



WOMEN IN TERRORISM.

**STUDYING IS's
OPERATIONAL &
RECRUITMENT
PATTERNS.**

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SECTION - I: INTRODUCTION

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, commonly known as ISIS (previously ISIL) or in Arabic as Da'ish or Daesh, is one of the most lethal violent quasi-state Islamic terrorist organizations having a global scope of operations. Inspired by al-Qaeda, the organization worked as a group under the former but was quickly expelled based on visible differences and a much more radical stance on most of the issues. After expulsion from al-Qaeda, Abu Musab al Zarqawi established ISIS in 2004 and started operating in and around Iraq and Syria. Even though ISIS faced a large rebuttal by the U.S. forces present in the Middle East in 2007, the organization stood firm and took advantage of the high-level instability in its host countries. Over the time, ISIS had built a robust operational mechanism coupled with a massive baseline of followers. By 2014, the terrorist organization declared a caliphate stretching from Aleppo in Syria to Diyala in Iraq and renamed the group the Islamic State.

Within a year, IS expanded its network and operations to more than eight countries and strengthened itself as a transnational terrorist organization. It followed a structured approach to not only target and cultivate people from across the world but also refined its operational strategies and compartmentalized them in order to minimize insider threats, intelligence spillages, etc. (as in the case of al-Qaeda). With more IS affiliate groups working in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, the terrorist organization was able to lure a large number of people from across the world into its trap. The massive influx of supporters and fighters enabled IS to conduct high-intensity attacks in various countries including the United States, Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan and others in addition to Iraq and Syria.

According to Wilson Center's report, IS-I was able to enrol as many as 15,000 members by 2008. Moreover, reports published by Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) under the European Research Council suggest that the global military strength of IS touched the 100,000 mark with the participation of foreign fighters between 12-20% of the total number. To understand the expansion of IS, it is pertinent to analyze its recruitment mechanism and overall induction cycle; religious, social, political, geographical and economic components.

The special report is structured to explore the recruitment tactics of IS with a special focus on the role of women. In a strategic manner, it connects the theoretical underlinings of recruitment (membership) with a case study of European women joining IS. It explains how women are cultivated for becoming fighters, the approaches used for cultivation and granting power as a means to lure them into the organization. A dedicated section of this special report

covers the operational roles of the female IS members as wives, fighters and recruiters. Lastly, it provides the readers with an analysis and policy options for contingency planning as IS continues to increase its sphere of influence.

SECTION - II: RECRUITMENT PATTERNS & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recruitment methods of terrorist organizations vary with respect to their ideology, nature and scope of operations. The cardinal belief systems and aims of leadership also play an essential role in cultivating and recruiting the targeted people. In the past, terrorist organizations have mainly cultivated young males to join the group. However, the recruitment processes have recently evolved as they focus on female induction. The participatory ratio of women in terrorist organizations has seen substantial growth in the last decade or so, regardless of the debate about whether the participation is voluntary, involuntary or hybrid. Terrorist organizations like ISIS have found an array of utilizations of women to achieve multiple objectives such as conducting terror attacks, generating revenue, using them as couriers, honey traps, and so on.

2.1 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION THEORY (RMT)

To turn individual grievances into sustained collective actions, Social Movements (SM) combine the necessary resources to recruit members from the target groups (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Bayat, 2005). One of these resources is identity, as Tubal (2009) argues. The identity component must be used by SMs to recruit members (Cohen, 1985, as cited in Tubal, 2009). This is crucial for Islamic organizations/movements, such as ISIS, to stress their Identity as Muslims to motivate them to fight against infidelity (Meijer, 2005). In addition to identity, financial resources are critical to SMs (Wiktorowicz, 2004). This is because the more money the SM has, the more it can recruit members and spend on campaigns to propagate its cause (Golhasani & Hosseinirad, 2017).

Moreover, mobilizing/recruiting members is done through one of three institutions: formal (i.e. political parties); legal (i.e. charities; NGOs; and civil society); and informal (i.e. social networks) (Wiktorowicz, 2004). The selected channel is determined based on the context and openness of the political system; for the movement to disseminate its ideas through the target

groups (Collins, 2007). According to Delibas (2009), informal means of mobilization are the most used by Islamic Movements, especially global ones like ISIS.

2.2 FRAMING

This shows how members are convinced to join a particular movement by constructing ideas (Benford & Snow, 2000). The tools used vary according to the cause the SM is fighting for, yet the process remains the same (Collins, 2007). First, the problem is identified, along with the blamed group (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Then, the movement offers the best solution for the problem, and finally, some phrases, words and symbols are used to motivate members to join the movement's cause (Benford & Snow, 2000).

This theory will be used to examine how IS succeeded in recruiting European Muslim Women and why these women were receptive to ISIS' calls, using the three above mentioned components.

2.3 A CASE STUDY OF EUROPEAN WOMEN IN ISIS

European women are essential in recruiting female members by revealing and discussing their "utopian happy" lives in the Caliphate on social media (Krause, 2018). Besides inciting men to join IS, they would feel ashamed that women fulfill their role in Jihad and build the Caliphate while they (i.e. men) do not (Bonnet, 2015).

However, to convince these women to sacrifice their lives in Western modernized countries that, to a large extent, respect women's rights and freedom, to join a group committing atrocities against women (e.g. systematic rape of Yazidi women) (Johnsen, 2016; Peresin, 2018), IS because should be carefully justified and framed. Two issues will be investigated to understand the pull factors that encouraged them to join: (i) how IS framed the importance of "European women" in fighting for its cause? and (ii) How were they mobilized and recruited?

2.4 CULTIVATING & NOURISHING EUROPEAN WOMEN

European women underwent systemic radicalization, conversion, recruitment and indoctrination (Bonnet, 2015). In framing and legitimizing its cause, IS relied on its official documents/propaganda materials, which its sympathizers share on social media platforms (The Carter Center, 2015). Using the Framing Theory and the identity component in RMT,

this section analyzes how Al-Dabiq magazine and Al-Khansaa Brigade Manifesto de-legitimized Western lifestyle and glorified life in IS for women.

2.4.1 AL-DABIQ MAGAZINE

IS' official media wing, Al-Hayat, released 15 issues of Al-Dabiq from July 2014 until July 2016 (Chan, 2015; Günther, 2015; Ubayasiri, 2019). In 2014, it was being sold and delivered by Amazon in some European countries, such as the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy (Speckhard, 2017). However, European security forces banned the magazine's distribution in early 2015 (Gambhir, 2015). Then, Al-Dabiq became an E-magazine uploaded on a Telegram channel called "Al-Dabiq" (Shehabat, Mitew and Alzoubi, 2017).

The magazine's primary purpose was to politically and ideologically de-legitimize western governments and build a European support base for IS (Chan, 2015; Walker, 2017; Sandal, 2018; Neelamalar & Vivakaran, 2019). Thus, it relied on a team of European editors, photographers and content creators to produce high-quality pictures and articles in European languages, including English and French, with thematic designs (Colas, 2016; Bunker & Bunker, 2018).

In addition, there were some issues in Al-Dabiq targeting European women (Günther, 2015; Silver & Stewart, 2019; Vale, 2019). In doing so, IS started de-legitimizing Western governance and values by framing them as signs of Kufr (i.e. infidelity) incompatible with Islam. Thus, Al-Dabiq conveyed that Westernization constitutes a significant problem for European women. This was evident in portraying Western ideologies, especially democracy, as "complete falsehood", which would reproduce generations "void of faith" (Dabiq: 2: p. 5; Dabiq: 15, p.20). Besides, working in capitalist Western societies is perceived as "Modern-Day Slavery...that leaves Muslims in constant subjugation to a Kafir (i.e. infidel) master" (Dabiq: 3: p.29). This slavery endangers women; where it requires them to commit actions against their Fitrah (i.e. what God has created them to do), such as working outside the house and "competing with men in the workplace", instead of being wives and mothers (Dabiq: 15, pp.20-25). Moreover, IS' female author, Umm Sumayah al-Muhajira, in "To our Sisters" referred to the West as "Dar al-Kufr" (i.e. home of infidelity and unbelief); arguing that if women stayed in the West, "seeing Kufr and Shirk (i.e. infidelity)" every day, "their hearts would die" (Dabiq: 8, pp.32-37) also, if their husbands adopt a "Western secular-oriented thinking", then they are not "lawful spouses" for them, as they are Kufar (i.e.

Non-Believers) (Dabiq: 10, p.42). This means that these women would be living in unbelief inside and outside the house if they remained in Europe.

Thus, the best solution for the salvation of European Muslim women is to do Hijra (i.e. migration); leave “Dar al-Kufr” (i.e. the West) and join “Dar al-Islam” (i.e. IS, which is where peace and faith exist) (Dabiq: 2, p.5; Dabiq: 3: p.10; Dabiq: 8, p.37). Besides, Al-Dabiq portrayed Hijra as a religious duty and a form of Jihad. Thus, those who remain in the West after understanding how to be “good Muslims” are “hypocrites” who are “willingly sacrificing themselves to infidel Western immoral freedom” and “secular liberalism” (Dabiq: 3, p.27; Dabiq: 15, p.25).

In encouraging European women to join IS, Al-Dabiq glorified their role in building the Caliphate and started giving European Muhaajirat (i.e. Immigrants) advice on how to be good Muslims. Being good Muslims is mainly to become mothers responsible for "...building the Umma, producing men, and sending them out to the fierceness of battle” (Dabiq: 11, pp.64-65). This is women’s Jihad as women “...are not responsible for waging war (i.e. physical jihad)” (Dabiq: 15, p.23). Moreover, in fulfilling their religious duties, Umm Sumayah al-Muhajira advised “European Muhaajirat” to accept polygyny, which is permitted by God and mentioned in the Qur’an (Dabiq: 12, p. 19). This is to help men protect more women and especially the widows of faithful martyrs. She also argued that rejecting polygyny under the “Western” notion of women’s rights is a rejection of "what Allah allowed" and "a hatred of the ruling itself" (Dabiq: 12, pp. 20-21). Umm Sumayah also advised the widows of martyrs to "mourn their husbands for four months and ten days only (i.e. al-I’dda) and “not exaggerate in mourning” so that they could accept marriage proposals afterwards (Dabiq: 13, pp.24-26). This is to fulfill their duty of giving birth and raising future fighters. Besides, as the French "Umm Basir al-Muhajira" noted, women are "bases of support and safety" for their Jihadi husbands. Thus, it is a religious duty to marry fighters and to support and push them towards Jihad (Dabiq: 7, p.51). Al-Dabiq glorified the traditional gender roles of being wives and mothers, and framed them as religious duties that the Caliphate could not survive without (Silver & Stewart, 2019).

In addition, some European Muhaajirat shared their experiences in Hijra calling other women to join them. For instance, in an interview with Umm Basir, she said that her journey to IS was easy and that “...living in a land where the law of Allah is implemented is an obligation” (Dabiq: 7, p.50). Also, Umm Khalid al-Finlandiyyah narrated how she was unaccepted in

Finnish society after converting to Islam and wearing Hijab. Moreover, she did not only call Muslims to perform Hijra but also advised "Christians in Finland and elsewhere" to "open their hearts and find out about Islam." This is because "when you are in Dar al-Kufr, you are exposing yourself and your children to so much filth and corruption" (Dabiq: 15, p.39).

For the most part then, Al-Dabiq portrayed European Muslim women as strangers to the values of their societies (Günther, 2015). That is how the magazine not only called them to join IS but also taught them how to be "good Muslims" and included stories of European women converts who are proud of "purifying their souls" (Kibble, 2016). It is also clear that Al-Dabiq was keen to emphasize the idea that European Muslim women do not belong to the West. They should rationally decide to forever stay in "Dar al-Kufr" as strangers or join the Caliphate and build a harmonious happy life guided by faith (Ingram, 2016; Ingram, 2018).

2.4.2 AL-KHANSAA MANIFESTO ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN IS

Al-Khansaa Brigade published the Manifesto on the 23rd of January, 2015 (Holliday, 2015; Fraihi, 2018). It was first published in Arabic and later translated into English by the London-based counter-extremism think-tank Quilliam Foundation (Holliday, 2015; Winter, 2015), the translated version used in this chapter. Some scholars, such as Fraihi (2018), argue that the Manifesto targeted only Arab women in the Middle East since it was originally published in Arabic. This section argues that the Manifesto also targeted Europeans of Arab origins (i.e. 2nd, and 3rd migrant generations in Europe) to encourage them to leave the "infidel West". Besides, the Manifesto was written in Arabic because it is the language of the Qur'an. Therefore, it serves as a reminder for these women of their origin and religion.

This argument is supported by the fact that the Brigade was under the leadership of the British convert Sally-Anne Johns (Bloom & Winter, 2015) and was mostly composed of European women who were the content creators of the Manifesto (Bulos, 2019). This gave the impression that the Brigade was a "European colonial police force" where some European female converts ensured the correct implementation of Shari'a and told Muslim women in the Middle East "how to be good Muslims," as explained by a French returnee called "Marie" (France24 English, 2017). Also, if the Manifesto were targeting Arab women only, it would have been published by Al-Zora Foundation IS' created in 2014 to radicalize and recruit Arab women in specific (Wahlberg, 2020).

As Al-Dabiq, the Manifesto aimed to de-legitimize Western values by framing it as the main problem facing Muslim women. This is because Westernization prevented them from "fulfilling the fundamental roles" God has created them for (Winter, 2015, p.17) under the "guise of development, progress and culture" (Winter, 2015, p.20). This was done by sending women to work outside the house as men, which endangers the society where "if roles are mixed...the base of society is shaken" (Winter, 2015, p.19) besides pushing women to study "Western sciences", which are "unrelated to religion" (Winter, 2015, p.24).

The Manifesto then portrayed the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate as the best solution to rescue European Muslim women. Thus, women should "disavow these heretics...of Europe" and fulfil the role outlined by God and his Prophet as they "do not need what these people (i.e. Westerners) provide (Winter, 2015, p.13). This is to get rid of Westernization that "resulted in the injustices felt by Muslims across the world" (Winter, 2015, p.7).

To encourage European women to join IS, The Manifesto stated the same ideas as Al-Dabiq on the importance of women in building the Islamic Caliphate; by portraying the conventional gender roles of "motherhood and family support" as the greatest responsibilities to fight against Westernization (Winter, 2015, pp.5&17&41). Besides women having to obey men, the Manifesto stated that "...Islam bestows upon women the honour...to bring up and educate, protect and care for the next generation to come" (Winter, 2015, p.18). Moreover, despite considering "Western sciences" religiously forbidden, the Manifesto argued that "Islam does not forbid the education for women" (Winter, 2015, p.18). However, Muslim women should study religious teachings, Islamic history, accounting and natural sciences, the rulings on marriage and divorce, acquire the skills of cooking and textiles, and learn how to raise children (Winter, 2015, p.24). Furthermore, the Manifesto listed some "exceptional" situations through which women could work outside the house "to serve society", such as by becoming doctors or teachers (Winter, 2015, p.22).

In this way, IS portrays itself as more liberal than other extremist groups and not against civilization. The Manifesto also suggested that women could be appointed for physical Jihad (Winter, 2015, p.22) and promised women martyrdom as men (Banks, 2019). This was easy to believe as IS had opened a school to train women in the Brigade to make explosives and use weapons (Bulos, 2019).

Ali (2015) and Ispahani and Shea (2015) argue that assigning women to tasks beyond being mothers and wives, but within a religious framework, is to attract well-educated European

women to deliver the message that those women left the West to serve Islam and support IS' cause with their Western knowledge and experience.

In the second part of the Manifesto, "The state of Muhaajirat," Al-Khansaa authors argued that women who undertook the Hijra (i.e. migrated) and left the infidel West to join the Caliphate are living "in peace, and untouched by hunger, the cold winds or frost". Moreover, the Muhaajirat (i.e. immigrants) are treated equally to non-migrants where "lineages are mixed, tribes are merged, and races join under the banner of monotheism, resulting in new generations within which are gathered the cultures of many different peoples" (Winter, 2015, p. 37). This portrays a utopian, harmonious life as if all people in IS are "one family". Here, as in Al-Dabiq, the Manifesto emphasizes the identity component, explained by Tubal (2009); to gain more sympathizers by delivering the message that there are no strangers in the Caliphate, unlike the West that rejects some groups, especially Muslims.

2.5 MOBILIZATION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

European governments must provide precise information on the profiles of European women who joined IS, how they were recruited, and how they managed to reach the Syrian borders (Bonnet, 2015). Instead, the available data on IS' recruitment strategies were collected and analyzed based on these women's online/social media activities, thanks to their involvement in radicalizing and recruiting other European women and encouraging them to do Hijra (Bakker & De-Leede, 2015). However, social media platforms and blogging and messaging sites (e.g. Tumbler, word press, Telegram, etc.) have recently deleted the accounts of IS members and affiliates for counter-terrorism purposes (Bulos, 2019). Using the Resources Mobilization Theory, this section relies on what has been found in previous studies and some of the interviews conducted with these women's families and friends, along with some returnees.

This section argues that IS relies on its members and sympathizers to spread its propaganda materials and recruit others, especially European women. This process occurs through "informal channels," adopting old-style (i.e. face-to-face) and online mobilization and recruitment strategies. Women, especially Europeans, engage in these mobilization and recruitment activities. They are not just mere sympathizers who do Hijra to marry heroic fighters (Banks, 2019; Silverman & Stewart, 2019).

2.5.1 OLD-STYLE RECRUITMENT

Many European women have been radicalized and recruited in IS with the help of their husbands and friends (i.e. people they know in person). For instance, according to their articles in *Al-Dabiq* magazine, the French *Hayat Boumeddiene*, or *Umm Basir al-Muhajira* (*Dabiq*: 7, p.50), and *Umm Khalid al-Finlandiyyah* (a Finish Muslim convert) (*Dabiq*: 15, p.39) were both recruited by their husbands. Based on an interview conducted by the news channel France 24 with the mother of the French converts Anisa, who joined IS in 2013, Anisa was believed to be indoctrinated by her fiancé, who denied knowing her after she left (France 24 English, 2017). British convert Lorna Moore, whose husband joined IS with a group of other Europeans, was supposed to join him in Syria. However, she was arrested before leaving the UK (Cowburn, 2016). It means she had already been radicalized and believed in IS' cause before her husband left. Another example is a British woman called Aisha (her name in IS). She did not accept IS ideas initially but left the UK and travelled to Syria with her children and husband, who wanted to join Jihad (Channel 4 News, 2013). Doing so exemplifies that her husband recruited her.

In addition, some IS' European female members remain in their homeland to mobilize and recruit others. For instance, the Somali-Dutch Shukri F. was accused of indoctrinating her two husbands and her Belgian friend, who was arrested at the Belgian airport on her way to Syria in 2014 (Bakker & De-Leede, 2015). Thus, Shukri was recruiting both male fighters and female members to join IS.

2.5.2 ONLINE RECRUITMENT

IS relies more on cyber-space in mobilizing and recruiting potential members. This is through IS' decentralized communication channels using different social media platforms and blogging and messaging websites/applications, such as Facebook, Signal, Surespot, KiK, Signal, ASK.fm, Tumbler, and dating applications like Tinder (Bloom & Winter, 2015). In 2014 there were 46,000 to 70,000 Twitter accounts for IS' affiliates with at least 1000 followers each, all disseminating IS' propaganda materials to radicalize, indoctrinate and recruit new members (Renard, 2016). Besides, IS created Telegram channels to propagate its cause and to communicate with larger numbers of audiences (Shehabat, Mitewand Alzoubi, 2017). In addition, IS recently started using the video application TikTok to post violent propaganda materials, which teenagers have widely viewed (CBS News, 2019).

There are several examples of European women and teenagers who travelled to Syria to join IS after being indoctrinated online. For instance, Belgian convert Laura Passoni was recruited by an IS male member on Facebook. According to an interview conducted with her upon her return to Belgium, she said that he convinced her to come to help the wounded and the orphans in exchange for money (ICSVE, 2020). She would go there for a “humanitarian mission” and to make her life meaningful. There is also the French teenager “Iman” who was arrested by anti-terrorism security forces in 2014 while attempting to shoot a police officer. She said she was indoctrinated by her new "female" friend whom she met on Facebook yet had not met in real life. They talked via mobile for almost six months (France 24 English, 2017).

SECTION - III: OPERATIONAL ROLES OF WOMEN IN ISIS

ISIS recruits women through a variety of methods. However, a question remains undiscussed in literature “What is a woman’s role in ISIS.?” Many researchers focus on the males in ISIS, going in-depth into their roles and impacts. There is a lack of analysis of women’s roles in terrorism in current literature. Still, women in the caliphate have a variety of roles and a significant impact on ISIS’ logistics.

3.1 WIVES

“The Islamic State was a third partner in her marriage.” (Moaveni, 2015)

Women are mainly recruited to become ISIS fighters’ “brides”. As part of their luring narrative, ISIS propaganda emphasizes the honor of becoming a bride, an event held in great regard, especially in Middle Eastern and Asian cultures (Ghazi-Hessami, 2016).

Before being assigned roles, most women, especially those from overseas, are brought to a finishing school where they are taught ISIS practices. After their short education, they were then matched with male fighters in ISIS to be married. The role of the wife is often considered the primary role for women who join ISIS. However, it is common for women to become widows after marrying; some even became widows after mere months. When this happens, they are often married to other fighters (Moaveni, 2015). One woman recounts having to be remarried only ten days after her husband’s death in a suicide bombing (Moaveni, 2015).

Wives are expected to bear and raise future jihadi warriors. They are instructed to immerse their children into ISIS’ practices by reading stories about martyrs and isolate themselves from countervailing “infidels” influences (Vale, 2018). It is the role and duty of women to produce and indoctrinate the next generation of ISIS. Involving women in the indoctrination, education and training of IS children is a way to make women feel empowered (Vale, 2018). This dimension of women’s lives under ISIS encourages women to emigrate with their children and participate in populating a “pure society” (Vale, 2018). Therefore, women are not only wives, housekeepers, and child bearers but also the “primary vector of cultural and religious transmission” (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2015). This at-home ideological brainwashing is extremely important for extremists.

Many women's husbands are abusive, and some treat their wives as slaves. Husbands also must follow the guidelines of the Islamic State and their superiors. For instance, many are ordered not to impregnate their wives as "New fathers would be less inclined to volunteer to carry out suicide missions" (Moaveni, 2015). As wives, women are expected to care for their husbands, no matter what. Most wives are told to remain at home, especially when their husband is absent (Spencer, 2016). The most common reason for women to leave their households is to study the sciences of religion (Ghazi-Hessami, 2016).

3.2 POLICE AND MILITARY ROLES

"I was much more afraid of women. The women would beat you for the smallest thing—how you looked or wore your headscarf. They used whips and metal sticks." (Rajan, 2022)

While fighting and being armed is not women's primary role in ISIS, all-women battalions have developed since 2013. The first battalion, Al-Dawa, was created in Raqqa in June 2013 (Speckhard, 2017). Its primary goal was mainly humanitarian; Al-Dawa's recruits would give food, clothes and money to those in need to win over the population. They later switched to a more aggressive strategy by harassing women and enforcing ISIS' dress code (Speckhard, 2017). Their final objective was the indoctrination of women and girls. Since then, several other female battalions have emerged.

Some female brigades take part in ISIS internal police services. The internal morality police (Hisbah) enforces strict pre-modern Islamic and penal codes (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2015). The Hisbah employs male and female ISIS operatives. In the highly sex-segregated system of ISIS, all-female brigades are necessary to access a segment of the population that would otherwise remain off-limits to male officers. Female hisbah officers are trained to use weapons, are allowed to drive and earn a wage and can patrol the streets freely (Vale, 2019). Female hisbah are extremely violent towards other women, going from arresting and beating women for the colour of their shoes (Kodmani, 2015) to killing a mother breastfeeding her infant in public (9NEWS, 2015). According to testimonies, women hisbah are the most brutal enforcers and instil extreme fear amongst women of the region, who would instead be arrested by "Daesh men" (Speckhard, 2017). Civilian women are frequently mutilated for allegedly disobeying the dress or moral code of ISIS. A "biting" device, mentioned in numerous reports, is used to tear parts of flesh off the bodies of apprehended women, some of whom bled to death (Speckhard, 2017). These acts of torture are committed by women of the

brigades, who participate willingly and directly in the oppression, abuse and belittling of other women.

Other brigades are part of the defence forces. Women from these brigades receive military and intelligence training. The Special Operations Khadija Bintu Kwaïld battalion is the most lethal and active all-female battalion (Speckhard, 2017). Its members are trained to carry out assassination operations outside ISIS territories and assemble bombs; they are highly equipped with explosive vests, handguns, rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikovs rifles. They receive an intense, more conservative sharia course. Operatives from the Khadija Bintu Kwaïld battalion may even be exempted from obeying ISIS' dress code. Key ISIS women leaders have reportedly been training the battalion (Speckhard, 2017).

The relatively well-known Al-Khansa Brigade appears to stand between police and military services. Its force initially consisted of around 1,000 women and was feared throughout Syria and Iraq (Saleh, 2021). The Brigade acted as a police force, punishing girls and women in ISIS territory by arresting or torturing them for breaking rules of any kind (Rajan, 2022). Foreign women who managed to join the Brigade were treated somewhat better than others. For example, they were allowed to train on Kalashnikov assault rifles instead of the usual pistols given to women (Moaveni, 2015). Al-Khansa battalion also has military functions. Its operatives received military and intelligence training; they were trained to assemble and create gun noise suppressors from basic material and were taught surveillance and assassination methods (Speckhard, 2017). Their surveillance targets consist of ISIS' directorate of fighters "deemed suspicious" (Speckhard, 2017). They can be women, men, journalists, or other ISIS members. The Al-Khansa battalion has killed many journalists and activists through surveillance operations.

The involvement of women in critical, confidential operations shows that women are not only considered passive, second-class utilitarian individuals but are considered trustworthy and valuable. If most of the ISIS leadership are men, key female leaders are considered notorious terrorists and are on the list of some countries' most wanted women (Speckhard, 2017). Amongst these female leaders, Aum Maria is reportedly the leader of the Al-Khansa battalion, and Aum Hiba, France's most wanted woman, is said to have trained recruits.

ISIS male fighters can register their wives and daughters interested in security, intelligence or combat roles (Cottee & Bloom, 2017). Each registered woman is given a recruitment number; the recruitment of women, if minor, is taken seriously and bureaucratized by the ISIS system.

If the classical doctrine of jihad provides that all able-bodied Muslims, men or women, are obligated to fight to defend their territory and faith, most jihadist ideologies exclude women from that obligation (Cottee & Bloom, 2017). Most women do not partake in combat or policing; the only instance when women who do not have combative roles are permitted to fight is when there is an ongoing attack, no men are in the surrounding area, and a fatwa has been issued (Spencer, 2016). This, along with the minimal combat-related roles available for women, means that most will not experience or partake in fighting.

3.3 RECRUITERS AND WESTERN WOMEN

“Women that joined ISIS had foundational roles in establishing the Islamic State.” (Hanoush, 2019)

One of the most common roles for women is handling recruitment, specifically online recruitment. Western women have a particularly pivotal and prolific role as propagandists and recruiters through social media and jihadist forums (Hanoush, 2019). The peer-to-peer dimension of their discourse is essential to the recruitment machinery (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2015). Western women also try to enrol local women in the US or Europe, targeting schools and poor neighborhoods (Hanoush, 2019). Women are a significant part of ISIS public relations. Young western women fleeing the Western world to adopt a new life on ISIS territory and sharing their “dream life” can appeal to potential recruits worldwide. Since a state cannot function in the long run without women, women-targeted marketing is essential to ISIS’s state-building strategy. One strategy is posting photos of food, restaurants, and overall ‘happy-looking’ photos online to lure in more recruits (Erlanger, 2014). The language is often English, meaning these advertisements are aimed at Western audiences.

SECTION - IV: CONCLUSION

With regards to cultivating and utilizing women in terrorism, IS seems to follow the African proverb, “If you educate a man, you educate one person. If you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” By engaging women from below to above, IS has successfully brainwashed whole families which would not have been the case if a male fighter/supporter was utilized in their place. Having a domino effect over other females, a woman can exponentially multiply the effects of IS ideology and agenda. Moreover, women have considerably boosted the recruitment process in IS especially when it comes to gathering

support from European countries. According to a report published by Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), more than 550 European women moved to Syria and Iraq for Jihad in 2016. Similarly, Europol's estimates of 2017 highlighted that more than 5000 individuals travelled to IS controlled areas as supporters, fighters, financiers etc. Moreover, many countries reported a sharp increase in percentages (up to 20%) of women travelling to IS territory in wake of the establishment of caliphate.

Several factors have accounted for the rise of women joining terrorist organizations, particularly IS. IS is joined by an array of individuals some of which a distinctive while others fall in generic category. In case of women, the majority of women come from two streams: (i) females with unstable personalities who have gone through domestic violence and (ii) high achieving females who feel powerless and undermined in their particular settings. Another very crucial line of women joining IS are the ones in government/public care, those who are not associated with anyone have more chances of being radicalized. Hence, IS taps on these fault lines very carefully; hitting these vulnerable spots helps them cultivate women and for the first two categories, it gives them access to their families as well.

Women have a variety of roles within ISIS – all of which are used to keep the terrorist organization running, just from different perspectives. All women are given husbands, which is the core role for most women, being wives and bearing children who can join ISIS. An uncommon role given to women is as a fighter or member of the organization's police. They are often used to control other women breaking the regime's rules. Western women are often given recruitment positions and are required to handle the online sector of ISIS. They post propaganda on social media and jihadist forums around the world, and in the Western sphere, they tend to target poorer areas to bring people to their cause.

The U.S. military has spent over \$20B to combat terrorist threats arising from IS but has failed to completely curtail or eliminate it. One of the most crucial components is the role of women in the organization. IS has elevated the roles of women in its grander scheme of operations based on their vitality such as low chances of being captured, higher ingress within circles of soft targets and a larger sphere of influence over other women and children.

IS challenged the conventional gender stereotypes that women are born to become supportive wives and mothers only. Instead, women in IS, especially Europeans, are involved in building the Islamic Caliphate. This is through playing vital roles in disseminating IS' cause in IS'

official and unofficial propaganda materials and mobilizing more sympathizers and potential members from different countries and regions ready to sacrifice their lives for IS' cause. In addition, recruiting European women and assigning them to these non-conventional tasks (i.e. propaganda and recruitment processes) was a strategy adopted by IS to look more liberal and to legitimize its cause in fighting against Westernization.

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