SYMBIOSIS OF MISOGYNY AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM: NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: Over the past few decades, feminist academics and advocates have amassed a wealth of evidence to argue that the empowerment of women contributes to peace, that gender inequality exacerbates conflict and insecurity, and that the full catalogue of violence against women in conflict-affected settings deserves the attention of international policymakers and peace and security actors. These claims form the basis of what has been known in the United Nations as the women, peace, and security agenda since the turn of the century. Yet more recent examinations of the gender dimension in acts of terrorism, violent extremism, and mass killings with unclear motivations have provoked questions about the role of misogyny that should further elevate the relevance of gender equality in international peace and security. On one hand, we have a growing list of findings about the personal histories of domestic abuse or documented misogyny in most perpetrators of acts of violent extremism in recent years. In Western countries, this factor has become more visible because of feminist journalists and activists. On the other hand, we have more detailed analyses about the role that the subordination of women has in both the ideology and tactics of many of the most active extremist groups. This article explores the recent data on the correlation between misogyny and violent extremism across the world; the role of misogyny as the gateway, the driver, or the early warning sign of most of this violence; and the implications that these findings should have for advocacy and policymaking.

INTRODUCTION

Since it held its first meeting in January of 1946, the United Nations Security Council has met more than 8,000 times to discuss matters related to international peace and security. On 13 October 2015, the Security Council reached its record number of speakers in a meeting: 110.[1] The occasion was the 15th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security (WPS), the

agenda item by which the United Nations addresses the protection and empowerment of women in conflict situations. In the last two decades, WPS has become one of the most important themes of the United Nations' work. This has been reflected not just in the meetings of the Security Council, but in the significant expansion of the global footprint of its programs, policies, media presence, and professionals of all kinds, such as civil society advocates, technical advisors in international organizations and the capitals of donor countries, and researchers in academic centers that focus on this topic.

Within this field, feminist academics have documented, and in some cases quantified, the impact that women's leadership and involvement can have in peace. Examples include making peace agreements likelier and more durable, accelerating the healing and recovery after wars, and preventing them altogether in the first place. They have also measured the impact war can have on women and girls including forms of violence like sexual violence, child marriage, or intimate partner violence, and a broad range of indicators such as maternal mortality, girls' education, women's access to livelihoods and land, food insecurity, and displacement.[2] However, the literature on WPS comparatively contains minimal examples about the role that misogyny plays in both armed conflict and extremist violence and its impact on women and girls. While there is a rich feminist literature on the topic of misogyny in general, this is rarely applied to conflict settings and international security.

This article uses Kate Manne's definition of misogyny as "a political phenomenon whose purpose is to police and enforce women's subordination and to uphold male dominance," rather than the more common understanding of individual hatred or hostility towards any and every woman, or women in general, simply because they are women.[3] We argue that there is an underexplored correlation between misogyny and acts of violent extremism across the world in recent years. This is illustrated by using two examples: the explicit ideology of today's most prominent terrorist groups in conflict-affected settings and the individual personal histories of domestic abuse or documented misogyny in the majority of perpetrators of acts of violent extremism in Western countries, where this factor has become more visible because of feminist journalists and activists whenever such data is available. We contend that misogyny is often the gateway, driver, and early warning sign of most of this violence, and note the implications that these findings should have for advocacy, policymaking, and further study.

Literature Review

The correlation between gender equality and peace is poorly known and rarely used in global policymaking, yet it is one of the least contested and most

significant findings in peace studies in recent years. A growing body of research links higher levels of gender inequality and gender-based violence in society with a greater vulnerability to civil war and interstate war and higher levels of violence within these conflicts.[4] For example, increases in domestic violence and the percentage of female-headed households coupled with decreases in girls' school attendance have been identified as early warning signs of broader political instability and insecurity.[5] Academics have found that countries with 10 percent of women in the labor force compared with countries with 40 percent of women in the labor force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience internal conflict, and that the very best predictor of a state's peacefulness is not its level of wealth, the quality of its democracy, or its ethno-religious identity, but how well its women are treated.[6] Most of these studies have focused on gender inequality in general and both structural and societal indicators. What is often missing is analysis of the ideological motivations or background of individual or collective perpetrators of mass violence. For example, the main thesis of Sex and World Peace by Hudson et al. (2012) is that how a country treats half of its population is a very strong predictor of how it would treat other categories of "others" and its propensity to use violence.[7] This same logic could apply to the personal motivations of individuals when joining terrorist groups or committing acts of violent extremism.

Similarly, new academic studies in the field of gender and preventing violent extremism have proliferated in the last five years due to the increased levels of terrorism since 2012 and the growing recognition by the UN Security Council of the linkages between WPS and counterterrorism.[8] However, most of the new studies in this area have focused on women's role in prevention, their participation in terrorist groups, and the impact of specific counterterrorism strategies on women's rights or gender equality.[9] In fact, a number of the publications in this field object to the nexus between the preventing violent extremism and WPS agendas. They argue that any efforts to bring these together are detrimental to women's rights and lead to instrumentalization, tokenism, and further risks for women's rights activists.[10] So far, this field of research says little about the role of violent misogyny in terrorism, with some notable exceptions. For example, research by Monash University's Gender, Peace and Security Centre in three countries in Asia found that support for violence against women and hostile sexist attitudes are stronger predictors of support for violent extremism than religiosity, typically perceived to be one of the leading factors.[11]

One of the better known and most comprehensive academic compilations on conflict prevention in recent years is the joint study conducted by the UN and the World Bank, Pathways for Peace, which highlights the link between gender inequality and conflict throughout its 337 pages but does not mention misogyny

once.[12] Instead, it does bring up the role of masculinities, which can be considered a close proxy. It is the field of masculinity and conflict studies where one finds more analysis on the nexus between misogyny and violent extremism. In spite of the obvious potential for cross-fertilization, this field is perhaps under-utilized by academics and advocates focused on WPS. The WPS literature has focused more on either the impact of war on women and girls or women's agency and roles as actors, from peacemakers to combatants. Masculinity studies are therefore likelier to unpack the role of men in this violence, but they do so primarily from the angle of aggrieved masculinity, rather than misogyny.

Examples of these studies include research linking the increased rates of domestic violence against women in refugee camps with men's inability to cope with life in these constrained settings; explaining how the unchecked rise of militarized masculinity and a warrior culture in South Sudan may have doomed peacebuilding efforts in that country; documenting how Latin American young boys in some of the most violent cities in the world articulate the reason for joining criminal gangs in related to perceptions and aspirations of manhood; and interviewing Congolese rebels to find that they commit sexual violence because of a sense of failed masculinity, such as not being able to provide for their families, not being respected by their communities, or being cheated off their salaries and rations by their commanders.[13]

However, the use of masculinities in this context focuses more on the interplay between the realities of conflict and the social, cultural, or political expectations placed on men, and in particular their inability to perform their traditional gender roles as family providers, protectors of their community, or fathers and procreators. In this sense, male violence is explained by social and economic pressures, rather than ideology, and affecting all of society, rather than specific individuals or armed groups. Ironically, this often leads to over-privileging a narrative of men's struggles and disaffection to the detriment of those experienced by women. The impact of armed conflict also makes it extremely difficult for women—not just men—to assert their roles or fulfill their socioeconomic needs, and yet, this does not make them resort to violence. Rather, it increases the likelihood that they will be targeted for this very reason. When women do engage in organized violence, this is more commonly explained as a result of coercion in many cases, as well as the desire for revenge—especially the loss of a loved one—perceptions of injustice, a desire for greater autonomy and freedom, and the need for protection.[14]

For example, although his main angle is men's disaffection and aggrieved masculinity rather than misogyny, Michael Kimmel's 2018 book on young men and violent extremism—based on more than 100 interviews with current or former extremists, including American neo-nazis and white supremacists, anti-immigra-

tion skinheads in Europe, and jihadists and Islamists in Western countries—puts gender at the center of the filtering process that makes some men cope and others turn to rage.[15] These include elements like a sense of manhood that feels thwarted by women's employment and education, changes in the global economy and political culture, perceptions that women and minorities have "preyed upon global sympathies to get special bargains," and an entitlement to holding "unchallenged moral authority over women and children." We can recognize many of these elements in the radicalization of young white men in Western countries like the United States and others, but it would be harder to apply this framework and these context-specific dynamics across the world, whereas the core ideological impulse of misogyny is much more common across regions. Furthermore, focusing on misogyny puts the emphasis on the ideology itself, rather than on the circumstances that purportedly affect men's sense of identity. It is that specific ideology, after all, which enables people to interpret cultural, social and economic changes in a particular way.

Other authors get closer to focusing on misogyny by employing the term "ideological masculinity" and labeling it as a form of violent extremism that ranges from online abuse to violence against women in public places. According to Rose, "men who subscribe to this ideology believe that women's empowerment has left them victimized and discriminated against. They play out their anger and resentment through violent acts, justifying these as merely reclaiming what they believe is rightfully theirs."[16] Researchers of "masculine honor ideology" in East Asia have concluded that individuals who endorse this worldview tend to hold more misogynist views and are more prone to political violence, measured among political activists in Thailand specifically.[17]

As we will see below, this connection is more explicit in recent analyses by feminist journalists, especially as the correlation between mass killings in the United States and other Western countries in recent years has become undeniable.

MISOGYNIST TERRORISTS IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

For years, feminists like Melissa McEwan and Jessica Valenti have been among the few voices consistently writing about expressed misogyny and domestic violence as precursors to mass violence, public shootings, and acts of terror.[i] In the

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[i] Melissa McEwan has been making her point in multiple blog posts throughout the last decade, since at least 2007, in www.shakesville.com. Jessica Valenti has argued for the use of the term "misogynist terrorism," a rubric that only began to be used in 2014 in the wake of the organized harassment campaign against women in the video game industry and against feminist media critic Anita Sarkeesian. For other examples of feminist journalists making similar points, see Heather Mallick, "Terrorists are Misogynists First," *Star,* 9 June 2017; Sara Meger, "When is Terrorism Not Terrorism," *The Gender and War Project,* 26 April 2018; Jennifer Wright, "Men Are Responsible for Mass Shootings: How Toxic Masculinity is Killing Us," *Harper's Bazaar,* 16 February 2018; Hadley Freeman, "What Do Many Lone Attackers Have in Common? Domestic Violence," *Guardian,* 28 March 2017; Katrin Higher, "The Misogynist Terrorism of #GamerGate," *Life of the Law,* 21 October 2014; and Jason Wilson, "What Do Incels, Fascists, and Terrorists Have in Common? Violent Misogyny" *Guardian,* 4 May 2018.

last few of years, as the personal histories of perpetrators of mass killings revealed this common element in nearly all of them, several others—especially journalists—have joined them in documenting this correlation. We believe that this argument deserves more attention by academics, policymakers, and mainstream media, which typically look more closely at other factors like ethnicity, religion, political ideology, or mental health, and treat certain incidents as random acts of lunatics rather than as terrorism or violent extremism. As Sara Meger puts it, "when is terrorism not terrorism? When the political motivations are misogyny."[18]

Meger was reacting to the Canadian government's hesitation to treat the killing of 10 people in Toronto in 2018 as terrorism, even though the suspect had used a van to hit pedestrians in the exact same way as Islamic State supporters in Nice, Berlin, Barcelona, London, and New York, and had posted about an "Incel rebellion" minutes before the rampage.[19] Incels, short for "involuntary celibates," are virulently misogynistic men who blame women and feminism for all kinds of personal and social ills.[20] There has been some attention to the ideological and violent nature of this movement, especially since the 2014 killing of six people on a college campus in California was explained by the author's own manifesto as exacting revenge against women for his virginity.[21] In Canada, over the past three decades, there have been 120 instances of extreme violence by right-wing groups, compared to seven by Islamist extremists. Notably, the list includes several attacks by incels, dating back to the killing of 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989.[22] Since 2014, there have been several killings by people who either self-identify as incels or praised incel killers in their social media. These include the killing of nine people at a mass shooting at the Umpqua Community College in Oregon in 2015, the killing of women at a yoga studio in Tallahassee, Florida, in 2018, and the killing of 17 people in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in the same year.[23] Earlier in 2019, the police intercepted another incel on his way to attack a women's march in Utah and already on probation for stalking and threatening women, a thwarted act of domestic terrorism that received limited media coverage.[24]

The hesitation in treating these acts as merely the random acts of "lone wolves" is more shocking when one considers that the internet forums where these men connect with each other have tens of thousands of users, with their own nomenclature and shared understanding of history. Much like any other terrorists, the perpetrators have a penchant for announcing or publicizing their acts publicly in these forums or in social media, often by writing full-fledged ideological manifestos.[25] Incels are only one of many rabidly misogynist subcultures in the "manosphere," from Reddit's Red Pill forum to so-called Pick Up Artists, Proud Boys, and many other communities of men's rights activists.[26]

While some focus on misogyny as the ideological content of this form of violent extremism, others pay more attention to misogyny as the "gateway drug" into the broader array of hatred of "others," like ethnic or sexual minorities.[27] As Shifman and Tillet argue, "men who commit violence, rehearse and perfect it against their families first." They cite an analysis of the criminal justice history of hundreds of thousands of offenders in Washington State which suggests that a felony domestic violence conviction is the single greatest predictor of future violent crime among men. The better-known statistic is that 57 percent of the 110 mass shootings in the United States between January 2009 and July 2014 include the murder of a current or former spouse, an intimate partner, or a family member. Following this logic, the number would increase sharply if it could capture any incident in which the perpetrator had a history of domestic violence. In this vein, Hadley Freeman makes a crucial point:

> "The simplistic explanation here is that these men were all just bad 'uns and, given they had no trouble with killing countless strangers, it is not surprising they terrorized the women in their lives. But this notes that most people are not surprised that these killers had no problems in terrorizing the women in their lives, but that "this is to look at the correlation the wrong way around. Domestic violence is frequently a way for male abusers to impose so-called traditional gender roles on their female partner, using violence to validate their own feelings of insecurity. So it is almost inevitable that these men would be attracted to belief systems—whether it is the Islamic State, evangelical Christianity, or the fundamentalist version of pretty much any major religion—that advocate wildly restrictive attitudes towards gender and endorse patriarchal systems that encourage men to punish women for their own failings."[28]

The author of the deadliest terrorist attack in New Zealand's history, in March 2019, left a manifesto that started with "it's the birthrates" repeated three times. In its aftermath, the New York Times quoted several academics explaining how misogynistic notions of women's role as merely reproductive is front and center for all these violent extremists, and that it is also the bridge that leads to further radicalization for many young men: "The birthrate conversation—and the question that goes with it, of women's continued freedom—has become a key recruitment tool for white supremacists. It is often the first political point of agreement a white supremacist recruiter online will find with a target, especially with young people."[29] Quoted in the same article, Annie Kelly, a doctoral student researching the impact of digital cultures on anti-feminism and the far-right, "in gaming and comic books and all these things that are not politically related, anti-feminism is an easy access point to make your case and then begin people's journeys."[30] Once individuals from the dominant group internalize this notion of victimization where feminism

and women are to blame, it is easier for them to apply that ideological framing to other categories of "others," and why sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry and intolerance frequently go together.

In fact, one can find examples of expressed misogyny or domestic violence in the personal histories of nearly all the perpetrators of the worst terrorist incidents and mass killings in Western countries in recent years, which is remarkable because neither misogynist acts or expressions nor violence against women are typically reported and exhaustively documented. It is not just the several mass killings attributed to incels and mentioned above. The murderer of Heather Meyer during the neo-Nazi marches in Charlottesville—whose main slogan was also about birthrates—had attacked and terrorized his own disabled mother violently many times.[31] A similar history of domestic assault and violence or threats against women can be found in the cases of the attackers at the Capital Gazette in Maryland in 2018, a bar in Thousand Oaks, California, in 2017, a Planned Parenthood center in Colorado Springs in 2015, a mosque in Quebec City in 2017, and a Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, in 2017, which was the deadliest shooting in an American place of worship in modern history.[32] The previous record was the Charleston church shooting of 2015, where the murderer shared a similar obsession with protecting white women from men of other races.[33] The killer of 20 small kids and 6 adult staff in Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 started his rampage by killing his mother and had a Word document in his computer about why women are inherently selfish.[34] The Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 sparked a conversation about violent videogames and mental health, but it is much less known that he had threatened and harassed two female students, who reported it to the university—in spite of which, the psychological evaluation marked him as a potential danger to himself, but not to others.[35]

One can find similar claims about the personal history or the motivations of the mass killers in movie theatres in Aurora, Colorado, and Lafayette, Florida, and the airport in Fort Lauderdale, even if their political motivations were less certain. In other cases, the political intentions were spelled out in lengthy manifestos, such as in the case of the sole perpetrator of the third-deadliest terrorist attack in Europe's history, in Norway in 2011. He had not been previously convicted of domestic violence, and much of the analysis in the aftermath focused on his hatred of Muslims, immigrants, and socialists, as he targeted a summer camp for youth affiliated with the Norwegian Labour Party. But his writing and recollections of former acquaintances reveal a man who was obsessed with gender relations, interracial couples, and feminism, which he blamed for Europe's "cultural suicide." His rants covered STDs, no-fault divorce, contraception, abortion, career women, and the supposed sexual "capital" of women, a favorite topic of outspoken misogy-

nists.[36]

But what about cases of public violence by people with different political leanings? Even in the killing of five police officers in Dallas in 2016, one of the very few examples of violence motivated by left-wing politics in this case—the indiscriminate killing of black men by the police—we find a common trait with many of the perpetrators of far-right violence: his military career had ended because of sexual harassment.[37] The attack against the Republican Congressional softball team in 2017 was perpetrated by someone who had been previously arrested for domestic violence.[38]

As we will see below, we do not have information about the personal histories of the members of the most prominent terrorist groups in the world. But when we do have this information, in the case of individual perpetrators that have lived in Western countries and conduct their attacks there, the pattern that emerges is exactly the same. The terrorist who murdered two people during a siege at the Lindt Café in Sydney in 2014 was on bail for charges relating to the murder of his ex-wife and had been charged with more than 40 counts of sexual assault for incidents allegedly taken place from 2000 to 2012.[39] The only suspect in the Barcelona attacks in 2017 that was already known by the local police had spent time in prison for both sexual assault and domestic violence.[40] While a motive has not been determined for the mass shooting in Cascade Mall in Burlington, Washington, in 2016, the shooter called out women's names as he killed his victims and may have been motivated by a previous break-up with someone who worked in the mall. On social media, he had posted pictures of both Islamic State leader al-Baghdadi as well as Ted Bundy, the serial killer and rapist of young women in the 1970s.[41] The author of the deadly mass shooting in San Bernardino had a violent marital history, from dropping a TV on his wife to pushing her toward a moving car.[42] The sister of the author of the bombing in Chelsea, New York, in 2016, claimed that her brother threw items at her, punched her in the face, threatened to hit her with a dumbbell, and attacked her mother with a phone charger wire, but was only charged—and subsequently acquitted by the jury—for stabbing another brother.[43] The hatchet-wielding terrorist in Queens, New York, two years earlier, had been arrested multiple times for domestic violence. The list goes on: the Boston marathon bombing in 2013, the massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando in 2016, the Liege Christmas market attack in 2011, the van-ramming and stabbings in London bridge in 2017, the Westminster attack in 2017 in London, the suicide bombing in Ariana Grande's concert in Manchester the same year, and the killing of 86 people on Bastille Day in Nice, France, in 2016, all share this trait that is common to both white supremacists and sympathizers of Islamist terrorist groups.

The above is not an exhaustive compilation, but it already includes nearly

every prominent terrorist attack in recent times in Western countries. And it only seems to be getting worse. In one week in January of this year, Annalisa Merelli pointed out that there had already been three mass killings in the United States where the perpetrator targeted women.[44] Many of the perpetrators did not belong to a recognized terrorist group and are typically treated like lone wolves perpetrating random acts. But online, these individual terrorists and mass killers, find a community, an ideology, tactics, and targets. Several of the feminist authors who have been documenting this phenomenon understand the nature of this terror very well because they are themselves subjected to constant threats as soon as they write about this topic. This is an experience they share with women's rights activists and feminists outside Western countries, where most of the deadliest terrorist attacks take place.[45]

THE MISOGYNIST IDEOLOGY AND TACTICS OF TERRORIST GROUPS

Most terrorist acts take place outside of the West, and most victims of terrorism are non-Westerners.[46] In most cases, however, we know almost nothing about the individual perpetrators of these cases, and cannot know if, like in the above cases, they have a history of expressed misogyny or violence against women. But what we do know is that the groups to which they belong, however they may differ, all have one thing in common: the subordination of women is central to their ideology and their tactics.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2018, well over half of the deaths caused by terrorists around the world in 2017 were attributed to these four groups: the Islamic State (also referred to as ISIS, ISIL, or Da'esh), the Taliban, Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab. Over the past decade, they have accounted for 44 percent of all terrorist deaths. For each of these groups, some of the earliest indications of the spread of their influence in an area was a quick and radical shift in the pushback on the rights of women—from dress, to mobility, to education. Perhaps the most paradigmatic example of this, the Taliban are well known for their brutal repression of women since they took over three-quarters of Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s. But the violation of women's rights also plays a role in the tactics of these organizations, not just their ideology. The Islamic State, which by the end of 2015 held a large area in western Iraq and eastern Syria, codified sexual slavery and used it as a recruiting tool. Boko Haram is known for abducting schoolgirls and using women and girls as suicide bombers, and Al-Shabaab, the Islamic State, and Boko Haram are all known to force women to marry their fighters. While these facts are well known, what has benefited from closer inspection and analysis in recent years is the full extent to which these misogynist acts are not merely part of their repertoire of violence or accessories to their political project,

but rather central to it, and that control over women's bodies is just as important to these groups as controlling territory or defeating their enemies.[ii]

At the United Nations, high-level officials like Zainab Bangura and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka have made this point forcefully. As Bangura put it in an essay for Crisis Group in 2015:

> "Control over women's sexuality and reproduction is integral to the nation-building aspirations of ISIL and its affiliates. In this regard, they seem more akin to the fascist movements that arose before and during the Second World War than to the small-scale insurgencies that have risen and fallen since. While the international community primarily views this threat in military terms, ISIL sees itself as much more than a terrorist insurgency. It sees itself as constructing an idyllic nation for adherents of its authoritarian strand of Islam. In their single-minded pursuit of a fascist theocracy, they oppose diversity and human rights in general, and gender equality in particular … Indeed, a common factor that presages the rise of authoritarian and extremist movements is their assault on women's rights and freedoms. This often includes strict enforcement of traditional dress codes and gender segregation, as well as the use of women's bodies as breeding ground for the next generation of fighters. Nazism included bureaus dedicated to both women and eugenics, including the sterilization of those deemed unfit, and lauded motherhood as the sole purpose of female existence. Today, the use of women as biological weapons for changing the demographics of a region is part of ISIL's genocidal campaign against religious and ethnic minorities. They are attacking the kinship ties that bind Yazidi, Christian, and Turkmen Shia communities, so that new families can be forged."[47]

The testimonies of women and girls liberated from areas under the control of the Islamic State, has shown the depth of how gender was manipulated by the armed group to fund itself, recruit fighters and supporters, enforce their authority, and govern the daily affairs of the civilians caught in their midst.[48] Nearly four years later, more than 1,000 Yezidi women and girls remain in their capture. A sophisticated network of actors has been auctioning and selling young women in open markets, gifting them to foreign fighters, or trafficking them to other places to raise funds and increase recruitment among their ranks. One of the first things we learned about how the group operated was that it set up marriage bureaus and published a guidebook for young mothers. Women and girls were forced into procreation for the sake of populating the new Caliphate. Near Mosul, they were

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[ii] For examples of these studies, see Nelly Lahoud, "Empowerment or Subjugation: A Gendered Analysis of ISIL Messaging" (Academic Paper, UN Women: 2018), http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/6/news-new-un-women-report-analyzes-the-use-of-gendered-messaging-by-isil; Luisa Dietrich and Simone Carter, "Gender and Conflict Analysis in ISIS-affected communities of Iraq," (Oxfam in Iraq: 2017), https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620272/rr-gender-conflict-isis-affected-iraq-300517-en.pdf; and Rukimini Callimachi, "ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape," *New York Times*, 13 August 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html. But this issue is also documented in the annual reports of the UN's Secretary-General on WPS and conflict-related sexual violence over the last few years, as well as in the outcomes of the meetings of the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, available at http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/un-security-council.

known to recruit rural male youth from nearby villages, with lower employment, opportunities, income, and literacy, and forced young women and girls to marry them, thereby binding the whole family networks to the organization. Their codification of sexual slavery was detailed in a lengthy how-to manual published by their Research and Fatwa Department a few months after the group rose to prominence. In the areas they occupied, they imposed severe restrictions on women's freedom of movement, expression, dress codes, and ability to participate in public life. They were targeted and killed, often publicly executed, for participating in politics, expressing dissent, or being reporters, activists, or women's rights defenders. And now that several countries are struggling with finding the appropriate and just ways of dealing with the thousands of women who joined the armed group, we know much more about how the Islamic State employed specific strategies on social media to lure them in.[iii]

Because the campaign asking for the release of the kidnapped Nigerian schoolgirls from Chibok went viral, Boko Haram's use of abduction, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy had also been extensively documented. The group has abducted thousands of women and girls for this purpose, and many of them were coerced or radicalized into suicide bombers. For example, two-thirds of all suicide attacks in 2017 were carried out by women, including nearly all in the Far North region of Cameroon that year.[49] Among children, Boko Haram has used four times as many young girls as young boys. Less is known about the gender dimension of the crisis itself and the emergence of Boko Haram in the first place.

Although the root causes of the conflict in the region are commonly associated with climate change—such as the shrinkage of 90 percent of Lake Chad since the 1970s—one issue has been largely overlooked: gender inequality. The correlation between gender inequality and the conflict can be observed in multiple indicators. In Nigeria, the North East's fertility rate of 6.3 births per woman compares with 4.3 in the South, and about a third of North East girls begin to have children between fifteen and nineteen years old. There are large age gaps between husbands and wives, and the North also has the lowest school attendance ratio for girls. Of the 56.2 percent of the North East population who own land, 4 percent are women, the lowest rate in the country. The fertility rate in Niger is even higher, at 7.6 births per woman. Maternal mortality rates in the four countries—Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon—are among the highest in the world, and these levels are even higher than their national average in the areas affected by Boko Haram attacks. Similarly, education-related indicators for girls in the conflict-affected areas are

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[iii] See for example ICAN and UNDP's "Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration from Violent Extremism" (2019), https://www.icanpeacework. org/2019/01/11/invisible-women/; and Heather Hurlburt and Jacqueline O'Neill, "We Need To Think Harder About Terrorism and Gender – ISIS already is," *VOX*, 1 June 2017, https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/6/1/15722746/terrorism-gender-women-manchester-isis-counterterrorism.

approximately 60 percent of the national average in these countries. Furthermore, the origins of Boko Haram's campaign can be partly traced back to debates about women's rights in the north of Nigeria over the last years.[50]

Meanwhile, the association of the Taliban with the subordination of women's rights has now been known for two decades. Al-Shabaab in Somalia has been less researched, but their use of sexual violence and forced marriage has been documented every year for the last decade by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his annual report to the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence.[51] In just one example, in an Al-Shabaab position overrun by AMISOM, the walls were covered with the obscene doodles full of rape imagery and bestiality, which is juxtaposed with their public version of piety, enforced on women through violence.[52]

It is clear that these misogynist acts and ideology are a very salient element of the way these groups think and operate, if not the central purpose of their enterprise. But the point that feminist analysts and advocates have been making, and is frequently ignored, is that this misogyny is the precursor and early warning sign of further political violence and terrorism. For example, through hundreds of interviews across 26 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, Karima Bennoune illustrates that women are often likelier than men to be the target and the early victims of extremism, or "the first to walk the gauntlet of rising fundamentalism, whether they are simply appearing in public, practicing professions that are off-limits, or, most of all, championing women's rights," as she puts it.[53] A recent study of Indonesian foreign fighters who joined the Islamic State found that their life trajectories demonstrate that their radicalization is rooted in a certain ideal of hegemonic masculinity.[54] As mentioned above, research by Monash University in Asia found that support for violence against women and hostile sexist attitudes are both stronger predictors of support for violent extremism than strength of religious belief.[55]

CONCLUSION

This article treats misogyny as a political phenomenon whose purpose is to police and enforce women's subordination. While this trait is shared by many actors in mainstream society, it is more virulently and overtly expressed and acted on by violent extremists, and it is the common link between white Christian extremists in Western countries and Muslim extremists in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia. This common ideological trait has also been observed in the rise of authoritarian leaders in many of the largest countries in the world, who diverge in many of their policy choices but exhibit the same drive to reverse the feminist gains of the last decades, alternatively described as toxic chauvinism, anti-feminism, or

simply misogyny.[56]

This common link should be made more visible, prompt further research, and be taken into consideration by experts in national and international security and conflict prevention. For example, human-rights monitors and prevention experts should be zeroing in on the most salient expressions of misogyny, and do more to incorporate trends reflecting increases in misogyny, anti-women rhetoric, political marginalization of women or women's groups, and strict enforcement of traditional gender norms, dress codes, or segregation. Currently, whenever gender slips into prevention-related analyses it is typically to report incidents of gender-based violence. But our data on this is too rudimentary to know whether increases are due to more violence or improved reporting and greater coverage service.

This link should also buttress the arguments of the feminist legal scholars and practitioners who are demanding more attention to gender-based crimes in international courts, rather than solely sexual violence. While the Security Council has begun to acknowledge sexual violence as tactic of terrorism and calling for its victims to access the same benefits of other victims of terrorism, our current international legal frameworks and definitions of terrorism still often fall short of interpreting the ideological content of men's violence and the targeting of women because they are women.

Similarly, the nexus between misogyny and public and political violence and terrorism should also persuade more voters and their governments to divert funding and resources to addressing violence against women, including online abuse, which is still not being taken seriously across the board, and treat calls for violence predicated on misogyny at least with as much attention as all other forms of ideologically motivated violent extremism. This means taking action against these manifestations, from condemning the rhetoric of leaders, traditional or otherwise, to taking measures against harassment in the workplace, the street, or online, to monitoring these trends as part of our human rights monitoring and conflict and political analysis, to investing much more in responding to violence against women, and finally to empowering women and girls and their advocates in every aspect. Ultimately, they are the ones that will more effectively challenge these harmful gender norms. For example, in their landmark study, Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon looked at 70 countries over four decades and found that the mobilization of strong, independent feminist movements was a more important force in reducing violence against women than the economic wealth of a nation, the representation of women in government or the presence of progressive political parties.[57]

We have seen some indications of change in this regard. Social media companies have only very recently started to grapple with the use of these platforms as

sites of radicalization and networking as real and impactful as other terrorist or hate groups, but neither tech companies nor legislators or law enforcement agents have an answer for the groundswell of online abuse of women because they are women.[58] For example, Reddit finally adjusted its policies to prohibit content that "encourages, glorifies, incites, or calls for violence or physical harm against an individual or group of people." The Southern Poverty Law Center started tracking the actions of incel groups. The Victorian Police in Australia announced last year that they would treat domestic violence perpetrators like terrorists, by specialized police units that target repeat offenders and work to predict violence to intervene before women are killed or injured.[iv] But we are only beginning to scratch the surface and need more analysis and experimentation to figure out what would work.

The recent surge in interest in men's disaffection and aggrieved masculinities typically points to broader social and economic trends, but are insufficient explanations to understand the violent acts of terrorists and mass killers. Beyond this, we must pay much more attention to the specific behavioral patterns and radicalization paths exhibited by most of them, and act more forcefully against the communities and ideologues that foment this violence.

The world has mobilized trillions of dollars of political, security and military resources to combat terrorism, and yet most of it is still blind to the shared ideology and political agenda that makes extreme misogynists so dangerous, to women and everyone else. At the very least, this common link between mass killers of such different stripes should be much more visible in our analyses. Feminist journalists and writers have been dutifully documenting this link, especially in the last few years, and it is time for policymakers to act like they have taken notice. ♘

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iv On the other hand, the same Victorian Police opened up a $30-million center a few months later to prevent and combat terrorism and lone-actor attacks and included no experts on violence against women. For example, see Jude McCulloch et al., "We Won't Stop Lone Actor Attacks Until We Understand Violence Against Women," *Conversation*, 19 March 2018, https://theconversation.com/we-wont-stop-lone-actor-attacks-until-we-understand-violence-against-women-92923.

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