

The Islamic State's sexual violence



Master thesis

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Abstract

The Islamic State is a Sunni Islamic movement that is guided by an ideology predominantly based on Jihadi-Salafism. The movement is based on an extremist reading of the Islamic texts and aims to establish and expand a caliphate. Their strategic objectives consist of 1) the establishment of a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, 2) the expansion of Sunni Islam and Sharia worldwide, 3) the recreation the power and glory of Sunni Islam and 4) controlling and governing the territory of the Islamic State. During their fight to reach these objectives, the Islamic State commits acts of sexual violence. Yazidis, who are the predominantly targeted group, are viewed as infidels by the Islamic State and their women are subjected to this violence, often in the form of sexual slavery. Eighty percent of the captured females are victims of trafficking and are sold to individual fighters. The selling and buying of these women takes place on trade markets, or at the locations where the women are being held. The other twenty percent becomes property of the Islamic State and will be sent to military camps in Iraq and Syria.

This thesis analysed to what extent ‘the idea of spontaneous sexual violence’, ‘the concept of sexual violence as a strategy’ and ‘the system of comfort women’ are of importance when trying to understand the case of sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. Primary and secondary sources have been used to analyse the importance of these explanations when trying to understand the reasons for sexual violence committed by the Islamic State.

This thesis showed that all three explanations contribute to an understanding of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women. The majority of the motivation for the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State cannot be understood as being of spontaneous origin. However, some of the more specific components regarding the behaviour of the fighters of the Islamic State, specifically towards the women they have labelled as their ‘sexual slaves’, can be understood as being spontaneous. The Japanese system of comfort women corresponds to the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, to the extent that both the Islamic State and Japan institutionalized their sexual violence. When looking at the strategic objectives of the Islamic State, the strategic component of the use of sexual violence becomes apparent, because the use of sexual violence against Yazidi women contributes to reaching these objectives. Furthermore, it is probable that the Islamic State also uses sexual violence with the specific aim of reaching these objectives. For this reason, it is a probability that the sexual

violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women can, partly, be understood as being part of a strategy.

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1. Introduction

Rape, in both war- and peacetime, is a crime mainly committed by men (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011; Kressel, 2002). There are several reasons and explanations that can be offered for the occurrence of rape and sexual violence. Interestingly, sexual violence occurring in armed conflicts originates from different rationales than the sexual violence committed in peacetime (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011). Throughout history, sexual violence occurring in wartime, has been explained predominantly by emphasizing the soldiers' masculinity and their sexual needs (Hirschauer, 2014; Steinman, 2016). Furthermore, it has been considered as an inevitable by-product of armed conflicts (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Wood, 2006; Gottschall, 2004; Littlewood, 1997). Here, sexual violence during an armed conflict is considered to be 'spontaneous sexual violence'. However, because of the extensive occurrence of sexual violence during other conflicts, this type of violence was recognised as having an instrumental function in a war as well. A leading explanation of sexual violence as having an instrumental function is the explanation stating that sexual violence is used as a 'strategy'. The armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are indisputable cases of this (Hirschauer, 2014). In the former Yugoslavia, it is estimated that 20.000 women and girls were raped while they were held in detention centres. These acts of sexual violence were supposedly the result of an overall pattern and part of systematic ethnic cleansing (Wood, 2006; Alison, 2007; Sharlach, 2000; Card, 1996). During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Hutu men subjected approximately 250.000 to 500.000 women and girls to rape. The rapes were planned, systematic and used purposefully as a weapon by the leaders of Hutu militia (Sharlach, 2000). Furthermore, in the Second World War another prominent explanation was presented, in which sexual violence was not committed spontaneously, but installed by a state. During this war, 'comfort women' were used as slaves by the Japanese state to comfort their soldiers (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011).

There has been an extensive amount of academic research and myriad theories have been offered to explain the occurrence of sexual violence during armed conflicts. The aforementioned cases of Rwanda and Yugoslavia are two of the most prominent and significant (Hirschauer, 2014; Gottschall, 2004; Sharlach, 2000). These two conflicts provide an indication for the concept of 'sexual violence as a strategy' to explain the occurrence of sexual violence during armed conflicts. This concept, combined with the explanations of 'spontaneous sexual violence'

and ‘the system of comfort women’, are most prominent explanations used to understand the occurrence of sexual violence during armed conflicts. This research will focus on trying to understand sexual violence in another major ongoing conflict, specifically the conflict with the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

In June 2014, the Islamic State seized Mosul and announced the establishment of a caliphate. In October 2014, the Islamic State supposedly had authority over 31.000 fighters and had substantial territorial control (Lister, 2014; Saltman & Winter, 2014). While having territorial control of areas in Iraq and Syria, fighters of the Islamic State committed acts of sexual violence against non-Sunni inhabitants of these territories, of whom Yazidi women are the most evident victims. The Yazidis form a minority religious group in Iraq. The Islamic State has been abducting thousands of Yazidi women a year, for whom the Islamic State has started an infrastructure and a comprehensive regulation of sexual slavery. The most noticeable introduction of sex slavery during this conflict dates took place on the third of August 2014, when fighters of the Islamic State seized towns on Mount Sinjar. Shortly after the invasion, women and men were separated. Women, girls and children were incarcerated, after which they were distributed in smaller groups to other places in Iraq or Syria where they were purchased and sold as sexual slaves (Callimachi, 2015).

This thesis will focus on trying to understand the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women. The sexual violence committed by the Islamic State has been investigated by the United Nations and Amnesty International and reports on their findings are publicly available. However, little academic research has been done on this particular topic. For this reason, academic research focused on explanations of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State is a useful addition to this field of research. The knowledge gap on this specific topic can be addressed by answering the following research question:

“How can the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women from 2014 and onwards be understood?”

To answer this question, this thesis will address the following sub-questions, using the three most prominent explanations for understanding sexual violence during armed conflicts:

1) “To what extent can the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women be understood using the idea of spontaneous sexual violence?”

2) “To what extent can the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women be understood using the concept of sexual violence as a strategy?”

3) “To what extent can the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women be understood using the system of comfort women?”

To answer these questions, the three explanations addressing the occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflicts will be thoroughly discussed. Hereafter, background information will be given on the conflict with the Islamic State to give insight in the context in which the acts of sexual violence occurs. This context is of great importance for the understanding of sexual violence in this conflict and is significant for the conduction of an effective analysis. This information will include the history, development and religious aspects of the conflict. Furthermore, in trying to understand the act of sexual violence in this conflict and provide an effective analysis, the acts of sexual violence committed against Yazidi women will be discussed in depth. Finally, the existing explanations for sexual violence will be applied to the case of the Yazidi women in order to address the overarching research question.

The aim of this research is to indicate to what extent the explanations of ‘spontaneous sexual violence’, ‘the system of comfort women’ and ‘sexual violence as a strategy’, are useful when trying to understand the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. By doing so, the knowledge gap concerning sexual violence in this conflict will be addressed, which makes this research academically relevant in the field of Crisis and Security Management. Besides the use of secondary sources to address this knowledge gap, primary sources will be used as well. The use of primary sources, which will consist of documents released by the Islamic State, will be of added value to field of terrorism studies, in which the use of primary sources is scarce (Schuurman & Eijkman, 2013).

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to increasing the understanding of a gross human rights violation in an ongoing conflict. For society, increasing the knowledge on this topic will shed a light on the necessity for the international community to deal with this problem during conflicts and providing the appropriate care for the victims. The gained knowledge may, in theory, also have a slight positive impact on the current policy on this topic. It could provide a valuable insight in how to deal with this type of violence in this conflict. If more information is available on the motives and explanations for the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, insight can be obtained on how to counter this type of violence in this conflict. The current

policy on this topic could be altered because of these insights, which could increase the effectiveness. Especially, because the understanding of the acts of sexual violence and its origins is improved, and as a result can be addressed at the crux.

1.1 Theoretical framework

Myriad sub-questions will be used to answer the research question. These sub-questions are based on the three most prominent explanations for sexual violence during armed conflicts, and may therefore be useful when trying to understand the acts of sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. As mentioned in the introduction, the three explanations that will be used in this thesis are the ‘spontaneous sexual violence’, ‘sexual violence as a strategy’ and the ‘system of comfort women’. Prior to applying these explanations on the acts of sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, more extensive descriptions of these explanations are needed and will be given below.

Research shows that rape rates are much higher during an armed conflict than in peacetime (Gottschall, 2004; Baaz & Stern, 2009; Wood, 2006). The occurrence of rape during armed conflicts can partially be explained by the great importance of masculinity in the military. In wartime, the primary group of reference shifts from family and friends to the military (Morris, 1996; Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011). Furthermore, military groups often emphasize on group bonding, which means that military units gain a strong influence on the viewpoints and behaviour of soldiers. Within such a primary military group, group norms might contribute to rape, especially in relation to attitudes towards masculinity, sexuality and women (Morris, 1996). This means that during an armed conflict, constraints regarding acts of rape that are present in regular societies are no longer valid, which makes the occurrence of rape more likely than in peacetime. Other aspects of war that might lead to the increasing rape rates during armed conflicts are the stressful and cruel wartime situations. The possibility of a soldier being classified as cowardly if he remains aloof could be an aspect as well. This may provoke a soldiers need to bolster his power, strength and manhood through sexual violence (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011).

In the aforementioned explanation for the increasing occurrence of acts of sexual violence during armed conflicts, individuals or groups are committing rape or sexual violence

relatively spontaneous. However, it can also be an element of a more structured plan or have the form of purposefully abusing or damaging certain women or communities. Two well-known manners in which the act of raping women is used during armed conflicts in a non-spontaneous way, are the use of ‘sexual violence as a strategy’ and the use of ‘comfort women’. This refers to women who coerced to be sexually available to soldiers that are confronted to the cruelties of the war (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011).

Sexual violence can and has been used as a strategy in armed conflicts (Sharlach, 2000; Bitar, 2015). In these cases, strategy refers to activities of armed forces to secure their (national) goals by political leadership (Millet & Murray, 1988). Thus, when acts of sexual violence are part of a strategy, sexual violence is a tactic that serves to reach a higher goal (Sharlach, 2000; Bitar, 2015). In these cases ‘rape is intentionally used to pursue military, territorial, social, and political gains during war’ (Ruby Reid-Cunningham, 2008, p. 280). Examples of armed conflicts in which extreme variants of sexual violence as part of a more structured strategy have been shown, are the conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the ’90’s of the twentieth century (Sharlach, 2000; Bitar, 2015). In Rwanda, “[m]en, primarily Hutu, used rape of women, primarily Tutsi, as a political weapon during the Rwandan genocide” (Sharlach, 2000, p. 98). In Yugoslavia, systematic rape was used as a part of the ongoing ethnic cleansing. Muslim women were raped by Serb soldiers who were under orders to do so. Rape camps were set up in which women were held (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011; Sharlach, 2000).

In the system of comfort women, women are forced into sexual slavery and abused to comfort soldiers who had to deal with the brutality of the war. The most notable example in which women were subjected to this system of comfort women, is the case of Japan during the Second World War. During this war, it is estimated that between 70.000 and 200.000 women were coerced into this system of sexual violence, in which most of them were sexually exploited by dozens of men every day (Wood, 2006; Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011). Comfort stations were set up everywhere the Japanese army went (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011; Wood, 2006; Tanaka, 2002). These explanations will be further elaborated in Chapter 3.

1.2 Research method & sources

In this thesis a case study approach will be used, specifically focused on the case of sexual

violence committed by the Islamic State. Secondary sources and academic literature will be used to conduct this analysis, as well as primary sources. The information available on this case, focuses predominantly on the acts of sexual violence against Yazidi women. This means that the empirical part of the analysis will focus on that specific case.

This case-study approach is relevant for this research, because it tries to present an in-depth description of a case. A disadvantage of the use of a case study is the limited generalizability (Riege, 2003; Yin, 2014). However, considering the aim of this research, which is to give insight in the explanations of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, generalization to other conflicts is not a priority (Riege, 2003). The obtained insights may still be of use to the broader topic of sexual violence during armed conflicts, because it provides in-depth knowledge of the under-researched acts of sexual violence in an ongoing conflict. Research that focuses on understanding the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State is sparsely. This research examines to what extent the existing explanations of this type of sexual violence are applicable to that case, and may therefore be of value to this specific field of research. Furthermore, it may mention other gaps in the knowledge on this topic that require further research.

Another disadvantage of this case-study approach, is its limited validity (Riege, 2003; Yin, 2014). The used explanations and their operationalization within this research may fail to be objective and complete (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, “[a] case study involves an inference every time an event cannot be directly observed” (Yin, 2014, p. 47). This research will, due to practical considerations, not use direct observations, which might have a negative effect on the internal validity. This negative effect will be minimized by a critical assessment on the obtained data and conclusions drawn from it.

As has been stated above, to conduct an analysis on the case of sexual violence by the Islamic State, multiple sources will be used. For a start, secondary sources will be used. Academic literature will give broad insight into the context of the conflict with the Islamic State. Furthermore, academic literature will be used to give insight into the three explanations (“sexual violence as a strategy”, “spontaneous sexual violence during armed conflicts” and “the system of comfort women”) that help to understand the occurrence of sexual violence. However, when basing the analysis entirely on these secondary literature sources, the analysis cannot be conducted, because little academic literature has been written on this specific topic. For this

reason, other secondary sources will be used that give insight in the sexual violence against Yazidi women. These secondary sources consist of documents released by the United Nations and Amnesty International. These organisations research the activities of the Islamic State, including the acts of sexual violence against Yazidi women. The reports are based on interviews with survivors, religious leaders, smugglers, activists, lawyers, medical personnel and journalists, and are highly elaborate, publicly available and recently published. These are reasons why analysing these reports is useful, because interviewing these actors for this thesis is impossible due to practical reasons, and the information conducted from these interviews would otherwise not have been obtained.

Besides secondary sources, primary sources will be analysed by using the approach of discourse analysis. These primary sources are documents released by the Islamic State and will give useful insight into why Yazidi women are sexually assaulted and how the leaders of the Islamic State address this issue. The primary sources that will be used are a Fatwa, a pamphlet of Questions and Answers on sexual slavery and an article in an issues of Dabiq (Gambhir, 2014; Byman, 2016).

A Fatwa is a legal opinion of an Islamic leader or scholar in a situation in which the Islamic law is not unambiguous enough and can be seen as a tool to increase the understanding of the true message of God (Ali, 2015). Dabiq refers to the previous digital propaganda magazine of the Islamic State and was released in English. It provided readers with battlefield updates, religious commentary and gave explanations for the Caliphate's existence (Gambhir, 2014; Byman, 2015). In September 2016, the Islamic State replaced Dabiq with Rumiya, which focusses more on its global campaign and external attacks (Gambhir, 2016). Concerning the use of this primary source in this research, the fourth issue of Dabiq explicitly mentions the use of women as sex-slaves and will therefore be analysed. Furthermore a fatwa will be used, as well as the Question and Answers the Islamic State has released concerning sexual slavery, of which the first has been translated to English by the U.S Government and the latter by The Middle East Media Research Institute. These primary sources will prove to be helpful in understanding the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State and will therefore be useful in answering the research questions.

The objectivity of these sources may be questioned, because the source of the information on sexual violence that is being obtained are the perpetrators themselves. However, the fact that

the information stems from the group that is committing the sexual violence, also makes it interesting to use in this research, because it gives unique insight into their reasoning behind this specific type of violence. Due to the questioned objectivity of the sources, the information obtained from these documents will be used carefully and compared with the information obtained from the secondary sources. The combination of these sources will provide an in-depth insight in the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State.

The information obtained from secondary sources is obtained to be academically relevant or to provide insight in the case study of the sexual crimes committed by the Islamic State, while the primary sources released by the Islamic State are not meant to be used as such. For this reason, combined with the previously expressed doubts on the objectivity of the primary sources, the information obtained from secondary sources will be leading if discrepancies between sources are found.

1.3 Outline

This thesis is divided into different chapters. Chapter two will focus on the three explanations that are used to understand the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. Chapter three will describe and explore the context of the conflict of the Islamic State and the sexual violence committed against Yazidi women. Chapter four will analyse to what extent the three explanations can be of importance when trying to understand the sexual violence by the Islamic State. Finally, chapter five will provide a conclusion.

2. Three explanations to understand sexual violence in conflict areas.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women can be understood, using the three most prominent explanations for sexual violence during armed conflicts. To conduct this analysis, a description of these three explanation is necessary. For this reason, the three explanations that are used to understand sexual violence in conflict areas will be described in this chapter. First, a description will be given of the idea of spontaneous sexual violence, followed by the concept of sexual violence as a strategy. Finally, the system of comfort women will be described.

2.1 Spontaneous sexual violence

Many rapists have a negative view of women, identify with a hyper-masculine role, tend to have low self-esteem and have anger management problems. However, it cannot be seen as a homogeneous group. Researchers on the psychology of rape generally state that there are different motives for rape and different types of rapists. The main motives of rapists are often classified as sexual or non-sexual. If the offender has a primarily sexual motivation, this type of offender can be divided into having sadistic cravings or not. If the offence cannot be viewed as primarily sexually motivated, the offender could be stimulated by hate, anger or the desire to have authority over his victim. Furthermore, the crime could be divided into being planned or spontaneous (Robertiello & Terry, 2007).

In the context of armed conflicts, rape has often been seen as an expected or even inevitable by-product and it has been perceived as a reward to triumphant soldiers (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Wood, 2006; Gottschall, 2004; Littlewood, 1997). Recurrently, during armed conflicts in which usual societal constraints are absent, men's sexuality has been seen as an important contributing element; men possess natural drives for aggressive sexual behaviour that are kept under control in day-to-day life, but are expressed in the chaotic conditions of an armed conflict (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Wood, 2006; Gottschall, 2004). It is often stated that rape committed by soldiers during wartime is not mainly provoked by natural sex drives, but that it should also be understood as an expression of violence and aggression. This type of aggression against women is built upon the general attitudes in societies concerning masculinity, women and (hetero-)sexuality. In the context of an armed conflict, these attitudes will become more penetrating, because masculine violence is deeply rooted into war situations and men have to be violent to

protect their country (Baaz & Sern, 2009; Gottschall, 2004).

During armed conflicts, violence is normalized, because soldiers often witness, endure or inflict it themselves. This makes the step towards morally detaching from their victims simpler, which, in turn, makes it easier to justify their aggressive offences such as rape. Soldiers who committed sexual offences consider themselves to be victims, which leads them to believe that they deserve some form of vengeance (Baaz & Stern, 2009). Furthermore, armed conflicts can be described as an abnormal biosocial circumstance that enlarges the risk of sexual violence, due to some psychophysiological aspects. Research shows that soldiers view sexual activity as lowering the fear and stress from the battlefield and gives soldiers some feeling of control in high-risk and staggering circumstances (Littlewood, 1997).

Here, rape during wartime is seen as the result of a complex combination of factors: the intermingling of general aggressive behaviour, absence of social constraints, feeling of having power, authority and control, men's sexuality and maleness and the 'access' to vulnerable women. These are likely factors to contribute to the occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflicts (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Gottschall, 2004).

While these factors may account for some part of the explanation for sexual violence during armed conflicts, environmental factors of military cultures are also generally acknowledged to be of influence (Morris, 1996). First of all, group behaviour for which individual soldiers do not feel responsible can be encouraged by certain aspects of military ethos, like group conformity, variety of ranks within the military and allegiance (Baaz & Stern, 2009). Furthermore, the military becomes the soldiers' primary group of reference and its culture therefore influences its members to a great extent. Certain characteristics of military cultures, combined with group norms within military units, can push up the rape rates during armed conflicts (Morris, 1996). The manner in which the military as a primary group can increase the chance of its members committing rape, will be discussed in more detail below.

An intimate cooperation and face-to-face association are specific features of primary groups of reference. In military context, it is usually a squad- to platoon -size unit. Between group members of units that are in combat, strong emotional ties will emerge, because this will increase their chance of staying alive (Siebold, 2007). "The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life an purpose of the group"(Morris, 1996, p. 691).

Primary groups have great influence on members' attitudes and behaviour and therefore have a high impact on their lives. Often, military units are institutions with strong primary-group characteristics, especially during combat (Morris, 1996), and are known to generate conformity (Mullins, 2009). For this reason it is expected that military groups have significant effects on the behaviour of their members. This influence starts at the training of new recruits and increases in intensity during combat situations. Strengthening of emotional ties with group members, detachment of members from their ties outside the military, membership requirements and the existence of an ideology within the group, increases the unity within military units (Morris, 1996).

The cause of sexual violence incidence in primary groups such as the military, seems to come from, to some extent, the groups' (sexual) norms. These sexual norms differs between groups and types of groups. If a primary group shares norms that are contributory to rape, the chance of its members committing acts of sexual violence is heightened. Sometimes, group norms may directly accept the occurrence of rape. However, more often, these group norms will comprise of normative attitudes toward sexuality, manliness and women in general (Morris, 1996; Flood & Pease, 2009). Combined in a particular set, these normative attitudes seem to increase the risk of group members committing rape (Morris, 1996; Robinson Korpius & Lucart, 2000). "Standards of masculinity that emphasize dominance, assertiveness, aggressiveness, independence, self-sufficiency, and willingness to take risks, and that reject characteristics such as compassion, understanding, and sensitivity have been found to be correlated with rape propensity" (Morris, 1996, p. 701). Also, norms that encourage deindividuation among group members can increase the occurrence of rape. Deindividuation is the process of identification with a group, while losing one's own identity and is encouraged during the military training of new recruits. If this process takes place in a primary military group that already has attitudes that are contributory to rape, the risk of committing acts of rape, either individually or in a group, increases (Morris, 1996).

Furthermore, the viewpoint that sexual relationships are always exploitative, a general focus on sexuality and especially, a high number of sexual partners, were found to correlate with increased levels of sexual aggression (Morris, 1996; Robinson Korpius & Lucart, 2000). Besides the attitudes toward masculinity and sexuality, attitudes that include bitterness towards women and approving of violence against them are found to be correlating highly with sexual aggression

and the tendency to commit rape. Some general military attitudes towards sexuality are also found to increase the chance of sexual violence. Men are often seen as sexual hunters and women are viewed as potential preys (Morris, 1996). Also, negative beliefs concerning women have been found to correlate with rape incidence. These negative beliefs refer to ideas such as that women are dishonest, that they flirt with men just to hurt them and that they are exploitative. If such beliefs are present in a military unit, they are likely to have a powerful effect on the attitudes of the soldiers (Morris, 1996). Furthermore, the belief within military units that men are supposed to hold a superior position in the household and that women should adopt a submissive role in the relationship, have been found to correlate with the occurrence of rape (Morris, 1996; Flood & Pease, 2009). If these attitudes and beliefs are found in primary groups, it can be expected that the rape propensity of that group is heightened (Morris, 1996).

While norms within military units are of influence to the (sexual) behaviour of its members, it should be kept in mind that when individuals join the military, they all have their own psychological background and motivation to join the military. This includes various individual attitudes towards rape or sexual violence. However, a military unit with group norms that correlate with sexual violence may be especially attractive to men that already have proclivities that increase the risk of rape (Morris, 1996).

2.2. Sexual violence as a strategy

In this paragraph, the concept of sexual violence as a strategy will be discussed. First, the general concept will be explained, followed by a description of the two notable cases in which sexual violence was used as a strategy, specifically the cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Strategic sexual violence

Since the occurrence of the mass rapes during the armed conflicts in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, acts of rape have increasingly been seen as a method carried out by soldiers in order to reach larger strategic objectives (Gottschall, 2004; Sharlach, 2000). “While supporters of this position do not always claim that military planners explicitly instruct soldiers to rape, the implication is clear: Wartime rape is a coherent, coordinated, logical, and brutally effective means of prosecuting warfare” (Gottschall, 2004, p. 131). This specific type of violence is purposefully

used to pursue and secure goals of political leaders during armed conflicts (Ruby Reid-Cunningham, 2008; Millet & Murray, 1988).

Rape may be used as a strategy of war against a specific community. The public rape of members of these communities while they are being removed from a specific area, can be a way to penalize the attacked group. In some cases, rape could be an institutionalized manner of payment or reward towards the soldiers. In this manner, the soldiers are compensated for their services by victimizing the female civilians of the enemy (which could also take the form of forced marriage or sexual slavery) (Wood, 2014). A large part of the strategic rape could consist of the effects that mass rape has on enemy populations, which will also be the focus of this paragraph. The manner, in which wartime rape can affect enemy populations, will be described below.

A first effect that will be discussed is that the widespread terror of mass rape could discourage and embarrass soldiers who have failed to protect the women of their communities. During conflicts men are often seen as warriors, while women are traditionally seen as innocent, pure and are supposed to be civilian non-combatants. As a result, it is common to adopt hyper-masculine attitudes to protect the home country, honour, lives and women. However, these gender roles also produce more powerful motives to violently victimise women. The diminishing of the enemy's power and masculinity is displayed by violating the purity of their women through sexual violence (Ahram, 2015; Gottschall, 2004; Card, 1996; Mullins, 2009). Another result of the use of sexual violence as a strategy, is the increased chance that civilians will flee and leave the territory that is attacked by the enemy (Benard, 1994). Furthermore, mass rape affects the cultural roots of the victimised population. By raping women, soldiers affect the familial genetics on which every society is built. Women who have been subjected to rape may get pregnant, may suffer psychical and psychological impairment, may die or may be abandoned by family members who are embarrassed of them (Gottschall, 2004; Card, 1996; Mullins, 2009).

In the case of the aforementioned effects, strategic mass rape is often referred to as genocidal rape (Gottschall, 2004; Card, 1996; Mullins, 2009). "According to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of an ethnic, national, or religious group and/or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, constitute genocide" (Sharlach, 2000, p. 89). While it is not formally mentioned

as a crime of genocide, sexual violence can inflict severe trauma to the survivor and may also shatter her own morale and the morale of her society. Multiple armed conflicts are characterized by sexual violence, of which the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are prominent cases that show how rape may be used as a genocidal weapon. In these cases, soldiers used sexual violence as a method to kill or cause mental or physical injuries to women. The mass rape of an ethnic group can also be seen as genocidal, because the women who get pregnant as a result, cannot give birth to children conceived by men of their own ethnic population at the same time (Sharlach, 2000; Card, 1996).

Rape causes victims to permanently suffer (psychological and/or physiological) injuries, and mass rape during (ethnic) conflicts can therefore generate widespread trauma and the dismantling of an ethnic community. Based on information obtained from armed conflicts such as Rwanda and Yugoslavia, it seems likely that rape as genocide occurs more often against ethnic groups that strongly condemn the victims of rape, instead of the offenders. In ethnic groups such as these, the community as a whole is embarrassed and degraded when a woman's honour is affected by the act of rape (Sharlach, 2000).

However, it cannot be stated that the acts of rape were perpetrated with these goals in mind only because the acts of rape during these armed conflicts may have caused families to become fractured and/or flee and demoralize entire communities. In order of an act of rape during armed conflicts to qualify as being strategic, it has to be motivated by a specific goal or motive. However, some results of the sexual violence, may be unintended (but not unwanted) outcomes of rape during armed conflicts (Gottschall, 2004).

To gain better insight into the ways sexual violence can be used as a strategy, the two most notable cases, namely the cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda will briefly be discussed below.

Former Yugoslavia

The war in the former Yugoslavia is one of the most prominent conflicts in which sexual violence has been used as a strategic weapon. Therefore, a broader description of the sexual violence during this armed conflict will provide an in-depth knowledge on this specific topic, and will be discussed next.

Sexual slavery was a common form of sexual violence in the early 1990s, during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia (Wood, 2006). The International Criminal Tribunal for the

Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has charged multiple men with committing genocidal acts during the armed conflict. During this conflict, Muslims were killed by Serbs, solely for being Muslims. Civilians were deliberately killed while they were unable to defend themselves. At least some parts of these actions were permitted by high-level authorities (Sharlach, 2000).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina alone, it is estimated that 20.000 women and girls were subjected to rape in 1992. Most of them were incarcerated at the time of the rape and had a Muslim or Croatian background. They were victimized in the woods, their own houses, detention centres (of which some were known as “rape camps”) or apartments. Many girls and women suffered gang rapes, which would be repeated over several weeks in some cases (Wood, 2006; Sharlach, 2000). At least some rapes were carried out with the goal of impregnation; women were raped until they got pregnant and were released when abortion was no longer an option (Alison, 2007; Sharlach, 2000; Card, 1996).

A commission of the United Nations carried out an investigation regarding the sexual violence during this conflict. They distinguished some notable patterns: “(1) by individuals and small groups in conjunction with looting and intimidation of the targeted group; (2) in conjunction with fighting, often including the public rape of selected women in front of the assembled population after the takeover of a village; (3) against some women and girls held in detention or collection centers for refugees; (4) in sites for the purpose of rape and assault where all women were assaulted frequently, apparently for the purpose of forced impregnation (women were told that was the case, and pregnant women were sometimes held past the point when an abortion was possible); and (5) in detention sites for the purpose of providing sex” (Wood, 2006, p. 312). The largest part of the offences were committed against imprisoned persons and sexual violence often took place at the same time as military pursuits (Wood, 2006). No direct evidence was found regarding the committed sexual violence as being organised or part of a policy. However, based on these findings, the UN commission concluded that most of the cases of rape could probably be systematic and were part of a larger plan. This suggests that a policy of sexual assault existed and that the commission perceived it to be likely that rape was part of systematic ethnic cleansing committed by the Bosnian Serb militia (Wood, 2006; Alison, 2007; Sharlach, 2000; Card, 1996).

Rwanda

During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, sexual violence was used as a strategy as well. However, while the use of rape during the armed conflicts in Yugoslavia and Rwanda show similarities, some interesting differences can be identified as well. For this reason, the sexual violence during this armed conflict will be described below.

It is estimated that Rwandan soldiers and civilians killed one million Tutsi within a timeframe of three months (Sharlach, 2000). Like the aforementioned case of sexual violence in the former Yugoslavia, the sexual violence during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide was targeted as well; primarily Hutu men, used rape of women, primarily Tutsi, as a political weapon with the aim to destroy the Tutsi population. It is estimated that 250.000 to 500.000 women and girls were raped and in some areas, almost all women who were not killed suffered rape (Alison, 2007; Sharlach, 2000). These rapes were committed all over the country between the 6th of April and the 12th of July, 1994. During this armed conflict, Hutu leaders instructed their soldiers not to spare Tutsi women and children (Sharlach, 2000). Part of the systematic propaganda against Tutsis, was the negative portraying of their women. They were described as arrogant, superior and tempresses who wanted to harm the Hutu culture and therefore deserved to be embarrassed (Alison, 2007).

The victims of rape were often killed afterwards or suffered fatal injuries. While forced impregnation was a distinguishable element of the rapes in the former Yugoslavia, infecting victims with HIV was a characteristic of the genocidal rape in Rwanda. If HIV is not being treated properly, it will almost always turn into AIDS and eventually into death in a period of 7 to 15 years. In Rwanda, medicine to control HIV are not available, which means that infecting a rape victim with HIV can be seen as manner in which it would slowly kill her. It is widely believed that the sexual violence was planned, carried out in a systematic way and used as a strategic weapon with the intention to destroy the enemy's population (Sharlach, 2000).

2.3 Comfort women

During the Second World War, multiple forces committed acts of (widespread) sexual violence. This paragraph will focus on a specific type of sexual violence, carried out by Japanese soldiers, specifically the sexual violence in the system of comfort women. As will be described below,

this system may, in some ways, be viewed as a strategy as well. However due to its unique characteristics that differ greatly from the strategies described in the previous paragraph, it will be discussed separately below.

In pre-war Japan, prostitution was organized by the state. The prostitutes had to be licensed and had to go through medical inspections. In the beginning of the twentieth century, travelling prostitutes from Japan were sent to many areas of Asia. Before the Japanese seized power in Korea, the country's prostitution had developed in similar ways as in many other countries. After Japan occupied Korea in 1910, licensed prostitution was imposed on the Koreans, which was controlled by the Japanese military-political police (Hicks, 1995).

From 1910 to 1945, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, which led Japan to use Korean women as sex labourers. At the latest, the military comfort stations, where the sexual needs of Japanese soldiers were satisfied under the control of the state, were installed in the first months of 1932. Subsequently, after some years passed, Japan began using Korean women widely for comfort after its army had invaded China in 1937 (Soh, 1996; Argibay, 2003). After this invasion, unregulated acts of sexual violence committed by the Japanese soldiers took place on a massive scale, which started in the Chinese city of Nanjing with the "rape of Nanking" on December 13, 1937. It lasted for eight weeks and it is estimated that 20.000 to 80.000 women and girls were raped, followed by their execution. This widespread sexual violence provoked negative international attention, after which the system of "comfort women" was widely implemented (Wood, 2006; Soh, 1996; Argibay, 2003).

The comfort women were forced to work in military brothels, known as comfort stations, in which they would travel along with the Japanese forces (Wood, 2006). The military comfort stations can be viewed as a way for the state to control the soldiers' sexual behaviour (Soh, 1996). The Japanese officials installed this system to suppress the rise of anti-Japanese feelings as a result of random acts of rape on a massive scale. Furthermore, they needed to avoid espionage and loss of soldiers caused by STD's or other diseases (Wood, 2006; Soh, 1996). Also, the Japanese armed force had some superstitions that were sex-related. They believed that having sex before going into battle would decrease the chance of getting injured and that a lack of sexual encounters would increase the accident proneness of a soldier. Furthermore, sex was used as a way to reduce stress caused by the war situations and the cruel circumstances the troops had to go through. According to some sources, Japanese soldiers ritualized sexual

exploitation of comfort women, particularly before they were about to go into combat. The idea behind this ritual was that men without any sexual experience should have at least been sexually intimate before he dies. A soldier who did not join this practice was considered to be an outsider (Hicks, 1995). Compared to the cases in the previous paragraph about strategic wartime rape, the explanations for the sexual violence in the system of comfort women, seem to focus more on providing sex for the perpetrators instead of the primary aim to inflict injury on the victims or their community.

Most of the victims were between the ages of fourteen and eighteen however, some of the women were pregnant or elderly. The exact number of women coerced into the system of comfort women is not known, because much of the documentation on this topic was destroyed (Wood, 2006; Hicks, 1995; Hsu, 1993). However, it is estimated that over 200.000 women from East and Southeast Asia were forcibly taken or deceitfully lured into the system to work as prostitutes (Wood, 2006). Most of them were Korean, yet some women from other Japanese-seized countries were forced into sexual service as well (Hicks, 1995). When forced, women serviced up to 30 men a day and when they refused, violence would be inflicted instantly (Wood, 2006; Hicks, 1995).

The majority of comfort women were young girls lured into the system. Testimonies of both military personnel and comfort women, claim that physical exertion, deception and coercion were used. Many of the women testified that they were promised to get jobs as cooks, assistants in hospitals or cleaners. Others were taken out of their homes by force (Hsu, 1993; Argibay, 2003). The Japanese officials got the women to sign 'agreement' forms, but the general lack of understanding the actual meaning of these forms made it deceitful allurements. For the recruitment of women, individuals who wanted to make money were involved, but by the time the military requested more comfort women, direct recruitment that was carried out by the police or local government became more frequently used (Hicks, 1995; Argibay, 2003).

This chapter described three explanations that are often used when trying to understand acts of sexual violence in conflict areas. First, the idea of spontaneous sexual violence described how rape during armed conflicts could be explained as a complex combination of factors. Military cultures and attitudes, general aggressive behaviour, absence of social constraints, sense of power and autonomy, men's sexuality and masculinity, are all factors that are likely to contribute to the

occurrence of sexual violence in armed conflicts. Here, sexual violence during wartime is considered to be a form of offences committed individually. The concept of sexual violence as a strategy described how rape during armed conflict could be explained as a tactic to reach higher strategic goals (Gottschall, 2004; Sharlach, 2000). It can discourage and embarrass soldiers, affect the roots of populations because women may get pregnant, could cause the women to die or be abandoned by family members (Gottschall, 2004; Card, 1996; Mullins, 2009), and may also cause civilians to flee their territory (Benard, 1994). However, acts of rape during armed conflicts should have a specific motive or goals for it to be strategic (Gottschall, 2004). Examples of armed conflicts in which sexual violence was used as a strategy are the Rwandan genocide and the war in the former Yugoslavia. Finally, the system of comfort women was described as an explanation for sexual violence during armed conflicts. In this system, sexual slavery was installed by the state of Japan to satisfy the sexual needs of Japanese soldiers. In this manner, the state was able to control the sexual behaviour of its soldiers (Soh, 1996). The majority of comfort women were young Korean girls, who were coerced into the system and had to travel along with Japanese forces (Wood, 2006; Hsu, 1993; Argibay, 2003).

3. Context of the conflict and sexual violence committed by the Islamic State.

This chapter will give an insight into the conflict with the Islamic State and the sexual violence committed against Yazidi women. Therefore, the first paragraph will therefore focus on the Islamic State, its development, its worldviews and, finally, its governance and objectives. Subsequently, the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women will be described.

3.1. The Islamic State

3.1.1. Development of the Islamic State

Approximately around 1999, the origins of the Islamic State can be found, when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was released from a Jordan prison. He attempted to come in contact with Al-Qaeda, requiring approval and financial help to set up a training camp, which he used to start his own jihadi movement (Lister, 2014; Byman, 2016). This group consisted primarily of Palestinians and Jordanians and fought together with Al-Qaida and the Taliban, until the group fled to Iran in December 2001 due to the U.S-led invasion in Afghanistan. In March 2003, the U.S invaded Iraq, after which Zarqawi made his first appearance into the conflict. He manifested his strategy by executing three major attacks in August 2003. From 2004 to 2006, Zarqawi's group increased the number of attacks, which included suicide bombings, kidnapping and beheading foreigners. Using earnings from ransoms, extortions and smuggling of oil, the group achieved to be financially self-sustaining near the end of 2006, with an income of approximately 70 to 200 million US dollars on a yearly basis (Lister, 2014).

On June 7, 2006 Zarqawi was killed, and a couple of month later the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) was established, with a completely structured cabinet and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as the new leader (Lister, 2014; Bunzel, 2015). The group experienced significant losses from 2007 to 2009. ISI overrated its ability to get support from the Sunni population and put too much pressure on its forces, which caused their protection to be deficient. Locally set up tribal commissions, whom the U.S and local security forces assisted, began countering ISI's territorial control seriously. In the beginning of 2008, ISI structurally reorganised and changed back into a terrorist group (Lister, 2014). After the U.S made the decision to withdraw their military

involvement from Iraq from mid-2009 to mid-2010, the military forces against ISI deteriorated. Consequently, ISI was able to expand their influence and power in the area (Lister, 2014; Byman, 2016).

In the beginning of 2011, ISI continued to grow and professionalize. The group increased its military activities in Iraq greatly, both geographically and in number of attacks, executing 20-30 attacks within one hour. The group also started to focus more on gathering and using intelligence, which gave them a considerable influence in Sunni Iraq. Central to their development from 2011 to mid-2014 was their change and expansion into an organisation that would be able to seize and control territory. With this development, their name changed into Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) (Lister, 2014). It is not entirely clear what 'al-Sham' refers to, but according to Irhaid (2015), it "can be translated variously as 'the Levant', 'Greater Syria, 'Syria' or even 'Damascus'". In January 2014, an alliance of moderate groups started operating against ISIS in the northern part of Syria, which caused ISIS to retreat east to Raqqa two months later. However, this impairment was short-termed and ISIS expanded along the Syrian border in Iraq. The operations of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria increased and they were able to conquer Mosul on the 10th of June (Lister, 2014). They claimed a caliphate on the 29th of June, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph (Speckhard & Yayla, 2015; Jones, Dobbins, Byman, Chivvis, Connable, Martini, Robinson & Chandler, 2017).

For the first time since the US military withdrew, president Obama permitted airstrikes in April 2014, that were executed in August of that year (Cooper, Landler & Rubin, 2014; Roberts & Ackerman, 2014; Byman, 2016). The aim of these airstrikes was to protect Americans in Erbil and Baghdad and to end the beleaguerment on Mount Sinjar, where tens of thousands of Yazidis had fled after they were attacked by the Islamic State (Cooper, Landler & Rubin, 2014; Roberts & Ackerman, 2014). In January 2015, US officials stated that up to that date, the airstrikes killed approximately 6000 fighters of the Islamic State and that the group would still consist of 9000 to 18000 fighters. Four months later, the group was able to seize Ramadi, a large city in Iraq and Palmyra, which is an ancient city in Syria where the fighters continued to destroy holy sites in the months that would follow. On August 30, 2016, the Islamic State announces the death of its spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who was killed in an airstrike (CNN Library, 2017).

Since the onset of the airstrikes, the Islamic State has lost territory and supply routes in both the Middle East and North Africa. In the timeframe of 2014-2017, the group has declined in

number and the support for the Islamic State and its ideology seems to be declining in the Muslim world as well (Jones et al., 2017). Iraqi forces, with the assistance of US-led air strikes, are slowly eliminating the fighters of the Islamic State and drive them out of towns and cities (Salaheddin, 2017). The group has lost 40 percent of its territory in Iraq, including areas that provided direct access to the Turkish borders. The group has not been able to seize considerable territory to compensate these losses. As a result, it will prove to be more arduous to convey fighters, stock and weaponry from Turkey into the territory of the Islamic State (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid, 2016; Gambhir, 2016). In January 2017, the eastern part of Mosul has been declared fully liberated by Iraq's authorities (Salaheddin, 2017). However, even though they have lost significant parts of their territory, the abilities of the Islamic State as a terrorist group have not been fundamentally dismantled (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid, 2016; Gambhir, 2016).

3.1.2. Worldviews of the Islamic State

The Islamic State identifies with Jihadi-Salafism, which is an Islamic political movement (Bunzel, 2015; Steinman, 2016). This is a distinguishable ideological movement in Sunni Islam and is based on an extremist understanding of Islamic texts. Based on their worldviews, the Islamic State focuses on establishing a caliphate, as well as purifying their faith (Bunzel, 2015). The manner in which Jihadi-Salafism has developed and influenced the worldviews of the Islamic State will be described below.

The Islamic State associates with Salafism, which is a theological part of Sunni Islam that focuses on purifying the faith. They consider themselves to be the only true Muslims and Muslim groups with other interpretations of the Islam are seen as apostates (Bunzel, 2015; Badar, 2016). Salafism is based on the belief that God is the world's unique, legitimate and sole ruler, and that only he should be worshipped (Wiktorowicz, 2006). Salafists believe that real Islam can be found in the reading and understanding of religious scriptures, which are given by the first three generations of Islam. The fundamental ideas of Salafism, on which the Islamic State's ideology is built, are: "the call to return to the authentic practices and beliefs of the first generation of Muslims (al-salaf al-sālih); the need to diminish unbelief; the sole belief that the Qur'ān and Sunna are the only valid sources of religious authority; the imperative to rid Islam of heretical inventions (bid'a); and the belief that specific answers to all conceivable questions are found in the Qur'ān and Sunna" (the path of the Prophet Muhammed) (Badar, 2016, p. 388). By following

the strict instructions of the Quran and Sunna, Salafists believe to be able to determine the only legitimate truth of God's commands. Any beliefs, interpretations or understandings that are not in line with this truth, are perceived to be a threat to their religion (Wiktorowicz, 2006).

The application of this religious interpretation onto new issues and problems, has resulted into the emergence of multiple Salafi factions, of which the 'purists', the 'politicos' and the 'jihadists' are the three major divisions. The purists focus on propagating, purifying and educating and excludes violence. Politicos want to apply their beliefs to the political domain, in order to be of significant influence to social justice and the right of God to legislate. Jihadists take a militant standpoint and want to use violence and start a revolution (Wiktorowicz, 2006). Furthermore, these Jihadists aim at using violence to install a caliphate and oppose their enemies. When looking at the development of this jihadi thought, it seems that many shifts are caused by new understandings of the context rather than different readings of religious texts. Jihadists use the same texts as other Salafists, but they have come to a different understanding on how the principles of these texts and should be operative in the present-day (Wiktorowicz, 2005).

The Jihad can be divided into two types, the offensive and defensive jihad. Part of the offensive Jihad is the idea that a legitimate leader, like a Caliph, is necessary to authorize the offensive seizing of new territory. This line of thought is widely accepted in the Salafi-Jihadi movement. The defensive jihad however, is more focused on preventing the oppression of attackers from the outside and does not express a need for a Caliph (Maher, 2015).

The roots of the jihadi faction of Salafism can be found the conflict of Afghanistan against the Soviet Union (Wiktorowicz, 2006). At the end of the twentieth century, the Arab Middle East witnessed the emergence of violent Islamist groups. The aim of these groups was to replace the ruling governments with Islamic States (Wiktorowicz, 2006; Bunzel, 2015). Over the last twenty years, the Salafi faction has increasingly influenced jihadism. In comparison to other Salafi groups, such as al-Qaeda, the Islamic State demonstrates the increase of the Salafi influence in their movement more severely (Bunzel, 2015).

Most Muslims and nonviolent Salafists underline evidence in religious texts to argue against the intentional attacking of non-combatants and state that Islamic fighters should do anything to minimize the number of victims among citizens. However, in the 1990s, the Algerian civil war led to a jihadi debate, which discussed the targeting of citizens. In 1993 the Armed Islamic Group/Groupes Islamiques Armé (GIA) was founded, which had ties with Bin Laden and

Al Qaeda. In 1996 the leader of the GIA released a fatwa that charged the whole Algerian society with apostasy and permitted attacking every civilian who did not join or support the GIA. As a result, the GIA operations started to focus on targets in society and eventually led to extensive civilian mass slaughters (Wiktorwicz, 2005). This line of reasoning and the attacks on civilians can be found back upon inspection of the Jihadi thought of the Islamic State: the group's approach of the jihad includes the statement that every Muslim may solely associate with other true Muslims and that all deserters of the radical version of Islam are deserving of death (Bunzel, 2015; Badar, 2016; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015).

3.1.3. Governance and objectives of the Islamic State

The aforementioned worldviews of the Islamic State, shape their military operations, strategies and governance. For a highly ideological movement such as the Islamic State, its strategies and governance are extraordinarily developed and will be discussed below (Byman, 2016).

The Islamic State began in 2004 as an insurgency in Syria and Iraq and was originally connected to Al-Qaeda. However, the Islamic State differed from Al-Qaeda, because the terroristic activities of the former were more brutal in nature and because their strategy focused on the establishment of a caliphate in the region of Syria and Iraq. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of the Islamic State, was killed in a bomb attack in 2006, after which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the groups spiritual and military leader. The Islamic State had, and still has, a clear organizational scheme, with a "cabinet", a spokesman, a military leaders and governors for different regions. By the end of 2014, the Islamic State occupied large areas of Syria and Iraq, including Iraq's second largest city, Mosul (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Lister, 2014). Its followers mainly come from Sunni youths in Iraq and Syria, but they also attracted large numbers of foreign fighters from Arab and Western countries. After the withdrawal of U.S troops from Iraq, the military force of the Islamic State expanded and grew to an army of about 30.000 fighters, of which 5.000-10.000 were foreigners (Cockburn, 2014; Lund, 2013).

When structuring the objectives for the leaders of the Islamic State, their collective objectives are mainly coherent, but individual leaders may show minor differences in their priorities. Considering the groups followers, many different objectives can be identified and each individual follower is likely to agree with some of the objectives of their leaders, while rejecting others. Based on the research of Siebert, Von Winterfeldt and John (2016), the strategic

objectives of the Islamic State and their ideas on how to achieve these objectives, can be divided into four categories.

1) The establishment of a caliphate in Syria and Iraq: This objective is not only aimed towards implementing a strict version of the Islam, but it furthermore strives to establish a caliphate in Iraq and Syria. The founding of a caliphate is integrated in the name of the movement and can be considered to be its fundamental element. Followers of the Islamic State as well as most Sunni Muslims think that establishing a caliphate is obligatory, because it also existed in Iraq for more than 500 years. With the re-installment of this caliphate, a prophecy would be fulfilled. Many think that the ruling of a caliph is the natural manner. To be able to achieve this strategic objective, the Islamic State needs to function as a state and provide services, like offering some form of security, health care, food, a police department and a stable economy (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Lister, 2014; Byman, 2016).

2) Expanding the Islam and Sharia worldwide: The Islamic State aims to expand the Islam and Sharia worldwide. Part of this objective is the embarrassment of polytheistic religions and their followers (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016). Al-Adnani, Islamic State's official spokesman (Bunzel, 2015), stated that they should aim at conquering Rome, and Al-Bagdadi assured that if they precede, they would succeed and dominate the world. This expansion of the Sunni Islam is closely associated to expanding the caliphate and the intrinsic goal of this expansion is to spread monotheism. To achieve this strategic objective, the Islamic State should exterminate the world of anti-Islamic powers. They want to be feared, radical, cruel and authentic and furthermore use their violent tactics and terroristic capacity to attack foreign countries from the inside (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Gambhir, 2016).

3) Recreating the power and glory of Sunni Islam: In a speech on January 7, 2014, Al-Adnani stressed that founding a caliphate would bring glory to the Islam and that Sunni Muslims should be the dominant power in the world once more. The Islamic State considers the caliphate to be a predecessor to the battle of 'the end of days', which would bring the final triumph for the Muslim society (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Byman, 2016; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015). To achieve this strategic objective, the Islamic State has to pursue the implementation of a pure, harsh and strict version of Islam, through the establishment of a totalitarian regime. Part of this approach is to kill apostates and purify the Islamic society. Furthermore, to achieve this strategic objective, the Islamic State needs to give meaning to the lives of Sunnis. Many Sunnis

experienced discrimination, which is something the Islamic State wants to stop. They want Sunnis to be treated with respect and for them to govern Iraq again (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016).

4) To control and govern the territory of the Islamic State. The three aforementioned objectives are not sufficient for the leaders of the Islamic State. Besides achieving these objectives, they also want to control and (personally) govern the caliphate. They want to install their own theocratic state, of which Islamic States' leader, al-Baghdadi, would be the 'caliph'. To be able to reach this objective, the Islamic State needs to remove the current leaders in Iraq and Syria. Therefore, the group wants to control, recapture and expand their territory. To be able to achieve these aims, the Islamic State has to be able to function like a modern army as well as a terroristic underground army (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016).

Two crosscutting means objectives can be identified. These crosscutting means objectives are actions that contribute to achieving all four strategic objectives. The first crosscutting means objective is to convert, frighten or kill infidels, which differentiates the Islamic State from other, less extreme, Islamic groups (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Lister, 2014). They use killings as a strategy to frighten their opponents and remove civilian societies (Knights, 2013). In the areas controlled by the Islamic State, civilians get the choice to convert to their strict version of Islam, or be killed (Steinman, 2016; UNHRC, 2015). It could be argued that this is a manner of ethnic cleansing, because it drives out entire populations from areas that are seized by the Islamic State (Knights, 2014; Steinman, 2016; Amnesty International, 2014). Due to the attacks being widespread and systematic, the actions of the Islamic State could also be seen as acts of genocide (Badar, 2016; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2016). The second means objective is make financial gains, because this allows them better access to weapons. Thus, besides the ideology part, there is also a part of financial greed (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016).

It can be concluded that the leaders of the Islamic State want to implement their pure and strict version of Sunni Islam, despite the disagreement from myriad Sunni's with this understanding of Islam. In relation to this religious aspect, it is unclear whether the Islamic State is a religious group using its military capacities to reach strategic objectives, or a military group that uses religion to justify their actions (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016).

Besides the objectives of the Islamic States leaders, the followers of this group have their

own set of individual objectives and motives to join the group, which can be divided into three strategic objectives: ‘Humanitarian fulfilment’, ‘religious fulfilment’ and ‘personal fulfilment’ (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016). These objectives of the Islamic States followers will be described in short below.

The first objective is the humanitarian fulfilment and was especially present in 2012 and 2013. In this timeframe, a part of their followers wanted to support humanitarian or Sunni causes, such as ending the armed conflict in Syria, providing aid in the humanitarian crisis, spread justice or counter oppression and discrimination by Shia.

The second objective is religious fulfilment. Followers want to reach spiritual fulfilment, they want to install a rigid version of Sunni Islam and they want to fight for God. To reach their spiritual fulfilment, they have to sacrifice life and wealth. They want to become warriors of God, which is also a manner in which to secure an eternal afterlife. To install their ideal version of the Islam, followers have to fight in order to carry out the Sharia law. Furthermore, some followers want to show the superiority of (their interpretation of) Islam. Other followers want to fight and kill non-believers for God (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016).

Finally, the final objective of the followers of the Islamic State is personal fulfilment. Followers want to gain power, enhance their financial position, enhance their self-confidence and belong to a social group. These objectives are also accepted and shared by most people who do not identify the Islamic State. However, two other ways to reach this personal fulfilment are not widely accepted, specifically attacking Westerners and infidels and pursuing violence and cruelty (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015). Furthermore, the Islamic State seems to be using the assurance of marriage and sexual slaves to convince young men to join their group, which is considered to be a strong incentive for some men who come from poor regions (Speckhard & Yayla, 2015).

Overall, the objectives of the leaders of the Islamic State and its followers are closely linked: all strategic objectives of the leaders are fostered by at least one follower objective (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016).

3.2. Sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women

This paragraph will provide an insight into the acts of sexual violence committed by the Islamic

State. Reports of the United Nations and Amnesty International are used, which are based on their investigations in the area concerning the crimes committed by this Islamic State, including acts of sexual crimes against female Yazidis. These investigations consist of interviews with survivors, religious leaders, smugglers, activists, counsellors, medical personnel and people from the press, and are highly elaborate, publicly available and recently published (UNHRC, 2016). Furthermore, primary sources released by the Islamic State will be used, which gives a unique insight into the motives and reasoning behind the sexual violence they commit. These primary sources consist of an article in an issue of Dabiq, a pamphlet with Questions and Answers and a Fatwa.

The Islamic State has presented the world with a great threat to human and global security. Atrocities have been committed towards women and religious minorities who are living in areas controlled by the Islamic State (Badar, 2016; Steinman, 2016). The Islamic State emerged from a political and societal context in which violence, especially sexual violence against women, is embedded. In the last decades, sexual violence continued to be a repressive instrument used by states (Ahram, 2015). Under other earlier Islamist regimes, such as the Taliban, women also endured cruel repression and abuse (Ali, 2015).

The Islamic State has a close connection to radical Islam and their interpretation of Islamic texts allows the group to justify criminal practices, which include rape and sexual slavery. These practices have been most apparent in the crimes against Yazidi women who were abducted (Steinman, 2016; Badar, 2016; Callimachi, 2015). In their radical interpretation of Islam, the Islamic State has embraced slavery as a permissible and acceptable substitute to marriage commanded by the rules of Sharia (Steinman, 2016).

The Islamic State (2014), does not consider the enslavement of women to be immoral, but believe it to be blessed according to their interpretation of Islam; sexual slavery existed many centuries ago at the time of Prophet Muhammed and the Islamic State restores these old practices (Islamic State, 2014; Steinman, 2016). Furthermore, slavery should be reinstated, because the desertion of slavery has led to an increase of adultery, which is condemned by the Islamic State (Islamic State, 2014). It should be noted that today, the significant majority of Muslims condemn practices of (sexual) slavery. However, the Islamic State endorses and legitimizes these practices due to its radical interpretation of the Islamic scripture (Steinman, 2016; Callimachi, 2015).

The Islamic State is governed by an extreme understanding of Islam and the Sharia law,

which leads women and religious minorities to be especially vulnerable groups. Due to this extremist understanding of Islam, the members of the Islamic State believe that it is acceptable to seize non-believing women, who are seen as infidels (Steinman, 2016; Islamic State, 2014; Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2014). For this reason, communities with a Jewish, Christian or polytheistic background are especially targeted. The faith of Yazidis is a combination of both Islamic and Christian traditions, which makes them polytheistic and thus, permissible targets (Steinman, 2016; Islamic State, 2014; Lister, 2014; Callimachi, 2015). In the cases of Christians and Jews, taxes can be paid to prevent being captured. However, in the case of Yazidis there is no room for such a payment (Islamic State, 2014; Callimachi, 2015). The Islamic State considers Yazidis to be even worse than Christians and Jews, due to the religious views of the former. Different from Jews and Christians, Yazidis worship Iblis, who refused to bow for Adam, despite God's command to do so (Islamic State, 2014). Probably, this causes the Islamic State to treat Yazidis more brutally than Christians or Jews.

During the attack on August 3rd 2014 on the Sinjar region of northern Iraq, hundreds of women and girls were captured and forcibly transferred into Syria (Steinman, 2016; UNHRC, 2015). The aim of the attack was to conquer the region and demolish its Yazidi population, (Islamic State, 2014; UNHRC, 2016). During this attack, hundreds of fighters of the Islamic State conquered towns and villages. The attacks on multiple towns were organised, systematic, showed a very similar pattern and were probably centrally coordinated in a command centre, located in Mosul. Once the fighters reached Sinjar their primary focus was to capture Yazidis. The most important roads and strategic crossings were controlled by the fighters, after which they organised checkpoints and had other fighters check for Yazidis who were running away. Some Yazidis left soon enough and were able to reach the higher parts of Mount Sinjar, where a humanitarian crisis developed. Tens of thousands of Yazidis got stuck in temperatures above 50 degrees Celsius and the Islamic State's fighters prevented them from getting water, food or medical treatment. Thousands of Yazidis were not able to flee in time, were seized in their towns or on the roads. The attacks were systematic, showed a very similar pattern, were well organised and centrally coordinated, thus it can be concluded that the seizing of Yazidis while they tried to run away was pre-determined (UNHRC, 2016). This pre-determined pattern is emphasized by the Islamic State, by stating that "prior to the taking of Sinjar, Shariah students in the Islamic State were tasked to research the Yazidis" (Islamic State, 2014, p. 14). In this manner, the

leaders of the Islamic State would have a better understanding of how this group should be treated. This led them to conclude that enslavement was the most suitable way to deal with Yazidi women (Islamic State, 2014, p. 14; Callimachi, 2015).

After they were captured, males and females were separated. Those who survived the attack and their seizure, were brought to short-term holding locations. The transfers to secondary holding locations were well organised and were carried out with busses and large vehicles, moving the Yazidis to properties in Mosul, Tel Afar and Baaj. At the first holding location, married and unmarried captives were separated. In some cases, women and girls were registered. At least one mass killing of Yazidi women took place at a primary holding location, of whom most victims were older women. The other captured women and children were transferred from one location to another. While the women and children were held in rooms of these locations, fighters of the Islamic State could come in and choose women and girls they wanted to buy. Women and children began to injure themselves in order to be less attractive to possible buyers and some cases of suicide are known as well (UNHRC, 2016).

Women and young girls from the Yazidi community have become victims on a large scale of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. Of this targeted group, many victims have been reported to be under the age of 18 (Steinman, 2016; UNHRC, 2015). The Islamic State considers the captured women and children to be their property, and they publicly refer to them as slaves (UNHRC, 2016). The Islamic State has developed a bureaucratic system of sexual slavery, which includes contracts that are authenticated by courts. In those contracts, women are registered as slaves and are referred to as property (Callimachi, 2015; Steinman, 2016). The bureaucratic way that the Islamic State ‘deals’ with Yazidi women, is furthermore characterized by the pamphlet of ‘Questions and Answers’ and a Fatwa. These documents explain how slaves should be treated. In the pamphlet and fatwa, women are indeed solely discussed as properties. The main focus of the rules is on the moment an owner is and is not allowed to be sexually intimate with his female captive. For example, a ‘brother’ is not allowed to have intercourse with his female prisoner when she is pregnant or when she is menstruating. He is not allowed to cause her to abort if she is pregnant or be sexually intimate with both a mother and her daughter. However, “[t]he owner of a female captive should show compassion towards her, be kind to her, not humiliate her, and not assign her work she is unable to perform” (Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2015). According to the pamphlet of Questions and Answers (Isil committee of

research and Fatwas, 2014), “[i]t is permissible to beat the female slave as a [form of] darb ta’deeb [disciplinary beating], [but] it is forbidden to [use] darb al-takseer [literally, breaking beating], [darb] al-tashaffi [beating for the purpose of achieving gratification], or [darb] al-ta’dheeb [torture beating]. Further, it is forbidden to hit the face.”

Eighty percent of the captured females can be bought by fighters of the Islamic State, which is confirmed in the fourth issue of Dabiq (UNHRC, 2016; Islamic State, 2014). These women can be bought in slave markets or at the aforementioned holding location. The Yazidi slave markets are organized by the Committee for Buying and Selling of Slaves. The other twenty percent of these women are property of the Islamic State and are sent to military camps in Iraq and Syria. The first known case of Yazidi women and girls being forced into Syria took place short before 17 August 2014, presumably. They were taken to either an underground prison/security base or a building surrounded by trees, both located in Raqqah city (UNHRC, 2016).

While being held by the fighters, Yazidi women and girls often had to stay inside, where they were subjected to sexual violence (UNHRC, 2016). “Without exception, all interviewees described multiple rapes by several men” (UNHRC, 2015, p. 15). Some women and girls had to convert to Sunni Islam, which however, did not appear to prevent further sexual and physical abuse (UNHRC, 2015). Girls from the age of nine were raped, as were pregnant women. The female captives were threatened by the fighters that any opposition would be sentenced with gang rape or death. Women who did resist or tried to escape, have been reportedly subjected to gang rape, beaten severely or their children killed. Some of them were still suffering from these injuries a couple of months later. While individual rape incidents of Yazidi women were documented, mass rapes did not take place. “This was despite the fact that hundreds of women and girls were held captive at the sites, surrounded by dozens of young, armed men. This serves to emphasize the rigid system and ideology governing ISIS’s handling of Yazidi women and girls as chattel, as well as the control it exerted over the majority of its fighters. The sexual violence, including the sexual slavery, being committed against Yazidi women and girls is tightly controlled by ISIS, occurs in a manner prescribed and authorised, and is respectful only of the property rights of those who “own” the women and girls.” (UNHRC, 2016, p.12).

The reported severe beatings and raping of pregnant captives, do not seem to be in line with the rules of the Fatwa. As mentioned above, this Fatwa states that the owner is not allowed

to have intercourse with a pregnant captive, should show compassion towards her and treat her kindly (Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2015). He is also only permitted to disciplinary beat his female slave (Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2014). It is unclear when the Islamic State defines beatings as ‘disciplinary’, which is the only type of beating they allow. However, considering the reports of heavy beatings and the women still suffering their injuries months later, it is probable that those beatings were inflicted too brutally to be considered just disciplinary.

Many women and girls reported that their owners forced them to take birth control. However, some women did not receive birth control, which inevitably led to pregnancies. Some children were born during the imprisonment or during the freeing of their mothers, but many infants seem to have been given away. Furthermore, the methods of birth control did not protect the women from sexually transmitted diseases. Owners would often refuse to adequately feed their captives. Many of the women and girls interviewed had visible wounds and scars caused by the abuse, but more evident were the signs of mental trauma (UNHRC, 2016).

According to their faith, a child should have two Yazidi parents to be recognized as such. As a result, mixed marriages or sexual relations outside marriage are not tolerated by the Yazidi community and such practices bring shame on the whole family (Amnesty International, 2014; UNHRC, 2016). The Yazidi community has welcomed back the women who came home after their captivity, subsequent to statements from their religious leaders that victims of the Islamic State continue to be Yazidi and should be accepted (UNHRC, 2016).

4. Analysis

This chapter will analyse to what extent the three discussed explanations when trying to understand the occurrence of sexual violence during armed conflicts, can be used in regards to the acts of sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. First, an analysis will be given to what extent the idea of spontaneous sexual violence can be used to understand the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, followed by the use of the concept of rape as a strategy. Finally, it will be analysed to what extent the system of comfort women can be used in this context.

4.1. Sexual violence committed by the Islamic State and spontaneous sexual violence

The idea of spontaneous sexual violence is mainly built upon the idea of the natural drives of men regarding aggressive sexual behaviour. This behaviour is expressed more easily during climates of armed conflicts. It is often stated that this should be understood as an expression of violence and aggression instead of being provoked by natural sex drives (Baaz & Stern, 2009; Wood, 2006; Gottschall, 2004). During armed conflicts, violence is normalized, social constraints are absent and women may become more vulnerable and victimization becomes simpler. The group identity of military units, which is often built around masculinity may increase the chance of sexual violence as well. Furthermore, some military cultures and attitudes towards sexuality, in which women are often viewed as sexual preys may also lead to an increase (Morris, 1996).

For the largest part, the sexual violence against Yazidi women committed by the Islamic State, does not seem to be corresponding with this idea of spontaneous sexual violence. The sexual violence committed by the fighters of the Islamic State is, at least for a large part, arranged, bureaucratic and controlled by the leaders or committees of the group. This means that in general, the sexual violence is not committed spontaneously. However, it has been reported that (some) Yazidi women have been treated in contrary to the laws of the Islamic State concerning the treatment of slaves. Pregnant women have been raped and severe beatings have been reported widely, both of which are forbidden by a fatwa (Isil Committee of Research and

Fatwas, 2015). While these acts of sexual slavery by the Islamic State is not arranged or controlled by its leaders, it is probable that it can be understood as a spontaneous component of the sexual violence against Yazidi women.

The spontaneous components of the sexual violence against Yazidi women may be partially understood when specifically looking at the objectives of the followers of the Islamic State. Specifically, some of their personal and religious fulfilments to fight for the Islamic State, consist of attacking infidels and pursuing violence and cruelty (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Speckhard & Yayla, 2015). These personal aims may increase the chance of the followers committing spontaneous sexual violence without any instructions from their leaders, because followers with these aims may be more prone to (sexual) violence against infidels like Yazidis.

4.2. Sexual violence committed by the Islamic State and the concept of sexual violence as a strategy

Strategic rape during wartime is a method executed by soldiers in the order to reach larger strategic objectives and can be used as a strategy of war against a specific population (Gottschall, 2004; Sharlach, 2000; Wood, 2014). This type of rape could be a way to penalize an entire population, an institutionalized form of payment or reward for the combatants (Wood, 2014).

In the case of Yazidi women, leaders of the Islamic State tried to conceptualize a manner in which this group should be treated, after which they came to the conclusion that the women were suitable for enslavement (Islamic State, 2014) and the capture of these women during the attack in Sinjar was clearly pre-determined. The attacks were well organised, systematic, showed a very similar pattern and were, probably, coordinated centrally in a command centre, located in Mosul (UNHRC, 2016). The attacks on Yazidis led to the women and girls being subjected to rape and sexual slavery (Islamic State, 2014, p. 14; Callimachi, 2015). Based on their worldviews, the Islamic State legitimizes this use of sexual slavery. The group states that it is blessed according to their believes, that they should reinstall the old practices of the time of the Prophet Muhammed and that desertion of slavery has led to an increase of adultery (Islamic State, 2014). However, this does not necessarily mean that the sexual violence has a strategic component as well.

The strategic component of the sexual violence already becomes more evident when

looking at the strategic objectives of the Islamic State as mentioned by Siebert, Von Winterfeldt and John (2016), because the violence can be seen as a means to reach these objectives. These objectives consist of 1) the establishment of a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, 2) expansion the Islam and Sharia worldwide, 3) recreate the power and glory of Sunni Islam and 4) controlling and governing the territory of the Islamic State. Furthermore, it was already stated that, to reach these strategic aims, the killing, frightening or converting of infidels is a crosscutting means objective.

To reach the four strategic objectives, it is necessary to have control over an army and/or to be able to function as a terrorist organisation. The use of sexual slavery can contribute to achieving this, because the promise of marriage and sexual slaves is a strong motive for some young men to join the Islamic State. As a result, the number of fighters of the Islamic State grows, which strengthens their position, both militarily and as a terrorist organisation (Speckhard & Yayla, 2015).

Besides the strengthening of their military position and position as a terrorist group, it can also be argued that the use of sexual slavery contributes to the objectives of the Islamic State in a more direct way. The killing, frightening or converting of infidels can be identified as contributing to all strategic objectives of the Islamic State, as will be described below.

To reach the first objective, the Islamic State pursues a strict version of the Islam, and also want to establish a caliphate in Iraq and Syria(Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016). According to the Islamic State and based on their interpretation of Islam, enslavement of women is blessed. Sexual slavery existed many centuries ago, at the time of Prophet Muhammed (Islamic State, 2014; Steinman, 2016). The reviving of sexual slavery could therefore be seen as contributing to the first objective of the Islamic State, because it is part of their interpretation of Islam and part of the caliphate they wish to establish.

To reach the second objective, which focusses on expanding the Islam and Sharia worldwide, the Islamic State wants to shame polytheists, spread monotheism, exterminate the world of anti-Islamic powers and to be a feared, radical and cruel movement (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016; Gambhir, 2016). Yazidis have a polytheistic background and are therefore considered to be infidels (Steinman, 2016; Islamic State, 2014; Lister, 2014; Callimachi, 2015). Due to the religious views of Yazidis, they are considered to be even worse than Jews or Christians (Islamic State, 2014). The Islamic States aim to spread monotheism and exterminate anti-Islamic powers may therefore be even more prominent in the case of this

polytheistic group than in other groups. Targeting Yazidi using sexual violence would shame them and would cause the Islamic State to be (viewed as) an even more feared and brutal movement as well (Islamic State, 2014).

The third strategic objective is to recreate the power and glory of the Sunni Islam. To reach this goal, the Islamic State needs to implement a pure, harsh and strict version of the Islam, and part of this approach is to attack dissidents and purify through a totalitarian regime (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016). The Islamic State clearly explains why they use Yazidi women and girls as sex slaves. Yazidis are considered to be infidels by the Islamic State, and cannot prevent their capturing by paying taxes, unlike Christians and Jews (Steinman, 2016; Islamic State, 2014; Callimachi, 2015). The sexual violence against Yazidi women is a way of attacking dissidents and purifying by using a totalitarian regime. For this reason, the sexual violence against Yazidi women can be seen as part of implementing a pure, harsh and strict version of the Islam and could therefore be useful to reach this third objective.

The fourth objective is to control and govern the territory of the Islamic State and in order to realize this objective, the group needs to occupy territory (Siebert, Von Winterfeldt & John, 2016). The use of sexual violence is known to increase the chance that civilians will flee and leave their territory (Benard, 1994). The sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, may have elevated the chance that the Yazidis would flee and may therefore also be seen as a way for the Islamic State to occupy territory.

The focus on targeting the Yazidi community and using their women and girls as sexual slaves can be seen as a direct goal of the Islamic State, but may also be seen as a way to recruit new fighters and strengthen its army. Furthermore, the sexual violence contributes to reaching all strategic objectives of the Islamic State. However, the sexual violence also has to be pre-determined and instrumentally used as well, for it to be used strategically. Based on the worldviews, military operations and governance of the Islamic State, it is probable that the sexual violence is used with the aim of reaching most of their strategic objectives. The sexual violence against the Yazidi women is closely related to the attack on the Sinjar region that preceded it. This attack was predetermined, which is clearly illustrated by the central coordination of the attack and the systematic and similar way the seizing of Yazidis was carried out (UNHRC, 2016). The attack could furthermore be seen as instrumental, because in this manner, the Islamic State could expand Sunni Islam, control the Sinjar region and expand its

territory. To be able to conquer this region, the Islamic State had to ‘deal’ with its population. During the attack the fighters of the Islamic State especially focused on capturing Yazidis. Based on proclamations of the Islamic State, it is known that the group aimed to demolish this population from the Sinjar region (UNHRC, 2016). According to research conducted by Sharia students, the leaders of the Islamic State concluded that (sexual) enslavement was the most suitable way to treat Yazidi women after their capturing (Islamic State, 2014; Callimachi, 2015). This idea of sexual slavery being legitimate according to the group, is emphasized by the existence of a committee for Buying and Selling of Slaves (UNHRC, 2016) and the rules the group formulated concerning the treatment of slaves (Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2015; Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2014). Thus, the sexual slavery can be seen as the most suitable way for the Islamic State to ‘deal’ with the captured women and is therefore the rightful way to reach their strategic objectives, based on their understanding of Islam and Islamic texts. The sexual violence was part of the Islamic States plan to seize the Sinjar region and deal with its population in a legitimate way. Based on this information, it can be concluded that the sexual violence was predetermined and instrumentally used as well. As the sexual violence also contributes to all Islamic States strategic objectives, the use of sexual slavery and violence against Yazidi women can probably be seen as part of the strategy of the Islamic State.

However, in the case of some objectives, it is not as clear if the consequences for the Islamic State of the sexual violence are the result of a strategy or convenient, but unintended, side-effects. It has been stated above that civilians are more likely to flee when sexual violence is used by their attackers, and that the promise of marriage and sexual slaves is considered to be a powerful inducement for some young men to join the Islamic State. However, it is questionable if the Islamic State uses sexual violence with these specific aims, or that these results are unintended consequences that, by chance, also contribute to their strategic objectives.

Groups like the Yazidis are attacked with the aim to kill, frightened away or be removed from their territories, and therefore it can be argued that it is a way of ethnic cleansing (Knights, 2014; Steinman, 2016; Amnesty International, 2014). The attacks are widespread and systematic, thus, they may even be seen as genocidal. Using Yazidi women as sexual slaves as part of these attacks, the sexual violence could not only be seen as part of a strategy, but could therefore also be viewed as genocidal rape (Badar, 2016; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2016).

Much of the behavior towards Yazidi can be understood when looking at the strategic

objectives of the group. However, not all behavior of the ‘owners’ that has been reported may be understood using this strategic concept. For instance, it has been reported that some fighters have treated their ‘slaves’ in ways that are contrary to the Fatwa rules. For instance, rapes of pregnant women and severe beatings have been reported, which is not allowed according the laws of the Islamic State (UNHRC, 2016; Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2015; Isil committee of research and Fatwas, 2014). As these behaviors are contradictory to the laws of their group, this behavior cannot be seen as part of a strategy.

Furthermore, it is notable that the aims of the Islamic State regarding the sexual violence they commit, seem to lack some of the aims that strategic rape often has. It has been stated that impregnating the victims, is often part of the strategic or genocidal rape (Sharlach, 2000; Card, 1996). However, many female Yazidi victims reported that they had to use birth control by their owners (UNHRC, 2016), which is inconsistent with the aim of impregnation. Also, returned Yazidi women were not generally abandoned or stigmatized by their society, which is often an aim of genocidal or strategic rapes (Sharlach, 2000).

The combination of these components seems to indicate the strategic use of sexual violence against Yazidi women by the Islamic State. However, some smaller components of the behavior of fighters of the Islamic State cannot be understood using this concept.

4.3 Sexual violence committed by the Islamic State and the system of comfort women

The system of comfort women was implemented to prevent the rise of anti-Japanese sentiments after acts of rape occurred randomly on a massive scale. The sexual behaviour of the soldiers could be monitored, sex before going into battle was believed to decrease the chance of soldiers getting injured, men without any sexual experience could have intercourse before death and it was a way to relieve combat stress. The victimized women were coerced into sexual service as comfort women and would travel along with the Japanese military forces (Hicks, 1995).

This system corresponds with the acts of sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, to the extent that the Islamic State and Japan both institutionalized sexual slavery. In the case of Japan, the sexual violence was controlled by the state. Women were recruited or forced to travel

along with Japanese forces (Hsu, 1993; Argibay, 2003). In the case of the Islamic State, Yazidi women are taken by force, rules for the 'individual' use and treatment of sex slaves are published and a central committee organizes slave markets where these women can be bought. A smaller part of the women and girls are 'collective' property and are sent to military camps in Iraq and Syria (Islamic State, 2014; UNHRC, 2016). Thus, in a way, the Islamic State also controls the acts of sexual violence of its fighters. Furthermore, the comfort women would travel along with the Japanese soldiers (Wood, 2006), which is similar to the twenty percent of the Yazidi women who accompany the military units of the Islamic State (UNHRC, 2016; Islamic State, 2014). Also, in both the system of comfort women and the case of the Islamic State, the sexual violence is mainly committed against one specific group: Korean women in the system of comfort women, and Yazidi's in the case of the Islamic State.

Another similarity is that both Japan and the Islamic State have their own ways to rationalise or legitimize the use of sexual slavery. In the case of the Islamic State, sexual slavery existed long ago and the Islamic State reinstalls these old practices (Islamic State, 2014; Steinman, 2016). Furthermore, slavery should be reinstalled, because it is blessed according to their interpretation of the Islam and they believe that the desertion of slavery has led to an increase of adultery. Due to their polytheistic believes, Yazidi's are targeted specifically by the Islamic State (Islamic State, 2014). In the case of Japan, prostitution was state-organised before the war started, but after Korea came under Japanese colonial rule, Korean women were used as sex labourers. The Japanese believed that sex before going into battle would decrease the chance of soldiers getting injured and it was a way to relieve stress. The visiting of comfort women was ritualized by the Japanese, with the rationale that men without any sexual experience should have been sexually intimate before he dies (Hicks, 1995).

In both cases of sexual slavery, practical and rational elements can be identified that may help to understand their occurrence, like countering adultery or accident-proneness. However, in the case of the Islamic State, an ideological aspect can be identified as well. They publicly display their violence against Yazidi women, state that sexual slavery should be reinstalled because it is perceived to be blessed and focus on attacking Yazidi's based on their worldviews. In the case of Japan however, the selection of their victims based was on practical considerations.

Another difference between the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State and

Japan, is that the largest part of the Yazidi females were sold to individuals where they would be subjected to sexual slavery. This does not correspond with the system of comfort women, in which women were generally kept for 'collective' use and travelled along with the Japanese forces.

5. Conclusion and discussion

During the attack on the Sinjar region of northern Iraq on the 3rd of August 2014, hundreds of fighters of the Islamic State captured several women and girls. Main roads and strategic crossings were controlled by the fighters, after which they organised checkpoints and had fighters check for fleeing Yazidis. During the attack, the fighters especially focused on capturing Yazidi women. The attacks were clearly pre-determined, because the attacks were well organised, systematic, showed a very similar pattern and were centrally coordinated (UNHRC, 2016). The Islamic State also emphasize this pre-determined pattern during the attack clearly. Prior to the attack, the group had researched the manner in which Yazidi people should be dealt with and treated, after which they concluded that Yazidi women were suitable for enslavement (Islamic State, 2014).

After they were seized, Yazidis were forcibly moved over the border into Syria (Steinman, 2016; UNHRC, 2015). The female Yazidi were subjected to a bureaucratic system sexual slavery (Callimachi, 2015; Steinman, 2016). Eighty percent of the women and girls can be purchased by individual fighters, the other twenty percent are property of the Islamic State and are sent to military camps in Iraq and Syria (UNHRC, 2016). The Islamic State legitimizes these practices due to its radical understanding of the Islamic texts (Steinman, 2016; Callimachi, 2015).

The aim of this research was to understand this sexual violence committed by the Islamic State by answering the following research question:

“How can the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women from 2014 and onwards be understood?”

To be able to answer this question, it was analysed to what extent ‘the idea of spontaneous sexual violence’, ‘the concept of sexual violence as a strategy’ and ‘the system of comfort women’ are of importance when trying to understand the case of sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. According to the idea of spontaneous sexual violence, sexual violence during armed conflicts is caused by a combination of soldiers’ masculinity and sexuality, chaotic circumstances, the psychological effect of war and military cultures and norms

(Baaz & Stern, 2009; Morris, 1996; Wood, 2006; Gottschall, 2004). The second explanation is the concept of sexual violence as a strategy, which focusses on the military and political objectives of leaders. Sexual violence is widely implemented and is intentionally used as a tactic to reach (national) goals (Gottschall, 2004; Wood, 2014). The system of comfort women was used by the Japanese leaders during the Second World War. Women were forced into sexual slavery, after which they would accompany the Japanese forces and provide (sexual) comfort (Hicks, 1995).

Firstly, the research focused on the extent of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women, which could be understood using the idea of spontaneous sexual violence. The greatest part of the sexual violence against Yazidi women committed by the Islamic State, does not seem to be corresponding to the idea of spontaneous sexual violence. Generally, the sexual violence is not committed spontaneously, because it seems to be arranged and controlled by the leaders or committees of the group. However, some behaviour of the fighters of the Islamic State could have occurred spontaneously, because it has been reported that (some) Yazidi women have been treated in contrary to the laws of the Islamic State. This part of the sexual slavery committed by the Islamic State cannot be seen as part of a strategy, and may be understood as a spontaneous component of the sexual violence against Yazidi women. This behaviour could have been caused by the personal objectives of the fighters of the Islamic State because the behaviour consists of attacking infidels and pursuing violence and brutality.

When answering the second sub-question, this research focused on the extent of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women that could be understood using the concept of sexual violence as a strategy. In the territory of the Islamic State, Yazidi women and girls are subjected to sexual slavery. The strategic component of the sexual violence becomes more apparent upon inspection of the strategic objectives of the Islamic State, because the use of Yazidi women as sexual slaves contributes to all four strategic objectives of the Islamic State. It is probable that the Islamic State uses sexual violence with the aim of reaching these objectives as well. At least, the sexual violence contributes to all strategic objectives of the Islamic State. Furthermore, the attack on the Sinjar region and the sexual violence that followed, seem to be predetermined and instrumentally used. For these reasons, it is probable that the use of sexual slavery and violence against Yazidi women can largely be understood as part of the strategy of the Islamic State. However, in the case of some objectives, it is not as apparent if the

consequences for the Islamic State of the sexual violence are part of a strategy or convenient, but unintended, side-effects. Furthermore, an aspect of the committed sexual violence that cannot be understood as being part of a strategy, are some actions of the fighters of the Islamic State towards their slaves, because these actions are incompatible to the laws of their group. It is also notable that the different aims concerning strategic rape are absent in the strategy the Islamic State uses. It can be concluded that major components of the sexual violence against Yazidis are part of the strategy used by the Islamic State. However, for some strategic objectives, the distinction between an explicit strategic aim and a convenient, but unintended, consequence is somewhat ambiguous. Nevertheless, the use of sexual violence against Yazidi women can reasonably be seen as part of the strategy of the Islamic State.

Finally, the system of comfort women was used to understand the extent of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women. The system of comfort women and the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State corresponds to the extent that both the Islamic State and Japan institutionalized sexual slavery. Furthermore, Japan as well as the Islamic State have their own ways to rationalise or legitimize the use of sexual slavery. In both cases of sexual slavery, practical and rational elements can be identified that may help to understand their occurrence. However, in the case of the Islamic State, an ideological aspect can be identified as well, which is based on their worldviews and strict interpretation of the Islam. Another difference is that the largest part of the Yazidi females were ‘used’ by individual followers of the Islamic State. This does not correspond with the system of comfort women, in which women were generally kept for ‘collective’ use and as company for the Japanese forces.

To understand the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State against Yazidi women, all three explanations discussed in this thesis seem to have contributing elements. Especially the concept of sexual violence as a strategy seems to have particular similarities with the case of the Islamic State. Combined, the idea of spontaneous sexual violence, the concept of rape as a strategy and the system of comfort women, may provide a valid understanding of the sexual violence against Yazidi women.

Even though this thesis merely provides a basic understanding of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, it is yet of added value to the academic research in this field of study. Myriad academic research has been conducted on sexual violence during other armed conflicts. However academic research on the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State is

scarce. To address the knowledge gap on this specific topic, secondary sources were used, as well as primary sources. The use of these primary sources is of added value to field of terrorism studies, in which the use of primary sources is scarce. Combined with the knowledge gained from secondary sources on the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, unique insight has been given into this specific topic. To be able to understand the committed sexual violence, prominent explanations for sexual violence during armed conflicts were applied to this case, which provides more knowledge to this field of research.

This research has provided insight in the gross human rights violations against Yazidi women. With this insight into the physical and mental traumas of this group of victims, the necessity of providing aid for these women has been made even more evident. This research has furthermore provided insights into how the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State can be understood. It has been concluded that large parts of the sexual violence can probably be understood as part of the Islamic States strategy, but that elements of spontaneous sexual violence and the system of comfort women are present as well. At least, it has been made clear that the sexual violence is institutionalised and controlled by the state, with the use of committees and rules on sexual slavery. As a result, it may be expected that the weakening of the Islamic States leadership and organisation, will also weaken the groups control on their system of sexual slavery, which might lead to a decrease in the occurrence of sexual violence committed by its followers. However, a prediction on the impact of this weakening cannot be underpinned based on this research. This research did show that, due to their understanding of Islamic texts, the Islamic State seems to be more inclined to use Yazidi women as sexual slaves than women from other groups. This does not imply that women from other groups are not victimised by the Islamic States for acts of sexual slavery. However, when trying to decrease the number of victims of this type of violence, it might be useful to focus on protecting groups like Yazidi women, who have an increased risk of being victimised.

It should be noted that in this study three of the most prominent explanations of sexual slavery were selected. However, as a result, other explanations that might have proven to be as useful or compatible have been excluded. Furthermore, the particular focus of this research was on the sexual violence against the Yazidi women, and other victims of the sexual violence used by the Islamic State have not been mentioned or included in this research. The underlying reason for this selection is that most of the obtained information has focused on this specific group of

victims. The focus on this specific group could be mentioned as a restriction of this thesis, because it could result in a decline of the generalizability across all victims of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State. While this thesis provides a basic understanding of the sexual violence committed by the Islamic State, further research should focus on elaborating the insights and explanations underlying the sexual violence against Yazidi women. Other victimized groups, that have not been given attention in this research, should be included as well.

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