

Abstract

This thesis investigates the underestimated issue of women's active participation in ISIS posing a critical threat to international security. The project focuses on the extent to which ISIS females' recruitment and propaganda dissemination activities contribute to the organization's endurance and global outreach, exploring how gender-based propagandistic narratives respond to, and are interpreted by, different viewpoints on female emancipation, reinforcing or challenging gender roles. By focusing on the concept of agency, inspired by Giddens's structuration theory, the project aims to provide an alternative understanding of the topic, considering its interaction with the organization's propagandistic content targeting women, as well as with gender roles. To assess their relevance for the organization, this research explores the role of ISIS women in their online and offline contributions as propaganda disseminators and recruiters. Furthermore, it examines how the organization's propagandistic narratives leverage on the ideas of empowerment and emancipation to appeal to its female audience. Through the conduction of a qualitative analysis of carefully selected primary and secondary sources, this thesis aims to contribute to the development of a broader understanding of females' participation in the Islamic State's violent extremism. This research's findings underline the relevance of not only considering their potential as agents in embodying and promoting ISIS ideology, but also the crucial role played by empowering propagandistic narratives, and the subjectivity of the interpretation of female emancipation when assessing the phenomenon of women's participation in violent extremism. This study attempts to provide valuable insights for policymakers and scholars interested in counter-extremism by adopting of a women-centered, agent-centric, gender-based approach.

Keywords: women, ISIS, agency, propaganda, recruiter, disseminator