

Warriors' Power

To outsiders, the struggles in which most members of terrorist groups see themselves engaged appear to be of such cosmic proportions that they cannot conceivably be won. When Boko Haram took charge of much of the territory in northern Nigeria, and when ISIS seized territorial control of western Iraq and eastern Syria and proclaimed that its caliphate had been established, these were notable exceptions. Boko Haram's authority was tenuous, however, and even at its broadest extent of geographic expansion in 2015, the "state" of ISIS was a spider web network of conquered towns and cities connected by roads that were not totally secured. When the territorial control was challenged in 2016, the ISIS domination of many towns and outposts in Iraq crumbled like a house of cards. One of the spokespersons for the movement, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, released a statement in May 2016, warning its detractors not to gain too much confidence in the Islamic State's loss of territory. "True defeat," he said, "is losing the will and desire to fight."¹ This was a sentiment shared by many of the thousands of volunteers who supported the movement online through Twitter and other forms of social media, and by those who had flocked to the region to support the imagined caliphate. For them, the struggle was never simply about the power of controlling land. But it was about power. In a message to his loyal followers around the world, ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi explained that conducting acts of terrorism on the movement's behalf were empowering. "Terrorism is to refuse humiliation, subjugation, and subordination," he explained,

adding that it would allow the Muslim involved in such acts to “live as a Muslim, honorably with might and freedom.”² Though al-Baghdadi urged his followers to rush to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State as fighters, for many of the supporters their participation was far away, in places such as London, Brussels, Detroit, Karachi, or Tunis, so that, in front of their computer screens, they took on imagined roles of soldiers in a glorious cosmic battle. At times, however, they went outside and actually performed as fighters. Undertaking terrorist acts, such as the assault on an office Christmas party in San Bernardino in 2015, was a way of joining the movement from afar. Most of these worldwide volunteers, and most of those who flocked to Syria and Iraq to support the Islamic State, had little to gain materially from their involvement. For most, in fact, it was an enormous sacrifice of money, time, and family ties. For some, it cost them their lives.

Yet, in the act of sacrificing and being involved, most of the ISIS fighters felt ennobled and empowered, even though there was no immediate material or political gain from their actions. A similar stance was taken by those involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the tragic suicide bombings in Israel. The very means by which these and similar battles have been waged—violent assaults launched by small minorities against opponents who were infinitely better armed—seem destined to failure. It is hard to take seriously the notion that these were rational efforts to achieve or maintain power, at least by ordinary calculations. Yet, to those undertaking them, there may have been something exhilarating, perhaps even rewarding, about the struggle itself. This sense of empowerment may have made the effort seem worthwhile.

“To die in this way”—through suicide bombings—the political head of the Hamas movement told me in words that were strikingly similar to the ISIS leader al-Baghdadi, “is better than to die daily in frustration and humiliation.”³ He went on to say that, in his view, the very nature of Islam is about the defense of “dignity, land, and honor.” He then told a story that the prophet had told about a woman who fasted daily, and yet because she humiliated her neighbors, she was doomed to hell.⁴ The point of the story, he said, is that dishonoring someone is the worst act that one can do, and the only thing that can counter it is dignity: the honor provided by religion and the courage of being a defender of the faith. In a curious way, then, both religion and violence were seen as antidotes to humiliation.

The countering of dishonor with piety and struggle is a theme that runs through many incidents of religious violence in the last decades of

the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first. Dr. Baruch Goldstein is said to have been driven to kill innocent Muslims in the shrine of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron because he felt Jews had been dishonored. A similar sense of pride was exhibited in the nervous bravado of the Hamas suicide bombers in the videotapes taken the night before their actions, and in the Twitter postings of young volunteers on their way to Syria to engage in combats that would likely take their lives. A British teenager who was lured to ISIS online said that he despised the way that his Bangladesh Muslim community in his own country was treated and was delighted to leave Britain to join ISIS. He ended up in a training camp in Syria, where he confessed to missing his parents—"we all miss our mums," he said—but added that he would "stay and fight until the Khalifah is established or I die."⁵ The same bravado was expressed by many young Sikh militants in India, who told me that they were fighting for the glory of the Sikh community and were angered that the government did not take them seriously.⁶ Japan's Shoko Asahara wanted to be not only "like a king," as one of his former followers told me, but "like Christ."⁷ Ashin Wirathu told me that he regarded himself as the voice of the Buddhist masses.⁸

In all these cases, the act of being involved in violence provided a sense of empowerment disproportionately greater than what the violence actually achieved. For this reason, I describe this feeling of strength as "symbolic empowerment." By using the term *symbolic*, I do not mean to imply that the empowerment was not real. After all, a sense of power is largely a matter of perception, and in many cases the power that the activists obtained had a very real impact on their community, their relationships, and themselves, as well as on the political authorities who feared them and granted them the respect of notoriety. But symbolic expressions of violence—performance violence, as I earlier described it—are empowering in a special way, for they seldom have led to conquests of territory or personnel in the traditional definition of military success. For most of these quixotic fighters, their great success was simply in waging the struggle—the heady confidence they received by being soldiers for a great cause, even if the battles were not won, or were even winnable, in ordinary military terms.

EMPOWERING MARGINAL MEN

A society provides an accepted—even heroic—social role for its citizens who participate in great struggles and have been given the moral license

to kill. They are soldiers. Understandably, many members of radical religious movements see themselves that way. Many ISIS followers, whether or not they were on the battlefields, called themselves mujahideen, literally a fighter "engaged in jihad." Sheikh Abdul Rahman described himself as "a soldier and servant in the cause of Allah."⁹ Rev. Michael Bray, who had once attended the naval academy at Annapolis but never completed his military training, called himself "a soldier for Christ."¹⁰ Anders Breivik liked to portray himself online posing in a military uniform, though he was never a soldier. A former staff member of the Aryan Nations said that he had been drawn to the movement by the flags, the military uniforms, and the parades.¹¹

For many activists, though, the militant posture is not just an affectation. They were indeed soldiers at one time in real wars, and continued their identities as war heroes—or perhaps fulfilled their frustrated careers—in the imagined wars of politico-religious struggles. Nidal Hassan was a military doctor for the U.S. Army Medical Corps stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009 when he turned on his fellow soldiers in a shooting rampage that killed thirteen. The two young men who carried out the Oklahoma City federal building bombing, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, were also soldiers, veterans of the Gulf War. In Operation Desert Storm, McVeigh is said to have enjoyed the act of killing and once boasted of decapitating an Iraqi with his cannon at a distance of eleven hundred meters. During the last battle—a no-contest encounter that amounted to virtual slaughter of all remaining Iraqi forces—McVeigh is reported to have been furious when ordered to stop shooting. He then took out his camera and wandered over the battlefield, taking pictures of the Iraqi dead.¹² When McVeigh returned to the United States after the war, he continued to wear his army fatigues and tote weapons as if preparing for battle. In this respect McVeigh was not unlike thousands of uniformed militia activists throughout the United States. Gordon Sellner, a militia member who subscribed to a Christian Identity ideology similar to McVeigh's and shot a deputy sheriff in Montana, barricaded himself inside his cabin and sent out directives that he signed, "a soldier for Christ and country."¹³

Other religious activists have also had military connections. Mahmud Abouhalima and many of the followers of Osama bin Laden and Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman had served as mujahideen in the battlefields of Afghanistan. On several tours of duty in Afghanistan in 1988–89, Abouhalima is said to have volunteered to undertake the most treacherous of missions.¹⁴ When I interviewed him, Abouhalima told

me that he submitted himself to dangerous situations in the Afghan war because "as a Muslim," it was his "job."¹⁵ A leader in Abouhalima's mosque said most Muslims like Abouhalima who went to the war in Afghanistan from America left "as ordinary men and came back so devout and so proud." He went on to explain that the Afghan war "reminded them of the glorious old days, many hundreds of years ago, when the Muslims were fighting the infidel."¹⁶

During the height of the Sikh separatist movement some of India's most highly ranked soldiers crossed over and joined the Khalistani revolt. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's military adviser, Shabeg Singh, had been a general in the Indian army. Shabeg Singh's former superior officer, Major General Narinder Singh, also joined the movement after his retirement. When I interviewed the former major general in the Punjab capital city, Chandigarh, he told me that his involvement in the movement initially was a matter of personal pride. He felt lost after leaving the military and was flattered when a group of retired Sikh military officers were brought to Amritsar and asked to support the struggles of their people. Narinder Singh said that for several years thereafter he traveled around the state, serving as adviser to five or six major paramilitary organizations.¹⁷ Other Sikh activists have had police connections. Dilawar Singh, the suicide bomber who killed Punjab's Chief Minister Beant Singh, was a dismissed special police officer from Patiala. An accomplice, Balwant Singh, was a police constable. The alleged mastermind of Indira Gandhi's assassination, Simranjit Singh Mann, had served as a superintendent of police in the Punjab.¹⁸

In the radical religious movements on both sides of the Palestine-Israeli confrontation, military images have abounded. Hamas cadres have had military as well as religious training, and some of the volunteers were former armed police of the Palestinian authority. On the Jewish side, both the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the perpetrator of the massacre in Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs had been soldiers in the Israeli army. The latter, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, maintained good relations with the Israeli military, and though long retired from the army he dressed up in his old military uniform the morning he entered the mosque at the sacred site of the Cave of the Patriarchs at Hebron and with an army weapon killed scores of Arabs kneeling at prayer.¹⁹

Such soldiers have found new battles: the grand spiritual and political struggles in which their movements envision themselves to be engaged. These cosmic wars impart a sense of importance and destiny

to men who find the modern world to be stifling, chaotic, and dangerously out of control. The imagined wars identify the enemy, the imputed source of their personal and political failures; they exonerate these would-be soldiers from any responsibility for failures by casting them as victims; they give them a sense of their own potential for power; and they arm them with the moral justification, the social support, and the military equipment to engage in battle both figuratively and literally. It is an incendiary combination, one that has led to horrendous acts.

Like soldiers in real armies, the imagined soldiers of cosmic wars tended to be young and male. They also tended to be members of financially and socially marginal groups for which there is a great need for empowerment. Like all generalizations, however, there have been significant exceptions: the leaders of the groups, for instance, have often been middle-aged and affluent.

The very youthfulness of most members of the movements made them socially marginal. Many of the foreign ISIS volunteers were still in their teens, only a few were out of their twenties. A tabulation of the ages of Sikh extremists killed by police indicated that most of the men were also in their early twenties.²⁰ According to Emmanuel Sivan, one of the leading scholars of modern Islamic history, Hamas fighters have consisted largely of "urban males in their teens."²¹ In most societies, young people between the ages of approximately sixteen and twenty-two are in a liminal state between life stages. They are no longer children in their parents' families, and they have not yet created families of their own. Their marginality is especially acute in traditional societies built around family units, in which one does not find the highly developed youth cultures of modern urban and industrialized societies. These activist youths are family members without a family, for whom religious movements provide a home and an extended kinship.

In the cultures of violence that have led to religious terrorism, the anxieties of all young men—concerns over careers, social location, and sexual relationships—have been exacerbated. Experiences of humiliation in these matters have made them vulnerable to the voices of powerful leaders and images of glory in a cosmic war. In Iraq, when the post-Saddam regime refused to accept soldiers from Saddam's old army, thousands of young men were put out of work, and many of them were eager to gain employment in the Islamic State militia. In Palestine, where the unemployment rate among young men in their late teens and early twenties hovered around 50 percent, economic frustration led to sexual frustration. Without jobs, which is usually a prerequisite to searching for

a wife in traditional societies, they could not marry. Without marriage, in strict religious cultures such as that of Palestinian Arabs, they could not have sex. The Hamas movement provided a way of venting the resulting frustrations in a community that supplied a family and an ideology that explained the source of their problems and gave them hope.

The same can be said about many other movements of religious activism, including the Islamic Resistance in Algeria. There religious opposition to the secular National Front Party was fueled by a 20 percent inflation rate, a 25 percent unemployment rate, and a youthful population—70 percent of citizens were under twenty-five years of age—who could not hope for marriage, an apartment, or a job under Algeria's dire economic conditions.²² A U.S. State Department official told me that an improvement in Algeria's economic climate would quickly quell the agitation of religious revolutionaries. The implication of his comments was that Algeria's religious revolution was an economic rebellion in disguise. Although I suspect that religious ideology permeated the Algerian resistance more deeply than he suggested, there is no question in my mind that much of what he said was right: economic despair led to a sense of desperation and anger that was aimed—appropriately or not—at the secular junta that seized power when the election appeared to be moving toward victory for the Islamic party.

In some movements, however, the economic situation was not one of extreme poverty, but of relative deprivation. This was the case in the Aum Shinrikyo movement in Japan, where most of the followers were middle class and many of them professionals, though often frustrated in their careers. Christian activists in Europe and the United States, also have not wholly fit the stereotype of young and poor: most of them have been employed and no longer youthful. The Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik was in his thirties when he committed the Oslo massacre; Breivik was not poor but was hardly a professional success. Timothy McVeigh was unemployed and drifting in his career, but others, like the abortion clinic attacker, Paul Hill, were more established. In Paul Hill's case he was a pastor, though one excommunicated by his own Presbyterian denomination and working as a car washer and detailer. The Tsarnaev brothers, who bombed the Boston Marathon in 2013, were stagnating in their ambitions as well: the older, Tamerlane, had given up on his dream of being a Golden Gloves boxing champion, and the other, Dzhokhar, at University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, had uncertain career plans. Another set of brothers, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, involved in the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine offices in Paris in 2015,

were also floundering in life, unable to maintain stable jobs or social relationships. What they all had in common was a sad tale of failed promise in their professional lives, and a fear of even greater social marginality in the future. Although many were white Protestant males and members of the middle class, they perceived European and American society to be moving in a direction that would make this class increasingly peripheral. The white militants were terrified at statistical projections, based on the rise of Middle Eastern immigrants in Europe and Asian and Hispanic immigrants in the United States that would increasingly marginalize Caucasians.

These fears of impending marginality have undoubtedly helped to fuel the racism of many radical religious movements. Kerry Noble, at one time a leader of the Christian extremist movement called the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, said that he used to preach sermons describing blacks as the "beasts of the field" mentioned in the Bible. Jews, he once alleged, were products of sexual intercourse between Eve and Satan. Even though Noble and his colleagues "had never personally known a Jew," that did not hinder them from blaming Jews for most of the problems in the modern world: "for the pornography, for the lack of morality, for the economic situation in America, for minority rights over white rights, and for kicking God out of the schools."²³ By implying that Jews were responsible for these problems, Noble was expressing his own frustration over the inability of white Christian men like himself to control the world around them.

In Myanmar, the fiery Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu prophesized that Burmese society would numerically favor Muslims rather than Buddhists if demographic projections came to fruition within a few generations. Wirathu thought that Burmese Buddhism was in danger of forever being dashed away, a dark prediction that I heard in a different context, in Sri Lanka, by another Buddhist monk, this one afraid of the increasing power of Tamil Hindus as well as Sri Lankan Muslims. In India, it was middle-class Hindus who feared the rising economic power of Muslims groups in Gujarat, and who fueled the anger that led to the massacre of Muslims in Ahmedabad. In India's Punjab state, the movement of Sikh empowerment was also composed largely of young men from a privileged class, the agrarian Jats, who saw their world similarly endangered, though in their case not by Muslims but by urban Hindus and Sikhs whom they thought the secular government was disproportionately advantaging. They feared that the social and economic status they regarded as their birthright was slipping away. Some of the most

fanatical members of the movement, including Beant Singh, one of the assassins of Indira Gandhi, were Sikhs who came from the lowest stratum of society—the so-called untouchable castes.²⁴ The bulk of the militant Sikh movement, however, was composed of young Jats, rural youths with little education. In earlier generations they would automatically have assumed positions of leadership and economic power within Punjab society. In the last decades of the twentieth century, however, as northern India became increasingly urban and industrial, money and social status within the Sikh community moved away from rural Sikhs and toward members of merchant and administrative castes—both Hindus and Sikhs—who live in cities. Urban groups such as Khatri and Aroras had begun to challenge the Jats for power in the Punjab, and young Jats were desperate to reassert the primacy of their caste—and themselves. In some cases, this desperation led to participation in movements of religious violence, such as the one that took the life of the chief minister of Punjab. On the morning that the young Jat Dilawar Singh ignited the bomb that killed the chief minister and fourteen others, he said, “Today I will make the Jats feel proud.”²⁵

Not all Sikhs who supported the militant movement lived in India, however. Sikhs abroad are examples of another kind of marginalized people who have become involved in paramilitary activity: expatriates. A considerable amount of money and moral support for Punjabi militants came from such faraway places as London, Houston, and Los Angeles. Sikhs in these places heard a message of belonging in the video- and audiotaped messages of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Although they were on the periphery of society in England, Canada, the United States, and the many other parts of the world to which Sikhs migrated in the twentieth century, militant movements provided them with the opportunity to display their commitment and prove their importance to the community in a powerful way.

The nineteen Muslim activists who participated in the suicide assault on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and perhaps other thwarted targets on September 11, 2001, were also in many cases men without countries. Alienated from their native lands in the Middle East they had encamped in urban environments in Europe and America. They were connected with one another through electronic communications and an occasional clandestine rendezvous. Unlike the suicide bombers of the Hamas movement they were often well-educated middle-class professionals in their thirties. What set them apart was not their youth and poverty but the marginality of their national identities. Like many other

mobile people of the twenty-first century their communities of identity are not in geographical space but in a kind of ethnic cyberspace.

In the twenty-first century this electronic connection among disparate disaffected youths around the world became a major motif in the organization of terrorist movements. Nowhere has this been more true than in the remarkable online jihadi network that emerged after 2014 supporting ISIS and its putative Islamic State. As I mentioned in my discussion of ISIS in an earlier chapter in this book, the Twitter accounts of volunteers that my research assistants have monitored revealed a consistent theme—the creation of a sense of community—that strikingly illustrated the degree to which these young people have felt alienated and marginalized in their home societies. One teenager of Bangladesh background who was raised in the United Kingdom said that leaving Britain to join the ISIS forces in Syria “was one of the happiest moments” in his life.²⁶ Charlie Winters, who has reported on the Twitter and internet network of what he has called the “virtual Caliphate” reported that “belonging” is one of the main themes of the Twitter chats; this observation was underscored by others who have been in Twitter contact with ISIS supporters and who have been impressed with how much the creation of an online jihadi friendship circle has meant to the young followers, many of them who have come from minority immigrant communities.²⁷

This phenomenon might be called “internet ethnicities”: transnational networks of people tied culturally through the internet despite the diversity of their places of residence and the limitations of national borders.²⁸ These ethnicities, united by websites and social media, are extensions of traditional societies whose adherents and cultures are dispersed throughout the world.²⁹ ISIS supporters are the most diverse, bringing together residents from Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia, along with those from North Africa and the Middle East. Other online networks are more ethnically specific.

Even before the widespread use of the internet, these expatriate groups have been the locus of global networks, such as the ones that I have mentioned above—Sikhs, Sri Lankans, and Arabs—including the followers of Osama bin Laden, who moved from Saudi Arabia to Sudan, to Afghanistan, and Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, who lived variously in Egypt, the Sudan, and New Jersey. Among their adherents was Muhammad Salameh, whose story is paradigmatic of the religious radical expatriate experience.

In New Jersey, Salameh lived virtually from hand to mouth, sharing addresses with several other people. All were situated in a busy working-

class neighborhood that, like other industrial neighborhoods of Jersey City, teemed with new immigrants from Haiti and the Middle East. The setting was in some ways not unlike the social and economic conditions in the crowded Palestinian refugee camps on the West Bank and in Jordan, where Salameh was born and raised and from which he departed in 1987 for America to improve his educational and financial situation. In the United States, where his limited English was a continuing social barrier, Salameh associated primarily with other Arabs. Since at this time the internet was not available to bring communities together, expatriate religious communities provided those points of identity and belonging. His life became focused around a local mosque located above a Chinese restaurant, led by the charismatic Egyptian cleric Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman. The trajectory of his life led ultimately to his participation in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, where the world came to know him as the terrorist who foolishly returned to the Ryder rental agency to retrieve his deposit for the van he had rented and subsequently blown up, and was immediately caught by waiting agents of the FBI.³⁰

Muhammad Salameh exemplified several aspects of marginality. He was a refugee first in the Middle East and then in America. He came from abject poverty and was a man with few skills and little hope of developing a career. He was a bachelor without good prospects for marriage. Yet one could say the same of thousands of others who immigrate to the United States in any given year, many of whom settle into respectable if not lucrative positions, and few of whom end up trying to destroy major urban buildings. At the same time, many of Salameh's comrades in the World Trade Center conspiracy were not socially or economically marginal at all: some, like Mahmud Abouhalima and Nidal Ayyad, a chemical engineer, were well-educated professionals with suburban homes and families.

Thus the case of Muhammad Salameh, while exemplifying a familiar pattern of marginality, also raises questions. What kind of causal connections should be made between marginality and the propensity for violent action? I hesitate to move too quickly. I do not think that economic or social despair leads automatically to violence, since virtually everyone on the planet has experienced some sort of economic and social hardship in his or her life. In the cases that we have examined, however, it appears that the combination of factors has made a difference, as has the intensity with which these factors are experienced and the availability of a religious and political vocabulary with which the frustrations can be articulated. Most important is the intimacy with which the humiliation is experienced and the degree to which it is regarded as a

threat to one's personal honor and respectability. These can create the conditions for a desperate need for empowerment, which, when no other options appear to be open, are symbolically and violently expressed.

WHY GUYS THROW BOMBS

Nothing is more intimate than sexuality, and no greater humiliation can be experienced than failure over what one perceives to be one's sexual role. Such failures are often the bases of domestic violence; and when these failures are linked with the social roles of masculinity and femininity, they can lead to public violence. Terrorist acts, then, can be forms of symbolic empowerment for men whose traditional sexual role—their very manhood—is perceived to be at stake.

Before we rush into an analysis of terrorism as a man's occupation, however, we have to acknowledge the fact that some women have played active roles in terrorist movements. The assassin who killed Rajiv Gandhi, the son and successor of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India, was a female suicide bomber who hid her lethal cargo in her sari. She had been a member of a Sri Lankan Tamil separatist group that was angry at Rajiv Gandhi's support of the neighboring Sri Lankan government's attempts to quell their separatist uprising. The Chechen separatist movement in Russia is infamous for its "Black Widow" fighters, women who carry out suicide attacks with bombs concealed beneath their black robes. When the Tupac Amaru movement invaded the Japanese embassy in Lima, Peru, several young rural women were prominent among the cadres who held the diplomats hostage. A Kurdish rebel suicide bomber in Turkey who killed nine people, including herself, in the town of Tunceli was dressed as a pregnant woman in order to hide the bomb that she was carrying beneath her skirt. In the Irish nationalist movement, women formed their own paramilitary group, Cumann Na Mbann, where their main role was to carry guns and explosives for the men to use in the military cadres of the Provisional Irish Republican Army.³¹

In all of these incidents, however, the groups of which the young terrorist women were a part were motivated by secular political ideologies or ethnic separatism; they were not religious. The Palestinian women who became martyrs as suicide bombers were members of the secular branches of the Palestinian independence movement, and not from Hamas, the Islamic branch. Yet increasingly in the twenty-first century, women have played a more active role even in political movements associated with religion. As we have seen in an earlier chapter in this book,

Maya Kodnani was convicted of terrorism in her role in the Hindu assault on Muslim neighborhoods in the Gujarat massacre. Though most in the angry mob of Hindus who committed the atrocities were young men, Kodnani, who was convicted of urging them on, was a middle-aged woman. Ten percent of the international volunteers who have joined ISIS were women, and though many came to provide sexual and social support for the male fighters, some have played strategic roles in terrorist acts. In the Paris attacks on the Bataclan nightclub and other sites in November 2015, the mastermind behind the attack, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a twenty-eight-year-old Belgian of Moroccan ancestry, was aided by his female cousin Hasna Aitboulahcen, who like him was in her mid-twenties. She helped her cousin elude authorities and then died in the police encounter when their Saint Denis apartment was surrounded. She had been raised in a foster home due to an abusive mother and an absent father, and her teenage years included binges on drugs and alcohol as well as attempts to go straight by adopting the most strict regimen of her Islamic faith. In the 2015 San Bernardino attack, the wife of terrorist Syed Rizwan Farook, Tashfeen Malik, was equally as radical as her husband, as evidenced by their comments, correspondence, and behavior. Some even thought that she might have been the main instigator of the plot.

In general, however, women have not played a prominent role in militant religious movements. Yet some groups have provided an ancillary role for women. The Twitter feeds of ISIS supporters online are overwhelmingly those of young men, though a few women have been outspoken in their rhetorical defense of the movement. ISIS has actively attempted to recruit foreign women into their ranks, in part to make the movement more attractive to the men who have been recruited. But once there, they have played strategic roles, including as guards and support staff. The movement for Sikh separatism in India adopted much the same position. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood reported that when a young woman pleaded with the leader of the Khalistan Commando Force to allow her to become a member, he finally assented but restricted her to support roles—carrying munitions and messages—rather than being involved in “combat actions.”³² Mahmood said that the woman waited for the day when she would have the opportunity to be more active. That time came when she broke into the house of a Hindu shopkeeper whom she suspected as having reported her to the police. She held a gun at his head, berating him for turning her in. The shopkeeper denied that he had done so, and was “begging for pardon” and “crying

that I was like his daughter," the young woman said. But she was not dissuaded. "I shot him down with my revolver," she went on to say, "with my own hands."³³

In reporting this grisly story, the young Sikh woman said that one of her purposes in murdering the Hindu shopkeeper was to spur Sikh men into what she regarded as even greater acts of courage. If they saw that "girls could be so brave," she reasoned, then Sikh boys "could be even more brave."³⁴ The implication was that the task of killing was ordinarily the work of men—or "boys," as the young Sikh activists were called—and the role of women was to provide support, to challenge them, and to spur them on. Her position was essentially that of the great martyr in the Sikh movement, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who addressed his congregations as if the men (especially the young men) were the only ones listening, encouraging them to let their beards grow in the long Sikh fashion and describing their cowardice in the face of government opposition as "emasculatation." In general, Bhindranwale's attitude was in line with the prevailing values of virtually all cultures of violence based on strong traditional religious ideologies. These have been postures of "radical patriarchalism," as Martin Riesebrodt has called it.³⁵ The role of men is in public life; the role of women is in the home.

Religious activists often have shown a certain paternalistic respect for women, as long as they have remained in their place. During the 1991–92 Muslim uprising in Algeria, Ali Belhaj, one of the Islamic Front leaders, said that a woman's primary duty was to "bear good Muslims"; and Sheikh Abdelkader Moghni, another Islamic Front leader, complained about women working and taking jobs from men. Women, he said, just "spend their salaries on makeup and dresses, they should return to their homes."³⁶ A businesswoman in Algiers responded by saying she feared that if the Islamic Front succeeded, it would usher in a reign of "pig power." "They're all male chauvinist pigs," she explained, adding, "believe me, we are worried."³⁷ The worst of these fears came true in Afghanistan, where the Taliban party promoted a male-dominant culture that did not tolerate women in public life, even as teachers, doctors, or nurses. Although they claimed that eventually Afghan society would become somewhat more liberal, they stated that society would not be regularized until the fighting was over. Such cases exemplify an assertion of masculinity and a recovery of public virility that is at once sexual, social, and political.

Does this explain why terrorism is primarily a male occupation, and why bombs are most often thrown by guys? I use the term *guys* in this

case because it evokes the camaraderie of young males slightly on the edge of social acceptance. Moreover, it is etymologically rooted in religious activism. The term *guy* came into use in England in the seventeenth century after Guy Fawkes was tried and executed in 1606 for his role in the Gunpowder Plot. This extraordinary conspiracy planned by radical English Catholics involved thirty-six barrels of gunpowder hidden in a cellar under the House of Lords, set to be ignited on the opening day of Parliament. Intended as a protest against laws they thought would restrict their religious freedom, the explosion would have blown up both British legislative houses and King James I. Thus the religious terrorist, Fawkes, was the original "Guy," and his name came to be applied to all roguish men who skirted danger.

The religious terrorists of recent years are today's guys: bands of rogue males at the margins of respectability. The gender specificity of their involvement suggests that some aspect of male sexuality—sexual roles, identity, competence, or control—is a factor in the "toxic masculinity" of the young men who have engaged in terrorism, as one writer has described it.³⁸ Perhaps the easiest aspect of this masculinity to understand is the matter of sexual competence—by which I mean the ability to have sex, a prospect that is limited in traditional societies by moral and situational restrictions. There is a certain amount of folklore about men and guns that cannot easily be dismissed—the notion, for instance, that sexual frustration leads to a fascination with phallic-shaped weaponry that explodes in a way that some men are unable to do sexually. As I mentioned earlier, the young bachelor self-martyrs in the Hamas movement enter into their suicide pacts almost as if it were a marriage covenant. They expect that the blasts that kill them will propel them to a bed in heaven where the most delicious acts of sexual consummation will be theirs for the taking. One young man who had committed himself to becoming a suicide bomber said that "when [he] exploded" and became "God's holy martyr," he was promised a place for himself and his family in paradise, seventy-two virgins, and a cash settlement for his family equivalent to six thousand dollars.³⁹ It was the virgins that seemed to interest the young man the most.

Sexual power for many men involves not only sexual competence—the ability to have sex—but also sexual control. This means knowing when not to have sex, and putting sexual matters in their place. Their aversion to what appear to be aberrations of traditional sexual roles—including misplaced gender assignments, such as women assuming dominant positions in the public arena—is an example of sex out of

control. To many men these phenomena also exemplify a wider form of social disorder: they are illustrations of the encroaching power of evil, demonstrations of the pervasiveness of the lack of moral values, and examples of how social definitions have become skewed. On a Twitter feed of one ISIS supporter the young man defended himself against an accusation of misogyny by saying that "I do respect women, but religious women only."⁴⁰ In *The Turner Diaries*, William Pierce spoke of what he called "Women's lib" as being "a form of mass psychosis . . . promoted and encouraged by the System as a means of dividing our race against itself."⁴¹

This concern with sexual roles elevates the issue beyond one of simple sexual competence or control on a personal level. For Pierce, sex is a social problem: roles and conduct out of place in what he regards as a society in moral decline. Moreover, it is a public problem that leads in some cases to hostility. It is anger against sex out of place that is often evident in the targets of violence, such as abortion clinics and gay bars and nightclubs. At other times the violence itself has had sexual overtones, as in cases such as in Ireland where torture of enemies has involved mutilation of the men's genitals—literally, in some cases, emasculating them—and in ISIS-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq, where the rape of women has been employed as a terrorist act.

Indeed, rape of women (and sometimes boys) has become a familiar part of violent assaults, and it is not entirely clear why. Rape in any circumstance is, like other acts of terrorism, a symbolic display of power. In the case of ISIS, where Yazidi women were sold into sex slavery, the acts were legitimated by the fiction that the followers of this ancient religion were devil worshippers and therefore deserved whatever punishment they received. Moreover, the act of rape was a way of conquering a people who had rejected Islam, and literally being forced to receive Muslim men. In that act they were in a sense made Muslim. Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi makes a similar observation regarding the Hindu rape of Muslim women during the Gujarat massacre. According to Ghassem-Fachandi, the Hindus who attacked the Muslim women thought that since the women were ethnically Indian they had turned away from Hinduism to become Muslim, and the act of forced sexual intercourse was a way of branding them as truly Hindu rather than Muslim.⁴² In both cases the forced sex was a claim of power.

What is the connection between these forms of violence, this macho religiosity, and these yearnings for political power? The antipathy toward modern women—the notion of female sexual roles gone awry—is one

clue. The hatred of homosexuality is another. The disdain of homosexuality has been a theme of conservative religion for centuries and was one of the criticisms that the religious opponents of the Enlightenment leveled against the values of secular morality in eighteenth-century France.⁴³ But it has returned with peculiar stridency in contemporary religious cultures of violence, where the fear of homosexuality—homophobia—has been a prominent theme.

Virtually all radical religious movements of the final decades of the twentieth century have had a homophobic twist. ISIS has been notorious for its treatment of homosexual men, dozens of whom have been executed in ISIS-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq because of their sexuality. A graphic YouTube video shows three allegedly gay men, whose hands and feet had been bound, pushed from the top of a three-story building onto the street below, after which their still-writhing bodies were set upon by a crowd of men and boys who threw large stones at their heads and torsos until they were dead. In 2016 a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida was attacked by a gunman who shouted out his allegiance to ISIS. In Iran, hundreds associated with the gay subculture of Tehran perished following the Islamic revolution. But Islam is not the only religious tradition in which conservative members of a faith are cruel to those regarded as sexual deviants. In northern California a gay couple was killed and gay bars were attacked allegedly by Christian Identity activists. Gays were included among the “mud-people” that Benjamin Smith hoped to destroy in his 1999 Illinois rampage, and *The Turner Diaries* described homosexuality as a kind of aberration that “healthy males” would not consider.⁴⁴ Some Christian activists have given their own interpretations of the Bible in asserting that it prescribes “the penaltys [*sic*] for race-mixing, homo-sexuality [*sic*], and usury” as “death.”⁴⁵ The acceptance of homosexuality in secular Israeli society has dismayed right-wing Jewish activists, who offered the rumors of Yasir Arafat’s alleged penchant for boys as evidence of the moral corruption of Palestine’s leadership.⁴⁶

During the troubles of Northern Ireland, one of firebrand preacher Ian Paisley’s main criticisms of liberal Protestantism was its acceptance of gays. “Lesbianism, homosexuality held up as taught in the Bible and to be practiced by Christian people,” he thundered in one of his sermons, “think of it!”⁴⁷ Along the same lines, one of Paisley’s complaints about Catholic clergy was that they never marry, a matter of some suspicion to the arch-heterosexual Paisley. “You do not need to kneel at a confessional box,” Paisley told them, “before a bachelor priest who has more sins than you have and yet pretends to forgive you.”⁴⁸ Another

Christian militant told a moving story about how he almost bombed a gay church in Kansas City. The militant, Kerry Noble, said that he had entered a gay church in Kansas City with the intention of igniting a bomb he was carrying in his briefcase.⁴⁹ After looking around and seeing men embrace other men, watching women kiss other women, and hearing the preacher speak about his male lover, Noble hesitated. He had second thoughts about the loss of life that would have resulted—at least fifty would have been killed—and he also questioned the effectiveness of the bombing. It would not, he reasoned, precipitate the revolution that he had hoped for. It was only later, after he had rejected the ideology and the personal ties to Christian Identity, that he also abandoned his homophobia and saw gays as scapegoats for what he and his group had regarded as society's immoralities.

Another Christian activist, Rev. Michael Bray, told me that the secular government's tolerance for abortion and homosexuality were the two marks of its moral degeneracy. Considering Bray's prejudices, it is interesting to note that when Bray was sent to prison for bombing abortion clinics, he was placed in the same cell with a pedophile convicted of preying on boys. Bray and his cellmate became fast friends, Bray told me, but only after the pedophile repented of his sins. Still, the man acknowledged to Bray that his sexual inclination toward young men persisted. When Bray refused to take part in a prison prayer meeting with an out-of-the-closet gay prisoner who was unrepentant about his sexuality, this led to tensions within the cell. His cellmate became angry and accused Bray of being antigay. Bray tried to assure his cellmate that same-sex attractions were understandable as long as one did not act on those impulses, and as long as one felt remorseful if indeed such acts were committed.⁵⁰

Why have such aversions to homosexuality been held so strongly by contemporary religious activists? One answer is a loss of identity: the kind of heterosexual male who is attracted to such movements is precisely the sort who loses power in a society in which women and gays have access to straight males' traditional positions of authority. They see women and gays as competition. But there is another answer to the question of why radical religious groups are so homophobic: a loss of control. Homosexuals have been scapegoats for a perceived systemic problem in society. When men have perceived their roles as diminished in a socioeconomic system that denies a sense of agency to individuals, either by being incompetent or overly competent—a faceless mechanical bureaucracy—this challenge has led to a defense of traditional roles.

Because men have so frequently held the reins of public order as their gendered responsibility in society in the past, they have felt particularly vulnerable when the public world has fallen apart or has seemed beyond control. In this case, they have seen active women and gays not just as competition, but as symptoms of a world gone awry.

This is a deeper fear, and there is not much that men can do about it. If the problem were just one of competition, they could hope to better themselves, and at least some would be able to succeed on an individual basis. If the problem is more systemic, then it is a matter of social disorder or worse: a sinister hand controlling and disrupting the world. This perception has led naturally to the satanization of enemies and to theories of cosmic war. It has also led naturally to a kind of tribal instinct that encourages members of such cultures of violence to band together and fight.

In such a context, then, though same-sex erotic acts are suspect, male bonding makes sense. Like the camaraderie of a football team facing a dangerous enemy in an uncertain struggle, the close community of men creates a primal form of social order. Unlike heterosexual bonding, which leads to private communities—families—the bonding of groups made up of the same sex, such as nuns and monks and football players, represents a primitive attempt to create a personalized form of public society. Individuals have a direct relationship with authority and a shared sense of responsibility in clearly delineated social roles. All-male radical religious groups, therefore, attempt to create and defend a righteous order in the face of massive social disorder.

These forms of marginal, male-bonding, anti-institutional, semipolitical movements are not idiosyncratic to the contemporary era. There have been occasions in past centuries when noninstitutional men's associations have spun off from mainstream religious traditions, often with violence on their agenda. The *Assassini* of medieval Islam are one example. The murderous, goddess-worshipping *Thuggees* (cult assassins) of India—from which we get the English word *thugs*—are another. In Christianity we have had the “guys” of Guy Fawkes's seventeenth-century Catholic terrorists and before them the Crusaders—blessed by Church officials, at least at the outset of their ventures. The Freemasons of the eighteenth century are a Protestant example of men springing from the domesticity of Church religion and founding their own secret order. Though not known for its violence, the organization has skirted the edges of institutional Christianity. So the precedent of somewhat marginal male movements has been set within religious history. But the proliferation of noninstitutional male paramilitary orders, such as the

Christian militia, is a relatively recent phenomenon. What is interesting is how intense the internal cohesion of the groups has been.

ISIS recruitment sometimes has the character of a fraternity initiation. Though some of the international volunteers are recruited online through social media, others are courted in face-to-face encounters in immigrant neighborhoods of European and Middle Eastern cities. One of my own students, an American of Palestinian ancestry, was studying Arabic for a year in Amman, Jordan, when a Jordanian friend invited him to a party one night. Innocently accepting the invitation, my student was surprised to see that the group of men who joined them in an SUV were not going to someone's house but to a hilltop where, in the darkness, an older member of the group began to talk about life's meaning and the importance of being true to one's religious faith, a commitment that sometimes leads to sacrifice and bravery. He realized that this was the overture to joining a jihadi movement, and the pitch was not just ideological, it was also personal. He was being invited to join a very special band of brotherhood.

Christian militants also provide access to similarly intimate male circles, as the militant novel *The Turner Diaries* describes. As the protagonist of the narrative entered the initiation rites of the secret movement, the Order, he observed a torchlight flickering over "the coarse, gray robes of the motionless throng," and thought to himself that these men were "the best my race has produced in this generation." They were truly men with whom he wished to bond. "These were no soft-bellied, conservative businessmen assembled for some Masonic mumbo-jumbo," the character affirmed to himself; and they were "no pious, frightened churchgoers whining for the guidance or protection of an anthropomorphic deity." They were "*real men, White men, men who were now one with me in spirit and consciousness as well as in blood.*"⁵¹

As this romantic rhetoric from Pierce's novel suggests, such close male bonding could have a homoerotic element—perhaps paradoxically so, considering the aversion that most men in right-wing religious groups have to sex out of place, including publicly identified homosexual roles. Yet same-sex intimacy has been a strong feature of many right-wing movements. The residents of Richard Butler's Aryan Nations compound in Idaho, for instance, virtually have all been young unmarried men.⁵² Even married male adherents of Christian Identity have found in their religious and political groupings a certain male bond. The friendship between Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, for example, was so tight and time consuming that Nichols's wife became jealous.

Young men who volunteered for suicide bombing missions sponsored by the Hamas movement usually worked in pairs and were sent out on missions accompanied by ritual elements often associated with marriage. On one of the videotapes depicting Hamas volunteers for suicide bombings, a young man no more than eighteen years old, wearing stylish dark glasses and a camouflage military cap, tells about his friend, who was sent on a suicide mission from which he never returned: "My brother Hatim, we were friends for the sake of God." The night before he left, the young man said emotionally, "He bequeathed me this gift." It was a dagger. The purpose was "to cut off the head of a collaborator or a Jew." He added, "and God living I will remain alive, and I will be able to fulfill the vow."⁵³

The pattern of male bonding in radical religious groups was also found in the movement of Sikh activism that uprooted India's Punjab. Being part of the Sikh movement was to join in a "bond of love," one young militant told Cynthia Keppley Mahmood.⁵⁴ The portraits of Sukha and Jinda, the Sikh assassins of General Vaidya, that many militants kept on their walls portrayed what Mahmood called "comradely love." With their arms around each other's shoulders, they exemplified the "tight bond of solidarity among comrades-in-arms" that she said accounted for much of the courageous behavior of Sikh militants in the field and the cycles of revenge killing that quickly escalated in the Punjab. In confronting death, Sukha and Jinda were said to have stated in their farewell address that they imagined the hangman's rope "as the embrace of a lover," and they "longed for death as for the marital bed." Their own "dripping blood" would be the "outcome of this union," and they hoped it would "fertilize the fields of Khalistan."⁵⁵ Friendships such as that of Sukha and Jinda are common in societies where extramarital male-female relationships are not allowed, and relationships within one's own sex can develop to considerable intensities. The Hindi and Punjabi languages have terms for such buddies who are more than just friends: they are *yar*, "intimate friends," or *yaro-ki yar*, "the best of friends."

Friendship may also have played a role in the dramatic events in 1984 that led to the death of the leader of the Sikh movement, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Bhindranwale had befriended his young lieutenant, Surinder Singh Sodhi, whom the Sikh leader described as "my brother."⁵⁶ Journalists considered him Bhindranwale's "right hand man," "personal bodyguard," and "key hit-man."⁵⁷ It was the murder of Sodhi that exacerbated the internal struggles between Bhindranwale's followers and the Akali Party forces linked with Gurcharan Singh and Sant Harchand

Singh Longowal, both sequestered in the Sikhs' main shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Bhindranwale accused Gurcharan Singh of having plotted Sodhi's murder, and claimed that the death of his young comrade was like "chopping my right hand."⁵⁸ Bhindranwale spent the week following the youth's murder confined to his quarters. Within days Sodhi's killer and several members of the Akali camp were killed in reprisal. As tensions mounted between the two factions, the Indian army invaded the Golden Temple, in what became known as Operation Bluestar. In the exchange of fire, Bhindranwale's forces killed the Akali leader, Gurcharan Singh, and Bhindranwale himself was killed. After Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated later that year, her son and successor, Rajiv, signed a peace accord with Longowal, who was himself soon thereafter assassinated, thus completing the spiral of violence that began with the killing of Bhindranwale's friend, Sodhi.

The theme of male bonding was also found in the Hindu nationalist movement, the RSS, composed of celibate men who boasted of their manhood and took inordinate interest in providing political and religious training to boys and young men in Boy Scout-type outings. Yet when an American scholar published a study of one of the RSS's spiritual heroes, Ramakrishna, revealing the homosexual aspects of his relationship with the boys who lived and studied in his school, the clamor of protest in India was enormous, especially among right-wing supporters of the RSS and the political party they have spawned, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), who thought that the scholar was trying to defame this famous Hindu teacher.⁵⁹ In an email rejoinder to Kripal on an internet listserv that circulated among American scholars of South Asian religion, Narasingha Sil, a professor of Indian origin, assailed Kripal for making it appear as if Ramakrishna's homosexual tendencies—his "diseased and disturbed mental proclivities"—were "normal or natural." Sil was clearly upset that the guru was put in the same category as those Indian lads "cavorting up and down the streets of the elite quarters of Calcutta or Mumbai, sporting nose rings or earrings." Although the professor acknowledged in India a certain "fondness for young boys on the part of some adult men," it was primarily "a pathetic option for aged impotent males."⁶⁰

This double standard—on the one hand a disdain for western-style homosexual behavior while on the other hand an acceptance of certain kinds of homosexual acts—helps to explain the curious ambivalence in the attitudes toward homosexuality in groups such as ISIS or the Taliban. In ISIS-held territories in Syria and Iraq, dozens of men have been

executed for homosexuality, as we have earlier observed. In 2016, however, a prominent ISIS officer, Abu Zaid al-Jazrawi, was found to be engaged sexually with a fifteen-year-old boy in the ISIS-held Syrian town of Deir ez-Zor.⁶¹ In the public outcry that followed, it was clear that punishment was appropriate, and an ISIS form of justice was quickly meted out. The boy was executed. Similar to other executions of suspected gay people in ISIS territory, his hands and feet were bound, and he was led blindfolded to the roof of the tallest building in town where he was pushed off, head first, landing on the pavement below in front of a large crowd that quickly set upon and mutilated the boy's body. The ISIS officer, however, was simply reassigned to another ISIS post in Iraq.

Since the older man, Abu Zaid, was an ISIS commander, his importance in the movement might have been the factor that saved him, but there were cultural issues as well. From a western point of view the older man would be considered a pederast and a rapist, the active aggressor in a case of anal sexual intercourse with an underage boy, who would be regarded as the victim. But in many nonwestern countries, as our discussion about Ramakrishna's sexuality in India has shown, the situation has traditionally been viewed differently. For one thing, the age of fifteen is not underage in societies where women are often married at age thirteen. Moreover, the animus against homosexuality depends more on the sexual roles than the sexual act. An active participant is simply playing the man's role of penetrator, whether the object is a woman, a boy, or a barnyard animal. The passive participant is playing in the role of a woman, which in a patriarchal and misogynist culture is demeaning for men to adopt. Hence in the case in the ISIS-held town of Deir ez-Zor, it was the boy who deserved to be punished more than the older man.

In Afghanistan there is a long tradition of dancing boys being sexually available for older men. This activity is called *bacha bazi*, a term that literally means "boy play," and informally refers to the exploitation of boys by men for erotic purposes in a society where women are not allowed to cavort in public. The mildest form of *bacha bazi* is to have the boys dress in makeup and feminine attire and perform suggestive dances, but these can lead further to rape and sexual slavery. Though the practice is officially outlawed, Taliban commanders are rumored to continue to abduct young men for this purpose. Such practices were portrayed in the novel and movie *The Kite Runner*.⁶² In this story, the protagonist's half-brother had been captured by a warlord and forced to be a dancing boy and provide sexual favors for his keeper.

Years later, the hero of the story returns to Afghanistan to rescue his half-brother's son, who has been abducted by the same warlord—now a Taliban commander—for the same purpose. This cultural practice is said to be adopted by both Taliban and their Afghan army opponents. A former U.S. Army Ranger who had served several tours of duty in Afghanistan told me that everyone in his unit had heard stories of “man-love Thursdays,” in which their fellow Afghan soldiers felt they had license to have sex once a week with other men, preferably boys who would be willing to play the woman's role of the passive partner in an oral or anal sexual encounter. Thus it is not surprising in such cultures to see elements of this homoerotic intimacy in the close male communities of religious-related groups involved in violent political acts.

Masculine assertions of potency, therefore, can be enhanced by the homoerotic bonds of a political brotherhood, and masculinity can be forged into a political resource. An American scholar, Sarah Lee Caldwell, has ruminated over what she described as “deep connections between male sexual prowess, virility, and Hindu nationalist violence.”⁶³ In Caldwell's opinion, the uproar in India over Kripal's suggestion of Ramakrishna's homosexuality was a defensive “hypermasculine” response that had “roots in the colonial period.” It was not just that Ramakrishna had a fondness for boys: the idea that he rejected playing the heterosexual male role and that his disciple, Vivekananda, may have played a passive role in satisfying his guru's sexual desires was, to many Hindu nationalists, “deeply threatening.”⁶⁴ According to Caldwell, the notion that a man would willingly play the woman's role of receiver in a sexual act raised specters of the “feminine” male of India. As several other writers on India have observed, the British view of Indian males as effeminate was part of what has been described as “colonial discourse.”⁶⁵

India's nationalist leaders from Gandhi to current members of the BJP have felt obligated to reassert the manliness of India's leadership. As scholars such as Ashis Nandy have claimed, the rhetoric of the British colonial period that referred to Indians in effeminate terms had a deep and enduring impact on India's nationalist movement, an impact that continues to the present day.⁶⁶ When the BJP came to power and shocked the world by conducting a series of nuclear tests, this demonstration of power was overwhelmingly approved within India. As one Indian scholar observed, the BJP's display of power showed the “hypermasculinity” inherent in the Hindu nationalism movement represented by such Hindu chauvinists as Balasaheb K. Thackeray, leader of the