

TALLINN UNIVERSITY

School of Governance, Law and Society

Study area: Political Science and Governance/International Relations

Anna-Maria Tukiainen

NATIONAL THREAT – IMPACT OF RETURNING ISIS WESTERN  
FEMALE FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Master's Thesis 120 ECTS credits

Supervisor:

Lecturer of International Relations  
Kevin Martin Blachford

Tallinn

2019

“I have written this thesis independently. All opinions, works, data from literature or elsewhere that are not my own have been cited.”

Anna-Maria Tukiainen

## Content

Abstract .....	5
INTRODUCTION .....	6
1. Methodology .....	8
1.1 Contemporary literary review .....	8
2. Problems of data collection.....	13
3. The relevance of my research to this issue .....	16
4. Chapter 1: Behind the veil of ISIS .....	18
4.1 Critical feminist theory .....	18
4.2 Gender emancipation.....	20
4.3 Female terrorism .....	21
4.4 Conclusion .....	24
5. Chapter 2: Young, blond and tweeting about ISIS.....	25
5.1 Role of women in ISIS.....	25
5.2 Push-pull factors.....	29
5.3 Emerging threats .....	33
5.4 Conclusion .....	35
6. Chapter 3: For Adam.....	36
6.1 Why a threat?.....	36
6.2 Punishments and penalties .....	43
6.3 Case countries .....	46
6.3.1 Sweden .....	47
6.3.2 Denmark .....	50
6.3.3 The Netherlands.....	52
6.4 Conclusion .....	55
7. Chapter 4: European solution.....	57
7.1 “European solution” .....	57
7.2 Online presence.....	61
8. Conclusions and suggestions .....	63
References.....	69
ANNEX.....	78
President Trump’s tweets .....	78
Roles held by women in ISIS.....	79
Amendments in national legislation on terrorism in 2016.....	80
History of ISIS – merger of modernity and tradition .....	81
Timeline of events .....	83

Merciless ideological approach .....	86
Quran's citations.....	87

## Abstract

Black veiled women with blue eyes are begging to return to their homelands. European female foreign fighters are emerging from refugee camps and Iraqi prisons into our awareness. Thousands of foreign fighters flocked into Syria and Iraq in years 2012-2016 to join ISIS – merciless and cruel terrorist organization. How should they be welcomed back home? There are different returnee policies; some states emphasize the preservation of individual returnee’s rights and others of collective national security. Female foreign fighters had several roles in ISIS, for example, as recruiters, mothers and wives of other fighters, in addition to these key roles, they engaged in building the network of women by sharing their lives in social media. By utilizing their language skills and ethnic background, these European women attracted media attention and brought sympathy to the cause. ISIS has projected an image of empowering women. Promises of a better life, excitement and adventure created a powerful push and pull forces – ISIS was able to capitalize on its network of European women. Female participation in ISIS as soldiers threatens European security – there is a need for a Europe wide solution to the returning female foreign fighters. Research question is divided into two parts: what kind of threats do returning foreign fighter women pose and secondly, can “European solution” strategy of rehabilitation help to prevent terrorism and radicalization?

Key words: Europe, female foreign fighters, ISIS, security studies, war studies

### Acknowledgements

Author wants to thank several terrorism experts for their contribution: David Malet, Akseli Saviranta, Lizzy Ambler, Amy McCroy, Finnish government workers, those who have read and commented draft versions, and the participants of foreign fighters’ EISAPEC seminar presentation in Prague fall 2018.

This is for Adam.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence is usually associated with masculinity – female participation in a terrorism organization is often seen to be in a supportive role. The women of ISIS are experts in violence; they have held different violent roles supporting terrorist activity and radicalization; now these same women are forced to return from building the Caliphate to their former residence in Europe. Recruitment of other women, antipathy and hate towards Western values in addition of being exposed to terrorist ideology for long time makes returning women a threat towards Europe. ISIS is not a Muslim problem of a certain geographical area in Iraq and Syria; it is international threat against national security. From 2014, ISIS has touched lives all over the world by bringing violent crimes against humanity online.

From June 2014 to February 2019, ISIS controlled territory in Syria and Iraq has decreased significantly creating a Europe wide headache with returning foreign fighters. Seen as enemy combats, female foreign fighters made their decisions by joining ISIS – results of these travel decisions are now nations' security problems since women and children are traveling or wanting to travel back from conflict zone to European countries. The emphasis of this thesis is on the Swedish, Danish and Dutch female foreign fighters who have travelled from Iraq and Syria back home. Powerful media propaganda targeting Western women created a pulling factor to support the cause by joining ISIS, because ISIS created a sense of community and belonging for women. In an examination of female foreign fighters and their affiliation to terrorism organizations, we try to see them within holistic microcosm that includes other male foreign fighters and on the other hand female freedom fighters in Kurdish organizations that liberated Northern Syrian areas in tandem with their male colleagues. Research question is divided into two parts: what kind of threats do returning foreign fighter women pose and secondly, can “European solution” strategy of rehabilitation help to prevent terrorism and radicalization?

Legally foreign fighters have the right to return, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states in its article 13: everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, and everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and return to his country. European countries need to adapt quickly to the possible threat perception, because the international community is planning to set up a special tribunal. How to fight this war against female foreign fighters and estimate their threat perception? Gendered understanding is crucial when dealing with returnee women, gendered lives in ISIS and experiences will reflect to the reintegration and rehabilitation. Publication on female terrorism is filled with gender stereotypes in Western media; utilizing ISIS's gendered roles, media image of 'jihadi brides' underestimated

women's brutality. Women attract media, credibility of women as terrorists is still considered low, which lets women move freely even after return to their original home country. The core argument of this thesis is that returning female foreign fighters are key players in future attacks; they have international networks and the capability to fight in different roles. A rehabilitation strategy is needed to accommodate returning female foreign fighters' needs and provide a gender based solution – European solution of rehabilitation model respecting individuals' human rights.

In this research, different publications included books about feminist security theory, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, reports about ISIS published by leading counter-terrorism centres (such as the Soufan Centre) are used as a background data. Women's presence in terrorism and conflict situations are important because employing women is a critical strategic technique. Also female terrorism research, contemporary academic research, media reporting about 'jihadi brides' and 'mothers' are used to analyse the possible security threat possessed by female foreign fighter returnees. When dealing with particular terminologies the author prefers to use non-borrowed terms to borrowed terms whenever possible, for example the author prefers to use holy war or waging holy war to the term jihad. This is done first to be more specific and second because the word jihad itself has changed meaning in literature in time. Etymologically the word stems from the Arabic root 'jhd' which means effort, and in Islamic literature and religious works the word has been used to refer to perseverance; however it has increasingly taken the third meaning of holy war.

Chapter one, "Behind the veil of ISIS" starts this work; chapter begins with the feminist theory with a subsection on female terrorism. The feminist approach to war help to understand why Western women left from European states to join a brutal jihadist group becoming key players in online propaganda. Women had different roles in ISIS; therefore, the second chapter introduces the roles of women in ISIS, push-pull factors and emerging threats. Social media propaganda targeted European women – ISIS lured women to join a terrorist organization. Third chapter analyses why the female returnees possess a threat to Western societies, review of punishments and penalties in Europe and three case countries – Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands – are presented. Returnee policies vary in Europe – politic climate in these case countries is becoming populist and strategies how to deal with returnees are changing from prior. Chapter 4 presents a Europe solution to the returning fighters, a strategy that makes Europe more secure about terrorism.

## 1. Methodology

The following section explains the methodology of this thesis. First, I will review the contemporary literature. Secondly, I will highlight the problems of and my solution to data collection. Thirdly, I will explain the relevance of my research to this issue.

This thesis is a combination of qualitative research and fieldwork at seminars – in Prague and in Istanbul. During fall 2018, I was able to present thesis draft in Prague at a conference about foreign fighters. In addition, I gained important insight to female terrorism in Istanbul where I listened two presentations about female foreign fighters in Australia.

In October 2017, I started to follow ISIS's rise and development from the aspect of internal security. I felt the discussion and analysing of ISIS was lacking one side: female aspect. Females were always victims, scandals in the British or Swedish media. It felt that women and girls were presented in genderless matter: not really a gender or capable of thinking without a male influencer. Thesis topic about Western female foreign fighters arise as the theme in spring 2018.

### 1.1 Contemporary literary review

At first, a review of the contemporary literature about women in the security studies, terrorism and in feminism studies. My area from the complex issue of ISIS and foreign fighters is narrow on purpose – women are underrepresented in the academic discourse of foreign fighters. In the beginning of my research in fall 2017, I was focusing only on men and their journeys from Iraq and Syria until I started to pay more attention on women and children. Women are not mentioned often in the framework of returning foreign fighters as a threat.

To find supportive data for threat perception, I turned to security studies and literature about women's violence in conflicts not only in European countries, but also in Russia and in the occupied Palestinian territory. Literature related to security studies often mix female suicide bombers and female foreign fighters in the same category. Why their sacrifices for leaving, experiences in the field and possible acts of violence are treated as less violent or serious than those of their male counterparts?

Women had a special role in the ISIS; they were treated as the future fighters' mothers and caregivers. That role of continuing the ideology of ISIS is still present and hatred towards outside world referred in ISIS's rhetoric as Western world or non-Islamic. I tried to find answers to questions about sentences and punishments from literature about previous conflicts with female participation (such as in attacks in Chechenia or in Moscow), because in my opinion gender should not define the punishment level; women should not get lighter sentences for terrorism just because

of motherhood, gender or young age. As a result, returnee's gender matters when reflecting sentences and media coverage that I was following as part of my daily routine. These sources were discovered through online searches using key phrases such as "female foreign fighters in ISIS", "foreign fighters women", "women of ISIS" or according to the organization "Soufan Center ISIS" or "Quillam Foundation, "Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto."

In my data collection and research, I have tried to separate the Palestinian and the Chechen freedom fighters (female suicide bombers) and returnees (foreign fighters) from Iraq and/or Syria, because Western ISIS women travelled longer distances to join the battle. In addition, Western women stayed longer periods in the conflict zone, unlike female suicide bombers from Palestine or Chechnia – unfortunately, they would have shorter terrorism related lifespan. Female suicide bombers are often from the area they operated, they had the same linguistic and ethnic background before dying in a suicide attack. Women who travelled to join ISIS (or some other affiliate in the area of Iraq and Syria) had different roles in the conflict and did not necessarily kill or were killed during their stay. Future studies on the topic will have more material to utilize and analyse when more emphasis is given to ISIS women and children in the conflict area. As Spencer (2016), points out "it is important to understand that the literature regarding the women of ISIS is essentially Western-based. Thus, the information is vastly focused on Western women and these women are very likely to be overrepresented in the sample. As an example, only 7% are Syrian or Iraqi, 82.2% are of foreign citizenship, and 9.6% are labeled as unknown. "(Spencer, 2016, p. 92-93)

Data collection used in this research is a combination of reports from official government sources including security and intelligence services, think tanks; academic and policy-oriented studies about women's role in violence Security studies and feminism. Techniques for gathering evidence about female foreign fighters is collected from peer-reviewed data, examining historical traces of ISIS and gender based records of foreign fighters. Other open-source material such as Quran's surah (chapters) related to violence and women's position such as 2 (Cow's surah) and 4 (Women's surah) and English-language mass media in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands; statistical data drawn from a dataset compiled by the Swedish Security Service. In addition to the English language media material, I have used Swedish language material when I have followed the discussion in the Swedish media.

As contemporary literature is in English and words related to the vocabulary of security studies in Iraq and Syria is in Arabic, I have consulted a translator in order to gain a deeper understanding of key concepts. In order to verify security studies literature's translations from Arabic to English, I have used an Arabic-Finnish translator to help with correct transliteration of Quran's vocabulary

that is used in security studies literature. In Sjoberg's book, there were some errors with transliteration of Arabic words and mistakes in Quran's citation marking.

The general approach to this research has been to follow the international media about foreign fighters, read about security studies and feminism. Laura Sjoberg's books, *Mothers, monsters, whores: Women's violence in global politics* (2007) and *Women, gender and terrorism* (2011), about women's role in violence, security studies and feminism are two main books on the field of Security studies and feminism. In my research, I have utilised Sjoberg's leading expertise on the field of violence by women. Feminism was chosen because topic is about women's role in acts of violence, what kind of threat women are posing to societies and gender does not define threat level. In general, narrative about ISIS women is about gender being linked to victimhood ('jihadi brides' vs female foreign fighters). Women should be treated equally as men, see women as a serious threat as a returning foreign fighter, not as 'jihadi bride', 'mother' or some other label created by media. Women are not a weak sex and therefore should get lighter sentences for acts against humanity. From my previous interest, female suicide bombing and books mentioned by security studies researches were already familiar by content as were two books (*Army Of Roses* by Barbara Victor and *Bombshell: Women and Terror* by Mia Bloom) mentioned by Anne-Marie McManus. Next, to female violence in literature and women in jihadism.

An article by Anne-Marie McManus (2013) about sentimental terror narratives looks at two main female suicide bomber books; Barbara Victor's *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (2003) and Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack* (2005). Facts meet fiction creating an image of a strong woman who fights for her rights in a patriarchal society – however, is a female terrorist a victim or perpetrator? "The emerging field of gender and terrorism studies casts critical light on representations of female terrorists as the tragic victims of men and circumstance..." (McManus, 2013, p.80) Who can be the knower of female violence? The norms of violence as terrorist, gendered expectation of a sympathetic female terrorist is something that is worth studying in this research. Sentimental terror narratives (McManus, 2013, p.84) as in gendered imagery and protection/production of life (motherhood) are difficult to ignore in data analysis.

One of the most striking revelations came when I was reading McManus' article: "At their worst, sentimental narratives construct terrorism as a distant object for the evaluation of morally untouchable Western readers, cast women as victims (to be rescued, presumably, by military interventions), and perpetuate the demonization of the male "evildoers" who pull their strings." (McManus, 2013, p.84) Especially in news coverage, women are brought closer to the readers by creating an emphatic image of fleeing ISIS women in need. Drawing a line from being a distant

object to being a threat to society, the role of women in terrorism is in the core of my research - the understanding of waging religious war, why women felt the need to join and stay in ISIS. Especially different (often multiple) roles in ISIS is news research material on the field of foreign fighters. When analysing roles in ISIS, I have been able to utilize academic material from Australia and have a short cut to understanding Australian media's narrative about 'jihadi brides'.

Roles in ISIS and women's participation in conflicts are visible in the contemporary literature. "In the context of a militarised understanding of terrorism, it is widely accepted that classical Islamic sources are not in favour of women in combat roles. Instead, these texts emphasise the importance of women's roles as "mothers, sisters, daughters and wives of Muslim men at war" (Sjoberg and Gentry 2011). Article by Hamoon Khelghat-Doost (2016), about female terrorists emphasized the role of women as mothers of tomorrow (p.23) and supra-nationalist approach towards state building. Before understanding the future implications of returning female foreign fighters, I needed data about specific case countries – Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden provided wanted information about their experiences with females. In this thesis, the data is organized by case countries; trustworthiness of data is questionable in some cases (such as figures about women) since women were not actively followed in the beginning of the phenomenon of ISIS foreign fighters.

Moving on from literature language to language used in the media, I have especially followed Sweden's national broadcasting documentaries about female foreign fighters. Data used in this research was gathered from English language free academic articles, books about female suicide bombers and security studies, seminars about terrorism and foreign fighters. Also TV and radio documents related to the topic of ISIS are from Netflix's programs Black Crows, White helmets and Sweden's national radio document '*Hennes resa till IS*' (Her trip to IS) from 2016. The radio documentary I came across while reading journalist and documentarist Karwan Faraj's interview in English about Swedish female foreign fighters. Most data available is from female fighters and returnees who have posted notifications about their lives on social media, given interviews or their family members have openly told about her journey.

Early on, I noticed similar quotations and patterns on research papers and often the same sources are repeated providing the same negative future scenario. In my opinion, the threat level presented by leading researchers is not efficiently proven and is based in assumptions that violent behaviour would be repeated in Denmark, Sweden and in the Netherlands. In my research, I have utilised female researchers' material, such as books, articles and academic works. To reflect the previous jihads with foreign fighters, dominantly Muslims and only men, in the 1970 to 1990's, distorts the reality of returning foreign fighters of ISIS. Data from previous conflicts is not usable since the

profiles of fighters is so different. In my research, past conflict situations where foreign fighters have participated cannot be reflected to the current situation of ISIS. Few authors are dominantly writing about the foreign fighters in general and reflecting the past situations (conflicts in Kosovo, Afghanistan or other Middle Eastern conflicts) to apply in this situation. In my opinion, it was important to pick data from sources with research results related only to this phenomenon and not to compare it to Afghanistan. The main difference between al-Qaida and ISIS is that non-Muslim fighters and women were able to join to ISIS. One of the main reason why there are so many foreign fighters in general.

Challenges with experience-based data are the concept of truth, ability to process the reality in Iraq or in Syria and loyalty to the concept of caliphate. Women should have a voice; therefore, Karwan Faraj's radio documentary in Swedish was brutally helpful in understanding the mentality of a young Swedish woman with small children who wanted to have freedom to live. In Faraj's interview, 'Sara' said that she did not have any space to live in Swedish society. She felt that leaving Sweden behind with her children would be the best choice. She soon returned with her children to Sweden, because she was locked up and tried to be sold as a bride. In my opinion, methods of return are important in returnees' threat perception if returnees are in debt, obligated to continue fight against West after return or had to leave children behind.

In conclusion, in security studies literature women are active perpetrators unlike sentimental narratives construct a victimized image of a woman. Data collection used in this research is a combination of reports from official government sources including security and intelligence services, think tanks; academic and policy-oriented studies about women's role in violence Security studies and feminism. Next to the problems of data collection, and how existing data helped to solve my research problem about returning female foreign fighters' threat perceptions.

## 2. Problems of data collection

In the second chapter of this thesis, tackling and highlighting the problems of data collection leads to how I have dealt with obstacles in the security studies literature, female terrorism and foreign fighters. Encounters with international experts of foreign fighters gave background information about data collection limitations and tools to continue foreign fighters' research.

Problems with data collection started in the beginning of my research in fall 2017. First problem was about narrowing the case countries. To narrow the case countries and solutions to the problem was difficult to choose; I tested three case countries from different reaction levels (ranging from soft approach to hard approach) –Denmark, Canada and Australia. Material varied between countries and mostly Danish and Dutch researches have extensively written about the rehabilitation model (soft approach) and are advanced in the categorisation of returned foreign fighters. The Danish model was worth researching since it offers an alternative solution to the threat to society giving a deeper understanding of long-term solution. It is possible to receive data from the Aarhus model, since few Danish returning foreign fighters were already willing to participate to the rehabilitation program during their imprisonment. Actual statistics about returnees in rehabilitation were difficult to find and due to the lack of funding and changes in the political climate in Denmark, the funding of rehabilitation program is questionable. To a certain point, it was possible to research one individual country and analyse data from different Danish cities about radicalization and rehabilitation.

In conclusion, research was stuck on the Danish model, in order to solve the problem of unilateral point-of-view, I added into the research Dutch and Swedish experiences. Second problem is the repeated threat level in literature and discussion about the male returning foreign fighters – not women.

Women are mainly seen as victims of circumstances and not as a threat per se. In my opinion, the problems in the returning foreign fighters' research are lack of individual approach to crime, generalising all Western societies and focusing on the hard approach against returning individuals. Gender definitions are missing from the academic research; women returnees do not have a voice in the academic research. However, women were interviewed, and given visibility in the international media. In order to fill this gap in the research data I have followed discussion about women in media in order to bring their experiences and stories into academic research. Gaps in the research are that the argument concentrates on the same threat level; all the returning foreign fighters are an equal threat to the society.

Thirdly, data collection has its limitations since the research field is so narrow, focus on women is even narrower and therefore local or international investigative media is used as a source in academic research. I have managed to network with researchers on the field and gain important insight to the phenomenon and access to material. Often same material circulates and is quoted in all articles and researches at that specific timeline. Because I have a journalistic background, I rely on media's strong ethic and fact checking when it comes to topics about conflict and terrorism. This is seen on the journalistic material of Sweden's National Broadcasting Company, journalistic input is valuable when journalists have interviewed returnees and especially SVT (Sweden's National Broadcasting Company) is focusing on women returnees in their documentaries. Foreign affairs journalism in radio in Sweden is still very strong, therefore I have listened a radio documentary about a Swedish (immigrant) woman who travelled to join ISIS. Since I can follow discussions and other material in Swedish, SVT has been a valuable source of data and hints about what to follow and search for next.

Relying on sources can be problematic since figures and statistics vary from source to source. Different sources tell a different story and when comparing different figures of those whom travelled and returned, it is challenging to trust to the accuracy. These data must be interpreted with caution because uncertainty of data such as figures is present. For example, how to separate those ones who just travelled once and returned once from those frequently travelled fighters? In the end, I decided not to concentrate on numbers and evaluate threat perception by arrival day. A leading foreign fighter researcher David Malet with Rachel Hayes (2018) did a vast study on returning foreign fighters' threat perception about arrival and crime. In sum, research problem evolves around women's threat on society when they return from Syria and Iraq with or without specific figures of female returnees' multiple entries to Europe.

The existing data help to solve my research problem - however, when focusing on gender related issues, it is difficult to estimate how genders differ from each other. Women are seen as silent actors without high threat expectation and men on the other hand are seen as a possible time bomb. It is difficult to predict the future behaviour of women whom are forced to return from ISIS. Most of academic studies focus on returning foreign fighters from previous conflicts and do not mention women as actors, mainly in supportive roles if any. As Gustafsson and Ranstorp point out about data collection difficulties, the lack of knowledge and empirical studies makes it difficult for the government, and society, to prevent and counter foreign fighters in specific, and violent Islamist extremism in general. "Detailed empirical evidence of age, gender, geographical concentrations, ethnic background, and the development over time, is clearly useful for creating and developing

policies and measures aiming to prevent and counter violent Islamist extremism and foreign fighters”. (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p.38)

Fourth problem in data collection is the ‘foreign fighter’ itself. As mentioned by Swedish researchers Gustafsson and Ranstorp, there are several estimates of how many fighters there are from Europe and elsewhere in Syria and Iraq. “Behind the numbers are different sources, methodologies, criteria and definitions of the concept “foreign fighter” making it difficult to conduct a comparative analysis of the phenomenon. It is vital to stress that these numbers are estimates and assessments sometimes based on vary vague information and unreliable sources”. (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p.49) In my research, I have utilized the numbers available for certain years, nationalities (for example if countries are categorized, or women are labelled as ‘Western’) and state-verified statistical information about female foreign fighters.

As an ending disclosure for this chapter, from data collection’s point-of-view, to collect data about ongoing conflict and analyse scattered information such as figures puts limitations on the research data gathering. In conclusion, there is wide-ranging data about foreign fighters, returning foreign fighters and international court cases dealing with different problems. Investigative journalism is an important part in data collection and verification of return from Iraq and Syria. Problems with data is that getting accurate figures of foreign fighters is challenging. Most of the open data is from second sources, for example from think-tanks such as Sofran Center and general estimates given from official sources (without a doubt the official figures are for male foreign fighters). Recently more emphasis is given to women and children, however figures are rough estimates (for example ‘every tenth’ or perceptual figure ‘20 percent’), and women are not in the same category of threat perception than men.

Third chapter ends this methodology section, by explaining the relevance of my research about Western female foreign fighters’ threat perception.

### 3. The relevance of my research to this issue

In this last chapter, the threat assumption is on three countries - focus is in particular on the Danish, Swedish and Dutch individuals who travelled to the ISIS controlled areas and returned in 2014-2017. A case study from Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands was chosen according to the reaction level, transparency of the problem solving and how the chosen method was implicated. Especially Sweden has raised the need to find a strategy of rehabilitation for returning foreign fighters. Why rehabilitation model is needed for returning female foreign fighters? American way of locking terrorist into Guantanamo has not worked out; therefore, a strategy of rehabilitation for the support of returnees' adaptation into their homelands is needed.

Female foreign fighters have legal right to return live in Europe – therefore as a reaction to this fact, countries either to find a suitable rehabilitation model for returning female foreign fighters that works for countries themselves or a more of a European response. The construction of different possibilities of return are related to the actual national threat these returnees bring to Western countries. There is a possibility that the transition from a conflict or from an actual war to peaceful 'normal life' is possible. We have a mutual understanding of a normal life in Western states; returning foreign fighters shatter the peaceful concept of democratic society. It will take long time until the relationship of society and the returnees evolve since there were no balance on the first place. In sum, because Western societies must take returning female foreign fighters back in their societies, a suitable rehabilitation model for women is needed.

This phenomenon should be seen as an individual event separated from previous conflicts with foreign fighters and exceptionally successful recruiting of non-Muslim fighters to Iran and Syria. To compare the amount of foreign nationality participants of ISIS to previous conflicts with foreign fighters, the emphasis is on fighting and religious fanatics. Conflict with ISIS is different from any previous conflict and should be analysed as a separate act of crime against humanity.

Societies need to adjust living with criminals, convicted or not and face this new threat of ISIS fighters of Western origin. Female foreign fighters are not common criminals since they have a strong believe in the caliphate and in their spiritual community. Europe has never faced a threat like them before and therefore this topic is crucial for the future development for counter-terrorism.

Especially in spring 2019, discussion about trials and finding a coordinated response to the problem of foreign fighters in northeast Syria, Scandinavian countries are backing the Kurdish administration's proposal to create a special international tribunal in northeast Syria. There has been a demand on the United Nations to establish a special international court for ISIS fighters – in

accordance with international law and human rights covenants and charters. (Stocker, 2019 and Sillanpää, 2019) A strategy to tackle returnees from rehabilitation's point-of-view is realistic, since the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) do not have the resources to keep thousands of foreigners locked up in their prisons; in addition to that, the legal limbo as seen with Guantanamo is not a long-term solution. As it is mentioned in the Defese Post: "The SDF has warned that it does not have the resources to continue detaining the fighters indefinitely, and international law is not clear on what should happen to them, not least because of the difficulty in establishing the roles of ISIS members, because the SDF is a non-governmental actor, and because the United States is not a party to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the International Criminal Court." (Stocker, 2019)

The field of research on foreign fighters is quite narrow, and during my EISA conference in Prague (October 2018) I met a leading researcher American David Malet when I was presenting a paper about soft approach to the returning foreign fighters in Denmark called the 'Aarhus model'. During two days, the topic of foreign fighters was analysed from legal, social and gender's point-of-view. The Aarhus rehabilitation model (also known as the Danish model) was in media and mentioned in every research about foreign fighters. There was a clear spike in media interest when something happened in Europe with a returnee or a court case had a ruling.

In my opinion, the phenomenon of female returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq is a relatively new problem – at least in the European discussion about finding a common solution to the problem especially for women. Solutions are connected to society's ability to process the different stages of threats and find the cooperative way to rehabilitate the radicalised individuals. For example, for the returning Danish foreign fighters, there are two different reintegration problems: religious and linguistic since Denmark has a diverse range of languages and religions. Diversity of the society and identities related to other languages or non-state religion are important factors when measuring the ability to utilise rehabilitation methods. If the integration failed or was not successful due to lack of communication and possibilities in the living area and social network, then the environmental problems are still waiting for returning female foreign fighters and other travelled individuals such as their children.

As a closing remark, this research matters since it is further developed from previous findings and explains further the impacts of returning European female fighters to homeland. This thesis will provide a starting tool to the rehabilitation of returning female foreign within European states, and will support finding a common European solution to the returning female foreign fighters' problem.

## 4. Chapter 1: Behind the veil of ISIS

This chapter 'Behind the veil of ISIS' is divided into three sections. The first examines critical feminist theory, before moving onto a second section, which looks at gender emancipation, and the final third section on female terrorism. Western feminism thinking is used to evaluate the core argument of women's threat perception; focus is on the individual agency of women themselves. Non-Western Feminism is mainly discussion about gender equality and sense of female community, therefore feminism from Islamic point-of-view is not used as a supportive theory in this research.

The relationship between security and gender is not widely studied and, the amount of literature is narrow – This is because women are often seen as victims rather than having active participating roles. Women have always had different roles in armed conflicts and wars. This chapter demonstrates that women have historically participated in wars as terrorists, insurgents and rebels, for example, as the Weather Underground, the Red Brigade, the Baader-Meinhof Gang, the People's Liberation Front for Palestine and the FARC.

### 4.1 Critical feminist theory

This subchapter looks at women as actors in terrorism and political violence. Studies into terrorism have traditionally focused on men, due to the longstanding belief that women have assumed passive, inherently less interesting roles in extremist groups. (Jacques and Taylor, 2009, p. 499) Women have had several roles in ISIS and been significantly important in media and recruiting propaganda, also maintaining male fighters' motivation during battles.

The foreign fighters' phenomenon in the European Union, according to the International Centre for Counterterrorism (ICCT, 2016), have problems for example with data collection, the lack of common and agreed definition of foreign fighter, uncertainty with the numbers on foreign fighters and foreign *terrorist* fighters.

The most common definition for a foreign fighter is the Resolution 2178 of the UN Security Council (2014), it defines foreign terrorist fighters (foreign fighter and foreign terrorist fighter are synonymous terms in this report) as:

[...] nationals who travel or attempt to travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality, and other individuals who travel or attempt to travel from their territories to a State other than their States of residence or nationality, for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts, or the providing or receiving of terrorist training.

Gustafsson and Ranstorp's vast study on Swedish foreign fighters excludes people from Sweden joining terrorist groups outside of Syria and Iraq or non-Sunni terrorist groups in the conflict area, e.g. militant groups such as the PKK, YPG, Peshmerga or Hezbollah. However, there are Swedish residents who have travelled to the conflict area to join these groups. (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017, p. 20) As Blanchard mentions, there is "an awareness of the connection between women's everyday experience and security, a critique of the state, and the recognition of the effects of structural violence with a strong normative and transformative vision, evidenced by its focus on inequality and emancipation". (Blanchard, 2003, p. 1298)

White men dominate feminism discussion in the International Relations, as Runyan and Peterson point out. To view female foreign fighters from feminist point-of-view gives a new perspective to the discussion. Feminists in IR argue that realism, dominated by elite, white, male practitioners, is a patriarchal discourse that renders women invisible from the high politics of IR. Even as it depends on women's subjugation as a "domesticated" figure whose 'feminine' sensibilities are both at odds with and inconsequential to the harsh 'realities' of the public world of men and states" (Runyan and Peterson 1991, p. 68–69). Feminists in IR explain the exclusion of women from foreign policy decision making by pointing to the "extent to which international politics is such a thoroughly masculinized sphere of activity that women's voices are considered inauthentic" (Tickner 1992, 4). (Blanchard, 2003, p. 1292)

According to Clark, the phrase critical feminist theory evokes multiple theories and meanings. In some usages, the term critical modifies feminist theory, suggesting that all feminist theory criticizes the misogynistic view of women that characterizes society. Feminist theory, viewed in this light, is a critical theory representing the radical notion that women are people (Clark, 2007). In particular, scholars studying gender and international relations have emphasized that gender relations are not power relations that just happen between men and women... Gender relations happen among members of terrorist organizations, between terrorist organizations and their target audience, between terrorist organizations and states, and between states. (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 7) In gender-neutral violence, instead of looking at women in terrorism as if "women" were either a gender-neutral category or one separate from men or masculinity (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 7).

Feminist theorists strive to change the male-female division and emphasize that women can equally act as men can. As mentioned by Martin, the division of labour between men and women may vary, the justifications given for that division may differ, but men hold more power than women do. In spite of this evidence of widespread gender-related inequality, feminist theorists continue to seek to change the gender order. (Martin, 2002, p. 7) Even though women had traditional domestic roles as

ISIS wives, mothers and daughters, they were strongly supported by ISIS to educate themselves and teach others. As ISIS let women join their lines, it could be seen as modern and feminist terrorist organization instead letting women to remain in their traditional roles. From that perspective, ISIS is a modern terrorist organization and it has utilized women openly in its media propaganda and recruitment of women and men. As it was mentioned by Martin, “Women are encouraged to act like men to enter male-dominated positions”. (Martin, 2002, p.10) Women – of all nationalities and colours are encouraged to act as men and join the jihad next to men. “Fixing the women” assumes that if women aspire to male-dominated jobs, they must learn to act as the men in those jobs do. However, women who act like men are often disliked and disrespected. In any case, most women will be less successful than most men, in acting like a man. (Martin, 2002, p. 11) Women who are members of racial, religious, or ethnic minorities suffer the double jeopardy of both sex and other forms of inequality, and for many minority women, gendered inequalities maybe of secondary importance. In addition, the pernicious effects of gender inequities may surface with a different form and intensity for minority women. (Martin, 2002, p. 12)

Interested or not interested as a feminist scholar in subordinating men or trading women’s interests for men. “Looking at gender to see where it leads.” (Sjoberg, 2013, p. 45) According to Sjoberg (2013), various feminist approaches to IR share an interest in studying gender subordination in global politics. Defining gender, however, presents another challenge. While sex categorization is a part of gender analysis, gender is often described as social construct, an institutionalized entity or artefact in a social system invented or constructed by a particular culture or society that exists because people agree to behave as if it exists or to follow certain conventional rules. (Sjoberg, 2013, p. 5) According to a senior fellow at the Centre for Advanced Study on Terrorism Farhana Qazi, throughout time, women have been presented as reflecting “the image of the pure nation”. She continues that in addition, idea echoed by a number of scholars who argue that national struggles and programs use women to “internalize the desirable national image of mother and wife, of desexualized members of community” (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 32). Moving on to gender emancipation, how European female fighters are not subordinate individuals – they are fighters and equal participators in terrorism as men are.

#### 4.2 Gender emancipation

Women are not used as reluctant weapons; it is the opposite exploitation to raise women’s appreciation and value. Women soldiers, insurgents and terrorists are not weaker emotional soldiers, because to sacrifice for common cause is equality and brings honor to their family. When women are given the opportunity, they are capable of doing what is considered traditionally a man’s

work in war. Peer pressure among women will push for more attention to suicide bombing and other violent forms of terrorism. Group conformity and the need to belong to the same strong pioneers of violence in ISIS will motivate new women to widen their role scale. Women want to be as strong as men and demonstrate their potential – in peace and war, as Sjoberg point out “Gender is conceptually necessary for defining security and war, important in analysing causes and predicting outcomes, and essential to solutions to violent conflict in global politics”. (Sjoberg, 2013, p. 7) With ISIS women participated in various ways to building a Caliphate, females were needed in building a society; another gender brings balance and harmony to group making it stronger and unified. To have the opportunity to see war and fight for a personal cause, these women were living their jihadi dream as liberated individuals. Women are assumed less violent than men are, a bias presumption about gender’s abilities that is highlighted in the media.

Women are underestimated, and at the same time categorized according to their gender as a weaker sex, balance between men and women remains unbalanced without change makers. Genders are lived in daily lives and global politics – female leaders are needed to act as a role model for other women. Women’s participation in national liberation movements, as suicide bombers and other freedom fighters is a significant tear away from traditional role of a woman. Heroes of their time – ISIS women are on the same level with men demanding equal rights. “In social life and in global politics, men and characteristics associated with masculinity are valued above women and characteristics associated with femininity”. (Sjoberg, 2013, p. 5) Female fighters refuse to remain in traditional roles of wives and mothers; they are demanding stronger roles as active participants and challenging violence that used to belong to men. Women’s participation in terrorism could be seen as our time’s liberation movement ending inferiority of women. Next, a review of female terrorism in history and present shows that status of women has not changed.

#### 4.3 Female terrorism

In this section, female foreign fighters have a sense of belonging in a group – male non-combatants are shamed due to their non-participation in terrorism. Female terrorist are remembered in history – such as in the ranks of the Baader-Meinhof Gang or the People’s Liberation Front of Palestine, credibility of a female terrorist depends on her level of violence. Employment of women in terrorism is nothing new; however, female’s violent participation is not openly accepted in terrorism organizations.

Female foreign fighters have different roles in ISIS as well as in their Western and Islamic cultures. The gender roles are seen differently in two cultures, in an Islamic culture women dress modestly and therefore their appearance can be taken advantage in terrorism acts. Tactical advantages such as

cross-dressing, utilizing pregnancy or children as decoy, women terrorist are able to move more freely than male terrorists. “The combination is seen to make women more dangerous than men because they have more access to sensitive areas and because their attacks carry significant shock value”. (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 5) As leading experts on female terrorism, authors Sjoberg and Gentry mentioned, gender stereotypes of women in Western media is contradictory for example with female suicide bombers’ actions, that alternative reasons and motivation for violence are searched elsewhere. Credibility of a female terrorist is on the line when her motivation is questioned, and belittled by society; therefore, women often remain invisible as is mentioned in the next section.

Women’s presence as fighters has been consistent throughout history, and is increasing, yet often remains invisible. In ISIS’s occasion, women have been visible in their own media, international media and research due to ISIS’s gender specific propaganda. As Sjoberg point out, women are still categorized as ‘women’, “when women are recognized as fighters, their fighting is often still distinguished from men’s fighting – where men are soldiers, revolutionaries, and terrorists, women are *women* soldiers, *women* revolutionaries, and *women* terrorists. Women who engage in political violence are often distinguished from men who commit political violence by their sex and from regular or normal women by their gender-bending behavior. Women’s violence is often described in terms of flaws in their femininities”. (Sjoberg, 2014, p. 40-41) Also in a vast Swedish study, women are described sometimes as voiceless: “Muslim femininity plays a significant role in producing ideals and roles. Women recruited into IS are active agents and some voiceless victims.”(Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017, p.62-63)

Women have not been voiceless in the history of terrorism as the participation of female fighters in terrorist organization such as the Baader-Meinhof Gang and the FARC demonstrate. “Women have not only been combatants on behalf of state militaries in state-sanctioned wars, they have also been terrorists, insurgents, and rebels, fighting against governments, for national self-determination, or for some other cause”. (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 43) As history has shown us, conflicts belong to women as well. Women have committed acts classified as terrorism for organizations as diverse as the Weather Underground (the United States), the Red Brigade (Italy), the Baader-Meinhof Gang (Germany), the People’s Liberation Front for Palestine, the FARC (Colombia). (Sjoberg, 2014, p. 40) Women’s participation in earlier national liberation movements has not significantly improved the status of women. (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 43) It is unlikely that women’s participation in ISIS would improve women’s position in any religious situation or state. Male leadership continues

to lead in ISIS; sympathy for female fighters remains in media and does not reflect to the command structure of ISIS.

As Sjoberg and Gentry say, “a woman who engages in terrorism, then, interrupts stereotypical expectations of women as pure, innocent and nonviolent”. Sensationalized media coverage of female terrorists follows a storyline that portrays women as capable of becoming bombers only if they are dominated by men instead of attributing their actions to similar factors as those seen to motivate men or even to other individual factors or choices. (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 4-5) Women are fighting against this stereotype by continuing violent acts against humanity; training to become better fighters of their cause and take their position as a capable suicide bomber or other terrorist. “Yet women soldiers, women insurgents, and women terrorists have begun to deploy in part because of the specific advantages that strategists see in weaponizing women. Many terrorist and insurgent groups have employed women to engage in delivery or suicide bombing missions because they are less likely to be scrutinized by security checkpoints than men are”. (Sjoberg, 2014, p. 41) In other words, women are given a change to get shoe in and expand their participation in terrorism, fill their migration for the cause of God (hijrah) and utilize their gender. As suicide bombers, women are weaponized as soldiers as it is presented next.

In this section, exposing start in 2005 changed how women were viewed in terrorism discussion. Suicide bombing – Act of feminism or an element of surprise in a war? When focusing on female terrorism, it is important to understand the limits of female participation and ‘liberation’ of regulation. Starting from another terrorist group, al-Qaeda in Iraq and its leader at the time, Abu Musab Alzarqawi, began employing women as suicide bombers in 2005; most observers suspect they adopted this tactic as a shrewd means of facilitating operational success through the element of surprise. A by-product of this designed-to-shock strategy was that al-Zarqawi doubled the size of his recruitment pool and effectively shamed male non-combatants into increased participation. (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011, p. 15) Shaming of men is an effective strategy to gain more attention and therefore participants – male fighters. In sum, capabilities of women are questioned and belittled; men need to step up in order to force women to return to their traditional roles as their wives and mothers of future fighters. Who takes commands from who? Next, combining working life as a female fighter and marital obligations.

Match making in ISIS’s style promises a brave husband, future jihadi children and economic stability in the Caliphate. However, women are expected to belong to their husbands. According to Europol’s Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016, ISIS expects women to obey their husbands, cater for children and educate them in line with ISIS ideology. They must be patient and

perseverant in the face of calamities, including the loss of husbands killed in fighting. ISIS tries to make this position acceptable to women by promising that their husbands, following the true Islamic model, will honour and protect them. (Europol, 2016, p.26) When husbands die in battle, women are stepping up their game and taking husband's place as a fighter. Saying goes that fighters fight, ISIS women were patiently waiting for their turn to rule their own lives in the battlefield of genders.

False image of future life and expectations came to women's daydream thanks to ISIS propaganda, it portrays women as empowered managers of their households, whose efforts are rewarded by the respect and affection paid to them by their husbands and relations. In addition, IS allows women to participate in weapons training and have an active role in the health sector and local female-only forces enforcing strict moral and dress standards in public. ISIS frames slavery in a way that it believes makes it palatable: taking female slaves is described as the ultimate humiliation of non-Muslims and a good deed, as it gives the slaves the possibility to become Muslims. The rationale behind these arguments is supposed to give female recruits a feeling of superiority. (Europol, 2016, p.26) In other words, ISIS women feel superior compared to Yazidi women who were sex slaves and treated inhumanely – European women participated in cruelties against other women. Women know how to demand and fight for their gender rights, without being neglected by society or their husbands.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, female fighters bring tactical and strategic advantages to terrorist group, because women have a shock value on target audience and international media. For example, historically female suicide bombers were not part of the traditional suicide attack arsenal – al-Qaeda in Iraq started to utilize women in their suicide bombing. Women have been neglected by society so long; they want to become part of a bigger narrative by joining in battle.

Offering a new role for a woman as a suicide bomber; women are able to rise from traditional supportive roles of a wife and a mother to an equal fighter. Having said that, women's participation in terrorism could be seen as our time's liberation movement ending inferiority of women, however women's participation in terrorism is not seen as their personal choice. They are seen as victims and possession of someone else – a father, a husband – not as freedom fighters. As it was showed in this chapter, female terrorism in history and present demonstrates that status of women has not changed.

## 5. Chapter 2: Young, blond and tweeting about ISIS

In this chapter, women from Western countries join ISIS and they are considered a threat when they return. In order to understand why women joined ISIS, this chapter begins with women's different responsibilities and roles in the Caliphate. Firstly, this chapter analyzes the role(s) of women in ISIS include motherhood, marriage and recruitment of others – Secondly, this chapter will examine the push-pull factors of joining ISIS, which reveals the power of social media in offering role models. Thirdly, this chapter examines the emerging threats of returning female foreign fighters.

### 5.1 Role of women in ISIS

Women hold different roles inside ISIS and it is possible to have several roles simultaneously, for example to be a mother and professional (such as a doctor or a prison guard). Women are given the opportunity to have multiple roles inside ISIS and therefore freedom of profession, education and childbirth could be a pull factor. Foreign women with light hair color and education are valuable commodity for ISIS. On the other hand, network of fertile aged women is crucial for any society or group in order to create a second generation of fighters.

Members of ISIS believe that a woman is made from Adam and for Adam, and that she has no greater responsibility than being a good wife to her husband. (Spencer, 2016, p. 81) Having said that, according to U.S. Navy researchers Katherine Pattillo and Jennie Stone, woman's role in the organization is at least according to older generation leaders of al-Qaeda, a conservative position as a supportive role. Current obstacle in women's recruitment as a suicide bomber is conservative limiting thinking. As Pattillo and Stone say, "the failure of female suicide bombers to gain significant traction within the overall organization probably stems, in part, from cultural reluctance to use women in an operational capacity". (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2011) Another key thing to remember is media's role in labelling women with different roles. Media perspective on women in ISIS, according to BCC's Gardner (2015) opens a social media dimension. "Unlike the Taliban or al-Qaeda, IS have allowed many of their western female recruits a prominent public role on social media. Perhaps the best known is the 20-year-old Glaswegian runaway, Aqsa Mahmood, who calls herself "Umm Laith". "(Gardner, 2015) As well as being in a conservative role as a mother and a wife, Western women had other prominent roles in ISIS. Next, light haired women were getting attention among ISIS fighters and women's roles in ISIS are diverse.

Western women were a rare sight in Syria and Iraq, male attention must be flattering and given a reason to seek a marriage suitors. Even though Western women's appearance in many cases is not mentioned, Western features are important fact to consider as an addition role. "Foreign women—specifically blondes and converts—are the most desired for recruitment and by male soldiers".

(Spencer, 2016, p. 93) According to the study by Spencer (2016), divided and recorded cases of women classified from Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) descent versus Western descent to determine if primary roles were affected. Out of the nine from the MENA region, each case held a low-level commanding or influential position, yet only 1% of Western women held authoritative positions. At 62%, the fundamental role of recruiter for Western women was consistent with other findings in the study. The larger conclusion of the research is that the nationality of a woman plays a key part in what role she holds in the caliphate. (Spencer, 2016, p. 93) In other words, much of the role discussion is focused on motherhood and marriage when according to the results of Spencer's study women are more likely to have a role as a recruiter (55 %) than as a mother (15 %) or wife (48 %). (Chart 1)

Women's roles are generational issues, because an example from another terrorist organization indicates that women have multiple roles in the organization. Senior al-Qaeda officials have expressed diverging views as to what role women should play in al-Qaeda and in the jihad. The rift exist among senior al-Qaeda leadership and extends across generational lines. (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2011, p. 170) Having said that, al-Qaeda argues that women should restrain from combat operations, therefore women are not allowed to become jihadi leaders and participate in combat situations. ISIS as well as domestic roles as mother, wife and caregiver 'serving as the womb of jihad' according to Pattillo and Stone (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2011, p. 170) answered a vacuum of limited participation. In conclusion, younger leaders in ISIS understood that women want to participate and are capable of providing more than just moral support and motherhood.

However, the ISIS founder, Abu Musab Alzarqawi, had few doubts about deploying women as, for example, suicide bombers. Even though one key figure would have had reservations of utilizing women in suicide attacks, those attacks still took place as Barrett mentions: "In July 2017, film of a woman carrying a baby and looking like any other civilian escaping the siege of Mosul, appeared to show her blowing herself up when she was in range of Iraqi forces. There are also reports of women having acted as snipers" (Barrett, 2017, p. 22). It is important to bear in mind that foreign fighters' media image varies according to current affairs; in early 2019, foreign fighters have been on local and international topic due to recent events with ISIS's network and Trump's comments about shared European responsibility on women. Shared responsibility on returnee women matters in this context because we need to understand how roles in ISIS have affected women. Can women forget their roles in ISIS or modify their previous status in order to adapt to the Western society?

Moving on from roles of mother, wife and recruiter to social media stardom online or in a Western country's social circles. Especially in Sweden, foreign fighters have had a long media interest and

several famous journalists have investigated individual travelers. A Swedish journalist Karwan Faraj has studied the phenomenon of Swedish female fighters, according to him Swedish women “they get a new status within their radical circle of friends in Sweden if they do the jihad. They are viewed as rock stars. Joining the holy war is romanticized among their radicalized friends. If you go to Syria and get married to the right person or work for the all-female moral police, for example – you get a higher status.” (Fernandezj, 2016) Roles of women in ISIS matter to them in their social environment and should matter to the Western society. Call for action is needed, how to maintain healthy social roles in women’s homelands and support transition into non-violent environment? Next, roles of women are divided into two main categories.

Roles can be divided into two categories: “the evolving roles adopted by women in jihadi organisations can be broadly divided into two categories – supporting and active roles”. (Khelghat-Doost, 2016, p.22) Taking a deeper look into the division, with respect to supporting roles in jihadi organisations, women are mostly involved in logistical and recruitment activities, such as delivering messages, intelligence gathering and acting as decoys. In terms of active roles, women are involved in executing violent operations (including suicide bombings, shootings and hijackings) and are trained in the use of weapons and the making of explosives. Women are therefore soldiers and not civilians; in addition, one of the dominant active roles of women is acting as ideologically devoted mothers. (Khelghat-Doost, 2016, p.22) Summing the roles of women in ISIS, mainly women had a main role as a wife, secondly as a recruiter and a mother of the next generation of terrorists.

Since ISIS considered itself to be a newly established state, the entity has a long-term plan for educating the next generation of its citizens. “Owing to the urgency of preparing the next generation of the caliphate, the women of IS today are regarded as the mothers of tomorrow”. (Khelghat-Doost, 2016, p.23) Importantly a functioning society was needed to cater for the needs of growing population of ISIS fighters. Moving on to the ambition of establishing an active society for ISIS – women in active participation of building the society.

Unlike its predecessor Al Qaeda, IS has the ambition of establishing a sustainable caliphate, which is essentially a state with a working system of governance. Beyond the male and female membership, a caliphate also comprises economic, military and other state institutions. According to the Middle East Monitor (2014), women consist of approximately 10 percent of the total number of ISIS’ foreign fighters and play a significant role in ensuring the normal functioning of the state and its institutions. In light of their indispensability to the group, ISIS engages women in different state departments and agencies including the medical, educational and tax collection departments (Gardner 2015). Researchers say that many of those women who make it across the Turkish border

into IS-controlled territory end up frustrated by the roles they are assigned. Unmarried women are kept in a safe house, usually with others who speak their language and given religious indoctrination and Arabic classes while a husband is found for them as quickly as possible. (Gardner, 2015) Having said that, it remains a puzzle to many as to why women voluntarily choose to adhere to the values of such a misogynist organization, especially when the foreign fighters of ISIS have been well exposed to western liberal values and education. (Saltman & Smith, 2015). In sum, according to ISIS, the duty of righteous women is to ensure infidels and disbelievers do not spoil the Muslim community. Key things to remember about roles of women in ISIS are that women could have several roles simultaneously and transfer those roles onto their children and online followers. To conclude first part of this chapter, two examples for ISIS women were ‘Umm Sayyaf’ and ‘Doctor Sham’, their fame in the social media gave new definitions for noticeable roles of ISIS women.

Furthermore cases of two well-known women in ISIS are Nasrin As’ad Ibrahim Bakar (Nisreen Assad Ibrahim Bahar), also known by her nom de guerre Umm Sayyaf who was married with a senior leader Abu Sayyaf (high-value target was killed in 2015), and blogging doctor Sham.

Level of women’s famousness among other ISIS women is related with their young age and husband’s rank in the organization. The increasing importance of women within ISIS is what led the U.S. military to obtain one of the richest human intelligence sources against ISIS to date in 2015 with the capture of ISIS leader’s wife Umm Sayyaf. (Spencer, 2016, p. 98) According to Department of Justice (2015), Um Sayyaf (age 25) is an Iraqi citizen, and she is charged for her role in a conspiracy that resulted in the death of an American citizen Kayla Jean Mueller in February 2015. (Department of Justice, 2016) In addition to Um Sayyaf, there are other famous ISIS wives; one particularly famous was a blogging doctor who wrote about her life in the Caliphate. Her blog texts were in English and written in an inspirational manner to attract women’s attention.

Are ‘ISIS brides’ real women or just fictional characters for ISIS’s social media marketing? The famous women of ISIS have different names online, for example, blogger Shams or Bird of Jannah (in English paradise) is a blogging doctor known on Tumblr and Facebook, blog called Diary Of A Muhajirah. Disturbing blog posts of a love story between a blogger and a ISIS fighter are deleted but still live online as memes and screen shots. Was she a real person trying to cover her nationality and protect her parents who were disapproving her life choice as a bird of paradise? Her glorifying writings about ISIS and constant battles against infidels suggest that she was a propaganda tool and recruiting other women to join ISIS. Therefore, they both are an apparent example of an ISIS woman of multiple roles in the ISIS society when they were sharing their lives on social media.

Onto to the second subchapter, 'push-pull factors' examine the reasons why Western women travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS.

## 5.2 Push-pull factors

Topics of this subchapter are the push and pull factors that are luring women to travel to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS. When luring young women to join the battle, the obvious method of choice is social media. On the field of terrorist groups, here has not been anything like ISIS's media propaganda machine. Female role models combined with successful use of online propaganda and social media tools, guaranteed visibility among young potential female recruits around the world.

In order to understand why relatively young Western women left their environment to join ISIS, we need to evaluate how social media platforms and ISIS's social media campaigns managed to lure women to travel. Women took part in building a society – promises of a better life is appealing to young women when marketing is done in their social media world. Recruiting is successful because it was happening in young women's social circles and it was approachable. Propaganda targeting Western women in principle contained the same messages as for Arab audiences. Perhaps women in Western society were attracted by the traditional roles in offer. In addition, however, it tried to give the impression that under ISIS rule women were able to play active roles, which is at odds with the proclaimed restrictions on women's freedom. (Europol, 2017, p. 32) "Belonging is an important and necessary ingredient in building a new nation and attracting new citizens. Those women whom feel left out of or discriminated against in Western communities due to race, skin colour and religion are offered a homeland where all Muslims are treated well and equally". (Tarras-Wahlberg, 2016, p.13) Primarily women want to belong to somewhere and have significance in society. Once invisible women in their Danish or Swedish environments due to different skin color or religion, in the caliphate they have multiple roles to choose from in a new environment.

Not all women in a Western society feel balanced and welcomed to live among natives even though they themselves would be considered as originally Swedish or Danish citizen. In sum, ISIS was able to provide a much-needed environmental solution for women, a safe peaceful unit of same-minded women and men building an ideal society. Social media offers glitter and glamour; therefore, it is important to look at ISIS's social media platform including online websites, blogs and women's magazines.

As Kim Kardashian of ISIS, there have been few socialites making sure the glamour of ISIS stays. Women in the Western media's public eye utilized their husband's rank in ISIS and other

‘achievements’ to gain popularity on social media sites. When it comes to nationality, hair colour and language, these factors influence on woman’s roles and value in ISIS’s society.

Women act as role models in ISIS’s online magazines and websites luring other women to join. Media platforms are utilized efficiently and according to Spencer (2016), ISIS has established an immense social media platform that has lured more than 20,000 foreign militants. “Studies indicate that ISIS predominantly relies on Western female recruits to lead the social media campaign on sites including, Twitter, Tumblr, Kik, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Ask.FM”. (Spencer, 2016, p.85) Most sites, blogs and tweets are being erased and most probably, communication has moved underground indicating fast paste media circulation. Female media unit was and most likely still is important within ISIS' media wing, since online propaganda is relatively cheap and easy to produce. “The objectives of the propaganda campaign are relatively straightforward—motivate women from abroad to perform hiraj to ISIS controlled territory. ISIS propaganda schemes target women who view themselves as outliers of their community because of social injustice”. (Spencer, 2016, p.85) In conclusion, online presence is important to ISIS in order to attract Western women to join and promote life in Caliphate. Next, women were lured into reading other woman’s experiences, to relate to it and act on it.

From woman to woman, chatting was quick way to ask and get answers from a Muslim sister in ISIS. Manipulation, images of beautiful infrastructure and promise of a handsome Muslim fighter husband was appealing to many women. “Age mattered in the hierarchy of women in the waiting houses and young Western women, especially blondes were preferred and data suggest that age is a real factor in the roles women assume in ISIS”. (Spencer, 2016, p. 94) The international media - as well as case countries’ media - found reporting on the involvement of women in terrorism irresistible all to the advantage of ISIS. As Spencer points out, “realizing what an important tool was suddenly at its disposal, ISIS began actively using women for propaganda purposes”. (Spencer, 2016, p.78) Propaganda works efficiently only when it is distributed correctly, in the case women acted as a pulling force for other women engaging them into ISIS. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, famous online role models gained popularity on different media sites and lured more followers to join ISIS. Western women were wanted for foreign militants as wives and mothers to narrow the gender difference between male and female foreign fighters.

What makes ISIS an attractive organization for women, especially for foreign women? Online propaganda was efficiently captured the attention of women. Addressed directly to ISIS women, women’s magazine with promises of a better life is a huge pull factor. Online websites and

magazines such as “To Our Sister” (later changed name to “From Our Sisters”) is considered especially important to women. The female authors producing the articles have discussed issues such as marriage, the taking of female slaves, family life and female migration using the platform of women’s magazine *Dabiq* address women directly, according to research by Tarras-Wahlberg. (Tarras-Wahlberg, 2016, p.7) Online magazine used by ISIS called *Dabiq* (active 2014-16) attempts to attract women from around the world by targeting different groups separately. “Role models are important tools for attracting other women to the cause of ISIS, which is why much effort is put into finding such key individuals”. (Tarras-Wahlberg, 2016, p.8) In other words, articles and pictures on magazines shows ISIS and building of the Caliphate as a picturesque and offering women more opportunities among other women and children of ISIS, to create an ideal world with endless opportunities.

However, as pointed out by Spencer (2016), ISIS’ treatment of women has placed the organization among the world’s worst perpetrators of gender-based violence. (Spencer, 2016, p. 74) Online propaganda managed to convince women of a better society, reply to their questions and concerns about life in ISIS – unlike Western societies with anti-ISIS sentiments. For example, in online chatrooms, blogs and magazines women asked about daily life in ISIS, how they should behave and speak with local people. In conclusion, magazines addressed women directly without censorship from Western media or society; printed and spoken words convinced enough readers to travel to Syria and Iraq. Despite cruelty towards women, female travels entered the Caliphate. Next, contradictory behavior of ISIS did not discourage Western women from traveling to a conflict zone.

Why did women leave their familiar Western styled life in Sweden, Denmark or in the Netherland behind and joined a violent inhumane world of ISIS? As Spencer mentions, “its cruel tactics include imprisonment, torture, sexual abuse, and the execution of thousands of both Muslim and non-Muslim women. In spite of their inhumanity towards so many women, many also flock to its ranks.” (Spencer, 2016, p. 74) Dreams, unrealistic images on social media and propaganda manipulate the reality of ISIS – online participation in a different environment gives the illusion of actually being present in Syria and Iraq. Spencer (2016) continues, “By romanticizing the life of women in the caliphate, ISIS has manipulated more recruits than any of its terrorist predecessors and the women of ISIS have attained influential roles in the caliphate despite the pitiless treatment of women throughout the territory that the group controls”. (Spencer, 2016, p. 74-75). According to Dr. Nabeel Jabbour from Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies, ISIS provided success to Muslims and a staying presence unlike foreign armies such as the British, the Soviets and the Americans. Up-

to date attractive social media with videos suitable to youth, without boring monologues. Purpose of living, “when they go to Iraq and Syria they get accepted as brothers and sisters who are warriors and heroes”. (Jabbour, x) It is important to understand that Western reality with Western styled life seemed to continue in the Caliphate and false images of peaceful life in harmony fooled social media followers. Spencer points out, the female influence continued in online presence since another key thing to remember is that “women are seen as the womb of the jihad”. (Spencer, 2016, p. 80) As Spencer continues, female influence for the success of ISIS is valid; it has managed to capitalize on its network of women in social media. ISIS has empowered women in making them key players in future attacks; therefore, marketing slogan could be ‘Women – untapped resource in propaganda’. Employment of women is a strategic technique, seeing opportunities and development in social media as a modern marketing tool. Different roles in ISIS are domestic roles, such as wife and mother, operational roles, Al-Khansaa brigade and recruiters, state-building roles, skilled workers (such as doctors) and students. (Spencer, 2016, p. 80) Having said that, versatile roles acted as a pulling factor for Western women – they could remain professionals and perhaps pursue new roles.

In a weird way, ISIS has projected an image of empowering women by promising them a better life. The responsibilities have become more diverse across the spectrum of these groups, empowering women, and making them key players in future attacks. ISIS actively recruits women for a variety of reasons, including growing their population and membership, and creating media attention. (Spencer, 2016, p.78) On the other hand, women had the opportunity to meet potential bachelors and utilize the endless Despite this puritanical code of behaviour, ISIS used the possibility to acquire women as an incentive to attract male fighters. In 2016, ISIS publications tried to persuade women that polygamy, i.e. the marriage of a man with up to four Muslim women, was the right of men, probably as a means to maintain the sexual stimulus for ISIS fighters. (Europol, 2017, p. 32)

In sum, Western women had problems adjusting to a Western society seeking an alternative solution; ISIS’s social media propaganda targeted Western women successfully giving them an online society of same-minded women. Cruelty and inhumanity against women and minorities did not hurt the attraction of ISIS – it managed to push Western women into migration. There were several push and pull factors ranging from following online social media stars, websites and magazines to wanting to marry a foreign fighter and immigrate abroad in all Muslim state. This chapter ends with third subchapter about emerging threats in the Europe. Female participation in ISIS - efficient tactic or new generation operational thinking?

### 5.3 Emerging threats

Third subchapter 'Emerging threats' ends this chapter combining women's roles, push and pull factors into threats against European societies. Counterterrorism strategies vary from ambitious, aggressive domestic policy to peaceful development of conflict management.

First, high figures of foreign fighters brings the phenomenon close to regional security. As mentioned by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague (ICCT), from September 2014 to September 2015 alone, the number of foreign fighters reportedly doubled and reached 30 000 combatants coming from 104 countries. (ICCT, 2016) Experts and government officials have increasingly warned of the potential security threat this phenomenon might also pose to Europe and beyond. (ICCT, 2016) Regional counter-terrorism cooperation is needed in European countries to ensure equal dialogue concerning male and female foreign fighters.

Women's roles are connected to their threat perception – violence was part of everyday life in the Caliphate, another key thing to remember is the vast amount of Western women in the area. According to ICCT's report, estimated total number of foreign fighters from the EU is 3922-4294, from which 17% are women. "As such, it is imperative that we better understand the roles of women in ISIS, how those roles are assigned, and how women contribute to ISIS' operational objectives" (Spencer, 2016, p. 74-75). The Islamic State's treatment of women has appropriately cast the organization as one of the world's most egregious perpetrators of gender violence. Paradoxically, despite its horrifying brutality against women, the female sex has become an irreplaceable asset to the longevity of ISIS. Women hold the responsibility of being proper Muslim wives to ISIS soldiers, procreating the following generation of jihad, expanding ISIS' global reach through recruitment, and stabilizing ISIS' network of women. (Spencer, 2016, p.97-98) Researchers at the Institute of Strategic Dialogue (ISD) in London, are curious at the "unprecedented surge in female recruits" to ISIS, are tracking more than 100 of the women through online platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and blogs. ISD's database, the largest of its kind, provides a unique lens through which to see the daily lives of the women of ISIS. They hope that by examining the way women are used by terrorist groups, analysts will better understand how the organizations work, and how to combat them. (Shubert, 2015)

After return from ISIS, its promised bonuses of a better life and status are difficult to compensate in the Western world. Access to health care, better prospects in work life and dating were not everyday luxuries for foreign fighters. In other words, loss of privileges after return to homeland can trigger antipathies against Western society. Previously introduced blogging doctor Shams describes life in ISIS as a utopia, posting lists of "benefits" for foreign fighters – for example free housing and

health care. (Shubert, 2015) When giving concrete information and instructions to act, all traveling related obstacles are fading and encouraging others to do the same – join ISIS. What comes to blogger Sham's life and her blog posts on 'experiences in ISIS' it seems like a cheap love novel with empowering worldview about ISIS. However, as mentioned in an article by the CNN the realities of life in ISIS territory are stark, and as a wife in the middle of a war zone, Shams acknowledges the grim, "pre-destined" fate that awaits her husband on the battlefield, posting a photo with the chilling caption: "Till Martyrdom Do Us Part." (Shubert, 2015) Drama, excitement and love all in one blog. Shams' blog is slowly becoming a myth; CNN calls her as a 'jihotty', as a young attractive woman who is idealizing jihad. Bloggers are described as ISIS jihotties, they are recruiting brides/wives and as Shams wrote in her now deleted blog "I came here alone and broken. You raised my status as a woman." In internal battle among foreign and local women of ISIS, the concept of status is mentioned.

Her empowerment story as a lone foreign woman among other ISIS sisters has a happy conclusion when she marries an ISIS fighter and while carrying his child, he dies in battle. A 26-year-old woman who claims to be a Malaysian has caused shock waves on the Internet as she has been regularly posting updates on her experiences as a 'Muhajirah' on her Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter accounts. (Ram, 2014) Her ultimate wish is to be widowed and praise God for this privilege.

Since women hold different active roles in ISIS, more emphasis should address to the violent roles of female militants. "Emerging threats with the use of women in ISIS to the EU are through radicalizing, facilitation activities and fundraising" .(EUROPOL, 2017, p. 13-14) Amount of female returnees cause also threats related to prolonged ideological indoctrination, military training such as use of weapons and explosives and gained combat training. (EUROPOL, 2017, p. 13-14)

Counterterrorism strategies are starting to acknowledge that in addition to the ISIS's male militants and male foreign fighters there are women. According to Spencer (2016), the group's willingness to use women in increasingly more important activities poses a substantial security threat to the international community. Despite the alarming consequences, counterterrorism strategies continue to focus on the group's male militants, essentially overlooking the relevancy of their female counterparts. (Spencer, 2016, p.97-98) Europol suspects that "they may also have established links to other FTFs abroad and become part of capable transnational networks. These returning fighters will have increased proficiency in terms of carrying out attacks, either under direction or independently." (Europol, 2017, p. 14) Moreover, some returnees will perpetuate the terrorist threat to the EU through radicalising, fundraising and facilitation activities. (Europol, 2017, p. 14)

Prevention, engagement and training against radicalization is crucial, on the other hand change in

mentality takes time. Construction of female returnee's role will provide a beginning to the dialogue of rehabilitation back to society. If women's freedom of expression and preferred lifestyle with suitable roles in ISIS is traded to imprisonment and loss of voice, return, as an option is not tempting for them. Migration for the cause of God did not provide a result – female returnees are now unwanted and neglected by their own Western societies and ISIS.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, ISIS offered something special for girls and women all over the world: dreams and hope for a better life in a different location. By offering supporters of ISIS what they may perceive to be empowering roles as a mother, blogger and wife, ISIS's propaganda targeted daydreamers – empowering worldview fills a void that many traveling Western women seem to have. For example, versatile roles in offer acted as a pulling factor for the Western women – they could remain professionals and perhaps pursue new roles.

In this chapter, the level of woman's online celebrity was demonstrated being related with young age, as well as a husband's rank in the ISIS. It was apparent with cases of Umm Sayyaf husband's rank and its relationship to woman's role(s) in the ISIS and doctor Shams and her famous blog about her work as a doctor. ISIS's online propaganda in blogs, online chats and magazines addressed directly to the ISIS women without censorship from the Western media or society; printed and spoken words convinced enough readers to travel to Syria and Iraq. Despite cruelty towards women, female travels entered the Caliphate.

## 6. Chapter 3: For Adam

This chapter starts with a section on first threat perception of terrorists, asking why returning women possess a threat to their homeland. The second section will analyze the various punishments and penalties in different countries. A third section introduces the case countries of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands; it will compare their approaches to returning female foreign fighters.

Behind the veil, women are as dangerous as men are; therefore, women should have a clearer voice in the returning foreign fighter discussion. Female foreign fighters have actively participated in ISIS's activities and therefore are considered as a threat after return. Figures of returning foreign fighters are estimates and women are not statistically followed as accurately as men are. In order to understand women's participation in ISIS, first the male participation in ISIS and other groups is introduced.

Six EU countries, which have confronted the handling of returned foreign fighters similarly are Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK, these countries are using the so-called soft approach. (Scherrer, 2018) Soft-approach methods support individual's active participation in rehabilitation during her prison sentence; being part of incarceration system could be a second chance to rehabilitation and to reintegration back to her society. Most EU member states report that women constitute around 20 percent of foreign fighters. Women's visible participation in ISIS as entrepreneurs shows that they are a threat to society as active participants instead of mere victims.

### 6.1 Why a threat?

This first section starts with examining the returnee policy of different countries, why some countries consider the terrorism threat level as "significant" and why female foreign fighters especially are considered a threat. In order to understand the legal restrictions for the foreign fighters' discussion, the UN's Resolutions which are binding states to obey the international law, are introduced. Three resolutions, UN Resolutions 2178, 2170 and 2396 are used to emphasize why reintegration is part of returning foreign fighters' "reestablishment of social, familial and community ties and positive participation in society" as mentioned in the UN's Resolution 2396 (2017).

There are several returnee policies ranging from for example utilizing the Iraqi criminal justice system (with death penalty), waiting for the International Crime Court to prosecute ISIS leaders for genocide or waiting for foreign fighters to return their homelands' rule of law. Since foreign fighters have the legal right to return according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(UDHR), returning foreign fighters are seen as a threat against society; they are treated as enemy combats and harsh treatments are offered to tackle the foreign fighters. The UN Security Council have tried to address the internationally difficult legal issue by providing guidelines and recommendations for countries facing the issue of foreign terrorist fighters. In UN's Resolutions, foreign fighters are referred as 'foreign terrorist fighters' and gendered as male. Next, the US was not able to tackle the problem of foreign terrorism with Guantanamo Bay, military detention center emphasized lack of human rights and torture, giving ISIS a propaganda tool against West.

In order to understand previous solutions in war against terrorism, the US's hard approach is analysed. The harsh response by the US has not worked previously with terrorists, however the terrorists detained in Guantanamo Bay and their previous and current legal limbo for decades is raised in the spring 2019 when discussion about returning foreign fighters is being active. As "American officials have refused to confirm another possibility: whether ISIS members whose home countries have revoked their citizenship could be renditioned to the U.S. military detention center in Guantanamo Bay." (Stocker, 2019) However, as pointed out by the Human Rights Watch (2018), 780 men sent to Guantanamo since 2002 are in a legal limbo, still 40 men are held there detained by the US – Guantanamo's juridical system does not meet international fair trial standards. "The military detention facilities created at Guantanamo Bay were designed from the outset to be outside the regular US justice system.

Nearly all of those detained at Guantanamo since its inception have, for one reason or another, been held in violation of applicable international humanitarian law or international human rights law." (Human Rights Watch, 2018) European countries do not have a death penalty unlike the US and Iraq, international humanitarian law and international human rights law are protecting prisoners from torture and death. 16 years of Guantanamo Bay has demonstrated the US's harsh method to solve terrorism problem has not succeeded. According to OSCE, "states face serious challenges in prosecuting foreign terrorist fighters and terrorist acts committed abroad due to the location of crimes, suspects and witnesses. In particular, it poses difficulties in accessing evidence, and there may be restrictions on the use of information received from foreign intelligence agencies". (OSCE, 2018, p. 42) Lack of territorial jurisdiction is problematic for European courts as well as for ICC; therefore, return to homeland would be for legal point-of-view less problematic. However, persecution for crimes against humanity or terrorism are difficult to prove as it is later demonstrated in this thesis.

Anyone being transferred out of a country by US forces, including someone turned over by non-state armed groups, should be able to contest the transfer in that country's courts. This would not be

required during a so-called international armed conflict between governments, such as between the US government and the Syrian government – every detainee must be treated humanely at all times (Human Rights Watch, 2018). In sum, the US does not see them as prisoners of war or criminals; torture and suicides of prisoners gave ISIS's propaganda a tool against West. Crimes allegedly committed by prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay were difficult to prove, therefore detention of years or decades did not help in the war against terrorism in foreign soil.

Moving on from the US's detaining of prisoners to the state binding obligations under international law, the UN Resolutions in 2014 and 2017 have addressed the problematic issue of returning foreign fighters. Under the international legal framework, Member States are required to implement obligations arising under Security Council resolutions and other binding international conventions and protocols into their national laws. (ONODC, 2018, p. 43) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights OSCE (2018) points out the UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014), that "requires states to prevent, disrupt, prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate foreign terrorist fighters". In addition the UNSC Resolution 2396 (2017) calls for "additional action to be taken in the areas of border security and information sharing; judicial measures and co-operation; and prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies". (OSCE, 2018)

A 2017 UN Security Council Resolution 2396 sanctioned a review of the Madrid Guiding Principles to address the evolving nature of the threat of the foreign terrorist fighters. The new challenges include the issue of foreign fighters returning to their countries of origin, their prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration into society. (Ochab, 2019 and United Nations Security Council) With different returnee policies, responsibility of return is tossed from one nation to another, "return will remain someone else's problem" as it was with Osama bin Laden's case. (Malet and Hayes, 2019, p. 9) Currently the returning foreign fighters are Iraq's and northeast Syria's courts expensive juridical problem. As it is mentioned in UN's Resolution 2379, "ISIS constitutes a global threat to international peace and security" and it is a terrorist group. At home as well as in some other European country or in the Middle East, the milieu of radicalization could be waiting for returning foreign fighters and offer new levels of radicalization opportunities.

In sum, criminal courts in the world vary and international law does not apply in all countries, some countries still have a death penalty. In order to reduce radicalization such as extreme religious belief is achieved by integrating women back into their societies after a possible prison sentence. Next, to figures about female participation in ISIS-related terrorism activities before moving on to threat scenarios presented by female returnees.

In Europe, figures about female participation are relatively same; Denmark and France estimate that around 20 percent of foreign fighters are women, Belgium report that 81 percent are male and 19 percent are female – in a study of 130 individuals arrested for Islamic State-related terrorist activities over 83% were men. (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017, p.62-63) In other words, every fifth European foreign fighter was a woman – on the other hand, higher number 40 % were Dutch women. When foreign fighters entered Syria and Iraq they could join in several armed groups or terrorist organizations, threats posed by affiliate groups worldwide are controlled by affiliated groups, these provinces are located in the Middle East (in countries such as Libya, Yemen, Egypt— Sinai and Saudi Arabia) and beyond (North Caucasus, Algeria, Nigeria and on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border). (UNODC, 2018, p.5) As the female participation is around 20 percent in European countries, such as in France, Denmark and Belgium, female foreign fighters should qualify as foreign fighters without being referred as ‘women’ in the UN’s Resolution 2178. Since ISIS was not a state, the United Nations problem with international prosecution is solved when female foreign fighter travels to her homeland’s juridical area.

Participation in a terrorist organization once in Syria and Iraq was mainly to ISIS, according to study by EUROPOL, “the majority of foreign fighters appeared to have joined ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra. Other groups they reportedly joined include Jaish al-Fatah (Army of Conquest), Harakat Ahrar al-Sham (Levant Free Men Movement), Jaish al-Muhajirin wal-Ansar (Army of Emigrants and Supporters), and Harakat Fajr ash-Sham al-Islamiya (Islamic Levant Dawn Movement)”. (Europol, 2016, p.29) Women mainly joined ISIS due to the fact that it was accepting female participants, even though as mentioned by Gustafsson and Ranstorp, “for some EU member states, there exist no publically available data breaking down the figures into age, gender, socio-economic background and other relevant factors. For example, the United Kingdom does not provide such public figures by government agencies beyond the fact that 850 foreign fighters have left”. (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017, p. 57) In most parts with country specific material, females were supposedly part of ISIS unless other information was given. On the other hand, women were able to challenge male participants by joining the jihad in the first place. Female participation in terrorism in the geographical area of Syria and Iraq matters, not individual women’s participation in smaller groups. Next, to the three threat scenarios by returning female foreign fighters.

The first terror threat scenario presented by female returnees is their participation in building the Caliphate. Women pose a threat due to their high participation level in ISIS’s activities and travel preparedness; especially female participation from the Netherlands was high. EUROPOL, without

dividing foreign fighters into gender categories, estimate that a number of European foreign fighters hold prominent positions in ISIS. Those individuals are likely to be maintaining contacts with terrorist support networks in their home countries. “Several travellers from the Netherlands were reported to have joined subgroups of ISIS that are focused on carrying out attacks in the West”. (Europol, 2016, p.29) In other words, there are active ISIS subgroups in the West ready to participate in violent terrorism. The Netherlands pops up again when female travellers are examined.

An increasing proportion of women have travelled from some EU Member States - for example from the UK, Belgium and, more markedly, the Netherlands. However, as EUROPOL has found out in its research, “females account for approximately 40% of the Dutch travellers in the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq in 2016. Only 11% of returnees to the Netherlands are female, perhaps underlining how difficult it is for women to leave ISIS territory”. (Europol, 2016, p.29) According to AIVD’s publication ‘Jihadist women, a threat not to be underestimated’, Dutch women are not known to have taken part in the Al Khansaa brigade, the female ISIS police force that monitors strict observance of the sharia and the moral code for women in ISIS territory. (AIVD 2, 2017, p.7) In sum, female participation in ISIS is in European average 20 %, when women’s figure of total foreign fighters from the Netherlands was 40 %. Even though Dutch women were represented proportionally higher than other women were, they do not seem to possess higher threat to the Netherlands than other foreign fighters do. Next, to the first threat scenario – return to homeland as radicalised and violent.

Having analysed returnee amounts from Europe, first threat against society is returnees’ violent indoctrination and learned violence during their time in ISIS. Returnee policies are different in European countries and harsh penalties could lessen female returnees’ needs of return - returnees prefer to stay underground.

In Denmark, according to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), at least 125 people have travelled to Syria/Iraq since January 2011, from those 31 are remaining abroad and 27 have confirmed dead. Thirty-one have returned to Denmark, majority of all foreign fighters are Danish citizens and have residence cities such as Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense (Boutin et, 2016, p. 29) In the Danish authorities’ threat assessment (Boutin et, 2016, p. 30) “the terrorism threat is “significant” and the returnees from the conflict pose a particular terror threat to the country”. On the other hand, ‘particular terror threat’ is not clarified in PET’s report, nor examined on gender level. The figure for Denmark is higher than the average 30 %, and according to the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), it estimates that from about 5000 European Union residents about 30%

have returned home and for example in Denmark, the number was closer to half in comparison to the 10% of 9000 Russian and former republics of the Soviet Union had returned. (Barrett, 2017, P. 10) Returning to homeland is traveling between two countries – not a terrorist act itself. For Denmark, returnees posed a threat since they were able to return to homeland.

It can be argued, that for Europeans returning home is easier than what it is for other nationalities. In addition, PET's comment suggests returnees are viewed as soldiers and not as traveling civilians. In sum, to Denmark, more returnees returned and threat is 'significant' according to Danish authorities. Moving on from figures to violence - why violent environment is a second potential threat against society.

Secondly, the risk of women's expertise on weapons and violence is a significant threat because living in a violent environment gave them reason to adjust to new reality. For example, a number of Dutch women with ISIS have direct experience with violence – in some cases, women have received weapons training. "Women in the conflict area are permitted to carry weapons and suicide belts, and a considerable number of Dutch women did so, sometimes under pressure from their husbands." (AIVD 2, 2017, p.7). It can be claimed that the weapons and training were for the purpose of self-defence in a conflict zone; however, it is unlikely that it would be the only reason. "A small number of Dutch women have expressed the desire to engage in acts of violence for ISIS, for example on the battlefield". (AIVD 2, 2017, p.7) Not only Dutch women can pose indirect threat through weapon knowledge, also other nationalities are capable of utilising learned combat and weapon skills against Western society and its population.

As mentioned above, an ability to use violence, fire a weapon and control others through fear gives empowerment and superiority to women. Violence against other Westerners and women can be justified in the ISIS mentality since violent behaviour and justification of violence was everyday life for ISIS women in fight against Westerner and their values. The organisation itself remained a danger and it succeeded in inspiring its followers to carry out many attacks in the West. According to The General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), in the Netherlands it is expected that ISIS will live on underground and that it will continue to plot attacks, also in the West. (AIVD, 2017, p. 12) Women are engaged in violence and fighting as men are – equals in violent behaviour. Skilled female fighters have the required skills to face a Western enemy.

In sum, female foreign fighters with military expertise in operational roles possess a threat after return to Western society. Search for violent justification and need to be violent in the future can

continue to exist in female returnee's presence. Violence can be binding role for women, a way to control uncertainties in the environment.

Thirdly, ISIS' reputation and dominant present on the map of terrorism requires it to be seen and heard. Female recruits are utilized as perpetrators for ISIS in West, as mentioned by AIVD, "ISIS continues to have a great need for attacks committed in its name. Besides the persistent motivation inherent in jihadist ideology that 'infidels' should be attacked, ISIS wants its propaganda to show how the group can exact vengeance on the international coalition, of which the Netherlands is a member". (AIVD, 2017, p. 12) As long as the returning foreign fighters remain a one faceless group, the discussion about the threat level adjust to the society's perception of danger. The question should be if the returning foreign fighters are one unified danger to a non-ISIS world. If all returning foreign fighters and possible family members are labelled as dangerous and threat to the national security, it creates a self-prophecy. Then they are given the permission to become dangerous and act according to the expectations. An American non-profit organisation the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) disagrees with the impact of returning foreign fighters to Europe. From a U.S. perspective, foreign fighters could "establish new affiliates or facilitate attacks in countries where the US has strategic interests". (Fellman, 2017, p. 1) To some extent, the returning foreign fighters have the tools and credibility among radicalised individuals in the area to establish new affiliates. In order to establish new affiliates or facilitate attacks for example in Denmark, radicalised groups do not necessarily need the outside ignition.

The reasons behind joining ISIS or some other group in Iraq or in Syria is relevant when it comes to their return. If the environment in the homeland was already troubled and same-minded individuals travelled together to combat areas, most likely the battlefields would follow home. "It is possible that most would-be fighters join because of their friends and family rather than fervent belief in the ideology of the Islamic State." (Fellman, 2017, p. 2) On the other hand, foreign fighters are fighters in a foreign land, not in their domestic land – transnational insurgency is preferred rather than domestic terror attacks. Threat perception is high due to the violent acts in the Caliphate, but does it automatically mean that those acts would follow back home? Not necessarily if returnees do not have opportunities to remain in radicalised environment.

In addition to the potential three threat scenarios, individual characteristics and travel patterns are significant part of the overall image of female returnee's threat expectation. Male threat is in many cases analysed as bigger than women's terror threat, because presumption is that male fighters have better knowledge of battlefield knowledge. Center for Terror Analysis (CTA) in Denmark assesses that men primarily pose the terror threat, but that women can also play an operational role in

terrorist attacks. CTA assesses that attacks carried out by women in other Western countries may inspire female militant Islamists in Denmark. (Danish Security and Intelligence Service, 2018, p.7) Focus on female returnees' radicalization level is important, having said that, female returnees' threat abilities should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, knowing all possible threat scenarios does not mean European societies are prepared for a returnee's attack.

In conclusion, the three scenarios against Western society are firstly, female returnees' active participation in building and supporting ISIS, secondly, women's participation and ability to use violence and thirdly radicalisation and need to continue building terrorism network outside the Caliphate. Third subchapter, 'Punishments and penalties' ends this chapter with introducing punishments and penalties for returning foreign fighters; sentences vary in Europe, especially high prison sentences are in Sweden.

## 6.2 Punishments and penalties

This last subchapter begins with facing ideologically indoctrinated returnees of ISIS, continues with arrest of returnees for terrorism ending with prison sentences. Penalties vary in European countries; sentences are especially high in Sweden where male foreign fighters are given long sentences. As there is still many foreign fighters waiting to return, long jail sentences could discourage them from returning. What is the price for return ticket home?

Women of the Islamic State travelled leaving behind the Western world and its laws – with no intention of return. As women are slowly returning to their old lives and jurisdiction, European courts are facing female violence in a form of terrorism outside its jurisdiction. In our social media age, it is difficult to hide from camera phone – especially when ISIS broadcasted and shared its violent material worldwide. Perpetrators must be in the correct country in order to be prosecuted for their international crimes. Verdicts have different outcomes in European countries, as EUROPOL reported that the guilty verdicts pronounced by courts in the EU in 2016 resulted in various penalties including imprisonment, fines, treatment in mental health care facilities, community service and restraining orders.

In the current flow of thousands of returnees, legal solutions take years to become active and used in returnees' cases. For example creating an international solution in northeast Syria, without accepting the foreign fighters into their homelands is the new proposal to keep foreign fighters in non-European prisons. "It's clear that creating such an international court is a long process. But we have examples such as the Yugoslavia court, which has been able to convict perpetrators," Interior Minister of Finland Kai Mykkänen said at an EU ministerial meeting in Brussels saying that all

Nordic countries are interested in creating a joint international court. (YLE, 2019) However, forming an international court supervised by the UN takes years until it is active, returning foreign fighters will return during that waiting period.

In addition, there have been cases where the court also imposed restrictions on civil rights and bans on entering the national territory on completion of the prison term, or revoked the citizenship of those convicted of terrorist offences. (EUROPOL's Terrorism situation and trend report, 2017, p.19) In 2016, according to EUROPOL's research on European verdicts for foreign fighters, "17 EU Member States reported to have concluded 275 court proceedings in relation to terrorism. The concluded court proceedings concerned 580 individuals, 53 of which were female". (EUROPOL, p. 17-19) In other words, male foreign fighters are over presented in court cases; however, punishments and penalties are given to female foreign fighters as for males. Just to name few of the verdicts, the majority of the verdicts for terrorism concerned offences related to the conflict in Syria and Iraq. There are several prosecution problems with international cases; firstly, ISIS is not a country and therefore problematic for the UN to intervene. Secondly, in order to prosecute the foreign fighters in a land of a non-state actor, foreign fighters must return to their homelands since according to the universal criminal jurisdiction the charged person must be in the 'correct' country in order to be prosecuted for international crimes. In other words, persecution happens in both hard and soft approaches, punishments for crimes against humanity does not disappear if there is rehabilitation program attached to the solution. By offering a rehabilitation model in addition to the possible prison sentence, the soft approach would benefit the society in the long-term.

Exit and rehabilitation programs are supporting for example the female defendants and those who are sentenced for planning and traveling to the conflict zone. As it is mentioned by EUROPOL, punishments as well as penalties, vary in different countries: "verdicts in 2016 involved persons who had prepared to leave for or have returned from the conflict zone, as well as persons who have recruited, indoctrinated, financed or facilitated others to travel to Syria and Iraq to join the terrorist groups fighting there". The highest number of female defendants in the concluded proceedings in 2016 were tried for separatist terrorist offenses (22) and for jihadist terrorist offences (22) (EUROPOL, p. 17-19). When female returnees have the possibility to exit ISIS's community, women enter to the Western society's legal system in which they can be prosecuted under the principles of the universal criminal jurisdiction. What kind of punishments do female terrorists need in order to feel there are being punished? Offering a softer approach includes a prison sentence with the possibility of rehabilitation back to the Western society.

In sum, as ISIS is not a state, the United Nation's prosecution problems are the lack of jurisdiction and therefore the lack of an international criminal court in the northeast Syria where most of the foreign fighters are held in captivity. European countries, including the Nordic countries are interested in creating a joint international court outside Europe. Moving on from the international criminal jurisdiction to the sense of punishment, female foreign fighters have lived under strict ISIS rules for years, for them the understanding of punishment has changed.

When Europe's focus is on female returnees, merciless ideological approach of ISIS, brutality against its followers and its 'legal' treatment of citizens is different from Western legislations and punishments. Prison sentences in Sweden or in some other European state are not necessarily a form of punishment for a returnee who has been used to physical punishments and cruelty against humanity. As mentioned by Oosterveld and Bloem, the ISIS leader Al-Baghdadi believed that a caliphate "would be a magnet" and thus persisted in his quest to upend the existing state system in the region. The paradox of ISIS' attempt to create a 'state' is that while it rejects the Westphalian order, it has adopted many of the trappings of Westphalian statehood. (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017, p.9) Now in 2019, European prisons and penalty systems are appealing to foreign fighters rather than those in Iraq. In sum, returnees are facing Western legislation and punishments for acts they have done outside European states' borders. Returning sounds appealing with prison sentence and rehabilitation when the alternative is to remain in some other country's prison system – better living conditions in prison are a motivation to travel back home. Better prison conditions could be considered as a human right and motivate returning female foreign fighters' to seek alternative lifestyles after prison sentence, however, prison sentences vary in different countries.

Before moving on to case countries, this subchapter ends with short and long prison sentences. One country stands out from the crowd of foreign fighter states – Sweden has exceptionally long prison sentences. In comparison to its neighbour Finland, where a life sentence for murder is 16 (in practise it is 8-10 years). Smallest prison sentences are in Austria and Belgium, highest in Sweden as well as in Greece. "Average sentence in years according to Eurojust, average sentence excluding non-prison penalties per Member State in 2016 were in Austria 3 years, Belgium 5, Denmark 4, Estonia 6, France 7, Germany 4, Greece 28, Hungary 12, Italy 5, Netherlands 3, Spain 5, Sweden 28 years and in the United Kingdom 5". (EUROPOL's Terrorism situation and trend report, 2017, p. 20) In Sweden, the prison sentences ordered by the courts in 2016 ranged between 6 weeks and 397 years. (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017) To compare case countries Denmark and the Netherlands to the third case country Sweden, its sentences are in different league and sending a strong message to foreign fighters outside country's borders.

As mentioned by EUROPOL, to charge for terrorist offences is difficult in many cases due to lack of evidence. In 2016 registered a record high conviction rate in the concluded court proceedings (89 %). In some cases, defendants were acquitted for terrorist offences, however convicted of other offences such as illegal possession of firearms, document forgery, preparing an armed robbery, manufacturing drugs and inciting racial hatred. (EUROPOL's Terrorism situation and trend report, 2017, p. 19) European prisons can become milieu of radicalization due to high volume of returning foreign fighters. Will European borders remain closed from unwanted citizens? Return is a nation's problem; responsibility cannot be pushed to some other country and force returnees in hiding in another country. Women are no longer only presented as travel companions; they have stronger involvement in terrorism.

To summarize, returnee policies in Europe reflect state's threat perception; policies emphasize the preservation of individual rights (foreign fighters) or collective national security (for example Denmark's). Arrest of women is on the rise when unwanted returns are increasing to Europe. Emphasising collective national security, previously liberal and rehabilitating countries with soft approach to the returning foreign fighters, Denmark and Sweden have both very strict line with returnees as it is demonstrated in the next subchapter. Next, case countries are facing challenges in a shape of a returnee female foreign fighter.

### 6.3 Case countries

The purpose of this subchapter is to examine case countries: Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands – all three countries had significantly high portion of women travellers to Iraq and Syria whom joined ISIS. Countries are kingdoms, their political culture and tradition of tolerance is liberal in all three countries, however returning foreign fighters have pushed the limits of acceptance. Case countries are geographically located close to each other and so called soft approach method against radicalization is copied from Denmark to Sweden. First, Sweden's foreign fighters' situation is analysed, followed by Denmark and ending this subchapter to the Netherlands.

A key thing to remember with case countries with exceptionally high amount of women travellers is that they are facing the same pressures to solve problematic returns alone or in cooperation with other nations. Problematic is that Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands have a partial picture of various features about travellers' movements. In order to track down individual foreign fighters from different countries, openness and amount of liable data varies – however, in most cases, governments, think-tanks and other researchers such as investigative journalists and academics use country's own databases.

Starting from the beginning of travel interest to Syria and Iraq, female travellers from Europe started to flow to the Caliphate in 2012, peak of travel occurred at the end of June 2014. It accelerated in 2013 and 2014 after the end of Ramadan, and as mentioned in a study by Gustafsson and Ranstorp, the end of 2015, about one-third of the 280 travellers from the Netherlands were women. In a study of 140 Dutch foreign fighters, 117 were men (84%) and 23 women (16%). “In the Netherlands, over half of the women travelling out to Syria did so after ISIS announced the established of the Caliphate at the end of June 2014. Other European states have witnessed an increase in the number of female travellers”. (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017, p.62-63) Moving on utilizing statistical data from the Swedish Security Service, therefore the first case country to be presented is Sweden.

### 6.3.1 Sweden

Sweden is multinational sovereign kingdom in Scandinavia – it has throughout its history taken different immigrant groups and is vibrant nation with already third generation immigrants. When it comes to obtaining data about Swedish foreign fighters, a recent declassified data by the Swedish Security Service has made the study and analyse of Swedish foreign fighters possible. According to an independent think tank Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS) (2017), the so-called "family terrorism" has recently become a new and increasingly severe issue: Terrorists belonging to the same family carried out attacks. In October 2016, the local authorities in the Swedish city of Lund were trialling a program to rehabilitate former ISIS fighters and other extremists with housing, employment, education and financial support. The aim was to reintegrate returned terrorists into society and prevent them from reverting to former networks.

The Soufan Center's recent research (October 2017) on the returning foreign fighters reveal that the estimated amount of European Union nationals are around 5000 and returnees around 1200. As of September 2016, 106 foreign fighters (40 percent) had returned to Sweden, while 112 (42 percent) were still in Syria or Iraq. It is estimated that 49 of the 267 (18 percent) have died in the conflict. (Gustafsson, and Ranstorp, 2017) These figures indicate that Swedish nationals are still in the conflict zone or in other locations outside Sweden. Estimated amount of Swedish travellers is about 300, moreover, the results of Gustafsson and Ranstorp study indicates that especially Swedish women's social status was higher in Syria than in Sweden. Light Swedish females challenged the cultural norms in the Caliphate; Scandinavian appearance brought tactical and strategical advantages to the ISIS's media propaganda. Scandinavian women as well as men had a propaganda value and rare language skill was utilized in online pro-ISIS propaganda material.

Moving on to the concept of time, months are relative when analysing possible events and violent indoctrination of Swedish women in ISIS. The results of a recent study by Gustafsson and Ranstorp show that the average time spent for men is 16 months, in comparison the average for women is 21 months. In other words, women in average spent more time in conflict zone than male foreign fighters. Women therefore have been living under terrorist radicalization longer than men have; returnees will have prolonged ideological mentality.

In sum, they have left Sweden uprooting themselves from the Swedish society accepting the new reality of ISIS – during 21 months, women have had the opportunity to live daily life and build a future having children while possessing a higher status than other women. Violence as a norm in ISIS has resulted in an increase in violent Islamic extremism is presented next.

Continuing with vast study of Linus Gustafsson and Magnus Ranstorp (2017) from Swedish Defence University who have extensively studied violent extremism in Sweden, very little is known about Swedish fighters' movements and radicalization. Referring to the push-pull factors presented in chapter two, the conflict in Syria and Iraq has resulted in an increase in the number of violent Islamist extremists in Sweden, and a significant increase of people from Sweden travelling to join terrorist groups abroad. Since 2012, as mentioned earlier, it is estimated that about 300 people from Sweden have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join terrorist groups such as ISIS and, to a lesser extent, al-Qaeda affiliated groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra – female participation is unknown. “Even though the foreign fighter issue has been on the political agenda for several years and received considerable media attention, very little is known about the Swedish contingent”. (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017) Emerging threats and problems of Swedish returning female foreign fighters are inability to adjust back to the Swedish society with possible children born outside Sweden resulting to another radicalization circle, possible language barriers preventing returnee to seek and accept help, in addition to possible mental problems. Considering that, Sweden is relatively small country by population (nearly 10 million) 300 foreign fighters is an alarming figure.

In sum, little is known about Swedish foreign fighters due to lack of declassified data from state officials. Much of the information about female foreign fighters was available by investigative journalism and local Swedish-language media that followed actively girls and women. Next, looking deeper into the figures of first-time travellers, figures rose from 2012 to its peak years in 2013-14 until plummeted in 2016.

Utilizing Turkey as a transit country, Swedish citizens travelled actively to Syria and Iraq during 2012 and 2015, especially active year for Swedes was 2013. In figures gathered by Gustafsson and

Ranstorp, 36 people first-time travellers travelled to Syria or Iraq in 2012, 98 in 2013, 78 in 2014, 36 in 2015, and 5 in 2016. In addition to first-time travellers, some of the foreign fighters have travelled back and forth between the conflict area and Sweden. The amount of women has significantly changed during the follow-up period, from “a few” in 2012 to 18 percent in 2013, and constituting about 40 percent of the foreign fighters in the conflict area in 2014 and 2015. (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017) In other words, Swedes travel motivation was the highest in 2013, in addition to first-time travellers there was also multiple-travellers. Swedes were quite old travellers when in comparison to other European countries, as it is shown next.

Among Swedish travellers, the average age of the foreign fighters is 26, and there are no significant differences between the average age of men and women. Still, there is a great variation indicating there are very young travellers but also older ones, as the age ranges in a span of 50 years. According to the Swedish Security Service, 18 percent of the travellers (45 people) are 19 or younger, while about 60 percent (154 people) are between the ages of 20 to 29. Those who left from Sweden were young, eager to join the terrorist movement and women were potential wife material to other foreign fighters. Young people immigrate since they have less obligations and rooted sensation towards Sweden – especially if they are immigrants or have an immigrant background themselves. External reasons influence to the travel decisions, and despite being a nation of multiple nationalities and religions, Sweden offers a blue and yellow view of the world to outsiders. When living in Sweden, foreigners are always considered as ‘främmande’ (out of country). Having said that, next to the division of Swedish foreign fighters and immigrant background foreign fighters.

Sweden is deeply a class society; it keeps outsiders away from its inner circle. “A majority of the foreign fighters, an estimated 80 percent, come from four of Sweden’s 21 counties – Västra Götaland, Stockholm, Skåne and Örebro”. (Gustafsson and Ranstorp, 2017) Having said that, more than seventy percent have been residents of an exposed area (socially deprived areas hit by high criminality and low socioeconomic status), which is common in these areas due to high unemployment and complexed housing situation in big cities that is forcing low income citizens to move further away from big cities. There is information that there have been recruiters in some of the areas, but social media may also have played a role in the mobilisation of foreign fighters.

As mentioned in the beginning of subchapter, Sweden is a nation of multiple nationalities. In Sweden, 75 percent of the foreign fighters are Swedish citizens, and 34 percent are born in inside the country, for example in different African countries, Afghanistan and Finland. Sweden is a melting pot of different nationalities: 38 countries are represented when analysing country of birth; street view in any Swedish city – big or small - is multi-ethnic and different languages are heard

spoken. As it was mentioned in Gustafsson and Ranstorp's study, most of the foreign fighters have at least one parent with country of birth outside of Sweden.

As a multinational country, in order to tackle the threats of returning foreign fighters, international cooperation is needed with other surrounding states like Denmark and the Netherlands. "As of September 2016, 106 foreign fighters (40 percent) had returned to Sweden, while 112 (42 percent) were still in Syria or Iraq. It is estimated that 49 of the 267 (18 percent) have died in the conflict". (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017, p.104) In the form of female returning foreign fighters, Sweden is facing female terrorism and terrorism sentiments on its soil when women are forced to return to home.

In other words, mostly returnees are young under 30, in total 300 foreign fighters left Sweden to fight with ISIS and build a Caliphate – young returnees require special rehabilitation programs in order to re-immigrate them to the Swedish society. In conclusion, the lack of authorities' transparency of terrorism in Sweden and radicalization of youth – Swedes and immigrants living in Sweden is problematic. Moving on to the second case country, another Scandinavian country, Denmark with population of 5, 7 million had around 145 foreign fighters.

### 6.3.2 Denmark

A small Nordic country Denmark, has ambitious goals of rehabilitation and deradicalization, can offer the international community a possible solution to new problematic phenomenon of returning foreign fighters of ISIS. What should the international community do with returning foreign fighters and family members from Iraq and Syria? "The total amount of Danish foreign fighters is around 145, and in addition, 23 were sent back from Turkey and 196 stop listed. Remaining Danish foreign fighters are about 35 and returned 67". (Barrett, 2017, p. 12) Denmark stipulated that only very few persons departed in 2016 – the vast majority of these travellers were young women.

In general, women account for nearly one eighth of the total number of travellers from Denmark. They also noted that more women play an active and independent role within jihadist circles in Denmark, and may consequently have an increasingly radicalising effect on their associates and families. (EUROPOL's Terrorism situation and trend report, 2017, p. 13) In comparison, Belgium reported that returning women (and children) are of concern, to the apparent involvement of female activists in the preparation of attacks. Some may also have received military training. In addition, IS propaganda has repeatedly depicted the training and indoctrination of minors. (EUROPOL's Terrorism situation and trend report, 2017, p.13) Terror threat according to the Center for Terror analyse (CTA) assessment is significant – the threat is primarily posed by militant Islamism and

comes from men as well as women. The conflict in Syria and Iraq and the group calling itself Islamic State (IS) are most important factors in the threat picture. (Danish Security and Intelligence Service, 2018, p.1)

From these countries, Denmark has been developing a rehabilitation model for prisoners prior to the phenomenon of returning foreign fighters of ISIS. According to the research by Francesco Ragazzi and Josh Walmsley (Scherrer, 2018, p.43) Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK have so-called soft approaches in terms of de-radicalisation; Denmark has equally been influential through the development of the 'Aarhus model'. In six member states, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK may impose restrictions on the movements of returnees.

Measures range from the refusal to issue or seizure/invalidation of identity cards and passports (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK) or the obligation to receive police approval to travel to certain areas (Denmark). (Scherrer, 2018, p.43) In recent time, once famous of its soft words about foreign fighters, tune is changing when Denmark's political atmosphere is getting populist and lack of funding has nearly buried the famous Aarhus Model of rehabilitation. Moreover, according to the research by EUROPOL, Denmark reported that recruitment, radicalisation and facilitation of people and resources to the conflict zone takes place in circles that are less visible and organised than previously observed.

Developments in the global threat picture according to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (2018) is still affected by foreign militant Islamist groups: "The "caliphate" takes on a more abstract form, and militant Islamist propaganda encourages support of the "caliphate" by committing attacks in one's home country, particularly in the West." (Danish Security and Intelligence Service, 2018, p.1) Radicalization is possible when there is lack of religious knowledge, distance from moderate contacts in one's social circle and assimilation to surrounding society is problematic for example due to religious appearance (niqab, jilbab). ISIS's propaganda targeting potential Danish terrorist women is luring when Danish society is viewed as anti-Muslim and controlling women's religious freedom of expression. When it comes to Denmark's soft approach to fight against radicalization, mainly target customers are young men and women are left out from the discussion, even though they are nearly one eighth of foreign fighters from Denmark.

As an example about the soft approach, Denmark's approach differs from rest of the EU community; it takes early prevention action on youth offering a scalable model that prevention against radicalization takes place on all levels. In sum, Denmark gained international attention presenting the Aarhus Model of rehabilitation for ISIS returnees, however the results of

deradicalization program is unknown. Linguistic emphasis is not often mentioned with returning foreign fighters, however with the last case country, the binding role of Dutch-speaking women is noticed in the Netherlands.

Last case country presents the Netherlands' view on approximately 100 female returnees' threat expectations by recruiting others, producing propaganda and fundraising.

### 6.3.3 The Netherlands

The third case country is the Netherlands, with a large population of 17, 8 million and estimated 80 women still in Syria and Iraq. Terrorism ideology, radicalization and threat of cyberterrorism against the Netherlands are pulling the security focus on Dutch terrorist women. There seems to be little sympathy for foreign fighters' cause among the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark.

In figures, the Netherlands' situation with its returnee women is the same than with Sweden and Denmark – in average 50 % have already returned. Jihadist women are considered a serious security threat against Dutch society. Dutch Prime Minister is notoriously famous of his Trump-like comments about foreign fighters, there seems to be little support left to accept returning foreign fighters into the Netherlands. As mentioned by Ochab, “the response to returning foreign fighters must be a considered a priority as part of individual states' counter-terrorism strategy”. (Ochab, 2019) Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte is notorious for having a hard line with ‘our enemy’ ISIS: “The terrorists have one aim: to destabilise our western civilisation”, Rutte said. “The best answer we can give these barbarians is not to become divided... Our values and our rule of law are stronger than the fanaticism of a small group.” (Dutch News, 2015) Rutte is backing ‘no survivors’ policy, “kill them all and let God sort them out”. (Malet and Hayes, 2019, p. 9)

Strong populist voices are similar in all three case countries; focus is on returning foreign fighters and terrorism in general in homeland. In the General Intelligence and Security Service's (in Dutch Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD) annual report 2017, the Netherlands' focus is on returnees as still 55 % are in the conflict zone and those returnees pose a threat to the Netherlands by recruiting others, producing and spreading propaganda and fundraising. (AIVD, 2017) Recruiting, producing and spreading pro-ISIS propaganda does not require physical presence in any Dutch city; everything can be done electronically from distance. Recruitment happens online as well as in real life; however, AIVD is concerned of female returnees' abilities to utilize cyberterrorism and become a digital terrorist. Terrorism related cyberattacks could pose a threat on Dutch society in the form of kill list and hacking. In sum, in addition to new emerging cyber threats,

cooperation among states is to focus on rehabilitation and reintegration – solutions differ from Rutte’s strategy to protect the Netherlands with ‘no survivors’ policy.

As mentioned in guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters by the UN Security Council (2015), for reaffirming the need to “improve border security, information-sharing on judicial measures and strategies to prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate terrorists in line with international human rights law.” The UN has also adopted a comprehensive approach to assist governments to deal with the threat posed by returning or relocation of foreign fighters. According to the UN Secretary-General, more than half of these projects focus on rehabilitating and reintegrating the individuals into society. Some of the new projects address the issue of returning women and children.

The Netherlands have exceptionally high amount of female foreign fighters, therefore it should have high motivation to tackle security threats by women. In EU Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2016, for example in 2015 from Dutch travellers, 40 % were women and historical data suggest that women are less likely to return. (EU Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2016, 2016, p. 7) Obviously Dutch returnee women disagree with statement, since as it is mentioned in the next section, Dutch women return and are arrested – arrest of women for terrorism is risen in the Netherlands and in Sweden.

Moving on to female influence in terrorism movement – figures demonstrate that Dutch female returnees are being arrested – a fight against terrorism is successful for short time period when arrest figures raise. Promotion of moderate religious interpretation, fighting poverty and improving economic situation are key factors when dealing with returnees from the same socioeconomic and linguistic background. Now to the figures about terrorism in the Netherlands: women returnees’ amount is growing; in 2016, it was already 40 %. In the Netherlands, terrorism arrest on Dutch women increased from 2013 (3 arrests), and 2014 (52) rapidly in 2015 (128). To compare the figures to Sweden’s female returnees, during the study period of June 2012 to September 2016, women returnees were in 2012 (few), 2013 (18 %) and 2014-15 (40 %); as of September 2016, 106 returnees (40 %) (Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017, p. 11) Knowledge of the environment is important and as these figures demonstrate, terrorists movement is active in the Netherlands and at the same time; towards the end of 2017, some 185 individuals from the Netherlands were still in Syria or Iraq. (AIVD, 2017, p. 12) Transparency and active listening of radicalised women is important in order to minimize the risk of terrorism among Dutch female returnees in the Netherlands. Dutch government’s goal is to imprison as many returning foreign fighters as possible to ensure peaceful security policy. In conclusion, ISIS is a Western problem as much as a Muslim problem, in a multinational society like the Netherlands, country’s religious leaders and other actors against

extremist interpretation should be included to the dialogue about finding solutions for Dutch returnees.

Instead of focusing on threat, as the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (2017) evaluate the returning foreign terrorist fighters as a potential threat to the Netherlands' national security, there should be improvement in critical thinking and a modern mentality that returnees are able to express themselves. It is true that "individuals who have received prolonged ideological indoctrination, military training in the use of weapons and explosives, or have gained combat experience during their stay in a conflict region pose a particularly strong security threat". (Europol, 2017, p. 14) At the same time, fight against terrorism in Dutch society requires cooperation nationally and internationally; in the early stages of rehabilitation planning, returnee women should be included to the rehabilitation program.

In the Netherlands (as well in Denmark), the focus is heavily on male returnees and grassroots level work is done among young men. Tone of discussion in Dutch politics and media is damaging women's voluntary participation because it is deeply negative and excludes them as potential rehabilitators. Next, linguistic link in radicalization process is a key factor with Dutch women.

Sharing the same cultural and linguistic background is underestimated unifying link between women of same background. Most women are in contact with one or more terrorists during their radicalisation process: a friend, a partner, a family member or online contact who uses the same language. Social media make it easier for women to meet terrorists in the Netherlands and abroad. (AIVD 2, 2017, p. 4) Foreign fighters have already managed to achieve the goal of traveling and being part of the ISIS or some other terrorist network in Iraq or in Syria. Outside factors as poverty, marginalisation and organised crime are affecting the returnees' minds and lives upon their return. Because of the negative influence, there should be a softer approach to address returning female fighters' needs by providing online assistance in their language and familiar methods such as approach and provide counselling in chat rooms.

The terrorist threat according to AIVD' annual report 2017 shows that there were no attacks in the Netherlands in 2017, but in many other Western countries, terrorists did succeed in violently carrying out their agendas. As AIVD mentions, 29 attacks took place, a slight increase from 2016, many more were prevented by the timely intervention of national authorities. The terrorist threat to the Netherlands mainly stems from the global terrorist movement, which has been under a great deal of pressure internationally. (AIVD, 2017, p. 12) As primary data is often very hard to obtain,

most studies that seek to address this question draw on open source materials such as court documents, media articles, online autobiographies, or official government statistics. (Sheik, 2016)

Comprehensive approach returnees in the Netherlands is according to National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (2017), an individual approach: The multidisciplinary case management team decides which interventions are best suited to minimize the potential threat from a returnee. A tailor made approach is key. Examples of interventions are criminal prosecution, restraining orders, care programs or a deradicalisation program.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

Europe has never faced a threat like them before with previous jihads such as with Afghanistan. Therefore, to research the threat level of returning foreign fighters is crucial for the future development of not only counter-terrorism but also international relations, which is struggling with the changing world order.

Solutions are connected to society's ability to process the different stages of threats and find the cooperative way to rehabilitate the radicalised individuals. In order to fight terrorism and specifically ISIS, firstly it is important to pay attention in promoting moderate Islam in society, secondly fight against poverty so that in the future terrorist groups would have less push-pull factors. In addition, religious leaders and returning female foreign fighters should be included into the discussion about rehabilitation and future in European society. Knowledge of modern woman's environment and reality is missing from the European discussion – women are blogging, vlogging and taking constantly images of their everyday moments. Women reach other women utilizing the same linguistic background in social media; these online platforms should be utilized in finding returnees.

Promoting and offering them an alternative way to live in their homeland is a carrot and a method that offers them a safe route away from radicalization. In the Danish approach, the emphasis is to the Muslim youth who are living outside the society or under pressure to become radicalised, because alienation from the Western society is reality for them as it is for female foreign fighters. The emphasis should not be tied or roughly connected to the religion or cultural identity, since also non-Muslims were radicalised and travelled to conflict areas. De-radicalisation programmes offer a possible approach to the incarcerated radical extremists, however results and veritable data takes years to get.

Having said that, prison sentences could be a second chance to rehabilitation, reintegration and having better opportunities for future. In the beginning of foreign fighters' phenomenon, Denmark

had a soft approach to returning foreign fighters, it offered rehabilitation to all those whom wanted to return. As political environment is getting windier in Denmark, it is approaching stricter line with its returnees. In sum, the ability to be less political and have a humanitarian approach to female returnees allows returnee women to adapt better to changing environment.

Often in discussion about returning foreign fighters, the discussion is marginalised to cover all the nationalities under the same threat level. Few countries offer a rehabilitation model for the returnees, it has a supportive reaction to the returning foreign fighters, a reintegration system that offers rehabilitation without prosecution. Collision of the returning Western foreign fighters of ISIS and European countries have an influence on society's ability to adjust to change. Western societies need to adjust to living with convicted or non-convicted ISIS fighters of Western origin. Foreign fighters are not common criminals since they have a strong belief in the caliphate and in their spiritual community.

## 7. Chapter 4: European solution

Chapter 4 concludes this study. This chapter begins with a European solution to the threats posed by returning female foreign fighters. Employment of women into the discussion of rehabilitation and sentencing is important measure to change their suppressed role in European societies. The second section analyses women's online presence, and how they are utilizing media in their conquest for a solution.

Hundreds of unwanted women and their children are still stuck in refugee camps and in prisons in Kurdistan and Iraq, as they are returning back having no alternatives. What can be learned from women's experiences in ISIS, and is it possible to find a secure strategy to handle their return? Feeling of rootlessness will follow when returnees are forced to evacuate from areas once part of ISIS's caliphate. From women's point-of-view, it is not dangerous for them to be with ISIS, but to be at home – in Europe.

*This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.*

*Winston Churchill*

### 7.1 "European solution"

This first chapter analyses the possibility of a collective security solution for European countries. As it was mentioned previously, different threat scenarios ranging from utilizing combat and weapon skills to form a sleeper cell, to producing propaganda for recruitment, or even to radicalization by distancing from moderate contacts has been raised. Returning women should not be underestimated because of their gender. As long as women are only seen as wives, mothers, and adventurists seeking for new experiences, no real discussion of threat scenarios by women against domestic society exists. Collective security solution for European countries seems unlikely when it comes to foreign fighters – men or women, because countries have already chosen their solutions.

Having said that, our common security threat with different solution scenarios is stirring the discussion on returning foreign fighters in Europe thanks to president Trump's tweets. A collective "European solution" for women and children of ISIS has been raised in Belgium, the same discussion that is taking place in any political arena in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. All the previous countries have raised concern about their citizens returning to their homeland after years of service in ISIS. In other words, the burden of finding a universal solution to the problem of female returnees requires cooperation among states and other sectors – a "European solution" for dividing and monitoring the rehabilitation of women require new methods. While female returnees

have been away from their homelands, discussion about them has continued during their absence. ISIS offered these female foreign fighters something that their own societies could not offer – a dialogue with them about their wellbeing. Next, President Trump is stepping on European toes proposing a unite response to a common threat.

In discussion about which of the returnees has the right to return to homeland, the United States have an influencing role in controlling the discussion. David Malet's research indicates that most domestic terror plots by returnees, including successful attacks, occur only within the first few months and that there is no evidence of any long-term threats by returnee sleeper cells. (Malet, 2019) To look beyond current conflict situation with western women in refugee camps and other non-European places, it is vital to create a strategy for productive post-conflict lives. As Malet and Hayes (2018) mention in their vast research on foreign fighter returnees security threats, "setting up a productive post-conflict lives with no need for financial resource to joining an armed group" is essential part of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). (Malet and Hayes, 2018)

President Trump's tweets are proposing how European allies should handle foreign fighters' phenomenon. The problematic in his tweets is that he is often referring only to male foreign fighters, not females. In addition to that, gendered understanding is still weak in media; returning women of ISIS are treated differently in the media compared to men, since women are portrait as weak, mothers, and victims of youth and silliness. Should European countries take more responsibility over returnees, as Trump suggested in his tweet: "The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back over 800 Isis fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial. The Caliphate is ready to fall. The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them". (New Delhi Television Limited, 2019) Trump's blunt approach to influence other countries with his expertise in violence is working. His original tweets can no longer be found on his personal Twitter account. However, several international media outlets have commented those tweets including screen shots.

By pushing the problem of returnees to the US in Syria is not a long-term solution, it does not support peace building in Syria and Iraq. Easy solution is to bring male foreign fighters to European courts and let women with their children to enter European soil without persecution – it would be the worst solution to this international problem. It is important to remember that women are not civilians; they are soldiers as much as their male counterparts are. In sum, women should be on the same threat level expectation with their male counterparts. Moving on to schedule pressure due to Trump's tweets.

Returning foreign fighters and their wives with children are a hot political topic of spring 2019. As traveling from ISIS controlled areas was impossible for many due to the lack of passport and money, foreign fighters were forced to stay in the conflict areas. After years of fighting ISIS, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) hold hundreds of foreigners accused of fighting for the group, and well as related women and children. Syria's Kurds have repeatedly called for their countries of origin to take them back, but these nations have been reluctant. The issue has taken on greater urgency, however, amid fears of a security vacuum since Trump's shock announcement in December that US troops would withdraw. (New Delhi Television Limited, 2019) Focus should be on returnees and especially on women returnees; because they are exiting ISIS controlled areas due to force and not voluntarily. After their return on European soil, women remain vulnerable on ISIS' propaganda, it is targeted on women and its feminist approach is keeping women faithful to the cause. ISIS has shown that it is pragmatic, modern and opportunist organization – able to utilize women in its propaganda and in establishment of terrorist network in Europe. In conclusion, nationality, same language and cultural background, women have a binding role in ISIS's violent terrorism ideology.

As a term, "European solution" is nothing new in Europe – according to the New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV), in Belgium, justice minister Koen Geens called for a collective "European solution" to the problem of foreign fighters, urging a solution that carries the least security risks. "We currently have mothers and children in northern Syria, but also some fighters who are known," he told Belgian public television network VRT. (New Delhi Television Limited, 2019) Due to women's anonymity after they have abandoned their Western identity and name, it became easier to become someone else in ISIS. In addition to the lack of identifiable name, European women were not actively followed in the beginning of travel waves to Syria and Iraq, therefore ISIS knows its followers better than European countries know their citizens. It is unlikely that women would give up their new identities and return to the same European scenario. In sum, a collective European solution about returning foreign fighters should support women's identity building and rehabilitation back to non-violent citizen.

As it was shown during the immigration wave from Iraq and Afghanistan, European countries were incapable of coordinating and report about immigrants with criminal past. In other words, common European solution of shared responsibility did not happen during immigration crisis in 2015-2016; therefore, an immigration wave in a much smaller scale seems as unlikely to happen between European states. Leaving those years behind, next relocation of returnees is causing discussion;

where should foreign fighters and their children stay or relocate in order to minimize the threat expectation?

Since spring 2019 has sparked an international debate on shared responsibility over foreign fighters, the United States is making its voice heard. “The US does not want to watch as these Isis fighters permeate Europe, which is where they are expected to go. We do so much, and spend so much - Time for others to step up and do the job that they are so capable of doing. We are pulling back after 100% Caliphate victory!” US doesn’t want to watch ‘fighters permeate Europe’ with caliphate ‘ready to fall’, says president Trump. (Wintour, 2019) In order to have 100 % Caliphate victory takes more than just geographical changes on the map of Syria and Iraq, ISIS soldiers need to stop existing and serving its aim. Troops move and fight because they are given a reason of a better life – which promise needs to address in European solution and offer meaningful solution to replace ISIS.

As thousands of refugees were referred as a wave of refugees, a new wave of returning foreign fighters is approaching. Return of many European fighters is causing uproar in advance. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, speaking to CNBC in Munich, said that he had concern over the “so many foreign fighters” who were trying to return home now that ISIS had collapsed as a major fighting force. Stoltenberg said NATO members had “good ways to share information” but described the return of potential terrorists back into domestic society as “a challenge for all of us.” (Clinch, 2019) Trump’s demand regarding the 800 fighters complicates an already tense debate about what European countries should do regarding combatants who have been captured fighting for the Islamic State, some of whom are European citizens. (Herszenhorn, 2019) Are returnees allowed to change their mind about staying in Iraq and Syria and be allowed to return home, or should they remain in refugee camps and prisons outside Europe? Even though not all women were part of military groups, European societies are facing women’s problems with adjusting to ‘civilian life’ – unworthiness of life in post-war situation. Lack of communality feeling of sisters-in-arms is facing them when returning to Europe. Trump’s mentioned 800 fighters could pose a threat in the future by becoming the next wave of jihad in Europe, especially with delayed returns of fighters whom prefer to remain in some other European country.

In other words, remaining foreign fighters should not stay longer than necessary in a conflict zone or in a refugee camp, until there is a universal solution for them. Allowing female foreign fighters to return to their homelands should be a human right – an anticipatory action to prevent further radicalization to happen on refugee camps and prisons.

In conclusion, after any length of stay, a return from a conflict area into domestic society is a challenge for the individual and to the society. Furthermore, information and experiences about return into domestic society should be shared, and learned. Women have formed an international terrorism network while being together in social gatherings, in wars fighting together, and shared everyday moments online. Countries should exchange information and experiences like ISIS women are doing. Deprogramming women from radicalism and ISIS's ideology will be the toughest challenge for national security.

Group of women – of same nationality, language group, or wives of the same fighter have a feeling of togetherness and responsibility towards their initial goal of live in ISIS. To touch an individual returnee woman's rootless emotion is a necessary approach in the beginning of rehabilitation. Rootless women with nothing to lose are dangerous ticking time bombs in society; they are easier to approach by recruiters and second radicalization process will have devastating consequences. Next, how to support European solution and not to alienate female returnees from the European society.

## 7.2 Online presence

In this second section, female returnees are controlling their media image and with or without media attention, women are rewriting the future for themselves. To cope with returning women from conflict area, European countries need to fight this war online in order to reach blogging, vlogging and instagramming female returnees. In order to fight this war against ISIS, gender norms have to support women's participation in post-conflict discussion and rehabilitation. For several years, ISIS empowered women by making them key players in present and future attacks, therefore women should have a stronger role in rehabilitation in fighting against learned extremism.

Foreign fighters who have been barred from their home countries have fanned the flames of terrorism and insurgency when left unchecked. Osama bin Laden was the most prominent of hundreds of such militants who created far more havoc than any returnees did. In addition, in the social media era, they do not even need to return home to reach domestic audiences. (Malet, 2019)

Vast media attention of Western girls and women in Kurdistan and Iraq is raising topic of unwanted Western returnees back to headlines. Unwanted returnees are stuck in refugee camps; they are giving interviews to Western media in order to gain attention, perhaps even a return ticket back to Europe. In spring 2019, returning women and children of ISIS are potential terrorist women of the future – women and their children were exposed to violent terrorism ideology for a long time and have created an international network of western women.

If female foreign fighters are able to return, the physical alienation – such as imprisonment for decades – of the female returnees from the Western population is not a realistic or a long-term solution. Employment of women into the discussion of post-imprisonment life in rehabilitation is an important measure in order to change their suppressed role in the European societies. Female returnees have a unique position to influence other ISIS female returnees and deradicalize them – they need a reason to root themselves and become a part of the Western society in Europe. Before ending this last chapter, the situation is escalating online with the remaining female foreign fighters, especially women are getting media attention.

Women are rewriting future of ISIS –the first terrorist organization that aggressively recruited women and articulated a role for them within the organization. Without forgetting, women have lived for years in a violent reality; they have become experts of violence, and managed to survive in unpredictable conditions. Scholar Khelghat-Doost believes that “Women of the Islamic State are the mothers of tomorrow”. (Khelghat-Doost, 2016, p. 23) They were given motherhood as a tool to spread ISIS propaganda by training their children as child soldiers. As seen, women bring tactical advantages, asymmetric capabilities and are being used in the suicide attack arsenal; in addition to that ISIS women know how to manipulate their social media image to their advantage.

Norms of violence for female terrorist is different, as they are seen through sympathy lenses in European media – story line that ISIS women know how to tell and share online. As McManus mentions, sentimental terror narratives (McManus, 2013) help women to have gendered imagery and protection or production of life in motherhood. Moreover, due to this, readers can identify to motherhood, “Women are also victimized, and portrayed as instruments of male leadership”. (Khelghat-Boost, 2016) Women and children are considered in the media as civilians and are often referred as outsiders in the conflict.

Having said that, women are manipulating and having an individual influence to the national and international public through online media as well as through non-stop news cycle. Basic crisis management is needed to control the online flow of false news, propaganda and horror stories from ISIS – a special international media unit to tackle the online talk. Lastly, to conclude this chapter, to conclusions and suggestions.

## 8. Conclusions and suggestions

This last chapter analyses the problems and solutions of public discussion regarding Western female foreign fighters who are returning to their homelands. In this thesis, I have presented the process of radicalization, female participation in ISIS and current problems of female foreign fighters' return to their homelands. As a solution to the possible security threats posed by female foreign fighters, I have analysed the 'European solution' rehabilitation strategy of returning female foreign fighters from European countries. This adaption model would approach female foreign fighters as female actors, therefore understanding their gender and gender roles in ISIS – utilizing those female returnees as facilitators of their own rehabilitation and adjustment to their Western cultures.

Since there is a lack of rehabilitation programs adjusted for female gender, strategy of rehabilitation should address the gender question. There are several adaptations of foreign fighter returnees in the Western countries, such as in the European countries; 'European solution' rehabilitation model of female foreign fighters takes under consideration the differences of male and female foreign fighters. Discussion from threats against society must move on to the long-term solutions, because Swedish, Danish and Dutch female foreign fighters have the legal right to return to their homelands. Therefore as rehabilitation suggestions, Future for Advanced Research and Studies' key points of rehabilitation are introduced. Throughout this thesis, the emphasis has been on the threat perception of returning female foreign fighters – this last section, analyses different solutions to recently raised security concerns.

Return of female foreign fighters is inevitable and universal since ISIS attracted thousands of male and female fighters – however, not all females are able to return from Iraq and other areas since they are kept in prisons, refugee camps or are denied entry to their respective homelands. Solution to radicalization is transparent dialogue between female foreign fighters and their homelands – Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands are forced to face their citizens, even though countries are trying their best not to facilitate their return to Europe. It is not realistic long-term solution to refuse to assist female foreign fighters in Syria and in Iraq – pushing their return on some other country's responsibility.

According to leading foreign fighters' expert, Assistant professor David Malet, the United States and other countries around the world are dealing with the same question: Should their citizens who join foreign terrorist organizations and fight for them be allowed to return to their home country? Many of the men and women who left their homes in the West to join the Islamic State group or similar terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq as fighters or supporters now want to come home.

(Malet, 2019) Having the insight knowledge about ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the rehabilitated returnees could help individuals who are radicalised or under the threat of radicalisation to fight back. In order to combat radicalisation and urge to travel to conflict zones, ISIS sympathisers, men and women, need a strong relatable leader.

Unlike some allies, the U.S. has not attempted to prevent foreign fighters from returning by removing their citizenship. Part of the disagreement between the U.S. and its allies over foreign fighters stems from the fact that every country has different policies concerning such returnees. (Malet, 2019) National responses have varied and are driven by domestic homeland security politics. From three case countries, Denmark has a successful and expensive reintegration program that provides social services to help some returnees deradicalize and disengage. However, opponents of this policy mounted challenges and won court rulings ensuring that Denmark can strip citizenship as well. (Malet, 2019) Lack of funding and raising populist sympathies are two main obstacles of rehabilitation after imprisonment. Before being prosecuted and imprisoned in their homeland, female foreign fighters are stuck in an international limbo of jurisdiction and media attention.

As the situation in Iraq is escalating in spring 2019, a coalition military official said ISIS had fired on the wives of fighters as they attempted to flee. Those “arriving to be screened are the wives of Isis fighters, some of whom sustained gunshot wounds while fleeing from ISIS”, said British Maj Gen Christopher Ghika. (Chulov, 2019) Female terrorism research is gaining crucial information from current flow of women returnees. Female enrolment in conflict has underlying factors since direct financial benefits are not the main reason for travel. Idealistic motivations do not explain the whole phenomenon of traveling women and girls to conflict zone, because when traveling as a man to a conflict zone, one becomes a foreign fighter. When a woman travels to join ISIS, she remains as an innocent civilian. In conclusion, real gender equality is reached when women are treated as an equal security threat with men. This is an indication of a larger trend to downgrade women from fighters to civilians in media to manipulate general discussion and opinion about women returnees. Media attention brings tactical and strategic advantages to the terroristic cause of ISIS.

As women are holding a strong representative role in Western media, ability to lead the discussion is crucial also in rehabilitation progress. Ability to lead as Fellman (2017) mentioned, should not be ignored in the rehabilitation progress, if foreign fighters have managed to be respected and authoritarian in the ranks of ISIS, the ability to lead should be noted and implicated in the rehabilitation. “In November 2016, a West Point Counterterrorism Center study found that 9 percent of documented returning fighters held leadership positions in the groups that they left.”

(Fellman, 2017, p. 5) A part of these documented returning fighters are non-Muslim and do not have the necessary language skills. Number seems surprisingly high considering the language barrier, lack of cultural or ideological knowledge and limited combat skills.

The problems come with lack of understanding of the returnees' departure and return reasons, possible language barrier with the returnee or with her family members and possible lack of trust on authorities. The importance of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in countering and preventing violent extremism should address the poor language and communication skills. The main obstacles of rehabilitation can also rise from the society itself, especially from countries with high number of returning foreign fighters since they have a pressure to reintegrate terrorists into society. The Danish approach is usable because it deals with radicalisation on different levels taking small steps towards maintaining a stable society.

According to the FARAS (2017) the main obstacles of rehabilitation vary between financial obstacles to mental challenges.

1) The reason is that large financial resources and non-traditional mechanisms are required to rehabilitate large numbers of returning fighters.

How long will societies finance rehabilitation of returning fighters and enforce the soft approach? If soft approach and long scale helping give successful results after years of rehabilitation, long term financing seems unlikely scenario. How to make sure the financial resources find the returnees in need of assistance and support the continuity of the program longer than six months or two years? In order to find the returning foreign fighters, road to rehabilitation starts slowly with building trust between authorities and individuals in need in the local communities. Financial resources should be directed to grass root level social work among returnees' families and close personal circle.

2) Overlapping and conflicting ideologies and organizational mind-sets. Because returning foreign fighters belong to multiple terrorist organizations embracing various extremist ideologies, it is difficult for involved states to rely on just one-fits-all rehabilitation program.

Soft approach or as analysed, the Aarhus model does not provide a perfect solution model for all states involved with returning foreign fighters. To utilise the Aarhus model as a starting point and redevelop to suit specific needs such as cultural and/or religious understanding, geographical relocation possibilities and restrictions. In a rehabilitation program should have space for individual approach and see the returnee as an individual part of the society, not only as an extremist. Negative sentiments, radical ideologies and lack of ability to coexist in the Western society have developed

during living in a Western country. For returnees, the pro-ISIS or other terrorist organisation sentiments have started earlier in the Western communities, therefore the return from conflict area should be seen as a return to the pre-ISIS mental state. I would see the differences of secular religion in a country like Denmark and ISIS's interpretation of Islam as the main problem. The overlap of mirroring religious behaviour in everyday life as a bigger challenge than conflicting different terrorist organisation ideologies. Long beard or certain type of veil stigmatises returnees among their own religious society and in the public. Adjusting from a strict religious mentality of the Caliphate to a secular democratic society, the outside world could be mentally an obstacle for a returnee.

3) Rooted propensity to violence. According to several views, some returning terrorist fighters pursue severely violent approaches to carry out the ideology of their organizations. This means their rehabilitation can require long periods of time, due to the fact that the problem does not only arise from their organizational approaches but also from the violent mechanisms they previously used during their participation in armed confrontations in areas under the control of their organizations.

Preference to violence, violent acts and cruelty towards other men, women and children according or discarding their religion, nationality and position in ISIS affect the rehabilitation. Since there are different levels of violence, approach to any act of violence should be addressed directly and severely. The ability to feel compassion and understand consequences of violent actions makes the distinction between ISIS and a state that protects its citizens from war, violence and injustice. In a rehabilitation program for returnees, the children should have a special position among adults.

4) To design special rehabilitation programs for female members of terrorist organizations that provide for their social conditions in particular, especially because some of them married terrorists and had children. The involved governments had to speed up relevant measures to prevent these organizations from recruiting these children in their ranks.

Martyrdom, glorification and respect of the fallen soldiers of ISIS are problems for rehabilitation program. In my opinion, any rehabilitation from violent act or abandonment of previous belief does not succeed without voluntary change for better. If a radicalised woman is married to an ISIS fighter and possibly has children with him, the rehabilitation needs the participation of partner and children. Women are a minority among the returnees; however, the gender should not matter when it comes to perception of threat and importance of rehabilitation.

5) The problem of concealing religious beliefs. Some returning terrorist fighters pretend that they gave up their extremist ideology they used to embrace when they were active operators of terrorist organizations.

Does religious belief such as Islam and extremist ideology of ISIS go hand in hand? Non-Muslim fighters joined ISIS, therefore in my opinion any religious beliefs and extremist ideologies cannot be tied automatically together. Religion should not be labelled as the source of violence and evil. In moderation, the question of faith and practice of religion can guide the returnee through the rehabilitation progress. Religious symbols associated with Islam are possible to stop wearing in public in order to gain more credibility in the rehabilitation process. Rehabilitation program has to offer something concrete such as a job, study place and housing to fill the gap of any need to return to the previous extremist ideology.

6) Social pressure. Reintegration of returning terrorist fighters in their original societies appears to be no easy task because the returnees are rejected over their organizations' appalling violations, which reduces the ability of these programs to achieve their set goals.

Concept of close social environment such as family members differs in societies – the female returnees with an immigration background adjust to the Western environment and social understandings of social life. To tackle the different approaches to social pressure and interpretations of social customs is not a change that happens during one generation. According to Muji (2017), the implementation of a foreign model and practices should be adapted to the country's specific needs. (Muji, 2017, p. 32) There are two paths for rehabilitation in society: one is to rehabilitate in their original living area and society or second, to rehabilitate in a new area and without the social pressure of previous life.

In sum, we do not see women returnees as a threat because females as a violent actors not a dominant view in Western society. As it was demonstrated in this thesis, the Western female foreign fighters' motivations to travel to and remain in the ISIS controlled areas were various, ranking from social reasons of gender equality and family problems to personal such as being a social outsider, to idealistic reasons of religion or commitment to cause. In addition, a certain key event could have been a motivating push factor, such as loss of loved one or specific humiliating instance. Another motivation category is revenge, for example vengeance and anger. For ISIS, female involvement brought advantages such as media attention, sympathy for the cause and raised fighters' motivation to participate. Women were actively participating in building the so-called Caliphate; violent and indoctrinated participation in real life and online creates a security threat

upon their return to their respective homelands. There are different levels of involvement starting from which women get involved in violent extremism, when they are recruited and how they perform their duty to ISIS.

In defence, feminist IR empowers women by highlighting our blindness to gender issues. The emancipation aspect comes from the agency of the women themselves or in the study itself feminist methodology, which recognises the role of women. They have left from homelands voluntarily and many have burned their passports leaving old homeland forever, nevertheless, they deserve to return to their homeland in order to face Western jurisdiction instead of an Iraqi one. As Western countries are getting reluctant to bring their female foreign fighters back from Iraqi prisons and refugee camps, possible rehabilitation after imprisonment is therefore unlikely combination.

## References

- AIVD Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, 2017. Annual report and in review 2017 AIVD. Retrieved from <https://english.aivd.nl/publications/annual-report/2018/03/09/annual-report-2017-aivd>
- AIVD 2 Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service. (November 2017). 'Jihadist women, a threat not to be underestimated' Publication by the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), the Hague. Retrieved from <https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2017/12/14/publication-jihadist-women-a-threat-not-to-be-underestimated>
- Ambler, L. (2018) Unveiling the Female Foreign Fighter: Interrogating Representations of the Radicalised Jihadi Brides. *Terrorism and Political Violence*.
- Basit, A. (2014), Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria – Why So Many? Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis Volume 6, Issue 9 October 2014. A Journal of the international centre for political violence and terrorism research. Retrieved from <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CTTA-October14.pdf>
- Barrett, R. (June 2014), Foreign Fighters in Syria. The Soufan Group. Retrieved from <http://www.soufangroup.com/foreign-fighters-in-syria/>
- Barrett, R. (November 2014), The Islamic State. The Soufan Group. Retrieved from <http://www.soufangroup.com/the-islamic-state/?catid=13>
- Barrett, R. (October 2017), Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees. The Soufan Group. Retrieved from <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v2.pdf>
- Blanchard, E. (2003). Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory. *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Summer 2003), pp. 1289-1312. The University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/368328> .
- Boutin, B., Chauzal, G., Dorsey, J., Jegerings. M., Paulussen. C., Pohl, J., Reed, A. & Zavagli, S. (2016). The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles, Threats & Policies. Retrieved from [https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf)

- Brown, K. (2018). Returning Foreign Fighters – what are the ethical and practical responsibilities? University of Birmingham. Retrieved from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/returning-foreign-fighters.aspx>
- Chatterjee, D. (2016). ‘Gendering ISIS and Mapping the Role of Women’, *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, Vol.3, No.2, 2016, pp. 201–218.
- Cheong, D. (2014), Returning ISIS fighters: what should be done with them? (RSIS Commentaries, No. 199). RSIS Commentaries. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University. Retrieved from <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10220/38445>
- Chulov, M. (14.2.2019). Isis fighters firing at escaping family members, says coalition. Syria. Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/14/isis-fighters-shot-escaping-family-members-says-coalition>
- Cook, J. and Vale, G. (2018). From Daesh to ‘Diaspora’: Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation. Department of War Studies, King’s College London. Retrieved from <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf>
- Clinch, M. (17.2.2019). Trump urges European allies to take back hundreds of ISIS fighters captured in Syria. World News. CNBC. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/17/trump-urges-european-allies-to-take-back-hundreds-of-isis-fighters.html>
- Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET). (12.1.2018). Assessment of the terror threat to Denmark. Center for Terroranalyse CTA. Retrieved from <https://www.pet.dk/~media/VTD%202018/VTD2018ENGpdf.ashx>
- Davies, S.E., George, N. and True, J. (4.4.2017). The difference that gender makes to international peace and security. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2017, Vol. 19, No 1, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1279904>
- Department of Justice. (8.2.2016). Wife of dead ISIS leader charged in death of Kayla Jean Mueller. The United States Department of Justice. Justice News. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/wife-dead-isis-leader-charged-death-kayla-jean-mueller>
- de Roy van Zuijdewijn, J. (2014), The Foreign Fighters’ Threat: What History Can (not) Tell Us. *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol 8, No 5 (2014). The Terrorism Research Initiative and the Centre for

Terrorism and Security Studies. Retrieved from

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/378>

Dutch News.nl. (14.11.2015). “The Netherlands is at war with ISIS, says Dutch prime minister”.

Dutch News. Retrieved from <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2015/11/the-netherlands-is-at-war-with-isis-says-dutch-prime-minister/>

Europol, European law enforcement agency. (2016). TE-SAT 2016. European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2016>

EUROPOL (2017). TESAT European Union, Terrorism situation and trend report 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/2017-eu-terrorism-report-142-failed-foiled-and-completed-attacks-1002-arrests-and-142-victims-died>

European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2018. (2019). Retrieved from

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2018-tesat-2018>

Entenmann, E., van der Heide, L., Weggemans, D. & Dorsey, J. (2015). Rehabilitation for Foreign Fighters? Relevance, Challenges and Opportunities for the Criminal Justice Sector. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism ICCT. Retrieved from <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ICCT-Entenmann-Heide-Weggemans-Dorsey-Rehabilitation-for-Foreign-Fighters-December2015.pdf>

Gustafsson, L. and Ranstorp, M. (2017). Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq. An Analysis of open-source intelligence and statistical data. Stockholm: Försvarshögskolan (FHS), 2017. , p. 135. Retrieved from <http://fhs.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1110355/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Grzyb, T., Fahmy, S., & Shaheen, J. (2015). Daesh information campaign and its influence. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. Retrieved from <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/daesh-information-campaign-and-its-influence-1>

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS). (25.9.2017b). Challenges facing rehabilitation of returning foreign fighters. Future for Advanced Research and Studies. Retrieved from <https://futureuae.com/fustudies.php/Mainpage/Item/3279/challenges-facing-rehabilitation-of-returning-foreign-fighters>  
Fellman, Z. with Sanderson, T. & Galperin Donnelly, M. Fallout. (2017).

The Future of Foreign Fighters. Center for strategic & International studies CSIS. Retrieved from [http://foreignfighters.csis.org/fallout\\_foreign\\_fighter\\_project.pdf](http://foreignfighters.csis.org/fallout_foreign_fighter_project.pdf)

Fernandez, C-C. (17.5.2016). Female Jihadists Are as Ambitious as Their Male Counterparts. VICE. Retrieved from <https://www.vice.com/sv/article/qb5jmv/meet-the-guy-who-interviews-swedish-is-women-123>

Focus on Returnees, AIVD, 2017, the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). Retrieved from <https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2017/02/15/publication-focus-on-returnees>

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS). (14.6.2017a). Mounting threat: Future of Terrorism in Europe. Retrieved from <https://futureuae.com/en-US/Activity/Item/145/mounting-threat-future-of-terrorism-in-europe>

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS). (25.9.2017b). Challenges facing rehabilitation of returning foreign fighters. Future for Advanced Research and Studies. Retrieved from <https://futureuae.com/fustudies.php/Mainpage/Item/3279/challenges-facing-rehabilitation-of-returning-foreign-fighters>

Hegghammer, T. (2010). The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters Islam and the Globalization of Jihad. *International Security*, Vol.35, No. 3 (Winter 2010/11), p. 53-94. Retrieved from [https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/The\\_Rise\\_of\\_Muslim\\_Foreign\\_Fighters.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/The_Rise_of_Muslim_Foreign_Fighters.pdf)

Hemmingsen, A-S. (2015). An Introduction to the Danish approach to countering and preventing extremism and radicalization. Danish Institute for International Studies. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20151/almdel/reu/bilag/248/1617692.pdf>

Herszenhorn, D. (17.2.2019). Trump threatens to release ISIS fighters if EU doesn't take them. Politico. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-syria-isis-threatens-to-release-isis-fighters-if-eu-doesnt-take-them/>

Hobson, J. M. (2000). *The State and International Relations*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tallinn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=153373>

Human Rights Watch. (27.6.2018). Q&A: Guantanamo Bay, US Detentions, and the Trump Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/27/qa-guantanamo-bay-us-detentions-and-trump-administration>

Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Think-tank <https://www.isdglobal.org/>

Jabbour, N. ( year? ). 10 Reasons Muslims are Eager to Join ISIS. Zwemer Center for Muslim studies at Columbia International University. Retrieved from <http://www.zwemercenter.com/sample-post-with-a-title/>

Jacques, K. and Taylor, P. (2009). Female Terrorism: A Review, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21:3, 499-515

Karwan F. (17.4.2016). Radio documentary [\*Hennes resa till IS\*](#) ("Her Trip to IS"). 51:09 minutes. P1 Dokumentär, Sveriges Radio, Swedish public radio. Retrieved from <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/705718?programid=909>

Khomami, N. (23.7.2018). Number of women and children who joined Isis ‘significantly underestimated’. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/23/number-of-women-and-children-joining-isis-significantly-underestimated>

Lister, C. (2015). *Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?* Brookings Doha Center. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/En-Fighters-Web.pdf>

Lose, L.G. (18.6.2017). The Newsletter. *The Cipher Brief*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/danish-ambassador-building-cyber-defenses-denmarks-key-priority-2>

Malet, D. (1.3.2019). Is it more dangerous to let Islamic State foreign fighters from the West return or prevent them from coming back? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/is-it-more-dangerous-to-let-islamic-state-foreign-fighters-from-the-west-return-or-prevent-them-from-coming-back-112588>

Malet, D. and Hayes, R. (28.9.2018) *Foreign Fighter Returnees: An Indefinite Threat?* *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Research. American University Washington DC.

Martin, J. (February 2002). *Feminist Theory and Critical Theory: Unexplored Synergies*. Stanford Business. Research paper no. 1758. <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/gsb-cmis/gsb-cmis-download-auth/317906>

McManus, A-M. (Spring, 2013). Sentimental terror narratives: Gendering violence, dividing sympathy. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*. Vol. 9, No. 2, Emerging voices in comparative literature from the Middle East, p. 80-107. Published by Duke University Press.

Meko, T. (22.2.2018) Now that the Islamic state has fallen in Iraq and Syria, where are all its fighters going? Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/isis-returning-fighters/?utm\\_term=.bb834e435d3c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/isis-returning-fighters/?utm_term=.bb834e435d3c)

Muji, A. (2017). Reintegration of returning foreign fighters: what approach best suits Kosovo? KCSS Kosovan Centre for Security Studies. Retrieved from [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Reintegration\\_842325.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Reintegration_842325.pdf)

Naik, B., Shubert, A. and Thompson, N. (28.10.2014). Denmark offers some foreign fighters rehab without jail time – but will it work? CNN. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/28/world/europe/denmark-syria-deradicalization-program/index.html>

National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism. (14.2.2017) Factsheet Comprehensive approach returnees. Ministry of Security and Justice. Retrieved from [https://english.nctv.nl/binaries/Factsheet%20NCTV%20Terugkeerders%20ENG\\_tcm32-244754.pdf](https://english.nctv.nl/binaries/Factsheet%20NCTV%20Terugkeerders%20ENG_tcm32-244754.pdf)

New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV). (17.2.2019). Put 800 Captured ISIS Terrorists On Trial: Trump To European Allies. New Delhi Television Limited NDTV. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/put-800-captured-isis-terrorists-on-trial-donald-trump-to-european-allies-1995015>

Ochab, E. (22.2.2019). Attempts To Address The Issue Of Foreign Terrorist Fighters Continue. Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2019/02/22/attempts-to-address-the-issue-of-foreign-fighters-continue/#3aeaa97d1cd2>

Oosterveld, W.T. and Bloem, W. (2017). The Rise and Fall of ISIS: from Evitability to Inevitability. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, StratMon 2016-2017. Retrieved from <https://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/The%20Rise%20and%20Fall%20of%20ISIS.pdf>

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. (2018). Guidelines for Addressing the Threats and Challenges of “Foreign Terrorist Fighters” within a Human Rights Framework.

Peresin, A. & Cervone, A. (2015). ‘The Western Muhajirat of ISIS’, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Vol.38, Issue 7, 2015.

Ram, S. (19.9.2014). Married To An ISIS Fighter, A 26-Year-Old 'Muhajirah' Claims To Be A Malaysian Doctor. Retrieved from <https://says.com/my/news/married-to-an-isis-fighter-a-26-year-old-muhajirah-claims-to-be-a-malaysian-doctor>

Reed, A. & Pohl, J. (14.7.2017). Tackling the surge of returning foreign fighters. NATO REVIEW magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2017/Also-in-2017/daesh-tackling-surge-returning-foreign-fighters-prevention-denmark-rehabilitation-programmes/EN/index.htm>

Reed, A., Pohl, J. & Jegerings, M. (2017). The Four Dimensions of the Foreign Fighter Threat: Making Sense of an Evolving Phenomenon. Retrieved from <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ICCT-Reed-Pohl-The-Four-Dimensions-of-the-Foreign-Fighters-Threat-June-2017.pdf>

Resolution 2178 (2014), United Nations Security Council, Adopted by the Security Council at its 7272<sup>nd</sup> meeting, on 24 September 2014, S/RES/2178 (2014) (6.a)

Runyan, A. and Peterson, V. (1991). “The Radical Future of Realism: Feminist Subversions of IR Theory.” Alternatives 16:67–106.

Saltman, E M & Smith, M. (2015). ‘Till Martyrdom Do Us Part’ Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon’, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015. Retrieved from [http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till\\_Martyrdom\\_Do\\_Us\\_Part\\_Gender\\_and\\_the\\_ISIS\\_Phenomenon.pdf](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf)

Shubert, A. (29.5.2015). The women of ISIS: Where are they now? CNN. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/29/middleeast/who-are-the-women-of-isis/index.html>

Scherrer, A. (May 2018). The return of foreign fighters to EU soil. Study, EPRS European Parliamentary Research Service. Ex-post Evaluation Unit. Retrieved from [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS\\_STU\(2018\)621811\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf)

Sillanpää, S. (14.4.2019). Kalifaatin raunioilla. (On the ruins of the Caliphate) Helsingin Sanomat. Retrieved from <https://www.hs.fi/sunnuntai/art-2000006068621.html>

Sjoberg, L. (2013). *Gendering Global Conflict - Toward a Feminist Theory of War*. Columbia University Press.

Sjoberg, L. 2014. *Gender, War, & Conflict*. Polity Press.

Soufan Group (2015). *Foreign Fighters - An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*. The Soufan Group. Retrieved from <http://www.soufangroup.com/foreign-fighters/?catid=5>

Spencer, A. (2016). 'The Hidden Face of Terrorism: An Analysis of the Women in Islamic State', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.9, No.3.

Stocker, J. (25.3.2019). SDF calls for international tribunal to try ISIS members in Syria. *The Defense Post*. Retrieved from <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/03/25/syria-sdf-international-court-isis/>

Stromme, L. (14.3.2017). Swedish minister says returning ISIS fighters should be integrated. *Expressen*. Retrieved from <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/779203/Swedish-minister-returning-ISIS-fighters-integrated>

Tarras-Wahlberg, L. (2016). 'Seven Promises of ISIS to its Female Recruits', *International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism*, 2016.

Tokyay, M. (28.10.2017). Daesh returnees pose major security risks, says report. *Arab News*. Retrieved from <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1184361/middle-east>

United Nations. (10.12.1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 13. General Assembly resolution 217 A. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

United Nations Security Council. (24.7.2014). Resolution 2178 (2014). Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178\\_2014\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf)

United Nations Security Council. (15.8.2014). Resolution 2170 (2104). Retrieved from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2170>

United Nations Security Council. (21.12.2017). Resolution 2396 (2017). Retrieved from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2396>

van Ginkel, B. and Entenmann, E. et al. (April 2016). *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union*. Retrieved from

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alastair\\_Reed3/publication/300081992\\_The\\_Foreign\\_Fighters\\_Phenomenon\\_in\\_the\\_European\\_Union\\_Profiles\\_Threats\\_Policies/links/5752ebc008ae6807fafc25a7.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alastair_Reed3/publication/300081992_The_Foreign_Fighters_Phenomenon_in_the_European_Union_Profiles_Threats_Policies/links/5752ebc008ae6807fafc25a7.pdf)

Wildman, S. Critical Feminist Theory. Encyclopedia of Law & Society: American and Global Perspectives. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412952637.n150>

Wintour, P. (17.2.2019). Trump: EU must take back 800 Isis fighters captured in Syria. Islamic State. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/17/islamic-state-isis-baghuz-trump-calls-on-european-allies-to-take-800-fighters-captured-in-syria>

Woody, C., & Nudelman, M. (26.10.2017). Here's how many foreign ISIS fighters have returned home from the battlefield. Business Insider Military & Defence. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-many-foreign-isis-fighters-have-returned-home-from-the-battlefield-2017-10>

YLE. (7.3.2019). Finland seeks international court to try Isis fighters. News, Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE. Retrieved from [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finland\\_seeks\\_international\\_court\\_to\\_try\\_isis\\_fighters/10678248](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finland_seeks_international_court_to_try_isis_fighters/10678248)

Zachariasson, H. (14.3.2017). Bah Kuhnke kallas till KU-förhör efter uttalande om IS-återvändare. (Bah Kuhnke is called to KU-interrogation after statement about IS-returnees) SVT Nyheter. Retrieved from <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/bah-kuhnke-kallas-till-ku-forhor-efter-uttalande-om-is-atervandare>

Zenko, M. (December 22, 2014). Guest Post: Booking a Return flight. Politics, Power and Preventive Action and Center for Preventive Action. Council on Foreign relations. [https://www.cfr.org/blog/guest-post-booking-return-flight?cid=otr-partner\\_site-Newsweek](https://www.cfr.org/blog/guest-post-booking-return-flight?cid=otr-partner_site-Newsweek)

## ANNEX

### President Trump's tweets



**Donald J. Trump**   
@realDonaldTrump 

The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial. The Caliphate is ready to fall. The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them.....

 92.8K  5:51 AM - Feb 17, 2019 

 36K people are talking about this 



**Donald J. Trump**   
@realDonaldTrump 

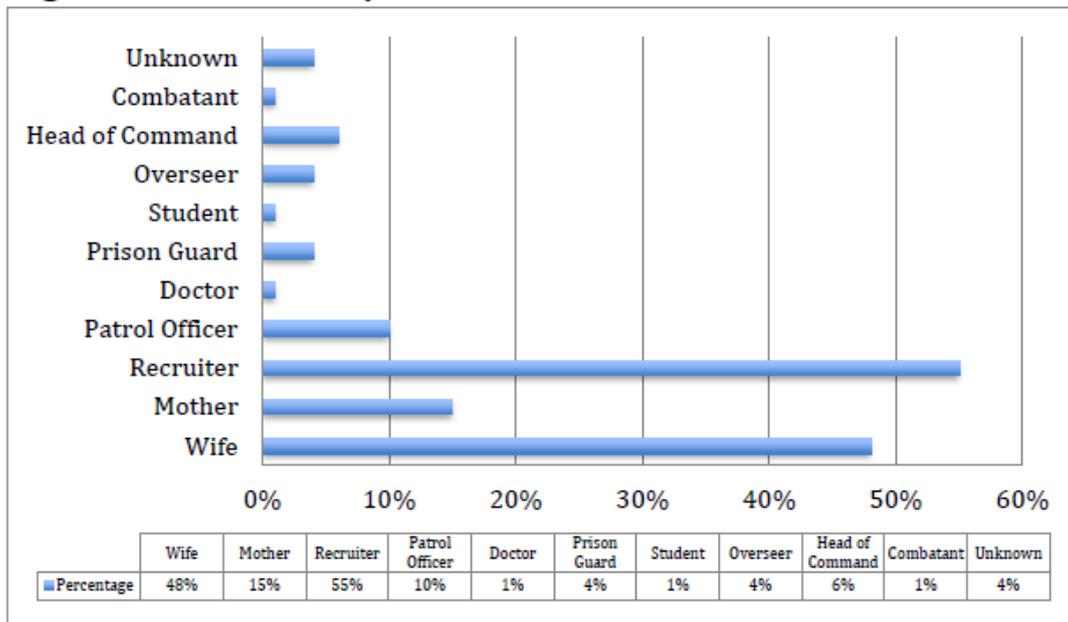
....The U.S. does not want to watch as these ISIS fighters permeate Europe, which is where they are expected to go. We do so much, and spend so much - Time for others to step up and do the job that they are so capable of doing. We are pulling back after 100% Caliphate victory!

 88.3K  6:01 AM - Feb 17, 2019 

 29.1K people are talking about this 

Clinch, M. (17.2.2019). Trump urges European allies to take back hundreds of ISIS fighters captured in Syria. World News. CNBC. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/17/trump-urges-european-allies-to-take-back-hundreds-of-isis-fighters.html>

**Figure 1. Roles held by women in ISIS**



*Primary Roles of Women in the Islamic State*

Chart 1, Spencer, 2016, p. 91

In particular, the roles of wives, mothers, recruiters, patrol officers, and principal advisors surfaced with sufficient clarity about age. Evidence revealed that 53% of women serving the role of a wife are between the ages of 14 and 18, while 56% of mothers are 25 and up. The findings also show that 50% of female recruiters are between the ages of 19 and 24. This is comparable with female patrol officers who are predominantly between the ages of 19 and 22. Women that occupy an authoritative position are generally older, between the ages of 24 and 27, with only one case that is under 21 years old. ISIS seems to employ older women in advisory roles because they are considered to be well educated, well disciplined, and mature. ISIS is a young environment for women. Yet, within that relatively limited spectrum, the breakdown of roles is still heavily age-specific. However, the data suggests that age is a real factor in the roles women assume in ISIS. (Spencer, 2016, p. 94)

## Amendments in national legislation on terrorism in 2016

### Denmark

Amendments concerning Article 114j of the Danish Criminal Code came into force on 30 September 2016. They criminalise the travel to certain areas in Syria and Iraq without a permit from the Danish authorities. The amendments envisage a penalty of up to six years of imprisonment for Danish nationals or persons with a permanent residence in Denmark, who travel into or stay in the designated areas. (Europol, 2017, p.57)

### The Netherlands

On 1 April 2016, the legal possibility to take away Dutch citizenship in case of dual citizenship and final conviction for terrorist offences was extended to preparatory offences (including training for terrorism). Such a measure would require the decision of the Minister of Security and Justice. (Europol, 2017, p.58)

### Sweden

Further amendments to the Swedish Criminal Code were made to counter the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. On 1 April 2016, new provisions came into force criminalising travelling to a country other than the country of which the suspect is a citizen, with the purpose of committing or preparing serious crimes, particularly terrorist crimes, gathering, supplying or receiving money or other property with the purpose of supporting such travel and passive training for terrorism. (Europol, 2017, p. 58)

### History of ISIS – merger of modernity and tradition

In order to understand the current situation with returning foreign fighters, it is important to look at the history of ISIS. No other development over the past 15 years better epitomizes the clash between and the merger of, modernity and tradition than the rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) or Daesh (equivalent of ISIL: Ad-Dawlat Islamiyat fi Iraq wa al-Sham). (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017) Appearing seemingly out of nowhere over the course of 2013-14, the organization captured the attention of international audiences through widely broadcast acts of barbarity, followed by the proclamation of its own state and upending state borders in the process. (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017)

In order to understand the rise of ISIS, the historical context of the region plays a significant role. The war in Iraq (2003-2011), the Arab revolutions (2010-present) and the civil war in Syria (2011-present) gave opportunities to spread into Syria where it could exploit the drift between Syria's Sunni majority and the Shia Alawite-led minorities. (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017)

From late 2011, the Islamic State has shown itself both tactically and strategically adept. After years of surviving as a persistently violent criminal/terrorist gang able to mount multiple synchronized attacks in built up areas in Iraq but little more, it managed to break into the big time when the collapse of government in northern and eastern Syria allowed it to expand across the border. At the same time, the sectarian approach of the then Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki had made the Sunni minority in Iraq ready to support any group that appeared to have the potential to reverse its increasing marginalization. Sunni tribal support continues to be essential to the viability of The Islamic State (Barrett, 2014).

For all its violence, The Islamic State promises its recruits adventure and intense engagement with an exciting new venture. There are no competing voices offering anything comparable. (Barrett, 2014, p. 7) The lack of attractive alternatives for local and foreign fighters who decide to join The Islamic State as a way to find identity, purpose, belonging or spiritual fulfillment. Thus both the pull and push factors that motivate foreign fighters remain unaddressed. (Barrett, 2014, p. 7)

By October 2014, the self-declared 'Caliphate' of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, also known as The Islamic State, was in control of territory stretching from North of Aleppo to South of Baghdad and including the cities of Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq. About six million people on either side of the Syria Iraq border were living under its rule. The Islamic State's control of territory depends on alliances with various local actors, primarily Sunni tribal groups, members of Saddam Hussein's army and intelligence services, and other casualties of the Shia-dominated governments of Nouri al

Maliki and the Alawite-dominated government of Bashar al Assad. Nonetheless, The Islamic State has demonstrated a comprehensive approach to its accretion of land, taking over areas held by weaker adversaries, regardless of their political stance or sectarian belief, as well as areas that provide resources, such as oil, water, and wheat. The longer-term strength of The Islamic State relies on it maintaining its alliances while it deepens its own independent levers of power. It has to strike a balance between governing by fear and governing by consent in order to achieve sustainability, especially as international action against it becomes more determined. (Barrett, 2014, p. 8)

However, its dependence on foreign fighters has shown that The Islamic State has not evolved into a truly indigenous movement, and the very presence of so many foreigners in its ranks may have put local fighters off joining. Certainly they are generally extremely radical and a significant number have become suicide bombers, with The Islamic State reporting suicide attacks in 2014 alone by Afghans, Danes, Egyptians, French, Iranians, Jordanians, Libyans, Moroccans, Pakistanis, Russians (Chechens), Saudi Arabians, Syrians, Tajiks, Tunisians, Turks, and Uzbeks. 36 Saudis carry out the great majority of these attacks. (Barrett, 2014, p. 22)

The Islamic State is an alarming phenomenon. It may wither and die as quickly as it has emerged, or it may prove to be the catalyst for major change within the region and beyond; in any case, it will take some time before its full impact is determined. However, in the meantime, the remarkable ability of a relatively weak and largely marginalized group of violent individuals, numbering in the hundreds, to establish themselves as a threat to international peace and security in command of an army of more than 30,000 fighters and controlling territory over a substantial area of two existing countries, is unprecedented in the modern age. (Barrett, 2014, p. 63)

### Timeline of events

October 17, 2014: Abu Musab al Zarawi's jihadist group in Iraq pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden's al Qaeda, henceforth becoming known as al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

October 15, 2006: Al Masri, Zarqawi's successor, announces the establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), with Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as its leader.

October 17, 2009: Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki targets Sunni leader, including Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, increasing sectarian tensions. Support for ISI begins to increase in Sunni tribal areas and IS claims responsibility for suicide attacks that killed hundreds in Baghdad.

April 8, 2013: Number of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) adopted.

August 2013: ISIS attacks Ahrar-al-Sham and al-Nusra around Raqqa.

December 30, 2013: ISIS takes control of Ramadi and Fallujah

January 2014: ISIS takes over Raqqa and declares it the capital of the ISIS emirate.

June 10, 2014: ISIS takes over Mosul, launching its largest offensive to date.

June 29, 2014: ISIS announces the establishment of a caliphate and rebrands itself as the 'Islamic State'.

August 7, 2014: President Obama announces the beginning of airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq to defend Yazidi citizens stranded in Sinjar.

September 19-22, 2014: ISIS advances on the Syrian border town of Kobani and thousands of refugees flee into Turkey.

September 22, 2014: ISIS spokesperson Abu Muhammad al Adnani calls for attacks on citizens of the United States, France and other countries in the anti-ISIS coalition.

January 15, 2015: Two gunmen, Said and Chérif Kouachi, attack the offices of French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris, killing 11 people. A third assailant, Amedy Coulibaly, carried out a synchronized attack on a kosher supermarket, taking hostages and killing four people. Coulibaly reportedly declared allegiance to the Islamic State.

January 26, 2015: Kurdish fighters, with the help of U.S. and coalition airstrikes, force out ISIS militants from the Syrian border town of Kobani after a four-month battle.

March 2015: ISIS claims responsibility for an attack on the Bardo museum in Tunis, which killed 22 people.

May 20, 2015: ISIS seizes the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra.

May 21: ISIS militants take full control of Sirte, Libya – Muammar Qaddafi's hometown.

June 27: ISIS claims responsibility for an attack on a Tunisian resort in Sousse, where 38 people killed and 39 wounded – most of them foreigners.

July 20: A suicide bomber with links to ISIS strikes a cultural center in Suruc – a Turkish border town near Kobani – killing more than 30 people.

September 30: Russia begins airstrikes in Syria. It claims to target ISIS, but U.S. officials allege that many of the strikes target civilians and Western-backed rebel groups.

October 15: Iraq forces recapture the Baiji refinery, the largest oil refinery in the country, from ISIS.

October 31: Sinai Province, Egypt's ISIS affiliate, claims responsibility for bombing a Russian passenger plane over the Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 on board.

November 12: ISIS claims responsibility for suicide attacks in Beirut that killed 40 people.

November 13: ISIS carries out a series of coordinated attacks in Paris, killing 130 people.

March 22, 2016: Three explosions at the Zaventem airport and a metro station in Brussels kill at least 30 people and injure dozens of others. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack.

March 27: The Syrian army, with Russian support, reconquers Palmyra.

July 3: ISIS militants carry out a suicide bombing that kills more than 200 people on a busy shopping street in Baghdad. The attack, which occurred during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, was ISIS's deadliest bomb attack on civilians to date.

July 14: A 31-year-old Tunisian man drives a truck through a crowd in Nice, France, and kills 84 people. ISIS claims credit for the attack, though it is not clear whether the attacker had any formal ties to the group.

October 16: The symbolically significant town of Dabiq north of Aleppo is captured by Turkish troops.

October 17: Battle for Mosul has commenced.

October 6: International coalition begins offensive against Raqqa.

(Source: Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017)

### Merciless ideological approach

Al-Baghdadi believed that a caliphate “would be a magnet” and thus persisted in his quest to upend the existing state system in the region. The paradox of ISIS’ attempt to create a ‘state’ is that while it rejects the Westphalian order, it has adopted many of the trappings of Westphalian statehood. (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017, p.9)

ISIS’ entire strategy is built around a millenarian vision executed with an uncompromising and merciless ideological approach, aimed at the establishment of an enduring caliphate. Due to its symbolic significance, the proclamation of the Caliphate and the establishment of a ‘state’ are highly significant. (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017, p.9)

### Problems with the European foreign fighters

The foreign fighters’ phenomenon in the European Union, according to the International Centre for Counterterrorism (ICCT, 2016), have problems for example with data collection, the lack of common and agreed definition of foreign fighter, uncertainty with the numbers on foreign fighters and foreign *terrorist* fighters.

From September 2014 to September 2015 alone, the number of foreign fighters reportedly doubled and reached 30 000 combatants coming from 104 countries. Experts and government officials have increasingly warned of the potential security threat this phenomenon might also pose to Europe and beyond. (ICCT, 2016) According to ICCT’s report, estimated total number of foreign fighters from the EU is 3922-4294, from which 17% are women.

The central role of the female members of IS has been to rear children and look after the men. The IS founder, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, had few qualms about deploying women as, for example, suicide bombers. Over time, IS may also have relaxed its rules, offering new interpretations of the circumstances under which a woman may use violence not just to protect herself and her home, but also to protect the broader community. In July 2017, film of a woman carrying a baby and looking like any other civilian escaping the siege of Mosul, appeared to show her blowing herself up when she was in range of Iraqi forces. There are also reports of women having acted as snipers. (Barrett, 2017, p. 22)

According to Barrett (2017), as the so-called Islamic State (IS) loses territorial control of its caliphate, there is little doubt that the group or something similar will survive the worldwide campaign against it so long as the conditions that promoted its growth remain. Its appeal will outlast its demise, and while it will be hard to assess the specific threat posed by foreign fighters and returnees, they will present a challenge to many countries for years to come.

## Quran's citations

Quran (4:74) - "Let those fight in the way of Allah who sell the life of this world for the other. Whoso fighteth in the way of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward." The martyrs of Islam are unlike the early Christians, who were led meekly to the slaughter. These Muslims are killed in battle as they attempt to inflict death and destruction for the cause of Allah. This is the theological basis for today's suicide bombers. (The Religion of Peace)

Quran (4:95) - "Not equal are those of the believers who sit (at home), except those who are disabled (by injury or are blind or lame, etc.), and those who strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has preferred in grades those who strive hard and fight with their wealth and their lives above those who sit (at home). Unto each, Allah has promised good (Paradise), but Allah has preferred those who strive hard and fight, above those who sit (at home) by a huge reward ". This passage criticizes "peaceful" Muslims, who do not join in the violence, letting them know that they are less worthy in Allah's eyes. It also demolishes the modern myth that "Jihad" does not mean holy war in the Quran, but rather a spiritual struggle. Not only is this Arabic word (mujahiduna) used in this passage, but also it is clearly not referring to anything spiritual, since the physically disabled are given exemption. (The Hadith reveals the context of the passage to be in response to a blind man's protest that he is unable to engage in Jihad, which would not make sense if it meant an internal struggle).

### Source

The Religion of Peace. What does Islam teach about... Violence. Quran's citations retrieved from Surah 4 and 2. Retrieved from <https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/pages/quran/violence.aspx> and <https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/quran/noble/sura4.html#74>