

Madonnas and whores or blood and gore?

Roles for women in the so-called Islamic State

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Abstract

From sweethearts to sex slaves, nurturing mothers to brutish police officers, roles for women in the so-called Islamic State are as diverse as their origins. Female functions within the organization vary, depending on one's religion, ideology, age, and nationality. While Daesh's exhaustive propaganda machine legitimizes the assignment of women's roles through historic and religious justifications, they also remain consistent with exaggerated gender roles in warfare, recurrent in human history across time and space. This analysis strives to better understand the organization's utilization of arguably their most powerful weapon. By analyzing Daesh propaganda through an intersection of qualitative content analysis overlaid with gender-war theory, this thesis explores the roles for women in Daesh, the historic and religious justifications underlying these roles, and tests whether female functions in Daesh fit the recurring gender roles posited by gender-war theorists.



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Table of Contents

Chapter One—Introduction

* Introduction.....	1
• Presentation of research questions.....	2
• Primary source materials.....	3
• Historiography.....	6

Chapter Two—Background & context

* Raising the black flag: the rise of Daesh.....	13
* Channels of Propaganda.....	16
• Propaganda as religion.....	16
• Propaganda as history.....	19
* Daesh doctrine: the ABCs of Daesh ideology.....	25
• Apostasy.....	25
• <i>Jihad</i>	26
• A Women’s Role in <i>Jihad</i>	27
• Sexual <i>Jihad</i>	28
• Slavery & sexual slavery.....	29
• Veiling & seclusion.....	30

Chapter Three—Methodology

* Qualitative content analysis.....	33
* Propaganda analysis.....	38
* Challenges, limitations & ethical considerations.....	42

Chapter Four—Through the lens of gender-war theory

* What is gender?.....	45
• Gender is socially constructed.....	45
• Gender is personality, gender is sexuality.....	46
• Can we study gender? Critics of the sex-gender distinction and gender realism....	47

- Gender in historical analysis.....48
- * Gender in war.....49
 - War is gendered.....49
 - Sexual violence in war: five theories.....49
 - Gender-war theory.....51
 - Social constructionist theory.....52
 - The many faces of women in Daesh.....53

Chapter Five—Roles for women in Daesh

- * Muhajirah.....55
- * Sweetheart.....56
 - Single.....56
 - Marriage.....57
 - Wifely duties.....58
 - Supportive.....64
 - Widow.....65
 - Polygamy.....67
- * Mother.....68
 - Motherhood in Daesh.....69
 - Cubs of the caliphate.....71
- * Nurse.....72
- * Jihadi bride.....74
 - Female warriors.....74
 - Women cannot fight.....77
- * Feminization of enemies: sex slaves.....78
- * Shamer.....82
 - Enforcing war.....82
 - Enforcing religion.....84
- * Conclusion.....85

Chapter Six—Conclusion

* Summary.....87
* Study limitations & further research.....87
* Policy recommendations.....88

Attachments

* Coding Framework.....90
* References.....105
* Glossary.....118



Chapter One—Introduction

The Jihadi-Salafist militant group Daesh¹ finds itself at the center of a media cyclone of their own making. Between their own Goebbels-esque ‘news’ branch pumping out propaganda, to the outpouring of reports, studies, and articles produced by global news outlets, Daesh is infamous worldwide. One consequence of such global notoriety is growth. Since their break with al-Qaeda in April 2013, Daesh’s technologically-savvy online campaign and globally inclusive ambitions drew in enough recruits to establish first, an army, and then, a territory.² Perhaps the most revolutionary factor separating Daesh from other terror groups are these state-building ambitions. Evolving from a legacy of terrorist cells that plot from the shadows, Daesh has operated in the harsh, dusty daylight of its strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa. And unlike their predecessors, Daesh relied on a new group of recruits, to meet the challenges of building a proto-state: women.

While many studies reported on the growth of Daesh largely from the viewpoint of the *mujahideen*,³ growing scholarship has shifted towards women. Foreign females flocked to the group in unprecedented numbers, leaving their homes to make *hijrah*⁴ with all the accompanying risks of engaging in terrorism and living in a war zone. Women traveling to Daesh territories adopted the term *muhajirat*⁵ as a self-identifying badge of pride. An estimated 10% of foreign fighters traveling to Daesh-held territories from North America, Europe, and Australia are women—or around 550.⁶ Less is known on foreign women traveling from non-Western

¹Daesh’ is the Arabic acronym for ‘the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.’ Due to its similarity to the Arabic word ‘daes’, (‘one who crushed underfoot’), and ‘dahes,’ (‘one who sows discord’), the term is despised by the group. I opt to use this name over IS, ISIS, or ISIL, as it is derogatory and avoids granting the group legitimacy by referring to it as a ‘state’.

² Please note this thesis only considers Daesh-held territory in Iraq and Syria, and excludes militant groups elsewhere who have pledged allegiance to the group (such as in Libya and Nigeria).

³ Those engaged in *jihad* (singular: *mujahid*). Commonly refers to male jihadist soldiers or guerrilla fighters.

⁴ A migration of Muslims to escape religious persecution or seek religious freedom.

⁵ The literal translation from Arabic (singular: *muhajirah*) is “one who avoids or abandons bad things.” This definition later evolved to “migrant,” with the same linguistic roots as *hijrah*, implying a religious impetus behind migration. The term is specific to females.

⁶ “Saudis most likely to join ISIS, 10% of group’s fighters are women,” *MEMO: Middle Eastern Monitor*, October 20, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/14758-saudis-most-likely-to-join-isis-10-of-groups-fighters-are-women>

countries, though they are rumored to be in the ‘thousands.’⁷ Another area of interest examines local Iraqi and Syrian women, whether captured and forced into sexual slavery or otherwise coerced to collaborate out of fear, family pressure, or opportunity benefits. At the height of Daesh’s territorial expansion, some ten million people were thought to live under the black flag.⁸

Despite a population numbering the millions, Daesh has wielded an iron grip over communication to the outside world. Limited internet access, brutal punishments for speaking out, and bans on journalists and travel all shroud the mysterious “hermit kingdom.”⁹ So air tight is their control that the majority of information from the caliphate is in fact propaganda—their monopoly over information is juxtaposed by an exhaustive propaganda machine, generating an unprecedented online campaign. Although they rely on medieval war references and military battalions of centuries bygone, Daesh understands the conflict as a modern war of information. What we’re left with is a photoshopped, rose-tinted picture of the caliphate, projected from their main media branch, *Al Hayat*. Daesh peddles its propaganda through social media accounts, online journals, e-books, and online magazines. I rely on propaganda as my primary sources—understood here as their English magazine *Dabiq*, social media accounts of English posting individuals verified to be in Daesh-held territories in Iraq and Syria, and official Daesh publications— simply because it is all we have. By considering all primary sources as propaganda, I bypass problems of bias to offer a meaningful analysis.

I. Presentation of the research questions

⁷ Gaja Pellegrini-Bettoli, “Intrepid Sisters Reveal How ISIS Depends on Role of Women,” *News Deeply*, May 26, 2017, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2017/05/26/intrepid-sisters-reveal-how-isis-depends-on-role-of-women>

⁸ “Islamic State and the crisis in Iraq and Syria in maps,” *BBC*, July 20, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>

⁹ “ISIS Steps Up Information Control in Raqqa and Deir Ezzor,” *Flash Notes 5* by *The Sec-Dev Foundation*, August 5, 2015, <http://new.secdev-foundation.org/isis-steps-up-information-control-in-raqqa-and-deir-ezzor/>; Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>

My research strives to take an inclusive view of women¹⁰ within Daesh by considering both local and foreign females.¹¹ I analyze Daesh propaganda to determine *what* have been the roles for women in the caliphate, and *how* these roles have benefited the group. Women streamed in from all over the world, with Daesh becoming a fundamentalist melting-pot of sorts. At the same time, millions of women saw their lives fundamentally altered when militants conquered their homelands and installed a regime founded on fear. In response to such a diverse populace, women's roles within the organization vary, depending on one's religion, ideology, age, and nationality. From wives to mothers to nurses to sex slaves, roles for women are as diverse as their origins. These discrepancies should not be viewed as random or consequences of "unleashing the dogs of war." Rather, they represent a deliberate choice made by the upper crust of Daesh leadership based on two considerations: historic-religious and strategic. The former involves a fundamentalist, selective interpretation of religious texts and early Muslim history, while the latter resonates in the exaggeration of gender roles and power relations recurrent in warfare across time and space.

Previous literature on women in Daesh reflects two disparate concerns of the international community: reports on Western women indicate curiosity and concern with the security risks of returning females, while coverage of local women reveals shocking exposés of slavery and sexual violence. There remains no singular comprehensive account of all females, including local female residents and non-Western *muhajirat*. To differentiate from previous studies, this thesis argues for a different approach: women from all corners of the globe viewed jointly, not as separate issues of security risks or human rights violations, but as a central asset to Daesh. The primary questions posited by my paper are thus:

- * *What have been the roles for women within Daesh, as portrayed by the organization?*
 - *What are the historical foundations for these roles?*
 - *What are the religious foundations for these roles?*
 - *How do these roles benefit the group?*

¹⁰ References to 'women' include women and girls. In order to be as inclusive as possible, I am not imposing any age minimum for women in this analysis, and include girls under the age of 18.

¹¹ I define 'local' women as residents of Iraq and Syria pre-2011. 'Foreign' women are those who traveled from abroad into Daesh-held territories.

To answer these questions, I scrutinized Daesh propaganda with qualitative content analysis and propaganda analysis through the lens of gender-war theory. I present my findings in Chapter 5.

II. Primary Source Materials

My primary source materials consist of various forms of Daesh propaganda, released in English.

One avenue consists of English-speaking social media accounts of individuals who either self-identify as living in the Caliphate, and/or are confirmed by other sources (in news articles and academic reports). In total, I identified six social media accounts on Tumblr and Twitter. I recorded posts from September 2015 through February 3, 2017 by taking screenshots on my iPhone. I only collected data relevant to my research questions on roles for women, and thus did not attempt to capture every post made during the designated period. I identified the nationalities behind the account holders through other sources (in news articles and academic reports), or by the poster's own admission. Out of the six accounts, two account holders originated from the UK, two from Sweden, one from the Netherlands, and one from Malaysia. Four accounts holders were female, and two male. I made this distinction by their user names (women use the prefix 'Umm,' the Arabic word for 'mother'. Males favor the prefix 'Al', the definite article of 'the' in Arabic). References to the author's gender were also made in posts. To protect the privacy of the account holders, I use code names based on nationality and gender (see table on the following page). Any researcher who wishes to access the uncoded primary data may contact me.

Similar to posts on social media is the English journal "Days of Sahawaat" by Sudanese fighter Abu Saa'd Al-Sudani on his exploits west of Aleppo in 2014.¹² The diary mentions a few of his female travel companions, whom he refers to as 'sisters'. Al-Sudani's passages on his 'sisters' give a window into the expected roles for foreign women in the caliphate.

Another avenue consists of English e-books and magazines published by Daesh. As of February 2016, there are thirteen issues of *Dabiq*, the monthly magazine published by Daesh for its English-speaking audience.¹³ The magazine includes articles specifically targeted towards Western women in issues 7-13. Furthermore, I analyzed two English e-books released by Daesh.

¹² Abu Saa'd Al-Sudani, "Days of Sahawaat (Episode One)," March 17, 2015 <https://justpaste.it/daysofsahawaat1>

¹³ At the time of writing, there are currently fifteen issues of *Dabiq* magazine, but this analysis only considers issues 1-13.

Social Media Accounts

Codename	Platform	Place of origin	Gender	Number of posts recorded	Word count	Types of posts recorded
UK-X	Tumblr, Twitter	UK	Female	18	3,479	injustices against Muslims, call to hijrah, ideology
UK-Y	Tumblr	UK	Male	38	13,623	advice, pictures around the caliphate, Q&A
SWE-X-1	Tumblr	Sweden	Female	7	4,850	Advice to <i>muhajirat</i> , life in the caliphate
SWE-X-2	Tumblr	Sweden	Female	30	2,322	Idyllic caliphate, cubs of caliphate, community
MAL-X	Tumblr, Twitter	Malaysia	Female	51 tumblr, 30 Twitter	17,734	advice, Q&A on life in the caliphate
NE-Y	Tumblr	the Netherlands	Male	3	611	Q&A on ideology

The first, *The Islamic State* (2015), gives a general overview of the background, goals, tactics, services provided, media outlets, and future of the organization.¹⁴ Among these chapters, the book includes sections on the “New generation of the Islamic State (Lion cubs)” as well as “Education for Females,” both of which are relevant for discussing women’s roles. The second, *Hijrah to the Islamic State* (2015) provides advice on traveling to the caliphate, *hijrah* stories, and outlines the religious call to hijrah.¹⁵ Women are specifically targeted in the sections providing advice for females making *hijrah*, and the personal story of one woman’s journey.

¹⁴ *The Islamic State 2015*, <https://archive.org/details/TheIslamicState2015-FullEbook>

¹⁵ *Hijrah to the Islamic State*, 2015 <https://thejihadproject.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/hijrah-to-the-islamic-state.pdf>

For a near-comprehensive picture of women's roles as told by the organization, I examine two pamphlets, one directed towards Western audiences and the other towards women in the Gulf. In late 2014, Daesh released *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, an English booklet outlining women's roles on and off the battlefield.¹⁶ This booklet is especially interesting when compared to *Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto and Case Study by the Al-Khanssaa Brigade*, a booklet on female role models and duties originally released in Arabic (translated by Quilliam, a counter-terrorism organization) in January 2015.¹⁷ While the former is more favorable towards women on the battlefield, the latter promotes traditional homemaking and child-rearing duties. Together, these two publications offer a near-comprehensive picture of societal roles for foreign women within the caliphate; however, they leave out an important group—*mushrikin* (polytheists or heretics),¹⁸ apostates,¹⁹ and *kuffar* (unbelievers or infidels).²⁰

Within Daesh ideology, infidels can be taken as spoils of war.²¹ In October/November 2014, Daesh released a pamphlet in Arabic (translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute) detailing 27 tips on sexual relations with captives.²² This pamphlet has been corroborated by stories of escaped women as well as additional admissions by Daesh itself.

III. Historiography

* *Daesh Propaganda*

¹⁶ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 2014, accessed November 18, 2015 https://archive.org/stream/SistersRoleInJihad/78644461-Sister-s-Role-in-Jihad_djvu.txt

¹⁷ *Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto on Women by the Al-Khanssaa Brigade*, 2015, trans. Charlie Winter, *The Quilliam Foundation* <https://therinjfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/women-of-the-islamic-state3.pdf>

¹⁸ Those who uphold *shirk* (idolatrous) religious practices. Also known as devil-worshippers or polytheists. Daesh mistakenly views the Yazidi as polytheists for their beliefs in angels, although their views are similar to angels in Christianity.

¹⁹ Those who have known and later turned their backs on Islam. Most often branded apostates by Daesh are Shia Muslims, whose traditions such as worshipping at the graves of imams and public self-flagellation have no mention in the Qur'an or the Prophet's life.

²⁰ Unbelievers. Often used interchangeably with *mushrikin*, though *kuffar* is a wider term, encompassing polytheists (the Yazidi), People of the Book (Christians and Jews), and apostates (Shia Muslims).

²¹ "The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour," *Dabiq* no. 4 "The Failed Crusade", August/September 2014, 14, <https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-isis-magazine-Issue-4-the-failed-crusade.pdf>

²² "Islamic State (ISIS) Releases Pamphlet on Female Slaves," *Middle Eastern Media Research Institute*, December 3, 2014, <https://www.memri.org/jtm/islamic-state-isis-releases-pamphlet-female-slaves>

Due to both the high quality and substantial quantity of Daesh propaganda, many analyses have been conducted on the group's publications.

Research fellow with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism J.M. Berger discusses the conduciveness of social media to Daesh's message of impending apocalyptic doom, and divides content into three categories: messages from leadership, military operations, and the utopian society.²³ Washington Institute research fellow Aaron Y. Zelin analyzes all Daesh media output for one week in April 2014, offering both a qualitative and quantitative analysis.²⁴ Zelin provides a complete snapshot by including Arabic postings, constituting the majority of Daesh propaganda.²⁵ He finds Daesh propaganda to be mostly visual, and relies on output to appear active in many regions. The most recurring themes include military, *da'wa* (faith), governance, *hisba* (enforcing Shari'a law), promotion of the caliphate, and enemy attack.²⁶

With the support of Google Ideas, J.M. Berger and data scientist Jonathan Morgan conducted a quantitative analysis of Daesh on Twitter, with the overarching goal of establishing a 'demographic snapshot.'²⁷ From September-December 2014, Berger and Morgan compiled a sample of 20,000 'Daesh-supporter' accounts through manual selection and social network analysis; data was collected and coded through proprietary software.²⁸ They found the majority of Daesh accounts operated out of the group's territories in Syria and Iraq, with 3/4 primarily posting in Arabic and 1/5 in English.²⁹

²³ J.M. Berger, "The Metronome of Apocalyptic Time: Social Media as Carrier Wave for Millenarian Contagion," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 no. 4 (August 2015): 62, 67, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/444/875>

²⁴ Aaron Y. Zelin, "Picture Or It Didn't Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State's Official Media Output," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 no. 4 (August 2015): 85, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/445/html>

²⁵ Zelin, 85.

²⁶ Zelin, 85, 87, 89.

²⁷ J.M. Berger and Jonathan Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Consensus: Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter," *The Brookings Project on Relations with the Islamic World: Analysis Paper* no. 20 (March 20, 2015): 2, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf

²⁸ Berger and Morgan, 40.

²⁹ Berger and Morgan, 3.

Counter-terrorism organization Quilliam offers an in-depth analysis of Daesh propaganda content, led by researcher Charlie Winter. Winter tracked all Daesh publications for a year beginning in June 2014, with monitoring mechanisms on social media sites and forums as well as interviews with individuals formerly involved in propaganda dissemination.³⁰ He uncovered six central themes: brutality, mercy, victimhood, war, belonging, and utopia, with the latter the most alluring for new recruits.³¹ Their findings reflect other conclusions on literature specific to women in Daesh, as joining a utopian society is an oft-cited motivation for Western *muhajirat*.³²

The aforementioned literature does not offer a gendered perspective. Literature strictly limited to women in Daesh focuses on two subgroups, at least within Eurocentric academia: voluntary Western *muhajirat* and minority local women captured and forced into sexual slavery.

* *Western Muhajirat*

Articles on Western *muhajirat* dominate Eurocentric scholarship on women in Daesh. In “Til Martyrdom Do Us Part: ISIS and the Gender Phenomenon,” researchers Erin Saltman and Melanie Smith with the anti-extremist think tank Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) highlight the diversity of Western *muhajirat*, and explain their journey as a multi-causal web of push/pull factors, including feelings of isolation, persecution, idealism, camaraderie, and romanticization.³³ Their analysis utilizes an extensive database of Western female migrant social media accounts, borne out of a collaboration between the ISD and the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR). Researchers employed the snowball technique, tracking over 100 accounts.³⁴ Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, and Ross Frenett, also researchers with ISD,

³⁰ Charlie Winter, “The Virtual Caliphate: Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy,” *The Quilliam Foundation*, July 1, 2015, 13-14, <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/charlie-winter-virtual-caliphate-understanding-islamic-states-propaganda-strategy>

³¹ Winter, “The Virtual Caliphate,” 6.

³² Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, & Ross Frenett, “Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS,” *Institute of Strategic Dialogue* 2015, 12, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ISDJ2969_Becoming_Mulan_01.15_WEB.pdf; Anita Peresin, “Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): 25, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/427/html>; Erin Marie Saltman & Melanie Smith, “Til Martyrdom Do Us Part: Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon,” *Institute for Strategic Dialogue* (2015): 13, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf

³³ Saltman & Smith.

³⁴ Saltman & Smith, 7-8.

give an overview of reasons women leave, preparations they take, the journey itself, life under the Caliphate, and conclude the threat of returning *muhajirat* to their home countries is small.³⁵ The authors rely on social media accounts as the bastion of their analysis, also collected through the snowball technique, with a core sample of 12 and 65 codified variables to create a searchable database.³⁶ Finally, in a statement to US Congress, ISD CEO Sasha Havlicek discusses the diversity of Western *muhajirat* in terms of ethnicity, religious background, and education level, push and pull factors, propaganda narratives compared to on-the-ground realities, security considerations, and how to counter Daesh narratives.³⁷

Anita Peresin and Alberto Cervone, scholars of the George C Marshall European Center for Security Studies, consider Western women's roles in "The Western Muhajirat of ISIS," stating their exclusion from combat is likely to continue based on historical examples of women during Mohammad's time and "the preservation of ISIS's power system."³⁸ Peresin further investigates Western *muhajirat* and gives her own surmising of motivations (in line with other literature), details the social media recruitment campaign and roles for women, and argues returnees *do* pose a risk.³⁹ Analysis of social media accounts plays a smaller role in the latter two articles, and no methodological approaches are mentioned. Sofia Patel, researcher for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, examines Daesh propaganda to discuss the caliphate's appeal in drawing in Western *muhajirat*, touches upon roles for Western women (divided into professional, domestic, and recruiter roles), and explores individual cases of Australian *muhajirat*.⁴⁰ Remaining literature consists of news articles examining individual cases. These articles provide identity confirmation for the social media accounts used in my analysis.

³⁵ Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett.

³⁶ Saltman & Smith, 7 and Hoyle, Bradford, & Frenett, 8-9.

³⁷ Sasha Havlicek, "The Islamic State's War on Women and Girls," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, July 28, 2015 <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20150729/103835/HHRG-114-FA00-Wstate-HavlicekS-20150729.pdf>

³⁸Anita Peresin and Alberto Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat of ISIS," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38 no. 7 (2015): 495, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1025611>

³⁹ Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 21-38.

⁴⁰ Sofia Patel, "the Sultanate of Women: Exploring female roles in perpetuating and preventing violent extremism," *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* February 2017, http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/ASPI-SR100_Sultanate-of-women_v2.pdf

* *Local women*

Regarding local women within Daesh, most literature examines the plight of captured Yazidi⁴¹ women, though pressure from religious and community leaders has pushed for the recognition of abuses committed towards Christian and Shia⁴² women.

In 2014, Amnesty International released “Escape from Hell: Torture and Sexual Slavery in Islamic State Captivity in Iraq” based on interviews with 42 escaped female Yazidi women, telling of systematic rape, forced marriage, and women driven to suicide.⁴³ Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report based on interviews with 20 escaped Yazidi women between January-March 2015, detailing similarly harrowing accounts.⁴⁴ The Office of the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner published a report on all human rights abuses committed by Daesh, and the testimony of escaped women conducted between November 2014-January 2015 aligned with the aforementioned findings.⁴⁵ All of these reports corroborate the conclusion that Yazidi women are victims of systematic rape. A fourth report published by the Public Library of Science (PLOS) utilized household surveys to determine more accurate estimates of mortality and abduction rates during Daesh’s assault on the Yazidi in August 2014.⁴⁶ They found an estimated

⁴¹ An ethnically Kurdish, distinct religious community based in northern Iraq. Victims of genocidal persecution by Daesh because the group views them as heretics.

⁴² A minority sect of the world’s Muslims. Daesh, a Sunni group, views Shia Muslims as apostates and considers it their duty to kill them.

⁴³ “Escape from hell: Torture and sexual slavery in Islamic State captivity in Iraq,” *Amnesty International*, 2014, https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/escape_from_hell_-_torture_and_sexual_slavery_in_islamic_state_captivity_in_iraq_-_english_2.pdf

⁴⁴ Samer Muscati, “Iraq: ISIS Escapees Describe Systematic Rape—Yezidi Survivors in Need of Urgent Care,” *Human Rights Watch*, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/14/iraq-isis-escapees-describe-systematic-rape>

⁴⁵ “Human rights situation in Iraq in light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups,” *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, March 13, 2015.

⁴⁶ Valeria Cetorelli, Isaac Sasson, Nazar Shabila, and Gilbert Burnham, “Mortality and kidnapping estimates for the Yazidi population in the area of Mount Sinjar, Iraq, in 2014: A retrospective household survey,” *PLOS Medicine* 14, no. 5 (2017): 1, <http://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002297>

9,900 individuals were kidnapped or killed in the attack. While these reports are a sample of the empirical research on Yazidi women abused by Daesh, news articles offer individual accounts.⁴⁷

There is growing awareness among the international community of the ongoing genocide committed against Christian, Shia, and other religious minorities in Daesh-held territories. Senior fellow of the Hudson Institute Nina Shea's report "The ISIS Genocide of Middle Eastern Christian Minorities and Its *Jizya* Propaganda Ploy" examines Christian persecution in Iraqi and Syrian cities under Daesh control, using survivor testimony and human rights documentation to counter the organization's claims that Christians are protected under *jizya*.⁴⁸ Two reports analyze the ethnic cleansing committed by Daesh against ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq; the first, "Ethnic Cleansing on a Historic Scale: Islamic State's Systematic Targeting in Northern Iraq" by Amnesty International, is based on field investigations in northern Iraq between June-November 2014.⁴⁹ The analysis points to evidence of ethnic cleansing among Assyrian Christians, Turkmen Shia, Shabak Shia, Yazidi, Kakai, and Sabeen Mandaeans. The second report, "No Way Home: Iraq's minorities on the verge of disappearance," conglomerated research from human rights reports, civil society reports, academic journals, news articles, Iraqi legislation, and international conventions with field-based research beginning in February 2016, which conducted interviews with survivors of minority groups as well as Iraqi diplomats and politicians.⁵⁰ The report found evidence for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against Iraq's Christians, Kaka'i, Yazidi, Shia Turkmen, and Shabak.⁵¹

⁴⁷ some examples: Richard Engel and James Novogrod, "ISIS Terror: Women Recall Horrors of Slave Auction," *NBC News*, February 8, 2015 <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/isis-terror-yazidi-woman-recalls-horrors-slave-auction-n305856>; Paul Wood, "Islamic State: Yazidi women tell of sex slavery trauma." *BBC News*, December 22, 2014 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30573385>; Rukmini Callimachi, "ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape," *New York Times*, August 13, 2015 <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html>

⁴⁸ *Jizya* is a special tax historically levied on Christians and Jews living in Muslim lands in exchange for their protection. Nina Shea, "The ISIS Genocide of Middle Eastern Christian Minorities and Its *Jizya* Propaganda Ploy," *Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom*, August 2016, <https://www.hudson.org/research/12665-the-isis-genocide-of-middle-eastern-christian-minorities-and-its-jizya-propaganda-ploy>

⁴⁹ "Ethnic Cleansing on a Historic Scale: Islamic State's Systematic Targeting of Minorities in Northern Iraq," *Amnesty International*, 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE14/011/2014/en/>

⁵⁰ Johanna Green, Mays Al-Juboori, Mark Lattimer, Alessandro Manno, Alison Smith, and William Spencer, "No Way Home: Iraq's minorities on the verge of disappearance," *The Ceasefire Project*, 2016 <http://unpo.org/downloads/1895.pdf>

⁵¹ Distinct ethnic-religious minority groups.

Finally, it must be noted that Sunni women also suffer terrible abuse at the hands of their alleged champions. The HRW report “Iraq: Sunni Women Tell of ISIS Detention, Torture” expands upon forced marriage, rape, torture and illegal detainment endured by Sunni women.⁵²

* *Identifying a Hole in the Literature*

To represent a departure from previous literature, my thesis presents a gendered perspective by focusing solely on propaganda related to women, as opposed to the more encompassing works by Berger, Zelin, Berger & Morgan, and Winter. Moreover, my analysis utilizes a qualitative content analysis, differing from the quantitative approach offered by Saltman & Smith and Hoyle, Bradford & Frenett, thereby examining source material in greater detail. Finally, my thesis strives to consider all of the roles allotted to women, as other works present only one demographic, be it the Yazidi, Western *muhajirat*, Christian minorities or another subgroup. A gendered perspective allows me to consider the entire complexity of female roles within Daesh.

* *Concluding remarks*

To set the stage for my analysis, I first presented my research questions, and then introduced the primary source materials used to address these questions. The third section of this chapter considered the historiography of other research on Daesh propaganda, Western *muhajirat* traveling to Daesh-held territories, and research on local women living in the so-called caliphate, revealing a hole in the literature my research strives to fill. The following chapter provides readers with necessary background information, tracing the development of Daesh, the roots of their propaganda narratives, and the historic-religious traditions utilized within group ideology.



⁵² “Iraq: Sunni Women Tell of ISIS Detention, Torture,” *Human Rights Watch*, February 20, 2017 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/20/iraq-sunni-women-tell-isis-detention-torture>

Chapter Two—Context

This chapter discloses a contextual backdrop prior to diving into analytical intricacies.

The context is presented in three parts; the first provides a brief background on the roots and rise of Daesh; the second explores the underlying foundations of the organization's 'channels of propaganda,' understood as religion and history; the third considers the 'Daesh doctrine,' examining specific historic-religious traditions utilized within group ideology.

I. Raising the black flag—the rise of Daesh

In 2014, Daesh burst out of obscurity to front and center of the media ring after the group overtook strategic cities in Western Iraq. In June 2014, the world watched in horror as black-clad militants overran Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. While Daesh became known in Western circles in 2014, the organization's roots stretch back to the founding of Al-Qaeda, their parent organization. Al-Qaeda was borne out of the ashes of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

* *Soviets invade*

Prior to the Soviets' arrival, Afghanistan was undergoing tumultuous political change, and large swaths of the country were in open rebellion. The Soviets intervened, staging a coup and installing a pro-Soviet leader. Cold War geopolitics transformed Afghanistan into a proxy war between East and West, with the CIA funding rebel groups to fight the Soviets. Around 35,000 foreign fighters traveled to Afghanistan to help the rebels fight *jihads*⁵³ against the foreign invaders. These guerrilla *mujahideen* established networks in Pakistan, funneled funds from Saudi Arabia and the United States, and set up schools and training camps. It was against this backdrop of foreign fighters answering the call to noble *jihads* that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian petty criminal-turned-jihadist, arrived to Afghanistan in 1989. Though the last of the Soviet tanks soon rolled out of the country, Zarqawi stayed on to work with the jihadists. A criminal charge for terrorism summoned him back to Jordan, where he served time in prison. Upon release, he met Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's founders, in 1999. Zarqawi went to western Afghanistan to run a training camp; here, he encountered genocidal Salafist⁵⁴ views calling for the slaughter of Shia infidels and Sunni apostates.

* *War on terror*

⁵³ To fight against the enemies of Islam.

⁵⁴ More on Salafism is discussed later in this chapter.

The post-9/11 world saw the US and their allies launch a ‘war on terror’ targeting al-Qaeda, which led to their ousting from Afghanistan and sent many underground. The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 proved to be ideal breeding grounds for extremist jihadist groups. An unjust war, political turmoil, and divisive policies favoring Shia Muslims over toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s preferred Sunni provided ample fuel for Zarqawi’s Salafist message. He helped establish Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), and orchestrated bombings on Shia mosques, markets, and neighborhoods. Targeting Shia raised many eyebrows among al-Qaeda’s leadership, as they believed they should avoid alienating fellow Muslims and focus on Western targets. In June 2006, Zarqawi was killed in an airstrike. Lauded as the brainchild behind Daesh’s central ideological tenets, his murderous legacy lived on. A few months after his death, the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), an alliance between AQI and other jihadist groups, was founded.

* *A new caliph*

By 2010, ISI was resigned to remote desert hideouts. In April, two AQI leaders were killed in a clash with US-Iraqi forces, leaving an opening for a new emir.⁵⁵ Through political maneuvering, Ibrahim Awad al-Badri secured the position.⁵⁶ Better known by his pseudonym Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, he went on to declare himself the Caliph of the so-called Islamic State in June 2014.

Originally a religious scholar from Iraq, Baghdadi was imprisoned by the Americans in Camp Bucca for most of 2004 for collaborating with militant Sunni groups. Many blame his radicalization on the time spent in prison, later criticized as a “terrorist convention” for would-be jihadists.⁵⁷ American prisons played a large role in founding extremist networks—people were arrested haphazardly, some on mere suspicion, and confined with other like-minded people. Detainment spawned resentment. The American guards did not speak Iraqi Arabic, and inmates were left unmolested to plot and plan. Prisoners wrote phone numbers and email addresses on each other’s underwear, forming the bedrock of today’s terror networks upon release.

Baghdadi was released in December 2004, and soon began working with Al-Qaeda. He rose in the Al-Qaeda ranks, becoming emir of AQI in 2010. A revolution brewing in nearby Syria

⁵⁵ William McCants, “Who Exactly Is Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the Leader Of ISIS?” *Newsweek*, September 6, 2015 <http://europe.newsweek.com/who-exactly-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-leader-isis-332582?rm=eu> a

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Brad Parks, “How a US prison camp helped create ISIS,” *New York Post*, May 15, 2015 <http://nypost.com/2015/05/30/how-the-us-created-the-camp-where-isis-was-born/>

provided the perfect opportunity for expansion. Historically, Syria has been subjected to divisive politics, pitting the various religious minorities against each other and the majority Sunnis. At the same time, Iraqi Sunnis felt disenfranchised by the country's Shia prime minister, Nouri Maliki. Playing off of the 1,400 year-old schism between Sunnis and Shia and the divisive politics employed by colonial and post-colonial regimes in Iraq and Syria, Baghdadi exploited Sunni resentment. The group swept into both countries. In 2013, Baghdadi issued a proclamation merging ISI with al-Nusra, a Syrian Salafist jihadist group with links to Al-Qaeda, to form the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL); however, his power play was rejected by both Al-Qaeda and al-Nusra leadership. Baghdadi's ambitions, coupled with ISIL's brutal attacks on Shia Muslims, forced Al-Qaeda to disown their unruly child in February 2014. 2014 also gave Daesh its first taste of territorial conquest. In January, the organization took over Fallujah in Iraq; in Syria, the group established strongholds in Raqqa and Aleppo. After the fall of Mosul in June 2014, Daesh rode a wave of success as town after town toppled. On June 29, 2014, Daesh declared the formation of the Islamic State (IS) and the resurrection of the caliphate. Overnight, the al-Qaeda spin-off became a media sensation.

* *Life under Daesh*

At its height, Daesh controlled around 90,800 square km, with some 10 million people living under the blag flag. Local Sunnis describe how the group transformed from liberators to oppressors, waking up each morning to new laws further restricting their freedoms. Smoking, drinking, and music became *haram*.⁵⁸ Women were forced to stay in their houses and don obtrusive, conservative clothing that limited their ability to move freely. Critics were publicly executed. Persons connected to the Iraqi and Syrian governments were hunted down. Medieval punishments such as public flogging, severing hands for thievery, crucifixions, and beheadings were reinstated. Sexual enslavement and forced marriages became commonplace. The longer Daesh stayed in power, the worse violence became.

Underlying Daesh's blunt brutality is the group's ideology. The organization relies on both religious and historic justifications to legitimize their profound violence. To analyze the group's ideology, I explore how Daesh utilizes religion and history as channels to conduct their message within online propaganda.

⁵⁸ Forbidden.

II. Channels of Propaganda

For propaganda studies pioneers Jacques Ellul, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, propaganda is all around us. Yet viewing society as permeated in propaganda leaves researchers with the difficulty of finding where to begin. In his book *Channels of Propaganda*, American professor J. Michael Sproule provides a roadmap by locating five channels of propaganda in American society: government, research and religion, news, classroom, and entertainment.⁵⁹ In the case of Daesh, most relevant is religion. I also add history as a pertinent category.

Within Daesh's narratives, religious, government/political and history propaganda channels are muddled together. One reason behind this overlap is that Islam is both a religious and political movement. Political aspects have been present in Islam from the very beginning, as the Prophet Mohammad was both a religious *and* a political ruler. Justification for the political authority of religious leaders is thus found within religious texts, and historical examples of Muslim rulers also lend a historical legitimacy. For this analysis, only religion and history are directly referenced.

Daesh wields religious and historic references in their campaign to conquer territory, conduct violent purges, and legitimize slavery. The following two subsections examine the twin pillars of religion and history, the bedrock of Daesh ideology and propaganda narratives.

A. Propaganda as religion

The backbone of Daesh ideology is Jihadi-Salafism, a strict, fundamentalist strain of Sunni Islam.⁶⁰ Like Al-Qaeda, Daesh is built on a foundation of Salafist and Wahhabi thought, with lesser influence from the activism of the Muslim Brotherhood. Where Daesh deviates from their predecessors, however, is their unforgiving adherence to religious dogma. Daesh became a caricature of Al-Qaeda, a Frankenstein whose quest for religious purification involves mass killings of Muslims. Their rigid fundamentalism is what earned Daesh the reputation as "too

⁵⁹ Michael J. Sproule, *Channels of Propaganda* (San Jose, California: EDINFO Press, 1994), 9.

⁶⁰ Cole Bunzel, "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State," *The Brookings Project on US Relations with the Islamic World: Analysis Paper* no. 19 (March 2015): 7, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State.pdf>

extreme for Al-Qaeda,” eventually leading to a messy break from their parent organization. The following section traces the development of Jihadi-Salafism.

* *Early Salafism*

Tracing the origins of Salafist thought takes us back to Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), one of the most celebrated theologians in Sunni Islam. His writings advocated an anti-rationalist theology denying human reason a role in reaching religious truth.⁶¹ According to Hanbal, religious scholars cannot reveal Allah’s will through interpretation; rather, scholars must stick to a literal application of the Qur’an and the Sunna (the sayings of Mohammad).⁶² Also hugely influential to Salafist ideology were the writings of Syrian scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who demanded a government founded on the Qur’an and the Sunna. This call for Islam as the only means of political rule was later enshrined into Salafism. While many Salafist scholars today argue for Salafism’s medieval roots, this is a controversial claim. It is unclear whether these medieval scholars labeled their own work as ‘salafist’, laying bare what Henri Lauzière describes as the ‘history of the label’ versus the ‘history of the idea.’⁶³ Nonetheless, their literalist interpretation of religious texts and political visions for Islam resonate in today’s Salafism.

* *Wahhabism*

In the eighteenth century, Salafism became infused with elements of Wahhabism, another ultraconservative branch and movement within Sunni Islam. Wahhabism emerged out of the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a Saudi preacher who spread a revivalist brand of Islam calling for a purge of ‘non-Islamic practices’ known as *shirk*. Al-Wahhab placed overbearing emphasis on *tawhid*, or monotheism, and called for religious purification by waging *jihad* against heretics. He was especially preoccupied with the Shia, whom he felt were polytheist owing to their belief that some of Mohammad’s descendants (known as Imams) possess special spiritual and political authority. In the 1700s, Wahhabi *jihad* consisted of

⁶¹Henri Lauzière, “The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2010): 371, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40784818>

⁶² M.M. Hafez, “The Alchemy of Martyrdom: Jihadi Salafism and Debates over Suicide Bombings in the Muslim World,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010): 365, DOI: 10.1163/156853110X499927.

⁶³ Lauzière, 371.

demolishing Shia tombs and shrines, and implementing ‘correct’ religious practices. Al-Wahhab’s preoccupation with religious purification by waging *jihad* and anti-Shia attitudes became fused with Salafism. While Salafist and Wahhabist writings provided the religious foundation, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood added a tone of political activism.

* *Political visionaries: the Muslim Brotherhood*

The Muslim Brotherhood was a political movement which swept the Middle East in the twentieth century, in retaliation against growing Western imperialism. The Sunni group was founded in Egypt in 1928, and sparked a grassroots Islamic activism determined to resuscitate Islam in Middle Eastern society. The Brotherhood emerged in the years following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which signified the end of the last caliphate. The leaders of the Brotherhood shared their vision for reviving a new caliphate, though this was not seen as an immediate objective. Jihadist-Salafists incorporated the ambitious territorial ambitions of the Brotherhood into their own ideology.

* *The Birth of Jihadi-Salafism*

In the late twentieth century, groups inspired by Salafism’s religious purification and the Muslim Brotherhood’s lofty political visions took a violent turn. Groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat in Algeria began plotting to overthrow their governments and form Islamic states. Particularly influential was Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian member of the Muslim Brotherhood who advocated for an especially radical brand of activism. The work of these groups was held up by scholars such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Basir al-Tartusi, whose writings lent legitimacy and gave the movement an even more violent orientation. Through the decades, the Muslim Brotherhood’s influence has waned in favor of Salafism’s violence-inducing jihad doctrine and rigorous interpretation of religious texts.

* *Jihadi-Salafism today*

Modern Salafism denotes a strict interpretation of Islam, which strives for religious purity by removing *shirk* (idolatrous religious practices). Salafism broadens the definition of unbelievers (or *kuffar*) by narrowing the range of acceptable Islamic beliefs and practices.⁶⁴ Practices

⁶⁴ Jacob Olidort, “What is Salafism? How a Nonpolitical Ideology Became a Political Force,” *Foreign Affairs*, November 24, 2015 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-11-24/what-salafism>

specifically approved by Mohammad and the first three generations of believers following his death set the limits of acceptable Islam.⁶⁵ Salafists consider themselves the only true Muslims.

B. Propaganda as history

The following subsection details the historical basis Daesh utilizes to craft its propaganda narratives. Through the historical record, Daesh simultaneously references days of glory and days of darkness for the Muslim world. This two-level narrative references the glorious age of the Rashidun Caliphate to justify their violent land grab as a return to greatness, contrasted with centuries of Western persecution to invoke defensive *jihad*. Their message is this: A righting of wrongs. A return to glory. A homeland for (Sunni) Muslims.

Days of glory—the Rashidun Caliphate

* *Why the Rashidun Caliphate?*

The Rashidun Caliphate was the first caliphate in Islamic history, founded immediately after the death of the Prophet and governed by the four “rightly guided” caliphs. The military conquests led by the Rashidun caliphs were among the most extensive and sweeping in history. The Rashidun Caliphate only lasted 29 years, yet this flash in history figures prominently into Daesh ideology. This age is emphasized for a few reasons; one, Daesh views their activities as a restoration of the Rashidun Caliphate, and stands on the legacy of the eighth century kingdom. Two, *jihad* was seen as pivotal to the early caliphs, to expand the caliphate and spread Islam. Three, the time represents a glory age for Islam, and plays into Daesh’s message for a return to Muslim greatness. For these reasons, Daesh draws historical parallels between themselves and the warrior Rashidun caliphs.

* *The Rashidun Caliphate: a brief history*

Following the death of Mohammad in 632 CE, the Muslim community grappled with serious questions on who should succeed him, how they should be chosen, and what their role should be. There was no clear successor; none of Mohammad’s sons survived adulthood, and the Prophet

⁶⁵ Olidort, “What is Salafism?”

left no instructions. The survival of Islam was at stake, as whole tribes along the Arabian peninsula took advantage of the political vacuum and returned to pagan rituals. Others refused to pay the alms tax, *zikhah*, or claimed to be prophets themselves. Like Daesh, Mohammad's followers felt surrounded by a sea of apostasy.

Mohammad's followers were internally divided over his successor. One candidate, Abu Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddiq 'Abdallah bin Abi Quḥafah (Abu Bakr), was Mohammad's father-in-law through his favorite wife A'isha, and eventually elected by tribal leaders as the first caliph. Caliphs are selected on merit and not considered divinely ordained. Caliph Abu Bakr subdued rebellious tribes during the *Ridda Wars*, also known as the Wars of Apostasy, incorporating the entire Arabian peninsula under his control. He then set about expanding the caliphate, and began two assaults against the Sassanids in Iraq and the Roman province in Syria. In two years, Abu Bakr pushed back the tide of war, taking Muslims from a defensive to an offensive position. Sharing the same name as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is no coincidence, but a deliberate choice made by the so-called caliph to reference the first caliph.

Wary of the succession squabbles that threatened Muslim unity, Abu Bakr designated Umar ibn al-Khattab, his chief secretary and advisor, as his successor. Abu Bakr died of a fever in 634 CE, two years into his role as caliph, but instructed Umar to continue the affronts against the Sassanids and the Romans. Thanks to Umar's brilliant commanders, Muslim armies conquered the Sassanid empire and three fourths of the Byzantine empire, including Jerusalem. Under Umar, the caliphate swelled to include present-day Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, and parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan. In 644 CE, Umar's role as caliph was cut short when he was assassinated by Persians at mosque in Medina, in retaliation for the conquest of their empire. On his deathbed, Umar appointed a committee to choose the next caliph.

The committee elected Uthman ibn Affan as the third caliph. A shrewd trader and businessman, Uthman's economic reforms produced prosperity that rippled across the empire. Under Uthman, the Caliphate reached its peak size. Uthman allowed his generals more independence, and decentralized military campaigns conquered parts of North Africa, Turkey,

and Afghanistan. Colonies were also established in Spain. The first Muslim navy was built, and went on to take Cyprus, Rhodes, and other Mediterranean islands. However, keeping order over so many peoples and territories proved difficult in the end. An armed revolt in Egypt marched to Medina, where the rebels broke into Uthman's house and assassinated him in 655 CE.

The fourth and final Rashidun Caliph was Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammad. Ali was selected by the rebels who assassinated Uthman, and his rule as caliph was plagued by one of the most turbulent periods in Muslim history. After Uthman's death, factions within the caliphate became apparent, and votes for a new caliph resulted in a deadlock. Ali was finally chosen, though many Uthman loyalists refused to pledge their allegiance. These divisions led to the First *Fitna*, or civil war (656-661 CE), lamented by Muslims as the end of Muslim unity. While praying at a mosque, Ali was stabbed with a poison sword by a member of a sectarian group and died in 661. The divisions borne out of Ali's succession are central to inter-Muslim conflict today. A small faction of Muslims held Ali to be the divinely appointed successor to Mohammad, or the first Imam. Shia Muslims today follow the *Imamah* doctrine, which states that Imams are the true successors to Mohammad, and do not recognize the first three caliphs. Shia also believe Imams possess divine knowledge, and can only be chosen from Mohammad's descendants. For Sunni (the majority of today's Muslims), Ali was the fourth caliph. Future caliphs are elected, and not seen as divine. The question of Mohammad's succession is at the heart of the 1,400 year-old schism between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

Ali's death signified the end of the Rashidun Caliphate, as the Umayyad family rose to power. The Umayyads established a dynasty, thus ending the election of caliphs by tribal leaders and the line of the "rightly guided" caliphs.

* *Jihad in the Rashidun Caliphate*

Military expansion was the primary preoccupation of the Rashidun caliphs and early Umayyad leaders, so much that the early caliphate is known as the "*jihad* state."⁶⁶ Early Muslims adhered to *jihad* teachings from the Qur'an and the Prophet, which instructed Muslims to spread Islam

⁶⁶ Robert Haug, "Frontiers and the State in Early Islamic History: Jihad Between Caliphs and Volunteers," *History Compass* 9 no. 8 (2011): 635, DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2011.00791.x.

and extend the caliphate's borders. Apocalyptic writings discussed the conquest of 'New Rome' (Constantinople) and Old Rome, a symbolic defeat of Christianity and crowning moment for political Islam.⁶⁷ Once Muslim armies overwhelm the two cities, the end of times is near.

Early Muslim armies were made up of volunteers, bound by a religious duty originating out of *bay'ah*⁶⁸ from the Prophet's time.⁶⁹ The armies of the first Caliphs were formed during Mohammad's lifetime, and primarily composed of Bedouin men. During the time of the Prophet, these bands of men could hardly be considered 'armies', and more closely resembled tribal migration.⁷⁰ Male fighters were accompanied by their families and herds, and men fought for honor, spoils, and self-defense. There was no standardized payment or hierarchal structure of command, and tribal leaders led the bands of men.⁷¹

Sometime after the Prophet's death in 632 CE, a real Muslim army emerged. These Muslim armies were controlled by a centralized power, and composed of fighters without women and children dependents. *Jihad* was led by the caliph, and power over these armies was vastly important to the legitimacy of the caliphate. By 641 CE, all of the lands in the Fertile Crescent (Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq) were under Muslim control; by 650, the caliphate covered much of Iran. The factors behind the astounding success of the Muslim armies are still unclear to historians. Surviving records are largely Arabic, with few Persian and Byzantine sources to counterbalance. Thousands of surviving Arabic sources describe their conquest as the will of Allah, the result of Muslim bravery and enemy cowardice.⁷² Historians today take this glorification of Muslim conquests with a grain of salt.

⁶⁷ Haug, 634.

⁶⁸ A binding pledge of religious allegiance that evolved to take on a political and military obligation.

⁶⁹ Haug, 637.

⁷⁰ Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

⁷¹ Kennedy, 2.

⁷² Kennedy, 2-3.

The Muslim armies brought farmlands, orchards, groves, cities, villages, monasteries, harbors, and large numbers of people into the caliphate. Muslims then settled in scattered groups across their new empire, to maintain military control.

The Rashidun caliphs exercised total control over *jihad*, though this changed during the Umayyad dynasty. A power struggle between religious scholars (*ulama*) and the caliphs led to the former gaining control over *jihad* in the eighth century. *Jihad* thus went from a centralized, state-sponsored activity to a smaller-scale religious duty.⁷³ This shift is partially to blame for the erosion of the caliphate and end of the sweeping victories of Muslim armies. In later centuries, repeated attempts by caliphs to regain control from the *ulama* demonstrates the significance of *jihad* to Muslim leadership. Control over *jihad* is vital to the legitimacy of the caliphate.

Days of darkness: East versus West

Less succinct is Daesh's utilization of the 'days of darkness,' where the bombings of the US-led coalition in Syria are painted as another wrong in a line of crimes stretching back to the Crusades. It is outside the scope of this thesis to provide a through analysis of the Muslim grievances referenced by Daesh, and they certainly differ depending on the language and target audience (for example, Russian propaganda may refer to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). I briefly outline three of the most recurring offenses in the propaganda surveyed below.

* *The Crusades*

The Crusades refer to a series of religious war campaigns encouraged by the Church between the 11th-13th centuries. For two hundred years, Christian armies attempted to reclaim the Holy Land from Muslim control. Campaigns goals included suppressing heresy and paganism and gaining geopolitical advantages. Christian armies eventually captured Jerusalem in 1099, slaughtering tens of thousands in the process, and lost the city in 1187.⁷⁴ Their campaigns concentrated in the Eastern Mediterranean, where they carved out 'Crusader states' along the coast. At the outbreak

⁷³ Haug, 637.

⁷⁴ Jay Michaelson, "Was Obama right about the Crusades and Islamic extremism? (ANALYSIS)," *Washington Post*: February 6, 2015 https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/was-obama-right-about-the-crusades-and-islamic-extremism-analysis/2015/02/06/3670628a-ae46-11e4-8876-460b1144cbc1_story.html?utm_term=.f03dbb956936

of the Crusades, Muslim divisions allowed Christian armies to make initial gains, though a gradual growth in Muslim unity was eventually strong enough to fend off invading Christians. Daesh propaganda repeatedly compares the US-led coalition against extremism in the Middle East as a continuation of the Crusades.

* *Sykes-Picot Agreement*

In 1916, the United Kingdom and France signed a secret agreement dividing up the lands of the Ottoman Empire into ‘spheres of influence’. The agreement allotted Britain control of modern-day Jordan and southern Iraq, while France received southeast Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. Russia received Istanbul, the Turkish Straits, and Armenia. Sykes-Picot was a devastating betrayal to Arabs, as the British negated on their promise to endorse an Arab homeland in exchange for their support during WWI. The subsequent colonialism of the Middle East left deep wounds that continue to shape political developments and present conflicts. One example is the Syrian Civil War, whereby colonial-era divisive politics pitting religious minorities against each other and the majority Sunnis enflamed sectarian tensions. European colonialism in the Middle East largely ended after World War II, though the West continues to interfere in the region. Sykes-Picot is widely regarded in the Middle East as a knife in the back of West-Middle East relations, and a deep source of embarrassment for the region.

* *American imperialism*

The US had killed women, children, and the elderly, during its direct occupation of Iraq prior to its withdrawal. There are countless accounts of American soldiers executing families and raping women under the sanctity of the US military and Blackwater. Muslim families were killed under the broad definition of “collateral damage,” which the US grants itself alone the right to apply. Therefore, if a mujāhid kills a single man with a knife, it is the barbaric killing of the “innocent.” However, if Americans kill thousands of Muslim families all over the world by pressing missile fire buttons, it is merely “collateral damage”... (*Dabiq* no. 3, 3).

Frequently referenced in Daesh propaganda⁷⁵, American imperialism is a term synonymous with American political and military interference in the Middle East after WWII. Broad in scope,

⁷⁵ Please see the above example, quoted in *Dabiq* no. 3, “A Call to Hijrah,” July-August 2014, 3 <https://clarionproject.org/docs/isis-isis-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-3-the-call-to-hijrah.pdf>

American imperialism can refer to many events, from the Gulf War to the Iraq 2003 invasion to the US-led coalition in Syria. Within these events, there are plenty of valid grounds for grievance — violations of national sovereignty, illegal detainment, torture, sexual abuse, and civilian deaths, to name a few. These events provide Daesh plenty of ammunition to make their polarized pitch of East versus West, of a Muslim world under attack.

III. The Daesh doctrine

Woven from strands of Jihadist-Salafism and early Muslim history, Daesh’s ideology nonetheless represents a departure from other jihadist groups because of its hardline, severe adherence to religious texts and historic tradition. This rigorous interpretation manifests in many ways. Below, I discuss the ABCs of Daesh ideology.

* *Apostasy*

We believe in the necessity of destroying and eradicating all manifestations of idolatry (shirk) and [in the necessity of] prohibiting those things that lead to it, on account of what the Imam Muslim transmitted in his Sahih on the authority of Abu ’l-Hayaj al-Asadi, who said: “Ali ibn Abi Talib—may God be pleased with him—said to me: Should I not urge you to do what the Messenger of God—may God bless and save him—urged me to do? That you not leave a statue without obliterating it, or a raised grave without leveling it?”

Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, “Some of Our Fundamentals,” March 2007.

For Jihadi Salafists, apostasy represents a sin much graver than heresy.⁷⁶ Apostates are those who have known and later turned their backs on Islam, whereas heretics have always held misguided beliefs. Qur’an 4:89 advises that apostates should be killed: *They wish that you should reject faith as they reject faith, and then you would be equal; therefore take not to yourselves friends of them, until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn their backs, take them, and slay them wherever you find them; take not to yourselves any one of them as friend or helper.*

However, if an apostate repents, mercy should be shown: *But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor—due, then are they your brethren in religion (9:11).* Yet medieval theologian

⁷⁶ Hafez, 367.

Ibn Tamiyyah refutes appeals to mercy, arguing that repentance only applies when Muslims are in power.⁷⁷ Both AQI and Daesh refuse repentance as salvation for apostates on this basis.

Most often branded apostates by Daesh are Shia Muslims, whose traditions such as worshipping at the graves of imams and public displays of self-flagellation have no mention in the Qur'an or the Prophet's life. Yet Daesh ideology takes the apostasy label to new extremes, applied to individuals selling alcohol or drugs, wearing Western clothes, shaving their beards, voting in an election (even if the candidate is Muslim), and neglecting to accuse others of apostasy.⁷⁸ Their liberal use of the apostate label, which they apply to the majority of Muslims, is a point of contention between Al-Qaeda and Daesh. There is no mercy for apostates, only the sword. Those found guilty of apostasy are killed or taken captive. For some women, apostasy is used to justify forcing them into sexual slavery. More on the historic-religious basis for sexual slavery in Daesh is discussed later on in this section.

* *Jihad*

The rejectionists [i.e., the Shia] are a group of idolatry and apostasy; in addition, they inhibit the performance of many of Islam's unambiguous rites.

We believe in the unbelief and apostasy of the sorcerer and in the necessity of killing him, [and we believe in] not accepting his repentance—as regards judgments in this [lower] world—after he has been apprehended. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab—may God be pleased with him—said: "The punishment of the sorcerer is a strike with the sword."

Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, "Some of Our Fundamentals," March 2007.

Central to Jihadi-Salafist ideology is *jihad*. Daesh promotes two forms of *jihad*, offensive and defensive, oriented in Salafist and Wahhabi tradition. Offensive *jihad* is concerned with purifying Islam of idolatrous practices and has origins in Wahhabism, which argued for true believers to wage jihad against idolatrous Muslims by destroying shrines and temples.⁷⁹ Most of the victims of Daesh's offensive jihad have been local Shia.⁸⁰ In contrast, defensive jihad implies that

⁷⁷ Hafez, 367.

⁷⁸ Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants."

⁷⁹ Bunzel, 10.

⁸⁰ Bunzel, 10.

violence is a defense against the attacks committed by apostate groups or governments.⁸¹ Appeals to defensive jihad is an overplayed refrain in Daesh propaganda, which repeatedly dredges up grievances committed by the West against Sunni Muslims. In contrast to Al-Qaeda, Daesh's obsession with rooting out apostates and the prominence of offensive *jihad* leads to a greater preoccupation with waging war against Muslims at home than crusaders abroad.⁸²

By focusing on territorial conquest, Daesh deviated from Al-Qaeda and other underground terrorist cell predecessors to resurrect this glorified *jihad* of the Rashidun caliphs. The rebirth of the caliphate is a return to the golden age of Islam, when Muslim armies made sweeping conquests. Daesh draws parallels between their fighters and early Muslim soldiers. Like the early Muslim armies, Daesh *mujahideen* are similarly disadvantaged in numbers and equipment, yet are a thorn in the side of Western powers and their allies (today's Byzantines and Sassanids). Daesh is as equally preoccupied with *jihad* as their eighth century counterparts. Dubbed the richest terrorist organization in the world, Daesh spends most of its robbed fortune on war, including soldiers' salaries, weapons, and propaganda, though recent bombings and a fall in oil prices dealt a serious blow to their economy.⁸³

* *A Women's Role in Jihad*

A murky area among jihadist groups is if and how women should participate in *jihad*. Proponents fall into two categories: supporters of active *jihad*, advocating for female participation as suicide bombers or in actual fighting, and supportive *jihad*, restricted to raising the next generation of fighters. Within Daesh propaganda, one finds mixed messages. The prevalence of 'jihadi glamor' shots showcasing burka-clad women wielding rifles is widespread. Propaganda asserts women *can* fight, but their participation is not yet needed; however, they should remain in a state of readiness.⁸⁴ Most important is raising the next generation of *mujahid* fighters—'little lions.'

⁸¹ Bunzel, 10.

⁸² Bunzel, 10.

⁸³ Tanveer Mann, "Here's how ISIS makes its money (and what it spends it on)," *Metro*: December 9, 2015 <http://metro.co.uk/2015/12/09/heres-how-isis-makes-its-money-and-what-it-spends-it-on-5553924/>

⁸⁴ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 4.

One of the direct parallels we can draw to female fighters within Daesh is the Al-Khanssaa Brigade (also known as *hisbah*), an all-women morality police force. The brigade is a form of offensive *jihad*, as female members brutally punish Muslim women who commit offenses, such as dressing immodestly. An all-women brigade is a departure from the practices of other fundamentalist groups. For terrorist researcher Thomas Hegghammer, this signifies a larger trend of allowing women to participate more directly in jihadist activities. As Hegghammer explains, “there is a process of female emancipation taking place in the jihadi movement, albeit a very limited (and morbid) one.”⁸⁵ Many wonder whether this ‘female emancipation’ will transfer to female suicide bombers, a form of defensive *jihad*. Daesh has been vague on their policy. Daesh is covering all of its bases here—putting weapons in women’s hands is a slippery slope towards deconstructing the rigid gender roles the organization relies on, yet Daesh may need women fighters as they continue losing soldiers.⁸⁶ More on female participation in *jihad* is discussed in chapter five.

* *Sexual Jihad*

Also known as *nikkah ul jihad*, sexual *jihad* is a temporary marriage between a man and a woman, sometimes as short as a few hours, that allows them to have *halal* sex. The rationalization behind *nikkah ul jihad* is that relieving *mujahideen* of their sexual frustrations will sharpen their focus on war. Proponents cite religious justification for sexual *jihad* in Qur’an 9:111: “*Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs is the garden: they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain.*” The traditional interpretation of the verse is that men sell their bodies to Allah by fighting; in return, they will reach the garden, or Paradise. The verse has since been applied to Muslim women, who can also sell their bodies by releasing sexual frustrations among fighters in the name of Allah.

⁸⁵ “A Sister’s Role in Jihad,” 4.

⁸⁶ The first report of female suicide bombers occurred in Libya in February 2016, though it is outside the time scope of this thesis. In the battle for Mosul, which began in October 2016, there have been reports of dozens of female suicide bombers.

Another source of religious legitimization is cited in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, a widely respected *hadith*⁸⁷ considered by some Sunnis to be the most important text after the Qur'an. *Sahih al-Bukhari* tells a story of strain between Mohammad's followers from Mecca and his followers from Medina, as the former believed they were worse off. To soothe tensions, a man from Medina makes an offer of generosity to the Meccan: "look at my two wives, and whichever of them you desire, I will divorce her so you can have her" (118:1943). Supporters of sexual *jihad* consider this a precedent of divorcing one's wife so that others may enjoy her sexually.

This controversial concept was first introduced by Saudi Wahhabi cleric Sheikh Mohamad al-Arefe, who urged Sunni women to do their part by offering comfort to *mujahideen* fighters in Syria in their war against the Assad regime. Proponents of *nikkah ul jihad* also argue that in times of *jihad*, forbidden acts become permissible (killing, for example). For them, this form of sexual relations also falls under the umbrella of permissibility. A UN probe revealed this is a common practice in Daesh between local women and fighters, occurring most frequently in Mosul.⁸⁸ Intelligence officials from Myanmar, the UK, Australia, and Tunisia confirmed some of their citizens traveled abroad to become 'comfort women' for fighters.

* *Slavery & sexual slavery*

Daesh has been transparent about the existence of, and justification for, their system of sexual slavery. Sexual slavery is openly discussed in Daesh publications, such as their pamphlet *Su'al wa-Jawab fi al-Sabi wa-Riqab* (Questions and Answers on Taking Captives and Slaves), their English magazine *Dabiq*, and social media accounts. In this section, I detail the historic-religious justifications Daesh provides to legitimize its system of rape and brutality.

According to Daesh ideology, an *al-sabi* is a woman captured in war, and her captivity is made permissible by her unbelief (*kuffar*). *Kuffar* women include those of Jewish, Christian, and polytheist faith (*mushrikin*). Apostates may also be taken, which includes Shia and Sunni women critical of Daesh. Sexual intercourse with slaves is permissible based on the Koranic verse, "Allah the almighty said: '(Successful are the believers) who guard their chastity, except from

⁸⁷ religious texts detailing the words, actions, and habits of the Prophet.

⁸⁸ James Renl, "Q & A: Probing Islamic State's sex atrocities with the United Nations," *Middle East Eye*, May 18, 2015 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/qa-probing-islamic-state-s-sex-atrocities-united-nations-1064004421>

their wives or that their right hands possess, for then they are free from blame” (23:5-6). There are around a dozen references in the Qur’an to “those which your right hand possesses,” understood as a slave.⁸⁹ The verse is thus interpreted as the only permissible sex is between man and wife, and a man and his slave. Not only is sex with slaves permissible, it is a religious obligation. The Prophet kept slaves and concubines, and married at least one former slave. Daesh members consider it their holy duty to enforce a system of rape and abuse towards women and girls. This way, they follow a tradition from Mohammad’s time.⁹⁰

Sexual slavery stands on numerous justifications. Yazidi, Christian, Shia, and other captured women from minority religious groups are seen as ‘spoils of war’. Sexual access to captives is licit in the Qur’an, and Daesh considers it is a religious *duty* for members to live in accordance with the Prophet’s time as rigidly as possible. Escaped women describe religious rites observed during their abuse—Daesh men pray before and after acts of sexual violence, thus “bookending the rape with acts of religious devotion.”⁹¹ Rape becomes ritual. The mass killings, sexual enslavement, and indoctrination of children is akin to genocide against Yazidi, Shia, and Christians, according to the UN and relevant community and religious leaders.⁹²

* *Veiling & seclusion*

Women’s lives in the so-called caliphate revolve around rules on veiling and seclusion. Swathed in all black, the strict dress code forced upon women is reminiscent of a harrowing dystopia. The new dress code was applied in stages, first requiring women and girls to cover their faces with a

⁸⁹ Terry Gross, “Interview with Rukmini Callimachi,” *Fresh Air* podcast audio, August 11, 2016 <http://www.npr.org/2016/08/11/489555425/inside-the-islamic-states-movement-to-spread-terror-all-over-the-world>

⁹⁰ Gross, *Fresh Air*.

⁹¹ Callimachi, “ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape.”

⁹² Nick Cumming-Bruce, “United Nations Investigators Accuse ISIS of Genocide Over Attacks on Yazidis,” *New York Times*, March 19, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/20/world/middleeast/isis-genocide-yazidis-iraq-un-panel.html> ; “Iraq crisis: Islamic State accused of ethnic cleansing,” *BBC News*, September 2, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29026491>; Nina Shea, “The ISIS Genocide of Middle Eastern Christian Minorities and Its *Jizya* Propaganda Ploy,” *Hudson Institute’s Center for Religious Freedom*, August 2016 <https://www.hudson.org/research/12665-the-isis-genocide-of-middle-eastern-christian-minorities-and-its-jizya-propaganda-ploy>

niqab, followed by gloved hands, socked feet, and finally, a layer of cloth covering the eyes.⁹³ Female bodies are swallowed inside an *abaya*, a shapeless, flowing robe. The *hisbah* morality police lurk to pounce on offenders, doling out fines and lashings. Women receive punishments for holes in their socks, momentarily lifting face veils to eat, or to check out a purchase before buying.⁹⁴ Everyday activities, such as walking, shopping, holding a pen, or eating in public are hindered by their dress. The true goal behind the dress code is to remove women from the public sphere, forcing them to stay at home.⁹⁵ Women are told their seclusion is a religious blessing.

The tradition of veiling and sequestering women predates Islam, emerging as early as thirteenth century BCE Assyria as a sign of privilege among upperclass women.⁹⁶ As the division of labor built up wealth that was later passed down along patriarchal lines, female purity became a way of ensuring paternity, and hence, a valuable commodity. This preoccupation with guarding and protecting women was especially strong in Mediterranean and Eastern societies, and early Muslims adopted the tradition from the peoples they conquered.⁹⁷

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. (Koran 24:31)

In this passage, the Prophet instructs women to ‘draw their veils over their bosoms’ and ‘not to reveal their adornment’; however, Nikki Keddie points out it was later interpreted as women

⁹³ Rukmini Callimachi, “For Women Under ISIS, a Tyranny of Dress Code and Punishment,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/world/middleeast/islamic-state-mosul-women-dress-code-morality.html>

⁹⁴ Callimachi, “For Women Under ISIS, a Tyranny of Dress Code and Punishment.”

⁹⁵ Callimachi, “For Women Under ISIS, a Tyranny of Dress Code and Punishment.”

⁹⁶ Nikki R. Keddie, “The Past and Present of Women in the Muslim World.” *Journal of World History* 1 no. 1 (1990): 79-80 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078457>

⁹⁷ Keddie, 80.

should cover everything but their hands, feet, and faces.⁹⁸ The Prophet requested his wives to be kept separate from other men, and this practice was gradually adapted by other high ranking Muslim families.⁹⁹ Through the ages, Islamic societies adopted varying degrees of veiling and secluding women. A geographic dimension developed, as was more difficult for rural or nomadic women to veil, and the practice became largely urban. During the reformist movements in the 19th and 20th centuries, Westernized upper classes moved away from veiling and seclusion, while rural lower classes held on to the old ways. Counter Islamist movements calling for a return of Islam to Middle Eastern societies prompted a backlash towards stricter veiling and seclusion. Today, modesty among Muslim women differs starkly from place to place. In Indonesia, for example, women rarely cover their heads; in contrast, Saudi women are required by law to wear an *abaya* and headscarf in public, and cannot travel without the permission of their male guardian. Daesh falls on the furthest edge of the spectrum.

* *Conclusion*

This chapter provides a thorough summary of relevant background information for this thesis. Following a brief history of the rise of Daesh, I examined the ‘channels of propaganda’ conducting group ideology—history and religion. The roof of Daesh ideology is held up by two columns; the first, Jihadist-Salafism, lends a religious legitimization to Daesh’s criminal acts. An obsession with religious purification carried out by violent means, and a rigid application of religious texts characterizes the Daesh dogma. The second, Muslim history, references the glorious age of the Rashidun Caliphate while simultaneously alluding to centuries of Western persecution against Muslims.



⁹⁸ Keddie, 83.

⁹⁹ Keddie, 84.

Chapter Three—Methodology

This chapter delves into the methodology behind my analysis, divided into three sections. Following a presentation of qualitative content analysis, I then discuss the application of Jowett & O'Donnell's propaganda analysis. The third section explores challenges, limitations, and ethical considerations.

I. *Qualitative content analysis*

* *Qualitative content analysis: coding*

Qualitative content analysis is a form of textual analysis, which methodology authors Lawrence Frey, Carl Botan, Paul Friedman and Gary Kreps describe as “the method communication researchers use to describe and interpret characteristics of a recorded or visual message.”¹⁰⁰ The goal of textual analysis is to determine the content, structure, and functions behind these messages. Within textual analysis, qualitative content analysis is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.”¹⁰¹ For Margrit Schreier, three qualities characterize qualitative content analysis: it reduces data, is systematic, and flexible.¹⁰²

Qualitative content analysis cuts down on data by forcing the researcher to focus on specific themes. The method calls for a repetition of steps that involve going over data again and again, making it fairly systematic. However, coding itself can be flexible, determined by data *as well as* by other concepts (theories, prior research, etc), distinguishing it from other methodologies (such as grounded theory).¹⁰³ In contrast to its quantitative cousin, which systematically counts textual patterns, qualitative content analysis explores topics and underlying themes. Researchers can identify patterns and reduce data volume by creating a coding system.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence Frey, Carl Botan, Paul Friedman, and Gary Kreps, *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 226-227.

¹⁰¹ Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth, “Qualitative Analysis of Content,” *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*, ed. by BM Wildemuth (Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2009), 308.

¹⁰² Margrit Schreier, “Qualitative Content Analysis,” *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. by Uwe Flick (London: SAGE Publications, 2014), 170.

¹⁰³ Ji Young Cho and Eun-Hee Lee, “Reducing Confusion about Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences,” *The Quantitative Report* 19 no. 32 (2014): 4, <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=tqr>

* *Defining codes*

A code is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language or visual data.”¹⁰⁴ When coding, the researcher encapsulates data with a word or phrase that can be applied again to data fitting the same criteria. Or, as historian Marc Trachtenberg puts it, “when you read that material, you see certain themes sounded over and over again”.¹⁰⁵ This coding is “at the heart of the method,” and can determine patterns, which are then used to discover underlying meanings.¹⁰⁶ Coding is largely interpretive, and not an exact science—researchers may develop and apply different codes to the same data.¹⁰⁷ As such, coding is heuristic, allowing the researcher to freely explore meanings within the data without following a specific formula.¹⁰⁸ Coding occurs over several stages. Later stages of coding allow the researcher to produce new codes and fine-tune old ones.

Codes must be unidimensional, exclusive, and exhaustive.¹⁰⁹ By limiting main categories to one theme, researchers create unidimensional codes. Decision rules make codes mutually exclusive, to help researchers determine which code to use and ensure the same unit is not coded twice. Finally, all of the data used must be coded, making codes exhaustive.

* *Pre-coding: data selection and organization*

Data selection is the first step towards building a coding framework. Researchers must include a manageable amount of data while retaining a diversity of sources.¹¹⁰ Coding accommodates a wider scope by allowing researchers to group together coded categories across sources.¹¹¹ Many researchers opt to utilize software, such as MaxQDA or Atlas.ti. However, use of software is not a requirement for qualitative content analysis. Such software can dictate how analysis is carried

¹⁰⁴ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Marc Trachtenburg, *The Craft of International History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 83.

¹⁰⁶ Schreier, 170.

¹⁰⁷ Saldaña, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Saldaña, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Schreier, 175.

¹¹⁰ Schreier, 175.

¹¹¹ Schreier, 170.

out, thus reducing the method's flexibility. For analyses that will not use software (like this one), strong organizational skills are a necessity. Data should be organized into absorbable blocks, usually by topic or source, before the coding phases begin. Within these blocks, data is broken up into short paragraphs. By breaking up the data into digestible chunks, the researcher avoids missing material. Tables, color-coding, and bold/italicized words can also help the researcher stay organized. Researchers are encouraged to begin coding during data collection, as this will cut down on data by restricting analysis to categories that are relevant to the research question.¹¹²

* *The first stage: Initial Coding*

During the first stage of coding, researchers are encouraged to jot down initial impressions in the margins, which can help produce codes. Highlighting words and phrases that seem significant is also good practice. Methodology author Johnny Saldaña cautions against relying on one's memory, instead advising, "get your thoughts, however fleeting, documented in some way."¹¹³ These early scribbles help determine the final codes to be used.

To develop codes, it is useful for a researcher to have a copy of their research questions nearby. This way, one can constantly scrutinize data in relation to the questions. Codes can be guided by theory (deductive approach) or data (inductive approach). The latter is an appropriate route if knowledge and research on the topic is limited, whereas the former can be used to test a theory's applicability to the data.¹¹⁴ However, even if a deductive approach is used, data must also determine the codes.¹¹⁵

To determine which code to apply to a unit of data, researchers draft descriptions, which consist of code definitions and rules. For main code categories, definitions can be broad and general. For subcodes, however, they must be very specific to reinforce the exclusivity of codes. Decision rules are also used, to help the researcher determine between subcodes. Another helpful tool for assigning codes is indicators, which are words or phrases that signal a specific code.

* *The later stages of coding*

¹¹² Saldaña, 8.

¹¹³ Saldaña, 17.

¹¹⁴ Zhang & Wildemuth, 311.

¹¹⁵ Schreier, 171.

Theoretically, there is no limit the number of codes or levels of subcodes a researcher can employ. However, a good rule of thumb is around 5-6 main coding categories, and no more than three levels (any more can be overwhelming).¹¹⁶ Another question relates to how often a code is applied within a text, and there are two different ways of going about code application. The first, ‘lumper coding,’ paints in broad strokes by lumping a large chunk of data under one code. The researcher can then go back and generate more subcategories. This method is a time-saver, but risks missing out on coding applications. In contrast, ‘splitter coding’ produces a code to all applicable units of data.¹¹⁷

Related to writing down one’s thoughts in the first stage of coding is analytic memo writing, which should be maintained throughout the coding process. In analytic memo writing, the researcher scribes their thoughts on the assigned coding and subcoding of data. This continual reflection aids the analytic process, and helps the researcher to be thorough.

Once the main coding categories have been decided, researchers must search data for units that fit the overarching category; then, the data must be filed under the appropriate subcategory, or create a new subcategory.¹¹⁸ This process, known as subsumption, is repeated over several stages until all of the data has been coded.

* *Presenting the results of qualitative content analysis*

The primary way researchers showcase the results of qualitative content analysis is through the completed coding framework. Generally, this framework will show the links between codes and subcodes, with code definitions, decision rules, indicators, and samples for each. Again, the goal of qualitative content analysis is to explore themes, identify patterns, and describe situations, not quantify their occurrence. As my analysis is theory-guided, I explore the applicability of gender-war theory in relation to roles outlined for women in Daesh propaganda. I discuss the results of my research in Chapter 5, and present my coding framework in the attachments.

* *Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative content analysis*

¹¹⁶ Schreier, 175.

¹¹⁷ Saldaña, 19-20.

¹¹⁸ Schreier, 176.

As with any methodology, there are advantages and disadvantages. Qualitative content analysis is a systematic, thorough approach that applies the same analytical sequence of steps to all data. At the same time, the method is flexible, allowing researchers to utilize inductive or deductive approaches, and to interpret data, thereby opening up analytical possibilities.¹¹⁹ However, this method is time consuming. In addition, the analytical steps are not often clearly defined, which can be confusing for first-time users.¹²⁰ Finally, the lack of software in this analysis widens the possibility that coding opportunities will be missed, dampening analytical richness.

* *Applying qualitative content analysis*

In the early stages, I struggled to identify primary sources. While E-books and online magazines were easy to find, locating social media accounts of individuals verified to be with Daesh proved difficult. I painstakingly went through news articles and academic reports to cross-examine the accounts used in their publications. This way, I ensured that all six of the social media accounts analyzed are verified by a secondary source. To pull out digestible extracts from my primary sources, I searched for references to female, women, sister, mother, girl, *muhajirah*, slave, and Yazidi, thereby weeding out data that wasn't relevant to discussions on women's roles.

Once I collected my data, I analyzed the texts with the wartime gender roles, discussed by Joshua Goldstein, in mind. In his book *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System*, Goldstein explores the striking uniformity of gender roles in wartime throughout human existence.¹²¹ For women, these roles are *nurse, sweetheart, mother, peace activist* and *shamer*.¹²² Notably, female warriors are largely absent from the historical record. Goldstein theorizes women's absence from the battlefield serves to reinforce masculine as aggressive and feminine as submissive, thereby prodding men to fight and protect their women. In the same vein, conquered enemies are feminized by male soldiers, manifesting as sexual violence in war. With these roles, I had the early stages of my coding framework. *Mother, sweetheart, nurse* and

¹¹⁹ Florian Kohlbacher, "The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 7 no. 1 (2006): 15, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/75/153>

¹²⁰ Cho and Lee, 17.

¹²¹ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System, and Vice-Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹²² More on gender-war theory is discussed in Chapter 4.

shamer were all straightforward applications reflected in the data. Goldstein's discussions on the *feminization of enemies* became *slave*, to incorporate the systematic enslavement of Yazidi, Christian and Shia women. *Jihadi bride* investigates the role of female warriors within Daesh. *Peace activist* was the only role I did not find evidence for. I thus built my coding framework around these initial categories of *mother*, *wife*, *nurse*, *shamer*, *jihadi bride*, and *slave*.

* *The subsequent stages: building a coding framework*

I organized my data by source, and took raw text and sorted it into similarly sized chunks. These chunks ranged from 150-500 words. Once the data was transcribed, I began coding—by reading the data, writing notes and looking for patterns across sources. I reviewed the data over several stages, to fine-tune, develop, and apply new codes. To aid my coding, I built a coding framework with definitions, code rules, indicators, and subcodes when relevant. This method allowed me to develop the additional category of *muhajirah* to reflect the data. After I coded all of the data by source (relying on color blocking and bolded words for organization), I reorganized the data in a second round by theme. In the second phase, I grouped together all data units by their primary coding category, shortened data units, and polished the application of my subcodes. My final coding categories are *muhajirah*, *sweetheart*, *mother*, *nurse*, *jihadi bride*, *slave*, and *shamer*. Each category contains up to two levels of subcodes. I provide my coding framework in the attachments given at the end of the document.

* *Why content analysis?*

To guide my choice of methodology, I first mediated on my primary research question: what have been the roles for women in Daesh? I knew I would be searching for evidence of different roles, or *themes*, within my primary source materials. Even in the earliest stages of data collection, I began mentally sorting source material into thematic groups, based on the roles presented and audiences targeted. Qualitative content analysis is a natural fit.

II. Propaganda analysis

* *Defining propaganda*

Defining propaganda is a controversial enterprise, with academics positing varying interpretations of the word since it burst out of obscurity and into extensive use in the twentieth

century.¹²³ Prior to the sixteenth century, ‘propaganda’ was a biological term denoting the reproduction of plant and animal species, with the Latin root signifying something “which ought to be propagated.”¹²⁴ With the religious rumblings of the Protestant Reformation, the term was then applied to competing Protestant and Catholic missionaries, eager to spread or *propagate* their beliefs.¹²⁵ Over the course of two world wars, the term went from specialized religious contexts to political discussions on the commons.¹²⁶ During World War I, the term adopted a negative connotation due to the assumption it prolonged the fruitless violence; however after World War II, attitudes crept towards neutrality.¹²⁷ This trend towards neutrality has persisted into the present day, with articles like Canadian scholar Douglas Walton’s arguing against tendencies to dismiss propaganda as overtly negative.¹²⁸ Thus, the term ‘propaganda’ has migrated from biological to religious to political arenas, shifting from positive to strongly negative to back in between.¹²⁹ It’s no wonder that, given propaganda’s evolving contexts and connotations, definitions of the term are no less unified.

Scholars have offered numerous criteria of what ‘propaganda’ entails, though no single definition enjoys widespread acceptance. French sociologist and philosopher Jacques Ellul offered one of the most celebrated studies of propaganda, defining his protagonist partially on technique and results: psychological manipulation, leading to identical results in technologically

¹²³ Erwin W. Fellows, “‘Propaganda’: History of a Word,” *American Speech* 34, no. 3 (1959): 184, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/454039>

¹²⁴ Fellows, 182.

¹²⁵ Fellows, 182.

¹²⁶ Fellows, 183-186.

¹²⁷ Fellows, 184-185.

¹²⁸ Douglas Walton, “What is propaganda, and what exactly is wrong with it?” *Public Affairs Quarterly* 11 (1996): 383, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2189875>

¹²⁹ Fellows, 188.

advanced societies (Nazi Germany, for example).¹³⁰ American psychologist Anthony Pratkanis and author Melanie E. Turner also focus on technique, distinguishing propaganda from persuasion as “the manipulation of the mob by the elite” by “playing on prejudices and emotions.”¹³¹ Pratkanis and fellow psychologist Elliot Aronson centered on technique in their book illustrating propaganda in American life, defined as the “mass suggestion or influence through the manipulation of symbols and the psychology of the individual.” Their definition highlights verbal as well as nonverbal forms. J. Michael Sproule also emphasizes the technique of the propagator, identifying propaganda as “the work of large organizations or groups to win over the public for special interests through a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal both their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supporting reasons.”

On the other end, author Terence H. Qualter identifies propaganda based solely on results, defined by its ability to change an audience.¹³² Master propagandist Joseph Goebbels agreed, stating propaganda has no method, only purpose.¹³³ And while Leonard W. Doob provides his own definition of propaganda in a 1948 essay, he also cautions that “a clear-cut definition of propaganda is neither possible nor desirable.”¹³⁴ Although academia is swimming in definitions, no singular term enjoys common use. Yet American professors Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell remind readers that a concise definition of propaganda is needed to properly study such a complex phenomenon, and distinguish it from other concepts used interchangeably, such as “persuasion,” “spin,” “brainwashing,” “lies,” and “manipulation.”¹³⁵

* *My definition of propaganda*

¹³⁰ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2012), 3-4.

¹³¹ Jowett and O’Donnell, 5.

¹³² Jowett and O’Donnell, 5.

¹³³ quoted in Jowett and O’Donnell, 282.

¹³⁴ Jowett and O’Donnell, 4.

¹³⁵ Jowett and O’Donnell, 2-3.

Jowett and O'Donnell present their surmising of propaganda as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”¹³⁶ This definition purposefully emphasizes the goals of the propagandist,¹³⁷ which reflects the intent of my own project—to evaluate Daesh propaganda, surmise what roles women hold, and how these roles benefit the group. Jowett and O'Donnell explain “...the one who benefits from the audience’s response [...] is the propagandist and not necessarily the members of the audience. People in the audience may think the propagandist has their interests at heart, but in fact, the propagandist’s motives are selfish ones.”¹³⁸ In our case, Daesh recruiters dangle scripted promises of adventure, romance, utopia, motherhood, sisterhood, purpose, justice and heavenly rewards in front of targeted females. The reality of life under the black flag for women is struck from the message. Considering this accentuation on propagandist’s intent, I elect to use Jowett and O'Donnell’s definition.

I chose this interpretation for a few reasons. One, identifying propaganda by outcome (like Qualter’s definition) calls into question whether one is committing a ‘questionable cause’ fallacy, assuming one event causes the other because they occur in conjunction. On the other hand, defining propaganda by method (such as Ellul, Sproule, and Pratkanis) is much too rigid in a world where technology and technique are ever-evolving. Two, the definition emphasizes the goals of the propagandist,¹³⁹ which reflects the aim of my own project—to evaluate Daesh propaganda, surmise what roles women hold, and how these roles benefit the group. Three, this definition of propaganda aligns with the purpose of textual analysis, to explain the functions (or goals) behind messages. Four, Jowett and O'Donnell provide an analytical framework, introducing readers to the complex study of propaganda and guiding researchers in analysis. This thesis investigates one point out of their 10-step process, detailed below.

* *Analyzing Propaganda*

¹³⁶ Jowett and O'Donnell, 6.

¹³⁷ Jowett and O'Donnell, 6.

¹³⁸ Jowett and O'Donnell, 9.

¹³⁹ Jowett and O'Donnell, 6.

The study of propaganda, relays Ellul, must be restricted to propaganda's characteristics.¹⁴⁰ Where Ellul stopped short was providing readers with a roadmap of *how*. Jowett and O'Donnell recognize that analyzing propaganda is a difficult task, and lay out a strategy to guide researchers.¹⁴¹ Out of the 10 points, I chose to focus on step one, Ideology and Goals. The remaining points lay outside the realm of my research questions.

- *Ideology and goals*

To uncover a group's ideology, researchers examine propaganda for recurring beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that formulate a reinforcing set of societal norms, or worldview.¹⁴² Ideology serves many functions, including as a type of consent to the group's pecking order with roles allotted on the basis of gender, race, religion, etc. Here, I apply a social constructionist theory of sexual violence in wartime to explore why subgroups of women are allotted different roles within Daesh, based on nationality, religion, skill set, and ideology.¹⁴³ With social constructionist theory providing the why, the analysis of propaganda for women's roles uncovers the how.

Another function of ideology is to dispense legitimacy. Ideology offers references to past struggles, situations, beliefs, or events and applies them to future initiatives.¹⁴⁴ With the legitimacy of the organization comes the defendability of its actions.¹⁴⁵ Currents of propaganda are conducted through historical and religious channels, which Daesh uses to justify and defend its criminal behavior. I explore how Daesh utilizes historical-religious citations in relation to defining roles of women in the Caliphate.

III. *Challenges and limitations of primary source material*

The challenges for this project are vast. The recency, ongoing nature, and language constraints all present formidable difficulties. In terms of language, I am limited to English sources, though camaraderie among researchers has led to a few English translations of some materials. In

¹⁴⁰ Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, (New York: Random House, 1965), xii.

¹⁴¹ Jowett and O'Donnell, 280.

¹⁴² Jowett and O'Donnell, 281.

¹⁴³ A full discussion on social constructionist theory of sexual violence in wartime is given in Chapter Four.

¹⁴⁴ Jowett and O'Donnell, 281.

¹⁴⁵ Jowett and O'Donnell, 281.

addition to these limitations, Daesh propaganda is under siege. The ongoing battle to shut down accounts by social media outlets (Twitter, for example), governments, and independent parties (since the November 13 Paris attacks, Anonymous has shut down at least 3,000) makes it difficult to follow an account for an extended period. Moreover, it is impossible to tell when a post was first published, as posts are taken down, reblogged, and recirculated on the information highway. The time dimension becomes murky. To combat this, I kept a time log with the dates I found each post. Finally, the contemporary nature of my project signifies that new reports and publications are coming out all the time, making it necessary to define a research endpoint.

* *Ethical Considerations*

This project also raises ethical concerns, as I publish social media posts without the account holder's permission. The question of privacy over publicly accessible website forums (especially social media accounts, which hold the most personal information), is hotly contested. As I am submitting my thesis to a Norwegian university, I refer only to Norwegian contexts. The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (NESH) Guidelines state that "[...]researchers can in general use material from open forums freely without obtaining consent from the parties".¹⁴⁶ However, they go on to state that people's perceptions of private versus public information differ, and researchers must respect this understanding. The guidelines thus recommend researchers to consider the "integrity of the context," i.e., the space the communication occurs in.¹⁴⁷ In this sense, they refer to whether the account holder intends for the information to be made public. The very nature of propaganda endeavors to "win over the public," leaving me reasonably assured my usage of social media accounts is ethical. Further privacy concerns arise if researchers utilize information from password-protected website forums, but all the accounts used here could be found by any monkey with Google.

To avoid any gray areas, I contacted the Norwegian Military Institute *Forsvarets Forskingsinstitutt* (FFI), an institute which conducts research on behalf of the Norwegian military and provides policy advice to political leaders. Under the FFI's branch of terrorism

¹⁴⁶ "Public or Private?" *The Norwegian National Committees for Ethics*, February 17, 2015 <https://www.etikkom.no/en/ethical-guidelines-for-research/ethical-guidelines-for-internet-research/1.-offentlig-eller-privat/>

¹⁴⁷ "Public or Private?"

research, researchers encounter similar legal and ethical questions. In an email correspondence, a member of the FFI confirmed it falls within legal and ethical jurisdictions to publish research from social media accounts without the account holders' permission, as long as sources are anonymized. They added an extra stipulation of advice: avoid collecting data from Norwegian citizens (as stringent privacy laws apply only to them.) I followed both pieces of advice, and saved all data in the form of iPhone screenshots if another researcher requests to view them.

* *Concluding remarks*

This chapter explored the caveats of the methodology applied in my analysis; first, I laid out a detailed definition and defense of qualitative content analysis, and discussed how I applied the methodology to my research. The second section sketched the varying conceptions of propaganda, and provided a concrete definition moving forward. Jowett and O'Donnell's steps on propaganda analysis coincide with the goals of my analysis, though I chose to only hone in on one. Analyzing 'ideology and goals,' addresses my primary research question, *what have been the roles of women within Daesh?* The third and final section presented the challenges and limitations of source materials, and weighed ethical considerations. The next chapter introduces the guiding light of my methodology: gender-war theory.



Chapter Four—Through the lens of gender-war theory

This section outlines gender-war theory, the theoretical foundation of my qualitative content analysis. While the first section sketches the development of gender studies, the second section narrows in on gender-war theory and social constructionist theory of sexual violence in wartime, providing the theoretical backdrop to determine why women are allotted varying roles in Daesh.

I. What is gender?

In her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir famously declared that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”. Beauvoir made a critical distinction between what later came to be known as ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, distinguishing the former as biology and the latter as learned. Renowned feminist Judith Butler later lauded this distinction as the “distinguished contribution of Simone de Beauvoir’s formulation”.¹⁴⁸

The term ‘gender’ long functioned as a form of grammar classification within lingual circles. Yet in the second half of the twentieth century, ‘gender’ evolved to take on a whole new meaning. As early as the 1950s, anthropologists and sociologists wrote of ‘sex roles’ (cultural expectations for men and women) and ‘sexual status’ (varying statuses of men and women across cultures).¹⁴⁹ By the 1970s and 1980s, the term ‘gender’ was mainstreamed by postmodernist and social constructionist scholars (as well as American feminists) to signify societal norms.¹⁵⁰ This led to a growing understanding among feminists that gender is constructed by cultural practices and societal expectations, put more simply as “socially constructed”.

* *Gender is socially constructed*

To explain gender differences, some feminists turned to social learning theory, where masculine and feminine gender roles are constructed through childhood learning. Kate Millett is one of the early social constructionist feminists who helped transform gender into its modern meaning with her book *Social Politics*, defining gender as “the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the

¹⁴⁸Judith Butler, “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*,” in *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2930225>

¹⁴⁹ Joanne Meyerowitz, “A History of Gender,” *The American Historical Review* 113 no. 5 (2008): 1353-1354, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30223445>

¹⁵⁰ Sharon Rae Jenkins, “Introduction to the Special Issue: Defining Gender, Relationships, and Power,” *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 42, no. 7-8 (2001): 471, E-ISSN:1573-2762.

culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression".¹⁵¹ This view was bolstered by observational studies within the social sciences, such as Beverly I. Fagot and Mary D. Leinbach's (1989), who observed parents playing with toddlers and concluded that boys and girls were rewarded and punished for different behaviors.¹⁵² For social learning theorists, influences are all around, shaping gender identity in complex and subtle ways—from how parents and teachers treat children, to what children observe in books and television. Not all accepted this explanation for gender identity, however.

* *Gender is personality, gender is sexuality*

Psychoanalyst and sociologist Nancy Chodrow faulted socialization as too simplistic to explain gender identities.¹⁵³ Influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, Chodrow theorizes gender develops from masculine and feminine personalities that form in infancy as a result of parenting practices, especially because women are the primary child carers.¹⁵⁴ These differences form the basis for stereotypically gendered traits. To correct these gendered personalities (which often lead to the oppression of women), Chodrow posits equal childcare duties between parents.¹⁵⁵ However, this viewpoint cannot accommodate for single-parent or same-sex parent households.

Still others see gender as an extension of sexuality. Catherine MacKinnon views men and women as socially conditioned through pornography and other channels to find female submission sexually pleasing; gender is therefore constructed by the sexual objectification of women.¹⁵⁶ With men as sexually dominant and women as submissive, gender is thus an inequality of sexual power relations between the sexes.¹⁵⁷ Yet surely gender existed before

¹⁵¹ Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 31.

¹⁵² Beverly I. Fagot and Mary D. Leinbach, "The Young Child's Gender Schema: Environmental Input, Internal Organization," *Child Development* 60 (1989): 663-672, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1130731>

¹⁵³ Nancy Chodrow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 205.

¹⁵⁴ Chodrow, 6-7.

¹⁵⁵ Chodrow, 214-215.

¹⁵⁶ Catherine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 113-114, 123.

¹⁵⁷ MacKinnon, 130-131.

pornography became widely available. Pornography is also diverse, encompassing fantasies of female dominance.

* *Can we study gender? Critics of the sex-gender distinction and gender realism*

As more scholars added their voices to the growing field of gender studies, others questioned whether we can even study gender at all. Critics pointed out the problems of isolating nurture from nature, while others questioned the assumption of ‘gender realism’—that gender is uniform.

Not all agree that we can artificially sever societal roles from biology and study them in isolation. For Nancy Tuana, “traits due to nature and traits due to nurture cannot be isolated, because any trait’s presence is due to both”.¹⁵⁸ Tuana argues we cannot disentangle sex from gender, as it relies on the assumption of the nature-nurture dichotomy that is simply impossible to achieve.¹⁵⁹ Moira Gatens is another critic of the gender-sex distinction, arguing that gender theorists assume the mind is “a blank slate, on which is inscribed various social ‘lessons,’” while the body is a “passive mediator of these inscriptions.”¹⁶⁰ Gatens refutes this “alleged neutrality of the body” and the “theoretically naive solution” of socialization proposed by gender theorists. The manmade ravine between sex and gender is therefore artificial, unrealistic, and naive. Joshua S. Goldstein sees no reason to draw lines in the sand, and paints in broad strokes by using ‘gender’ as an umbrella term for both sex *and* gender.¹⁶¹

Other scholars reject the underlying assumption of gender studies: that gender is uniform, known as gender realism. Two influential criticisms against gender realism are referred to as the “particularity argument” and the “normative argument”. Elisabeth Spelman launched the particularity argument in *The Inessential Woman* (1990), which counters the assumption of a ‘common womanness’ based on differences in class, race, and other factors.¹⁶² As gender is

¹⁵⁸Nancy Tuana, “Refusing nature/nurture,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 6 no.6 (1983): 626, https://www.academia.edu/33174485/Re-fusing_nature_nurture

¹⁵⁹ Tuana, 625.

¹⁶⁰ Moira Gatens, “A critique of the sex/gender distinction,” *Beyond Marxism? Interventions After Marx* eds. Judith Allen and Paul Patton (Sydney: Intervention Publications, 1983), 144.

¹⁶¹ Goldstein, 2.

¹⁶² Elisabeth Spelman, *The Inessential Woman* (London: The Women’s Press, 1990), 159.

socially constructed, Spelman posits womanness is culturally specific, and that women with the same racial, class, and ethnic backgrounds occupy the same 'gender'.

Judith Butler also offers a compelling criticism of gender realism in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Butler presents the normative argument, which rejects gender realism based on “the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of ‘women’ are constructed”.¹⁶³ Aligning with Spelman, Butler refutes there is a single concept of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ due to the myriad of differences in class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, etc within genders. Butler’s arguments for a multifaceted gender are especially relevant for my thesis, which explores women within Daesh with varying ethnic, national, religious, educational, and age differences.

* *Gender in historical analysis*

In 1986, historian Joan Scott’s article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” triggered an “epistemological tidal wave” that rattled feminist scholarship to its core.¹⁶⁴ Scott’s two-part definition of gender instructed it is both “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes” as well as the “the primary way of signifying relationships of power.”¹⁶⁵ Scott explains the “constitutive element[s]” consist of cultural symbols operating within scientific, legal, political, religious, and educational arenas that set in “binary opposition” what ‘male’ and ‘female’ are.¹⁶⁶ Power is central to Scott’s analysis, and lies in the unequal relationships between the genders, as well as the organizations that perpetuate such inequalities. Her article argues for the inclusion of gender in historical analysis to understand how politics shape gender, and vice-versa.¹⁶⁷ Scott’s work united social scientists with literary critics; social sciences and the humanities were able to communicate in a common

¹⁶³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 13.

¹⁶⁴ Nancy Green, “Changing Paradigms in Migration Studies: From Men to Women to Gender,” *Gender and History* 24 no. 3 (2012): 265, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0424.2012.01706.x.

¹⁶⁵ Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” in *The American Historical Review* 95 no. 5 (1986): 1067, DOI: 10.2307/1864376.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Scott, 1070.

tongue, as studies of difference and inequality became merged with studies of language.¹⁶⁸ Her article was met with a wall of criticism, and seen by some as a patriarchal misstep.¹⁶⁹

Nonetheless, Scott's work on gender is lauded as one of the most important contributions to gender studies. Her analysis is especially useful for my thesis, as she champions the use of gender in historical analysis to paint a more realistic, albeit messier, picture of how society is organized around gender difference, resulting in power inequalities.

II. Gender in war

While the previous section captures the evolving discussions within gender studies, I now refocus on the specific caveats of my thesis. My thesis occupies a specific space: wartime. To accommodate these spatial needs, I apply a social constructionist analysis of wartime roles, a conceptualization nestled within gender theory.

* *War is gendered*

Some argue that war is inherently gendered, and it is impossible to discuss the former without the latter. "If war hinges on disempowering one's opponent, and gender difference encodes power, then manipulating gender can be deployed as a tactic of disempowering," explains Carol Cohn.¹⁷⁰ Betty Reardon asserts that war is "the unchecked manifestation of the patriarchy,"¹⁷¹ while Joshua S. Goldstein holds that socially constructed gender roles fuel the flames of war.¹⁷² It is more difficult to argue that *every* war is gendered, but within Daesh, where sexual violence runs rampant and gender roles are enforced with a Draconian fervor, the case is easy to make.

* *Sexual violence in war: five theories*

Since the well documented cases of widespread sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the Yugoslav wars from 1992-1995, increasing attention has been paid to the relationship between sexual violence and war. Sexual violence and war have a complex

¹⁶⁸ Meyerowitz, 1355-1356.

¹⁶⁹ Meyerowitz, 1348.

¹⁷⁰ Carol Cohn, *Women and Wars: Contested Histories, Uncertain Futures* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 10.

¹⁷¹ Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 10.

¹⁷² Goldstein, 6.

relationship, and fluctuate in frequency across different armed groups.¹⁷³ There is no consensus on why or how sexual violence manifests in war, though theories have been proposed. I briefly outline five such theories below.

Feminist theory suggests that wartime rape is an exaggeration of masculine/feminine gender roles, an extension of patriarchal societies and male domination over women. Joshua Goldstein offers a feminist argument by holding rape in war as a form of symbolic domination, by which a conquered enemy is feminized. However, as critics point out, this theory fails to account for rape in peacetime, as well as instances of wartime rape in less patriarchal societies.¹⁷⁴

Rooted in psychoanalysis, the cultural pathology theory is used to peel back years of history and explore sociocultural factors that contributed to the outbreak of sexual violence.¹⁷⁵ For example, Iris Chang's famous analysis of the rape of Nanking rationalized the rampant sexual violence as the result of the highly militarized Japanese army, intense training, anti-women attitudes in army culture, and newfound reprehension for the Chinese.¹⁷⁶ Again, rape occurring in less patriarchal, non-militarized societies cannot be explained with this viewpoint.

The most popular by far is strategic rape theory, which asserts that sexual violence is used by armed groups as a strategic tactic to further military goals. In her book *Against Our Will* (1975), Susan Brownmiller was the first to propose wartime sexual violence could be deliberate, calculated, and planned. Since then, many authors have taken up the banner. Several explanations have been proposed on why sexual violence in war can be beneficial—spreading terror, demoralizing the enemy, emasculating enemy soldiers, and male bonding, to name a few. Strategic rape has become closely linked to genocidal rape, in which an armed group utilizes sexual violence to wipe out an ethnic or religious group by violating their populations and

¹⁷³ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare?" *Politics and Society* 37 no. 1 (2009): 132, DOI: 10.1177/0032329208329755; Dara Kay Cohen, Amelia Hoover Green, and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Misconceptions, Implications, and Ways Forward," *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 323 (2013): 1, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2013/02/wartime-sexual-violence-misconceptions-implications-and-ways-forward>; Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnhild Nordås, "Sexual violence in armed conflict: Introducing the SVAC dataset, 1989-2000," *Journal of Peace Research* 51 no. 3 (2014): 418-428, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343314523028>

¹⁷⁴ Jonathan Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," *The Journal of Sex Research* 41 no. 2 (2010): 131, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3813647>

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ referenced in Gottschall, 131.

causing severe mental and physical anguish. Yet academic Jonathan Gottschall questions whether strategic rape theory blurs cause and effect, muddling motivations with consequences.¹⁷⁷

Based in economic theory, opportunistic sexual violence theory maintains that perpetrators are encouraged to loot and seize valuable resources in the instability of war.¹⁷⁸ Raping and pillaging go hand in hand in areas of poor economic conditions like Colombia, where soldiers rob civilians and sometimes sexually assault them in the process. Women and girls are also captured and kept as slaves, bought and sold on the markets as a commodity. This is a well documented practice within Daesh.¹⁷⁹ However, the theory cannot account for wartime rape in cases where soldiers are not strapped for resources—Daesh is a prime example. At one point dubbed the “richest terrorist organization in the world,” the seizure of Mosul’s bank and funds from illegal oil sales, extortion, and sympathetic donors allowed Daesh to pay its members a decent salary in a war-torn area. Although economic woes are now forcing the organization to slash salaries,¹⁸⁰ the system of sexual slavery was implemented from the start.

While the four theories outlined above present a sociocultural standpoint, biology-based theories reject environmental factors. The biosocial theory holds that men are naturally inclined towards rape to propagate their genes; these instincts are curbed during peacetime, but become unleashed in the chaos of war.¹⁸¹ Yet this approach cannot explain soldiers in conflicts who choose not to rape—or ethnic conflicts where rape is largely absent, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.¹⁸² Furthermore, it cannot account for the diversity of acts of sexual violence that do not result in reproduction, such as the rape of men, insertion of foreign objects, violation of corpses, and female perpetrators of sexual violence.

* *Gender-war theory*

¹⁷⁷ Gottschall, 132.

¹⁷⁸ Erika Carlsen, “R/ape and War in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” in *A Journal of Social Justice* 21 (2009): 477, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10402650903323546>

¹⁷⁹ The organization has released a pamphlet detailing rules with sex slaves, as well as a video showing fighters excitedly discussing the slave markets. Both of these sources are discussed in the section on primary sources.

¹⁸⁰ Denver Nicks, “Why ISIS is Going Broke,” *Time*: March 8, 2016 <http://time.com/money/4251494/why-isis-is-going-broke/>

¹⁸¹ Gottschalk, 133.

¹⁸² Wood, “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare?”

In his book *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice-Versa*, Joshua Goldstein navigates a “puzzling cross-cultural consistency”: the absence of female warriors throughout history.¹⁸³ While historians can point to a few examples, from the mandatory military service requirement for Israeli women to the mythical Amazonian tribe, women are by and large missing from the battlefield, whether in clashes between hunter-gatherers or on-the-ground counter-terror initiatives of the twenty-first century. Women’s absence is especially striking when Goldstein argues that both gender *and* warfare are richly varied through time and space; yet in conjunction, gendered war roles are eerily consistent.

If women are missing from battle, where are they? Based on an exhaustive historical analysis, Goldstein presents women’s roles in war, understood as *mother, sweetheart, nurse, peace activist, shamer, and conquest*. After presenting and exploring various hypotheses (including biological) on why women are excluded from the battlefield, Goldstein concludes that their absence is the product of social constructions of gender identity, hyper-inflated in wartime. Masculinity is built as aggression, strength, and toughness; to goad men into the fray, femininity is constructed in its mirror image: as submission, weakness, and defenselessness. Permitting women to fight would shatter these social constructions, endangering male participation and the war effort at large. Women are thus called to serve in other ways, which account for the near-universality of female roles in wartime.

My analysis applies Goldstein’s research on gendered war roles, to explore whether his findings apply to the case of women in Daesh. However, there is an element missing from Goldstein’s analysis—why do women assume different roles? Why do some women become sweethearts, while others are taken captive? Why are some women peace activists, and others war hawks? To understand why women in Daesh are allotted certain roles over others, I apply social constructionist theory.

* *Social constructionist theory*

To understand the inclusive female experience within Daesh, I apply a social constructionist concept of sexual violence during war. According to Inger Sjelsbæk, social constructionist conceptualization is the best structure for analyzing the relationship between sexual violence and

¹⁸³ Goldstein, 1.

war, as its fluidity is well-suited to capturing reality's complexities.¹⁸⁴ The conception holds sexual violence in wartime to be a "transaction of identities between victim and perpetrator," where the perpetrator and their ethnic/religious/political identity becomes masculinized, and the victim and their corresponding identities are feminized.¹⁸⁵ Keeping with other theories of war and gender, this conceptualization assumes gender identities exist in a hierarchical power relationship, where the masculine is linked to power and aggression, and the feminine to weakness and submission.

This framework is helpful in explaining the differences in roles and treatment between women based on religion, nationality, class/status, or ethnicity. The central premise of the theory, that the overlap of gender with certain identities results in different experiences for sub-groups in the context of hierarchical gender identities, can explain these discrepancies in treatment. In the context of Sjelsbæk's theory, women fall along nationality and ethno-religious cleavages.

* *The many faces of women in Daesh*

Jihadi brides, mothers, homemakers, recruiters, enforcers, shamers, caretakers, soldiers, sexual slaves and compliant citizens are but some of the pathways Daesh provides for women. Roles for females are as diverse as the women that fill them, and largely determined by their nationality, ethnicity, and religion. By applying a social constructionist theory of sexual violence, I can explore how Daesh chooses to utilize some women as homemakers and mothers, while others are condemned to sexual slavery.

* *Concluding remarks*

This chapter begins by outlining the development of gender theory, tracing the arguments and counterarguments that have shaped gendered perspective over the past six decades. Like Tuana, Butler, and other prominent feminists, I reject my own ability (or that of any academic) to sever biology from society. As such, any reference to 'gender' is a catch-all for both sex and gender. I find Scott's arguments on the usefulness of gender in historical analysis a sound foundation to build my own historical analysis upon. Arguments against gender realism resonate in my own

¹⁸⁴ Inger Sjelsbæk, "Sexual Violence and War: Mapping Out a Complex Relationship," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 2 (2001): 211-237, http://file.prio.no/publication_files/prio/Skjelsbaek%202013.EJIR.pdf

¹⁸⁵ Sjelsbæk, 226-227.

theoretical assumptions—that women within Daesh are assigned different roles on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and nationality. I endorse Butler, Spelman, and others who put forth the notion of a multifaceted gender, cut along socio-ethnic and religious cleavages. To address my primary research question—*what have been the roles of women within Daesh?*— I apply Goldstein’s research on gendered war roles, which argues that women in wartime assume the roles of *sweetheart, mother, nurse, peace activist, shamer* and *feminized enemy*. I then make the case that social constructionist theory is best equipped to determine why women assume varying roles. In the following chapter, I address the following research questions—*what have been the roles for women in Daesh, as portrayed by the organization? What are the historical foundations for these roles? What are the religious foundations for these roles? How do these roles benefit the group?*



Chapter Five—Roles for women in Daesh

Muhajirah, jihadi bride, sweetheart, mother, nurse, sex slave, shamer. These seven coding categories, determined through qualitative content analysis and guided by Goldstein’s gender-war theory, represent the various roles allotted to women in the caliphate. The following seven subsections summarize the data for each coding category, as well as the layers of subcodes. For the complete coding framework, please see the attachments presented after Chapter Six.

I. Muhajirah

For foreign women, the first role they step into is that of a *muhajirah*.¹⁸⁶ *Muhajirah* must be strong, as they are asked to leave everything behind. Propaganda counsels women through this emotional minefield. To guide women through the process, Daesh propaganda takes a carrot and stick approach. As push factors, propaganda offers practical and emotional advice on the journey, reminders that *hijrah* is a religious obligation,¹⁸⁷ reassurances that women do not need the permission of their male guardian,¹⁸⁸ and a repeated mantra that *hijrah requires sacrifices*.¹⁸⁹ For pull factors, propaganda depicts life in the caliphate as a utopia, with extensive social benefits, women’s rights,¹⁹⁰ community and sisterhood,¹⁹¹ and harmonious diversity.¹⁹²

The majority of the propaganda analyzed discusses *hijrah*-related issues. Like an iceberg, much of recruitment is hidden underneath the surface. These public posts are the first phase of recruitment, as much of the actual legwork is done behind closed doors, in private chat apps. By definition, the role of *muhajirah* occurs outside of Daesh-held territories in Syria and Iraq; it thus

¹⁸⁶ Other spellings include *muhajirat*, *muhajiraat*, *muhajiraah*.

¹⁸⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post, collected September 17, 2015-January 14, 2016.

¹⁸⁸ UK-Y, Tumblr posts; MAL-X, Tumblr posts, collected October 20, 2015-February 3, 2017; *Dabiq* no. 8, “Shari’ah Alone Will Rule Africa,” February-March 2015, 35 <https://clarionproject.org/docs/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue+8-sharia-alone-will-rule-africa.pdf>; *Dabiq* no. 10, “The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men,” June-July 2015, 15 <http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Issue%2010%20-%20The%20Laws%20of%20Allah%20or%20the%20Laws%20of%20Men.pdf>; *Hijrah to the Islamic State*, , 18.

¹⁸⁹ MAL-X, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post, collected October 28-November 3, 2015; *Dabiq* no. 2, “The Flood,” June-July 2014, 3 <https://clarionproject.org/docs/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-2-the-flood.pdf>; *Dabiq* no. 8, 34-35; *Hijrah to the Islamic State*, 36-37.

¹⁹⁰ UK-Y, Tumblr post; SWE-X-2, Tumblr post, collected January 13, 2016.

¹⁹¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post.

¹⁹² *Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto on Women by the Al-Khanssaa Brigade*, 37.

lays outside the scope of this thesis, and will not be discussed at length. For a summary of the *muhajirah* category, please see the table on pages 100-103. The remaining roles for women featured in Daesh propaganda are discussed in the following sections.

Gender-war literature identifies the important roles women play in war, as nurturers of male warriors.¹⁹³ The next three sections outline the nurturing roles women provide in the caliphate—as sweethearts, mothers, and nurses.

II. Sweetheart

Women in war serve a vital function. According to Goldstein, their softness counteracts the horrors of war, providing men with a much-needed escape to lick their wounds and brace themselves for the next battle.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, they reinforce the war machinery by cheering their loved ones off. In some cases, if new couples do not know each other very well, or speak different languages, this disconnect allows them to live out a romantic war-time fantasy. The following category explores the caveats of the Sweetheart role, from single women to choosing a spouse, marriage, wifely duties (excluding those related to raising children), emotionally & spiritually supporting a fighting husband, polygamy, and widowhood.

a. Single

This subsection scrutinizes posts on the rules, regulations, and lifestyles for single women. All women migrating to the caliphate are required to spend their first night at the *makkar*¹⁹⁵, where newcomers are screened. Women who came with a *mahram* can be collected by their male guardian; single women, however, are required to live out their days at the *makkar* until they are married. Life in the *makkar* is far from glamorous: crowded, lack of privacy—these are the most common themes described by propagandists.¹⁹⁶ Women are not permitted to go outside without a *mahram*.¹⁹⁷ This British *muhajirah* explains the reasoning behind the ruling: *It is not like the*

¹⁹³ Goldstein, 310.

¹⁹⁴ Goldstein, 310.

¹⁹⁵ A safe-house for women, where newcomers are screened and single women live.

¹⁹⁶ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

¹⁹⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; UK-X, Tumblr post, collected February 3, 2017.

*west where you can casually walk out and go to Asda/Walmart and drive back home... even till now we have to stay safe outside and must always be accompanied by a Mahram.*¹⁹⁸

Propaganda explains unmarried women are barred from leaving the *makkar* so they can be kept safe. However, the ruling also puts more pressure on women to get married quickly. As one *muhajirah* admits,

*Coming as an unmarried woman without a Mahram is the hardest position ~ you would most likely be staying in the maqqar until you get married which could take weeks - I ask Allah to strengthen your heart because for any sister coming alone with no idea when she'll be out it can be really frustrating.*¹⁹⁹

There is no rose-tinted picture of life for single ladies here. One surmises there is an ulterior motive: to facilitate marriages with the *mujahideen*.

b. Marriage

Under this subsection, posts advise women on choosing a spouse and the marriage process for single *muhajirat*. On the question of marriage, Daesh propaganda claims there is no forced marriage.²⁰⁰ Women are free to choose from a smorgasbord of nationalities at the time of her choosing.²⁰¹ Nonetheless, remaining single does not seem to be an option. One account presents the obligation of marriage upon women in stronger terms:

*I have stressed this before on twitter but I really need sisters to stop dreaming about coming to Shaam and not getting married. Wallahi life here is very difficult for the Muhajirat and we depend heavily on the brothers for a lot of support [...] lol there's only so long one is treated like a guest and until your morals kick in and you realise how much of a burden you are upon people.*²⁰²

Marriage for women, if not obligatory, is highly encouraged. Daesh sees the primary role for women as mothers raising the next generation of warriors, and this societal contribution cannot

¹⁹⁸ UK-X, Tumblr post.

¹⁹⁹ SWE-X-1, Tumblr post.

²⁰⁰ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; *Hijrah to the Islamic State*, 21.

²⁰¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post.

²⁰² UK-X, Tumblr post.

be fulfilled without marriage. Ideally, women are married by sixteen or seventeen, *while they are still young and active*.²⁰³ For *muhajirah*, finding a husband is easy—men outnumber women, and even locals prefer to marry foreign women (according to one source): *A Muhaajirah is like gold in Sham, and believe me when I say it, everyone wants to marry a Muhaajirah*.²⁰⁴

Many sources guide women on navigating a match. Both genders are encouraged to marry before *hijrah*—for men, to reduce the frustration of waiting for a bride; for women, to ease their travel and transition upon arrival.²⁰⁵ When considering suitors, *muhajirat*-to-be are warned against sending their pictures online, due to concerns with security and modesty.²⁰⁶ Instead, women are instructed to find spouses through married couples they know personally.²⁰⁷

For single *muhajirat* who wish to marry in the caliphate, they can inform the sister-in-charge at the *makkar*,²⁰⁸ or approach a married female friend, who can broker a marriage with her husband.²⁰⁹ Weddings in the caliphate are a simple affair: *It was the simplest nikah*²¹⁰ *I ever witnessed in my life. No glamorous dress, no crowds, no-nothing*.²¹¹ Keeping with rules on modesty, male and female guests are segregated, while women wait outside during the ceremony. Married couples receive their own house,²¹² as well as a \$700 wedding present.²¹³ Married *mujahideen* receive more time off than unmarried men, allowing them to spend time with their brides.²¹⁴ Once married, women are expected to fulfill their wifely duties.

c. Wifely duties

²⁰³ *Women of the Islamic State*, 24.

²⁰⁴ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁰⁵ SWE-X-1, Tumblr post.

²⁰⁶ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁰⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁰⁸ MAL-X, Tumblr post; *Hijrah to the Islamic State*, 21.

²⁰⁹ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²¹⁰ Marriage contract.

²¹¹ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²¹² UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post; UK-X, Tumblr post.

²¹³ UK-Y, Tumblr post; *The Islamic State 2015 Full Ebook*, 61.

²¹⁴ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

As wives, women must uphold certain duties, portrayed in propaganda as domestic chores, patience, obedience, modesty, sexual access, piety, patience, and obedience.

* *Domestic chores*

A woman's place is in the home, and wives spend the majority of their time cooking, cleaning, and performing other domestic chores.²¹⁵ Once married, she can go to the market without an escort. When their husbands return from the front lines, good wives cook their favorite foods and wash their clothes.²¹⁶ Wives are encouraged to carry out their chores with a smile.²¹⁷

* *Patience*

Wives are expected to be patient while their husbands are away. This patience forms part of a woman's *jihad*.²¹⁸ Women must be ready to accept the sacrifices of *jihad*, and withstand the challenges of their husbands' capture, injury, or death.²¹⁹ Wives stand by their husbands no matter the circumstances. Divorce, or leaving the caliphate upon their husband's death, is sinful.²²⁰ In return for their patience, wives of righteous husbands will be rewarded in the next life. Daesh ideology considers *mujahideen* as the most righteous, as they sacrifice their lives for Allah. Their wives are rewarded in kind.

Historic-religious justifications

To illustrate the heavenly rewards awaiting patient wives, Daesh propaganda tells the story of Asma bint Abi Bakr, a companion of the Prophet and early convert.²²¹ Asma was married to Al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, an important commander in the Muslim army, yet he was abusive towards his wives. Asma complained of her husband's abuse to her father, who advised her to

²¹⁵ UK-Y, Tumblr post; UK-X, Tumblr post.

²¹⁶ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²¹⁷ UK-X, Tumblr post.

²¹⁸ *Dabiq* no. 11, "From the Battle of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions," August-September 2015, 41 <http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Issue%2011%20-%20From%20the%20battle%20of%20Al-Ahzab%20to%20the%20war%20of%20coalitions.pdf>,

²¹⁹ *Dabiq* no.11, 41.

²²⁰ *Dabiq* no. 11, 42-43.

²²¹ Referenced by MAL-X, Tumblr post.

stick by her husband: “*O my daughter, have patience, for if a woman has a righteous husband, and he dies and she does not remarry after his death, they will be reunited in Paradise.*”²²²

By patiently enduring the abuse, Asma will be rewarded in Paradise.

* *Obedience*

Women require their husbands’ permission to go to the market, internet cafes, attend study circles and weapons trainings, or take children to the park.²²³ Daesh propaganda relies on religious justifications to underline the importance of obedience in wives.

Historic-religious justifications

In their manifesto on women’s roles, Daesh propaganda explains obeying one’s husband is another path to paradise: *In the hadith, “when any woman [...] obeys her husband, it is said to her: Enter Paradise from whichever of its doors you wish”.*²²⁴ Obedience increases the chances of reaching *Jannah*. By obeying her husband, wives also participate in *jihad*, an obligation on all Muslims.²²⁵

* *Sexual access & piety*

Muhajirat are instructed to bring lingerie, makeup, dresses, perfume, and jewelry for their husbands-to-be, and *to be presentable in your appearance [...] Let him enjoy you as you are halal for him and he is halal for you.*²²⁶ Men in *jihad* require ‘female comforters’, and physical connections constitute an important component.²²⁷

At the same time, female piety is highly valued. Women in the caliphate are told to rely on their faith as a stalwart against the many dangerous hurdles they face, a coping mechanism against trauma. The daily lives of *muhajrat* revolve around religious practices. Women are instructed to bring tablets or laptops and download religious texts prior to *hijrah* so they can pass

²²² Muhammad Ibn Sa’d, *Kitab at-Tabaqat al-Kabir: Volume VIII The Women of Madina*, trans. by Aisha Bewley (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1995), 177; quoted in MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²²³ UK-X, Tumblr post.

²²⁴ Musnad Imam Ahmad (No. 1664); referenced in *Women of the Islamic State*, 17.

²²⁵ NE-Y, Tumblr post, collected December 26, 2015-January 13, 2016.

²²⁶ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²²⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

their time in study.²²⁸ Once in the caliphate, women attend study circles and Koranic classes with other women.²²⁹ She can earn a degree in Shari’ah sciences at an all-female university.²³⁰ Religious education is an obligation placed upon all Muslim women.²³¹

Historic-religious justifications

Ultimately, the mold for an ideal wife is perhaps best exemplified in this text written by Ibn al Jawzi (d. 1200), an important Muslim historian and biographer:²³²

A woman was mentioned to me, so I married her. Whenever she finished praying Ishaah, she would perfume herself, adorn herself with incense and wear her (fine) clothes; then she would approach me and say: ‘Do you have a need?’ If I said yes, she would stay with me; and if I said no, she would take off her (fine) clothes and stand up for (prayer) till the morning. Riyaah said: “By Allah, she really delighted me.”

The text presents two contradictory traits women should emulate: sexual access and piety. This duality is not unique to Daesh, but commonly referred to as the *madonna-whore complex*.

Daesh propaganda holds up Asiya bint Muzahim as a model for female piety.²³³ Asiya, the wife of the Pharaoh and adoptive mother of Moses, is a recurring figure in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious texts. However, it is the Muslim faith that canonized Asiya, transforming her into one of the most revered models for women.²³⁴ Within the Qur’an, ‘the wife of the pharaoh’ is mentioned twice. Qur’an 28:9 details how she intervened to spare baby Moses after he was discovered in the reeds. Qur’an 66:11 reveals she asked Allah for a place in paradise to

²²⁸ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; UK-X, Tumblr post.

²²⁹ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; UK-X, Tumblr post; *Dabiq* no. 7, “From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone,” January-February 2015, 51 <https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf>

²³⁰ UK-Y, Tumblr post; *Women of the Islamic State*, 34.

²³¹ *Dabiq* no. 11, 44.

²³² Ibn al Jawzi, *Siffatu al-Safwah*, 116; referenced in SWE-X-2, Tumblr post.

²³³ *Dabiq* no.7, 51; *Dabiq* no. 10, 46; *Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto*, 26.

²³⁴ George Archer, “A Short History of a ‘Perfect Woman:’ Translations of the ‘Wife of the Pharaoh’ Before, Through and Beyond the Qur’anic Milieu,” *Mathal* 3 no. 1 (2013): 2, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=mathal>

spare her from the Pharaoh's wrath. The Qur'an provides no context on Asiya's plea to God, and this gap was later filled by other storytellers.

Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Tha'labi (d. 1035), a Persian Islamic scholar, offers a detailed story of Asiya. According to al-Tha'labi, Asiya was a practicing monotheist who kept her religion a secret from her husband. After her adopted son Moses grew up, he began preaching of the one true God, considered a subversive act against the divine Pharaoh. Sometime later, Asiya witnessed the Pharaoh torturing a handmaiden, a fellow monotheist. Asiya saw angels come down and carry the handmaiden away after she died, and had a vision foreseeing her own martyrdom. Asiya then told her husband she was divinely marked, and refused to recant her beliefs. The Pharaoh ordered for her to be tortured to death between four stakes, yet God intervened, and she felt no pain. Asiya's sacrifice and martyrdom is made even more significant due to her high standing—she gave up power, status, and all the comforts of royal life to serve the one true God. Her faith is held in the highest esteem, making Asiya a heroine for Muslim women through the ages.

Other pious women captured in Daesh propaganda include Zainab, the Prophet's daughter, who left her non-believing husband out of love for Allah²³⁵; Hajar, the mother of Ismail, who was abandoned in the desert yet retained her faith²³⁶; and Umm Sulaym, who refused her suitor's proposals until he converted to Islam.²³⁷ The emphasis of female piety hinges on the understanding that women are the holders of religion, and responsible for passing Islam down to their children. Families, communities, and the entire Ummah²³⁸ depend on female piety. This idea was perpetuated by the Prophet, who told his followers, *every one of you is a shepherd and everyone is responsible for his herd [...] And the woman is a shepherd in her house and is responsible for her herd.*²³⁹ Islam's survival relies on the religious faith and practices of wives.

* *Modesty*

²³⁵ *Dabiq* no. 10, 43.

²³⁶ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²³⁷ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²³⁸ Muslim community.

²³⁹ Koran 66: 6; referenced in *Dabiq* no. 11, 44.

Among the most important virtues for Muslim women is modesty. To justify its rigid control over female dress and movements, Daesh utilizes a mix of historic-religious justifications, from the figure of Maryam and Koranic verses to anti-Western attitudes.

In the caliphate, women are required to avoid all interactions with men outside their families (known as free mixing). Daesh bases this strict ruling on the Qur'an: "*The Prophet said, 'When two (from the opposite gender) are alone, the third is the Devil.'*"²⁴⁰

Free mixing is banned to avoid *fitnah*, or temptation.²⁴¹ This taboo also applies online, and men and women are forbidden from interacting with each other.²⁴² Any violation of free mixing is grounds for divorce.²⁴³ To avoid male-female interactions, women do not have to work. Universities for women are gender segregated. They are instructed to stay in their homes, leaving only when absolutely necessary:²⁴⁴ *And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance*²⁴⁵

In the caliphate, wearing *hijab* is not an obligation, but a *right*. Women are free to practice this aspect of Shari'ah law without harassment or discrimination. Daesh also plays into the symbolism of the veil. According to Scott Atran, the veil symbolizes a shield against the corruption of the *dunya*, or material world.²⁴⁶ Moreover, the veil stands as an emblem against Western colonialism and oppression. Quoting Frantz Fanon, an important voice in post colonialism theory, Daesh propaganda asserts,

"this woman, who sees without being seen, frustrates the colonizer." By adjuring Western standards of liberation, she asserts an identity, and even power, of her own, thus refusing

²⁴⁰ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁴¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁴² UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁴³ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁴⁴ *Dabiq* no. 13, "The Rafida: From Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal," January-February 2016, 25-26 <http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Issue-13-the-rafidah.pdf>,

²⁴⁵ Koran 33:33; referenced in MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁴⁶ Referenced by Simon Cottee, "What ISIS Women Want," *FP*, May 17, 2016 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/17/what-isis-women-want-gendered-jihad/>

*to acknowledge the validity of, and inherent power in, her colonizer's unveiling, subjugation and rape of her own culture.*²⁴⁷

The veil provides the perfect accessory to Daesh's narrative on the pervasive oppression of the Western powers against the Muslim world. By wearing the veil, women are part of the resistance.

Historic-religious justifications

Maryam, the mother of the Prophet Issa (known as Jesus in Christianity), is frequently held up as a shining example of female purity.²⁴⁸ Although Maryam appears in the New Testament, she is covered much more extensively in the Qur'an, where a full chapter is dedicated to and named after her. The Qur'an reveals Maryam was born to a good family favored by the Lord; her mother, Anne, promised to send her unborn child into God's service if she could only conceive.²⁴⁹ Maryam was born, and grew up under God's watchful presence. One day, angels came down and told Maryam she was chosen.²⁵⁰ The virgin birth of Jesus is hugely important in the Bible as well as the Qur'an, where Maryam's chastity is unequivocally stated. "*She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me? He said: So (it will be). Allah createth what He will. If He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is*" (Koran 3:47). Mary gave birth to Jesus under a palm tree, and God performed a miracle allowing the infant Jesus to speak, explaining the prophecy to skeptics. By being chosen, Maryam became the most chaste woman out of all humanity. Christians and Muslims alike revere Maryam for her purity.

d. Supportive

As wives, women are taught to be pillars of emotional and spiritual support for their fighting husbands. The following subsections examine the caveats of each pillar.

* *Emotional support*

Keeping with gender-war theory on women in wars, wives must emotionally support their husbands. One British mujahid explains why women are desperately needed to fill this role:

²⁴⁷ Quoted in MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁴⁸ some examples include *Dabiq* no. 7, 51; *Women of the Islamic State*, 26.

²⁴⁹ Koran 3:35.

²⁵⁰ Koran 3:42.

*Know that the life on front lines psychologically affect him and can cause him slight stress at times. The blood he sees, the body pieces he walks over on the battlefield, the friends he loses, the disturbed sleep he gets, all of this is sufficient to make anyone break. [...] A woman by nature is someone who is loving and caring, and everyone needs this, especially a Mujahid.*²⁵¹

Female softness is needed to counterbalance the horrors of war. Goldstein argues male soldiers are taught to suppress their emotions, learn discipline and endure the brutality of war. In turn, women are needed to “pick up the emotional slack in relationships,”²⁵² and compensate for the emotionally stunted development of their partners. Daesh propaganda gives women a guide on treating PTSD, and how to nurture their battle-worn husbands. Let them rest, and avoid excessive complaints or demands, as *some brothers end up wishing they could go for a martyrdom operation after marriage due to the stress some sisters cause them.*²⁵³ Women are instructed to offer a peaceful, comforting presence, speaking softly and kindly.²⁵⁴ Wives are implored to respect, love, and please their husbands. A woman’s role is to stay strong, allowing her husband to focus on his mission.²⁵⁵

* *Spiritual support*

*One of the most important, if not the most important contribution of sisters in the on-going Jihad [...] is their sincere dua, as is requested by the Mujahideen themselves.*²⁵⁶ Propaganda instructs women to make *dua*, or pray, for their fighting husbands.²⁵⁷ As the holders of religion, women are often more pious than their male counterparts. Praying forms a component of female jihad.²⁵⁸

e. Widow

²⁵¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁵² Goldstein, 269.

²⁵³ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁵⁴ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁵⁵ *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 10.

²⁵⁶ *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 17.

²⁵⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tweet, collected January 6-14, 2016; *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 17.

²⁵⁸ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

According to one propaganda source, soldiers in the caliphate are usually martyred within the first two years.²⁵⁹ For married women, their chances of becoming widows are high. Daesh therefore offers guidance and religious rules on widowhood in the caliphate. Women are taught that their husbands' martyrdom is inevitable, and some present a flippant reaction to their deaths:

*When Abu Baraa became shahīd leaving behind one orphan child who was not even turned one year old yet—But—I was prepare for that news for long. Each time he leaves, I wouldn't think he would return. I wasn't shaken with the news.*²⁶⁰

Widows are well-provided for in the Islamic State.²⁶¹ To be the wife of a martyr is considered a great honor: *Anyone can be a Mujahids wife but only the choosen one can be a shaheeds wife.*²⁶² Their husband has completed a noble duty, and they will be able to join him in Paradise. Once a husband is martyred, his family receives \$1,000 USD.²⁶³ The state continues to provide martyrs' families with weekly food and wages.²⁶⁴ Once a widow finishes her *Iddah*²⁶⁵ period, she will then move into a safe house with other widows.²⁶⁶ According to some sources, widows are not forced to remarry²⁶⁷; however, another unequivocally states they are highly encouraged to do so, as life in the caliphate without a husband is difficult.²⁶⁸ The following subsection further delves into expectations for widows in the caliphate by analyzing the historic-religious justifications underpinning their rules.

* *Historic-religious justifications*

²⁵⁹ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁶⁰ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁶¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post;

²⁶² MAL-X, Tweet.

²⁶³ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁶⁴ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁶⁵ mourning.

²⁶⁶ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

²⁶⁷ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁶⁸ UK-X, Tumblr post.

Rules for widows are based on the Qur'an and other religious texts.²⁶⁹ *Iddah*, the mourning period, lasts for four months and ten days. During this time, women wear black and abstain from make-up, jewelry, and perfume. For pregnant women, their *Iddah* lasts until she gives birth.²⁷⁰ She must live in the house she shared with her husband until *Iddah* is over, leaving only when necessary, and never at night.²⁷¹ While mourning, widows are also banned from attending weddings and discussing marriage proposals.²⁷² At the same time, women are cautioned against excessive mourning. Propaganda mentions that even the Prophet's wives, who were mourning the death of "the best of creation," did not spend their whole lives in sorrow.²⁷³ This is an allusion to the expectation of remarriage. The following section explores polygamy, the mechanism which allows widows to marry again.

f. Polygamy

Polygamy is highly encouraged in the caliphate. Backed by religious texts, historic justifications, and appeals to the heart, Daesh propaganda informs women they must share their husbands.

Far from oppressing women, propaganda argues polygamy protects women. In an article discussing the 'wisdoms of polygamy,' Daesh puts forward the following arguments: first, women outnumber men, as men are naturally more exposed to dangerous situations; second, widows, divorcees, and infertile women are protected in marriage; third, men have others to fulfill their sexual needs when a wife is menstruating, recovering from childbirth, etc.²⁷⁴ Assuming responsibility for widows and their children is also seen as a noble duty. Women are advised to abandon jealousy and support their husbands in taking another wife, as it is an honorable act for wives of martyrs: *Let every sister just put herself in the shoes of the wife of a shahīd and sacrifice some of the selfishness that is a part of our nature!*²⁷⁵

²⁶⁹ Fiqh-us Sunnah v 004 *Funerals and Dhikr*, Fiqh 4.023; quoted in *Dabiq* no. 13, 24.

²⁷⁰ *Dabiq* no. 13, 24.

²⁷¹ *Dabiq* no. 13, 24-25.

²⁷² *Dabiq* no. 13, 26.

²⁷³ *Dabiq* no. 13, 26.

²⁷⁴ *Dabiq* no. 12, "Just Terror," November-December 2015, 20, <http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/islamic-state-isis-isil-dabiq-magazine-issue-12-just-terror.pdf>

²⁷⁵ *Dabiq* no. 12, 22.

Wives of martyrs have made a huge sacrifice, and must be taken care of. Jealousy, while a natural reaction, is not an excuse for wives to ban polygamy. Women are told having co-wives gives them the opportunity to *build a wonderful sisterhood*.²⁷⁶ Polygamy does not destroy marriages, but bolsters their strength.

* *Historic-religious justifications*

Polygamy is a part of Shari'ah. Women are warned they must follow all of Shari'ah law, lest they fall guilty of apostasy.²⁷⁷ The basis for polygamy can be found in the Qur'an.²⁷⁸ Allah permits men to have up to four wives *if they can treat their wives justly*.²⁷⁹ Men who cannot be a good husband to multiple wives should only marry one. Daesh also informs readers that Muslims were hardly the first group to practice polygamy, highlighting the evidence of polygamy in Christian and Jewish religious texts.²⁸⁰ To help women cope with jealousy, propaganda references Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives, whose jealousy of Mohammad's other wives is well documented; however, she never prevented him from taking a wife.²⁸¹

Conclusion

This section explored the various phases of the Sweetheart role for women in the caliphate. From single women, to marriage, widowhood, and entering polygamy, women come full circle. In their nurturing of male warriors, we can understand why women are vital to the caliphate's immediate success. In the following section, which analyzes Motherhood, I examine how women are essential to the caliphate's enduring *survival*.

III. Mother

Mothers raise soldiers. According to Goldstein, the perpetuation of the male warrior role stems from the grooming of boys from an early age, in the home. For women in Daesh, above all, their most important role is motherhood: *The greatness of her position, the purpose of her existence is*

²⁷⁶ MAL-X, Twitter post.

²⁷⁷ *Dabiq* no. 12, 21.

²⁷⁸ Koran 4: 3.

²⁷⁹ Koran 4: 3. Quoted in *Dabiq* no. 9, "They Plot and Allah Plots," May-June 2015, 44 <https://clarionproject.org/docs/isis-islamic-state-magazine-issue+9-they-plot-and-allah-plots-sex-slavery.pdf> ; and *Dabiq* no. 12, 19.

²⁸⁰ *Dabiq* no. 12, 19-20.

²⁸¹ *Dabiq* no. 12, 21-22.

*the Divine duty of motherhood.*²⁸² Women are ordained to fulfill this ‘divine duty,’ and raising children becomes her primary obligation. In March 2016, the Quilliam Foundation estimated that some 31,000 women in the caliphate were pregnant.²⁸³ In this section, I first analyze the role of motherhood the caliphate and the historic-religious justifications underlying this role; the second section considers how the state participates in raising these ‘cubs of the caliphate’.

a. Motherhood in Daesh

For young *muhajirat*, entry into motherhood begins as soon as they prepare to leave. *Hijrah* packing lists advise women to bring prenatal vitamins, pregnancy-safe painkillers, and stretchable t-shirts.²⁸⁴ Upon arrival, even a single woman’s days can revolve around looking after children in the *makkar*.²⁸⁵ Motherhood is an obligation—one post explains that if a woman wants family planning, her husband must agree prior to marriage.²⁸⁶ Once they have their own families, mothers become responsible for training their children according to Daesh’s guidance.

Rearing *lions and pious little princesses* fulfills a part of a woman’s *jihad*.²⁸⁷ For women itching to be more active in *jihad*, Daesh assures them they will be better rewarded as mothers.²⁸⁸ All children should be raised humbly, with true Muslim teachings. Girls should be brought up as pious, modest, and righteous. Women must emulate these qualities to set a good example for their daughters.²⁸⁹ For boys and girls, Daesh gives extensive guidance on how women can prepare their children for war. In a detailed guide, Daesh cautions mothers to start training their children early, before age seven.²⁹⁰ To spark their interest in *jihad*, mothers are instructed to tell bedtime stories of Muslim martyrs, teach boys to channel their anger towards Allah’s enemies,

²⁸² *Women of the Islamic State*, 18.

²⁸³ Nadim Houry, “Children of the Caliphate: What to Do About Kids Born Under ISIS,” *Human Rights Watch*, November 23, 2016 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/23/children-caliphate>

²⁸⁴ MAL-X, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post.

²⁸⁵ UK-X, Tumblr post.

²⁸⁶ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁸⁷ NE-Y, Tumblr post; *Dabiq* no. 11, 41.

²⁸⁸ UK-X-1, Tumblr post.

²⁸⁹ MAL-X, Tumblr post.

²⁹⁰ *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 7.

and encourage physical activity.²⁹¹ Daesh recommends target shooting using ‘safe toys’, playing military games, and devoting time to ‘jihad-friendly’ activities.²⁹² Mothers should expose children to military books, CDs, videos, and other jihadi materials online. Boys and girls also have the right to basic military training from their parents.²⁹³ If her husband is killed, women are expected to carry out this training by herself, raising her sons to be *mujahid*, and daughters, wives of *mujahid*.²⁹⁴ The ultimate duty comes when fighting arrives, and women must send their sons into the fray: *I saw sisters on a night enflamed by battle send their fifteen year old sons outside the home saying, “Allah is the greatest! Go to Jannah whose width is that of the Heavens and the Earth!”*²⁹⁵ By fulfilling these obligations, women become “the mother of lion cubs.” This role is truly honorable: *Sisters don’t forsake this beautiful blessing being able to raise the future Mujahideen of Shaam.*²⁹⁶

* *Historic-religious justifications*

Out of all of the women in Islam, the Prophet reportedly stated the four holiest in the universe were Khadijah (his first wife); Fatimah (his daughter); Maryam (mother of the Prophet Issa); and Asiya (the wife of the Pharaoh).²⁹⁷ As one social media account notes, *what made them so unique was that they raised the best of men. They raised true slaves of Allah. Their role as mothers were so important since their upbringing resulted in the future of their child - through which they gained countless ajr.*²⁹⁸

The Prophet did not choose Aisha, his favorite wife, who was very knowledgeable in Islam, nor did he choose Umm Ammarah, who defended him in battle, or Umm Salamah, who made *hijrah* alone. These four women were chosen (according to Daesh) for their roles as

²⁹¹ *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 7-8.

²⁹² *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 7-8.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ “Days of Sahawaat,” 91; *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 13; *Dabiq* no. 11, 42-44.

²⁹⁵ *Dabiq* no. 8, 36; *Dabiq* no. 11, 41.

²⁹⁶ UK-X, Tumblr post.

²⁹⁷ Musnad Imam Ahmad bin Hanibal, 2668.

²⁹⁸ UK-X, Tumblr post. *Ajr* is commendation for performing religious duties.

mothers, a role which propaganda assures brings great reward. Motherhood is the single most important obligation for women in the caliphate, a role which supersedes all others. The following section explores how the state plays a heavy hand in raising the ‘cubs of the caliphate.’

b. Cubs of the caliphate

Again and again, Daesh propaganda emphasizes the caliphate as an ideal place to raise children. The caliphate is *the safest place in the world*²⁹⁹, where children play in parks and carnivals. The caliphate is free of racism, tribalism, or nationalism, where all are united under Islam.³⁰⁰ The ‘cubs of the caliphate,’ as propaganda calls them, are safe from drugs, alcohol, TV shows promoting adultery, billboards of half-naked women, and lessons on Christian holidays and sex education in school.³⁰¹ Instead, the state offers a detailed education plan for boys *and* girls.

In Daesh, all schools are free and gender segregated. Women are called upon to serve as teachers in the state-run schools for girls. For girls ages 7-9, they attend classes on Islam and Shari’ah law, reading and writing Koranic Arabic, accounting, and natural sciences.³⁰² From 10-12, they study more Shari’ah, especially related to marriage and divorce, knitting and cooking.³⁰³ From 13-15, girls continue with Shari’ah, also studying Muslim history and the life of the Prophet, and child-rearing skills.³⁰⁴ Ideally, girls are married by 16 or 17, *while they are still young and active*.³⁰⁵ Like girls, boys also learn Arabic, Qur’an reading and memorization.³⁰⁶ In addition to their Islamic studies, boys attend training camps, where they learn to use weapons, martial arts, and armed combat. Young boys are not allowed near the front lines.³⁰⁷ Finally, boys spend time with soldiers at the safe-houses for men.

²⁹⁹ MAL-X, Tumblr post

³⁰⁰ *The Islamic State 2015 Full Ebook*, 44.

³⁰¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post; NE-Y, Tumblr post.

³⁰² *Women of the Islamic State*, 24.

³⁰³ *Women of the Islamic State*, 24.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *The Islamic State 2015 Full Ebook*, 44.

³⁰⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post; *Dabiq* no. 8, 20; *The Islamic State 2015 Full Ebook*, 44.

Conclusion

In bearing and raising children, we see the ultimate utility of women for Daesh. Daesh does not attempt to hide their motive for attracting female candidates:

*by migrating to Sham you are not just benefitting yourself but you are also benefitting the Islamic State in its expansion and advancement. By raising your kids here, you are increasing its population and hence creating more Mujahideen*³⁰⁸

Women are the lifeblood of the caliphate, and provide a dual service: first, by producing future generations, and second, by indoctrinating children into the organization within their own homes. Without women, the caliphate would not survive, but fall back into the dusts of history as quickly as they rose. *May your sons be the bricks and mortar in the tower of majesty and minarets of the State of Islam.*³⁰⁹

IV. Nurse

The tradition of female nurses in wartime stretches far back in the historical record. Their persistent presence is not a coincidence, as female nurses serve a number of vital functions. According to Goldstein, their utility is multi-pronged: along with sweethearts and mothers, nurses fulfill a nurturing role of male warriors, becoming surrogate mothers.³¹⁰ Women's absence from active fighting reinforces traditional viewpoints of masculinity and femininity, thereby encouraging men to go to war to protect women.³¹¹ Female nurses also act as witnesses to male bravery, egging men on. Finally, from a practical standpoint, female nurses free up manpower, enabling men to fight.³¹² In their use of female nurses, Daesh stands to reap these benefits.

Daesh propaganda makes repeated appeals to Muslims with medical backgrounds to come serve the caliphate.³¹³ On the one hand, Daesh asserts the caliphate enjoys excellent

³⁰⁸ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³⁰⁹ *Women of the Islamic State*, 41.

³¹⁰ Goldstein, 308-312.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Goldstein, 308-312.

³¹³ *Dabiq* no. 1, "The Return of the Khilafah," June-July 2014, 11 <https://clarionproject.org/docs/isis-isis-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf>; *Dabiq* no. 9, 26; UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post.

healthcare; on the other, emotional appeals describe a severe shortage of medical personnel to attend to the brave soldiers who sacrifice their lives.³¹⁴ Muslim doctors are called to serve their fellow Muslims, and reminded their *hijrah* is a religious obligation. Muslim doctors are warned of the repercussions on Judgment Day. In exchange for giving up high wages, they will be rewarded in Paradise.³¹⁵

Daesh issues specific calls for female medical personnel. While Daesh makes it clear that women should stay in their homes, working in medicine is a valid exception.³¹⁶ For women who have not completed their studies, Daesh invites them to attend medical colleges. Medical schools are free and gender segregated, with a female teaching staff.³¹⁷ Daesh even provides packing lists of books and supplies for those wishing to go.³¹⁸ Single women who attend medical school do not have to live at the *makkar*, but in dormitories with other female students (an added incentive).³¹⁹ Women can also work in the understaffed hospitals as doctors' assistants, bringing patients food, straightening pillows, and the like.³²⁰

Providing medical support is an important component of a woman's *jihad*.³²¹ At minimum, all women should know basic combat medicine and first aid, to be prepared.³²² The need for female nurses is great, and Muslim women are called to serve.

* *Historic-religious justifications*

As Daesh notes, women served as nurses for the early Muslim armies. Both Aisha, Mohammad's wife, and Fatimah, Mohammad's daughter, tended the wounded during battles, providing Daesh

³¹⁴ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³¹⁵ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³¹⁶ *Women of the Islamic State*, 22.

³¹⁷ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post; *Dabiq* no. 9, 26.

³¹⁸ UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post; SWE-X-1, Tumblr post;

³¹⁹ SWE-X-1, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post.

³²⁰ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³²¹ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 4.

³²² *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 15-16.

with a historic justification for women today.³²³ According to historical accounts, both women were present at the Battle of ‘Uhud (625 C.E.), where the outnumbered Muslim army fought against the Meccan tribes. At the battle, Fatimah focused on tending the wounded.³²⁴ Aisha was also documented at the Battle of ‘Uhud, where she worked alongside her mother providing water to the soldiers.³²⁵ Aisha and Fatimah were not the only women present, as other women and children provided an important service to Muslim armies, by caring for injured soldiers, supplying water, and burying the dead.³²⁶ In their services to the Muslim soldiers, Aisha and Fatimah set a precedent for female nurses in the caliphate.

Conclusion

Gender-war theory demonstrates the utility of female nurses in war, helping to explain their well-documented occurrence. Daesh propaganda outlines how women can fulfill this role, by becoming doctors and nurses, providing medical assistance in hospitals, or giving extra support on the battlefield. Nursing is but another role women can fill to benefit the caliphate.

V. Jihadi Bride

Today, an overwhelming 97% of militaries are male, despite advances in technology, military techniques, and societal change.³²⁷ Aside from a few exceptions, this puzzling absence is consistent across time and space. Yet the ‘jihadi girlpower’ in Daesh propaganda, featuring covered women posing with AK-47s and suicide belts, seemingly portrays a pro-female warrior stance. At the same time, other sources assert that women are not permitted to join the fighting. This section first examines the evidence for female warriors in Daesh, posts claiming women cannot fight, and historic-religious justifications for both cases.

a. Female warriors

Despite the universal absence of female warriors, Daesh propaganda portrays evidence of female soldiers in the caliphate. Unlike family planning, women do not need their husband’s permission

³²³ Referenced in *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 4.

³²⁴ *Kitab Al-Jihad wal-Siyar* 19: 4413.

³²⁵ *Kitab Al-Jihad wal-Siyar* 19: 4455.

³²⁶ Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari vol. 12: the Battle of al-Qadisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine*, trans. by Yohanan Friedmann (Albany, New York: Suny Press, 1992), 107.

³²⁷ Goldstein, 107.

to participate in jihad.³²⁸ Women own guns and explosive belts, and many brides receive guns as wedding presents.³²⁹ Guard duty is an avenue of jihad open to women.³³⁰ Attending weapons seminars and trainings organized by women is another way to pass the time.³³¹ When their husbands return home, women can practice target shooting.³³² Women are encouraged to receive military training, so they can defend themselves.³³³ In an online journal, the author describes how one well-prepared woman killed members of the FSA (enemies of Daesh) before her death:

One of the sisters, before she got shahadah, was able to kill a few FSA men who charged at her and the other sisters when the brothers got shahadah. All of the killed brothers & sisters had their index fingers raised and we saw the FSA men trying to lower their index fingers to hide it from the people, but failed to do so.³³⁴

After killing their attackers, the woman died glamorously, finger raised in a defiant Daesh salute.

Despite the allusions to female warriors, women are not yet joining men on the battlefield. Their jihadi glamor is superficial, girls playing dress-up to live out their martyrdom fantasies. As one *mujahid* jokes,

If she wants to wear a black headband and carry a gun she can do that the whole day if she wants (hahaha! some sisters are very die hard Ma sha Allah)³³⁵

Women are told their participation in fighting is not yet needed, but to wait for summons. Nonetheless, they must be prepared.³³⁶ This way, Daesh preserves strict gender roles, yet holds the cards to utilize an untapped fighting force. As Daesh continues to lose territory, we see an upsurge of female (and child) suicide bombers. The subject of female suicide bombers is not

³²⁸ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 1-2.

³²⁹ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³³⁰ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 5.

³³¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³³² UK-X, Tumblr post; "Days of Sahawaat", 3.

³³³ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 10.

³³⁴ "Days of Sahawaat," 3.

³³⁵ NE-Y, Tumblr post.

³³⁶ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 4; *Women of the Islamic State*, 22.

addressed in the propaganda surveyed, and can be considered a means of survival rather than an ideological policy change.

* *Historic-religious justifications*

Known as ‘the Prophet’s Shield,’ Umm Ummarah³³⁷ is a well-known female warrior in Islam, and Daesh holds up her ferocious strength as a model for women.³³⁸ We know of Umm Ummarah’s exploits with the Prophet thanks to Al-Waqidi (d. 822 CE), one of the earliest Muslim historians and biographers, who compiled the first written biographical account of the Prophet. Umm Ummarah participated in the battles of Hudaibiyah, Khaybar, Hunayn, Yamamah, and most famously at the Battle of Uhud.³³⁹ At the Battle of Uhud, Umm Ummarah arrived to give the Muslim soldiers water, but upon seeing the Prophet was unprotected, she positioned herself in front of the approaching enemy soldiers. Umm Ummarah received twelve wounds in the process, earning the nickname “the Prophet’s Shield.”³⁴⁰ In return for her bravery, the Prophet asked Allah to make her his companion in Paradise. At the Battle of Hunayn, Umm Ummarah cut down a camel carrying a soldier; at the battle’s end, she lopped off the head of a prisoner in a rage.³⁴¹ After the Prophet’s death, Umm Ummarah begged Caliph Abu Bakr to attend the Battle of Yamamah, in order to avenge her sons. Despite her old age, Umm Ummarah went to battle and stabbed her son’s killer with a spear.³⁴² It is no wonder that, given her dazzling heroics in battle, Umm Ummarah became the poster child for women wishing to join active jihad.

Another example of the female warrior in Daesh propaganda is Safiyyah bint Abdul Muttalib, an aunt of the Prophet.³⁴³ At the Battle of the Trench, Safiyyah sought refuge in a fortress along with other women and children, while the Muslim army fought Jewish tribes. She

³³⁷ Also known as Nusaybah Bint Ka’ab.

³³⁸ Umm Ummarah is referenced in SWE-X-2, Tumblr post and *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 3.

³³⁹ ³³⁹Muhammad ‘Ali Qutb, tran. by ‘Abdur-Rafi’ Adewale Imam, *Women Around the Messenger* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2008), 183.

³⁴⁰ Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad Ibn ‘Omar Ibn Waqid al-Aslami, *The Life of Muhammad: Al-Waqidi’s Kitab al-Maghazi*, trans. by Rizwi Faizer, Amal Ismail, and AbdulKader Tayob, (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 131.

³⁴¹ al-Waqidi, 443.

³⁴² Qutb, 188-189.

³⁴³ Referenced in *A Sister’s Role in Jihad*, 5.

noticed a Jewish man on the premises, and fearful he would discover the Muslim army's unguarded rear, clubbed the man to death.³⁴⁴ These two women portrayed a fearless dedication to Islam, and their ferocity appears in Daesh propaganda as shining examples of female warriors.

b. *Women cannot fight*

While Daesh propaganda is full of glitzy jihadi glamor, sources maintain that women are best suited to participate in *jihad* in other ways. As one *muhajirah* puts it,

*I will be straight up and blunt with you all, there is absolutely nothing for sisters to participate in [...] These are all rumours you may have heard through some sources who themselves are not actually aware of the truth. And the women you may have seen online participating are all part of a propaganda [...] Please sisters do not believe anything you hear or see online where apparently sisters are fighting*³⁴⁵

Images of women with guns are seemingly for propaganda purposes. The *muhajirah* goes on to explain that female fighters would emasculate men, who cry when they aren't selected for martyrdom operations.³⁴⁶ Daesh asserts that *jihad* is an obligation upon women; however, there better ways for them to fulfill this duty. Most important for women is their role as mothers.³⁴⁷

* *Historic-religious justifications*

At the same time, a basis for excluding female warriors from the battlefield can be found in the Qur'an. After the Prophet revealed that *jihad* was an obligation upon men, and came with great rewards, the women became jealous. Umm Salamah, the wife of Mohammad, asked the Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, the men go out to battle and we do not go out to battle..." So Allah revealed: {And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others} (Koran 4: 32).³⁴⁸ The Prophet tells women to not wish for the obligations of others. Women must be content with their exclusion—nevertheless, jihadi glamor is a prominent theme in propaganda.

Conclusion

³⁴⁴ Muhammad ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Mohammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. by A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 458.

³⁴⁵ UK-X, Tumblr post.

³⁴⁶ UK-X, Tumblr post.

³⁴⁷ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 7.

³⁴⁸ Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 11, 40-41.

In the role of female warriors, Daesh presents two contradictory narratives. On the one hand, propaganda is splattered with images of women wielding AK-47s and references to gun classes and suicide belts; on the other, posts assert that women do not fight, but her *jihad* is raising the next generation of *mujahid*. By maintaining this juxtaposition, Daesh has the best of both worlds: rigid gender roles form the foundation of the organization, yet Daesh holds a final ace—an army reserve, waiting to be called up.

VI. Feminization of enemies: sex slaves

One of the most abhorrent acts perpetrated by Daesh is the systematic sexual enslavement of women. Daesh's genocidal persecution of Christian, Shia, and Yazidi communities was a common pattern of warfare in the ancient Middle East and Greece, where victorious armies slaughtered men and raped and enslaved women.³⁴⁹ These actions serve to feminize enemies as a form of symbolic domination. Rape is not driven by desire, but domination.³⁵⁰ Other acts of feminization include gendered massacres, castration of enemy soldiers, and gendered insults.

Another function of wartime rape erases the captive's identity, as the captor asserts their own moral and spiritual identity as stronger. Daesh intends to destroy the Yazidi and Shia, because they view the former as guilty of polytheism, and the latter as apostates. Finally, rape (especially gang rape) leads to group cohesion, where soldiers are bound together by an unspeakable crime. Daesh incorporates the rape of female slaves into the group's religious ideology, where rape becomes a religious duty. Escaped Yazidi women tell human rights groups how Daesh men perform religious rites, praying before and after the act and thus “bookending the rape with acts of religious devotion”.³⁵¹

By transforming rape into a religious obligation and developing rites to accompany the crime, Daesh espouses a ‘theology of rape’.³⁵² This theology forms one of the strands that weaves the men of the caliphate together. In this jihadi melting pot, Daesh requires a means of enhancing the social cohesion of its diverse inhabitants.

³⁴⁹ Goldstein, 357.

³⁵⁰ Goldstein, 362.

³⁵¹ Callimachi, “ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape.”

³⁵² Callimachi, “ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape.”

*I write this while the letters drip of pride. Yes, O religions of kufr altogether, we have indeed raided and captured the kāfirah women, and drove them like sheep by the edge of the sword. And glory belongs to Allah, to His Messenger, and the believers, but the hypocrites do not know!*³⁵³

The above excerpt from Daesh's *Dabiq* magazine comes from an article attributed to an Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah, who penned an article to other Western women defending sexual slavery in the caliphate. Sexual slavery is not a matter of shame, but pride; a practice to celebrate, not hide. Sexual slavery is a sign of the victory of Muslims over Allah's enemies.³⁵⁴ Daesh propaganda does not shy away from the subject of sexual slavery, but freely admits and defends the practice. A pamphlet on sex slaves leaked to the media in 2014 provides a window into what is permissible within Daesh' religious interpretations of the practice, and how they defend it. Among other rules, the pamphlet outlines the age when sex becomes permissible ("when she is fit,") bans the separation of mothers from prepubescent children, and forbids a man from having sex with sisters if both are present. According to the pamphlet, men cannot have intercourse with pregnant slaves, nor sell them. This ruling is consistent with the accounts of escaped Yazidi women, who describe being forced to take birth control.³⁵⁵ By avoiding pregnancy, Daesh maintains their supply of sex slaves.

Propagandists also report slaves accepting Islam through their own free will, thus ensuring their salvation:

*And I swear by Allah, I haven't heard of nor seen anyone in the Islamic State who coerced his slave-girl to accept Islam. On the contrary, I saw all of those who accepted Islam had done so voluntarily [...]*³⁵⁶

Propagandists warn readers to beware of media stories reporting the contrary, and insist that slavery can save hell-bound women. Propaganda also goes to great lengths to argue that sexual

³⁵³ *Dabiq* no. 9, 46.

³⁵⁴ *Dabiq* no. 9, 47.

³⁵⁵ Rukmini Callimachi, "To Maintain Supply of Sex Slaves, ISIS Pushes Birth Control," *New York Times*: March 12, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/world/middleeast/to-maintain-supply-of-sex-slaves-isis-pushes-birth-control.html>

³⁵⁶ *Dabiq* no. 9, 48.

slavery, backed by the Qur'an, historic examples, and humanitarian claims is a far cry from rape in the secular world.

As for the slave-girl that was taken by the swords of men following the cheerful warrior [...], then her enslavement is in opposition to human rights and copulation with her is rape?! What is wrong with you? How do you make such a judgment? What is your religion? What is your law? Rather, tell me who is your lord?³⁵⁷

The grim realities of sexual slavery are glossed over, painted instead as an affable arrangement with 'the cheerful warrior'.

* *Historic-religious justifications*

And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the mushrikīn wherever you find them, and capture them, and besiege them, and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.³⁵⁸

In Qur'an 9:5, Daesh finds the religious justification for enslaving women. When captured, *mushrikin* should be given the opportunity to repent and accept Islam, or face enslavement. The Yazidi, whose religion incorporates influences from Zoroastrianism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, are deemed devil-worshippers by Daesh, and therefore deserving of enslavement as handed down by Allah. The Qur'an also justifies sexual access to slaves: *{And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed}*.³⁵⁹ Righteous Muslim men should abstain from sexual acts, except for with their wives, or those *that their right hand possesses* (a reference to slaves). Sex with slaves is *halal*, permissible. According to Daesh, slaves and concubines are the 'legal' solution to temptation, which can lead to the crimes of adultery and fornication.³⁶⁰ Daesh insists sexual slavery can save polytheists by converting them into believers: *Allah marvels at a people who enter Jannah in chains [reported by al-Bukhārī]*.³⁶¹ Slavery is therefore beneficial for the

³⁵⁷ *Dabiq* no. 9, 48-49.

³⁵⁸ Qur'an 9:5. Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 4, 14.

³⁵⁹ Koran 23:5-6. Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 9, 44.

³⁶⁰ *Dabiq* no. 4, 17.

³⁶¹ Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 4, 15.

captured women, as it can lead to salvation. Daesh argues that Allah commands them to treat slaves well:

*Your brothers whom were placed by Allah into your hands, feed them of what you eat, dress them of what you wear, and do not hold them to account for what they can't bear. If you hold them to account, then assist them!" [Reported by al-Bukhārī]*³⁶²

Far from a cruel practice, Daesh presents slavery as humane. Armed with these justifications from the Qur'an, Daesh also makes a historical case for sexual slavery.

At various times in history, slavery was a widespread practice. The Prophet and his companions followed the practice of enslavement, and two of Mohammad's wives were formerly slaves.³⁶³ The first, Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith, was captured in a skirmish between the Muslims and her tribe in 628 C.E. Juwayriyyah's husband was killed in battle, and she accepted the Prophet's proposal to escape slavery. The second, Safiyya bint Huyayy, was of Jewish descent, and captured after the Battle of Khaybar in 629 C.E. Safiyya converted to Islam and married the Prophet. The Prophet and his companions also kept female concubines. Ibrahim (known as Abraham in Christianity and Judaism) took Hajar as a concubine, and she gave birth to Ismail.³⁶⁴ The Prophet was given Mariyah al-Qibtayya (Maria the Copt) as a gift from the ruler of Egypt in 628 C.E, and she gave birth to a son, Ibrahim.³⁶⁵ This practice was continued by Caliph Abu Bakr during the *Ridda Wars*.³⁶⁶ Daesh also insists the Yazidi have long been seen as deviant by others, including Christians, throughout history.³⁶⁷

Conclusion

Sexual slavery is systematically committed against Yazidi, Christian, and Shia women. According to gender-war theory, their function serves as a form of symbolic domination over the enemy, genocidal persecution, and promotes social cohesion within Daesh's ranks.

³⁶² Referenced in *Dabiq*. no. 9, 48.

³⁶³ Referenced in MAL-X, Tumblr post.

³⁶⁴ Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 9, 47.

³⁶⁵ Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 9, 47.

³⁶⁶ Referenced in *Dabiq* no. 7, 7.

³⁶⁷ *Dabiq* no. 4, 14.

VIII. Shamer

A vital role for women in war serves to shame men into combat, and enforce pro-war ideologies within their communities. To coax any human into war is a difficult thing, as one must confront feelings of fear, guilt and empathy for the enemy. By constructing masculine identity as powerful and aggressive, feminine identities are made into mirror images—submissive and defenseless. Men are called upon to protect their women, and any deviation from traditional manhood is labeled as cowardly. Shame thus becomes “the glue that holds the man-making process together,” thus a form of “nagging men” into war.³⁶⁸

As shamers, women are a vital cog in the war machinery. Women shaming men into war is observed across history, from ancient Greece, where men could not marry until they had proved themselves in battle, to World War I, when women handed out white feathers to ‘cowardly’ men who stayed at home.³⁶⁹ Shaming also serves to explain women’s absence on the battlefield—if women were shown as capable of defending themselves, the traditional constructions of manhood would crumble. Daesh also relies on this role for women. This section examines the shamer role of women in the caliphate, whereby women are called upon to enforce Daesh ideology on their spouse, and among fellow women.

a. Enforcing war

One of the primary examples of women shaming men into war in the caliphate is through their choice of spouse. Women are instructed to marry a *mujahid*, as it is the most noble role for men. To combat reluctance on marrying a man destined for martyrdom, propaganda reassures women they will be reunited in *Jannah*.³⁷⁰ Single women are given questions to pose to their potential spouse, to determine his role in the caliphate and keenness to die for Allah:

So what questions should you ask a potential spouse before marrying him? 1. What his role is in the State 2. Why he is not currently on front lines. 3. How long has it been since

³⁶⁸ Goldstein, 253, 269.

³⁶⁹ Goldstein, 272.

³⁷⁰ Referenced in UK-Y, Tumblr post; MAL-X, Tumblr post.

*he has not been on front lines. 4. What's the longest duration he spent on ribat. 5. How long has he been in Sham. Such questions can help to filter who is a decent potential.*³⁷¹

Women are warned against falling for men who are “always on twitter,” and taught to ask why a suitor is not on the front lines. Such lines of questioning teach men that serving as soldiers will boost their attractiveness as a potential spouse. In a state where women are outnumbered, wives are a valuable commodity.

For women who are already married, Daesh propaganda informs them they must push their husbands to join *jihad*. If their husbands refuse, women are obligated to divorce them:

*it is not permissible for you in any case to remain under the same roof with someone who has removed the noose of Islam from his neck, and the marriage contract between you and him was nullified the moment when he apostatized from the religion of Islam.*³⁷²

Women must pursue a truly Islamic life, even if it involves leaving their husband. Fear of violence or losing one's children is not an excuse to stay, as their biggest fear should be Allah's wrath.³⁷³ Pleasing Allah trumps all, even motherly duties.

Encouraging their husbands and male family members to fight is a form of *jihad* for women, both on and off the battlefield.³⁷⁴ Off the battlefield, women can *patiently and untiringly encouraging the men of their families, reminding them of their duty to Allâh and other Muslims.*³⁷⁵

* *Historic-religious justifications*

To illustrate women's power in their choice of spouse, Daesh propaganda tells the story of Umm Sulaym, one of the first female converts to Islam.³⁷⁶ Umm Sulaym was approached by a suitor, Abu Talhah; however, he was not Muslim, and she refused. Nevertheless, Abu Talhah persisted, and Umm Sulaym finally accepted, on the condition that he converted. The couple married, and

³⁷¹ UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³⁷² *Dabiq* no. 10, 44.

³⁷³ *Dabiq* no. 10, 45.

³⁷⁴ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 5, 10.

³⁷⁵ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 10.

³⁷⁶ Referenced in MAL-X, Tumblr and Twitter posts.

Umm Sulaym's *jahr*, or dowry, was Islam. Women today are told to *let jihad be your mahr!*, where accepting a marriage proposal hinges on their suitor's participation in *jihad*.

For married women, Daesh references the story of Zainab bint Muhammad, the eldest daughter of the Prophet and his first wife, Khadija.³⁷⁷ Zainab married Abu al-As ibn al-Rabi'. Shortly after, Muhammad declared himself Prophet. Abu al-As refused to convert to Islam, and Zainab was barred from migrating to Medina with her father and his followers. After the Battle of Badr (624 C.E.), Muhammad was able to negotiate the return of his daughter, and Zainab emigrated to Medina and converted to Islam. Her love of Islam drove her to leave her husband and live as a practicing Muslim. Women are urged to follow the example of Zainab.

On the battlefield, women can station themselves on the outskirts to keep men firm, and bear witness to their bravery. Propaganda provides the example of Safiyyah bint Abdul Muttalib, an aunt of the Prophet. At the Battle of Uhud (625 C.E.), she reportedly stood at the edge of battle with a spear, striking down Muslims who dared to flee.³⁷⁸ Safiyyah bint Abdul is given as a role model for women in the caliphate.³⁷⁹

b. Enforcing religion

One of the most literal examples of women enforcing Daesh's Islam is by serving on the Al-Khansaa Brigade, or *hisbah*.³⁸⁰ With their strict laws against free-mixing, Daesh needed a way to enforce their laws among women in the home. Reported convictions include breastfeeding, wearing thin veils or make-up, and going out unchaperoned. The *hisbah* is largely composed of foreign women, whereas victims are local.

Another form of religious enforcement is by teaching classes on faith and the Qur'an to other women. Religious study is highly encouraged in the caliphate, and classes are taught in different languages to *muhajirah*.³⁸¹ Foreign women also reach out to local women:

³⁷⁷ Referenced in *Dabiq* no.10, 43.

³⁷⁸ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 5.

³⁷⁹ *A Sister's Role in Jihad*, 5.

³⁸⁰ Referenced in UK-Y, Tumblr post.

³⁸¹ Referenced in MAL-X, Tumblr post.

*Alhamdulillah the wives of the two brothers, Abu Saif Al-Amriki and Abu Hudhaifa Al-Somali, along with a single sister who came to Sham done their obligation to the women of the town in teaching them the true meaning of hijab in unimaginable ways. [...] They had become walking role models and an example for all those who wished to know the true meaning of hijab.*³⁸²

Finally, women can informally enforce religion in the community, by being role models or offering advice to women. This type of religious enforcement is another pathway to Jannah:

*Ten characteristics, that if women follow they will know if they will come to Al-Jannah [...] That she makes Dawah to her sisters, gives advice, and reminds them of what is right and wrong. She tries to be a good muslim for her neighbours and sisters.*³⁸³

Daesh espouses a state of fear, where critics or those who become disillusioned with the cause are afraid to speak out and find other like-minded people. By building a Big Brother state, the caliphate keeps its citizens in check.

c. Conclusion

One cannot have masculine without feminine. Constructions of manhood rely on female shamers, to push men into the extreme circumstances of war. However, female enforcement does not stop with men; women are also called upon to enforce Daesh's Islam where men can't reach—among women. Stoking the fires of fanaticism, Daesh trains women on enforcing religious laws amongst their peers. As men are destined to martyrdom, women become the holders of ideology, passing on Daesh teachings to future generations.

VIII. Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed my primary research question: *what have been the roles for women in Daesh? what are the historical foundations for these roles? What are the religious foundations for these roles? How have these roles benefitted the group?*

To answer these questions, I utilized qualitative content analysis intersected with propaganda analysis to explore whether the universal roles for women in wartime outlined by Goldstein are reflected in Daesh propaganda. My analysis subsequently uncovered the following roles, consistent with Goldstein's analysis: *muhajirah*, sweetheart, mother, jihadi bride, nurse,

³⁸² "Days of Sahawaat," 2-3.

³⁸³ UK-X, Tumblr post.

sex slave, and shamer. Further analysis yielded the historic and religious justifications used by the organization to legitimize these roles.

Sjelsbæk's social constructionist conceptualization of sexual violence in war is best suited to explain the division of roles in Daesh, whereby factors of religion, nationality, and age all interplay to determine which roles women assume. Religion is the most significant, as local Shia, Christian, Yazidi, and other women belonging to religious minorities are executed or enslaved on the spot. Nationality is also significant, as local Sunni women are less ideologically dogmatic as foreign women who voluntarily immigrated to the so-called caliphate. Foreign women are therefore more likely to be shamers within their communities. Finally, age is an important factor, as women beyond child-bearing years are a less valuable asset to Daesh. This conclusion aligns with the multifaceted conceptions of gender put forth by Butler and Spelman.

Despite pictures of gun-slinging, burka-clad women, the universal absence of female warriors also rings true for Daesh (save a few cases of female suicide bombers). Daesh understands the true value of women in war, which coincides with wartime roles for women throughout history.



Chapter Six—Conclusion

* *Summary*

Borne out of underground terrorist cells in remote desert hideouts, Daesh carved out a territorial stronghold through tactics of terror and blunt force. The group has conducted a sophisticated propaganda campaign targeting women, and attracted females to its bases in Iraq and Syria in droves. Media tend to label this female phenomenon as unprecedented—however, closer examination of Daesh propaganda reveals women’s roles in the caliphate resonate with traditional wartime roles for women, consistent with gender-war theory. The probability of women becoming *muhajirat*, sweethearts, mothers, jihadi brides, nurses, and shamers is dependent on their religion, and to a lesser degree, ideology, nationality and age. Whereas foreign women are more likely to be *muhajirat*, shamers, and jihadi brides (due to higher rates of radicalization), local Syrian and Iraqi women (who can be Christian, Shia, Yazidi, or moderate Sunnis) have higher chances of falling into slavery. This phenomenon, whereby the overlap of religion, nationality, ideology, and age determines the likelihood of sexual violence is best captured with Sjølsbæk’s social constructionist conceptualization of sexual violence in war, and echoed in the multifaceted conceptions of gender proposed by Butler and Spelman. Women are a resource, a means of furthering the organization’s goals. Understanding how Daesh exploits women is crucial for discussions on war & gender, human rights, and global security.

* *Study limitations and further research*

This thesis aimed to provide an *inclusive* picture of women in Daesh, and avoid producing yet another study on Western women in the organization—however, language constraints and restrictions on primary data limited the potency of my analysis on non-Western women. As mentioned in Chapter Two, I am constrained to source materials in English, and thus do not have access to propaganda in Russian, Arabic, and the many other languages Daesh publishes its extremist bulletins. While research groups provided English translations for some materials, this must be done on a larger scale, for academics worldwide. In addition to practical barriers for Eurocentric academics, there should be more interest in foreign non-Western women joining Daesh. Female migrants from the Middle East and North Africa are said to number in the “thousands,” with a reported 700 women from Tunisia alone. These figures outnumber the estimated 550 Western female migrants in Daesh, yet the discrepancy in size is not reflected in research. At the same time, governments’ reluctance to share data on citizens who have joined

the group limits avenues of research. Numbers of foreigners suspected to be with the group are hard to come by—even more difficult is a gendered breakdown of these figures.

For a more developed picture of women in Daesh, more collaboration is needed on international and domestic levels. Daesh's message holds universal appeal, and efforts to counter their effectiveness should be equally international in scope. Too little information on non-Western foreign women is available within Eurocentric circles. Governments and academics must share notes across borders. Data should be translated and made available for international scholarship. With more research on the propaganda narratives luring foreign women into extremist circles, government agencies can manufacture counter-propaganda targeting the same groups of women. Domestically, governments must reach across the aisle and include relevant communities (including Muslim leaders) and parents in discussions on combatting extremist narratives. Often, Daesh attracts supporters from outsider communities, such as first generation young adults. If we can understand their gravitation towards Daesh, government policies, working with parents and community leaders, can reach out to disenfranchised youth and others at risk of falling into extremist circles.

At the same time, there needs to be an understanding among social media companies, governments, and cyber activists that shutting down Daesh accounts only drives their message further underground, where five more spring up in their place. The organization has an army of propagandists situated around the world who continue to propagate pro-Daesh accounts, as well as a sophisticated media department. The production of further content is inevitable. Better the devil we know than the devil we don't.

* *Policy recommendations*

At the time of writing, Iraqi and Syrian military forces are fighting on the ground to secure Mosul and Raqqa, liberating villages and towns as they go. Desertions from Daesh-held territories are rampant, and civilians and supporters alike stream from bombed-out neighborhoods. Yet even without their territorial strongholds, the Daesh narrative retains its potency. The first half of 2017 has witnessed numerous attacks worldwide claimed by Daesh, from the Manchester Arena bombing to the first Daesh attack on Iranian soil (carried out by men disguised as women). The first report of a female suicide bomber occurred in Libya in February 2016. As Daesh continues to lose territory, we will see more female suicide attacks. Conservative women's clothing is easier to hide weapons under, and women attract less suspicion. Often, the

perpetrators behind these attacks have not set foot in the self-proclaimed caliphate, but find inspiration and support online. It is increasingly vital to understand the propaganda narrative Daesh pumps out, to weaken one of their most powerful weapons: women. Understanding Daesh's utilization of women holds two tiers of benefits— from a human rights angle, to confront the group's exploitation of women, proven to hold genocidal consequences and war crimes; from a security angle, to combat their poisonous messages spreading hate and divisiveness that lead to further bloodshed.

Women are a resource, mined and exploited like any other. If the international community wishes to defeat Daesh, we must understand *how* and *why* they utilize women.



Coding Framework

Code	Code definition	Indicators	Code rules	Historic/ Religious Justification	Example
1. Muhajirah	all posts encouraging women to make hijrah, and giving women practical advice on how to make hijrah.	Muhajirah, muhajirat, muhajiraat, muhajira, hijrah; parent(s)		The Prophet and his companions made <i>hijrah</i> to Medina from Mecca.	
a. practical/ emotional advice	All practical and emotional advice for women to make hijrah. Practical— tips on what to pack, how to travel, status of the borders, and security (to avoid arousing suspicions). Emotional—tips on how to tell one’s family, provide emotional support to make decision, reminders to have faith in Allah and not give up.	pack; suitcase; border	Excludes references on packing items for pregnancy or babies (falls under ‘Mother’), religious materials, and lingerie, perfume & make-up (falls under ‘Sweetheart— sexual access/ piety’)		<i>try looking at it in stages. Stage 1=the flight from uk to turk (easy). Stage 2=go to the hotel room (easy). Stage 3-buy phone and ring contact (easy inshaaAllaah). Stage 4=wait patiently reading quran until you get in touch with link. Just break it down into milestones inshaaAllaah, it’ll make it easier for you (UK-Y, Tumblr post)</i>
b. religious obligation	All posts reminding readers that hijrah is a religious obligation to Allah, and failure to do so will result in punishment in the afterlife.				<i>The author says: “It is obligatory upon this umma to migrate from a Land of Shirk to a Land of Islaam.” This is affirmed by the Book, the Sunnah and the unanimous consensus of the scholars. The one who abandons Hijra is threatened with punishment. (MAL-X, Tumblr post)</i>
c. utopia	All posts portraying the caliphate as an idyllic, utopian society.	society			

Coding Framework

Muhajirah cont.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social services 		<p>healthcare, bridges, zitna, orphans, needy, wage, salary, accommodation, zakhat</p>			<p><i>When you move into your apartment you provided with everything. In the beginning your home will have the basics; free electricity for a few hours a day then you pay for the rest, but dawla provides you with LED lights on the walls for when electricity cuts. gas, mattresses, blankets, you are also provided with boxes of food and kitchenware.. soo much subhaanAllah pans plates cutlery cups bowls sooo many tins of food pasta rice etc then you can be given all your cleaning equipment bleach washing liquid soap sponges even shampoo subhanAllah (SWE-X-2, Tumblr post)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • women's rights 	<p>All posts related to Daesh providing social services for female citizens, from free room & board, wages without working, free healthcare and free education.</p>	<p>cigarette, drugs, beer, smoking, drinking, bandits</p>			<p><i>Ask a woman who wants to wear a full veil in Holland if she is oppressed. Ask the Muslims who want to live their lives according to the Shariah of Allah (SWT) without censorship if they are oppressed in Holland or elsewhere in the world. Let me tell you, they are oppressed and the moment they live their lives their Lord ordered them to live it, they will be put into jail or oppressed even worse. (NE-Y, Tumblr post)</i></p>

Coding Framework

Muhajirah cont.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community & sisterhood 	All posts expressing caring, bonding and community within the caliphate, especially between women.	bond; community; Ummah; sister/ sisterhood			<i>We met amazing sisters all different nationalities from moroccan to Australian to Indonesian in the maqqar subhanAllah Allah yihfazom, seeing the true sisterhood of islam purely fisabelilah was truly an emotional moment. (SWE-X-1, Tumblr post)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> melting pot 	All posts related to diversity of Daesh's citizens (often terms of nationality/place of origin, skin color, ethnicity and language) and the lack of racism or discrimination	Nationalities and ethnicities (ex: French, Somali, Swedish, Maghrebi)			<i>The number of mix-marriages and mixed race children are so high. It's beautiful to witness brotherhood with no racism. (The Islamic State 2015 Full Ebook, 61).</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. permission 	all posts informing women they don't need permission from their parents/husband/male guardian to make hijrah	parents; wali; permission; mahram		Umm Salamah—early Muslim convert, later married the Prophet. Made hijrah without a male guardian (UK-Y, Tumblr account); Koranic quote on obedience to Allah superseding obedience to one's parents (Dabiq #10, 15)	<i>So it is entirely permissible to migrate without the permission of one's mahram, especially if she knows that her mahram will be against it or will prevent her from going if he finds out. (UK-Y, Tumblr post)</i>

Coding Framework

Muhajirah cont.					
e. self-sacrificing	All posts informing readers that hijrah requires sacrificies, personal stories of <i>hijrah</i> , and reminding readers of sacrificies made by Muslims before them.	dunya; jannah; paradise; hardship; fly high; sacrifice		early Muslims migrating to Medina (MAL-X, Tumblr post); Suhayb al-Rumi, followed the Prophet to Medina (MAL-X, Tumblr post); Sawdah Bint Zam'ah— wife of Mohammad, performed hijrah to Ethiopia and Medina (Dabiq #8, 34)	
• personal stories	All posts telling personal stories from the author on their own experiences during <i>hijrah</i> .				<i>*Smiles* I thought I would never go through the same pain ever again. Yes, indeed so many things happened after I came here. Leaving family wasn't easy, but it is an obligation for Allah's sake, and somehow I could able to resist the biting pain. Separation took place between me and my best friends, yet I was able to swallow the bitter pill. (MAL-X, Tumblr post)</i>
• heavenly rewards	All posts reminding women they will be rewarded for their hardships in paradise	jannah; paradise			<i>HIJRAH-A Journey to Allāh, The Path towards Jannah!—It's been two years since I've made Hijrah and by Allāh, these two years are the best years in my life. Hijrah which is done sincerely for the sake of Allāh carries great reward and that is why it's filled with trials and tribulations. (MAL-X, Tumblr post)</i>

Coding Framework

2. Sweetheart	All posts related to life for single women, picking a spouse, marriage and wifely duties to husbands, polygamy and widowhood.	marry/ marries married/ marriage; mujahid/ mujaahid; husband; wife/wives; safe-house/ safe house; makkar/ makar/ maqqa; makar; mahr			
a. single	All posts on the rules, regulations, and lifestyle for single (foreign) women who have migrated to the caliphate.	makkar/ makar/ maqqa; safe house	Excludes posts advising single women on marriage.		<i>Coming as an unmarried woman without a Mahram is the hardest position ~ you would most likely be staying in the maqqa until you get married which could take weeks - I ask Allah to strengthen your heart because for any sister coming alone with no idea when she'll be out it can be really frustrating. (SWE-X-1, Tumblr post)</i>
b. marriage	All posts discussing marriage, advising women on marriage and selecting a husband.		Excludes posts encouraging women to marry a mujahid (falls under 'Shamer —enforcing war')		<i>On arrival If you already know people in the Islamic State then the process of finding a brother is much easier ~I heard for sisters coming alone with no contacts they are placed on a waiting list until there is a prospective husband, but getting married here is very easy and simple. (SWE-X-1, Tumblr post)</i>

Coding Framework

Sweetheart cont.					
c. Wifely duties	All posts referencing the ‘wifely duties’ of domestic chores, modesty, sexual access, piety, patience, and obedience.		Excludes posts on child raising (falls under ‘Mother’)		
• domestic chores	All posts referencing the daily chores of wives—cooking, cleaning	cooking, cleaning			<i>A normal day for a Muhajirah revolves around the same duties as a normal housewife. Anyways, your day will revolve around cooking, cleaning [...] Haha I didn’t even know how to cook when I got married (3 months ago) but now I’ve had so much free time that I’ve learnt... Trust me sisters ‘practice makes perfect’.</i> (UK-X, Tumblr post)
• modesty	All posts related to women dressing modestly, staying in the house, and avoiding contact with men (online and in reality)	modest/modesty; free mixing; chaste; niqab/niqaab; hijab/hijaab; cover; veil; naked; mahram; pictures/photos		<i>The Prophet said, “When two (from the opposite gender) are alone, the third is the Devil (al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami’ (2546), ref in UK-Y, Tumblr post); And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:33, ref in MAL-X, Tumblr post)</i>	<i>Freemixing is impermissible in Islam (not just by IS) due to the fitnah (temptation) it causes. If a guy sits next to a girl and his hormones don’t bubble then he has something seriously wrong with him. In Islam, the Believers are awliyaa (friends, supporters, advisers) of one another, however there is no such thing as having tea parties and whatever else the Kuffar do.</i> (UK-Y, Tumblr post)

Coding Framework

Sweetheart cont.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● patience 	<p>All posts stating the virtues of patience in wives. Includes referring to patience as a form of jihad, a religious obligation, and a pathway to paradise.</p>	<p>patient/ patience</p>		<p>Wife of Ayyūb (Job), remained by husband's side during suffering (Dabiq # 11, 41-42)</p>	<p><i>Patience - Know that when one's caretaker goes out for Jihād, it is a time for much patience for his family, especially his mother, wife, and sisters. Encourage your men by being strong, confident, and patient, so they can focus on their mission and not worry about the anxiety of their women. (A Sister's Role in Jihad, 10)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● obedience 	<p>All posts informing women that as wives, it is their religious obligation to be obedient to their husbands.</p>	<p>obey/ obedience</p>		<p>Khadija, Asiya, Fatima, Maryam (Musnad Imam Ahmad bin Hanibal, 2668; ref in UK-X, Tumblr post)</p>	<p><i>The 4 greatest women in Islam = Khadeejah, Asia, Fatimah and Maryam. So we as muslim females should view these women as our role models as these were the most blessed in the sight of Allah. So what did these females all have in common? [...] their role as obedient wives is also an important factor. And that is the reality my dear sisters. (UK-X, Tumblr post)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sexual access and piety 	<p>All posts reminding women to study Islam, pray, and have faith in Allah; also related to posts on the importance of female 'comforters' for men, reminders to bring lingerie, make-up and short dresses</p>	<p>dua/du'a/ du'aa; pray; Shari'ah sciences; school; university; Islam classes; Qur'an classes; tie your camel; faith; lingerie; perfume; make-up; short dresses</p>		<p>Asiyah (Dabiq 7, 51; Dabiq 10, 46; Women of the Islamic State, 26); Maryam (Dabiq #7, 51; Women of the Islamic State, 26); Zaynab, the Prophet's daughter (left nonbeliever husband out of love for Allah) (Dabiq 10, 43); Hajar, mother of Ismail (MAL-X, Tumblr post)</p>	<p><i>be presentable in your appearance and speak to him in a soft tone using the best of words. Let him enjoy you as you are halal for him and he is halal for you. (UK-Y, Tumblr post)</i></p>

Coding Framework

Sweetheart cont.					
d. Supportive	All posts related to women supporting their fighting husbands.				
• emotional	All posts related to women emotionally supporting their husbands, through kindness, gentleness, softness, and care.				<i>A woman by nature is someone who is loving and caring, and everyone needs this, especially a Mujahid. A Mujahid needs someone who he can share his life with. He needs someone who he can take comfort and enjoyment with during his days off from the front lines. (UK-Y, Tumblr post)</i>
• spiritual	All posts related to women spiritually supporting their fighting husbands, through prayer or religious arguments to support jihad.		Includes studying Islamic texts to better argue for jihad, or convincing husbands they have a religious obligation to fight.		<i>Dua—One of the most important, if not the most important contribution of sisters in the on-going Jihad in Chechnya and other locations worldwide is their sincere dua, as is requested by the Mujahideen themselves. (A Sister's Role in Jihad, 17)</i>

Coding Framework

Sweetheart cont.					
e. Widow	All posts related to the rules and lifestyles for women who become widowed.	martyr; shahadah/ shaheed/ shahid; Idda/ Iddah		<p>Rules for widows: <i>The Messenger of Allah said, “The woman is not to mourn more than three days, except for her husband, for whom she shall mourn for four months and ten days. She should not wear any colorful clothing except for cloth used to block menstrual blood. Nor should she wear kohl or use any perfume, except at the end of her menses when she bathes therefrom, with only a dab of qust or adhfār (Fiqh-us Sunnah v 004 Funerals and Dhikr, Fiqh 4.023; quoted in Dabiq no. 13, 24); Aisha, favorite wife of Mohammad, did not mourn beyond mourning period (Dabiq #13, 26)</i></p>	<p><i>Q5) What happens to my wife and kids after I get martyred? Once a brother gets martyred, the wife and kids are looked after by Dawlah. Each battalion has someone in charge whose task it is to give their families their weekly supply of food and monthly wages. (UK-Y, Tumblr post)</i></p>

Coding Framework

Sweetheart cont.					
f. Polygamy	All posts related to the merits of polygamy.	polygamy, shaheed's wife, multiple wives		<p><i>Allah (ta'ālā) said, {And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of [other] women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hand possesses. That is more suitable that you may not incline [to injustice]} (An-Nisā': 3, quoted in Dabiq no. 9, 44 and Dabiq no. 12, 19); A'ishah (wife of the Prophet) was jealous, but let him marry others (Dabiq # 12, 21)</i></p>	<p><i>Indeed, the legislation of polygyny contains many wisdoms. Amongst them is that women are greater in number than men, who face many dangers and hardships in their lives, such as war, hazardous work, and disasters. Likewise, young men tend to prefer virgins and abstain from marrying widows and divorcees, so who then would look after this group of women? Furthermore, Allah might afflict a woman with infertility, but instead of divorcing her Islam has permitted the man to marry another woman while keeping his infertile wife honored and supported. Also from the wisdoms of polygyny is that the woman, by her nature, has her life interrupted by phases in which she is unable to fulfill the rights of her husband, as is the case with menstruation, childbirth, and postpartum bleeding. So during such phases he can find in his other wives what should prevent him from falling into forbidden or suspicious matters (Dabiq no. 12, 20)</i></p>

Coding Framework

3. Mother	All posts related to pregnancy and raising children.	mother; children; kids; cub(s); little ones; grow; prenatal; pregnancy; baby		Khadija, 1st wife of Mohammad; Maryam, mother of Jesus; Fatimah, eldest daughter of Mohamad; Asiya (UK-X, Tumblr post)	
a. motherhood in Daesh	References to women's roles and responsibilities as mothers in the caliphate				<i>Bring up the sons of the Caliphate to know true tawheed. Bring up its daughters such that they know chastity and decency. Know that you are the hope of the ummah. (Women of the Islamic State, 41).</i>
b. cubs of the caliphate	References to state-run education for children of the caliphate.	next generation; cubs of the caliphate			<i>The young children (called 'Lion cubs') in the Islamic State learn to speak and write Arabic as the official language and their studies consist of: - Arabic language. - Quran reading and Memorization. - The art of being an inspiring speaker. - Physical exercises, including training how to use weapons. - Martial Arts (Judo) and combat. As they get older they are taught more advanced forms of armed combat. Or in simple words, Training camps for the youth. All the education is provided for free and many videos have been released by the Islamic State to show the teaching and training practically. (The Islamic State 2015 Full Ebook, 44).</i>

Coding Framework

<p>4. Nurse</p>	<p>All posts relating to women studying medicine and nursing wounded men on the battlefield or in hospitals, and highlighting the need for medical staff and medical education opportunities in the caliphate.</p>	<p>doctor; medical; medicine</p>		<p>Aaishah, Mohammad's wife, and Fatimah, his daughter (A Sister's Role in Jihad, 4)</p>	<p><i>When the jihaad in Sham started, many doctors fled the country to live in Turkey or other countries. This caused an insufficient number of remaining doctors to treat the wounded. I have been to the hospitals up and down the State and so many hospitals lack not only man power but also doctors who are qualified for their jobs. I have seen many trainees training others on how to treat wounds, and many errors are committed by these untrained, unqualified, inexperienced helpers. (UK-Y, Tumblr post)</i></p>
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Coding Framework

5. Jihadi bride	all posts discussing female participation in actual fighting/on the battlefield.				
a. female warriors	All references to women owning guns, receiving weapons training, participating in fighting, and providing support on the battlefield.	gun; shooting; jihad; AK47; Kalash; explosive belt		<p><i>“O Messenger of Allah, the men go out to battle and we do not go out to battle...” So Allah revealed: {And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others} [An-Nisā’: 32], ref in Dabiq #11, 40-41); Umm Ummarah, (A Sister’s Role in Jihad, 3); Safiyyah bint Muttalib, (A Sister’s Role in Jihad, 5)</i></p>	<p><i>Women may go out to serve the community in a number of situations, the most important being:</i></p> <p><i>1) Jihad (by appointment) – if the enemy is attacking her country and the men are not enough to protect it and the imams give a fatwa for it, as the blessed women of Iraq and Chechnya did, with great sadness, if the men are absent even they are present.</i></p> <p><i>(Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto, 22)</i></p>
b. women cannot fight	All posts stating women cannot join the physical fighting.				<p><i>Wallahi sisters our role is more important than any other, and even the brothers know they are not as capable and as strong as a women is created to be. It is a part of our Fitrah to be wives and mothers, and we are not created like man. Wallahi from the bottom of my heart I completely understand your desires and craving to participate in the battlefield and give away your blood feesaabeelilah but I will share with you a piece of advice which truly helped me...;</i></p> <p><i>(UK-X, Tumblr post)</i></p>

Coding Framework

<p>6. Feminization of enemies (sex slaves)</p>	<p>All references to taking women as slaves.</p>	<p>yezidi/ yazidi; spoils; slave; right hand possesses; captive</p>	<p><i>{And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the mushrikīn wherever you find them, and capture them, and besiege them, and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.}</i> [At-Tawbah: 5], ref in Dabiq #4, 14); <i>{And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed}</i> ([Al-Mu'minūn: 5-6], ref in Dabiq #9, 44); Safiyyah Bint Huyayy Ibn Akhtab—Jewish captive taken by the Prophet, who set her free and married her (Dabiq #9, 45); Hajar (slave of Ibrahim) bore son Ismail; Prophet took slave Mariyah as concubine (Dabiq #9, 45)</p>	<p>Are slave-girls whom we took by Allah's command better, or prostitutes – an evil you do not denounce – who are grabbed by quasi men in the lands of kufr where you live? A prostitute in your lands comes and goes, openly committing sin. She lives by selling her honor, within the sight and hearing of the deviant scholars from whom we don't hear even a faint sound. As for the slave-girl that was taken by the swords of men following the cheerful warrior (Muhammad – sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam), then her enslavement is in opposition to human rights and copulation with her is rape?! What is wrong with you? How do you make such a judgment? What is your religion? What is your law? Rather, tell me who is your lord? (Dabiq no. 9, 48-49)</p>
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Coding Framework

7. Shamer	All references to women shaming men into war, and enforcing Daesh's religious laws within their families and communities.				
a. enforcing war	All posts encouraging and glorifying men who fight jihad, and shaming those who do not.		Includes advice to women on choosing a soldier husband above men in other professions.	Safiyah bint Abdul Muttalib — the Prophet's aunt, stood at edge of battle and struck down Muslims fleeing the Battle of Uhud (A Sister's Role in Jihad, 5); Umm Sulaym bint Milhan, only accepted marriage proposal once husband converted to Islam (MAL-X, Tumblr post)	<i>You may ask me, marrying a righteous is enough why must it be a Mujahid? Those who fights for the sake of Allah and get martyred in His Cause are beloved to Allah. The virtue and status of a Shahid is mentioned in both Qur'an and Hadith and how Allah has preferred them over others. (MAL-X, Tumblr post)</i>
b. enforcing religion	All references to women enforcing religious laws within their own families and communities, including on the female police force.	Hisbah			<i>Ten characteristics, that if women follow they will know in advance if they will come to Al-Jannah [...] 10 That she makes Dawah to her sisters, gives advice, and reminds them of what is right and wrong. She tries to be a good muslim for her neighbours and sisters. (SWE-X-2, Tumblr post)</i>

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Glossary

- * **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**—the self-proclaimed caliph of the so-called Islamic State (IS).
- * **Abu Omar al-Baghdadi**— the first leader of the militant group Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), killed in an airstrike in 2010.
- * **Abu Bakr aş-Şiddiq ‘Abdallah bin Abi Quḥafah (Abu Bakr)**—Mohammad’s father-in-law through his wife A’isha who later became the first caliph, ruling from 632-634 CE.
- * **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**—one of the founders of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the predecessor to Daesh. al-Zarqawi shaped Daesh’s extremist Salafist ideology by calling for the slaughter of apostate Shia Muslims.
- * **Ali ibn Abi Talib**—the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammad and fourth and final Rashidun caliph, ruling from 655-661 CE. Divisions borne out of Ali’s succession led to civil war. Controversy over his legitimacy as caliph is at the heart of the Sunni-Shia schism.
- * **Al-Khansaa Brigade**—an all-women morality police force operating in Daesh strongholds in Iraq and Syria. Known for inflicting brutal punishments on offending women. Also referred to as *hisbah*.
- * **Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)**: an Iraqi Sunni jihadist organization active from 2004-2006 before being taken over by it’s umbrella organization, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).
- * **apostate**— those who have known and later turned their backs on Islam. Most often branded apostates by Daesh are Shia Muslims, whose traditions such as worshipping at the graves of imams and public self-flagellation have no mention in the Qur’an or the Prophet’s life. Daesh sees it as their duty to kill apostates.
- * **Asiya bint Muzahim**— the wife of the Pharaoh and the adoptive mother of Moses. In Islamic tradition, she was killed for her beliefs. Revered for her piety and role as a mother. Identified by the Prophet as one of the four ‘holiest women in the universe’.
- * **Asma bint Abi Bakr**—a companion of the Prophet and early convert. A model of female patience, as she endured a marriage with her abusive husband.

- * **bay'ah**—a binding pledge of religious allegiance that evolved to take on a political and military obligation. The tradition originated during the Prophet's time.
- * **caliph**—a term signifying the 'successor to the messenger of God.' The caliph is awarded total political control over the caliphate, as well as a degree of spiritual authority, though they are not seen as divinely ordained.
- * **caliphate**— a political-religious state, home to a Muslim community and others under its jurisdiction. The caliphate is governed by a caliph. The first caliphate was founded in 632 CE after the death of the Prophet. The last caliphate crumbled with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1924.
- * **Daesh**—the Arabic acronym for 'the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.' Due to its similarity to the Arabic word 'daes', ('one who crushed underfoot'), and 'dahes,' ('one who sows discord'), the term is despised by the group. I opt to use this name over IS or ISIL, as it is derogatory and avoids granting the group legitimacy by referring to it as a 'state'.
- * **Fatimah bint Muhammad**—one of the Prophet's daughters. Identified by the Prophet as one of the four 'holiest women in the universe'.
- * **hadith**— religious texts detailing the words, actions, and habits of the Prophet.
- * **Hajar**—the concubine of Ibrahim and mother of Ismail. A model of female piety and used to justify sexual slavery.
- * **hijrah**—a migration of Muslims to escape religious persecution or seek religious freedom.
- * **Iddah**— the mourning period for widows, lasting four months and ten days according to religious texts. During this time, women wear black and avoid make-up, jewelry, and perfume. For pregnant women, *Iddah* lasts until she gives birth. She must live in the house she shared with her husband until *Iddah* is over, leaving only when necessary, and never at night. While mourning, widows are also banned from attending weddings and discussing marriage proposals.
- * **Islamic State in Iraq (ISI)**— a militant jihadist group founded in 2006 by an alliance between AQI and other groups. The group aimed to establish an Islamic state in Iraq.

- * **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)**—an Arabic Wahhabi-Salafist jihadist group founded by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2013. The group aims to establish an Islamic state and purify Islam by waging *jihad*. The name is used interchangeably with IS or Daesh by some.
- * **Islamic State (IS)**—in 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself caliph of the Islamic State. The name is used interchangeably with ISIL or Daesh by some.
- * **Jannah**—Paradise or the Afterlife. The most pious and loyal reach the highest level. According to Daesh, wives reach the same level as their husbands.
- * **jihad**—to fight against the enemies of Islam. *Jihad* can be offensive (purifying Islam of idolatrous practices) or defensive (defense against attacking apostate groups).
- * **Jihadi-Salafism**— a strict, fundamentalist approach to Sunni Islam that combines Salafism’s emphasis on religious purifications with Islamic political activism. Forms the bedrock of Daesh ideology.
- * **jizya**—a special tax historically levied on Christians and Jews living in Muslim lands in exchange for their protection.
- * **Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith**—captured in 628 CE after her tribe fought against the Muslims. Became one of the Prophet’s wives. Used to justify sexual slavery.
- * **Khadijah bint Khuwaylid**—the Prophet’s first wife. Identified by the Prophet as one of the four ‘holiest women in the universe’.
- * **kuffar**—Arabic term for ‘disbelievers,’ or someone who rejects the Prophet’s teachings. A wider term encompassing *mushrikin*, apostates, and People of the Book (Jews and Christians). According to Daesh, *kuffar* individuals may be captured in war.
- * **mahram**—a male guardian. Must be a member of a woman’s family. Women can make *hijrah* unaccompanied, but once in the caliphate, single women are not allowed out solo.
- * **makkar**— a safe-house for *muhajirat* women upon reaching the caliphate, where newcomers are screened and single women live until married.
- * **mushrikin**—those who practice *shirk* (idolatrous) activities. Also known as polytheists, devil-worshippers, and heretics. Most often branded *mushrikin* are the Yazidi.
- * **Mariyah al-Qibtayya**—also known as Maria the Copt. Given to the Prophet as a concubine from the ruler of Egypt in 628 C.E. Used to justify sexual slavery.

- * **Maryam bint Imran**— the mother of the Prophet Issa (known in Christianity as Jesus). Revered in Islam for her piety, chastity and role as a mother. Identified by the Prophet as one of the four ‘holiest women in the universe’.
- * ***muhajirah***—the literal translation from Arabic (plural: *muhajirat*) is “one who avoids or abandons bad things.” This definition later evolved to “migrant,” with the same linguistic roots as *hijrah*, implying a religious impetus behind migration. The term is specific to females, and has been taken as a badge of pride by women migrating to Daesh territories.
- * ***mujahid***—the term for one engaged in *jihad* (plural: *mujahideen*). Commonly refers to male jihadist soldiers or guerrilla fighters.
- * ***mushrikin***—a term referring to polytheists. According to Daesh, when captured, they are given the opportunity to repent and accept Islam, or face enslavement.
- * **the Muslim Brotherhood**—an Islamic political movement which originated in Egypt during the 20th century. They advocated for a resuscitation of Islam in Middle Eastern society and a restoration of the caliphate.
- * **the Rashidun Caliphate**—the first caliphate in Islamic history founded after Mohammad’s death in 632 CE and governed by the four ‘rightly guided’ caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali). This glorious age in Islam is characterized by sweeping military conquest, and lasted 29 years (until 656 CE).
- * **Safiyah bint Abdul Muttalib**— the Prophet’s aunt. Known for standing at the edge of the Battle of Uhud (625 CE) with a spear, striking down Muslims who tried to flee. Also killed a Jew at the Battle of Trench. A model for female shamers and warriors.
- * **Safiyya bint Huyayy**—a Jewish captive taken after the Battle of Khaybar in 629 C.E. Converted to Islam and became one of the Prophet’s wives. Used to justify sexual slavery.
- * **Sawda bint Zam’a**—a wife of the Prophet. Known for making *hijrah* to Abyssinia at the Prophet’s bidding and later returning to Mecca. Used to justify female *hijrah*.
- * **Shia Muslims**—Shia Muslims believe Ali ibn Abi Talib (Ali) was the divinely-appointed successor to Mohammad and the first *Imam*, whereas Sunni (the majority of Muslims, including Daesh) consider him the fourth caliph. Daesh views Shia Muslims as apostates, and considers it their duty to kill them.

- * **Suhayb al-Rumi**—a companion of the Prophet who gave up all of his wealth to make *hijrah* to Medina. A role model for the sacrifices needed to make *hijrah*.
- * **sexual jihad**—a temporary marriage allowing a couple to have *halal* sex. The controversial practice was first encouraged by a Wahhabi cleric during the Syrian civil war.
- * **shirk**—idolatrous religious practices. Those who perform *shirk* are apostates and *mushrikin*.
- * **Umar ibn al-Khattab**—the second Rashidun caliph, ruling from 634-644 CE, known for his military accomplishments.
- * **Umm Ummarah**—a female companion of the prophet, also known as ‘the Prophet’s Shield.’ Fought in multiple battles, held as an exemplar of a female warrior in Daesh propaganda.
- * **Umm Salamah**— one of the first converts to Islam, who later became one of the Prophet’s wives. Known for making *hijrah* to Medina from Mecca alone.
- * **Umm Sulaym**—a companion of the Prophet who refused her suitor’s proposals until he converted to Islam. A model of female piety.
- * **Uthman ibn Affan**—the third Rashidun caliph, ruling from 644-655 CE. Thanks to his military achievements, the caliphate reached its peak size.
- * **Wahhabism**— an ultraconservative branch and movement within Sunni Islam originating in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century. It calls for a purge of *shirk* and advocates religious purification by waging *jihad* against heretics.
- * **Yazidi** — an ethnically Kurdish religious community based in northern Iraq, branded as *mushrikin* by Daesh. Historically misunderstood for centuries, their religion encompasses strains of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. In August 2014, the group was attacked on Mount Sinjar. Men, women, and children were killed indiscriminately, and survivors kidnapped. Around 9,900 individuals were killed or kidnapped in the assault.³⁸⁴
- * **Zainab bint Muhammad**—the Prophet’s daughter, who left her non-believing husband out of love for Allah. A model of female piety.

³⁸⁴ Cetorelli, Sasson, Shabila, and Burnham, 14.