"My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

By: **Julia Musial[1]**

Abstract

The terrorist group Islamic State succeeds in radicalizing thousands of young people from the West, among them a large number of women. Although the phenomenon of female members in terrorist groups is not entirely new, the massive commitment of females for the Islamic State is surprising. The group makes strong use of the internet, especially social media, to spread its propaganda which contributes to female radicalization and might even lead to their recruitment. By now it is known that the push and especially the pull factors appearing in the radicalization process are different than those in male radicalization. Howeverresearch does barely take the gender-specific dynamics into account when it comes to the development of measures that counter Islamic radicalization. At this point, I argue that a deeper understanding of the gender-specific narratives of the group serves as a key point to develop effective measures. In the propaganda of the Islamic State that directly addresses women from the West, certain narratives can be found. With the analysis of articles that address women taken from the online magazine *Dabiq*, I identified nine narratives outlined in this paper. The investigation of both images and the strategic use of language in the considered articles indicate how the narratives are constructed. The emphasis on religious and gender-specific narratives in the articles leads me to argue in favor of a stronger focus on female-specific counter-radicalization measures. The involvement of the findings from this paper into radicalization research may help to develop effective counter-narratives and adjust them gender-specifically.[2]

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39

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Content

Glossary of Terms

1. **Introduction**
2. **Theoretical Background and Literature Review**
3. **Methodology and Operationalization**
4. **Analysis and Findings**
5. **Conclusion and Outlook**

List of References
Appendix

The quote on the front page "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" is taken from Dabiq Issue 11: 44 – the term mujahidah is the Arabic word of a female fighter in jihad

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Glossary of Terms:

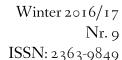|	
ahlul-dhimma	engl.: protected people; In Islamic tradition the term refers to a concept under Islamic authority to tolerate Jews and Christians as monotheist religions against payment of a protection fee
al-Firdaws	highest stage in paradise (Jannah) in Islamic belief; depending on the religious deeds in this life, the stage in afterlife is defined
Allahu akbar	engl.: Allah is greater
ayah	a single verse of the Quran
Dabiq	city in Northern Syria, where the battle of the last days is said to take place; name of an English online magazine of the Islamic State
darul-Islam	term that refers to a region where Islam is the dominant religion and Muslims can practice their religion in security
darul-kufr	engl.: place of faithlessness; refers to regions under other authority than Islam
dunya	engl.: earth; this life
fitrah	engl.: human natural instinct; refers to a pure condition that is believed to reach through a devout life
Harithah	Arabic name used for boys and girls, referring to a companion of Prophet Muhammad
hijrah	originally: migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina; in IS propaganda: migration to the IS-held territories, the so-called caliphate
iddah	time after a divorce or the death of the husband that a woman after Islamic rule has to wait until the marriage with another man

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

ihdad	rule for a woman to dispense with any fragrance or adornment; applies in few occasions under e.g. during the mourning time
Insha'allah	engl.: Allah willing
jannah	place of afterlife; paradise
Khansa	engl.: gazelle; historical female poet in the 7th century; 'khansa brigade' is a religious women police within the Islamic State
khilafah	engl.: caliphate; area that is ruled by the caliph (khalifah) who is regarded as successor to Prophet Muhammad and leads the worldwide Muslim community (Ummah)
kufr (pl. kuffar)	disbeliever; atheist
mahr (pl. mahram)	male relative whom a woman is not allowed to marry; e.g. her brother, father or son
muhajir/ muhajirah	Muslim immigrant to the IS-held territories
mujahid/ mujahidah	fighter in the holy war (jihad)
mushrikin	polytheist; idolater
muslimah (pl. muslimat)	Arabic word for a female Muslim believer
muwahhidah	monotheist; believer in the oneness of God
radiyallahu `anhim	engl.: Allah may be pleased with him; phrase used after mentioning one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (sahabah)
rahimahullah	engl.: Allah may have mercy upon him; phrase that is often used after mentioning historical personalities from the surrounding of prophet Muhammad
sahabah	companions of Prophet Muhammad
sahwah	engl.: awakening; in IS propaganda the term is used for

	Arabic states that underwent political reforms and/or are regarded as allies of the West
shahid (pl. shuhada)	engl.: witness; term to label a martyr, an individual dying either in a suicide attack or during a battle in jihad, in IS propaganda the status of a martyr is very honored and desired
shari'a	religious law of Islam
taghut (pl. tawaghit)	state authorities that are blamed to build their rule on earthly concepts instead of Islam
takbir	term for praying the Arabic phrase Allahu akbar (Allah is greater)
Ummah	worldwide Muslim community

Remark on the notation of Arabic words:

Unlike in Islamic Studies, Arabic words and terms are not transferred in the formal MSA transcription. Terms are used as commonly spelled in relevant English literature. This eases the reading flow and facilitates understanding for readers less familiar with Arabic terms.

1. Introduction

Since 2012, when the Syrian conflict intensified and its effects increased within and across the borders, western[3] countries have been confronted with a relatively large number of their population radicalizing and engaging in the armed conflict in the crisis region of Syria and Iraq (Kirk 2015). The majority of these western emigrants are assumed to have joined the ranks of the terrorist group Islamic State[4] that has attracted more foreign fighters[5] than any jihadist organization in the past (Roy 2015; Hughes & Vidino 2015). About 4.000 persons from western states have migrated to IS-held territories (Neumann 2015b: 13), most of them as male fighters. In 2014 and 2015, after al-Baghdadi had declared the caliphate, the number of women travelling to Syria has drastically increased (Bakkers & De Leede 2015: 1; Huey & Witmer 2016). Western societies are confronted with the challenge of countering the increasing stream of women to Syria (Bakker & De Leede 2015) as well as with an increasing influx of disillusioned women returning from IS back to their home countries (Neumann 2015a: 132). In summer 2016, 550 western women consider themselves as residents of the caliphate and thereby hold a share of ten to 15 percent of all migrants originated from western countries. In the case of Germany, the percentage of females amongst the migrants is estimated to be even 20 percent (Bakkers & De Leede 2015; Verfassungsschutz 2015). These numbers indicate that women from the West are attracted by IS and its ideology. The large

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[3] It is well known that the term "West" is a problematic concept. In this paper, it is used for the European states (excluding Turkey and Russia) and North America and refers to the shared culture and values.

[4] Various terms are used in Media and by the group itself: ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), Daesh (arab. ad-daula al-islāmiyya fī l-ʿIrāq wa-š-Šām). In this paper, the term Islamic State (in short IS) is used to provide an easier reading flow. The addition 'so-called' used by some researchers is skipped for the same reason without providing legitimacy to the group thereby. For further discussion on the names, profile and history of the group see: Lister, C.,2014. *Profiling the Islamic State*. [online] http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Research/Files/Reports/2014/11/profiling-islamic-state-lister/en_web_lister.pdf?la=en (Rev. 10.08.2016).

[5] Foreign fighters are defined here as individual joining insurgencies during civil conflicts of states they are non-citizens in. This definition is put forward by David Malet (2013: 9) in his book: Malet, D., 2013. *Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* New York: Oxford University Press.

amount of female migrants[6] furthermore shows a factor that distinguishes IS from other terrorist groups (Neumann 2015a: 130). Female engagement for terrorist organizations in general is in fact not entirely new and has been researched for decades (Lines 2009; Bloom 2011). The large numbers of western females taking the decision to voluntarily join an organization in the name of jihad has taken on a whole new dimension with the case of the Islamic State (Bakkers & De Leede 2015: 1). It appears apparently paradox that women from countries that emphasize gender equality and female emancipation start a radical new life within a jihadist group and thereby voluntarily choose a conservative role. They represent a threat with their engagement in recruit further potential radicals and spread of propaganda. It is furthermore unpredictable if female returnees might be commit suicide attacks and thereby constitute a direct danger for their home countries. As the Islamic State loses territory increasingly, a shift in the groups´s terrorism strategy is observed since August 2016. It becomes more likely that women are actively included in future attacks. Few examples indicate this new threat already (Burke 2016). It is therefore currently necessary to develop measures and strategies that combat female radicalization of the Islamic State.

Because the female migrant phenomenon has increased momentum very recently, its full extend still remains surprising to experts of terrorism as well as of radicalization research. Scientific research has so far gained only little knowledge of the driving forces behind women joining IS and only initial conclusions can be drawn about the jihadist radicalization of women (Bakker & De Leede 2015).

Already well known is that easy access to propaganda material (Verfassungsschutz 2015) serves as enabling factor for female radicalization (Neumann 2015a: 111). Indeed, the intensive use of online platforms and social media as "radicalization agents" seems to be crucial for female recruitment in particular (Huey & Witmer 2016: 1). As the Islamic State publishes propaganda material designed particularly for a female audience the impression increases that the group recognizes a priority to attract women. Women are explicitly called to

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[6] In this paper, a female individual travelling to IS-held territories to join the group is described as "female migrant" (in Arabic mujahiraat) to avoid other controversial and striking terms such as "jihadi bride" or "female foreign fighter".

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

travel to Syria for joining the Islamic State in the propaganda (Bakker & De Leede 2015). Scholars even noticed a shift in the "unique propaganda strategy" of the group with a focus on women in their recruitment efforts since 2014 (Saltman & Smith 2015: 15).

Current studies focus on the personalities of the women and take a closer look at their individual socio-economic backgrounds. Investigation of these personal radicalization processes is hoped to reveal a general pattern of female radicalization and already provides preliminary findings (Saltman & Smith 2016; Huey & Witmer 2016; Baker & De Leede 2015; Hoyle et al 2015). It is known that narratives are crucial for radicalization (Neumann 2015b: 9) but still, there is very little knowledge about the narratives that pander to the radicalization process of women. The basis on which effective counter-radicalization[7] strategies and especially counter-narratives can be built is currently very thin. However, as many scholars point out, the deployment of such counter-narratives nowadays is more urgent than ever as well as there is a "greater need for counter-narratives and counter-extremist messaging that is targeted at females." (Saltman & Smith 2015: 6).

In acknowledgement and agreement with the demand of stronger counter-narratives, I argue that counter-radicalization strategies must develop and apply gender-specific approaches to achieve the maximum impact in combating female radicalization. I further refer to recent studies that have focused on the radicalized women whereas less attention has been given to the central propaganda of the Islamic State. However, exactly this propaganda can reveal further important information on the narratives that IS uses to attract and to radicalize women. Thus, a deeper knowledge on narratives in the propaganda offers a basis for the development of counter-narratives as an alternative to the narratives that the Islamic State offers to women. (Saltman & Smith 2015). According to the prior research interest, the research question of the paper reads:

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[7]Counter-radicalization is understood a collective term for different measures that counter radicalization. Mostly, they are divided in prevention and de-radicalization measures and are applied in certain stages of the individual radicalization process. Counter-narratives are a frequently-used tool in both prevention and de-radicalization. Counter-radicalization approaches are rooted in psychology and consequently not discussed in this paper in depth. Further information on the topic is provided in the monograph publication: Rabasa, A. et al, 2010. *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists.* Santa Monica: RAND Cooperation.

What narratives are contained in selected articles from Islamic State´s leading propaganda medium Dabiq[8] that address western women in particular? How are the narratives constructed through the application of strategic use of language and supporting images in the articles?

The research is located at the interface of the broader research lines of women in terrorist groups on the one hand and Islamic radicalization in western countries on the other.

The analysis focuses on propaganda material that IS created for the target audience of western females and maps out the narratives that are used within the material. The results are objected to validate and expand preliminary knowledge that is investigated so far on narratives fostering female radicalization. Besides the content of the narratives, the analysis takes the strategic use of language and the visual elements of the material into account. With this approach, it can be identified how the narratives are constructed and supported.

After outlining the theoretical background of women in terrorist groups in general and an introduction to radicalization theory, the current literature on women in the Islamic State is presented. Subsequently, the method of discourse analysis is introduced and adapted in the following. The analysis consists of two parts, text analysis and image analysis, from which the findings are explained in chapter four. This chapter also evaluates the findings and connects the analysis results with the theoretical background. Finally, the last chapter summarizes the results and provides an outlook to challenges and opportunities regarding the development of measures that counter female radicalization.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The theoretical background for this paper is derived from the two research strands sketched in this chapter: Firstly, terrorism research analyzing women in terrorism gives insights into the female role in radical groups. Secondly, radicalization research provides knowledge on the motivations and circumstances that makes young individuals perceptive for radical ideologies.

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[8] All Dabiq Issues are taken from Jihadology, an online project collecting primary sources of jihadist groups for research purposes. http://jihadology.net/2016/07/31/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-magazine-dabiq-15/

In a subsequent part, an insight into the currently ongoing academic debate on women in the Islamic State is provided. Against this background, the paper contributes to the research line of women in terrorism as well as to radicalization studies, both as part of security studies within the broader context of political science.

2.1. Women in radical and terrorist groups

Regardless of female engagement in terrorist and radical groups in the 19th century, association with female terrorism is often limited to European left-wing groups or connected to secular nationalist groups in Turkey or Asia (Bloom 2011: 4). Research on the topic is still rare although the phenomenon of female recruitment by IS recently increased attention on this field (ibid.). Consolidated results exist on why women join terrorist groups and wherefore groups seek to attract women. Furthermore, the roles women fill in radical groups regardless of their ideological background is well studied as well as the trigger factors for women to exceed the threshold from passive membership to engagement in active violence. Recent studies also focus on the role of women in jihadist groups.

The Spanish Civil war in the 1930s is an impressing example of the phenomenon with a large amount of foreign women travelling to Spain to actively support the revolt against the Franco Regime (Lines 2009). Since then, "there has been an increase in the number of women engaged in terrorism across the globe" (Bloom 2011: 2). Questions arising from this fact are: Why are women interesting for the groups? How do groups seek to attract women? For which reason do women join? Research on jihadist groups has shown that they in fact follow the same logic than other terrorist groups when it comes to the reasons to attract women. In following Roy (2015: 4), the Islamic State can be identified as a radical group that commits to a religious ideology only at the outside. In this regard, most of the factors of female involvement in terrorist groups also apply to IS. The opportunities to get involved for women and their roles however are found to differ according to ideology (Bloom 2011: 10).

The advantages for radical groups resulting from the inclusion of women as members and operatives are more obvious than the reasons for the women to support these groups. This applies to terrorist groups like IS to the same extend as for parties in national conflicts such as the Franco revolt. In order to explain why radical groups seek to attract women, it was found that female recruitment is based on desperation when either a lack of men appears or the female role in the group cannot be replaced by male counterparts (Dalton & Asal 2011). Both factors are recognized in jihadist groups whereas the second one prevails (Bloom 2011; Gonzalez et al 2014).

Usually, after joining, women and men are traditionally segregated following ideological gender roles. This applies particular for jihad movements and leads to the fact that women share their passion for their common cause with other women whereas men are "trained and professionalized" (Bloom 2011: 10). Women are rarely found in the executive level of terrorist organizations (Gonzalez et al 2014: 346). Only a few examples from the 70s serve as an evidence of active female participation in leadership (Bloom 2011: 5). The revolutionary cells or the Japanese red army, the Baader-Meinhof group and the German red army faction are three of those groups named. Even for jihadist groups one famous example of female leadership can be found in the person of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui. She initiated an attempt to murder an US federal agent in 2010 and is seen as heroine and a female Muslim warrior by jihadists worldwide ever since. The Islamic State even proposed a prisoner´s exchange for her with James Foley in 2015.

Whether the female role is predetermined through religious narratives (Bloom 2011; Zakaria 2015) is debated in terrorism research. While some state that gender roles are complementary (Zakaria 2015) others claim that attributing a domestic role to women leads to a misconception of female involvement in the groups (Huey & Witmer 2016: 2).

In most terrorist groups and especially in almost all jihadist groups, the female role is supportive and limited to giving birth and raising up new generations of fighters, spreading the ideology or transporting weapons and munition (Bloom 2011: 5). Furthermore, women are considered to be more successful in attracting other men and women with propaganda by

using gender roles to persuade especially men of their obligation to become active members (Bloom 2011: 7). The female roles can therefore be summarized to the following three: facilitators, propagandists and the group´s historical conscience (Cragin & Daly 2009) In jihadist groups, women fulfill a trilogy of activists for the community, supporters of jihad and missionary workers (Cunningham 2007: 121).

Recruitment strategies of terrorist groups show gender-specific approaches. "Gendered pathways leading men and women to involvement in terrorism" (Bloom 2011: 10) can even be recognized. Furthermore, gender stereotypes are exploited and the sense of urgency for women to join is emphasized in particular (ibid.: 4). Terrorism studies point to the fact that groups use the language of empowerment, equality and choice within their ideological framework to attract women (Dalton & Asal 2011).

Some groups also indicate a strategy not only for the recruitment of women but also for their utilization for violent actions, in most cases suicide attacks. The attacks of Chechen women (Bloom 2011: 12), the case of Palestinian female perpetrators during the second intifada (Naaman 2007) as well as the female Tamil combatants (Herath 2012) are clear examples. From 1985 to 2010, a quarter of suicide attacks worldwide were however committed by women from different organizations (Bloom 2011:2). Bloom (ibid.: 4) identified three key reasons that lead groups to the use of women for attacks: (1) when male operatives are less in number, (2) when targets are difficult to penetrate and (3) when they hope that the perpetrator escapes. The strongest advantage for groups definitely is the fact that women are not associated with terrorism in public perception. With female terrorists, groups exploit gender stereotypes to generate a surprise effect (ibid.). Between jihadist groups, an ambiguity is recognized on this issue. In the past, most groups rejected female suicide perpetrators but a change has been noticed during the last decade. One example is the intensive use of female suicide bombers and martyrs by Hamas during the second intifada (Naaman 2007: 933) with nine conducted attacks and a lot more failed attempts. Even traditional jihadist groups such as Taliban and Al-Qaida have occasionally used female operatives. Al-Zarqawi, a former al-Qaida leader and founding father of IS, was rather supportive of female involvement (Bloom

2011: 6). Based on the fact, that a possible religious justification for female operatives can be created, scholars (Schröter 2015; Gonzalez et al 2014) pointed out what has become reality since August 2016: the risk that IS changes its strategy and involves women for attacks whenever it seems necessary.

Besides focusing on the groups and taking into account their motives to both attract and use women in violent actions as outlined above, research also gained knowledge on the reasons for women to join terrorist groups. Women in terrorist groups are mostly presented as passive victims and not as active and self-determined participants in public perception (Brown 2016). However, terrorism research considers the passive role to be a misconception of the media (Gonzalez et al 2014: 345). Most of the women join and participate voluntarily which refutes the impression of their victim role (Bloom 2016).

It is assumed that women prefer the engagement in domestic terrorism with a superior national aim rather than terror that operates globally (Gonzalez et al 2014: 345). A strong motivation for women to participate is a relationship with a male member of the group. This is found to be the same for jihadist groups due to the assumption that the ideology of the group plays a subordinate role for the female decision to join (ibid.: 346). Female engagement in jihadist groups is found to have a further motive that is especially attractive for women from conservative families or backgrounds. "Women in Islamic organizations acquire a power to act they do not possess in conservative-traditional environments." (Schröter 2015: 79). Within the provided frame they autonomously develop independent activities (ibid.). In this regard, the jihadist group offers an alternative to modern gender relations and gives women a feeling of superiority through the "Islamic way of life" (: 72). In this lifestyle, the niqab is their resistance and fight against society and their contribution to jihad. Thus, Islamic ideology gives both men and women a "fighting ground" for their struggle (: 76).

Reasons of women to join a terrorist group can differ from the reasons to stay and engage in violent actions (Bloom 2011: 11). Pape (2005) and Schweitzer (2006) claim that women are more affected by emotions when joining active violence, whereas men are rather convinced by religious or ideological reasons. Women more likely participate in attacks that damage

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

property not human lives (Gonzalez et al 2014: 348). If they do, suicide attacks are found to be the preferred method for committing violence against humans. In most cases though, women are more risk-averse and it takes longer for them to be mentally prepared to turn commit a terrorist attack (Gonzalez et al 2014: 347). The decision for women to commit an attack is a result of several factors (Bloom 2011: 9; Merari et al. 2010: 102). It is assumed that women commit an attack almost only with support of a network (Gonzalez et al 2014: 348). Although terrorist involvement is based on own decisions, a network or group play a leading role in pushing women towards active violence (Merari et al. 2010: 102). The case of the Palestinian women is very strong to support several of the outlined arguments: The women engaging in domestic terrorism acted within an intensive ideological loaded network and committed suicide attacks as a tool to express their support for the aim of the group in a way that caused massive media-effective attention on the international level (Miller 2007; Bloom 2004).

Personal tragedies or a feeling of loneliness can result in death appearing as attractive alternative to life (Bloom 2011: 9). A suicide attack in this regard is an opportunity of empowerment that additionally gives attention and honor (Gonzalez et al 2014: 348; Herath 2012). In jihadist groups, the religious justification provides a further motive. The interpretation of Salafi Islam teaches that martyrdom of a woman wipes away all of her sins and gives back her dignity and pride. It says that she gains beauty in after-life, a perfect husband and sits beside the prophet with 70 of her relatives in paradise (Bloom 2011: 13). It can be concluded that the decision of a women to commit an attack is rooted in religious and personal motives and social pressure.

2.2. Radicalization theory

Radicalization is understood as an individual process that changes the value system of a person and happens not promptly but rather in several phases towards extremism (Neumann 2013: 873). However, an catalyst event such as war experience or the loss of a beloved person

can accelerate the process (Christmann 2012: 19). Theory knows a variety of approaches from which the *four-stages model* (Sageman), the *pathway model* (Gill 2007) and the *al-Mujahiroun* model (Wiktorowicz 2004) are three core concepts to explain this process. All of the models are common in the assumption of several stages that are passed by an individual during the radicalization process. For this research, employing the model of Wiktorowicz is seen as appropriate for supplying a theoretical background as it was developed with an emphasize on Islamic radicalization. The key point of radicalization is identified as the *cognitive opening* appearing as a result of a personal crisis that can be triggered by various cultural, economic, political or personal occurrences. The own conception of the world is not able to explain and handle the crisis what makes the individual receptive for radical ideas (Wiktorowicz 2005: 20) and narratives of a radical ideology (Roy 2015: 5). The narratives offer interpretations that seem reasonable and useful for explaining the crisis. Religious dimensions in particular provide a framework for reconstructing the individual self-perception (ibid.). However, the definition of *narrative* remains ambiguous in social science. What matters for this research is their function to construct an individual identity as well as a group identity. In this function they can serve as a tool to mobilize people into action (Riessmann 2008: 6). Narratives offer belonging within a community to the potential radicals (Roy 2015: 11; Böckler & Zick: 19). In general, radicalization proceeds in the same way regardless of ideology (Glaser 2016). Consequently, the religious argumentation is strategically exploited by radical organizations and Islamist radicalization can be understood as "a youth revolt against society, articulated on an Islamic religious narrative of jihad" (Roy 2015: 4f).

In radicalization theory, two types of causal factors are distinguished that influence the radicalization process. On the one hand, *push factors* can be understood as personal reasons that push individuals towards radical ideas. Male and female radicalization is quite similar with regard to these push factors, although they are not totally equivalent (Saltman & Smith 2015: 9). On the other hand, *pull factors* attract potential radicals (Borum 2011: 57) and consist of narratives that offer answers to the negative push factors (Wiktorowicz 2005). Whereas push factors are rooted in the individual background of a person, pull factors are

apparent in the offered ideology of a certain group. As the investigation of push factors is located in the discipline of psychology, the paper focuses on pull factors in detail.

The radical group offers narratives to the recipients that appear as pull factors in their radicalization process. Based on the very different roles that men and women have in jihadist group as the Islamic State, the pull factors differ according to gender especially in regard of such groups (Saltman & Smith 2015: 13). Transported through propaganda, they take effect on the woman in the phase of cognitive opening. Propaganda is in this regard the communication tool of the Islamic State through which it shares its values and interests. (Bussemer 2008: 33). According to the *pluralistic propaganda paradigm* (: 53) the narratives of this propaganda have to fit the social and psychological context of the targeted individual to be effective. The narratives used by IS seem to provide orientation, interpretation possibilities and behavior patterns that potential female recruits obviously lack (: 62). It should be noted that it is not possible to conclude from propaganda content to the direct impact it has on the recipient. "Identifying IS recruitment narratives is not the same as explaining why people join. The process of radicalization and/or recruitment is complex and multifaceted, and consists of a variety of factors and influences […] Narratives are part of this, because they provide the rationales, justifications and incentives that convince people to join." (Neumann 2015b: 9). It can however be concluded from the large number of female migrants in IS-held territories that propaganda contains narratives and elements that attract women from western contexts.

As radicalization processes are highly individual, the development of an effective strategy to counter this process is subject to each respective case. However, there are general measures and widely adopted strategies of *de-radicalization* and *prevention*. Whereas concerned individuals or returnees undergo individual de-radicalization programs, prevention is more generally and widespread in its application in the early phases of the radicalization process (Saltman & Smith 2015: 51). The approach of *counter-narratives* that deconstruct the radical narratives is used in both cases (Rabasa et al. 2010: 127; Roy 2015: 13). That counter-narratives align as precisely as possible to the radical narratives is an essential condition for

their impact. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the narratives in Islamic propaganda is necessary to develop appropriate counter-narratives.

2.3. Literature review on women in the Islamic State

Recent studies on women in the Islamic State mostly focus their social media appearances of the women about their reality and role in IS and the backgrounds of their radicalization processes. About 100 accounts were for example investigated by researchers over a period of several months (Saltman & Smith 2015; Huey & Witmer 2016). Preliminary knowledge of narratives and strategies used in IS propaganda in female recruitment can be deduced from the ongoing academic debate and will be summarized subsequently.

It is already known that western female jihadists cannot be broken down to a single type of concerned persons. Rather, they come from different social, cultural and academic backgrounds (Neumann 2015a: 149). Representing 10% of western foreign recruits, 550 women and girls are assumed to reside in IS-held territories, most of them aged between 18 and 25 (Zakaria 2015; Bakker & De Leede 2015: 4). The very young age is stressed by many studies to be unparalleled in female radicalization in general (Bakker & De Leede 2015: 5). Other than in the medial display, researchers emphasize that IS radicals do not fit in the stereotype of submissive female victims of radical beliefs. Women joining IS are fully convinced in supporting the practices of jihad and were brought to Syria by own decision (Bakkers & De Leede 2015: 9; Schröter 2015: 75). Their role within IS-held territories was so far a domestic one behind the battlefield in indirectly supporting the fight as mothers, nurses and facilitators (Bakker & De Leede 2015: 10). The investigation of their reality living within IS is hoped to be informative to find reference points for potential counter-radicalization measures (Bakker De Leede 2015).

The female aspects of radicalization by IS are important for possible strategies to counter phenomenon but are very often neglected (Saltman & Smith 2015). "Further research is needed to reach more robust conclusions and identify specific categories of reasons for

women leaving for Syria, and to identify various types of female jihadists." (Bakker & De Leede 2015: 9).

A fact that occurs exclusively in female radicalization is the significant role of online platforms. Although offline contacts to the Jihadist network have a strong influence on potential radicals, women are radicalized almost exclusively by online propaganda and within a jihadist online network (Neumann 2015a: 146). "Women are systematically and rapidly contacted when they inquire online about Daesh, jihad and Islam in general" (Roy 2015: 8). The internet is the female "tool of communication, propaganda and information" (ibid.). Most of the women establish active online presences after their arrival in the caliphate (Saltman & Smith 2015: 4). They use their accounts to communicate about their life, justify their decision to immigrate to IS-held territories and to attract other men and women to join (Bakker De Leede 2015). Moreover, the internet presence is their way to organize independently from men (Schröter 2015: 79) and offers a way to contribute to jihad that compensates their prohibition to fight actively (Saltman & Smith 2015: 31). For these reasons, female jihadists make greater use of the internet than their male counterparts and appear online more aggressive than men (Neumann 2015a: 148).

Female migrants often share indications to their personal backgrounds online. From the investigation of them, push factors could be identified to have fostered their radicalization (Hoyle et al. 2015; Huey & Witmer 2016; Saltman & Smith 2015). Based on the large number of analyzed accounts, the findings can be generalized to some extent and combined with findings on female push factors previous to the phenomenon of the Islamic State.
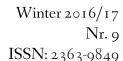
Push factors that were identified to apply not only for Islamic radicalization but in general for female radicalization are *revenge, redemption, relationship and respect* (Bloom 2011: 11). Based on the analysis of social media accounts from female migrants in the Islamic State, Saltman and Smith (2015) describe further aspects specifically applying for the current phenomenon. Female push factors are very much based on emotions and are influenced and strengthened by the media reporting about terrorism, conflicts and attacks (Saltman & Smith 2015: 10). It was found that a *feeling of isolation* from the society the women live in and

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

uncertainty of belonging in the culture is particular distinctive for second or third generation of Muslim immigrants within western societies (: 10). The perception of being a member in a *persecuted Muslim community* leads to a feeling of injustice and representative victimization (: 11). *Anger and frustration towards the missing international reaction* to the Muslim persecution result from the victimization (Saltman & Smith 2015: 12).

Recent studies also discovered motives that are assumed to act as pull factors for western females. Brown (2016) indicates that the claim of the Islamic State to be *a 'proto-state'* not a terrorist organization creates an impressive narrative for women as a state offers a long-term perspective and framework for a secured life to them. The proto-state simultaneously supports the imagination of a *special community* that works on a superior project. Saltman and Smith (2015) propose that female pull factors contain the narratives of *religious duty to join*, *belonging to a community* and a *romantic notion* of life in IS. Zakaria (2015) emphasizes an alternative *kind of female empowerment for women* based on the imagination that they might fill leading roles in this community. Migration as liberation from the western culture where Islam experiences a "ghettoized status" (ibid.) is also mentioned as factor. Neumann (2015a: 150) refers to a jihadist kind of empowerment that he calls *twisted emancipation* and describes it as a contrast to sexual expectations in the West. Schröter (2015) outlines that the female role is presented as a special heroic role in the story of the caliphate as a *heavenly project* larger than life (: 75). The question whether a *fantasy of fighting* also acts as a pull factor is issue of ongoing debates. Whereas statements and images of "female fighters" may raise the expectation of girls to fight (Schröter 2015: 80), other authors found that female active fighting is permitted in the Islamic State as opposing the domestic role (Hoyle et al. 2015: 32). With the loss of large amounts of IS-territory, the group began to use female suicide perpetrators within their territories as well as on the international level very since summer 2016. Whereas some attacks are conducted by female IS-supporters, more attempts in North Africa and France were prevented (Burke 2016). This fact is a shift in the international terrorism strategy of the group, but however does not indicate an opening for women to fight in military ranks.

It can be summarized from the current literature that several partially overlapping pull factors were suggested. Yet, less attention is paid on official propaganda addressing women. With the analysis of central propaganda, the research paper intends to contribute to the ongoing academic discussion on pull factors appearing in female radicalization.

3. Methodology and Operationalization

3.1. Hypotheses derivation from theory and literature review

The theoretical background of female roles in terrorist groups and radicalization research as well as the literature review on women in IS enable the derivation of hypotheses that serve as basis for the analysis. Roy (2015: 4) and Neumann (2015a: 139) mention the political, socio-economic and religious dimensions that matter in the radicalization process and appear in both push and pull factors. In the paper, I will separate the social and economic aspect because societal reasons are seen as particular important for the attractiveness of the Islamic State (Hoyle et al 2015). For the case of female radicalization, the gender dimension is added by Saltman and Smith (2015). I argue in line with the authors that gender aspects can not only be found in strategic use of language or images but also within gender-specific narratives. Pull factors provide solutions and easy answers for the political, social, economic, religious or gender-based problems that individuals face (Roy 2015: 11). Rooted in the theoretical background and supplemented by recent academic debate, hypotheses are derived proposing narratives that function as such pull factors.

1.) The narrative of a *religious obligation to join the Islamic State as a devout muslimah* is derived as the religious dimension in propaganda (Hoyle et al 2015: 13).

2.) The narrative of *the long-term state-building project of the Islamic State* includes aspects from the economic and political dimension (Roy 2015; Brown 2016). With a state and nation with Islamist character, the caliphate offers a save surrounding, provides financial stability and structure for daily life to women

3.) The social dimension is expressed through two narratives that offer social inclusion and economic provision:

3.1.). The narrative of *sisterhood within a special community* is represented in opposition to western superficiality of friendships.

3.2.) The narrative of *marriage with a jihad fighter* promises financial supply and saves the societal position

4.) The gender dimension is addressed in propaganda with two narratives that oppose the western value of female emancipation.

4.1.) The narrative of the *domestic role* is offered to women in the articles (Saltman & Smith 2015).

4.2.) The *jihadist form of feminism* including active fighting and leadership positions is another female-specific narrative (Schröter 2015)

The research analyzes propaganda in regard of containing narratives and examines the hypotheses thereby. With this approach, the current academic debate on pull factors in female radicalization can be enhanced with knowledge based on central propaganda. The hypotheses guide the analysis as well as the subsequent evaluation of the findings.

3.2. Data selection

Female-addressed propaganda is analyzed by the example of articles and supporting visual elements taken from the online magazine *Dabiq*. Seven articles from the section *To Our sisters* build the material body for the text and image analysis.

The Islamic State intensively utilizes the internet and social media to spread propaganda and reach western target groups on this virtual level (Böckler & Zick 2015: 20). This has caused a mass production of propaganda that has never seen before (Winter 2015a: 7). Compared to other jihadist groups, the use of online platforms for internal and external communication has reached professionality and maximum output with the Islamic State (Steinberg 2015: 168). Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and ask.fm are the preferred social media channels of the group where propaganda material is published in various formats reaching from short tweets up to high-gloss magazines as *Dabiq* (Fernandez 2015; Weimann & Jost 2015).

59

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Propaganda material mostly reaches potential recruits through intermediaries. It is assumed that IS strategically employs talented and charismatic individuals to recruit sympathizers online. This strategy applies especially for the recruitment of potential female migrants (Huey & Witmer 2016; Hoyle et al 2015; Winter 2015a: 42). Intermediaries actively connect themselves with interested women and girls on social media platforms. (Weimann & Jost 2015: 373). Since the declaration of the caliphate, an increasing focus on women is recognized in this strategy that is planned with the utmost precision (ibid.). Material distributed on a decentralized level still follows the leading opinion of the group (Winter 2015a: 9) and propaganda of the Islamic State appears as "decentralized but self-policed messaging" (Saltman & Smith 2015: 49).

Published by one of the official IS media institutions *al-Hayat,* the online magazine *Dabiq* was recognized as the leading medium of the group (Fouad & Heinke 2015) until September 2016, when its publication discontinued and *Rumiyah* replaced it. Still, Dabiq displays the official narratives of the group (Saltman & Smith 2015: 50). The articles extracted from Dabiq are therefore assumed to be representative for propaganda contents of the Islamic State and serve as appropriate objects for the analysis.

Availability of Dabiq to western potential migrants based on both language and open online access is another factor leading to the material selection for the research. Dabiq is published in several languages amongst them English, German and French, a western target audience is particularly addressed (Fouad and Heinke 2015). Whether it specifically focuses on potential radicals (Azman 2016) or rather on already sympathizing recipients (Vergani & Bliuc 2015) is less apparent. In comparison to the al-Qaida magazine *al-Shamikha* which is a whole magazine exclusively targeting women, in the case of IS, the female articles are included into their general propaganda magazine. The magazine invites explicitly women and children for life in the caliphate and offers participation possibilities within the IS community to both men and women (Neumann 2015a: 126). It is estimated that the majority of potential female recruits in the West is not capable reading and understanding Arabic. As female migrants from the West pose the group of interest in this paper, female-addressed propaganda in Arabic

60

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

such as the translated manifest "Women of the Islamic State" by the female police *al-Khansaa brigade* (Winter 2015b; Mohaghedhi 2015) are excluded from the scope of this analysis.

Dabiq is released in the layout of a high-gloss magazine and verbal text passages are supported by emotional and professionally inserted images (Winter 2015a: 3). Pictures and images support the written content on the emotional level (Straßner 2002: 5). As outlined in the literature review, emotional attachment matters in the recruitment process of women (Bakker & De Leede 2015; Ali 2015) Emotional and romantic contents are particularly attractive for girls in their teenager years (Hoyle et al. 2015). As visual material is assumed to provide knowledge on the gender- and age-specific aspects of radicalization, it is essential to include visual contents from the sections *To Our Sisters* into the analysis. With the combined approach to analyze text and images, deeper knowledge of the narratives used in propaganda for female recruitment can be gained.

3.3.   Methodology: discourse analysis of text and images

With the method of *Qualitative Discourse Analysis,* narratives in IS propaganda are examined to evaluate relevant outcomes for radicalization research that recognizes these narratives as relevant pull factors in the individual radicalization process.

Discourse is regarded as the expression of meanings, metaphors, representations, images and stories (Burr 1995: 2) and the institutionalized use of language (Jorgensen & Philips 2002: 5) which in whole produces *narratives* that constitute particular subjective versions of reality. The narratives make some actions become natural whereas others appear impossible (Jorgensen & Philips 2002: 5). Different perspectives of the world lead to different actions. Discourse analysis offers the inclusion of visual elements seen as construct of reality (Renggli 2014: 50). The analysis of this research is therefore divided in the two parts text analysis and image analysis to investigate the narratives that are constructed. Text and images are seen as complementary parts whereas each contributes to the impression that the material has on the

reader (Fegter 2011: 212). With the combined approach, it is further analyzed how the narratives are supported through the strategic use of language and visual elements.

The concept of *narrative* as the end product of a discourse is defined following Patterson & Monroe (1998: 317) and Riessmann (2008: 6) as simple alternative interpretations of reality that construct individual and group identity and influence behavior. Based on this definition, narratives serve as meaningful patterns and at the same time offer new options for action. They are constructed by discourses and are infused with strong normative and moralizing implications (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 324). Narratives of terrorist organizations are effective tools in radicalization and recruitment attempts due to the inherent mobilizing aspects (Neumann 2015a; Roy 2015). They mobilize the target group and influence their self-perception within the group. As narratives always offer a subjective perception and interpretation of reality, they simultaneously serve as entry points for possible counter-narratives (Saltman & Smith 2015: 6).

The text analysis examines data material in regard of what is mentioned as well as what is expected but not mentioned (Jorgensen & Philips 2002: 5). The text will be coded based on meaning and content of each unit. A text unit is defined as a whole article from the section "To Our Sisters", text units are analyzed consecutively. The coding unit as the smallest element in the analysis consists of the expression of a single idea or statement (Smith 2000: 321). The coding categories are inductively derived from the material whereas each one is labelled by the narrative. This approach ensures the application of relevant categories that are still close to the empirical data. Dual coding is permitted for the reason that discourses may overlap in IS propaganda. Exact documentation of the discourse analysis with anchor samples, coding rules and category definitions provides transparency on the compliance with scientific rules (Appendix: Table 3).

Besides the contents of the narratives, the strategic use of language for the construction of narratives (Fairclough 1995). Institutional language such as specific terms and vocabulary is instructive (Jorgensen & Philips 2002: 5). Furthermore, emotional rhetoric and religious explanations justifies the narrative in the discourse. As the target group of the articles is

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

defined by female young individuals from the West, the analysis focuses especially on stylistic aspects that address the target group with reference to these aspects. Gender-specifics are assumed not only to arise in strategic use of language and images, but also in female-specific narratives. Age- and western-specific aspects are estimated to be seen in images and language use and style within various categories. Findings on the language patterns used for narrative construction allow conclusions on how the Islamic State presents its own world view as common sense and truth and may provide further entry points for possible counter-narratives. Besides institutionalized language, narratives are supported by visual elements that especially foster female radicalization (Zakaria 2015).

Visual elements are investigated in the second part of the discourse analysis and assigned to the appropriate narrative (Burr 1995). It is assumed that images support more than one narrative each. Rule-guided analysis of images is ensured with the application of the "iconological method" (Panofsky 1975) originated in art studies. The method proposes the consecutive steps description of the image, analysis and interpretation. Firstly, the obvious aspects persons, rooms and animals are explained as well emotions expressed with the specific kind of representation in facial expressions or positions (: 38). Secondly, background knowledge that is available either from the wider topic referred to in the image or from the context of the image is taken into account (: 45). The last step of the interpretation focuses on the meaning of the image (: 48). For the case of propaganda, the third step emphasizes reasons for the application of a specific visual element at a certain position. Added to the appendix (: Image Analyses), the full version of image analyses helps to retrace the three-step-process of description, analysis and interpretation. The image analysis is estimated to provide further knowledge on the construction of the narrative and to highlight the age-specific focus in the propaganda in particular (Borum 2011).

In the following chapter, the content of the categories will be summarized based on examples from the material to identify the narratives constructed in the material. Each category will thereby provide one narrative that corresponds with the subjective perspective of reality that the Islamic State presents. Accordingly, evaluation of the stylistic elements in the text

provides knowledge on the justification of the narratives. Subsequently, the image analyses will be summarized while outlining two examples in more detail. The findings will then be reduced to the hypotheses and to the theoretical background.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1. Data description

The data material for the analysis consists of seven articles released in the female addressed section taken from the regularly published Dabiq magazine in the time frame between February 2015 and July 2016. Until the beginning of the analysis in August 2016, 15 issues of Dabiq were regularly released exclusively online and spread decentralized in various forums. The first issue published in June 2014 appeared shortly after the declaration of the caliphate. Primary topics title each issue and appear in the several sections throughout the particular issue (Gambhir 2014: 2). The 15 issues show similarity in their structure and pattern. From issue seven published in February 2015 up to and including issue 13 published in January, a section addressing women in particular was taken up without interruption. This regular section is named *To Our Sisters* - except in issue nine and ten where the section is referred to as *From Our Sisters*. Whilst a whole issue consists of 40 to 83 pages, the sections *To Our Sisters* have a length from two to seven pages. It is noteworthy that the female section was slid to an earlier position from the last half of the magazine to the first half in issue 12 and 13 (Appendix: Table 1). Except of issue seven containing an interview with the widow of a fighter, the articles have continuous text bodies. From issues eight onwards they start with the phrase "In the name of Allah" to show the religious reference of the following content in the front. The author identifies herself as *Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah*, only in issue 13 an indication of an author is missing. The woman tells in Issue 8 (: 33[9]) that she "was the only Arab women amongst muhajirah sisters during that trip". The expression suggests that she is a female migrant originated from an Arab country. As her pseudonymous does not appear in the

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[9] The page number always refers to the whole Dabiq issue.

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

mentioned studies of female social media accounts (chapter 2.3.) it can be estimated that she is only operative within the official propaganda section of IS.

Between one and four photographs, 17 at all, can be found in each of the seven articles and will be included in the second part of the analysis.

4.2. Findings

The results of the conducted discourse analysis are subsequently presented in two parts. At first, narratives investigated based on the text content are outlined with the use of examples from the data material. Secondly, the outcomes of the image analysis are summarized and assigned to the one or more narratives. After summarizing general findings on the images, a closer look onto two examples follows. The presentation of the results serves as basis for the following evaluation.

4.2.1. Content analysis and stylistic aspects in the text

During the investigation of the text, nine categories were formed inductively and transformed into a category system with coding rules and anchor examples (Appendix: Table 3). The categories represent a narrative each and were found to fit in the four dimensions derived in the chapter above (chapter 3.1.). Within the religious dimension, the *religious obligation of hijrah*, *rewards in this life* and *promises of afterlife* were found as three narratives. For the political and economic dimension, the two narratives of the *long-term state-building project* and an *(easy) life in the caliphate* are recognized. The social dimension is found in the narratives of *sisterhood within a special community* and in the *marriage with a jihad fighter*. The gender-dimension at least, comes along with the narratives of the *domestic/ complementary female role* and one that I refer to as *jihadist feminism*. The two latter narratives are found dominantly throughout all issues whereas both political and economic dimensions are less present in the text body.

Religious obligation of hijrah

The obligation to migrate from the home country to the territories of the Islamic State appears throughout all issues with the Arabic term *hijrah*. Muslims are called to leave behind their life amongst the unbelievers in order to begin a life guided by religion in IS (Issue 8:33). Particular women are called to leave their home countries even when they have to travel alone: "a women's hijrah from darul-kufr is obligatory whether or not she has a mahram." (Issue 8: 35). The performance of hijrah is an individual and exclusively religious obligation that should not have any social reason as marriage (Issue 11: 43). A strong presentation as liberation from the old life is especially found in personal migration stories: "I feel at ease now that I have carried out this obligation." (Issue 7: 50). Challenges and adventures of the travel and personal stories from succeeded journeys strengthen the narrative and encourage the migration. "The first obstacle that the mujahirah faces is the family. […] with these people, merely thinking about proposing the subject of hijrah to them is like butting a rock with your head." (Issue 8: 34). The territories of the Islamic State are repeatedly referred to "darul-Islam" (e.g. Issue 10: 47) and thereby claimed to be the only direction for the migration. In this aspect, the political territory functions as basis for the religious obligation of migration, as well as the hijrah justifies the political demand to possess a state territory. The narrative of the religious obligation is underlined with adventurous and personal notions and serves as basis for religious promises that are made for this life and the afterlife.

Rewards in this life

Succeeded migration to the territories of the Islamic state often comes along with the narrative of religious gifts that are granted to the believers in this life. "My beloved sister, indeed from the blessings of Allah upon you is that He honored you with the life on the soil of the Khilafah." (Issue 11: 45). Good behavior and the compliance of other religious rules lead to rewards as well. Sometimes rewards are mentioned in particular, for example in the case of a better husband that is promised as reward for abandoning a former less devout one (Issue 10:

45). In other cases, a reward is left unspecified: "Be firm, my dear sister, be patient, and await your reward." (Issue 8: 37). The reward system is legitimized based on religion and grants obedience and prosecutes unwished behavior. "For what is with Allah is better and more lasting – then you will be at ease, enjoy relief, and have a pleasant life." (Issue 12: 22).

Promises of afterlife

Strongly present is the belief of an afterlife that waits with all rewards that were not visible in this life. Life with its struggles is seen as a transit station for the afterlife in paradise (Issue 8: 36) that is described as a beautiful place: "And He [Allah] has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great success." (Issue 8: 32). The afterlife has several gradations in which believers are classified and judged upon their deeds and non-believers are punished: "And never think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He only delays them for a Day when eyes will stare in horror." (Issue 10: 47). The migration to the Islamic State is presented as assurance to enter paradise (Issue 10: 48). Martyrdom even promises a higher level within paradise: "so rush to the State of honor even if you have to exchange all your dunya for your Hereafter." "Is it just one Jannah? There are many levels in Jannah and he [a martyr] is in al-Firdaws." (Issue 8: 36). The afterlife is obviously an important topic in several contexts and feeds hopes for everlasting rewards even if this life is full with tribulations (Issue 7: 51). It makes death becoming a better alternative to worldly conditions: "he died and was buried in the Islamic State upon the fitrah, and this is better for him than to die through the curriculum of the tawaghit's schools." (Issue 8: 36). The narrative appears as an empty promise when an expected reward in this life failed to arise.

Long-term state-building project

The territories held by the Islamic State labelled with the Arabic term "Khilafah" are presented as a political state. Stressed constantly, the caliphate aims to stay and provide a

territory for the Muslims and giving them honor and pride (Issue 9: 46). Referred to as "darul-Islam", the claim of a territory is based on a religious dimension that serves as justification. The territories are appointed by Allah (Issue 9: 47) to provide a safe place for believers to pursue their religion "So darul-Islam is the place ruled by Muslims, where the Islamic laws are executed, where authority is for the Muslims, even if the majority of its population are kuffar from ahlul-dhimma." (Issue 8: 32). The religious basis of the caliphate contrasts it to western states while it still claims to be accepted as a valuable political entity. "These shouters do not agree with us on a principle matter and that is the establishment of an Islamic state fulfilling the conditions and characteristics for its legitimacy." (Issue 8: 35). Complementary to the religious basis, the caliphate is furthermore described as natural progression of historical events after the death of Prophet Muhammed "Here we are today, and after centuries […] we brought it back by the edge of the sword" (Issue 9: 47). The narrative of the state simultaneously indicates a long-term perspective with providing the conditions for the establishment of a normal daily life therein. Women are needed for this long-term project and may feel attracted by this perspective.

(Easy) life in the caliphate

The promise of an easy life in the caliphate once the hijrah is performed appears as the worldly equivalent to the religious rewards in this life. It relates to the narrative of the caliphate state and expresses the possibility to live a regulated daily life within the territories. Laws and rules guiding social aspects of life are mostly based on religious argumentation and represent a kind of social policy in IS. A behavioral code for a widow during her mourning time or a law defining the number of women a man is allowed to marry are two examples. "Then the Shari'ah of Islam came and defined a specific number of wives that no Muslim is allowed to exceed, that number being four. As for concubines, there is no limit." (Issue 12: 20).

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

The good state provision with institutions that ensure education and health complements the narrative with a socio-economical component (Issue 11: 43). The life in the Islamic state does not lag in anything behind of life in the West because the caliphate would offer the same and even more institutions to its citizens. The possibility for women to visit educational institutions is represented as contrast to other countries. "Allah has blessed the Islamic State, which has not been stingy towards its women in providing institutions and courses on the entirety of the Shari'ah sciences." (Issue 11: 44). With state provision ensuring a guided life, the caliphate is described as attractive alternative to the home countries of the women.

Sisterhood within a special community

Relationships with other women in the Islamic State are found to be a focused topic in the material. Within this sisterhood community, all women are equal based on their common belief and devout behavior. "Their colors and tongues are different, but their hearts are united upon 'there is no god but Allah'"(Issue 8: 33). Repeatedly, the group is praised and proudly described: "They are fragile as glass bottles but their souls are those of men with ambitions almost hugging the heavens. Yes, these are the muwahhidah" (Issue 8: 34). The women of the group are stressed as honorable for their devout characters and attributed as female successors of historical Islamic women: "These are the women of our Ummah! The first Khansa women!" (Issue 11: 45). In contrast to western friendships that are seen as superficial and sinful, the sisterhood forms a community of faith, suffering and real friendship: "These gatherings should also be free of gossip, backbiting, and other sins […] [and] ought to serve a purpose such as worship, learning the religion or keeping family ties." (Issue 13: 25). With advices for good female behavior, the devout character of the sisterhood should be preserved.

Marriage with a jihad fighter

The marriage relation with a fighter is a natural component of the female life in IS. Reference is made to the marriage as a grant and honor that comes along with female duties. Compared

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

to the "complementary female role", the narrative focuses more on the relationship and less on the female role itself. It is expected the marriage is only for a limited time: "Indeed, you, my precious sister, are today the wife of a mujahid, and tomorrow you might be the wife of a shahid, or an injured fighter, or a prisoner." (Issue 11: 41). Although the men are concerned with jihad, mujahidin are described as perfect romantic husbands that selflessly fight for the community and thereby appear almost like fairytale princes (Issue 11: 41). The male duty to fight in jihad implies the female duty to be tolerant and modest within the relationship. "Will you be patient if he returns to you being carried with pouring, or do you want your husband only when he is well?" (Issue 11: 41).

Rules covering various aspects of the marriage including polygamy (see as well *(easy) life in the caliphate*) are justified based on religion (Issue 12: 22) and lead to further female behavioral codes within the marriage. "And isn´t polygamy a part of this Shari'ah?" (Issue 12: 21). Women in turn must tolerate those practices and are appeased with calming words. The issue of husbands married with up to three other women is a noteworthy component of the narrative. "So say to him, 'Even if I were from the most perfect of women, and the best of them in character, beauty, knowledge, and manners, the Legislator […] has given the man the right to marry a second, a third, or a fourth women!" (Issue 12: 21). In the marriage, the female body belongs to her husband (Issue 10: 44) and he has the right to dispose of her sexuality as it is repeatedly implicitly expressed: "the women, by her nature, has her life interrupted by phases in which she is unable to fulfill the rights of her husband, as it is the case with menstruation, childbirth, and postpartum bleeding." (Issue 12: 20). The narrative of the marriage shows how particular behavior – for example polygamy – appears as self-evident through the Islamic State discourse.

Domestic/complementary female role

The clearly defined female role to stay in the house and function as mother and wife comes along with appreciation: "The women is a shepard in her house and is responsible for her herd. So have you understood, my Muslim sister, the enormity of the responsibility that you

carry?" (Issue 11: 44). A woman should not leave her house except in very urgent cases and for good reasons (Issue 13: 25). Besides caring for her household, a further task is stated in supporting her husband and other male relatives and back them whilst they fight in jihad (Issue 7: 51). "My sisters, be bases of support and safety for your husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons. Be advisors to them. They should find comfort and peace with you. Do not make things difficult for them. Facilitate all matters for them." (Issue 7: 51). Own redemption and acceptance of male dominance is stated as religious rule: "it is not permissible for a women […], accepting what pleases her and rejecting what goes against her desires." (Issue 12: 21). Pointed out to the same extend is the mother role: "She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men." (Issue 11: 44). Amongst other terms, the metaphor of children to be lion cubs is frequently used in the context of the mother role. Particular appreciation is given to the importance the mother has in her role for the whole Ummah, the worldwide Muslim community (Issue 11: 41). Women are appreciated when they fulfill their complementary role with self-redemption and without claiming any demands.

Jihadist feminism

An opportunity is offered to women going beyond the domestic female role in religious education. It is presented as the way to female self-empowerment and offers a platform on which women can act as self-determined individuals (Issue 7: 51). In terms of religion, a woman is allowed to contradict male dominance and anticipate from her husband and family. "The marriage contract between you and him was nullified the moment when he apostatized from the religion of Islam. (Issue 10: 44). She can even claim demands towards men provided it serves a religious cause (Issue 10: 43). This religious empowerment is constructed as parallel and equal to the armed fight of men and therefore supported by military vocabulary: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah, and if the weapon of the men is the assault rifle and the explosive belt, then know that the weapon of the women is good behavior and knowledge. Because you will enter fierce battles between truth and falsehood." (Issue 11: 44).

Active fighting for women is excluded from the narrative but still left open for possible reinterpretation. "Still, the absence of an obligation of jihad and war – except in defense against someone attacking her" (Issue 11: 41). This jihadist kind of feminism is described as liberation from the expectations of the West or the world at whole in the Islamic State. The narrative gives women a limited platform for leadership and expression of own opinion within the patriarchal society of the Islamic State. "Rather, be a model and an example for them all, and what a great honor it would be to be the first." (Issue 10: 48). Women function thereby as supporters and guardians of the IS interpretation of Islam.

Stylistic aspects in the text

The whole text contains a range of stylistic elements with specific wording, rhetorical figures, the application of emotional and religious language as well as the mentioning of target-group oriented topics and associations. In the following, the strategic use of language is outlined with examples from the text.

Throughout the article specific vocabulary is applied that constructs a kind of insider language. The target group is often directly addressed with Arabic terms as "mujahirat" (Issue 8: 33), or in English as *sister*, variably complemented by various adjectives "my noble sister" (Issue 11: 44), "my precious sister" (Issue 11: 41). Mixed terms of Arabic and English are also applied to directly refer to the women: "O wife of a mujahid" (Issue 11: 41). Depending on the context, they are addressed as wives, mothers or believers: "female seekers of knowledge" (Issue 12: 20) and "Allah´s female slaves" (Issue 8: 36).

With the intensive use of Arabic phrases from religious context, the text established a language that becomes familiar for the reader. Expressions such as "Harithah is in Firdaws" (Issue 8: 36) intensifies the impression of belonging to a special group that presents itself as particularly religious. Other religious phrasing such as "ayah" (Issue 8: 33) and "dunya" (Issue 11: 41) penetrate the English text body throughout all issues. The religious language legitimates statements and rules in the text and destroys any contradiction that may appear. Quranic verses are strongly inserted for this cause: "O Allah, show us the truth as truth and

guide us to follow it. And show us falsehood as falsehood and guide us to avoid it." (Issue 7: 51). This particularly appears when for the topic of hijrah (Issue 8: 36) and when topics are mentioned that appear controversial such as polygamy to underline the religious correctness of the interpretation: "Allah´s messenger said, 'Sulayman Ibn Dawud said, 'I will surely have intercourse with a hundred women tonight, or ninety nine, and every one of them will give birth to a knight who will wage jihad for the cause of Allah…'" (Issue 12: 19).

Besides the application of Quranic verses, controversial topics are accompanied by convicting questions that seek to convince the reader of the IS interpretation. In questioning the belief of the reader, any other view on the topic is destroyed, in the following example shown for enslavement of the Yezidi women: "What is wrong with you? How do you make such a judgement? What is your religion? What is your law? Rather, tell me who is your lord?" (Issue 9: 49).

A further striking language aspect in the material is the emotional rhetoric that accentuates the narratives. Especially the migration to IS is object of emotional attachment "As soon as the sun of their awaited state rose, thy rushed to it alone and in groups from the eastern and western extends of the Earth." (Issue 8: 33). "We saw them here with our eyes while tears from our eyes poured forth generously and our tongues pronounced the takbir silently." (Issue 8: 36). Emotional language is complemented by figurative language playing with nature elements "This is a verse as clear as the sun that does not require extensive explanation or interpretation." (Issue 12: 19).

The introduction of heroine examples is another aspect supporting several narratives. Women are called to behave like the historical wives of the Prophet (Issue 10) or the biblical person Ayyub (Job) (Issue 11) or like contemporary sisters that show particular devout and noble behavior (Issue 8). With these comparisons, the language supports the high standard for female behavior on the one hand and creates a consciousness of belonging to special group of valuable women on the other.

As for the target group, age-specific as well as western-specific references can be recognized occasionally. The young age of the female migrants is addressed with the topic of the family

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

that may hold a girl back from her migration: "The first obstacle the muhajirah faces is the family. And what can make you know what the family is!" (Issue 8: 34). With the semblance of understanding, possible barriers should be decreased and an opportunity to dissolve from the childhood is offered. The aspect of adventure is another element identified as age-specific and attributed to the life in the caliphate: "through the hardship of a long journey that is also exciting and full of memories" (Issue 8: 35). A third indication of a young target group is the imagination of a romanticized marriage with a young and brave fighter. "And I think that on the day he came forward to marry you, if he was not a mujahid then, he was a mujahid in the making." (Issue 11: 41). This element unites the wish for a teenage love with the sense of adventure to be the wife of a fighter.

Western-specific aspects are recognized through a reference to the western context of the women with specific topics or phrases. The West is compared with the caliphate in black-white-comparison or mentioning that the caliphate offers a life that goes beyond life in western countries. "And if the claimants of Islam in the lands of kufr raise their children on the stories of Cinderella and Robin Hood", you should make use of the stories in […] as stories for your lion cubs before they sleep." (Issue 11: 45). References to western political concepts as "democracy […] and division of power" (Issue 10: 43) serve as starting points for the dichotomy that is expressed between the West and the caliphate. Insults support the hostility: "And it is known to every impartial person with vision that those who fight as proxies on behalf of the dog of the White House and his puppets" (Issue 10: 42). People and places from the West are mentioned to make the text more accessible to western women. "And who knows, maybe Michelle Obama´s price won´t even exceed a third of a dinar, and a third of a dinar is too much for her!" (Issue 9: 49). The use of a western example to justify the slave markets creates comprehensiveness for the western reader.

4.2.2. Image analysis

17 images are found in the data material showing different motives. Three of them display a city or elements of a city, further three represent nature elements as plants and camels and two

show a book and a letter. The majority of images however display humans - on five of the nine images there are children. All visual elements are photographs and placed on different positions on the page. The images support the verbal content on the visual level, some of them directly, others rather implicitly. It has been found out (Appendix: Image Analyses), that most images can be assigned to one or more narratives strengthening its content. The marriage narrative (Images 7.1. & 9.1.) gets a visual hint with photographs of Islamic State fighters. Whereas the jihadist feminism narrative is only noticed in one image (8.1.), the obligation of hijrah is supported by two (8.2. und 8.3.) with both referring directly to the journey. By displaying street scenes (Image 9.2.) and a mosque (Image 8.4.), reference to daily life in the caliphate is made. In a wider context, the same images provide visual support for the narrative of rewards in this life. Unfavorable presentations of other groups of fighters (Images 10.2. und 10.3.) implicitly assist the narrative of the long-term state-building project (and 11.3. & 11.4.). Nurturing the narrative of the female domestic complementary role (9.1., 11.1. und 11.2.), images of children address the motherly instinct. Many images of children in uniform (10.3., 11.1., 11.2. 11.3. & 11.4.) are noticeable as they address the women as mothers and moreover indicate the gender roles in the group as all uniformed children are boys. Additionally they can refer to the narrative of the long-term state-building project in displaying the next generation that ensures the persistence of the Islamic State.

Images (7.1. & 9.1.) showing male fighters appear similar to teenage posters in their format and perspective and support the age-specific aspect. Romantic photographs that reveal a sunsets (Image 8.2. & 8.3.) or natural elements (Images 8.1. & 12.1.) provide emotional attachment either with the text or the Islamic State in general. They further connect the nature with the mentioned rules and laws and thereby create self-evidence. An image showing an open Quran (Image 10.1.) can be interpreted as the visual counterpart to the religious justifications in the text. This is moreover visible in the demonstration of religious buildings (Image 8.3.) and in children adopting a pose of prayer (Image 10.4. & 11.4.).

Subsequently, two image analyses are presented in more depth whereas the full version containing all analyses can be found in the Appendix (: Image Analyses). The following

examples are significant based on the fact that they show a variety of narratives and target-group specifics.

The *image 9.1.* (Annex: Table 2) shows male horse riders in a street together with jeep cars forming a street parade. The front rider fills the right half of the image and constitutes the main motive. The following masked riders and cars appear smaller. The street is bordered with trees and palm trees and an IS flag only seen in parts. The first rider wears a military uniform and has his brown horse saddled and bridled. He is waving a IS flag and wearing a hood. He shows the approach of a smile and appears strong and brave. The image evokes the association of a victory celebration. The text context focuses on the justification of men capturing women as slave-girls. At first glance, the picture has no parallel with the text. With a second look it may indicate a victory that serves as a basis for the capture of slaves. It may also take away the attention from the problems that many women may have with the slave-girl rule according to the text and focuses on the comfortable aspect of being married to a jihad fighter. The symbol of the horse is connected with jihad in Salafi notions as it reminds of the successful battles of the first generation of Muslims and is mentioned in a hadith of the collection *Sahih al-Bukhari*: "He who out of faith in Allah and a firm belief in His promise prepares a horse while waiting for jihad, then its feeding and drinking and its dung are all in his favor on the day of Resurrection". Through the connection with the first victories of Islam, the horse motive is linked with bravery, true Islam and chivalry. Especially in combination with a rider and a flag, the horse has become a common symbol for jihad in visual propaganda. The aspect of chivalry simultaneously supports the narrative of the romanticized marriage with a knightly man that leaves for jihad and returns in victory. While the image does not directly support the text, both seem to show complementary aspects of the life as a woman in the Islamic State. The image additionally indicates an age-specific aspect as the fighter may remind of the stereotypical imagination of a fairytale prince on his horse.

The *image 11.1.* (Annex: Table 2) shows the head and upper body of a boy from the side view. He is around 12 years old and dressed in military uniform and wears a black hood. His facial expression is serious and he gazes of into distance. Two other boys dressed in the same

way stand behind him and are shown blurred. "A jihad without fighting" is the title of the article from which the image fills the whole first page as background for its title. At first, it seems to be contradictious to the image that obviously shows an army of children. In the context of the article, the image functions in a more implicit way: The text emphasizes once more the female role as wife and supporter of the male fighters and as mothers for the next generations. The images of children support the latter task in showing this next generation. Whereas children in military uniform may repel a viewer, it can be assumed that women already infiltrated with jihadist ideology may feel proud and joy viewing this motive. In this regard, the image supports the narratives of the domestic role as well as the state-building project.

4.3.   Evaluation of the findings

The analysis of the text images allows four conclusions in relation to the hypotheses derived in chapter 3.1. Firstly, all expected narratives were found in the considered articles. After the analysis, three more narrative can be added. The political and economic dimension is enhanced with the narrative of the (easy) life in the caliphate referring to the provision of basic needs for a daily life in the Islamic State. In the religious dimension, a reward system is present throughout the issues forming the narratives of rewards in this life and promises of afterlife.

Secondly, the gender-related and religious-based narratives are found to be particular emphasized whereas the economic and political dimension is rather less accentuated. Sisterhood and marriage are important topics appearing constantly within the articles. They focus on the social relations that promise belonging, friendship and love. Following the current literature, they are assumed to be the strongest narratives in female radicalization. In propaganda however, the gender dimension is even stronger emphasized. Clear complementary roles are expressed leaving no doubt that a women's place is home and her role is limited to be a mother and wife. However, the platform to act independently in terms of religion may compensate the conservative setting. The narrative of jihadist feminism offers

77

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

women a function as guardians of the ideology. This resonates with the fact that female migrants mostly establish very active online appearances through which they propagate and justify the Islamic State's ideology.

Thirdly, the images are found to generally support the text content whereas especially the narratives of hijrah and the domestic role have visual counterparts. The impression that these narratives are especially prior and important is strengthened by the use of visual element. For its continuing persistence, the Islamic State depends on women that migrate to its territories and marry the male fighters as well as on female citizens that fulfill the role as mothers and raise the next generation of fighters. Given the fact that emotional attachment plays a significant role in female radicalization, the emotional visualization of narratives appears as a logical consequence. As the discourse analysis also takes those elements into account that were expected but not mentioned, the analysis gained further knowledge. Although women are addressed by the articles, not only one image shows a female person. This does not correspond with the studies of social media accounts that identify a highly intensive self-exposing through mobile phone pictures and links to personal accounts (chapter 2.3.). In the official propaganda, the personal reference is rather made with stories of female individuals and by directly addressing the target group.

Fourthly, the strategic use of language indicates the target group to be young and from a western context and argues with religious justifications. Specific vocabulary shapes a continuous language that strengthens the consciousness of belonging to a special group. The intensive use of Arabic terms refers to religious concepts that justify Islamic State rules. Barely age-specific language or wording could be found, but reference to the young age is recognized in topics and images.

It can be summarized that the analysis of the articles partly confirms and complements what is found out concerning female radicalization. Other findings seem to propose other conclusions to what is assumed in the ongoing academic debate. The official propaganda - for which the analyzed articles are a representative example – must be regarded as kind of a raw version for the later personally distributed contents in social networks. Taken the findings of previous

78

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

studies and this paper together, they offer a promising link for the development of effective counter-narratives and further strategies to encounter female radicalization.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

The analysis of propaganda addressing women in the West provided deeper knowledge of the pull factors appearing in female radicalization. As outlined above, in reference to the ongoing academic debate on women in the Islamic State, the results confirm and complement assumptions. As studies proposed, female migrants indeed represent a current example of jihadist women that actively engage for the cause of jihad. The internet provides the key platform for the spread of propaganda and radicalization as well as for female engagement for the group. It is foreseeable that the role of the internet for female involvement in terrorism remains important or even grows in the future. In this regard, I advocate that the research line involves and further investigates the online aspect and the resulting effects in the theoretical scope. The gender dimension is discovered to appear as a focus in propaganda. Women are clearly awarded with the domestic role serving as mothers and wives. It can therefore be assumed that girls travelling to the Islamic State are fully aware and supportive of their new life that completely contradicts the female emancipation of their home countries. In this aspect, the research confirms the claim of the study conducted by Bakkers and De Leede (2015). Countering the appearance of the women as victims of the ideology in official media must be fostered. I propose that cooperation with official media in informing the society of female radicalization could help to frame the official perception of female migrants and possible returnees.

Based on the strong emphasis of the narratives domestic role and jihadist feminism, I argue in line with Saltman and Smith (2015: 6) and practitioners from counter-radicalization work that gender-specific aspects must become a stronger focus of applied strategies. Narratives in the propaganda offer entry points for counter-narratives in de-radicalization approaches as well as in prevention measures. The conducted research gained useful knowledge of content and strategy in terms of creating such measures appropriate to the radicalizing narratives.

The afterlife is apparently a strong and effective motive in propaganda because rewards after death do not demand evidences of truth or fulfillment. Jihadist feminism is probably especially attractive to girls that suffer from male dominance in their own social context at home. The topics and strategy of the propaganda show similarity with the contents found in social media accounts. Propaganda shows less personal reference in images than the social media accounts analyzed in previous studies. Unlike indicated in some accounts, participation in active fighting is clearly prohibited for women in propaganda. Although reinterpretation could be possible, the Islamic State states abundantly obvious in Dabiq that females fulfill a complementary role. It seems that propaganda material is in some topics closer to reality than the accounts of female migrants. Very recently, the group uses female suicide perpetrators which is a strategic shift already observed by other terrorist groups before. The new propaganda magazine Rumiyah calls both men and women to commit attacks and praises first female martyr. For this reason, I state that propaganda and especially Rumiyah should be further investigated to gain results beyond the outlined findings.

In line with radicalization experts, I argue that the reality of life in the Islamic State serves as effective counter-narrative combating the romantic imagination that girls may have. Besides social media accounts, a further source providing truth of the reality for women in the Islamic State is the group of returned desillusioned women. The involvement of their experiences in counter-radicalization measures may help to adjust the approaches specifically to the female target group. To prevent female radicalization in the future, counter-narratives should be spread through various platforms including media reporting, social media channels and education institutions.

Creating new measures and adjusting existing ones with help of knowledge gained from propaganda and returnees, female radicalization can be combated. The findings of this paper should be complemented with further analyses of propaganda and contribute a part to the important societal challenge of female migrants in the Islamic State.

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

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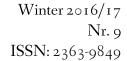
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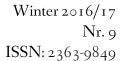Weimann, G./Jost, J., 2015. *Neuer Terrorismus und Neue Medien*. In: ZFAS, 2015 (8), S. 369-388. [online]

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Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Appendix:

Table 1: List of articles from Dabiq

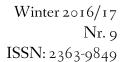| Issue Number and Name	Issue Release Date/ Page Number	Topic Female Article (Pages)	Number of Images (on the page number of whole issue)	Author
Issue 7: From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone	12 February 2015 (83)	To Our Sisters: A Brief Interview with Umm Basir al-Muhajirah (page 50 – 51 2 pages	1 image (50)	Interviewer Dabiq and Umm Bashir al-Muhajirah
Issue 8: Shari'ah Alone Will Rule Africa	30 March 2015 (68)	To Our Sisters: The Twin Halves of the Muhajirin page 32 – 37 6 pages	4 images (32, 33, 34, 37)	Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah
Issue 9: They Plot and Allah Plots	21 May 2015 (79)	From Our Sisters: Slave-Girls or Prostitutes? page 44 – 49 6 pages	2 images (46, 49)	Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah
Issue 10: The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men	13 July 2015 (79)	From Our Sisters: They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another 42 – 48 7 pages	4 images (42, 44, 45, 48)	Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah
Issue 11: From the Battles of Al-Ahzāb to the War of Coalitions	9 August 2015 (66)	To Our Sisters: A Jihad Without Fighting page 40 – 45 6 pages	4 images (40, 42, 44, 45)	Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah
Issue 12: Just Terror	18 November 2015 (66)	To Our Sisters: Two or Three or Four page 19 – 22 4 pages	1 images (19) and background image in whole article (same than page 19)	Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah
Issue 13: The Rafidah from Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal	19 January 2016 (56)	To Our Sisters: Advice on Ihdad page 24 – 26 3 pages	1 image (24)	not mentioned

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Table 2: List of images

Image (Number of Issue/ Number of Image)	Image title (Dabiq)	Image title (alternative if the a title is not given)	Location of Image (page number of the whole issue)
7.1.	Abu Bashir (Rahimahullah)		7: 50
8.1.		red leave	8: 32
8.2.		camels at sunset	8: 33
8.3.	The City of Mosul		8: 34
8.4.	The Great Masjid of an-Nuri in Mosul		8: 37
9.1.		fighters on horses	9: 46
9.2.		IS flag in a street	9: 49
10.1.		open Quran	10: 42
10.2.	FSA murtaddin fighting for the cause of democracy		10: 44
10.3.	lighters from the Jawlani branch of the Sahwah		10: 45
10.4.		praying children	10: 48
11.1.		two and a half boys	11: 40
11.2.		weapon on arms	11: 42
11.3.		army of boys	11: 44
11.4.		uniformed boys praying	11: 45
12.1.		fruit blossoms	12: 19
13.1.		letter and envelope	13: 24

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Table 3: Coding rules and anchor examples

dimension	category	coding rule	anchor example
social dimension	sisterhood within a special community	Refers to the relation to other sisters Description of other sisters that live in the Islamic State and are honored for special characteristics Description of the community life between the women in IS and comparisons to friendships in the West Representation of the sisterhood as a special and devout community of faith, suffering and friendship Representation of the community as the female successors of historical women	"Their colors and tongues are different, but their hearts are united upon 'there is no god but Allah'. I remember the day I performed hijrah, I was the only Arab women amongst muhajirah sisters during that trip" (Issue 8: 33) "They are fragile as glass bottles but their souls are those of men with ambitions almost hugging the heavens. Yes, these are the muwahhidah" (Issue 8: 34)
	marriage with a jihad fighter	Refers to the marriage relation Description of the marriage and the character of the husband as well as rules and laws determined by the Islamic State for the marriage. In comparison with the category "complementary role", it focuses more on the relationship and less on the role itself	"Will you be patient if he returns to you being carried with pouring, or do you want your husband only when he is well?" (Issue 11: 41) "Indeed, you, my precious sister, are today the wife of a mujahid, and tomorrow you might be the wife of a shahid, or an injured fighter, or a prisoner." (Issue 11: 41)
political and economic dimension	long-term state building project	referring to the caliphate as political state that is established with the aim to stay and provide a territory to the Muslims Reference to the land as darul-Islam giving it a religious notion – the direction of hijrah	"Here we are today, and after centuries, receiving a prophetic Sunnah, which both the Arab and non-Arab enemies of Allah had buried. By Allah, we brought it back by the edge of the sword, and we did not do so through pacifism, negotiations, democracy or elections. We established it according to the prophetic way, with blood-red swords, not with fingers for voting or tweeting" (Issue 9: 47)

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

			"I swear by my Lord, it is certainly Khilafah, as certain as your ability to speak, see and hear. It is Khilafah with everything it contains of honor and pride for the Muslim" (Issue 9: 46)
	rules and life in the caliphate	financial and economic beneficials of life in the caliphate se.g. institution such as schools and kindergartens laws and rules guiding several aspects of life (mostly based on religious argumentation) that are valid for life in the caliphate	"And here before you are the Shari'ah institutions, training camps, and even the kindergartens." (Issue 11: 43). "You know that acquiring knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim and every Muslimah, and Allah has blessed the Islamic State, which has not been stingy towards its women in providing institutions and courses on the entirety of the Shari'ah sciences." (Issue 11: 44)
religious dimension	promises of afterlife	description of the Afterlife, promised rewards for believers in Paradise for their religious life in the caliphate. Threads to non-IS-members of punishment in the afterlife. Feeding hopes for rewards even if there is nothing visible in this life life is seen as transit station for the afterlife	"And He [Allah] has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great success." (Issue 8: 32) "The life of the believer is full of trials and tribulations. So be patient while hoping for Allah's reward. Life is short, even if appears sometimes – during times of sorrow – to be long. By Allah, what awaits us is better and ever-lasting, insha'allah." (Issue 7: 51)
	religious duty of hijrah	statements on the obligation of hijrah in general and especially for women Description of the challenges in performing hijrah and recommendations to successfully reach the caliphate Hijrah is a religious obligation and should not have any social reasons	"I feel at ease now that I have carried out this obligation." (Issue 7: 50) "a women's hijrah from darul-kufr is obligatory whether or not she has a mahram." (Issue 8: 35) "Whoever made hijrah for the sake of her husband, then know that he is indeed departing, without doubt, if not today then tomorrow." (Issue 11: 43)
	rewards in this life	rewards that are said to come from Allah in this life for good behavior and devout life have a religious dimension	"My beloved sister, indeed from the blessings of Allah upon you is that He honored you with the life on the soil of the Khilafah." (Issue 11: 45)

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

		often seen as consequences for fulfilled hijrah or obedience to the religious rules of the Islamic State	"For what is with Allah is better and more lasting – then you will be at ease, enjoy relief, and have a pleasant life." (Issue 12: 22)
gender dimension	jihadist feminism	female empowerment through the religion makes women self-determined individuals liberation from the expectations of the West, the world or from people is seen in the Islamic State expression that indicate the female task to guard the ideology	"Rather, be a model and an example for them all, and what a great honor it would be to be the first." (Issue 10: 48) My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah, and if the weapon of the men is the assault rifle and the explosive belt, then know that the weapon og the women is good behavior and knowledge. Because you will enter fierce battles between truth and falsehood." (Issue 11: 44)
	domestic/ complementary role	focuses on the role of the women in the Islamic State that is the role of a mother and wife in complementary to the men	"As for you, O mother of lion cubs… And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is? She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men." (Issue 11: 44) "… And the women is a shepard in her house and is responsible for her herd. So have you understood, my Muslim sister, the enormity of the responsibility that you carry?" (Issue 11: 44)

Images Analyses

Image 7.1.

The image shows a man sitting cross-legged in front of a wall. He has dark skin and is dressed in white all over and wears a black and white scarf around his neck. His right hand forms a fist and his face shows no emotion. The man fills the left half of the picture while on the right half a black rifle is leaning against the wall.

The scarf around his head is obviously a Palestinian scarf that is mostly associated with resistance and fight for the purpose of a group. His body language shows a relaxed pose whereas the clenched fist indicates anger and the threat of violence.

As we learn from the subtitle of the picture, the man is Abu Bashir and he is mentioned in the interview as one of the perpetrators from an attack in France. The picture obviously shows a person that is referred to in the article as martyr. The information that he died creates the notion of pureness and honor in his representation in white clothes. The image supports the text as representation of a fighter that is stylized as hero by the propaganda. The poster-like close-up view may remind of a teenage poster. The image supports the narrative of the marriage with a strong and brave jihad fighter and appears in a format pleasant for teenage girls in particular.

Image 8.1.

The photograph of a rust red leaf is shown on a bright background. Shadows on the left side of the leaf indicate that it is lying whilst the photograph is taken top down. Water drops are seen on the background. The leaf can be indicated as autumn leaf and is represented in a close-up view in the center of the image.

The leaf shows an element of nature that is associated with beauty and fragility. In line with the title of the article "The twin halves of the muhajirin" the leaf can be seen as a metaphor for how the propaganda sees the role of women. As a leaf has a line halfway and two mirrored pages, men and women in the Islamic State are said and through the picture shown to be twin halves.

The connection of women and flowers, blossoms and natural elements is seen in other images in Dabiq as well. The text raises the topics of hijrah and the role of women in the Islamic State. This context offers an additional association with the picture. The autumn motive that is implicitly mentioned through the leaf may also create an urgency that could is connected to the hijrah in the text. The image supports the text but in a metaphorical way that may arise a sense of well-being to the viewer. It supports the narrative of a jihadist feminism that gives women the same position as men being their twin halves.

Image 8.2.

The image shows a caravan of four camels in front of a waterside in the sand in the sunset that fills the center of the background. A rider sits on the first camel that seems bigger than the other camels due to the perspective of the photographer. The element of the camel is associated with both – oriental culture and travelling in historical times. Within the textual context that deals with the obligation of hijrah, the emigration to the Islamic State, the camel motive underlines the historical roots of the obligation as well as the claim of IS to establish a state that one can immigrate into. The sunset motive adds a romantic notion to the narrative of the obligation to hijrah. The text describes the journeys of some female migrants from the West as an adventurous and long-lasting trip and additionally refers to the hijrah as a religious action derived from historical events. The caravan in the picture can be associated with both. Emotional attachment with the topic produced by the romantic element of sunset is particular obvious in this image. Although the image only fills small place within the page, the narrative of hijrah is supported by it and gains a romantic impression that indicates an age-specific aspect as it may address particular younger women.

Image 8.3.

The image shows a city skyline behind a river with a bridge in the sunset. The river and the city fill only one third of the image whereas the sunset sky takes the major part with yellow blue and red colors. Several minarets and palm trees identify the city as a Muslim city in the oriental region. The city seems far away through the separating water but reachable through the element of the bridge. The image subtitle "The city of Mosul" proposes the association with the Islamic State´s self-announced capital as destination of hijrah. The fact that the image fills the upper half of the page increases its melancholic impression that is triggered with the motive of a skyline in the sunset. The skyline representation as it can be seen in the picture reminds of famous photographs of modern western metropolis as New York or Frankfurt. This leads to the assumption that western women in particular should feel attracted by the image and will be rewarded with life in a modern city. The image supports the narrative of the

rewards for making hijrah with the visual element of a beautiful destination that is worth all efforts of the journey.

Image 8.4.

The image is a side close-up of a mosque with a green roof and three visible minarets. In front of the mosque, a street on which a few people pass by can be partly seen. In the background, palm trees and oriental style flat roof houses are shown. The mosque with affiliated buildings is shown as major element in the image that fills the upper half of the page. This raises the association of the central position that the religion has in the Islamic State. The subtitle identifies the mosque with the an-Nuri mosque in Mosul that the Islamic State claims as its capital city. In association with the article focusing the role of women in IS and the obligation of Hijrah, the image can be interpreted as supporting key element that comes along with a few associations. Firstly, the mosque as center of historical Muslim cities supports the claim of the Islamic character of the state as well as the narrative of the long-term state-building project that serves as basis for hijrah towards the territory. Secondly, the role of women evolves around the realization of a devout Muslima who places the religion as highest priority. This is visually supported through the central symbolic of the mosque. Religious buildings and institutions provide the conditions for religious way of life within the Islamic State.

Image 9.1.

The image shows male horse riders in a street together with jeep cars forming a street parade. The front rider fills the right half of the image and constitutes the main motive. The following masked riders and cars appear smaller. The street is bordered with trees and palm trees and an IS flag only seen in parts. The first rider wears a military uniform and has his brown horse saddled and bridled. He is waving a IS flag and wearing a hood. He shows the approach of a smile and appears strong and brave. The image evokes the association of a victory celebration. The text context focuses on the justification of men capturing women as slave-girls. At first glance, the picture has no parallel with the text. With a second look it may

indicate a victory that serves as a basis for the capture of slaves. It may also take away the attention from the problems that many women may have with the slave-girl rule according to the text and focuses on the comfortable aspect of being married to a jihad fighter. The symbol of the horse is connected with jihad in Salafi notions as it reminds of the successful battles of the first generation of Muslims and is mentioned in a hadith of the collection Sahih al-Bukhari: "He who out of faith in Allah and a firm belief in His promise prepares a horse while waiting for jihad, then its feeding and drinking and its dung are all in his favor on the day of Resurrection". Through the connection with the first victories of Islam, the horse motive is linked with bravery, true Islam and chivalry. Especially in combination with a rider and a flag, the horse has become a common symbol for jihad in visual propaganda. The aspect of chivalry simultaneously supports the narrative of the romanticized marriage with a knightly man that leaves for jihad and returns in victory. While the image does not directly support the text, both seem to show complementary aspects of the life as a woman in the Islamic State. The image additionally indicates an age-specific aspect as the fighter may remind of the stereotypical imagination of a fairytale prince on his horse.

Image 9.2.

The image shows a long two-lane street bordered with trees, placards and elaborate street lamps and is dominated by a hoisted black Islamic State flag. The depicted scene shows a daily life scene and indicates a normal day. Yet, the hyper-dimensional flag dominating the photograph raises the attention of the viewer. The image fills the whole page, whereas the text is written partly across the sky in the image. It does not show any content connection to the text context on the permission and justification of slavery. Thus, the dominant banner stresses the authority of the Islamic State and its rules over the private and daily life of the citizens. The narrative of life in the caliphate is supplemented by the impression that the state has the power to enforce the rules.

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Image 10.1.

The image shows a close up view of an open Arabic book in classical Arabic language. Artfully written letters with vocalization and elaborate frame around the text body identifies the book as Quran. Filling the upper half of the page, it catches the viewer's look immediately. The title of the article is "They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another" and comes up with the call to women to abandon their husband when he does not follow the Islamic State ideology and belongs to another group fighting in Syria. Given the fact that it is not usual and allowed in conservative Muslim societies for women to abandon their husbands, the article gives female supporters an exceptional position. The image of the Quran underlines the religious basis the article refers to and thereby legitimizes the statement. It serves as religious justification of an expressed rule and supports the text on the visual level.

Image 10.2.

The image shows a large group of around 25 armed men in an empty street. The image looks like it is taken the moment before the men pose for a group photo. Some of them are screaming, reaching their arms in the air and all look in different directions. Whereas some men wear rifles, some have strapped explosive belts around their hips. The fact that they don´t wear uniform enhances the impression of chaos and disorder that the image creates. Furthermore, the large number of weapons shown in the image imparts an impression of danger and threat. The subtitle "FSA murtadd in fighting for the cause of democracy" appears as irony connected with the disordered group. The image obviously shows an enemy group that is run down and japed with the connection of photograph and subtitle. Democracy is seen as something negative and is used like an insult. However, the term can be recognized as western-specific key word within the propaganda as direct opposite to the ideology of the Islamic State. Especially potential recruits in the West are provided with the impression that democracy and the fighters of democratic values are unable to fight in the Syrian conflict. Thereby the image implicitly supports the narrative of the state-building project that establishes order and rules following jihadist ideology.

Image 10.3.

The image shows six men posing with weapons in front of a black-and-white flag in a kind of courtyard. The flag is inscribed with Arabic letters and framed with golden threads. One of the men wears a beard, two are masked and the other three seem to be in young ages. They loosely hold their weapons which makes them look unexperienced. This impression is increased through different clothes they wear such as leather jacket and jogging pants. Except for the weapons, nothing would reveal the fact that the depicted persons belong to a fighting group. The subtitle "Fighters from the Jawlani branch of the Sahwah" identifies the men as fighters from another enemy group that are classified as betrayers of jihadist ideology in the propaganda of the Islamic State. The image supports the impression of other groups to be unable of fighting and creating order and function thereby as opposition to the Islamic State itself. Connected to the image in the previous page, the democratic as well as the other jihadist groups are ridiculed on the example of their men. Without showing an image of an Islamic State fighter, the message of the photographs is thus clear implicitly: The only brave, skilled and victorious fighters are the ones of the Islamic State. The narrative of marriage with a jihad fighter is supported by the image as well and expressed through devaluation of other men.

Image 10.4.

The image is a close-up of a large number of little boys around 10 years old dressed in military uniforms. Each boy is looking at his own hands as if he is praying. Their faces show meaninglessness and a sense of forlornness. It can be recognized that the boys originate from Central or Southern Asia and form a children army. The image closes the article with it covering the bottom half of the page. On the first glance, the text gives no direct reference to the photograph. It may underline the importance of raising children for the sake of fighting and religious obedience. In this regard, the image would support the domestic role of women to be mothers for the next generation of fighters. The motive of children in military uniform is often repeated throughout the articles and probably supporting the maternal instinct.

Julia Musial: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah" - Narratives in the propaganda of the Islamic State to address and radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary analysis of the online magazine *Dabiq*

Image 11.1.

The image shows the head and upper body of a boy from the side view. He is around 12 years old and dressed in military uniform and wears a black hood. His facial expression is serious and he gazes of into distance. Two other boys dressed in the same way stand behind him and are shown blurred. "A jihad without fighting" is the title of the article from which the image fills the whole first page as background for its title. At first, it seems to be contradictious to the image that obviously shows an army of children. In the context of the article, the image functions in a more implicit way: The text emphasizes once more the female role as wife and supporter of the male fighters and as mothers for the next generations. The images of children support the latter task in showing this next generation. Whereas children in military uniform may repel a viewer, it can be assumed that women already infiltrated with jihadist ideology may feel proud and joy viewing this motive. In this regard, the image supports the narratives of the domestic role as well as of the state-building project.

Image 11.2.

The image shows the extract of an upper body in military uniform bearing a rifle that is directed into the camera. The person wears gloves and an explosive belt. In the background, the Islamic State flag can be recognized. The close-up image fills half of a page and obviously shows a military situation. The rifle expresses seriousness and urgency whereas the person's calm position indicates that the picture is rather taken during training or an assembly than during a war situation. Like the previous image, the photograph supports the narrative of the complementary role of women in the Islamic State. Under the title "A jihad without fighting", the use of the term "O wife of a mujahid" (Issue 11: 41) to address the female readers, the article allocates women to their supporting and complementary role within the fight if the Islamic State.

Image 11.3.

The image shows seven young boys in military uniform with black hoods standing in a row behind each other. The face of the first boy is shown fully, the other faces only half. The facial expression of the front boy is serious and concerned with a notion of anxiety. Together with the two previous images, it appears like an image series. The third picture fills the right half of the page on which the term "O mother of lion cubs…" (Issue 11: 44) arises. The impression of this image goes in line with the one that the other two create: women are seen as mothers of the next generation of strong fighters. The young age underlines that the purpose of male children is to fight. In this regard, the narrative of the state-building project is nurtured here as well.

Image 11.4.

The image shows eight boys in military uniform standing in two rows with only one boy in the front row. They look at their hands and show a concentrated facial expression that suggests a praying position. The boys seem to be approximately nine years old. The image functions as the closing element of the article and connects the military motive with the religious motive. It thereby legitimizes the military use of children through religion as well as the stated order in the article as religious law. Whereas the use of children for active fighting is not mentioned in the article explicitly, the images indicate it. The narrative of the Islamic State as long-term state project is underlined through as well as the strict role assignment of women in the house and men on the battlefield.

Image 12.1.

The image shows white fruit blossom and orange leaves on a branch of a tree in the blue sky. The photograph is framed in orange and has the subtitle written in large letters over the right half of the image: "TWO THREE OR FOUR". The bright and fresh natural motive creates a positive impression. The blossoms also evoke associations such as purity and fertility. Throughout the whole article, photographs of blossoms act as hazy background. Appearing as

a contradiction to the text of the article, it emphasizes the topic of polygamy and justifies four women per man with the argument of religious continuity of the praxis. It also defends it against critical voices. The natural motive may serve to underlines the naturalness with which polygamy is seen in the Islamic State. Thereby, it visually and emotionally justifies the ideology. The image can be seen as gender-specific support of the text.

Image 13.1.

On the image, a white letter and an open envelope on a red background is shown. The left half of the image is filled with the two items whereas the right half a bright red artful pattern is drawn on the darker red ground. The letter serves as frame for the title of the article: "Advice on Jihad". It creates the impression of a precious or even secret message that is dealt with in the article. The text comes up with guidelines on the mourning time for women after their husband died and focuses on wrong behavior that widows showed previous to the article. The image with its simple design is once more the visual support of the text: A widow should stay at her house, behave reserved and dress simply and discreetly. The narrative of domestic role is underlined in this regard.