CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

Master's Thesis

2024   **Anastasia Latenkova**

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

Supply and Demand: The Intersection between ISIS's Offerings to Women and Women's Motivation to Join

Master's thesis

Author of the Thesis: Anastasia Latenkova

Study Programme: Master in International Security Studies (MISS)

Supervisor: Mgr. Markéta Kocmanová, Ph.D.

Year of the defence: 2024

`

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.

2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.

3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on   Anastasia Latenkova

31.07.2024

`

References

LATENKOVA, Anastasia. *Supply and Demand: The Intersection between ISIS's Offerings to Women and Women's Motivation to Join*. Praha, 2024. 152 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies. Department of Security Studies. Supervisor Mgr. Markéta Kocmanová, Ph.D.

Length of the thesis: with spaces 314,488, without spaces 267,966

`

Abstract

Women's participation in ISIS attracts attention, yet their motivations and roles within ISIS remain under-examined. The thesis addresses the gap in understanding female motivations both from the perspective of women and ISIS. The primary objective of this research is to examine the relationship between women's motivations to join ISIS and the group's offerings to its female members. The thesis applies a microeconomic theory of supply and demand to explore this interconnection.

As a part of the main objective, the thesis attempts to deepen the understanding of ISIS women's motivations by conducting a meta-analysis of existing scholarship published between 2015 and 2024. Moreover, the thesis identifies twenty-eight subthemes and five themes in women's behavioral radicalization into ISIS, providing a unique categorization of female motivations. These themes were identified in the process of qualitative inductive thematic analysis. The identified themes are Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement.

Moreover, the thesis provides a comprehensive overview of twenty-one of ISIS's offerings to its female members. The thesis additionally identifies the roles that women are expected to perform within ISIS. Once motivations and offerings are presented, I explore how ISIS's offerings and women's motivations intersect and influence one another.

The research findings contribute to a more profound understanding of the interconnection between ISIS's offerings and female motivations. It further spotlights the importance of a terrorist group's supply to one's behavioral radicalization. The thesis carries implications for radicalization studies, terrorism prevention strategies, and deradicalization policies.

Abstrakt

Účast žen v ISIS přitahuje pozornost, ale jejich motivace a role v ISIS zůstávají nedostatečně prozkoumány. Diplomová práce řeší mezeru v chápání ženských motivací jak z pohledu žen, tak ISIS. Hlavním cílem tohoto výzkumu je zkoumat vztah mezi motivací žen připojit se k Islámskému státu, a nabídkami této skupiny svým ženským členům. Práce aplikuje mikroekonomickou teorii nabídky a poptávky k prozkoumání tohoto propojení.

`

Jako součást hlavního cíle se práce snaží prohloubit porozumění motivacím žen ISIS provedením meta-analýzy stávajících studií publikovaných mezi lety 2015 a 2024. Navíc práce identifikuje 28 podtémat a pět témat v behaviorální radikalizaci žen do ISIS, což poskytuje jedinečnou kategorizaci ženských motivací. Tato témata byla identifikována v procesu kvalitativní indukční tematické analýzy. Identifikovanými tématy jsou přežití, afinita, osobní rozvoj, povinnost a vzrušení.

Navíc tato práce poskytuje komplexní přehled 21 konceptů, které tvoří nabídku Islámského státu svým ženským členům. Diplomová práce dále identifikuje role, které se očekává, že ženy budou hrát v rámci ISIS. Představení motivací a nabídek je doplněno vzájemným propojením a ovlivňováním mezi nabídkou ISIS a motivacemi žen.

Výsledky výzkumu přispívají k hlubšímu pochopení vzájemného propojení mezi nabídkami ISIS a ženskými motivacemi. Dále práce zdůrazňuje význam nabídky teroristické skupiny pro behaviorální radikalizací a také zmiňuje implikace pro studia radikalizace, strategie prevence terorismu a politiky deradikalizace.

Keywords

ISIS, female jihadists, muhajirat, women of ISIS, female radicalization, female foreign fighters

Klíčová slova

Džihádistky, ISIS, muhadžirát, radikalizace žen, ženy ISIS, zahraniční bojovnice

Title

Supply and Demand: The Intersection between ISIS's Offerings to Women and Women's Motivation to Join

Název práce

Nabídka a poptávka: Průsečík mezi nabídkou ISIS ženám a motivací žen se připojit

`

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. Markéta Kocmanová, Ph.D. Thank you for all the valuable advice, priceless guidance, and learning opportunities you have provided me with. Thank you for helping me grow as a researcher. I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone who had to listen to me talking and rambling about my research for the past two years. This heartfelt appreciation goes to my friends, family, psychologist, work teammates, Tandem partners, baristas, and strangers. This thesis has been a labor of love, and I am grateful you gifted me your genuine support. Your reassurance and interest in my research truly encouraged me to keep working.

Table of Contents

`

`

List of Tables

`

List of Figures

`

Introduction

Given ISIS's legacy of gender-based violence, sexual abuse, torture, and executions, it might be hard to believe that women would voluntarily choose to join such a group. (Spencer 2016) Nonetheless, despite the abuse and visible gender oppression, ISIS received a significant influx of women. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Makanda 2019) It is estimated that around 4500 foreign women joined ISIS. However, the number of local ISIS women in Syria and Iraq remains obscure. (Cook and Vale 2018; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Perešin 2018) All in all, there is no conclusive data on how many women joined ISIS. (Antunez Moreno 2020)

It is quite complicated to trace women joining ISIS. Some countries, especially in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, could not provide data on the women who left for ISIS, mostly because the countries could not identify if women joined ISIS or other terrorist groups. (Cook and Vale 2018; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Perešin 2018) Moreover, on a more personal level, some families attempt to hide the fact that their family members traveled to ISIS and therefore deny providing any relevant information. This way, they attempt to ensure their own safety. Such a strategy, while quite understandable, further complicates producing adequate estimations. (Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017) As a result, the total number of ISIS female participants is believed to be even larger than 4500 individuals. It is, in fact, believed that ISIS has witnessed a bigger female member influx than other extremist groups in the past. (Bjørgum 2016; Perešin 2018; Scheuble and Oezmen 2022) Incomplete data on the number of women who joined ISIS hinders our understanding of the unique threat that female ISIS members might pose. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Perešin 2018) Why would such a great number of women join a terrorist group?

There is still no ultimate empirical research that would universally establish why people opt for extremist violence and join extremist groups. There is no one profile of a terrorist. (Neumann 2013; Sedgwick 2010) Among ISIS members, there are those from broken homes and those who come from loving supportive families. ISIS similarly attracted those whose parents were diplomats, well-respected doctors, waiters, and welfare recipients. (Moaveni 2019, 274) In fact, a substantial amount of foreign female ISIS participants come from well-

established, non-radicalized middle-class families with the means for comfortable living and higher education. There are instances when those families cried and begged their girls or women to abandon radical ideas and come back. (Loken and Zelenz 2017; Perešin 2015) Yet these women chose to join a ruthless terrorist group, move to a conflict zone, regularly witness public executions and beheadings, and tolerate sexual violence and slavery. (Perešin 2018) It is noteworthy that many women, most prominently Western foreigners, left their comfortable lives to join ISIS. (Daymon and Margolin 2022) Naturally, it might sound startling that women would leave a relatively comfortable life for the sake of ISIS lifestyle. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

In addition, it is astonishing that some women who moved to ISIS, traveled there with their children, sometimes literal toddlers. (de Leede 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018). In fact, most ISIS women who traveled to its premises had children even before joining ISIS. In other words, despite a common societal assumption, children do not serve as a women's excuse for not migrating to ISIS. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) Moreover, some women left their husbands and children behind and traveled to ISIS-occupied territories alone. (Nuraniyah 2018; Perešin 2015) Leaving a child behind signified a holy sacrifice in the name of *jihād* and the highest level of commitment to the ISIS cause. (Daymon and Margolin 2022)

Other women managed to recruit their husbands and/or other family members into ISIS. (Bakker and de Leede 2015; de Leede 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017) Some men, in fact, became radicalized after they had married a woman loyal to a jihadi cause. (Orsini 2020) There are also women who traveled to the ISIS territory, left their spouse, and married a jihadi fighter, because the women were told their previous husbands had been excommunicated. Therefore, their marriage was no longer valid. (Nuraniyah 2018; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) One of the ISIS women, Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah, further produced an eight-page-article citing historical evidence on why women should leave their husbands who oppose ISIS and join the group instead. (Stempien 2021)

Nonetheless, the research on ISIS members has been predominantly focused on men (Perešin 2015), while women have remained an under-examined ISIS population. (Cook and Vale

`

2018; Gan, et al. 2019; Spencer 2016; Windsor 2020) Studies of ISIS women tend to be based on the secondary data and/or on the social media accounts of female ISIS participants. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Primary data is still severely missing. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019) This happens for several reasons. Firstly, the group is seen as hyper-masculine in its essence; it promotes strict gender hierarchy where women are demoted to the private sphere. They are hidden from the public eye and are hard to access. (Daymon and Margolin 2022)

Such gendered focus also occurs because male ISIS members are seen as the main perpetrators of physical violence. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Jackson 2021; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) Jihadi violence is said to be dominated by men. (Pearson 2015) Hence, men attract more research interest: they are seen as the core of jihadi extremism. Additionally, research into female ISIS members has been constrained by the assumption that women would not voluntarily choose to live in a violent, highly patriarchal society. As a result, an overriding narrative has been that ISIS women were simply groomed by ISIS men into joining the terrorist group. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Jackson 2021; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017)

It is surprising that terrorism studies would portray women as victims of men's violence. (Antunez Moreno 2020; de Leede 2018; Speckhard 2015; Spencer 2016; Stempien 2021) Female terrorism is not a new phenomenon. The history of terrorism provides us with various examples of women conducting terrorist attacks and participating in suicide bombings. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Perešin 2015; Ulaş 2024) Throughout history, women played an important role in terrorism. (Antunez Moreno 2020) Women have been trained for combat and participated in it across various countries, including radical Islamic movements in Libya, Afghanistan, and the Philippines. The fact that women do not engage in violence, even if they are a subordinated minority, is a myth. (Cook and Vale 2018; de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Perešin 2018) Women are as likely as men to initiate deliberate violence. (Speckhard 2015)

In the meantime, media reporting on ISIS female members usually highlights a woman's physical appearance and uses cliched narratives such as "good girl gone bad" and "for love's sake". The language that is used in such reporting usually portrays ISIS as an unrelenting

`

body of water that, almost magically, sweeps women away with overpowering force. (Jackson 2021) Even when ISIS female members return to their home countries, they are often said to have escaped ISIS rather than simply deciding to leave the group. The common narrative is that men, being natural members, leave, while women escape. (Strømmen 2016) Radicalization is thus described as something that just happens to women; they are otherwise not an active part of the radicalization process. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) The studies of female radicalization tend to focus on how women suffer from the actions of radicalized groups while being a victim, an unvoluntary participant of the group. (Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development 2016; Bjørgum 2016) Female violence tends to be isolated as a singular anomalous event, so that the stereotype of peaceful women remains. (de Leede 2018; Patel and Westermann 2018)

Overall, there is a tendency to believe that men join terrorist groups such as ISIS out of rational motivations and women out of emotional motivations. Such a stress on the personal element of female motivation serves to depoliticize female violence, denying their agency and refusing to acknowledge women's grievances. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019) Some studies and journalistic pieces tend to neglect or even caricature the complexity of radicalization among women of ISIS. They ignore the complexity of social dynamics and various life experiences that those women go through. Their representation often comes down to portraying women as sex slaves or girlfriends of militant jihadists. (Antunez Moreno 2020)

In addition, there is an unspoken belief that girls, especially the ones from Muslim communities, are less streetwise, less experienced outside of the families, and less educated on the matters of radicalization. They are often shown as being victimized by Muslim men. As a result, it is often believed that they are not able to critically assess ISIS propaganda. Such discriminatory biases and narratives feed into the idea that women, especially young ones, are lacking agency in their radicalization. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Jackson 2021; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) As a result, it is often believed that Muslim women join ISIS purely out of irrational romantic reasons or because they were forced into joining. (Antunez Moreno 2020)

`

Consequently, one of the terms that is quite popularly applied to women of ISIS is a "jihadi bride" instead of, similarly to their male counterparts, foreign terrorist fighters. The term "jihadi bride" is rather problematic, as it conveniently explains away female motivation to join ISIS by putting them in the framework of motherhood and sexuality and assigning them conventionally feminine tasks. Such a perception nullifies the possibility of choice. Brainwashing, naivety, unawareness, male coercion, and infantility are feminized terms that are simpler to comprehend in the context of women in ISIS. All these terms uphold the gendered perception of female victims and male perpetrators. Accordingly, women of ISIS become a matter of saving or ignoring, or both. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Pearson 2015; Strømmen 2016) As a result, we might witness cases such as one of Laura Passoni. She repeatedly stated that she had voluntarily converted to Islam, joined ISIS, and truly believed in the utopian dream of the Caliphate. Yet eventually her husband has been held accountable for both her, and his actions. While both of them were perpetrators who willingly joined a terrorist group, the bonds of society strapped her to the role of a victim. (Strømmen 2016)

The tendency to utilize metaphors such as a "jihadi bride" leads to seeing all ISIS women as one homogenous group devoid of personality. It impedes one from distinguishing unique sets of motivations in women. (de Leede 2018; de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Jackson 2021; Saltman and Smith 2015) The women of ISIS are essentially dehumanized. (Jackson 2021) In reality, these women are a diverse group of individuals: they come in various age groups, citizenships, education levels, religious, economic, political, and family backgrounds. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bjørgum 2016; Cook and Vale 2018; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; de Leede 2018; de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Milton and Dodwell 2018; Perešin 2018) Some are converts, some were born into Muslim households. Some are minors, and some are adults traveling with families. (Daymon and Margolin 2022) The socio-demographic characteristics of female ISIS members are so diverse that no sustainable generalization to one profile can be made. (Cook and Vale 2018; (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) Radicalization is a multi-layered phenomenon regardless of an individual's gender. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) Hence, female motivations to join ISIS are equally diverse.

`

It is true that women might experience wars, conflict, and violence around them differently than men. Yet, in their experience, they would have more in common with men around them than with women from different countries across the globe. (Moaveni 2019, 328) Nonetheless, most public and academic discussions on women seem to be disconnected from the life experiences of Muslim women and/or women in the Middle East. They do not necessarily consider the context of past or ongoing conflicts, local political oppression, wars, their coverage, and coverage's impact on the affined minorities. Even the language that is employed when discussing ISIS women emphasizes doubts about the factual reality of events. Feelings of discrimination are usually described as nearly *perceived*, feeling of cultural exclusion as *incited*. Women are regarded as possessed by their sexual desires and religious brainwashing; they are diagnosed with motivations that suit the common perception of Muslim women best. However, such a diagnosis hardly describes the reality of ISIS women; it merely hints at the relation of the diagnostician to his subjects of research. (Moaveni 2019, 326-328)

It is, of course, fair to say that some women were forced to migrate to ISIS-occupied territories. (Cook and Vale 2018) Some women probably did not understand the lifestyle under ISIS. (Bjørgum 2016) Some women acted in full consciousness; some were too young to exercise an adult judgment. (Perešin and Cervone 2015; Moaveni 2019, 326) Yet it is quite a stretch to argue that all women traveled to ISIS being completely unaware of its conditions or lifestyle. (Milton and Dodwell 2018) Nonetheless, some women were probably groomed and manipulated, indeed. (de Leede 2018) However, such a narrative offers little consideration of the multiplicity of female motivations and obstructs our understanding of what ISIS messaging resonates with women. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017; Saltman and Smith 2015) Plus, it excludes the fact that some men were probably manipulated into ISIS as well. (de Leede 2018)

In the meantime, ISIS has effectively capitalized on its female network. It has regarded women as an unexploited resource, a strategic advantage for the group's expansion. Consequently, the group has increasingly been willing to bend its ideology to attract women to join ISIS ranks. (Spencer 2016; Stempien 2021) Recently, ISIS has even become more open to female participation in future warfare. (Bjørgum 2016) In the ideological context of

`

the group, ISIS values its women. It considers them essential for the state-building efforts and the continuity of *jihād*. (Stempien 2021)

The ISIS's attitude towards its women is quite important; it resonates with these women until today. It is known that there are still fevered ISIS supporters among women. In al-Hol camp in Syria, for instance, it is relatively easy to find women who would show pride in their faith and ISIS ideology. They promise to raise their children with radical ideas at heart, and they await the return of the Caliphate. (Vale 2019; Saleh 2021) In the absence of adult ISIS men, some pro-ISIS women even sexually abuse young boys to procreate more future ISIS fighters. (Speckhard 2023) Additionally, it is known that *Al-Khansā'* brigade (of which we will speak later) is still active in the al-Hol camp. Similar disturbing news comes from other camps, too. (Vale 2019) In addition, one should not forget that women and their children have shown capacity to plot and execute attacks worldwide. They represent a security threat and play a significant role in carrying ISIS ideology and legacy. (Cook and Vale 2018)

All in all, it is visible that women of ISIS are regarded from an orientalist point of view, homogeneously passive, apolitical, and most certainly vulnerable to dominant Muslim men. (Pearson 2015) Such a representation once again pictures women as passive, peripheral, susceptible, enchanted spectators rather than active subjects who are genuinely interested in *jihād*. It truly marks contrast to the way male ISIS members are described. (Bjørgum 2016; Jackson 2021; Windsor 2020) As it was mentioned earlier, oftentimes, radicalization is seen as something that passively happens to a woman. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) Nonetheless, radicalization is not exclusive to men. Women also radicalize and often provide jihadi movements with the so-called invisible infrastructure. (Orsini 2020) There is no firm binary between being a victim and being a perpetrator, women participate in violence in complex ways. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019) It is time to recognize that becoming a terrorist can be a woman's deliberate choice. (Antunez Moreno 2020)

As it is visible above, women of ISIS are under-researched compared to their male ISIS counterparts. They are frequently presented as victims void of conscious choice to join a terrorist group and/or as romantically driven, naïve women. However, every woman, as any human being, is different and operates in distinct contexts. It is a grave mistake to generalize

`

over 4500 ISIS women under the umbrella of victimhood and romanticism. However, recognizing the fact that women can be violent is not enough; it does not clarify why they become radicalized and join terrorism. (Speckhard 2015) Therefore, further research into women of ISIS is essential. Researching women in terrorist groups, especially such violent and gender-oppressive groups as ISIS, might provide new perspectives in the studies of radicalization and women's relationship to violence. Plus, as it was pointed out above, ISIS has recognized its women as the ultimate hope of the group's survival, and some women in the refugee camps gladly ensure that ISIS legacy lives. Women clearly pose a security threat, so it is dangerous to simply dismiss them. The narrative of love-struck women falling for the ISIS Casanovas should be questioned, as it can withhold policymakers and policy practitioners from dealing with the problem effectively. (Milton and Dodwell 2018) Research into the women of ISIS is relevant for developing adequate security responses and expanding de-radicalization discussions.

Initially, in the Research Proposal, I was interested in analyzing existing research on female motivations and creating a comprehensive overview of why women join ISIS. I was bothered by the idea that women, according to the public, media, and – partially – research, would leave their families and children, would sacrifice their lifestyle to travel to a war zone just for the sake of a man. My assumption was that it took a great deal of consciousness to execute such a plan, a deeper internal motivation to turn one's life upside down. I was also curious why women would join such a visibly violent, highly patriarchal group, hence, the idea of exploring the ISIS offer was also presented. Once I started to collect and read through the data, I realized that simply compiling female motivations and ISIS offers for women seemed incomplete. Therefore, some changes were applied.

First, while I noted an increase in the research of the female ISIS members, I did not encounter any paper that would compile all existing research on female motivations and then structure it. There was a research gap that needed to be addressed. Thus, I opted for the meta-analysis of the existing literature on female motivations to join ISIS. The meta-analysis includes scholarship published between 2015 and 2024. Next, when collecting and analyzing data, I realized that women's motivations, while extremely diverse, had a certain pattern to them. Hence, I found conducting a qualitative inductive thematic analysis the most appropriate for structuring and conceptualizing all female motivations found in existing

`

scholarship. Second, discovering what ISIS offers would not fully encompass ISIS's attractiveness for women. ISIS's offerings would recruit women, but what would happen next? Women, just like men, are supposed to have a role within the ISIS society. In simple terms, they would be expected to perform the role of a woman upon arrival. These roles and expectations are a part of the ISIS's package; what are they and how do they resonate with women? Thus, I decided to closer examine both ISIS's offerings and ISIS's expectations of a woman within its structures. Examining female roles within ISIS should uncover the multifaceted nature of female participation in the terrorist group.

Third, in parallel, I have consulted literature on radicalization and realized that various radicalization models tend to track an individual's pathway into radicalization, but they rather neglect a terrorist group's targeted involvement in a person's radicalization. Some models consider terrorist groups in terms of the influence of extremist propaganda and providing enabling structures to an individual. Yet, this influence is presented as a part of a person's radicalization rather than a correspondingly powerful force to an individual's choice to adhere to terrorism. Thus, I decided to try a new perspective and consider ISIS's offerings on par with personal female motivations to join ISIS. I will speak about radicalization models later in the research.

Lastly, exploring female motivations and ISIS's offerings and female role expectations in parallel hardly explained why women would respond to ISIS's call. ISIS's offerings and female motivations are supposed to correspond to one another at some point. The assumption went as follows: why women with one set of motivations would join ISIS with another non-corresponding set of offerings? If a motivation is not met by any offer, then it must be more logical to choose other alternatives rather than joining ISIS. In this case, the assumption continues: for a woman to join ISIS, ISIS's offer and female motivation should intersect. I decided to further explore this potential connection.

All these thoughts and assumptions made me consider how I could explore the intersection of ISIS's offerings and female motivations, to discover how ISIS's *supply* meets women's *demand*. As a result, I decided to explore whether the existing scholarship had already applied the microeconomic theory of supply and demand to the topic of radicalization. While I eventually found a few other researchers briefly employing this theory, I did not encounter

any research that would consider ISIS's offerings as *supply* and female motivations as *demand*. Consequently, I settled on the idea of implementing this theory to the discussion of ISIS's offerings and female motivations to join ISIS. All in all, the nature of the initial research has expanded and evolved in its nature.

The thesis will address the female motivations to join ISIS, both from the perspective of local and foreign women. It will further address the offerings that ISIS provides to these women. The thesis fits into the radicalization and terrorism studies' discussion on women, female experiences of radicalization, and participation in terrorism. The main objectives of the thesis are 1) to discover the connection between women's motivation to join ISIS and the ISIS's offerings to women, 2) to learn what ISIS offers to their female members, and what roles they are expected to assume within the group, and 3) to summarize what existing scholarship identifies as female motivations to join ISIS. The objectives will be achieved through exploring ISIS's offerings to women, conducting a meta-analysis of the current literature on female motivations to join ISIS, applying qualitative inductive thematic analysis to gathered female motivations, and employing a microeconomic supply and demand theory to female motivations and ISIS's offerings to women.

In accordance with the research objectives, this thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the connection between women's motivation to join ISIS and the ISIS's offerings to women?
    a. What does ISIS offer to their female members, and what roles are they expected to assume within the group?
    b. What does existing scholarship identify as the motivations for females to join ISIS?

This thesis contributes to the discussion of female radicalization into ISIS by addressing why women become radicalized and join ISIS. I have made the first scholarly attempt to conduct the meta-analysis of the existing literature on the motivations of women who voluntarily joined ISIS and improve conceptualization of female motivations through categorizing them into five themes. The themes are Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and

`

Excitement. They will be explained in **Methodology**. Furthermore, the thesis uniquely spotlights both foreign and local women's motivations and identifies common motivations among all women. This way, the thesis addresses the research gap on clear categorization of female motivations and contributes to the literature as an empirical investigation of existing knowledge on female ISIS members, providing space for the discussion on a multifaceted nature of female motivation to join ISIS. Moreover, the thesis provides an extensive overview of ISIS's offerings to women and the role that women are expected to play within ISIS. There is a common misunderstanding about the role women play in ISIS. An analysis of the way ISIS uses its women might provide us with a unique perspective on the terrorists' decision-making and ISIS inner-workings. (Saltman and Smith 2015)

In addition, the thesis contributes to the existing research by providing a unique application of the microeconomic supply and demand model to the question of radicalization. The application of the model offers a chance to examine female motivations to join ISIS through the terrorist group's lens: it provides an opportunity to discover how ISIS addresses female grievances and life circumstances. Furthermore, my application of the microeconomic supply and demand model attempts to deepen the understanding of human radicalization. Lastly, the supply and demand model endeavors to shed light on the availability of the alternative supply in domestic institutions and women's home societies.

The thesis is structured in six parts and organized in the following manner. It commences with the **Introduction** that contextualizes the topic of women joining ISIS and states the research objectives guiding this thesis. Next, the research will proceed with the **Theoretical and Conceptual frameworks** explaining the terms, models, and notions that are important for the data analysis. Theoretical Framework will focus on the existing scholarship on the topic of radicalization. Conceptual Framework will include the microeconomic theory of supply and demand and the conceptualization of such terms as *jihād*, jihadism, foreign (terrorist) fighters, migrants, jihadi brides, and role. It will additionally include a glossary of Arabic and Islamic terms that are contextually significant for the thesis. The next part will be devoted to **Methodology**, where I thoroughly describe my data collection method, the process of data analysis, limitations, and the outcomes of inductive thematic analysis. Afterwards, the thesis proceeds to **Empirical Findings**. First, the findings on ISIS's offer will be examined. Then, the meta-analysis on female motivations will follow. Female

`

motivations will be divided into five main themes that were identified during the inductive thematic analysis of the collected data. Last, the thesis will proceed with the **Discussion**, where findings will be summarized and connected to answer the research questions. This part will also provide directions for the future research. Lastly, the **Conclusion** with final remarks will follow.

`

1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

To understand a specific context of female participation in ISIS, it is crucial to first explore what current research knows about people's decision to join an extremist group. To provide a comprehensive context for data analysis and explore why people adhere to extremist groups and ISIS in particular, the notion of radicalization should be discussed. It will be reviewed within the **Theoretical Framework**.

To ensure effective data analysis, several conceptual tools will be applied. First, the supply and demand model will be presented. Next, such terms as *jihād*, jihadism, foreign (terrorist) fighters, migrants, jihadi brides, and role will be conceptualized. They will be followed by the glossary of Islamic and Arabic terms that are vital for understanding the context of female ISIS members and ISIS propaganda. These concepts, the glossary, and the supply and demand model will be demonstrated in the **Conceptual Framework**.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

There is no one agreed-upon definition for radicalization. In fact, its essence might change in accordance with the context in which it is used. (Sedgwick 2010) In a way, the notion of radicalization, to phrase it metaphorically, is in the eye of the beholder. (Neumann 2013) It is fluid and sometimes carries negative security connotations. (Hoskins and O'Loughlin 2009; Meierrieks and Krieger 2022) According to John Horgan, the reasoning behind an individual stepping on the pathway towards radicalization can vary. Hence, it is quite complicated to find a universal answer to why an individual would choose a radical lifestyle. In some settings, it is possible to ask terrorists about their radicalization. However, when interviewed, terrorists often start justifying their decisions a posteriori, applying ideological argumentation to paint their choice as a noble necessity. (Orsini 2020) Accordingly, some scholars further argue that radicalization should be regarded as a collection of varied experiences that are rather unique for each individual. (Cherney, et al. 2021)

In simple terms, radicalization can be described as the process whereby individuals convert to extremism, a term that itself does not hold a universal definition. (Neumann 2013) Hardy (2018) provides a similar definition by stating that radicalization is indeed a process whereby an individual espouses extremist ideology and steps on the path of committing violent acts.

`

In addition, radicalization can also be tied to the notion of resocialization. This concept is defined as a process whereby a person's beliefs, values, and perception of norms are transformed as a consequence of an intense social process, most frequently in the context of a total institution. Some equate radicalization to resocialization, primarily because radicalization is closely intertwined with social dynamics and interpersonal relations. Such social ties are believed to have a greater influence on an individual's radicalization path compared to, for instance, extremist ideology. In this case, radicalization means "becoming a born again believer". (Orsini 2020)

Besides resocialization, there are two important notions that belong to discussion on radicalization: cognitive and behavioral extremism. Cognitive extremism encompasses radical ideas that a person adopts. Behavioral extremism presumes extremist actions. (Neumann 2013) Following these terms, cognitive radicalization is defined as the acquisition of attitudes, beliefs and values that significantly diverge from the attitudes, beliefs and values of mainstream culture and society. Behavioral radicalization, in its turn, is defined as engaging in extremist activities that have a potential to culminate in terrorism. (Hafez and Mullins 2015; Vergani, et al. 2018)

It is still debated whether behavioral radicalization is possible without the cognitive change and to what extent cognitive radicalization leads to any violent action (Neumann 2013; Vergani, et al. 2018), as radicals might not be violent per se. (Schmid 2013) Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that women in the given research have traveled to ISIS and hence actively engaged in its extremist activities. Therefore, when discussing the radicalization of ISIS women who voluntarily joined the group on its territories, at least *behavioral* radicalization is presupposed.

Besides looking at radicalization through cognitive and behavioral lenses, various scholars attempted to outline radicalization by developing a model of it. These models primarily attempted to capture the process of one's radicalization. (Hardy 2018) Nonetheless, the idea of how the process of radicalization works differs from scholar to scholar, mainly because there is no universal road to one's radicalization. (Colliver, et al. 2019)

NYPD model, for instance, presents radicalization as a linear process consisting of four stages: "pre-radicalization", "self-identification", "indoctrination" and "jihadization". Marc Sageman (2018), on the contrary, suggests a model of non-linear interplay of four different factors comprising radicalization. These are "a sense of moral outrage", "developing a specific worldview", "resonating aforementioned worldview with personal experiences", and "mobilizing through interactive networks". Gill (2018) models radicalization as a four-stages pathway: "exposure to propaganda", the experience of a ""catalyst" event", and "pre-existing social ties facilitating recruitment". These steps culminate in the last stage, "in-group radicalization". (Hardy 2018) Orsini developed a so-called DRIA model consisting of four main principles. These are "disintegration of social identity", "reconstruction of social identity through a radical ideology", "integration in a revolutionary sect", and "alienation from the surrounding world". (Orsini 2020) Hafez and Mullins (2015) presented radicalization as a puzzle consisting of four main elements: grievances, networks, ideologies, and enabling environments combined with support structures. Borum (2011) also suggested a four-step pathway: "it is not right", "it is not fair", "it is your fault" and "dehumanization of the outgroup". Wiktorowicz similarly proposed a model that includes four steps. These are "cognitive opening", "religious seeking", "frame alignment" and "socialization". (King and Taylor 2011)

Similar to Wiktorowicz, Silber and Bhatt (2020) also mention religious seeking and cognitive opening. Both concepts are, however, viewed as part of the self-dentification phase. In total, Silber and Bhatt (2020) suggest four phases of radicalization. These are preradicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization. Coming back to cognitive opening, it is important to highlight that this concept is overall quite utilized in the studies of radicalization. It tends to be a catalyst for an individual to begin their religious search. Silber and Bhatt (2020) define cognitive opening as the consequence of traumatic experience in social, political, economic, and/or personal areas of life. Once it occurs, cognitive opening encourages a person to begin reevaluating and questioning their belief system. (Orsini 2020)

Moghaddam (2020) deviates from the four-stage framework and develops a staircase that an individual climbs during his process of radicalizing. The Staircase to Terrorism model illustrates processual radicalization and attempts to recreate the chronology of an individual

`

transforming into a terrorist. (Orsini 2020) The person starts with the ground floor, that is "Psychological Interpretation of Material Conditions". Then he moves to the floor of "Perceived Options to Fight Unfair Treatment. Then he proceeds to "Displacement of Anger", then to "Moral Engagement". Last two floors are "Solidification of Categorical Thinking and the Perceived Legitimacy of the Terrorist Organization" and "The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanisms". (King and Taylor 2011) McCauley & Moskalenko (2017) also deviated from a four-stage framework and developed a model of two pyramids – one of opinion and one of action – that might overlap as a person's radicalization brews.

The motivational imbalance theory provides yet another curious perspective on radicalization. The theory states that radicalization is just another type of extremism on par with extreme sports, addictions, or extreme diets. Such extreme behaviors are infrequent, yet possible. In the case of terrorist groups, the explanation for the occurrence of such extreme behavior lies in the group's emotional allure, pressure, and charismatic leaders, who tend to appeal to such values as duty, honor, self-respect, dignity, and a desire for respect. (Kruglanski, Bélanger and Gunaratna 2019, 35-59) It is supported by the idea that joining a terrorist group might serve as an "identity stabilizer", which is necessary for those who have low self-esteem, feel isolated in the community, and seek to belong. (Kleinmann 2012) The aforementioned appeals lead an individual towards a "quest for significance", a vital human need, which can be triggered in three different ways. The first is humiliation and the loss of significance in given circumstances. The second is anticipation of such a loss and the feeling of one's significance being threatened. The last method is an opportunity to gain significance. (Kruglanski, Bélanger and Gunaratna 2019, 35-59)

The last element of the "quest for significance" resembles the concept of risk sensitivity, developed by Lawrence Kuznar. Orsini (2020) states that the main premise of the concept is that a person who is at risk by the change of the social status in their current environment starts leaning towards participation in a terrorist group. In such a case, two distinct vulnerable social groups emerge. One social group includes people whose social position is threatened by ongoing social changes. This group is afraid that their social position would change for the worse, so they risk joining a terrorist organization in order to avoid the deterioration of their social status. The second group sees a terrorist group as an opportunity

`

to improve their social status, hence, they risk joining the terrorists in hopes of improving their social standing. (Orsini 2020)

Speaking of choices and opportunities, another prominent approach to radicalization is rational choice theory. This theory regards one's decision to join a terrorist group as a consequence of cost-benefit analyses, an economic calculus the goal of which is maximizing (expected) utility. Such calculus consists of three main elements. These are the material costs of becoming a terrorist, the benefits of being an extremist, and the opportunity costs. In this case, an individual's choices and subsequent behavior can be analyzed through assessing the person's perception of both the nature and results of their decisions. (Kleinmann 2012; Meierrieks and Krieger 2022; Morrison 2022) In accordance with Max Weber's comprehensive method, rationality should be assessed utilizing the point of view of the individual who commits the act. (Orsini 2020) In other words, the influence of context in individual decision-making process is crucial to consider.

Radicalization has been also viewed from the perspective of push and pull factors. Push factors are usually understood as structural factors external to the individual. These factors, as follows from the name, push an individual towards radicalization. Push factors include unjust political circumstances, socio-economic environment, systematic discrimination, and various forms of deprivation. (Cherney, et al. 2021; Shafieioun and Haq 2023; Vergani, et al. 2018) Relative deprivation theories support the idea that politically and economically oppressed individuals choose to apply violence to produce change. (Kleinmann 2012) The feeling of discrimination and otherness can be further amplified when those in the position of power deny the occurrence of injustice and socially neglect trauma of the marginalized. (Shafieioun and Haq 2023)

Pull factors are related to the individual, his network, and existential matters that make joining an extremist group appealing. Pull factors, for example, include the search for identity, a group's ideological allure, material incentives, and exposure to radicalized peers or family members. (Cherney, et al. 2021; Vergani, et al. 2018) Some researchers also highlight a third type of radicalization predictor, that is, personal factors. They include personality traits that make a person vulnerable to a group's message, preceding psychological disorders, and personal traumatic experiences. This type of factors is more

`

often related to cognitive radicalization and behavioral radicalization of lone wolves. (Vergani, et al. 2018) Push, pull, and personal factors do not exist independently from one another. Instead, they interrelate and vary in importance, depending on the person. (Cherney, et al. 2021; Vergani, et al. 2018) At the same time, push factors, given their structural and contextual nature, can often be a trigger for pull and personal factors. (Vergani, et al. 2018)

Nonetheless, despite individual differences, one pull factor seems to be prevalent among people. The factor is social networks, subsequent exposure to extremist ideology via one's social circle, and social learning of the radical behavior. (Cherney, et al. 2021) Besides exposure to a radicalized community, the feeling of threat towards said community has also been identified as a reoccurring part of one's radicalization. (Pisoiu 2022) Social learning theory further contributes to the idea of community influence. The theory states that individuals who live in regions ravaged by violence and who witness terrorism might start imitating terrorists and learning the culture of terrorist glorification. (Kleinmann 2012)

Considering the context of this thesis, it is also relevant to discuss the radicalization of people who join ISIS. Gulfer Ulaş (2024) outlines six levels of so-called "Islamic radicalization". The first level is socio-economic, where radicalization emerges as a defense mechanism against exclusion, inequality, and discriminatory socio-economic conditions of Muslims in the West. Subsequent Muslim victimization, an idea that Muslims are under attack, and a strive for a better society opens the pathway towards Islamic radicalization. The next level is Political. It encompasses the adoption of (political) ideas that would cause greater changes to the political system. The third level is Psychological. It includes the feeling of alienation, cultural crisis, where family culture clashes with one's host culture, and traumatic experiences leading people to seek purpose in a religion and elsewhere. The fourth level is Rational. Its core is the rational choice theory that has been discussed above. The next level is Personal bonds, where a person is searching for belonging and affinity with other humans. The last level is Structural. It describes how terrorist groups and their ideologies charm people into joining. (Ulaş 2024)

`

1.2 Conceptual Framework

To appropriately examine and interpret the data, this subchapter expands on key models, concepts, and terminology that will be applied to the data analysis.

1.2.1 Supply and Demand Theory

As it is visible in the Theoretical Framework, the topic of radicalization has been analyzed from different perspectives and theorized into distinct models. However, numerous approaches to radicalization omit a vital element that is an extremist group's offer to a person on the pathway to radicalization. Such models typically consider radicalization through a one-dimensional perspective, that is, the perspective of internal and external factors directly related to or influencing an individual who joins a terrorist organization.

Nonetheless, there are several models that, to a certain extent, consider the extremist organization's offer. For instance, the third floor of Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism (2020) incorporates a terrorist group's ability to pull a person in on both macro- and micro-levels. On a macro-level, they pull an individual in by presenting themselves as the only power capable of reforming current society. On a micro-level, terrorist organizations might pull a person in by presenting themselves as a safe haven for all the marginalized and misunderstood. (Orsini 2020) Similarly, Push and Pull (and Personal) framework considers the extremist groups' allure and ideological representation as a pull factor on the pathway to radicalization. Additionally, several aforementioned models, such as, for instance, Hafez and Mullins' radicalization puzzle (2015), also reference terrorist propaganda paired with enabling structures and mention their significance in an individual's radicalization path. Yet, these approaches consider an extremist organization's offer as just a part of one's radicalization, a factor that might have a various degree of relevance. They tend to neglect the power that a good offer might have, while personal grievances of any sort cannot be cured within a terrorist organization without a terrorist group *offering* a sensible way to amend them.

Thus, this thesis attempts to close the gap and consider a terrorist group's offer as a sweeping force equal to the power of an individual's choice to join terrorists. In order to explore female radicalization into ISIS and simultaneously consider what ISIS offers to women, this thesis

`

proposes to use a microeconomic model of supply and demand. Such an approach provides an innovative way of modeling radicalization and, simultaneously, a new perspective on radicalization. First of all, it allows researchers to analyze what demand a terrorist organization is addressing, what target group they are supplying to, and where their interests intersect, producing more radicalization. Secondly, it gives visibility into the necessity and/or presence of alternative supply within the legal and social framework of domestic institutions. Next, the model allows to see the demand through the ISIS lens, as the group is interested in alluring more members and therefore supplying exactly what their target audience requires. Lastly, it provides an idea of how a shift in terrorist groups' supply and female demand influences behavioral radicalization. The model itself can be applied to all genders. However, the focus of the thesis is female ISIS members; therefore, the following theoretical framework will spotlight women only.

The inspiration for the application of this model has been drawn from the general agreement among radicalization policy initiatives. The initiatives in question include endeavors to increase surveillance of communities, establishment of programs for community cohesion, efforts to engage Muslim communities in a dialogue, development of counter narratives to the extremist propaganda, creation of role-model campaigns and personalized mentoring programs, and efforts to implement anti-discriminatory measures. These initiatives tend to agree that it is possible to prevent radicalization by targeting both the demand for radical ideas and the supply of extremist ideologies. (Lindekilde 2012) Such a demand and supply vision of extremist ideas inspired me to explore the microeconomic model of supply and demand and its application in radicalization research.

During the topic exploration, it has been found that Meierrieks and Krieger (2022) similarly utilize an economic perspective of supply and demand in discussion of individuals and extremist groups' interactions. They state that the terrorist groups are firms, and terrorist leaders are entrepreneurs who demand new members among their ranks. Potential members are the labor supply for these groups. The demand for members and the supply of them intersect at the equilibrium on the market of radicalism, where the price regulates total extremist activity. According to Meierrieks and Krieger (2022), supply and demand shift in accordance with the rational choice theory. In other words, an individual is more likely to supply extremism if the direct (material) costs of joining a terrorist group decrese, the benefit

`

of participation increases, and the opportunity costs of extremism decrease. (Meierrieks and Krieger 2022)

In addition, Tobias Ide (2024) has also recently applied terms such as supply and demand to his research of female non-combatant participation in non-state armed groups. Supply referred to women's motivations to join a rebel group. These motivations, the supply, included financial benefits within the group, protection from sexual assault, dissatisfaction with gender dynamics in a given society, female unemployment, poverty, and a strive for a political change. Demand encompassed armed groups' search for new recruits and the extent to which these groups were ready to accept women as their recruits. These demand factors, for instance, included gender inequality, rebels' governance structure, and groups' organizational strength. In this sense, Ide applied microeconomic terminology in the sense of "supply of women" and "demand for women". (Ide 2024)

Both articles, however, did not mention a microeconomic framework of supply and demand. Instead, the terms "supply" and "demand" were used in general terms, as understood by the public. This thesis is different, however. The core of the theoretical framework consists of the detailed microeconomic theory of supply and demand. Later, in the **Discussion**, the microeconomic theory is directly applied to empirical findings.

Next, both articles consider demand as a terrorist group's necessity to recruit new people. Supply, in its turn, is viewed as an individual's wish to join a terrorist group. Once these supply and demand meet, a person joins a group. Such a model primarily considers the numbers of potential joiners and the volume of "seats" a terrorist group can offer within their ranks. The unique contribution of the thesis is that the demand is equated to human motivations to join a terrorist group, while the supply is equated to a terrorist group's offering to any potential joiner. In this case, the model does not consider the volumes of participants but rather attempts to see why individuals behaviorally radicalize and how their desire for participation changes with every shift of supply. The microeconomic supply and demand model succeeds in reflecting the interests of all parties involved: both the one wishing a certain good (demand) and the one fulfilling the wish (supply). Hence, by applying such a model, it becomes possible to consider women's demand to join ISIS and ISIS's offerings to women. This way, one is able to look at the female radicalization through the lens of

`

female demand and ISIS's supply mutual dependency and interaction. By knowing what radicalization demand and supply curves represent, one might be able to assume both demand and supply curve behavior should external factors (e.g., new counterterrorism measures or ISIS territory expansion) occur to them.

Two main principles of the microeconomic model of supply and demand are a supply curve and a demand curve, which are parts of the structure where goods and services are exchanged – the market. In the classical microeconomic understanding, the upward sloping supply curve (S) represents the quantity of a certain good that a manufacturer desires to sell at a given price, considering other influencing factors constant. Reasonably, the higher the price rises, the more a producer is capable and eager to produce and, consequently, trade. The downward sloping demand curve (D) represents the amount of goods a consumer desires to purchase as the price of the good changes. Omitting other influencing factors, the lower the price, the more consumers are ready to buy. The lower the price, the more consumers, who were previously not able to afford the good, are drawn towards the purchase. Both curves can shift entirely should other variables and influencing factors occur. For example, the supply curve (S) might shift right (S`) if the cost of production goes lower (Figure 1). Such change would allow the producer to manufacture more goods and, hence, deliver a higher quantity of products or sell at a lower price. In the case of the demand curve (D), the shift (D`) might occur if the consumer income rises. (Figure 2) With such a change, a consumer is willing to pay a higher price or buy a greater quantity of product. (Pindyck and Rubinfeld 2018, 44-46)
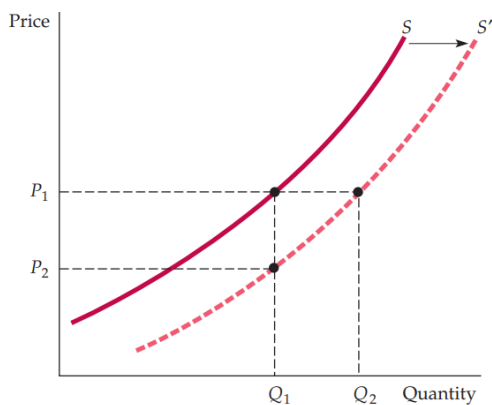
Figure 1. A supply curve (S) and shift in a supply curve (S'). Adopted from *Microeconomics, Global Edition*, by Pindyck, Rober, and Daniel Rubinfeld. (Harlow: Pearson Education, Limited, 2018), 44.

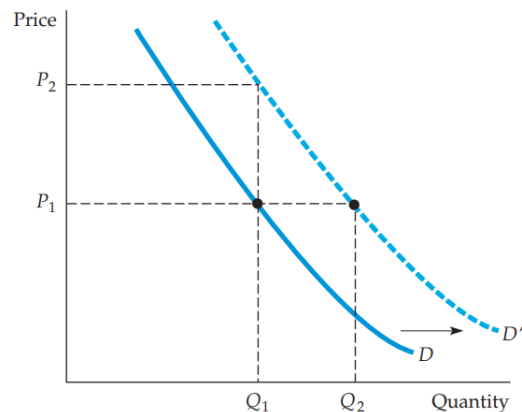
Figure 2. A demand curve (D) and shift in a demand curve (D') Adopted from *Microeconomics, Global Edition*, by Pindyck, Rober, and Daniel Rubinfeld. (Harlow: Pearson Education, Limited, 2018), 46.

A product, however, does not exist in a vacuum. It can, for instance, be influenced by the market behavior of a complementary or a substitute product. A substitute good is a good whose price increase will result in the demand increase for the other, alternative good. Pindyck and Rubinfeld (2018) provide an example of copper and aluminum: shall the price for aluminum increase, the demand for copper will increase along with it. Complementary goods function a bit differently. They tend to be used together with a given product, and hence an increase in the price of a complementary good will result in a decrease in demand for the other good. A common example to showcase complementary goods is gasoline and cars. A decrease in the gasoline price tends to lead to an increase in the quantity demanded for both gasoline and cars. Alternatively, complimentary goods' curves might shift together as a result of an external force. Demand for both skis and snowboards, for example, usually shifts with accordance to the weather and season. (Pindyck and Rubinfeld 2018, 46-47)

Demand and supply curves intersect at the point called equilibrium. It is a point where price equalizes supplied quantity to demanded quantity. Equilibrium is a place of stabilization when the price does not need to change anymore to adjust to an intersection of demand and supply. In such a case, it is said, the market clears: the supply and demand become equal. (Pindyck and Rubinfeld 2018, 47-49) Gale (1955) further explored the operation of supply and demand and concluded that, while the perfect balance is nearly impossible, the reality of the markets presupposes that the supply should be at least equal to demand for the curves

`

to intersect. A manufacturer, for example, might also be supplying a by-product, which is often inevitably produced alongside the main product. However, such overproduction would not deter the demand and supply curve from meeting equilibrium. In other words, as long as supply meets the quantity demanded, the equalibrium is possible. (Gale 1955)

1.2.2 Concepts and Terminology

To proceed with the research, several terms should be first and foremost clarified. The following terms will be conceptualized: *jihād*, jihadism, foreign (terrorist) fighters, migrants, jihadi brides, and role. To provide adequate context to female motivations and ISIS offers, a glossary of Arabic and Islamic terms will follow.

Radicalization

As it is visible above, the perspectives on radicalization vary. After careful consideration of models, theories, and definitions, I outline the following description of radicalization. Radicalization is a process of obtaining extremist ideas and/or adhering to extremist actions through ideological exposure to extremist ideas via her networks (e.g. friends, family, online acquaintances, propaganda, etc.). Such exposure plants its seeds on the fertile ground of an individual's personal grievances, certain sentiment of injustice, its personal socio-political perception of surrounding environment, and the strive, however actionable, for a change. As a result, an individual adopts an extremist identity, which leads to a person adhering to extremism, cognitively and/or behaviorally.

Jihād & Jihadism

Jihād is a concept that is used extensively in the discussion surrounding ISIS. In the minds of the public, it is also quite often equating to Islamic fundamentalism. Consequently, jihād is oftentimes cited as a proof of Islam's incompatibility with peace and civilized societal norms. (Bonner 2008, 1) In order to avoid any confusion, however, it is essential to differentiate the theological notion of jihād and the concept of jihadism that is often used interchangeably with the word "jihād".

`

Jihād (الجهاد) is often translated to mean "struggle", "striving", "effort". It revolves around religiously inspired efforts in theological, political, personal, or military domains. (Colliver, et al. 2019; Neumann 2014) Most theologists agree that *jihād* consists of an inner and external struggle. Inner *jihād*, that is, the Greater *jihād*, is a spiritual struggle against yourself. It is an attempt to be pure and be sturdier than your immediate desires and worldly temptations. Greater *Jihād* calls a person to contemplate oneself and to become a better version of oneself. The majority of Muslims see inner *jihād* in a quotidian practice of Islam. External *jihād* is a lesser struggle. It encompasses the physical struggle against the adversities. (Bonner 2008, 13-14; Colliver, et al. 2019) The precise definition of adversities is rather vague. It might mean a fight against injustice and tyranny or a fight to protect the defenseless and the powerless. It might also mean a more subtle propagation of one's Islamic beliefs and the building of a just society. (Atabik and Muhtador 2023; Colliver, et al. 2019) Lesser *jihād* is bound by Islamic ethical principles and Islamic law: it forbids unjust violence and justifies violence only when the peaceful resources are exhausted. Nonetheless, the room for (mis)interpretation of the concept of "lesser jihād" remains open. (Atabik and Muhtador 2023)

Jihadism uses the word "jihād" in terms of a religious duty to fight the oppressors (e.g., the West and non-believers) who have allegedly conspired against the Muslims and plan to suppress Islam. (Wiktorowicz 2006) Such a goal corresponds to the "lesser jihād". While the history of jihadism traces back to the ideologies of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb (Adraoui 2022), modern jihadism has its roots in the USSR occupation of Afghanistan. It inspired defensive *jihād* against the occupiers, attracted fighters from abroad, and eventually evolved into a transnational struggle against the West. (Colliver, et al. 2019)

Jihadists promote the idea of a war being waged against *ummah* and Islam. Muslim relation to the other has become a trademark of the jihadi message. Jihadists state that Muslims and the rest of the world are not in a mere disagreement but are experiencing ontological enmity. They are in a state of war, where the spiritual side of *jihād* is considered outdated. Therefore, its essence declared in peaceful times should be suspended, together with customary laws. Instead, a war against Muslims presupposes a different kind of response, an exception that includes the necessity of defensive violence. (Adraoui 2022)

`

In Jihadism, in order to defend Islam, protect Muslim lands, and free true believers, violence of any sort is justified. It is seen as the only way to combat the evil. Beside the existential battle with the "other", jihadism also follows a specific religious doctrine: Salafism. The doctrine propagates a rather narrow and highly patriarchic vision of Sunni Islam. It attempts to resurrect perfect conditions of the times when the very first generation that succeeded the Prophet Muhammad – the devout *Salaf* - walked the earth. Following this doctrine, Salafi jihadists reject man-made law and show hostility towards other religions and Islamic sects. (Neumann 2014) They also reject the notions of human reasoning and logic. Instead, Salafi jihadists adhere to Qur'ān and *Sunnah* to eliminate the possibility of erroneous human interpretation, subjectivity, and possible self-interest. (Wiktorowicz 2006)

Salafists do not recognize local Islamic practices across various cultures but rather rely on the textual meaning of the holy scriptures. They attempt to practice Islam the same way it was practiced in the early times of the religion. (Adraoui 2022; Galonnier 2022) As a result, Salafism became rather popular due to its deculturized, rationalist method of interpreting and following the religion. It especially attracted converts who tend to lack Islamic culture and upbringings and struggle to prove their legitimacy in Islamic spaces. In Salafism, a good Muslim is an individual who follows Islamic practices as they are outlined in the book, not the one who has grown up in a Muslim culture. Salafists additionally tend to elevate their converts, as their lack of Islamic culture supposedly serves as a symbolic capital and a tool to recognize "true" Islam. (Galonnier 2022) Consequently, Salafism, especially in the case of marginalized communities, helps an individual to solve their identity crisis and provide a new sacred sense of belonging. It diverts a person from any other cultural allegiances and encapsulates its members within authentic Salafi doctrines, practices, and obligations. (Kocmanová and Földes 2024)

Remarkably, Islamic knowledge and religiosity tend to be negatively associated with jihadi radicalization. In other words, upon joining a Salafi-jihadi group, extremists tend to be less religious and knowledgeable about Islam. (Vergani, et al. 2018) However, when a person joins a Salafi-jihadi group, his religiosity tends to increase. Having become a full-fledged member of a Salafi-jihadi group, a person also becomes more likely to hold on to its ideology and embrace it despite the initial reasons for participation. (Souleimanov 2018)

`

Consequently, they callously enforce the ideology, strict moral codes, and social norms within their group. (Neumann 2014)

It is also crucial to highlight that the concept of *jihād*, as used by extremist groups, has evolved over time. Initially, *jihād* was seen as a necessary mean to defend Muslims and restore *ummah*'s rights. Jihadists' enemies used to be states that either betrayed or threatened the existence of Islam. The death of the civilians, including fellow Muslims, was seen as a sacrifice for the good of the *ummah,* a sorrowful but necessary collateral damage. At the same time, fellow Muslims were viewed as coreligionists who simply needed to be convinced, to be mobilized against the enemy. They, however, were not an enemy per se. (Adraoui 2022)

The concept of the enemy has, however, demilitarized. Civilians also became the target of jihadists. The logic behind considering civilians as enemies and thus targets is that the civilians are morally united with the adversarial states. Some societies further cooperate with their states by producing anti-Islamic movements. Subsequently, the role of civilians has evolved from collateral damage to primary targets. Muslims who oppose ISIS and its vision of an Islamic state started to be viewed as enemies worth killing as well. All in all, in the eyes of ISIS, anyone who opposes its jihadi plan is an enemy. Since the enemy is ubiquitous, ISIS considers itself being in a state of permanent global war. Thus, violence against the enemies who wage this permanent war, even if they are fellow Muslims, is legitimate, justified. (Adraoui 2022)

The shift in the concept of the enemy has been solidified by ISIS's declaration of its own state, its expansionist ambition, and the amalgamation of *jihād* with *hijrah* and its mandatory nature. Now the enemy is not only those opposing Islam but also those who try to demolish the divine Caliphate and halt the holy *hijrah*. ISIS equates the denial of the Caliphate to the declaration of war. The goal of defending Islam has expanded into fulfilling a utopic Islamic plan of building a place surpassing social and state structures. Military participation in this plan would not only protect Muslims but would also bring personal fulfillment, divine rewards, serve as a measurement of Islamic belonging, and represent counterculture. (Adraoui 2022)

`

To sum up, jihadism is an evolving contemporary radical political ideology that commands the usage of violence to protect and simultaneously promote a very specific interpretation of Sunni Islam. (Neumann 2014) As aforementioned jihadists situate themselves and their adversaries in religious terms and conceptualize their goal as a religious one, they are believed to follow a religious ideology of Salafi-Jihād. (Moghaddam 2005) Given the information provided above, *jihād* that will be mentioned throughout the text will in fact symbolize "lesser jihād" when mentioning people and Salafi-Jihād ideology when mentioning ISIS.

Foreign Fighters vs. Migrants vs. Jihadi Brides

One of the main questions that this thesis begs is how ISIS women should be labeled. Are they female foreign fighters, guiltless victims, jihadi brides?

First, it is necessary to define what a term "foreign fighter" means. A foreign fighter is a person who engages in a conflict that is not a conflict of his country of origin. Foreign fighters are usually a part of an asymmetric conflict, in which at least one party to the conflict is a non-state actor. (Mendelsohn 2011) Hegghammer (2010) expands on the definition and suggests four main criteria to determine if someone is a foreign fighter. First of all, he must be someone who joined an insurgency and operates within its boundaries. The next criterium is that this person should be a non-citizen of the conflict state. Nor should he have familiar links to the warring parties. In other words, the person should not be a returning member of the diaspora or a previously exiled citizen ot rebel. The third criterium presumes that a person is not a member of any military organization. For example, he is not a soldier sent to the conflict zone. Lastly, a person is a foreign fighter if he is not paid for participating in combat. This criterium is meant to exclude mercenaries who follow monetary gains. (Hegghammer 2010)

The United Nations has passed Resolution 2178, providing a definition for foreign *terrorist* fighters. The definition states that a foreign terrorist fighter is a person "who travels to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training." In point 6 (b) and (c), Resolution 2178 (2014) also mentions that a foreign

`

terrorist fighter might be engaged in facilitation, funding of, and recruitment for "the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training". (United Nations Security Council 2014)

It is believed, however, that the term "foreign fighter" does not encompass the diversity of activities that a person can take part in within a group. It does not properly encapsulate the participation of women and minors. Instead, this demographic group is often referred to as migrants. (Cook and Vale 2018) Some scholars believe that women who traveled to ISIS-controlled territories should indeed be called migrants as they do not normally engage in combat. Plus, women who joined ISIS and moved to its territories tend to self-identify as *muhājirāt.* which signifies women's religious nature of moving to the Caliphate. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Perešin 2015, 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015). The term *muhājirāt* is plural while *muhājirah* is singular. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Perešin and Cervone 2015) Following this discussion, foreign female ISIS members will be also referred to as *muhājirāt* and migrants throughout the text.

Technically, a strict interpretation of the Islamic law dictates that women are forbidden to participate in combative activities. Currently, there is still little evidence of ISIS women participating in battle. However, in times of need, women of ISIS are not forbidden from conducting terrorist attacks, participating in suicide bombings, or even joining the combat. (Gan, et al. 2019; Moaveni 2019, 173; Perešin 2015) Times of need presuppose extreme cases of enemy attacks, a deficient number of available male fighters, and authority deprivation in Muslim territories. (Perešin 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Stempien 2021) In addition, it is known that at least some women of ISIS undergo military courses and are taught how to use weapons. It can potentially be considered as receiving terrorist training. (Perešin 2015; Strømmen 2016)

Beside military training, some women have a job of enforcing the Islamic law, and some take care of recruiting new members into ISIS. (Strømmen 2016) Women encourage other women to travel to the ISIS-controlled territories, accepting no excuse for not to travel to ISIS. They provide quite practical instructions on how to embark on the journey to ISIS, what to bring along with them, what to wear, and what to expect during the travel. Plus, some ISIS female recruiters encourage Western women to commit attacks in the West.

`

(Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) In such a case, it seems that the Resolution is connected to women of ISIS. They travel to a foreign country of which they hold no citizenship. They might plan and/or participate in terrorist acts. They also receive military training, and some evidence suggests that there are women participating in combat. Plus, many ISIS women actively engage in recruitment into ISIS. Following this logic, foreign female ISIS members will be also referred to as female foreign (terrorist) fighters through the thesis.

Another popular label of ISIS women is a "jihadi bride". This terminology is quite reductionist, as it portrays women's motivations to join ISIS in simple romantic and sexual terms. Instead of conceptualizing women of ISIS, such a term sustains a gendered belief that women are nothing, but victims and men are nothing but perpetrators. Consequently, in the eyes of the public, female ISIS members should be saved or ignored, but not researched and understood. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Leede, et al. 2017; Pearson 2015; Strømmen 2016) In such a case, female ISIS members are effectively being dehumanized. (Jackson 2021) In reality, radicalization, as it is visible above, is a multidimensional phenomenon that happens to individuals of all genders. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) Women joining ISIS are diverse. Accordingly, their motivations to travel to ISIS are correspondingly diverse. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bjørgum 2016; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Leede 2018; Milton and Dodwell 2018; Perešin 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015) Considering the derogatory nature of the term "jihadi bride" and its limited application to female motivation to join ISIS, foreign female ISIS members will not be referred to as jihadi brides. Nonetheless, the term will be utilized in a few specific contexts to support an argument.

Terms such as *muhājirāt*, migrants, female foreign (terrorist) fighters, however, do not apply to local women. Therefore, local women will be referred to simply as (local) ISIS women, (local) female ISIS members, or women of ISIS. Foreign female ISIS members will be referred to as *muhājirāt*, migrants, female foreign (terrorist) fighters, (foreign) ISIS women, (foreign) female ISIS members, or women of ISIS.

`

A part of the thesis will discuss the roles that women are expected to hold within ISIS, hence, the definition of a *role* is necessary. Role is defined as allocated or obligatory actions, encompassing domestic, state-building, and other operational activities. An individual might simultaneously hold several roles, and those roles can change over time. (Spencer 2016)

Glossary of Islamic & Arabic Terms

Both women of ISIS and ISIS propaganda tend to utilize specific Islamic and/or Arabic terms. These terms are crucial for understanding the speech context of ISIS-affiliated content and research. To fully encompass the meaning behind female motivations to join ISIS, Islamic and Arabic terms and words will be similarly utilized throughout the text. To clarify Islamic and Arabic terminology, I created a glossary of the terms used in the thesis. The terms that can be found in the glossary below will be written throughout the text in *Italics*.

Latin alphabet does not reflect the structural characteristics of the Arabic language. At the same time, there is no universally utilized transliteration principle for an Arabic text. As a result, it is quite complicated to read Arabic in Latin script and be sure that its interpretation is correct. (Vavichkina, Vlasova and Paymakova 2021) In order to consistently transliterate Arabic words and terms, the Arabic Transliteration Alphabet published by the United Nations Statistics Division will be utilized. (United Nations Statistics Division 2017) For example, thesis will mention one of the ISIS's female moral police units - لواء الخنساء. In accordance with the document, it will be translated to and transliterated as Al-Khansā' Brigade. Such unified transliteration enables consistent representation of the terminology in a foreign language, avoids the occurrence of homographs, and maintains an accurate meaning of the terminology throughout the text.

TABLE 1. Glossary of Islamic & Arabic Terms (Table by Anastasia Latenkova)

Term	Arabic spelling	Translation & Meaning	Citations
Ahl al-Kitāb	أهل الكتاب	"People of the Book". Followers of the religions	*Oxford Reference,* s.v. "Ahl al-Kitab." Accessed

		guided by previous godly revelations; holders of the divine books, e.g., the Gospel and the Torah. In Islam, People of the Book are granted special rights. They are to be respected and, if necessity arises, protected.	February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095357939.
Ajr	أجر	"Compensation". Spiritual reward from God for a good deed or action.	Al-Khansā'Brigade, and Charlie Winter. 2015. *Women of the Islamic State: A manifesto on women by the Al*-Khanssaa Brigade. Translation and analysis, London: Quilliam. Accessed February 14, 2023.
'Aqīdah	عقِيدة	"Creed". Something a person wholeheartedly believes in with certainty within their souls. Such a belief is not corrupted by doubt or indecision. Islamic creed, a statement of faith.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Aqidah." February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095420609.
Dār al-Ḥarab	دار الحرب	"Abode of war". The term is a part of Islamic political ideology and the idea of the world's divisions.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Dar al-Harb." Accessed February 14, 2024.

		Non-Islamic regions where true God is opposed. Rulers of these regions are called upon to accept Islam.	https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095700308.
Dār al-Islām	دار الإسلام	"Home of Islam". The term is a part of Islamic political ideology and the idea of the world's divisions. Islamic regions of the world.	Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Dār al-Islam." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 29, 2011. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dar-al-Islam.
Dīn	دين	"Religion", "custom". Islamic way of living.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Din". Accessed February 14, 2024, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110810104746857.
Fardh al-'aīn	فرض العين	"Individual duty". Individual religious obligation that each Muslim has to perform, e.g., prayer or pilgrimage.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Fard al-Ayn." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095810492.

Fatwá	فتوى	"Verdict". An official ruling, a formal interpretation or opinion of Islamic law. It is issued by a qualified Islamic legal jurist.	Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "fatwa." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed February 14, 2024 https://www.britannica.com/topic/fatwa.
Fiṭrah	فطره	"Original disposition", and "'innate nature". In other words, the term refers to inherent qualities of human nature.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Fitrah." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095821426.
Ḥadīth	حديث	"'Talk", "discourse". Both sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims consider it a key foundation of Islamic law and moral guidance.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Hadith." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095914816.
H̱ijāb	حجاب	"Veil", "screening". Mandatory dress for the Muslim women.	*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Hijab." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hijab.
(the) Hijrah	الهجرة	"Migration". 1) Prophet Muhammad's and his	Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia.

			companions' migration from Mecca to Medinah to escape persecution; 2) Abandoning a place in search of a sanctuary free of persecution; a sanctuary where one can practice their religion freely.	"Hijrah." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed February 14, 2024 https://www.britannica.com/event/Hijrah-Islam.
Ḥisbah	حسبة		"Accountability". Depending on the Islamic school, the term refers to either individual or collective duty to enforce Islamic law. It presupposes the perpetuation of Islamic communal moral codes and order.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Hisbah." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095938397.
Ḥudūd	حدود		"Limits", "borders ". Punishments mandated by the Islamic law.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Hudud." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095948870.
Imām	إمام		"Leader". In general sense, the term refers to an Islamic leadership position; the person who leads a prayer.	*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Imam." Accessed February 14, 2024. "Imam." https://www.merriam-

			webster.com/dictionary/ imam.
Istishhād	إستشهاد	"Martyrdom"	*Reverso Context*, s.v. " إستشهاد," trans. Reverso Context, accessed February 14, 2024, https://dictionary.revers o.net/arabic-english/%D8%A5%D8 %B3%D8%AA%D8% B4%D9%87%D8%A7 %D8%AF.
Jāhilīyah	جاهليه	"Ignorance". The term is oftentimes used to describe the times of ignorance and disbelief before the Qur'ān was revealed.	Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "jāhiliyyah." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 14, 2020. https://www.britannica. com/topic/jahiliyah.
Jannah	جنه	"Garden", "paradise". Heaven.	*Reverso Context*, s.v. " جنه," trans. Reverso Context, accessed February 14, 2024, https://dictionary.revers o.net/arabic-english/%D8%AC%D9 %86%D9%87.
Jihād	جهاد	"Striving", "struggling"	*Please refer to the **Theoretical and**

`

			Conceptual Framework for more information on the term and its citations.
Kāfir (kuffār)	كافر (كفار)	"Infidel" ("infidels")	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Kafir." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100028304.
Kunya	كنية	"The one being called". A teknonym, is the name of a parent derived from their oldest child's name.	Saltman, Erin Marie, and Melanie Smith. 2015. *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part' Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon.* London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf.
Maḥram	محرم	"Prohibited". A male member of a woman's family whom this woman cannot marry due to the proximity of their relationship, e.g., brothers,	Islam Question & Answer. "Who Is a Woman's Mahram? - Islam Question & Answer." Accessed February 14, 2024.

46

		father. Such a man usually serves as a woman's guardian who, depending on the circumstances, might accompany a woman outside of the house. A woman does not have to wear a *hijāb* in front of *maḫram*.	https://islamqa.info/en/answers/5538/who-is-a-womans-mahram.
Mākmūm	مأموم	In religious terms, it means congregation, those who pray behind the imām. In general terms, a follower.	Nuraniyah, Nava. 2018. "Not Just Brainwashed: Understanding the Radicalization of Indonesian Female Supporters of the Islamic State." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 890-910. doi:10.1080/09546553.2018.1481269.
Maqqar	مقر	"Location for placement". In the context of the thesis, the term refers to the hostel/guesthouse for single and widowed women of ISIS.	Perešin, Anita, and Alberto Cervone. 2015. "The Western Muhajirat of ISIS." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 495-509. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1025611.
Muhājirah (muhājirāt)	مـهـاجرة (مهاجرات)	"Female migrant" ("female migrants")	*Please refer to the **Theoretical and**

			Conceptual **Framework** for more information on the term and its citations.
Mujāhidāt	مجاهدات	A broad term for female strugglers, for women engaging in jihad.	Stempien, Marta Sara. 2021. "The Role of Women and Girls in the Eyes of Islamic State: A Content Analysis of Dabiq and Rumiyah Magazines." *Journal of Human Security* 46–56. doi:10.12924/johs2021. 17010046.
Niqāb	نقاب	"Veil". Female clothing covering the whole face except for the eyes.	*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Niqab." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ niqab.
Qitāl	قتال	"Fighting". Unlike jihād, the term specifically refers to fighting using weaponry. It is so-called *jihād* by sword.	European Commission. *Periodic Reporting for period 1 – DerRadIslam. Qur'an and Qital. The violence against the Other in a historical critical deradicalizing perspective.* Accessed February 14, 2024.

			https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/746451/reporting.
S̲abr	صبر	"Persistence". It is one of the parts of the faith encompassing spiritual patience and endurance.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Sabr." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100435581.
Salaf	سلف	"Predecessors". The term includes the first three generations of Muslims: the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, their followers, and then also the followers of the followers.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Salaf." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100437552.
Sharīʿah	شريعة	"Path leading to the watering place", "path to truthful guidance and salvation". A body of divinely ordained Islamic law. Often referred to simply as Islamic Law.	Coulson, N. James and Shamsy, Ahmed El. "sharia." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/sharia.
Shirk	شرك	"Association". Idolatry and polytheism.	*Oxford Reference*, s.v. "Shirk." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.10

			93/oi/authority.2011080 3100502503.
Sunnah	سنة	"Practice", "way". Traditions, teachings, activities of the Prophet Muhammed, his Companions, and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Generally considered as a behavioral standard, a moral compass for Muslims to follow.	Afsaruddin, Asma. "Sunnah | Definition & Significance in Islam." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998. https://www.britannica. com/topic/Sunnah.
Sūq	سوق	"Market"	*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Suq." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ suq.
Ūkhtī (akhwātī)	أوختي (أخواتي)	"My sister" ("My sisters")	*Reverso Context*, s.v. "أخواتي," trans. Reverso Context, accessed February 14, 2024 https://dictionary.revers o.net/arabic-english/%D8%A3%D8 %AE%D9%88%D8%A 7%D8%AA%D9%8A.

				Reverso Context, s.v. "أوختي," trans. Reverso Context, accessed February 14, 2024 https://dictionary.reverso.net/arabic-english/%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%AE%D8%AA%D9%8A.
Ummah	أمه		"Nation". Refers to the collective nation of Muslims.	Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia."Ummah | Islam." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/ummah.
Zakāt (zakāh)	زكاة		"That which purifies". One of the pillars of Islam. Religious obligation of almsgiving, applied to all Muslims who are able to help the ones in need.	Liberto, Daniel. "Zakat: The Basic Rules for One of the Five Pillars of Islam." In *Investopedia*. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/z/zakat.asp#:~:text=Zakat%20is%20a%20religious%20obligation,families%20with%20their%20essential%20needs.

`

2. Methodology

To conduct the research, a qualitative methodological approach will be applied. Since this thesis attempts to comprehend and discover female motivation to join ISIS, the interpretivist tradition will be followed.-The main body of the thesis will be devoted to the meta-analysis of existing secondary data on the topic of voluntary women's participation in ISIS. Meta-analysis will incorporate literature published between 2015 and 2024. In addition, this thesis will examine potential participation reasons through the lens of ISIS's supply, that is, their offerings to women and subsequent female roles within ISIS. There are three main objectives. The first one is to discover what ISIS offers to their female members, and what roles they are expected to assume within the group. The second objective is to summarize and outline the existing literature on female motivations to join ISIS. Based on the analysis of the two previous objectives and subsequent theoretical application, the last objective is to evaluate the interconnection between female motivation (demand) and ISIS's offerings (supply).

To fulfill these objectives, the research attempts to collect present secondary sources about the topic within the framework of one thesis. All gathered data will be thoroughly analyzed; the aforementioned theoretical framework of supply and demand will be applied to it. Collected data focuses on female ISIS members who joined ISIS voluntarily and/or chose to participate in ISIS structures of power (e.g., *Al-Khansā'* Brigade). Such a distinction excludes slaves and female captives of ISIS, as, by definition, they were taken into ISIS against their will and could not express demand for joining ISIS. Women will be subclassified into Locals and Foreigners. The category "Local women" will include women from the territories where ISIS proclaimed its Caliphate, that is, Iraq and Syria. "Foreign women" will include women from the rest of the countries. As some female motivations tend to be true both for Locals and Foreigners, a subpart "Local and Foreign women" will also be utilized in some instances.

Such classification is necessary in order to avoid generalization of female experiences. The fact that women have adhered to a group with the same extremist ideology does not mean that their radicalization occurred for the same reasons. The context in which women lived is important. For instance, foreign women chose to travel to ISIS territories from distinct

`

backgrounds. Western women in particular have radicalized in a comparatively peaceful context of Western societies. Foreign women also eventually had a choice of relocating to ISIS-occupied zones. Local women, however, either lived on or in close proximity to the territories that ISIS occupied. They might also have experienced a different level of scrutiny and recruitment tactics from ISIS, given women's proximity to the group. Local women also lived in the context of war-torn countries, conflict, and violence, which they directly experienced. Their context of direct violence is different from the more peaceful context of foreign women. (Morrison 2022; Vergani, et al. 2018)

At the same time, some women might share common motivations, despite their country of origin. Such commonalities are reflected in "Local and Foreign women" subpart. Initial Research Proposal planned further classification into local-Muslim, foreign-Muslim, local-convert [for ISIS], and foreign-convert [for ISIS] categories. However, collected data suggested that such classification is not reliable, is more diverse than just a Muslim-non-Muslim distinction, and is not available for most of the women. Beside women's backgrounds, female motivations to join ISIS will also be divided into groups. They will be categorized into five main topics: Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement. The reason for such classification will be described in detail in Data Analysis.

Secondary data for this research is based on the available academic resources, which, in their turn, use primary and/or secondary data. For instance, the thesis extensively utilizes research conducted by Anne Speckhard and Anita Perešin (examples will be provided below). Overall, the academic resources are primarily peer-reviewed academic articles, for example from such journals as *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* and *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and books. Examples of mentioned authors, journals, and types of resources from the reference list are provided below:

Jackson, Leonie B. 2021. "Framing British 'Jihadi Brides': Metaphor and the Social Construction of I.S. Women." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1733-1751. doi:10.1080/09546553.2019.1656613.

Moaveni, Azadeh. 2019. *Guest House for Young Widows: Among the Women of ISIS.* London: Scribe Publications.

`

Nuraniyah, Nava. 2018. "Not Just Brainwashed: Understanding the Radicalization of Indonesian Female Supporters of the Islamic State." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 890-910. doi:10.1080/09546553.2018.1481269.

Perešin, Anita, and Alberto Cervone. 2015. "The Western Muhajirat of ISIS." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 495-509. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1025611.

Speckhard, Anne, and Molly Ellenberg. 2020. "ISIS in Their Own Words: Recruitment History, Motivations for Joining, Travel, Experiences in ISIS, and Disillusionment over Time – Analysis of 220 In-depth Interviews of ISIS Returnees, Defectors and Prisoners." *Journal of Strategic Security* 82-127. doi:https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.13.1.1791.

2.1 Note on Used Terminology

The discussed terrorist group will be referred to as "ISIS". This acronym is generally the most recognizable name for the organization. It is also most frequently used by the United Nations and individual governments, with certain exclusions. (Strømmen 2016) The phrase "Islamic State" will not be utilized at all. While ISIS captured vast territories and managed to function in a state-like manner, it is not internationally and legally recognized as a state. In order to avoid granting a degree of legitimacy to a terrorist group by constantly emphasizing the "State" part of the name, the term "Islamic State" will be omitted. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015)

2.2 Data Collection

The empirical part of the thesis is document-based. Currently available academic sources such as books, peer-reviewed scientific articles, conference reports, and reports produced by (counter-)terrorism and (de-)radicalization studies centers have been utilized in order to write this work. Such databases as JSTOR, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, and ProQuest were used, among others. Such data collection aimed to ensure that non-academic data, primarily in the form of media reports and personal standpoints, were evaded in the thesis. The main challenge with such data collection has been the limited availability of topic-related publications due to both the relative novelty and security nature of the discussion on women who joined ISIS. Plus, given the gendered focus of the thesis,

`

acquired data might contain nuanced gender biases. Further limitations of the data collection will be thoroughly discussed later.

Through a careful examination of collected resources, a sample of female ISIS participants has been identified. The collected sample will be displayed and discussed in the **Empirical Findings**. Thesis will provide individual examples of some of the ISIS women throughout the text. It is questionable whether one should utilize the names of extremists and thus give them sought-after agency in the actions the mainstream society deems immoral. (Langman 2018) Nonetheless, most of the examples of female ISIS members' motivations will be cited together with a woman's name. The primary reason is that most of the cited women's names are in fact their *kunyas* and thus do not reveal the real name of a person. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Other reasons are that, according to the thesis' author, usage of names protects the text from excessive repetitiveness and gifts its examples with more credibility. Moreover, it allows to track stories of some of these women throughout the text. As a result, it becomes visible how multifaceted female motivations are.

2.3 Data Analysis

Since the thesis employs secondary resources as its empirical core, the analysis is focused on the manifest meaning of gathered data. In other words, to excerpt information on female ISIS members, I attempted to investigate what is overtly stated in the collected sources. In order to further analyze the gathered data, inductive qualitative thematic analysis was applied. Thematic analysis represents a method of identifying themes that appear crucial for the description and explanation of the phenomenon. It further helps in defining and encoding patterns in information and organizing identified themes and possible observations. (Swain 2018) Consequently, the analysis has been completed through a thorough investigation of collected information and subsequent identification of patterns or recurrent narratives in female motivations to join ISIS and ISIS offers to women.

To lessen the generalization of ISIS female participants, consider the context, and track potential differences in their motivations, collected data will be analyzed within the framework of the following categories: "Local women", "Foreign women", and "Local and

`

Foreign women". There are also women whose origins might be unknown or obscured (Spencer 2016), hence, any misplacement errors are purely accidental.

In order to organize female motivations, they will be categorized into five main themes: Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement. These themes have been inductively identified during the data collection and source analysis. At first, I commenced searching for patterns and meanings in the found sources and highlighting the information I deemed necessary. Once I got familiarized with the data, I began re-acquainting myself with the sources by re-reading previously highlighted points within sources. Upon the revision, I started noticing patterns within the data and began coding those data into the Excel file. In the beginning of data collection and analysis, in accordance with both research objectives and research questions, I prepared an aforementioned Excel file. The Excel file contained four sheets such as "Female Motivations", "What ISIS offers", "Main Sources", and "Supplementary sources". Later, one more sheet - "Female Motivation Themes" – has been added.

The first sheet, "Female Motivation", consisted of four columns: "Motivation", "Comments", "Source uses Primary Data", "Source uses Secondary Data". The column "Motivation" contained identified subthemes of female reasons to join ISIS. The column "Comments" contained summary and, simultaneously, detailed explanation of each subtheme, as mentioned in each used source. "Source uses Primary Data" and "Source uses Secondary Data" contained numbers, as the author of the thesis enumerated each utilized source, using numbers for "Main Sources" and letters for "Supplementary Sources". I decided to divide sources into "Source uses Primary Data" and "Source uses Secondary Data" columns to observe whether there are any differences in the way sources based on primary data and sources based on secondary data represent the motivations of women of ISIS. The observation can be found in **Discussion**. If a source contained both primary and secondary data, I identified whether a particular statement had been drawn from the primary data or secondary data and accordingly allocated the information in the spreadsheet. If a statement had been drawn from both types of sources, it was counted in "Source uses Primary Data". In order to ensure clarity of the aforementioned explanation of the data analysis, an excerpt from the discussed Excel sheet "Female Motivation" is provided below:

	A	B	C	D
1	**Motivation**	**Comments**	**Source uses Primary Data**	**Source uses Secondary Data**
2	Islamophobia. Feeling of isolation, inequality and oppression of Muslims	1) war against Muslims by non-believers; 2) images of injured/killed children; 3) binary representation of the world; 4) veiling bans in Europe; 5) [Westerners] making fun of Islamic clothing; 6) social and cultural isolation in the West	1, 5, 9, 10, 16, 27, 29, 32, 34	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 18, 21, 22, 26, 31, 33
3	The West's role in the ME conflicts. Western foreign policy	1) empathy with Muslim victims of ME conflicts; 2) bombing raids in the ME intensify hatred towards the West; 3) lack of international action to help the persecuted (Bosnian genocide, Syrians, Palestine. French intervention in Mali); 4) second-hand exposure to traumatic events; 5) Western counterterrorism strategies targetting specific minorities	1, 10, 14, 27	4, 6, 7, 11, 18, 25, 26, 33
4	Building the Caliphate	1) new vision of society and ideologically pure state that abide by the law of Allah; 2) bringing honor to Ummah; 3) honorable life under Shariah; 4) Islamic utopia; 5) practical contribution as mothers/nurses/teachers; 6) safe place where hijab does not alienate them or make a target of racism; 6) place where they are not objectified by men and are treated with honor; 7) being a part of the movement that will change the world; 8) the Caliphate has its own land; 9) Caliphate is spiritual and divine compared to the West	1, 9, 10, 16, 27, 29, 32, 34	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, 22, 26, 33

Figure 3. A sample of the coding process for "Female Motivation" (Figure by Anastasia Latenkova)

Altogether, twenty-eight subthemes have been identified. These subthemes will be demonstrated later, in the discussion of overarching themes in the Data Analysis and descriptions of female motivations in **Empirical Findings**.

As it was mentioned, the Excel file also contained separate sheets with "Main Sources" and "Supplementary sources" for tracking purposes and proper enumeration of the sources. "Supplementary sources" included sources that were not directly related to the research questions and writing of the **Empirical Findings**, but rather aided the author in writing other parts of the thesis, such as, for instance, **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**. The sheet "Supplementary sources" simply stated the information necessary for the proper citation of the works.

In case of the "Main Sources" sheet, however, additional columns were added. "Main Sources" contained works that were directly related to the research questions; hence, additional columns were necessary. For example, the sheet contained the column "Type of Data" to identify whether the source used primary data, secondary data, or both. It also included the "Methodology" of the research conducted by the authors. It ensured that the author could always double-check and assess how the utilized research had been conducted in the first place. "Comments" expanded on "Methodology", highlighting points that might prove to be interesting in the analysis and discussion. Next, a column called "Women" has been added. This column stated whether the source has discussed local women, foreign women, or both. The rest of the columns referred to the information necessary for citation of the works. In order to showcase the aforementioned sheet, an excerpt is provided below:

`

#	Type of Source	Type of Data	Methodology	< - Comments	Women	Year	Name	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4	Other Authors	Published by/in
1	Report	Primary	Analysis of social media accounts of Western ISIS women; "snowball" technique to find more ISIS women; photographs; online interaction with other ISIS accounts; media reports	Analysis is focused on the women's self-identified reasons for migrating.	Foreigners	2015	Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS	Carolyn Hoyle	Alexandra Bradford	Ross Frenett			Institute for Strategic Dialogue
2	Journal Article	Secondary	Qualitative analysis of existing literature		Foreigners	2016	Jihadi Brides: Why do Western Muslim Girls Join ISIS?	Maren Hald Bjørgum					Global Politics Review
3	Journal Article	Secondary	Push and pull factors are categorized into macro-, meso-, and micro levels.		Foreigners	2018	Western Women Supporting IS/Daesh in Syria and Iraq – An Exploration of their Motivations	Seran de Leede					International Annals of Criminology
4	Journal Article	Secondary	Qualitative analysis of existing literature		Foreigners	2015	The Western Muhajirat of ISIS	Anita Peresin	Alberto Cervone				Studies in Conflict & Terrorism
5	Journal Article	Primary	Case study of 25 women who joined ISIS; in 2015-2017 the author conducted a virtual etnography by being part of pro-ISIS Telegram chats	Half of them are migrant workers in HK, SG, TW. The rest are based in Indonesia.	Foreigners	2018	Not Just Brainwashed: Understanding the Radicalization of Indonesian Female Supporters of the Islamic State	Nava Nuraniyah					Terrorism and Political Violence

Figure 4. A sample of the coding process for "Main Sources" (Figure by Anastasia Latenkova)

The sheet "What ISIS offers" followed the same logic as the sheet "Female Motivations". The difference is that it naturally focused on ISIS's offerings to its female participants instead of women's motivations to join ISIS. In total, twenty-one offerings have been identified. Collected data showed that ISIS's offerings were rather straightforward and combined simple material and spiritual properties. Those offerings will be discussed in the **Empirical Findings** and summarized in **Discussion**.

On the other hand, once I familiarized myself with the data on female motivations and identified all the subthemes within those data, I concluded that the sheet "Female Motivations" contained a rather unmanageable amount of data. Those data were quite intertwined in meanings and leitmotifs. Collected data on female motivations begged more structure. Accordingly, I proceeded with identifying the main themes in female motivations. All the female motivations from the column "Motivation" have been transferred into a separate sheet called "Female Motivation Themes".

I attempted to find commonalities among twenty-eight subthemes and subsequently categorized those subthemes into five main themes: Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement. The naming of the themes did not follow any existing theory or research but were rather created by the author of the thesis, based on the meanings I identified within the female motives to join ISIS. Such an approach might entail a degree of subjectivity. However, I attempted to address it with a transparent description of data analysis in **Methodology** and a detailed presentation of the research discoveries in **Empirical Findings**.

These themes should not be regarded as independent categories. Instead, they are interconnected. Some subthemes within different themes would resemble each other, given a wide spectrum of human emotions and motivations. Nonetheless, I considered what each subtheme is rooted in, and classified each subtheme accordingly. All the data on female motivations and subthemes are presented in the table below:

TABLE 2. Identified themes in data on female motivations (Table by Anastasia Latenkova)

Theme	Description	Subthemes (Motivations)
Survival	Motivations that are rooted in fear, anxiety, defenseless, victimization, vulnerability, despair, and hope for alternatives. Theme "Survival": 1. Encompasses fears around women's security and feeling of safety, on international, local, and personal levels. 2. Includes physical, mental, and spiritual security. 3. Embraces the desire to contribute to the creation of a safe living space and divine utopian land, where being a Muslim woman is not dangerous. 4. Incorporates women's belief that the only correct way of responding to the threatening world is joining a just society of ISIS members.	1. Reaction to the West's role in the Middle Eastern conflicts and Western foreign policy towards Muslims and/or Muslim countries. Subsequent feeling that *ummah* is under attack. 2. Desire to build the divine Caliphate, where Islamic justice ensures security. 3. Experience of domestic Islamophobia, subsequent feeling of isolation, inequality, and oppression of Muslims. 4. Need of alternative job opportunities, work migration. 5. Seeking physical security in the light of international, local, and/or individual circumstances.

		6. Presence of weak domestic institutions.
Affinity	Motivations that are rooted in empathy, compassion, and personal belief systems. Theme "Affinity": 1. Includes women's connection, spiritual or otherwise, to other people, their ideas, and a global cause. 2. Embraces a desire to escape perceived isolation and to belong elsewhere. 3. Incorporates the need to be among like-minded people.	7. Joining jihadi husbands and/or family due to familial ties; peer influence. 8. Search for camaraderie, sisterhood, and meaningful belonging in a community of like-minded individuals. 9. Belief in ISIS ideology, as it is preached by ISIS.
Personal Development	Motivations that are rooted in individual fulfillment, self-challenge, discovering oneself, personal evolution, and the desire to be respected. Theme "Personal Development": 1. Revolves around one's identity. 2. Orbits around the topics of one's purpose and significance.	10. Search for life's meaning and purpose. 11. Search for personal identity. 12. Exploration of ISIS ideology triggered by personal religious beliefs. 13. Experience of personal crisis; search for an opportunity to start a new (and independent) life. 14. Desire for emancipation and female Muslim empowerment.

	3. Touches an existential question of the meaning of life. 4. Includes search for the resolution of women's personal crises and their sins redemption. 5. Contains a pursuit of an opportunity to start a new independent life and gain societal respect. 6. Includes rebirth of a person through Islamic emancipation and female empowerment, a renaissance of a new persona through the desire to participate in a humanitarian mission.	15. Participation in a humanitarian mission. 16. Strive for redemption of sins. 17. Disappointment with mainstream Islamic groups. 18. Yearning for societal respect.
Duty	Motivations that are rooted in responsibility, pride, commitment, fulfillment of obligations, and compliance. Theme "Duty": 1. Incorporates external and internal commitments that women feel obliged to fulfill. 2. Embraces female compliance with religious scripture.	19. ISIS declaration of Caliphate. 20. Fulfillment of mandatory religious duty. 21. Fulfillment of religious and societal duty of pious marriage, necessity to marry in accordance with religious scripts. 22. Feeling of the absolute necessity of revenge.

`

Excitement	Motivations that are rooted in enthusiasm, curiosity, anticipation, thrill, and the intrigue of the unknown. Theme "Excitement": 1. Includes aspirations for adventure, romance, and new hyped emotions of enthusiasm. 2. Embraces women's desire to inflict violence and strive to obtain similar fame as the ISIS women before them. 3. Encompasses certain romanticization of the conflict and female response to the over-demonization of ISIS.	23. Seeking marriage for the sake of a romantic experience and material benefits. 24. Longing for adventure. 25. Desire to inflict violence. 26. External parties' over-demonization of ISIS and subsequent research into the group. 27. Romanticization of the conflict. 28. Drawing inspiration from other ISIS women and subsequently becoming a copycat.

While the table provides the summary and description of each theme, it is crucial to highlight that all the overarching themes above will be discussed in greater detail in the **Empirical Findings**.

2.4 Limitations

It is crucial to highlight limitations of this thesis. First of all, research into female ISIS members has been rather limited compared to their male counterparts (Perešin 2015). It might be explained by security reasons (e.g., often classified nature of recent terrorism-related information), social dynamics (e.g., limited access to female members of a highly patriarchal society), and the common misperception of Muslim and/or ISIS women being voiceless followers, victims. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) Plus, to guard their personal security, some women might feel rather resilient towards sharing data with media outlets or

`

researchers; their relatives might be similarly hesitant. (Bakker and de Leede 2015) Anyone who was in close proximity to this subject of research tends to feel rather wary, understandably so. Women of ISIS, their relatives, and friends often felt frightened, as some of them were under the scrutiny of security services and/or did not want to call societal attention to themselves. Consequently, there were individuals who would meet with researchers but then get scared and/or disappear, thus leaving data collection incomplete. (Moaveni 2019, 333) Furthermore, some women who had agreed to being interviewed in the sources I utilize were in detention at the time of research. Consequently, they might not have been feeling safe enough to disclose all the information, as it could put them in a vulnerable position, at a possible threat of abuse. (Moaveni 2019, 335)

In some cases, women felt disillusioned by the researchers who had come in the past and, as women noted, asked the wrong questions, framed in a way that already implied the answer. Consequently, they were rather discouraged to talk to other researchers. (Moaveni 2019, 270) Some women were rather skeptical to talk to someone who did not share their beliefs. (Navest, Koning and Moors 2016) All in all, participants of ongoing conflicts are complex subjects to research. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Plus, motivations can also change over time. Someone who was strongly motivated by one set of reasons might change her vision based on new experiences and therefore forget or omit the initial reasons to join, having adopted new motives upon arrival at ISIS. (Perešin 2015)

Additionally, there is a lack of both neutral data on the reality of living in ISIS and trustworthy socio-demographic profiles of female ISIS participants. (Perešin 2015) Plus, as researchers faced the obstacle of obtaining access to female ISIS members, they sometimes needed to rely on ISIS women's social media. Consequently, some scholars whose work will be utilized in this thesis, collected data through analyzing social media accounts of ISIS women. (Navest, Koning and Moors 2016) Social media might be deceiving, however, as women's portrayal of life in ISIS might be disturbed by her security concerns. Women might feel threatened to voice certain information about ISIS online, as it might endanger their personal safety. In such a case, it is complicated to evaluate the validity of their accounts. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Plus, such social media accounts oftentimes served as ISIS propaganda. (Saltman and Smith 2015) As a result, available data cannot reflect the full spectrum of female perceptions of ISIS or their motivation to support the group.

`

Secondly, I had to rely upon the secondary source data, as it is quite difficult, especially given the scope and resources of the master's thesis, to gather a representative sample of a clandestine populace. (Spencer 2016) As a result, this thesis relies upon secondary data that has been collected and *perceived* by other people. Hence some nuances of the original data could have been completely lost to me. Moreover, collected information was published in English. Articles published in English tend to focus on Western ISIS members, which lowers the sample's diversity. (Vergani, et al. 2018) To diversify the data, I have also attempted to search for information in Russian and Spanish, but eventually have not found relevant research. Lastly, due to the language barrier, this thesis might have potentially lost crucial sources in other languages and, most prominently, data in Arabic.

Next, the research is based on women's self-identified motivations. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) When one talks about human motivation, one must heavily rely on another person's words as a source of truth. One cannot guarantee that all women whose data has been used in this research felt confident in sharing everything they genuinely thought or experienced. They might have been limited by their environment, circumstances, or societal rules of modesty. Talking to women of ISIS provided data at the discourse level. In other words, the researchers needed to rely on what women had said rather than observing what they had actually done. In some cases, primary data was collected via online conversations with women, which meant that the researchers could not observe women's facial expressions or their tone of voice, which could have influenced the data. Plus, the setting of the online conversation might have pushed women to summarize rather than provide details. (Navest, Koning and Moors 2016) Thus, it is necessary to take available information with a degree of doubt, since, while revealing quite a lot, existing data might not reflect the full spectrum of one's mind or decision-making.

Lastly, as it will be visible throughout the thesis, empirical data on local women and their individual radicalization pathways is extremely limited. Instead, literature is primarily Western-based. Overall, Western women are overrepresented in the research compared to other female ISIS participants (Spencer 2016), even though the highest proportion of ISIS women are from Eastern Asia and Eastern Europe. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019) In some countries, the data were nearly impossible to find, especially in the MENA region. Countries in the MENA region could not provide data on

`

the women who left for ISIS, mostly because the countries could not identify if women joined ISIS or other terrorist groups. (Cook and Vale 2018; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Perešin 2018) Therefore, while the thesis attempts to provide as many female voices as possible, it cannot encompass the motivations of the majority of women of ISIS. None of the limitations listed above attempts to, in any way, discredit the data used in the thesis. These limitations serve to caution the reader and potentially highlight contemporary gaps in research on women of ISIS.

`

3. Empirical Findings

To evaluate why women join ISIS voluntarily, to discover the reasons behind women's *demand* for ISIS, it is necessary to assess what ISIS offers them and, subsequently, what role the group foresees for its female participants. In order to be attractive for the perspective members, a terrorist organization should have some allure. (Orsini 2020) An eloquent ideological message aiming at a specific target group – women, in this case – might pull women into joining the terrorist organization. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) Hence, ISIS's *supply* for female motivation should be analyzed.

3.1 Supply

One of the most prominent documents that explicitly states the role that women should play within ISIS and the benefits they would receive from participation is "Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto on Women". (Bjørgum 2016) The text is not an officially published policy of ISIS, but rather a document produced by devoted members of *Al-Khansā'* Brigade – the all-female moral police of ISIS. The document is, however, the most thorough ISIS-produced source on its women's role in the organization. (Gan, et al. 2019; Jacoby 2015; Loken and Zelenz 2017) The original document was published in Arabic, as it meant to target Arabic-speaking women. Later, it was translated to English by a former counterterrorism think-tank, Quilliam Foundation. (Perešin 2015) The translated version of the document will be cited here below, aided by the accounts of academic resources.

Throughout the text, the Manifesto clearly places its chief emphasis on a sedentary lifestyle as a woman divine right outlined by Islamic law. It further highlights that, naturally, womanhood is manifested in stability, stillness, while manhood equals movement and dynamic motion. Should the roles mix, the document warns, and the world, the whole of humanity would be thrown into a state of chaos, disarray, and instability. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015)

Proliferating such a vision of women, the Manifesto naturally approaches the question of family dynamics. The document clearly states that a woman's purpose of existence, her

`

supreme role and responsibility are to be a pious wife to her husband and a good mother to her children. To add an authoritative touch and, thus, support such a statement, the Manifesto cites a religious belief that Eve was created from Adam and for Adam. In other words, it is an explicit godly desire for a woman to be a home-bound spouse to her man. At the same time, the document hurries to point out that, in the light of God's will for gendered divisions, Islam also ensures a harmonious equilibrium between a husband and a wife. A man is set for dominance, he is a leader; a woman is the implementor whose job is to obey the leadership and execute the leader's requests. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) The tale of Adam and Eve is not the only narrative ISIS uses. Overall, it regularly emphasizes various holy scriptures that outline that a woman's principal purpose is motherhood and taking care of her family. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017) In fact, some female ISIS followers uphold such a belief and exhibit the same narrative, calling for women to remember that, naturally, women are just *mākmūm*, while men are *imām*. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Beside citing the Almighty, ISIS recruitment messages also portray marriage with an ISIS fighter as a glorified union - something that ISIS believes should be a central objective for all Muslim women. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) It is worth mentioning, however, that ISIS rarely promises romance in its propaganda messages. The concept of dating in Islam, let alone for highly conservative ISIS ideologues, does not exist at all. When ISIS propaganda mentions romantic relations, it mostly focuses on family and marriage in the context of female Islamic duties. In line with its vision of women, ISIS constantly emphasizes women's dependency on their husbands. Whoever opposes such a dependency goes against *fiṭrah* and is, therefore, in the wrong. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) According to ISIS, going along with *fiṭrah*, being a mother and a spouse offers women a meaningful life. (Gan, et al. 2019) In fact, marriage in ISIS also fosters loyalty to the ISIS community; it separates new members from their previous society. (Orsini 2020)

Simultaneously, the ISIS narrative of voluntary female subjugation is not as simplistic. In ISIS words, a woman is bestowed an enormous task of bringing up, properly educating, and protecting the next generation. The Manifesto recognizes the difficulty of these tasks but promises that God has prepared the best reward for such truly pious females. Women are assured to receive a reward better than any employment (outside of the family) could ever

provide. In order to fulfill her female duties, the document once again implies that a woman should stay indoors, in the shadows of her own house. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015)

Peculiarly, the Manifesto, as it soon becomes clear to a reader, fancies comparisons. For instance, curiously, the authors of the Manifesto compare a woman to a media production director: both are important people doing the most difficult job, yet both remain hidden behind the scenes. The document further expands on the idea that equality is in fact quite damaging to women. The Manifesto proclaims that equality means working on the same terms as men while also having to go through such female experiences as menstruation, being pregnant, and having family duties. Western idea of equality is simply void of fairness. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) The Manifesto is not a unique ISIS source that outlines such views on its women. The Zora Foundation – ISIS media group – mentions quite similar expectations from women of ISIS. Womankind should cook, raise children, and support their fighters. Zora Foundation also adds that a woman should gain basic medical training, be able to repair damaged clothes, fear God, hate *kuffār*, and encourage other people to join ISIS. (Bakker and de Leede 2015) The thesis will expand on those expectations later.

Driving away from the Manifesto for a moment, it is essential to mention that the academic articles confirm that common roles for women of ISIS were marriage, supporting their jihadi husbands, procreation, and children indoctrination with jihadi ideology. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Makanda 2019; Perešin 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Shorer 2018; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Spencer 2016; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Academia further confirms the ISIS narrative that women are seen as producers of future jihadi fighters and preparers of ISIS so-called lions. Female power, according to ISIS, lies within reproduction: having more children – future fighters – guarantees ISIS conquest of the world. (Stempien 2021; Vale 2019) Women are viewed as protectors of the home and, as the comparison goes, shepherds of the family. (Stempien 2021). Her place is in the house. In free time, (primarily foreign) women study religion and Arabic, yet the movement outside of home is restricted, especially if you are unmarried. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015)

Simultaneously, ISIS offers newly recruited women not only religious but also limited military education. They learn how to operate with a gun and practice with such guns in the

`

field. Remarkably, an approach to religious education is taking quite seriously. When it came to the religious classes, they were mostly taught by women who held PhDs in theology and jurisprudence. (Moaveni 2019, 174)

Nonetheless, the Manifesto repeatedly draws its main arguments against further female education. The main argument it employs is quite grand, it is nearly existential. ISIS calls out (perceived) materialistic and utterly false nature of the current world and civilization. Civilizations, as the authors of the Manifesto state, eventually decline, but what would remain constant is the religious knowledge. Hence, the argument continues, Muslims of the world should not dedicate large parts of short human lives to learning sciences, but rather focus on the religion and its eternal spiritual rewards - *ajr*. By engaging in sciences, Muslims forget their main spiritual duties and become trapped in worldly ignorance. The discussion on spiritual rewards is additionally spiced up by arguing that having friendly relations with infidels further corrupts Muslim livelihoods and strive for the knowledge of the afterlife. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) In other words, all education but that of religion is pointless in the face of eternity, and non-Muslims force a religious individual to forget about it.

Despite the emphasis on the sedentary lifestyle, servitude to the family, and little necessity of education, the Manifesto also outlines the circumstances under which women are allowed to go outside. All conditions are inevitably related to community service. First, in case an enemy attacks their lands and there are no male fighters available, women are allowed to leave for *jihād* (with a *fatwá* permission). Such a possibility will be discussed later. Second, they can go outside in order to study religious sciences and courses on knitting, cooking, and child-raising. As was mentioned above, other studies are rather discouraged. They are discouraged not only due to the worthlessness of education, but also because studies take too many years and diverge a woman from her primary goal – marriage and what comes with it. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015)

Like education, active female employment is also mostly discouraged due to the same line of reasoning. (Perešin 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) However, if a woman is widowed and/or still unmarried, she is often allowed to hold a low-level professional role to support ISIS, since her employment is not interfering with family

`

duties. (Spencer 2016) In fact, ISIS has been generally quite attractive to those attempting to find employment of such – for some – comfortable conditions. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020)

It is hard to deny that overtime ISIS has developed its own bureaucratic machine. Following a strict religious interpretation, ISIS does not allow women to mix with unrelated men. Consequently, the group needed women who could work with other women in public-facing jobs: education, healthcare, orphanages, law firms, internal security, and even female politics. (Leede, et al. 2017; Makanda 2019; Patel and Westermann 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Spencer 2016; Vale 2019) As a result, ISIS has been searching for well-educated women who could fill in women-facing professional roles. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Perešin 2018) Consequently, married women were, in fact, also given permission to be outside to work as doctors, teachers, or other necessary skilled professionals to serve the rest of ISIS women. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015; Makanda 2019; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Shorer 2018; Spencer 2016)

Continuing the discussion on ISIS expanding bureaucracy, it is also important to highlight that in 2014, ISIS managed to transition into governance. One of the ISIS's objectives was to establish a state with a permanent society. To accomplish that, they needed citizens who would ensure ISIS longevity and functionality by building both infrastructure and the core society. At the same time, they needed to ensure that societal units – families – would function properly. To accomplish that, ISIS, for instance, called upon Western women to provide wives to their Western male fighters. This was done in order to overcome a language barrier, cultural differences, and traditional obstacles of marrying local women to foreign men. (Perešin 2018) Local women are customarily not enthusiastic about marrying foreigners. Perhaps surprisingly, ISIS saw forced marriage of local women to foreigners as less beneficial than a more voluntary nature of foreigners marrying foreigners. Those who married completely against their will tended to be worse supporters of ISIS. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

Focusing on the governance and citizenry, ISIS practically encouraged women to populate and build the Caliphate in the territories it had occupied. (Shorer 2018) The idea of a family is not only important for the sake of religious propriety. It is also an essential building block

`

of social infrastructure - the main project of ISIS and, subsequently, the main job of an ISIS woman. (Cook and Vale 2018; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) The establishment of an Islamic state would not be possible without populating it, so ISIS commenced active engagement with a female audience. (Jacoby 2015; Perešin and Cervone 2015) Propaganda began to explain women their roles and societal expectations, their unique value in ISIS ranks, and their victimized state in the outside world. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Perešin 2018) In other words, women have become crucial for building a functioning state. Subsequently, ISIS has been in search of mothers and wives for the sake of its state dream. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

Another role women were expected to fulfill was online recruiting of people of all genders, sometimes, for example, through sharing their own experience of an amazing life in ISIS or through shaming or inspiring (or both) non-ISIS Muslim men into action. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Leede, et al. 2017; Makanda 2019; Pearson 2015; Perešin 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Spencer 2016) Plus, through such an employment, women were expected to motivate their husbands and keep them focused on *jihād*. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) It is believed that women were better recruiters than men, especially when it came to recruiting other women. (Shorer 2018)

Overall, ISIS focused on recruiting women online, in the private space of their homes and online accounts where indoctrination could be quicker than that of the male peers. (Leede, et al. 2017; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) It is not a coincidence that Muslim women were more frequently recruited online rather than offline. Such a tendency is related to common gendered norms related to public and private spheres of life. Muslim women, in some places more than in others, are often secluded to living within a private sphere, hence, offline radicalization becomes problematic. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019) Strict ISIS ideology tried to ensure that women and men are separated online as well. In fact, women were frequently recruited by other women. While it is hard to confirm that a person behind the screen is indeed a woman, targeted women are in any case made to believe that they are among their understanding sisters. (Scheuble and Oezmen 2022) In other words, the role of female recruiters was strategic and rather crucial for ISIS to achieve its objectives. Besides, recruitment is a perfect female job, as it does not require a woman to leave the house, yet she can still increase her contribution to ISIS.

`

ISIS female recruitment, its promised *supply*, turns out to be nuanced in accordance with the targeted audience. For instance, in the case of Western women, ISIS often emphasizes that women wearing *ḫijāb* will always be branded as terrorists in the Western world; that they will never be accepted or valued there. When ISIS tries to reach out to French and English women more specifically, it also tends to circle its narrative around women's empowerment. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019) Western women are also targeted with an idea of thrill and adventure. They are often shown real weaponry, good-looking commanders (selling an idea of a real man), and the possibility of taking administrative roles. Women are promised increased influence not only within the Caliphate but also in world politics. ISIS female joiners are also promised to have power over women of other religions. (Shorer 2018; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Another important empowerment narrative circles around the idea that women could take control over their lives, deny materialistic and secular societies, and choose to migrate to ISIS. As a benefit, women would be free of societal pressures to wear makeup or revealing clothes. They will be able to finally stop being mere objects of sex appeal but would instead be respected for their virtues. (Leede, et al. 2017; Mietz 2016)

Fascinatingly, the message for Spanish citizens includes an additional call for a mandatory fight, which would reclaim the historically Islamic area of al-Andalus. It further calls for the conquest of parts of Portugal and Spain, which historically used to be the Emirate of Cordoba. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) In the case of local women, the main recruitment strategy is offering infrastructure and organization in contrast to the chaos of regional wars. (Shorer 2018)

Besides recruitment, women of ISIS can assist with low-risk activities: fundraising, spreading ISIS propaganda, or even assisting with creating bombs. (Cook and Vale 2018; Gan, et al. 2019; Leede, et al. 2017; Loken and Zelenz 2017; Nuraniyah 2018; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Shorer 2018) It is clear that while ISIS emphasizes a sedentary lifestyle, it also provides its women with opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Certain female engagements also implied power. For example, women were regularly expected to join ISIS morality police in a form of all-female brigades – *ḫisbah*. (Speckhard

and Ellenberg 2020) The most well-known brigade is *Al-Khansā'* Brigade, notoriously famous for its extreme cruelty in the form of torture, physical abuse, and executions justified by versing passages of Qur'ān. (Perešin 2015; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Spencer 2016) Initially, *Al-Khansā'* Brigade was established with the sole purpose of checking women at the checkpoints. It became necessary after several men dressed up as Muslim women sneaked into the ISIS premises and assassinated few of the group's commanders. Nonetheless, it is believed that women who are a part of *Al-Khansā'* Brigade tend to be single women in the age range of 18-25. However, their nationalities, despite the belief that they mostly consisted of Western women, are rather undetermined. (Spencer 2016) In fact, it is alleged that *Al-Khansā'* included women of different nationalities: Saudi and British, Syrian, and French. Local recruiters, however, were strictly discouraged from talking to the foreign women. (Moaveni 2019, 176)

Joining *Al-Khansā'* Brigade secured a stable monthly salary (a bit less than 200 USD) and guaranteed a certain degree of power over other women and civilians. Overall, ISIS expected women to create and participate in such brigades, as women could control civilians in ways that their male counterparts couldn't. Plus, women were able to communicate with local women and recruit them into the brigades. (Perešin 2015) It is noted that 100% of local women obtained a position of authority, primarily thanks to their language skills and understanding of local cultural and Islamic cultural context. In other words, local women were considered better at communicating with the local population. (Spencer 2016)

Morality police enforced *Sharīʿah*, surveilled the local population, and punished the lawbreakers. They were additionally supposed to report spies or potential enemies. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) Moreover, members of *Al-Khansā'* operated at checkpoints, conducted home raids, and participated in sex slave trade. (Perešin 2018) Women in morality police units were also trained in combat, weaponry maintenance, and assassination techniques. (Cook and Vale 2018; Perešin 2018; Spencer 2016) It was also reported that at least one of these women was wearing a suicide vest all the time. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) It is visible that women of ISIS are allowed to hold positions of power and build a power-based hierarchy. For instance, when it came to the female hierarchy within ISIS, older women generally tended to hold more authority. They are believed to be a better advisory source (for other women) due to their maturity, discipline, and education. (Spencer 2016)

`

Yet, it is crucial to highlight that, even though women were given high positions of power, it was always power over other female members but never over men. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Vale 2019)

Besides working in recruitment, moral policing, healthcare, and education, women could also find employment in doing charity, collecting tax and foreign donations, running a slave market, and local surveillance. Plus, they could work with incoming international women by registering them and distributing aid. (Cook and Vale 2018; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin 2018) Furthermore, some ISIS female members were participating in kidnappings and trafficking of women to Syria, most prominently Yazidi girls. (Makanda 2019) Additionally, some women were charged with transporting correspondence, goods, and arms. Some were also creating strategic alliances through marriage unions. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Moreover, women were occasionally needed on the battlefields. Firstly, they were needed to film ISIS accomplishments and later use these footages in their propaganda dissemination. Secondly, they would need to cook for soldiers and nurse the wounded. (Perešin 2018) Reports state that some women also worked as suicide bombers, snipers, battlefield fighters, and plotting assistants of terrorist attacks. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Women have become a truly vital part of ISIS society.

Another crucial point the Manifesto is addressing is female security. First of all, the authors are claiming that under mental and military colonialism [of Muslims], women have to suffer violations of their bodily autonomy. In ISIS, however, women regain their rights and respect for the bodies through hiding them from other people and their corrupted hearts. Plus, unlike in many countries outside of ISIS, women are not anymore forced to work and study in mixed environments (together with men). Neither are they anymore forced to share their neighborhoods or dormitory rooms with nonbelievers, who are often, as it was mentioned earlier, try to either poison a Muslim heart or to spy on them. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015)

Secondly, the document mentions that within the territories occupied by ISIS, one cannot help but notice how secure it is for its devout inhabitants, thanks to the enforcement of *ḥudūd* punishments. Women, the document continues, now can go to *sūqs* and/or on pilgrimage without fearing criminals. Additionally, the Manifesto claims that ISIS has truly just courts

`

and zero corruption within its ranks: both of which ensure a just life and full protection from harmful actions or abuse. In such blessed conditions, women can feel secure to enjoy an Islamic lifestyle. As a sign of pure Islamic life, the Manifesto cites an example of how *sūqs* stop operating at prayer time. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) This fact has also been confirmed by ISIS women in their social media accounts. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015)

Lastly, women are secured from poverty, from which, the Manifesto states, women have usually suffered more than men. To target women from the Gulf countries, ISIS contrasts this region's female poverty to the golden palaces of their countries' rulers, who care more about the wealth than about their women, the building block of the whole society. The authors of the Manifesto emphasize Islamically-permitted work opportunities for women in ISIS. These work opportunities are supposed to secure women from poverty. Additionally, the document accentuates the existence of *Zakāt* Chamber, through which women can receive monetary support the same way female Companions of the Prophet Muhammed did. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) Widows are also promised to be taken care of through a short-term widows' monetary benefits system. Additionally, *ḥisbah* members are supposed to check on widows and supply them with money and food. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017)

While discussing security, it should also be mentioned that ISIS allegedly offers free and full healthcare. The Manifesto declares that ISIS fixed the hospitals and equipped it with modern technologies. Their hospitals supposedly offer vaccinations for children and can even treat cancer patients. Besides healthcare, ISIS also promises its foreign joiners the support of lawyers. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Overall, the authors state, the life in the ISIS-occupied areas has improved. They provide an example of Mosul [in Iraq], which ostensibly became a cleaner, safer city that ensures women's and their children's security. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) Generally, ISIS often markets itself as a real, well-functioning state that has effective services and overall benefits for its inhabitants. ISIS potential joiners, for instance, are offered material benefits: houses, money, and various household items for the convenience of a woman. (Gan, et al. 2019; Shorer 2018; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Wood 2017, 204) Plus, benefits and monetary support are often promised for each born child, which might serve as an additional incentive for people to feel secure building a family in ISIS. (Perešin 2015) Together with a stable household, women

`

are once again promised a loving husband, a relationship with whom would be sacred and full of understanding due to the blessed religious nature of their union. (Gan, et al. 2019) With all of that, ISIS promises a supply of a secure and comfortable life for their women: single, married, or widowed alike. (Shorer 2018)

Talking about single women, unmarried female newcomers are promised to be taken care of as well. Upon arrival, they are placed in all-female hostels – *maqqar*. The hostel has several purposes. Firstly, it provides marriage-arrangement services. Secondly, its employees educate women on Islam, first aid, online marketing, programming, weapons and explosives, and household affairs. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Perešin 2015) Such a female finishing school is called Al-Zawra. Such female education is unquestionably viewed as a supportive force of her main purpose in life, which is to be of service to her spouse, children, and society. (Spencer 2016) At the same time, such educational opportunities are provided for free. It is noted that a student usually receives food, clothes, textbooks, and transportation facilities. Those who study well might also receive an additional reward. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Some women who are targeted to migrate and work as nurses, doctors, and teachers are promised a place in *maqqar* as well. They are promised a monthly allowance and no pressure to marry upon arrival. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

When it came to foreigners specifically, *muhājirāt* and their families were equally promised a peaceful life devoid of cold or hunger alike. They are also offered money like any other Muslim of the Caliphate. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) It is believed that at least some families were offered a payment of $3000 per family member, should the family move to ISIS. (Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017) However, the fine print of such an offer presupposes that money would be offered to men only, it does not matter if a woman initiates the travel. (Pearson and Winterbotham, 2017) In other words, such a significant payment was not freely given to women. Men were still expected to manage family finances, in line with the ISIS ideology.

Nonetheless, *Al-Khansā'* Brigade further highlights that in ISIS, everyone is treated equally, despite one's national origins or skin color. Everyone is a friend united in monotheism, everyone's culture is contributing to a new beautiful, harmonious culture of Islamic lifestyle

in ISIS. Everyone is a subject to the rule of Islam – something that is not possible anywhere else due to national divisions. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) In a way, ISIS specifically calls for all the unwanted and discriminated against. (Gan, et al. 2019; Shafieioun and Haq 2023) ISIS presents itself as a place where people who were off track in their lives, could have a fresh start, take a meaningful role, and find purpose. (Perešin 2018) Additionally, ISIS frequently evokes the idea of holy sisterhood; ISIS's supply is the honor of being a sister of/in Islam. (Scheuble and Oezmen 2022) Being a sister signifies fostering deep, eternal relations with other pious and hence honorable women. (Gan, et al. 2019)

The reality on the ground is usually quite different. When it comes to marriage, the prospects of women are not equal. Foreign women are valued more because they are believed to be more zealous when it comes to female duties. Local women are often described as more snobbish and pretentious. Favoritism of the foreign women, such a visible discrimination creates resentment among locals and results into locals being rather hostile towards *muhājirāt*. The fact that the foreigners are married off sooner oftentimes leads to jealousy and conflict. (Moaveni 2019, 177; Perešin 2015; Speckhard and Yayla 2017; Spencer 2016) The key is not marriage itself, however. Overall, it is believed that foreign, blonde women and/or converts tend to be valued more and are, hence, married to the high-ranking men who tend to have more power, better social status, and the benefits associated with the before-mentioned qualities. It is important to mention foreigners' elevated status in ISIS, as it creates the supply of power and status for those foreigners who seek it. (Perešin 2015)

The last point that the Manifesto touches upon is the oppression that Muslim women face in the world. In ISIS, however, the authors state, a woman is privileged: she receives an elegant home, she finds true friends, she is shown fairness in all aspects of her life, and, most importantly, she is free to practice her religion. (Al-Khansā'Brigade and Winter 2015) Besides, ISIS promises a land where women's children finally wouldn't have to be shy of or embarrassed about their religion, where they can grow up religiously righteous. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020)

Overall, ISIS tends to supply the audience with an idea of a long-lasting oppression of the Muslim population. It provides historical examples of the struggles of the Ottoman Empire, civilian deaths in Somalia, the Bosnian genocide, and, of course, the question of Palestine,

`

among others. In modern times, the ISIS message is often fueled by the visible indifference of the West towards the human deaths in the Syrian conflict. (Bjørgum 2016; Moaveni 2019, 111-112; Saltman and Smith 2015; Shafieioun and Haq 2023) Additionally, in its recruitment strategy, ISIS often employs quite graphic videos of Muslim suffering under Western attacks. (Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Ulaş 2024)

ISIS repeats the idea that Western domination over Muslim lands occurred due to *ummah* deserting true Islam. The group reinforces the idea that whoever lives outside of true Islam, lives in a state of *jāhilīyah*. ISIS juggles Islamic history and holy texts in order to create a sense of existential threat among the Muslims. ISIS portrays Middle Eastern conflicts in terms of a prophesized apocalyptic war. In order to survive the apocalypse, abandon unholy Western influences, re-establish true Islam, and thus launch Muslim hegemony, *ummah*, according to ISIS, should essentially build the Caliphate. (Antunez Moreno 2020)

The idea of perpetual oppression resonates with some people's idea of establishing an Islamic state, the Caliphate. Such a state would be a contemporary entity uniting *ummah* under one socio-political banner, where domineering tyranny would not exist. (Moaveni 2019, 134) In the Caliphate, ISIS emphasizes that religious and societal contributions made by Muslims will be at last valued and appreciated. Such statements resonate with those feeling targeted by politics and oppressed by domestic dominant culture. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) To achieve the creation of an Islamic state and shake the shackles of oppression, *jihād* is portrayed as the only possible response to such atrocities. Violent *jihād* becomes a dutiful and expected response of *ummah*, no matter the consequences. (Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) As one Indonesian ISIS woman mentioned, sometimes you love something so much that you are ready to overlook the bad parts. If the promise is eventually fulfilled, then violence and brutality were just the means to achieve independence and utopia. (Moaveni 2019, 306)

In addition, ISIS constantly attempts to sooth its cruelty by highlighting the necessity of waging their version of violent *jihād* as the only pathway to establish the long-desired Caliphate. *Jihād* is represented as the ultimate tool to regain Muslim honor and power worldwide. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Peculiarly, ISIS essentially romanticized *jihād* by playing on the human sense of honor. It presented its fighters as courageous heroes, and their

women as honorable spouses and mothers ready for a holy martyrdom. (Perešin 2018) ISIS was essentially marketed as paradise, full of honorable individuals. (Shorer 2018)

Besides offering freedom from oppression, ISIS also advocates an opportunity to accomplish Muslim religious duty. It suggests women migrate from the lands of infidels to the truly Islamic place. (Perešin 2018) ISIS often emphasizes that the duty of migration – *hijrah* – is equally imperative for both women and men. Moving to ISIS is presented as fulfilling one's religious duty. According to ISIS, those who fail to fulfill this duty are claimed as disgrace deserving severe afterlife punishment. (Bjørgum 2016; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) According to ISIS, the only possible and accurate destination of Muslim *hijrah* is ISIS itself. (Klik 2022) Developing on the religious narrative, ISIS also emphasizes that it is simply women's shared obligation to arise for the sake of the *dīn*. (Scheuble and Oezmen 2022)

Next, ISIS supplies female empowerment. (Stempien 2021) It emphasizes the idea that Western feminist ideas are, in fact, an exclusionary practice that serves white women at the expense of women belonging to minorities. As a remedy from so-called feminist oppression, ISIS promises women to give them agency based on Islamic ideals and "natural" roles for men and women. (Leede, et al. 2017; Stempien 2021) They offer and enforce a world where women do not have to compete with men and force unnatural equality. Instead, they should rather complement men and cooperate with them: such an idea aligns with the previously mentioned vision of a good wife. (Gan, et al. 2019) The group thus offers women to become free of forced-upon Western feminist ideas, reclaim their own Muslim identity, and discover their self-worth as a Muslim woman. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017) ISIS emphasizes that it values its women not just as sexual objects as the West does, but as an important force, guardians of the ISIS legacy, mothers of the ISIS future. (Saltman and Smith 2015) ISIS truly portrays itself as a (Muslim) women's rights crusader. (Spencer 2016)

Besides emphasizing how Western feminism destroyed the real roles of men and women, as they are prescribed in Islam (Pearson 2015), it further highlights that it is impossible for Muslims to live a pious life in the West. It is believed that Muslims, however unintentionally, will be polluted by Western practices and corruption. ISIS often emphasizes that filth and deviances of the Western women are dangerous enough to threaten a Muslim woman's soul and, consequently, the soul of her children. Islam (as ISIS sees it) is portrayed as the only

way to save a Muslim woman. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) This way, ISIS offers a conservative form of women empowerment where female influence in the society can still meaningfully increase but with accordance to Islam. Female influence in ISIS is measured by the fact that at least some women are allowed to drive and receive weapons to maintain order. As it was previously mentioned, some are also given the honor of participating in *ḥisbah*, which automatically gives women power and great authority over other women of ISIS. (Bjørgum 2016; Perešin 2015; Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Vale 2019)

ISIS recruiters also ensure that a woman feels supported in her preparation to travel to ISIS. In an online environment, they are advised on what to bring and what to leave at home, how to communicate with one's family. Recruiters provide courses on how to become a good jihadi wife. (Leede, et al. 2017; Perešin 2015) Some women have also created matchmaking online channels and charity channels to support families of imprisoned terrorists. The Internet, to some extent, leveled up the playing field for men and women, providing space for women's voices, cooperation, and sought-after sisterhood. (Cook and Vale 2018; Nuraniyah 2018)

It is also crucial to highlight that the role of a woman in ISIS has evolved over time. Women have become more active members of ISIS. The group elevated female status and started offering women a platform where they have the ability to expand their responsibilities and take more forefront roles. (Gan, et al. 2019) With time and territory loss, ISIS has begun to encourage its women to plan and conduct attacks both on the ISIS-occupied territories, and abroad. ISIS further demonstrated that women were cheered to for conducting suicide bombings. Such a tactic proved to be rather effective due to the element of surprise: little did people expect from the women of ISIS. (Cook and Vale 2018; Strømmen 2016) Women are also harder to detect by the security force. They can successfully hide weaponry and explosives within their clothing. (Speckhard 2015; Stempien 2021) Plus, using women in suicide attacks is more advantageous, as it eliminates the threat of excessive female empowerment gained through militancy. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

The evolution of female status was not accidental. For a long time, the state of *ummah* was not considered terrible enough for its female members to be called to fighting. Normally,

`

women who join *jihād* were expected to support it in any other possible way. (Bakker and de Leede 2015) Some women help ISIS via financing. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Some, as the subjects of this study, join the group on its territories. ISIS's main offer for women was an opportunity to wage *jihād* in non-combative ways. (Stempien 2021; Vale 2019) Thus, initially, ISIS held women away from active fighting, unless it involved an attack on the foreign soil or a suicide attack. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020; Vale 2019) One of the main reasons for such an exclusion is the attempt to insure that a tradition of female modesty, gender segregation, and a tradition of *maḥram* are not breached. Gender separation in militant *jihād* also preserves the patriarchal order of the traditional Islamic society. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

Nonetheless, ISIS wedding certificates as early as of 2015 stated that ISIS leaders could grant a woman permission to carry out a suicide attack. In such a case, her husband would not be allowed to stop her. (Speckhard 2015) Then, the role of a woman continued to evolve. In 2016, ISIS allegedly created a women sniper squad to shoot the enemies. ISIS has also published an official statement affirming women that it is now necessary for them to perform *jihād*, with accordance to Qur'ān, of course. (Gan, et al. 2019)

As time progressed, ISIS started to legitimize female fighting more often. In 2018, ISIS created and published a video of a female member participating in combat on the battlefield. She was alongside the male fighters and, through her actions, signaled the permission for women to participate in combat. (Cook and Vale 2018) Plus, there was a video from Baghouz, where women were visibly fighting alongside men. (Vale 2019) Now, ISIS offers women a possibility to participate in a military fight, to become *mujāhidāt,* should the circumstances permit it. (Stempien 2021)

Occasionally, the ISIS propaganda machine would make references to Khawlah bint al-Azwar. She was a Muslim fighter, one of the first Prophet Muhammad's followers. Al-Azwar is almost a role model for the women who want to fight, alongside their men, for the cause they deem important. (Bjørgum 2016) Overall, Islamic history presents examples of militant women, some of whom were even relatives of the Prophet Muhammad. It is also used by ISIS to craft their message to women. (Perešin and Cervone 2015) The idea of women participating in fighting was related to the restoration of women's collective honor

`

and shaming male members into fighting. (Vale 2019) On a more practical side, calling women for militant *jihād* was also related to the reduction in its male followers, as many were killed or jailed. (Gan, et al. 2019)

On the whole, the Manifesto is so thoroughly cited in this thesis, as this is the document that shows how multifaceted ISIS's *supply* is. Besides examples above, the very language of the text is quite thought-provoking. It constantly portrays a Muslim woman as the most important element of society, as the *ummah*'s hope, and as the most prominent component to human survival. Her role in ISIS is every so often described through the prism of female divine rights, religious harmony, godly equilibrium, and stability. The authors regularly emphasize the miseries of Muslim women all around the world; they frequently highlight how women suffer from poverty and inability of Islamic lifestyle the most, and how no one but ISIS seems to care about that.

Overall, ISIS's supply manages to target a vast area of topics. The Manifesto states that a woman's main roles are being a wife and a mother, who raises and educates future generations of the *ummah*. Within ISIS, it states, a woman can live a truly Islamic sedentary lifestyle, find pious true friendships, enjoy free healthcare with modernly equipped hospitals, maintain her bodily autonomy, and forget about cold, hunger, dirty cities, and poverty. She can also receive a house and monetary support, obtain Islamically-permitted employment and education, forget about corruption, crime, and discrimination, and enjoy divine equality, fairness, and justice. Lastly, she can be free from the shackles of mental and military colonialism, from the wrong focus on earthly sciences. She can be free to practice her religion and await her eternal reward.

Academic sources point out that women of ISIS are constantly being elevated to the nearly divine level. They are called the ultimate hope of *ummah*; ISIS constantly shares a message that the Muslim world would not survive without its women. (Leede, et al. 2017; Moaveni 2019, 173) Women are praised for being the bearers and the main proselytizers of ISIS ideology onto other women and next generations. Women are vital to the ISIS cause. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Gan, et al. 2019; Patel and Westermann 2018; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Female ISIS members are seen is one the most crucial lines of defense, as

`

they are nearly hallowed spiritual guardians of Islam, shielding their loved ones from the superficial outside world. (Gan, et al. 2019)

Women of ISIS serve both as ISIS ardent supporters and victims of Islamophobic Western societies, which are trying to rip Muslim women both of their female dignity and Islamic heritage. (Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) Racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia that some Muslims face in the outside world is often used by ISIS recruiters to lure people into the Caliphate, a place that is supposedly free of such alienation and discrimination and full of religious freedom. (Perešin 2018; Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Within ISIS, its people shake off the boundaries of ethnicity and nationality and adopt a religious meta-identity. (Saltman and Smith 2015)

All in all, ISIS propaganda often targets women who consider themselves outliers, suffering at the hands of injustice. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) In this case, ISIS supplies a way to resolve private frustration and life disappointments. Additionally, ISIS offers better living conditions and various benefits, combining intangible desires with material benefits. (Spencer 2016) Women are also important in raising the next generation of jihadis, encouraging men to fight, orchestrating financial and logistical support, collecting and sharing intelligence, exalting the holy struggle, and spreading the ideology. (Perešin and Cervone 2015; Ulaş 2024)

ISIS offers women to become a crucial element of state-building of a utopian state and a life focused on the divine afterlife rewards. (Speckhard 2015; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) It further offers a sense of belonging, meaningful sisterhood. When a woman begins her journey into radicalization, she often finds other sisters. Those women talk to each other as if they were real sisters or best friends, creating a longing for the same type of friendship. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020; Shorer 2018) Lastly, it offers a thrilling adventure in which they could also encounter real love and the honorable death of martyrdom. (Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) (Gan, et al. 2019; Pearson 2015) Widowhood and martyrdom are romanticized, as they are connected to honor and divine rewards. Such a romanticization is supposed to dilute the fears of women. (Bjørgum 2016)

One might say that women play a supportive role, while men tend to be more operational. (Nuraniyah 2018) On the other hand, women's role can also be seen as operational; it often

`

serves strategic goals of ISIS. (Daymon and Margolin 2022) It is clear that ISIS sees its women more than pious wives and loving mothers. (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020) Roles of women within ISIS are quite diverse; some are beyond traditionally supportive. Some women can change their roles and responsibilities over time; some might hold several positions at once. Their roles tend to be more private, restricted to specific areas, physical or societal. Nonetheless, those roles are crucial in the functioning of ISIS and are, hence, irreplaceable. (Spencer 2016) In any case, women's role in ISIS should not be disregarded, as it shapes her responsibilities and contribution to the group's existence. (Strømmen 2016)

At the end, ISIS offers a woman a choice. She can remain outside and enjoy the earthly worthless pleasures, simultaneously suffering from discrimination, or live a truly Islamic, forever-rewarding life. ISIS emphasizes that they have everything for a comfortable Islamic life, work, and studies. Hence it "reasonably" asks its female audience – what are they waiting for? (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020)

`

3.2 Demand

Motivation to join ISIS varies from one woman to another. Some reasons might resemble those of men, even though radicalization studies tend to consider female and male motivations in seclusion from one another. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bakker and de Leede 2015; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017; Perešin and Cervone 2015) I conducted an inductive thematic analysis and identified twenty-eight female motivations to join ISIS. Later, as was described in the **Methodology,** I classified twenty-eight subthemes into five themes. The themes are the creation of the thesis's author and are based on my interpretation of meanings within female motivations to join ISIS. These themes are interconnected. Given the fact that the research is dealing with the complex subject of human motivation, some subthemes within different themes carry a resemblance to one another. Nevertheless, I reflected on what each subtheme could be rooted in and classified each subtheme accordingly. The five themes presented below are Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement.

3.2.1 Survival

As per TABLE 2, A set of motivations united under *Survival* encompasses motivations that are rooted in fear, anxiety, defenselessness, victimization, vulnerability, despair, and hope for alternatives. It revolves around women's fears around their security and feeling of safety, on international, local, and personal levels. This set does not only concern itself with physical security but also with mental and spiritual ones. It embraces the desire to contribute to the creation of a safe living space and a divine utopian land, where being a Muslim woman is not dangerous. *Survival* further incorporates women's belief that the only correct way of responding to the threatening world is joining a just society of ISIS members.

There are six main subthemes in *Survival*. These are 1) reaction to the West's role in the Middle Eastern conflicts and Western foreign policy towards Muslims and/or Muslim countries, subsequent feeling that *ummah* is under attack, 2) desire to build the divine Caliphate, where Islamic justice ensures security, 3) experience of domestic Islamophobia, subsequent feeling of isolation, inequality, and oppression of Muslims, 4) need of alternative

`

job opportunities, work migration, 5) seeking physical security in the light of international, local, and/or individual circumstances, 6) presence of weak domestic institutions.

Foreign women

Most of the sources utilized in the research mention that *muhājirāt* join ISIS to participate in a state-building activity of the newly established Caliphate, thus allegedly participating in something utterly divine. (Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development 2016; Antunez Moreno 2020; Bjørgum 2016; Colliver, et al. 2019; Cook and Vale 2018; Daymon and Margolin 2022; Gan, et al. 2019; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Leede 2018; Loken and Zelenz 2017; Moaveni 2019; Navest, Koning and Moors 2016; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020; Ulaş 2024) Many foreigners were deeply moved by the proclamation of the Caliphate. Plus, they were additionally motivated by the fact that ISIS occupied such large land. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Wood 2017, 99) In those new lands, women want to actively participate in creating a new society that would be different from the morally corrupt, women-disrespecting West. In contrast, they choose to live piously under the banner of ISIS, where a strict *Sharīʿah* is enforced, where women are treated honorably, despite their ethnic or national background, and where pure Islamic life is possible. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bakker and de Leede 2015; Colliver, et al. 2019; Cook and Vale 2018; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Leede 2018; Moaveni 2019, 141; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017; Perešin 2015, 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Some women further equate *Sharīʿah* to justice. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) In other words, women want to participate in building the divine Caliphate, because it promises Islamic rule of law and, hence, divine, true justice. In the eyes of *muhājirāt*, Islamic justice ensures female security and dignity.

In order to build such a just and safe place for the Muslims, women genuinely want to contribute as teachers, doctors, mothers, and nurses. Through such a contribution, they are able to help to build this new utopian society – the promised Caliphate - in a more significant way than just supporting ISIS online. Such a contribution clearly presupposes the need for a

`

woman to migrate to ISIS-held territories. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015) Evidently, women have responded to this need.

Additionally, most *muhājirāt* grew up within the realms of "War on Terror", which was framed as a Western battle against unfathomable evil located in the Middle East and South-Central Asia. The War on Terror had created stigma towards the Muslim population; violence against and murder of Muslims suddenly became justified. (Moaveni 2019, 197; Windsor 2020) Consequently, those women expressed the idea that their *ummah* and religion were under attack by the West. Subsequently, both had to be defended from the assault and the war on Islam. Additionally, female ISIS members often cited their fury, frustration, and utter condemnation at their home countries' foreign policy toward Muslim nations and international complicity in the ongoing conflicts. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Cook and Vale 2018; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin 2015, 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Ulaş 2024)

Muhājirāt cite conflicts around the world as a part of the plot to wage war against the Muslims. They believe the world is divided into two camps: believers vs. non-believers, us vs. them. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Women believe that Muslims are being violently persecuted internationally. Online content depicting Muslim suffering in conflicts, violence towards the most vulnerable, and the aftermath of bombing raids reinforces the idea that Muslims are being attacked. (Saltman and Smith 2015) When talking about violence against Muslims, female foreign fighters cite wars in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, intervention in Mali and other Muslim lands. They mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Plus, they deeply lament local occurrences of injustice in their home environment. (Windsor 2020)

Roshonara Choudhry, for example, was triggered by the King's award to the former Israeli president. She felt deep injustice on behalf of fellow Muslims from Palestine and felt that she had to take an action. Besides Palestine, Choudhry, similarly to other ISIS members, mentioned the unjust invasion of Iraq and her pain for Iraqis. She felt like she had to act. (Pearson 2015) On a side note, once a woman is with ISIS, female hatred towards ISIS opponents tends to intensify even further due to bombing raids on the ISIS-controlled

`

territory. It becomes especially strong if a woman's family members die as a result of it. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015)

Before joining ISIS, another female foreign fighter shared distressful pieces of news that happened just within a few months of 2014 and 2015. These are Chapel Hills' murder of three Muslims, arson in one of Houston's mosques, shooting at the Montreal Muslim school, and an attempted murder of a ḫijābī woman who was pushed on the rails of the metro. In all these tragedies, Muslims were targeted. The woman was further astonished by the Muslim presentation in popular culture, especially by the praise of the movie American Snipper which glorified a soldier killing Iraqis. Overall, the popular culture painted a world where evil Muslims are perpetually seen as aggressors but never as victims of the Western world's violence. (Moaveni 2019, 94-98, 151)

It does not help that some media overtly lied about Muslims being extremists. One of the cases is The Mail accusing a Muslim family of extremism. The accusations were wrong, the newspaper later apologized and paid the victims compensation, but it could not undo the social damage it had caused. (Moaveni 2019, 94-98, 151) Unfortunately, the media attempts to sensationalize headlines ascribed to minorities without regard for accuracy. Such a behavior fuels isolation of and confusion about minority groups. (Saltman and Smith 2015)

Some *muhājirāt* are additionally infuriated by the fact that media prefers to portray Islam as a religion perpetuating sexual violence, oftentimes through spotlighting extreme marginal people who twist the religion in atrocious ways. (Moaveni 2019, 94-98, 151) As a result, the concept of Muslim identity is often depicted as incompatible with democratic principles and modernity; it is portrayed as both a security threat and a cultural danger. (Shafieioun and Haq 2023) *Muhājirāt* suspect, it is important to the Western foreign policy for the people to believe that Islam is a security threat, a danger to society. Muslim dehumanization aids the justification of invasions and various anti-extremist campaigns waged globally. (Moaveni 2019, 94-98, 151) Combined with popular culture and media, immigration from the Middle Eastern conflict zones to Europe led to further identity clashes and regional conflicts with right-wing anti-immigrants seeing a rise in popularity. (Windsor 2020)

`

Women felt that no matter the part of the world, Muslims were not safe anywhere. Consequently, they started following ideologues who had stated that safety was possible through an armed struggle against the slaughter of Muslims, that is, through *jihād*. (Moaveni 2019, 112) Not all ISIS women necessarily support violence, they might deem it unnecessary and extreme. Yet, they often believe they have no other option left. Nonviolent action would not stop regional dictators. It would not prevent the invasion of Iraq and subsequent murder of civilians. According to these women, the West has completely lost its empathy towards the anguish of the Muslims and/or the Middle Easterners. The Western world, therefore, has to be awakened through the suffering of their own people. (Moaveni 2019, 114-115, 174) Eventually, by joining ISIS, women respond to a political call for righteousness. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

Naturally, another key set of motivations for foreign women to join ISIS revolves around perceived injustice and Islamophobia. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Leede 2018; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017; Pearson 2015; Perešin 2018) Women who travel to ISIS tend to experience marginalization, prejudice against them, and social exclusion back at home. (Colliver, et al. 2019; Mietz 2016; Nuraniyah 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard 2015) Such factors as feeling of isolation and inequality, experience of racism and xenophobia - sometimes rather violent - and inability to practice their religion freely without social judgement contributed to women's desire to escape their current lives. (Cook and Vale 2018; Leede 2018; Loken and Zelenz 2017; Moaveni 2019, 141-142; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin 2015; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) Women were often feeling a double betrayal. One from their anti-Islamic community, and the other - from the governmental structures that had not done anything to protect their Muslim minority. (Gan, et al. 2019)

Women often cited various structural barriers to their existence. Back at home, women had a hard time finding employment or social opportunities as Muslims. (Loken and Zelenz 2017; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Windsor 2020) One of the Dutch *muhājirāt*, for instance, had apparently been rejected from college due to her desire to wear a *niqāb*. This rejection has become one of the key factors of her radicalization. Muslim women from Canada further noted that Muslim girls, like everyone else, study to become doctors, nurses,

`

or other professionals, yet they are rejected at jobs due to their religious attire. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017)

Other women experienced assault (insults, being spat at, etc.) on the streets for wearing Islamic clothing. A Muslim woman in the West can also be a subject of dressing laws implemented against the Muslim veiling, but not against, for example, Christian nuns' clothing. Islamophobia towards women has a particular gendered twist to it, as their religion is visible via *ḥijāb* and *niqāb*. Muslim women are seeking marriage for the sake of a romantic experience and material benefits and tend to experience more discrimination in public than their male counterparts. Their visibility of "otherness" is often perceived as a threat to the Western ideals of womanhood. Living in a non-Muslim society can be truly dangerous for Muslim women. (Loken and Zelenz 2017; Saltman and Smith 2015; Shafieioun and Haq 2023; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) Consequently, women felt uncertainty about belonging to the Western culture. They had an identity crisis and fear of belonging to a minority experiencing assaults because of their ethnic otherness. (Saltman and Smith 2015)

Foreign women were in search of a society that would not resemble their home. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Feeling fearful of and distant from the societies they live in pushed *muhājirāt* in ISIS's open arms. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Evidently, women chose an alternative place for the sake of their livelihood. By moving to ISIS, they feel free as Muslim women, as no one will attack them again for their religion or religious attire. (Leede 2018; Perešin 2015) In ISIS, women can feel safe for being who they are. They see veiling in ISIS as a salvage of their rights that were taken away by Western colonizers. They can finally find an authentic place for unadulterated religious practices. Joining ISIS serves as a reclamation of modesty. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

Muhājirāt also felt that ISIS was safer for women. They believed that ISIS would protect them from rape. Back in their home countries, they felt unsafe walking alone in the streets, but such a problem does not exist in ISIS. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Plus, in ISIS, some women are trained in self-defense (e.g., shooting guns) and are allowed to carry guns on them, which adds to the feeling of personal safety. (Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015)

`

Another crucial survivalist motivation is work migration. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) ISIS was also seen as a way to escape dull home and work lives. (Speckhard 2015) High levels of unemployment, absence of meaningful opportunities, especially in rural areas, pushed some women to seek employment elsewhere. (Mietz 2016) Kyrgyz women, for instance, were also quite motivated to move to ISIS as support workers. To earn bread, they often had to work as migrant labor. The working conditions were poor, and the salary was miniscule. Absence of proper renumeration, rest, and meaningful alternatives made life seem rather miserable and lonely. When women compared their salaries and subsequent life conditions with possibilities in ISIS, they found ISIS more promising. The salary there was higher than in Kyrgyzstan, so women could already have a better life. Plus, ISIS provided food, an allowance, and a house. All these benefits were not provided by their previous employers. In addition, in ISIS, infidel slaves removed household burdens from Kyrgyz women who felt like slaves in their home countries. ISIS brutality and a cycle of remarriage were a small price to pay for all the material benefits that joining ISIS brought. (Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017) Beside Kyrgyz women, there were a plenty of other foreign women seeking material benefits in ISIS. (Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) Economic stability is an overall common incentive to join the terrorist group. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021)

In addition, moving to and living within ISIS did not require much capital for initiation, unlike living in the cosmopolitism of the Western world. Western societies require a person to be able to afford goods and travels to be accepted and respected. ISIS was more accessible in that matter. (Moaveni 2019, 193) As it was mentioned above, women received free housing in *maqqar* and did not have to pay bills or rent. They were also given food, clothes, and a monthly allowance. Married women would receive a house with electricity and water together with their husband. Some newlyweds received monetary rewards upon their marriage. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Consequently, some women noted, free healthcare, free housing, and education were motives to join ISIS. (Cook and Vale 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) One Indonesian ISIS woman convinced twenty-five of her relatives to travel to ISIS because ISIS promised to pay off her father's debts and provide healthcare and housing upon arrival. Furthermore, ISIS covered the travel costs, too. (Moaveni 2019, 306)

`

Weak local government institutions, lack of rule of law, especially in remote and/or rural areas, sometimes become yet another factor for a woman to join ISIS. In remote areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, a lack of governmental presence led to the existence of radical Salafist villages that swore allegiance to ISIS. (Mietz 2016) Arab foreigners, in their turn, saw joining ISIS as a way to escape their government's policies and servitude to the Western states. (Moaveni 2019, 114) A Tunisian woman, Olfa, has described the hardships she had to overcome back at home. Life in ISIS had its hardships, too, but it also gave her certainty. If you had any problem, ISIS had a way to solve it. She felt that they had a way to lessen the hurt from injustice, or deprivation, or else. She craved such comfort. (Moaveni 2019, 231)

Some women followed their partners into ISIS out of fear of divorce or abandonment. While being left by one's loved one is emotionally painful, women were also scared for their financial situation once their man leaves. Even though the aforementioned motive seems to be driven by coercion, it is nonetheless not true. It is estimated that most of the women who traveled to ISIS with their partners were also quite motivated to join the group. They often agreed with ISIS's and their spouses' ideology and even encouraged it. The majority of these women decided to travel to ISIS despite having the options of remaining home, connecting with the extended family, or all together attempting to talk their partner out of traveling to ISIS. Instead, they were quite proud of their husbands seeking employment with ISIS (as it would bring great benefits such as, once again, a free house) and helping to build the prophetic Caliphate. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Wood 2017, 165)

Other women sought the safety of ISIS due to more personal reasons. Some women had poor marriage prospects in society that does not tolerate unmarried women. Joining ISIS, however, ensured having a husband and thus becoming a socially acceptable individual. (Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017) Some younger women noted that their family disowned them and/or threw them out of the house for converting to Islam. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Some women had to make a choice in favor, as they believed, of a lesser evil. One of the foreign ISIS members, Lina, mentioned that she preferred living with a faithful, upstanding spouse in a fractious environment of ISIS to being alone and miserable

`

in a female German shelter, where she had been staying before joining ISIS. (Moaveni 2019, 77)

For some, a divorce or living with a dysfunctional family contributed to the desire to seek mental safety in the religion and, later, physical safety within ISIS. (Nuraniyah 2018) Nuraniyah (2018) provides an example of an Indonesian woman who was cheated on and beat by her husband. At some point, she started to believe that her husband's family conducted a paranormal ritual to hurt her. It was disappointing both on the personal and religious levels, as conducting [supposedly] paranormal rituals is a *shirk*. As a result, she turned to Islamic alternative medicine – thibbun nabawy, which was supposed to heal her paranormal problems. Classes of thibbun nabawy introduced the woman to Salafi Jihadists; she started wearing *niqāb*. Later, her new friends helped her to divorce, escape to pro-ISIS communities, and marry a jihadi husband. Dealing with personal crisis and unhappiness essentially led this woman to seek alternatives and choose ISIS support and community. (Nuraniyah 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015)

Local women

Local women tend to join ISIS to save their families and children from the aftermath of the wars in Syria and Iraq. (Makanda 2019) They seek security, or at least a sense of it, within the "walls" of ISIS out of a survivalist desire to not be murdered or harmed. It is especially true for women who lost their family members, as, unfortunately, such women often became soft targets for assault due to the absence of family members' protection. Additionally, local traditions might impede widowed women from working. They essentially become poor and scared for their lives. (Gan, et al. 2019) Poverty and the fear thereof are one of the most common reasons among local women to join ISIS. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020)

Plus, women who lost their families in Syria, for instance, tend to be rather distrustful of the national authorities and prefer not to address them for help. (Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development 2016) In ISIS, however, it is ensured that her and her children's basic needs would be covered. Unlike in her hometown, in ISIS she can receive food, water, transport, a roof over her head, and a sense of protection. (Gan, et al. 2019) Covering basic needs and ensuring personal and familial safety have indeed become the priorities.

`

(Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Having one's own space, a house without extensive family, was yet another driver to join ISIS. (Moaveni 2019, 141)

Violations of human rights, and subsequent violence against the female population caused by state actors, sometimes paired with effects of counterterrorism measures, were also a driver for female radicalization among the locals. (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Moaveni 2019, 174) Having lived through such horrors, local women saw that everyone seemed equally voracious in their violence. Women acknowledged that, at this point, all parties had blood on their hands. Everyone used some kind of ideology to justify their violence. They questioned whether ISIS was really the evilest. They wondered if the actions of the other parties, local or international, were not also acts of terrorism. (Moaveni 2019, 127; 132)

The last motive for local women to join ISIS might sound rather controversial; should one question to what degree this option equates to someone voluntarily joining ISIS. Nonetheless, some local women became ISIS collaborators - not so much for the ideology or material benefits, but for the sake of survival. It was simply safer to be with ISIS than against them. (Moaveni 2019, 165-179) Furthermore, sometimes young local girls married into ISIS out of disparity. Seeing their families starve, they had to get married to receive ISIS ration cards, which would ensure some food for the girl's family. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017)

Local and Foreign women

This theme does not present common motivations among local and foreign women because this theme is the most "physical" of all. It concerns security in quite distinct contexts. As it is visible above, foreign women oftentimes mention the feeling of injustice and discrimination in the state of relative physical security. Local women, however, had to live through wars, loss of relatives and shelter, and experience of direct violence. Their physical security was compromised. Foreign women fled mostly the structural context of personal security, while local women fled the absence of the physical context of security. Therefore, the survivalist motivations of foreign and local women are quite different and should not be combined.

`

All in all, the first theme - ***Survival*** – includes frustration at the West's role in the Middle Eastern conflicts and a subsequent feeling of global Muslim persecution. It embraces anger at Western foreign policy and visible indifference towards Muslim deaths. Motivations mentioned in ***Survival*** highlight daily Islamophobia, feelings of cultural isolation, experiences of social inequality, and Western counterterrorism strategies that seem to target specific minorities. Veiling bans in Europe, Westerners making fun of Islamic clothing, and bombing raids across the Middle East further intensify women's hatred towards the West. These women start to search for opportunities to bring justice.

Survival encompasses a longing for a sense of security and a consequent desire to build a safe home in the form of a just divine Caliphate. Women have a new vision of a society, of an ideologically pure state that would abide by the law of God. This vision is supported by the fact that ISIS managed to capture physical land for its citizens-to-be. They want to participate in building Islamic utopia, where they would be safe to wear *ḥijāb* and where they would not become a target of xenophobia because of that. They want to participate in a world-changing movement and bring honor to *ummah* by contributing as mothers, nurses, doctors, teachers, and so on. Female foreign fighters embrace the idea of living in a spiritual, divine (contrary to the West) place where they are not objectified by men and are treated with honor.

These women want to live in a society where they can feel physically safe and be certain about their future, given the material benefits ISIS provides. They also attempt to find an alternative safe space after having experienced hardships in their personal lives. Some women join ISIS out of fear of abandonment, emotional or financial. Some join the group to escape dysfunctional families and seek survival in an accepting society.

Survival also includes those women who have witnessed failures of weak domestic institutions, the near absence of rule of law, and an unstable domestic economy. Such women seek ISIS for stability. ***Survival*** also encompasses those who hope to find adequate work. Low pay, absence of resources and rest, high (youth) unemployment, and lack of meaningful opportunities all result in spiritual void and loneliness. Such women demand ISIS as it offers

employment and high(er) salaries. Plus, it often promises a signing bonus per family member upon arrival.

In the case of local women, it was often safer to join ISIS. It was a way to protect children and families from the ravages of wars; it was a way to survive. Plus, local women needed security in a more material form, and ISIS offered just that in a form of shelter, food, healthcare, education, and coverage of family debts.

3.2.2 Affinity

As per TABLE 2, a set of motivations united under ***Affinity*** incorporates motivations that are rooted in empathy, compassion, and personal belief systems. It covers women's connection, spiritual or otherwise, to other people, their ideas, and a global cause. It embraces a desire to escape perceived isolation and to belong elsewhere. Lastly, it incorporates the need to be among like-minded people. There are three subthemes in ***Affinity.*** These are 1) joining jihadi husbands and/or families due to familial ties, 2) searching for camaraderie, sisterhood, and meaningful belonging in a community of like-minded individuals, and 3) believing in ISIS ideology, as it is preached by ISIS.

Foreign women

Some women lacked a sense of meaningful belonging. (Leede 2018; Patel and Westermann 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard 2015; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) They demonstrated interest in international relations and social activism, aspiring to act upon it. Subsequently, they joined ISIS to feel affinity for a global cause and to spend their lives meaningfully. (Colliver, et al. 2019; Leede, et al. 2017; Perešin 2015)

Some women felt distant from the society they lived in. (Saltman and Smith 2015) They also felt alienated from their own diaspora. (Perešin and Cervone 2015) Some *muhājirāt* expressed the lack of acceptance by the Muslim community at home, so they started seeking a Muslim community that would accept her elsewhere. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017; Perešin 2018) Women ardently wanted to feel strong friendly bonds and sisterhood with other Muslim women. Such sisterhood would bring them both acceptance and sanctity. Such

`

friendship would also be special. The reason why a relationship with a fellow ISIS sister would be so strong is because it is supposedly based on the love towards God and care for the *ummah* rather than on earthly simplicities. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bakker and de Leede 2015; Colliver, et al. 2019; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede 2018; Mietz 2016; Patel and Westermann 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) For many female foreign fighters, it was difficult to leave their families and friends behind, but funding true friends within ISIS was said to be worth it. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede 2018) In reality, women of ISIS are so closely involved with each other's lives that they indeed foster a sturdy bond with each other. (Colliver, et al. 2019) Women often affectionately refer to each other as *ūkhtī* or *akhwātī*. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

Aforementioned religious attire has become not only a question of security and hyper-visibility, but also a stumbling block in the question of affinity. Some girls faced utter rejection of pious religious clothing by their families. Subsequently, some of them decided to move to a place where such rejection wouldn't exist. ISIS has become a way to find like-minded people who also look like these women and further inspire other sisters to wear pious clothes. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017)

It was also mentioned that some women feel utter frustration and anger at the state of politics and Muslim repression. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Cook and Vale 2018; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin 2015, 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015) They experience secondary traumatization from exposure to disturbing content and hence wish to help. (Speckhard 2015; Windsor 2020) *Muhājirāt* from the Balkans were especially affected as the war and sufferings they had had to live through were still fresh in their memory. They had a hard time not responding to the cries of help from fellow Syrian Muslims. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) It is overall quite common for the women of ISIS to express hatred specifically towards the regime of Bashar al-Assad and those loyal to him. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) As a result, they join ISIS to fight against the Assad regime and ease the miseries of Syrians. (Perešin 2018) Women felt affinity towards people suffering in the war zones of Syria and Iraq, so they joined ISIS to help their fictive kin. (Speckhard 2015)

`

Local women

Some local women stated they felt more affinity with fellow Muslims across the world than with their home country co-nationals, who were Muslims in name only or were not Muslims at all. Such women wanted to live around the shared family of those Muslims. Consequently, to seek such affinity, they chose ISIS. (Makanda 2019) Overall, it is alleged that people who value their Muslim identity over a national or ethnic one show more affection towards the ideas of *jihād* and martyrdom. (Morgades-Bamba, Raynal and Chabrol 2020)

Local and Foreign women

There is a motivation that both local and foreign women share in full. It is the affinity with ISIS ideology. Some find the ISIS message close to their hearts and naturally desire to join the group of likeminded individuals who strive to live within the realms of pure Islam. (Gan, et al. 2019; Leede 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Ulaş 2024) Once in ISIS, its members tend to live in a very isolated social setting where belief in ISIS is encouraged and any doubt about it is punished. Hence, the affinity with ISIS ideology intensifies. (Wood 2017, 268)

In addition, some women chose to accompany their spouses in their travel to ISIS because of the familiar affinity. (Perešin and Cervone 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) It has also been shown that some *muhājirāt*, especially the ones from Asia, tend to join ISIS following family or other close ties. (Shorer 2018) Another ISIS female member mentioned that she simply traveled to ISIS with her father, whom she fully trusted. She did not see ISIS propaganda before joining, her father's decision to move to ISIS was enough for her to move as well. (Shafieioun and Haq 2023) Similarly to foreign women, some local women follow their husbands into ISIS. They do not necessarily desire to become fighters but rather to remain good wives to their husbands. Beside marital affinity, they additionally interpret it as a blessing to be affiliated with a jihadi fighter. (Makanda 2019) Across various communities, the idea of peers and families traveling to ISIS together has been spreading like an infectious fever dream, sweeping women (along with men) away on the pathway to ISIS. (Moaveni 2019, 101)

`

All in all, *Affinity* includes a wish to belong and a search for a meaningful global cause to support. It also encompasses a desire for camaraderie and sisterhood. *Muhājirāt* felt alienated both from the diaspora and their home society. Subsequently, they started searching for a community elsewhere. Similarly, local women felt the need to live in a different community - somewhere where they would be surrounded by real Muslims. Women felt that, unlike surface-level relationships in the West, they could find real friendships united in God. ISIS became such a community. In ISIS, they could also find sisters who would similarly adhere to Islamic clothing, without judgement.

Affinity also incorporates joining jihadi husbands and/or family and presupposes a degree of peer influence. At least some of these women felt affinity for the ideas of their loved ones. Others wholeheartedly supported the ideology of ISIS. Women also felt the pain of Muslim victims through being exposed to the news of Muslim suffering. Consequently, they received a second-hand exposure to such traumatic events. Women felt the necessity to help their fictive kin and therefore joined ISIS to do so.

3.2.3 Personal Development

As per TABLE 2, a set of motivations under *Personal Development* includes motivations that are rooted in individual fulfillment, self-challenge, discovering oneself, personal evolution, and the desire to be respected. This theme revolves around one's identity, and orbits around the topics of one's purpose and significance. It touches on an existential question of the meaning of life. *Personal Development* also includes the search for the resolution of women's personal crises and their sins redemption. It contains a pursuit of an opportunity to start a new independent life and gain societal respect. It also includes the rebirth of a person through Islamic emancipation and female empowerment, a renaissance of a new persona through the desire to participate in a humanitarian mission.

Personal Development includes nine subthemes. These are 1) search for life's meaning and purpose, 2) search for personal identity, 3) exploration of ISIS ideology triggered by personal religious beliefs, 4) experience of personal crisis, search for an opportunity to start a new (and independent) life, 5) desire for emancipation and female Muslim empowerment, 6)

`

participation in a humanitarian mission, 7) strive for redemption of sins, 8) disappointment with mainstream Islamic groups, and 9) yearning for societal respect.

Foreign women

Some female migrants believe that by joining ISIS they participate in a humanitarian mission, the goal of which is to help mistreated, suffering Syrians. Women witness such unfolding sufferings, see the general silence of Western and Arab countries, and, as it was mentioned earlier, start identifying themselves with the pain imposed upon other fellow Muslims around the globe. Helping those suffering in a humanitarian crises thus becomes an honorable mission for a woman, an act of altruism. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Leede, et al. 2017; Leede 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Perešin 2015; Ulaş 2024) Even if the life of *jihād* is challenging, women consider this struggle as the ultimate altruistic form of Islam. (Ulaş 2024) A woman feels reborn through her participation in a social movement striving for a better, more just world. (Windsor 2020)

Mentioning one's mission, some women, following the religious duty of migrating, found a purpose. They saw themselves as a founding generation of the utopic Caliphate. (Leede 2018; Mietz 2016; Saltman and Smith 2015; Ulaş 2024) Female foreign fighters noted that they had completely lost the meaning of their lives when they stumbled upon ISIS propaganda online. The group convinced them that the meaning could be found in the pure – ISIS version – of Islam (Gan, et al. 2019; Saltman and Smith 2015) Joining ISIS was a way to leave the social sphere and focus on private religious fulfillment instead. (Antunez Moreno 2020) They saw a meaning of their existence and personal significance within ISIS. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bjørgum 2016; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Speckhard 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Furthermore, some women saw their pious membership in the Caliphate as a golden ticket to gain her family's and societal respect. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Leede 2018)

Discussing one's purpose goes along with the fact that some women joined ISIS in search of identity. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) For some, becoming a part of ISIS was truly a resolution to one's identity battles and/or an adolescent rebellion. Foreign Muslim girls often found themselves trapped between traditional values and parental control of their families and their more liberal, mostly Western environment. Consequently, challenging

`

both the traditional and Western worlds, they discovered a third pathway towards their identity. Belonging to ISIS brought them a sought-after sense of stability and full acceptance within society. (Bakker and de Leede 2015; Colliver, et al. 2019; Perešin 2015, 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Windsor 2020)

Family conflict, a feeling of estrangement within a family and subsequent isolation added to foreign women's desire to join ISIS. (Moaveni 2019, 81; 142; 157-162; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) Oftentimes, female migrants had rather subordinated positions back at their home countries. Some felt additional constraints as their brothers were often favored and loved more. (Jacoby 2015) Some women also mentioned joining ISIS as an attempt to gain their parents' attention. (Ulaş 2024) In ISIS, however, they felt as if they could play a vital role, feel independent, take control of their lives, increase their self-esteem, and become something once again significant. (Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021; Colliver, et al. 2019; Cook and Vale 2018; Leede 2018; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) It was indeed crucial for these women to find their voice and to exercise their Islamic identity. (Patel and Westermann 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020)

Privilege also played a role in the search of female identity. Female foreign fighters arriving from the West, for example, tend to have had high-quality education, available technology, and safe living conditions. They had their basic physiological needs fulfilled. Subsequently, they had more opportunities to conceptualize multifaceted endeavors such as, for instance, political radicalization. Female migrants rejected their privilege by joining those they deemed oppressed. Yet, at the same time, they used that privilege to take a certain degree of power and control within the group. In this case, privilege let women be absorbed by the political, religious, and social forces that took over their identity and hence brought the identity crisis resolution. (Windsor 2020)

Some women sought personal development through Islamic garments. They were excited that in ISIS they would not be objectified by men, as it was in their home countries. (de Leede 2018) Abaya did not only save women from the male gaze. It also gave some peace of mind, as they stopped comparing their clothes to those of other girls and women. They stopped feeling sad over fashionable garments which were not affordable but without which

you might not have been accepted as a "cool" member of society. The sameness and strictness of an abaya erased such anxiety. It also made bad company stay away from women. (Moaveni 2019, 67-68) Women see ISIS as the place to reclaim their modesty, which, they believe, is not possible outside of the Caliphate. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

Additionally, joining ISIS brought some women freedom of expression. For some, the inability to wear what they wished diminished women's access to full citizenship of their home countries. Women felt that, despite having citizenship, they were considered just quasi-citizens who did not hold full access to a local political community. (Shafieioun and Haq 2023) In ISIS, however, they finally had an opportunity to abandon societal taboos and express their freedom through the right of wearing *ḥijāb*, supported by a belief that women were forcibly revealed by Western colonizers. (Bakker and de Leede 2015; Leede 2018; Moaveni 2019, 141; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) As it was mentioned previously, these women longed for a place where they could wear a *ḥijāb* without being alienated or abused. (Bjørgum 2016; Moaveni 2019, 141; Shafieioun and Haq 2023) Plus, some of them saw joining ISIS as the sign of rejection of Western values, more specifically Western feminist ideas, consumerism, and gender equality. (Colliver, et al. 2019; Jacoby 2015; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017; Ulaş 2024)

Simultaneously, women sought empowerment within ISIS. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Colliver, et al. 2019; Cook and Vale 2018; Mietz 2016; Ulaş 2024) Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) conducted primary research in the form of interviews and focus groups within ISIS-affected communities that experienced radicalization. The results of this research showed that acquiring status and power was more strongly connected to female rather than male radicalization. (Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) Women of ISIS obtain a degree of power through marriage. In ISIS, marriage is guaranteed to all women, hence, any woman can increase her status through it. A good husband indeed levels his wife up in the ISIS hierarchy. (Colliver, et al. 2019) Plus, once again, some saw the very fact of supporting their jihadi husband as empowering. (Saltman and Smith 2015)

Additionally, by being jihadi wives, women felt not only high dignity but also equality in fighting against the oppressors of Islam alongside their husbands. By joining ISIS, they signaled their choice to join the holy war against the dissolution of their religion. (Makanda

2019) At the same time, these women did not mourn their secluded lifestyle. On the contrary, they chose the patriarchal model outside of the rights-based framework. They emphasized the ideals of motherhood and wifehood. This way, women signify their struggle not only against the West but more specifically against Western women and their liberal ideals. ISIS became their form of emancipation from the West. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Colliver, et al. 2019; Jacoby 2015) Feminism for women of ISIS is embodied in their existential role for the family. They seek empowerment in supporting their religious family, maintaining cultural and Islamic traditions, and sustaining ISIS ideology alive. (Bjørgum 2016; Leede 2018)

Indeed, there are women who joined ISIS because they shared the group's views on gender roles. They wanted to adhere to being mothers, wives, sisters, and principal educators of the next generation. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Leede 2018) They further believed that the West enforces both men and women to be less "real". As a result, Muslim women are not allowed to be feminine, and men are not anymore masculine. ISIS, in their vision, has a correct approach towards gender roles and allows men to be men and women to be women. (Shorer 2018) Their personal development consisted of stepping into the feminine role, as prescribed by Islamic holy scriptures.

Within ISIS, women are able to bend gender rules, attempting to expand female contribution to *jihād* while safeguarding their chastity and virtue. Women have an opportunity to fill in positions associated with men: they work in recruitment, propaganda dissemination, fundraising, attack plotting, glorifying violence against the enemies, and so on. (Daymon and Margolin 2022; Colliver, et al. 2019; Leede, et al. 2017) They can also exercise the ultimate authority in the aforementioned *Al-Khansā'* Brigade, the kind of power that many women, especially from the rural area, have never felt before. (Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul 2017) Since ISIS male fighters could die or be put in jail at any time, women should be able to support themselves and their children. As a result, in addition to housewife duties, many women chose to do low-mobility jobs. Some ran online shops, some opened female herbal therapy and massage facilities, some co-run food vendors with their jihadi spouses. (Nuraniyah 2018) It might be said that this way women were simultaneously challenging the hierarchy of their home societies, and the hierarchy of ISIS. (Jacoby 2015) In addition, Western women joining ISIS meant that they had abandoned Western morale and had chosen

`

ISIS as a superior ideology. (Perešin and Cervone 2015) Hence, luring foreigners into ISIS additionally served as a sign of victory over the West (Perešin 2018)

When speaking of participation in ISIS, *muhājirāt* often mention the feeling of regained agency and acquired power. For example, the aforementioned Roshonara Choudhry insisted that watching Abdullah Azzam's speech on female *jihād* gave her a sense of female agency in executing violence. She obviously needed male permission to conduct violence, yet she recalled her agency through an interpretation of Azzam's speech. Choudhry then used her interpretation to legitimize a woman's violent *jihād*. (Pearson 2015) The study of Aqsa Mahmood, another infamous ISIS member, revealed her as one of the leaders in female ISIS recruitment. She was fully aware of her powers to lure people into ISIS, and she, in her own words, enjoyed it. (Windsor 2020) Similarly, other women found their platform through taking various other operative roles. Such assertive conduct of female ISIS members represents a form of emancipation of women who have been subordinated by their conservative societies yet who want to live in accordance with Islamic tradition. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

Another incentive to join ISIS was disappointment with one's life and a subsequent attempt to find an alternative to a dissatisfactory existence. ISIS in such a case was seen as a fresh start, as a way out of the personal crisis. (Bakker and de Leede 2015; Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021; Leede 2018; Perešin 2015, 2018; Speckhard 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) For instance, Umm Vegas, an Indonesian ex-employee of a multinational oil corporation, mentioned that her sudden pregnancy, a messy breakup with the baby's father, and subsequent single motherhood motivated her to become a better person. She felt guilty for her life choices, and she truly wanted to become an amazing mother. Thanks to the baby, she decided to study further and eventually obtained a master's degree. Her life became more religious, as the woman wanted to repent the sins of her past. She started wearing more Islamic clothing, her lifestyle began to change as well. Some of the Western colleagues at the oil corporation, she mentions, started making fun of her religiosity. This perceived discrimination motivated Umm Vegas to search for support online until she found ISIS friends and married a European foreign fighter online. It was not pregnancy per se that made Umm Vegas seek *jihād*, but rather a desire to find a moral, spiritual compass that would guide her to become a better human being. (Nuraniyah 2018)

104

`

For some women, moving to ISIS meant redemption of sins, an opportunity to leave behind the life of shame and *haram*. (Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin 2015; Speckhard 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) Ummu Yasir and Ayu, for instance, also searched for a spiritual and moral compass to become better selves. They have been suffering through harsh divorces, multiple job losses, drug addiction, and subsequent indebtedness. Both were also separated from their children for over 10 years. Another ISIS supporter, Icha, suffered through domestic abuse, painful divorce, losing custody over children, and being disowned by her parents. One more *muhājirah*, Ika, was spiritually suffering from drinking too much alcohol in the past, her tomboy phase, and alleged lesbianism. Previously mentioned alcohol abuse and drugs are a noteworthy vulnerability that made some women feel *jāhilīyah*. In order to escape such sinful ignorance, women would come to Islam while still not having in-depth knowledge of the religious scriptures. These women trying to be reborn into a new happy life chose ISIS, who had promised honor and utter purity. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Indeed, what united all those women above is that ISIS accepted them and provided these women with a new purpose, hope for life and a way of repenting their sins. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Some women have also indicated that joining ISIS was a way to escape traumatic experiences mostly related to domestic, sexual abuse and honor-related violence. (Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021; Colliver, et al. 2019; Leede 2018; Perešin 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Ulaş 2024) Women who lived through such a traumatic experience as rape joined ISIS out of fury, yearning for revenge. Sometimes they felt that rape had ruined their chances for happiness, so they joined the terrorist group to gain a chance for a happy, respectful life again. (Speckhard 2015)

Some women chose ISIS to cure their psychological problems. (Perešin and Cervone 2015) For example, some Indonesian female migrant workers noted the feeling of spiritual void in a new country. It was exacerbated by loneliness and inadequate opportunities for socializing, both caused by dislocation and limited time outside of work (some women would only have one day per month off). As many women would not have the privilege of free weekends or vacations, they would turn to online platforms to satisfy the need for socialization and emotional, spiritual thirst. It resulted in most Indonesian workers joining mainstream Islamic accounts. In this case, religion has become a source of ultimate comfort. In fact, it is crucial

to highlight that despite the public's focus on the recruitment of Westerners, ISIS has been thriving in places where Indonesian labor migrates. Such places are South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. (Nuraniyah 2018) Some women were also suffering through depression, sometimes triggered by deaths of close family members. ISIS, thus, became an escape from void and pain. (de Leede 2018)

These *muhājirāt* did not have a straight path to ISIS, however. They explored their religion and its interpretations first. In fact, for some, it was the frustration with given mainstream Islamic groups that led future female migrants to explore ISIS. Such disappointment could come from a teacher, preacher, or fellow members of the (mainstream) Islamic groups. Some Indonesian women who worked in Hong Kong mentioned that they got frustrated with their Islamic assembly after having seen a Muslim teacher selling charms to people. Such a behavior contradicted so-called pure Islam, as charms are a representation of *shirk*. Another woman cited leaving her Islamic group because of its female members being too obsessed with aerobics and extravagant charity instead of focusing on religious knowledge. Additionally, the disappointment in local Muslim communities increased in cases when their leaders cooperated with the governmental structures. As such, alienation from moderate Islamic groups, led women to seek more extreme versions of Islamic establishments. Joining radical groups became even a better choice, when women felt accepted by the new radical community. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Salafis, compared to such local Muslim communities, are quite religiously strict. They tend to be extremely knowledgeable on Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth.* Consequently, they are often seen as more pious and intellectual, and hence seem to have more authority over religious matters and more respect from their followers. (Nuraniyah 2018) Salafism has become rather attractive to Muslims worldwide due to its aura of genuineness and literality, paired with plentiful references to various sacred Islamic writings. Besides its intellectual attraction, adhering to modern days Salafism has also become a way to reject both Western and parental cultures. (Antunez Moreno 2020)

Lastly, some women turned to ISIS while trying to explore their sexuality. Taboos around the conversation of female sexuality, most prominently in traditional households, led some girls towards finding their sexuality within the Islamic context. Some of them joined ISIS as

`

it gave them the sexual liberation of having a husband without parents' permission. (Colliver, et al. 2019) Within ISIS, some women have discovered the erotic side of their feminine identity. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020)

Local women

Local women have sought the restoration of their Islamic identity as well. These women often cited their grievances about the Sunni rights in the region. They believe that Syrian Alawite and Iraqi Shi'ah governments are unfair and oppressing towards the Sunnis. In ISIS, however, these women felt proud of their Sunnism and were sure that Sunni ISIS will provide them with adequate rights. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020)

Another important motive for local women to join ISIS is war trauma. Umm Rashid, a young Syrian ISIS member, noted all the trauma she had to live through in Syria. First, she lost her husband. Later, her parents died in bombings. Once she joined ISIS, however, she felt empowered by their ideology and support; she felt empowered by being a part of *ḥisbah* and, as she believed, rightfully punishing women. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Umm Rashid enthusiastically recalls her times in *Al-Khansā'*. She described how they would imprison guilty women in the cemeteries, in the cages together with real skeletons. She explained how they would put women's family members heads inside those cages, just to drive a woman insane with severe fear and endless grief. Within such practices, Umm Rashid felt powerful. No one was able to challenge the power and decisions of *Al-Khansā'* members. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017) The cruelty of beating, biting, and flogging that *ḥisbah* conducted released the woman from her own fears and pain. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Joining ISIS made her feel stronger and more confident. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017)

Local and Foreign women

Talking about personal development and trauma might beg a question of mental health and its impact on the women of ISIS. The research demonstrated that mental disorders are often not related to radicalization. In fact, terrorists tend to be mentally healthy. (Silke 2008) There are studies, however, that state that certain character traits are rather common among radicalized persons. Apparently, certain dark personality traits such as sadism, narcissism,

`

Machiavellianism, and psychopathy contribute to both cognitive and behavioral radicalization among women. Additionally, perceived discrimination and religious immersion tend to increase dogmatism, which intensifies radicalization. Psychopathological features such as depression or schizotypal traits, however, were found not to be related to female radicalization. Nevertheless, such findings should not serve as a tool of generalization of ISIS women. As in the case of the whole discussion on female ISIS members, more research needs to be conducted. (Morgades-Bamba, Raynal and Chabrol 2020)

All in all, **Personal Development** includes search for meaning, purpose, and identity. Women seek to be a part of something bigger. They demonstrate their Islamic loyalty and thus gain a sense of personal significance. They demand an opportunity to be a good virtuous Muslim and search for an opening to embrace their Islamic and feminine identity. **Personal Development** also includes women's search for "pure" Islam, their choice of ISIS religious ideology, their belief that God is above anything. Women joined ISIS for the freedom of Islamic expression and personal development through Islamic clothing. They perpetually seek eternal rewards and express animosity towards other religions. Additionally, as women suffered secondary traumatization from being exposed to the deaths of other Muslims across the globe, they want to help and lessen the suffering of mistreated people. Hence, they sought ISIS to accomplish an honorable mission of saving those in need.

Personal Development also includes women's desire to have a personal growth through starting a new independent life and simultaneously leaving current unsatisfying life behind her. Women were ready to travel to ISIS to cure their disappointment with life and find an alternative to it. **Personal Development** also incorporates overcoming personal crisis and psychological problems through the search of an adequate moral and spiritual compass. Women found such a compass in ISIS. It became the space where women could repent sins, heal the pain, escape a history of abuse, honor violation, broken families, and dysfunctional relationships. They also saw an opportunity to seek revenge. Women who felt excluded by their families and found themselves alone, weak, and disoriented similarly found ISIS on the way of personal development.

Personal Development also encompasses empowerment and female emancipation. As some women grew up in conservative societies that relegate women to subordinate position, they

demanded freedom and opportunities to meaningfully participate socially and politically, despite their inferior position. Such freedom also entailed gaining confidence and seeking emancipation from the Western standards of women, reclamation of modesty, equality with men in their fight for Islam, and discovering female sexuality in the religious Islamic context. Some women were additionally seeking ISIS precisely because it upheld strict Islamic gender roles and scriptures, unlike some unsatisfactory mainstream Islamic groups.

Lastly, **Personal Development** was sought through gaining societal respect from husbands, families, other ISIS members. Women saw it a privilege to have a jihadi husband, to be a widow of a martyr. They also saw an opportunity of obtaining a better social position, a chance to try on a new social role.

3.2.4 Duty

As per TABLE 2, a set of motivations under **Duty** mainly embraces motivations that are rooted in responsibility, pride, commitment, fulfillment of obligations, compliance. This theme revolves around external and internal commitments that women feel obliged to fulfil. External commitment is a mandatory religious duty to migrate to the Caliphate, the establishment of which was declared by ISIS. Consequently, it includes societal duties associated with the religious prescriptions: marriage, raising the next generation, supporting *jihād*. Internal duty includes the obligation that women feel to avenge their lost honor and the deaths of their loved ones. **Duty** embraces female compliance with religious scriptures.

This theme includes four subthemes. These are 1) ISIS declaration of Caliphate, 2) fulfillment of mandatory religious duty, 3) fulfillment of religious and societal duty of pious marriage, necessity to marry in accordance with religious scripts, and 4) feeling of the absolute necessity of revenge.

Foreign women

`

Frequently, female foreign fighters cite religion as their motivation to join ISIS. Religious motivation usually comes in a form of exercising a religious duty to move to the newly established Caliphate and help building it – *Fardh al-'Aīn*. According to the holy scriptures, Muslims are obliged to make *hijrah*. This concept carries a requisite nature. As a result, women believe, they will receive a dual reward: a place in *Jannah*, their salvation, and aforementioned belonging on Earth. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Bakker and de Leede 2015; Cook and Vale 2018; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede 2018; Loken and Zelenz 2017; Mietz 2016; Perešin 2015, 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) In the same manner, some women were afraid not follow the holy prescriptions and end up in Hell (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020), since *Fardh al-'Aīn* is as much a female religious duty as men's. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Additionally, some women cited the (religious) beauty of sisters of different colors and tongues being united by *hijrah* and God. (Bjørgum 2016) Women also see *hijrah* as a unique gendered obligation. They are the Caliphate's mothers, nurturers, and a moral compass. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Plus, as a part of female religious duty, they would need to become wives and a mothers of the Caliphate. (Colliver, et al. 2019)

Some women link their migration directly to the *Hijrah* made by the Prophet Muhammad who fled to another city, escaping persecution and waging *jihād* against nonbelieving opponents. In this case, women are being courageous in following the cry for true believers. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) The possible hardships of living with ISIS are just a necessary and almost consecrated sacrifice needed to enter a forever blessed afterlife. (Gan, et al. 2019) Living through the hardships tests woman's endurance and determines whether this woman is worthy of entering paradise. Most women were ready to sacrifice living with their beloved families just for the sake of God. Women mention the pain of leaving their family behind. Even though they realize the necessity of such sacrifice in the face of God, their hearts still ache greatly. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) It shows that women of ISIS are committed devout actors who made a decision on what they considered essential to their faith. They go against sexualized expectations and, evidently, take on more conservative roles than was possible in the West. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

Female migrants genuinely wanted to build a utopian Caliphate; they were fascinated by its promotion as an ideal place to live in. (Bjørgum 2016; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015;

`

Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015) Women believe that ISIS-held territories can truly flourish into an Islamic utopia. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Such women do not see any excuses of why a Muslim would not participate in waging dutiful *jihād*. For them, ISIS is not a terrorist organization but a legitimate newly established state where people can happily live the Islamic life. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Leede, et al. 2017)

Infamous British ISIS member - Roshonara Choudhry - mentioned that she came across the videos of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam stating that women also had a duty to conduct violent *jihād*. Her interpretation of this message transformed her passive online curiosity about ISIS into traveling to ISIS and becoming its active member. (Pearson 2015) The importance of the Caliphate proclamation has been noticed in the numbers of people travelling to join ISIS soon after the proclamation. Hundreds of women responded to the call. (Leede 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015) For example, the amount of European women who departed for ISIS increased from 15% to 36% in just the first year after the Caliphate had been proclaimed. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017)

Some *muhājirāt* believed that abandoning one's non-believing family was also a religious duty, as blood ties cannot overcome family's betrayal of siding with *kuffār* and rejecting *jihād*. Living a true Islamic life within a real Islamic state is more rewarding and beautiful than staying with a family which rejects rightful *jihād*. (Bakker and de Leede 2015) Female motivation was further strengthened by the fact that ISIS displayed real-time results by conquering new territories and materializing prophetic Caliphate. One Indonesian-based supporter mentions that, upon the Caliphate proclamation, she critically studied ISIS and Islamic history. As a result, she was convinced by ISIS's offerings and joined the group, not out of fanaticism, but out of her own analysis and religious duty. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Some Indonesian women working abroad mentioned that they were shamed for being servants of infidels, instead of being servants to their families and husbands. In some cases, the fact that they were radically active online and supported *jihād* financially did not save them from being humiliated by peers. Such a burden of proof of loyalty transformed into women's duty to stop serving infidel masters and commence living an Islamic life. (Nuraniyah 2018)

`

Other women considered joining ISIS as they felt it was their duty to seek revenge on infidels, especially because the infidels are responsible for the division of the world into two parts – *Dār al-Islām* and *Dār al-Ḥarab*. (Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021; Mietz 2016; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) Other female migrants sought a dutiful revenge triggered by the loss of relatives and women's honor violations. (Perešin and Cervone 2015) Losing a husband or another family member generally invalidates a woman's traditional role as caregivers. Subsequently, they might start seeking participation in combat or suicide missions whereby making a violent statement not only in the name of external factors (leaders, religions, countries) but in the name of her gender. (Windsor 2020)

Local women

Many local women lost their family members and friends during the wars in their countries. They also experienced abuse and violation of honor. Joining ISIS for them was a way to avenge the deaths of the beloved ones and senseless murder of civilians, especially innocent children. This motivation is quite common among the local women, as foreigners rarely have similar experience. (Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021; Makanda 2019; Speckhard 2015)

One of the specific examples is a woman who was mentioned several times throughout the text – Umm Rashid. According to her, joining ISIS gave Umm Rashid an opportunity for revenge against the Coalition, the international forces that killed her parents during the bombardment. Plus, she remembers seeing corpses of children everywhere; Umm Rashid was sure that the Coalition's true goal was to murder Syrians and children instead of fighting the regime. Hence revenge against the murders became her duty. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017)

Local and Foreign women

`

Some women – both Local and Foreign – adhered to a new form of Islam-inspired feminism. As a comeback to Western feminism, a new type of Islamic feminism emerged – the so-called *jihād* feminism. It recognizes Muslim women's divine rights, and its core principle lies in a Muslim woman's duty to wage *jihād* against the oppressors alongside men. Despite the name, this new form of feminism has a rather different connotation from what a Western reader is used to. Aligned with the divine wish, *jihād* feminism stimulates women to consent to a lower social status within ISIS. In their turn, women of ISIS gladly help to sustain male dominancy as a part of their religious duty to obey. (Makanda 2019)

However, it is crucial to highlight, that most of these women are already used to taking care of the household and their families. They often tend to be already veiled and are used to a rather sedentary life. (Makanda 2019) Women who live in the conservative Islamic environment, tend to be quite devoted to following the tradition of female subordination and exhibit the features of feminine submissiveness. Such women become the spine of their societies. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) These women do not see it as oppression but rather as normality and their divine duty of household nurturers. Jihadi feminists do not necessarily attempt to fight but rather support their husband's holy *jihād* and educate their children on ISIS ideology. (Makanda 2019) It is also important to highlight that women who had been living through wars and political crisis for a long time, found their voices and political platform within religious expression and dutiful motherhood. (Jacoby 2015)

It seems true that ISIS women accept and uphold gender roles within the group. However, it does not equal to the absence of agency. Once a woman joins ISIS, she attempts to indorse dutiful self-piety, patience, subordination, shyness, readiness to accept her husband's death, and so on. The cultivation of such characteristics is not a sign of passive indoctrination. Female internalization of ISIS gender rules does not fit a simple binary lens of resistance or utter submission. Instead, it involves a multifaceted process of resistance to certain types of authority and dynamic attempt to obey new ones. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Lastly, some women saw traveling to ISIS as their wifely duty. They felt it was their duty to comply with the wishes of the husband who wanted to join ISIS. A woman named Dua, for example, felt loyalty to ISIS as an extension of her loyalty towards her husband, the ISIS fighter. (Moaveni 2019, 88, 181)

`

All in all, **Duty** includes a response to ISIS declaration of Caliphate and the subsequent mandatory religious duty that women, like all Muslims, have. Women demand an opportunity to participate in building of a new Caliphate and waging *jihād*, as it is their righteous obligation. Women believe in the afterlife and divine rewards, they see *hijrah* to ISIS as a test of endurance which can determine if she deserves heaven. It also incorporates societal duties of a Muslim woman who believes in jihadi feminism; that is to be a righteous wife and to raise children, to take care of a household, and to do a practical contribution to *jihād*. Some women join ISIS along with their husbands, as they see following one's husband as a religious duty as well.

Duty also entails revenge against those who had harmed those women and their families. It becomes their duty to avenge a loss of a (male) relative, violation of honor, abuse. ISIS is a way to outrage over senseless killings of civilians. In their desire for revenge, women often support ISIS brutality and are ready to fight alongside men. In addition, by joining ISIS women refuse the infidels and life with non-believing families. Instead, they choose a dutiful life outlined by holy scriptures.

3.2.5 Excitement

As per TABLE 2, a set of motivations under **Excitement** incorporates motivations that are rooted in enthusiasm, curiosity, anticipation, thrill, and the intrigue of the unknown. This theme comprises of aspirations for adventure, romance, and new hyped emotions of enthusiasm. It also discusses women's desire to inflict violence and strive to obtain fame of the ISIS women before them. **Excitement** also encompasses certain romanticization of the conflict and female response to the over-demonization of ISIS. The theme includes six subthemes. These are 1) seeking marriage for the sake of a romantic experience and material benefits, 2) longing for adventure, 3) desire to inflict violence, 4) external parties' over-demonization of ISIS and subsequent research into the group, 5) romanticization of the conflict, and 6) drawing inspiration from other ISIS women and subsequently becoming a copy-cat.

`

Foreign women

Finding romance and true love is yet another incentive for female migrants to join the terrorist group. (Bjørgum 2016; Gan, et al. 2019; Leede, et al. 2017; Patel and Westermann 2018; Saltman and Smith 2015; Shorer 2018; Speckhard 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) Some female ISIS participants appeared quite excited about meeting "jihotties" – so-called bad boys and real men – in ISIS. (Leede 2018; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018) The possibility of marrying an ISIS fighter seemed exciting, as such men were looked at and fantasized about as courageous noble heroes, holy warriors, willing to sacrifice themselves for an honorable cause. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Mietz 2016; Perešin 2015; Perešin and Cervone 2015) Marrying an ISIS fighter is also often seen as a blessing, as those fighters are seen as respectable soldiers of God. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Husband's seniority within ISIS ranks also tends to influence what position a woman would hold within the group. She might even become a privy to a top-secret conversation if her husband is high enough in the ranks of ISIS. (Spencer 2016)

Plus, the seeming glory of a man would reflect upon a woman herself. Should her heroic husband die as a martyr, her social status would increase. Her chances of entering *Jannah* would increase as well. (Bakker and de Leede 2015; Gan, et al. 2019) Being a martyr's widow is a privilege, an honor. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Martyrdom is the highest rank one can achieve within ISIS. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017) People who die on the pathway to God are not referred to as "dead", but instead are considered being alive (in the divine realm). (Wood 2017, 162) M*uhājirāt* are also happy that ISIS supports them with food and money, should their husbands die. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) In other words, the question of women seeking romance in ISIS is neither simple, nor that romantic.

To begin with, it is widely believed that women were frequently romantically lured into ISIS, primarily via online space. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate 2019; Jackson 2021; Loken and Zelenz 2017; Milton and Dodwell 2018; Moaveni 2019, 220-221; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017) Online courting prior to a woman travelling to ISIS and subsequent marriage, however, served as the next step of participation, as a new joiner's seal of commitment, rather than a primary seduction

`

technique into ISIS. Plus, sometimes out of curiosity, women would start searching for more information about ISIS because they would be interested in ISIS's message. Only later would they encounter a community of like-minded individuals, where a romantic interest might naturally spark out of shared views. (Nuraniyah 2018) Besides, some *muhājirāt* consciously chose to marry jihadi fighters because back at home they had to consider if a man really truly believed in Islam, if he had *'Aqīdah*. In ISIS, however, women supposedly did not have to worry about it, as men were allegedly pious servants of God. (Navest, Koning and Moors 2016)

Nonetheless, one of the American ISIS recruiters – Umm Waqas – specifically stated that not one single woman would leave her comfortable home just to marry a man. (Perešin 2018) Another ISIS female recruiter – Umm Irhab – similarly reiterated that women should not come to ISIS for the sake of romance or sexual adventure. Women, according to her should come for God. (Moaveni 2019, 112) Other ISIS recruiters similarly asked potential travelers to consider carefully whether they were travelling for the sake of marriage or for the sake of fulfilling their religious obligation. Traveling just for marriage was discouraged. (Saltman and Smith 2015) As it was noted previously, women are often portrayed as naïve romantic souls, when in fact they are mostly educated individuals looking forward to living a true Islamic life, which canons simply include having a husband. (Gan, et al. 2019)

Finding a husband is important. (Perešin and Cervone 2015) However, romance is not real within the walls of ISIS. For the sake of the argument, a local woman's words will be utilized in this paragraph. Umm Rashid, a local woman, for instance, mentioned that she hadn't known who her husband was when marrying him. Such a non-romantic encounter is the case for many women. (Speckhard and Yayla 2017) Women of ISIS themselves refuse the notion of fairytale romance and subsequent label of jihadi brides. They see it as another attempt by the media/the West to portray Islam as a misogynistic religion. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) It is essential to comment on the meaning of marriage within ISIS. Marriage is often regarded as a primary – and sometimes the only - female motivation to join ISIS, which is, however, not true. Milton and Dodwell (2018), for example, analyzed female guesthouse registry and found that around 77% of incoming women were already married and, hence, were not interested in traveling to ISIS to hunt a handsome jihadi fighter.

`

It is quite convenient to have a husband. Some women seek marriage because they are irritated by the lack of mobility without *maḥram*. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Other women were eager to marry only to ensure that their passage to ISIS-controlled territories was safer and the life in ISIS was easier. (Colliver, et al. 2019) Some women go to ISIS-controlled territories to marry an ISIS fighter because for them it is a chance to have a stable, sheltered living where women are provided for. (Windsor 2020) Additionally, when it comes to younger ISIS participants, marriage could signify a sought-after transition from a child to an adult. Younger female migrants were excited to become adults through the ritual of marriage. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Mietz 2016) Marriage, in other words, provided women with exciting, however limited, freedom. It is visible that aforementioned women did not join ISIS out of successful male seduction, so often attributed to the women of ISIS. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Living conditions in ISIS also encouraged women to get married. (Navest, Koning and Moors 2016) Female hostels or guesthouses were intentionally made extremely uncomfortable. Women who stayed there underwent psychological and sometimes physical abuse. ISIS ensured that women understood that being with a jihadi husband is the only way to a decent enough life within ISIS. Some women had to constantly remarry without giving a second thought to her grief just to avoid coming back to a *maqqar*. (Moaveni 2019, 251; Saltman and Smith 2015) Being a single woman in ISIS is extremely challenging, so female ISIS recruiters generally advise to come to ISIS already engaged to fighters or married. Otherwise, single women should mentally prepare themselves for the hardships and apply the principal of *sabr*. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015)

Women of ISIS are surely preoccupied with marriage in a spiritual sense as well. However, such a preoccupation takes its roots in the religious and political ideologies. Romantic and sexual aspirations are not the driving cause of the desire to get married. Female foreign fighters marry to fulfill their gendered role within ISIS, that is to support ISIS fighters, contribute to *jihād* and raise the future of Caliphate. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) *Muhājirāt* believe that marriage is a recommended Islamic custom. (Navest, Koning and Moors 2016) Female migrants additionally believe that marriage within ISIS is more fulfilling than it could be anywhere else. Yet, it is rather secondary compared to an excitement of a real

`

meaningful connection to Allah and their contribution to *jihād* and building of the Islamic state. (Loken and Zelenz 2017)

Feeling of adventure, excitement about traveling to a new land, and a certain romanticization of the conflict are also driving causes of joining ISIS. (Bakker and de Leede 2015; Bjørgum 2016; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Leede, et al. 2017; Leede 2018; Mietz 2016; Patel and Westermann 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Speckhard 2015; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2018; Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020; Ulaş 2024; Windsor 2020) It has been found that some younger members of ISIS simply felt bored with their lives. Joining ISIS meant participating in a movement that has a potential of changing the course of history, even if it entails committing violence and acts of terrorism. (Gan, et al. 2019; Perešin 2018) Joining an anti-societal group meant a life full of adrenaline for some. (Colliver, et al. 2019) For Western women, ISIS has become an aesthetic, a lofty resistance movement to belong to. (Moaveni 2019, 114) Others were seeking the sense of being heroic. (Speckhard 2015) It is also believed that by joining ISIS, Western women were additionally excited by the possibility to play a new social role that they would never otherwise try. (Bodziany and Netczuk-Gwoździewicz 2021) In this case, being an ISIS member has become a fantasy escape for women who felt that ISIS would provide them with an exciting life and coveted empowerment. (Antunez Moreno 2020; Perešin 2015)

It is crucial to highlight, however, that a certain degree of romantism and naivety do not automatically signify women having a weak motivation to join a terrorist group. In effect, it takes courage and solid determination for a woman or – even more so – for a teenage girl to leave their families and comfortable lives behind, travel to a war-torn territory and marry a stranger. Such actions presuppose strong motivations, strong will. (Perešin 2015; Perešin and Cervone 2015)

There are certain women who joined ISIS as a result of the copy-cat effect. They have seen intense media coverage of ISIS and felt a certain degree of admiration towards the women who left for ISIS. More than just admiration, however, women felt the same desire for scandalous fame. (Shorer 2018) Other women truly admired the resistance movements within Syria and got excited and inspired by the bravery of those people. (Windsor 2020)

`

Some women have also expressed their desire to inflict violence, to participate in *qitāl*. There are women who truly want to participate in combat and die an honorable death of a martyr. Others compete with male ISIS members in brutality and call for more beheadings, executions, and crucifixions. (Colliver, et al. 2019; Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015; Perešin 2018; Perešin and Cervone 2015; Saltman and Smith 2015; Ulaş 2024) One former British medical student – her name in ISIS was *Mujāhidāh* Bint Usama – posted a proud photo of holding a detached head in her hand. (Bakker and de Leede 2015) Another British woman – Khadijah Dare – proclaimed her wish to commit executions of ISIS's enemies, while reports from Mosul stated that a 12-year-old ISIS girl executed five women. (Perešin 2018) Another example is an American woman – Allison Fluke-Ekren – led and trained women ISIS battalions. She repeatedly voiced her wish to conduct attacks in the United States and expressed how exactly she would do it. (Daymon and Margolin 2022) Besides the examples above, there were reports of more ISIS female members who were rather frustrated that they could not execute enemies or freely fight on the battlefield with their brothers. (de Leede, Haupfleisch, et al. 2017)

Women of ISIS are conscious of violence the organization commits, yet some of them accept it. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Some ISIS women publish violent content, including beheadings and other public punishments. They call for a ruthless war between ISIS and the rest of non-Islamic world, they encourage domestic terrorism. Furthermore, they support and encourage rape and enslavement of non-Muslim women, especially if they are not *Ahl al-Kitāb* like Yazidis, for example. Women believe that rape and enslavement are a just punishment for deserting God. (Loken and Zelenz 2017) Additionally, some women are even calling for murder of fellow Muslims who belong to the *Shi'ah* sect. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015)

Women also felt significant antipathy towards the West; they craved to incite violence, a real bloodshed against the Western world. Other women were enraged by the Israeli's treatment of Palestinian people and subsequently wanted to respond to them with severe violence. Living in the horrific reality of ISIS, women become less sensitive to violence and dreadful acts that the organization has been committing. They justify occurring violence in accordance with the *Sharīʿah*, they celebrate it as ardently as male ISIS fighters. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Violence against the evil force, solidified in the "us vs. them"

`

dichotomy, becomes justified. (Saltman and Smith 2015) Consequently, living through violence combined with rage creates soil for horrific violence against their opponents. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Such women are excited to punish those they perceive enemies. (Perešin 2015)

One ISIS woman has famously tweeted that she'd be curious to become a Mulan and join men on the battlefield. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Some women proactively voiced their desire to commit *istishhād* operations and consequently become martyrs, even though fighting for women is not *Fardh al-ʿAīn*. Yet, it is possible that, as ISIS has lost its territories, women might assume more and more military tasks such as fighting and more advanced intelligence-gathering. There are already cases confirming this theory. (Perešin 2015) With the loss of so many male fighters, ISIS patriarchal structure might collapse, as women would have to step in into more central roles in their society, potentially including combat. (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015) Violent female participation in ISIS inevitably increases the overall military power of the group. (Perešin and Cervone 2015)

Over-demonization of ISIS also made some women quite curious about the group and consequently led them to researching more about the terrorist organization. This was especially the case for women who already felt great sympathy towards Muslim victims in Syria, and who have not noticed any action regarding that from other Muslim groups, including Salafis. Oftentimes, they could not be silent about fellow Muslims being massacred and raped. Those women could not understand why they had to hate the jihadis without seeing evidence of their evilness with their own eyes. Neither could they understand how others could mock jihadists, who are supposedly fighting for the *ummah* and against the Muslim murdered, while the critics are sitting in the comfort of their warm houses instead of helping. (Nuraniyah 2018)

Some did not believe what the media told about ISIS, signing it off as a typical Western Islamophobia. These women wished to see the evidence of ISIS brutality with their own eyes. (Speckhard and Ellenberg 2020) One of the Tunisian ISIS women mentioned that the news on the ISIS-run slave market and conducted crucifixions sounded like an ISIS opposition's propaganda. She was quite skeptical about such accusation; she did not believe ISIS would do such acts. (Moaveni 2019, 227)

`

Moreover, there are online female recruits who criticize Western media for over-demonization of ISIS. These women state that their lives in ISIS are great, that they moved to a better place where they finally feel free. (Moaveni 2019, 157; Perešin 2015) At the same time, female recruiters do not promise an easy life in the Caliphate. Yet, they present any potential hardships as a God's test of women's patience and faith. (Perešin 2015) Lastly, recruiters share posts full of violence glorification and romantic endeavors that awaits a woman in ISIS. (Scheuble and Oezmen 2022)

Local women

It is complicated to say if local women truly experienced excitement about joining ISIS, giving their lives' circumstances. However, one local female ISIS member mentioned that it was exciting to meet women from all over the world. There were female ISIS members from the Arab world, Europe, Afghanistan, the United States and so on. Subsequently, this woman could get to know cultures she otherwise would not. (Moaveni 2019, 185)

Local and Foreign women

Some local and foreign women learned about ISIS ideology from their peers. Hearing their ardent speeches about the holy jihad, inspired the same rage and excitement within them. Consequently, they decided to travel to ISIS-controlled territories in the pursuit of the ideology. (Gan, et al. 2019)

All in all, *Excitement* incorporates a desire for romance, adventure, and violence against the enemies. Women seek to find a brave and noble husband, a "real" man. They are additionally excited by all the benefits they could receive as jihadi wives. Women are enthusiastic about the possibility of assuming a new social role within ISIS. *Muhājirāt* also want to travel to a different land to combat their boredom, local women might be excited to get to know other cultures within ISIS.

Excitement also includes women's fascination with ISIS female members from the news and revolutionaries fighting Syrian government and entails women's subsequent fall into becoming a copy-cat. Women's empathy for Muslim victims blends with the excitement of

`

inflicting violence, with fighting along the men, and becoming a divine martyr. Consequently, occasionally additionally inspired by her peers, women demand an outlet to exercise violence and rage. Lastly, *Excitement* highlights female romanticization of the conflict and their doubts over demonization of ISIS and the desire to see the evidence of ISIS brutality.

`

4. Discussion

This thesis has attempted to conduct the first scholarly meta-analysis of contemporary secondary data on the voluntary female participation in ISIS. It endeavored to showcase both ISIS's supply and women's demand for the participation in ISIS. The study found that the ISIS's supply consists of the following offerings: fulfillment of religious duty, freedom to practice Islam, promise of *Jannah*, an alternative society and Islamic (Sunni) lifestyle. It also offers a sense of purpose and meaningful belonging, sisterhood, honorable marriage and family, and a fresh start. Additionally, ISIS's offering includes employment, free housing, food supplies, free education, money and/or monthly allowance, the absence of bills to pay, adventure, religious romance, and easy migration to the ISIS-controlled territories (including a lawyer upon arrival). Lastly, it offers an opportunity to restore one's honor individually or as a Muslim, establish female agency and live a secure, safe life.

It is noteworthy that local and foreign women tend to have distinct motivations. Local women mostly join for the sake of physical security, an opportunity for revenge, and the absence of alternative choice in the state of violence. Foreign women, however, tend to join for the sake of spiritual rewards, meaningful belonging, freedom to practice their religion, adventure, and emancipation from their host societies. Women's motivations intersect at the material benefits that ISIS offers. These benefits, for instance, include free housing and supplies.

Women who join ISIS demand an opportunity to fulfil their religious duty and participate in state-building, especially given ISIS's proclamation of the Caliphate. They want to join ISIS due to Islamophobia, feeling of isolation, inequality, and Muslim oppression throughout the world and the West's role in the Middle Eastern conflicts combined with the Western foreign policy. Some demand ISIS in search for meaning, purpose, identity, camaraderie, sisterhood, societal respect, sense of security, and an opportunity to start a new (and independent) life. Women also join ISIS in light of a personal crisis, searching for a place where they could repent their sins, emancipate, feel empowered and seek revenge. Some women demand to participate in a humanitarian mission or inflict violence upon the enemies. Others join as a duty to their jihadi husbands and/or family, supporting ISIS's religious ideology. Women who join ISIS also demand adequate pious employment, adventure, and marriage, in

123

`

romantic, strategic, or religiously societal sense. Lastly, some women join ISIS because they are disappointed with mainstream Islamic groups, wary of over-demonization of ISIS, tired of weak domestic institutions, romanticizing ISIS and its struggle, or becoming copy-cats. The thesis has proposed a unique categorization of the aforementioned motivations into five themes. These themes are Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement.

The question of marriage was a thought-provoking finding in female reasons to join ISIS. Available data highlighted that just because women of ISIS tend to marry immediately does not mean that they come to ISIS for marriage. In fact, primary sources tend to conclude that women are not lured into joining ISIS by sex or romance. Romantic love is most often cited by secondary sources which lean towards giving a subjective evaluation of female motivations. This subjectivity is most visible in the researchers' use of such adjectives and phrases as "naïve", "false empowerment", "young", and "jihadi bride". At the same time, the term "jihadi bride", coined by the media, is ardently hated by ISIS women themselves. In primary sources, marriage is frequently presented as a part of the experience, a part of the religious duty, a survival necessity. When a woman travels to ISIS, she accepts both the Caliphate life and having a husband as a part of natural unavoidable course of life.

Now that both the supply and demand have been outlined, it is possible to associate them in terms of the supply and demand theory. When it comes to radicalization, both curves and axes should be adjusted to the topic in question. To begin with, microeconomic market should transform its essence into a market of ideas where radicalization supply and demand curves exist. In the framework of this thesis, a producer or a manufacturer is ISIS; consumers are ISIS's potential customers – female ISIS audience which exhibits interest in ISIS. Since thesis discusses women who voluntarily joined ISIS on its territories, good becomes an alternative life in a Caliphate. Quantity of this good is represented via ISIS promises of religious and material character (e.g., an Islamic lifestyle and a good salary). Price represents a non-material price a woman is willing to pay to "purchase" the good the ISIS is offering. Leaving one's comfortable life, abandoning family, quitting a job, becoming a target of potential prosecution can be represented on the price-axis. When the price is high, ISIS, in its turn, might offer a bigger quantity of benefits within an alternative life it offers. As the data above has shown, ISIS supplies more to the *muhājirāt:* it offers lawyers, easy migration,

`

alternative lifestyle; it attends to the feelings that are unique to the people coming from foreign lands. When it comes to the locals, it mostly focuses on the sense of security only.

The supply curve represents ISIS's supply of a good - an alternative life in the Caliphate - that the terrorist organization is ready to provide to a consumer at a tailored cost. Similarly to the microeconomic model, the supply curve might shift right. For example, as it was visible in the data, once ISIS proclaimed the Caliphate, it immediately established the legitimacy of its good and attracted an unprecedented influx of women. The demand curve subsequently represents ISIS's potential female followers' demand for an alternative life and a subsequent desire to respond to the offered good depending on the price of the good. Naturally, the higher the price, the less a person is willing to pursue a good ISIS offers. Consumer demand in this case might shift right as a response to personal micro- (e.g., sexual assault) or external macro- (e.g., a national ban on Islamic attire, the humanitarian crisis in Syria) events. Demand in this case is an umbrella term for human motivation to "purchase a good". In other words, demand is a set of motivations to choose an alternative life and join ISIS. Such events were discussed in detail in the main body of the thesis.

The research has visibly focused on behavioral radicalization and analyzed women who have joined ISIS on the territories under its control. As a point of demand and supply intersection and a sign of balance, equilibrium represents the point where an individual is ready to pay the price for "purchasing" an alternative life and join ISIS, and ISIS is ready to provide an individual with certain offers in exchange for the price she pays. In the case of radicalization, equilibrium represents a point where most people would become behaviorally radicalized and join ISIS. As it was mentioned previously, it is important for the supply to be at least equal to the demand for the equilibrium to occur. (Gale 1955) In accordance with the theory, if supply meets the quantity demanded, the equilibrium and therefore behavioral radicalization is possible. This might further pressure ISIS into ensuring that their potential customers' demands are satisfied and their right of existence as a supplier of alternative life is justified. Otherwise, potential customers might opt for another producer. (Crenshaw 1981)

Shall we apply the supply and demand model to the radicalization, it would be represented as follows (Figure 5):

`

Price of
Abandoning
Current Life

Supply 1 of an alternative life

Supply 2 of an alternative life

Equilibrium = an individual joins ISIS
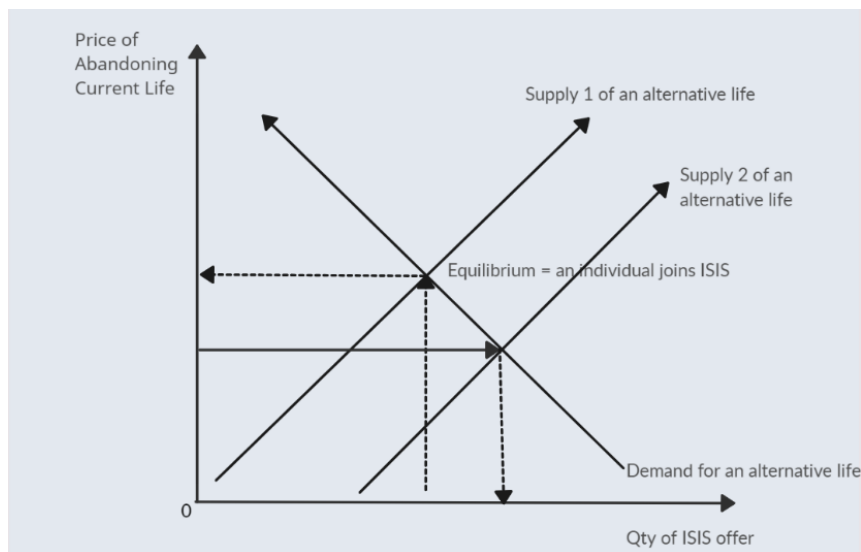
Demand for an alternative life

0

Qty of ISIS offer

Figure 5. Demand and supply curves; the impact of the supply curve (*Supply 1*) shifting to the right (*Supply 2*) (Figure by Anastasia Latenkova)

The graph attempts to show both the demand and supply curves, including their intersection, the equilibrium. It additionally represents what would happen to ISIS's supply and equilibrium points should the supply curve shift right ("Supply 2 of an alternative life") due to aforementioned reasons.

Substitute goods are opportunities to clear one's grievances and exercise the motives elsewhere rather than within ISIS structures. Such opportunities can be, for example, a possibility of local political participation, socioeconomic improvements, or good local minority representation. (Lindekilde 2012; Meierrieks and Krieger 2022) A complimentary good to living in a Caliphate can be travelling there. ISIS facilitation in making it easier to travel to the ISIS-controlled territories decreases the price of migrating there. In such a case, if the price of travelling to join ISIS decreases, then the price of choosing an alternative life decreases as well and the demanded quantity of ISIS's offerings increases. It is crucial to highlight, however, that the focus of this thesis has been the demand (motivations) and supply (ISIS offers) curves. Complimentary and substitute goods were mentioned rather in passing as a part of the main discussion.

There are certain limitations to the study conducted and therefore to the findings discussed. Such limitations have been outlined in the **Methodology**. Nonetheless, it is still crucial to

`

discuss how these findings are related to the existing knowledge on radicalization. As it was outlined in the **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**, radicalization models tend to focus on the individual radicalization. They often comprise of a blend of personal outrage and grievances, peer/network influence, displacement of anger and putting the blame on the unfair other, a strive for a change and a desire to act. The data gathered in the **Demand** section complies with these models, as women who join ISIS voluntarily also exhibit aforementioned blend of reasons to join.

Oftentimes, however, radicalization models carefully track a person's path into cognitive and/or behavioral radicalization, omitting a terrorist group's potentially enormous involvement into one's radicalization. Some of the models mention extremist propaganda and enabling structures which support a person on the journey to the radicalization. Yet, the models look at a terrorist group's offer as a part of individual radicalization rather than an equally sweeping force to a personal choice to join a terrorist group.

Looking at radicalization through a supply and demand model provides a new perspective. Recognizing supply of a terrorist group may give an opportunity to see what demand it will be covering, therefore identifying a potential target group. The model can additionally provide an opportunity to see the demand through the ISIS lens. The terrorist organization is interested in attracting new female members, especially for its state-building, expansionist, and administrative plans. Hence the group would recalibrate their supply in accordance with women's demand Expanding on the research, it might become possible to use such a model to analyze whether the targeted group has an alternative supply within the framework of the domestic policies. According to the supply and demand model, if one finds adequate supply for their personal demand in real life, they might ignore ISIS's supply all together. In addition, analyzing radicalization through a supply and demand model might give even deeper visibility into human radicalization. For example, it is visible in the data that should the supply curve shift right (e.g., through ISIS proclaiming Caliphate or expanding its territory), the price to "purchase the good" becomes smaller. Consequently, more people become behaviorally radicalized and join ISIS.

It is, however, important to consider that the microeconomic model of supply and demand typically deals with measurable prices and quantities. In contrast, when discussing

`

radicalization, one often works with unquantifiable subjects such as human perception and human motivation. Hence, when discussing prices and quantities on the supply and demand graph of radicalization, it is important to remember that these prices and quantities are not necessarily something material. Instead, they are rather a set of measurements which value is assigned by an individual for herself. (Calder and Staw 1975) For example, a price of abandoning a family will be perceived like a higher price to pay for an individual who has loving and supporting family members compared to a woman who barely has any ties with her family.

Further research might focus on gathering primary data on female motivations to join ISIS and female socio-demographic profiles, as they are still rather limited. Moreover, current state of research is significantly lacking data on local and foreign non-Western women, hence this gap represents an enormous field for new research and potential discovery of new female motivations. Further research might also explore loyal female ISIS members living in the new context of ISIS defeat and refugee camps. Further research might also focus not only on the women's demand to join ISIS, but also on ISIS's supply/offering that these women found attractive. Additionally, further research could explore substitute and complimentary goods, both in terms of states' counteroffer and ISIS complimentary supply. In addition, further research might include a more diversified profile of research in terms of gender, languages, adding and/or using resources that were not originally gathered and/or published in English.

`

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to answer three research questions:

2. What is the connection between women's motivation to join ISIS and the ISIS's offerings to women?
   a. What does ISIS offer to their female members, and what roles are they expected to assume within the group?
   b. What does existing scholarship identify as the motivations for females to join ISIS?

In the process of meta-analysis of the existing scholarship on women's motivations to join ISIS, I identified twenty-eight motivations, also referred to as subthemes. Based on a qualitative inductive thematic analysis, twenty-eight subthemes were categorized into five interconnected themes: ***Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement***. A set of motivations under ***Survival*** includes women's reaction to the West's role in the Middle Eastern conflicts, Western foreign policy towards Muslim countries, and subsequent feeling that Muslim community is under attack. It also embraces an ardent desire to build the divine Caliphate, where Islamic justice would ensure women's security. Next motivation revolves around women's experience of Islamophobia, ensuing feeling of isolation, inequality, and belief in the oppression of Muslims. Other motivations in this theme are a need of alternative employment prospects, work migration, and seeking physical security in the light of international, local and/or individual conditions. The next theme – ***Affinity*** – included such motivations as presence of weak domestic institutions in women's host societies and a genuine belief in ISIS ideology, as it is discoursed by ISIS. It also includes search for camaraderie, sisterhood, and meaningful belonging to a group of like-minded people. Similarly, ***Affinity*** incorporates a motivation to join a jihadi husband and/or family members due to familial ties.

Theme ***Personal Development*** includes a quest to find one's life's meaning and purpose, pursuit of personal identity, attempt to repent the sins, longing for societal respect, and a desire to partake in a humanitarian mission. It also contains exploration of ISIS ideology triggered by women's religious believes, disenchantment with mainstream Islamic groups,

`

and a desire for emancipation and female Muslim empowerment. Lastly, it includes experience of personal crisis and search for an opportunity to start a new (and independent) life. The fourth theme – ***Duty*** – incorporates ISIS declaration of Caliphate, the necessity to fulfill *Fardh al-ʻaīn*, and the feeling of the obligation to revenge women's loss and sorrows. It also includes the fulfillment of the socio-religious duty of pious marriage and necessity to marry in accordance with religious writings. Last theme – ***Excitement*** – embraces such motivations as desire to inflict violence, yearning for adventure, romanticization of the conflict, and seeking marriage for the sake of both a romantic experience and material benefits. It also includes the reaction to external parties' over-demonization of ISIS and subsequent research into the group. Lastly, it integrates being inspired by other ISIS women and subsequently becoming a copy-cat.

When it comes to the ISIS's offerings, the thesis has concluded that ISIS supplies an opportunity to fulfill (Muslim) religious duty, provides a free space to practice Islam, offers a different society which follows Islamic (Sunni) lifestyle and promises such significant religious awards as *Jannah*. In addition, ISIS supplies the idea that women can find their purpose and meaningful belonging within ISIS. ISIS offers sisterhood, camaraderie, religious romance, honorable marriage, an opportunity to have a family and a fresh start in life. The group also offers material benefits such as free housing and education, food supplies and money allowance, employment and the absence of bills to pay. ISIS also assists its members in migration to the ISIS-controlled territories. Finally, the terrorist group supplies women with an opportunity to restore personal and/or Islamic honor, reclaim one's agency and live a safe, secure life. As for the roles, the primary role of an ISIS woman is to be a pious wife, a good mother, and invisible infrastructure to support the longevity of ISIS. She is also responsible for raising future fighters of ISIS, indoctrinating them with ISIS's ideology, sustaining ISIS's society, and upholding morality principles. Women are also expected to work in administrative and operational positions, execute planning and recruitment, and assume jobs where only female presence is permitted. Some women surpass supporting tasks and commence to participate in violence and warfare.

Based on the application of the theory of supply and demand, the thesis demonstrated the connection between women's motivation to join ISIS and the ISIS's offerings to women. Applying the language of the supply and demand theory, ISIS is the producer, female ISIS

`

audience is ISIS's potential customers, an alternative life in a Caliphate is the good, ISIS's offerings are the quantity of the good, and the life a woman is willing to sacrifice to "purchase" ISIS's good is the price. The higher the price, the bigger quantity of the good ISIS is ready to offer, that is why ISIS introduces more offerings to the foreign women than local women. Supply and demand curves might shift based on the market's conditions. Similarly, supply and demand curves of radicalization shift as well. ISIS's supply curve, for instance, shifted and thereby decreased the price of purchasing their good when the group proclaimed the Caliphate. Women's demand curve, for example, shifted in response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and thereby decreased the price of purchasing the good.

Supply and demand curves meet at the equilibrium, where a woman is willing to pay the price of "purchasing" an alternative life with ISIS and joins the group. Equilibrium also highlights ISIS's readiness to supply a woman with tailored offerings in exchange for the price she would pay. In other words, when it comes to radicalization, equilibrium becomes the point where women behaviorally radicalize and join ISIS. The application of the supply and demand theory also provided a peculiar perspective on the alternatives to joining ISIS. It introduced the idea of a substitute good which, in the case of female radicalization, represents an alternative good, an alternative opportunity to address women's grievances and exercise their inner motivations in a different manner, outside of ISIS. In addition, the theory introduced complimentary goods that oftentimes decrease the price of purchasing the main good. In case of behavioral radicalization into ISIS, one of the main complimentary goods has been ISIS assistance in ensuring easier migration to the ISIS-controlled territories.

These findings fall within existing theories of radicalization. They similarly include various push and pull factors, highlight personal grievances, terrorist propaganda, social and political perception of the surrounding environment, the importance of peer influence, feeling of injustice, and a desire for a change. At the same time, the thesis challenges a common vision of the importance of a terrorist group's offerings to its members. Unlike most radicalization models, this research considers terrorist groups' supply as crucial as individual's motivations. As it was visible in the main body of the thesis, ISIS tailors its offerings to women's desires, grievances, surroundings, and geographical locations. In accordance with the supply and demand theory, ISIS ensures their supply is equal to women's demand, so that equilibrium, or behavioral radicalization, occurs. To attract new members, to attract

`

women, the maintenance of supply is vital. Otherwise, people might choose a different producer, another way to amend their grievances.

This research contributes to the discussion of female radicalization. The existing scholarship on women's motivations to join ISIS has grown substantially but has failed to provide a comprehensive overview and a clear categorization of all the identified motivations. The thesis is the first scholarly attempt to gather the motivations through the meta-analysis and categorize them through qualitative inductive thematic analysis. The results of this endeavor challenge the assumption that the radicalization of women into ISIS is simplistic, passive, and romantically driven. Furthermore, the research contributes to the discussion of female ISIS members' motivations by bringing attention to the differences and similarities among local and foreign women. Such conceptualization and categorization uniquely spotlight the variety and complexity of women's motivations to join ISIS. In addition, the thesis offers a summary of ISIS's offerings to the women and the role that women are expected to play within ISIS. This allows researchers to deepen their understanding on how ISIS views its women, creates both gender-tailored and general offers, and effectively responds to their audience's grievances.

In addition, this work contributes to the existing research on radicalization by offering a unique application of the microeconomic theory of supply and demand. Such application allows to visualize the connection between a terrorist group's supply and their potential members' motivations. It also allows to consider the presence and/or implementation of substitute, non-terroristic, supply and complimentary conditions that ease one's decision to join a terrorist group. Plus, this thesis presents a terrorist organization's supply as a sweeping force equal to the power of an individual's demand. This way, it becomes easier to investigate what demand a terrorist group is covering, what target group they are supplying to, and where their interests interconnect manufacturing more behavioral radicalization. Similarly, the theory of supply and demand lets one contemplate individual's demand through the ISIS's lens, as the terrorist organization is concerned with attracting more participants and therefore supplying precisely what their target audience craves. Lastly, it allows to perceive how a shift in terrorist group's supply or an individual's demand influences the occurrence of behavioral radicalization.

`

Nonetheless, the thesis contains several limitations. First of all, the meta-analysis is based on a sample taken from secondary sources. These secondary sources are still limited, mostly Western-oriented, restricted to English language, and based on self-identified motivations. Hence, while the thesis attempted to include all existing literature on female radicalization into ISIS, it could not possibly reflect the experiences of the majority of women of ISIS. Next, while the supply and demand theory offer a unique perspective on radicalization, it can only showcase behavioral radicalization. Cognitive radicalization remains outside of the supply and demand model. Lastly, while the supply and demand theory allows researchers to visualize the interconnection between ISIS's supply and women's demand, it cannot transfer its microeconomic quantifiability to human radicalization. Hence, in its current form, it cannot forecast the exact quantity of demand and supply needed for the equilibrium to occur. Nonetheless, the thesis offers practical application for the study of behavioral radicalization and its prevention. It further offers a comprehensive overview of female motivations to join ISIS and ISIS's offerings together with female role expectations. This knowledge might assist both researchers and security practioners in developing adequate preventive measures, security policies, and gender-sensitive deradicalization models.

The women of ISIS have long been in the shadows of societal gender biases. Remaining unnoticed and neglected, they are transforming into the ISIS's main force. They continue ISIS's legacy in the absence of ISIS fighters, they indoctrinate children, and they demand to inflict violence upon the "other". Simultaneously, ISIS is responding to their call and providing opportunities for women to execute their desires. The group further fuels women's motivations to join by whispering its tailored-made promises to women's hearts. It is, therefore, vital to face the uncomfortable reality of female violence, restitute ISIS women's agency, and utilize the knowledge on intersection between ISIS's offerings to women and women's motivation to join in order to create an adequate response to the emerging women-driven threat.

`

Master's Thesis Summary

The thesis examines the interconnection between ISIS's offerings to women and female motivations to join the group. It further challenges the idea that the women of ISIS are passive, romantically driven victims who were forced to join the terrorist organization. Applying a microeconomic theory of supply and demand, the thesis explores the relationship between women's motivations and ISIS's offerings. By conducting a meta-analysis of the existing scholarship published between 2015 and 2025 combined with qualitative inductive thematic analysis, the thesis identifies five themes in female motivations to join ISIS. These themes are Survival, Affinity, Personal Development, Duty, and Excitement. These themes include twenty-eight subthemes that provide a nuanced understanding of the female motivations to join ISIS.

The research also documents twenty-one of ISIS's offerings to attract and recruit women into its ranks. The offerings are strategically designed to address the complexity and variety of women's motivations. In addition, the thesis explores what roles female members are expected to perform within ISIS. The primary roles include pious motherhood, numerous administrative and opertional tasks, ensuring the longevity of ISIS, and recruitment of new members. The study of female roles spotlights the multilayered nature of female participation in ISIS.

By examining how ISIS's offerings and women's motivations intersect and influence each other, the thesis contributes to a more profound understanding of female participation in such terrorist groups as ISIS. The thesis challenges the common assumption about the women of ISIS and their role within ISIS, highlights the importance of a terrorist group's offerings, and provides a framework for further investigation of behavioral radicalization. The findings of the research carry academic relevance and implications for radicalization studies, terrorism prevention strategies, and deradicalization policies, highlighting the necessity of overcoming gender biases in the study of extremism and violence.

`

List of References

Adraoui, Mohamed-Ali. 2022. "Islamic Doctrines: Theorizing Radicalization through the Concept of "The New Spaces of Jihadism"." In *Radicalization In Theory and Practice: Understanding Religious Violence In Western Europe*, edited by Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, 68-92. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12202059.

Afsaruddin, Asma. "Sunnah | Definition & Significance in Islam." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sunnah.

Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development. 2016. *Women and Violent Radicalization in Jordan.* Technical Report, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/Women-Violent-Radicalization-Jordan-EN.pdf.

Al-Khansā'Brigade, and Charlie Winter. 2015. *Women of the Islamic State: A manifesto on women by the Al-Khanssaa Brigade.* Translation and analysis, London: Quilliam. Accessed February 14, 2023.

Antunez Moreno, Juan Carlos. 2020. "Western DAESH Women: Ideology, Profile and Motivation." *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional* 155-174. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.18847/1.12.9.

Atabik, Ahmad, and Moh Muhtador. 2023. "Jihad and Interpretation of Religious Texts on Female Terrorists in Indonesia." *Qudus international journal of Islamic studies: QIJIS* 1-30. doi:https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i1.16342.

Bakker, Edwin, and Seran de Leede. 2015. "European Female Jihadists in Syria: Exploring an Under-Researched Topic." *ICCT research paper (Online)* 1-13. doi:https://doi.org/10.19165/2015.2.02.

Bjørgum, Maren Hald. 2016. "Jihadi Brides: Why do Western Muslim Girls Join ISIS?" *Global Politics Review* 91-102. https://globalpoliticsreview.com/2464-9929_v02_i02_p091/.

Bodziany, Marek, and Marzena Netczuk-Gwoździewicz. 2021. "Feminization of Terror: Psychological Analysis of the Role of Women in Terrorist Structures." *Terrorist*

`

Structures,   Studies   in   Conflict   &   Terrorism   266-283.
doi:10.1080/1057610X.2018.1531542.

Bonner, Michael. 2008. *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice.* Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University Press. doi:https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400827381.

Calder, Bobby J., and Barry M. Staw. 1975. "Self-perception of intrinsic and extrinsic
motivation." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 599-605.
doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/h0077100.

Cherney, Adrian, Idhamsyah E Putra, Vici Sofianna Putera, Fajar Erikha, and Muhammad
Faisal Magrie. 2021. "The push and pull of radicalization and extremist
disengagement: The application of criminological theory to Indonesian and
Australian cases of radicalization." *Journal of Criminology* 407-424.
https://doi.org/10.1177/26338076211034893.

Colliver, Chloe, Seran de Leede, Lucie Parker, Hadiya Masieh, Rebecca Skellett, Alexia
Augeri, and Charlotte Moeyens. 2019. *Women, Girls and Islamist Extremism.* A
Toolkit for Intervention Practitioners, London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.
https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ISD-Toolkit-English-Final-
25-10-19.pdf.

Cook, Joana, and Gina Vale. 2018. *From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and
Minors of Islamic State.* Report, London: International Centre for the Study of
Radicalisation.   https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-
Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-
of-Islamic-State.pdf.

Coulson, N. James and Shamsy, Ahmed El. "sharia." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 3, 2024.
Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/sharia.

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. 2019. *Gender dimensions of the
response to returning foreign terrorist fighters: Research perspectives.* Trends
Report, United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive
Directorate.
https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/f
eb_2019_cted_trends_report_0.pdf.

Crenshaw, Martha. 1981. "The Causes of Terrorism." *Comparative Politics* 379-399.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/421717.

Daymon, Chelsea, and Devorah Margolin. 2022. *Women in American Violent Extremism: An Examination of Far-Right and Salafi-Jihadist Movements.* Washington, D.C.: Program on Extremism at George Washington University. https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/8/.

de Leede, Seran. 2018. "Western Women Supporting IS/Daesh in Syria and Iraq – An Exploration of their Motivations." *International Annals of Criminology* 43–54.

de Leede, Seran, Renate Haupfleisch, Katja Korolkova, and Monika Natter. 2017. *Radicalisation and violent extremism – focus on women: How women become radicalised, and how to empower them to prevent radicalisation.* Study, Brussels: European Parliament Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596838/IPOL_STU(2017)596838_EN.pdf.

Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/chivalry.

European Commission. *Periodic Reporting for period 1 – DerRadIslam. Qur'an and Qital. The violence against the Other in a historical critical deradicalizing perspective.* Accessed February 14, 2024. https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/746451/reporting.

Gale, David. 1955. "The Law of Supply and Demand." *Mathematica Scandinavica* 155-169. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24490348.

Galonnier, Juliette. 2022. "Conversion Models." In *Radicalization in Theory and Practice: Understanding Religious Violence in Western Europe*, edited by Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, 93-118. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. doi:10.3998/mpub.12202059.

Gan, Ruth, Loo Seng Neo, Jeffery Chin, and Majeed Khader. 2019. "Change is the Only Constant: The Evolving Role of Women in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)." *Women & Criminal Justice* 204-220. doi:10.1080/08974454.2018.1547674.

Hafez, Mohammed, and Creighton Mullins. 2015. "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 958-975. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375.

Hardy, Keiran. 2018. "Comparing Theories of Radicalisation with Countering Violent Extremism Policy." *Journal of Deradicalization* 76-110.

Hegghammer, Thomas. 2010. "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad." *International Security* 53-94. https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/The_Rise_of_Muslim_Foreign_Fighters.pdf.

Hoyle, Carolyn, Alexandra Bradford, and Ross Frenett. 2015. *Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS.* London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/becoming-mulan-female-western-migrants-to-isis/.

Ide, Tobias. 2024. "Supply and Demand: Drivers of Women Non-Combat Participation in Rebel Groups." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2024.2372862.

Islam Question & Answer. "Who Is a Woman's Mahram? - Islam Question & Answer." Accessed February 14, 2024. https://islamqa.info/en/answers/5538/who-is-a-womans-mahram.

Jackson, Leonie B. 2021. "Framing British 'Jihadi Brides': Metaphor and the Social Construction of I.S. Women." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1733-1751. doi:10.1080/09546553.2019.1656613.

Jacoby, Tami Amanda. 2015. "Jihadi brides at the intersections of contemporary feminism." *New Political Science* 525-542. doi:10.1080/07393148.2015.1089028.

King, Michael, and Donald M. Taylor. 2011. "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 602-622. doi:10.1080/09546553.2011.587064.

Kleinmann, Scott Matthew. 2012. "Radicalization of Homegrown Sunni Militants in the United States: Comparing Converts and Non-Converts." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 278-297. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2012.656299.

Klik, Jan. 2022. "Hijrah of Our Time: Islamic Concept of Religious Emigration in Contemporary Salafism." *Review of Social Sciences & Humanities* 1–20. doi:https://doi.org/10.24132/actaff.2022.14.1.1.

Kocmanová, Markéta, and Kristián Földes. 2024. "Risk of Romani Radicalization in the Balkans: Freeing the Shackles of a Marginalized Identity." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 1-23. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2024.2307088.

`

Kruglanski, Arie W., Jocelyn J. Bélanger, and Rohan Gunaratna. 2019. *The Three Pillars of Radicalization: Needs, Narratives, and Networks.* New York:: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190851125.001.0001.

Langman, Peter. 2018. "Different Types of Role Model Influence and Fame Seeking Among Mass Killers and Copycat Offenders." *American Behavioral Scientist* 210–228. doi:10.1177/0002764217739663.

Liberto, Daniel. "Zakat: The Basic Rules for One of the Five Pillars of Islam." In *Investopedia*. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/z/zakat.asp#:~:text=Zakat%20is%20a%20religious%20obligation,families%20with%20their%20essential%20needs.

Lindekilde, Lasse. 2012. "Introduction: assessing the effectiveness of counter-radicalisation policies in northwestern Europe." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 335-344. doi:10.1080/17539153.2012.723522.

Loken, Meredith, and Anna Zelenz. 2017. "Explaining extremism: Western women in Daesh." *European Journal of International Security* 45–68. doi:10.1017/eis.2017.13.

Makanda, Joseph. 2019. "The Jihad Feminist Dynamics of Terrorism and Subordination of Women in the ISIS." *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies* 135-159. doi:10.17583/generos.2019.3814.

Merriam-Webster. Accessed February 14, 2024. http://www.merriam-webster.com.

Mccauley, Clark, and Sophia Moskalenko. 2017. "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model." *The American Psychologist* 205-216. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000062.

Meierrieks, Daniel, and Tim Krieger. 2022. "Economic Perspectives." In *Radicalization In Theory and Practice: Understanding Religious Violence In Western Europe*, edited by Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, 23-44. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12202059.

Mendelsohn, Barak. 2011. "Foreign Fighters—Recent Trends." *Orbis* 189-202. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2011.01.002.

Mietz, Eric. 2016. "WHAT ABOUT THE WOMEN?: Understanding and Addressing the Problem of ISIS Female Recruitment in the Western Balkans." *Belgrade Centre for Security Policy.* http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04790.

Milton, Daniel, and Brian Dodwell. 2018. "Jihadi Brides? Examining a Female Guesthouse Registry from the Islamic State's Caliphate." *CTC Sentinel* 16-22.

`

https://ctc.westpoint.edu/jihadi-brides-examining-female-guesthouse-registry-islamic-states-caliphate/.

Moaveni, Azadeh. 2019. *Guest House for Young Widows: Among the Women of ISIS.* London: Scribe Publications.

Moghaddam, Fathali M. 2005. "The Staircase to Terrorism." *The American Psychologist* 161-169. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.2.161.

Morgades-Bamba, Clara Isabel, Patrick Raynal, and Henri Chabrol. 2020. "Exploring the Radicalization Process in Young Women." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1439-1457. doi:10.1080/09546553.2018.1481051.

Navest, Aysha, Martijn de Koning, and Annelies Moors. 2016. "Chatting about marriage with female migrants to Syria." *Anthropology Today* 22-25. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12241.

Neumann, Peter R. 2014. *The New Jihadism: A Global Snapshot.* King's College , London: International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence. https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ICSR-Report-The-New-Jihadism-A-Global-Snapshot.pdf.

Neumann, Peter R. 2013. "The trouble with radicalization." *International Affairs* 873-893. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23479398.

Nuraniyah, Nava. 2018. "Not Just Brainwashed: Understanding the Radicalization of Indonesian Female Supporters of the Islamic State." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 890-910. doi:10.1080/09546553.2018.1481269.

Orsini, Alessandro. 2020. "What Everybody Should Know about Radicalization and the DRIA Model." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 68–100. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2020.1738669.

Oxford Reference. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://www.oxfordreference.com.

Pearson, Elizabeth. 2015. "The Case of Roshonara Choudhry: Implications for Theory on Online Radicalization, ISIS Women, and the Gendered Jihad." *Policy & Internet* 5-33. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.101.

Pearson, Elizabeth, and Emily Winterbotham. 2017. "Women, Gender and Daesh Radicalisation." *The RUSI Journal* 60 - 72. doi:10.1080/03071847.2017.1353251.

Perešin, Anita. 2015. "Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 21-38. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26297379.

`

Perešin, Anita. 2018. "Why Women from the West Are Joining ISIS." *International Annals of Criminology* 32-42. doi:10.1017/cri.2018.19.

Perešin, Anita, and Alberto Cervone. 2015. "The Western Muhajirat of ISIS." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 495-509. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1025611.

Pindyck, Rober, and Daniel Rubinfeld. 2018. *Microeconomics, Global Edition.* Harlow: Pearson Education, Limited.

Pisoiu, Daniela. 2022. "Social Movement Research." In *Radicalization in Theory and Practice : Understanding Religious Violence in Western Europe*, edited by Thierry Balzacq and Elyamine Settoul, 46-67. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/59876/9780472902835.pdf;jsessionid=EC04765EF4A64D59C05220E3AAFBB6EB?sequence=1.

Reverso Context. Accessed February 14, 2024. https://context.reverso.net.

Saltman, Erin Marie, and Melanie Smith. 2015. *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part' Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon.* London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf.

Scheuble, Sophie, and Fehime Oezmen. 2022. *Extremists' Targeting of Young Women on Social Media and Lessons from P/CVE.* Luxembourg: PublicationS Office of the European Union. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/extremists-targeting-young-women-social-media-and-lessons-pcve-february-2022_en.

Schmid, Alex P. 2013. *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.* ICCT Research Paper, The Hague: ICCT. https://www.icct.nl/publication/radicalisation-de-radicalisation-counter-radicalisation-conceptual-discussion-and.

Schmid, Alex P., and Albert J. Jongman. 1988. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature.* Amsterdam: North-Holland.

Sedgwick, Mark. 2010. "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 479 — 494. doi:10.1080/09546553.2010.491009.

`

Shorer, Marina. 2018. "Mobilization of Women to Terrorism: Tools and Methods of ISIS." *International Annals of Criminology* 93 - 104. doi:https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2018.16.

Silke, Andrew. 2008. "Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization." *European Journal of Criminology* 99–123. doi:10.1177/1477370807084226.

Souleimanov, Emil Aslan. 2018. *Religion and Civil War: The Cases involving Salafi Groups.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Speckhard, Anne. 2015. "Female Terrorists in ISIS, al Qaeda and 21rst Century Terrorism." *Trends.* May 24. https://trendsresearch.org/research.php?id=955&title=Female_Terrorists_in_ISIS,_ al_Qaeda_and_21st_Century_Terrorism.

Speckhard, Anne. 2023. *ISIS Women Using 13-Year-Old Boys as Sex Slaves To Breed New Fighters.* Brief Report, Washington, D.C.: International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism. https://icsve.org/isis-women-using-13-year-old-boys-as-sex-slaves-to-breed-new-fighters/.

Speckhard, Anne, and Ahmet S. Yayla. 2017. *She Doesn't Regret Torturing Women for ISIS.* Brief Report, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism. https://icsve.org/she-doesnt-regret-torturing-women-for-isis/.

Speckhard, Anne, and Ardian Shajkovci. 2018. *10 Reasons Western Women Seek Jihad and Join Terror Groups.* Research Paper, Washington, D.C.: International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329076201_10_Reasons_Western_Wome n_Seek_Jihad_and_Join_Terror_Groups.

Speckhard, Anne, and Molly Ellenberg. 2020. "ISIS in Their Own Words: Recruitment History, Motivations for Joining, Travel, Experiences in ISIS, and Disillusionment over Time – Analysis of 220 In-depth Interviews of ISIS Returnees, Defectors and Prisoners." *Journal of Strategic Security* 82-127. doi:https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.13.1.1791.

Speckhard, Anne, Ardian Shajkovci, and Chinara Esengul. 2017. *Analysis of the Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan, including the Roles of Kyrgyz Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan.* Research Report, Washington, D.C.: International Center for the Study

`

of Violent Extremism. https://icsve.org/analysis-of-the-drivers-of-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-in-kyrgyzstan-including-the-roles-of-kyrgyz-women-in-supporting-joining-intervening-in-and-preventing-violent-extremism-in-kyrgyzsta/.

Spencer, Amanda N. 2016. "The Hidden Face of Terrorism: An Analysis of the Women in Islamic State." *Journal of Strategic Security* 74-98. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.9.3.1549.

Stempien, Marta Sara. 2021. "The Role of Women and Girls in the Eyes of Islamic State: A Content Analysis of Dabiq and Rumiyah Magazines." *Journal of Human Security* 46–56. doi:10.12924/johs2021.17010046.

Strømmen, Ester. 2016. "Female Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Da'esh: Victims or Perpetrators?" *PluriCourts Research Paper No. 17-01.* https://ssrn.com/abstract=2962231.

Strømmen, Ester. 2016. *Female Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Da'esh: Victims or Perpetrators?* PluriCourts Research Paper No. 17-01, Oslo: PluriCourts. https://elsevier-ssrn-document-store-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/17/05/18/ssrn_id2962231_code468680.pdf?response-content-disposition=inline&X-Amz-Security-Token=IQoJb3JpZ2luX2VjED8aCXVzLWVhc3QtMSJIMEYCIQCcPpXViMG0U7ZTLbUtz80pga2Xpp0CmiryWTMZm15nCAIhAN5353b9pTp5.

Swain, Jon. 2018. "A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research: Using a Practical Example." *SAGE Publications Ltd* 1-21. doi:10.4135/9781526435477.

Tarras-Wahlberg, Louisa. 2020. "ISIS Female Recruits: The Alluring Propaganda Promises." In *The SAGE Handbook of Propaganda*, edited by Paul Baines, Nicholas O'Shaughnessy and Nancy Snow, 1-15. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-handbook-of-propaganda/book262889.

Ulaş, Gulfer. 2024. "Encounters with ISIS-affiliated women: radicalisation process, motivations, and their journey." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2024.2338498.

United Nations Security Council. 2014. "S/RES/2178 (2014)." *United Nations Security Council.* September 24. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n14/547/98/pdf/n1454798.pdf?token=nLDKz4H2jyU0MB7ouI&fe=true.

`

United Nations Statistics Division. 2017. "Romanization System from Arabic Letters to Latinized Letters 2007 - ENGLISH." *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics.* July 13. Accessed February 2024. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/11th-uncsgn-docs/E_Conf.105_137_CRP.137_14_Romanization%20System%20from%20Arabic%20%20letters%20to%20Latinized%20%20%20letters%202007%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf.

Vale, Gina. 2019. *Women in Islamic State: From Caliphate to Camps.* ICCT Policy Brief, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep19621.

Vavichkina, Tatiana, Yulia Vlasova, and Elena Paymakova. 2021. "Present and Future of the Arabic Language Transliteration on the Internet (linguistic features of Arabizi)." *Linguistica Antverpiensia* 195– 213. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358146218_Present_and_Future_of_the_Arabic_Language_Transliteration_on_the_Internet_linguistic_features_of_Arabizi.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2006. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 207–239. doi:10.1080/10576100500497004.

Windsor, Leah. 2020. "The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 506-538. doi:10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457.

Wood, Graeme. 2017. *The Way of the Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State.* London: Allen Lane.

Master's Thesis Research Proposal

Motivation

Women are often seen as structural sufferers who were forced to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (hereafter, "ISIS"). While it is a correct assumption for some, it is not equally the case for all the female members of ISIS. Some women join ISIS voluntarily and execute violent attacks (Speckhard 2015; Loken and Zelenz 2017; Tarras-Wahlberg 2020). Additionally, there are known cases when women radicalized their family members; asked ISIS leaders for a permission to participate in active combat; volunteered for suicide missions; proudly brought their children to join ISIS; became leaders of religious police reinforced by ISIS, and so on (Nuraniyah 2018; Perešin 2019; Makanda 2019). Such behavior applies to both local (from territories of ISIS presence) women and foreign female terrorists. It requires genuine dedication and willpower to leave your normal life and (sometimes) families behind and join - in some cases through smuggling one's way to the ISIS operation zones - an illegal and gender-segregating group. The main research question is, therefore, why do women radicalize and voluntarily join ISIS? What does ISIS offer these women so that they want to partake in terrorist activities? What role do women expect to fulfil within ISIS and how it is related to their motivation?

The phenomenon of female mobilization in support for ISIS has often been framed through a rather simplified and gender-bias lens (Tarras-Wahlberg 2020). This thesis attempts to contribute to the existing scholarship by exploring the topic of female ISIS members in depth. It will investigate what roles women expect to play within ISIS and what ISIS offers women so that they decide to join the group. Next, taken previous questions into consideration, the research will answer the main research question - why do women radicalize and voluntarily join ISIS? The thesis will consider different geographical and societal backgrounds of women in question and categorize them into local-Muslim, foreign-Muslim, local-convert [for ISIS], and foreign-convert [for ISIS].

Literature Review

1. Auchter, Jessica. 2012. "Gendering Terror." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 121-139. doi:10.1080/14616742.2011.619780.

The article challenges a common victim/agent dichotomy linking it to the limits of

patriarchal structures. It is important for the research because it explains what the elimination of such a dichotomy can bring to the topic of female participation in terrorism. The article might potentially serve as a basis for a theoretical framework of the thesis.

2. Berko, Anat, and Edna Erez. 2007. "Gender, Palestinian Women, and Terrorism: Women's Liberation or Oppression?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 493-519. doi:10.1080/10576100701329550.

This publication closely analyses a specific case study - Palestinian female terrorists. The article is important for the thesis as it brings a fresh viewpoint on the nature of female motivation bounded by the settings of gender-"respectable" norms. Norms which resonate with internal ISIS gender dynamics.

3. Cunningham, Karla J. 2003. "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 171–195. doi:10.1080/10576100390211419.

The article is one of the first and most influential publications on the topic of female motivation to join terrorism. It outlines several common assumptions about female terrorists, discusses them, and provides its own view of female motivation to partake in terrorist activities. The article is crucial for the literature review as it represents early scholarship assumptions about female terrorists' motivation.

4. Jacques, Karen, and Paul J. Taylor. 2009. "Female Terrorism: A Review." Terrorism and Political Violence 499-515. doi:10.1080/09546550902984042.

The publication provides a qualitative and quantitative analyses of 54 publications on female terrorism. This article is a necessary base for the thesis because it summarizes the roles women are expected to play within a terrorist group and types of female motivation for joining terrorism.

5. Jacques, Karen, and Paul J. Taylor. 2013. "Myths and Realities of Female-Perpetrated Terrorism." Law and Human Behavior 35– 44. doi:10.1037/h0093992.

The article explores myths of female terrorism and compares them with the reality of collected data. The uniqueness of the publication is in the fact that authors include data on male terrorists to provide a comparison group to the female-oriented research.

6.   Matusitz, Jonathan. 2019. "Symbolism in Female Terrorism: Five Overarching Themes." Sexuality & Culture 1332–1344. doi:10.1007/s12119-019-09624-4.

The publication provides a new perspective on motivations for female terrorism - honor restoration. Such a perspective might be especially relevant for this research as honor is an important part of local ISIS culture.

7.   Nacos, Brigitte L. 2005. "The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Patterns in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 435-451. doi:10.1080/10576100500180352.

The publication explores how media framing of female terrorism serves terrorist organizations and defines female roles within a terrorist group. This can serve as an interesting perspective for the research: media tends to portrait ISIS women as victims which is quite advantageous for the terrorists.

8.   Ness, Cindy D. 2005. "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 353-373. doi:10.1080/10576100500180337.

The article explores female participation within both secular and religious terrorist groups and further explores female militancy - together with the possibility of female agency in violence - in traditional societies. The publication highlights unique female motivations and female expectations within conservative societies which ISIS belongs to.

9.   Nivat, Anne. 2005. "The Black Widows: Chechen Women Join the Fight for Independence—and Allah." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 413-419. doi:10.1080/10576100500180394.

The publication focuses on a specific case study - Chechen female terrorists who are usually associated with jihadi terrorism. The author, however, states that jihad was not a matter of religion, but a matter of identity and self-authenticity amidst the despair of war. This idea might be further explored in the thesis since ISIS is linked to jihadi ideology.

10.   Speckhard, Anne. 2008. "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 995-1023. doi:10.1080/10576100802408121.

This article provides a different point of view on female motivation to join terrorism: it states that female and male motivations are quite similar, what differs is whether a woman is inside or outside of the conflict. Additionally, the article challenges a common belief that women join terrorist groups to demand gender equality. The publication might project a new perspective on 1) motivation difference between local and foreign female ISIS terrorist and 2) motivation for gender equality.

Methodology

Methodological approach

To proceed with the research, qualitative methodological approach will be utilized. This research will follow interpretivist tradition because it aims to understand and uncover why women radicalize and join ISIS voluntarily. It further seeks to investigate what ISIS offers, however immaterial, to these women and what role do female supporters of ISIS expect to play within the group. Thesis will begin with conceptualization of such notions as terrorism, radicalization, and self-radicalization. Conceptualization will be utilized to develop reader's understanding of the essence of terrorism and radicalization for to further develop on female motivation to join a terrorist group. The research will then advance with a thorough literature review on women and terrorism. It will help to outline current state of discussion on overall female involvement in terrorism: it will explore causes of female participation in connection with their expected role within a terrorist group. Next part of the thesis will be dedicated to the analysis of the existing secondary data on voluntary female participation in ISIS. The research will additionally investigate possible reasons behind proactive female participation in ISIS through discovering what ISIS offers women and what role women expect to play within ISIS. Such in-depth analysis aims to gather all the existing secondary sources on the topic within one research to identify potential patterns of ISIS women's motivation. Lastly, collected data will be analysed. Based on collected data, thesis will discuss the interconnection of why women radicalize and join ISIS voluntarily, what ISIS offers these women and what role women expect to play within ISIS.

Data

To begin with, data will focus on women who joined ISIS voluntarily. Since the research touches upon a topic widely accepted as religious terrorism, women will also be

`

subclassified into local-Muslim, foreign-Muslim, local-convert [for ISIS], and foreign-convert [for ISIS] where local-Muslim and foreign-Muslim would represent pre-ISIS Islamic upbringing of a woman. Such distinction can additionally demonstrate whether or how religious affinity influences female motivation to join ISIS.

Secondary data will be obtained in the form of available literature resources. To construct an adequate theoretical framework and obtain information on existing cases of women who voluntarily joined ISIS, academic literature in the field will be used. This includes, but is not limited to, books and peer-reviewed academic journals.

Data Collection

Document-based research will be employed as a method for data collection. Current academic publications such as peer-reviewed articles, books, conference reports, PhD theses and (counter-) terrorism research centres' reports related to the topic of the research will be collected. Such data ensures that media reports and personal viewpoints are minimized or are entirely avoided in the research. A potential challenge with this mode of data collection, however, can be inability to collect enough publications due to their security nature, its female focus and ongoing debate on the topic. Furthermore, given a gendered lens of the research, collected data might be a subject of bias. Moreover, documents do not exemplify a dynamic data which would explain an individual's attitude and behaviour in real life.

Data Analysis

Since secondary data will be used in the research, the analysis will be focused on manifest meaning of collected data. The researcher will try to examine what is overtly stated in the publications to extract data portraying current available information on women who voluntarily joined ISIS.

Qualitative thematic analysis will be applied to the collected data. Based on the existing academic research in the field, women's voluntary participation in ISIS will be analysed. The analysis will be conducted by investigating the collected data and identifying patterns or repeated narratives within each case of women. To reduce generalization of all women who joined ISIS, collected data will be categorized into "local" and "foreign". Within two

three categories additional sub-categories such as "Muslim" and "convert [for ISIS]" will be applied. Such categorization ensures that religious and cultural backgrounds are taken into consideration when answering the research question.

Conceptualization/Operationalization

To successfully conduct the research, there are several concepts that should be clarified and precisely stated. The following terms will be conceptualized: terrorism and radicalization.

Terrorism follows the following definition: "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought" (Schmid and Jongman 1988)

To explain *Radicalization*, the definition of Mohammed Hafez & Creighton Mullins will be used. Hence, *Radicalization* will be defined as "adopting an extremist worldview, one that is rejected by mainstream society and one that deems legitimate the use of violence as a method to effect societal or political change.". (Hafez and Mullins 2015)

Suggested Thesis Structure

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Theoretical Framework
4. Methodology
5. Empirical Findings

`

6. Discussion on Empirical Findings

7. Conclusion

`

Master's Thesis Research Proposal References

Auchter, Jessica. 2012. "Gendering Terror." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 121-139. doi:10.1080/14616742.2011.619780.

Hafez, Mohammed, and Creighton Mullins. 2015. "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 958-975. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375.

Loken, Meredith, and Anna Zelenz. 2017. "Explaining extremism: Western women in Daesh." *European Journal of International Security* 45–68. doi:10.1017/eis.2017.13.

Makanda, Joseph. 2019. "The Jihad Feminist Dynamics of Terrorism and Subordination of Women in the ISIS." *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies* 135-159. doi:10.17583/generos.2019.3814.

Nuraniyah, Nava. 2018. "Not Just Brainwashed: Understanding the Radicalization of Indonesian Female Supporters of the Islamic State." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 890-910. doi:10.1080/09546553.2018.1481269.

Perešin, Anita. 2019. "The Role of Women in Post-IS Jihadist Transformation and in Countering Extremism." In *Militant Jihadism: Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Serafettin Pektas and Johan Leman, 101-122. Leuven University Press. doi:https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvq2vzmt.9.

Schmid, Alex P., and Albert J. Jongman. 1988. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature.* Amsterdam: North-Holland.

Speckhard, Anne. 2015. "Female Terrorists in ISIS, al Qaeda and 21rst Century Terrorism." *Trends Research & Advisory.* May 24th. Accessed October 13, 2022. https://trendsresearch.org/research/female-terrorists-in-isis-al-qaeda-and-21st-century-terrorism/.

Tarras-Wahlberg, Louisa. 2020. "ISIS Female Recruits: The Alluring Propaganda Promises." In *The SAGE Handbook of Propaganda*, edited by Paul Baines, Nicholas O'Shaughnessy and Nancy Snow, 550-565. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.