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Dissertation

The Barriers and Limitations of the Modern Genocide Approach in Syria

A Case Study of the Sieges of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta

Dissertation submitted by

Anna Costa

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Supervisors: Pablo Pareja & Nikolai Sitter

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Name: Anna Costa

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1.Executive Summary

After eight years of conflict it is necessary to start considering the future of Syria. The crimes that were committed, the legal value of them and what are the possible consequences should be considered to envision an effective reconciliation and reconstruction plan. This report looks at the possibility of framing specific events such as the Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta sieges as genocides.

This report explores the meaning of genocide in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the limitations, and the main criticisms. Finding that the concepts of groups and intent are restrictive. A new framework based on a sociologist perspective on genocide will be created. Following this, it will be argued that political groups should be included as a protected category. Leading to a definition of intent that not only includes the act of killing but that it should also include policies that aim at expulsion and limiting return.

This framework will be applied to the cases of Aleppo and Ghouta. The possibility of religious and political opposition as being the target groups will then be considered, as well as the inhumane tactics of the regime such as using chemical weapons. Finally, it will examine the acts of evictions and policies such as Decree 66 and Article 10 that aim to prevent the safe return of certain Syrians.

The report concludes that even though the sieges should be defined as genocide this will not happen due to the limitation of the law and the current political landscape. However, this should not prevent policy makers, national and international actors from treating these events for what they really are. It finally offers three policy options; that Bashar Al-Assad and allies are condemned for the crime of genocide, Regime actors and opposition actors are trialled as single individuals for war crimes, or the regime will win the conflict and the crimes committed by regime forces will not be condemned. The report will suggest the third option as the most likely, advising

the actors involved in the peacebuilding process to take into consideration that genocide happened in order to secure sustainable peace.

2. Introduction

The Syrian conflict began in 2011 with a civilian uprising led by pro-democracy activists. By April 2018 more than 465 000 Syrians were killed, over a million were injured and more than half of the country pre-conflict population was displaced¹. During this conflict there have been and still are besieged areas. This thesis will focus on the besieged areas of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta. These two cases have been chosen due to the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis and the types of violent attacks they have been targeted with. The Eastern Aleppo siege has been one of the most intense, characterised by constant bombing and driven by the Syrian government tactic of “surrender or die”². The besieged area of Eastern Ghouta has been the target of several chemical attacks by the Syrian Regime. Four attacks were recorded between the period of November 2017 to January 2018³.

Due to the nature of the topic, this thesis will be a policy report. The study is based on recent events for which no academic literature has been written yet. The research question is; To what extent the Syrian conflict, specifically the Aleppo and Ghouta sieges, will currently not be treated as genocide due to the limitations of international law and the current political landscape? I will first look at the limitations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. I will then focus on the barriers that will be faced due to the current political environment.

This thesis finds its relevance in the lack of extensive literature related to the Syrian conflict. There is no current literature that analyses these events as possible cases of genocide. It will also analyse in depth two specific aspects of the Syrian conflict; the

¹ (April 2018) “Syria’s civil war explained since the beginning” Aljazeera

² “Siege Watch Fifth Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria – November 2016-January 2017” PAX, The Syrian Institute

³ “Siege Watch Ninth Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria November 2017 – January 2018” PAX, The Syrian Institute

besieged areas of Aleppo and Ghouta and will put into perspective the gravity of these events. The findings will be relevant and can be taken into consideration when it comes to reconstruction and reconciliation. It ultimately could give some understanding on who should be held accountable for these crimes and who should receive reparations.

The thesis will first start with a literature review divided in two sections. The first one based on the different definitions and criticism of genocide. The second one will focus on the Syrian conflict most specifically the sieges of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta. These sections will be followed by the explanation of the theoretical framework. In the third section, the theoretical framework will be applied on the two case studies. The thesis will then conclude with a number of policy recommendations.

3.Literature Review

3.1.a The Concept of Genocide

The definition of the crime of genocide was conceived by Raphael Lemkin, influenced by the atrocities of the German Government during the Second World War. The definition and recognition of the crime of genocide was codified with the drafting of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) in 1948. So far the convention has only been used three times. The crimes that have been labelled as genocide are the Holocaust, the Rwanda Genocide and the Srebrenica massacre of 1995⁴. There are other crimes of mass destruction that scholars and human rights activist have argued to be recognised as crime of genocide but the strict and limited definition has not allowed for other conflicts to be defined as such. In this section, the legal definition of the crime of genocide and its limitations will be explored. Other suggestions recommended by sociologists and historians will also be considered.

⁴ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) "Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas" Rutgers University Press

The CPPCG states in Article II that they can be considered as genocidal “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group⁵”. It was a significant step forward after the Nuremberg Trials. It compels the signatories of the convention to prevent in the future similar acts to those committed during the Holocaust⁶. It is also the first international legal instrument that only protects specific groups⁷. However, the concept of groups, and other concepts, such as intent, do not have a precise definition within the convention. The specification of these terms can be found in the conclusions of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and Yugoslavia⁸.

3.1.b Protected Groups by the Convention

Professor Raphael Lemkin, in a UN press release of June 10, 1947, declared that the most controversial point of the Convention will be the discussion concerning political groups⁹. During the *Travaux Préparatoires*, “political groups” were included as a protected group in the convention. It was highly debated and countries were divided in deciding if political groups ought to be included or not. Some representatives, such as the delegate from Cuba, argued for the inclusion of political groups as they might be in even greater danger. The Dutch delegates were also in favour arguing that the Nazis not only persecuted Jews but they also killed a great number of people due to their political affiliation¹⁰. Other delegates shared their concerns about excluding specific groups as it could be used as a loophole. Criminals could claim to be op-

⁵ General Assembly Resolution 260 A (III) (9 November 1948) “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”

⁶ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) “The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot” *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 106, No. 7

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) “Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas” Rutgers University Press

⁹ Milliren, Mariam L. (1947) “The UN Convention on Genocide” *World Affairs*, Vol. 110, No. 4,

¹⁰ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) “The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot” *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 106, No. 7

pressing political groups while they are instead persecuting other groups protected by the convention¹¹. This possibility was mentioned by the French Judge, Donnedieu de Sabres, during the Nuremberg trials which thought that excluding such groups could be seen as a legitimisation of their persecution¹². In addition, Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn have found evidence that since World War II political groups have been the most persecuted category¹³.

However, the sixth committee of the General Assembly was the one responsible for writing the final version of the Convention. They concluded that political groups had to be excluded as they were not homogeneous and lacked stability. The targeted groups ought to have clear identifiable permanent characteristics an element that political groups did not have¹⁴. Furthermore, Martin Shaw explains that political groups could have never been included due to the political atmosphere in which the Convention was being drafted. At the time, the leaders of the Soviet Union were committing a large number of killings targeting people that were opposing the regime. Hence, if political groups were to be included Stalin would have been held accountable for his atrocities¹⁵. In the end, a compromise was reached, in order to obtain more signatories to the convention the committee decided to exclude political groups as victims¹⁶. The debate around the inclusion of political groups is relevant as it will be argued that one of the victim groups in Syria is the political opposition.

3.1.c The Illegality of Excluding Political Groups

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² Feierstein, Daniel (2014) "Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas" Rutgers University Press

¹³ Chalk, Frank & Jonassohn, Kurt (1990) "The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies" Yale University Press

¹⁴ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) "The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot" The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

¹⁵ Shaw, Martin (2011) " Britain and Genocide: historical and contemporary parameters of national responsibility" Review of International Studies, Vol. 37, No. 5,

¹⁶ Kok-Thay Eng "Redefining Genocide" Genocide Watch

From a legal perspective, the 1948 convention does not respect the concept of equality before the law¹⁷. By limiting the groups that can be defined as victims of genocide it prevents individuals from being protected from atrocious crimes. There have already been examples in history of crimes not defined as genocide due to this specific limitation. For instance, the cases of the Khmer Rouge (1975 to 1978)¹⁸ and Darfur¹⁹. In the former, at least a fifth of the population was starved or killed because of their class affiliation. In the latter, international organisations and governments, such as the US under the Bush administration, acknowledged that a genocide was happening, but the UN failed to react accordingly²⁰.

Thus, the exclusion of certain groups is unlawful. Beth Van Schaack argues that the crime of genocide is part of Jus Cogens, this entails that even if governments have not ratified the Convention they are bound by International Customary Law²¹. The exclusion of certain groups goes against both the principle of Jus Cogens and the principal of universality of the law. The authority of the Jus Cogen was developed as a doctrine of treaty law and included in Article 53 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on The Law of Treaties.

Article 53. TREATIES CONFLICTING WITH A PEREMPTORY NORM OF GENERAL INTERNATIONAL LAW ("JUS COGENS")

"...For the purposes of the present Convention, a peremptory norm of general international law is a norm accepted and recognised by the international community of States as a whole as a norm from which no derogation is permitted..."²²

¹⁷ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) "Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas" Rutgers University Press

¹⁸ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) "The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot" The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Shaw, Martin (2011) "Britain and Genocide: historical and contemporary parameters of national responsibility" Review of International Studies, Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 2417-2438

²¹ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) "The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot" The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

²² United Nations, (23 May 1969) "The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties" p. 14

The validity of the Crime of Genocide is strengthened by the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued in 1951 entitled Reservations to the Genocide Convention. The ICJ states that the prohibition of genocide is binding even to those states that do not subscribe to the Convention as its inherent part of the principles of civilised nations²³. Beth Van Schaack claims that the action of signing the convention means that the parties accept further multilateral commitment²⁴. This does not only mean that any country can be prosecuted for the crime of genocide but also that the exclusion of political groups goes against Jus Cogens. This can be claimed on the one hand, because the original General Assembly Resolution discussing the crime of Genocide declared that political groups ought to be included. On the other hand, there are several countries which include such groups as a protected category in their national legislation²⁵.

Originally, during the Nuremberg trials it was concluded that political and social groups ought to be defended by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by national legislation²⁶. In his updated report on the Questions of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide published in 1978, Nicodeme Ruhashayankiko proposed a new definition of genocide. It suggested that new protected groups should be added based on their sexual and political orientations²⁷. To remedy the lack of mentioning the concept of political groups a new category of crimes named “politicide” has been created. This category is not included in any sort of treaty or convention preventing the possibility to attribute responsibility and persecute perpetrators committing such crimes. This report will argue for the need of considering political group as a protected category as it is part of Jus Cogens.

²³ Wouters, Jan & Verhoeven, Sten (January 2015) “The Prohibition of Genocide as a Norm of Ius Cogens and Its Implications for the Enforcement of the Law of Genocide” Institute of International Law

²⁴ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) “The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot” The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) “Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas” Rutgers University Press

²⁷ Nicodeme Ruhashayankiko, Special Rapporteur, (1978) “Study of the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” U.N. ESCOR, Hum. Rts. Comm., Subcomm. On Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 31st Sess., para. 440 at 120, U.N.

3.1.d How Can Group Members Be Identified?

A first barrier was defining which groups ought to be protected, a second one came when tribunals had to define victims as belonging to a specific protected category. It has been challenging for International Tribunals to classify victims as belonging to a specific group. For instance, as Daniel Feierstein explains while reviewing the conclusion of the International Criminal Court for Rwanda, that it was problematic to differentiate Hutus and Tutsis as two separate groups. Erik Markusen points out that most Tutsis were killed based on the ethnicity written in their document issued during the Belgian colonial government²⁸. There was no other specific group characteristics that differentiated the two ethnic groups.

There can be two ways of defining group membership; objective or subjective recognition. In the legal perspective in order for victims to be part of a group they have to have objective characteristics that make them belong. An objective approach analyses and finds the specific characteristics that gathers certain individuals together. If they do not have specific characteristics they are not identified as group. Using this approach it makes it more difficult to respect the specific groups underlined in the Convention²⁹. In a more sociologist perspective the construction of the group is subjectively created by the perpetrator. S/he defines the victims collective characteristics³⁰. The victim not always perceives itself as belonging to a group but it is the perpetrator imposing the membership on them³¹. Carola Lingaas, argues that the concept of “othering” is created by the perpetrator. S/he names, identifies and defines,

²⁸ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) “Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas” Rutgers University Press

²⁹ Shaw, Martin (2015) “What is Genocide” Polity Press

³⁰ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) “The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot” The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

³¹ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) “Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas” Rutgers University Press

based on its own judgement of the group to then proceed to the destruction³². Sociologists believe that the objective perspective has limited the possibility of persecuting certain crimes as genocide. The concept of group is so important because the individual is a mean to an end, each dead individual means a step forward to eliminate the group. It is his/her connection to the group that make him/her a target. This is why a specific definition of groups is so vital. Benjamin Whitaker, an English Lawyer that was given the mandate to revise the Convention, in his report issued in July 1985, stated that the lack of a precise definition of the groups in the Convention weakens its effects³³.

3.1.e What is Intent?

The concept of intent is another controversial point in the legal framework of genocide. Intent is seen as a key element to prove in order to define genocide. The crime itself is characterised by the “intent to destroy a group”³⁴. Raphael Lemkin during the drafting of the Convention acknowledged the barriers that can come up when trying to prove intent³⁵. However, Lemkin introduced the element of intent in order to distinguish genocide from other crimes. The perpetrators' intent to exterminate a specific group is what makes genocide such an atrocious crime³⁶. Human Right experts believe that the concept of intent ought not to be part of the limitation as the difficulties of proving this concept prevents the persecution of perpetrators of genocide³⁷. It is extremely difficult to prove intent and it is rare that a government pub-

³² Lingaas, Carola (December 2918) “Defining the protected groups of genocide through the case law of international courts” International Crimes Database

³³ Waller, James (2016) “Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide” Oxford University Press

³⁴ Lingaas, Carola (December 2918) “Defining the protected groups of genocide through the case law of international courts” International Crimes Database

³⁵ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) “Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas” Rutgers University Press

³⁶ Harff, Barbara (2003) “No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955” The American Political Science Review, Vol. 97, No. 1

³⁷ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) “The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot” The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

licly and clearly states its intentions of exterminating part of its population. This only happened in the isolated case of Nazi Germany where Hitler announced his intention in *Mein Kampf*³⁸.

From a legal perspective and according to the Rome statute a genocidal act is not spontaneous but organised. It is the knowledge of a defined plan to destroy a specific group³⁹. The emphasis on the concept of intent is to define that genocide is a deliberate action supported by specific policies. Barbara Harff defines intent as “any persistent, coherent pattern of action by the state, its agents (or, in the case of civil war, either of the contending authorities) that brings about the destruction of a collectivity, in a whole or part is prima facie evidence of authorities responsibility”⁴⁰. In the Rwanda Chamber, intent was defined as an act that can be deduced from a systematic action directed to the same group⁴¹.

Van Schaack gives four possible ways to determine if there is or not intent of genocide. These events are; security forces, such as police and military, ignoring isolated killings. The government conducting repressive acts that are excessive compared to the opposition response. The use of propaganda by elite groups in order to contrast government opposition groups. Finally, the perpetrators are mainly affiliated to the state, such as authorised state militias, police or military⁴². Daniel Feierstein claims that intent can be perceived when the perpetrators are destroying relationships of cooperation and autonomy by isolating a significant part of the population. In a second phase the perpetrator uses terror to establish new social relationships and im-

³⁸ *Ibid*

³⁹ Shaw, Martin (2015) “What is Genocide” Polity Press

⁴⁰ Harff, Barbara (2003) “No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1

⁴¹ Shaw, Martin (2015) “What is Genocide” Polity Press

⁴² Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) “The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot” *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 106, No. 7

poses new identities among the survivors⁴³. As a matter of fact, Lemkin specifies that genocide has two phases; the first one aiming at the destruction of national patterns of the targeted groups. The second one is the imposition of new patterns by the oppressor⁴⁴. The notion of intent in the Syrian case will not be found in a specific plan or declaration of the perpetrators. It will be proved by analysing different policies and actions carried out by the regime.

3.1.f What Acts Constitute Intent?

In order to identify and prove intent it is necessary to define which acts constitute a genocide. Hence, even though the convention only considers killing as action of genocide, Raphael Lemkin had a broader concept in mind. He wanted to criminalise any action that aimed at the destruction of a group. He also lists biological, cultural, economic and political as mean of destruction⁴⁵. For instance, even if murder is the violent way to destruction, expulsion is still a way to destroy a group as the perpetrator is pushing the victims away from their home, their family ties and preventing them from continuing a life as they knew it⁴⁶. It should still be considered as a violent destruction of a way of life. At first the Nazis implemented policies of expulsion and deportation before implementing the “final solution”. Policies such as dehousing, terror bombing, destruction of towns and other actions that aim at the alienation or displacement of a population ought to be perceived as genocidal actions. According to Martin Shaw the concept of expulsion was not included as United Nations (UN) powers were themselves perpetuating force removal of populations. For instance, the Soviet Union was exporting political opponents to gulags and Britain which was

⁴³ Feierstein, Daniel (2014) “Chapter: Genocide as Social Practice in Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas” Rutgers University Press

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ Shaw, Martin (2011) “Britain and Genocide: historical and contemporary parameters of national responsibility” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 2417-2438

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

aware of the mass deportation of Jews in Germany and decided to turn a blind eye on the situation⁴⁷. In 1948, the UN voted for the division of Palestine and contributed to the forced eviction of three quarters of a million Arabs from the new territory of Israel.

3.1.g The Limitations of the Convention

The literature related to the crime of genocide sees a division between what is the definition given by the CPPCG and what is the perspective of legal scholars and sociologists. The main critiques are the exclusion of political groups as a protected category and the difficulties of proving intent as intended in the convention.

When it comes to the concept of political groups it can be concluded that a great compromise had to be achieved for the convention to be accepted by as many countries as possible. Scholars also argue that the definition was specifically proposed by Lemkin to target the actions perpetuated during the Holocaust. A destruction that was based on a biological racism determined by the Nazis. Social groups do not build relationships based on biological grounds. The structure of a society is socially built not biologically⁴⁸. The concept of race has also changed since the drafting of the convention. Science has proved that race does not exist but that we are all equals. These flaws in the convention lead to a failure of the international community to intervene in case of actual genocide. It also shows how countries' interests are more important than actually saving people's lives. The United States' intervention in Iraq has proven that a country can intervene but they only do so if there is a personal interest⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Shaw, Shaw, Martin (2015) "What is Genocide" Polity Press

⁴⁸ Shaw, Martin (2015) "What is Genocide: Chapter 2, Raphael Lemkin and the Idea of Genocide" Polity Press

⁴⁹ Kok-Thay Eng "Redefining Genocide" Genocide Watch

The convention was a reaction to a crime that before had not been defined. Times have changed and as war have evolved the definition and recognition of genocide should to. This literature will be used to analyse the cases of the siege of Ghouta and Aleppo to argue that the Assad government has committed genocide towards specific groups based in those areas. The emphasis on the importance of the inclusion of political groups comes with the fact that the targeted population in Syria are citizens affiliated with the political opposition.

3.2.a The Syrian Conflict

This section of the thesis will discuss how the Syrian conflict began and what are its singular characteristics. It will then review the specific cases of Eastern Ghouta and Eastern Aleppo as sieges. There is little literature related to the Syrian conflict. It is especially limited when it comes to the sieges. In order to trace an overview of the facts I will rely on reports written by international organisations and journalists that have an unbiased position, as much as possible, towards the conflict.

The Syrian conflict has now entered its eighth year. It is been defined as the longest lasting anti-regime uprising in history⁵⁰. So far the International Community and the United Nations have been incapable of mediating a ceasefire and end the killings⁵¹. The conflict began in 2011 with local peaceful protests against the government's human rights abuses and corruption. Ahmed Hashin and Gregoire Patte argue that the protests began due to an overall dissatisfaction from the population. The poor economic landscape, youth unemployment and the authoritarian regime incapable of

⁵⁰ Hashim, Ahmed & Patter, Gregoire (June 2012) "The Syrian Cauldron of Violence the Role of the Islamist Opposition" Counter Terrorism Trends and Analysis, Vol. 4, No 6, pp. 15-19 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁵¹ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

reform were all triggers of the revolution⁵². People were asking for the ending of the regime and they were answered with arrests and torture. The regime had a violent reaction to the protests which led to an armed response from politically motivated groups which ended in an armed conflict⁵³. Initially, the International Community sided with the opposition as they believed Assad was a tyrannical leader that killed and tortured his people⁵⁴. Thus, countries such as the United States have supported certain rebel groups with the supply of arms.

3.2.b The Actors involved

The actors in the conflict are many, some participating directly other indirectly. What started off as a civil war, witnessing contrast between Bashar AL-Assad regime and the Syrian opposition, has now led to an intersection of a multiplicity of international and local actors⁵⁵. Syed Huzaifah Alkaff explains that the Syrian opposition consists of heterogeneous groups ranging from secular factions to more extremist and moderated Islamist groups. On the other side of the conflict is the Assad Regime receiving its main international support from Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah and an alliance with Russia⁵⁶. Iran provided Assad with military personnel and weapons⁵⁷. Hezbollah identifies as Shiite Islamist which support the regime due to its Alawite affiliation. Aron Lund describes Assad's support as a multiplicity of militia groups, intelligence and military forces mainly composed by Syrian minorities and Ba'ath

⁵² Hashim, Ahmed & Patte, Gregoire (June 2012) "The Syrian Cauldron of Violence the Role of the Islamist Opposition" Counter Terrorism Trends and Analysis, Vol. 4, No 6, pp. 15-19 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁵³ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁵⁴ Uludag, Mekki (August 2015) "Syrian Civil War Important Players and Key Implications - A Fact-sheet" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 7, No. 7 pp. 4-10. International Centre for Political and Terrorism Research

⁵⁵ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁵⁶ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁵⁷ Uludag, Mekki (August 2015) "Syrian Civil War Important Players and Key Implications - A Fact-sheet" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 7, No. 7 pp. 4-10. International Centre for Political and Terrorism Research

party members⁵⁸. The Ba'ath party members are well-known to receive favours from the government. A change in the regime would result in a loss of status for many of them.

Mekki Ulundag in an analysis conducted in 2015, divided the parties to the conflict in four different groups. The first group, is defined by the Syrian government and its allies. They are the strongest force on the ground. Bashar al Assad is an Alawite, a sect of Shiite Islam. They represented 10 to 15% of the population in Syria before the conflict. Assad represents them and they support the regime⁵⁹. Sunni Muslim represent 75% of the population⁶⁰. Aron Lund premises that the allies are mainly formed by Shia Muslims that have travelled from different countries to join the sectarian fight recruited by religious parties in Iraq and Lebanon⁶¹. The second group, are terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS and affiliates like Jbhat al Nusra. The third group of actors, is the Syrian opposition. The regime opposition is fragmented and has many different groups that do not coordinate or have a centralised decision-making authority. The only communality between these groups are their common goal of overthrowing the Assad regime. They have been trying to form a coalition several times. The 3 of August 2014, a coalition of seventy-two factions, called the Syrian Revolutionary Command Council, was established. The coalition aimed at strengthening the opposition and coordinating actions. One of the largest umbrella group of the opposition is called the Free Syrian Army. Even though they had achieved a certain level of unity it ended up failing due to the increasing number of opposition groups and the ideological differences⁶². The fourth one, he defines as the

⁵⁸ Aron Lund "Chapter 10: Chasing Ghosts" Kerr, Michael & Larking, Graing *The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*. Oxford Scholarship Online

⁵⁹ Uludag, Mekki (August 2015) "Syrian Civil War Important Players and Key Implications - A Fact-sheet" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 7, No. 7 pp. 4-10. International Centre for Political and Terrorism Research

⁶⁰ Hashim, Ahmed & Patte, Gregoire (June 2012) "The Syrian Cauldron of Violence the Role of the Islamist Opposition" *Counter Terrorism Trends and Analysis*, Vol. 4, No 6, pp. 15-19 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁶¹ Aron Lund "Chapter 10: Chasing Ghosts" Kerr, Michael & Larking, Graing *The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*. Oxford Scholarship Online

⁶² Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff & NurulHuda Binte Yussof (August 2016) "An Overview of the Syrian Conflict" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 8, No. 8 pp. 8-11

Kurdish front⁶³. This group was based in Northern Syria aiming at achieving the independence of Kurdish areas.

3.2.c The Sectarian Nature of the Conflict

Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff & NurulHuda Binte Yussof describe the conflict as sectarian⁶⁴ although it is not the only driving factor. Merrill Perlman explains that “Sectarian violence is a conflict between and among groups with a specific ethnicity or religion. The conflict may have numerous causes, but the result is violence based on ethnic/religious differences”⁶⁵. Assad is representing the minority group of Alawite and the Shiite. Some rebel groups are targeting the Regime as they represent the Sunnis. For instance, Zahran Alloush the former leader of one of the main rebel groups was an Islamist sectarian leader who was against Shiites⁶⁶. While in power Bashar al Assad and his family used their position to support the rise of Alawites in the highest positions. For instance, it was estimated in 2012 that at least one thousand Alawites were part of the security services and more than ten thousands were part of the presidential guard or the army⁶⁷. The presidential guard being composed only of Alawites. This Alawite dominant presence was the consequence of Bashar al Assad’s policies which aimed at creating an empowered Alawite male and female community which is both reliant and loyal to the regime⁶⁸.

⁶³ Uludag, Mekki (Jan/Feb 2015) “Syria” Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 29-83

⁶⁴ Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff & NurulHuda Binte Yussof (August 2016) “An Overview of the Syrian Conflict” Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 8, No. 8 pp. 8-11

⁶⁵ Merrill Perlman (June 2016) “Civil versus Sectarian Conflict: how to pick the most accurate war world” Columbia Journalism Review

⁶⁶ Mamouri, A. (2016) “Was Zahran Alloush really a moderate leader?” Al-Monitor,

⁶⁷ Hashim, Ahmed & Patte, Gregoire (June 2012) “The Syrian Cauldron of Violence the Role of the Islamist Opposition” Counter Terrorism Trends and Analysis, Vol. 4, No 6, pp. 15-19 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁶⁸ Balanche, Fabrice (2015) “Chapter 4: Go to Damascus, my son” The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant Kerr, Michael & Larkin Craig, Oxford Scholarship Online

Syria is the most heterogeneous country in the region, the civil war has led to an even greater divide related to unaddressed grievances. Since the beginning of spring 2011 it was clear that there was a sectarian element to the situation as it was Sunni Syrians who were protesting in the streets⁶⁹. Some of the early slogans of more extremist Sunni groups stated; "Send the Alawis to the grave and the Christians to Beirut"⁷⁰. These statements gave more reasons to Assad to answer to the uprising with more violence as a successful Sunni uprising would have meant a threat for the stability of Alawites in the country. The Alawite minorities were instead using slogans such as "Assad Forever"⁷¹. Assad encouraged the Alawite minority to create local gangs to respond to the protests⁷². This led to the creation of several militia groups that supported Assad which with time became invaluable and necessary strength. These civilian militia groups were named Shabiha by the opposition. In the early beginnings of the uprising they supported the government by suffocating the peaceful protests with violent means⁷³. Raymond Hinnebush defines it as a conflict between the privileged and the deprived which quickly turned into a sectarian violent war⁷⁴.

3.2.d The Violence

"The fighting in Syria has reached unprecedented levels of horror and destruction with reports of chemical weapons being used by both sides"⁷⁵. The crimes committed during this conflict have been the most reported in history⁷⁶. There is proof of every type of atrocity carried out by both sides of the conflict. Syria has been for a

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ Balanche, Fabrice (2015) "Go to Damascus, my son" (p. 3) *The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant* Kerr, Michael & Larkin Craig, Oxford Scholarship Online

⁷¹ Hinnebush, Raymond (2015) "Chapter 5: Syria's Always and the Ba'ath Party" Kerr Michael & Larkin, Craig, *The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*. Oxford Scholarship Online

⁷² Aron Lund "Chapter 10: Chasing Ghosts" Kerr, Michael & Larking, Graing *The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*. Oxford Scholarship Online

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ Hinnebush, Raymond (2015) "Chapter 5: Syria's Always and the Ba'ath Party" Kerr Michael & Larkin, Craig, *The Always of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*. Oxford Scholarship Online

⁷⁵ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁷⁶ (April, 2016) "Genocide and Mass Atrocities Alert: Syria" Genocide Watch <http://genocidewatch.net/2013/03/20/genocide-alerts-syria/>

long time a highly militarised power due to its bordering with Israel and Turkey⁷⁷. The Assad regime, which had a great power in Chemical Weapons has used them several times against its population. On 6th December 2013, the regime pretended to destroy its Chemical Weapons, after pressure from the International Community. This destruction was certified by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). After this claimed destruction, there is proof of other Chemical Weapons attacks conducted by the regime⁷⁸.

3.2.e Eastern Ghouta

The territory of Eastern Ghouta is a suburb located fifteen kilometres north from Damascus and was under siege since 2013. With an estimated population of 400 000⁷⁹, it has been a strategic stronghold held by two of the main opposition groups Jaish Al-Islam and Faylaq Al-Rahma. These two groups are not only fighting against the government but also against each other to obtain the ideological and territorial dominance of the region. It is a key area due to its proximity to the Syrian capital. It allows rebels to use this position to attack Damascus⁸⁰. The division between the rebel groups brought one of the last remaining strongholds to collapse. This report will not account for all the events that happened since the beginning of the siege. It will mainly focus on the last few months that brought the regime to retake control.

⁷⁷ Hashim, Ahmed & Patte, Gregoire (June 2012) "The Syrian Cauldron of Violence the Role of the Islamist Opposition" Counter Terrorism Trends and Analysis, Vol. 4, No 6, pp. 15-19 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁷⁸ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

⁷⁹ Chughtai, Alia & El Hilali, Nouran Mohamed (23 March 2018) "Under Siege: Syria's Eastern Ghouta" Al Jazeera <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/05/siege-syria-eastern-ghouta-170503080230797.html>

⁸⁰ Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff & NurulHuda Binte Yussof (August 2016) "An Overview of the Syrian Conflict" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 8, No. 8 pp. 8-11

At the beginning of February 2018 the regime, with the help of Russia, began an offensive aiming to retake at any costs the Eastern Ghouta territory⁸¹. Antonio Guterres has defined the situation in Eastern Ghouta as “Hell on Earth”⁸². During this offensive the government has targeted several hospitals and other critical facilities. Twenty-five health facilities were hit in only four days⁸³. This siege witnessed a death toll of 550 people in only eight days of regime held attacks in February 2018⁸⁴. The United Nations Security Council issued a resolution calling for a thirty days’ ceasefire. Russia requested a truce aiming at evacuating civilians. Human Rights organisations claimed that attacks were ongoing even after the resolution and the Russian requested truce⁸⁵.

There are several reports from United Nations investigations proving the use of multiple chlorine and sarin bombs on the territory. The first reported sarin attack was in August 2013 which ended with a total death of 1466 people of which 426 were children⁸⁶. The government kept claiming that the targets were territories held by terrorist. However, by tracing the areas of the attacks it is clear that those are home to civilians. The attacks seemed more to be directed to any individual that is present in rebel held areas⁸⁷. Evacuations of the area began the 9th of March when the first opposi-

⁸¹ Jabbour Samer (March, 2018) “Death and suffering in Eastern Ghouta, Syria: a call for action to protect civilians and health care” The Lancet Vol. 391

⁸² Al Jazeera News (February 2018) “‘Hell on Earth’ in Eastern Ghouta must stop: UN chief” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/earth-eastern-ghouta-stop-chief-180226095712324.html>

⁸³ Syrian American Medical Society (Feb 20, 2018) “Thirteen targeted attacks on hospitals in east ghouta in 48 hours. Medics describe the situation as “catastrophic.” https://www.sams-usa.net/press_release/thirteen-targeted-attacks-hospitals-east-ghouta-48-hours-medics-describe-situation-catastrophic/

⁸⁴ Syria Observatory for Human Rights “ Syria’s war: Eastern Ghouta ceasefire violations kill two” United Kingdom <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=85820>

⁸⁵ Farah, Najjar (February, 2018) “Syria’s war: Eastern Ghouta ceasefire violations kill four” Al Jazeera <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/syria-war-eastern-ghouta-ceasefire-violations-kill-180227081259783.html>

⁸⁶ Sparrow, Annie (February 9, 2018.) “Hypocritical oath: how WHO and other international agencies aid Assad’s war against Syria’s civilians.” Foreign Policy. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/09/hypocritical-oath/>

⁸⁷ Jabbour Samer (March, 2018) “Death and suffering in Eastern Ghouta, Syria: a call for action to protect civilians and health care” The Lancet Vol. 391

tion group was evicted. The Syrian government regained control of Eastern Ghouta on the 12th of April 2018⁸⁸.

3.2.f Eastern Aleppo

Aleppo city and country side experienced a divide since before the conflict. Rich bourgeois were thriving in the city while the countryside was populated by lower income communities⁸⁹. Since the start of the violent uprising, the regime focused on holding on to the main cities and military locations. Places where they held the most support. The opposition groups entered the city of Aleppo for the first time in July 2012⁹⁰ by attacking checkpoints and security facilities. Until mid 2015, The rebels were holding and advancing territory in Aleppo. In October, ISIS was moving within the Northern Aleppo region occupying several villages. In 2015 Russia began its participation in the conflict claiming to target ISIS territory in Syria providing the government with air arm support⁹¹. Simultaneously, Iran and Hezbollah provided support on the ground. In the final week of April 2016, the government began heavy shelling of the Eastern region of Aleppo which was held by rebel forces⁹². In a week of offensives the regime launched one hundred and ten bombs and more than two hundred and sixty airstrikes⁹³. The most deadly outcome was the destruction of the hospital which killed the last paediatrician present in the area⁹⁴. There are several reports of government forces specifically targeting health clinics in rebel areas leav-

⁸⁸ Al Jazeera (14 April 2018) "Eastern Ghouta: what happened and why" <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/eastern-ghouta-happening-180226110239822.html>

⁸⁹ Tokmajyan, Armenak (May 2016) "2012: Aleppo Conflict Timeline" The Aleppo Project

⁹⁰ Tokmajyan, Armenak (May 2016) "Aleppo Conflict Timeline" The Aleppo Project

⁹¹ Tokmajyan, Armenak (May 2016) "2015: Aleppo Conflict Timeline" The Aleppo Project

⁹² Tokmajyan, Armenak (May 2016) "April 2016: Aleppo Conflict Timeline" The Aleppo Project

⁹³ Boffey, Daniel (30 April 2016) "'We've had massacres all week:' Aleppo on fire again as Assad consigns ceasefire to history." The Guardian. 30 April 2016. Accessed 9 May 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/30/syria-airstrikes-aleppo-assad-ceasefire-civilians>

⁹⁴ The Guardian. "Aleppo mourns Syrian paediatrician killed in hospital airstrike." 29 April 2016. Accessed 29 May 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/29/mohammad-wassim-maaz-syrian-paediatrician-al-quds-airstrike>

ing them unavailable to use⁹⁵. In the meantime, there were peace talks held in Geneva that were leading to no results.

On the 7th of July 2016 the government put Eastern Aleppo under siege⁹⁶. There were 250 000 people under siege with the regime and Russia continuously attacking⁹⁷. The UN petitioned the government for a ceasefire to let aid convoys in as the food and medical supplies were running out⁹⁸. Assad organised two passages for civilians and one for rebels ready to surrender⁹⁹. The siege was broken by opposition forces on the 6th of August but without any possibility to leave or enter the city of Aleppo in a safe way¹⁰⁰. By September the tactic of Bashar al Assad which began as a “starve and surrender” became “surrender or we will wipe you out”¹⁰¹. This policy was used for all the sieges. Simultaneously, Russia intensified the bombing on the Eastern region of Aleppo. The city fell in December. Between the 14th and 15th of December an evacuation plan was carried out to evict citizens from rebel held areas. The expulsion was concluded in December 22 with around 35 000 people relocated by buses to other areas¹⁰².

The Assad regime resorted to tactics of starvation and heavy shelling in order to regain the territory of Aleppo. It prevented aid convoys to supply food and medicines

⁹⁵ Aljazeera English. “Syria civil war: Air strikes hit Aleppo hospitals.” 24 July 2016. Accessed 27 July 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/syria-civil-war-airstrikes-hit-aleppo-hospitals-160724090834185.html> ; The Middle East Eye. “Hospitals pounded in rebel held Aleppo by Syrian and Russian forces.” 24 July 2016. Accessed 27 July 2016. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/four-hospitals-hit-airstrikes-aleppo-manbij-two-day-old-baby-syrian-doctors148745952>

⁹⁶ Tokmajyan, Armenak “July 2016: Aleppo Conflict Timeline” The Aleppo Project

⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁸ Al-Monitor. “UN pleads for weekly 48-hour truce in Syria’s Aleppo” 21 July 2016. Accessed 3 August 2016. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2016/07/syria-conflict-un-aid.html>

⁹⁹ BBC News. “Syria conflict: ‘Exit corridors’ to open for Aleppo, says Russia” 28 July 2016. Accessed 3 August 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36912718>. Skynews. “Assad Leaflet Airdrop Pitches Syria Amnesty Deal.” 28 July 2016. Accessed 3 August 2016. <http://news.sky.com/story/assad-leaflet-airdrop-pitches-syria-amnesty-deal-10515050>

¹⁰⁰ Middle East Eye (6 August 2016) “Government siege of Aleppo broken by Syrian rebels.”. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/siege-aleppo-broken-rebels-sources-227544564>

¹⁰¹ Miles, Tom. “Syrian opposition says Aleppo battle hides ‘cleansing’ of siege towns.” Reuters. 1 September 2016. Accessed 29 September 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kodmani-idUSKCN11750C>

¹⁰² ICRC, (December 22, 2016) “SARC and ICRC finalise evacuation of some 35,000 people from devastated Aleppo neighborhoods, International Committee of the Red Cross”, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/sarc-and-icrc-finalise-evacuation-some-35000-people-devastated-aleppo-neighborhoods>

while also destroying main facility areas such as hospitals. They left 250 000 Syrians on the verge of starvation¹⁰³. It was also reported that the regime used chlorine gas against the citizens of Aleppo¹⁰⁴. During this exhausting and devastating humanitarian crisis the regime and its allies have not respected the basis of the International Law of War and International Humanitarian Laws. For instance, they have breached the Chemical Weapons Convention.

4. Conceptual Framework

In light of what happened and the nature of the Syrian conflict I will analyse part of the events in order to determine how they should be defined and what are the repercussions. So far there have been limited accusations of the acts performed during the Aleppo and Ghouta sieges as being genocidal. Syrian activists present during the conflict and reporting on a daily basis have defined the situation as an ongoing massacre of unprecedented nature. Academics, sociologists and lawyers have not yet explored at the fullest the possibility of these events being genocidal. The main research that has been conducted has been related to the genocidal acts that members of the Islamist State might have committed¹⁰⁵.

In order to analyse if the Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta sieges can be defined as genocides I will be using the following set of concepts and definitions. The theories that I will draw from will be representative of a sociologist perspective of what genocide ought to be defined as. Carola Lingaas argues that the legal perspective is

¹⁰³ Al Jazeera, (November 11, 2016) "UN: Eastern Aleppo residents at risk of mass starvation" Al Jazeera English, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/east-aleppo-residents-risk-mass-starvation-161110131343850.html>

¹⁰⁴ Harrison, Emma, (November 18, 2016) "Aleppo's children's hospital bombed as it treats chlorine gas victims" the Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/18/aleppos-childrens-hospital-bombed-as-it-treats-chlorine-gasvictims>

¹⁰⁵ Rolando Gomez (June,2016) "UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria: ISIS is committing genocide against the Yazidis" United Nations Human Rights Officer of the High Commissioner

both narrow and outdated¹⁰⁶. It was specifically tailored for the events that happened during the Holocaust. In order to analyse if genocide has occurred in modern days' warfare a new definition ought to be drafted.

4.a The Concept of Group

Martin Shaw believes that a perpetrators based approach should be used to delineate what a group is and who are its members. The perpetrator creates the concept of "other" and labels it as a target¹⁰⁷. The target group might have objective characteristics but cannot be defined as a specific determined category. What is believed to be the "other" by the perpetrator might not be seen as such by another individual. On the contrary, the convention defines the victims as a homogeneous group. Individuals belonging to the same group due to their fixed shared characteristics. This limited classification of who can be a group of victims makes the law exclusionary instead of universal. Finding groups that specifically embed the requirements of the genocide convention has been challenging for lawyers and judges. For instance, the concept of race has drastically changed since the convention was drafted. Science has proved that there is no gene that distinguishes people as members of different races¹⁰⁸.

In this thesis a perpetrators based perspective will be used to define a victim group. The perpetrator does not per se have to attribute real characteristics to these groups but can be features perceived by s/he¹⁰⁹. This will entail that more groups can be added to the protected group of victims in addition to the already pre-existing one. Several scholars believe that political groups should be added to the list. Nicodeme Ruhashyankiko explains that people should be defined as a victim group based on

¹⁰⁶ Lingaas, Carola (December 2918) "Defining the protected groups of genocide through the case law of international courts" International Crimes Database

¹⁰⁷ Shaw, Martin (2015) "What is Genocide" Polity Press

¹⁰⁸ Lingaas, Carola (December 2918) "Defining the protected groups of genocide through the case law of international courts" International Crimes Database

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

their sexual or political orientation¹¹⁰. Doctor Eng Kok-Thay argues that a modern definition of the crime of genocide ought to “protect any member of any group” just because they are members of a group¹¹¹.

However, the element of group is essential in a crime of genocide. The victim cannot be defined as a victim only because of its individual characteristics but these have to be affiliated with a group membership. The target groups do not have to be passive victims but can be active individuals that resist the violence perpetuated by the oppressor¹¹². This leads to the possibility of the target group committing crimes as a defence mechanism.

4.b. The Concept of Intent

In the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, intent is described in Article II as physical destruction of a group by bodily harm, killing or “Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”¹¹³. For the purposes of this thesis we will define the concept of intent not only as a practice of killing but it will also include “violent type of action or policy” as Martin Shaw argues¹¹⁴. Hence, policies that aim at the eviction and expulsion of a population from its town ought to be considered as genocidal. By forcing individuals to leave their houses, their social connections and belongings, the perpetrators are eradicating individuals from where they belong. Taking away what they have known and owned

¹¹⁰ Nicodeme Ruhashyankiko, Special Rapporteur, (1978) “Study of the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” U.N. ESCOR, Hum. Rts. Comm., Subcomm. On Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 31st Sess., para. 440 at 120, U.N.

¹¹¹ Kok-Thay Eng “Redefining Genocide” Genocide Watch
<http://www.genocidewatch.org/redefininggenocide.html>

¹¹² Shaw, Martin (2016) “Genocide in the Contemporary Middle East: A Historical and Comparative Regional Perspective” in Anthony Tirado Chase, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: Routledge.

¹¹³ General Assembly Resolution 260 A (III) (9 November 1948) “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”

¹¹⁴ Shaw, Martin (2011) “Britain and Genocide: historical and contemporary parameters of national responsibility” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 2417-2438

all their lives and throwing them into uncertainty. This is a different way of perpetuating genocide but it stills aims at destroying a group. By removing people from a territory the perpetrator is re-engineering the demography of a place. Removing the unwelcome to leave space for the wanted group. This policies can be traced to the holocaust as Hitler first used mass displacement and deportation policies before moving on to the arbitrary killing through gas chambers¹¹⁵.

To add to the literature on genocide I will argue that not only expulsion policies are a sign of genocide but also those policies that aim at limiting the return of the unwanted group. This concept has not yet been developed in the genocide literature. Considering expulsion as a genocidal act is related to forcibly removing people from their houses. The policies that aim at limiting return through the perpetuation of fear or policies that aim at preventing people from returning to their households can be considered to have the same goal. Hence, those policies will also be considered a matter of intent of destroying a group. Finally, intent will not have to be proved only by finding a predefined set of policies that were all built to bring destruction. It can also be policies that were created over time to enhance the destruction. Genocide should be regarded as a “policy driven action”¹¹⁶. Thus, different policies that have been issued over time and by analysing them it can be concluded that they are interconnected and can lead to genocide.

4.c. Measuring the Scale of a Genocide

In this case I will draw from the definition in the Convention that has been lost as a concept over time. A genocide is the act to destroy “in whole or in part” a group¹¹⁷. However, the only three times that the genocide convention has been applied the International Tribunal conceived this concept as a mass destruction of very signifi-

¹¹⁵ Shaw, Martin (2015) “What is Genocide” Polity Press

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹⁷ General Assembly Resolution 260 A (III) (9 November 1948) “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”

cant numbers. The holocaust was a very specific event that reached unprecedented levels which are also difficult to match in other potential genocidal cases. This perspective of genocide should not cause smaller scale actions to go unnoticed. Hence, as Leo Kuper says, genocide can be perpetuated in any scale. It goes from the destruction of a small group to the total obliteration or the systematic exterminations of millions. He uses the term “genocidal massacre” to define smaller scale genocide¹¹⁸. He defines it as the “annihilation of a section of a group - men, women or children - as for example the wiping out of whole villages”¹¹⁹.

In conclusion, based on the concepts explained by Martin Shaw, Carola Lingaas, Kok Thay Eng and Nicodeme Ruhashyankiko, the definition of genocide that will be used to analyse the Syrian case in this thesis will be;

An intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a group that has common characteristics, through the act of killing or other policies aiming at the expulsion of groups or preventing their return.

The group characteristics will be defined by using a perpetrators based approach. It will aim at understanding how and why the victims group is perceived as an enemy by the perpetrator.

5. Eastern Aleppo & Eastern Ghouta Siege: Can they be Defined as Genocide?

In this section I am going to analyse if the events that took place during the sieges of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta can be defined as genocide based on the above designed framework. The section will be divided in four layers of analysis. It will first look at the determination of which groups are the targeted victims. It will be followed with the investigation of specific events and actions that will determine the existence of intent from the perpetrator. The third section will focus on the reasons

¹¹⁸ Leo, Kuper (1983) “Genocide: its political use in the twentieth century” Yale University Press

¹¹⁹ Leo, Kuper (1983) “Genocide: its political use in the twentieth century” p. 10 Yale University Press

why specifically these areas over the entire Syrian conflict can be defined as genocide. Finally, it will look at what are the international environment limitations that are preventing the international community from framing these crimes as genocides.

5.a. The Target Groups

The victims of the sieges are the residents of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta that have been put through hell by the Assad regime and its allies. In order to determine genocide it's necessary to understand if these victims have any common characteristic that have made them become the simple mean to a greater end of the destruction of the group¹²⁰. I believe that there are two groups that can be determined as targets; a political group and a religious group.

From the dynamics of the conflict the territory of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta are occupied by opposition groups. These groups are also called rebel by the media and the Syrian Regime. There are different opposition groups present in both territories. As Huzaifah Alkaff explains the opposition groups are made of different factions some of which are purely opposing the government on political grounds¹²¹. These are moderate groups that are part of the Syrian National Coalition which disassociate themselves from more extreme Islamist groups. A coalition lead by human rights defenders and democracy activists¹²². The Free Syrian Army (FSA) is one of the groups that are part of the coalition which represented, for a period of time, the political party of certain moderate politically motivated groups. The main aim of the FSA at the beginning of the revolution was to protect the innocent protesters that were demonstrating against their repressive regime¹²³. On the other hand, as it was already mentioned during the literature review, the opposition forces are mainly

¹²⁰ Lingaas, Carola (December 2918) "Defining the protected groups of genocide through the case law of international courts" International Crimes Database

¹²¹ Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

¹²² Black, Ian (21 April 2013). "Syria: opposition anger over US refusal to fund arms". *The Guardian*. London.

¹²³ Lister, Charles (November 2016) "A Free Syrian Army: A decentralised insurgent brand" The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

made of Sunni Muslims while the regime groups are mainly Alawites¹²⁴. As it is a Sectarian conflict there is a clear intent of the government to target Sunnis and protect Alawites.

Using a perpetrators based approach It is necessary to identify how the regime and Assad perceives the target group. The common characteristics shared by the individuals under siege is the threat that they pose for Assad. On the one hand, they threaten to overthrow the government taking away Assad's power and requesting democratic election. They are perceived as those who want to put an end to the ruling of the Ba'ath party¹²⁵. On the other hand, the Sunni's are the majority group leading the opposition. They are a threat to the stability and leadership of the Alawites in the country. Since the beginning of the conflict the regime began accusing the opposition of promoting sectarianism¹²⁶. They began distributing sand bags to Alawite communities claiming that Sunni will soon try to kill them. The regime created an image of the 'evil other' fostering the already existing divisions between different communities creating ethnic violence. At the same time, the regime guards, majority Alawite, were arbitrarily killing peaceful, Sunni, protesters¹²⁷. As Martin Shaw argues, it is clear from the actions and tactics of the Syrian government that they are targeting any individual that might be connected to opposition forces it does not matter if they are innocent or perpetrators¹²⁸.

Based on the convention definition of groups only part of the targeted civilians could be categorised as victims of genocide. During the Srebrenica genocide the Muslims

¹²⁴ Uludag, Mekki (August 2015) "Syrian Civil War Important Players and Key Implications - A Fact-sheet" Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 7, No. 7 pp. 4-10. International Centre for Political and Terrorism Research

¹²⁵ Stratfor (May 2011) "Making Sense of the Syrian war"

¹²⁶ Christopher Phillips (2012) "Syria's Torment" Survival Global Politics and Strategies

¹²⁷ *Ibid*

¹²⁸ Shaw, Martin (2016) "Genocide in the Contemporary Middle East: A Historical and Comparative Regional Perspective" in Anthony Tirado Chase, ed., The Routledge Handbook of Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa. London: Routledge.

were defined as religious targeted minority¹²⁹. In the Syrian case it can be argued that the Sunnis are a religious group targeted by the regime. However, those who do not identify as Sunni but only as political opposition would not fit in the category. This was also the case of the Cambodia massacre during the Khmer Rouge¹³⁰. This is why I argue for a new definition of genocide. In addition, as scholars argue genocide and the defence of political groups is part of Jus Cogens which means that perpetrators of genocidal acts, in this case the Assad regime and other actors, should be persecuted for their act even if the definition of genocide would not identify them as such¹³¹.

5.b. Proving Intent

On the basis of the convention which sees genocidal acts only as acts of killing, intent could still be proved¹³². However, in the case of the sieges the acts of genocide go beyond killing but include policies of eviction and preventing return. The atrocities of the two sieges have been highly reported by news channels and human right activists. From the events retraced in the above mentioned literature it is clear that the government was heavily shelling targeting essential facilities¹³³. The reports state how in both sieges hospitals and other clinics were being purposefully targeted. It has used all the means necessary to provoke death and destruction not only limiting itself to the use of bombs and other fire arms but also resorting to toxic gasses. The Regime also refused aid convoys to help the population that was at the verge of star-

¹²⁹ Khan, Mujeeb (1997) "Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Politics of Religion and Genocide in the "New World Order" Islamic Studies, Vol. 36, No. 2/3, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad

¹³⁰ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) "The Crime of Political Genocide: Repairing the Genocide Convention's Blind Spot" The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

¹³¹ Van Schaack, Beth (May, 1997) "The crime of political genocide: repairing the genocide convention blind spot" The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 106, No. 7

¹³² General Assembly Resolution 260 A (III) (9 November 1948) "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide"

¹³³ Tokmajyan, Armenak (May 2016) "Aleppo Conflict Timeline" The Aleppo Project

vation in the sieges¹³⁴. When agreements of safe passages were made there are reports of the continuous shelling from government forces, the ceasefire not being respected. This indiscriminate violence that sees no limits on the use of weapons is a clear sign of the authoritarian characteristics of the Syrian regime¹³⁵. A democratic government would limit the use of certain tactics in order to follow international law limitations. The Syrian regime signed the Convention on the use of Chemical Weapons in 2013 and still used Chemical Weapons on civilians killing children, women and men only because of their presumed affiliation to opposition groups¹³⁶.

The government also proceeded to a policy of expulsion for instance with the eviction from eastern Aleppo with the use of buses¹³⁷. The government has pushed opposition forces in limited territories for instance to Idlib province. A persecution policy continues even after the sieges have been defeated. From interviews conducted of Syrians living in rebel areas in the countryside of Aleppo and in Turkey, there are claim that the regime is targeting any individual that is connected with the opposition¹³⁸. There have been several episodes of opposition members being jailed and tortured. They are in fear of returning to now regime held eastern Aleppo as they do not feel secure for their lives. Aleppians have a strong sense of belonging. One of the interviewees based in Turkey said that they rejected the possibility of having refugee status for him and his family in Canada as he wanted to return to Aleppo¹³⁹. Unfor-

¹³⁴ Al Jazeera, (November 11, 2016) "UN: Eastern Aleppo residents at risk of mass starvation" Al Jazeera English, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/east-aleppo-residents-risk-mass-starvation-161110131343850.html>

¹³⁵ Todman, W. (2017). Isolating dissent, punishing the masses: siege warfare as counter-insurgency. *Syria Studies*, 9(1), 1-32.

¹³⁶ Alkaff, Syed Huzafah (Jan/Feb 2014) "Syria" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 32-33. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

¹³⁷ Costa, Anna & MacMillan, Michele (2018) "From Rebel to Regime: Barriers of Return to Aleppo for Internally Displaced People (IDPs)" *The Aleppo Project* <https://www.thealeppoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Here.pdf>

¹³⁸ Interview with Shamy Lina and Mousa Youssef, prominent activists who were evicted from Aleppo after the siege and based in Gaziantep at the time of the interview

¹³⁹ Interview with a business owner in Aleppo based in Gaziantep at the time of the interview. A number of the interviewees requested to remain anonymous for security reasons. The interviews were conducted in May 2017 and the records can be requested to the author of this thesis

tunately, as the siege of eastern Ghouta has recently fallen it was not possible to conduct the same type of interviews in the area.

In addition, Assad has issued laws that will limit the possibility to return for those who did not leave the country through government channels or have been evicted from siege areas. Assad has been using these laws to change the social demographic of the city¹⁴⁰. The effects can already be perceived in Aleppo. In Ghouta the reconstruction process has not begun yet. Decree 66 is a law that was issued in 2011 with the aim of rebuilding areas occupied by informal settlements through private companies. This same law is being used to rebuild Syria¹⁴¹. In Aleppo the reconstructions are being made by Assad's cronies and the prioritised areas are in western Aleppo leaving the previously besieged Aleppo destroyed preventing the return of its residence¹⁴².

The law Article 10 promulgated on April 2, 2018 aims at defining property rights benefitting Assad supporters and penalising its enemies¹⁴³. It is an extension of Decree 66. Based on this law, cities can decide which areas they want to redevelop in an arbitrary basis. If residents are not able to present proof of ownership of their house in the selected areas of reconstruction they will not be able to reclaim their property rights in the future¹⁴⁴. This means that those who flee the country for fear of their lives or those who feel their life is in danger of being arrested and tortured because they can be associated with opposition groups will not be able to reclaim their houses. This policy will take away the right from people to return to their own houses and communities.

¹⁴⁰ Costa, Anna & MacMillan, Michele (2018) "From Rebel to Regime: Barriers of Return to Aleppo for Internally Displaced People (IDPs)" The Aleppo Project <https://www.thealeppoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Here.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Costa, Anna & MacMillan, Michele (2018) "From Rebel to Regime: Barriers of Return to Aleppo for Internally Displaced People (IDPs)" The Aleppo Project <https://www.thealeppoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Here.pdf>

¹⁴² *Ibid*

¹⁴³ Maha Yahya (May, 2018) "The Politics of Dispossession" Carnegie Middle East Centre <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76290>

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

As Martin Shaw argues genocide it is not only killing but also the extirpation of someone's life from their community and their home¹⁴⁵. Not only Assad and his allies perpetuated mass massacres by using a policy of starvation, killing and exhaustion of the opposition in order to retrieve the territories under siege. They mass evicted citizens from towns giving them no choice, either they would leave or they would be killed or arrested. It is clear that Assad did not give the final possibility for residents to peacefully surrender and stay in their own houses, he is pushing all the opposition forces to a same specific area. Finally, he is preventing them from returning both through prosecution and through specific policies.

5.c. The Size of the Genocide

These two specific areas have seen the highest amount of violence of the entire conflict seeing a high number of victims and individuals being involved. As Leo Kuper argues, a destruction of an entire village can be a genocide¹⁴⁶. In this case there has been the destruction of Eastern Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta. The sieges destroyed most of the infrastructure of the area as they also targeted the water supplies, sanitation networks and electricity. The eastern section of Aleppo has witnessed an unprecedented level of destruction with school, shops, homes and many other buildings destroyed. A clear comparison can be made with the western side of the city where a high number of buildings and facilities are still intact¹⁴⁷. Eastern Ghouta is an extensive agricultural area with cultivable land that supplies food to the local market. During the siege crops were specifically targeted before or during harvest season to prevent farmers from providing food within the besieged area¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁵ Shaw, Martin (2015) "What is Genocide" Polity Press

¹⁴⁶ Leo, Kuper (1983) "Genocide: its political use in the twentieth century" Yale University Press

¹⁴⁷ Chulov, Martin (October 2016) "A tale of two cities: satellite images show contrasting fortunes of Aleppo's citizens" The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/06/a-tale-of-two-cities-satellite-images-show-contrasting-fortunes-of-aleppos-citizens>

¹⁴⁸ Todman, W. (2017). Isolating dissent, punishing the masses: siege warfare as counter-insurgency. *Syria Studies*, 9(1), 1-32.

Sieges were created by the regime around those areas to isolate insurgency. As Will Todman explained sieges are a strong tactic for the Syrian regime as it allowed them to use their entire military force against one specific target instead of scattered groups. Having the targeted population in a specific area allowed them to control their livelihood such as medical supplies and food while proceeding to mass destruction¹⁴⁹. The Syrian regime has already used these tactics to suffocate opposition in Hama in 1982. These two sieges were created due to the importance of the areas in context. Aleppo one of the biggest commercial hubs of Syria and Eastern Ghouta which is in high proximity to the capital¹⁵⁰. The spread of the opposition group to pro-government Western Aleppo or Damascus would have meant greater loss for the regime with a greater possibility of defeat.

5.d. Political Environment

Similarly, to the situation in 1948 that put a constrain in the drafting of the CPPCG the current political environment prevents international powers from condemning the Assad regime and other parties for the crime of genocide. Even during the Rwanda genocide the Security Council failed in a first stance to respond to the crisis¹⁵¹. The international community still fails today.

There have been, over the years, several peace talks organised with the intent of reaching a compromise between all the parties involved. None of these attempts have been successful¹⁵². Calls for cease fires have not been respected or have been rejected. There are too many interests involved both coming from the inside and the outside of Syria which makes the possibility of peace more challenging.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁵¹ Harff, Barbara (2003) "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1

¹⁵² Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff & NurulHuda Binte Yussof (August 2016) "An Overview of the Syrian Conflict" *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 8, No. 8 pp. 8-11

The Syrian regime for the past eight years of conflict has breached a multiplicity of international laws and treaties. The inaction in front of the atrocities shows how the world order and the United Nations itself is limited by the singular interests of the governments. The UN Security Council actions are limited by the veto power of the sitting countries¹⁵³. Many of the resolutions proposed by the Council regarding Syria were vetoed by Russia. The Security Council is the only power that can impose sanctions, allow the use of force and request investigation from the International Criminal Court. Due to the interests of Russia and its alliance with the Syrian regime no mechanism of accountability or mechanism to limit violence, such as no fly zone, were triggered¹⁵⁴.

6. Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

The conflict in Syria especially the sieges of Eastern Ghouta and Eastern Aleppo have been the most reported events. There are official and unofficial footages and statements made by victims, activists and investigations by international organisations that can prove the events and who perpetrated them¹⁵⁵. It is a complex conflict as there are many actors involved and violence has been used from all sides. The recommendations are based on my analyses of the genocide combined with theories of conflict and peacebuilding. I predict that there are three possible solutions to these events:

- The sieges of Eastern Ghouta and Eastern Aleppo are defined as genocide.

This would entail that the perpetrators, among which is Bashar Al-Assad, will be condemned by an International Criminal Tribunal. It will be specially created to deal

¹⁵³ Abraham, Christina (April 2016) "Why has the international community failed Syria?" The New Arab <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/4/18/why-has-the-international-community-failed-syria>

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁵ (April, 2016) "Genocide and Mass Atrocities Alert: Syria" Genocide Watch <http://genocidewatch.net/2013/03/20/genocide-alerts-syria/>

with the genocidal acts committed in Syria as requested by the convention¹⁵⁶. The convention also requires the signatories to both prevent and punish genocide¹⁵⁷.

Defining these sieges as genocide will be beneficial as it would first allow the international community to intervene to stop the massacre and limit the number of innocent victims¹⁵⁸. Crimes of genocide should trigger the Responsibility to Protect. It gives international actors the power to disregard the concept of sovereignty and intervene in order to protect civilians¹⁵⁹. Secondly, it would allow the removal of the government in place and the trial of the perpetrators¹⁶⁰. This would allow for a tribunal to judge, sentence and punish the criminals. It will also indicate what are the reparations and retributions deserved by the victims which many have lost not only their possessions but also part or all their relatives.

However, based on the definition of genocide present in the convention it will be difficult for the International Criminal Court to prove acts of genocide. Even if, the proof was possible, the international community will not proceed due to the aforementioned interests. In addition, who exactly will be accused of genocide will create a great obstacle in the investigations. Due to the multiplicity of actors involved and the inactions of the international community several actors could be accused of perpetuating genocide.

- The perpetrators are persecuted for violations of Human Rights and War Crimes.

¹⁵⁶ General Assembly Resolution 260 A (III) (9 November 1948) "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide"

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁸ Krain, Matthew (September, 2005) "International Intervention and the Severity of Genocides and Politicides" *International Studies Quarterly*

¹⁵⁹ Mennecke, Martin (2005) "The Crime of Genocide and International Law" NIOD, Netherlands

¹⁶⁰ Krain, Matthew (September, 2005) "International Intervention and the Severity of Genocides and Politicides" *International Studies Quarterly*

In order to prove war crimes it is necessary to prove two elements; that the unlawful actions took place during an armed conflict and that there was a clear intent to kill¹⁶¹. War crimes can only be individual crimes and legal persons such as a government cannot be trial for it¹⁶².

Identifying and processing the actions of different actors as war crime would allow the trial and punishment of independent criminals while granting reparations to the victims. In this case only some of the crimes would be trialled. For instance, the crime of eviction would not be trialled as it could be argued that it was a policy engaged to move the population to safer areas¹⁶³.

However, it will again mean prosecuting Bashar Al-Assad for the crimes committed during the sieges such as starvation, mass murder and arbitrary killing. Prosecuting individuals for war crimes could also result in the regime abusing this tool to prosecute and jail opposition members while regime allies and forces may not be condemned.

- Bashar Al-Assad will win the conflict and will not be prosecuted for any of the crimes committed during the sieges.

Looking at the current situation in Syria it seems that the victory of the regime could be the most probable outcome. The opposition groups have lost most of their strongholds and they are now mainly located in a single area. In addition, the opposition being formed of divided groups that have not been able to come to an agreement in the eight years of war do not offer a valuable alternative to the regime. If this is the case the reconstruction of the main besieged areas will have to be carried out under Assad's control.

¹⁶¹ United Nation (2018) "Definitions: War Crime" United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect <http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.html>

¹⁶² Schwarz, Alexander (September, 2014) "War Crimes" Oxford Public International Law

¹⁶³ Kafala, Tarik (October, 2009) "What is War Crime" BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1420133.stm>

No matter the outcomes or the possibility of holding accountable the perpetrators for the crimes committed it is important that the nature of the events is kept in mind during the peace building process. In order for Syria to enter a sustainable peace Chimni explains that four types of insecurities need to be addressed; material, physical, social and psychological and legal¹⁶⁴. These elements have to be considered in the process of reconstruction and reconciliation. The Rwanda genocide has proven that there is not only one specific way to deal with transitional justice and peace building¹⁶⁵. Thus, it is not fully necessary for specific international legal mechanism to be used as long as grievances are addressed during the aftermath. The division created by the conflict between different groups and the concept of return will have to be considered. Hence, the International Community, governments and local organisations that will be involved in the process, while providing aid for reconstructions they have to be aware of the facts and direct the aid for the right causes.

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Annex 1. Thesis Report

Jihadi Women and Radicalisation: How Women become Radicalised in Europe

Introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s separatist or left-wing nationalist groups such as Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), Red Brigade, and IRA, were the source of many terrorist attacks in Europe¹. In the twenty-first century, the threat has shifted from left wing terrorist clusters to Islamist terrorism, with groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS being the most threatening. Only within the European Union between 2014 and 2015 there has been an increase in Islamist motivated terrorist attacks from four to seventeen². Islamist extremist groups call for both Muslim men and women all around the world to join their cause. With new technologies, their ability to recruit worldwide has exponentially increased. Only in 2015, 687 suspects were arrested for “religiously inspired/jihadist terrorism” compared to 122 in 2011³. In addition, there has been a rise in the number of women that have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS. For instance, 40 percent of Dutch travellers in 2015 were identified as female⁴. In April 2016, it was estimated that 550 European women had travelled to join ISIS⁵. In the same year, a report on foreign fighters coming from Europe suggested that 17 percent were women⁶. Due to the increase of women’s participation the research question that will be addressed in this thesis report and the subsequent thesis is: what are the reasons driving European women to join violent Islamist extremist groups?

¹ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) “Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures” Report Funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.

² EUROPOL (2016) “European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016”

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Anita Orav, Rosamund Shreeves & Anja Radjenovic with Sofia López (April, 2016) “Radicalisation and counter-radicalisation: a gender perspective” European Parliamentary Research Service

⁶ Ibid

In order to answer to the question this report will focus on three threads of literature related to Islamist terrorism, radicalisation and women in terrorism. These three literatures have been chosen in order to be able to have a perspective on the topic and understand what has been researched so far and what is missing. Hence, the literature on Islamist terrorism gives an understanding on the type of terrorism, which are the groups, what are their aims and how women can play a part in it. The literature on radicalisation will give an overview of what are the steps taken by an individual during the radicalisation process. It will help identify women's characteristics that can be associated with the radicalisation process. The section on women in terrorism will show what has been so far discussed about women in terrorist activities and the conclusions that have been made. It will point out what was the opinion about women, roles and reasons for joining terrorist groups compared to what is the most recent perspective.

The thesis report will first focus on understanding Islamist terrorism, what it means, what are the root causes and which are the most common tactics and strategies used. Then it will give an overview of the general understanding of radicalisation patterns. In the third part, the report will explore what is the literature around female terrorism and what is the understanding of their actions and roles. The last section will focus on possible hypothesis, research methods that will be used and future work plan.

Islamist Terrorism

Islam is often stereotyped as a violent religion as if all the believers agreed on the violent actions taken by a small minority. It is necessary to define what it is referred to when talking about Islamic terrorism. In the first part of this section key terminology will be defined. This part will follow with the explanation of the root causes and the main tactics used by Islamic terrorist groups. To explain this part of the research

the examples used will be mainly related to al-Qaeda, ISIS due their prominence and Boko Haram for their extensive involvement of women in their organisation.

2.1 Islamism

The word Islamism is used to describe those movements that aim at the preservation and spreading of Islam. Three different categories of Islamism can be identified: missionary Islam, Islamic activism and militant jihadi movement. The movements that aim at preserving the Muslim identity are identified with “missionary Islam”. They do not believe in the use of violence and are apolitical. The category of “Islamic activism” refers to those who seek political power through political movements. Finally, what is defined as the “militant Jihadi movement”, is a small minority who believes that the use of violence is necessary and justifiable. They attempt to impose tradition by imposing their interpretation of sharia law with the use of force⁷. This research will focus on militant Islam.

2.2 Militant or Jihad Islam

The word Jihad is holy for most Muslims. Opposite to what many westerners believe “jihad” does not mean “holy war”. In the Qur’an it refers to the everyday struggle to reach God’s pleasure. It is the idea of resisting worldly temptations to sin and be pious and god conscious⁸. However, this word has often been misused and interpreted negatively by extremist groups. They define it as the “battle of belief against unbelief”. Extremist groups argue that it is their duty to protect Islam (defensive jihad)

⁷ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) “Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures” Report Funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.

⁸ Farhana Qazi (2011) “The Mujahidaat: Tracing the early female warriors of Islam” Women, Gender and Terrorism, University Georgia Press

from Western values and aim at creating a caliphate. They find their support amongst extremist Muslim which may or may not participate to violent actions. They believe that the time has come to rise against the West which has tried to oppress Islam for too long. They see America as the main threat⁹.

2.3 Root causes

The Arab world has been through half a century of unstable economic situation. They remember their prosperous Islamic civilisation and attribute the end of it to the West and America¹⁰. Extremist feel is time for them to fight back and preserve their culture. They justify their actions with a verse of the Qur'an; Chapter 6, Verse 151 "do not slay the soul sanctified by god except for just cause"¹¹. They interpret it as an obligation imposed by the religion to defend each other and Islam. Their violent actions are justified by this verse as the protection from external threats is a just cause.

The date of the beginning of Islamist terrorism is debated in the literature. Ersun Kurtulus argues that modern terrorist attacks in the name of Islam can be traced to 1940 when religiously driven organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Fedayeen-e Islam in Iran began killing members of the government¹². In his analysis the goals of jihadist terrorists are very similar to secular terrorists. In both cases they are driven by ideology. Both groups follow revolutionary theories written by specific authors that remain focal points no matter the name of the terrorist organisation. On the one hand, secular theories coming from Lenin or Mao Zedong. On the other hand, religious theories coming from Ruhollah Khomeini Iranian ayatollah, or Ab-

⁹ Graham Allison et Al. (2012) "Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World. Chapter 5: The Future of Islamic Terrorism." MIT Press

¹⁰ Graham Allison et Al. (2012) "Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World. Chapter 5: The Future of Islamic Terrorism." MIT Press

¹¹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, (2005) "A Genealogy of Radical Islam" Department of International Studies, Rhodes College

¹² Ersun N. Kurtulus (2017) "Terrorism and fear: do terrorists really want to scare?," Critical Studies on Terrorism" Critical Studies on Terrorism

dullah Yusuf 'Azzam Palestinian theologian¹³. Religious groups use terrorism as a defence mechanism in order to protect Islam against foreign threats¹⁴.

Rapoport divides terrorist groups in four different waves, Anarchist, Anti-Colonial, New Left wave and Religious wave¹⁵. In this research the focus will be on the fourth wave which began in 1979 with the Iranian revolution and the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. The author explains that religion was present in every wave. However, this period is characterised by the strong presence of Islam and the use of religion as a justification for the establishment of a new world. This wave compared to the previous one uses massive attacks against government and military installations with America becoming a frequent target. For instance, extremist organisations such as al-Qaeda are associated with an Islamist community identified as Salafi or Wahhabis¹⁶. They find their root cause in a strict interpretation of Islam. They believe in a “pure Islam”¹⁷.

2.4 Tactics & strategies

Modern Islamist terrorist organisations are aiming at mobilising the worldwide Muslim community to join them in the Jihad and at expanding their territorial control. They do so by using wide spread propaganda through social media and by taking advantage on the internal conflicts present in different countries such as Syria and more recently Yemen.

¹³ Jonathan Fine (2008) “Contrasting secular and religious terrorism” *The Middle East Quarterly*, Volume 15 Number 1

¹⁴ Ersun N. Kurtulus (2017) “Terrorism and fear: do terrorists really want to scare?”, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* *Critical Studies on Terrorism*

¹⁵ David C. Rapoport, (2002) “The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11” Department of Political Science University of California at Los Angeles

¹⁶ Quintan Wiktorowicz, (2005) “A Genealogy of Radical Islam” Department of International Studies, Rhodes College

¹⁷ Boaz Ganor, (2015) “Global Alert” Chapter 7 *The Rationale of Modern Islamist Terrorism*. Columbia University Press

One of the main tactics of aggression that they use is suicide bombing. They use what Islamist terrorists define as “martyrdom operations”. They convince their members to commit suicide while simultaneously killing infidels that are impure. Islamic theology thinks highly of martyrs. They are entitled to rewards when they die. Ahmad al-Tirmidhi claims in an hadith, that male martyrs will enjoy seven special favours from Allah¹⁸. These favours range from forgiveness, marrying seventy-two virgins and the promise that seventy members of the martyr’s household will have access to paradise. Young children are raised with the model of the martyr, when they become adults they aspire to become a martyr¹⁹. Male adults and in less circumstances women will volunteer to carry out suicide bombing in order to have the chance to become a martyr. For instance, al-Qaeda believes that through suicide bombing which cause high number of victims they will be able to push Americans out of the Middle East²⁰. The Chicago Project on Security and Threats has calculated that al-Qaeda so far has carried 59 “belt bomb” attacks, ISIS 61 and Boko Haram 66²¹. Boko Haram is also the pioneering terrorist organisation that began using women as suicide bombers²². Women are less suspicious, thanks to their clothes they have a better possibility to hide a bomb and be unnoticed.

In conclusion, this literature is relevant because it helps to place into context the specific terrorist movements that will be studied in this research. Understanding Islamic terrorism, is necessary in order to understand the logic behind these groups, why women might want to be part of their cause and what are the incentives used by the groups to recruit them.

¹⁸ Farhana Qazi (2011) “The Mujahidaat: Tracing the early female warriors of Islam” Women, Gender and Terrorism, University of Georgia Press

¹⁹ Boaz Ganor, (2015) “Global Alert, Chapter 5 The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism and the Challenge to the Liberal Democratic World” Columbia University Press

²⁰ Boaz Ganor, (2015) “Global Alert, Chapter 5 The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism and the Challenge to the Liberal Democratic World” Columbia University Press

²¹ Suicide Attack Database (2016) Chicago Project on Security and Threats
http://cpostdata.uchicago.edu/search_results_new.php

²² Marius Pricopi, (2016) “Tactics Used by the Terrorist Organisation Boko Haram”

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is a challenging process to understand. The Dutch Security Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) claimed that since 2002 there were indicators that showed the beginning of radicalisation of Muslims raised in Europe²³. In 2004 radicalisation became the central point of study to understand terrorism²⁴ as understanding radicalisation opens a door to comprehend the root causes of violent extremism.

For the purpose of this research Martha Crenshaw's definition of radicalisation will be used. She defines it as "willingness to use or support violence opposed to the peaceful pursuit of radical change, it is a mix of psychological, sociological and economic process"²⁵. The focus will be mainly on "home grown" terrorism; defined by Thomas Precht as the "decentralisation of terrorist groups"²⁶. This means that the individual who carries the attack was born, raised, and educated in a Western country. In order to fully understand the phenomenon of radicalisation it is necessary to avoid stereotypes and oversimplifying the concept. When it comes to radicalisation in violent extremist Islamic groups each individual is different and specific characteristics cannot be established. There is not a single factor that can be determined as "causal" but there are many different determinants involved²⁷. However, most experts agree on some basic patterns that are common to the majority of terrorists.

²³ AIVD, (2002) „Annual Report of the Defence Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands.” Defence Intelligence and Security services

²⁴ Dr. Alex P. Schmid, (March 2013) “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review” International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague

²⁵ Martha Crenshaw, (2011) “Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and consequences” Chapter 2: The causes of terrorism”

²⁶ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) “ Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures” Report Funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.

²⁷ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) “ Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures” Report Funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.

The main stereotype to be avoided is the classification of terrorists as individuals who are mentally ill. The attribution theory explains that people tend to perceive the behaviour of others as a definition of a person's personality. Due to the fact that terrorists' actions are not perceived as normal, people believe that terrorists are psychologically damaged²⁸. This was in many cases proven wrong. Terrorists tend to be stable individuals²⁹. Anyone can become a terrorist. A second stereotype to be avoided is classifying a terrorist as an individual that comes from a disadvantaged family. Especially those who join Islamist groups are often very well educated³⁰. However, experts agreed that people are more vulnerable to radicalisation when they are going through an existential crisis and they have lost their way. Joining an extremist group will give them a purpose to live for. In addition, radicalisation is a process that takes time. What will make a difference is the strong connection with a social network. More than 95 percent of executed and planned terrorist attacks are conducted by groups of people rather than lone-wolf individuals³¹.

The literature on radicalisation divides the process into various stages. However, depending on the individual the pace of completing a given stage and the order of the stages may vary. M. Assaf Moghadam claims that the radicalisation process has three phases. His framework to analyse the different stages is called "Staircase mode to terrorism"³². It divides three phases that are analysed at three different levels. The levels are; micro which entails the personal component in the process, meso which refers to the group dynamics, and macro which analyses how society influences the process³³.

²⁸ Andrew Silke, (2008) "Holy Warriors. Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalisation". *European Journal of Criminology*.

²⁹ Martha Crenshaw, (2011) "Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and consequences" Chapter 2: The causes of terrorism"

³⁰ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) " Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions

³¹ Bertjan Doosje et Al. (2016) "Terrorism, radicalisation and de-radicalisation" *Science Direct*

³² F.M. Moghadam, (2009) 'De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism', in David Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspective* (New York: John Wiley,), pp. 278-79

³³ Bertjan Doosje et Al. (2016) "Terrorism, radicalisation and de-radicalisation" *Science Direct*

M. Assaf Moghadam created this framework to analyse the increase of Muslim radicalisation in Europe. He argues that not every individual will reach the final stage, many will drop in the middle of the process³⁴. The three phases are: “sensitivity to radical ideology” which is connected to the need of an individual to find a purpose and identify with a group. At this stage, the person empathises with the injustices endured by Muslim brothers that are not family or friends³⁵. The second stage refers to the beginning of the affiliation to a terrorist organisation and the proof of loyalty. The final phase refers to the moment when the individual is ready to commit violence in the name of the organisation.

In 2012 Joshua Sinai created another framework to analyse radicalisation. It is again divided in three stages that he calls radicalisation, mobilisation and action³⁶. For the radicalisation phase Sinai creates six different groups of determinants. The categories of factors are; personal, political, economic, ideological, community, group and possibility factor which entails the actual possibilities of joining an extremist group. The phase of mobilisation is then reached by the individual when s/he is not resisting anymore and is open to the ideas and actions of the extremist group³⁷. This part consists in three primary components; opportunity, capability and preparedness to act on behalf of the group. The final phase, actions, refers to carrying the actual attack.

Sinai’s model compared to M. Assaf Moghadam seems reductive and simplistic. Moghadam considers at every stage all the influencing forces that will take an individual to commit a terrorist attack. It does not only focus on the personal driving factors but also he cares to explain how the external environment influences someone’s decision. On the contrary Sinai focuses mainly on the personal level, exten-

³⁴ Joshua Sinai, (Summer/Fall 2012) ‘Radicalisation into Extremism and Terrorism: A Conceptual Model’, *The Intelligencer*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 22-3.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Dr. Alex P. Schmid, (March 2013) “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review” International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague

sively considering all the different personal factors that can bring an individual to engage in the process of radicalisation.

With another perspective Hoffman focuses more on the “rational choice model of decision making” it believes that a person will make a rational decision based on the processes that will lead to the highest benefit. The person who joins a terrorist group will conduct a cost benefit analysis. This analysis will be influenced by its background, culture, values, and experiences. Thus, the person will decide to join if they believe is the only and most profitable way to achieve their goal³⁸.

Instead, Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko focus on the “mechanism” of radicalisation which are “the means or manners in which something is accomplished”³⁹. They believe that people are radicalised due to personal grievances and by “identity-group grievances”⁴⁰. They identify twelve mechanisms that can drive a person to radicalisation. The mechanism can range from personal victimisation, political grievance to hate and martyrdom. More than one mechanism can lead a person to radicalisation. At the same time, they admit that more mechanisms can exist and that there is no single theory that can actually explain the full extent of the radicalisation process⁴¹. Every individual is different thus the pathways to radicalisations are multiple. As Horgan points out there are many different complex factors that can lead to an individual to a national or intentional affiliation with terrorist groups⁴². However, it can at least be concluded that radicalisation is a reactive action towards a group grievance or to other people’s injustices⁴³.

³⁸ Boaz Ganor, (2015) “Chapter 7 The Rationale of Modern Islamist Terrorism.” Global Alert, Columbia University Press

³⁹ Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko (2008): Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence, 20:3, 415-433

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko (2008): Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence, 20:3, 415-433

⁴² John Horgan, (2005) “Psychology of Terrorism” New York: Routledge, 105–106.

⁴³ Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko (2008): Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence, 20:3, 415-433

Overall the literature describes radicalisation as a long process that has been speed up due to social media. Precht argues that the process of radicalisation in Europe began in 1990 mainly due to radical Imams discourse in mosques⁴⁴. This process has different stages that start from the first pre-radicalisation where the person feels lost in his/her life or identity which will lead them to find relief in their extremist Islamic faith. They will then build a strong connection with the group to finally end with a violent action⁴⁵. Most common offenders are young male from second or third generation of migrants. Andrew Silke describes this as a predictable factor as young male are usually more involved in crimes than women. Studies say that between 54 and 96 percent of young male have been involved in criminal activities⁴⁶. This is due to the nature of risk taking and desire of retribution and revenge that many young male feel. On the other hand, women are considered to take the role of supporters within Islamic terrorism⁴⁷. Most of the literature focuses on men radicalisation and their role in Islamist extremist groups. The process of radicalisation will be relevant for this research as it will be used to analyse women's behaviours and the similarities or differences with men. It will be useful to understand if women react to the same injustices perceived by men or if they are moved by other factors. The main focus within the thesis will be on those determinants such as political, economic or ideological, among others, that are driving women towards radicalisation.

4 Women and Terrorism

4.1 Brief history of women in terrorist groups

⁴⁴ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) "Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Andrew Silke, (2008) "Holy Warriors. Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalisation". European Journal of Criminology.

⁴⁷ Tomas Precht (December, 2007) "Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures" Report Funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.

For decades, women have played a variety of different roles. In the 1960s and 1970s they were involved in high leadership roles in left wing terrorist groups⁴⁸. For instance, the Japanese Red Army Faction connected with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PELP) was founded by Fusako Shigenobu. Leila Jhaled was one of the main heroes by taking part in the Israel's plane hijacking in 1969 and 1970. Karla Cunningham explains that since 1985 women have participated to a quarter of terrorist attacks that have been taking place in Egypt, Sri Lanka, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Chechnya⁴⁹. Since 2002, they have carried out fifty percent of the suicide attacks in Chechnya, Sri Lanka and Turkey. Yet the role of women is still defined by many as invisible.

Female terrorists have become notorious in East Asia with the role they played in Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and more recently in Chechen rebel group. LTTE has been active from 1970 to 2009 and women were part of the group since an early stage. Many were involved driven by the same reasons as men, nationalistic pride and anger towards the Indian and Sinhalese government. In 2002, Chechen women became famous in Western societies for the role they played in the three days Moscow theatre occupation. The Russian government referred to them as "Brides of Allah" or "Black Widows". Williams explains that these women were thought to be the sisters, mothers and widows of Chechen men killed by Russians during the 1990s war⁵⁰.

History shows that women were involved in terrorist groups for a long time even though they draw most of the public's attention only in 2002 with the activities of the "Black Widows"⁵¹. At the same time, the history of women's terrorist in the litera-

⁴⁸ Rebecca S. Cruise, (March, 2016) Enough with the Stereotypes: Representations of Women in Terrorist organisations. *Social Science Quarterly*, Volume1, University of Oklahoma

⁴⁹ Cunningham, K.J. (2003) "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26(3): 171–95.

⁵⁰ Williams Brian Glenn, (2014). "The Brides of Allah: The Terror Threat of Black-Widow Suicide Bombersto the Winter Olympics." Huff Post—The Blog. the-brides-of-allah-the-t_b_4761027.html.

⁵¹ Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, (2011) "The Gendering of Women's Terrorism" *Women, Gender and Terrorism*, University of Georgia Press

ture shows an arbitrary understanding of their reasons and roles. The studies carried on them has been limited. The analyses of female terrorists often assumes a bias perspective that follows standard stereotypes of gender norms⁵². This bias was admitted by different authors such as H.H.S Cooper in “Women and Terrorism”. He claims that the attitude towards women terrorist tends to be sexist⁵³.

4.2 Bias justifications of women’s engagement in terrorism

One of the first articles addressing women in terrorism was “The Female Terrorist and Her Impact on Policing” written in 1976. The author claims that “erotomania” is the primary cause for women’s engagement in terrorism⁵⁴. “Erotomania” arises in women because they have been neglected by men, especially by their father. The author of the article believes that female terrorists are not rational and are motivated by a more personal reason that has no logic connections with the organisations cause⁵⁵. H.H.S Cooper vilifies the woman as a terrorist. He sees terrorism as men work and not women. A female terrorist is inhumane because she lost, what he defines as the women characteristics of being nurturing and compassionate. He also believes that women engage only because of irrational reasons that are pathological and obsessive⁵⁶. Both authors find the study of women terrorist pointless as the reasons of their engagement is related to their disillusionment towards men.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ H.H.S Cooper (1979), “Woman as terrorist,” in *The Criminology of Deviant Women*, ed. Freda Adler and Rita James Simon Boston: Houghton Mifflin

⁵⁴ Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, (2011) “The Gendering of Women’s Terrorism” *Women, Gender and Terrorism*, University of Georgia Press

⁵⁵ Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, (2011) “The Gendering of Women’s Terrorism” *Women, Gender and Terrorism*, University of Georgia Press

⁵⁶ H.H.S Cooper (1979), “Woman as terrorist,” in *The Criminology of Deviant Women*, ed. Freda Adler and Rita James Simon Boston: Houghton Mifflin

With a similar perspective, the feminist writer Robin Morgan believes that women in terrorist organisations can only be token or victims. She takes away women's agency by claiming that they are incapable of being independent decision makers⁵⁷. She describes the "token terrorist" as a woman who has deserted the feminist path to embrace the world of political violence dominated by men. She believes that women, such as Mara Cagol one of the leaders of the Red Brigades, only assumed a leadership position in order to win the approval and love of the partner.

In patriarchal cultures women are pictured as nurturing, peaceful and victims. Authorising the participation of women into violent actions is breaking basic principles of patriarchy⁵⁸. Women's are creators of life they are not supposed to destroy them. Thus, the crimes committed by women need to be justified or explained as their actions contradict the accepted societal role. Sjoberg and Gentry explain that there are three categories of women who commit violent act: mothers, whores or monsters⁵⁹. Those who are defined as "mothers" are protecting those whom they love. The 'whores" manipulate men by using their sexuality. The "monsters" could not fulfil their duty of becoming a mother or they lost their men. An example of a "mother" is Wifa Idris who became famous in 2002 as the first reported female suicide bomber. She became a role model for women⁶⁰. Other justified her actions to the departure of her husband that left her due to their inability of bearing children. This left her unfulfilled and led her to suicide bombing.

4.3 Unbiased perspectives of women's engagement

⁵⁷ Robin Morgan (1989) "The Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism" New York: Washinton Square Press

⁵⁸ Kathy Laster & Edna Erez (2015) Sisters in Terrorism? Exploding Stereotypes, Women & Criminal Justice, 25:1-2, 83-99

⁵⁹ Sjoberg, Laura, and Caron Gentry (2007) "Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics" London: Zed Books.

⁶⁰ Mia Bloom (2011) "Bombshell: women and terrorism" University of Pennsylvania Press

In 2015 women constituted at least 50% of all suicide bombers. In 2000 around 20 and 30 percent of international terrorist actions were committed by women⁶¹. Overall, women terrorists are more educated than men. Between 30 to 40 percent of Palestinian women who have joined a terrorist organisation have attended university⁶². Groups such as al-Qaeda and Hamas have shifted their opinions of women engagement in their organisation. They are now actively recruiting them as they are considered a strategic asset⁶³. They now view women as more successful perpetrators⁶⁴. In several cases women decide to engage for the same reasons men have: nationalism, support for the cause, community building. Other reasons can be more gender specific such as the desire of vengeance that follows sexual violence or rape⁶⁵. However, their clear intentions and willingness of engaging in terrorist actions has led to re-considering women image as non-violent and pacifist⁶⁶.

Women have taken over many supporting roles. In some organisations they are “mothers of fighters”⁶⁷. They have the duty to have boys that in the future will contribute to the cause of the organisation. They were also expected to take care of the house and other domestic related issues. However, the above mentioned literature has a limited understanding of women reasons and roles in terrorism. Women have engaged as informant and messengers. They have distracted the police and planted bombs⁶⁸. They have also been involved in decision making position by recruiting and

⁶¹ Harmon, C. C. (2000) “Terrorism today” London, England: Frank Cash.

⁶² Farhana Qazi (2011) “The Mujahidaat: Tracing the early female warriors of Islam” Women, Gender and Terrorism, University Georgia Press

⁶³ Kathy Laster & Edna Erez (2015) Sisters in Terrorism? Exploding Stereotypes, Women & Criminal Justice, 25:1-2, 83-99

⁶⁴ Farhana Qazi (2011) “The Mujahidaat: Tracing the early female warriors of Islam” Women, Gender and Terrorism, University Georgia Press

⁶⁵ Rebecca S. Cruise, (March, 2016) Enough with the Stereotypes: Representations of Women in Terrorist organisations. Social Science Quarterly, Volume1, University of Oklahoma

⁶⁶ Farhana Qazi (2011) “The Mujahidaat: Tracing the early female warriors of Islam” Women, Gender and Terrorism, University Georgia Press

⁶⁷ Rebecca S. Cruise, (March, 2016) Enough with the Stereotypes: Representations of Women in Terrorist organisations. Social Science Quarterly, Volume1, University of Oklahoma

⁶⁸ Mia Bloom (2011) “Bombshell: women and terrorism” University of Pennsylvania Press

organising. As a matter of fact, the increase participation of women in male dominated terrorist organisation shows a shift in societies mentality⁶⁹.

5 Hypothesis and conclusions

The reductive interpretation of the characteristics of women terrorists leads to inefficient and inconclusive policies. For instance, in 2011 the US National Security Plan defined terrorism as one of the biggest threats but the role of women in terrorist organisations was not mentioned⁷⁰. The focus on women has to be increased in order to both prevent them from being radicalised but also for future reintegration purposes. Those women who travelled for instance to join ISIS might return, in order to build an effective re-integration plan their reasons for joining have to be understood. The literature on radicalisation has shown that people are both driven by personal grievances and by external factors. The literature has also proved that not only women decide to take part in terrorist organisations in different ways but that also Jihadi groups have an interest in women being part of their cause. In the future thesis it will be in depth analysed the reasons that are driving women raised in Europe to participate in terrorist actions. The hypothesis that will be explored is that women join Islamist extremist groups because they feel oppressed and want to break free from gender stereotypes imposed by the societies they lived in. The dependent variable is women joining violent Islamist extremist groups. The independent variable is the level of oppression. My contribution to the literature is the connection between oppression and accession to groups.

⁶⁹ Kathy Laster & Edna Erez (2015) Sisters in Terrorism? Exploding Stereotypes, *Women & Criminal Justice*, 25:1-2, 83-99

⁷⁰ Rebecca S. Cruise, (March, 2016) Enough with the Stereotypes: Representations of Women in Terrorist organisations. *Social Science Quarterly*, Volume1, University of Oklahoma

The dependent variable will be assessed by collecting the data of women in Islamist terrorist organisations since 1979. This is the year defined by Rapoport as the beginning of Islamist terrorism⁷¹. It will be narrowed down by specifically looking at those women who came from Europe. To verify the hypothesis an analysis will first be made of which are the countries in Europe that have the highest number of women terrorist. I will then map what are the differences and communalities of these countries and the situation this specific women live in.

The independent variable will be analysed by assessing the overall situation of women based on the determinants that the literature has pointed out as elements that could drive an individual to radicalise. It will combine personal factors and pressures coming from the external environment. Thus, based on Joshua Sinai's list of determinants data will be collected on the economic, political and ideological situation women lived in previous to joining⁷². The analysis will also follow M. Assaf Moghadam concept on how the external environment has an influence in the person's decision⁷³. Hence, a broader analyses of the overall situation of the countries and neighbourhood they lived will be conducted. I will run interviews with specialised research, de-radicalisation centres and with organisations that have been created by mothers or parents of radicalised people. If it is possible personal background of a number of women jihadi will also be assessed in order to analyse the similarities.

⁷¹ David C. Rapoport, (2002) "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11" Department of Political Science University of California at Los Angeles

⁷² Joshua Sinai, (Summer/Fall 2012) 'Radicalisation into Extremism and Terrorism: A Conceptual Model', *The Intelligencer*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 22-3.

⁷³ F.M. Moghadam, (2009) 'De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism', in David Canter (Ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspective* (New York: John Wiley,), pp. 278-79

Working plan

Data & interviews:

October: collect data from countries with the highest number of women Islamist terrorist

November: first round of interviews

Deadlines:

February: draft of literature review

March: analysis of the Data & interviews

May: First full draft

July 1st: Final draft

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