Through the looking glass: 'Jihadi Brides' in Western media

Urso, Sara

Through the Looking Glass: 'Jihadi Brides' in Western Media

Bachelor Project: Social Movements & Political Violence

International Relations & Organisations (BSc)

Universiteit Leiden

Sara Urso

s.urso@umail.leidenuniv.nl

S2537745

Thesis Supervisor: Corinna Jentzsch

Word Count: 7,867

30 May 2022

“Little Alice fell
d
o
w
n
the hole, bumped her head and bruised her soul”
— Lewis Caroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Contents

Introduction

Scholarship on the impact of women's participation in violent movements generally points to their positive effect on perceptions of legitimacy (Viterna, 2014; Loken, 2021; Bayard de Volo, 2004; Brunner, 2005). However, almost 80% of the British public claimed they supported the revocation of Shamima Begum's British citizenship after she joined the Islamic State (IS) at fifteen (Carr, 2019). This is one of many examples of how women's participation in violent Islamic movements did not trigger the expected sympathy from Western audiences (Manekin & Wood, 2020, p. 1645). Yet a significant body of literature argues that participation of women in violent organisations should increase that group's perceived legitimacy (Viterna, 2014, p. 148). These studies mostly focus on women in ethno-nationalist movements (Alison, 2009), therefore the puzzle posed by violent Islamist groups has not been substantively analysed in light of this contradiction. This raises the question: *why does the participation of women in violent Islamist groups fail to increase the group's perceived legitimacy?*

This question will be answered by investigating neo-Orientalist discourse in Western and Middle-Eastern media narratives about female jihadis joining Islamic State (IS). This case study should shed light on why, despite the relatively high levels of (female) mobilisation (Trisko-Darden, 2019, p. 81), perceptions of IS' legitimacy have not increased in mainstream media as the literature would suggest.

With the collapse of the Caliphate, states are increasingly struggling to develop appropriate responses to returning IS fighters. The urgency of this issue calls for an examination of how discourse has shaped perceptions of female foreign fighters in particular. I argue that female jihadis are delegitimised and victimised by Western media because of the foundational challenge they pose to neo-Orientalist discourse.

1. Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the state of the art regarding existing scholarship on women's participation in political violence. The two competing motifs of the Armed Mother and the Jihadi Bride help visualise the disconnect in the literature on the legitimising influence of women in violent groups.

1.1. The Armed Mother

Women's participation in violent groups has been typically considered to have a legitimising effect on perceptions of said group, particularly to Western audiences (Manekin & Wood, 2020, p. 1645). The logic behind why female participation has this legitimising effect can be understood through the 'Armed Mother' image, the "visual cliché" of a female fighter with a rifle in one hand and a child in the other (Loken, 2021, p. 27).

Three elements of the Armed Mother contribute to women's legitimising influence on the use of political violence. Firstly, when women/mothers —widely understood as innocent and vulnerable— are perceived as under threat and needing to defend themselves, the severe disruption caused by the enemy is highlighted (Brunner, 2005, p. 35; Loken, 2021, p. 29). Secondly, the "conflict envelopment of society" is reiterated (Loken, 2021, p. 31), emphasising how violence has seeped into everyday life that even mothers must take up arms, thereby justifying the use of extreme measures in retaliation. Finally, the image reassures the audience of the temporary nature of women's use of violence, a typically masculine domain: the armed mother is depicted with her child, indicating that life will return to the normal gender order once the conflict is won. When audiences observe these elements, perceived legitimacy toward the group is expected to increase (Loken, 2021, p. 37; Viterna, 2014, p. 147).

This theory condenses other authors' findings on female participation increasing legitimacy: essentially, women's political violence, which challenges traditional gender norms, is understood as a temporary measure to protect more important values (like women's chastity or their children), ultimately leading to the restoration of the status quo (Viterna, 2013, p. 51). Women's violence is rationalised as an extension of their feminine identity and therefore it is more acceptable since it does not challenge the established gender order (Sjoberg, 2018).

Overall, there is a significant body of literature arguing for the legitimising effect that women's participation can create. It is important to note that the legitimising effect is prompted when groups of women, rather than individual ones, are perceived to be engaging in political violence (Viterna, 2014; p. 148). These arguments are empirically supported, based on qualitative analyses of media content or in-depth case studies of the relevant communities, indicating that women's participation positively affected the group's perceived legitimacy (Loken, 2021; Van de Pol, 2021; Viterna, 2013). However, these findings have mostly been based on ethno-nationalist/left-wing revolutionary movements and have not been applied to Islamist movements (Alison, 2009).

If it is broadly theorised that women's participation in violent groups has a legitimising effect on that group's image (Manekin & Wood, 2018), why is it that research on media depictions of female jihadis consistently found that women were victimised and their agency diminished (Sjoberg, 2018; Jackson, 2021)? Islamist movements, particularly IS, have demonstrated high levels of female mobilisation domestically and internationally (Mahood & Rane, 2017), therefore the theories above would suggest that perceptions of the group should become more positive, or that their use of violence would be perceived as more legitimate. Yet empirical analyses and case studies show that that has not been the case (Martini, 2018; Sjoberg, 2018; Jackson, 2021).

1.2 The Jihadi Bride

On the other end of the spectrum for perceptions of violent women is the 'Jihadi Bride', a label frequently used to refer to female jihadis. Instead of interpreting feminine qualities in ways that validate women's use of violence like the Armed Mother, the Jihadi Bride's use of violence is presented as due to her deviance from expected gender norms and is therefore unacceptable (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015).

Jihadi Brides do not have a legitimising effect on their violent organisations because they are not considered to be legitimate political actors. Studies on how (Western) media portrays female terrorists tend to converge around one conclusion: mainstream media presents female jihadis as aberrations, although women's participation in political violence has a long history (Nacos, 2005, p. 436). Mainstream media constructs a narrative which casts violent (individual) women outside the feminine discourse and decreases their agency (Martini, 2018); Conway & McInerney, 2012; Nacos, 2005; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015). By showing that these women are not 'normal women', gender discourse presenting women as peace-loving is

safeguarded, since these challengers are already outside established gender norms (Conway & McInerney, 2012; Martini, 2018). In other words, violent women do not 'count' as women, therefore socially constructed gender expectations still stand.

The puzzle emerges here, as narratives that invalidate women's participation in political violence are employed when individual women, rather than groups, are involved (Viterna, 2014). Several reports indicate that IS' mobilisation of female recruits is unprecedented (Barrett, 2017; Dawson, 2021), yet despite what Armed Mother theories suggest, research on perceptions of female IS members finds that they are routinely delegitimised as political actors by (Western) media and do not increase IS' perceived legitimacy (Martini, 2018; Jackson, 2021; Sjoberg, 2018).

Some scholarship suggests neo-Orientalism drives the delegitimisation of female jihadis: these women directly challenge neo-Orientalist perceptions that Muslim women are victims, therefore, to make their actions culturally intelligible, female jihadis are depicted as aberrations to protect the constructed image of victimised Muslim women (Martini, 2018, p. 460; Sjoberg, 2018).

1.3 Gender & Neo-Orientalist Discourse

Discourses are "sets of statements that construct objects and an array of subject positions" (Willig, 2014, p. 342), meaning that the language we use shapes how we interpret reality and societal power relations/hierarchies. Based on the interpretations promoted by specific discourses, societies construct expectations on possible/acceptable responses or actions in different situations for different actors (ibid.). For example, gender discourse determines the expectations assigned to men and women, creating a "regime of truth" on masculine and feminine characteristics (Foucault, 2002, p. 49), and delineating who is allowed to display these characteristics.

Traditional gender norms typically assume women are vulnerable and innocent, whereas aggression is linked to masculinity (Manekin & Wood, 2020, p. 1643). 'Normal' women are expected to be carers and peacekeepers, therefore participation in violence departs from feminine ideals and threatens the socially constructed discourse. Paraphrasing Butler (1990), social constructions are only real to the extent to which they are performed. (Individual) women's participation in violence has historically been viewed as deviant and abnormal,

despite its prevalence (MacKenzie, 2009; Sjoberg, 2018) as a way of 'explaining away' why they do not conform to gender norms, rather than confronting the artifice of said norms. Women in conflict are typically cast as the 'Beautiful Souls', where they are victims caught in the crossfire that must be protected (Elshtain, 1985; Sjoberg, 2018), doubly so when the women in question are Muslim.

Discourse on Muslim women combines gender expectations with neo-Orientalist perceptions of Western superiority over the 'Orient' (Martini, 2018, p. 461; Saleh, 2016). Neo-Orientalist discourse maintains the West's hegemony over the 'Rest' by presenting Western civilisation as the most desirable and advanced. This is typically accomplished through depictions of a barbaric 'Orient', painting Western culture as superior and more advanced in comparison. (Said, 1978). Depictions of women play a particularly important role in constructing Western hegemony: the 'average third-world woman' (Mohanty, 1984) does not enjoy the freedoms of her Western counterpart. Muslim women are perceived as "victim[s] of an eternal Arab-Islamic patriarchy" (Saleh, 2016, p. 84). In the context of a Western gender order where women need to be protected, cultures that are perceived to mistreat their women are viewed as inherently uncivilised and inferior (Sjoberg, 2018, p. 301).

This narrative played a key role in justifying the 'war on terror'. Western audiences viewed it as their responsibility to save the passive and helpless Muslim women from their oppressors: Muslim men and Islam in general, the latter of which is essentialised as an inherently violent and irrational religion (Saleh, 2016, p. 82; Shepherd, 2006; Sjoberg, 2018). This dynamic is succinctly summarised by Spivak (1988) as "white men saving brown women from brown men". Therefore, Muslim women engaging in political violence threatens gendered and neo-Orientalist perceptions of them as passive and in need of saving, especially when these women actively choose to renounce the West by joining IS. Western women following this path pose an even greater threat to perceptions of Western superiority (Martini, 2018, p. 461).

Ultimately, there is a disconnect in the literature on women and violence: theories on its legitimising impact have not been substantially applied to perceptions of Islamist female terrorists, and therefore do not adequately address the impact of neo-Orientalism on perceptions of these violent women. Using theories on the presentation of the Jihadi Bride in the media, I aim to investigate and problematise these depictions through their impact on neo-Orientalist discourse. I then bring these findings into dialogue with the Armed Mother to suggest why the theory fails when female jihadis are involved.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design & Case Selection

Considering the goal of this study is to highlight and problematise Western media depictions of female jihadis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used. This research is based on the assumption that "language is constructive and performative" (Flick, 2014, p. 144). This means that the way language is used promotes specific understandings of reality which in turn have social consequences as they dictate which action repertoires are perceived as appropriate responses to certain topics (ibid., p. 342), therefore a discourse analysis is the most suitable method. As the goal is to criticise how discourse maintains certain power hierarchies socially, CDA is the most appropriate approach.

The analysis was conducted across three different countries to compare media discourse on Islamic female foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in the West and the Middle East: the UK was selected as it was in the top three countries producing FTFs (Radicalisation Awareness Network [RAN], 2017, p. 15), therefore the issue would be particularly salient there, making it suitable for discourse analysis. Tunisia was selected as it was among the top producers of FTFs in the Middle East (Barrett, 2017), therefore a good point for comparison. Egypt was selected to supplement data for Middle Eastern discourse as it also produced IS FTFs (ibid.).

Both Egypt and Tunisia had one of the highest scores for media freedom in the region in 2016 according to Reporters Without Borders, making it as close a comparison to the UK press as possible. This selection was also made based on the feasibility of accessing data compared to other Middle Eastern countries. The decision to compare Arab and British media was to inspect how both 'sides' of neo-Orientalist discourse talk about female jihadis to determine the extent to which such discourse influences perceptions of legitimacy.

IS was selected as the relevant violent Islamic organisation because of its unprecedented levels of FTF recruitment, particularly among women (Mahood & Rane, 2017; Trisko-Darden, 2019). Furthermore, the focus on IS is currently topical as their significant territorial losses in 2019 have raised questions in the international community about appropriate responses to returning FTFs, highlighting the need to question how discourse influences reactions to these individuals.

The newspapers chosen for analysis were selected based on their circulation: The Daily Mail (UK), Al-Ahram (Egypt), and Echourouk (Tunisia) are all in the top three most circulated newspapers in their respective countries in 2016. Accepting that the media plays a role in shaping cultural understanding through their framing of social issues (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014), the most circulated newspapers can indicate the general tone of discourse surrounding a topic in that society as that is the narrative that its members are most exposed to.

2. 2 Concepts

i. Terrorism

Terrorist groups, specifically Islamic terrorism, will be understood as another form of violent social movement. Several scholars argue that Islamist movements should fall under the same umbrella as other violent movements to allow for the application of existing theories on civil wars, revolutionary movements, and collective violence (Westphal, 2018; Kalyvas, 2015; Goodwin, 2003). Kalyvas (2015) specifically emphasises how IS fulfils the three key dimensions of revolutionary groups (combat, organisation, and governance), therefore the exceptionalisation of Islamic movements is arguably based more on ideological biases rather than characteristic differences from other violent groups.

Conceptualising IS as a violent revolutionary movement enables theories on violent women to be applied to female jihadis. Therefore, the terms ‘violent groups’ and ‘terrorist organisations’ will be understood as interchangeable throughout this paper, although there is a difference in connotations, as the ‘terrorist’ label carries significantly more negative implications than ‘violent group’.

This study focuses on female FTFs joining IS (referred to as female jihadis in this paper), defined as individuals “who leave or try to leave [their home country] to fight somewhere else” (Hegghammer, 2013, p. 1). The decision to focus specifically on female FTFs is based on theories on neo-Orientalism: as Mohanty (1984) and Martini (2018) highlight, neo-Orientalist discourse views Arab-Muslim women as “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound” and generally oppressed by men (Mohanty, 1984, p. 387). The perpetuation of this belief constructs Western superiority by comparison: Western women have better lives than their Middle Eastern counterparts because they are free, educated, and modern. These

assumptions are most directly challenged when Western women willingly give up their lifestyle to join Middle Eastern organisations embodying traditionalism and oppression. Therefore, female FTFs pose the biggest threat to mainstream discourse in the West, making this group the most theoretically significant for this study.

ii. Legitimacy

Legitimacy will be understood as the extent to which the media presents women as capable/valid political actors, as that reflects on the perceived legitimacy of the violent group. In the context of the research question, women must be considered political agents in some capacity for their participation to have a legitimising effect on their group. This is because when women's violence is not viewed as an expression of political agency but rather due to the manipulations of a violent organisation, women are framed as vulnerable and the organisation is perceived as "barbaric" and politically illegitimate for "luring" innocent women astray (Sjoberg, 2018, p. 302).

Media narratives are used as an indication of legitimacy due to their impact on shaping mainstream discourse amongst the public (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2014; Martini, 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that although not every member of a society will agree with the underlying judgments present in the media, studying how news sources present these women will be indicative of the general beliefs and values of that society as news is interpreted through a lens that makes it more "culturally intelligible" (Nacos, 2005).

2. 3 Data Collection

Newspaper articles relating to female FTFs in ISIS that were published in 2016 will be analysed as that is the year when FTF recruitment for ISIS peaked (Blanchard & Humud, 2018; RAN, 2017), therefore this is arguably the point when the issue in question was most salient in mainstream discourse. This is also reflected by the fact that 2016 saw the highest number of news articles published about IS in general compared to publication levels from 2014-2022 (Factiva, 2022). Articles for the Daily Mail were filtered through the tags 'ISIS' (and its variant names), 'woman/women', 'girl(s)', 'bride(s)', and 'wife/wives'. As the Arabic newspaper articles are not as descriptively tagged as the British ones, using less specific tags and manually selecting the articles was the most effective technique to decrease the likelihood of omitting relevant data. Therefore, all articles published in 2016 tagged

'ISIS' (and its variants) *or* 'women/girls' were inspected. Articles were selected if they referred to foreign women's participation in IS, which excluded numerous pieces focused on gender-based violence as they do not address the subject of women's own use of violence.

The 155 relevant articles from the Daily Mail were narrowed down to a more manageable 54 through random selection. Due to the much smaller number of relevant articles in the Arab newspapers, all 18 articles were analysed.

Articles from the Tunisian 'Echorouk' were translated from Arabic to English, however only the English version of the Egyptian 'Al-Ahram' was accessible for the relevant time period. This raises some concerns about whether the English articles adopt a more 'international' perspective since they target English speakers, but they are still written by Egyptians and published in Egypt. It ultimately proved beneficial as it allowed a direct comparison of authors' word choices in British and Egyptian articles.

2.4 Coding Frame

The coding frame was formulated based on the most common narratives that emerged through the literature on framing violent women in the media. Five main categories were identified: the mother, the monster, the whore, the child, and the political agent (other less central categories were included for completion). The mother narrative frames women as emotional and violent due to some deviation in their feminine/maternal instincts (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015). The monster narrative dehumanises women and presents them as psychologically deviant, implying they are more evil than their male counterparts (ibid.). The whore narrative presents the women's violence as rooted in sexual or romantic attachments (ibid.; Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005). The 'Child' narrative presents women as immature, naive, and lacking agency (Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005). Finally, the political agent narrative presents the women's motivation similarly to their male counterparts, particularly in a way that gives them agency/responsibility for their actions (Issacharoff, 2006). This doesn't have to be explicitly stated; for the purpose of this study, it suffices if the text does not claim/imply that the women's violence is due to a biological defect/the influence of a man.

Further sub-categorisations were created for a more nuanced interpretation of the text. It should be noted that these different narratives have been condensed to their essential features to clearly differentiate between the categories, but in reality, the narratives often overlap. It is up to a certain level of interpretation which narratives are being employed in the discourse.

However, the use of this coding frame allows a systematic analysis of the themes that emerge throughout the data to indicate whether certain narratives are more frequently used than others and when.

2.5 Relevant Frames

Although most of the narratives appeared in the data to an extent, this analysis will focus on the narrative categories that were most present in the sample and their implications on socio-political contexts. To that end, these subcategories will be briefly elaborated on below.

i. Sexual Slavery

The 'Sexual Slavery' narrative falls under the 'Whore' category and depicts women as passive victims, their violence as something that has been forced (directly or indirectly) by men. This narrative constructs an image of women where they are tools of violent men, therefore any violence these women participate in is meaningless as it lacks agency (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Nacos, 2005). Male control can be physical or emotional and includes women choosing violence due to male manipulation.

ii. Rebellious Teen

The 'Rebellious Teen' narrative, a subset of the 'Child' category, presents violent women as immature adolescents. This narrative suggests that women engage in violence as a way of acting out against their parents/communities due to sheer boredom rather than political/ideological beliefs (Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005). Infantilising the women through this frame ridicules their behaviour and minimises the seriousness of their actions.

iii. Islamisation

The 'Islamisation' narrative is often linked to other narratives that emphasise the women's instability/exclusion from the group of 'normal women'. This narrative implies that female jihadis became violent due to their conversion to Islam, presenting such conversion as synonymous with 'radicalisation' (Martini, 2018, p. 469).

iv. Political Agent

The 'Political Agent' narrative acknowledges the women's active participation in violence, usually by referring to their political, ideological, or financial motivations. Women are presented similarly to their male counterparts, and the effect is that their role as political agents is not diminished or undermined.

2.6 Limitations

The limited scope of this analysis restricts the generalisability of the findings; while these newspapers are among the most widely circulated, they still essentially represent one point of view in each country's mainstream discourse and so they cannot be considered wholly representative of the society. Furthermore, as Hodgetts & Chamberlain (2014) point out, "we should be careful not to regard media power as overly deterministic" as several competing narratives exist in societies which often challenge images constructed by mainstream media (p. 381).

It should also be noted that the number of relevant articles is much lower in Middle Eastern press compared to UK press, which suggests that the issue was not as politically or culturally salient there. It could also be due to the comparatively higher restrictions on the press in the MENA region (Khazen, 1999). This made it more difficult to fully analyse Middle Eastern discourse on female terrorists as there was less data, however, the difference in reporting frequency could also highlight a hyper-fixation on the 'Jihadi Bride' in the UK which is relevant for this analysis.

Regardless, this study is useful in illuminating the different ways in which mainstream media frames Islamist female terrorists and the potential implications of these constructed narratives. Ultimately the aim of this study is not to determine what the societal perceptions of these women are, but rather to see how mainstream discourse about them is shaped because that indicates the cultural understandings/meanings that powerful actors (intentionally or otherwise) want to maintain. Hodgetts & Chamberlain (2014) highlight how the media is ultimately a tool for the powerful as it dictates what is spoken about and how people speak about it. This study aims to question and problematise power relations that are inherent in mainstream discourse, therefore the focus on media is appropriate. That is not to

say that the narratives identified in the media are necessarily indicative of the understandings held by the individuals in that society.

3. Analysis

3.1 Background Information

Before discussing how Arab and British media depicted female jihadis, it is pertinent to briefly establish what research has determined about women's recruitment and roles in IS as these subjects are the focus of news articles about female jihadis.

IS initially adhered to a strict division of labour based on traditional gender roles; the majority of women in IS took on support roles, acting as housewives and mothers (Margolin, 2019, p. 45; Darden, 2019, p. 81; Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2021). From mid-2016 to early 2017, IS began training more women in active combat as their territorial losses increased, a distinct departure from their previous stance reiterating that women should only support their husbands (Margolin, 2019; Gan et al., 2019). This changing role of women partially falls within the time scope of this study, although only the Arab newspapers document it, while British news maintains a focus on 'jihadi brides' as housewives.

When discussing motivations, a common assumption across both mainstream media and academia is that the women are irrational or were seduced/deceived into joining; Binetti (2015) goes as far as arguing that female jihadis are human trafficking victims because they were tricked into joining IS. However, alternative explanations offer more complex motivations: analyses of social media activity of IS female FTFs find that (similarly to male recruits) ideology plays a significant role, as do feelings of isolation in their home country and a desire for a sense of community/sisterhood ((Loken & Zelenz, 2018; Martini, 2018; RAN, 2017). Interviews of IS defectors seem to confirm the importance of religious ideology and feelings of isolation as motivations (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2021, p. 5). Speckhard & Ellenberg (2021) and Kaya's (2020) studies also highlight the similarity between men's and women's reasoning for joining IS, concluding that it was partly out of a desire to fulfil traditional gender roles as an assertion of their gender identity. Gentry & Sjoberg (2015) argue that although personal issues like the loss of loved ones may play a role in fuelling

women's participation in violence, there has been ample evidence indicating their political and ideological motivations are equally if not more important.

Ultimately, it is impossible to determine what motivated each woman to join IS, as it was likely due to a mixture of personal, political, and environmental reasons which vary across individuals (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2021; RAN, 2017). However, as discussed below, mainstream British media essentialises female jihadis as irrational victims and flattens any nuance to their motivations. This infantilising construction of the Jihadi Bride triggers certain repertoires of action in response to female jihadis (Willig, 2013), although the scholarship on the topic indicates that the 'victimised IS housewife' is only one of many realities for female members.

3.2 Findings

When beginning this analysis, the primary point of notice was the significant disparity in the number of articles produced by the UK and the Arab newspapers. While both Arab newspapers combined produced a total of 18 articles on female FTFs in IS in 2016, the Daily Mail produced 155 articles, over eight times as many pieces in the same timespan. Further inspection revealed that other UK newspapers produced a similar amount: according to Factiva, the Times published 144 articles in 2016, the Sun published 103, and the Guardian, 81. Although it was not possible to compare the number of articles published in other Arab newspapers due to limited accessibility, it is still telling that the most widely circulated newspapers in Tunisia and Egypt only published twelve and six relevant articles respectively. This gap in the number of articles produced already suggests that the issue of female FTFs joining IS was considerably more salient/discussed in the UK than in the Arab world. Arguably, the controversy of female Islamist FTFs was deeper in the UK as it dually threatened the established gender and neo-Orientalist discourse (Shepherd, 2006; Mohanty, 1984), whereas only gender discourse was disrupted in the Arab region.

I. Arab Media Narratives

Compared to UK media, narratives in Arab newspapers were overall less inflammatory; the language used was considerably less graphic, and the number of different narratives employed was also lower (only two were significantly present). This could be explained by the fact that articles were overall shorter in the Arab newspapers compared to the UK. However, the shorter length does also indicate that less attention was paid to this issue in the Arab region as suggested by the considerably smaller number of relevant articles in the first place.

i. Sexual Slavery

Analysis of the Arab newspapers does indicate some irritation towards the women's deviance from established gender norms: the most common narrative utilised by both Echorouk and Al-Ahram was 'Sexual Slavery'. However, this was exclusively used in the context of presenting women as tools used by men/IS to achieve their goals. Women were depicted as passive subjects: "use[d] for what [IS] called 'marriage jihad.'. However, [...] the organisation is training women [...] to exploit them during the clashes." (Echorouk, 'ISIS training and recruitment centres', 2016). The implication created by the author's word choice ("the organisation uses women", "exploit them") evokes the idea of female members as passive, with no political or even personal motivations. The Arabic word for 'exploit' used here literally means 'take advantage of/benefit from', suggesting that women are merely another resource for IS to draw on.

Interestingly, this manifestation of 'Sexual Slavery' does not contain any explicitly or implicitly sexual/romantic aspects. Aside from one article claiming that an IS militant's husband married her to "facilitate her desire to become a suicide bomber" ('Arrested Indonesian woman', Al-Ahram, 2016), there is no focus on women being seduced into committing violence. This narrative was included under the 'Sexual Slavery' category because the articles still constructed female jihadis as slaves due to their sex, implying their victimhood and suggesting that men are forcing them into their violent roles through manipulation, but an argument could be made for its applicability under the 'Child' category, which similarly delegitimises them as political actors.

ii. Political Agent

A close second in terms of frequency was the 'Political Agent' narrative. In both this and the previous narrative, the women were discussed very briefly and superficially; however, articles included in this category referred to financial, political, or ideological reasons to explain the women's motivations. In these cases, women were presented similarly to their male counterparts; they would be described as having simply been "radicalised online", with no further mention as to who or how they were 'radicalised' ('UK mother', Al-Ahram, 2016; 'Militant in IS video', Al-Ahram, 2016). Ideological motivations were identified, in some cases including the woman's explanation (e.g.: "Shakil claimed she only travelled to Syria because she wanted to live under sharia law." ('UK mother', Al-Ahram, 2016)). This lent the women agency and indicated that they played an active role in their decision to join IS. The image constructed of these women when the Political Agent narrative is employed removes the element of victimhood and passiveness, implying they are serious political actors—or at least as serious as their male counterparts.

iii. Superficial Descriptions

A particularly noteworthy observation during the analysis was the usage of gender-neutral language. Arabic does not have gender-neutral nouns or verbs, however, Echorouk published headlines that circumvented gendered vocabulary, only stating that "IS [was] behind the latest conspiracy in Paris" (Echorouk, 2016) rather than 'three women behind the latest IS conspiracy'. As Al-Ahram was analysed in its English version, the word choice was more apparent: headlines would describe "Arrested militants plann[ing] attack" (Al-Ahram, 2016) and would only mention that the militants in question were women later in the article. The overall effect was that the involvement of women seemed less sensationalised in Arab media compared to British headlines exclaiming about "Mrs Terror"'s latest tweets (Enoch, Wyke, & Drury, 2016).

Furthermore, compared to the descriptions of the women in the UK press discussed below, Arab reporting was considerably more superficial. Issacharoff's (2006) description of the "dry" Arab reporting on Palestinian female suicide bombers (p. 47) is apt. In the majority of the articles, female jihadis were perfunctorily described, stating their ages and sometimes their nationalities, but often even their names were omitted. The only instance where some background information was provided was in the Al-Ahram article 'Militant in IS video'

(2016), where one sentence states that Khadijah Dare was a Christian named Grace before converting to Islam and changing her name.

Jaques & Taylor (2009, p. 505) and Issacharoff (2006, p. 43) report similar findings on the more superficial reporting in Arab media, where Palestinian media was more focused on the political/ideological motivations of female suicide terrorists and paid less attention to personal details. It should be noted, however, that these studies were conducted on female suicide bombers for secular Palestinian nationalist movements, reported mainly in the Palestinian press. Issacharoff (2006) suggests that this more 'neutral' presentation of female suicide bombers (in that they were described similarly to their male equivalents) was to promote Palestinian nationalism. It validated the women's political agency, thereby legitimising their organisation, as is evident by the implementation of the Armed Mother narrative for this violent movement (Loken, 2021, p. 30).

I would argue that Issacharoff's (2006) reasoning does not apply to the current findings. Firstly, despite a less vehement denunciation of the women's actions compared to the British press, Arab media did not present female jihadis' use of violence as legitimate. Women's participation is viewed as an issue that must be addressed, particularly when the 'Sexual Slavery' narrative was used as it implied the women needed to be saved from IS' predations. Therefore, it can be inferred that media presentation of female jihadis as serious political actors does not deeply threaten established discourse in the Arab region. As Brunner (2005) describes women's violence and the gender hierarchy, if there is "no substantial transgression of the structures in place, [it] at the most serves only as a short-term irritation." (p. 48).

II. UK Media Narratives

Unlike Arab media, articles in the Daily Mail used much more graphic and emotional language. The articles tended to be longer and delved much deeper into the women's backgrounds. Another striking difference was the focus on 'Jihadi Brides'; Arab news in this period commented on how women in IS were getting more frontline roles, a trend that was also documented in scholarship on the topic (Margolin, 2019; Gan et al., 2019). However, this aspect of women's participation in IS is curiously absent from all the British articles analysed, which focused entirely on women as 'Jihadi Brides'.

Indeed, female jihadis were almost universally referred to as Jihadi Brides, even when there was no mention of marriage (Martin, 2016; Taylor, 2016). The constant use of this gendered label to refer to all female jihadis inextricably links their actions to a hypothetical man and automatically applies assumptions on what these women's goals are: marrying a militant (Martini, 2018, p. 464), thereby glossing over any political/ideological/societal motivations. Furthermore, the women's own violence is minimised because they are not considered 'foreign fighters' like their male counterparts. Rather, the connotations of women in marriage imply they take on supporting 'housewife' roles. These implications ridicule female members of IS and ignore their participation in political violence, delegitimising them and by extension, the organisation.

i. Sexual Slavery

Like the Arab newspapers, sexual slavery was the most common narrative for female jihadis in the Daily Mail. However, the presentation of this narrative was considerably more inflammatory. The language choices often evoked paedophilia even when the women involved were not minors (e.g: "Page 3 Girl 'is being groomed to be a jihadi bride':" (Taylor, 2016)), which had the dual function of infantilising the women and emphasising how evil IS men are. The former image strips the women of their agency, removing the political implications and motivations of their violence, the latter reasserts the neo-Orientalist narrative that Muslim men are perverse dangers to women. The main element of the Sexual Slavery narrative used by the UK media highlights that the women were forced, directly or indirectly, into joining ISIS, through a sexual or romantic connection which took advantage of them. Gye (2016) writes that Tareena Shakil had "fallen for a mystery man [she met in Turkey], before being kidnapped and driven across the border", displaying that both emotional and physical manipulation were involved in Shakil's recruitment.

The use of the Sexual Slave narrative promotes the idea that women were not willingly joining IS, and therefore the Jihadi Bride phenomenon does not threaten the gender and neo-Orientalist discourse in the same way that women actively choosing to leave the West to participate in violence would (Martini, 2018). Although the Arabic newspapers created a similar narrative of passive victimhood by presenting these women as mere tools being manipulated, the sexual victimhood of female jihadis and depravity of the IS recruiters are much more heavily emphasised in UK media. This suggests that female jihadis pose a deeper

threat to the discursive status quo in the West than they do in the Middle East because of how thoroughly British media delegitimises female IS members (Brunners, 2005, p. 48).

ii. Rebellious Teen

The second most common narrative that emerged from the sample was the 'Rebellious Teen', wherein articles presented the women as immature and apolitical, their violence as juvenile. Here, authors often adopted a patronising tone ridiculing the women's actions. Robinson (2016) quotes Khadija Dare's father telling her to "come back and face the music. Because she had let herself down.". The expressions used are evocative of a student being caught skipping school rather than an adult woman travelling abroad to join a terrorist organisation, diminishing the seriousness of her criminality.

This narrative infantilises the women and then chastises them, in contrast with the previous 'Sexual Slavery' frame that presents them as agentless objects of pity. The moralising tone is most evident in Wahid, Wyke, & Craven's (2016) article on Gondal, a prominent IS recruiter. The authors fixate on how her family is well-off, describing her house as 'palatial' and mentioning that it had a driveway and a pool, details which were not necessary to include. Arguably, the inclusion of these descriptions and the use of relatively dramatic language compared to other news articles (e.g.; "palatial", "prestigious", "this is not a story of a disenfranchised, no-hoper youth") emphasise the moralising tone of the piece and present her as an ungrateful, spoilt child who threw away a 'good life' because she was "something of a rebel" (ibid.).

This narrative ignores that there are several push and pull factors which influence people's decision to join IS, including feelings of isolation and the desire for a sense of community (Speckhard & Ellenberg, 2021). By patronising Gondal, the authors diminish and ridicule any potential societal factors which contributed to her decision to leave because her actions are viewed as superficially motivated by childish whimsy. When this narrative is implemented, neo-Orientalist discourse is reinforced as they present Western lifestyles as vastly superior, ridiculing the women who defected and naturally regretted their decision after realising "quite quickly the propaganda doesn't match up with the reality." (Martin, 2016).

iii. Islamisation

Several articles drew particular attention to the female jihadis' conversion to Islam before becoming terrorists. "Muslim convert" is used to label the female jihadis (see: Wilgress,

2016; Martin, 2016; Johnson, 2016), essentially conflating conversion to Islam with becoming a Jihadi Bride. This narrative is a consistently present undercurrent throughout UK media: readers are constantly reminded of how Grace 'Khadija' Dare "loved church. She had a Bible, she read the bible" (Akbar, 2016). Articles repeatedly juxtaposed how 'Western' female jihadis were before converting and joining IS: Sally Jones used to be a punk rocker before she "converted to Islam and [became] an Isis recruiter." (Taylor, 2016), Lorna Moore had a "typical student life until converting in 2002," (Robinson & Gye, 2016), a 'Page 3 girl' went from being a "glamour model to something completely different" after she was recruited online (Taylor, 2016). As the authors constantly recall these women's more Western lifestyles, they construct an idea of what is normal/'typical' and what is deviant. These repeated comparisons highlight how dramatically these women changed; being 'Western' is assumed to be normal and good, whereas conversion to Islam becomes synonymous with radicalisation and violence. Representing Islam as the natural indicator of radicalisation maintains the neo-Orientalist narrative "that Muslims are prone to violence by their faith and irrational to boot" (Saleh, 2016, p. 93).

3.3 Discussion

Across both Arab and British media, the most consistent narrative applied to female jihadis was the 'Child'. Even when other narratives were employed, the implication of the women's naivete and lack of agency persisted: the rebellious teen was too young and foolish to understand her actions, the sexual slave was manipulated and forced into joining, and even the monster has a backstory of being vulnerable and taken advantage of (see Curtis, 2016; Wahid, Wyke, & Crave, 2016). The effect is that all women joining IS, regardless of why or how, have one thing in common: they lack agency. The overarching image of the Jihadi Bride is that she is a manipulated victim, and so her decisions are not credible or reflective of 'normal' women, a finding that is consistent across similar studies (Martini, 2018; Saleh, 2016; Jackson, 2021; Sjoberg, 2018).

However, the greater intensity with which this narrative was pushed in British compared to Arab media indicates that so-called Jihadi Brides posed a bigger threat to established discourse in Britain, namely the neo-Orientalist assumptions of Muslim women's passivity and victimhood. In the neo-Orientalist context, 'Western' Muslim women choosing to abandon their "better status" to live in the 'Orient' is "incomprehensible" to Western

audiences (Martini, 2018, p. 461). To safeguard neo-Orientalist perspectives, female jihadis are infantilised and victimised to invalidate the legitimacy of their actions.

The foundational threat to established neo-Orientalist norms in the West is arguably why the Armed Mother narrative is never employed for female jihadis. As established earlier, the power of the Armed Mother largely stems from the assumption that 1) she is violent to protect more important feminine ideals, and 2) once her group wins, the established gender order will be restored (Viterna, 2013, p. 25). Neither of these applies in Western contexts for female jihadis: they challenge established discourses too deeply for ideals that are not reflective of the status quo (as 'Islamic culture' clashes with "Western civilisation" (Sjoberg, 2018, p. 302)), and a profound alteration of gender and neo-Orientalist orders will ensue should they win the conflict. Therefore, it can be deduced that the legitimising effect of women's participation in violent groups is constrained by how well their actions align with gender and neo-Orientalist (in the case of violent Islamist groups) discourse.

The "exaggerated" agency of the Kurdish Women's Protection Units (YPJ) (Sjoberg, 2018, p. 297) perpetuated by Western media supports this conclusion; because the YPJ is seen as fighting with the "good guys", they are depicted as agential (ibid.). Women participating in political violence by joining IS, on the other hand, are not valid as political agents because they are presented as manipulated victims who would not have joined if they were 'normal women' (Binetti, 2015; Conway & McInerney, 2012).

It should be noted that this study does not take into account many variables which likely influence perceptions of female jihadis, the most prominent of which being IS' presentation of itself. Winter (2017) argues that IS went to great lengths to present itself as an "international pariah" to raise its media exposure by using excessive brutality (p. 104). It indicates that IS *wanted* to be perceived as radicals trying to "[destroy] the political status quo" (Margolin, 2019, p. 40). This is a potential explanation for why the Armed Mother narrative does not apply to IS despite female participation: Viterna (2014) and Loken (2021) indicate that violent groups strategically use the Armed Mother narrative to control their external image, something that IS is evidently not interested in. Therefore, it is likely that safeguarding neo-Orientalist perceptions is not the only reason female jihadis do not increase the perceived legitimacy of violence used by Islamist groups.

Comparison to the Arab newspapers was particularly illuminating when considering alternative explanations to the proposed theory. The Arab articles indicated that it is possible

to discuss and criticise female jihadis without promoting neo-Orientalist narratives as the British media does. Although there were several instances where Arab media also delegitimised women as political actors, I would argue that this was more related to gender than neo-Orientalist discourse as there were no notable instances implying the superiority of Western culture/'civilisation', whereas that was not the case in British media. This suggests that neo-Orientalism did play a role in the British media's extreme infantilisation of female jihadis.

The delegitimisation of female jihadis as political actors is problematic as it protects essentialising neo-Orientalist assumptions of Muslim women as passive victims and Muslim men as barbaric and violent, thereby reasserting Western superiority by comparison (Mohanty, 1984). Beyond that, this construction is especially problematic as more female FTFs return to their home countries after the collapse of the Caliphate (RAN, 2017). These women (and their families) tend to weaponise salient narratives of the female terrorist's victimhood to ease their reintegration into their home societies (see: Atkinson, 2021). This is not to deny the possibility that some female terrorists are indeed victims, but it is unlikely that most of them are, considering the body of research indicating that many women were strongly motivated to join IS due to ideological reasons (see: RAN, 2017, p. 21). Dismissing female jihadis' political agency can pose future security threats for governments developing policy responses toward FTFs by underestimating their ideological commitment.

4. Conclusions

This thesis aimed to highlight and problematise the neo-Orientalist discourse adopted when Western media talks about female jihadis. By analysing and comparing the persistent infantilisation of female jihadis in British and Arab media, this study suggests that neo-Orientalist perspectives play a pivotal in stripping female jihadis of political agency and negating the predicted legitimising effect of large groups of women participating in political violence (Viterna, 2014, p. 148).

By bringing the motifs of the Armed Mother and the Jihadi Bride into dialogue, the apparent disconnect in the literature on women's use of political violence is partially resolved: I argue that for women's membership in violent groups to increase perceived legitimacy, the

audience must be reassured that established socio-political relations/hierarchies (i.e.: the status quo) will be maintained. The Jihadi Bride cannot offer that to Western audiences due to how female jihadis deeply challenge neo-Orientalist assumptions of the West's cultural hegemony (Martini, 2018), which is why women's participation does not increase perceived legitimacy of violent Islamist groups. These findings are limited in their generalisability due to the narrow scope of the study but can still provide insight for future research on the topic.

The analysis also raised questions on why Arab media is so seemingly nonchalant and perfunctory in reporting female jihadis compared to the UK. It was interesting to note that this was also the case in reporting (secular) female suicide bombers (Jaques & Taylor, 2009, p. 505). It is clear that the media's comparative apathy towards female terrorists is not due to widespread cultural beliefs in gender equality: both Arab newspapers still had a tendency to present female jihadis as passive rather than agential, indicating the influence of traditional gender biases. Further investigation could clarify whether the difference in framing compared to Western media is due to the weaker influence of neo-Orientalist discourse in Arab society, governmental restrictions on the press (Khazen, 1999), because the region is more accustomed to violent Muslim women (Issacharoff, 2006), or due to an alternative explanation. Such a study would contribute significantly to scholarship on depictions of violent women, as the existing body of literature is very Eurocentric in its focus.

Notes

1. The author recognises that the usage of labels like ‘Western’, ‘Arab’, and ‘female jihadi’ are problematic and promote an essentialised understanding of these groups, similarly to what this paper seeks to criticise. However, the labels were necessary to facilitate discussion and argumentation.

References

‘"Abu Al-Mara"... An engineer from Bodawa who became the recruitment official for "ISIS" in Syria!’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%a3%d8%a8%d9%88-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d9%85%d9%87%d9%86%d8%af%d8%b3-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a8%d9%88%d8%af%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%88-%d8%aa%d8%ad%d9%88%d9%91%d9%84-%d8%a5%d9%84%d9%89-%d9%85

Akbar, J. (2016a, February 11). Shocking new ISIS video shows four-year-old British boy dubbed 'Jihadi Junior' blowing up four alleged spies in a car bomb. *The Daily Mail.*

Akbar (2016b, March 11). Were the names of 22,000 ISIS fighters DELIBERATELY leaked to stop them deserting? Theory emerges that data was released so everyone on it must 'fight to the death'. *The Daily Mail.*

Alison, M. (2009). *Women and political violence: Female combatants in ethno-national conflict.* Routledge.

‘Arrested Indonesian woman says IS group militant ordered bombing’. Al-Ahram. (2016). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/9/253079/World/International/Arrested-Indonesian-woman-says-IS-group-militant-o.aspx

‘Arrested militants planned attack on Paris railway station, France says’. Al-Ahram. (2016). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/9/243694/World/International/Arrested-militants-planned-attack-on-Paris-railway.aspx

Atkinson, E. (2021). ‘Shamima Begum says she ‘did not hate Britain’ when she fled to Syria’. *The Independent.*

Barrett, R. (2017). *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*. New York, NY: The Soufan Center.

Binetti, A. (2015). *A new frontier: Human trafficking and ISIS’s recruitment of women from the West.* Information 2 Action.

Blanchard, C. M., & Humud, C. E. (2018). *The Islamic State and U.S policy.* Congressional Research Service.

Brunner, C. (2005). Female suicide bombers - Male suicide bombing? looking for Gender in reporting the suicide bombings of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *Global Society : Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations, 19*(1), 29–48.

Butler, J. (1990). “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” In S. Case (Ed.), *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, 270–282. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.

Carr, H. (2019). ‘Shamima Begum: 78% of Britons support revoking IS bride's UK citizenship - Sky Data poll’. *Sky News.*

Conway, M., & McInerney, L. (2012). What's love got to do with it? Framing 'JihadJane' in the US press. *Media, War & Conflict, 5*(1), 6–21.

Crossley, L. (2016, January 25). British mother accused of taking her toddler son to Syria to join ISIS claims she 'made a mistake' by going to live under the terror group. *The Daily Mail.*

Cunningham, K. J. (2003). Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 26*(3), 171–195.

Davies, B. (2016, September 3). HOW HIS TWISTED MOTHER TURNED JOE, 11, INTO A GRINNING; ISIS KILLER. *The Daily Mail.*

Davies, K. L. (2016, January 21). British mother accused of taking her toddler son to Syria to join ISIS claims she didn't understand what the terror group is really like before she went. *The Daily Mail.*

Dean, S. (2016, August, 3). 'Jesus was a slave of Allah': Sick ISIS magazine tries to convert Christians, justifies barbaric killings, and says Islam IS violent. *The Daily Mail.*

De Volo, L. B. (2004). Mobilizing Mothers for War: Cross-National Framing Strategies in Nicaragua's Contra War. *Gender & Society, 18*(6), 715–734.

‘Elements tried to escape from Sirte by "swimming"’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%dabinet%d8%a8%dadona%d8%a78%d8%b9%d{d{6%d8%a7%d8%b5%d8%} d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%b4-d8%ad%d8%a7%d8ISIS

Elshtain, J. (1985). *Women and Wars.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

‘Emirati gets death sentence for joining Syria militants’. Al-Ahram. (2016). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/180601/World/Region/Emirati-gets-death-sentence-for-joining-Syria-mili.aspx

Enoch, N. (2016, May 26). 'You are pathetic England... you all scare so easily. Have a nice summer': British ISIS recruiter 'Mrs Terror' taunts the nation a day after warning Londoners to avoid using the Underground in June and July. *The Daily Mail.*

Factiva. [Database]. New York :Dow Jones & Reuters.

Foucault, M. (2002). *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* New York: Routledge.

Gan, R., Neo, L. S., Chin, J., & Khader, M. (2019). Change is the Only Constant: The Evolving Role of Women in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). *Women & Criminal Justice, 29*(4-5), 204–220.

Gentry, C. E., & Sjoberg, L. (2021). *Beyond mothers, monsters, whores : thinking about women's violence in global politics.* London, England: Zed Books

Goodwin, J. (2004) What must we explain to explain terrorism? *Social Movement Studies, 3*(2), 259–265.

Gordon, A. (2016, July 31). ISIS is training children of foreign fighters including 50 British youngsters to become next generation of terrorists *The Daily Mail.*

Gye, H (2016, January 15). British mother accused of taking her toddler to Syria to join ISIS says she 'just ran, ran, ran' for the border to escape their clutches. *The Daily Mail.*

Hegghammer, T. (2013). Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting. *The American Political Science Review, 107*(1), 1–15.

Hodgetts, D., & Chamberlain, K. (2013). Analysing News Media. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 393–393.

'IS behind the latest conspiracy in Paris'. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%b4-d%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a1-d8%a7%d9 %84%d8%a4%d8%a7%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a7%ISIS

'"ISIS" publishes "a list" Assassinations of American soldiers'. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%b43%dandera%d{6%d8%b4%d8%b1-dabi2%d8 %a7%d8%a6%d8%a%d8%a7%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a7%d8%a% %84%d8%b9%d8%b3%d{3%d8%b1%d{%d8%a3%d}

'IS planning "horrific attacks" in Britain'. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%b4-dbanka%d8%ae%d8%b7%d8%b73%d nited9 %80%d8d8%ac%d8%a7%d8%aa%d8%b1%d8%b9%d8%a9 ISIS

Issacharoff, A. (2006). The Palestinian and Israeli media on female suicide terrorists. *Female suicide bombers: Dying for equality*, 43-50.

'ISIS training, recruitment and teaching centers in the residential complexes'. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%b1%d8%a7%d{3%d8%b2-d8%aa%d8%af%d8%b1%d{a%d8%} a8-%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%Sunrise

Jackson, L. B. (2021). Still just victims or villains? The "jihadi brides" and the representation of politically violent women. *Critical Studies on Terrorism, 14*(4), 412–415.

Jacques, K., & Taylor, P. J. (2009). Female Terrorism: A Review. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 21*(3), 499–515.

Johnson, A. (2016, February 7). My Daughter, the terrorists. *The Daily Mail*

Kalyvas, S. N. (2015). Is ISIS a Revolutionary Group and if Yes, What Are the Implications? *Perspectives on Terrorism, 9*(4), 42–47.

Kaya, Z. (2020). Sexual violence, identity and gender: ISIS and the Yezidis. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 20(5), 631-652.

Khazen, J. (1999). Censorship and state control of the press in the Arab world. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 4(3), 87-92.

Kuehnast, K. (2015). Women Under ISIS Rule: From Brutality to Recruitment. *Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, US House of Representatives*.

‘Kuwait: Confirmation of the death sentence against a suspect in the bombing of a Shiite mosque’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%83%d9%88%d9%8a%d8%aa-%d8%aa%d8%ab%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%aa-%d8%ad%d9%83%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d8%b9%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%85-%d8%a8%d8%ad%d9%82-%d9%85%d8%aa%d9%87%d9%85-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%aa%d9%81

Loken, M. (2021). ‘Both needed and threatened’: Armed mothers in militant visuals. *Security Dialogue, 52*(1), 21–44.

Loken, M., & Zelenz, A. (2018). Explaining extremism: Western women in Daesh. *European Journal of International Security, 3*(1), 45–68.

MacKenzie, M. (2009). Securitization and desecuritization: Female soldiers and the reconstruction of women in post-conflict Sierra Leone. *Security Studies 18*(2): 241–261.

Mahood, S., & Rane, H. (2017). Islamist narratives in ISIS recruitment propaganda. *Journal of International Communication, 23*(1), 15–35.

Manekin, D., & Wood, R. M. (2020). Framing the Narrative: Female Fighters, External Audience Attitudes, and Transnational Support for Armed Rebellions. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution 64*(9) , 1638–65.

‘Man responsible for recruiting Australian fighters to ISIS killed’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%b3%d8%a4%d9%88%D8%A%D8%A%D8%A%D8%A%D8%A%D8%A7%D8%a%d8%a%d8%a%d8%b3%d8%a%d8%a7%d8%a

Margolin, D. (2019). The Changing Roles of Women in Violent Islamist Groups. In A. Alexander (Ed.), *Perspectives on the future of women, gender, & violent extremism*. George Washington University.

Martin, A. (2016, August 13). JIHADI BRIDE KILLED BY AIRSTRIKE FEARED EXECUTION IF SHE TRIED TO FLEE SYRIA. *The Daily Mail.*

Martini, A. (2018). Making women terrorists into "Jihadi brides": an analysis of media narratives on women joining ISIS. *Critical Studies on Terrorism, 11*(3), 458–477.

‘Militant in Islamic State video believed to be British bouncy castle salesman’. Al-Ahram. (2016). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/180178/World/Region/Militant-in-Islamic-State-video-believed-to-be-Bri.aspx

Mohanty, C. T. (1988). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review, 30*(1), 61–88.

‘Morocco announces the dismantling of a female terrorist cell’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ba%d8%b1%d8%a8-%d9%8a%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%86-%d8%aa%d9%81%d9%83%d9%8a%d9%83-%d8%ae%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a5%d8%b1%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%86%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%a6%d9%8a%d8%a9

‘Morocco dismantles a cell loyal to ISIS of ten women’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d8%a7%d%91% d8a7% d8a7 d8a9 d8a7 max d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%b4-dapple-

Nacos, B. L., & Bloch-Elkon, Y. (2011). The media, public opinion, and terrorism. In *The Oxford handbook of American public opinion and the media.*

Nacos, B. L. (2005) The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Patterns in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 28*(5), 435-451.

‘“Naima” Libyan women recruit Algerian women for "jihad" with "ISIS"!’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d9%86%d8%b9%d9%8a%d9%85%d8%a9-%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d8%ac%d9%86%d9%91%d8%af-%d8%ac%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%a6%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%84%d9%80%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%af

Piotrowski, D. (2016, March 22). Schoolgirl, 16, and man, 20, arrested by counter-terrorism police after being accused of 'raising money for Islamic State'. *The Daily Mail.*

Pol, C. van de. (2021). *Legitimacy of armed groups: A gendered perspective on the Women’s Protection Units.* [Bachelor’s thesis, Leiden University]. The Student Repository.

Radicalisation Awareness Network [RAN]. (2017). *Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families*. EU Commission.

Robertson, A. (2016, January 31). Jihadi mother who took her toddler to join ISIS 'is attention seeker who stole another woman's husband'. *The Daily Mail.*

Robinson, M. (2016, January 5). Kit Kat, Snickers and the best cappuccinos around! Former bouncy castle salesman Jihadi Sid wrote a travel guide on ISIS in a bid to recruit more Muslims. *The Daily Mail.*

Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*. New York: Pantheon.

Saleh, L. (2016). (Muslim) Woman in Need of Empowerment. *International Feminist Journal of Politics, 18*(1), 80–98.

‘Saudi woman sentenced to 6 years' jail for IS group support’. Al-Ahram. (2016). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/216708/World/Region/Saudi-woman-sentenced-to--years-jail-for-IS-group-.aspx

Shepherd, L. J. (2006). Veiled references: Constructions of gender in the Bush administration discourse on the attacks on Afghanistan post-9/11. *International Feminist Journal of Politics, 8*(1), 19–41.

Sjoberg, L., & C. E. Gentry. 2008. “Reduced to Bad Sex: Narratives of Violent Women from the Bible to the War on Terror.” *International Relations 22*(1): 5–23.

Sjoberg, L. (2018). Jihadi brides and female volunteers. *Conflict Management and Peace Science, 35*(3), 296–311.

Spivak, G. C. 1988. “Can the Subaltern Speak?.” In C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 271–314. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Speckhard, A., & Ellenberg, M. (2021). ISIS and the Allure of Traditional Gender Roles. *Women & Criminal Justice,* 1–21.

Spencer, A. N. (2016). The Hidden Face of Terrorism: An Analysis of the Women in Islamic State. Digital Commons @ University of South Florida.

Taylor, R. (2016, September 5). Page 3 Girl 'is being groomed to be a jihadi bride': Kimberley, 27, from Bradford is warned by MI5 she faces arrest if she continues to contact terrorist recruiters. *The Daily Mail.*

Trisko-Darden, J., Henshaw, A., & Szekely, O. (2019). *Insurgent Women.* Washington: Georgetown University Press.

‘UK mother gets six years for joining ISIS group in Syria’. Al-Ahram. (2016). https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/9/186464/World/International/UK-mother-gets-six-years-for-joining-ISIS-group-in.aspx

Viterna, J. (2013). *Women in war : the micro-processes of mobilization in El Salvador*. Oxford; New York : Oxford University Press.

Viterna, J. (2014). “Radical or Righteous? Using Gender to Shape Public Perceptions of Political Violence.” In Bosi, Lorenzo, Chares Demetriou, and Stefan Malthaner. *Dynamics of Political Violence. A Process-oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Wahid, O., & North, N. (2016, January 3). ISIS leader killed in US drone strike paid for British teenager to become a jihadi bride and laundered money for terror group. *The Daily Mail.*

Wahid, O., Wyke, T., & Craven, N. (2016, July 3). Unmasked Britain’s Jihadi Bride maker. *The Daily Mail.*

‘Websites target Algerian women, dragging them towards extremism’. Echorouk. (2016). https://www.echoroukonline.com/%d9%85%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%82%d8%b9-%d8%a5%d9%84%d9%83%d8%aa%d8%b1%d9%88%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d8%b3%d8%aa%d9%87%d8%af%d9%81-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%a6%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%88%d8%aa

Willig, C. (2013). Interpretation and Analysis. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 149–149.

Willgress, L. (2016, February 24).White Muslim convert who was training to teach maths and 'planned to take her three young children to Syria' is guilty of not telling authorities her supply teacher husband had joined ISIS. *The Daily Mail.*

Winter, C. (2018). Apocalypse, later: a longitudinal study of the Islamic State brand. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 35*(1), 103–121.

Appendix A - Coding Frame

Female Terrorists in the Media		
Code	**(Sub)Category**	**Description**
MT	**Mother**	The general elements of this narrative frames women as emotional due to their feminine/maternal characteristics, where some deviation related to these characteristics causes them to act violently.
	Subcategories	
	Failures as Women (Martini, 2018)	Presenting these women as outside the realm of 'normal' women by focusing on their failed marriages, inability to have children, or inability to raise children 'correctly'. Here, the aim is to exclude these women from the gender discourse by emphasising their deviance as women. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'vengeful mother': - If the focus is on showing how these women are not and should not be considered 'normal' women due to their inability to meet feminine expectations, it falls under this category. - If the focus is on how the women's inability to meet feminine expectations has triggered a rage or desire to seek revenge which made them turn to violence, it falls under 'vengeful mother'. Example: - "kidnaps (her) [. . .] children and flees to Syria to join Isis" (Martini, 2018, p. 468).
	Domesticated Terrorist (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	Presenting the women as joining terrorist organisations to take on support roles (traditionally feminine labour). The tone implies that they are joining these organisations because they want to feel needed and can't fulfil their feminine roles like 'normal' women. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and the 'failures as women' category: - If they are presented as joining the organisation as a way of filling some void, wanting to carry out traditionally feminine tasks (e.g.: cooking, having children), then it falls under this category. - If the focus is on how these women have failed as mothers/wives/women and emphasising their deviance from standard gendered expectations, it

		falls under ‘failures as women’.
	Vengeful Mother (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Martini, 2018)	Presenting women as turning to violence due to their inability to fulfil feminine expectations like having children or getting married. Here, the women are presented as enraged and emotional, becoming violent because they could not be ‘normal’ women. Gentry & Sjoberg (2015) also include women that aren’t mothers in this category when they are presented as emotional due to “maternal inadequacies” (p. 75). This narrative focuses on women being emotional and seeking revenge due to a “disrupted gendered path” (ibid.), meaning they don’t necessarily have to be mothers who lost children/husbands. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and ‘failures as women’: - If the emphasis is on how the women’s violence is fueled by feminine/maternal instincts, presenting her as emotional or enraged, it falls under this category. - If the tone is moralising, emphasising how the women are deviant for not being able to fulfil gendered expectations, it falls under ‘failures as women’ Example: - Can sometimes include explanations stating that women joined ISIS because they want to get married and couldn’t do it the ‘normal’ way, implying these women are incomplete and trying to ‘fix’ themselves.
MN	**Monster**	The general elements of this narrative frame women as irrational, evil, and unpredictable. It creates an image that dehumanises and demonises them, presenting them as even more monstrous and bloodthirsty than their male counterparts.
		Subcategories
	Betrayal of the Jihadi Bride (Martini, 2018)	Emphasising how the women are essentially ‘biting the hand that feeds them’ by joining ISIS when they had all the modern luxuries of living in the West. - Reinforces Western superiority and implies they’re irrational for throwing it away. The emphasis on irrationality is why this subcategory falls under the

		‘monster’ category.
	Tougher-Than-Men (Nacos, 2005)	Presenting women as being more fanatical and blood-thirsty than the male counterparts because they have something to prove. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and ‘the gorgon’: - If the focus is on how women are being more violent than men because they feel like they have to prove they belong in this male-dominated role, it falls under this category. - If the focus is on a mental or biological deficiency in the woman making her violent and irrational, dehumanising her, it falls under the ‘gorgon’ category. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and ‘rebellious teen’: - If the focus is on female terrorists being more bloodthirsty/dangerous than male ones because they feel they have something to prove, it falls under this category. The overall tone presents the women as monstrous and volatile. - If the women are presented as naive/rebellious teens acting out, it falls under ‘rebellious teen’. Example: - “the females were ‘the most determined and aggressive of the hostage takers’ and that they were especially “cruel and threatening and eager to die. . . .” (Nacos, 2005, p. 445)
	The Gorgon (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	Emphasising the irrationality of the violent women, presenting them as obsessive and pathological. In this narrative the women are dehumanised and presented as pure evil, a more serious threat than their male counterparts because the violent women are irrational and unpredictable (whereas the men who commit the same acts are not) - Emphasis is on presenting the women as abnormal due to something being wrong with their womanhood → excluding them from the gender discourse because their unladylike behaviour is ‘explained aways’ by them being present as ‘un-women’/not human. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and the ‘vengeful mother’: - If the irrationality is due to a “biological flaw that

		disrupts their femininity" (G&S, 2015, p. 93), it falls under this category. - If the irrationality is due to an essential characteristic of their feminine nature (e.g.: a mother's love for her family making her violent when she loses them), then it falls under the 'mother' category. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'tougher than men': - If the focus is on a biological or mental deficiency in the woman, dehumanising her and presenting her as an evil monster beyond comprehension, it falls under this category. - If the focus is on presenting women as being more violent/cruel/aggressive than men because they want to prove their 'worth' or that they belong in this male-dominated area, it falls under 'tougher than men'.
WH	**Whore**	The general elements of this narrative frame women's violence as sexually deviant, implying that their sexual activity or lack thereof is related to their use of violence.
	Subcategories	
	Erotic Dysfunction (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Martini, 2018)	Presenting the women's violence stemming from an incapability to (sexually) please men. Their use of violence is explained as a result of their failure to fulfil their "biological destiny" (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015, p. 114). Decision rule to differentiate between this category and "failures as women": - If the narrative focuses on the women's sexual dysfunction or her inability/unwillingness to provide men with sexual pleasure, it falls into this category. - If the narrative does not emphasise the women's sexuality/sexual behaviour when presenting her as outside the realm of 'normal women', it falls under the "failures as women category". Examples: - Masculinising violent women/implying they are violent because they are lesbian and thereby sexually dysfunctional
	Sexual Slavery (Gentry	Presenting the women as victims of men, and their

	& Sjoberg, 2015; Nacos, 2005; Martini, 2018)	violence as something that has been forced (directly or indirectly) by men. In this narrative, the women are presented as controlled by men and therefore lacking any choice in the violence they partake in. This control can be physical or emotional, and includes descriptions of women choosing violence because they were 'seduced' by men who then manipulated them. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and the 'child' narrative: - If the women's lack of agency is presented as due to some (implied) sexual or romantic reason, it falls under this category. If there are no sexual allusions made when the narrative highlights the women's lack of agency, it falls under the child narrative. Examples: - Presenting the women as victims of sexual grooming, emphasising their naivete and the manipulation of the men using them. "the Syria-bound schoolgirls aren't jihadi devil-women, they're vulnerable children [. . .] – the rockstar barbarism of Isis is designed to recruit impressionable teenagers" (Martini, 2018, p. 465) - Presenting the women as choosing violence because they believe they are in love, when they are just a tool to the man orchestrating the violence.
	Sex-Crazed (Martini, 2018; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	Presenting the women as sexually deviant or sex-crazed, and linking this sexual deviance with violence. Here, the implication is that these women are incapable of repressing inappropriate sexual urges and by extention, their violence. Example: - "Marrying one is a religiously approved way to channel the mad, hormonal energy that powers all teenagers [have]" (Martini, 2018, p. 470) Decision rule to differentiate between this category and the 'gorgon': - If the women are presented as irrational due to sexual/romantic desires or urges, it falls into this category. - If the presentation is more focused on their

		irrationality due to some kind of mental deficiency (e.g.: they are "pathologically deviant" (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015, p. 93), then it falls under the 'gorgon' category.
CH	**Child**	The general elements of this narrative frame the women as immature victims that lack agency. Often, the narrative implies the women are manipulated, out of touch with reality, or childish, and thereby not serious political actors but rather objects of scorn or pity.
		Subcategories
	Rebellious teen (Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005)	Presenting women as participating in extreme violence as a way of rebelling against their family or because they want an escape from boredom. The motivation is presented as based on childish whims, the women as young girls acting out rather than politically motivated. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'women's lib gone wrong': - If the focus is on women behaving violently out of a misguided notion of feminism/gender equality, it falls under 'women's lib gone wrong. - If the focus is on women joining terrorist organisations as a means of rebelling against their family/community/because they are bored and want an adventure, it falls under this category.
	Family Relations (Martini, 2018; Nacos 2005)	Presenting women's involvement as something caused by a male relative rather than their own decision, minimising their agency in participating in violence and their political motivations. Example: - Emphasising the political/ideological beliefs of male relatives to imply they are the reason the women became involved in violence. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'vengeful mother': - When the focus is on the woman's loss of family members or the inability to fulfil maternal expectations, it falls under 'vengeful mother'. Here, the woman is emotional/enraged because of her maternal instinct. - When the focus is on how a relation led the woman towards terrorism, it falls under this category. Here,

		the woman is naive and victimised, misled or forced into violence based on the decision of a male relative. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'sexual slavery': - If the woman's actions are explained as due to a man that she was in a romantic relationship with/married, it falls under 'sexual slavery' - If the woman's violence is explained due to a family connection (e.g.: father, brother), it falls under this category.
	Personal Trauma (Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005)	Presenting the reason behind their violent actions as a consequence of personal traumas rather than political beliefs, generating a sense of pity and victimising the women. Example: - Focusing on how a woman used to be a victim of domestic abuse, implying that is the reason they became violent - This can often have a neo-Orientalist connotation as the trauma is presented in conjunction with some women converting to Islam, suggesting they did it because they weren't in their right minds.
IL	**Islamisation** (Martini, 2018)	Presenting women as becoming violent due to (converting to) Islam. Typically, a conversion to Islam is presented in a way that is synonymous with 'radicalisation'. This frame is often linked to personal trauma, as it is usually presented as the underlying reason for conversion. This category falls under the 'child' narrative because it implies that the women's actions/decisions were because they were not in their right minds and therefore decreases their credibility. Example: - "do not know exactly what it was that turned her from tomboyish Christian to bloodthirsty Islamist." (Nacos, 2018, p. 465)
FE	**Feminist**	This narrative presents womens' participation in violence as related to a statement about gender equality or

		feminism. Could be presented in a positive or negative light
Subcategories		
	Women's Liberation (Nacos, 2005)	Presting their participation in violence as an "deviant expression of feminism" (Nacos, 2005, p. 443). In this case the authors usually argue that they do not condone the violence but praise the message or the goal, or highlight that it is something positive for gender equality. Example: - "Shattered a glass ceilings" (Nacos, 2005, p. 444) - "that by 'attacking the Israelis, these female suicide bombers are fighting for more than just national liberation; they are fighting for gender liberation.'" (ibid.) - Note that the women referred to above are committing violence as a part of a secular national liberation group.
	Women's Lib Gone Wrong (Nacos, 2005)	Presenting women as participating in extreme violence as a way of shocking the public to show that they are not feminine/weak. Example: "[...] platform to say, 'I am liberated from past stereotypes, I am accepted in the ultimate masculine roles.'" Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'tougher than men': - If the focus is on women being violent to make a point about sexual equality, then it falls within this category. The overall tone suggests the women are misguided feminists ("deviant expression of feminism" (Nacos, 2005, p. 443)). - If the focus is on female terrorists being more bloodthirsty/dangerous than male ones because they feel they have something to prove, it falls under 'tougher than men'. The overall tone presents the women as monstrous and volatile. Decision rule to differentiate between this category and 'rebellious teen': - If the focus is on the women being rebellious to make a point about gender equality, then it falls under this category. - If the women are being presented as being violent because they are naive/out-of-touch/essentially

		acting out against their families etc., it falls under the category of ‘rebellious teen’.
PA	**Political Agent**	Women are presented as joining violent groups for political/ideological/financial reasons, in a way that acknowledges their agency in the decision. Example: - Not differentiating between reasons men and women joining terrorist groups. - Saying they have been radicalised online but not making references to men/family members/relationships as an explanation for the ‘radicalisation’

Appendix B

NB: This is an abridged copy of the coded data

Female Terrorists in the Media (MENA)		
Code	**(Sub)Category**	**Description**
MT	**Mother**	The general elements of this narrative frames women as emotional due to their feminine/maternal characteristics, where some deviation related to these characteristics causes them to act violently.
Subcategories		
	Failures as Women (Martini, 2018)	" she took her 10-year-old son" (Echorouk, 'ISIS publishes a list', 2016) - Bad mother for taking her son with her, but the narrative is less intense compared to the UK narratives. It is only mentioned once and is not explored at a deeper level. Compare to the article describing at length on how innocent the boy is and how she is a "wicked mother" for corrupting him (Davies, 2016)
	Domesticated Terrorist (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	N/A
	Vengeful Mother (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Martini, 2018)	N/A
MN	**Monster**	The general elements of this narrative frame women as irrational, evil, and unpredictable. It creates an image that dehumanises and demonises them, presenting them as even more monstrous and bloodthirsty than their male counterparts.
Subcategories		
	Betrayal of the Jihadi Bride (Martini, 2018)	N/A
	Tougher-Than-Men (Nacos, 2005)	"after a fierce battle in which the army admitted that it had never seen anything like it before." (Echorouk, 'ISIS training and recruitment centre', 2016) - Not really fitting into this category as there is no clear implication the women are fighting harder

		because they have something to prove, but the tone of the article makes them seem almost inhuman in how 'fierce' they are/how well they are fighting.
	The Gorgon (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	N/A
WH	**Whore**	The general elements of this narrative frame women's violence as sexually deviant, implying that their sexual activity or lack thereof is related to their use of violence.
	Subcategories	
	Erotic Dysfunction (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Martini, 2018)	N/A
	Sexual Slavery (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Nacos, 2005; Martini, 2018)	"the militant group wanted to turn women into fighters rather than just doing housework [...] this latest plot shows that ISIS is ready to use women to carry out attacks." (Echorouk, 'IS behind the latest conspiracy', 2016) - Implies the women are passive, just doing whatever the men in the group are telling them to do, whether it is housework or fighting "Usually, the organization uses women for what they have called "marriage jihad." . However, according to the exclusive photos obtained by Al-Shorouk, the organization is training women to use various types of weapons to exploit them during the clashes." (Echorouk, 'ISIS training and recruitment centres', 2016) - Again, the implication here is that the women are tools being used by ISIS in whatever way they need, particularly highlighted by the term 'exploit' (the Arabic word used here literally meaning 'take advantage of/benefit from') "[...] Freedom of Tunisia", which is part of the terrorist organization "ISIS", whose mission is to recruit women in Algeria and Tunisia, who are likely to be used in what is known as "marriage jihad."" (Echorouk, 'Libyan woman recruit Algerian women', 2016) - Again, using the Arabic word for 'utilised' essentially showing that these women are merely tools for ISIS. "The investigation into the case also revealed that the

		seven women who were arrested [...] were intending to join the terrorist organization to engage in what is known as “marriage jihad.”” (Echorouk, ‘Abou Al-Mara’, 2016) - This wording seems to be giving the women more agency in this case, acknowledging their decision in the actions they took: ‘intending to join’ ‘to engage’. “ISIS" are planning to radicalize women in the Sahel countries as an important factor to rely on, noting that the social networking sites "Facebook" and "Twitter" are exploited by these groups to set up illiterate women or women with a limited education in order to be recruited into the extremist organization.” (Echorouk, ‘Websites targeting Algerian women’, 2016) - Presenting the women as vulnerable targets pursued by ISIS. Here the onus of the blame for a woman joining ISIS falls on the organisation itself because it is presented as predatory, rather than on the women for joining it “He added that most of the detainees revealed during the investigation that they had married fighters in the Islamic State, stressing that “the investigation revealed that some of them do not even know the legal conditions for marriage in Islam, including the consent of the guardian” (Echorouk, ‘Morocco announces the dismantling’, 2016) - Emphasising how young these girls are and how little they know of the world (‘do not even know the legal conditions for marriage in Islam’), the implication is that they are being taken advantage of since they don’t know better. “Her husband, Solihin, also interviewed by the TV station, said he married Novi to facilitate her desire to be a suicide bomber.” (Al-Ahram, ‘Arrested Indonesian woman’, 2016) - Shows the woman being used as a tool by her husband/a man to carry out violence
	Sex-Crazed (Martini, 2018; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	N/A
CH	**Child**	The general elements of this narrative frame the women as immature victims that lack agency. Often, the narrative implies the women are manipulated, out of touch with reality, or childish, and thereby not serious political actors but rather objects of scorn or pity.

Subcategories		
	Rebellious teen (Martini, 2018)	N/A
	Family Relations (Martini, 2018; Nacos 2005)	"to carry out suicide operations against vital facilities in the Kingdom, similar to the brother of one of them who had previously carried out" (Echourouk, 'Morocco dismantels a cell', 2016) - They mention that one of the women arrested has a brother who was also involved in terrorism, but no further comment is made about him and his potential influence on her, in fact the article does not even clarify which woman is related to him. - That said, the fact they mentioned this connection at all implies that it serves some explanatory purpose, although the text does not clearly imply that he influenced her.
	Personal Trauma (Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005)	N/A
	Islamisation (Martini, 2018)	N/A
FE	**Feminist**	This narrative presents womens' participation in violence as related to a statement about gender equality or feminism. Could be presented in a positive or negative light
Subcategories		
	Women's Liberation (Nacos, 2005)	N/A
	Women's Lib Gone Wrong (Nacos, 2005)	N/A
PA	**Political Agent**	Women are presented as joining violent groups for political/ideological reasons, in a way that acknowledges their agency in the decision.
		"The center published a picture of a woman moments before she blew herself up, without causing any casualties." (Echorouk, 'Elements tried to escape', 2016)

		- Referring to her very superficially, no attempt is made at explaining why she did it. "recruiting Australian men, women and children and encouraged acts of terrorism." (Echorouk, 'Australian recruiter for ISIS killed', 2016) - Grouping the women (and children) in the same category as the men and not making any particular distinctions (e.g.: saying that he seduced the women) "his cell is charged with the process of recruiting young men and women in exchange for financial temptations amounting to 200 million!" (Echorouk, 'Abou El-Mara', 2016) - Men and women are given the same motivation for joining ISIS (financial), which has never been mentioned in any of the UK articles I've read. "Khadijah Dare is also a keen propagandist for the group[...] Reported to have been radicalised online" (Al-Ahram, 'Militant in Islamic State video', 2016) - Motivations here are similar to the ones given to men that join terrorist organisations. It does not go beyond saying they were radicalised online; doesn't mention being seduced by a man etc. - Also show that she has an active role in ISIS as a 'propagandist' "She said she was influenced by articles from an Islamic website on upholding monotheism and defending the caliphate and Aman Abdurrahman" (Al-Ahram, 'Arrested Indonesian woman', 2016) - Showing political/ideological motivations "The court heard that Shakil was radicalised online [...] instead, she crossed the border into Syria" (Al-Ahram, 'UK mother', 2016) - She has agency in this narrative she chose to go there and her motivations aren't diminished by saying that she was seduced online or had a "turbulent home life" (Johnson, 2016) "Shakil claimed she only travelled to Syria because she wanted to live under sharia law." (Al-Ahram, 'UK mother', 2016) - Ideological reason given for her actions, which was not mentioned once in any of the Daily Mail articles about her.

MC	**Miscellaneous**	Other elements that are of note but do not fall into any of the other categories
		"The dismantling of this female cell is a precedent in Morocco. Female terrorist cells have never been dismantled in this country" (Echorouk, 'Morocco dismantels a cell of ten', 2016) - Highlights the novelty of their gender, but that is the extent to which their gender is noted throughout the article. "IS behind the latest conspiracy in Paris" (Echorouk headline, 2016) - Headline doesn't mention that the conspiracy involved three women "He noted that British police launched more counter-terrorism-related arrests in 2015 than in any previous year, including a significant number of women and people under the age of 20." (Echorouk, 'IS planning "horrific attacks"', 2016) - That is the entirety of the conversation about women joining ISIS in that article. Is just briefly mentioned. Would put it under 'political agent' but it doesn't really talk about politics, it just says they were arrested and doesn't go beyond that. - Can argue that the fact they singled out "women and people under the age of 20" is because it is unusual and therefore worth noting, however, when compared to how much more sensationalised women's participation in ISIS is in the Daily Mail, this reaction from the press seems significantly subdued. "It also confirmed prison sentences of up to 15 years against eight defendants, including four women. [...] 29 people, including seven women, were accused of providing assistance to the Saudi suicide bomber." (Echorouk, 'Kuwait: Confirmation of the death sentence', 2016). - The only mention of women is to point out the number of women involved. The fact that they are singled out like this indicates that their participation is not considered normal and the implication is that it is unusual for women to be a part of terrorism acts. However, there is no particular narrative that is developed around these

		women, their description remains superficial, not even listing their names, nationalities, or ages.

Appendix C

NB: This is an abridged copy of the coded data

Female Terrorists in the Media (UK)		
Code	**(Sub)Category**	**Data**
MT	**Mother**	The general elements of this narrative frames women as emotional due to their feminine/maternal characteristics, where some deviation related to these characteristics causes them to act violently.
	Subcategories	
	Failures as Women (Martini, 2018)	"British mother accused of taking her toddler son to Syria to join ISIS [...] her 14-month-old son" (Davies, 2016) - Repeated emphasis of the young age of her son highlighting how irresponsible she is as a mother, showing that she is not a 'normal' woman. - This is repeated across several stories about Shakil (Gye, 2016; Crossley, 2016) "the story of how this once-innocent child was snatched away from the life he knew in Britain and turned into an ISIS executioner by his wicked mother." (Davies, 2016) - Bad mom narrative, calling her wicked evokes some of the monster narrative imagery as well. The author is really emphasising the child's innocence and the mother's responsibility in turning them into a killer (the article opens with a lyrical description of the boy's birth in the UK), presenting her as reprehensible. Her corruption of her son's innocence makes this framing of her overlap with the gorgon category as she is presented as sick and deviant. "paint an unstable picture of a troubled woman who was in debt and constantly visited by bailiffs as well as local drug dealers." (Davies, 2016) - Show that she is a bad mother, even before joining ISIS her life was off the rails - Author also emphasises that her son was often at his grandparents rather than with her, showing that she is also an absent mother. On all counts, she fails every expectation of womanhood and motherhood, being absent, unstable, drug-addled
	Domesticated Terrorist (Gentry & Sjoberg,	"Another article about the 'near-extinction of the Western woman' advises women not to 'imitate man' and to

	2015)	cleave to motherhood, 'while his father works as the breadwinner and she obeys her husband as his wife.' The article bemoans that 'more and more women abandon motherhood, wifehood, chastity, femininity, and heterosexuality, the true woman in the West has become an endangered creature.'" (Dean. 2016) - Presenting women's purpose for joining the organisation as to fulfil traditional gender norms but taken to the extreme compared to Western norms (link to Mohanty). Presents the women who choose this lifestyle as backwards and desperate, that they would go so far to act out this role of 'traditional woman'
	Vengeful Mother (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Martini, 2018)	N/A
MN	**Monster**	The general elements of this narrative frame women as irrational, evil, and unpredictable. It creates an image that dehumanises and demonises them, presenting them as even more monstrous and bloodthirsty than their male counterparts.
	Subcategories	
	Betrayal of the Jihadi Bride (Martini, 2018)	"her spartan home in the Syrian city of Aleppo after swapping a comfortable life in Britain for the horrors of war." (Robinson, 2016) - Irrational, no normal person would ever make this decision Also in descriptions of Shakil returning because life was 'too hard' "She is the eldest daughter of a successful London businessman and was, according to friends, in the top set for all subjects at her local secondary [...] won a place at the prestigious Goldsmiths College, part of the University of London, studying English. [...] has been living in Raqqa since arriving in the war-torn country [...] As Gondal was making her secret plans to leave for Syria, she and her family were living in a palatial six-bedroom house in Wanstead, a leafy suburb on the outskirts of East London. Their white-gated house had a large driveway and a swimming pool in the back garden." (Wahid, Wyke, & Craven, 2016) - Showing that she had everything a 'normal' woman could have wanted and she threw it all

		away; the use of 'prestigious' and 'won' imply that she should have been grateful for having these things → neo-Orientalist undertones because it's implying that her Western lifestyle is so much better and her abandoning those things is ridiculous and irrational. - 'War-torn country'; they could have just said Syria, but the use of this descriptive language emphasises the disparity in standards of living and how much better the UK is, that you have to be insane to leave it like this - This narrative also has strong undertones of 'rebellious teen' as the tone of the text is very moralising, sounding like a lecture from a disappointed parent about how children don't appreciate what they have. It is very patronising and presents her as immature and silly. There is sometimes a grim sense of satisfaction in how the women are described when they run away/try to return from ISIS, as though to imply they got what they deserved for going.
	Tougher-Than-Men (Nacos, 2005)	N/A
	The Gorgon (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	"She commands a powerful influence on her following of largely young girls as she 'grooms' them, urging them, as she has done, to travel to Syria and marry bloodthirsty IS killers." (Curtis, 2016) - Language is very graphic and creates a strong villain image: 'commands' 'powerful influence on her following' 'grooms' 'urging' 'bloodthirsty killers' - Very heavy imagery, language choice connotes a scary, evil villain coming to steal away your young girls "In her online rants, she described Britain as 'a filthy country' and praised the Paris massacre" (Curtis, 2016) - 'Rants' evokes hysteria/that she's unhinged - This statement highlights Gondal's cruelty and sadism, 'prais[ing] the Paris massacre', and the word choice creates an undertone of violence and vitriol ('filthy' 'rants' 'massacre'), which contributes to her monster image. The fact that she's a young girl from a well-off family makes her seem all the more pathological that she turned out this bloodthirsty despite having a 'good' upbringing on paper. The implication is that

		something was inherently wrong with her (biological deviance) that made her this monster. This is highlighted by how they repeat across the articles that her father was a 'successful businessman' and that she was a 'good student'. "Jones, they say, regularly boasted that she was a witch with the ability to practise black magic.[...][on her young son] transformed beyond recognition by his evil mother and her ISIS cohorts." (Davies, 2016) - Showing that she is pathologically insane, just not a normal person.
WH	**Whore**	The general elements of this narrative frame women's violence as sexually deviant, implying that their sexual activity or lack thereof is related to their use of violence.
Subcategories		
	Erotic Dysfunction (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Martini, 2018)	N/A
	Sexual Slavery (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Nacos, 2005; Martini, 2018)	"[she claims that she had] fallen for a mystery man she met at the beach, before being kidnapped and driven across the border." (Gye, 2016) - Forced into joining ISIS against her will, therefore not responsible for her actions - Also reflects how returning female terrorists play on these victimising narratives that are perpetuated by the media to get favourable court rulings. "'Often it is vulnerable individuals who are targeted by ISIS. ISIS recruiters paint a narrative of hope to lure in these individuals.'" (Gye, 2016) - Using language evocative of paedophilia (lure), emphasising the 'vulnerability' of the women recruited to highlight that they were emotionally manipulated. "Unknown to her parents, Tareena was being drawn to the conflict unfolding in Syria." (Johnson, 2016) - Emphasis on her parents and the use of 'drawn' are evocative of paedophilia/grooming. This description patronises Shakil by presenting her as a child who needs her parents' supervision and presents her as extremely passive; she did not

		choose to join ISIS, she was “being drawn” to it. “Al Lubnani may have groomed Gondal online to join him in Syria. For a while, she seemed to adopt the role of homemaker and housewife, saying how much she enjoyed making shami kebabs for her husband.” (Wahid, Wyke, & Craven, 2016) - Groomed implying she is a child being taken advantage of. - 'Seemed to adopt the role of homemaker' has a sceptical overtone, as though doubting she actually enjoyed doing this traditionally feminine labour. Evokes the idea of how women in the Middle East are oppressed and confined to such tasks which are considered inferior. "saying how much she enjoyed making shami kebabs for her husband" makes her sound ridiculous, as though she is in denial about actually enjoying doing these things. “ISIS have targeted vulnerable women and girls over the internet in 'matchmaking' schemes to recruit them to become 'Jihadi brides'.” - ‘Vulnerable women and girls’ emphasising their weakness and naivete, they were tricked into joining and taken advantage of. “Page 3 Girl 'is being groomed to be a jihadi bride':” (Taylor, 2016) - The language connotes the woman’s passiveness in this process. Things are happening to her that are beyond her control. Despite being 27 years old, she is still being ‘groomed’, language which is evocative of paedophilia, an image which is encouraged by the use of ‘girl’ and presents her as young and lacking agency.
	Sex-Crazed (Martini, 2018; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015)	“[Shakil] has been exposed as an attention-seeker who stole another woman's husband. [...] had a secret affair with the man while they were still married when she enjoyed a party-girl lifestyle and regularly smoked cannabis.” (Robertson, 2016) - Sexual deviance and behaving in ways that are not acceptable for women (attention-seeking, affair, party-girl). Painting the image of her as a ‘bad woman’. “'She would wear short, revealing dresses in order to attract men. [...] 'She asked me if I thought she was pretty, and she kept looking at herself in the mirror. She seemed

		so self-obsessed.” (Robertson, 2016) - Sexually deviant and abnormal, behaving in ways that aren’t appropriate for ‘good’ women → being ‘self-obssessed’, the detail of her ‘looking at herself in the mirror’ emphasises her pathological deviance, her overconfidence is sickening in this context (she is confronting the wife of the man she is having an affair with), behaving completely opposite to how women are supposed to (virtuous, demure, self-contained) “hot on the heels of her new 19-year-old husband, Birmingham Jihadi Junaid Hussain — a man 25 years her junior. [...] She later told relatives she had 'fallen in love' with the teenager.” (Davies, 2016) - A woman in a romantic relationship with a man so much younger than her is seen as sexually deviant and inappropriate. It's clear the author thinks so too as they take particular effort to emphasise the age gap. The implication is that this is further proof of her deviance, that she would engage in a relationship with a man so much younger than her.
CH	**Child**	The general elements of this narrative frame the women as immature victims that lack agency. Often, the narrative implies the women are manipulated, out of touch with reality, or childish, and thereby not serious political actors but rather objects of scorn or pity.
Subcategories		
	Rebellious teen (Martini, 2018)	“Mr Dare, who is also known as Sunday, begged his daughter to return to Britain. He said: 'She should come back and face the music. Because, she has let herself down,'” (Robinson, 2016) - Patronising a grown woman who went to join a terrorist organisation, presenting it as though she’s skipping school. “[...] who fled to the self-declared caliphate in October 2014 after telling her family she was going on holiday to Turkey, told a jury she came back of her 'own free will' after a change of heart.” (Crossley, 2016) - Words like ‘fled’, that she lied to her family (why is that worth mentioning?), that she had a ‘change of heart’; all these expressions trivialise the matter and make it seem as though she’s a teenager who ran away from home and came back once she

		realised it's harder than it looks - The tone is patronising when describing her in ways that imply her immaturity and silliness, as though to say of course you wanted to come back, reaffirming Western superiority and that life is better here, a discourse which is challenged by her decision to leave. By patronising her in this way, the text implies that she should not be taken seriously as a political actor/agent and therefore her actions can be easily dismissed. "[...] from happy schoolgirl about to leave for college to IS cheerleader in a burka toting an AK-47 is stark. These days, instead of furthering her education, her most cherished desire is to become a 'martyr' in a suicide bombing." - Patronising tone created through 'happy schoolgirl' and 'cheerleader' are all very infantilising descriptions. The moralising tone of 'instead of furthering her education' sounds like a parent telling off their child, making her seem silly and immature. This childish image is further reiterated throughout the article as the describe her acts of rebellion at highschool which include her smoking cigarettes and having secret boyfriends. She seems silly and not a credible threat.
	Family Relations (Martini, 2018; Nacos 2005)	N/A
	Personal Trauma (Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005)	"She was very unhappy because her marriage was a disaster. She thought she could find peace under sharia law [...] she thought she was going to a place where woman are treated very well, but she felt she had been tricked. [...] She was naive and gullible.' [... Shakil's] turbulent home life left her vulnerable to the promise of a better life with a terror group masquerading as an Islamic utopia." (Johnson, 2016) - Presenting her as incapable and vulnerable, should not be held accountable for her decisions because she had problems in her personal life and she was taken advantage of. - Reasserts neo-Orientalism by showing that the only reason women would go there is because they are naive and were 'tricked', when in reality life there is much worse, thereby reinforcing Western superiority. "It is Jones, of course, who holds the key to this disturbing

		story and the sickening images[about her young son posing with people he killed] Jones was still a girl when her parents divorced and just ten when her father committed suicide after taking an overdose." - She's in an unstable relationship with the father of her son, then he dies when the son is two years old, she had substance abuse issues, had postnatal depression.
	Islamisation (Martini, 2018)	"[...] she extolled the virtues of her adopted religion, declaring: 'I'm not oppressed. If I was oppressed I wouldn't be a Muslim right now.'" (Robinson, 2016) - In context with the rest of the article which has heavily implied that she is irrational and not a normal person based on her decisions, including this quote implicitly indicates to the readers that she is wrong/delusional. The use of 'extolled' further highlights her delusion, which by extension implies that the oppressiveness of Islam for women is common knowledge and she is ridiculous for saying otherwise. "'She loved church. She had a Bible, she read the Bible." (Akbar, 2016) - She was good Christian girl before she converted, which is synonymous with being radicalised. The implication here is that it is unthinkable that a woman who loved church and read the Bible would commit acts of violence like this. The fact that they also use the monster narrative shows that clearly she is not a normal woman (anymore) and therefore that's why she became violent after her conversion to Islam. "Jones, who abandoned her disastrous career as a punk rocker to convert to Islam, [...] the 47-year-old convert" (Enoch, Wyke, & Drury, 2016) - Repeatedly mentioning that she converted to Islam, using it as a label ('convert') as though that is an identity that is innately linked with radical terorrism. "She said: 'I've gone from glamour model to something completely different. [...] Ms Miners' case could end up being similar to Sally Jones', who converted to Islam and left the country three years ago, becoming an Isis recruiter. [...] Jones abandoned a disastrous career as a punk rocker

		to convert to Islam" (Taylor, 2016) - The article focuses on how a very 'Western' woman who used to pose 'topless for the Sun' has now converted to Islam and is sympthasising with ISIS. The author links conversion to radicalisation and through his comparison between her 'old' life and her 'new' life. The author conflate her 'Westerness' to her not being a terrorist, and her conversion to Islam is conflated with her terrorism/'radicalisation'. they imply that the former is better.
FE	**Feminist**	This narrative presents womens' participation in violence as related to a statement about gender equality or feminism. Could be presented in a positive or negative light
Subcategories		
	Women's Liberation (Nacos, 2005)	N/A
	Women's Lib Gone Wrong (Nacos, 2005)	N/A
PA	**Political Agent**	Women are presented as joining violent groups for political/ideological reasons, in a way that acknowledges their agency in the decision.
		"Last night police were quizzing four men from Derby aged 22 to 36, a 27-year-old man from Burton upon Trent and a woman, 32, from London on suspicion of engaging in the preparation of an act of terrorism." (Camber, Dolan, & Boyle, 2016) - Only mention her gender, no further comments about it in the rest of the article.