GENDER IN TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM: GENDERED DYNAMICS IN MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS, PROSECUTION AND RADICALIZATION

WORKSHOP REPORT
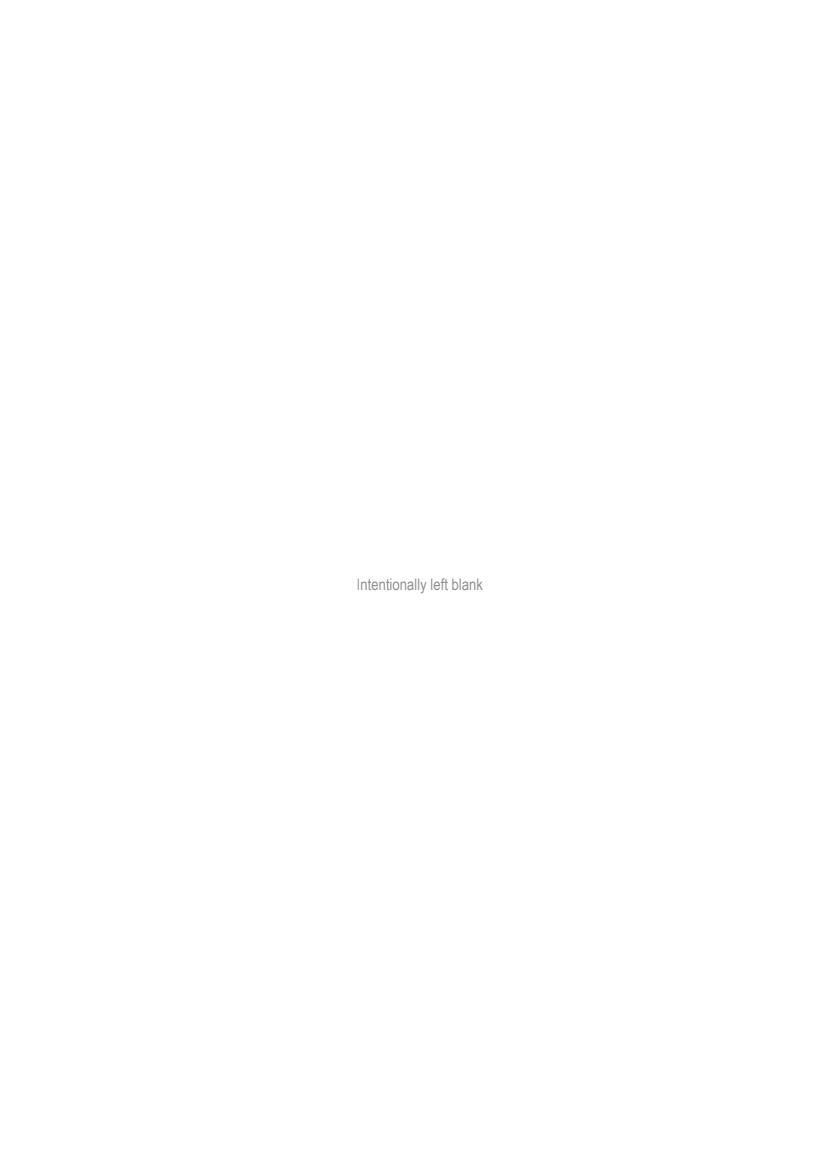by the
NATO Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism

Gender in Terrorism and Counterterrorism:

Gendered Dynamics in Military Effectiveness, Prosecution and Radicalization

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVATIONS

CT : Counter-terrorism

CJTF : Civilian Joint Task Force

COE : Centre of Excellence

CTRC : Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum

CVE : Countering Violent Extremism

DDR : Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

EAPC : Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

FTF : Foreign Terrorist Fighter

GTD : Global Terrorism Database

IDP : Internally Displaced Person

JFC Naples : Joint Force Command Naples

MC : Military Committee

NATO : North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NCGM : Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations

NETF : NATO Educational Training Facilities

NSHQ : NATO Special Operations Headquarters

OSCE : Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PRR : Prosecution, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration

TFF : Terrorism and Foreign Fighter

TRS : Terrorism Recidivism Study

TTPs : Tactics, Techniques and Procedures

UK : United Kingdom

UN : United Nations

UNDP : United Nations Development Programme

UNSC : United Nations Security Council

UNSCR : United Nations Security Council Resolution

UN Women : United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

US : United States

VE : Violent Extremism

WPS : Women, Peace and Security

INTRODUCTION

NATO, for the first time in its history, mentioned its commitment to the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in a strategic concept twenty-two years after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on WPS. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept underlined the Alliance's adherence to gender equality as a reflection of its values, as well as promoting and advancing the WPS agenda across all of NATO's core tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management and cooperative security.[1] Additionally, the Strategic Concept emphasizes: "Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity."[2] In this way, NATO Allies once again confirmed terrorism as a persistent security threat and underscored the essentiality of counter-terrorism (CT) for the collective defence of the Alliance. The Strategic Concept also highlights: "NATO's role in the fight against terrorism contributes to all three core tasks and is integral to the Alliance's 360-degree approach to deterrence and defence."[3] Against this background, both advancing WPS agenda and countering terrorism are referred as essential parts of NATO's core tasks. Apart from that, the WPS agenda has already been linked to that of counter-terrorism (CT) by the international community via the relevant UNSCRs. Then NATO in 2018, with its revised NATO/EAPC WPS Policy and Action Plan, identified the requirement to "reinforce NATO's efforts to implement all relevant UNSCRs on WPS and include gender perspectives in countering terrorism efforts for their long-term sustainability."[4] After that, in 2019 NATO endorsed a Counter-Terrorism Action Plan reflecting gender perspectives. However, the overall analysis of NATO's CT efforts reveals that reference to gender perspectives still remains weak and insufficient. Concerning capstone documents delineating Alliance's efforts of CT, at least NATO's Military Committee Concept for Counter-terrorism, known as MC 472[5], requires a revision for the full integration of gender perspectives. Within this framework, as a NATO Centre of Excellence dedicated to assist Alliance's transformation efforts to seize the future through lessons learned from the past – while not missing the reality of today – COE-DAT committed to use each and every opportunity to underline the importance of gender perspectives in CT. The workshop series began in 2019 to address gendered aspects of terrorism and counterterrorism and is the foremost reflection of COE-DAT's commitment to WPS and CT objectives.

The 2022 Workshop on Gender in Terrorism and Counterterrorism is dedicated to the analysis of gendered dynamics in three main themes, namely, military effectiveness, terrorism prosecutions and terrorist radicalization and recruitment. Gender mainstreaming is an international legal responsibility. Therefore, there is no question about the task and responsibility. However, as important as the task is the communication of the requirement to mainstream gender and advance gender equality. The reasons for integrating gender perspectives should be carefully considered, discussed and communicated to the target population; here, it is the staff in the military organizations, because the *why* for integrating gender perspectives is very much intertwined with the *how* of integrating gender perspectives. There have been two main approaches to achieve the communication of the need to integrate gender perspectives: one being the rights-based approach and the other being the pragmatic approach, also known as the operational effectiveness argument. These two approaches are, of course, not mutually exclusive and should be utilized simultaneously and seen as reinforcing each other. We cannot simply say that integrating gender perspectives to CT is the 'smart' thing to do, but must also never forget and should underline that it is the 'right' thing to do. Against this backdrop, demonstrating what is meant by military effectiveness by clarifying its goals and objectives is critical. Therefore, if we want our communication strategy to appeal to people, we have to address it at the right levels.

When it comes to the value of gender perspectives in CT, gender should be illustrated as both part of the problem as well as part of the solution. This means that when analysing the terrorist threat, we need gender perspectives to accurately identify security challenges like recognizing the different roles women play in terrorism and the fact that men can be victims of terrorism. There appears the need for sex-disaggregated data to rightly diagnose the threat and then efficiently counter it and come up with solutions that meet the needs of women, men, girls and boys. In a similar vein, we need to recognize the value of gender perspectives in developing adequate CT polices, programs and operations. Therefore, we need more

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[1] *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, 3, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf.

[2] Ibid, 4.

[3] Ibid, 8.

[4] *NATO/EAPC Women, Peace and Security Policy and Action Plan 2018*, 22, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180920_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf

[5] *MC 0472/1 Military Committee Concept for Counter-terrorism*, last updated in 6 January 2016, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/topics_pdf/20160905_160905-mc-concept-ct.pdf

women in the security sector at multiple levels in various positions, because meaningful participation of women in policy planning and implementation brings in diversity which leads to success. For that, we need gender-based recruitment strategies to attract more women to the security sector in general, CT world in particular.

Today, it is beyond dispute that terrorist organizations use 'gender' in terrorist recruitment and radicalization, and to achieve in-group cohesion. Apart from that, they use 'gender' for operational advantages in planning their attacks, and benefit from our own gender biases and blind spots for their ends against us. For this reason, for better and more efficient CT policies and measures, we need to understand how our own societies grasp gender and how our enemies, in this case terrorists, understand gender and use it against us. Then we need to find out how to use 'gender' to defeat, deny and deter terrorists.

When the international community was overwhelmed with the phenomenon of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), whether they were men or women, following the loss of territories by Daesh in Syria, the question of how to overcome the challenges and the potential threat they pose to the countries of return through criminal justice responses to terrorism became one of the hot points of discussion. These discussions have revealed that there are gender disparities in different pillars of the criminal justice system and at different stages of the criminal justice processes. In line with that, COE-DAT initiated a research project in order to scrutinize how gender influences criminal justice outcomes, particularly potential gender disparities in convictions and sentencing practices in the terrorism context based on sex-disaggregated data in different countries. Therefore, the second session of the workshop was devoted to discuss the findings of the COE-DAT research project titled "Sex-Disaggregated Data in Terrorism Prosecutions". In short, the findings demonstrated that there are gender-based disparities in criminal justice responses to terrorists and extremists in the contexts explored. More precisely, the research pointed out no female defendants in the Western Balkans, disparate charging in Germany, and disparate sentencing practices in Canada and the United States. The overall conclusion indicates that such disparities have important implications for deterrence, rehabilitation and reintegration as well as social defence. Equally important are the illustration of the lack of and need for sex and age-disaggregated data, public access to criminal justice data, and more nuanced analysis on the disengagement programs in different countries at the macro level.

When it comes to gendered dynamics in terrorist radicalization and recruitment, most obvious is the fact that gender power structures and culture are consciously used by terrorist groups for recruitment. Understanding gendered dynamics in terrorist radicalization and recruitment is vital for designing effective CT measures including prosecution, disengagement, de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration policies. Terrorist groups, depending on their motivations, use different narrative and messaging, whether gender-inclusive or gender-exclusive. In addition to this, terrorist organizations have been using emerging communications technologies and online networks, which also helps them to easily organize and mobilize. Exploration of these different dynamics in terrorist radicalization and recruitment in different contexts is important to seeing present and emerging trends and revising our policies as well as present findings of the existing literature on terrorist radicalization.

With this report, COE-DAT hopes to raise awareness on different gendered dynamics in terrorism and CT, reach out to the policy-making world as well as research community, and facilitate their cooperation for the common good of humanity against the persistent threat of terrorism.

Dr. Zeynep Sütalan
Workshop Academic Advisor

WELCOME ADDRESS

Col. Oğuzhan Pehlivan
COE-DAT Director

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I want to express my respects on behalf of all COE-DAT staff, furthermore kindly and warmly welcome you because of your participation to the fourth Gender Workshop that has been organized by our Centre. It is our privilege to host you in COE-DAT.

Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is the most asymmetric threat to the security of the citizens of the countries and to international peace and prosperity. Additionally, pervasive instability, cyberspace, emerging disruptive technologies, irregular immigration, and climate change enhance the impact of terrorism and terror-related incidents.

I regretfully confess that we still use the term "gender" in a wrong way instead of women, albeit gender is a socially constructed phenomenon. However, we should accept that women have increasingly become key strategic assets within the realm of terrorism. For example, the average number of victims resulting from individual attacks conducted by women is 8.4, versus 5.3 killed per male attack when we take into account suicide terrorism.

There is growing evidence that understanding gender relations, identities and inequalities can help improve standard-setting. Often assumptions are based on stereotypical perceptions of women's and men's roles in terrorism and counter-terrorism (CT). Men are often seen as perpetrators of terrorism and women primarily as passive victims. It has been observed, however, that when gender has been considered in the context of counter-terrorism, little consideration has been given to "men" as a category. Instead, the term "gender" has been equated with "women" as a category.

Understanding these differences can help ensure a more comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism. We can enumerate three significant reasons. First, we can integrate gender perspective into policy making. Second, we can integrate gender in developing new legal instruments. Last but not least, we can provide monitoring and evaluation.

In the previous gender workshops, we emphasize the roles, motivations, and concepts of women in CT. Now, our main aim is to approach gender dynamics in military effectiveness, prosecution, and radicalization. We believe that international responses to terrorism should consider and be shaped by the experiences of both men and women.

One of the key strategies for promoting gender equality and women's rights, and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women on the basis of sex and gender, is gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming emerged as an internationally agreed strategy for promoting gender equality at the Fourth International Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and was later adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/203 as a United Nations system-wide policy.

Criminal justice systems – most of which were developed by and based on the experience of men – are in many cases based on gender stereotypes about women and men who come into conflict with the law. As a result, women may be discriminated against and disadvantaged at various points of contact with the system, including the following: crime prevention efforts; phase of initial contact with law enforcement; the investigation phase; before, during and after the trial; and during imprisonment.

In order to mainstream gender into criminal justice, one needs to take account of the differentiated impact of laws, policies and practices, and as well as of crimes, on women and men. In addition, one must analyse how issues pertaining to the rule of law, security and justice are sustained by social and power relations, question the biases built into such institutions and structures, and ensure that the experiences, needs, priorities and capacities of both women and men are taken into account in any criminal justice reform.

At the end of this Workshop, I strongly believe that we can put forth some good practices and applications. I reiterate my honour to all our participants, and wish you all a fruitful and informative seminar.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Ms. Irene Fellin
NATO Secretary General's Special Representative
for Women, Peace and Security

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen, and

Good Morning to those joining us from overseas,

Please allow me to first express my gratitude to the NATO Centre of Excellence for the Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) and especially to its Director, Colonel Oğuzhan Pehlivan, for the kind invitation and for your warm words of welcome. I would like to congratulate all those who have contributed to ensure the success of this fourth edition of the Gender in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Workshop.

It is a real pleasure for me to address this audience today and to continue the cooperation between NATO HQ and NATO COE-DAT on the topic of gender and terrorism and counterterrorism.

The NATO COE-DAT, as NATO's unique centre on Defence against Terrorism and Counterterrorism, is making important contributions to NATO and its partners' better understanding of the topic of gender and terrorism and counterterrorism and I want to seize this opportunity to commend this critical work that you are doing at the Centre.

I am happy to share with you first some reflections about why gender matters in terrorism and counter-terrorism, followed by how we are approaching this question at NATO, looking in particular also into the three focus topics of this edition of the workshop, namely military and operational effectiveness, the gendered dynamics in terrorism prosecutions and the gender aspect of terrorist recruitment and radicalisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The stakes are high when it comes to gender and terrorism and counterterrorism. The consequences of not getting it right in any of the phases of combating terrorism are considerable if our policies, programmes, operations, resources and tools do not integrate the gender perspective. Not getting it right might leave our forces unprotected from certain terrorist threats, our responses ineffective at best or harmful at worst, and let impunity prevail.

We have seen that there is an increasing interest in the linkages between gender and terrorism and the integration of a gender perspective in counterterrorism efforts, not least thanks to the work that has been done by institutions like this Centre of Excellence and researchers and practitioners around the world over the past years on making these linkages visible and explaining them.

First of all, I think it is important to clearly recognise the differential impact of terrorism and violent extremism on women and girls' human rights, including on their health, education, and participation in public life. Terrorism and violent extremism constitute a threat to our Alliance's common values such as individual liberty, human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality.

Secondly, over the past years, we have gained increased understanding in a number of areas when it comes to gender and terrorism and counterterrorism: for example, we know that violent extremist and terrorist groups across the ideological spectrum exploit gender dynamics and norms in their recruitment strategies. Gender dynamics also influence the many different roles women, voluntarily or by deceit or force, play in these groups, from recruiters, supporters, informants, strategists to fighters. The rise of armed groups like D'aesh and Boko Haram, and the questions around women Foreign Terrorist Fighters during the past decade have drawn global attention to this question of women's roles. Gender dynamics may also influence the reasons for either staying or leaving terrorist groups and the reintegration process in society.

On the other hand, women's roles in the prevention and fight against terrorism have also been highlighted, as well as the need to better take into account the gendered impact of counterterrorism measures, in particular for women not to be squeezed between terror and anti-terror.

And last but not least, the need to look into gendered bias in the prosecution of terrorists and persons associated with terrorism is also identified as an area that still needs to be further explored. While there is a whole range of insights already existing, sex-disaggregated data and gender analyses are still insufficiently available in order to have the full picture available.

Looking at the workshop topics, the diversity of experts and participants, I am convinced that this workshop will make an important contribution to filling some of these gaps.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You might wonder what NATO is doing in the area of gender and counterterrorism and how gender is taken into account in NATO's fight against terrorism.

Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, continues to present a persistent threat, and as recognised by NATO's new Strategic Concept endorsed by Heads of State and Governments at the NATO Summit in Madrid in June, terrorism "is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity". In the Strategic Concept, NATO confirms that its role in the fight against terrorism contributes to all three core tasks of the Alliance, that are Deterrence and Defence, Crisis Prevention and Management and Cooperative Security.

From the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) perspective, the Madrid Summit constitutes an important shift as for the first time ever, WPS as well as Human Security are also reflected in this strategic document and defined as "cross-cutting" and therefore pertain to all three of our core tasks.

This cross-cutting approach is already reflected in NATO's two action plans that deal with WPS and CT and which set a clear direction for our work on these topics.

First, as per the 2018 NATO/EAPC WPS Policy and the current agreed Action Plan for the Implementation of this Policy endorsed by Ministers of Defence in October 2021, NATO considers the integration of a gender perspective into all of its policies, programmes, military capabilities and training as key to protect civilians, its own forces and improve its situational awareness. This is also relevant to NATO's fight against terrorism.

Second, NATO's 2021 updated Action Plan on Enhancing NATO's Role in the International Community's Fight against Terrorism is a good example of this integration, as gender perspectives are firmly integrated into related research, training and education, engagement and collaboration with partners and international organisations.

It calls for further work on gender aspects and recognises the need to understand gender dynamics on the ground in order to better prevent and respond to violent extremism and terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's workshop has a particular focus on military and operational effectiveness, the gendered dynamics in terrorism prosecution and gender aspects of terrorist recruitment and radicalisation.

For military and operational effectiveness, and I know that my colleagues from the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives and JFC Naples speaking on this panel will cover it in-depth, it is important to have for example gender analysis expertise and tools at hand, to gain a deeper understanding of the context and the dynamics at play which we know can differ significantly from one place to another, from one terrorist group to another. It will help us to use our resources effectively, as we are able to integrate it in the planning, conduct and evaluation of NATO-led operations and missions. Thus among other activities, NATO is integrating Gender and CT in defence capacity building and training and education for Allies and partners. I would also like to mention the structural measures NATO has taken by deploying gender advisors - military and civilian - across its commands, operations, and missions. These men and women operate at strategic and operational levels and are valuable resources to Commanders, who are responsible for the overall integration of gender perspectives into planning, execution, and evaluation. Speaking of evaluation, the exchange of good practices and lessons learned on gender and CT in military operations with partners and other international organisations is an area of interest of NATO.

In addition to using gender expertise at all stages, another key aspect of NATO's WPS Action Plan remains that women's participation matters, not only for military effectiveness. Promoting gender balance in national counter terrorism roles will help develop policies, assess and counter the threat of terrorism and end impunity for perpetrators.

Our work roots in the in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions, such as 2242, which highlight the implications of women's roles in both perpetrating and countering terrorism. NATO must continue to assess conflicts and crises with an understanding of women as possible victims, survivors, perpetrators, preventers, security actors.

This leads us to the second focus of this workshop which looks at recruitment and radicalisation. Understanding the gender dynamics at play is again essential when it comes to the manifold pathways for women, men, boys and girls' association with or integration in terrorist groups and the diverse roles women and men take in these groups. For example, understanding the complex gender dynamics of the push and pull factors including their use in recruitment strategies by terrorist groups is crucial for our ability to effectively assess risks and respond to them.

It is important to highlight that our WPS and Counter-Terrorism action plans are not limited to a gender perspective, but include also a Human Security perspective which in the case of NATO includes conflict-related sexual violence, children and armed conflict, human trafficking and cultural property protection. For example, NATO is currently working on a food-for-thought paper that looks at children's recruitment and roles in terrorist groups.

The third focus of this year's workshop, the topic of "gendered dynamics of terrorism prosecution", includes many aspects that need to be analysed, but I would like to highlight just two of them: Firstly, the question of prosecution of women terrorists or associated with terrorism. As already identified in last year's workshop, there is an increasing number of women in terrorism, as data shows from various sources. For example, 13% of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Iraq and Syria between 2013 and 2018 were women. In the OSCE region, out of the 20,000 reported Foreign Terrorist Fighters, 17% were women and when looking at some national statistics, figures are even higher. Europe has also seen an increase in women's participation in far-right organizations. We need to make sure that women perpetrators of terrorist attacks are held accountable by our justice systems, while at the same time also avoiding any re-victimisation. This relates again to the need for a better understanding and awareness of recruitment pathways and roles women play and avoiding gender bias based on gender norms which either result in under punishment of women as they are only seen as victims, or over punishment because women are vilified for their support for terrorism.

The second aspect I would like to highlight is the case of Foreign Terrorist Fighters committing human rights and international humanitarian law violations, and particularly conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking. There is a general problem of significant underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) for the reasons well known which may include prevailing stigma, lack of information of how legal processes work, experienced trauma and lack of psychosocial support, lack of resources, just to name a few obstacles. The second problem relates to the low rates of convictions for CRSV cases even when reported which again may be linked to many factors including to evidence required, the fact that CRSV is only considered a secondary crime, inappropriate procedures, biases based on gender stereotypes etc.

Pertaining to these two areas of accountability and ending impunity, NATO has adopted three documents that I would like to highlight here. One is the NATO Battlefield Evidence Policy which can contribute to bringing foreign terrorist fighters to justice and which also takes into account NATO's WPS and Human Security agenda, and specifically mentions conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking as two of the areas in which this policy may apply. The other two documents are the NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence endorsed by the Ministers of Defence and the recently updated NATO Military Guidelines on the Prevention of, and Response to, Conflict related Sexual Violence. These three documents address the question of battlefield evidence to support the international community's efforts to end impunity for conflict-related sexual violence and other significant violations of national and international law, while also observing the guiding principles of a survivor-centred approach to victims and survivors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In light of some of our current work I just mentioned, and ranging from policies, programmes, military capabilities to training, I can only emphasise once again the relevance of this year's topics of the workshop and the importance of practical research and the exchange of information and experiences among experts and practitioners from diverse background.

I thank once again the workshop organisers for the opportunity for me to address the audience and share NATO's perspective on these issues and I look very much forward to the outcome of this workshop.

Thank you.

GENDER AND MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS: INTEGRATING AND IMPLEMENTING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN MILITARY ORGANISATIONS AND OPERATIONS

LTC/Dr. Lena P. KVARVING

Officer in Command, Education and Training Department

Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM)

The year 2022 marks 22 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the UN Security Council and much of the international community's starting point for recognising the need for gender perspective in all security matters. The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM) is also celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year, working to enable Armed Forces to apply gender perspectives in every situation to increase operational effect in providing security for men, women, boys and girls.

Progress towards this goal has been made, but there is still an indisputable need for advancement. There is still resistance and even some backlash within the military domain. Therefore, it is worth clarifying what effectiveness with regards to gender perspectives in military organisations and operations means, and how this can best be commanded and disseminated to reach the aim of peace and security for all.

Arguing effectiveness must be communicated to personnel in a way tailored to the level they are at, yet always in the context of other levels. This is especially important in an organisation sceptical to change, where the organisational culture favours "hard security" and masculine values, and where the topic challenges the organisational culture, those with power of definition and decision, and privileges.[1]

Too often, in answer to the question of *why* we should implement gender perspectives in military operations and organisations - it is simply said that it is more effective. Often because many have experienced that mentioning "equality" in any shape or form, or that it is an equal right and the right thing to do, make personnel in a hypermasculine hierarchal organisation simply disregard the whole concept.

However, using effectiveness as just a "sales pitch" for adopting gender perspectives should be avoided. Simplifying a message too much can backfire and lead to misunderstandings and delays in implementation. Gender should not be presented as a "silver bullet", because there can be real dilemmas in need of risk assessment.

It is true that it in addition to being a right at the individual level and a necessity at a societal level, gender perspective also provides our organisations and operations with tools such as better situational awareness, better intelligence and better analysis, etc. But we also need to be clear that gender sensitivity can challenge other commonly used effectiveness dimensions. These dilemmas will have to be addressed with regards to the desired end state of the operation. For example: Choosing one transport route for military forces can be effective from a time perspective, from an economical perspective or from a force protection perspective – but a gender sensitive perspective might challenge the above and create a dilemma, since choosing a route might impact the security or livelihood of local population. This needs to be analysed and prioritised.

Implementing gender perspectives has always had a dual justification – that it is the right thing to do from a rights perspective, but also the smart thing to do, and effectiveness can be argued from both these perspectives. But research has identified structural, functional and cultural factors that prevent and promote implementation of gender perspectives[2], and proves there are still no shortcuts to implementation. Trying to avoid challenging things that need changing, will not serve to instigate the much-needed change. It is therefore necessary to clearly identify the end goal (of a given mandate), the level of implementation and integration we argue from, and always maintain the wider context of other levels of implementation.

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[1]   Lena P. Kvarving, "Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces and Military Operations: An uphill battle. Cultural, structural and functional factors that prevent or promote implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Norwegian Armed Forces and NATO", (PhD dissertation, University of Oslo, 2019), https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/81318

[2]   Ibid.

Too often I have experienced personnel discussing gender perspectives and effectiveness from completely different angles and levels, causing miscommunication. One person might talk about feeling discriminated for a promotion on the individual level and the other is talking about how gender perspective is important in order to create equality as a sustainable development goal on a global scale that will prevent crisis and conflict. Both these points are clearly connected and will affect each other, but the mismatch of the level of discussion could inhibit the resolution of either topic.

I have suggested this model to describe the different levels in which effectiveness can be argued; the societal, the organisational and the individual level:

Different levels of gender perspective – all connected

Society: In order to create a just and sustainable future, peace, security and end (causes of) crisis, conflict and war – nations have agreed to some vital changes i.e. the UN Sustainable development goals and the Women, Peace and Security agenda, both recognizing equality and gender perspective as essential.

Organisation: Gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels - to make women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres.

Individual: Gender Equality as equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities that allows women and men to advance equally across social, political and cultural spheres. The right to an inclusive and safe (working) environment - free of gender based discrimination and harassment.

The Societal Level

Based on research and experience, the international community has recognized equality and gender perspectives as not only essential to security, but also for a sustainable future where the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.[3]

The UNSCR 1325 was unanimously adopted under the presidency of Namibia in the Security Council, in close collaboration with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China.

This first resolution addressed the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. It called for gender perspective in prevention, protection and participation, in addition to relief and recovery efforts. It also called for gender mainstreaming and gender balance, and all parties in armed conflict to fully respect international laws applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians.

Since 2000, nine more resolutions related to WPS have been adopted, widening the scope and range of gendered peace and security. The resolutions have been fundamental in changing the philosophy and rhetoric related to conflict and gender equality. Gender was not a new concept, but it was the first time it was formally recognized by the Security Council as a vital part of peace and security efforts. Later, in 2015, the United National General Assembly presented The Sustainable Development Goals: 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a shared outline for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, today and into the future. Development Goal #5 Equality is not only a goal in itself, but a prerequisite for many of the others. This makes Gender Equality and Gender Perspectives vital on a global scale, not just as a courtesy to women, but essential to peace and prosperity.

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[3]   The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), (1987).

When met with resistance in the military organization, with arguments like "we cannot promote equality, because this is a western value, a cultural aspect we cannot enforce" – the response could be: "Of course we promote values – all the time. Fighting terrorism is a value, so is fighting inequality. Terrorism killed on average 24,000 a year the previous decade[4] while according to a study from 2018, there is an average of 239,000 excess deaths per year of girls under the age of five in India alone just based on their gender[5]. Gender inequality is essentially a much bigger security threat than terrorism, and gender equality is consequently a value the Armed Forces have been tasked to promote, protect and enforce".

The Organizational Level:

How does this translate to the organisational level? NATO, for instance, has taken up the challenge of advancing the WPS agenda, reaffirming their commitment to its principles and putting those principles into practice. Taking into account the changing social and political landscape, the current NATO Policy on WPS aims to translate the global commitments into a NATO context, where *Integration*, *Inclusiveness* and *Integrity* draw from the Alliance's values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and rule of law.[6]

What an organisation should do is to gender mainstream, and that is "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality"[7].

Subsequently, NATO states on their web-page on 22. June 2022:

> "*NATO recognises the disproportionate impact that conflict has on women and girls, the vital roles women play in peace and security, and the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in all that the Alliance does*"[8]

This statement signifies that a gender perspective should permeate all Human Resources (HR) related tasks such as recruitment, retention, working conditions, discrimination, harassment, equal opportunities, complaints mechanisms, gender balance, etc. Furthermore, gender perspective is to be part of education, training, exercises, certifications, evaluations and lessons learned. Finally, gender perspective should be part of horizon scanning, early warning systems, analysis, planning, conduct of operations and of course operational aspects of conflict related sexual violence - to reach the aim of gender equality, a precondition for peace and security for all.

NATO does not teach or provide education on HR topics, but depends on Nations and Partners with regards to HR and gender balance. However, a better gender balance within the NATO institution is a goal in itself and also a means for improving performance. NATO is committed to this, and to ensuring a respectful and safe working environment that will allow all to reach their full potential.

Nations are expected to gender mainstream their own military organizations, but what NATO can provide through NCGM as Department Head on Gender in Military Operations is education and training such as, Gender Adviser Courses, Gender Focal Point Courses, Key Leader Seminars, etc., but also helpful tools such as a Gender Analysis Tool or A Military Guide to Women, Peace and Security with a specific NATO focus.

The Individual Level

The individual level is linked to the societal and organisational levels. Women and men affect, and are affected differently by, crisis, conflict and war. And in peacetime, individuals need to work in an inclusive and safe environment,

4   Ritchie et al, *Terrorism*, 2022, https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism
5   Guilmoto et al, "Excess under-5 female mortality across India: a spatial analysis using 2011 census data," *The Lancet Global Health* 6, no.6, 2018, https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/05/180514185913.htm
6   NATO, Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2025, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_187485.htm
7   UN, Report of The Economic and Social Council for 1997.
8   "Women, Peace and Security", NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm

free of gender-based discrimination and harassment to thrive and be efficient. Equality means that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality recognises the diverse perceptions of and by women and men, but allows for both to advance equally across all spheres – social, political, economic, and cultural. Notably, gender equality is not a 'women's issue', but a concern for everyone.

To sum up the three levels, gender perspective, gender mainstreaming and gender balance is the smart thing and the right thing to do because;

- Gender equality creates more peaceful and sustainable societies and better quality of living.

- Gender equality is a sustainable development goal and a prerequisite for many others.

- Gender perspective is a tool that provides better situational awareness and informed decisions in response to crisis, war and conflict

- Gender balance and equality will make the organisation more (cost) effective – and able to reach their goals

- It will create a working environment where individuals can thrive and achieve their full potential

- It is fair and it is just and in accordance with our core values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and rule of law.

Leadership and Transformational Change

In order to achieve this, we need leaders that have knowledge and the ability to lead transformational change. So far there have been a lot of leaders that support the agenda, but the agenda does not need leadership support – it needs leaders to LEAD. It demands a transformational change approach because it challenges existing organisational culture and the ones with power of definition and privileges in the military organisation.

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Research confirms that the lack of command and control, lack of conceptualisation and priority, structures, knowledge and processes, lack accountability, lack of consequences, creative reporting and ridicule prevents implementation of gender perspective in military operations and organizations.[9] And since we know change hurts, we need leaders that create psychological safety for transformational change. However, "there is no comfort in learning and no learning in comfort" so there will always be challenges when learning something new.

Transformational change needs a tailored approach, especially since the organizational culture needs to change. Some professional advice in order to increase success suggests the following in addition to the standard procedures of a plan, communication and resource allocation, etc.: [10]

- A cultural map of the organization; leaders need to know the status in the organization in order to target actions.

- Take strategic choices and make the necessary structural and functional changes that support the tasks and changes needed, in tune with the new way of thinking and working.

- There is a need for power, expertise, and knowledge (there already exist a lot of tools and expertise on the subject for leaders to make use of).

- Ensure that learners are involved in the process to promote understanding and motivation for change – to understand why this change is needed, both on the societal, organisational and individual level.

- Create formal and informal arenas for relevant groups and teams to train, where challenges can be aired and discussed.

- There is a need for positive role models, and the creation of a network of change-agents in the organization (like Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points).

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[9]   Kvarving, "Gender Perspectives".
[10] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Gert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

- Revise personnel policies, and have a clear reward and discipline system to promote the change (this is maybe the most important point, because accountability is key and leaders will have to make sure progress is rewarded, and lack of progress disciplined).

- And leaders will have to keep monitoring, evaluating and developing the organizational culture to make sure it evolves in the right direction.

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GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN MILITARY OPERATIONS: REFLECTIONS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM

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Introduction

NATO invoked its collective defence clause[1] for the first and only time in the history of the Alliance, in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the United States. This event immediately prompted Allies to launch Operation Active Endeavour[2], to adopt its first Military Concept for Defence against Terrorism, in 2002, and to initiate various capability and institutional changes.[3]

In 2010, NATO`s Strategic Concept recognized terrorism as a direct threat to the security of the Alliance and acknowledged it would remain a threat for the future. Two years later, in the Chicago Summit, the NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism (CT) were endorsed, and they established the three key areas the counter-terrorism efforts of NATO should focus awareness, capabilities and engagement. To implement it, the Alliance approved, in 2014, the Action Plan for Implementation of NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism. This Action Plan called for the development of a new military concept for CT to reflect the Policy Guidelines, and the Military Committee updated it in 2016.

Almost two decades after 9/11, the Counter-Terrorism Action Plan, endorsed in late 2019, reflects, for the first time, a gender perspective. At the NATO Summit in Madrid, last June, Allied Leaders adopted the Alliance's 2022 Strategic Concept that continues to identify terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, as the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of NATO citizens and to international peace and prosperity.

On one hand, if we analyse NATO`s robust framework on CT, we realize the scarcity of references to the integration of gender perspective in NATO`s CT efforts, acknowledging counter-terrorism policy almost exclusively conceptualises terrorists as male, except for its Action Plan. On the other hand, looking at the Alliance`s Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework, NATO's first policy on WPS was developed by Allies and partners in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 2007. In 2018, NATO Heads of State and Government endorsed the revised WPS policy that, for the first time, introduced the need to reinforce NATO's efforts to include gender perspectives in countering terrorism.

Why Do We Need to Integrate Gender Perspective in NATO's CT Efforts?

The overall understanding of the complexity and variety of motivations behind the radicalisation of women tend not to have been adequately incorporated into counter-terrorism policies and practices. Understanding women's involvement in terrorism and the ways in which terrorist groups employ them is essential to have effective CT measures.

Understanding how women experience the conflict, not only as victims, but also as actors, needs to directly inform policies and programs to tackle the roots of the insurgency and strategies for countering it, as well as facilitate women's contribution to lasting peace.

Next we will analyse three different case studies to better understand which are women´s roles in terrorist groups.

a. Boko Haram

Women's and girls' importance for Boko Haram stems from their roles and how they are perceived in society. As wives, they enhance social status and provide sexual or domestic services (sometimes forced), thereby becoming valuable incentives for potential male recruits.

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[1]   Article 5 of *The North Atlantic Treaty* (Washington, 4 April 1949): "An armed attack against one or more of the member nations in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all". See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm

[2]   Operation Active Endeavour (2001-2016) - Under this Operation, NATO ships patrolled the Mediterranean and monitored shipping to help deter, defend, disrupt and protect against terrorist activity.

[3]   International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO took the lead in 2003. Mandated by the United Nations, ISAF's primary objective was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country and develop new Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan would never again become a safe haven for terrorists.

Their adherence, willing or forced, to the movement's version of religion can also contribute to the spreading of its ideology among other women, but possibly also young men. In addition to this, in Boko Haram-controlled areas, marriage could bring a measure of security and well-being for women and their extended family.

However, Boko Haram, also uses women in very different from traditional stereotypes. Because women were not considered a threat, initially they could circulate in government-controlled areas more easily, as spies, messengers, recruiters and smugglers.

For the same reason, from mid-2014, Boko Haram turned to female suicide bombers, which attracted much publicity. On average, female attackers are said to receive eight times more media coverage than their male counterparts, thereby drawing the attention of a wider audience.[4]

The attacks, which have killed hundreds, became symbolic of the insurgency's brutality. Female suicide attacks tend to inflict greater casualties than those carried out by men[5] and factors for this increased effectiveness are tied to the prevalence of certain social norms and gender stereotypes, which mean that women generate less suspicion, are subjected to more relaxed security measures and are able to conceal explosives with more ease.

The first suicide bombing was in 2011 but it became important only in the second half of 2014. Attacks grew in frequency and severity, but declined from mid-2015, mainly due to improved prevention measures, including at checkpoints, as security forces adapted to terrorist tactics and the nature of the counter-terrorism response evolved[6].

It is important to underline that some women have fought Boko Haram by joining the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)[7]. Some joined out of outrage and bitterness, seeking vengeance, other volunteered to help the CJTF at checkpoints and some offered information discreetly on Boko Haram members and their activities.

b. Islamic State (IS)/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)/DAESH

From its inception, Daesh attracted large numbers of female recruits. Women were enlisted to perform a wide range of roles, which were considered crucial for their state-building project. Out of the 41,490 foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) thought to have joined Daesh, approximately 13% were women[8].

In the case of Daesh, women often fulfil essential roles without directly participating in violent attacks, such as financing and logistical support, recruiters and propagandists, distributing information pertaining to the making and use of explosive devices, couriers and smugglers or maintaining communications links between desert/rural-based Daesh cells and networks in villages and camps[9].

All-female Daesh cells are particularly visible in the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps in Syria and Iraq. They are suspected of being family members of Daesh male fighters, ideological adherents and/or former combatants themselves. Their activities include fundraising and training, but they are also involved in overseeing and upholding gender norms, punishing those who do not comply with the Daesh dress and behavioural code[10]. When these women and children return to their home countries, they will be essential for keeping the "Caliphate" memory alive, unless they can be effectively deradicalised and rehabilitated.

The participation of women in terrorist activities has also been used to shame men into taking up arms, namely in its propaganda and recruitment strategies. In fact, Daesh has been using gendered messaging in its recruitment of both men

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4   Mia Bloom, "The rise of the female suicide bomber," *New Humanist*, 10th November 2011, https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/2686/the-rise-of-the-female-suicide-bomber.

5   Lindsey A. O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" *Security Studies 18*, no.4, (2009): 681-718, DOI: 10.1080/09636410903369084. Burcu Pinar Alakoc, "Femme Fatale: The Lethality of Female Suicide Bombers," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no.9 (2020): 796-814, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1505685.

6   Nyssa Fullmer, Stephanie Lipson Mizrahi & Elizabeth Tomsich, "The Lethality of Female Suicide Bombers," *Women & Criminal Justice 29*, no.4-5 (2019): 266-282, DOI: 10.1080/08974454.2018.1548409.

7   A local group formed in 2013 to support the Nigerian security forces in the fight against Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria and to protect local communities from attacks by Boko Haram.

8   Joana Cook and Gina Vale, *From Daesh to Diaspora: Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 2018).

9   Isabel Coles and Ali Nabhan, "Islamic State Enlists Women as Covert Operatives in Survival Bid", *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 January 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-forced-underground-turns-to-women-to-survive-11548856800.

10   Gina Vale, "Women in Islamic State: From Caliphate to Camps," Policy Brief, (ICCT, 2019), https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/10/Women-in-Islamic-State-From-Caliphate-to-Camps.pdf

and women and all IS online propaganda is gendered, glorifying violence against women, prioritizing men's rights over those of women, and imposing strict limitations on women's role in society.

c. Indonesia[11]

Throughout the waves of religious extremism in Indonesia, women have consistently played roles behind the scenes, undertaking activities such as fundraising, planning and logistics support, strengthening alliances through strategic marriages, and indoctrinating the next generation of extremists.

With the rise of Daesh, Indonesian women's participation has expanded to include more visible and operational roles, which includes conducting online recruitment, developing digital and social media content, planning and executing terrorist operations, and acting as suicide bombers.

That is why by recognising the many different roles that men and women may play in terrorist groups, NATO needs to integrate a gender perspective in all its counter-terrorism efforts, including training and education for Allies and partners, as well as policy and programme development.

Integrating Gender Perspective in NATO's CT Efforts

In practice, how can we achieve this?

NATO's work on counter-terrorism focuses on improving awareness of the threat, developing capabilities to prepare and respond, and enhancing engagement with partner countries and other international actors.

a. Awareness

NATO ensures shared awareness of the terrorist threat through consultations, enhanced intelligence-sharing and continuous strategic analysis and assessment. Awareness is an essential enabler for the planning, preparation and execution of all CT activities. NATO's military contributions will include:

(1) Providing terrorism-related information, intelligence and assessments regarding terrorism in order to enhance NATO's overall Situational Awareness.

All data collected and shared needs to be sex-disaggregated. The lack of sex-disaggregated data hinders efforts to systematically assess the scale, range and nature of women's participation in terrorism. Without this type of data, it is impossible to measure the level of women's involvement in each terrorist group, as part of the global terrorist landscape.

(2) Maintaining a system of terrorism indicators and warnings to facilitate early detection. Regarding early warning indicators, women have unique vantage points to detect early signs of radicalization. Women notice rising extremism, as their rights are often the first targets of fundamentalists, from harassment in public spaces to dress requirements or attacks on girls' schooling. Women can also access spaces and conversations that may not be monitored by security officials, like Afghan women who noticed young men in their communities were being recruited at weddings.

b. Capabilities

The Alliance strives to ensure that it has adequate capabilities to prevent, protect against and respond to terrorist threats. NATO has unique military training, means and expertise which can contribute to global Counter-Terrorism efforts. Potential military contributions include:

(1) Sharing best practice, expertise and information relating to capabilities relevant to CT. For example, NATO's work on protection of critical infrastructure is well established and may be useful to an effective CT response by the Alliance, international organizations and individual nations. Building resilience and ensuring appropriate planning and preparation for response to and recovery from terrorist acts, needs to integrate gender perspective, as the consequences of these attacks on women, men, boys and girls can be different and so needs to be our response.

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11 "Countering the Female ISIS Threat in Indonesia", Blog Post, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 20 May 2020, https://www.cfr.org/blog/countering-female-isis-threat-indonesia.

NATO is also addressing the use of information obtained on missions and operations. In 2018, Allies agreed a biometric data policy. This policy enables biometric data collection to support NATO operations, and NATO's Strategic Commands have recognised that developing and improving this capability is a military requirement. This is particularly relevant to force protection and the threat posed by the FTFs. The development of systems to collect and share biometric data to identify suspects, need to integrate gender perspective, making sure they include behaviours, appearance, and other personal characteristics of female FTFs.

(2) Maintaining existing capabilities and expertise (including NATO Educational Training Facilities (NETF) and NATO accredited Centres of Excellence (COE) and NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ)) applicable for use against the terrorist threat.

In 2020, NATO launched its first standardized Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum (CTRC) to help learners develop the knowledge and skills needed to understand terrorism and counterterrorism in order to successfully anticipate and mitigate potential threats. In the 148-page curriculum, there are three references to gender or women: on returnees "nations should develop gender and age sensitive approaches to returnee challenges"; on recruitment strategies "it encompasses recruitment strategy including whether women and children can be used" and it identifies that "increasingly, women have also engaged as FTF's as their roles within terrorist groups evolve. Some have been the wives of FTFs, but they also can engage in dissemination of ideological propaganda, weapons training and fundraising".

Gender perspective needs to be mainstreamed across all education and training facilities, centres of excellence and headquarters working in CT.

c. Engagement

NATO can support national and international efforts to CT via existing cooperation mechanisms. Military initiatives should concentrate on developing and implementing programs directed towards assistance and advice to progress Defence and Security Sector Reform and training, advising and assisting host nation security forces.

The terrorist threat is even more complicated to address in countries where women cannot interact with men. If the Defence, security and counterterrorism organizations are unable to carry out effective monitoring, surveillance, targeting, infiltration, and interrogations of female terrorist targets, they will be quite ineffective. To mitigate this counterterrorism challenge associate with the culture, the Defence and Security Forces need to mirror the female terrorist threat by increasing and training the women of its defence, security and counterterrorism organizations.

Recommendations

Effective counter-terrorism strategies must be risk-based, intelligence-driven and comprehensive. Terrorist groups are aware of the gendered perceptions of their members and actions. These groups use women strategically and take advantage of heavily ingrained societal attitudes. The bias that creates the stereotypes of female terrorists also contributes to these women being able to effectively escape detection. The repeated shock when a woman commits terrorist acts shows that this strategy is effective and will continue to be should policymakers and practitioners not recognise the need for the integration of gender perspective.

A more nuanced understanding of the gender dimensions of radicalization, as well as of the different roles played by women and men within terrorist groups, has important implications for the design and implementation of counter-measures and prevention strategies.

Going forward, it is important to ensure adequacy of our counter-terrorism knowledge and efforts, to highlight the lessons learned so far, and to sharpen awareness of the emerging security challenges through the integration of gender perspective. To address this, I suggest some key takeaways for NATO.

1. Document and disseminate lessons learned. Over the past few decades, there have been many efforts to anticipate, prevent and respond to female terrorism, including when it comes to reintegrating women terrorists. These valuable lessons should be captured and incorporated into policy, doctrine and training.

2. Conduct gender analysis and include gender perspective in risk assessment. Integrating gender perspective into the analysis of terrorism trends should become the norm across the Alliance. Developing risk-assessment tools for individuals who show signs of radicalization to violence, including a gender perspective is essential. There should be a robust framework for evaluating the terrorist threats that women pose, including the risks associated with the early release of a female terrorist.

3. Integrate gender perspective across all educational programs and forums designed to support professional development in the fields of terrorism and counter terrorism. This means that gender perspective needs to be mainstreamed in all courses in programmes, instead of isolating the gender dimension of terrorism and counter terrorism in specific training.

4. Develop a manual of the Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) used by female operatives. This TTP manual could then be used to develop countermeasures and effective interventions to mitigate the female terrorist threat.

5. Update the MC Concept for Counter-Terrorism. Following the Counter-Terrorism Action Plan, endorsed in 2019, and the Action Plan for the implementation of the NATO/EAPC policy on Women, Peace and Security, approved last year, the MC Concept for Counter-Terrorism needs to be update accordingly and reflect the gender dimension of CT.

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INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN MILITARY PLANNING: A "HOW TO" GUIDE

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A question that often comes up when discussing the inclusion of a gender perspective in military planning is: "How do we integrate a gender perspective in the planning and execution of military operations?" The current literature and discussion from military Gender Advisors is of concern; what is addressed most often is approaching the inclusion of gender from a political position of instituting equal social rights within the military structure and personnel without addressing the most fundamental question of "why" a gender perspective is important to military organizations. Without addressing a coherent military reason for gender to be included in military planning, gender discussions will center around this being a "women's" issue, leading to superficially addressing the issue which will in all reality continue to lead to the marginalization of gender issues and military operations.

The "how" and "why" questions concerning gender and military operations are intermingled and are inseparable if we are to achieve effective military planning. One way to integrate gender into military planning is to conduct a gender analysis. In its most basic form, a gender analysis consists of asking questions that help identify power structures and relationships between men, women, boys, and girls. The answers to these questions influence the planning. If done correctly, the inclusion of gender will strengthen the military organization, address the security risk to military forces, and provide military advantage to fielded forces.

The first step is for planners to understand the commander's intent and desired effects. These will guide the planner in developing plans. Plans should stick to military objectives and not veer into the highly political realm of social engineering or forced introduction of "rights". Straying into these areas can lead to anger, resentment, and potentially violence against military forces. Plans shaped to change a people's values and culture should be avoided and left to political or other instruments of power.

Planning military and especially counter-terrorism operations is extremely complicated with many interrelated parts, with gender being only one of the large number of issues that planners must take into account. Care must be taken to ensure that gender does not become an overarching main effort for the planning, but rather a complimentary part of planning to determine how gender affects and interrelates with other areas (through the prism of "why" gender matters in military planning) to achieve the commander's intended effects. Gender-specific questions must be short, sharp, and to the point and most importantly must not become an additional burden on military planners to look into the issue because it is a popular social or political topic, but rather because it adds military value. In this regard, gender questions need to be complimentary to core military planning questions.

Traditional military plans, and particularly counter-terror planning, should be developed around the three core military reasons "why" considering gender is important to military operations. The first looks internally to our own formations and centers on the fact that diversity of thought produces better plans. The second reason is that if we do not account for gender in our planning, it creates a security risk to our own forces. The third reason is that gender variations offer an opportunity for military forces to increase security, to gain advantage, and act as a force multiplier. Throughout the planning process these three reasons should be understood and guide planning efforts.

In 2021, COE-DAT conducted a Gender Workshop addressing many issues centered around how gender influences terrorism and counter-terrorism. At that time, I postulated a simplified series of gendered questions for military planners to consider for traditional military and counter-terrorism missions divided into three broad categories:

1. Planning done before a military operation,
2. Planning during a military operation, and
3. Planning for post operation stabilization and hand over to civil authorities.

In reality, many of the questions overlap into other phases of planning. For that reason, this paper will examine the "how" questions postulated in the 2021 workshop summary through the lens of "why" gender should be addressed to meet military requirements (diversity of thought, securing the force, and exploitation of gender to gain advantage).

Planning accomplished before a military operation in regards to gender normally is done during peacetime or in the run up to a crisis. The planning should look at the target population, terrorist organizations, and our own military forces that will conduct the operation.

Diversity of Thought for Better Solutions

Critical questions planners should ask center around diversity of our organizations and particularly of the planning and leadership teams. Questions such as:

- What are the gender roles in your organization?
- How do these gender roles affect power dynamics in your organization?
- Is the planning section represented by an inclusive cross section of society?
- Is the command group represented by an inclusive cross section of society?

When looking at ourselves, it must be recognized that diverse organizations produce better plans and policies. If we all look alike and think alike, we will invariably always come to the same conclusions. These questions point to the diversity of the organization. But why does diversity matter for planners and command teams?

Societies that are more inclusive produce better policies and solutions in general and in Counter-terrorism (CT) in particular. Inclusive societies include more women in all aspects of society, to include government, as well as greater diversity as reflected in representation by sex, race, ethnicity, and religion. With greater diversity of thought and approaches to problems, more holistic and efficient solutions that include greater elements of society are developed.[1]

Greater representation of women in society is a sign of a society that responds well in a crisis owing to governance structures and social contract that are more inclusive and diverse.[2] There is also a correlation between the increase in women in public life and lower levels of corruption.[3] Conversely, societies that exclude women tend to institutionalize violence more and are less likely to negotiate.[4]

Women are well suited to deconstruct stereotypical gendered perceptions of women's and men's roles in terrorism and counter-terrorism. Since men and women have different views, concerns, perspectives, and experiences resulting from terrorism and counter-terrorism, the inclusion of many diverse points of view can help ensure solutions are more comprehensive, affect more communities, and ultimately are more effective.[5]

Gender Represents a Security Threat

Gendered aspects of terrorism present a security threat to NATO, Partner Nations, and the International Community, because if gender is not accounted for in threat assessments, it could lead to deficient understanding of the threat and insufficient responses to the threat.

Today, women are increasingly more visibly active in terrorism. The numbers of women arrested for terrorism offenses is on the rise. In Europe, 22% of those arrested on terrorism charges in 2018 were women, of 26% in 2016, and 18% in 2015.[6] Additionally, research has shown that armed groups supported by women are more likely to control greater territory and more

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1   Clare Wenham and Asha Herten-Crabb, "It's a Distraction to Focus on the Individual Success of Individual Women Leaders During COVID", https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/individual-women-leaders-covid, accessed 7 June 2021; Council of Europe, https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/counter-terrorism, accessed 1 June 2021; COE-DAT, "Women in Terrorism and Counterterrorism" 2019 workshop report, http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/workshop_reports/08-WomenInTerrorismAndCounterterrorism.pdf, 6, 35, and 36; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: Good Practices for Law Enforcement, 15.

2   Wenham and Herten-Crabb. "It's a Distraction."

3   Miemie Winn Byrd and Gretchen Decker, "Why the U.S. Should Gender Its Counterterrorism Strategy," *Military Review*, July-August 2008, 98.

4   Robert Ulrich Nagel, "Gendered Preferences: How Women's Inclusion in Society Shapes Negotiation Occurrence in Intrastate Conflicts, *Journal of Peace Research*, 13 July 2020.

5   Council of Europe, https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/counter-terrorism, viewed 1 June 2021.

6   NATO AC/119-N(2020)0064, Food For Thought Paper on Gender and Terrorism, 1-2.

likely to achieve victory over government forces. Women increase legitimacy, and their presence is an indication of greater community support and enhances tactical capabilities.[7] Besides, terrorist organizations understand the importance of gender and actively use gender stereotypes to seek recruits by tailoring the recruitment narrative to both men and women.

To gain an understanding of how gender impacts a society's normal relations between males and females, an analysis by planners needs to focus on an understanding of the society where operations will be conducted, as well as their own society. By working with academics and organizations such as Human Terrain Teams, an understanding of the cultural norms will emerge. Questions that can be helpful to understanding gender specifics in the target population include:

- What are the accepted norms in regards to gender?
- What is the relationship between genders?
- What is the power relationship between the genders?
- Are there groups you are unable to interact with?
- What roles do women fulfill in the terror organization? and
- What roles do men fulfill in the terror organization?

It is also useful to look inside your own society and ask,

- How does gender power dynamics affect our own organization?
- What views on gender do we bring to the mission? and
- How do we view the gender roles in our own society?

Comparing and contrasting the answers about our own society with the target population will reveal potential gender blind spots. For instance, we are accustomed to view women as victims in their links with terrorism, for instance as sex-slaves and Jihadi Brides. We are less mindful of the other roles play by women as sympathisers, supporters, radicalizers, recruiters, facilitators, perpetrators, etc.

Another question that must be asked is, "If women engage in combat, how does this affect other women's roles and the balance of power?"

Women are increasingly leading violent attacks. In Morocco several all-female terror cells have been disrupted. In London a plot to attack tourists at the British Museum by a mother and her two daughters was foiled.[8] The increase in female-led attacks is particularly true and dangerous in the context of suicide bombings. The numbers of attacks using female suicide bombers is increasing. Of concern is the substantial difference in lethality of a male versus a female suicide bomber with female bombers killing an average 8.4 while males kill on average 5.3 per attack.[9] Between 2014 and 2018, female suicide bombers killed over 1,200 people and due to their success almost two-thirds of all al-Shabaab suicide attackers are women. The effectiveness of female suicide bombers can be viewed through the gendered views of how women act in society. Generally, women are not viewed as a threat, which enables them to conceal explosives better due to conservative dress, and are subject to fewer screenings than males by security forces.[10] Because of this "blindness" to women, male suicide bombers in Afghanistan have dressed as women as a means to get to their targets.[11] As a consequence, from a threat analysis perspective, turning a blind eye to the agential power of women in terrorism leads to security gaps and insufficient CT and CVE programming.

Gender is Critical as Force Multiplier

"[T]he power of women to prevent and counter violent extremism remains largely untapped and under-supported."[12] This approach tends to miss examining why women join terror organizations and also misses opportunities to develop more effective CVE efforts. By addressing the complexities that gender plays in women and girls joining terror organizations

7   Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, "Women and Terrorism: Hidden Threats, Forgotten Partners," Council on Foreign Affairs, May 2019, 3.
8   Ibid., 4.
9   Ibid., 3.
10   Ibid., 3.
11   Michelle Barsa, "U.S. approaches to countering violent extremism must prioritize women," *New America*, 12 March 2015, https://www.newamerica.org/ weekly/ edition-72/us-approaches-countering-violent-extremism-must-prioritize-women.
12   United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "Women Preventing Violent Extremism", 2015, 12.

more nuanced solutions targeted towards women and girls can be developed. Often women are best suited to understand and aid in developing programs that incorporate a gendered perspective. Incorporating women's distinctive perspectives can lead to better intelligence gathering and more targeted responses to potential security threats.[13] By analyzing the context of gender dynamics, counter-terrorism policies can be developed to support women in the roles of predictors, preventers (rehabilitators, community leaders, and peace activists), and security actors.

Including women in security forces is a force multiplier that builds trust with local communities and increases security. Women have different perspectives and are perceived differently by communities from their male peers. This allows greater interaction with the community and in particular with women and girls. This gain of trust equates to greater situational awareness, more intelligence, and more information for security forces as female security personnel can engage with women and children that males often cannot.

By including women in security forces these women are able to conduct searches of females and reduce the chances of terrorists evading screening due to gender issues. Globally, about 15% of police forces are female while in South Asia that percentage drops between 2% and 8%. Without efforts to change the structure of police and security forces, female terrorists will retain an advantage.[14]

Planning should take into consideration for what happens after the operations ends and the post conflict return to civil authority. Some questions that need consideration are:

- If women were leaders and engaged in combat, does Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) / Prosecution, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (PRR) return them to normal women's roles?
- What is the effect on power relationships held in the terror organization to peaceful society?
- How does DDR/PRR affect women in terms of position in society, economy, and power relationships?

In many countries due to the prevailing gendered views that women are victims with no agency, many women are not prosecuted, and if they are prosecuted, women receive sentences that are far more lenient than men.[15] The gendered affect is women do not receive equal access to de-radicalization programs, as these are typically part of prison sentences for males. This could lead to women never de-radicalizing and lead to a second generation of terrorists as women FTFs pass on their ideologies.[16] And once women have access to rehabilitation programs, these programs either do not meet their needs nor offer merits or capabilities that take into account the power, status and wealth those women acquired when they are in the terrorist organisation.

Recommendations:

1. We should ensure women's representation at all levels in the Security Sector, because it will improve diversity and security as a force multiplier.

a. We need to improve the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women across the security sector to bolster the capacity of forces to mitigate potential terrorist threats. Our current recruitment strategies are traditional and/or stereotypical because they are generally aimed at young male audience and thus simply do not work well for women.

b. While recruiting women, we should not pigeonhole them into certain posts such as gender advisors or members of female engagement teams, and we need to include women at critical posts in decision-making and implementing.

2. We should acknowledge women's agency in terrorism and counterterrorism.

a. We need to be cognizant of gender biases and stereotypes overshadow the agential power of women in terms of their engagement in terrorism, and these biases lead to the miscalculation of the threat posed by women.

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[13] Bigio and Vogelstein, "Women and Terrorism", 7.

[14] Ibid, 9.

[15] Omi Hodwitz, "Prosecution of Women Associated with Terrorism: Reflections Based on Sex-Disaggregated Data" in *Gender in Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Data, Analysis and Response*, by COE-DAT, Workshop Report, Ankara, 2021. Dr Hodwitz points out women are 50% less likely to receive a prison sentence for a comparable non-violent crime as opposed to men. Men and women are comparably sentenced for violent crimes. Dr. Hodwitz notes that recidivism rates in the US for terrorism related crimes is very low at 3% but cautions the sample size is too small to make generalizations on the effectiveness of prison sentences.

[16] Joana Cook and Vanessa Newby, "An Interview with NATO on Gender and Counterterrorism", https://icct.nl/publication/an-interview-with-nato-on-gender-and-counter-terrorism/, 9 April 2021.

b. Pre-deployment training needs to warn against our common gendered view of women as innocents and victims only. The most common cases can be seen in body-search related cases. Women are not likely to trigger suspicion in terms of perpetrators of terrorism; they are better able to hide weapons and explosives either due to the dress code norms or presumed pregnancy and thus they are often not subject to strict security measures including body-searches.

c. Women should also be recognized as critical actors in CT. Their roles can vary from predictors and preventers to security actors. Supporting such roles of women will lead to more effective CT policies.

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GENDERED DIFFERENCES IN THE PROSECUTION OF DAESH RETURNEES IN GERMANY

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Counter Extremism Project

More than 1,150 individuals left Germany to travel to Syria and Iraq, most of them to join terrorist organizations such as the so-called Islamic State (IS) or Daesh.[1] Of those, around 25 percent were women. Some of the German foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) had returned voluntarily, fled to Türkiye and were deported or lost their lives; in some cases, their exact location is not known to German authorities. Since the military defeat of Daesh in 2019, several thousand alleged or former (foreign) Daesh members and affiliates, including German men, women, and children, remain in camps and detention facilities in Northeast Syria together with tens of thousands of displaced Syrians and Iraqi refugees. In total, at least 37 percent of the FTFs from Germany have returned, including more than 90 adult women.[2] For example, Germany had repatriated 22 women and 69 children out of humanitarian concerns as well as obliged by several court decisions.[3] While the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of these 'returnees' is one of the key challenges for Germany – and other European countries – there is still a lack of evidence-based analysis available on the scope of the issue and responses so far. In addition, female returnees are posing a specific set of challenges. These include for example that women in political violence, including religiously motivated extremism, have long been perceived mostly as naïve and passive or as victims of their male partners' decisions. Gendered narratives promoted by Daesh further played into this stereotypical understanding, underplaying the importance and agency of women within terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.[4] Another challenge has been an insecurity by the prosecution regarding which concrete offenses could be used to charge female returnees, since they were not involved in combat or planning of terrorist attacks like male returnees. Even if female returnees are prosecuted, a growing body of research indicates that women are treated more leniently than men in the criminal justice system, including when they are prosecuted for terrorism offenses.[5]

In this context, this contribution presented findings into gendered differences in the prosecution of Daesh returnees in Germany. The results are based on a data set of convicted returnees (25 males and 25 females), collected by the author based on open-source material such as press releases and media articles. The criteria for an individual to be included in the data set were that he or she 1) holds at least the German nationality, 2) had been affiliated with Daesh in Syria and Iraq and stayed in its territory, 3) returned to Germany and 4) was convicted at least in the first instance for membership in or support of a terrorist organization according to §§129a,b German criminal code (StGB) between 2014 and 2022. Partly due to the highly gendered roles that Daesh sought to propagate and enforce in its territory, no direct comparison between the judicial treatment of male and female returnees having committed similar offenses seemed possible. However, there are three main findings that resulted from this analysis.

First, the data confirms that before 2018, it would take significantly longer for women to be arrested by German authorities after return than for men. While male FTFs who returned in 2013 and 2014 would on average be arrested up to a year after their return, those who returned in 2015, 2016 and 2017 were directly arrested upon return or few months later.[6] In turn, between the two female FTFs who returned in 2013, one was not arrested at all and the other was only arrested after four months.[7] The two female returnees who returned in 2016 spend on average 33 months in Germany before being ar-

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1 Spiegel, "Rund 450 Dschihadisten aus Deutschland noch im Ausland," *Spiegel*, December 3, 2021. https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/rund-450-dschihadisten-aus-deutschland-noch-im-ausland-a-51e6b665-b380-49f2-91ca-069a0405ba00; Sofia Koller,"Prosecution of German Women Returning from Syria and Iraq: Insights and Recommendations for Policymakers and Security Agencies," CEP Policy Paper, August 2022. https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2022-08/CEP%20Policy%20Paper_Prosecution%20of%20German%20Women%20Returning%20from%20Syria%20and%20Iraq_August%202022_final.pdf.

2 Bundestag, "IS-Anhänger und deren Kinder im In- und Ausland – Stand 30. September 202." Antwort der Bundesregierung, Drucksache 20/166, 01 December 2021. https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/001/2000166.pdf; Bundestag. "Rückführungen von IS-Anhängerinnen mit deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit aus Syrien und anderen Ländern durch die Bundesregierung." Antwort der Bundesregierung, Drucksache 20/283, 15 December 2021. https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/002/2000283.pdf

3 See, for example, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/30-jaehrige-mit-drei-kindern-deutschland-holt-erstmals-is-anhaengerin-aus-syrien-zurueck/25260052.html or https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/gericht-droht-mit-zwangsgeld-bundesregierung-muss-is-anhaengerin-nach-deutschland-zurueckholen/25599988.html

4 Koller 2022, p.7.

5 Audrey Alexander & Rebecca Turkington, "Treatment of Terrorists: How Does Gender Affect Justice?," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Volume 11, Issue 8 (September 2018). https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CTC-SENTINEL-092018.pdf

6 None of the convicted male returnees returned after 2017, which makes comparison after that year difficult.

7 Apparently, none of the female FTFs who potentially returned in 2014 or 2015 were later convicted and hence do not appear in the dataset.

rested. From 2018 onwards, the period between return and arrest was reduced significantly. Women returning in 2020 and 2021 were arrested directly upon return since they were either deported from Türkiye or repatriated by German authorities. Of course, an arrest at the airport did not necessarily lead to pre-trial detention and/or an indictment, but it does indicate an awareness of security agencies that the returnee might have committed an offense and/or pose a security risk. One explanation for the difference in duration could be that female returnees were usually not prosecuted in Germany before 2018. Women with Daesh were perceived differently than men, as they were often assessed to be victims, naïve and only being housewives rather than proper members of Daesh. This understanding was slowly changing as more information about the role of women in Syria and Iraq emerged. Yet, in 2018, the Federal Court of Justice ruled, that only the presence in Daesh territory was not enough for (female) returnees to be charged with membership in a terrorist organization.[8] Since then, public prosecutors have used a new argumentation to charge and convict female returnees: otherwise legal activities could be considered membership within the broader context of Daesh, for example, marrying an male Daesh member and being a housewife was considered as supporting Daesh by enabling the husband's activities as a Daesh fighter; having children in the caliphate was considered as adhering to Daesh' ideology by securing the next generation. German prosecutors successfully argued that women who supported Daesh with these activities were hence also to be considered Daesh members, even if they did not participate in combat. Other options were using statutes under national and international law. Women could be charged as Daesh members since they carried weapons given to them by Daesh, lived in houses that had been looted and given to them by Daesh and committed crimes against Yazidi "slaves".

Second, the data seems to confirm that the date of return also impacts whether a female returnee is charged of terrorism offenses. First, prosecution for Daesh membership or support only started in 2014, when Daesh was recognized as a foreign terrorist organization by the German Ministry of Justice.[9] Up to and including 2018, the majority of the 24 charged returnees were male, with most male returnees charged in 2015 and 2016. After a decrease in 2016, no new charges have been pressed since male returnees usually did not return to Germany after 2019. On the other hand, only three female Daesh returnees were charged between 2014 and 2018 inclusive. The data then shows a clear turning point in and after 2018: from 2019 on, most of the 24 charged returnees were female. Once again, the data hence confirms the turning point in prosecuting of female returnees after 2018 as opposed to male returnees, who were systematically charged starting from 2014.

Finally, the data also suggests that charges for offenses committed in the "private sphere" concerned almost exclusively female returnees. These offenses included for example offenses against children or Yazidi "slaves" as well as crimes committed in the person's house as opposed to in public. In the two cases of male returnees charged for war crimes against persons, it concerned their torture of Daesh prisoners.[10]

There are, of course, several important limitations to consider when interpreting these results. These include that there might be other factors at play apart from gender, a difficult access to complete trial documents, the small size of the data set which only allows for cautious conclusions as well as the general lack of access to evidence, which is more challenging in the case of female returnees.

However, there are three preliminary conclusions that result from this first analysis. First, the dataset supports the existence of a turning point in the prosecution of female returnees in 2018 as discussed elsewhere.[11] Second, while the data confirms that almost only women were charged with offenses committed in the "private sphere", including abuse of Yazidi "slaves" and minors, the testimony of Yazidi victims during the trials of female returnees suggests that men were also and even more responsible for this abuse.[12] However, a third conclusion is that the data confirms how the ongoing lack of repatriation of male FTFs to Germany hinders their prosecution for the crimes that they may have committed with Daesh and other terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.

[8]   Sofia Koller & Alexander Schiele, "Holding Women Accountable: Prosecuting Female Returnees in Germany," Counter Terrorism Centre Sentinel, December 2021, Volume 14, Issue 10. https://ctc.usma.edu/holding-women-accountable-prosecuting-female-returnees-in-germany/.

[9]   Gerwin Moldenhauer, "Rückkehrerinnen und Rückkehrer aus der Perspektive der Strafjustiz," Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2018; German Parliament, "Antwort der Bundesregierung. Verfolgungsermächtigungen nach § 129b des Strafgesetzbuches," Drucksache 18/9779, September 27, 2016.

[10]   Manasi Gopalakrishnan, "German court sentences former 'Islamic State' member Nils D.," *Deutsche Welle*, March 4, 2016. https://www.dw.com/en/german-court-sentences-former-islamic-state-member-nils-d/a-19095235.

[11]   Koller & Schiele 2021.

[12]   "German court convicts a third ISIS member of crimes against humanity committed against Yazidis," *Doughty Street Chambers*, June 19, 2021. https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/german-court-convicts-third-isis-member-crimes-against-humanity-committed-against-yazidis.

There are several recommendations that can be formulated based on these results. Considering the overall lack of analysis on the intersection of gender, criminal justice, and terrorism, recommendations for researchers include to reflect what contributions they can provide despite a lack of sex-disaggregated data, for example preparing their own data base or comparing country approaches to similar challenges. Recommendations for policymakers include to provide or promote public access to criminal justice data broken down by gender and age as well as provide opportunities for international exchange between researchers and practitioners as well as governmental and non-governmental actors.

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THE INVISIBLE DEFENDANT: FEMALE EXTREMISTS IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA

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Overview

Extant research has predominately focused on the reactions of the criminal justice system towards male extremists, while largely ignoring the role females play in terrorism. The current presentation initially sought to understand the differences in the prosecution between male and female extremists in the Western Balkans. However, after an initial analysis of the data, one clear trend became apparent: only males were prosecuted in this region. This finding led to an examination of a new set of research questions: (1) do women engage in terrorism in the Western Balkans; (2) are women prosecuted for terrorism; (3) or is the data androcentric?

Current Study

The Terrorism and Foreign Fighter (TFF) Database, collected by Balkan Insight, included all criminal prosecutions of domestic terrorists and foreign fighters in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia from 2010 to 2020. The data were displayed as short narratives regarding each criminal proceeding, therefore a dataset needed to be created pulling out key information from the narrative regarding crime type, sentence, and gender. Gender needed to be coded through pronouns utilized in the narrative, such as "he" or "his." After reviewing all one hundred and eleven cases, one trend became clear, not a single female was represented in the data.

After determining the lack of gender differences in the initial data, the original research question comparing prosecution outcomes for men and women could no longer be investigated. However, new and equally important questions presented themselves. While female terrorists are relatively less common in prosecutions in other countries, it is rare to find no females present in the courtroom, which led to the question of whether women in the Western Balkans engage in terrorism?

In order to investigate this question, a qualitative analysis of news articles, scholarly research, and government reports was conducted to see if there was any evidence of women committing terrorism in this region. After extensive searches through these sources, it was clear that women do engage in terrorism. There were few reports of women committing domestic terrorism, however some of these cases were outside of the countries represented in the TFF. On the other hand, there was ample evidence of women as foreign fighters. One study estimated that up to 15% of foreign fighters from the Western Balkans are female.[1] After reviewing numerous sources, there is a definitive conclusion that women are engaging in extremist activity in the Western Balkans.

While not directly part of the research, these various sources revealed reasons women engaged in terrorism as foreign fighters. One of the major factors that led to women travelling to countries like Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine was to follow their husbands and take care of the home and children abroad. Given the culture of the Balkans, women are seen as the primary caretaker of the home, thus it is expected they continue to maintain this role even in a foreign country. Other women travelled to find a husband in these regions or as sexual partners for men. On a different note, other reasons women became foreign fighters was to escape the patriarchal society that provided limited opportunities socially, politically, and economically for women. Recruiters often promise freedom, independence, and adventure to these women and to escape their current domesticated roles in society.

Regardless of the reasons, there was evidence of female terrorists in the Western Balkans, which leads to the next research question: are they being prosecuted for these crimes? A qualitative analysis of the same sources as previously stated was conducted to see if there was evidence of women being prosecuted for terrorism. Ultimately, there were only two incidents of women being prosecuted for terrorism related crimes. The first example was two women in Kosovo,

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[1]   Mietz, *What About The Women?: Understanding and Addressing the Problem of ISIS Female Recruitment in the Western Balkans*, 4.

outside the TFF data, who were convicted of terrorism and given suspended sentences contingent on good behavior and mandatory counseling. The other incident involved a woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina who was charged with financing terrorist operations by sending money to her husband in Syria, though this incident was not until 2021 which was outside of the TFF data collection period. This woman was ultimately acquitted of her crimes after she claimed she did not know for what the money was used.

There were a few scholarly studies that focused on the criminal justice system and results were fairly consistent. Females are generally viewed as non-combatants by the state. Even though there is evidence that these women are willingly joining these organizations and travelling with their partners, they are defined as non-combatants since they are not directly engaged in any fighting. It is apparent that women are treated the same as children and deemed non-threatening to society. Culturally, they are assumed to have followed their husbands to care for the family, providing a necessary role of caretaker. Since there women are upholding the societal expectation, their behavior is deemed socially acceptable. Several female returnees have also claimed to be the victim, being forced by their partners into their role in the organization. Prosecutors tend to avoid these cases since they will not likely result in a guilty verdict and choose not to prosecute them.

Given the evidence thus far that women are engaging in terrorism but are not prosecuted for their crimes, the TFF seems to be accurately reflecting prosecution practices in the Western Balkans. Initially, there was suspicion that the data collectors could have excluded or failed to collect information on female defendants due to societal beliefs that women cannot be violent criminals. In order to ensure robust findings confirming that the data was not biased, further examination of three additional data sources was conducted.

The first data examined came from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which is collected by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism between 1970 and 2018. The GTD only includes attacks as opposed to individuals, however if the perpetrator of the attack is known, information on that individual is collected and included in the dataset. The current study only looked at incidents from 2007 until 2018, of which 74 incidents from the Balkans were found. Of all the cases where gender was included, the perpetrator was male, supporting the findings from the TFF.

The second data sources analyzed was the Counter Extremism Project which is a non-governmental organization that collects data on extremist individuals and attacks. The data include arrests for extremism since 2007, though only for Bosnia and Albania. The data revealed only one female arrested in the region, which was the same woman discovered through the qualitative analysis who was acquitted of her crimes in 2021. Again, the data here are consistent with the TFF data showing that females are not prosecuted for terrorism.

The final dataset evaluated was the International Crimes Database which was collected by the Asser Institute (T.M.C. Asser Instituut). These data include international crimes arbitrated in both national and international courts. This dataset included the least information as only Bosnia was included, but four incidents were found, of which all were male. Thus, consistent with the findings from the qualitative analysis and initial conclusions from the TFF, women do not appear to be prosecuted in the Western Balkans indicating the data collection process was not biased by cultural factors.

Conclusions

After initial data revealed that females were not prosecuted in the Western Balkans, qualitative analysis was conducted to further examine this phenomenon. Findings revealed that while women do engage in terrorism in the region, they are not prosecuted for their crimes and thus do not appear in official data. These findings reveal an important distinction in the Western Balkans, setting it apart from other nations where women are held responsible for their actions by the criminal justice system.

Research has shown that many of these female returnees face a lot of consequences when they arrive back in their home country. There have been reports that communities shun these women for their actions leading to high levels of discrimination. They also have reported facing severe mental health issues including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, sleep deprivation, and others, which often go unaddressed and untreated. Finally, many

who return continue to hold radical beliefs; though there has been no research on the likelihood that these women would recidivate, that remains a possibility. The findings from this study reveal that we have a long way to go in understanding this phenomenon, particularly in the Western Balkans, where female extremists are largely ignored.

The criminal justice system serves many purposes. First, it is there to deter individuals from ever committing a crime through fear of punishment and to punish those who have committed a crime so that they choose to not further engage in criminal behavior. If women are not prosecuted for their crimes, there is no reason for women to fear punishment for their actions, potentially increasing the likelihood one would engage in radical behavior.

The system also incapacitates, placing people in prison so they cannot cause further harm to society. While males may be convicted and sentenced to prison for domestic terrorism and foreign fighting in the Western Balkans, women are not, so they can continue their actions unabated by a criminal justice response increasing the risk of incidents occurring both within the region and in areas like Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine.

Aside from punishment, an important role of the criminal justice system is also to rehabilitate and reintegrate an offender. Without any criminal justice response, women do not receive any rehabilitation or reintegration upon returning to the Balkans. Females are treated as non-combatants and victims of their partners actions and thus not deemed liable for their behavior. They do not get placed in reintegration programs that can help them assimilate back into their communities nor do they receive any form of mental health treatment to address the mental consequences they face upon return. Without a proper rehabilitative response, women may continue to hold radical ideology, which may be further exacerbated by the discrimination and lack of opportunities faced in the home communities. This may lead to increases in radical behavior by these women in the future.

A criminal justice response serves many purposes, with the goal of reducing and preventing crime. Female extremists in the Western Balkans do not get brought into the criminal justice system, thus they do not benefit from these programs put in place to reduce recidivism and help them reintegrate successfully into society. Our current study has highlighted the need for the Western Balkans to take steps to addressing these women and help them instead of assuming they are not dangerous and do not need a criminal justice response.

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GENDERED DISPARITIES IN SENTENCING IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT

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Overview

Research has pointed definitively to the presence of gender disparities in criminal justice proceedings. However, these studies have focused almost entirely on apolitical or conventional criminal offending while excluding consideration of ideologically motivated offending. Despite this oversight, terrorism scholars have assumed that these results can be extended to radicalized populations without taking the necessary step to test this assumption. This paper addresses this oversight by examining the intersection between extremism, gender, and the criminal justice system in the North American context. Specifically, it assesses potential gender-based sentencing disparities of extremists in the United States and Canada.

Theoretical Premise

In criminological studies, there are two key theoretical frameworks that provide direction on gender-based analysis: the *chivalry hypothesis* and the *conflict perspective*. The chivalry hypothesis suggests that females will receive differential treatment by criminal justice practitioners when compared to their male counterparts. Within this framework, *desperate women* are viewed as having reduced accountability due to being coerced or forced into deviance while the *fallen woman* may have greater accountability but is still worthy of salvation due to her role as a mother and as a member of the 'weaker sex'. The result of either narrative is leniency or *paternalism* in criminal justice proceedings.

The conflict perspective also suggests that women will be treated with leniency in many circumstances but offers one key caveat or condition. According to conflict theorists, the criminal justice system is a tool in the hands of the powerful who use it to maintain the status quo. Females will be treated with leniency unless they threaten a gendered hierarchy by engaging in gender-atypical crimes (e.g., violent offenses); if they do, the criminal justice system will respond *punitively*, treating them in a manner similar to their male counterparts.

Both theoretical orientations are supported by research using innovative methods and carried out in a variety of contexts.[1] However, for the most part, this research has focused on apolitical populations, or individuals that engage in conventional deviance; there is a notable deficit in research that examines ideologically motivated or extremist populations. Despite this oversight in the literature, terrorism scholars have applied these findings to political populations, adopting the assumption that gendered disparities are also evident in extremist samples.[2] They have done so without the empirical evidence necessary to support this assumption. This paper attempts to address this deficit by providing a preliminary examination of possible gender disparities in sentencing in the North American context with a focus on extremist defendants.

The Current Study

This study addresses two theoretically driven hypotheses: 1) females accused of terrorism-related offenses receive leniency in sentencing decisions (the chivalry hypothesis) and 2) leniency will not be afforded to females accused of engaging in gender-atypical forms of extremism (conflict perspective). To ensure robustness of results, this study is carried out in two countries that share key similarities and differences: Canada and the United States. While these countries are similar in ethnic and religious orientation, cultural practices, and social expectations, they differ on key metrics that are integral to the intersection between extremism, gender, and criminal justice response. The United States, for example, embraces a retributive approach to deviance, while Canada adopts a restorative stance. Canada has a hybrid criminal

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[1] See, for example, Jill K. Doerner, Stephen Demuth, "Gender and Sentencing in the Federal Courts: Are Women Treated More Leniently?," *Criminal Justice Policy Review 25*, no.2 (2014): 242-269; Anna Bindler, Randi Hjalmarsson, "The Persistence of the Criminal Justice Gender Gap: Evidence from 200 years of Judicial Decisions," *The Journal of Law and Economics 63,* no.2 (May 2020): 297-339; Richard A. Aborisade and Sunday S. Adedayo, "Gender and sentencing in the Nigerian justice system: Are women given preferential treatments?" *Gender and Behaviour 18,* no.2 (2020): 15581-15590; and Arnaud Philippe, "Gender Disparities in Sentencing." *Economica 87*, no.348 (2020): 1037-1077.

[2] See, for example, Esther E.J. Strommen, "Jihadi brides or female foreign fighters? Women in Da'esh – from recruitment to sentencing," *GPS Policy Brief (*Oslo: PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace, and Security, 2017).

justice system while the United States has a uniform system. Lastly, the United States places a premium on freedom of expression while Canada prioritizes equality. Given their differences, if both countries show support for the chivalry and/or conflict frameworks, this suggests the findings are robust.

To test the above-cited hypotheses, this study relies on the Terrorism Recidivism Study (TRS) which records information on individuals accused and convicted of terrorism-related offenses in the United States and Canada post-911 through to the end of 2020.[3] The United States data consist of 731 individuals, including 58 females, while the Canada data consist of 75 individuals, including nine females. Given the small sample size of extremists included in the Canada data, this set is best used in an exploratory manner, first noting any differences in sentencing averages between the male and female sample, then comparing public and legalistic narratives to determine if those disparities are rooted in a *desperate* or a *fallen* narrative. The United States sample, on the other hand, is much larger and thus is more fitting for explanatory research, using inferential quantitative methods to examine the relationship between gender and sentencing, while also controlling for other factors that may influence outcomes.

Canadian Outcomes

The Canadian analyses consist of two steps: 1) comparing average sentencing outcomes between males and females and 2) using content analysis of publicly available documents to determine if observed sentencing disparities are driven by a particular narrative.

The typical Canadian male extremist is in his late 20s, engages in violent offenses, and is likely affiliated with a terrorist organization. Canadian female extremists are also in their 20s but are split in their likelihood of engaging in violence versus non-violence and becoming involved with a terrorist organization versus remaining unaffiliated. Comparison of average sentencing outcomes, however, illustrate some notable differences between the two groups. Males are more likely to be convicted than females (69% versus 55% respectively) and, once convicted, are more likely to be sentenced to prison (97% versus 50% respectively). Males are sentenced to prison terms that average 13.7 years while females are sentenced to prison terms that average 4.7 years. There are no notable differences in supervised release (parole or probation) but fines, although rare, are a male-specific phenomenon. These comparisons provide support for the chivalry hypothesis, indicating that women receive leniency when compared to their male counterparts in the Canadian context. This begs the question *why*? Is, for example, leniency rooted in a desperate or a fallen narrative?

Identifying underlying narratives can be difficult but content analysis is fitting for the task. Content analysis involves systematically examining speech and text to determine thematic narratives that indicate meaning or subtext. In this case, this requires collecting media and court documents, reviewing them for key words or phrases that suggest underlying motives or perspectives, then assessing whether these motives or perspectives differ between gender-defined groups. Before doing this within the Canadian context, however, a smaller and more manageable sample is necessary; one that ideally shares legal and extralegal characteristics. In this case, the sample includes four pairs of Canadian extremists: romantically linked partners that share demographic characteristics *and are accused of committing the same crimes*, thus ensuring that any difference in media or court narratives are likely gender-based.

With the sample of four pairs of matched extremists in hand, the next step involves collecting media and legal documents and assessing them for content.[4] The results from this assessment, as described in Table 1 and summarized below, suggest that Canadian courts and the public recast female extremists as *desperate women.*

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3   See Omi Hodwitz, "The Terrorism Recidivism Study (TRS): An update on data collection and results," *Perspectives on Terrorism 15, no.*4 (2021): 27-38 for a full description of the TRS.
4   For the purposes of this study, a minimum of 20 media and court documents were required for each member of the sample resulting in a minimum of 160 sources.

Table 1. Content Analysis Results.

Key Themes	Gender	Example of Descriptors	Tone and Subtext
Family	Female	• Strained parental relationship • Protective sister • Well-respected family	Family is central and is presented in a positive light, as caring and supportive, but struggling to connect with the defendant
	Male	• Lucky to have caring mother	Family is rarely mentioned and, when referenced, is peripheral but presented as bearing the burden of the defendant
Psychological References	Female	• Troubled life • Searching for identity • Struggling to fit in • Socially estranged • Looking for meaning	Mental and emotional state is central, presented in a manner that may elicit sympathy
	Male	• Emotionless • Angry • Significantly less intelligent • Henchman mentality	Mental and emotional state is central and presented in a manner that may elicit judgement
Accountability	Female	• Victim of circumstance • People who blame her are pathetic	Reference to accountability is moderate and focuses on reduced agency
	Male	• ISIS fanboy • Warrior in jihad	Reference to accountability is moderate and focuses on committed group membership
Personal History and Character	Female	• Excellent student • Model for women • Bright and artistic • Kind and generous	Personal history is central and focuses on desirable characteristics
	Male	• Crude tattoos • Drug addict • Previous criminal record	Personal history is moderate and focuses on undesirable characteristics

Content analysis indicates key differences between the narratives surrounding male and female extremists. When *family* is mentioned in relation to females, this concept is described as a caring and supportive aspect of the defendant's social life, but one that is marked by strain as families struggle to support their errant offspring or sibling. Male defendants' families, on the other hand, are rarely referenced in public and legalistic narratives and, when they are, the implication centers on the burdensome nature of the defendant on the family.

Both media and legal authorities are liberal in reflecting on the *psychological characteristics* of male and female defendants, although the tone and subtext between the two gender-defined groups is notably different. Females tend to be presented in a manner that appears designed to elicit sympathy. Male defendants, on the other hand, are described in a manner that may elicit judgement.

Although not prevalent, social narratives do occasionally offer sentiments that reflect on perceived *accountability*. Female defendants are generally presented as having reduced agency and/or accountability, while male defendants are described as holding active and enthusiastic sentiments towards an extremist organization or ideology, thus suggesting accountability.

Reflections on *personal history and character* are also prevalent, particularly for women. Once again, female defendants are cast in a positive light, described as possessing a commendable set of attributes. As for the males, the narrative is notably different, once again focusing on negative attributes.

In summary, the findings from this study suggest that females are treated with leniency in the Canadian context, providing support for the chivalry hypothesis. In addition, this seems to be driven, at least in part, by a *desperate woman* narrative, one that casts female extremists as possessing positive characteristics and lacking in accountability. Although these findings are informative, there are some considerations that temper their definitive nature. As mentioned previously, the sample size is small and, therefore, its representativeness must be questioned. In addition, the sample is restricted to Canada, which is unique in many respects, further mitigating the ability to generalize beyond the sample. Lastly, as noted previously, males are more likely to be charged with violent offenses and to be linked to a terrorist organization, both of which are legitimate legal factors that may influence sentencing outcomes and subsequent narratives. Therefore, the next step is to replicate the study using a larger sample, in a country that differs in many respects from Canada, while also controlling for other gender-based explanations for sentencing disparities. This will ensure that any shared results are more definitive, generalizable, and robust.

United States Outcomes

The United States analyses consist of three steps: 1) comparing average sentencing outcomes between males and females, 2) using statistical regression to account for other factors that may influence outcomes, and 3) using statistical regression to examine disparities in gender-atypical offending.

In comparison to the Canadian sample, the United States sample is more homogenous. Both males and females are in the mid-30s, the majority of which are engaged in non-violent offenses and affiliated with a terrorist organization. Their sentencing outcomes, however, differ considerably. Males are more likely to be imprisoned than females (87% versus 74 % respectively) and their length of imprisonment is more severe (11.7 years versus 7.2 years respectively). There is little difference in who receives a supervised sentence, but the length of sentence is once again longer for males than females (7.2 years versus 4.9 years respectively). Both groups are equally likely to receive fines, but the amount is disparate; the average fine amount for males is $574,000 while the average rate for females is $136,000.

Similar to Canada, sentencing disparities in the United States support the chivalry hypothesis; it appears that females are granted leniency when compared to their male counterparts. However, males have several legal characteristics that may explain these differences. Male offenders, for example, are more likely to have previous criminal records and may have more collective charges than females. To account for these differences, the next step involves running a regression analysis while controlling for both legal and extralegal characteristics that may influence sentencing outcomes.[56] Results from these analyses point to several conclusions. First, other legal and extralegal variables are influential for sentencing outcomes, illustrating the importance of each of these factors on judicial decisions. Second, after controlling for these additional factors, gender does not significantly affect decisions surrounding supervised release.[7] Third, after controlling for alternative explanations, gender is a significant predictor of both the decision to incarcerate and the length of the prison sentence. The results of the analysis indicate that women are half as likely to be sentenced to prison as their male counterparts and, when they are incarcerated, their sentence is approximately two and a half years less in length than males convicted of comparable offenses. Thus, the chivalry hypothesis is supported in the United States, at least in relation to incarceration.

In addition to testing the chivalry hypothesis, the United States set can also be used to assess the conflict perspective. Carrying out this analysis requires separating the female extremists into two groups: those that engaged in gender-typical crimes (non-violent offenses) and those that engaged in gender-atypical crimes (violent crimes). Using regression modeling again allows for a comparison of sentencing outcomes for each of these groups with their male counterparts.

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[5] Regression models relied on OLS or logit regression.

[6] These included the following: number of offenses, offense type, organizational affiliation, prior criminal convictions, year of arrest, disposition, race, and age.

[7] This finding is not surprising within the context of the chivalry hypothesis. Supervised release is generally considered the softer alternative to prison and, if the criminal justice system is likely to adopt a paternalistic approach to sentencing, this is a more likely outcome for convicted female extremists. It is also important to note that, due to the rarity of fines, this outcome was removed from the analysis so is not included in the discussion of results.

Results from this last round of analyses are telling. First, gender is not a significant factor in sentencing decisions for violent females; outcomes relating to decisions to incarcerate and to apply supervised release are comparable for both male and female extremists. Second, the relationship between gender and sentencing disparities becomes even more pronounced for non-violent extremists.[8] Thus, in addition to the chivalry hypothesis, the United States sample also provides support for the conflict perspective. In the United States, female extremists receive leniency by representatives of the criminal justice system unless they engage in gender-atypical offenses, such as violent offenses. Violent extremist women are no longer offered leniency, subjected instead to a punitive approach.

Conclusions

Through a series of diverse analyses, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, the results from this study indicate that gender plays a role in judicial decision-making in the North American context. In Canada, female extremists are treated with leniency, often recast in the role of the desperate woman. In the United States, female extremists can also expect reduced sentences, particularly in relation to incarceration, unless they engage in gender-atypical or violent offenses, in which case leniency is replaced with a punitive approach. These disparities suggest that the criminal justice system is not adequately fulfilling its primary objective with this unique population of offenders; female extremists are limited in their access to criminal-justice oriented rehabilitation, they may not be deterred due to diminished or inconsistent punitive outcomes, and the public is placed at greater risk due to the increased likelihood of their return to the community.

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[8] This illustrates the 'washing out' effect. When non-violent and violent women are both included in the same sample, the non-effects of the violent women 'wash out' the effects of the non-violent women, thus masking a relationship for one group by the non-relationship of another group.

THE USE OF GENDER IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT RECRUITMENT AND RADICALIZATION:
THE OATH KEEPERS

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The January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol in the United States has raised concerns over Violent Extremist Organizations that aim to challenge the electoral process and the legitimacy of the U.S. government. Somewhat surprisingly, some of these "anti-government" groups have included women not only in their ranks, but also as key leaders and as combatants. This is particularly true of the Oath Keepers, an organization made up principally of former military, law enforcement and first responders claiming to be upholding their oath of office "against enemies foreign and domestic."

This summary considers how the Oath Keepers uses gender in its messaging to recruit and radicalize members. Here gender is defined as "the social attributes associated with being male and female learned through socialization and [which] determines a person's position and value in a given context…gender does not exclusively refer to women."[1] It proposes that that the Oath Keepers draws on a "meta-identity" of local, state and federal service members as "Guardians of the Republic"—including military, law enforcement and first responders—and claims it is their responsibility to uphold the oath of office against enemies foreign and domestic, including the U.S. government. This "meta-identity" supersedes gender and allows for inclusion of both men and women in its ranks, including in leadership and combat roles.

The Role of Gender in Recruitment and Radicalization

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The process of recruitment and radicalization of individuals who join terrorist groups has received considerable attention in academic literature.[2] Within the study of radicalization, how groups use gender to recruit, radicalize and justify violence is perhaps less studied, although this topic has received more attention in recent years. Several scholars note, first, the importance of considering gender roles in wider society and how this affects recruitment and radicalization in extremist groups. Ifat Idris, for example, stresses that "Men and women can have very different reasons for joining/supporting extremist groups, based on their gendered roles; they can participate in different ways; and be impacted by violent extremism in different ways."[3] Elizabeth Pearson argues that, when men join extremist groups, it is often taken for granted. "It is seen as something natural to what men are, a 'boys will be boys' approach. This assumption implies essential qualities linked to male and female biology. It suggests that when men are violent, there is no need to ask why. Such assumptions are often based on stereotypes rather than evidence."[4]

Another approach to studying why men and women join extremist groups and the different gender roles they play in these groups focuses on ideology as a key factor. Typically, this literature is subdivided between the different ideologies of right wing, left wing, and religiously based extremist movements, and the connection between ideology, gender, and the roles that men and women perform within various organizations. Right wing groups, in particular, are typically believed to have gender specific messaging and to relegate women to specific and limited roles within the extremist group. For example, a 2019 OSCE report on gender and CVE summarizes "alt-right groups" as, these movements are often misogynist, and both men and women who are part of them hold the belief that women should primarily stay at home, raise children

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1   "HQ SACT Office of the Gender Advisor," https://www.act.nato.int/gender-advisor, accessed 6 August 2022.

2   See, for example: Fathal Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism," *American Psychologist* 60, no.2 (2005):161-169; John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Racial and Extremist Movements* (New York, NY: Routledge 2009); Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two Pyramid Model," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017): 205-2016; Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38, no 11 (2015): 958-979; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways towards Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 20, no. 3 (2008): 415-433; and Guilain Denoeux with Lynn Carter, "Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism," *USAID*, 8. https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/44292, accessed 13 August 2022.

3   Iffat Idris, "Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism Programming on Men, Women, Boys and Girls," *K4D/GSDRC: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development*, 9 October 2019, https://gsdrc.org/publications/preventing-countering-violent-extremism-programming-on-men-women-boys-and-girls/, accessed 13 August 2022.

4   Elizabeth Pearson, "Why Men Fight and Women Don't: Masculinity and Extremist Violence," *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*, 13 September 2018, 6. https://institute.global/policy/why-men-fight-and-women-dont-masculinity-and-extremist-violence, accessed 13 August 2022.

and care for the family. Women may perform the role of "wife with a purpose" or that of "tradwives" (traditional wives who support the involvement of their husbands, through social media in particular). Few women can be found in leadership functions.[5]

Similarly, research on religiously motivated terrorist groups tends to note how women are subjugated as part of groups' overall ideological framework. For example, Biglio and Vogelstein assert in a CFR report: "Many extremist groups promote an ideology that classifies women as second-class citizens and offers strategic and financial benefits through women's subjugation."[6] However, several scholars note that women play a wide range of roles in religiously motivated extremist groups, including Sara Mahmood's work on Darul Islam in Indonesia,[7] and Idris' work on Al Shabaab, in which women have been used in "intelligence gathering, recruitment, fund-raising and financial transactions, transporting goods, and domestic chores."[8] Women have also perpetrated acts of violence in religiously motivated extremist groups, especially Boko Haram in Nigeria.[9] Mia Bloom's pathbreaking work on female suicide terrorism expands on these observations. She argues that "Lots of women are just as bloodthirsty as the male members of terrorist groups, but women's motivations tend to be intricate, multi-layered, and inspired on a number of levels." [10]

Several scholars also recognize that right wing and religious based extremist groups have constructed specific and distinct gender narratives to recruit and radicalize men and women. For example, A DCAF OSCE/ODIHR policy brief notes "ISIS…successfully appealed to young urban men by portraying its fighters as honourable "real" men and protectors of the community. They promised recruits a monthly income, a wife, and a home—traditional markers of the passage to adulthood that many young men were struggling to achieve."[11] Daesh has also developed a separate and distinct gender narrative for women. "Female recruits were attracted by perceived "liberation" from the immoral "beauty salon culture" of the West and the freedom to practise their religion without discrimination. ISIS portrays women as complementary but not equal to men, and morally and socially superior to Western women."[12]

As will be described, the Oath Keepers appear to be breaking with traditional right-wing and religious-based extremist groups' use of gender specific recruitment as well as the specific roles that women are allowed to play in the organization.

Anti-Government Movements in the United States: The Oath Keepers

Elmer Stewart Rhodes, a Yale-trained lawyer who had done a brief stint in the Army as an enlisted soldier, founded the Oath Keepers in 2009 with the claim that the U.S. government is failing to uphold the U.S. Constitution and the liberties it enshrines. Its motto is "Guardians of the Republic," and its logo mimics the U.S. Army Ranger "tab", which is yellow with black letters and worn by soldiers who successfully graduate from Ranger school. [13] The Oath Keepers calls for military, law enforcement, and first responders to keep their oath of office to defend the U.S. Constitution against enemies foreign and domestic, including the U.S. government as a potential domestic enemy. Alongside the oath of office, the Oath Keepers identify ten orders from the U.S. government that they will not obey, including seizing citizen's weapons, interning citizens, and allowing foreign troops on U.S. soil.[14]

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the Oath Keepers' messaging has been consciously inclusive of men and women. This is particularly true of Rhodes, who claims to have taught rape prevention courses while he was at the University of

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5   Camilla Bognoe, et al, "Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: Good Practices for Law Enforcement," *Office of Security and Cooperation in Europe and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs* Vienna, May 2019, 9. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/b/420563_1.pdf, accessed 13 August 2022.

6   Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, "Women and Terrorism: Hidden Threats, Forgotten Partners," *Council on Foreign Relations Discussion Paper,* May 2019, 3. https://www.cfr.org/report/women-and-terrorism, accessed 10 August 2022.

7   Sara Mahmood, "Negating Stereotypes: Women, Gender and Terrorism in Indonesia and Pakistan," unpublished manuscript, 2019, 14. https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Negating%20Stereotypes-%20Women%20Gender%20and%20Terrorism%20in%20Indonesia%20and%20Pakistan.pdf, accessed 12 August 2022.

8   Iffat Idris, "Gender and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Kenya-Mozambique Region," *K4/GSRDC: Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development*, 4. https://gsdrc.org/publications/gender-and-countering-violent-extremism-cve-in-the-kenyamozambique-region/, accessed 13 August 2022.

9   Bigio and Vogelstein, "Women and Terrorism: Hidden Threats, Forgotten Partners," 4.

10   Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), ix.

11   Amrita Kapur, "Gender, Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism," *DCAF Policy Brief* (Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance), 3. https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/GSPolicyBrief_3%20EN%20FINAL_0.pdf, accessed 06 August 2022.

12   Ibid.

13   ADL, "Oath Keepers," https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/oath-keepers, accessed 16 August 2022.

14   Ibid.

Nevada, Las Vegas.[15] For example, in the lead up to the January 6 attack on the Capitol, Rhodes wrote in November 2020, "On your feet!... Stand up, hook up, check equipment ... and shuffle to the door *my brothers and sisters*."[16] Significantly, Rhodes emphasizes military language and symbols (hook up, check equipment, shuffle to the door, which are references to being a paratrooper) and includes both men and women in his messaging. In 2015, following a terrorist attack on a U.S. military recruiting office and Naval Reserve base in Chattanooga, Rhodes wrote: "Go armed, at all times, as free men and women, and be ready to do sudden battle, anywhere, anytime, and with utter recklessness. That IS the price of freedom."[17] Again, Rhodes calls on men and women to take up arms and do battle, as opposed to just men.

Alongside Rhodes' gender inclusive rhetoric, the Oath Keepers have included women throughout their ranks, including in leadership roles. Most notably, one of the key participants in the January 6 insurrection was Jessica Watkins, a 39-year-old transgender soldier who attended Ranger school and who served in Afghanistan before being forced out of the military for being trans.[18] Following her arrest on January 13, 2021, a D.C. federal judged denied her bail, claiming that "She was not just a follower. She was higher up in the chain," and "She was a recruiter and did recruit others to participate in the events of January 6…She is not just a foot soldier. She is someone planning, organizing larger groups of people."[19]

Beyond the inclusion of Watkins, other women have participated in a range of activities for the Oath Keepers. Of the dozen key Oath Keepers arrested in connection with the January 6 attacks, five were women (Connie Meggs, Sandra Parker, Laura Steele, Jessica Watkins and Kellye SoRelle), and two of these women have served in the U.S. military (Steele and Watkins).[20] Furthermore, four of the women were photographed at the Capitol in military gear participating in the "stack," a military formation used in direct action raids, suggesting they had training in preparation of the attack and assumed a combat role on that day.

Hilary Matfess and Devorah Margolin argue in a report titled "The Women of January 6," that the Oath Keepers' inclusion of women is unusual and something new. What is most noteworthy about the participation of women in the Oath Keepers militant networks has been both the number of women and their level of involvement. While many of these women were associated with male members of the network, they also took a public-facing role, taking part in a premeditated operation that involved coordination and training. Moreover, Watkin's leadership position, even over male counterparts, is a very unique manifestation in the far-right.[21]

The Oath Keepers' inclusion of women in a number of roles within its movements, including leadership, is thus significant and may be signifying a change within anti-government movements in the United States. Specifically, it appears that women are participating in roles that, historically, other right-wing groups did not welcome, including particularly leadership and combat roles. While not all anti-government groups fit this description—some remain openly hostile to women, such as the Proud Boys—other groups may be following a more gender inclusive trend. QAnon, for example, appears to have considerable numbers of women within its movement. Matfess and Margolin note that "QAnon's ideology appears more gender-inclusive than other far-right extremist groups, and women have played a significant role both in disseminating and creating QAnon propaganda."[22]

With regard to the Oath Keepers, the inclusion of women throughout its ranks could be the result of several factors, all of which require further investigation. One proposal is that the inclusion of women in an array of roles, may be the result of drawing on a "meta-identity" of local, state and federal service members as "Guardians of the Republic" and claims that it is the responsibility of these individuals to uphold the oath of office against enemies foreign and domestic, including the

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[15] Josh Lederman, "The Founder of a Far-Right Militia Once Warned of Federal Tyranny. Then Came Trump," *NBC News*, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/founder-far-right-militia-once-warned-federal-tyranny-then-came-n1256546, accessed 15 August 2022.

[16] Drew F. Lawrence, "What the Military Records of the Oath Keeper's Leader Actually Says About His Military Career," *Military.com*, 6 May 2022, https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/05/06/he-hinted-hardened-service-oath-keepers-leaders-military-records-dont-back.html, accessed 15 August 2022.

[17] Southern Poverty Law Center, "Elmer Stewart Rhodes," https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/elmer-stewart-rhodes, accessed 22 August 2022.

[18] Jessica Garrison, Ken Bensinger, and Zoe Tillman, "Jessica Watkins, an Oath Keeper Charged in the January 6 Attack, Fears Harsh Treatment Because She is Transgender," *Buzzfeed.news*, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/jessicagarrison/oath-keeper-transgender-jail-jessica-watkins, accessed 16 August 2022.

[19] Marshall Cohen, "Alleged Oath Keeper Ringleader in Capitol Siege Ordered to Stay in Jail Before Trial," *CNN*, February 26, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/26/politics/jessica-watkins-oath-keepers-capitol-attack/index.html, accessed 22 August 2022.

[20] Hilary Matfess and Devorah Margolin, "The Women of January 6th: A Gendered Analysis of the 21st Century American Far Right," *Program on Extremism: The George Washington University*, April 2022, 35. https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Women-of-Jan6_Matfess-and-Margolin.pdf, accessed 19 August 2022.

[21] Ibid, 36.

[22] Ibid, 21.

U.S. government. This "meta-identity" supersedes gender roles defined by society—it is based on the oath that individuals swore to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution—and allows for inclusion of both men and women in its ranks, including in leadership and combat roles.

It also bears mentioning that, not only has the Oath Keepers included women throughout its ranks and in a key leadership role in the January 6 attacks, but that it has also included a transgender individual. One explanation for including Watkins is her military training and expertise as a Ranger-trained, infantry solider. Watkins knows weapons and tactics, skills that are useful to the Oath Keepers and may, in part, explain both her inclusion and her presence as one of the key leaders in the January 6 attacks.

Conclusion

The size and scope of the Oath Keepers is a troubling development for the anti-government militia movement in the United States. The organization's inclusion of women throughout its ranks deserves a gender-based study to better understand why it and possibly others, such as QAnon, appear to be diverging from traditional right-wing movements and including women throughout its organization, including in leadership and combat roles.

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THE ROLE OF MASCULINITIES IN PATHWAYS "TO" AND "OUT" OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

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Introduction: Why Are the Majority of Violent Extremists Men?

One of the most consistent patterns of violent extremism (VE)[1] is that the majority of those who enact violent attacks are men. Despite the fact that "movements often are driven by men and organised by masculinities" scholarship, policy-making or the public are rarely attentive to this fact.[2] This represents a curious omission, that a field which has received extensive funding and attention has chosen to ignore one of the most common characteristics of those it seeks to understand. To address this gap, an emerging body of scholarship and early practical initiatives have questioned *why the majority of violent extremists are men*, how gender shapes their relationship with violence, and what actions might be taken to disrupt this relationship.[3] Now reflecting on a decade of growing work, what can policy-makers and the security sector learn from work on masculinities and VE?

This paper sets out to being answering this question. To do this, it first provides a brief overview of the scholarship on masculinities and political violence. After this, it outlines three distinct ways that masculinities can be said to shape VE (social context, practices within organisations, disengagement pathways). Finally, it will provide a limited number of suggestions about how those working on VE might start to think about masculinities in their work.

Literature Summary: Understanding Masculinities and Violence

There is a rich body of literature on the role of masculinities in promoting violence from outside of scholarship on VE. This scholarship, which is backed by more than 30 years of sustained attention including large-scale multi-country quantitative research, has suggested that not only is violence commonly interpreted to be masculine as an act, but that expectations are often placed on men to enact violence in order to maintain their status as.[4] Within sociology and criminology this scholarship began by questioning why men had higher rates of perpetration for violent crime, and especially for gender-based violence.[5] Subsequently, work has moved beyond trying to simply establish *that there is a relationship* between masculinity and violence, to understanding how that relationship works in particular contexts, and how it can produce radically different rates of perpetration between groups of men or alter the patterns of perpetration. To do this, scholarship argued that it was essential to understand masculinity not as a single model for how men behave, but as the multiple, relationally defined and contested ways that men engage with gender.[6] This multiplicity has resulted in sociologist Raewyn Connell arguing that we should refer to masculin*ties* plural when understanding how gender shapes men and boys.[7]

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1   The terminology related to this topic is deeply contested within scholarship. This summary will primarily use 'violent extremism' as is consistent with the dominant usage in the literature it summarises, more detail on contestation over terminology can be found in Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining terror: How experts invented 'terrorism',* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

2   Joshua M, Roose et al, *Masculinity and Violent Extremism* (Palgrave, 2022). The exception to this is a body of work on masculinity and far-right movements in the Global North which have been more attentive to masculinity. As will be discussed below, this work is poorly integrated with the wider scholarship on gender and VE.

3   Maleeha Aslam, *Gender-based explosions: The nexus between Muslim masculinities, jihadist Islamism and terrorism* (New York: UNU Press, 2012); Anna Maria Möller-Leimkühler, "Why is terrorism a man's business?" *CNS spectrums 23, no.2* (2017): 119-128; James W. Messerschmidt, and Achim Rohde,"Osama bin Laden and his jihadist global hegemonic masculinity," *Gender & Society 32*, no.5 (2018): 663-685; Micheal Kimmel, "Healing from Hate: How Young Men Get into-and out of-Violent Extremism," *A Journal of Culture and Society 12* (2019):155-160; Elizabeth Pearson, "Extremism and toxic masculinity: the man question re-posed," *International Affairs 95*, no.6 (2019): 1251-1270; David Duriesmith and Noor Huda Ismail, "Embodied militarism and the process of disengagement from foreign fighter networks," *Critical Military Studies 8*, no.1 (2022): 22-38.

4   Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Emma Fulu et al.,"Prevalence of and factors associated with male perpetration of intimate partner violence: findings from the UN Multi-country Cross-sectional Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific," *The lancet global health 1*, no.4 (2013): e187-e207; Micheal Flood and Bob Pease, "Factors influencing attitudes to violence against women," *Trauma, violence, & abuse 10, no.*2 (2009): 125-142; Elin Bjarnegård et al, "Armed Violence and Patriarchal Values: A Survey of Young Men in Thailand and Their Military Experiences," *American Political Science Review* (2022): 1-15.

5   Bob Pease, "Engaging men in men's violence prevention: Exploring the tensions, dilemmas and possibilities," *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse* 17 (2008): 1-20; Helen McFarlane, "Masculinity and criminology: The social construction of criminal man," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice 52, no.3* (2013): 321-335.

6   R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept," *Gender & society 19* no.6 (2005): 829-859.

7   R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, (London: Routledge, 2020).

Within scholarship on violent extremism work on gender has a much shorter history than broader work outside of the space. Excepting a few early pieces[8], the most sustained attention to masculinities and VE prior to 2010 had come from scholarship on culture and practices within the far-right.[9] However, this work had been poorly integrated broader VE scholarship and its focus on masculinities rarely travelled beyond the Global North. This has meant that there has been little conversation between scholarship on masculinities within the far right specifically and VE more broadly.[10] Despite how recent the work is, there are three key areas it has been able to establish a link between masculinities and VE.

Masculinities and Men's Relationship Violent Organisations

Masculinities can be linked to VE at a societal level, to the practices of within organisations and to the disengagement pathways men navigate as they try to leave organisations. By understanding the multiple ways that masculinities operate, we can start to outline what an agenda of practical work on masculinities and VE would look like.

On a macro level, masculinities make VE possible by facilitating support for political violence among communities. In many contexts social expectations around masculinities imply that men should be willing to use violence in order to protect those who they view as being made vulnerable, in response to being humiliated or undermined, or in order to achieve key goals.[11] More specifically, research has suggested that in contexts where ideas around gender are particularly rigid and emphasise what Bjarnegård et al. refer to as masculine honour ideology is strongly linked with support for violent groups.[12] Further, Johnson and True suggest that misogynistic forms of masculinity are one of the most strongly correlated factors with support for VE in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Libya.[13] More detailed studies on how this functions, such as Aslam's 2012 book on Pakistan indicates that culturally prescribed ways to be a man (emphasising heroism, strength, brotherhood among other tropes) may push men to join violent groups when other pathways for gendered recognition are closed.[14]

Within organisations, recent scholarship suggests that the particular pattern of masculinities may be strongly determinative of the tactics, recruitment patterns and targets they select. While society at large may put forward notions about how men should behave, within violent organisations they are reinterpreted, challenged, reformed and put to work.[15] While masculinities facilitate violence, they do not facilitate all forms of violence or facilitate them equally. Particular models of manhood may permit certain kinds of violence, such as attacks against civilians, sexual violence or the training of female combatants, while prohibiting others.[16] What is viewed to be manly will shape what an organisation is willing to do or what kinds of violence are seen to be admirable. Importantly, this can also change, with organisations shifting gendered norms over time, or contestation emerging within an organisation about appropriate behaviour for men.

Finally, emerging literature suggests that masculinities shape men's pathways out of violent organisations and their attempts to reintegrate with society. It is well established within literature on state-armed groups that the transition from military civilian life often entails a difficult transition which is shaped by gender identity and an effort to understand one's role in society.[17] Early work on men within VE also suggests that some similar dynamics may exist as men who have craft a gendered sense of self through their involvement in a violent network attempt to find a 'place' within the gendered order of mainstream life.[18] Understanding men's pathways out of armed groups, and how the disengagement process functions therefore requires an understanding of how men involved in violent groups understand their role *as men in the group*

8   Robin Morgan, *The demon lover: The roots of terrorism* (Norton, 1989).

9   Abby L. Ferber, "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors," Men and Masculinities 3, no.1(2000): 30-56.

10   Elizabeth Pearson, "Gendered reflections? Extremism in the UK's radical Right and al-Muhajiroun networks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2022): 1-24; Roose et al, *Masculinity and Violent Extremism.*

11   Iris Marion Young, "The logic of masculinist protection: Reflections on the current security state," *Signs: journal of women in culture and society 29*, no.1 (2003): 1-25; Michael Flood, *Unpacking the Man Box: What is the impact of the Man Box attitudes on young Australian men's behaviours and well-being?* (Melbourne: Jesuit Social Services, 2020).

12   Bjarnegård et al, "Armed Violence and Patriarchal Values".

13   Melissa Johnston and Jacqui True, "Gender Equality and Violent Extremism: Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco," Policy Brief. UN Women, 2020.

14   Aslam, Gender-based explosions.

15   Ariel I. Ahram, "Sexual Violence and the Making of ISIS," *Survival 5,* no.3 (2015): 57-78; Zeynep Kaya, "Sexual violence, identity and gender: ISIS and the Yezidis," *Conflict Security & Development 20* no.5 (2020): 631-652; Anna Speckhard and Molly Ellenberg, "ISIS and the Allure of Traditional Gender Roles," *Women & Criminal Justice* (2021): 1-21.

16   Duriesmith, "The adaptation of militarized masculinity".

17   Paul Richard Higate, "Theorizing continuity: From military to civilian life," *Armed Forces & Society*, *27* no.3 (2001): 443-460.

18   David Duriesmith and Noor Huda Ismail, "Masculinities and Disengagement from Jihadi Networks: The Case of Indonesian Militant Islamists," Studies in Conflict & Terrorism (2022): 1-21.

and an understanding of what it might mean for them to craft a position *as a man outside the group*. This may require an appreciation of factors that shape men's lives beyond those which have traditionally been the focus of VE scholarship, such as men's leisure, intimate relationships, position within workplaces or perceived ability to protect those who matter to them. By understanding these sometimes inconspicuous factors as gendered those working on VE can expand the tools available to them to address masculinities.

Conclusion: Integrating a Masculinities Perspective

Based on a brief overview of the growing scholarship on masculinities and men's pathways into and out of VE organisations three suggestions can be drawn. First that work on gender and VE need to be attentive to whether they are addressing gender holistically or in Terrell Carver's words using gender as "a synonym for women."[19] If this is done it may help avoid what Jennifer Eggert has observed in her survey of disengagement literature that "studies that focus on gender – rather than women – remain rare."[20] Second, is that masculinities should be understood as plural, relational and changing. When masculinities have been discussed by those without a grounding in work on the topic there has been a risk of portraying an overly unified and coherent account of them, something Pearson has critiqued with the discussion of 'toxic masculinity.'[21] Avoiding this will allow for the local contextual factors which shape masculinity (such as societal support for honour ideology, norms around use of violence and adaptation by armed groups of masculine norms) to be apprehended. Finally, to remain attentive to masculinities in work that focuses primarily on men. The burgeoning work on how masculinities shape men's pathways into and out of violent groups indicates that they are directly impacted by the gendered norms they attempt to adhere to. If those aiming to address such use of violence remain inattentive to how men, as men, are shaped by gender that are likely to miss a key tool in preventing participation in such groups.

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GENDERED DYNAMICS OF ONLINE RADICALIZATION, RECRUITMENT AND PROPAGANDA

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Overview of right-wing extremist online communications

While right-wing extremism has long had a transnational history, information and communications technology have opened up new avenues for recruitment, radicalization, propaganda, and importantly, but often overlooked, community building, in both scale and scope.[1] Since the 1990s, right-wing extremists have been pioneers in communications. This began in the 1980s with pre-web bulletin board systems, in which users would communicate online and plan to meet offline, to the rise of Web 1.0 in the 1990s with websites, chat rooms, and forums. Importantly, right-wing extremists must be understood as innovation opportunists, noted by media scholar Jessie Daniels: "Part of what I observed in the shift of the White supremacist movement from print to digital is that they were very good, prescient even, at understanding how to exploit emerging technologies to further their ideological goals".[2]

With the shift to Web 2.0, that is, social media, user generated content, and the so-called visual turn, we saw the emergence of mainstream platforms that we're most familiar with today, such as Facebook (now Meta), Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit, which grew in the 2010s. Yet, the same time witnessed the creation of fringe platforms, which can be either ideological or non-ideological in terms of their purpose and creation. One category within fringe platforms are so-called alt-tech (alternative tech) platforms. Within alt-tech, there are three main subcategories.[3] The first are platforms that are created by extremists and used primarily by extremists. This includes sites and alternative media such as Gab, Minds, Parler, BitChute, Patriot Peer, Hatreon, WASP Love, Red Ice TV, and Rumble, among many others. Often these platforms are ephemeral, partly due to poor financing or poor infrastructure. The second subcategory within alt-tech are ultra-libertarian platforms that have a laissez faire approach towards content posted on their sites; examples of this are the Chansphere (e.g. 4chan/8chan), and the block chain-supported video streaming sites Odysee and Dlive. The third and final subcategory are platforms that have been hijacked by extremists, such as the gaming chat app Discord and livestreaming site Twitch, as well as encrypted and non-encrypted messaging apps like Telegram and WhatsApp.

The contemporary online ecosystem can be conceptualized as networks with swarms.[4] Swarms are characterized by their decentralized structure (i.e., fragmented), the ability for users to quickly navigate and migrate across websites, and the use of coded language to flout law and regulation. Bearing the concept of swarms in mind, it is equally important to recognize that different platforms have different purposes. Mainstream platforms are well known to serve as opportunities for amplification and exposure to broad audiences, whereas fringe platforms primarily serve for communication and mobilization purposes, in which users are already radicalized and reinforcing their in-group identity building.

What then, is online radicalization? In a systematic review of the literature, Marwick, Clancy, and Furl observe that "the adoption of extremist, far-right, and fringe beliefs is often referred to as 'radicalization,' which was formulated post-9/11 to understand jihadi terrorism, a very different context from the far-right".[5] How is someone radicalized into right-wing extremism based on the academic research? Marwick, Clancy, and Furl cite that no specific type of person is vulnerable; most who commit violence are not mentally ill or socially alienated; radicalization is not caused by poverty, oppression, or marginalization; there is no single way in which people are 'radicalized'; and viewing extremist media does not necessarily lead people to adopting extremist beliefs or committing violence. However, they do note two significant findings. The first is that radicalization is gradual. Individuals slowly adopt identities, emotions, and interpretations shared by a community. Further, problems are seen as injustices caused by others, and justified by violence against them. Secondly, the internet does not cause radicalization. But it helps spread extremist ideas, enables people interested in these ideas to form communities, and mainstreams conspiracy theories and distrust in institutions, such as the mainstream media and political system.

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1   Maura Conway, Ryan Scrivens and Logan McNair, "Right-wing extremists' persistent online presence: History and contemporary trends," ICCT Policy Brief (2019).
2   Jessie Daniels, "The algorithmic rise of the "alt-right"," *Contexts 17*, no.1 (2018), 63.
3   See Julia Ebner, *Going dark: The secret social lives of extremists* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).
4   Bharath Ganesh, "The ungovernability of digital hate culture," *Journal of International Affairs 71, no.2* (2018), 30-49.
5   Alice Marwick, Benjamin Clancy & Katherine Furl, "Far-Right Online Radicalization: A Review of the Literature," *The Bulletin of Technology & Public Life* (2022), 2.

Despite this, tech use is also highly gendered on different platforms. The dark web and fringe forums are dominated by men. And while mainstream platforms are used by everyone, they are primarily dominated by women who recruit followers and build audiences for the movement. In particular, right-wing extremist women have several key roles as recruiters, propagandists, organizers, and fundraisers.

Case study: Right-wing extremist (female) influencers

Exploring in-depth the world of right-wing extremist influencers, we can draw upon media scholar Rebecca Lewis who observes, "Blending the 'glamour' of celebrity with the intimacy of influencer culture, they broadcast gender traditionalism and performed 'whiteness'. In this way, influencers display the way they *live their politics as an aspirational brand* ".[6] In other words, influencers merge their personal lives with political identity in their social media performances. They effectively do so through "networked intimacy [which] has become an instrument to bind audiences to the influencer and create a perception of authenticity".[7] These influencers come across as relatable, accessible, authentic, and responsive. They are intimately engaged with their audiences, whether it be posting a casual video chatting about their travel experiences and 'checking in' with their followers, posting an Instagram Story of a selfie, or showcasing behind-the-scenes material in order to build anticipation with their fans for forthcoming content releases. These influencer practices are an effective radicalization strategy by right-wing extremists.

A genre of YouTube videos that I term 'red pill' vlogs is one such practice among these influencers. The 'red pill' is a euphemism to signal the first step of radicalization into right-wing extremism. It derives from the 1999 film *The Matrix*, in which the protagonist Neo is offered to take the red pill and be awakened to the 'truths' of society, or take the blue pill and live a life of ignorance and delusion. For right-wing extremists, being red pilled symbolizes being awakened to the 'truth' that society is jointly controlled by feminists, leftists, and Jews who seek to increase Muslim immigration to Western countries as a form of population control to decrease the white race, also known as the Great Replacement conspiracy theory. One of the first videos on their YouTube channels is a female influencer's monologue of their red pilling experience, which they describe as a "journey" or "origin story" of their awakening. Interestingly, these influencers share similar backgrounds—they all grew up in middle class families in middle class neighborhoods, attended university, worked in professional jobs in urban areas, and socialized with friends and colleagues. But then they describe a moment in their lives in which they became deeply unhappy and depressed with their life situation: they consequently blame feminism for their happiness. Feminism is attributed for forcing women into 'unnatural' situations such as employment in the workplace. For these influencers, traditionalism is the antidote to feminism. Frequently, the second video on their channels is a follow-up blog in which they describe the loss of social support (family and friends) as a result of their red-pilling experience. Speaking directly into the camera with tears in their eyes, these women are engaging in networked intimacy with emotional appeal to their viewers. However, these influencers assert their behavior as worthy and courageous, as finding self-worth and self-confidence, thus framing their narratives of authenticity to mask a hateful ideology.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, right-wing extremist female influencers showcase bonds of sisterhood on social media in their efforts to recruit and radicalize women. In particular, they feature selfies with other right-wing extremist women from around the world, representing the importance of transnational connections in their global sisterhood. Relatedly, these influencers view their primary role as wives and mothers within the movement, in effect reproducing the nation. While this is continuing the legacy of previous right-wing extremist movements,[8] contemporary women do so through acts of networked intimacy. For instance, they host YouTube channels and livestreams where they discuss tips and recommendations on all pregnancy and parenting matters ranging from TTC (trying to conceive), prenatal nutrition, and fertility improvement, to breastfeeding and napping schedules. They also extensively use Instagram to post daily household photos, often soliciting engagement from their followers for suggestions on how to shape future content. The media scholar Ashley Mattheis describes this as "alt-maternalism", or empowered motherhood that is combined with "anti-multiculturalist, white ethno-nationalism, and hate networks".[9] While it can be superficially interpreted as apolitical, the content that these influencers create is, in fact, extremely political when understood in context. These female influencers are especially adept at tapping into pre-existing digital cultures such as mommy or food blogging as a strategy of retention for their audience. In effect, they serve to legitimize or normalize right-wing extremist ideology for popular appeal.

6   Rebecca Lewis, *Alternative influence: Broadcasting the reactionary right on YouTube*, (New York: Data & Society Institute, 2018), 28.

7   Ico Maly, "Metapolitical new right influencers: The case of Brittany Pettibone," *Social Sciences* 9, no.7 (2020) 113, 13.

8   Kathleen M. Blee, *Inside organized racism: Women in the hate movement* (University of California Press, 2002).

9   Ashley Mattheis, "Shieldmaidens of whiteness:(Alt) maternalism and women recruiting for the far/alt-right," *Journal for Deradicalization*, no.17 (2018), 128-162.

Female influencers primarily dedicate much content towards female followers, but they also use gendered narratives of hypermasculinity to radicalize and recruit men into right-wing extremism. For instance, they create YouTube videos claiming that society is anti-men, and prohibits men from exercising their 'natural', biological masculinity such as traits like dominance, aggression, and leadership; if they join right-wing extremists, however, these men will be able to assert these traits in gender traditional spaces. Similarly, influencers produce videos for male viewers on tips to red pill the women in their lives, such as sisters, girlfriends, wives, mothers, etc. There are likewise social media accounts with messages and images tailored specifically for male followers, with narratives promoting the gendered archetype of men as providers and protectors of women and their families.

Platform governance

This leads us to considering the best approaches and measures in countering right-wing extremism online. One particularly useful theoretical concept is that of platform governance, which is a form of media governance characterized by self-regulation, informal mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder initiatives as a way to shape the behavior of firms.[10] In other words, platforms *govern*—they shape content rules—and governments and civil society apply pressure on platforms to affect their governance approaches. Gorwa's visualization of the 'platform governance triangle', with each end representing the "state", "firm", and "NGO", is an effective way of illustrating the power dynamics of vested actors, as well as the overlap between legislative and governance measures.

Regarding specific tools to counter right-wing extremism online, the use of 'hard' or repressive approaches is fairly common. This includes deplatforming (banning a user or account from a platform) or the temporary measure of suspension (for a short time period). Demonetization is another tool, or restricting access to advertising revenue or crowdsourcing, which has been most effective on platforms like YouTube. Another measure is content moderation, which focuses upon a specific post like a tweet or Facebook comment; within content moderation there is either a option of removal, or affixing a warning label (e.g. this post contains false information). Unfortunately, large-scale automated content moderation systems can often generate false positives in application. Finally, the last two 'hard' tools are manipulated search results and changing algorithmic recommendations, which are more applicable to search engines like Google or YouTube. This significantly decreases the visibility of content for exposure.

Importantly, right-wing extremists have long been aware of these measures enacted to stymie their activity, and have found creative ways to circumvent regulation of their content. One particularly common strategy is to use coded language and/or manipulate spellings or emoji substitutes for words in order to avoid detection. There is an additional challenge of cross-platform posting and disproportionate responses. For example, while an influencer may be restricted in posting an image on one platform, they may post the exact same image on another platform unfiltered. This poses challenges for platform governance when different companies do not apply the same restrictions on the same user.

As opposed to 'hard' approaches, there is the option of 'soft' approaches. This includes the category of counter-narratives, which offer an alternative narrative aiming to debunk extremist messaging. A pioneer in this space is Moonshot, a company that developed the 'Redirect Method' using Google's advertising infrastructure in order to target at-risk users searching for political extremist content and 'redirects' them to de-radicalization resources.[11] The effectiveness of counter-narratives is mixed, largely due to lack of transparency of metrics and users,[12] but it still presents promise.

Another 'soft' approach that is largely under-utilized is addressing influencer culture. In a study of "informal counter messaging actors",[13] Benjamin Lee finds that government counter-extremism programs could benefit from using influencers in their efforts. However, Lee cautions that such initiatives should carefully evaluate the motivation or ideology of counter-influencers, the strategies they employ for audience engagement, and the potential risks (e.g. are they viewed with suspicion as 'too close' to government). Lee recommends that the most crucial consideration is to provide counter influencers credibility by allowing them control and autonomy over the creative process in order to remain genuine and authentic with their audiences.

[10] Robert Gorwa, "The platform governance triangle: Conceptualising the informal regulation of online content," *Internet Policy Review 8*, no.2 (2019): 1-22.
[11] Moonshot, https://moonshotteam.com
[12] Bharath Ganesh and Jonathan Bright, *Extreme Digital Speech: Contexts, Responses, and Solutions* (VOX-Pol EU Network of Excellence, 2020).
[13] Benjamin Lee, "Countering violent extremism online: The experiences of informal counter messaging actors," *Policy & Internet 12* no.1 (2020): 66-87.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of online radicalization is complicated, but we should also recognize that different platforms serve different purposes for right-wing extremists, whether it be exposure and amplification versus communication and mobilization. This case study exploring right-wing extremist female influencers reveals that influencer practices (relatable, accessible, authentic, responsive) are an effective radicalization strategy, but often slip under the radar due to its supposed apolitical content (i.e., coded language) and networked intimacy framing. Subsequently, tech use is highly gendered, a blind spot that must be acknowledged when countering right-wing extremism online within a broader platform governance framework composed of multi-stakeholder agendas.

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Gender Perspectives

➢   Integrating gender perspectives is not optional; it is a task.

➢   Research has identified structural, functional and cultural factors that prevent and promote implementation of gender perspectives in organizations including NATO, and proves there are still no shortcuts to implementation.

➢   It is critical to communicate the value of gender perspectives and the reason *why* it is necessary to integrate gender perspectives before communicating *how* to do it.

➢   NATO, as an organization, is committed to and has been advancing the WPS agenda. Organizations should eventually gender mainstream. That is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas to make women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally. Therefore, the ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

➢   The role of leadership is critical to lead the transformational change for achieving the integration of gender perspectives and gender mainstreaming. Leaders are needed to create psychological safety to ensure credibility during structural change where several problems may arise. For leaders to lead effectively, there is a need for a cultural map of the organization, and then leaders will have to keep monitoring, evaluating and developing the organizational culture to make sure it evolves in the right direction.

➢   One way to integrate gender into military planning is to conduct a gender analysis. In its most basic form, a gender analysis consists of asking questions that help identify power structures and relationships between men, women, boys, and girls. The answers to these questions influence the planning. If done correctly, the inclusion of gender will strengthen the military organization, address the security risk to military forces, and provide military advantage to fielded forces.

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➢   Application of gender perspectives into military planning necessitates the understanding of gender in our own societies before the target society. What is more, armed forces are not always necessarily the reflection of society. Therefore, when we ask the question of what we understand from gender in our society in terms of our own values, we should also add to that how our military understand gender and how is this reflected. We need to make that differentiation.

Military Effectiveness

➢   What is meant by military effectiveness needs to be clarified. Effectiveness might look completely different depending on where you are professionally within the organization, what perspective you have, and what level you are at.

➢   Military effectiveness should be communicated to the personnel in accordance with their levels, because it might look different from different levels or different posts.

➢   When communicating gender equality and mainstreaming, we might need to utilize the "operational effectiveness" argument, because a rights-based approach may not appeal to the personnel in a conservative hierarchical hyper-masculine environment that is resistant to change. However, an operational effectiveness approach may lead to over-simplification and has its own disadvantages. Therefore, these two approaches should be seen as reinforcing each other. Additionally, legal advisers could be used as a leverage since legal responsibilities may appeal more to some commanders. Therefore, the value of the right communication strategy should be recognized.

Gender Perspectives and CT

➢ Women should also be recognized as critical actors in CT. Their roles can vary from predictors and preventers to security actors. Supporting such roles of women will lead to more effective CT policies.

➢   Pre-deployment training needs warn us against our common gendered view of women as innocents and victims only. The most common cases can be seen in body-search related cases. Women are not likely to trigger suspicion as

perpetrators of terrorism; they are better able to hide weapons and explosives, either due to the dress code norms or presumed pregnancy and thus they are often not subject to strict security measures including body-searches.

NATO, CT efforts and Gender Perspectives

➢ When NATO's role in countering terrorism is analysed, there is a lack of reference to gender perspectives. Overall, gender perspectives have not been fully integrated into countering terrorism, including NATO's MC Concept for Counter-terrorism.

➢ NATO's CT efforts concentrate on three key areas: improving awareness of the terrorist threat, developing required capabilities to prevent and respond to terrorism and boosting engagement with partner countries and other international actors. Therefore, integrating gender perspectives to NATO's CT efforts means:

➢ Awareness: First and foremost, important thing is to increase consciousness about the agential power of women in terms of their engagement in terrorism so that the existing gender biases and stereotypes could not overshadow the reality and would not end up with the miscalculation of the threat posed by women and highly impacted by power dynamics, which also originates from gender. Second, shared consultations and intelligence sharing is critical and should include sex-disaggregated data. Third, women's ability to detect early signs of radicalization should be utilized for maintaining a system of terrorism indicators.

➢ Capability: Sharing best practices, expertise and information relating to capabilities relevant to CT is required for an efficient defence against terrorism. However, these efforts should include gender perspectives since the impact of terrorism is different across sex and age. Additionally, there is a need of development of systems to collect and share biometric data to identify suspects needs to integrate gender perspective, to make sure that they include behaviours, appearance, and other personal characteristics of female foreign terrorist fighters. Last, but not the least, gender perspective needs to be mainstreamed across all education and training facilities, COEs and institutions working in countering terrorism.

➢ Engagement: To mitigate any counterterrorism challenge originating from culture, the defence and security forces need to mirror the female terrorist threat by increasing and training the women of its defense, security and counterterrorism organization.

Women in Security Organizations

➢ Women are underrepresented in security organizations, which itself is a security vulnerability. Any kind of barriers, especially cultural institutional barriers that prevents women joining security organizations should be overcome.

➢ More women should be recruited to security organisations, and they need to be placed on positions according to their merits. Every man and woman should be given equal opportunities for every position. Women need to be placed on all level of positions to get diversity of thought.

➢ We need more women in CT at different levels to mitigate, analyse and counter terrorist threats.

➢ We need meaningful participation of women, not pigeonholed to certain posts as gender advisors and female engagement team members.

➢ Present strategies to attract women into law enforcement and the military needs to be adjusted because they are traditional and/or stereotypical because they are generally aimed at young male audience and thus simply do not work well for women.

Terrorism Prosecutions

➢ There is a lack of sex and age-disaggregated data on criminal justice responses to terrorism or not shared data between institutions. Public access to criminal justice data should be ensured.

➢ There is a lack of research and analysis on the intersection of gender, criminal justice, and terrorism

➢ There is still a lack of evidence-based analysis available on the scope of criminal justice responses to terrorism.

➢ Regarding the prosecution of women associated with terrorism, there is a lack of evidence to press charges.

➢ Long-term data that look at how individuals have been prosecuted by the criminal justice system, what happens to them once they are released, and how likely they are to engage or to re-engage or disengage is missing. There is good data on qualitative analysis that looks at disengagement programs on the micro level, but not on the macro level.

➢ Prosecution of the returning FTFs is a challenge for most of the European countries.

➢ Women associated with terrorism are either not prosecuted or experience leniency in the criminal justice system.

➢ In Germany, 2018 is a turning point. Before 2018, it would take significantly longer for women to be arrested by German authorities after return than for men. From 2018 onwards, the period between return and arrest was reduced significantly. Women returning in 2020 and 2021 were arrested directly upon return One explanation for the difference in duration could be that female returnees were usually not prosecuted in Germany before 2018.

➢ Criminalization of offenses of support roles in terrorist organizations is critical. In Germany, for example, marrying a male Daesh member and being a housewife was considered supporting Daesh by enabling the husband's activities as a Daesh fighter; having children in the caliphate was considered as adhering to Daesh's ideology by securing the next generation. German prosecutors successfully argued that women who supported Daesh with these activities were hence also to be considered Daesh members, even if they did not participate in combat.

➢ As a gender disparity in terrorism prosecutions to be noted is that charges for offenses committed in the "private sphere" concerned almost exclusively female returnees in Germany. These offenses included, for example, offenses against children or Yazidi slaves as well as crimes committed in the person's house as opposed to in public. However, men were not charged for such crimes.

➢ Data confirms how the ongoing lack of repatriation of male FTFs to Germany hinders their prosecution for the crimes that they may have committed with Daesh and other terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.

➢ In the Western Balkans, present available data reveals that women were not prosecuted in the Western Balkans, but research findings reveal that women do engage in terrorism.

➢ Only males are prosecuted for terrorist crimes in the Western Balkans.

➢ In the Western Balkans, there is a need for rehabilitation and re-integration programs for women. The more likely women associated with terrorism are caught and punished, the less likely they will commit those crimes again. Once they are punished, there is a chance of not doing it again. However, in the Western Balkans, women do not have a fear of being caught. There are no de-radicalization and re-integration efforts for women. Women are returning to the Western Balkans without any kind of help in terms of rehabilitation and reintegration to the society. The criminal justice system serves as an incredible role when it comes to crime, particularly with respect to deterrence. However, there is no fear of punishment and thus deterrence in the Western Balkans. Research shows that they continue to hold their radical ideology and nothing is being done to prevent it further.

➢ There are gender disparities in sentencing practices in Canada and the United States. In both countries, females are granted leniency when compared to their male counterparts. Women are half as likely to be sentenced to prison as their male counterparts and, when they are incarcerated, their sentence is approximately two and a half years less in length than males convicted of comparable offenses.

➢ In Canada, female extremists are treated with leniency, often recast in the role of the desperate woman, meaning having reduced accountability due to being coerced or forced into deviance. In the United States, female extremists can also expect reduced sentences, particularly in relation to incarceration, if they are not engaged in gender-atypical or violent offenses. If they are engaged in violent offenses, then they are subjected to a punitive approach.

➢ If a person is affiliated with a terrorist organization, they are eight times more incarcerated, with a sentence being increased by four years, in the United States. Therefore, affiliation with a terrorist organization is of great importance in prosecutions.

➢ Gender disparities suggest that the criminal justice system is not adequately fulfilling its primary objective with this unique population of offenders; female extremists are limited in their access to criminal-justice oriented rehabilitation, they may not be deterred due to diminished or inconsistent punitive outcomes, and the public is placed at greater risk due to the increased likelihood of their return to the community.

➢ Battlefield evidence plays a huge role in terrorism prosecutions. The military's role in gathering battlefield evidence and sharing them by giving access to those who are actually using them is critical.

Gender Dimension of Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment

➢ There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the gender dimensions of terrorist radicalization and recruitment including the roles of women in terrorist organisations. Men and women can have very different reasons for joining/supporting extremist groups, based on their gendered roles; they can participate in different ways; and be impacted by violent extremism in different ways

➢ Right wing extremist groups, in particular, are typically believed to have gender specific messaging and to relegate women to specific and limited roles within the extremist group. 2019 OSCE report on gender and CVE summarizes "alt-right groups" as, these movements are often misogynist, and both men and women who are part of them hold the belief that women should primarily stay at home, raise children and care for the family. Women may perform the role of "wife with a purpose" or that of "tradwives" (traditional wives who support the involvement of their husbands, through social media in particular). Few women can be found in leadership functions. Similarly, research on religiously motivated terrorist groups tends to note how women are subjugated as part of groups' overall ideological framework.

➢ The Oath Keepers, an anti-government group in the US, appear to diverge from the traditional right-wing and religious-based extremist groups' use of gender specific recruitment as well as the specific roles that women are allowed to play in the organization.

➢ The Oath Keepers' messaging has been consciously inclusive of men and women. What is more, the group have included throughput their ranks, including leadership roles. For example, a transgender individual was one of the leading figures in the January 6 events and a recruiter.

➢ Oath Keepers have created a "meta-identity" based on community, state and national service; the Oath of Office; defense of the US Constitution; and the US government as a domestic threat. Meta-identity is gender neutral (i.e. "solider").

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➢ The language Oath Keepers uses display it is mimicking U.S. military's recruitment language, which is gender inclusive. Oath Keepers seems to take who is useful to them, who has the requisite training and skills to further their cause, irrespective of sex.

Masculinities and Radicalization

➢ Studies on violent extremism have been poorly integrated with broader scholarship on masculinities and political violence. On the other hand, they do not explain how the definition and implementation of masculinity differ in different organizations. A growing body of work is exploring the link between sexist attitudes and support for violent extremism.

➢ The majority of work on political violence recognizes that men are the primary perpetrators. Biological accounts underline that there is an innate relationship between men and the use of violence whereas basic sociological accounts denotes a link between the male sex role and the use of violence. Additionally, there are attitudes, expectations, and structures that say that men need to use violence, otherwise, their position as a man would be undermined or questioned, and thus men who do not meet these expectations risk being marginalized. Therefore, the critical masculinities perspective argues the roles exist but rejects that these are simply male-sex roles. Rather, multiple relationships define what it means to be a man, which tells us why in some contexts men do engage in violence and in other contexts they do not.

➢ The masculinities framework criticizes the fact that when people are talking about gender, they do not specifically refer to gender. They are using gender as a synonym for women. This framework proposes to have an inclusive meaning when we are conducting projects, research, and inquiries about gender-related issues. On the other hand, the studies on relations between gender and violence are exclusively about men and they are not concerned about masculinity and the real meaning of gender.

➢ The masculinities framework argues that particular manifestations of masculinity are not inevitable, natural, or stable. These may change when the context changes, and with it the definition of being a man. It also asserts that there are multiple articulations of masculinity in any given society. In addition, masculinities and femininities are socially contested.

➢ Young men are often confused with contradictory messages. Violent extremist groups are very well aware of these contradictions and use them to recruit youngsters. They do recognize the vulnerabilities of young people and in turn, are able to offer them something. These organizations do understand how gender-based messaging relates to political violence and consciously deploy gendered messaging to recruit people.

➢ The victimization of young boys and men is a component of recruitment.

➢ Culturally prescribed ways to be a man (emphasising heroism, strength, brotherhood among other tropes) may push men to join violent groups when other pathways for gendered recognition are closed.

➢ Particular pattern of masculinities may be strongly determinative of the tactics and recruitment patterns of the violent organisations and targets they select. Society at large may put forward notions about how men should behave, and these notions are reinterpreted, challenged, reformed and put to work within violent organisations.

➢ What is viewed as manly will shape what an organisation is willing to do or what kinds of violence are seen to be admirable. Importantly, this can also change, with organisations shifting gendered norms over time, or contestation emerging within an organisation about appropriate behaviour for men.

➢ Masculinities shape men's pathways out of violent organisations and their attempts to reintegrate with society. Therefore, understanding men's disengagement from violent extremist groups requires an understanding of how men are involved in violent groups, their role as men in the group and how it would be once they are out the group.

➢ Masculinities should be understood as plural, relational and changing.

➢ Culture is absolutely essential for gender and its interpretation.

Gendered Dynamics in Online Radicalization

➢ Information and communications technologies have opened up new avenues for terrorist recruitment, radicalization, propaganda, and community building in both scale and scope. With the emergence of social media, we stepped into a new era in communications. In addition to the mainstream platforms emerged in 2010s including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, there are also fringe platforms (non-ideological vs ideological in purpose and creation) and alt-tech (alternative technology) platforms. Alt-tech platforms include platforms created for extremists and used by extremists, ultra-libertarian platforms, and hijacked platforms.

➢ Newly emerging platforms are decentralized, enabling its users to quickly navigate and migrate across websites, and use coded language to flout law and regulation.

➢ Different platforms have different purposes. Mainstream platforms in particular provide opportunities for extremists in terms of amplification and exposure, making them able to reach wider audiences. On the other hand, we know that fringe and alt-tech platforms tend to serve for communication and mobilization. With these platforms, they can further strengthen their in-group identity and organization.

➢ Radicalization is gradual. Individuals slowly adopt identities, emotions, and interpretations shared by a community.

➢ Internet does not cause radicalization. However, it helps spread extremist ideas, enables people interested in these ideas to form communities, and mainstreams conspiracy theories and distrust in institutions.

➢ The use of technology is highly gendered, and the gendered use of technology is a blind spot. The dark web and fringe forums are dominated by men whereas mainstream platforms are dominated by women who recruit followers and build audiences for the movement.

➢ Influencer culture is not among the popular reasons for men to use the internet; the majority of influencers and influencer followership are female. Female influencers in Instagram and YouTube are a tool for violent extremists. Although influencer practices are an effective radicalization strategy, they are often unnoticed because of their apolitical content or because they are framed as networked intimacy. Influencers can attract very different types of people and demographic. It is important for us to track the ways in which these violent extremist movements make use of these platforms to attract younger generations and new followers.

➤ In terrorist organizations, violent male and female extremists use the internet in divided ways. Additionally, different platforms have different purposes. For instance, Telegram would be used by men and women as a form of communication and mobilization. However, those same women in the same organization can use Instagram for sharing a recipe. The behavior, discourse, and content of posts of a user might differ depending on the platform. These organizations are clearly aware of this fact and they do select their target social media platforms considering this issue.

➤ These influencers share similar backgrounds; many struggle with depression and attribute unhappiness to feminism. Loss of social support (family, friends) is common. They propose traditionalism as an antidote to feminism. These influencers are in the pursuit of reproducing the nation, considering their primary role as wives and mothers is continuing the legacy of previous right-wing extremism movements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ Despite the limitations regarding the availability of sex-disaggregated data and the overall lack of analysis on the intersection of gender, criminal justice, and terrorism, researchers should reflect what contributions they can provide such as preparing their own data base or comparing country approaches to similar challenges.

➢ Long-term data which look at how individuals have been prosecuted by the criminal justice system, what happens to them once they are released, and how likely they are to engage or to re-engage or disengage should be stored.

➢ There is a need for data on qualitative analysis that look at disengagement programs on the macro level, analyzing long-term outcomes for individuals who are prosecuted, including the likelihood of re-engagement in or to disengagement from terrorism.

➢ Research comparing de-radicalization programs of different countries is also required.

➢ More research on anti-government movements should be conducted; there are groups like the Oath Keepers that differ from other right-wing extremist groups in their inclusion of men and women in various roles. Additionally, more research is needed on the use of gender-inclusive and/or gender-neutral narratives from anti-government movements engaging in radicalization and recruitment.

➢ There is a need for research based on content analysis of anti-government movement gendered messaging.

➢ Datasets are critical to understand terrorist radicalization dynamics. Therefore, it is important to keep records of perpetrators.

➢ Present literature on right-wing groups is based on gender biases preventing accurate assessment of gender roles. More research is required to reveal these gender biases.

➢ Further research is required to seek out the limit of cooperation between terrorist and violent extremist groups that use a gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language like the anti-government militia group Oath Keepers in the US and those groups that have gender-specific and derogatory messaging like the Proud Boys.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ Public access to criminal justice data broken down by gender and age should be promoted.

➢ Information sharing between organizations and researchers is very much dependent on trust and network building. There are certain measures that organizations who have data in hand can take to make sure that their interests are protected and that their data is not used in any other way before refusing to share data.

➢ Opportunities for international exchange between researchers and practitioners as well as governmental and non-governmental actors should be created.

➢ The most important role criminal justice system plays is deterrence from crime. If women engaged in terrorism are not prosecuted for the crime(s) they committed, they are not deterred from re-offending, while other women are not deterred from engaging terrorism since there is no punishment.

➢ The criminal justice system is there to deter individuals from committing a crime through fear of punishment and to punish those who have committed a crime so that they choose to not engage in further criminal behavior. If women are not prosecuted for their crimes, there is no reason for women to fear punishment for their actions, potentially increasing the likelihood one would engage in radical behavior.

➢ Platform governance can be a tool to be utilized in countering online right-extremism. Platform governance is a form of media governance, characterized by self-regulation, informal mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder initiatives as a way to shape the behavior of firms. Platforms govern, they shape content rules, and governments and civil society apply pressure on platforms to affect their governance approaches.

➢   There are also hard (i.e. Deplatforming/Suspension, Demonetization, Content moderation: removal, warning label, Manipulated search results, Changing algorithm) and soft approaches (counter-narratives) in countering online right-wing extremism.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATO

➢   Integrating gender perspective into the analysis of terrorist trends should become the norm across the Alliance.

➢   Terrorist risk assessment should include gender perspectives through gender analysis.

➢   Risk-assessment tools for individuals who show signs of radicalization toward violence should be developed.

➢   There should be a robust framework for evaluating the terrorist threats that women pose, including the risks associated with the early release of a female terrorist.

➢   Develop a manual of the Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) used by female operatives. This TTP manual could then be used to develop countermeasures and effective interventions to mitigate the female terrorist threat.

➢ All educational programs and forums designed to support professional development in the field of counterterrorism should include gender perspectives. Gender perspectives must be mainstreamed in all courses in programs, instead of isolating the gender dimension of terrorism and counter-terrorism in separate training.

➢ The Counter-Terrorism Action Plan, endorsed in 2019, and the Action Plan for the implementation of the NATO/ EAPC policy on Women, Peace and Security, approved in 2021 necessitates updating of NATO's MC Concept for Counter-Terrorism so that it reflects the gender dimension of CT.

➢   The question of whether anti-government groups are an issue for Allied nations in the same way it has been for the US should be explored

ANNEX-A

COE-DAT WORKSHOP

Gender in Terrorism and Counterterrorism:
Gendered Dynamics in Military Effectiveness, Prosecution and Radicalization

13-15 September 2022- Ankara, Türkiye

Workshop Director: Col. Shawn V. YOUNG (USAF)
Workshop Co-Director: Ms. Demet UZUNOĞLU (TÜR)
Workshop Academic Advisor: Dr. Zeynep SÜTALAN (TÜR)
Workshop Assistant: Ms. Aslıhan AKYOL KEMER (TÜR)
Rapporteur: Ms. Alice LÕHMUS (EST)
Rapporteur: Ms. Elif Merve DUMANKAYA (TÜR)

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

	13 September 2022 (1stDay)
15:00 – 15:05	***Welcome Address,*** *Col. Oğuzhan PEHLİVAN (TÜR A), Director, COE-DAT*
15:05 – 15:30	**COE-DAT Introduction & Admin Briefing,** Ms. Demet UZUNOĞLU, WS Co-Director
15:30 – 15:50	***Keynote Speech,*** Ms. Irene FELLIN (NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security)
15:50 – 16:00	Break
16:00 – 18:00	**Session – 1 Gender, Military and Operational Effectiveness: Gender Perspectives in Counter-Terrorism Moderator:** Dr. Zeynep SÜTALAN (TÜR)
16:00 – 16:20	*Gender and Military Effectiveness: Integrating and Implementing Gender Perspectives in Military Organizations and Operations – Ltc/Dr.* Lena P. KVARVING (Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations)
16:20 – 16:40	*Gender Perspectives in Military Operations: Reflections on Counter-terrorism – Ltc. Diana MORAIS (Chair of NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives)*
16:40 – 17:00	*Integrating Gender Perspectives in Military Planning: An "How to" Guide –* Col. Daniel W. STONE (USAF, JOC Director, JFC Naples)
17:00 – 17:10	Break
17:10 – 18:30	Open Discussion
18:30 – 18:35	'Hot wash-up' of day 1 discussions
	Wednesday, 14 September 2022 (2nd Day)
15.00 - 17.30	**Session – 2 Sex-Disaggregated Data in Terrorism Prosecutions - Moderator:** Dr. Zeynep SÜTALAN (TÜR)
15.00 - 15.20	*Gendered Differences in the Prosecution of Daesh Returnees in Germany –* Ms. Sofia KOLLER (Counter Extremism Project)
15.20 - 15.40	*The Invisible Defendant: Female Extremists in the Balkan Peninsula – Asst.Prof.Dr. Kathleen KNOLL-FREY (John Carroll University)*
15.40 - 16.00	*Gendered Disparities in Sentencing in the North American Context –* Assoc.Prof.Dr. Omi HODWITZ (University of Idaho)
16:00 – 16:10	Break
16.10 - 17.30	Open Discussion
17.30 - 17.35	'Hot wash-up' of day 2 discussions
	Thursday, 15 September 2022 (3rd Day)
15.00 - 17.30	**Session – 3 Gender, Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment - Moderator:** Dr. Zeynep SÜTALAN (TÜR)
15.00 - 15.20	*Gendered Narratives in Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment –* Dr. Heather GREGG (US Army War College)
15.20 - 15.40	*The Role of Masculinities in Pathways "to" and "out" of Terrorist Organizations –* Dr. David DURIESMITH (The University of Sheffield)
15.40 - 16.00	*Gendered Dynamics of Online Radicalization, Recruitment and Propaganda –* Dr. Eviane LEIDIG (Tilburg University)
16.00 - 16.10	Break
16.10 - 17.30	'Open Discussion
17.30 - 17.45	'Hot wash-up' of day 3 discussions and Closing Remarks

ANNEX-B

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SPEAKERS (in alphabetical order)

DURIESMITH, DAVID

David Duriesmith holds a BA (2009) and PhD (2014) in International Studies from the University of Melbourne. After completing his studies, he held postdoctoral posts at the University of Melbourne (2015-2017) and the University of Queensland (2017-2020).

In 2020 he joined the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Sheffield as a lecturer. David's research explores the relationship between masculinities and violence. He has published on preventing violence after war, men's support for gender equality, foreign fighter networks, male victims of sexual violence, the transformation of war and feminist international relations theory.

FELLIN, IRENE

Ms. Irene Fellin has recently been appointed NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. She is the high focal point on all aspects of NATO's contribution to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, with the aim to facilitate coordination and consistency in NATO's policies and activities and to take forward the implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy and Action Plan on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions. She is a Gender and Security expert and peacebuilder with more than 15 years of experience in the field of international security. She was instrumental in establishing and coordinating the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), a project promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy aimed at fulfilling the need to increase the number of women involved in peace-making efforts and at facilitating the appointment of high-level women mediators at local and international level. Ms. Fellin is a strong supporter of female leadership and in 2016 she founded the Italian chapter of Women in International Security (WIIS), an organisation dedicated to advancing the leadership and professional development of women in the field of international peace, security and defence.

GREGG, HEATHER S.

Heather S. Gregg is professor of Military Strategy and Policy at the U.S. Army War College in the Strategic Studies Institute. Dr. Gregg's academic focus is on irregular warfare, terrorism and counterterrorism, causes of extremism, and leveraging culture in population centric conflicts, including repairing communities and national unity in the wake of war and political instability.

Prior to joining the U.S. Army War College, Dr. Gregg was an associate professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where she worked primarily with Special Operations Forces. She is the 2017 recipient of the NPS school-wide Hamming Award for excellence in teaching. Dr. Gregg was also an associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation from 2003-2006. She has conducted research for USASOC, OSD, TRADOC, BIMA, NCTC, Department of State, and JIEDDO.

Dr. Gregg earned her PhD in Political Science in 2003 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also holds a Master's degree from Harvard Divinity School, where she studied Islam, and a Bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology, with honors, from the University of California, Santa Cruz.
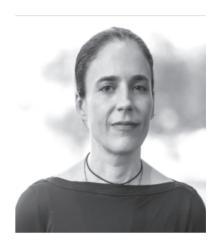
In addition to academic experience, Dr. Gregg has spent time in several regions of conflict, including Palestine/West Bank and the former Yugoslavia, in addition to working in Qatar and Japan, and studying in Hungary. From 2013-2015, she was part of teaching and engagement teams in Tajikistan. In 2016, she taught at the Indonesian Defense University on subjects relating to asymmetric warfare. Most recently, she has participated in a series of engagements with NATO's Center of Excellence, Defense Against Terrorism in Ankara, Türkiye.

Dr. Gregg has published extensively on irregular warfare, religiously motivated conflict and extremism, including: *Religious Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press, 2020); "Religiously Motivated Violence" (Oxford University Press 2016); *Building the Nation: Missed Opportunities in Iraq and Afghanistan* (University of Nebraska 2018); T*he Path to Salvation: Religious Violence from the Crusades to Jihad* (University of Nebraska 2014); and co-editor of *The Three Circles of War: Understanding the Dynamics of Modern War in Iraq* (Potomac, 2010).

HODWITZ, OMI

Dr. Omi Hodwitz is a criminologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Culture, Society, and Justice at the University of Idaho.

Prior to becoming a professor, Dr. Hodwitz was a researcher at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Center at the University of Maryland. This is also where she received her Ph.D. after completing dissertation work examining the intersection between civil society and terrorist organizations.

Dr. Hodwitz specializes in quantitative research examining the influence of policies and practices on violent and extremist behavior. She is the director of the Terrorism Recidivism Study (TRS), a large-scale data project that tracks and reports incidents of terrorist recidivism in the United States and abroad. She also directs the Aviation Attack Database (AAD), which records all violent attacks directed towards the global aviation industry.

Dr. Hodwitz has delivered guest lectures and trainings on data collection, analysis, and policy assessment to academic, practitioner, and military audiences in North America, Europe, MENA, and Asia.

She has published an assortment of journal articles, chapters, and research reports on violence and extremism, as well as instructive guides for the counterterrorism community on conducting high quality and ethically sound research.
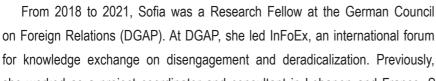
KNOLL-FREY, KATHLEEN

Dr. Kathleen Knoll-Frey is an Assistant Professor at John Carroll University in the department of Sociology and Criminology.

Her research focuses on the differences between prisons and jails, treating the facilities as different entities. She also conducts research on improving outcomes for those incarcerated and improving communities to reduce those entering the criminal justice system.

KOLLER, SOFIA

Sofia Koller is a Senior Research Analyst at the Berlin office of the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), where she works on the prevention of religiously motivated extremism, with a focus on the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of returned foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq, including women. She also supports the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) of the European Commission (DG HOME) and the Council of Europe as an external consultant.

From 2018 to 2021, Sofia was a Research Fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). At DGAP, she led InFoEx, an international forum for knowledge exchange on disengagement and deradicalization. Previously, she worked as a project coordinator and consultant in Lebanon and France. Sofia Koller holds a Master's degree in International Conflict Studies from King's College London.

KVARVING, LENA P.

LTC/PhD Lena P. Kvarving is a Norwegian national, currently Officer in Command of the Education and Training Department (ETD) at the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM). She has served as Head teacher for UN Operations at the Norwegian Defence University College (NDUC), been seconded from Norway as Gender Adviser at the Politico-Military Domain to OSCE, worked as Senior Staff Officer at the Norwegian Defence Staff on equality, diversity and gender perspectives (WPS agenda), Leader of the Gender Project at NDUC, and various military positions in Norway, USA and Afghanistan. In addition to her military higher education and training, she holds a PhD in Political Science from University of Oslo.

Her doctoral thesis revealed cultural, structural and functional factors that affect implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Norwegian Armed Forces and NATO. Her Master degree from London MET compared the work for equal opportunities in the EU and the Council of Europe. She has also led a centre for refugees for Norwegian People's Aid, and she has published and lectured widely internationally in cooperation with NGOs, IGOs and international security organizations. Kvarving has supported the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with her expertise i.e. China, Lithuania, and in the Human Rights Dialogue with Indonesia. She is a member of Nordic Women Mediators (NWM), and has been a Steering Committee member of the NCGM and the Norwegian delegate to NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives for several years.

LEIDIG, EVIANE

Dr. Eviane Leidig is a Marie Sklodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at Tilburg University, Netherlands. Her research expertise is on the far-right, gender, and online radicalization, recruitment, and propaganda, as well as online governance and regulation. She is an affiliate at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo, an Associate Fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), and an Associate Fellow at the Global Network on Extremism & Technology (GNET). Eviane regularly gives talks and consults for policymakers and practitioners such as the US Department of State, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Commission, Council of Europe, Radicalisation Awareness Network, and NATO, as well as advises tech companies and the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT).

MORAIS, DIANA

Lieutenant-Colonel (LTC) Diana Morais holds a master's degree in Military Engineering and is currently a PhD candidate in Gender Studies.

She has held several appointments as an Army Engineer officer, such as platoon and company commander. In 2009 she was deployed to Lebanon, as company commander and Civil-Military Cooperation officer.

After graduating from the Joint Staff Course, in 2015, she served as senior staff officer at the Army Headquarters and she was also appointed Army`s Gender Focal Point to the Ministry of Defense Gender Equality Working Group.

Her interest around the topic of Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda has grown and in June 2017, she applied and was elected Deputy-chair of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP). Two years later, she was elected for the Chair position and, in June 2021, following the two-year period of co-sharing, she took over as NCGP Chair.

In March 2020, she was invited to head the newly established Equality Office at the Ministry of Defence and also adviser to the Minister of National Defense regarding gender equality and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, position that she has been serving since.

STONE, DANIEL W.

Col. Daniel W. Stone currently serves as the JOC Director at JFC Naples. Previously, he was the Deputy Director of NATO Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism in Ankara, Türkiye between the years 2018 and 2022.

Col. Stone earned his commission from the United States Air Force Officer Training School in 1995. He has served in a variety of operations and staff positions throughout his career. Col. Stone began his career as a computer communications officer, where he was responsible for Air Mobility Command and Control systems, daily operations of 5AF network systems, and supported Air Operations Center training and testing. As a KC-135 pilot, Col. Stone flew numerous operational missions and served as Flight Commander, Assistant Operations Officer, and Operations Officer in numerous squadrons both in garrison and deployed.

Col. Stone was assigned as a foreign military advisor in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) Hands program and led COMISAF's Advisory and Assistance Team as Deputy Director for a seven nation multi-national organization, in five geographically separated locations, tasked with observing and reporting on international efforts to partner with, develop, and sustain the Afghan security transition. Additionally, Col. Stone managed all aspects of the Air Force AFPAK Hand program to include personnel training, Headquarters Air Force policy development, and strategy and concept development. Col. Stone previously served as the Deputy Commander of Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA), Kabul, Afghanistan. As Deputy Commander, he served as the lead integrator of the Force Protection Group, Air Operations Group, and Base Support Group functions to defend, operate, and support HKIA and the NATO compound located on North HKIA. Additionally, he oversaw the training, advising, and assisting of Afghan personnel in airfield operations and force protection duties at HKIA.

ANNEX-C

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