

How do images of female jihad challenge and reinforce narratives surrounding women's agency in terrorist violence in the areas occupied by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria?



(TomoWorld 2015)

Grace Annesley-Mair

Supervisor: Cristina Masters

Summer 2016

BA Hons Politics & Modern History

Table of Contents:

<u>Introduction:</u>	5
• Methodology	8
<u>Chapter 1: Literature Review: Women’s violence in global politics</u>	11
• Centralising gender in international relations	11
• Idealised gender constructs in war and conflict	14
• the intersection between race and gender: narratives of “oppressed Muslim women”	18
<u>Chapter 2: Aqsa Mahmood: gendering radicalisation and violent female jihad</u>	26
• Gendered narratives of female radicalisation: naive romanticism	34
• Reductionist gendered terminology: jihadi wives, ISIS brides and brainwashed schoolgirls	40
<u>Conclusion</u>	
<u>Bibliography</u>	50
	54

Introduction: Gender and the Politics of the visual:

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) originated from a splinter group of Al-Qaeda and declared itself a caliphate in June 2014¹. The group now controls vast areas of Iraq and Syria and it is estimated that up to eight million people are under the occupation of the group (Wood 2015). Since June 2014, there has been a steady movement of individuals who have migrated from states in the West to areas controlled by ISIS. What is significant about this movement is not only its rate and size, but also, the number of women it has included (Saltman and Smith 2015:4). While there has been a significant amount of attention dedicated to the violence of male fighters in the media - in part, due to the videoed public executions of James Foley, Ali Al-Sayeed, Steven Sotloff, David Haines and Khaled Al-Asaad by European nationals including "Jihadi John"- less focus has been directed at their female counterparts. The women who have joined the terrorist group have received less attention despite the unprecedented number of Western women who have joined the self-proclaimed state. The proportion of women engaging in *hijrah* has never been seen before in previous jihadist international mobilisations; it is estimated that approximately 4,000 Western fighters have joined the terrorist group, with more than 550 women making up the total figure (Barrett 2014:13-17, Jazeera 2014, Neumann 2015, Peresin and Cervone 2015:496, Saltman and Smith 2015:4-5). The increasing inclusion and participation of women in terrorist organisations was initially strategic, as female terrorists circumvent the stereotype of terrorists *as men* (Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:57). While there is a tendency to perceive women as passive actors more than active agents within the context of international terrorism, recent scholarship has challenged this by focusing on the dual nature of the threat these women pose. On the one hand, those who travel to the occupied areas pose a threat by partaking in the state-building (and thus legitimising) efforts of a terrorist insurgency group (Peresin and Cervone 2015:496). On the other, a significant threat is also posed by the radicalised women who accept the group's violent and fundamentalist ideology, but who are unable to make *hijrah* and remain in the West, to propagate ideology, and plan to perpetrate

¹ This research will use ISIS and ISIL interchangeably as these acronyms have featured most heavily in the news and media, and are the most likely terms to be known by the reader.

“lone wolf” or group terror attacks (Peresin and Cervone 2015:496-7, Hellmuth 2016:988). An example of the latter threat was seen through what many thought was the advent of Europe’s first female suicide bomber attack by Hasna Ait Boulacem following the ISIS attacks across Paris in November 2015. The former threat is embodied by the women who have made the journey to Syria and have joined the Al Khansaa Brigade - ISIS’ all female morality police. The creation of the Al-Khansaa Brigade in February 2014 marked a significant shift in how women have been represented and utilised by terrorist organisations (Ali 2015:12). The women of the Brigade have a significant online presence in terms of propagating, managing and disseminating ISIS’ ideology through violent and provocative visual material (Klausen 2015:12-14). Multiple scholars, media pundits and experts in the field have pointed out that ISIS’s propaganda and media strategy is more advanced than the efforts of previous terrorist organisations (Ali 2015, Peresin and Cervone 2015:503, Saltman and Smith 2015, Stern and Berger 2015:127-147). The images used by the group on social media have been key to the groups operational and radicalisation strategy; much of this is managed and monitored by the back office and website managers, who are often wives and female supporters (Klausen 2015:2-4, 12). This is to say that the women of the Brigade, as well as the radicalised women who stay in their home countries, are taking on active roles within the state-building and legitimising efforts of the self-declared caliphate online and on the ground.

It is against this backdrop of women being actively involved with the groups’ state-building efforts, online radicalisation strategy, and propaganda efforts that this analysis turns to the visual representations of Muslim women committing violence in the name of ISIS. Women committing acts of violence is not a new phenomenon. Yet, instances and images of female violence in mainstream cultural and political discourse have become far more visible in recent years. From the photographs of Lynndie England committing prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib to Aqsa Mahmood brandishing a decapitated head, images of women committing acts of brutal violence have begun to feature more regularly in the international media. That these images are newsworthy suggests their

relevance to political analysis, as these images appear to challenge hegemonic gendered stereotypes and expectations of women and of female bodies in war. Despite the increasing visibility of women's political violence, conventional accounts and analyses of women's violence have been marginalised by the wider literature in international politics. However, when women's violence is recognised, it has often been explained and rationalised in explicitly gendered terms. This tendency has perpetuated monolithic caricatures of women as *only* motivated by issues traditionally associated with the private sphere. Since the war on terror, visual representations between women – in particular Muslim women – and violence in mainstream discourse have been characterised by racialised and Othered victimhood. This is largely because images and instances of women's violence – whether it be illegal or state sanctioned – subvert cultural and gendered expectations of female bodies and identities in contemporary settings of war. Mainstream discourses have utilised these gendered and racialised caricatures to legitimise foreign intervention. Consequently, these stereotypes have acted to perpetuate notions of Orientalism through the White Saviour Complex (Norton 2013). This research addresses the conflicting ways in which the images of female jihad and of the Al-Khansaa Brigade specifically challenge and reinforce narratives surrounding women's agency in terrorist violence. This phenomenon is significant considering the unprecedented amount of Western, female *hijrah* going to ISIS held territories and the considerable role these women have played in propagating ISIS ideology through, logistics, suicide bombing, combat and recruitment (Saltman and Smith 2015:4-8). This paper argues that gendering women's violence has far reaching consequences for political analysis. Namely, that gendering women's violence denies women agency and often culpability for their actions. This does not only produce problematic stereotypes of women as political subjects, but also, limits our understanding of the complex motivations which drive women's violence and how international conflict comes about.

Methodology:

The need to take visual representations of women committing violence seriously is significant in the context of women being actively involved with the groups's state-building efforts, online radicalisation strategy and featuring in propaganda efforts. Images have played a particularly important role in making war and conflict intelligible, especially in terms of bringing wars to geographically distant audiences. Furthermore, photographs are a particularly powerful medium since they are not limited by language barriers, and because they maintain their authority as they are seen to capture 'reality' (Sontag 2003:5, Cloud 2004:389). Because images communicate visually they are particularly accessible to a wide demographic. Images are open to a broad variety of interpretations. In this sense, photographs are significant because they are "potentially destined for all" (Sontag 2003:16-17). As Susan Sontag explores in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), spectating war and conflict is the 'quintessential modern experience,' because photographs and moving images have brought far away wars and their sights and sounds into the living room (Sontag 2003:16). In short, something becomes *real* and comprehensible to those who are far away from the actual event or situation, by being photographed. The comprehension of war to those who have not seen, experienced or lived through war, are largely a product of images and visual representations (Sontag 2003:19).

However, photographs show as much as they omit. As Susan Sontag argues: "*to photograph is to frame and to frame is to exclude*" (Sontag 2003:41). Moreover, photographs are always the image that someone *chooses* - whether by the editor of a national paper, the manager of the Al-Khansaa Brigade's twitter account, or a 'selfie' from a soldier on patrol - which indicates their value to political analysis; considering the deeply political decision in and of itself to decide what image (and thus message) is appropriate to be viewed an audience. Therefore, images have been fundamental to making social phenomena and human beings intelligible, especially in the context of war. This is to say that reality is composed through a variety of mediated visual representations,

which effect our perception of social phenomena (Sontag 2003:97, Cloud 2004:289) and thus require critical engagement.

Furthermore, the problem of images and the effect of their epistemological framing on how human beings perceive each other's humanity (and suffering) has been examined by Judith Butler (Butler 2009). In *Frames of War* (2009), Butler illustrates how certain frames - understood as the frames which work to differentiate the lives we apprehend from those we do not - generate specific ontologies about the subject (Butler 2009:3-4). Butler illustrates how these particular frames are linked to the broader societal and cultural norms that determine whom the audience regards as human and which lives are deemed grievable. In this respect, photographs can, and should be regarded as an interpretation of an event in their own right. Butler's analysis focuses on how these frames - which are themselves constructed and governed by established societal norms - influence who we perceive as human, and as victims. Butler's analysis suggests that if these frames can dictate who we perceive to be human, they can also influence who we consider to be perpetrators. The way in which these frames impact who is perceived as a perpetrator is also significant, especially when examining representations of women as perpetrators of violence.

(re)Interpreting gender: performativity

A more nuanced understanding of women's violence can be achieved by utilising a more complex approach to gender. In accordance with Judith Butler, this essay understands gender as performative. Notwithstanding common assumptions, it should be noted that gender is not synonymous with women, nor femininity exclusively. Rather, the gendered identities of both the masculine and feminine (among a myriad of other gender identities) are ascribed meaning by their social and political context. The substantive meaning of either term is dependent on and perpetuated by the particular ideas and expectations society has about men and women. In this sense, gender can be regarded as a culturally constructed form of social classification by which society ascribes the

body and the behaviours it exhibits meaning in order to make human beings intelligible. Thus, gender is not intrinsically stable or a 'locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time - an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts' (Butler 1988:519-20). Therefore, it is not just the actual bodies of men and women which are significant. Rather, it is the representations and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity which are of more importance than the body itself. It is these behaviours and their visual representations which are of more importance to analysing *gendered* representations of women's violence in global politics.

This dissertation seeks to understand how these images, which are embedded in established societal norms, shape how we see women as perpetrators of violence. Thus, images require critical analysis if we are to complicate how women's relationship to violence has been represented. Visual representation has been key to how Muslim women have been portrayed in mainstream political discourse. These images - such as the Time cover of Bibi Aisha - have contributed to the gendered rationale which has purported Muslim women as victims in order to perpetuate and legitimise conflict. The representation of Muslim women-as-victims has been all encompassing as well as problematic, as it has tended to portray large groups of diverse Muslim women through this monolithic trope. As Dana Cloud illustrates, in wartime these images - of Afghan women or of Afghan men bearing arms - become naturalised, and reduce the complex reasoning and life experiences of human beings in war to a singular image (Cloud 2004:289-90). Critically interrogating images - specifically images of Muslim women as perpetrators of violence - is key to complicating how women and women's political violence has been conventionally understood in international politics. By taking events of women's violence seriously, as well as the ideological motivations which lead to such violence, society can become far more perceptive when analysing this type of socio-political phenomenon.

Chapter 1: Literature Review: Centralising gender in international politics

The tendency for traditional theories of international politics to hypothesise about the international system from a state centric, rationalist and top-down perspective has led to a marginalisation of women and of their experiences in the global political arena (Koo 2002:526). Feminist theories have sought to challenge this orthodoxy by centralising the position and real life experiences of women by posing simple yet *radical* questions such as, ‘where are the women?’ (Enloe 2000:xxi). Cynthia Enloe’s trail-blazing book *Banana’s, Beaches and Bases* (1990) articulated and made feminist sense of the complex ways in which gendered processes uphold and reinforce power relations within the international system. By locating the perspectives of women traditionally marginalised - military wives, Filipino prostitutes, women in Bangkok’s sex-tourism industry and Carmen Miranda - Enloe’s analysis highlights how the global economy and militarism have relied on gendered ideas about women’s identities to stimulate economic growth, tourism and to legitimise conflict. Her analysis underscored how the manipulation and commercialisation of gendered *ideas* about women, and about femininity, have been key components of wider diplomatic strategies and political manoeuvres of states within the international system (Enloe 1990:124-26). *In Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarising Women’s lives* (2000) Enloe explores this further by examining the importance of *ideas* about gender in regard to war and militarisation, arguing the international system, governments and militaries “have needed ideas, especially ideas about femininity. Just as important to the maintenance of military life as has been the ideology of manliness, just as important as parades, alliances and weaponry have been certain feminized ideas” (Enloe 2000:xiv). Enloe’s analysis showed how integral gender has been to the maintenance of war and militarism, despite the tendency for it to be marginalised by conventional approaches to the field. By placing gender at the forefront of political analysis instead of confining it to the peripheries feminist analysis has, and continues to identify alternative processes, actors, structures, curiosities and narratives than those highlighted by conventional rationalist accounts (Smith 2000:284). By focusing on the locations of women, and on specific manifestations of gender within

the international system, feminist curiosities expand the ways in which men and women have been traditionally and contemporaneously understood in a wartime context.

Enloe's analysis makes clear the significance of gender in the context of war and militarism, and how it frames the relationship between women and violence in global politics today. It is only in 2016, that women in the British and United States military will be allowed to enter frontline combat positions (Guardian 2015, Thompson 2015). This is not to make the case that this shift in military policy signifies unproblematic equality. Nor to make a normative judgement about those who serve in the military, or those who have campaigned for integration. Rather, the nature of the debate and the increased focus on *as soldiers as women* indicates the increased significance of traditional gender expectations (Enloe 1993:202-3, Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:9). The focus on sex and gender within the contemporary debate is telling, and makes obvious the salience of gendered assumptions in regard to how men and women's relationship to violence has been constructed by mainstream cultural and political discourse. In the US, women's integration has been opposed because of the gendered *presumption* that women are unsuitable to the 'brutal' combat zone, and on the basis of integration threatening national security: "expanding opportunities for our female service members without considering the timeless, brutal, physical and absolutely unforgiving nature of close combat... do so at the expense of our Corps' war-fighting capability and, in turn, the security of the nation" (Thompson 2015).

Furthermore, female integration has been criticised on the basis of stirring up problematic "sexual dynamics" - what ever such a vague concept means - "it's the sexual dynamic that's important here—somebody has to get up early to clean the urinals and pick up trash," and also, because women's integration would "only diminish the training benefit received by men" (Thompson 2015). Similar gendered presumptions were at work within the public debate in the UK. Lord West (a retired senior officer of the Royal Navy) mentioned the "nervousness" felt

within the armed forces in relation to women's integration, commenting "they [women] have to actually advance on the enemy, climb into a trench and fight and kill each other...I want forces that can win"; West continued to conjecture about the assumed physical inadequacy of female front line combatants as a counter-argument for integration: "they don't have the same size, power and all of these sort of things" (Guardian 2015).

These criticisms and assumptions reinforce Enloe's observations concerning the pervasiveness of gender to informing our understanding of war and militarism. It is significant that these comments came from noted political and military figures and were reproduced by the mass media without being problematised; this in itself illustrates how integral (and insidious) gendered assumptions about femininity remain concerning the issue of how women are conventionally represented in relation to violence. Women who are engaged in war and in violence - whether illegal or state sanctioned - subvert cultural and gendered expectations of female bodies and identities in contemporary settings of war. The crux of these assumptions are rooted in idealised notions of femininity and masculinity. These require critical engagement if we are to complicate how the relationship between women and violence has been represented in mainstream political discourse, and in international politics. Unpacking the relationship between women and violence is key to analysing the contemporary debate surrounding gendered *representations* of women's violence in global politics.

Idealised gender constructs in war and conflict:

Traditionally, representations of the relationship between women and violence within cultural and political discourse has been one of victimhood. Women have been portrayed as helpless victims devoid of agency of their own, and dependent on male protection. Women, as victims and as perpetrators of violence, have operated within a gendered prism, whereby their actions and behaviours are explained and represented in essentialist terms of their sex and gender. This logic

assumes men to be naturally apt for war because of their presumed inherent risk-taking, aggressiveness, belligerence, violence and rationality (Hutchings 2008:389). In contrast, women are portrayed as the opposite: weak, passive, non-violent, irrational (which is linked to emotional capacities and reproductive organs). This gendered prism operates upon the assumption that the “natural” traits of masculinity and femininity are attached to male and female bodies respectively, and that men and women possess a fundamental essence and certain behaviours because of their sex and gender. These stereotypes are products of the inherited gendered archetypes that have been aligned with women throughout history. These archetypes have served to represent the relationship between women and violence as one characterised by fundamental victimhood and an existence devoid of political and personal agency; women have often been portrayed as the opposite to their male counterparts: peace-loving, anti-war, passive, maternal and as nonviolent beautiful souls (Elshtain 1982:342). The idea of the beautiful soul is intimately tied to ideas about femininity and to the idea of the just warrior, both constructs embody specific ideas about the role of men and women in the setting of war (Elshtain 1982:341). The beautiful soul construct outlines idealised notions of militarised femininity that women have historically been aligned with: the beautiful soul is constructed as morally superior and the polar opposite of violent masculinity (Elshtain 1982:342). The construct of the beautiful soul embodying the home front is linked to the representation of “womenandchildren” as a singular entity (Enloe 1989:15). By merging these individuals into constructs of unified bodies of victimhood - who are objects of violence, rather than its subject - both are denied political agency by representing them as dependent on the masculine might of the protector. In both positions the feminine entity is denied agency through her innate incompatibility with conflict and her dependence on masculine protection (Sjoberg 2014:33). In contrast, the just warrior is assigned the role of protector (and arguably the burden of responsibility) for his passive and less able feminine counterparts. This logic charges women with the dual purpose of being a justification for violence as well as its victim.

These presumptions form the logic which underpins the aforementioned arguments of biological essentialism, frequently used in contemporary debates to refute women's integration into the military, or other traditionally masculine spheres. These arguments are indicative of how deeply the concept of women in the military - as soldiers engaging in state sanctioned violence - troubles gender stereotypes and expectations. Similarly, Jill Steans has argued that even examples of idolised militarised femininity such as female heroism in combat - like Lisa Head, the first female bomb disposal officer to be killed on operation in Afghanistan - challenge the masculinity-war nexus by subverting the assumed capabilities assigned to male and female bodies, as well as dominant cultural constructions of masculine and feminine identities (Steans 2013:102). Although these archetypes have varied geographically, culturally and visually the idea of men as powerful and women as passive victims has stood fast; these romanticised archetypes have been inherited through historic discourse and continue to permeate expectations about female behaviour and agency in contemporary theatres of war (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:4).

Although women's violence has become more visible, it has not prevented its marginalisation in the wider literature. The absence of women's violence in several prominent books - *The Political Economy of Terrorism* (2006), *World's In Collision* (2002) and *Inside Terrorism* (1999) - is emblematic of this problem; none of these books feature a listing for 'women' in the index, nor 'women's violence' (Sjoberg 2009:69). However, when women's violence has been recognised it is explained in overtly gendered terms - a trend which has been problematised by multiple feminist scholars (Kaufman-Osborn 2005, Shephard 2006, Gronnvoll 2007, Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, Sjoberg and Gentry 2015). Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg have developed this further by problematising how women's violence is often portrayed through the gendered archetypes of the "Mother", "Monster" or "Whore" (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, Sjoberg and Gentry 2015). The mother narrative chronicles women's violence as a consequence of skewed motherhood

and women's innate "need to belong, need to nurture, and a way of taking care of and being loyal to men" (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:12). Similarly, the monster narrative describes women who commit acts of violence as pathologically damaged, devoid of humanity, rational thought and femininity; the whore narrative expounds women's violence on the basis of their sexual deviance and abnormality in terms of their femininity and sexuality (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:13, Steans 2013:109). Furthermore, the whore narrative also places emphasis on the desperation or inability of these women to please other men or women sexually and depicts them as the puppets of their superiors (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:12-13).

Lynndie England's prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib are a case in point. England's violence was gendered through both the monster and whore narratives. The abuses of Iraqi prisoners did not only shock the world because of the depravity, but because the prisoner abuses were carried out, in part, by women (Kaufman-Osborn 2005:603). The images of England with dead Iraqis on a leash did not fit with the construct of women as passive or anti-violent. Lyndie England subverted gender stereotypes because she was a perpetrator of violent crime rather than its victim. Through her acts of violence, England violated idealised notions of militarised femininity; England's actions did not fit with the representations of women as idealised soldiers or as victims. England's abuses were understood as "triple transgressions" because she violated her identity threefold: she did not just violate her identity as a female soldier, but also, her assumed sexuality and her gender identity – England was perceived as violating her own femininity because she was an active perpetrator of violence (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:58). The stories of her sexual deviance and the media focusing on her becoming pregnant with Private Charles Graner's child, indicate how her violence was understood to be a product of her sexual deviance and skewed femininity. Significantly, the explanations provided for England's conduct were explicitly gendered. Commentators focused on her sexual past, her "butch" appearance and her sexual relationship with Graner (Kaufman-Osborn 2005:601-3, Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:68-69, Collins 2015:112). Therefore, England's behaviour

was not just understood through the prism of being a failed soldier, but a defeminised and defunct woman. It should be noted that the focus on England's sexuality, *et alia*, shifted attention away from other political factors which made the abuses possible – such as the chain of command which advocated enhanced interrogation techniques and the role of institutionalised racism in the military (Gronnvoll 2007:372). The response to the images of Lynndie England, by some American feminists and in public discourse more generally signify the consistency of gender stereotyping when interpreting women's violence (Kaufman-Osborn 2005:601-4). Women like England, amongst many others who have committed acts of violence are not only deemed bad citizens, but bad women (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:2).

This is largely because images and instances of women's violence - whether it be holding Iraqi prisoners on a leash, engaging in armed combat, murder or carrying out a suiciding bombing - are antithetical to the historic and cultural representations of women's relationship to violence. Women as perpetrators of violence do not fit with the conventional representations of women as weaker, non-violent, passive or feminised. Therefore, women's violence, in and of it self, subverts the logic which underpins the idea of women as feminised beautiful souls. It is worth noting that the narratives of mother, monster and whore have sought, and to a certain extent, have succeeded in presenting instances of women's violence as exceptional, or as the case of a 'few bad apples' (Gronnvoll 2007:386). By representing women's violence in such a way, mainstream constructions of women and of femininity appear intact and untroubled. The implications of gendering women's violence are far reaching: it simplifies the complex motivations and reasons behind violent acts, it provides problematic understandings of women and their capabilities in war, and gendering women's violence denies women political agency and culpability. Explaining women's violence through a gendered prism undermines the idea that women are autonomous political subjects who are just as willing and able to use ideologically motivated violence as their male counterparts. Moreover, gendering women's violence and seeing this phenomena as something

which is only motivated by (a particularly narrow and gendered interpretation of) personal, rather than political issues limits how we comprehend and analyse global politics. Simplifying acts of women's violence limits the purview of political analysis and produces an incomplete understanding of how international conflict comes about. Looking at women's violence in a more nuanced manner is not intended to glorify or celebrate such violence, but instead seeks to complicate how women are conventionally understood and represented in the theatre of war.

The intersection between race and gender: narratives of "oppressed Muslim women":

The particular ways in which whole groups of diverse women - in this case Muslim women in the Middle East - have been portrayed since the war on terror is significant when analysing current representations of women's violence. The stereotypical representations of women as victims of violence has been extended to foreign policy and to women beyond the realm of domestic politics, both historically and in the present day. Traditionally, the representation of the relationship between Muslim women and violence within Western cultural and political discourse has been one of Othered victimhood (Khalid 2014:7). The intersection between race and gender has played a particularly important role because it has contributed to the reproduction of imperialist and Orientalist notions of Western superiority and Muslim 'Otherness' (Delphy 2015:1-36). This, in turn, has perpetuated the White Saviour Complex (Norton 2013). The use of hierarchical, racialised and gendered binaries in the construction of (supposedly) legitimate and moral narratives of war is well founded in mainstream political discourse and has been problematised by feminist scholarship (Coughlin 2000, Cooke 2002, Shephard 2006, Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, Steans 2008, Abu-Lughod 2013, Khalid 2014, Sjoberg and Gentry 2015). In "Veiled References: Constructions of Gender in the Bush Administration," Laura Shephard shows how the construction of Muslim women as "Helpless Victims" was produced along racial and gendered lines, in order to present the invasion of Afghanistan as legitimate and morally just. The rhetorical rationale for conflict was explicitly gendered, and represented the invasion as the only way to liberate Afghan women from the

stereotyped “barbarity” of Afghani and Arab men (Cooke 2002:285-6, Shephard 2006:25). George Bush portrayed Muslim women as the racialised cliché of the “average third world woman” who was infantilised and dependent on the mercy of their “brutal” Arab counterparts (Shephard 2006:25). This rhetoric represented men from the Middle East as the polar opposite of (white) American men, who were represented as hyper-masculinised and as the “brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity” (Shephard 2006:21).

Conversely, Arab men were constructed as a mass of barbaric, backward and evil terrorists, and were presented as the enemy of the United States and as well as a fundamental threat to Muslim women (Merskin 2004:157-8, Khalid 2014:5-7). By utilising constructions of Afghan women as Helpless Victims - who are characterised as victims because of their gendered, religious and racial identities - Bush represented Muslim women as unified bodies of victimhood, dependent on the masculine might of the United States as their “protector” from the stereotyped violence and barbarity of the men of their own region (Cooke 2002:486, Shephard 2006:20). The construction of the US nation state as masculine and superior provided the moral justification for intervention because the Beautiful Souls/Helpless Victim(s) could not help themselves in the face of the Taliban’s brutality. This presupposition has an explicit moral dynamic, which reinforces the protector/protected myth through a racialised and gendered nexus, because it portrays the West as morally just good and righteous - the diametric opposite of the Other. These racialised and gendered constructs provided the logic which underpins the concept of the White Saviour Complex, often used to justify intervention (Norton 2013). These clichés deny the possibility that Muslim women are engaged and thinking political actors. They also serve to perpetuate gendered and Orientalist understandings of the world by presenting the West as superior, progressive and ‘good’, while simultaneously portraying the East as backward, barbaric, inferior and ‘evil’ (Khalid 2014:3-4). On the whole, the war on terror discourse has used race and gender to present Muslim women first and foremost as the victims of violence, both visually and rhetorically, who are defined by their lack of

agency and autonomy. Therefore, gender has not only been politically useful to the narratives of war, but also for their “moral” justification and perpetuation.

However, this is not to say that these representations have only reinforced the superiority of white men over Muslim women. They have also sought to reinforce the hierarchy of white Western women over “average third world women” (Shephard 2006:25). In the West the burqa has been constructed as having special significance as a symbol of the oppression of Muslim women (Cooke 2002:285, Steans 2008:5, Khalid 2014:7). In a similar way to how Arab and Muslim men have been typecast as ‘evil, bloodthirsty, animalistic terrorists’, the visual stereotype of Muslim women as oppressed, veiled, subjugated and in need of saving by the West, is well founded in popular culture and in mainstream political discourse (Merskin 2004:158, Ahmed 2009:106, Abu-Lughod 2013:25). This assumption in itself is deeply troublesome because it forgoes the cultural, religious and geographically variable meanings of religious dress. It also refuses to consider the *choice* that Muslim women make when wearing religious dress in order to practice their faith as they see fit. Furthermore, it is also problematic because it assumes the superiority of Western dress over any other. The way in which the burqa has been deployed visually in war on terror discourse has been particularly difficult; a leaflet dropped in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom showed an image of a member of the Taliban whipping a veiled woman, accompanied by the text “is this the future you want for your women and children?” (Shephard 2006:26).

Leaflet dropped during Operation Enduring Freedom (Friedman 2005)

Similarly, this visual stereotype of Muslim women-as-victims has been especially prevalent in Western depictions of the Middle East; the photograph of Bibi Aisha on the front cover of Time magazine - showing her face after being mutilated by the Taliban - accompanied by the statement “what happens if we leave Afghanistan” conveyed a clear message (Abu-Lughod 2013:27). It reduced the war on terror to a zero sum game between women’s subjugation at the hands of the Taliban with the intervention of the United States military in Afghanistan, and illustrated the



centrality of liberating Afghan women to the securitisation of the war on terror discourse (Abu-Lughod 2013:28-29).

Time Cover of Bibi Aisha 2010 (Henderson 2010)

Paying attention to women committing acts of violence is not intended to suggest that their personal or political agency can *only* be expressed through violent acts and behaviours. Nor does this analysis seek to overlook the significant other ways through which Muslim women have exercised agency through non-violent means, such as through the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, Muslims Women Network UK, the Jerusalem Centre for Women and AMINA the Muslim Women's Resource Centre. By paying attention to selected instances of Muslim women's political violence this essay seeks to explore how particular expressions of Muslim women's political agency in the setting of war – violent expression in this context – might destabilise the hegemonic gendered and racialised constructions of Muslim women in mainstream discourses.



These racial and gendered representations overlook the long precedent of Muslim women's engagement in political violence: the Iranian Mujahideen uses all female combat units, women played a significant role in the Algerian war of independence (for covert operations and in combat) and Palestinian women have been engaged in violent (as well as passive) resistance since 1884

(Coughlin 2000:227, Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:114). The precedent of women's violence has not prevented their actions from being gendered in their representation. Nor has it prevented the violence of these women in particular from being represented and explained through the archetypal narratives of mother, monster and whore. The representation of Wafa Idris - the first female suicide bomber in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - in the mass media was explicitly gendered and explained her violence through the "mother" narrative (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:12). The press focused on her recent divorce as the primary motive for her violence and alleged that her husband had divorced her because she was unable to bear children (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:120). Her violent act was represented as a product of her failure to bear children, maintain a marriage and fulfil the expectation of her gender. Similarly, Muriel Degauque, later known as Myrium, was a native born Belgian who blew herself up in Iraq. Her violence was also represented in gendered terms; for example, newspaper articles stated that her clothing had 'concealed the explosives around her womb' (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:128-9). The explanations for her violence focused on her three past marriages and that she was unable to have children. Consequently her violence was explained as an unfortunate upshot of her skewed (motherly) frustration at her inability to stay married and bear children (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:129). Deploying limited, stereotypical gender and religious representations is problematic because it is analytically unwise and culturally imperialist to "reduce the diverse situations and attitudes of Muslim women to a single item of clothing" (Abu-Lughod 2013:40) and a monolithic visual stereotype. Using stereotypes such as these reduces complex political actors into rigid clichés, which in turn oppressively simplifies and depoliticises the complex perspectives, concerns and opinions of diverse groups of people. Essentially, the ways in which the burqa has been understood in relation to Muslim women's political, religious and cultural choices, falls into an Orientalist frame that has worked to divide the world into separate spheres; the "liberated" world of white Western civilisation and the supposed oppressive and uncivilised realm of the East (Abu-Lughod 2013:32).

In short, these representations of women's relationship to violence continue to reinforce Western imperialist thinking through the White Saviour Complex (Norton 2013). Allowing for colonial and patriarchal ideas to reinforce the idea of "white men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988:296, Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:33). Muslim women, like most women around the world, have and continue to face subordination on grounds of gender, faith, ethnicity, class and (dis)ability. However, it is important to note that there are other narratives and decisions which shape their lives (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:115). This trajectory of understanding women and international politics denies Muslim women agency by refuting these women identities beyond that of racialised victims. Furthermore, these stereotypes also deny the possibility that Muslim women are in fact capable and willing to make choices, engage in political life, and even partake in violence. The focus on elements such as family, spouse and sexual relationships of these women indicates the significance of gender in explaining and rationalising representations of women's violence. Moreover, this tendency perpetuates monolithic caricatures of women as *only* motivated by issues traditionally associated with the private sphere. This in itself entrenches the idea that women do not have, or do not act upon political motivations, which in turn simplifies the complex motivations that drive women's violence in global politics. Perceiving such violence as something only recognised in gendered terms produces an problematic image of how international political violence comes about, and it stifles the development of a more sophisticated understanding of women in war and conflict.

The readiness by which women's violence is explained as gendered, indicates the ease with which gender stereotypes and expectations are reproduced in mainstream discourse. By examining public responses to instances of women's violence in comparison to how femininity is conventionally understood, feminist analysis has shown how gendered essentialism and biological determinism in explanations of women's violence abound. The ramifications of only understanding women's violence through biological determinism have serious implications for women's violence.

This underscores the need to utilise a more complex understanding of gender. This is particularly true in the context of war, as it is an arena in which gender is reproduced, perpetuated and consumed. These gendered archetypes are problematic because they simplify the reasoning behind Muslim women's acts of violence; gendering women's violence also works to deny their agency and culpability as political actors within the context of international conflict. Not only that, but viewing women through a gendered prism continues to reinforce simplistic and problematic understandings of women being as human beings and as political subjects. This in turn, continues to marginalise and thus oppress the real life voices, experiences and perspectives of women within international politics (Enloe 1989:xiv).

Chapter 2: Aqsa Mahmood: gendering radicalisation and violent female jihad

Image showing Aqsa Mahmood in a doctor's coat, alongside two small children holding the severed head of a Syrian man who was executed for criminal acts in ISIS held territory (Ali 2015:13, 25, barenakedislam.com 2015)²

Pictured above is Aqsa Mahmood (Ali 2015:15). She stands holding the decapitated head of a Syrian man who had allegedly committed a crime in ISIS controlled territory. She is dressed in a the full burqa and wears a doctors coat over her religious garments. Two young children stand to the left of her, one of which appears to have a bloody hand or is holding a bloodied piece of fabric. Another woman who's identity is unknown, stands to the back of the frame on the right hand side. The photographer is unknown. This image was posted during 2015 onto various social media platforms and was soon heavily featured in various news outlets globally. The caption posted with the image on Twitter read "dream job, terrorist doc" followed by a series of smiley and heart emoticons.

² This uncensored image was retrieved from the website barenakedislam.com. This website is deeply islamophobic. This dissertation does not reflect or indorse these views in any way.

This image challenges the way in which the relationship between Muslim women and violence has been constructed by mainstream discourse. Firstly, this image challenges the visual stereotyped constructions of Muslim women which have visually and rhetorically represented women as first and foremost as the victims of violence; Mahmood is situated within a gory and bloody scene, in which she is not the victim. The image shows Mahmood (a Muslim woman) brandishing a decapitated head (of a man), deeply subverting the gendered rationale which underpins the Beautiful Soul/Just Warrior construct outlined in chapter 1 (Elshtain 1982:341-2). Conversely, the audience is presented with an image in which the man is the sole object of violence rather than its subject. Nor does the image show a woman who is devoid of agency of her own: Mahmood brandishing a head is the sole focus of the image, in which she holds, or held, more power (quite literally) over the life of this Syrian man.

What is particularly significant is the way in which Mahmood - by virtue of wearing the burqa and having her face covered - almost sits outside of the frame and construction of gender. Because Mahmood's body and face are covered, it is not as easily possible to identify the sex or gender of the individual. Nor is it possible to see or interpret the expression on her face in response to this violent act. Consequently, the viewer is left unable to determine whether her expression reads triumphant or revolted, which makes it more difficult to gender this instance of violence as well as the response to it. Because her body and face are covered - and thus *some* of the markers of sexed bodies and gendered identities are not as easy to identify - this image of Mahmood becomes quite ambiguous; it could be any *body* under the burqa, so to speak. As a consequence of this visual ambiguity this image moves beyond the gendered frame because the body committing violence within within the image does not neatly fit within the binary constructions of femininity or masculinity. The burqa almost shifts attention away from the sex and gender of the perpetrator. Instead, the main focus of the image is the act of brutal violence and the decapitated head. By

means of the burqa shifting attention away from the sex and gender identity of Mahmood, this image of not only subverts and destabilises the representation of and construction of the relationship between Muslim women and violence in the context of war; but also because of this bodily ambiguity, this image does not allow for the body to be so easily gendered and thus made intelligible. Essentially, this image queers the gender binary frame. In turn, this challenges way in which women's acts of violence are explained and represented through a simplistic and binary gendered prism.

Furthermore, this image stands in opposition to the way in which Muslim women's relationship to violence has been traditionally constructed through a radicalised and gendered nexus. The fact that Mahmood is fully veiled challenges the way in which the burqa has been deployed in political discourse. This visual destabilisation of gender contradicts the underlying rationale of the White Saviour Complex (Norton 2013) because it does not present a situation in which "brown women" need saving by "white men from brown men" (Spivak 1988:296). Rather than the burqa being constructed as a *specific* marker of female oppression - as discussed in chapter 1 - in this image the burqa blurs the distinction between male, female and gender. The burqa does not appear to prevent (and therefore repress) Mahmood's agency or ability to engage in violence. Consequently, by this image blurring the distinctions between sexed bodies and between genders, it visually contradicts and destabilises the presumed characteristics (and thus presumed capabilities and gender roles) of religious, radicalised and sexed bodies in the context of war. Thus, this image of a self identified Muslim woman committing violence (despite being in the burqa) contradicts the underlying logic of the White Saviour Complex (Norton 2013) because it does not present a woman who is repressed because of her faith or religious garb, or who is in need of saving by the West. Instead the picture shows a man who *might* have required saving from the brutal violence of a veiled woman, rather than vice versa.

The woman who we see within this image, does not look weak, victimised, or like someone unable to wage jihad because of her gender, sex or religious clothing. Nor does this image present the visual stereotype of a Muslim woman being a “Helpless Victim” and in need of saving from the West because she is wearing the burqa. Instead, it illustrates that a woman who is veiled is not devoid of agency or unable to commit political violence. This visual destabilisation poses a problem for foreign policy narratives which have relied on certain constructions of Muslim women as racialised “Helpless Victims” to legitimise conflict. The fact that Mahmood is presented as the perpetrator of brutal violence questions the gendered presumption that women are innately incompatible with the battlefield and conflict, which in turn destabilises the assumption that women are innately weak, passive, non-violent, maternal and anti-war by virtue of being a woman (Elshtain 1982:342). This, in and of itself subverts the Beautiful Soul/Just warrior construct and the masculinity-war nexus, because it destabilises the assumed capabilities and expectations of male and female bodies, as well as dominant cultural constructions of religion, masculinity and femininity in the context of war (Elshtain 1982:341, Steans 2013:102). In short, the image fundamentally destabilises and complicates the way in which Muslim women’s agency has been represented in relation to violence. This visual event of brutality does not fit in alignment with the idea that the women who make *hijrah* are putty in the hands of men, or that these women are primarily motivated by romance. Rather, the audience is shown a woman who has left the United Kingdom and is now committing violence against men and women in the name of ISIS.

Furthermore, this image signifies the diverse and violent role that these women play within ISIS and within the Al-Khansaa Brigade, which goes far beyond the scope of the label of ‘wife’ or ‘bride’. As this image suggests, these labels do not denote the range of roles that these women occupy under the so-called caliphate, nor do they adequately recognise or show the violence of the

Brigade which is directed at other women: such as, whippings and the use of a device known as the “biter” - a contraption based on a mechanical bear trap, which is used to clamp down on women’s breasts as a particularly heinous form of gender based disciplinary torture (Mohammed 2015). This image of Mahmood is the diametric opposite to the conventional visual stereotype of Muslim women-as-victims. Instead the audience is presented with a Muslim women committing brutal violence, suggesting she is someone to be feared rather than saved. Nor does not depict a Muslim woman who’s existence is characterised by lacking agency, racialised, Othered victimhood and whom requires saving from the West.

The fact that Mahmood posted this on social media, (under the pseudonym of Mujahidah Bint Osama) accompanied by the caption “dream job, terrorist doc” challenges the presumption that women do not celebrate or revel in violence. While this image will have undoubtedly been deployed for propaganda purposes and to gain attention in the mass media, it is also worth noting that these sorts of images signify a distinct shift in how women have been portrayed in terrorist propaganda. As Muh-Rukh Ali notes, because the Taliban banned all photography and filming of women, they were not heavily featured in or relied upon in terms of propaganda (Ali 2015:12). However, ISIS portray women in a multitude of ways: presenting women as jihadis or warriors (as pictured above) and by publicly attaching value to female militancy, as in the case of the public request to trade Dr. Aifa Saddiqui (a Pakistani neuroscientist who attempted the murder of two US nationals) for James Foley (Zakaria 2015). These shifts in the visual representation of women and the (publicity) value being attached to female jihad suggests that as a terrorist organisation, ISIS are changing the way in which terrorist organisations have deployed visual images of women, and that this shift in representation should be recognised as such.

Reinforcing Gendered Narratives:

However, the way in which this instance of violence has been gendered through the “Monster” narrative in mainstream discourse, reinforces gendered narratives surrounding women’s agency in international conflict. Farad Hashimi rationalises Mahmood’s radicalisation and violence through the “Monster” narrative (Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:12):

I can imagine her thoughts, her anguish, her pain and her emotions. I can imagine her heart nagging her as she would watch those numbers, those scenes of brutality, death and destruction on television, newspapers and social media... Yet, her emotional depth, will and strength of character to feel the pain of others and to work for them in the way she deemed right, made her take the path that she did. In the process, however, she has been wasted and destroyed, because she went off in the wrong direction... If Aqsa Mahmood’s parents are to be believed... there was no other fundamentalist involved; no one egging her on to the path she took. (Hashmi 2014)

The author places emphasis on *feminine* attributes such as empathy and “emotional depth” as the key factor to her radicalisation, but then suggests that it is those same feminine attributes that have gone wayward which have caused her to become violent, “wasted and destroyed” and devoid of accepted forms of femininity. This genders Mahmood’s violence through the Monster narrative. It explains that the decision to make *hijrah* and commit violence as primarily motivated by extreme pathological emotion gone askew - “her anguish, her pain and her emotions”- over than any other factor. However, what is interesting about this rationale is that that it does not articulate her violence or radicalisation as a product of male agency or manipulation - “there was no other fundamentalist involved; no one egging her on to the path she took”. Instead it argues that Mahmood embracing “the path of violence and militancy” as a product of flawed femininity and emotions gone awry. Implying it was this pathology rather than political choice or ideological conviction that motivated her. Taken to its extreme, this logic suggests that Mahmood only became radicalised and violent because her emotions, femininity and womanhood are flawed. This argument removes Mahmood’s agency and culpability. It explains her violence as a product of perverted femininity and womanhood, rather than through a commitment to ideological jihad. This logic frames Mahmood’s violence as an unfortunate offshoot of her emotional and pathological deviance from accepted feminine norms. By articulating her violence as pathologically damaged, her

violence is represented as irrational. Other commentators articulated a similar diagnosis of Mamood's violence, describing her and the image as "gruesome," "horror without end...total madness' and "evil" (Lester 2014, Libero 2014, Pleasance 2014). One pundit described her violence as being that much worse because it transcended the violence of men: "the so-called "fairer" sex in the netherworld of Islam can be as monstrous – some even more – as their male counterparts" (Kutnicki 2014). Such descriptions reinforce the way in which Mahmood's violence is gendered through the Monster narrative. Her violence is portrayed as much more abhorrent because it is done by a *woman*. This subverts gendered expectations and does what is stereotypically expected from masculine rather than feminine bodies:

The disgusting thing is, she was holding a severed head...in front of kids...when the photo of a woman holding a severed head in front of children isn't the most extreme thing an organization has done, then your organization is some next level evil (Lester 2014).

By describing this instance of violence as "evil," "madness" and "monstrous" Mahmood's violence is explained as an outcome of flawed womanhood, emotional pathology and irrationality. This also reaffirms the presumption that women's violence is an inevitable outcome of emotional and irrational "madness" gone berserk rather than ideologically driven violence. Her agency and culpability is also revoked because her violence is portrayed as a result of defective biology instead of an outcome of politically motivated violence. Explaining this instance of violence through a gendered prism shifts attention from the ideological motivations of the individual involved and the socio-political factors which can make an individual more susceptible to radicalisation. Moreover, the tendency to interpret women's violence as motivated by gendered presumptions produces a limited and problematic understanding the role that these women play within ISIS and the Al-Khansaa Brigade.

Gendered narratives of female radicalisation: naive romanticism



Left: Image posted which features Aqsa Mahmood with two other women of the Al-Khansaa Brigade in August 2014 (Blog 2015). Right: Image of Mahmood provided by her family which has been widely used in the media since she moved to Syria in November 2013 (Madley 2016).

Background: Aqsa Mahmood, pictured above, is also known as the “bedroom radical” or Umm Layth on social media (Ali 2015:13). In 2013 Aqsa left Scotland and Glasgow Caledonian University where she studied Radiography to join ISIS (Guardian 2014, Harriet Sherwood and Gambino 2014). Since then she has received notable attention, locally and globally. On arriving in ISIS held territory and began to promote ISIS ideology on Twitter and other social media platforms (Ali 2015:15, Madley 2016). In the UK, the emotional and public appeals by Aqsa’s parents, Muzaffar and Khalida Mahmood have been heavily featured in British news outlets. Several reports have noted Mahmood’s record of academic excellence and the fact that she was privately educated at Glasgow’s Craigholme Private Girls School (Shubert and Naik 2014, Telegraph 2014, Madley 2016). In his most recent appeal, her father said “If our daughter, who had all the chances and freedom in life, could become a bedroom radical then it’s possible for this to happen to any family” (Shubert and Naik 2014). In so highlighting that women travelling to Syria do not share a

predictable profile or common demographic (Harriet Sherwood and Gambino 2014, Saltman and Smith 2015:5).

One of the most common narratives surrounding female radicalisation is the “Naive Romanticism” narrative, which is linked to the “Whore” narrative (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:13). These narratives tend to articulate female radicalisation as an outcome of the desire of these women to fulfil the expectation of their gender: to find romance or a husband. This narrative also relies on the presumption that women are lured into ISIS’s brand of radical Islam by male propagandists and emphasises the role of naivety and irrationality because of age and gender. An example of this kind of gendered rationale can be identified in a recent article in the Spectator titled “How do bright schoolgirls fall for jihadis? The same way they fall for Justin Bieber”. This claimed that the women joining ISIS are suffering from something not too dissimilar from boy-band fanaticism:

What chance does reason have against a teenage crush? Think of the screamers at pop concerts. Muslim girls are falling for Twitter profile pics of fighters in the same unstoppable way. There’s a sort of moth-like self-immolation about a teenage girls love which makes it almost long for martyrdom. (Wakefield 2015)

Articulating female radicalisation as the same as an affinity for a pop star both infantilises and genders radicalised women. It portrays “muslim girls” not only as a singular monolithic group who become radicalised because of the visual appeal of the “twitter profile pics of fighters,” but also because it presumes the desire to become romantically involved with jihadi fighters. Similarly gendered, if not crass explanations for the radicalisation of Amira Abase (one of the Bethnal Green three) argued that she went to Syria to “take up an exciting and challenging position as an in-house whore for the vibrant and decapitating warriors of the Islamic State” (Liddle 2015). The latter rationale reinforcing the assumption that it is primarily the sexual and romantic dimension to radicalisation which motivates these women to make *hijrah*. Other media pundits focused on these women being “young, daft and desperate for a cause” (Wakefield 2015). It was a cause they found -

according to Mary Wakefield - on the “twitter feeds of jihadi wives who sell Syria as teenage paradise: all fast food, deathless love, martyrdom and shopping” (Wakefield 2015). Similar infantilising and gendering presumptions were at work when CNN claimed that women had been lured by ISIS with “kittens and Nutella” (WKAJ TV 2016).



Screen-grab from CNN news segment which claimed ISIS were using kittens and Nutella to radicalise women (Taub 2015, WKAJTV 2016).

These narratives gender because they explain the decision to make *hijrah* as the predominant outcome of “youthful naiveté and determination” and the tendency of these women to “fall in love with the idea of falling in love” (Bennhold 2015) rather than ideological intention. These are particularly one dimensional and explicitly gendered interpretations of the motives which lead to women making *hijrah* and engaging in jihad. More pointedly, this rationale suggests that female jihad is *only* motivated by the desire of these women to fulfil the expectation of their gender - to find a man and marry - rather, being motivated by ideological convictions or a desire to engage in international conflict, or even in political violence.

Moreover, explaining female radicalisation as a product of the inability of these women to overcome a “teenage crush” in order to see “reason” (Wakefield 2015) implies that women who engage in jihad or *hijrah* are only motivated by romantic prospects and are thus irrational. This logic also ties radicalisation, female jihad and religious fundamentalism together, all of which are seen as synonymous with irrationality - to be radical or to become radicalised denotes an inability to think within the confines of logic or reason (Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:34). In turn, this removes the political agency of the actor because it suggests that radicalised women are irrational and are therefore outside the realm of the political; a sphere in which logic and reason are valued as indicators of political and personal agency (Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:34). By tying female jihad and radicalisation to religious fundamentalism - to Islamic fundamentalism specifically - this narrative also entrenches Orientalist notions of Western superiority and rationality in contrast to Muslim backwardness, irrationality and “Otherness”(Delphy 2015:1-36). By constructing female jihad as irrational, this narrative reasserts the construction of the West as superior because it portrays the West as the place in which rationality is maintained. Following this logic, leaving the West and engaging in *hijrah* is depicted as an irrational, illogical and thus non-political. This reasserts a Orientalist hierarchy between East and West because these narratives continue to construct the realm of the East as a place filled with a mass of irrational “barbaric, evil terrorists” who lack political agency are enemies of the West (Merskin 2004:158). This logic constructs radicalised women as victims of their own irrationality and lack of (rational) political agency. This, in turn, voids their culpability for their actions as they are explained as a an outcome of irrational desire. Gendering and racialising radicalisation in this way also shifts attention away from the political motivations that lead to radicalisation and *hijrah* - however morally dubious such ideological motivations may be.

These types of gendered presumptions about female radicalisation be identified in a wide variety of mainstream news articles about Mahmood (Mendick and Verkaik 2014, Shubert and Naik

2014, Middleton 2015, Wakefield 2015, Madeley 2016, Madley 2016, McGinty 2016, McGinty 2016). One of the primary motivations put forward for Aqsa's radicalisation is her relationship with Adeel Ulhaq. Mahmood's parents described "how online grooming by English-based fanatic Adeel Ulhaq transformed their daughter from a girl who was 'scared to take the bins out at night' to a key voice of IS...Ulhaq had been secretly grooming their daughter for jihad" (Madley 2016). This narrative emphasises the romantic relationship between Aqsa and Adeel Ulhaq as the primary reason for radicalisation over any other factor. Such a narrative builds on the idea that women are passive victims devoid of agency, and that *female* radicalisation is largely a product of male agency. This logic suggests that it is the personal and political agency of men - in this case Adeel Ulhaq - that "transforms" women into radicals, rather than the women themselves as political subjects. These types of narratives are explicitly gendered because they continue to portray women first and foremost as victims of male agency and suggest that women are merely puppets easily manipulated by ISIS men: "He [Ulhaq] got into her brain" (McGinty 2016). This type of rationale denies the agency and culpability of these women because it portrays them first and foremost as the passive "brainwashed" victims of male agency who are primarily motivated by a desire to fulfil gendered feminine expectations. Equally, explaining radicalisation as *just* a product of male agency also overlooks the significant role that women have in online recruitment and radicalisation strategies (Klausen 2015:14-19).

Explaining female radicalisation in this way reinforces traditional gendered narratives around women's agency because it continues to portray women as irrational and passive; entrenching the gendered assumption that women are innately irrational and only motivated by gendered motivations (such as romantic interest) associated with the private sphere. This suggests that a primary motivation for women's engaging in *hijrah* and jihad is driven by the need to fulfil the expectation of their gender. Describing the process of female radicalisation this way overlooks the social and ideological factors that have been identified to make individuals more prone to

radicalisation. Such as, the media negatively shaping public perceptions of minorities, grievances with Western foreign policy in the Middle East, and a view that the West does not intervene in the face of persecution of the *Ummah* (Saltman and Smith 2015:11). Furthermore, gendering radicalisation narratives shifts focus from other (potentially preventable) issues which can make an individual more susceptible to radicalisation; such as domestic racism within the West, in particular, verbal abuse of women wearing the niqab or burqa and feelings of alienation caused by these factors (Saltman and Smith 2015:8-18).

Reductionist Gendered Terminology: jihadi wives, ISIS brides and brainwashed schoolgirls

A vast majority of the media reports about Mahmood have primarily referred to her - as well as other women who have travelled to ISIS held territory - as an 'ISIS bride,' 'jihadi bride,' a 'brainwashed schoolgirl' or 'an impressionable young woman' (Mendick and Verkaik 2014, Shubert and Naik 2014, Middleton 2015, Madley 2016). This terminology conforms to the Naive Romanticism narrative because it articulates the positions that women play under ISIS and within the Brigade through a simplistic, infantilising and explicitly gendered prism. By referring to Aqsa as first and foremost as an 'impressionable young schoolgirl' or as 'brainwashed,' she is denied agency because her radicalisation is portrayed as a product of her naivety, age and "brainwashed" irrationality - despite that she was legally an adult when she left the United Kingdom. It is worth mentioning that in the United Kingdom, the youngest person to be found guilty of planning a terrorist attack - the foiled Anzak day terror plot - was a young boy from Blackburn who was fourteen at the time of his arrest and sixteen at prosecution (BBC 2015, Elgot 2015). However, the motivations for this young boy's offence were explained in terms of personal hardship, not his age, naivety or gender: he "had found an online jihadist community through his first smartphone which "filled a void" caused by problems he was having at school and at home as well as a degenerative eye condition" (BBC 2015, Elgot 2015). The contrast between the ages of these individuals and the way in which their potential violence is explained - the young man was fourteen at his arrest and Aqsa was eighteen when she left for Syria - indicates the implicit salience of gender informing how we comprehend women's radicalisation and violent extremism. Namely, that women are less politically motivated than their male counterparts and are lured into extremism because of a desire to fulfil gendered expectations, their innate irrationality, and naivety associated with their sex, age and gender - over any ideological or political motivation. Additionally, by labelling Mahmood an "impressionable young schoolgirl" attention is shifted away from her political agency and that she became increasingly interested in international politics in the Middle East prior to leaving the United Kingdom.



Image of the Al-Khansaa Brigade undertaking firearm training in Syria (Wyke 2015).

The focus in the debate on jihadi's *as women* is telling, and indicates how critical gender is to how Muslim women's radicalisation and potential violence is explained (Enloe 1993:202-3, Sjoberg and Gentry 2007:9). While women are expected to marry jihadi fighters soon after their arrival in ISIS held territory, it is misleading and gendering to refer to these women as *just* 'jihadi brides' or 'jihadi wives'. Referring to these women in such a way overlooks the significant role that these women play in terms of logistics, political safeguarding, suicide bombing, combat (under certain conditions - as shown by the image above), propagating ideology and encouraging recruitment (Klausen 2015:16-19, Saltman and Smith 2015:4). These labels are especially simplistic when discussing Aqsa Mahmood. Mahmood has married since migrating to Syria, however her pivotal role within the Al-Khansaa Brigade goes far beyond the role of a jihadi wife or bride. Reports by the Institute of Strategic Dialogue and Reuters describe her as a leading figure of the Brigade, and highlight her significant online presence through her blog and propaganda efforts geared toward radicalisation and recruitment of Western women on Twitter (Ali 2015:13, 15-16).

Furthermore, Mahmood is one of the leading members of the Al-Khansaa Brigade, ISIS' all female morality police, which is largely composed of Western women who have migrated to Syria.

Allegedly a large portion of the brigade are British Muslim's, including Sally Jones "the punk jihad," "the Bethnal Green three" - Shamina Begum, Kazida Sultana and Amira Abase - among others. The gendered labels used to refer to the Brigade do not encapsulate their violent reputation or the violent roles these women take under the ISIS regime - as highlighted by the previous image; reports cite extreme torture of women (and in some cases men) as punishment for those whom the Brigade perceive as disobeying the groups particularly strict interpretation of Sharia law (Ali 2015:4). More recently, reports from human rights organisations and from citizen run blogs reporting from within Raqqa, have stated that the Brigade are also in charge of the brothels which have been set up for jihadi fighters (IndiaToday 2014); these these brothels are composed of kidnapped Yazidi women and girls, some of which are as young as ten years old (Amnesty and International 2014:8, IndiaToday 2014). Yazidi women and girls face extreme sexual violence, including rape (of women and children), forced marriage, brutal physical violence and long term psychological trauma - often resulting in suicide while in captivity (Amnesty and International 2014:4,6,12-15). In the context of the Brigade overseeing these brothels and Mahmood's role within the group, it is important to recognise that this is a case of women being involved in the violent sexual violation, exploitation and abuse of other women. This in and of itself complicates the way in which women have been understood and represented in relation to violence. In turn, instances of women's political violence and brutality such as these, question the gendered presumption and construction of women as the sole objects of violence.

Gendered and infantilising terminology, as demonstrated above, circumvents the political agency of these women in making the decision to migrate to Syria and shifts attention from the significant roles that they take on upon arrival. Recognising this shift in how women have been integrated into terrorist organisations in comparison to how these women have conventionally been

represented and labelled is important. This is especially pertinent in comparison to other terrorist groups such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda, who did not rely on women in the same way - in terms of using images of women to propagate their ideology, or on women practically in terms of managing social media accounts and other web based communication platforms, within and beyond the battlefield (Ali 2015:4-5, Klausen 2015:3). These labels also obfuscate the complex social and political factors which lead to radicalisation, such as feelings of isolation as a consequence of domestic racism, feelings of the *Ummah* being persecuted and the lack of international intervention at this persecution, for example (Saltman and Smith 2015:8-10).

Conclusion:

Considering the number of women who have joined ISIS and the significant role that these women have played in recruitment strategies, this thesis has sought to explore how visual representations of women's jihad have challenged and reinforced notions of women's agency. Overall, this dissertation has argued that while photographic representations of Muslim women committing violence may act as a springboard to challenge limited notions of women's agency - as in the case of Aqsa Mahmood - this has not prevented the violence of these women from being gendered through the archetypes of mother, monster and whore by mainstream discourses. Gendering women's violence in this way has acted to not only deny women agency and culpability for their actions, but has also reproduced stereotypical and problematic understandings of women as political subjects and the motivations which drive women's violence in the theatre of war.

Considering the way in which women's violence has been gendered - as demonstrated by this research - it is crucial to explore how to move beyond gendered narratives of women's violence. Regarding women as first and foremost as political rather than just *gendered* actors in international politics is critical. While the personal is political, it is important to recognise that instances of women's political violence are not solely the outcome of grievances over particularly narrow and gendered interpretations of personal issues traditionally associated with the private sphere. Instead of examining men and women's political violence on a foundation of difference, it is essential to look for similarity in the reasoning that has led to such violence. Matters of agency are complex for both women and men. Acknowledging that agency and choice are context dependent and constrained by a multiplicity of factors (Sjoberg and Gentry 2015:148) for both men and women is a starting point. Considering this, it is paramount to also take account of the (potentially preventable) structural and domestic issues which can make both men and women more susceptible to radicalisation. Such as, domestic racism, feelings of cultural alienation and issues of representation of minority groups in the media. It is in the context of the media shaping discourse

and constructing understandings of men and women, that is it crucial to recognise these issues as are intimately related to matters of representation. Simplistic and gendered explanations and representations of political violence are problematic, not only in terms of adequately recognising the motivations of the individuals in question, but also in terms of how these stereotypes and narratives work to discursively shape women and men - both within and outside the context of terrorism - as political subjects. By taking instances, images, and the agency of these women in all their complexity seriously, society can become more perspicuous and hopefully able to prevent this type of social political phenomenon.

Bibliography

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2013). *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* London, Harvard Press.
- Ahmed, D. (2009). "Not Yet Beyond the Veil: Muslim Women in American Popular Literature." *Social Text* 27(2): p.101-129.
- Ali, M.-R. (2015). *ISIS and Propoganda: How ISIS Exploits Women*. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper. Oxford, University of Oxford, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: p.1-25.
- Amnesty and International (2014). *Escape from Hell: Torture and Sexual Slavery in Islamic State Captivity in Iraq*. London, Amnesty International: p.1-17.
- barenakedislam.com (2015). *Dream Job, Terrorist Doc*. www.barenakedislam.com.
- Barrett, R. (2014). *Foreign Fighters in Syria*. New York, The Soufan Group: p. 6-33.
- BBC. (2015). "Anzac Day terror plot: Blackburn Boy sentenced to life." Retrieved 26th March, 2016, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34423984>.
- Bennhold, K. (2015). "Jihad and Girl Power: How ISIS Lured 3 London Girls." Retrieved 12th April 2016, 2016, from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/world/europe/jihad-and-girl-power-how-isis-lured-3-london-teenagers.html?_r=0.
- Blog, I. (2015). *Girl Talk: Calling Western Women to Syria*. news.siteintelgroup.com, Insite on Terrorism and Extremism.
- Butler, J. (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40(4): p. 519-531.
- Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London, Seagull Books.
- Cloud, D. L. (2004). "'To veil the threat of terror': Afghan Women and the <clash of civilizations> in the imagery of the U.S war on terrorism." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90(3): p. 285-306.
- Collins, V. E. (2015). *State Crime, Women and Gender*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Cooke, M. (2002). "'Saving Brown Women'." *Signs* 28(1): p. 468-470.
- Coughlin, K. M. (2000). *Women, War and the Veil: Muslim Women in Resistance and Combat. A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*. G. J. DeGroot. Harlow, Pearson Education: p. 223-240.
- Delphy, C. (2015). *Separate and Dominate: Feminism and Racism after the War on Terror*. London, Verso Books.
- Elgot, J. (2015). "Anzac day terror plot: British teenager given life sentence." Retrieved 11th February 2016, 2016.
- Elshtain, J. B. (1982). "On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness." *Women's Studies* 5(3): p. 341-348.
- Enloe, C. (1989). *Banana's, Beaches and Bases*. California, University of California Press.
- Enloe, C. (1990). *Carmen Miranda on My Mind: International Politics of the Banana. Banana's, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkley, University of California Press: p.124-151.
- Enloe, C. (1993). *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the end of the Cold War*. London, University of California Press.
- Enloe, C. (2000). *Preface. Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. London, University of California Press: p. xi-1.
- Friedman, H. A. (2005). "Psychological Operations in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom." Retrieved 11th April 2016, 2016, from <https://www.psywar.org/afghanistan02.php>.
- Gronnvoll, M. (2007). "Gender (in)Visibility at Abu Ghraib." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10(3): p. 371-398.
- Guardian. (2014). "Scottish woman who married Isis fighter 'wants to become a martyr'." Retrieved 22nd March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/06/scottish-woman-married-isis-fighter-martyr-aqsa-mahmood>.
- Guardian. (2015). "UK military could allow women in frontline by end of 2016." Retrieved 22nd March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/20/uk-military-could-allow-women-in-close-combat-roles-by-end-of-2016>.
- Harriet Sherwood, S. L., Kim Wallasher, Ben Knight, Maddy French and a. L. Gambino. (2014). "Schoolgirl jihadis: the female Islamists leaving home to join Isis fighters." Retrieved 22nd March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/schoolgirl-jihadis-female-islamists-leaving-home-join-isis-iraq-syria>.

- Hashmi, F. H. (2014). "Aqsa Mahmood, the ISIS bride." The Express Tribune Blog <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/24150/aqsa-mahmood-the-isis-bride/> 2016.
- Hellmuth, D. (2016). "Countering Jihadi Terrorists and Radicals the French Way." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism **38**(12): p. 979-997.
- Henderson, J. (2010). Mutilated Afghan Woman on the cover of Time. www.thehealthcareculture.com.
- Hutchings, K. (2008). "Making Sense of Masculinity and War." Men and Masculinities **10**(4): p. 389-404.
- IndiaToday. (2014). "British jihadist running ISIS brothels of kidnapped Iraqi women: report." Retrieved 3rd March 2016, 2016, from <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/isis-brothels-yazidi-women-kidnapped-sex-slaves-british-jihadist/1/382192.html>.
- Jazeera, A. (2014). "CIA says IS numbers underestimated." Retrieved 19th April 2016, 2016, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/09/cia-triples-number-islamic-state-fighters-201491232912623733.html>.
- Kaufman-Osborn, T. (2005). "Gender Trouble at Abu Ghraib?" Politics & Gender(4): p. 597-619.
- Khalid, M. (2014). "Gendering Orientalism: Gender, Sexuality and Race in post-9/11 global politics." Critical Race and Whiteness Studies **10**(1): p.1-18.
- Klausen, J. (2015). "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism **38**(1): p. 1-22.
- Koo, K. L. (2002). "Confronting a Disciplinary Blindness: Women, War and Rape in the International Politics of Security." Australian Journal of Political Science **37**(3): p. 525-536.
- Kutnicki, A. (2014). "Female Jihadis, European & American, Are GRAVE Dangers! Commentary By Adina Kutnicki." Retrieved 11th April 2016, 2016, from <https://adinakutnicki.com/tag/shariah-law-mandated-jihad/>.
- Lester, D. (2014). "Suspected British Medical Student Pictured Holding Severed Head While in Burka and White Doctor's Jacket." Retrieved 11th April 2016, 2016, from <http://rightwingnews.com/top-news/suspected-british-medical-student-pictured-holding-severed-head-burka-white-doctors-jacket/>.
- Libero, Q. (2014). "Jihad, the British girl who exhibits a severed head: "job of my dreams"." Retrieved 3rd March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/esteri/11688811/Jihad--la-ragazza-britannica-che.html>.
- Liddle, R. (2015). "Whose fault is the jihadi bride? Certainly not her astonishing father." Retrieved 11th April 2016, 2016, from <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/04/whose-fault-is-the-jihadi-bride-certainly-not-her-astonishing-dad/>.
- Madeley, G. (2016). Jailed, the extremist who lured jihadi scot. Scottish Daily Mail. www.pressreader.com, Scottish Daily Mail Limited.
- Madley, G. (2016). "Heartbroken and hopeless: Parents of Scottish jihadi bride Aqsa Mahmood tell of their devastation at losing her to ISIS brainwashing." Retrieved 3rd March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3457741/Heartbroken-hopeless-Parents-Scottish-jihadi-bride-Aqsa-Mahmood-tell-devastation-losing-ISIS-brainwashing.html>.
- McGinty, B. (2016). "Aqsa Mahmood: Brit student lured to Syria by ISIS was brainwashed with secret text messages." Retrieved 13th April 2016, 2016, from <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/aqsa-mahmood-brit-student-lured-7410349>.
- McGinty, B. (2016). "How ISIS stole my daughter: Mum admits when Aqsa Mahmood left Scotland for IS death cult she felt like she was dying." Retrieved 6th March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/how-isis-stole-daughter-mum-7410181>.
- Mendick, R. and a. R. Verkaik. (2014). "British female jihadis sign up to the Islamic State's all-women police force." Retrieved 4th March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11079386/British-female-jihadis-sign-up-to-the-Islamic-States-all-women-police-force.html>.
- Merskin, D. (2004). "The Construction of Arabs as Enemies: Post-September 11th Discourse of George W. Bush." Mass Communication & Society **7**(2): p. 157-175.
- Middleton, R. (2015). "Scottish jihadi bride Aqsa Mahmood rants against Syrian refugees for fleeing to Europe." Retrieved 5th March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/jihadi-bride-aqsa-mahmood-rants-against-syrian-refugees-fleeing-europe-1520786>.

- Mohammed, A. (2015). "ISIS' abhorrent punishment for women who breastfeed in public." Retrieved 5th March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.raqqa-sl.co/en/?p=868>.
- Neumann, P. R. (2015). "Foreign fighter total in Syria/Iraq now exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s." Retrieved 17th April 2016, 2016, from <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>.
- Norton, B. (2013). "Malala Yousafzai, Spivak, Abu-Lughod, and the White Savior Complex." Retrieved 6th March 2016, 2016, from <http://bennorton.com/malala-yousafzai-spivak-abu-lughod-and-the-white-savior-complex/>.
- Peresin, A. and a. A. Cervone (2015). "The Western Mujairat of ISIS." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism **38**(7): p. 495-509.
- Pleasance, C. (2014). "British jihadist medical student, 21, is pictured holding severed head while wearing her white doctor's jacket." Retrieved 4th April 2016, 2016, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2755210/British-jihadist-medical-student-21-pictured-holding-severed-head-wearing-white-doctor-s-jacket.html>.
- Saltman, E. M. and a. M. Smith (2015). 'Till Martyrdom Do Us Part: Gebder abd the ISIS Phenomeonon. I. o. S. D. W. a. E. Programme. London, Institute of Strategic Dialogue: p.1-80.
- Shephard, L. (2006). "Veiled References: Constructions of gender in the Bush administration discourse on the attacks on Afghanistan post-9/11." International Feminist Journal of Politics **8**(1): p. 19-41.
- Shubert, A. and a. B. Naik. (2014). "CNN Exclusive: From Glasgow girl to 'bedroom radical' and ISIS bride." Retrieved 6th March, 2016, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/05/world/europe/isis-bride-glasgow-scotland/>.
- Sjoberg, L. (2009). "Feminist Investigations of Terrorism/Terrorism Studies." International Relations **23**(1): p.69-74.
- Sjoberg, L. (2014). Gender War and Conflict. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Sjoberg, L. and a. C. Gentry (2007). Mothers, Monsters and Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics. London, Zed Books.
- Sjoberg, L. and a. C. Gentry (2015). Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women's Violence in Global Politics. London, Zed Books.
- Smith, S. (2000). "The Discipline of International Relations: Still an American Social Science?" British Journal of Politics and International Relations **2**(3): p. 372-402.
- Sontag, S. (2003). Regarding the Pain of Others. London, Penguin Books.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. C.Nelson and a. L. Grossberg. London, Macmillan Education: p. 271-317.
- Steans, J. (2008). "Telling stories about Women and Gender in the War on Terror." Global Society **22**(1): p. 159-176.
- Steans, J. (2013). Gender and International Relations: Theory, Practice and Polity. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Stern, J. and a. J. M. Berger (2015). ISIS: The State of Terror. London, William Collins.
- Taub, A. (2015). No, CNN, women are not joining ISIS because of "kittens and Nutella". www.vox.com, Vox Media Incorporated.
- Telegraph, T. (2014). "Privately-educated woman, 20, who went to Syria to marry an ISIL fighter." Retrieved 1st February 2016, 2016, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11073923/Privately-educated-woman-20-who-went-to-Syria-to-marry-an-Isil-fighter.html>.
- Thompson, M. (2015). "Pentagon Opens All Frontline Combat Jobs to Women." Retrieved 1st January 2016, 2016, from <http://time.com/4134976/pentagon-combat-women/>.
- TomoWorld (2015). Women in the Islamic State: female jihadis publish guide on life for girls under ISIS. youtube.com, TomoWorld 2015.
- TV, W. (2016). CNN's Embarrassing ISIS Segment (Full) 18 Feb 2015. youtube.com, WKAJ TV.
- Wakefield, M. (2015). "How do bright schoolgirls fall for jihadis? The same way they fall for Justin Bieber." Retrieved 22nd March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/02/how-do-bright-schoolgirls-fall-for-jihadis-the-same-way-they-fall-for-justin-bieber/>.
- Wakefield, M. (2015). "Isis takes its British schoolgirl jihadis seriously. Why don't we?" Retrieved 25th March 2016, 2016, from <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/10/isis-takes-its-british-schoolgirl-jihadis-seriously-why-dont-we/>.

Wood, G. (2015). "What ISIS Really Wants." Retrieved 10th April 2016, 2016, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

Wyke, T. (2015). "Inside the female jihadist training group: Female fanatics chant as they are trained to use assault rifles (though they're making at least one firearms blunder)." Retrieved 14th April 2016, 2016, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3033285/Inside-female-jihadist-training-group-Female-fanatics-chant-trained-use-assault-rifles-making-one-firearms-blunder.html>.

Zakaria, R. (2015). "Women and Islamic Militancy." Retrieved 1st April 2016, 2016, from <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/why-women-choose-isis-islamic-militancy>.