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PROMISES OF PARADISE?

A Study on Official ISIS-Propaganda Targeting Women



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Abstract

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 close to 30 000 foreign recruits from more than 100 countries have migrated to the area of Iraq and Syria in support of the terrorist organization this thesis will refer to as ISIS. Among those traveling is a historically unprecedented number of women. Why women are drawn to violent Islamic extremist groups is rather unexplored. Through a qualitative text analysis of official ISIS-propaganda this thesis investigates what promises the organization makes to women, examining pull-factors derived from social media studies of female migration to ISIS-held territories. The thesis concludes that women are promised the possibility to fulfill their religious duty, become important state builders, experience deep and meaningful belonging and sisterhood, to live an exciting adventure and find true romance, as well as being increasingly influential is also promised. Official propaganda does not make explicit promises to women of exerting violence. A secondary purpose of the thesis is to assess the potential risk that ISIS-affiliated women returning to the West, pose to society. This thesis further concludes that women who gain limited knowledge of handling weapons and explosives in ISIS-territory are not probable participants in armed terrorist attacks directed towards the West. However, through increased social networks acquired while in Syria or Iraq, women may play an important supporting role in the process of planning, crowd funding and executing attacks. Based on these findings the thesis provides some gender specific policy proposals intended to counter the recruitment of women to ISIS.

Key Concepts

Dabiq, Daesh, female migration, female foreign fighters, ISIL, ISIS, ISIS-women, Islamic State, muhājirah, muhājirat, propaganda, pull-factors, radicalization, threat assessment, violent Islamic extremism

List of Frequently Used Terms

- Dārulkufr – the land of infidels, generally relating to the West
- Duā – the religious act of supplication
- Dunyā – this world, its earthly concerns and possessions, as opposed to the hereafter
- Hijrah – migration, relating to the migration carried out by prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mekka to Yathrib in 622 a.d.
- Jannah – the Islamic concept of paradise or heaven
- Jihād – a term referring to the religious duty of Muslims to maintain their religion. Jihād describes a struggle and can be interpreted as an internal or an external battle
- Khilāfah – a term referring to the the Caliphate or the so called Islamic State
- Kufr – heretics, individuals disbelieving in Allah and his messenger Muhammad
- Mahram – male guardian accompanying women
- Muhājirat – female migrant accompanying Muhammad, plural
- Muhājirah – female migrant accompanying Muhammad, singular
- Muhājirin – male or female migrant accompanying Muhammad, singular
- Mujāhid - holy warrior engaging in armed jihād, singular
- Mujāhidīn – holy warrior engaging in armed jihād, plural
- Mushrīk – an individual who practices polytheism or worships other Gods than Allah
- Shahid – honorific term denoting a martyr who died fulfilling a religious commandment
- Sharī'ah – body of Islamic law regulating public and private life in a governing system based on the Quran
- Shirk – the sin of practicing idolatry or polytheism
- Shuhadā – an Islamic confession of faith
- Sunnah – the verbally transmitted teachings, records, deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad
- Takbīr – commonly used prayer when uttering the phrase Allah Akbar
- Tawāghīt – overstepping boundaries, disobeying your religion
- Ummah – the supranational community of Muslim sharing a common history
- Uqab banner – “the banner of the eagle” was according to a hadith originally flown by the prophet Muhammad and has been used by a wide range of violent Islamic extremist groups as flag, among them ISIS.

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1. Introduction

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 the term *foreign fighters* have become well established among researchers and policy makers. Since then an astounding figure of close to 30 000¹ foreign recruits from over 100 different countries, many from the West, have migrated to the area of Iraq and Syria in support of the terror organization, which in this thesis will be called the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS).²

In June 2014, ISIS declared the establishment of a Caliphate, an “Islamic state” currently holding territory bigger than that of Austria with ambitions for further expansion.³ Individuals leaving their countries of origin to engage in war-making abroad is not a new phenomenon. It has occurred in various conflicts throughout history such as the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s’ and the Afghan fight against Soviet occupation in the 1980s.⁴ What is new is the unprecedented number of travelers that have volunteered to engage in this conflict by siding with ISIS, causing the United Nations (UN) to label the situation a global and unprecedented threat to peace and security.⁵ As compared to earlier conflicts there is a remarkable number of women among those migrating. As of January 2015 some 550 had traveled to areas controlled by ISIS. Although exact numbers are hard to establish, indications point to that the numbers have increased significantly further.⁶

Many Western governments have taken initial steps in developing general preventive measures to counter the recruitment of individuals to violent Islamic extremist organizations.⁷ They have however yet not developed specific measures targeting women but have shown awareness of the need to do so.⁸ Few policy recommendations have come out of the academic debate on the subject and more research is needed in order to validate the initial findings.⁹ Existing research on women within ISIS build on empirics derived from social media accounts tied to female ISIS-migrants. These have given important insights into the daily life of women within ISIS, depicting them foremost as mothers, wives and supporters of the so-called Caliphate.¹⁰ Through their online activities female migrants also propagate for other women to join the movement, effectively making them unofficial propaganda tools for ISIS. They celebrate the violence carried out by the organization and show willingness and motivation to take part in its realization.¹¹ Their role as fighters have however been disputed by several reports claiming it is out of bounds for women to carry weapons or participate in war.¹² A number of accounts studied within these reports have shown images of women carrying weapons, practicing gun drills or patrolling the streets with automatic weapons.¹³ Unofficial propaganda stemming from smaller groups within ISIS such as the all female religious enforcement unit *al-Khanssaa Brigade* has also condoned female war-making, by appointment of men, in cases when the enemy is attacking and the male fighters do not suffice or are absent to protect ISIS territory.¹⁴ Members within *al-Khanssaa* have, according to media reports, also been allowed to fight on the frontline with ISIS.¹⁵

The contradiction of what role women play within ISIS, needs to be explored in more detail as it has an important bearing on what potential threat women pose if returning to the West. The debate on the issue of threat has largely been based on theoretical discussions tied to previous conflicts and other groups, not on empirics derived from the specific case of ISIS.¹⁶ Reports based on secondary source material have also been written.¹⁷ Empirical exceptions to this fact have been based on social media studies, primarily discussing the attitudes of women towards violence.¹⁸ They therefore largely fail to acknowledge that threat assessment is based on the two factors of *motivation* and *capability* to carry out an attack.¹⁹ The experience of participating in war is, from a Western perspective, problematic as it provides training and know-how in handling heavy weaponry to potentially motivated individuals, effectively giving them the tools to act on their grievances.²⁰ Evidence of the effects of “terrorist training” can be seen in some of the attacks carried out by men affiliated with ISIS in Paris, Copenhagen and Brussels in 2015 and 2016 where several of the perpetrators had spent time abroad engaging in war.²¹ Failure to include the factor of capability in discussing the risk that ISIS women pose to Western nations has left us without clear answers.

How does ISIS as an organization attract women and what is their understanding of women’s roles within the organization? These questions can be answered by looking at what *promises* are made to women in official propaganda, such as magazines and statements, targeting this group. Comprehensive studies focusing on how official propaganda attracts women are lacking.²² The research problem, outlined below, expands on this issue further, giving us the backdrop against which the research purpose and the following research questions have been formulated.

1.1 Research Problem

The role of women within ISIS, as well as what potential threat they pose if they return to the West is afflicted with contradictory evidence and vague answers. Part of this uncertainty stems from lack of empirical research on the subject.²³ Comparatively little effort is put into studying why women are drawn to violent extremist groups, what role they play within them or how these groups gain women’s attention.²⁴ During the last year though, a few scientific articles have treated women migrating to ISIS-held territories. These are mostly based on social media accounts tied to female ISIS-migrants.²⁵ As such they do not highlight the official stance on women held by the organization, nor what the organization promises them.

Existing research has however been important in detailing *push* and *pull factors* that influence women in particular. It has also provided us with interesting avenues for further research.²⁶ In giving little attention to official propaganda it paints a pale picture of reality, leaving us with contradictory evidence of the role of women within ISIS and what threat they actually may pose to Western societies

upon return. By studying official propaganda we can get a better understanding of what the organization asks of women, and furthermore how it attempts to attract them to join.

1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to increase our knowledge about how ISIS attracts women. This is done by investigating what promises the organization makes to women in official propaganda. Based on these promises, a secondary purpose of the thesis, is to assess the potential risk that ISIS-affiliated women returning to the West, pose to society. The thesis finally seeks to get a better understanding of how to counter the recruitment of women to this organization. The two research questions stated below concretize the outlined research purpose.

1.3 Research Questions

- What promises are made to women in official propaganda originating from ISIS?
- What conclusions can we, based on the promises made to women by ISIS, draw on the potential risk women pose if returning to Western societies?

1.4 Why Should we Care?

The study of official ISIS-propaganda targeting women has a bearing, both on a societal and theoretical debate relating to the study of women in violent extremist groups. On the theoretical level this study aims to test and possibly also enrich existing theoretical tools derived from social media studies by fine-tuning the factors that *pull* women into violent extremist groups. Increasing our understanding of what promises ISIS makes to women is also important from a societal perspective. First, as mentioned earlier, understanding the role played by women in ISIS is key from a security perspective. Individuals who have taken active part in war, increase their capabilities to carry out terror attacks against targets in their countries of origin upon return.²⁷ The difference between taking part in terrorist training or war-making abroad and being a mother or wife in ISIS is therefore paramount. Second, an increased understanding of how official propaganda targets women and what promises are given to this particular audience can help us devise gender specific counter narratives that allow for more efficient preventive efforts. Such efforts can in the end help limit migration to and affiliation with ISIS.

1.5. Outline

The thesis consists of eight chapters. First, the theoretical framework is introduced. Thereafter follows a description of the research method used to answer the research questions. Further, the material collected for analysis is presented. The material is processed in an analysis before a theoretical reapplication is made. In this reapplication the theoretical framework is applied to the analysis of the material. Some gender specific policy proposals based on the analysis are then presented. After that a concluding discussion of the main findings is offered. Finally, some ideas for future research are presented briefly.

2. Theory

This chapter opens with a review on prior research relating to the subject of women in extremist and terrorist organizations. Thereafter follows a short summary of the field of radicalization studies to which the factors of *push* and *pull* belong. These factors are intended to provide a framework for analyzing what promises official propaganda of ISIS is giving women and are therefore expanded on. Then follows a brief recount of how threat assessment is made. This is presented to provide a basis for analyzing the secondary purpose of this thesis consisting of what potential risk ISIS women returning to the West pose. In essence, the theoretical framework presented seeks to detail a potential answer to the research questions posed in the thesis and therefore constitutes the best answers that academia currently can offer.²⁸

2.1 Previous Research

Early accounts of why individuals engage in violent extremism and terrorism evolved in the 1970's.²⁹ Violent extremism, the term used in this thesis, can be defined as “movements, ideologies or people who do not accept the democratic social order and who not only tolerate, but support the use of ideological violence to further a certain cause”.³⁰ Violent extremism which is a broader concept than that of terrorism, encompasses various ideological movements striving to change the foundations of society. Violent extremism, when compared to terrorism, includes not only direct acts of violence but also the support of such acts through financial means, verbal backing or other types of endorsements. Violent *Islamic* extremism narrows the scope to individuals or groups who engage in or support the use of violence to further the cause of a social order built on Islamic beliefs and *Sharī'ah* laws.³¹

Accounts from the 1970's tended to view violent extremism and terrorism as irrational anomalies caused by psychopathologies and psychological problems. Researchers therefore ascribed violent extremist actions to mental illnesses.³² The focus on irrationality simplified the issue of extremism and impeded further research on the issue. Claire Sterling's book *The Terror Network: the Secret War of International Terrorism* is a good example of such a simplification.³³ Although Sterling's line of reasoning has met stark criticism the debate about the mental state of extremists is still alive. Many politicians still refer to pathologies when trying to understand and cope with violent extremism and terrorism.³⁴

However, most researchers of today agree that there is no such thing as a deviant “terrorist personality”. Various psychological studies based on empirics gathered from the wave of terror that swept through Europe in the 1980's confirm this fact.³⁵ Terrorists are according to contemporary scholars not suffering from pathologies.³⁶ Instead acts of violent extremism or terrorism follow from a careful calculation of costs and benefits. Extremism and terrorism is from this perspective seen as a rational choice providing benefits for its political actors.³⁷

As was pointed out in the introduction of this thesis research on women in terrorist organizations is rare.³⁸ A browse through 310 papers written on the topics of violent extremism and terrorism confirms this fact as only three explicitly treat to the issue of women in such organizations.³⁹ Research on women and extremism has tended to focus on women as passive bystanders and their experiences of such violence.⁴⁰ Important contributions investigating women as active agents have however been made by Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Rafia Barakat and Lisa Shetret who explore the roles of women in terrorism, conflict and violent extremism.⁴¹ Further, Mia Bloom investigates the roles of women in terrorist organizations over time and space⁴² while Rafia Zakaria looks at women and Islamic militancy.⁴³

Just as research on terrorism and extremism in general, academic research on ISIS has, paid much attention to male foreign fighters, their reasons for migrating and their roles within the organization.⁴⁴ Examples of such research can be found in *Western Foreign Fighters: Innovations in Responding to the Threat*⁴⁵, *Foreign Fighters in Syria*⁴⁶, *Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq*⁴⁷ and *#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks*⁴⁸. Research on ISIS women is very limited. As with much of the general research concerning terrorism and extremism many studies are based on secondary source material.⁴⁹ There are however four important exceptions to this fact worth presenting.

First, in *Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS*, Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford and Ross Frenett provide groundbreaking insights into female ISIS-migrants' lives by examining the reasons for migrating and their lives in ISIS-controlled territories.⁵⁰ As pointed out by the authors themselves, the report based on a small selection of social media accounts tied to twelve individuals, represents a starting point rather than a final analysis of women choosing to join ISIS.⁵¹ The report further concludes that the sampled women are not fighters but participants in the state-building efforts of ISIS through motherhood and recruitment activities.⁵²

Second, in *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part – Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon* you can find Erin Marie Saltman and Melanie Smith's efforts to expand on Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett's research by using a larger selection of more than one hundred social media accounts tied to western ISIS-migrants.⁵³ Saltman's and Smith's objective is to explore who is being radicalized to join ISIS, why women decide to migrate and how the process can be interrupted. The report concludes that there is significant diversity among women being radicalized, that their reasons for migration is multi-faceted and include various so-called *push* and *pull* factors and that their responsibilities within ISIS include being a good wife, bearing children and recruiting other women in the western world through social media platforms.⁵⁴ These roles however do not match with the cover of the report which depicts a group of

women standing in front of a car holding automatic weapons and waving black ISIS-flags. This fact is left un-commented by the authors.⁵⁵ Multiple photos depicting similar situations are also included in the report.⁵⁶

Third, in *Caliphates: Women and the Appeal of Islamic State*, Haras Rafiq and Nikita Malik discuss the appeal ISIS has on women using material derived from social media and official propaganda.⁵⁷ The authors conclude that there are four main promises made to women: empowerment, deliverance, participation and piety.⁵⁸ As Rafiq and Malik combine official propaganda with social media, it is difficult for the reader to distinguish the official ISIS-discourse from that of its followers. Further, as distinguishing between sources is complicated, identifying the organization's view is difficult.

Only one study known to the author of this thesis has attempted to do so, the comparative study *No Sandwiches Here: Representations of Women in Dabiq and Inspire Magazines*. In this report Laura Huey scrapes the surface of how Al-Qaeda and ISIS communicate with women.⁵⁹ Huey concludes that the two organizations are interchangeable in their rhetoric toward the target audience portraying them as women fulfilling classic female roles of child bearer and a married woman.⁶⁰ In limiting itself to using only nine issues of the ISIS-magazine Dabiq and focusing on a quantitative comparison with official Al-Qaeda propaganda Huey's efforts should be seen as an initial effort inspiring further, in-depth research including material consisting of alternative official sources.

In relation to above stated material, this thesis aims at offering a next step, by an expansion of material and in depth research, of how women are targeted through official propaganda. Before describing the material included in this thesis, the process of radicalization and the *push* and *pull* factors that drive that process, causing women to migrate to ISIS-held territories, will be explained.

2.2 The Process of Radicalization

The process of radicalization can be understood as a process "leading a person or a group of people to support or wield ideologically motivated violence to further a specific cause".⁶¹ This is a contested topic and there are debates regarding the definition above as well as on the underlying reasons for its occurrence.⁶² Researchers have brought experiences from many fields such as sociology, psychology, political science, religion, law and criminology. This has resulted in a multitude of frameworks illustrating the process, describing why some individuals turn to violent groups, as a transformative process. It consists of several steps with a logical approach that include multiple factors increasing the risk of radicalization.⁶³ The disagreement has various explanations. The concept is in itself equivocal, as being radical is a contextual notion dependent on time and space. What is considered radical in one setting might not be radical in another.⁶⁴ There is also disagreement on determining the starting-point of the radicalization process. Some researchers argue for an understanding of radicalization in a

broader sense, encompassing not only individuals using or supporting violence but also those who only show initial signs of anti-democratic behavior. Others argue for a narrow definition including those individuals who clearly support or use violence themselves.⁶⁵ Finally, the process of radicalization is one taking place on multiple levels. Researchers disagree on the importance of the levels; different scholars emphasize different causes either at the individual or the societal level.⁶⁶ However, many researchers agree that the process of radicalization is of social nature dependent on a multitude of factors.⁶⁷

In essence a radical person takes a simplified stance where absolute ideological and religious truths divide the world into a black and white reality, consisting of good and evil. Socializing a person into such thinking is called a radicalization process.⁶⁸ The spark and maintenance of this process is dependent on external human influence through a friend, a family member or a stranger. This contact is most efficient when made in the real world but can also be found online.⁶⁹ The Internet has revolutionized radicalization by shrinking space, allowing for contacts to be made regardless of nationality and borders. This creates a market place where individuals that sympathize with the same ideologies can make new friends and exchange propaganda; one-sided information in support of a specific cause.⁷⁰ This material rarely has the power to, by itself radicalize or recruit individuals to an organization but plays a crucial role of an incubator. As such it catalyzes the process of radicalization and consolidates already existing sympathies, thereby creating more active supporters.⁷¹

The underlying reasons for engaging in violent Islamic extremism are complex, varied and multifaceted, occurring on both an individual and a collective level. Available research within the field of political science highlights the necessity to study the phenomenon of radicalization through four perspectives:

- The interplay between different types of grievances that *push* people to engage in extreme groups and how these groups have been portrayed on the local level.
- The way in which social dynamics, ideology, media and narratives are used to mobilize, indoctrinate and *pull* individuals towards extremist groups.
- The capabilities and resources available to extremist groups to market their organizations.
- The underlying motives for individuals to join groups or networks and the reasons that drive those with an extremist attitude to commit acts of violence.⁷²

As such the process of radicalization is contextually dependent on various internal and external factors such as an individual's social psychological traits and the dynamics of the violent extremist group itself. Researchers have contributed a long list of factors that drive the process of radicalization forward, containing individual, social, political and ideological dimensions.⁷³ Whereas some

researchers have focused on macro and mezzo-level factors, such as social alienation or foreign political events,⁷⁴ others have employed social psychological theories to identify a wide range of micro level factors influencing radicalization.⁷⁵ In reality these levels interact and their relative importance varies from person to person. Radicalization is in essence dependent on deep interference between so-called *push* and *pull* factors.⁷⁶

2.3 Push and Pull Towards Radicalization

Individuals who travel to territory held by ISIS in support of the organization have - seen through the lens of radicalization theory - gone through a process where they gradually come to sympathize with the message of ISIS. European research on factors enforcing radicalization underlines the interface between individual psychological features, social and political factors, ideological and religious dimensions, cultural identity, traumatic experiences and group dynamics.⁷⁷ These factors act in a cumulative process at the micro, mezzo and macro levels simultaneously. For the purpose of clarity, they are usually divided into so-called *push* and *pull* factors.⁷⁸ Understanding them is important in designing efforts to effectively challenge the issue of radicalization. *Push* factors make individuals more susceptible to extremist propaganda and relate to the person's individual and social situation that increase the risk of radicalization. *Push* factors often spring from profound dissatisfaction relating to personal or political circumstances.⁷⁹ *Pull* factors, on the other hand, *draw* individuals by positive incentives into subscribing to a violent Islamic extremist ideology. These play on the longing for social kinship, finding ones identity, exerting power as well as control and violence, gaining social status or seeking an adventure.⁸⁰ As such, *pull* factors increase the traction of a specific group such as ISIS. Attractive offers have the ability to inspire individuals into migration, acts of violence or other types of support.⁸¹ Scholars welcome more research on *push* and *pull* factors to enable an increased understanding of how the process of radicalization affects people. What particular *push* and *pull* factors cause the transition from frustration into supporting or using violence as a political tool?⁸² For understanding radicalization *push* and *pull* factors have been used by researchers and policy makers alike. Based on empirical research and observations the Swedish Security Service (Säkerhetspolisen) has listed general factors that drive individuals into violent extremist groups.⁸³ These factors are neither group nor gender specific. They therefore include both men and women engaging in a wide range of violent extremist organizations such as various neo-fascist, autonomous left wing and Islamic extremist groups.⁸⁴

Table 1. Push and pull factors according to the Swedish Security Service	
<p><u>Push Factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perceived global injustices ▪ Perceived oppression ▪ Discrimination of self or others ▪ Alienation of self or others ▪ A search for identity ▪ A search for purpose ▪ Difficult or destructive family situation ▪ Active citizenship ▪ Personal traumas or tragedies ▪ Fascination with violence ▪ Low self-esteem ▪ A will to make a difference ▪ Frustration over the democratic avenues for change 	<p><u>Pull Factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of power or control ▪ Importance of group status ▪ Social kinship ▪ Belonging ▪ A sense of purpose ▪ Clear rules of life to abide to ▪ A sense of security ▪ Attractive ideological arguments ▪ Loyalty among group members ▪ Adventure ▪ Thrill-seeking ▪ Conviction of being the good fighting the evil ▪ Respect

As can be seen the factors above act at different levels and relate to various areas such as ideology, social relations and political engagement. The *push* and *pull* factors should not be understood as causing radicalization themselves. They should rather be considered as risk factors or circumstances necessary for the process of radicalization to take place. There is a need for interaction among these factors to initiate the process of radicalization.⁸⁵

In their report, Saltman and Smith present a more specific range of *push* and *pull* factors pertaining to the case of women migrating to ISIS-held territories.⁸⁶ These have been developed through an analysis of over 100 female profiles across online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Ask.FM, Kik and blogs.⁸⁷ Women within the dataset have been identified as coming from fifteen different countries and have been designated as female migrants to ISIS-territories if they have identified themselves as such and appear to recede in these areas.⁸⁸ The factors are based on how the women within the sample have described their reasons for migrating. The six *push* and *pull* factors identified through social media studies are listed below. As can be seen, they to some extent echo the factors listed by the Swedish Security Service.

Table 2. Push and pull factors according to Saltman and Smith	
<p><u>Push Factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling socially or culturally isolated, questioning identity and belonging ▪ Muslim community under persecution ▪ Anger and sadness over international inaction to perceived persecution 	<p><u>Pull Factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Religious duty of building the utopian Caliphate ▪ Belonging and sisterhood ▪ The romantic adventure of life in ISIS-held territory

This thesis aims at testing the *pull* factors defined by Saltman and Smith, detailed in the right hand column in table two. These factors are eligible for study in the chosen material for this thesis. The thesis further complements the three *pull* factors with an additional factor mirroring the research problem of this thesis. The reason for introducing this *pull* factor – *influence and violence* - is the circulation of imagery in social media depicting women carrying heavy weaponry and participating in ISIS gun practices, paired with the debate on their roles as mothers and wives. What does official ISIS-propaganda say about women carrying guns and participating in armed struggles within its territories?

The Swedish Security Service has identified the factor of influence and violence as an important *pull* for some men engaging in violent Islamic extremist organizations.⁸⁹ Individuals looking for adventure join such groups as a way of increasing their influence, either on a personal level or as a group, on the

Table 3. Additional Pull Factor
<p><u>Pull Factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Influence and violence

local, national or international arena. Joining can also be seen as a way of acting out against society by the use of force. Men that engage in violent Islamic extremist organizations often have a fascination for and earlier experiences of

violence. Testaments highlighted in the introduction of this thesis ascribe women the sole roles of wives, mothers and concubines.⁹⁰ These testaments are disputed by illustrations of women engaging in battle.⁹¹ It is therefore of great interest to include the fourth *pull* factor in this thesis to investigate if official ISIS-rhetoric attracts women using such promises.

2.4 Pull Factors

The following *pull* factors have been identified as inspiring Western female migration to areas controlled by ISIS. These have been produced by social media research and embrace positive incentives and motivational reasoning. The *pull* factors have some similarities with those affecting male foreign fighters but differ due to the distinctive roles that women and men play in the state-building process of ISIS.⁹² Below follows a resume of the three pull factors presented in Saltman’s and Smith’s study of social media (2.4.1-2.4.3). The fourth *pull* factor formulated for the purpose of this thesis is described in 2.4.4.

2.4.1 Religious Duty of Building the Utopian Caliphate

Social media posts made by female migrants attempt to attract other women to what is depicted as a utopian society. The state building aspirations of ISIS and the subsequent declaration of the so-called Caliphate has been key in attracting both women and men to join its cause. By migrants who have already joined ISIS, women are told that they are instrumental in this project and that their role is based on religious duty. Through social media women declare that joining ISIS is a woman’s duty as

much as it is a man's. The Caliphate offers a safe haven for those who fully wish to embrace, practice and protect Islam, which is not available nor understood in Western societies.⁹³ Supporting the survival of the so-called Caliphate and thereby fulfilling your religious duty ensures a place in heaven, much valued by pious Muslims. Female migrants see hope in the mission of ISIS, celebrating its military victories and hoping that the region will develop into an Islamic utopia. As agents of state building women ensure that there is a next generation of citizens safeguarding the survival of the so-called Caliphate. Women contribute to ISIS expansion and success as mothers and wives. Women are also needed in such roles as doctors, nurses and teachers. Altogether this creates a force that has the ability to attract women to migrate to ISIS-held territories.⁹⁴

2.4.2 Belonging and Sisterhood

Along with the promised reward of an afterlife granted when migrating to ISIS-held territories, women in social media talk at length about sisterhood and the fulfilling sense of belonging offered by the Caliphate. Women belonging to minority groups living in Western societies often go through a difficult process of questioning their identity and belonging. By advertising the importance of unity and community in ISIS-held territories and contrasting it with the “fake” and “shallow” relationships, offered by communities in the West, women who have already migrated to ISIS-held territories create a powerful pulling force. The promise of belonging and sisterhood can, according to Saltman and Smith affect women in the West to the point where they decide to migrate.⁹⁵

2.4.3 The Romantic Adventure of Joining ISIS

An important *pull* factor that attracts women from the West to join ISIS is that of adventure and romance. This especially affects young women for whom traveling to a new and unexplored country becomes part of a process of liberation. Images shared on social media platforms also give promises of meaningful romance as the grand price for making the journey.⁹⁶ This propaganda often glorifies the union between female migrants and male foreign fighters, depicting it as an empowering role for women. For the younger audience, the purpose of marriage works as a transition from childhood into adulthood, the avenue to liberation. Official propaganda also highlights the great honor that the death of a prospective foreign fighter would bring upon the woman married to him. Becoming a martyr's widow is portrayed as a great privilege.⁹⁷

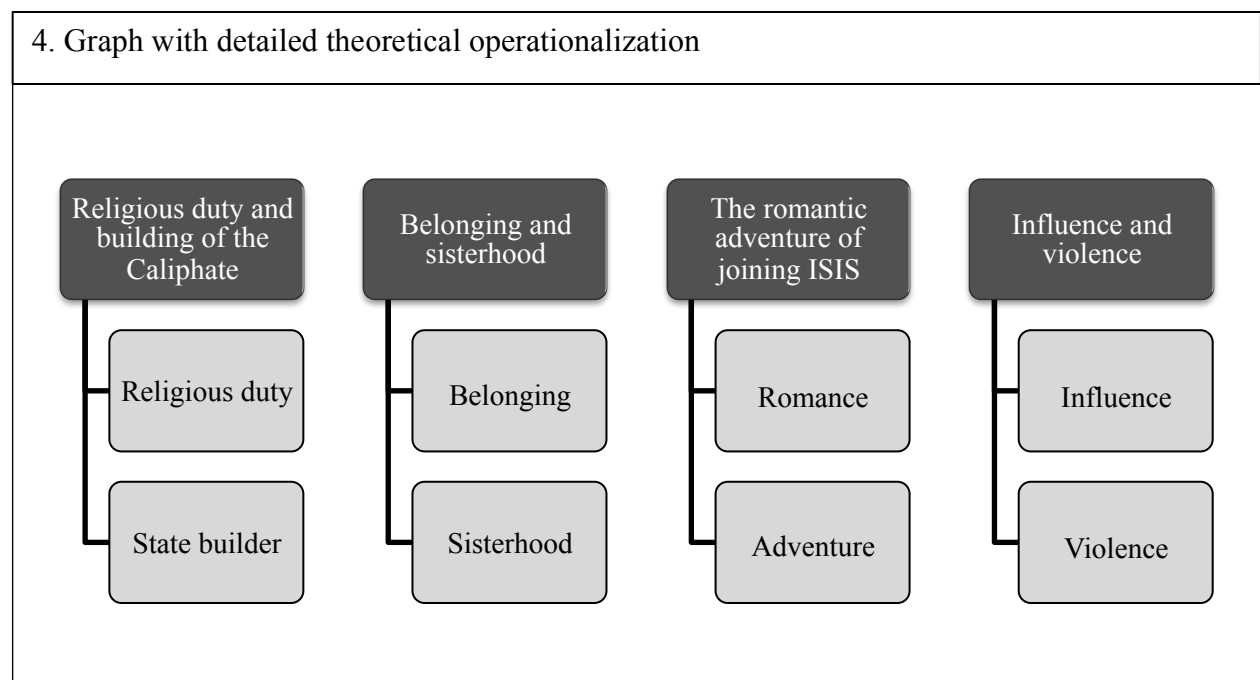
2.4.4 Influence and Violence

There is an ongoing discussion on whether women within ISIS are allowed to carry guns and participate in armed struggles or not. Some researchers have argued that women within ISIS are not allowed to do so.⁹⁸ However, media reports, unofficial propaganda from groups within ISIS-held territories together with pictures posted in social media accounts suggest otherwise. As pointed out in the report by Laura Huey, comparing Al-Qaeda and ISIS-propaganda, female supporters of ISIS are often seen on photographs posted on Twitter, Facebook and elsewhere, posing with automatic weapons, participating in gun drills and patrolling public areas carrying Kalashnikovs.⁹⁹ Such

photographs have also made the covers of research reports treating the issue of female ISIS-migrants.¹⁰⁰ What role women play within ISIS influences the debate on the potential threat they pose if returning to their countries of origin in the West. Secret service agencies make threat assessments based on both the *motivation* and the *capabilities* that individuals have for carrying out an attack.¹⁰¹

2.4.5 Analytical Tool

Through theoretical operationalization of the *pull* factors detailed in the sections above an analytical tool can be created. This tool guides us in answering the primary research question of this thesis – what promises official ISIS-propaganda make to women. The theoretical operationalizing endeavor includes translating the theoretical terms and concepts of the *pull* factors to the research context in order to make them researchable. Our operationalized concepts present indicators measuring the studied phenomena.¹⁰² As was explained in the theoretical chapter, *pull* factors can be understood as positive incentives presented to women. The operational indicators of *pull* factors will therefore be identified as promises made to women in official ISIS-propaganda.¹⁰³ These promises can tell us what ISIS expects of women as well as what role they play within the organization. As the level of abstraction of the *pull* factors detailed in the theoretical section is fairly low the distance between the theoretical and the operational level is short.¹⁰⁴ This allows for sound operational indicators, which provides for high validity. We, in other words, measure what we claim to be measuring.¹⁰⁵



A number of analytical themes presented in the graph above have been developed and used to structure the main part of the analysis. These themes are, as can be seen in the graph, based on the *pull* factors derived from social media studies complemented by the additional factor of *influence* and *violence* identified through imagery. The operationalization therefore springs from the theoretical

framework presented earlier. The *pull* factors have, for the purpose of analytical clarity, been broken down into more detailed sub-categories consisting of potential promises made to women in official ISIS-propaganda. The sub-categories increase the level of detail in the analysis, which enables us to produce concrete policy proposals to counter radicalization among women.

2.5 Threat Assessment

The secondary purpose of this thesis is, based on the promises given to women in official propaganda, to discuss what potential risk women pose if returning to the West. Threat assessment theory claims that, a person, in order to pose a threat to society or individuals, must have both the *capability* and the *motivation* to act. An individual with great motivation but no capability is no threat. Equally, an individual with great capabilities but no motivation is not considered a threat.¹⁰⁶ Whereas the motivation of people can change rapidly, depending on personal and international political events, their capabilities tend to evolve during a longer period of time.¹⁰⁷ One important factor affecting motivation is that of affiliation to a group with global aspirations of terror, such as ISIS.¹⁰⁸ Earlier research on women within this group has, as stated, confirmed them to be great supporters of the violence carried out by the group, with willingness to participate in its realization.¹⁰⁹ The recent bombings in San Bernardino, California, where a husband and his wife, affiliated with ISIS, killed thirteen people is proof of this fervent devotion of some women as well as the global agenda of ISIS.¹¹⁰

Capabilities can relate to economic, social and physical proficiencies. Physical proficiencies are arguably the most important for carrying out an attack. They pertain to experiences of using terrorist violence often gained through participation in combat, military and terrorist training abroad.¹¹¹ Several of the recent attacks carried out in Europe confirm that the perpetrators had spent time training and preparing abroad prior to the attacks.¹¹² War travels also enable networking amongst peers and like-minded on both a national and an international level. Social relations can allow for more efficient planning as well as the acquisition of weapons and explosives. Extensive social networks also facilitate crowd funding of materials necessary for carrying out an attack.¹¹³ The role that ISIS prescribes to women therefore matter greatly, as to determine what threat they can pose. Different roles give different access to terrorist training and social networks. The fourth *pull* factor, i.e. that of *influence and violence*, has been included in this thesis to investigate access to terrorist training and increased physical capabilities for women.

3. Material

This chapter presents the empirical material used to answer the research questions posed in chapter 1.3. As this material consists of documents stemming from official ISIS outlets the chapter opens by describing the organization's communications strategy and various platforms briefly. This is done to allow for a better understanding of how ISIS communicates with its supporters. The official ISIS-

magazine *Dabiq* which is the primary source of material for this thesis is then introduced. The chapter then briefly presents supporting material consisting of eleven transcripts of speeches given by official ISIS-spokesmen. The chapter ends by commenting on alternative but excluded material.

3.1 Communications Platforms

ISIS is waging war on two levels: on the ground as well as in the virtual space, online. The communications strategy of ISIS is a tightly run and highly centralized operation managed by an information ministry.¹¹⁴ High quality videos, images, speeches and radio shows are being distributed from a wide range of official news agencies such as *al-Hayat Media Center* (video content), *al-Furqan* (news content) and *al-Bayan* (radio content).¹¹⁵ Great effort is put into reaching legitimacy through keeping an “official posture”. Noteworthy is that the logotype of *al-Hayat Media Center* bears a striking resemblance to the well-reputed news agency *Al Jazeera*. ISIS has also created its own smartphone application called the *Dawn of Glad Tidings*.¹¹⁶ An additional media wing named the *al-Zora Foundation* was created in October 2014. This establishment is dedicated to producing content directly targeting women. Videos and YouTube posts in Arabic, stemming from the media branch, quickly attracted large crowds. In a couple of months, the *al-Zora Foundation* had gained over 3,200 followers on Twitter.¹¹⁷

The centralized state-provided propaganda apparatus is, however important, highly dependent on its many followers. ISIS has become well known for the decentralized part of its communications strategy. Thousands of followers become independent media wings by posting online messages, creating online groups, producing their own content and reposting official propaganda. Here social media channels have been widely recognized as important. Members tied to ISIS operate at various platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Ask.FM, and thereby attract new followers.¹¹⁸ Figures show that 45,000 Twitter accounts were used by ISIS-supporters in the fall of 2014. 73 percent of these accounts had an average of 500 followers; others had an astounding 50,000 followers.¹¹⁹ Even if the numbers are unclear, Facebook is also being widely used by foreign fighters in Syria for the purpose of recruiting friends to join the organization.¹²⁰

ISIS’ official propaganda outlets are not very well known to the general public. Research, however, confirms their great importance in leveraging support for the organization and creating more active members.¹²¹ While propaganda in itself seldom radicalizes or recruits a person to an organization, it catalyzes radicalization and consolidates already held sympathies.¹²² One of ISIS’ core official tools in the virtual war is the online-publication *Dabiq* magazine.

3.2 Dabiq Magazine

Dabiq is a publication produced by ISIS’ media wing *al-Hayat Media Center*, first issued in July 2014, echoing the official view of the organization.¹²³ Released in several different languages, this

propaganda magazine is produced for a global audience. Editions are available in English, Arabic, Turkish, French, German and Russian.¹²⁴ The central role of this publication becomes evident at the first glance. Great effort is put into composing this thorough and extensive magazine containing well-edited texts and high definition illustrations. *Dabiq* was initially sold in a paperback version on the online platform Amazon, delivering to the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. Nowadays its production and sharing is restricted to a digital format.¹²⁵ As a communications channel *Dabiq* serves three main objectives spanning military, political and religious dimensions.¹²⁶ First, it reports on the military victories achieved by ISIS. Second it reports on life within ISIS-held territory. And third it delivers religious teachings to its readers. Furthermore, it repeatedly encourages Muslims to make *Hijrah*, which roughly translates into migrating to the so-called Caliphate.¹²⁷

The title of the magazine refers to a small town in the Northern parts of Aleppo, Syria, of particular importance to ISIS grand strategy. A well-known Hadith - a recount claiming to cite the prophet Muhammad found in the Quran – describes ‘Armageddon Dabiq’ as a site for a future clash between Muslims and “Rome”, generally interpreted as the West. Dabiq also bears a historic importance as the site of a decisive battle between the Ottomans and the Mamluks in 1516 where Ottoman victory led to the consolidation of the last recognized Islamic Caliphate.¹²⁸ The inevitability of the future doomsday is underlined by a quote from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, recited in every issue of the magazine, stating: “The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah’s permission – until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq”. Photoshopped pictures of Western soldiers burning in a sea of flames frequently accompany the quote underlining its meaning.¹²⁹ The 13 issues of *Dabiq* analyzed in this thesis consist of 768 primary source pages and encompass all issues released from July 2014 through January 2016.

3.3 Official Statements

The eleven statements analyzed for this thesis are made by official spokesmen of ISIS between June 2014 and December 2015. Nine of the statements have been given by Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, appointed official spokesperson of ISIS, making most of its official statements. The declared Caliph of the so-called Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has made two of the statements. The original statements were given in Arabic and have been transcribed and translated into English by *al-Hayat Media Center* who provides PDF documents of the transcripts available for download from the Internet. The statements vary in length between three and fifteen pages and together make up a total of 89 primary source pages. All the statements that have been found have been given by key ISIS-stakeholders and will therefore be considered representative of the official view of the organization. The statements have been collected using a simple snowball method (see below, 3.4). They provide a good picture of how these men, as representatives of their organization, view and portray women and communicate it to the world.

3.4 Potentially Applicable Material Excluded and the Consequences Thereof

The eligible material for studying the issue of female migration to ISIS-held territories is highly limited. Traveling to Syria or Iraq with the purpose of carrying out interviews with women who have joined ISIS has, for obvious reasons, not been an alternative in this thesis. Neither the security situation, nor the given time frame for a thesis of this size has made it possible. Interviewing female returnees in Europe or Sweden has proven equally difficult. These individuals have, so far, mostly refrained from publically sharing their stories or making their identities known.¹³⁰

This being stated, the material; the magazines and eleven official statements that this thesis is based on, was gathered by using a simple *snowball method* of selection. One source led to another until no new material could be found.¹³¹ The propaganda is dispersed over the Internet and there can be no guarantee that all the official material targeting women has been found. By including considerably more material than the prior study based on official propaganda by Laura Huey this thesis aims to give a broader account with a deeper understanding of what promises are made to women in ISIS and what potential threat they pose if returning to their countries of origin in the West.¹³²

When studying the communications strategy of ISIS it becomes evident that the organization benefits greatly from using both their centralized and decentralized channels. There is interdependence between the two. Neither would be efficient without the other. As the primary purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of what promises ISIS make to women in official propaganda it adds to existing research in the field, which is largely based on social media accounts tied to female migrants.¹³³ Unofficial propaganda has therefore been excluded. So has semi-official material from regional media outlets and smaller groups within ISIS. The focus thereby remains on propaganda produced and sanctioned by ISIS and its core leadership.

As propaganda circulating on the Internet tends to be taken down by site hosts, the 857 pages analyzed in this thesis have been downloaded which allows for replication of the study. Official visual propaganda has been excluded as women seldom appear in such material.¹³⁴ The unique video material stemming from the all-female *al-Zora Foundation* has also been excluded as it is produced solely in Arabic and has been taken off the web by major site hosts. As will be discussed in the following methodological chapter, choices pertaining to material largely decide the method for processing that same material. It also affects the generalizing ability of the study, our possibility to draw conclusions beyond the selected case and material.¹³⁵ To answer the research questions postulated at the beginning of this thesis, the material has been scrutinized with the help of the in depth research method of a qualitative text analysis, applied within the fitting framework of a case study. In the following chapter we therefore outline and describe these research methods in more detail.

4. Method

Method is the way through which we reach answers to the research questions posed.¹³⁶ As the purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the promises given to women by ISIS as well as what potential risk they pose if returning to their countries of origin a qualitative approach to science is applied. The goal is hence to study data qualitatively, not quantitatively. The qualitative case study has therefore been chosen as the research methodological approach. A qualitative text analysis has been made within the framework of this case study.

4.1 The Case Study

A case study always represents a case of something.¹³⁷ This study represents a case of how violent extremist organizations attract women. As such the case study is a part of a larger context. The case study can be of a qualitative or quantitative nature and has as a result of its scientific, theoretical approach different aims with higher or lower ambitions for making generalizations beyond the analyzed material. As this case study focuses on one entity or case rather than multiple, it is of a predominantly qualitative character.¹³⁸

A large-n study, such as a quantitative text analysis could, as has been highlighted in the section on future research (9), be deployed in analyzing the selected material. Such a research method would arguably answer interesting, although very different questions. It could for example be helpful in uncovering comparative patterns of how many official ISIS-articles and statements are addressed to women as compared to men and correlate it with the interest that the separate audiences show for the organization. Further, it could give us important insights into the quantities of propaganda that different extremist organizations produce, correlating it with the interest that the public shows for the same organizations.¹³⁹ Large-n studies are however not ideal when the purpose of a study is to create a deeper and better understanding of an intricate issue, such as that of how ISIS attracts women with official propaganda. For answering such questions a qualitative case study is better suited. Using this method also allows capturing the full complexity of the studied phenomenon. This method enables us to describe the phenomenon fully, which gives us a better understanding of its context.¹⁴⁰ It has therefore been chosen.

As researchers are the qualitative case study's prime instrument for data collection and analysis, the method is coupled with a decisive interpretative strain. The researcher automatically incorporates his or her understanding of the case studied. This can result in an end product reflecting his or her conception of the world.¹⁴¹ Errors like these can in turn affect the reliability of the study where its results come to vary depending on who carries out the research.¹⁴² The issue of interpretations that reflect the prejudices of the researcher can be countered by making clear references to the studied material. Citations and abstracts can be used to support the conclusions drawn.¹⁴³ This is done throughout the analysis in this thesis to showcase what promises ISIS is making to women. Also, by

devising clear operationalization (2.5) derived from the applied theoretical framework, the risk for far-reaching and groundless interpretations can be minimized.¹⁴⁴

A unique strength of the case study is its ability to incorporate many different kinds of material consisting of documents, interviews or observations. Through triangulation, i.e. the use of various methods for the collection of data, different perspectives are brought to the fore. This creates a richer and deeper understanding.¹⁴⁵ The case study is also suitable when analyzing single types of material providing the possibility for thorough analysis and better understanding of very complex phenomena. The use of one unit for analysis affects the external validity of the study or limits the possibilities to make generalizations beyond the studied case. This, in itself, does not present an issue for a qualitative researcher who tends to focus on the particularities of an interesting and relevant case.¹⁴⁶ The case study can, at a later stage, offer a building block in a larger comparative study with more far-reaching ambitions for making generalizations.¹⁴⁷ Such a study could include women from different violent extremist milieus such as the right-wing, left-wing and violent Islamic extremist one.

4.2 The Qualitative Text Analysis

A qualitative text analysis can have different shapes being of a systematizing or critically reviewing kind.¹⁴⁸ Different types of text analysis have in common that nothing is measured or counted. Instead, through thorough reading of the selected material, a deeper understanding for its content is sought. In essence, for the research question, relevant content is highlighted and clarified.¹⁴⁹ The qualitative text analysis therefore pairs well with the case study. In this thesis a systematizing analysis of the descriptive kind will be employed where the content of the material is classified as different categories depending on its nature.¹⁵⁰ Categories are derived from the theoretical discussion on *pull* factors presented and broken down in chapter two (2.4.1-2.4.5). By using the eight promises of: *religious duty, state builder, belonging, sisterhood, romance, adventure, influence* and *violence* as a tool for analysis, the material can be thoroughly examined. Detailed subcategories allow us to define better and more targeted policy proposals. Using the theoretical tool of the eight promises based on the theoretical framework derived from social media studies as a basis for analysis gives this thesis a theory consuming character. The particular case at hand is the focal point and answers are sought with the help of existing theory.¹⁵¹

When carrying out a text analysis the researcher can adopt a *closed* or an *open* approach towards the studied material.¹⁵² In an *open* approach the material is allowed to speak to the researcher more freely. The answers to the research questions as well as the themes that are devised are then highly dependent on what is found in the material. In a *closed* approach, such as this one, categories for analysis are developed beforehand.¹⁵³ This has the benefit of limiting the room for interpretation by the researcher while increasing the transparency of the analysis. It therefore minimizes confirmations of previously

held biases and stereotypes. It also increases the reliability of the study, making it possible for other researchers to replicate the analysis to ensure sound results.¹⁵⁴ To guarantee the feasibility of cumulative knowledge, it remains critical to allow for the inclusion of alternative themes, in the material, to surface. Exclusion of existing themes also remains a possibility.¹⁵⁵

The promises given in official ISIS-propaganda targeting women are, as will be seen in the analysis, seldom explicit. They rarely take the form of “ISIS promises women” or “we guarantee women”. Writers and speakers instead deliver more implicit promises that are embedded in, and dependent on, the context of the material. The analysis therefore includes both explicit and contextual promises. These are in turn often expressed in complex, demagogic and sometimes lyrical language riddled with Arabic words and religious terminology referencing the Quran. Implicit promises, together with a complex language, places high demands on the researcher’s ability to decode and interpret the meaning of the material.¹⁵⁶ The author of this thesis has prior work experience in the field of countering radicalization and violent extremism. This has the positive consequence of decreasing the distance between the material and the researcher, which in turn can increase our understanding of the studied phenomenon. It however also bears a risk related to the issue of reliability. Replication of the thesis by a researcher with a different background could result in different conclusions.¹⁵⁷ A word list presenting frequently used terms has been provided on page two in this document. The word list is intended to minimize the distance between researchers and allows for a better understanding of the analyzed propaganda.

A researcher striving for a reflective and transparent study needs to remain critical towards the selected themes. In this case this will be done by not only looking to the aspects where the promises given to women by ISIS fit the picture painted by social media researchers but also study occasions when it does not. Asking questions such as what additional factors can be discerned in the material is key. This decreases the risk of overlooking new and important themes in the material. Doing so allows for potential additions or revisions of the previously detailed factors.¹⁵⁸

4.3 Generalizing Ambitions

As was discussed in the section above on qualitative case studies (4.1), the ability to generalize the results of a study or its external validity, beyond the researched variable to a broader context, is limited.¹⁵⁹ As such this study can tell us little about how women are attracted to violent extremist organizations other than ISIS. Although it is necessary to be humble, this study can provide us with a significant building block for future research of comparative nature.¹⁶⁰ This study aspires to draw important conclusions on how ISIS attempts to attract women and what promises are made to them by the organization.

5. Analysis

In this chapter the collected empirical material is presented and analyzed thoroughly. Similarities and differences are highlighted through a systematic comparison of the material where quotations are used to confirm the occurrence of promises present in the empirics. The four *pull* factors presented and operationalized into eight promises in the theoretical chapter (2) give structure to the first part of the analysis. After the analysis of promises given to women follows an analysis of what potential risk ISIS women pose upon return to the West, i.e. the secondary purpose of this thesis. This analysis is based on the promises presented in official ISIS-propaganda.

5.1 Promises to Women

When investigating the promises made to women in official ISIS-propaganda it becomes apparent that women have grown increasingly important as a target group for the organization. In the analyzed material women were initially only addressed as being a part of the bigger Muslim *Ummah*. Writings such as “all Muslims” were used often but women were seldom addressed directly. Articles treating a multitude of subjects only sporadically mentioned women.¹⁶¹ The seventh issue of *Dabiq* changed this fact. The magazine included a section titled “To Our Sisters” containing an interview with Umm Bashīr al-Muhajirāh, the widow of Amedy Coulibaly who participated in the terrorist attacks in Paris in January 2015.¹⁶² “To Our Sister” later changed name to “From Our Sisters” and has since the seventh issue reoccurred in every magazine treating subjects considered especially important to women. The name of the female author producing the articles is Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh. Al-Muhajirāh has discussed issues such as marriage, the taking of female slaves, family life and female migration. Through al-Muhajirāh, women are addressed directly. As will be seen in the following sections, they are frequently given promises relating to issues of *religious duty, state building, belonging, sisterhood, adventure, romance, influence and violence*. Whereas some of these promises are implicitly wrapped in eloquent language, others are explicit and outright. Some promises are also more prominent than others.

5.1.1 Religious Duty

Official propaganda is riddled with calls for making *hijrah*, migrating to the so-called Islamic State. By so doing women and men are promised to fulfill their religious duty. The deed of migration is portrayed as an obligation for all pious Muslims in both *Dabiq* and the official ISIS statements. In an article by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, women are portrayed as the “twin halves” of men when it comes to the subject of migration. There is no difference between the sexes in relations to the duty of *hijrah*. Al-Muhajirāh writes: “This ruling [of migration] is an obligation upon women just as it is upon men.”¹⁶³

It is, according to ISIS rhetoric, impossible to live as a pious and righteous Muslim in Western countries, which are filled with sin, where good Muslims are said to be “polluted” by values that go

against the will of God. Women in the West wearing religious clothing such as the hijab or the burqa are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. Debates on the repressive nature of such garments have led several countries in Europe to ban the use of these outfits in public spaces.¹⁶⁴ This enables ISIS to portray it as it being impossible for Muslim women to live a pious life, in line with the organization's interpretation of Islam. Women are thus told they cannot live in accordance with their religion in the West. Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah reminds women of the fact that remaining in Western countries is a sinful deed by saying:

So everyone who lives amongst the mushrikīn while being able to perform hijrah and not being able to establish his religion, then he is wronging himself and committing sin.
[...] 'Whoever gathers and lives with the mushrik, then he is like him.'¹⁶⁵

The message conveys that it is impossible to be a true Muslim living in Western societies. Migrating to ISIS-held territories is presented as the only solution to this problem. *Dabiq* attempts to attract women from around the world by targeting different groups separately. In one article ISIS encourages women from Iraq to function as role models for other women in the region by making a swift *hijrah*. Al-Muhajirah states this eloquently when writing: “[D]o not wait for other women from amongst the wives of Sahwah soldiers to make *hijrah* before you. Rather, be a model and an example for them all, and what a great honor it would be to be the first.”¹⁶⁶ Role models are important tools for attracting other women to the cause of ISIS, which is why much effort is put into finding such key individuals.

The women that comply with the demand of making *hijrah*, fulfilling their religious duty will be heavily rewarded with the grace of God, both in this life and in the hereafter. Often highlighted is the fact that the rewards will be in accordance with the hardship taken and sacrifices made.¹⁶⁷ Those that fail to fulfill their religious duty will face severe punishment. ISIS depicts these individuals as black sheep and a disgrace for all Muslims collectively. This is highlighted in an official statement given by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the appointed Caliph of ISIS. He threatens those that refuse migration by saying: “If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all.”¹⁶⁸ The promise of fulfilling one's religious duty and thereby receiving in this life and the afterlife the rewards for so doing is prominent in the material analyzed in this thesis. Similar warnings and threats followed by illustrious rewards for complying with one's religious duty are common in ISIS official propaganda, both in *Dabiq* and in the official statements. It is one of the most important themes, running as a red thread throughout the material.

5.1.2 State Builder

Women are given promises of fulfilling an important role in ISIS state building ambitions. They are presented with multiple possibilities to contribute to the cause of ISIS community. One of the most prominent promises is that of employment where women are offered the possibility to become doctors, nurses or teachers in a newly created state. In an article describing the welfare system of the Islamic State a writer explains the merits of studying at a new medical school just opened in Raqqa by saying:

The teaching staff consists exclusively of degree holders. Entrance is open to both females and males, with a dedicated school building, hospital, and female teaching staff for the female students. To support the students in their efforts the Islamic State does not charge any fees and provides the students with all that is necessary in terms of food, clothing, housing, transport, and books. For further encouragement high-achievers are granted rewards.¹⁶⁹

Describing that half of the student body is made up of highly motivated and achieving, women the *Dabiq* article then invites future female medical teachers who are looking for a stimulating job opportunity. By migrating to ISIS-held territories the women can make a real difference while receiving everything needed:

This should be received as a wake-up call for the many Muslim students in the lands of kufr who claim to study medicine to “benefit and support the Muslim Ummah,” but then remain in those lands, chasing after worldly pleasures instead of performing hijrah to the Islamic State – and this despite hijrah being an undeniable Islamic obligation, in addition to the fact that hijrah was and still is relatively easy. The Islamic State offers everything that you need to live and work here, so what are you waiting for?¹⁷⁰

The leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi sought both military and non-military personnel of unspecified gender in a speech given in the month of Ramadan in 2014 where he stated:

We make a special call to the scholars, fuqahā’ (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields. We call them and remind them to fear Allah, for their emigration is wājib ‘aynī (an individual obligation), so that they can answer the dire need of the Muslims for them.¹⁷¹

Dabiq explains that women who wish to engage in religious studies can do so in the safe haven of the so-called Islamic State. ISIS provides courses in the subject of “*Sharī’ah* sciences”. Al-Muhajirāh clarifies that it is a woman’s obligation, just as it is a mans to acquire knowledge about the surrounding world and the Islamic faith:

Allah has blessed the Islamic State, which has not been stingy towards its women in providing institutions and courses on the entirety of the *Sharī’ah* sciences. So shake off the

dust of laziness and procrastination and come forth, free yourself from ignorance and learn the matters of your religion.¹⁷²

Another state building role ascribed to women is that of motherhood. Women are seen as key figures in nursing the next generation of fighters, often called "lion cubs", who the survival of the state hinges on. Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah highlights the importance of motherhood in an article published in *Dabiq* in 2015: "As for you, O mother of lion cubs... And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is? She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men".¹⁷³ The importance of this role is highlighted in the same article where women are depicted as a vital part of the Muslim body:

And the woman is a shepherd in her house and is responsible for her herd. So have you understood, my Muslim sister, the enormity of the responsibility that you carry? O sister in religion, indeed, I see the Ummah of ours as a body made of many parts, but the part that works most towards and is most effective in raising a Muslim generation is the part of the nurturing mother.¹⁷⁴

Women are, as can be seen in the paragraph above, important actors given the responsibility of furthering the cause of ISIS into the next generation. Providing a good upbringing for the children of the so-called Islamic State, in accordance with the organization's interpretation of the religion rather than that of secularism and infidelity is key. For so doing, ISIS promises help to the mothers in this venture:

And if the claimants of Islam in the lands of kufr raise their children on the stories of Cinderella and Robin Hood, you should make use of the stories in "Mashāri' al-Ashwāq ilā Masāri' al-'Ushshāq" of Ibn an-Nahhās as stories for your lion cubs before they sleep. And here before you are the Sharī'ah institutions, training camps, and even the kindergartens.¹⁷⁵

Along with job opportunities and motherhood, a third and equally important state building task for women is that of marriage. This category somewhat overlaps with that of romance discussed in section 5.1.5 as women are assumed to be married living in the so-called Islamic State. The centrality given to the role of the wife within ISIS-held territory is clearly stated by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah when she equates its merits to that of jihād addressing women directly:

Please listen. Indeed you are in jihād when you await the return of your husband patiently, anticipating Allah's reward, and making du'ā' for him and those with him to attain victory and consolidation. You are in jihād when you uphold your loyalty to him in his absence. You are in jihād when you teach his children the difference between the truth and falsehood, between right and wrong.¹⁷⁶

Promises are given to women again and again of a meaningful family life. Those that fulfill their

duties as wives and mothers in ISIS-territories can expect the rewards of God's grace.¹⁷⁷ The family as the core of the Muslim community is highlighted once again in another article written by the same author on the topic of marriage:

And this small Muslim home is the core of the Ummah, and the parable of these two spouses and their children is like that of a plant that produces its offshoots and strengthens them, and then they stand upon their stalks. Its appearance is beautiful and its fruit is pleasant. If, however, its soil is polluted with kufr and shirk, then how impossible, how impossible it is for the plant to stand straight and become pleasant!¹⁷⁸

Women have a key role in supporting their husbands in their fighting for the survival of the so-called Caliphate. In a brief interview in *Dabiq* with Umm Basīr al-Muhajira, the widow of Amedy Coulibaly, who attacked a Jewish supermarket in Paris in 2015, this becomes clear:

My sisters, be bases of support and safety for your husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons. Be advisors to them. They should find comfort and peace with you. Do not make things difficult for them. Facilitate all matters for them. Be strong and brave. [...] Know that the Companions (radiyallāhu ‘anhum) did not spread Islam in these vast lands except with their righteous wives behind them.¹⁷⁹

In sum, it is according to ISIS the duty of the righteous women to ensure that the Muslim community does not get spoiled by infidels and disbelievers. Becoming a working professional, top student, perfect wife or good mother are among the most frequent and explicit promises in official ISIS-propaganda. It ensures that the state will support women in achieving such success by providing kindergartens, universities and other attractive incentives free of charge. If fulfilling these roles with a good result, women will be offered divine rewards, in this, as well as in the afterlife.

5.1.3 Belonging

Official propaganda puts much effort into communicating a sense of belonging for all Muslims living in ISIS-held territories. The Islamic State is in official propaganda portrayed as a safe haven for both men and women not discriminating on the basis of skin color, ethnicity or nationality. Every individual that ascribes to having a Muslim identity is welcome to enter this community. The so-called Caliphate is illustrated as a permitting society by the official spokesman al-Adnani in a speech given in March 2015: "There is no difference here between Arab and non-Arab, nor between black and white. Here, the American is the brother of the Arab, the African is the brother of the European, and the Easterner is the brother of the Westerner."¹⁸⁰ ISIS is portrayed as an inclusive community.

That all Muslims belong in and are welcome to the state created by ISIS is also proclaimed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who, in the month of Ramadan in 2014 gave a speech underlining that there is no difference between Muslims in saying: "Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state.

Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah's. [...] The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims."¹⁸¹ Regardless of nationality everyone is said to be welcome. The same issue is treated in *Dabiq* where the female writer Umm Symayyah al-Muhajirah underlines that the diversity of Muslims within ISIS-held territory does not splinter the organization, rather it unifies it in the spirit of religion:

[T]he rate of hijrah magnified and now every day there are not only muhajirin to the land of Islam but also muhajirat who were sick of living amongst kufr and its people. As soon as the sun of their awaited state rose, they rushed to it alone and in groups from the eastern and western extents of the Earth. Their colors and tongues are different, but their hearts are united upon "there is no god but Allah."¹⁸²

In a speech al-Adnani asks Muslims worldwide to respond to the call of Allah by migrating to the so-called Caliphate to unite under its one flag. By so doing total equality among all Muslims will be granted and their superiority vis-à-vis the infidels will be demonstrated. Al-Adnani asks the Muslim *Ummah* to abandon prior disunities in saying:

We call them to abandon discord, the discord of the factions, parties, and groups, for the Khilafah gathers all the Muslims, the Shami, the Iraqi, the Yemeni, the Egyptian, the European, the American, and the African. It gathers the Arabs and the non-Arabs. It gathers the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, the Maliki, and the Hanbali. So come to your Khilafah, for you have fought for long years to revive it and to implement the Shar'ah of Allah.¹⁸³

ISIS' promises of equality and the out-rooting of discord among Muslims worldwide aim at creating a sense of belonging and unity in a large, diverse and geographically dispersed group of people. Belonging is an important and necessary ingredient in building a new nation and attracting new citizens. Those that feel left out of or discriminated against in Western communities due to race, skin color or religion are offered a homeland where all Muslims are treated well and equally.

5.1.4 Sisterhood

The promise of sisterhood is more narrow and less frequent than that of belonging. Within the official ISIS-propaganda there is not much evidence of the promise of sisterhood, salient in the unofficial propaganda circulating in social media.¹⁸⁴ This can in part be explained by the fact that social media is a more direct and private way of communication which lends itself better to the sharing of personal and emotional messages. An article discussing the positive aspects of polygyny, the taking of up to four wives at the same time, can be seen as an exception to the void of promises relating to sisterhood.¹⁸⁵ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah highlights that women need to embrace the taking of more than one wife as it benefits them as a group. Polygyny is presented as insurance for women and children alike. "Sisters" living in ISIS-controlled territories are frequently widowed due to the

participation of their husbands in armed struggle. Widows and their orphan children living in ISIS territories are through polygyny ensured preserved honor and economic sustenance. Widows are frequently remarried as second, third or fourth wives. Although jealousy is a normal reaction of most women to polygyny, al-Muhajirāh calls for selflessness by saying “Let every sister just put herself in the shoes of a wife of a *shahid* and sacrifice some of the selfishness that is part of our nature”.¹⁸⁶ This selflessness is supposed to be interpreted as an act of sisterhood that benefits the weak and lonely. In the end it ensures that no “sister” is left outside of the community. Sisterhood and selfless deeds are according to ISIS-propaganda heavily rewarded. Good sisters increase their rewards in the present life as well as in the afterlife.¹⁸⁷ Being a *shahid*’s widow results in increased status and glory for ISIS women. It also works as an assurance for a new marriage to be arranged which in turn means security to the “sisters”.

5.1.5 Adventure

The promise of adventure in joining ISIS is often portrayed through vivid recounts of the journeys made by women wanting to migrate to ISIS-held territories. Official propaganda at length discusses the courageous women who can be found among all individuals migrating to Syria and Iraq. This is evident in an article published in *Dabiq* where the author, Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, speaks on behalf of all the women she has met when making her way to the so-called Caliphate and depicts the journeys as a life changing experience filled with joy but also adventure:

[Women go] through the hardship of a long journey that is also exciting and full of memories. While we would discuss the stories of hijrah, we would all agree upon a feeling that overtakes every muhājirah during her journey. It is as if we leave from darkness to light, from caves of darkness to a welcoming green land. Rather, by Allah, it is as if we are resurrected, from death to life!¹⁸⁸

An important and prominent part of the adventure is seemingly that of meeting new people. In describing her journey al-Muhajirāh portrays the courageous women she has met, among them a young British woman:

I met a sister who was six months pregnant accompanied by her husband coming from Britain. I was surprised by this adventurer, so I said, “Why didn’t you wait a bit until you gave birth to the baby you are carrying and then perform hijrah!” She answered, “We could not handle waiting any longer. We melted yearning for the Islamic State!”¹⁸⁹

Only the brave manage to make the trip, and are generously rewarded with, what al-Muhajirāh describes as a paradise on earth:

On the path towards Jannah, there is no place for the fearful and for cowards! And even if I were to forget everything, I would never forget the moment our feet treaded upon the good

lands of Islam and the moment our eyes saw the Uqāb banner fluttering high. [...]The first checkpoint we saw, the first image of the State’s soldiers far from the Internet and TV screens – those dusty and ragged in their flesh and blood – we saw them here with our eyes while tears from our eyes poured forth generously and our tongues pronounced the takbīr silently.¹⁹⁰

The promise of adventure is straightforward: the new land is depicted as a paradise of roughness and challenges awaiting only the brave “sisters”. This interpretation of paradise on earth including tough challenges and hardship is somewhat different from the conventional one. Adventure is a part of the full ISIS-experience, including the journey to paradise.

5.1.6 Romance

The promise of romance is one that does not occur often within official ISIS-propaganda. When mentioned it is in relation to the issue of marriage where women assume the key role of supporting their husbands.¹⁹¹ For unmarried women, ISIS guarantees that men fighting on its side are the best. Therefore they are also portrayed in the propaganda as suitable husbands for the righteous women making *hijrah*. ISIS aims at attracting women without male companions:

Here I want to say with the loudest voice to the sick-hearted who have slandered the honor of the chaste sisters, a woman’s *hijrah* from *dārulkufr* is obligatory whether or not she has a mahram, if she is able to find a relatively safe way and fears Allah regarding herself. She should not wait for anyone but should escape with her religion and reach the land where Islam and its people are honored.¹⁹²

It is according to ISIS-ideology important to live within the boundaries of marriage and respect the will of the husband. Although divorce is normally no alternative official propaganda openly encourages women living with men, who do not follow ISIS’ strict interpretation of Islam, to abandon them:

If, however, he shows arrogance and his pride in his sin takes hold of him, then it’s upon you to abandon him in the *dunyā* so that you may succeed in the Hereafter. And here I call on you to make *hijrah* to us here in the lands of the blessed Islamic State!¹⁹³

For the woman with a husband who does not live in accordance with Islam, as interpreted by ISIS, *hijrah* can present new possibilities. Official propaganda promises great rewards to those that leave behind their infidel spouses in their home countries and migrate to ISIS-held territories:

[If] you fear your Lord and His anger, and abandon this apostate husband in obedience to Him, then He will replace him with something better and will provide for you from where you do not expect.¹⁹⁴

Women that lose their husbands to war are encouraged to remarry after a period of mourning that should not exceed more than four months and ten days.¹⁹⁵ Official propaganda warns widowed women from returning to their countries of origin. Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh reminds female readers of *Dabiq* that their rewards will be proportionate to their suffering:

I whisper into the ear of every muhājirah sister who has been afflicted with the loss of her husband on the battlefield here in the State of honor: Be firm, my dear sister, be patient, and await your reward. Be wary, be wary of thinking of going back to the lands of the tawāghīt. [...]Do not forget that reward is in accordance with the degree of hardship.¹⁹⁶

The passages above demonstrate that the promise of romance, if at all occurring in the propaganda, is connected to marriage. ISIS official statements are lacking the subject of romance. The perfect man makes out an important *pull* factor for women looking for marriage and family life. The Western habit of dating seems to be non-existent in the so-called Islamic State.

5.1.7 Influence

One clear and prominent promise, present in both *Dabiq* and the speeches given by official ISIS-spokesmen is that of influence and restitution for the Muslim population worldwide. ISIS paints a picture where Muslims have been humiliated slaves to the West for centuries. Living without their own state, scattered in the lands of infidels Muslims have been marginalized because of their faith. ISIS-propaganda argues that the establishment of a Caliphate has returned the lost power and influence to Muslims and given them back their self-determination. The ISIS official spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani describes this in a speech delivered in October 2015:

The cause of your weakness, O Muslims, was the collapse of the Khilāfah and your straying thereafter. Yes, O Muslims, the collapse of the Khilāfah was your illness, and its revival is your cure. So gather around it and seek shelter with it after Allah.¹⁹⁷

Much focus is put on conveying that the so-called Islamic State provides the returning of leadership to Muslims who have been disgraced followers for too long. Through supporting ISIS men and women alike can become “masters of the world and kings of the earth.”¹⁹⁸ Through gradual expansion of the so-called Caliphate to the entire world Muslims supporting ISIS can soon rule the world.¹⁹⁹ Calling on the Muslim youth to choose the winning side of ISIS, its official spokesman al-Adnani says:

Therefore, O Muslim youth, join the caravan of the mujāhidīn, for if you do so you will be the honored, dignified kings of the earth who rule the Dunyā. And if you refuse, you will be the humiliated, miserable, contemptible losers.²⁰⁰

Winning against the infidels in the West is constantly portrayed as given through the grace of God.²⁰¹ The return of power and influence affect women in a particular way. This becomes evident in an

article written by Umm Sumayya al-Muhajirāh justifying ISIS forcing Yazidi women, who have been taken as slaves, to convert into Islam. According to the writer, doing so seems to elevate the status of the Muslim women while degrading the infidel Yazidis:

Therefore, I further increase the spiteful ones in anger by saying that I and those with me at home [in the Caliphate] prostrated to Allah in gratitude on the day the first slave-girl entered our home. Yes, we thanked our Lord for having let us live to the day we saw kufr humiliated and its banner destroyed. Here we are today, and after centuries, reviving a prophetic Sunnah, which both the Arab and non-Arab enemies of Allah had buried. By Allah, we brought it back by the edge of the sword, and we did not do so through pacifism, negotiations, democracy, or elections.²⁰²

The so-called Islamic state is, in official propaganda, portrayed as the only salvation for Muslims interested in honor, glory and victory.²⁰³ It promises the return of influence and retribution to the generations of Muslims that, according to speakers and writers have "drowned in oceans of disgrace", have been "nursed on the milk of humiliation" and "ruled by the vilest of all people" living in a long "slumber in the darkness of neglect."²⁰⁴ ISIS claims to have the ability to elevate Muslim status, that of both men and women putting them above the people of disbelief. Siding with ISIS provides a safe road to success and fortune, both in this life and in the hereafter. The promise of influence and power is therefore ever present in official propaganda:

The time has come for those – the time has come for them to rise. The time has come for the ummah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) to wake up from its sleep, remove the garments of dishonor, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace, for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone, and the dawn of honor has emerged anew. The sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared.²⁰⁵

The promise of influence in world politics is of central importance in ISIS official propaganda. As such it surfaces in both *Dabiq* and in official statements. The idea of a Caliphate founded through *jihād* is portrayed as an essential tool for regaining honor, power and influence to Muslims all over the world. Muslim women are promised influence by subjugating women from other religions. Influence is depicted as a zero-sum game with clear winners and losers.

5.1.8 Violence

Violence is a prominent element running as a red thread throughout ISIS official propaganda. Pictures of dead and mutilated people are paired with texts justifying acts of violence and killing. The undertaking of *jihād*, defined as an armed struggle for the cause of religion, is often framed as an obligatory deed for all pious and righteous Muslims. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Caliph of the claimed state, excludes no one from fighting in a speech given in November 2014 by saying:

Thus, it is upon the Muslims to understand well and realize that fighting is obligatory upon each individual from amongst them, and that jihad is the best of deeds and peak of Islam. Their honor and sublimity is by it, as is their wellbeing in the Dunya and the Hereafter.²⁰⁶

As the act of *jihād* is claimed to be mandated by God, those engaging in it will be heavily rewarded, whereas those refraining from it will be punished, suffering painful torments.²⁰⁷ Women however, are exempted from the obligation of *jihād*. An article published in *Dabiq* written by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhājirāh emphasizes other priorities, more suitable for women:

My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujāhidah, and if the weapon of the men is the assault rifle and the explosive belt, then know that the weapon of the women is good behavior and knowledge. Because you will enter fierce battles between truth and falsehood.²⁰⁸

Official propaganda emphasizes that a woman's role is to engage in religious studies, not fighting. This has, according to the author been the cause of some tension and jealousy among women who have wanted to enjoy the tremendous rewards of *jihād* available for men.²⁰⁹ Al-Muhājirāh stresses that women do play an instrumental, although non-combative, role in the waging of *jihād*, they are the mothers of future ISIS-fighters:

Still, the absence of an obligation of *jihād* and war upon the Muslim woman – except in defense against someone attacking her – does not overturn her role in building the Ummah, producing men, and sending them out to the fierceness of battle.²¹⁰

That women are supposed to use violence, only in the case of self-defense, is in part due to the fact that they are seen as feeble war-makers. Female fighters within the Turkish resistance movement PKK are for example degraded in official ISIS-propaganda and referred to as “flimsy”, needing the support of US airstrikes to engage in war.²¹¹ That women are barred from fighting for ISIS in Syria and Iraq does not mean that their use of violence in other settings is condemned, rather it is seen as unusual. In an article recounting for the San Bernardino attacks in California in December of 2015, ISIS praises the perpetrators consisting of both husband and wife:

Thus, the Khilāfah's call for the Muslims to strike the crusaders in their own lands was answered once more, but on this particular occasion the attack was unique. The mujāhid involved did not suffice with embarking upon the noble path of *jihād* alone. Rather, he conducted the operation together with his wife, with the two thereby aiding one another in righteousness and taqwā. [...] May Allah accept the sacrifices of our noble brother Syed Rizwan Farook and his blessed wife, accept them among the shuhadā', and use their deeds as a means to awaken more Muslims in America, Europe, and Australia.²¹²

In sum, this demonstrates that women are not encouraged to fight for ISIS' cause. The use of arms for *jihād* in the land of ISIS is reserved for men. According to official propaganda women must refrain from using arms except in self-defense. The organization does not make promises regarding the use of violence in its territory to its female constituents. It however neither condemns acts of violence carried out by women in other countries, rather it incites them by hoping for the hereafter and calling on more such attacks.

5.1.9 Promises – a Conclusion

What promises are made to women in official propaganda originating from ISIS? That is the primary research question posed in this thesis.

After analyzing the selected material - 13 issues of *Dabiq* magazine and a number of official ISIS statements - the conclusion can be made that there are eight major promises given to women. The promises of fulfilling your *religious duty*, becoming an important *state builder*, experiencing deep and meaningful *belonging*, finding *sisterhood* and *romance* as well as *adventure* and *influence* is quite explicit in the material while the promise of exerting *violence* is not directly stated. They all vary in frequency but among the most prominent are those of religious duty, state builder, belonging and influence. Although women that participate in terrorist attacks are not condemned, the use of violence is not primarily depicted as a task for female migrants to ISIS-territories. In sum the eight promises - whereof seven are explicit - depict a “perfect” life filled with meaning, possibilities, honor and adventure. Women living in the so-called Islamic State are called upon to assume an active role where they are given the possibility to contribute to society in a multitude of ways. Women can, according to official ISIS-propaganda, study and practice medicine while being provided all that is needed for a comfortable life. They can leave their children in state-run kindergartens while increasing their knowledge about issues relating to faith. They can marry and have children with a heroic husband. They can experience new adventures and build lasting and deep relationships with other women. Finally, they can please God and receive the rewards for so doing, both in this life and in the hereafter.

Altogether these promises assumedly create a powerful pulling force, attracting women to migrate to ISIS-territory. It is as if the official propaganda makers of ISIS have read and been inspired by a thrilling novel with a female protagonist winning the game in all aspects of life. Education, influence, love, family life, harmony, friendship, travels and adventure.

5.2 Risks

What does the analysis of the eight promises mapped in the official ISIS-propaganda say about the risk that women pose upon a potential return to their countries of origin in the West?

There is little evidence within official propaganda to support the claim, stemming from photographs circulating on the Internet, that ISIS-women generally participate in gun drills and carry automatic weapons in order to engage in battle. According to official propaganda, women living within ISIS-held territories seem to assume highly conventional roles related to that of marriage, child-bearing and upbringing.²¹³ *Dabiq* magazine along with official statements rather disclose the role of an ISIS woman in *jihad* is first and foremost that of supporting her fighting husband by engaging in intensive religious studies, child-care and other marital duties. Women can also serve the so-called Caliphate as workingwomen in the roles of doctors, nurses or teachers.²¹⁴

As highlighted in the analysis, women who spend time in ISIS-held territories are tempted by promises of belonging and to some extent also by sisterhood. Writers in *Dabiq* discuss the courageous and pious women they meet daily in the so-called Islamic State. It is therefore reasonable to assume that a female migrant's network of ISIS-friends and acquaintances grows while abroad. As underlined in the chapter treating threat assessments in the theoretical section, a network of able and willing friends is a factor that can increase the capabilities of individuals lacking other means to act.²¹⁵

Official ISIS-propaganda makes no promises to women of them being granted the possibility of exerting violence. Neither does it *encourage* women to engage in the armed battles against the enemies in Syria, Iraq or elsewhere nor does it *discourage* participation in attacks. An example of this is the San Bernardino case where a woman was part of both planning and execution.²¹⁶

In sum this suggests that women migrating to ISIS-held territories, if following official state guide lines, do not receive the same experience of handling weapons, ammunition and explosives as their male counterparts. Their capabilities to carry out an attack against Western targets must therefore be assessed to be lower. The motivation of some women to carry out attacks has been confirmed by earlier research. Women who are avid supporters of ISIS and its cause can constitute a valuable support system in a team of perpetrators. Therefore Western security services must make individual threat assessments free from gender biases.

5.2.1 Risks – a Conclusion

What conclusions can we, based on the promises made to women by ISIS, draw on the potential risk women pose if returning to Western societies? That is the secondary research question posed in this thesis.

There is no explicit promise to women of exerting violence within the so-called Islamic State to be found in the official ISIS-propaganda analyzed in this thesis. The use of weapons - in other cases than self-defense - cannot be considered a *pull* or a female duty. According to official propaganda, women

do not seem to be trained in handling weapons, ammunition or explosives. If state guidelines are followed, this influences the level of risk that women pose if returning to the West. Their limited knowledge of handling weapons and explosives does not make them probable participants in armed terrorist attacks. They can, however, through increased social networks acquired while in Syria or Iraq, play an important supporting role in the process of planning, crowd funding and execution of attacks. As proved in the recent attack in San Bernardino, a woman can be an important actor as an assistant to her male companion.²¹⁷

Against this background it remains important to carry out threat assessments of each individual independent of gender. It is dangerous to completely disregard women as participants in terrorist attacks only because they generally seem not to be trained in using weapons, ammunition or explosives. Their role of support can be key in the “success” of the planned attacks.

6. Theoretical Tieback

Through their groundbreaking research on social media Erin Saltman and Melanie Smith produced three major *pull* factors affecting female migration to ISIS-held territories. According to these scholars *religious duty of building the utopian Caliphate, belonging and sisterhood* and *the romantic adventure of life in ISIS-held territories* were the major forces present in social media that affected women to join ISIS.²¹⁸ Through a theoretical operationalization in section 2.4.5 this thesis deconstructed the three factors into six more detailed ones: *religious duty, state builder, belonging, sisterhood, adventure* and *romance*. The two additional factors of *influence* and *violence* were also added. All eight were tested on official ISIS-propaganda.

The first *pull* factor distilled through Saltman’s and Smith’s social media studies is that of *religious duty of building the utopian Caliphate* (in this thesis: *religious duty* and *state builder*). The analysis in chapter five indicates that Saltman’s and Smith’s first factor can be considered the most prominent *pull* in official ISIS-propaganda. As shown by Saltman and Smith - and confirmed by this thesis - women have a religious duty to make *hijrah* and migrate to the so-called Caliphate. They are considered the “twin-halves” of men when it comes to this obligation.²¹⁹ There they are given the opportunity of becoming important and active *state builders*. The roles outlined in official propaganda mirror those frequently mentioned in social media, i.e. doctors, nurses, teachers, mothers and wives.²²⁰ This thesis also confirms that women, within the safe haven of the so-called Islamic State are encouraged to engage in religious studies. Piety is highly rewarded, not frowned upon as is occasionally the case in the West. Just as in social media, promises of the possibility to fulfill one’s *religious duty* while simultaneously being a key state builder are frequently made in official propaganda. This *pull* factor thereby is one of the most important and salient ones in the analyzed material.

The second *pull* factor distinguished by Saltman and Smith is that of *belonging and sisterhood*. According to these scholars social media is filled with promises of deep and meaningful relationships between sisters in the so-called Islamic State. The analysis in this thesis demonstrates that this *pull* factor is present to some extent also in official ISIS-propaganda. When divided into the two sub-factors of *belonging* and *sisterhood* we can see that promises of belonging are made frequently, whereas that of sisterhood is more rare. Official ISIS-propaganda often underlines that all Muslims are welcome to join the so-called Islamic State, regardless of skin color, ethnicity or nationality.²²¹ ISIS depicts its new state as a non-discriminatory entity where the American is the sister of the Iraqi and women of different color are the same. As underlined by Saltman and Smith, this can have a huge impact and attract individuals that have experienced discrimination and exclusion in the West. Sisterhood, on the other hand, is only discussed in relationship to polygyny where women are supposed to be inclusive towards each other to ensure that no one is left out of the community.²²²

The third *pull* factor originating from Saltman's and Smith's study is that of the *romantic adventure of life under ISIS-held territory*. According to the authors this *pull* factor frequently appears in social media where women are promised an exciting trip to a new and unexplored country. Meaningful romance with a perfect knight in a shining armor makes out an important reward and a part of this adventure.²²³ The factor has in this thesis been broken down into the two promises of *romance* and *adventure*, which enables a more in-depth scrutiny. The analysis effectively demonstrates that promises of both adventure and romance occur in official ISIS-propaganda, where the great adventure that migration to ISIS offers, is highlighted. In this material female writers often describe at length the strong sisters they have met along the way and the intriguing men they soon are to marry in the so-called Islamic State.²²⁴ Women that chose to abandon the weak and unrighteous men living in the West can expect great rewards as these will be replaced with something better in the new land.²²⁵

The fourth *pull* factor, *influence and violence*, was inductively created for this thesis. It is derived from imagery circulating in social media depicting women carrying automatic weapons and participating in gun drills. The promises of influence and violence have been documented as important forces in attracting men to violent Islamic extremist organizations.²²⁶ The analysis in this thesis revealed that the promise of *influence* was given also to women in official ISIS-propaganda. The organization, again and again asserts its right and possibility to return leadership to Muslims who, according to the interpretation of ISIS, have been humiliated and subjugated. Through the use of arms ISIS, along with its followers will rule the world and return honor to the Muslim community. The status of Muslim women will, according to this strategy, be elevated if women with other religious affiliations are subjugated to them.²²⁷ Women do not, however - as opposed to men - hold combative roles in the waging of war. ISIS does not give women promises of exerting *violence* in its territory. Instead they

are given non-combative roles in *jihād*²²⁸ The organization does not, however, condemn acts of violence carried out by female affiliates abroad; rather it incites them.²²⁹

In short this thesis confirms the importance of Saltman's and Smith's *pull* factors - *religious duty of building the utopian Caliphate, belonging and sisterhood* and *the romantic adventure of life in ISIS-held territory*. The thesis also highlights *influence* as a *pull* towards radicalization and potential migration. In official ISIS-propaganda *violence* neither presents a clear promise to women nor a *pull* for migration. This has a bearing on the potential risk that women pose if returning to their countries of origin in the West. Threat assessment theory tells us that experiences of gun tactics, military operations and explosives markedly increase the *capability* of potentially *motivated* individuals.²³⁰ It thereby gives them the tools to carry out an attack. Without these experiences women should be deemed less likely to play the leading roles in major terrorist operations. They can however, as has already been stated, play key supporting roles in such acts. Their enlarged social networks, gained in Syria or Iraq, can contain contacts with valuable ISIS-affiliates. These can be massively important when it comes to obtaining weaponry, cash or additional perpetrators.²³¹

7. Policy Proposals

On the basis of the analysis in and conclusion of this thesis there is an almost infinite number of possible policy proposals that could be made. The proposals presented below are for practical reasons not exhaustive but should be seen as a list of *feasible* measures to counter the recruitment of women to ISIS. Some are already employed in different European countries.²³² The basic criteria for all policy proposals are those democratic rule and human rights. The proposals are of a preventive nature but do not contest the need of repressive measures such as criminalization or increased surveillance. Preventive and repressive measures should be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic.

- It is key to ensure a broad religious education for all at an early age in school. Knowledge has the ability to prevent exclusion and intolerance, which often spring from a lack of understanding. Targeted educational efforts should also be made towards certain professional groups such as journalists and teachers, social workers and police officers.
- Those that wish to practice their religion need a safe and open space to do so. Interreligious prayer rooms can be provided in selected official establishments. An official educational program for Imams should be established, matching that of Christian priests. The construction of mosques should also be supported to minimize the occurrence of underground establishments.

- Heads of state and other leaders should be attentive to signal inclusiveness to all citizens regardless of religious affiliation. Religious tolerance and diversity can be promoted by such simple gestures as wishing merry Christmas, happy Eid and happy Chanukah for example.
- Governments should be weary of enforcing laws that ban religious expression. Wearing religious symbols in public spaces should not be banned without proper investigation of the costs and benefits for so doing.
- Special attention should be given to granting access for Muslim women in the area of education, housing and employment. Decreased discrimination in application-processes can be achieved through such measures as anonymous procedures and anti-discriminatory laws.
- Inclusion of Muslim girls and women in leisure activities should be encouraged. Laws and regulations should ensure that all children are welcome to practice activities regardless of gender or religious belonging. Civil society actors should be encouraged to deploy special measures in order to reach this target group.
- Respected religious authorities within the Muslim community should be identified and given a platform that enables dialogue and a balanced theological discussion. They are important actors and channels in the effort to counter ISIS extreme messages.
- Government agencies should increase their efforts in working against honor violence and honor culture to ensure that all women living in democratic societies are granted equal rights.
- Concerned agencies should encourage already existing civil society organizations to create mentorship programs specially directed towards Muslim women. Mentors should be identified among established women, Muslim or others, to contribute to the empowerment of these individuals.

8. Concluding Discussion

How does ISIS attempt to attract women? To investigate this has been the primary purpose of this thesis. By scrutinizing official propaganda consisting of *Dabiq* magazine and ISIS-statements a number of promises made to women have been mapped. Women are offered the possibility to fulfill their *religious duty*, to become important *state builders*, to experience in-depth *belonging* and *sisterhood* and to some extent also *romance* and *adventure*. They are also promised great *influence*. There is little evidence to support the popular images of women carrying guns and participating in

fighters circulating in social media. Official propaganda does not make promises to women of exerting *violence* in ISIS-held territories - but it does not condemn such acts on foreign soil.

Based on the promises a secondary purpose of the thesis has been to assess the potential threat that ISIS-affiliated women pose to society if returning to the West. The analysis indicates that women, if following official ISIS-rules, are not encouraged to use weapons and they do not seem to be trained in handling them. The same goes for ammunition and explosives. This must influence the level of threat that women can pose if they leave the Caliphate. This also excludes them from being active participants in well-coordinated and armed terrorist attacks. Women can, however, play an important *supporting* role in the process of planning, crowd funding and execution of attacks. While in Syria or Iraq female migrants have indeed had the possibility to expand their social networks, which can be crucial in such efforts. Against this backdrop Western security services should avoid making gender biased threat assessments. Not including women in their analysis will give a false illusion and can lead to far-reaching consequences.

In conclusion, this thesis confirms the results of earlier studies relating to female ISIS-migrants. The same *pull* factors as distilled through social media are frequent in ISIS official propaganda. This analysis has however discovered an additional *pull* factor in the promise of investing migrating women with *influence*. ISIS promises what they consider the return of power in world politics to the Muslim *Ummah*; Muslim women will gain influence by subjugating women of other faiths.

The “promises of paradise” resemble those that women from all around the world have found, through the times, in reading classic romantic novels or watching such movies. ISIS seems to have been able to touch the same nerve in its official propaganda and statements. True or not.

The nine policy proposals, sprung from the analysis, are intended to try to stop future migration of women to ISIS. Western governments have a strong responsibility to prevent the recruitment of women – not only men - to such organizations. The “promises of paradise” should be dismantled and disputed. How enchanting is this so-called Caliphate in reality? That is the question that needs to be addressed by a larger number of politicians, researchers, civil society organizations and security services.

9. Future Research

This thesis has applied a *qualitative* approach in analyzing official ISIS-propaganda. Future research could benefit from applying a *quantitative* methodology to the study of women in ISIS. Research analyzing the availability of official propaganda targeting women online over time could give meaningful insights into the potential importance of official propaganda in attracting women, in

comparison to unofficial propaganda. Such knowledge would also provide researchers and policy makers with indications of how ISIS communications strategy is developing over time and how ISIS constituents receive and react to that information. Expanded knowledge on such topics would benefit the creation of counter narratives aiming at contradicting the propaganda.

This thesis has further focused on exploring what promises are given to women in official ISIS-propaganda. It thereby aspired to complement existing research mostly based on empirics derived from social media. Future qualitative research would benefit from carrying out interviews with women still in, or returning from, ISIS-held territories. Such interviews would arguably provide us with a deeper understanding of female migration to ISIS-held territories. Although interviews focusing on the *pull* factors of radicalization are most welcome, researchers should also focus on expanding our knowledge on the *push* factors that affect women. This would provide both policy makers and researchers with valuable information in detailing out who is most susceptible to violent extremist propaganda. A deepened understanding of these mechanisms would give society the ability to further fine-tune policy proposals and make targeted efforts in preventing recruitment of women to violent extremist organizations.

Mapping how life under ISIS-rule affect women by carrying out interviews can also present us with important and powerful tools to counter radicalization. Defectors and ISIS-affiliates have the ability to shatter the utopian picture of women's lives in the Caliphate painted by ISIS. Contradictory evidence of the benefits of migrating as voiced by people with experiences of so doing can be vital for the fight against violent extremism. Female defectors can become effective key assets and strong voices for the necessary counter-activities against radicalization in the same way as their male counterparts have been.²³³

Finally, future research could contribute with vital insights of the *push* and *pull* to violent extremist groups by carrying out comparative studies. Such studies could for example investigate both similarities and differences of women within diverse extremist milieus. Getting a better insight into what unifies and differentiates women in violent right-wing, left-wing and the Islamic extremist groups can generate an increased understanding for the attraction of such organizations.

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11. Footnotes

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² ISIS has, since its birth in 2007 gone through various stages applying names such as ISIL, ISIS and IS. European states have also used the term Daesh to refer to the organization. Declaring a Caliphate in June of 2014 its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the creation of the Islamic State (IS). This term will be broadly avoided in this thesis since using the label of the IS involves the risk of granting a degree of legitimacy to the created entity why this will be avoided. While the organization goes to great length in taking on state-like functions it has not gained the international recognition needed for it to be deemed a legitimate state. (Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:9)

³ Rafiq & Malik 2015:11

⁴ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:65

⁵ UN Resolution 2249 (2015)

⁶ Havlicek 2015:3

⁷ Ranstorp, Gustafsson & Hyllengren 2015:37-42

⁸ Example Regeringsbeslut 24, Diarienummer Ku2015/01868/D

⁹ Exception Rafiq and Malik 2015

¹⁰ See Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015; Saltman & Smith 2015

¹¹ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:28-34

¹² Example Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:32; Rafiq & Malik 2015:4 and Huey 2015:1

¹³ Example Saltman & Smith 2015:1 and Huey 2015:3

¹⁴ Winter (A) 2015:22

¹⁵ Eleftheriou-Smith, Independent, 2015-04-20

¹⁶ Exception Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015.

¹⁷ Katz 2015

¹⁸ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:28

¹⁹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:13

²⁰ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:82

²¹ Buchanan & Park, The New York Times, 2016-04-09

²² Huey 2015:5

²³ Saltman & Smith 2015:1

²⁴ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:8

²⁵ Example Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015; Saltman & Smith 2015 & Rafiq & Malik 2015

²⁶ Saltman & Smith 2015:8; Rafiq & Malik 2015:8

²⁷ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:81-2

²⁸ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:37

²⁹ McCormick 2003:477

³⁰ SOU 2014:20-1

³¹ SOU 2014:22

³² McCormick 2003:490-1

³³ Sterling 1981

³⁴ Cottam 2010:270-3 McCormick 2003:474, 491

³⁵ Ferracuti 1998:60

³⁶ Cottam 2010:270-3 McCormick 2003:491

³⁷ Ranstorp 2009:24

³⁸ Stump & Dixit 2013:56

³⁹ Christmann 2012

⁴⁰ Rafiq & Malik 2015:14

⁴¹ Chowdhury Fink, Barakat & Shetret 2013

⁴² Bloom 2011

⁴³ Zakaria 2015

⁴⁴ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:8

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- ⁴⁵ Briggs Obe and Silverman 2014
⁴⁶ Barrett 2014
⁴⁷ Klausen 2015
⁴⁸ Carter, Maher and Neumann 2014
⁴⁹ Silke 2009:34-7; Ranstorp 2009:17 See also Katz 2015
⁵⁰ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015
⁵¹ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:38
⁵² Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:32
⁵³ Saltman & Smith 2015:7
⁵⁴ Saltman & Smith 2015:5-7
⁵⁵ Saltman & Smith 2015:front page
⁵⁶ Saltman & Smith 2015:27-30, 34
⁵⁷ Rafiq & Malik 2015
⁵⁸ Rafiq & Malik 2015:38
⁵⁹ Huey 2015
⁶⁰ Huey 2015:1
⁶¹ Neumann 2008:3
⁶² Kühle & Lindekilde 2010:22
⁶³ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:80-2; Säkerhetspolisen 2010:33-4
⁶⁴ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:59, 87-9
⁶⁵ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:29-30, 33-4
⁶⁶ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:33
⁶⁷ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013-85-7
⁶⁸ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:59
⁶⁹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:36-8, 40-1
⁷⁰ Säkerhetspolisen 2015:46
⁷¹ Schori Liang 2015:2; Winter (B) 2015:15; Rafiq & Malik 2015:39-40
⁷² Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:80
⁷³ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:85-7
⁷⁴ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:85-6
⁷⁵ Hogan 2008:82-3
⁷⁶ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:86
⁷⁷ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:85-7
⁷⁸ Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:85-6
⁷⁹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:34-5; Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:86
⁸⁰ Ibid; Ibid
⁸¹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:34
⁸² Ranstorp & Hyllengren 2013:87
⁸³ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:34-5
⁸⁴ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:33-4
⁸⁵ Sageman 2004:135
⁸⁶ Saltman & Smith 2015:8-17
⁸⁷ Ibid.
⁸⁸ Saltman & Smith 2015:7
⁸⁹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:43-4
⁹⁰ Saltman & Smith 2015; Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015
⁹¹ Saltman & Smith 2015:27, 29-30, 34
⁹² Saltman & Smith 2015:14
⁹³ Saltman & Smith 2015:14-5
⁹⁴ Saltman & Smith 2015:13-5
⁹⁵ Saltman & Smith 2015:15-6
⁹⁶ Saltman & Smith 2015:16
⁹⁷ Saltman & Smith 2015:16-7
⁹⁸ Saltman & Smith 2015; Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015; Rafiq & Malik 2015
⁹⁹ Huey 2015:14-5
¹⁰⁰ Saltman & Smith 2015
¹⁰¹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:77
¹⁰² Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:54-5
¹⁰³ Similar operationalizations have been made in Rafiq & Malik 2015

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- ¹⁰⁴ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:55-6
¹⁰⁵ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:56-8
¹⁰⁶ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:77
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
¹⁰⁸ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:79-80
¹⁰⁹ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015:28-33
¹¹⁰ N.A. The New York Times. 2015-12-10
¹¹¹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:79-84
¹¹² Buchanan & Park, The New York Times, 2016-04-09
¹¹³ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:80-2
¹¹⁴ Winter (B) 2015:12-3
¹¹⁵ Zelin 2015:89 Schori Liang 2015:5-6
¹¹⁶ Schori Liang 2015:5
¹¹⁷ Schori Liang 2015:6
¹¹⁸ Schori Liang 2015:2
¹¹⁹ Schori Liang 2015:5
¹²⁰ Gustafsson 2015:43
¹²¹ Schori Liang 2015; Gustafsson 2015
¹²² Winter (B) 2015:7; Schori Liang 2015:2
¹²³ Gambhir 2014:1
¹²⁴ Schori Liang 2015:4
¹²⁵ Loveluck, The Telegraph. 2015-06-06
¹²⁶ Schori Liang 2015:4
¹²⁷ Gambhir 2014:1,10
¹²⁸ Gambhir 2014:2-3
¹²⁹ Ibid.
¹³⁰ Exception: Marilyn Nevalainen: Rubin, The New York Times, 2016-03-02
¹³¹ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:188-9
¹³² Huey 2015
¹³³ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett 2015; Saltman & Smith; Rafiq & Malik 2015
¹³⁴ Rafiq & Malik 2015:12
¹³⁵ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:58
¹³⁶ Moses & Knutsen 2007:5
¹³⁷ Moses & Knutsen 2007:132
¹³⁸ Burnham 2008:64
¹³⁹ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:197-8
¹⁴⁰ Merriam 1994:44
¹⁴¹ Merriam 1994:32
¹⁴² Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:63-5
¹⁴³ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:224
¹⁴⁴ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:216-7
¹⁴⁵ Merriam 1994:23
¹⁴⁶ Merriam 1994:180
¹⁴⁷ Moses & Knutsen 2007:136
¹⁴⁸ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:211
¹⁴⁹ Ibid.
¹⁵⁰ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:211-2
¹⁵¹ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:41
¹⁵² Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:217
¹⁵³ Ibid.
¹⁵⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵⁵ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:218
¹⁵⁶ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:222
¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
¹⁵⁸ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:217-9
¹⁵⁹ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerlund 2012:58
¹⁶⁰ Moses & Knutsen 2007:136
¹⁶¹ Example: N.A., Dabiq, July (A) 2014:43; N.A., Dabiq, July (B) 2014:4 & N.A., Dabiq, September 2014:3
¹⁶² Umm Bashīr al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, February 2015:50

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- ¹⁶³ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March 2015:33
¹⁶⁴ N.A., Svenska Dagbladet, 2010-04-26
¹⁶⁵ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March 2015:33
¹⁶⁶ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, July 2015:48
¹⁶⁷ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, November 2015:22
¹⁶⁸ Al-Baghdadi, statement, 2015-12-26:4
¹⁶⁹ N.A., Dabiq, May 2015:26
¹⁷⁰ Ibid.
¹⁷¹ Al-Baghdadi, statement, 2014-07-05:4-5
¹⁷² Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:44
¹⁷³ Ibid.
¹⁷⁴ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:44
¹⁷⁵ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:45
¹⁷⁶ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:41
¹⁷⁷ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:42
¹⁷⁸ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, July 2015:43-4
¹⁷⁹ Umm Bashīr al- Muhajirāh, Dabiq, February 2015:50
¹⁸⁰ Al-Adnani, statement, 2015-03-12:3
¹⁸¹ Al-Baghdadi, statement, 2014-07-05:5
¹⁸² Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq March, 2015:33
¹⁸³ Al-Adnani, statement, 2015-06-23:9
¹⁸⁴ Saltman & Smith 2015:15-6
¹⁸⁵ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, November 2015
¹⁸⁶ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, November 2015:22
¹⁸⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸⁸ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March, 2015:35
¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
¹⁹⁰ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March, 2015:36
¹⁹¹ Example: Umm Bashīr al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, February, 2015
¹⁹² Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March, 2015:35
¹⁹³ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, July 2015:47
¹⁹⁴ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, July 2015:45
¹⁹⁵ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, January 2016:24
¹⁹⁶ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March, 2015:36-7
¹⁹⁷ Al Adnani, statement, 2015-10-13:7
¹⁹⁸ Al-Adnani, statement, 2014-09-22:8
¹⁹⁹ Al-Adnani, statement, 2015-03-12:6
²⁰⁰ Al-Adnani, statement, 2015-10-13:8
²⁰¹ Al-Adnani, statement, 2014-09-22:8
²⁰² Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, May, 2015:47
²⁰³ Al-Adnani, statement, 2015-10-13:5
²⁰⁴ Al-Adnani, statement, 2014-06-29:3
²⁰⁵ Ibid.
²⁰⁶ Al-Baghdadi, statement, 2014-11-13:1
²⁰⁷ Ibid.
²⁰⁸ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:44
²⁰⁹ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:41
²¹⁰ Ibid.
²¹¹ N.A., Dabiq, October 2014:41
²¹² N.A., Dabiq, January 2016:4
²¹³ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:40-45
²¹⁴ N.A., Dabiq, May 2015:26; Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August 2015:44
²¹⁵ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:80-2
²¹⁶ N.A, The New York Times, 2015-12-10
²¹⁷ Ibid.
²¹⁸ Saltman & Smith 2015:13-7
²¹⁹ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March 2015:33
²²⁰ Saltman & Smith 2015:13-4
²²¹ See for example Al-Adnani, statement, 2015-03-12:3

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- ²²² Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, November 2015
²²³ Saltman & Smith 2015:16-7
²²⁴ Example: Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, March, 2015:35
²²⁵ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, July 2015:45
²²⁶ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:43-4
²²⁷ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, May, 2015:47
²²⁸ Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirāh, Dabiq, August, 2015:40-5
²²⁹ N.A., Dabiq, January 2016:3-4
²³⁰ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:77
²³¹ Säkerhetspolisen 2010:79-82
²³² Example: Cameron, Twitter post, 2013-10-14
²³³ Neumann 2015