in Russia was that of terrorist tragedies in rapid succession – two aircraft crashes as a result of terrorism and an act of terrorism near Rizhskaya metro station, which were committed by female suicide bombers; and the tragedy in Beslan that had no precedent on the scale of cruelty and the number of child victims.

In the night of August 24/25, 2004 there were synchronous accidents involving two airplanes that followed different routes: Flight TU-154 from Moscow to Sochi and Flight TU-134 from Moscow to Volgograd. The total number of dead was 89 persons. The first press articles about the reasons for the crashes discussed a number of possible causes: human factors (pilot error); technical factors (equipment failure); fuel factors (airplanes fuelled with bad gasoline); revenge by disgruntled former airport employees (airport security guards informed about dismissal); hijack by terrorists with subsequent destruction by air defense means. The possibility of bombs and suicide bombers was rejected in the initial commentaries: ‘The investigatory actions undertaken have revealed no signs of acts of terrorism on the planes that met with accidents’ (Zakharov 2004), and violation of aircraft service regulations was considered as the plausible story. An act of terrorism emerged as a plausible explanation only four days after the crashes (Ignatenko 2004).

True, Komsomolskaya Pravda of August 26 speculated that the explosion could have been committed on board flight TU-134 by Amanai Nagayeva who had number 28 on the list of passengers, and the newspaper reported on August 28 that “‘black widows’ were under suspicion”. Although an initial check of Nagayeva had shown that no criminal record was found in her past or in the past of her relatives (Kots 2004), according to information provided by a KP source in the Ministry of the Interior of Chechnya, ‘the girl had been abducted for marriage and taken away to the mountains where there are no registry offices. The husband was killed in a shelling. Then the girl could well have been brainwashed, trained and sent *to take revenge*’ (Kots 2004). The newspapers pursued the subject of ‘revenge’ in subsequent articles as well.

By disclosing new details connected with the two ‘mysterious *Chechen women* that flew on the blown-up TU-154 and TU-134’ (they proved to be acquainted with each other and went with two other girls to buy things in Baku that they could resell in Chechnya), journalists had, involuntarily or deliberately, assigned an ethnic flavor to the circumstances of the act of terrorism. Milana Dzhebirkhanova notes that her sister was convicted of an act of terrorism because of her Chechen origin: “Why does she need to blow people up? They are bearing false witness against *Chechens* again” (Steshin 2004a). Returning to the

subject of acts of terrorism in the capital on September 10, the newspaper noted that “*Moscow has long become a hornet’s nest of Chechen terrorism... There are training schools here where stoned or heart-broken Chechen women are taught to wear and fasten shahid belts*” (Baranets 2004b). When identifying female terrorists using the categories of ethnicity or religion (as well as the 2002-2004 typologies), the authors of the articles created new hierarchies and shaded individual distinctions within them.

The circumstances of the acts of terrorism continued to expand. A terrorist tragedy occurred near Rizhskaya metro station on August 31, which resulted in eleven people dead and fifty-one wounded (including four children). The newspapers wrote that ‘Rizhskaya was blown up by a sister of the suicide bomber from Flight TU-134’ (Boiko/Kots 2004). So explanations for acts of terrorism on airplanes were supplemented by and included in a general scenario with comments on a new act of terrorism committed by a female terrorist after September 2, 2004. Describing the terrorist, slang words are now used such as “*tyotka*” and “*tyotenka*” [“*frump*” or “*dowdy*” women]: “Sergeant Yegorov had no time to check out the suspicious, coarse woman ... A dowdy women was there indeed’ (Rodkin 2004). A woman’s involvement in the act of terrorism was confirmed according to the newspaper, by evidence of the remains/fragments of the dead terrorist found: “A torn-off female head was found on the roof of the Rizhskaya vestibule, a leg was found six meters from the explosion’s epicentre... the act of terrorism was committed by a shahida” (Rodkin 2004).

The newspaper placed a report from Chechnya in the same issue. It used an explanation for the participation of women in acts of terrorism that is already well familiar to us: “Shahidas of loose morals have been sent to atone for their sins”; this is a “bad family” (Steshin 2004b). The article said that a policeman from the Lenin District police division in Grozny said that

The apartment was rented for girls not for trade... More precisely, they were trading there, but not in things or products – they were selling themselves. They were too sluttish for Chechen women. A client advised them to “atone” for sin before Allah in this way. (Steshin 2004b)

The explanation for the participation of women in acts of terrorism given in this citation is that a reputation stained with libertinism, synchronously appeals to the need for atonement and punishment for offence against and discrediting of ethnic and religious identity. KP has made explicit the association of terrorism with Islamic religion already widespread in the mass media by informing its readers that a piece of paper was found near Nagayeva’s body (at the crash site) with the words “Allah Akbar” in Arabic on it (Konov 2004).

In its next issue the newspaper drew the attention of readers to the price of terrorism, writing how generously those who detonate explosions leading to mass victims are rewarded. So

Zarema Muzhakhoyeva arrested by FSB half an hour before an act of terrorism in downtown Moscow was promised \$30,000. The relatives of the terrorist who blew herself up during a rock festival in Tushino received \$70,000. It is easy to guess that relatives of the airplane terrorists as well as of the suicide bomber who blew herself up near Rizhskaya will receive compensation at a similar rate. (Baranets 2004a)

Thus, the actions performed by terrorists are considered from the viewpoint of the material compensation of relatives after the act and the death of the terrorist. It also says that

suicide bombers are the most highly paid person: depending on the scale of the damage done to the 'unbelievers' between 50 and 100 thousand dollars are payable to relatives. It is easy to guess that actions performed by the suicide bombers, who 'have risen to Allah' through killing 89 people on two aircraft and 10 Muscovites near Rizhskaya ranked at the top of the scale... (Baranets 2004a)

The subject of monetary reward to terrorists is continued in a Rossiiskaya Gazeta article: "In addition, a suicide bomber's family receives a large material reward, from 5 to 20 thousand dollars. This is another factor that pushes people on the path to terrorism" (Averbukh 2004). Thus, the mass media have touched on the subject of the recruitment of suicide bombers from the mercantile point of view adding to the aforementioned motives of female terrorists.

Arguments and Facts newspaper points out the physical convenience of women for bringing a bomb onto the plane in the terms of "the body" (contrasting with reason and intelligence): "according to a bitter joke by bomb-disposal experts, the most reliable place for bringing a fuse is the woman's most intimate place: a regular factory-made fuse has the shape and size of a tampon" (Svartsevich 2004). Such "reliability" and the practicality of female body for hiding an explosive device, according to this article, make women especially attractive for a terrorist role.

In addition to the attribution of bad reputation, stained ethnic and religious identity, revenge of black widows, and commercialism to terrorists, newspapers proposed an interpretation of terrorist tragedies in terms of a war discourse. In 2004 the following appeared: "We are fighting a war. Accordingly, we have enemies"(Samarina /Glikin 2004). Vladimir Putin stressed the same thought in his Presidential address:

We are dealing not with individual acts of intimidation, nor with isolated expeditions by terrorists. We are dealing with a direct intervention of international terror against Russia, with a total, severe and full-scale war that takes away the lives of our compatriots repeatedly.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Obrashcheniye Predizenta RF, in: Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2004, No. 167, 4 (Speech of the President of the Russian Federation, in: Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2004, No. 167, 4).

Rossiiskaya Gazeta stresses the military context of acts of terrorism, with which the country has already become familiar: “*An act of terrorism is perceived as the next incident in an anticipated chain of events*”; “*we are living in a country at war*”; “*nothing can be done – these are the wartime conditions in which we live*” (Shutkevich 2004). The use of the concept of war was possibly called on to transform terrorism into a threat that is clearer to the population, and to justify the strengthening of the Russian state at the same time. Rossiiskaya Gazeta published an article entitled “*Black widows will be replaced by shahid children?*” “as a forecast/warning where it said that

terror’s face is not always female in the Near East now – in Israel they started to detain children with explosives about half a year ago... Palestinian groups say that woman and children, unlike men, can pass through Israeli checkpoints much easier. (Averbukh 2004)

The image of a “shahida” has become not only well known and habitual, but is even replicated as fashionable and a cult in our country. The Dni.ru Internet newspaper pages published detailed information about the concept of Ivan Shapovalov’s new musical project, entitled “NATO” on August 31, 2004 (after the airplane attacks and virtually simultaneously with the explosion near Rizhskaya).<sup>17</sup> An image of a female suicide bomber covering her face with a hijab and singing is set against the background of screens broadcasting Al-Jazeera reports alternating with “Al Qaeda” and “Iraq” slogans. Similarly, the singer Chorchovon, has a song about four brothers who died in the mountains. It can be found on the album, “The Heavenly Empire No. 1”. The first concert by the singer was called “The Act of Terrorism Show” and was held on September 11, 2004 (right after a series of acts of terrorism and the deaths of hundreds children and adults in Beslan). The tickets to the concert were facsimiles of airline tickets.

Thus, in comparison with earlier articles about acts of terrorism committed by “shahidas”, female terrorists were a less emotive subject in the mass media in 2004, and initial comments on the reasons for the tragedies avoided even mentioning the possibility of acts of terrorism. The mainstream mass media repeated the interpretations of female terrorism that are familiar to us from articles of 2002/2003 (including libertinism combined with the wish to atone for sin and an ethnic “fault”; revenge of “black widows”; pragmatic purposes underlying giving one’s life; attributing ethnic and religious features to terrorism, which have become a standard explanatory procedure in articles), supplemented with similar new explanations (the reliability of female body for hiding explosives), and continued to build borders and to create categories named to give a seemingly logical shape to a war that has never been declared.

However, one can detect some mobility in the structure of the discourses analyzed and the dynamics of mass media rhetoric. Positions appeared in news-

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<sup>17</sup> Dni.ru //http://www.vokruginfo.ru/news

papers in 2004, explained the events in terms of a war. One article even predicted the possibility of replacing women with shahid children in acts of terrorism. The use of the metaphor of war was probably called on to clarify the problem of terrorism by presenting it in images that are clear to the population and simultaneously provide an important argument in favor of strengthening the Russian state. It is interesting to note that newspapers mentioned that people are getting accustomed to acts of terrorism, and that the word “shahid” has been included in our thesaurus over time, with image that has become well familiar and even replicated as fashionable, with cult status. A somewhat unexpected post-act of terrorism situation arose too: The image of a woman bomber started to be used in the culture and music industry in response to the growing number of actions of suicide attacks and in connection with their human victims and losses, as well as in response to mass media representations’ negative explanatory models of shahidas.

## **Conclusion**

We have considered various interpretations of the gender features of terrorism, drawing on the interplay of the elements: terrorism – mass media – society. We have included biological, psychological, pro-feminist and traditionalist explanations of gender distinctions along with the general reasons for male and female participation in terrorist activity, and also shown the heroic nature of revolutionary and nationalist/patriotic terrorism as recorded by mass culture.

Female terrorists break with the stereotypical perceptions of the female nature as passive, by being in the wrong place and engaged in a non-female business. This form of women’s self-actualization manifests itself in the imposition of new and tougher stereotypes. There have been and there will be women altering gender stereotypes and wishing to play an active role in choosing their destiny in history. Only the purposes and methods they choose for their achievements are at issue.

A characteristic of the discussions in the press was understanding the subject of female participation in acts of terrorism on the basis of comparison with men, who thereby form a “norm” in the world of terrorism. The distinguishing characteristics of female participants in acts of terrorism were shown to be irrationality, excessive aggression, fanaticism and being more dangerous in comparison with men.

Judging from the articles reviewed, female terrorists are portrayed as an inert and auxiliary element of a terrorist group, to which they are first recruited and then used by male organizers and leaders. The texts of articles found that all of the three publications we have selected used a paradigmatic structure which included the dichotomies of private/public, emotionality/rationality, subordinated/autocratic, home/war as divided symbolic territories and characteristics of behavior attributed to women and men, respectively. According to these repre-

sentations, female terrorists show a failure of ethnic identity and deviate from confessional norms.

One cannot but pay attention to the enthusiasm of journalists in picking up pathological versions of explanations of female participation in terrorism. It is surprising to what extent the newspapers selected for analysis were ready to attribute any non-standard behavior of women to all kinds of deviation or pathology of a biological or cultural nature. In our view this is due to the fact that our society, including journalists, is completely patriarchal, and this leads to the stereotypical approaches and models used in popular Russian mass media.

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