

Rose's Turn: How Women in Positions of Political Leadership Handle Terrorism on the Homefront

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"The only safe ship in a storm is leadership." - Faye Wattleton

From Elizabeth II to Hillary Clinton, women in political leadership roles have been judged far more mercilessly for their decisions, especially those requiring force. Over the decades, some argue that their female bodies are too emotional to handle issues like terrorism appropriately. Others argue that it is because of their maternal instincts and protectiveness make them entirely unfit to handle tough decisions. By looking at figures like Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir and through analysis of their counterterrorism policies in their nations, one can begin to distinguish the difference, if any, between women and men as public leaders.

Keywords: political leadership, terrorism, counterterrorism, feminist foreign policy, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Israel, Great Britain, women in political office

INTRODUCTION:

*"A woman of valor, who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value." – Proverbs 31:10
Eshet Chayil*

Women have ruled for thousands of years. We can trace female political leadership through Queen Victoria, known for singlehandedly redefining the British monarchy; Cratesipolis, who commanded the ancient Grecian army against the Sicyonians; Cleopatra, leader of the Egyptians; and Ku-baba, the only queen of the 100-year reign of kings in Sumer. However, women in power and their political decisions have always been judged more harshly than their male counterparts. Leaders are either categorized as doves, which are soft on security, defense, and military fronts, while hawks are hard on security, but less likely to produce social programs, or will even reduce social programs in favor of promoting defense and security measures. This extends to women leaders with even more polarity: women who are doves are seen as unable to lead armed forces and women who are hawks are seen as unemotional and cold. The idea that women lead differently from their male counterparts pervades cross-cultural ideologies. As put by Virginia E. Schein:

That women would lead or govern differently is not new. Women's leadership has been linked with enhancing world peace, reducing corruption, and improving opportunities for

the downtrodden. If women, as keeper of the values of social justice, nurturance, and honesty, are put in charge, then the conflicts, corruption, and greed around us will go away – or so say proponents of this view. The maximalist perspective within the now fragmented feminist movement supports this idea. It argues for innate or highly socialized gender differences and views women as more likely to exhibit cooperative, compassionate, and inhumane types of behaviors than men. (Quoted in Genovese and Steckenrider, 2013, p. 23).

Women must fight adversity to be strong political leaders. Many chalk up the recent loss of Hillary Clinton to Donald Trump in the run for the Presidency to the fact that Clinton *wasn't the right woman*. In many respects, moderates and Democrats who should have been political supporters of Clinton cited her untrustworthiness and unfeminine qualities as turn-offs. Some qualities that individuals find vital in women and political leaders are trustworthiness, and diplomacy, which some say may have cost Clinton the election (Woodruff, 2016). Women who do make it to executive office live in the metaphorical eye of the hurricane that is international diplomacy and potential disasters. Given the different expectations facing women political leaders, how do they navigate the office and its trials and tribulations? Do they behave differently from men? Because of the sheer number of issues that a national leader faces on a daily basis, I have chosen to narrow down the topic to how women leaders handle acts of terrorism on the home front. Terrorism is a topic that requires fundamentally quick action and protective instincts. Acts of terrorism are complex; they involve an aptitude for both foreign and domestic policy. Terrorism is also an issue that cannot be buried or turned into an exercise in political party leadership. I aim to show the many different types of reactions to terror a leader can take, but specifically those set by the most well-known woman leaders in the last hundred years.

Margaret Thatcher nor Golda Meir were feminists (Steinberg, 2008, p. 9). Neither particularly went out of their way to promote women's rights or ensure an equal cabinet, gender-wise, nor promoted, and even disregarded the need for social programs for women (Steinberg 2008, p. 9). Despite trying to cover up their gender, it can make a difference in the way leaders govern (Steinberg, 2008, p. 9-10). I argue that women in male-dominated governments must act more hawkish and aggressive in general, but specifically in the area of national security to maintain the favor of the cabinet and the voters. This may not be true of women in more gender-equal governments, where women can be more dove-like, which may be in more recent examples of women in political leadership. Women in male-dominated governments, like Thatcher and Meir, usually have to show they belong more in the boys' club of political leadership, which may explain the need to use more hawkish behavior (Steinberg, 2008, p. 303-304). This is not the only reason to explain the hawkish behavior of women in leadership; life experience and morality play a huge part, as well (Steinberg, 2008, p. 304).

Before moving further, I would like to clarify that the cited remarks throughout this paper represent the position either expressly stated or alluded to by the authors of each source, many being the leaders themselves. Since no one may analyze their actions as being indicative of their public perception, and since one can only expect these individuals to tell the truth as much as possible, this is the best information I have to use. Additionally, the women in public offices today may deal with terrorist or insurgent operations classified from the public as they may compromise national security. All the information from their battles with terror stems from news agency reports and IGO/NGO reports worldwide. This is to say that to remove bias from the present-day analysis is difficult and might exist in the sources. Lastly, some may argue that any one of the groups mentioned here is not, in fact, a terrorist or insurgent group, I will be using the conditions set by the leaders and authors who codify groups as such. For instance, many see the pro-Russian military and paramilitary forces' occupation in the Ukrainian territory of Crimea and the areas near Donetsk as Russian terrorism and aggression, while others, mostly Russians and pro-Russia supporters, see it as reclamation of their territory. Many do not consider the Palestinian freedom groups' or Arab countries' attacks on Israel as acts of terror; however, the attacks of the Six Day War and Yom Kippur War are both attacks on civilians to incite political change in Israel, and Golda Meir considers that these were terrorist attacks on Israel and the Jews.

HERE'S TO THE LADIES WHO LUNCH: GOLDA MEIR AND MARGARET THATCHER

"In politics, if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman." – Margaret Thatcher, 1965

"...I don't believe there is ever a good enough reason for knuckling under to terrorism..." – Golda Meir (416)

The first two women who truly came to power in a world of terrorism were Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher, in that order. These women were well-known for their acts of political leadership in hard times, but they also were leaders in more politically conservative parties. Thatcher was famous for being hard-edged, and anti-feminist. She prided herself on being the first Prime Minister with a degree in science more so than being the first female Prime Minister. Golda Meir was proud to be a Zionist Jew in office more so than being a woman in the office. Both of these women are famous to have handled some of the most difficult national security dilemmas of the era with a whisper and a very big stick.

Golda Meir's early childhood was set in a very Catholic Russian-occupied Ukraine. The first eight years of her life were spent in poverty, anti-Semitism, sadness, and fear. Her young life on the outskirts of Kyiv was indicative of her existence as an outsider. She only realized her differences when Ukrainians launched a pogrom on her house in 1903. After moving briefly with her mother and sisters to her maternal grandparents' home in present-day Belarus, where Meir learned of anti-Semitism, the labor movement, and of Zionism, her family relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where Meir developed her leadership skills and independence. Looking at her personal history and life of poverty, discrimination, and disadvantages, it is easy to see why she became known for her resilience as a political leader.

As a young adult, after long persuasion and infatuation with the Labor Zionist movement, Meir moved to Palestine with her husband and sister to join a kibbutz where she spent three years, most of which as the head of the Political Department. After leaving the kibbutz, Meir began working for the Histadrut (the Israeli organization of trade unions), as well as a representative at the Évian Conference (which dealt with Jewish refugee issues), secretary of the *Moetzet HaPoalot* or the Working Women's Council. After spending time as an emissary in the United States, due to British repression of the Palestinian-Zionist movement, Meir became the acting head of the Jewish Agency for Israel after her predecessor was arrested, where she remained until the creation of the Jewish State of Israel. Anecdotal evidence of her leadership skills lies in the dawn before the creation of the state when Meir snuck into a meeting with the Jordanian King Abdullah I and convinced him not to attack the new land. Meir was tolerant of the Arab population, comparing the forcible removal and exodus of Arabs to that of the European Jews under Nazism. After stints as the Minister of Labor and then Foreign Affairs for the state of Israel, she was appointed prime minister in 1969 after the sudden death of the head of the Labor Party. She would spend the next four years gaining the trust of the Israeli peoples.

Meir dealt with several crises, including the Six Day War, the Schoenau hostage crisis, the Yom Kippur War, and many others. However, these three individual events are indicative of Meir's terrorist policies. In her autobiography, Meir defends Israel's actions during the Six Day War as follows:

There are two ... general comments I must make about the Six-Day War. The first should go without saying; but I have learned not to take anything for granted ... If the defeat of the Arab armies massed against us could be made total, then perhaps our neighbors would finally give up their 'holy war' against us and realize that peace was as necessary for them as for us and that the lives of their sons was as necessary for them as for us and that the lives of their sons were as precious as the lives of our sons... The second point... is that in June, 1967, the Sinai, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem all were in Arab possession, so it is ludicrous to argue today that Israel's presence in those territories since 1967 is the cause of tension in the Middle East or was the cause of the Yom Kippur War. (364)

This reaction shows both Meir's respect for Arab occupants of Palestine and Israel, but the disdain for the way they treat Israelis and Jews. This seemed to be the hardest aspect of the Premiership for Meir; that she identified with the Arab Palestinians struggle against an invading group as she had been a victim herself as a Jew in Russia, but could not tolerate the actions they took to solve the issues.

Meir's actions during the Six Day and Yom Kippur Wars were swift and politically rational. She writes about the Yom Kippur War that she regrets not seeing the signs of a war before the Israelis were attacked on their holiest day. She writes, "I think that if I hadn't learned, during all those years, how to be strong, I would have gone to pieces then. But I didn't" (429). Her autobiographical chapter on the Yom Kippur War is also much more removed from the actual fighting and focuses instead on meetings with her Director of the Prime Minister's office Simcha Dinitz, Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff David "Dado" Elazar. The conversations were far less emotional in retelling from those about the Six Day War. Meir cites her experience for her restrained nature; stating that she learned from the first bout of attacks and so was more prepared for the Yom Kippur War.

The biggest test of Meir's foreign diplomacy and in dealing with terrorists is the Schoenau Hostage Crisis and ultimatum. As Prime Minister, Meir had helped develop policies to help Russian Jews emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel. The path to Israel ran through Czechoslovakia, then through to the Schoenau Castle refugee camp in Austria before they boarded planes to Israel. In 1973, members of the Palestinian freedom group As-Sa'iqa took several emigrating Ashkenazi Jews hostage at the Czechoslovakian-Austrian border. They demanded that if the Austrian government did not cease assisting Soviet Jews in their emigration and close the Schoenau castle, they would kill their Jewish hostages, including an elderly man, an ailing woman, and a three-year-old child (416). As-Sa'iqa also threatened Austria with further repercussions in the form of terror attacks if its demands were not met. The Austrians caved without a fight. Meir spoke to Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, with whom she had a good relationship, and asked why he submitted so quickly to As-Sa'iqa. Kreisky, a Jew himself, thought it unfair to expect so much of Austria to take the Jews, however, Meir reminded him that the Russians made the deal to allow the Jews to leave only if they were funneled through neutral Austria. This is the only international incident where Meir showed her emotions. She ad-libbed a speech in Strasbourg directly responding to Austria's actions and then refused to hold a joint press conference with Kreisky after their meeting.

Golda Meir's Premiership was plagued by Arab and Russian aggression, and she managed the country with finesse and strength, but by far the Yom Kippur War was the breaking point. Her inability to acknowledge the signs of Arab aggression and prevent the attack and ensuing war was seen by the Israeli people as incompetency. The work she had done to gain their trust had been shattered, and even though the Labor Party won the election in 1973, maintaining her leadership, she resigned from office in 1974, claiming she felt unable to represent Israel in the office anymore (454).

Some of the most formative events in Israel's history happened under the reign of Golda Meir. Meir's personal history as a poor Russian Jew in a country that tried to eliminate her family for religion shaped her by introducing her to a work ethic and an unwavering determined mindset. The dichotomy between her personal attitudes towards those who dislike the Jews and her appreciation of human life no matter what is what some world leaders seem to use in their own dealing with terror attacks. The ability to empathize with violent actors but be able to show no mercy in counterterrorism seemed to guide her decision-making process as Prime Minister. Meir's Premiership and ability to govern and her femininity were publicized by the media often, as well as the terms by which she came into and left power were atypical; she was appointed to office as a result of coming back from retirement and left after being reelected, through resignation (Trigger, 2014, p. 116). Meir represented Israel in talks with other world leaders and was able to get her way with all of them, but the area where she faltered was losing the trust of the Israelis after the events of the Yom Kippur War. While no one can claim that Meir being a woman was a major factor, Zvi Trigger argues that her relationship with feminism was multifaceted and may have determined her public presentation (Trigger, 2014). Trigger argues that Meir faced three different dilemmas that framed her career: "that of her self-definition, the gender issue, and a normative framework that defines feminist activity as 'betrayal' of the public good" (Trigger, 2014, p. 20). The first, the self-

definition issue, is that Meir strongly identified as an anti-feminist, but her actions which often defined that of all women; this may be one factor which led to her hawkish behavior: that she did not want to be seen as a woman, but as a politician, a Zionist or a Jew (Trigger, 2014, p. 20). The conflict of the gender issue is that between her feminine qualities and having to act like a man in politics, even having Prime Minister Ben-Gurion jokingly call her “the only man” in the cabinet (Trigger, 2014, p. 9). Lastly, her dilemma with the feminist activity which “betrays” the public good, indicates her support of Zionism and Judaism over feminism (Trigger, 2014 p. 16, 20). She felt that priority and attention should be given to Zionism and Judaism as a mechanism for equality, before, or even without the need to support, feminism (Trigger, 2014, p. 16). This may be because of her history as a Jewish Zionist, and growing up with two sisters, or because she felt that she, herself, was equal with men and did not need feminism to feel so. Either way, Meir’s complex history as a woman in politics, with men and women, foreign and domestic, friendly, unfriendly, or otherwise, was an indication of her strong governing in such a volatile area of the world.

Margaret Thatcher, on the other hand, was British born and raised. Unlike Meir, Thatcher grew up in relative economic comfort. Thatcher did grow up in a very religious household, hers was Methodist however and nor did she live in repression for it. The other commonality from Thatcher’s childhood to Meir’s is that she showed political aptitude at a young age. As a precocious ten-year-old, Thatcher began volunteering with local political campaigns for the Conservative party. After graduating from Oxford College with a degree in chemistry, the few companies she applied to work at denied her application. She attended a conference for university representatives for the Conservative party, of which she was a member and leader in her years as a student. There she was asked to run as an MP in Dartford, after which she met her future husband. Thatcher claims her femininity and youth got her media attention in the elections, the first two of which she lost the popular vote but was able to divide the Labour Party. Missing the next round of elections to care for her twins, Thatcher then ran for and won the MP seat in Finchley. When many others counted on a Thatcher national leadership, Thatcher herself discounted the temperament of the British men to elect a woman. However, after a stint as Education Minister, in 1975 she became the leader of the opposition party for her work to control student protests as Education Minister. She was an interesting choice, but not unexpected; since the beginning of her political career, she was known as an anchor for conservative policies and an incredible public speaker. In 1979, though, she became Prime Minister. Her policies as Prime Minister were of extreme social and fiscal conservatism, known for shrinking welfare, restricting legal abortion and homosexuality to extreme measures.

Thatcher was equally famous for her relationship with Ireland and the IRA. The Irish Republican Army was a non-state actor that used terrorist tactics (MacDonald, 1991, p. 130-131). Thatcher not only refused to recognize an independent Ireland but refused to even validate the fight and revolutionaries by writing them off as nothing more than petty criminals, even commenting on the death of Bobby Sands in the Long Kesh prison hunger strike saying, “Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organisation did not allow to many of its victims” (Taylor, 1997, p. 242-243). The IRA was obsessed with Thatcher, even carrying out the attack at Brighton Beach, in the hotel where major members of the Conservative Party, including Thatcher, were staying before their party convention the next morning on October 12th, 1984. A bomb killed five major members of the Conservative Party, but it was Thatcher’s steadfastness, many would claim, that saved her life. The bomb exploded in the early hours of the morning, but Thatcher was still awake perfecting her speech and was one of the first individuals to evacuate the premises. The next day, she gave what many consider her most provocative speech in her Premiership. Mostly off-the-cuff, her speech was raw, unfiltered, and was one of the only real-time she addressed the IRA as a legitimate organization.

Thatcher’s other grand test of the Irish resistance was dealing with the actual Irish government. When negotiating with the Irish government, Thatcher had to, on some level, recognize the IRA as a threat to peace between the two nations, which was against the very attitude she had constructed against them. On November 15, 1986, Thatcher and the Irish Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, (Ie.-Gb. 1986). The Treaty created the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, which was the bilateral

government force over Northern Ireland, and stipulated the introduction of a referendum in Northern Ireland to become a part of the Republic of Ireland or stay a member of the United Kingdom (Ie.-Gb. 1986). This Treaty all but entirely ended The Troubles in Northern Ireland, which was a huge win for Thatcher, as she had proven to the British and Irish peoples that she could not only navigate the terror in Northern Ireland without negotiating with terrorists, but it was an exercise in bipartisanship and won her favor in Great Britain. While the IRA and Sinn Féin continue to operate to this day, the attacks of terror significantly decreased after the signing of the Treaty, and the IRA and Sinn Féin became more of a political lobbyist group than a violent non-state actor.

Between the two women, Golda Meir's and Margaret Thatcher's policies towards their respective non-state actor groups using terrorism, the reactions are quite diametric. Thatcher's policy of non-recognition and non-cooperation with the IRA certainly did not alleviate attacks. She justified the policy by convincing herself and other Britons that these were not terrorists, but street criminals. If she did not dignify the IRA with special status, then it did not need special treatment. Thatcher, however, never came from a heritage where her identity was demeaned. Before becoming an elected official, she never had an interaction with the IRA acts of terror or its cause. To this day, even in her memoirs, she barely mentions the group and still does not consider it a terrorist or legitimate group. Only once in over 500 pages does she speak of the IRA, and when she does, it is about the assassination of Conservative MP Airey Neave, through a car bomb planted by the IRA. Thatcher writes of the attack, "[I felt] anger that this man – my friend...should be murdered by someone worse than a common criminal" (434). This is the only recognition she has ever given the IRA.

Golda Meir, however, seemed to be more sympathetic to her challengers. She understood that the Arabs had a claim to the land that was taken from them but could not understand the tactics they chose to use. She often made comparisons between the Jews and Arabs, in beliefs, prehistory, discrimination, and treatment. At a press conference in 1969 in London, Meir is quoted as saying, "We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children. We will only have peace with the Arabs when they love their children more than they hate us." (420). She often put the onus on the Arabs to start the peace process, claiming that the Jews and Israelis have done so much to try to maintain peace in the Middle East. In a meeting with the AFL-CIO in 1976, she said, "[I will make peace with the Arabs] When Arab farmers will cross the Jordan not with planes or tanks, but with tractors and with their hands outstretched in friendship, as between farmer and farmer, as between human beings. A dream it may be, but I am sure that one day it will come true." (123). Meir tried to create peace in the Middle East but was met with violence. However, due to her leadership, Israel was not overtaken in an event of terror and managed to win both the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE FUTURE OF WOMEN LEADERS

"With the danger of terrorism and war spreading in the world, now is the right moment to stop and reconsider our actions and do everything possible to bring an end to the fighting, be it in your own homeland, neighboring countries, or in your region." – Dalia Grybauskaitė

With the higher reporting of terror attacks around the world and the rise of women as political leaders, one must wonder what the future of women's leadership in national security and defense will hold. One would be hard-pressed to find an average American who can name more than a handful of current female political leaders. Every day, though, women are breaking glass ceilings. Two women, in particular, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia, and Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania, are incredible examples of resilience in politics. Grabar-Kitarović is the youngest President in Croatian history. While Croatia may not be extremely susceptible to instances of terror, the wave of Islamic extremist terror in Europe still gives an air of insecurity to this Adriatic-coastal country. Dalia Grybauskaitė has been called the Iron Lady or the Steel Magnolia of the Baltics. Grybauskaitė is well-known for her criticism of Russia, likening Vladimir Putin to the new-age Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin and

stating Russia is governed by a “terrorist regime.” Not only is Grybauskaitė the first female President of Lithuania, but she is also the only Lithuanian President to be reelected for a second term. While Lithuania is unlikely to be the subject of the Islamic-extremist terror attacks plaguing central Europe, Lithuanians fear re-annexation by the Russians, or occupation, not unlike that in Crimea. With an international rise in Russian aggression, Lithuanians’ fears are valid. Whether or not Putin decides to expand his control over Lithuania, Grybauskaitė’s utter outspokenness against a major regional hegemon is unlike any other female leaders’ in the past, though her treatment is quite like the hard-knuckled Margaret Thatcher. Grybauskaitė has validated the existence of the threat of terror and has been quite verbal against it, without empathy or amiability to the Russian cause. This may be due to the fact that this terrorism, in this case, is state-sponsored, and the history between Lithuania and the former Soviet Republic, which has elicited the kind of forceful response from Grybauskaitė.

The question remains, what can we expect from future women leaders when issues of national security and terrorism arise? I have come to the following conclusions: the first women in political leadership of any given government usually exhibit: a) more hawkish behavior than their successor, b) less feminist behavior than their successors, and c) are more subject to public approval than their male counterparts. Until women in political office become a norm everywhere, we will see women in political office disavow feminism and turn to hawkish behavior. This is not to say that the public perceptions of women do not cause these issues; if women are not expected to be more masculine and hawkish when elected, they will not need to exhibit this behavior, in the first place.

In reality, there is no way to predict individual women’s actions; there are far too many variables. Additionally, women leaders are too few and far between to statistically prove these claims, as well. However, these observations lead to far more questions than answers; do women’s personal histories affect them more than men in the context of political leadership? Does time or geography play a role in the interactions with insurgency groups? Is it better to acknowledge the presence of insurgency groups or to ignore them? Are violent action groups more receptive to female or male leaders? I invite readers interested in this topic to further explore the answers to these and other questions.

While this paper discussed the many ways women as political leaders deal with terrorism, there is obviously no evidence to prove that women cannot handle being in charge of national defense. Women as political leaders have handled some of the most crucial events in the history of terror attacks; from the Yom Kippur War and the Brighton Beach bombing, women have managed these and many other crises. Governing is not a matter of gender. The capacity and ability to govern are not carried on the Y chromosome, nor is it a product of testosterone; so why do so many people around the world doubt the ability of a woman to lead in times of crisis? Neither male nor female leaders can base their decisions solely on stereotypical gender roles or the preconceived emotional or rational rule. With a rise of women as political leaders who continue to break glass ceilings everywhere, hopefully, this preconception will die out. Rather, it can be stated, deduced, inferred, implied and otherwise notated as leading based on perceived outcomes that, in these instances of women in leadership who must make consequential decisions in the wake of terror, these leaders have minimalized damage both physically, as in lives lost, and politically, as in having reacted to avoid backlash and provide support for their countrymen and women.

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ENDNOTES

1. Unless otherwise stated, all information comes from each woman's respective biographies:
2. Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. Print. and
3. Golda Meir, *My Life*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975. Print.

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