Examining the Human Security Challenges Emanating from the Weaponisation of Women

A Case study of Boko Haram and the Islamic State 2001-2018

Examinando los desafíos de seguridad humana que emanan de la militarización de las mujeres

Un estudio de caso de Boko Haram y el Estado Islámico 2001-2018

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Abstract: The post-cold war period has witnessed an evolution in the nature of conflict from the new wars of the 1990s to asymmetric conflicts involving the weaponisation of civilians. This has achieved the twin objective of operating within the ranks of the combatants (in the case of women) as wives and child-bearers of the fighters, and inflicting harm on adversaries through suicide attacks. The weaponisation of women in the case of the wars in Syria and Nigeria has therefore elicited both human security challenges for the communities being targeted, and for the weaponised women. The biggest dilemma facing states of origin has been whether to accept the weaponised women's return and rehabilitate them or declare them stateless. There has been a clear tendency to securitise them, especially when internal political dynamics are factored in. This qualitative study uses a case study approach to delve into the human security challenges emanating from the weaponisation of women in the case of Boko Haram and the Islamic State between 2001 and 2018. The paper further relies on content analysis to delve deeper into the discourse on human security. Through the use of a human security conceptual framework and securitisation theory, the paper argues that although once weaponised, some women become human security threats to targeted communities, and also face human security challenges during and after the insurgency, there is a need to deal with the women on a case-by-case basis rather than pursuing a blanket policy of securitising them. States need to work with international organisations to action processes aimed at delivering justice, demobilisation, rehabilitation, and the reintegration of these women. This will uphold international law and respect for human rights.

Keywords: Weaponisation, securitisation, Boko Haram, Islamic State, Nigeria, Syria, Human Security, demobilisation, rehabilitation.

Resumen: El período posterior a la guerra fría ha sido testigo de una evolución en la naturaleza de los conflictos, desde las nuevas guerras de los años noventa hasta los conflictos asimétricos que implican la militarización de los civiles. Con ello se ha logrado el doble objetivo de operar dentro de las filas de los combatientes (en el caso de las mujeres) como esposas e hijas de los combatientes, e infligir daño a los adversarios mediante ataques suicidas. Por consiguiente, la militarización de las mujeres en el caso de las guerras de Siria y Nigeria ha suscitado tanto problemas de seguridad humana para las comunidades contra las que se dirigen los ataques como para las mujeres armadas. El mayor dilema al que se han enfrentado los Estados de origen ha sido si aceptar el regreso de las mujeres armadas y rehabilitarlas o declararlas apátridas. Ha habido una clara tendencia a la «securitización» especialmente cuando se tiene en cuenta la dinámica política interna. Este estudio cualitativo utiliza un enfoque de estudio de casos para ahondar en los desafíos de seguridad humana que se derivan de la militarización de las mujeres en el caso de Boko Haram y el Estado Islámico entre 2001 y 2018. El documento se basa además en un análisis de contenido para profundizar en el discurso sobre la seguridad humana. Mediante el uso de un marco conceptual de seguridad humana y la teoría de la securitización, el documento sostiene que, aunque una vez convertidas en armas, algunas mujeres se convierten en amenazas para la seguridad humana de las comunidades objetivo, y también se enfrentan a desafíos de seguridad humana durante y después de la insurgencia, es necesario tratar con las mujeres caso por caso en lugar de seguir una política general de securitización. Los Estados deben colaborar con las organizaciones internacionales en los procesos de acción encaminados a impartir justicia, desmovilizar, rehabilitar y reintegrar a esas mujeres. De esta manera se respetará el derecho internacional y el respeto de los derechos humanos.

Palabras clave: militarización, securitización, Boko Haram, Estado Islámico, Nigeria, Siria, Seguridad Humana, desmovilización, rehabilitación.

Summary: 1. INTRODUCTION. 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK. 2.1 Securitisation Theory. 2.2 Human Security perspective. 3. REVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE. 3.1 The cases of Boko Haram and the Islamic State. 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS. 4.1 The human security impact of weaponisation of women on communities. 4.2 The human security impacts on weaponised women. 5. CONCLUSION. 6. BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, the dynamics of civil war have been evolving and culminating in new concepts to define them, such as 'new wars', which is believed to have emerged as a result of globalisation that has led to depriving states of the monopoly on violence.[1] In the same vein, Mueller[2] articulated that modern-day war is escaping from state control and is falling prey to bandits and anarchists. Such conflicts have been witnessed in Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, and Burundi to mention but a few. These conflicts have been resource-driven by benevolent rebel leaders like Jonas Savimbi in Angola and Charles Taylor in Liberia, around whom the conflict dynamics evolved. The demise of the leaders usually led to the end of the conflict. Similarly, the use of international treaties like the Kimberley Process to curtail trade in illicit natural resources, plus a combination of peacekeeping initiatives, de-escalated the conflicts.

However, as witnessed by the attack on the United States by Al-Qaeda, a new wave of violence was unleashed by non-state actors on various states. This form of violence has been perfected by groups involved in asymmetric warfare with state actors. For example, Palestinians have resorted to lone attacks on Israeli defence forces and unprotected installations to maximise damage. The asymmetric nature of this warfare is increasingly involving civilians as weapons of war. Some groups targeted for this weaponisation process include women and children, as these groups are unlikely to be suspected of being able to attack highly securitised areas. Key players in this weaponisation process have been Boko Haram of Nigeria and the Islamic State, which operated in Iraq and Syria.

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[1] KALDOR, M., «In defense of new wars». *International Journal of Security and Development*. vol. 2, n.º 1, 2013, pp. 1-2.

[2] MUELLER, J., «Policing the Remnants of War». *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 40, n. 5, 2003, pp. 55-518 (p. 509).

According to Abdulrasheed[3] Boko Haram which means 'Western Education is Forbidden' has unleashed violence in Nigeria with an extended aim of outlawing political systems such as multiparty democracy and create a theocracy with the rigid application for Sharia law.[4]

The Boko Haram group came into existence in 2001 under its pioneer leader and originator Mohammed Yusuf, and in the year 2014, it moved to the Yobe State in Nigeria[5] from where it attacked police outposts, churches and schools.[6] Attacks were expanded to Abuja as witnessed in the June and August 2011 suicide attack on police headquarters and the United Nations facilities respectively.[7] The group changed tactics on 14 April 2014, when 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno state were abducted, and thereafter the capture of girls and women increased. They were used to serve operational duties such as acting as spies for the insurgent group, for suicide bombings, and also forbearers of children as future Boko Haram jihad fighters.[8] The coercion of women also included forceful conscription,[9] and kidnappings remained the most popular way of filling their ranks with women.[10]

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was is a militant jihadist group which had bases in Iraq and Syria, but recently operates mainly in Syria. ISIS was driven by a desire to restore the Islamic caliphate.[11] The group was said

[3] ABDULRASHEED, O. BELLO, A. and ONUSELOGU, A., «Historical analysis of Boko Haram Insurgency on Educational Management in Northern Nigeria». European Centre for Research Training and Development UK. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*. vol. 02, n.º 10, 2014, pp. 77-83 (p. 78).

[4] CAMPBELL, J., «Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency». Council on Foreign Relations 2015, p. 2. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/blog/women-and-boko-haram-insurgency [accessed 11/11/2019].

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 79

[6] MANTZIKOS, I., «Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis». e-International Relations, UK: Bristol, 2013, p. 17.

[7] POPOVSKI, V. and MAIANGWA, B., «Boko Haram's attacks and the people's response: A 'fourth pillar of the responsibility to protect?» *African Security Review*, vol. 25, n. 2, 2016, pp. 159-175 (p. 160).

[8] IYI, J.M., «The Weaponization of women by Boko Haram and the Prospects of accountability». Springer International Publishing AG, 2018, p. 264.

[9] BLOOM, M. and MATFESS, H., «Women as symbols and swords in Boko Haram's terror», *Prism*, vol. 6, n. 1, 2016, pp. 104-121 (p. 109).

[10] PEARSON, E, ABDULBASIT, K, BARKINDO, A, IDAYAT H, ZACHARIAS P, and OMAR M. 'Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency.' Report. Edited by Zenn Jacob. Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2018, pp. 33-52 (p. 47).

[11] Mainstream Muslim Scholars, «ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria): Origins, Ideology, and Responses. A Resource for Community Leaders», National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, 2016, p. 1. Available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55120ecae4b01593abad-c441/t/58fe89feff7c5003d9acbd86/1493076 [accessed 4/8/2019].

to have been the most threatening contemporary terrorist group, as it posed a large threat to world security at the height of its power.[12] Although the roots of the Islamic State can be traced back benefitted Al Qaeda in Iraq[13] it also to from the power vacuum left behind by the Syrian Civil war following the Arab spring[14] and a similar one that emerged from the overthrow of Saddam regime in Iraq in 2003. With a base in the captured the city of Raqqa, ISIS was engaged in several activities like capture of minority religious groups whose women were turned into sex slaves[15] and the men were mostly executed. Among these were the Yazidi. The women were married off to ISIS fighters[16] and forced to have what was later known as Jihad babies to boost the morale of fighters and increase the caliphate's population[17]. Women also served as recruitment incentives especially for ISIS fighters hailing from economically marginalised backgrounds, who were promised access to women[18].

The term weaponisation, can be defined as the propensity to utilise something to intentionally inflict harm on other people.[19] For example Asaf[20] asserts that Boko Haram and the Islamic State weaponised women to serve as propaganda tools on social media, as spies, to carry out reconnaissance, and to act as suicide bombers. Other activities included non-operational duties such

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[12] JASKO, K., KRUGLANSKI, A., HASSAN, A., GUNARATNA, N., «ISIS: Its History, Ideology, and Psychology». In: *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*. Springer, Woodward, M. Lukens-Bull, R. (eds.), 2018, p. 2.

[13] SPECIA, M. The Evolution of ISIS: From Rogue State to Stateless Ideology. *The New York Times*, 20 March 2019, p. 1 Accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/world/middleeast/isis-history-facts-islamic-state.html [accessed 28/10/2019].

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[15] ABINGTON, T., «Armies of Women: The Syrian crisis and the new war thesis». E-International relations, 2019. Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2019/03/27/armies-of-women-the-syrian-crisis-and-the-new-war-thesi/ [accessed 04/04/2019].

[16] SEMPLE, K., «Yazidi Girls Seized by ISIS Speak Out After Escape». *The New York Times*, 15th November 2014, p. A4.

[17] SPECIA, M. The Evolution of ISIS: From Rogue State to Stateless Ideology. *The New York Times*, 2019, p. 3. Accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/world/middleeast/isis-history-facts-islamic-state.html [accessed 28/10/2019].

[18] OOSTERVELD, W. and BLOEM, W., «The Rise and Fall of ISIS: From Evitability to Inevitability». The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies 2016-2017, p. 10.

[19] POOLE, S., «Weaponise! The meaning of 2017's political buzzword». *The Guardian*, 27th March 2017. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/mar/27/weaponise-the-meaning-of-2017s-political-buzzword [accessed 13/07/2019].

[20] ASAF, Y., «Syrian women and the refugee crisis: Surviving the conflict, building peace, and taking new gender roles», 2017, p. 6. Available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/socsci [accessed 28/04/2019].

as cooking for the combatants and raising the children born to Boko Haram and ISIS fighters[21] all in support of the war effort.

In both Nigeria and Syria, human security challenges are emanating from the weaponisation of women by Boko Haram and the Islamic State. According to Waisova[22] the subject of human security involves individuals, and from a traditional perspective, its end goal involves protecting them, for instance, from military and non-traditional threats, which include both poverty and disease. In essence, the central point of this concept of human security is that its deprivation is likely to undermine peace and stability within the parameters of states.[23]

In 1994, Mahbub ul Haq provided a different view of human security in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report. Arguments were made that human security is primarily concerned with dignity, including human life. However, in the context of Nigeria and Syria, their nationals face human security challenges resulting from the weaponisation of women.[24]

The study, therefore, explores the human security challenges arising from turning women into weapons of war. These challenges are explored both in the target communities and in the women being weaponised. Women who are used in such conflicts are often not looked upon as victims, but as perpetrators and political tools. For example, their home governments treat them as combatants, yet in most cases, they were coerced. Methodologically, the study relies on a qualitative research method, and content analysis is used to explore the discourse of human security challenges emanating from the weaponisation of women.

The research question of the study is: What human security challenges emanate from the weaponisation of women? This work involves case studies of Boko Haram and the Islamic State 2001-2018. The rationale of the study is drawn from the research gap that exists in the discourse on the human security challenges emanating from the weaponisation of women in the communities concerned, and the weaponised women themselves. The focus of the Post-Cold War perspective on the new conflicts that emerged highlighted these

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[21] BLOOM, M. and MATFESS, H., «Women as symbols and swords in Boko Haram's terror». *Prism*, vol. 6, n.º 1, 2016, pp. 104-121 (p. 105).
[22] WAISOVA, S., «Human Security – the Contemporary Paradigm?» Institute of International Relations, NGO. *Perspectives*, n.º 20, 2003, pp. 58-78 (p. 62).
[23] *Ibidem*.
[24] *Ibidem*.

women and children as victims[25] and opened up a large volume of the literature on women in conflict as victims[26] of violence of all nature.

However, the advent of terror organisations and their utilisation of women has led to a departure from the discourse[27] as witnessed by governments refusing to repatriate women jihadists and ostracising former Boko Haram captives, thereby increasing their human insecurity. By being part of a terror group, whether voluntarily or not, the women were perceived as human security threats. Thus, there is a need to examine the human security challenges experienced by these communities[28] from the weaponised women[29] to map a clear discourse on women[30] in the ever-evolving conflict dynamics[31] in the contemporary world[32]. The main argument of the study is that although some women, once weaponised, have become human security threats to the targeted communities, they also face human security challenges during and after the insurgency. Moreover, some women willingly join terror organisations, but the majority of the rest are usually coerced. Those who join willingly face the lack of agency due to the gendered power dynamics within those organisations that are not in their favour. Therefore, there is a need to deal with the women on a case-by-case basis, rather than pursuing a blanket policy of securitising them. States need to work with international organisations to put into action processes aimed at delivering justice, demobilisation rehabilitation, and the reintegration of these women.

The study is divided into three parts: the first introduces the topic, the second explores the conceptual framework and presents the literature review; the third part delves into the study findings and analysis. The conceptual framework and a review of the existing literature follows.

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[25] BUDIG, M., and JONES, K., *Feminist Theory*. USA: Sage Publications, 2008, p. 2.

[26] TICKNER, J.A., «Gendering a Discipline: Some Feminist Methodological Contribution to International Relations». Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol. 30, n.º 4, 2005, pp. 2173-2188.

[27] IYI, J.M., «The Weaponization of women by Boko Haram and the Prospects of accountability». Springer International Publishing AG, 2018.

[28] *Ibidem*.

[29] ASAF, Y., «Syrian women and the refugee crisis: Surviving the conflict, building peace, and taking new gender roles», 2017. Available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/socsci [accessed 28/04/2019].

[30] SEMPLE, K., «Yazidi Girls Seized by ISIS Speak Out After Escape». *The New York Times*, 15th November 2014, p. A4.

[31] BLOOM, M. and MATFESS, H., «Women, Peace, and Inclusive Security». *Prism*, vol. 06, n.º 01, 2016.

[32] YAHAYA, A., «Boko Haram and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria: The Nexus». *Polac International Journal of Humanities and Security Studies*, vol. 2, n. 1, 2016, pp. 299-312.

2. Conceptual Framework

The study conceptually draws from securitisation theory and the human security perspective to firstly explore the dynamics of securitisation of women who have been weaponised by Boko Haram and ISIS. Secondly, human security unpacks the different challenges that society and the weaponised women face that are not strictly within the confines of the traditional security apparatus yet have far-reaching implications for the people and the states involved, plus their neighbours.

2.1. *Securitisation Theory*

Eroukhmanoff[33], and McGinchey, Walters and Scheinpflug[34] argue that securitisation theory shows that the security policies of states are not a natural given but are carefully designed by politicians and decision-makers. Political issues are constituted as security issues to be dealt with by being labelled as dangerous, threatening and terrorising. This is constituted by the securitising actor normally relying on social and institutional power to reach an audience beyond politics. So, security issues are not discovered but are articulated as such by the actors and approved by the public. Security is not necessarily universal and positive but much more complex and subject-dependent, and even negative at times.

Security threats are determined by how the words are constructed by the securitising actors. Words are used to create a security image to an audience through acts of speech. Hence, threats are not natural but constructed by language. In essence, an issue becomes securitised when «the intersubjective establishment of an existent threat which demands urgent and immediate attention as well as the use of extraordinary measures to counter this threat».[35]

The securitization of women in this context takes the form of declaring them as enemies of their states and communities of origin by the mere fact that they have been part of a terror organisation whether through consent or

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[33] Eroukhmanoff, C., «Securitisation theory». in *Getting Started with International Relations Theory* McGinchey, Walters and Scheinpflug (eds.), E-International Relations Publishing, 2017.

[34] McGinchey, Walters and Scheinpflug (eds), *Getting Started with International Relations Theory* E-International Relations Publishing, 2017.

[35] Charrett, C., «A critical application of securitization theory: overcoming the normative dilemma of writing security». *International Catalan Institute for Peace, Working Paper*, 2009.

coercion. Securitization therefore embodies the deep aversion to these women when they try to get back into their societies. It can take a form of or a combination of; hostile treatment both public and private (for example denunciation), forced isolation from community, inability to be trusted by the state or community, verbal and physical attacks, imprisonment and being subjected to death sentences (whether present or in absentia) and revoking of nationality.

There are three components to securitisation, the securitising actor, the referent object, and the functional actor. Securitising actors are usually part of leadership like governments, cultural leaders, elites, civil society and the military, to name but a few, while functional actors are mostly entities like media houses, think tanks and non-governmental bodies. These are tasked with helping to frame the discourse around the issues that are being securitised. The referent object is that which must be securitised. For the study, the securitising actors are normally governments, cultural leaders and civil societies (among others) of states to which the weaponised women belong. For example, Nigeria, Syria and a host of others like the United Kingdom and European countries, Canada, the United States, the Middle Eastern States and other countries worldwide, that have recruited women into the ranks of ISIS and Boko Haram. The functional actors as shown earlier are media houses, for instance, some of which support or reject the stance of their governments. Humanitarian organisations and non-governmental entities operating in the war-torn region play a big role in constructing the image of weaponised women. The referent objects are usually the communities that the once weaponised women want to return to. The securitising actors have always sought to protect these spaces due to the fear that the returning women will pose a security threat to their communities. This in essence securitizes the returning women.

2.2. *Human Security perspective*

Although the concept of human security has rekindled the debate over the meaning of what security is, or whose security we should be focusing on, or the kind of security that should be provided, the term has been open to interpretation by different entities.[36] For example, it has been perceived as

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[36] ACHARYA, Amitav, «Human security: East versus west». *International journal*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2001, pp. 442-460.

«a means of reducing human costs of violent conflict, a strategy to enable governments to address basic human needs and offset the inequalities of globalisation and as a framework for providing a social safety net to people impoverished and marginalised by suddenand severe economic crises».[37] This has made it cumbersome to operationalise the concept.

Tadjbakshs[38] notes that although there is no single definition of human security, key proponents agree on a need to move the locus of security from state-centred to people-centred. Thus, border security should be replaced with the security of the people who live within the borders. Newman[39] argues that human security perspective seeks «to place the individual or people collectively as the *referent* of security, rather than, although not necessarily in opposition to, institutions such as territory and state sovereignty». Therefore, human security, although not opposed to a traditional state-centric security approach, reorients the perspective on who within the state needs to be secured. Newman further views human security as normative, due to the need to reorient security around the individual from a redistributive perspective. This is further linked to the argument that human security deprivation, like socio-economic deprivation (such as poverty and income inequality), and exclusions like access to education, human rights abuse, and epidemiological threats like malaria and HIV/AIDS, have a direct impact on peace and stability between and within states.[40]

Alkire[41] concurs with the above as he argues that human security is centred on the premise of safeguarding all human lives from critical threats and should be done consistently with long-term human fulfilment. The concept of human security as articulated by Menon[42] provides that there is a need for the protection of individuals against any form of threat as opposed to focusing on providing territorial security. This is accentuated by the fact that the

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[37] *Ibidem*.

[38] TADJBAKSHS, S., «Human security: concepts and implications with an application to post-intervention challenges in Afghanistan». Les Estudes du Ceri no, 2005, pp. 117-118.

[39] NEWMAN, E., «Human security and constructivism». *International studies perspectives*, vol. *2*, n.º 3, 2001, pp. 239-251.

[40] *Ibid*. (p. 240).

[41] ALKIRE, S., «A Conceptual Framework for Human Security». Working Paper 2, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford, 2003. Available at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.580.2805&rep=rep1&type=pdf [Accessed 4/1/2019] (p. 3).

[42] MENON, S., «Human Security: Concept and Practice», paper n.º 2478, MPRA, 2007, p. 8.

traditional conceptualisation of state security does not ensure the security of citizens. Moreover, modern-day conflicts like civil war as experienced in Africa, have led to state collapse, high levels of internal and external displacement, and the victimisation of civilian women and children.[43]

The Commission on Human Security[44] takes the conceptualisation of human security further, by arguing that human security threats are mutually reinforcing and interconnected. For example, they are interconnected in a domino effect in that they feed off each other. A case in point is the lack of access to education. This can lead to poverty, which in the end can lead to civil strife due to food insecurity. Moreover, human security challenges can have wider regional and international negative security challenges.

According to Singh,[45] the concept of human security comprises two main aspects. Firstly, it refers to safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression. Secondly, it means protection from unforeseen and harmful disruptions that tamper with the pattern of daily life, whether in homes, in jobs, or communities. The perspective on human security also emphasises the great need for governments to safeguard their territories. This can be attained when governments provide and promote human security by Identification (of any challenging, critical pervasive threats); Prevention, to ensure that risks do not occur; Mitigation, so that if any risks occur the damage is minimised; and Response, for victims and the chronic poor to survive with dignity and maintain their livelihoods.[46]

3. REVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

The concept of weaponisation has become a prominent subject in the field of security studies.[47] Weaponisation, according to Burton and Soore[48] has

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[43] NEWMAN, E., «Human security and constructivism». *International studies perspectives*, vol. 2, n.º 3, 2001, pp. 239-251.

[44] Commission on Human Security. *Human Security Now: Final Report*. New York: CHS, 2003, p. 8.

[45] SINGH, J., «Human Security: A Theoretical Analysis». *International Journal of Political Science and Development*, vol. 2 Iss. 8, 2014, pp. 175-179.

[46] ALKIRE, S., «A Conceptual Framework for Human Security». Working Paper 2, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford, 2003, p. 8. Available at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.580.2805&rep=rep1&type=pdf [accessed 4/1/2019].

[47] BURTON, J. and SOORE, R., «Understanding the Strategic Implications of the Weaponization of Artificial Intelligence». Paper presented at the 11th International Conference on Cyber Conflict (CyCon) vol. 900, 2019, pp. 1-17.

[48] *Ibid*., p. 6.

been used profoundly in the military, most prominently in nuclear materials and programmes. In other instances, concerns of weaponisation have been documented, such as the weaponisation of toxins and biological and chemical agents, while the manipulation of weather and climate has been examined within the concept of weaponisation.[49]

Weaponisation is applicable in various situations, hence it is not a limited term in scope.[50] This is evident in cases where other things have been weaponised to fulfil certain goals. In Syria for instance, Fouad et al.[51] contend that services like health care were weaponised. This involved a strategy of using people's need to access health care as a weapon against them, by violently depriving them of it. Amnesty International[52] reported that doctors practising in areas that went through a series of protests were forced to secretly treat individuals who were injured by government attacks. These clandestine treatments were done in fear of being arrested. Moreover, according to the United Nations Human Rights Council,[53] the government of Syria passed a counter-terrorism law in July 2012, which sought to criminalise the provision of medical care to any individual injured by pro-government forces during anti-government marches.

On further scrutiny it evident that in Syria, weaponisation takes place in the form of gender, thus the term *weaponisation of gender*.[54] This form of weaponisation is seen through the involvement of female contingents that were deployed to various locations or areas throughout the conflict in Syria by both state and non-state groups, for instance in state-sponsored female battalions.[55]

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[49] PINCUS, R., «To Prostitute the Elements: Weather Control and Weaponization by US Department of Defence». *War & Society*, 2017, vol. 36, n. 1, p. 69.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[51] FOUAD, M. et al., «Health workers and the weaponization of health care in Syria». Preliminary inquiry for *The Lancet*. American University of Beirut Commission on Syria, 2017, p. 1.

[52] Amnesty International, «Syrian government targets the wounded and healthcare workers», 2011. Available at: http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/mde240592011en_22.pdf [accessed 24/11/2019].

[53] United Nations Human Rights Council., «Assault on medical care in Syria», 2013. Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session24/Documents/A-HRC-24-CRP-2doc [accessed 24/11/2019].

[54] Abington, T., «Armies of Women: The Syrian crisis and the new war thesis», 2019, p. 2. Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2019/03/27/armies-of-women-the-syrian-crisis-and-the-new-war-thesi/ [accessed 04/04/2019].

[55] CHINKIN, C. and KALDOR, M., «Gender and New Wars», *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 67, n.º 1, 2013, pp. 167-87.

Further assertions made by Enloe[56] postulate that in Syria, female combatants have been exploited for propaganda rather than for military operations. In military groups in Syria for instance, every military base depends on women for its operation.

Semple [57] contends that in other instances, the prostitution of women is used as integral to military operations. This is evident in cases whereby the Islamic State has established an industry of female enslavement as a strategy to sustain its troops: women are distributed to combatants as enslaved sexual partners who are there to boost the morale of combatants

It should be noted that the weaponisation of women is not only limited to ISIS and Boko Haram. Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda is one of the leading figures to have initially adopted this tactic of using women for his war effort against the Ugandan government. His rebel outfit abducted women and children for varying reasons. The women would serve as his wives and those of his soldiers, while the children were groomed as child soldiers. Having become wives of the Kony fighters, the women could not return to their communities or receive acceptance as they were seen as unclean.

This raises the spectre of the weaponised girls being considered as combatants and in this case child soldiers. Although the tag of child soldiers has been usually put on young boys, the weaponised girls are viewed as combatants especially due to the challenges they face when reintegrating in society. As will be shown there is a fear of the danger they pose to society once back home.

For example, according to a *Deutsche Welle* report by Alex Gitta, among the girls rescued from Kony was Joyce Amono. She was freed after four years of being used as a sex slave by a rebel commander:

> When she tried to go back home, she was considered unclean. She later had a relationship with a man, but once he found out that she was one of the kidnapped girls, he took off, leaving her pregnant again.[58]

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[56] Enloe, C., *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*, University of California Press, 2014, p. 175.

[57] Semple, K., «Yazidi Girls Seized by ISIS Speak Out After Escape». *The New York Times*, 15th November 2014, p. A4

[58] Gitta, A., «Uganda 20 years since 'Aboke girls' abduction». *Deutsche Welle*, 2016. Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/uganda-20-years-since-aboke-girls-abduction/a-35993023 [accessed 4/5/2020].

Failure to accept women back into the society is due to several reasons. They can be viewed as unclean as they had been sexual partners of the fighters, or perceived as a security threat, as in the case of Shamima Begum, which highlights the under-explored notion of blanket securitisation of women who have experienced weaponisation.

The process is sometimes political, but it may also emanate from genuine fear, as was argued by Aleksandra Dier, the gender expert of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee at a 2019 committee meeting, that these women should not be seen as merely victims or simply jihad brides. It is more complex, as they join terrorist groups for numerous reasons and play different roles and show different levels of remorse if they leave the groups.[59]

Matfess[60] concurs, as she notes that Boko Haram gave women room to advance their agenda, especially if the group adhered to Sharia Law which had some progressive rules regarding women having autonomy. Moreover, Matfess is of the view that in some cases women went willingly to live with the Boko Haram, due to the structural violence they had experienced in Nigerian society. To Matfess, the victimhood of women was a strategy pursued by the Boko Haram and the Nigerian government. When this is contextualised with the ISIS, where women played the role of fighters, wives, and recruiters, the perception of women as victims seems to be overstated.

In the literature relating to the UN Security Council Counter-terrorism strategy, it is argued in the UN Security Council resolution 2242 of 2015 that:

> The differential impact on the human rights of women and girls of terrorism and violent extremism, including in the context of their health, education, and participation in public life, and that they are often directly targeted by terrorist groups, and expressing deep concern that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, used as a tactic of terrorism, and an instrument to increase their power through supporting financing, recruitment, and the destruction of communities.[61]

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[59] Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, «Gender dimension of the returning foreign terrorist fighters: Research Perspective.» United Nations Security Council, 2019.

[60] MATFESS, H., «Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses». Zed Books Ltd, 2017.

[61] United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242, adopted by the Security Council at its 7533rd meeting, on 13th October 2015 (p. 2).

Nevertheless, the duality of roles (victims and perpetrators) is not entirely ignored as exemplified by the Global Counterterrorism Forum[62] which acknowledges the dual nature of the role played by women, hence the good practices proposal that is geared to embrace both scenarios.

Another key issue that emerges within the literary discourse on weaponisation and human security challenges emanating from it, is the role of international organisations and states. Since counterterrorism has been left to states with less intervention from international institutions, there has been a variety of reactions to the weaponised women within their states and where they have been operating. As shown by the different UN resolutions above, although there is a concerted effort to harmonise counter-terrorism measures and adopt a gendered approach, states have largely been left to develop their approaches. This creates a gap in the body of knowledge emanating from the failure to incorporate securitisation of women and the impact it would have on their human security, due to the policies that states come up with. Secondly, although women may be victims, the human security dangers they pose to the society once re-integrated have not been fully quantified, which creates uncertainty among the political classes that may be facing pressure from the electorate to securitize these women with key policy of stripping them of their nationality.

3.1. *The cases of Boko Haram and the Islamic State*

Weaponisation of women in the case of Boko Haram and ISIS served the aim of getting women to fulfil the war effort, from controlling the population in the different localities to suicide bombing. As explored earlier, women as combatants or as people who performed non-operational duties in the war effort, eased the burden on their male counterparts. Yet in the process of weaponisation moved hand in hand with perpetuation of violence against these women. The weaponisation was a violent experience as most women were unwilling recruits in the process in both cases of Boko Haram and ISIS.

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[62] Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, «Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism», 2013. Available at https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20 Documents/GCTF%20Good%20Practices%20on%20Women%20and%20CVE.pdf?ver=2016-03-29-134644-853 [accessed 3/4/2020].

Therefore, although studies on conflict have tended to focus on violence against civilians the gender-neutral rhetoric does not uncover the extent of the violence that women face in such conflicts. For example in pursuit of controlling the population, Boko Haram carried out mass abductions of school children in April 2014, particularly female learners and teachers in the area of Chibok, where the group abducted 276 school children; they later abducted 111 girls from the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi (Yobe state) on 19 February 2018. Due to this tactic, many girls across Nigeria feared for their lives. They were used as informants and suicide bombers[63] which alienated them from their societies in the long run. Similarly, the Islamic State abducted over 6,000 Christian Yazidis women in a bid capture territory with little or no resistance.[64] This violence against women was intended to instil fear in non-believers with a stark choice of either conversion to Islam or get the women in the community abducted and enslaved.[65] These women were further violated as they were used as incentives to recruit male fighters in the ISIS ranks.[66]

In the same vein, with its aim to strengthen the group's morale and to attract affiliates, Boko Haram resorted to a method of sexual violence against women to lure fighters to the group. According to Bloom and Matfess[67], Boko Haram allowed its fighters to have more than one wife. Bloom and Matfess[68] further assert that one of the male survivors of Boko Haram raids on local communities said that when Boko Haram was raiding his community, they abducted women and tossed 5,000 Naira (about $25) on the floor, alluding that it was the bride price for the kidnapped girls. Moreover, after estimates that Boko Haram has abducted thousands of women and girls, those perceived to

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[63] SEMPIJJA, N. and EYITA-OKON, E., «Counter-Terrorism Resolutions and Initiatives by Regional Institutions: African Union and African Commission on Human and People's Rights». In: *International Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism. International Human Rights*. Singapore: Springer. E. Shor and S. Hoadley (eds), 2019.

[64] IBRAHIM, H., ERTL, V., CATANI, C., ISMAIL, A.A., NEUNER, F., «Trauma and perceived social rejection among Yazidi women and girls who survived enslavement and genocide». *BMC Medicine*, vol. 16 Iss.1, 2018.

[65] *Ibidem*.

[66] KALE, S., «How Terrorist Groups Like ISIS Use Sexual Violence to Lure Recruits», 2017. Accessed At: https://www.vice.com/en_asia/article/mb7yga/how-terrorist-groups-like-isis-use-sexual-violence-to-lure-recruits [accessed 23 November 2019].

[67] BLOOM, M. and MATFESS, H., «Women as symbols and swords in Boko Haram's terror». *Prism*, vol. 6, nº 1, 2016, pp. 104-121.

[68] *Ibidem*.

be exceptionally beautiful were selected and groomed to be married to senior leadership members of Boko Haram.[69]

The aforementioned activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State indicate that weaponised women performed various duties under these terror organisations control. It is in this sense that the research findings in the next section of the paper delve into the human security challenges emanating from the weaponisation of women. These are explored through two distinct sections, one of which looks at the human security impact of weaponisation of women on communities, the other examines the human security impacts on weaponised women.

4. Research Findings and analysis

4.1. *The human security impact of weaponisation of women on communities*

The weaponisation of women by Boko Haram and the Islamic State often tampered with human security in communities in which these groups operated. These human security challenges were perpetrated to fulfil the objectives and goals of these two groups of having total control over the Muslim communities, and to instil fear in all the «non-believers» and non-Sunni Muslims who are not willing to convert to Islam. Thus, according to Ibrahim et al[70] the Islamic State, with its tactics of abduction, committing mass executions of men, women and children, and the enslavement of apprehended individuals, led many people to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere.

According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees[71]during August 2014, ISIS attacked the communities of the Mount Sinjar area, which included a majority of Yazidi. These attacks on civilians drove many from their homes. Approximately 275,000 people were forcibly displaced, leading many to migrate to the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KR-I), particularly the Dohuk governorate.

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[69] *Ibidem.*

[70] Ibrahim, H., Ertl, V., Catani, C., Ismail, A.A., Neuner, F., «Trauma and perceived social rejection among Yazidi women and girls who survived enslavement and genocide». *BMC Medicine*, vol. 16, n.º 1, 2018.

[71] Trends, U., «Relevant COI for Assessments on the Availability of an Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative (IFA/IRA) for Yazidis in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)». United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016, p. 8.

Moreover, according to Campbell and Harwood,[72] the United Nations' refugee agency report on Boko Haram displacement in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger estimates that conflict in the region led to the displacement of 2.4 million and left seven million subjects to starvation. Thus, according to the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report[73], modern-day human security includes the protection of people from conventional threats and the assurance of access to food and proper health care facilities, including access to education. Subsequently, the conflict in Nigeria has led many of these aspects of human security to be violated if not disregarded, because it is evident that there are human security challenges that emanate from the weaponisation of women.

Weaponisation of women has had negative results on schools in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger, due to the fear instilled by Boko Haram through their mass abduction of people, particularly women and girls.[74] Boko Haram's brutal execution of innocent people led many schools in the region to close, while female children feared going back to those that were still open after the Chibok incident, where Boko Haram abducted school children from a government secondary school. Furthermore, the abductions that occurred at the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi on 19 February 2018, exacerbated fears about school attendance, as this triggered the fears experienced after the event of the Chibok abduction that occurred on 14 April 2014.[75]

The utilisation of women as personally-borne improvised explosive devices (PBIED) or suicide bombers, led to many casualties involving both the attackers and the attacked civilians.[76] According to Campbell and Harwood, this attack on civilians was aimed at questioning the legitimacy and ability of governments when it came to protecting civilians. Moreover, this reduced engagement with military forces was cost-effective for the terror groups be-

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[72] CAMPBELL, J. and HARWOOD, A., «Boko Haram's Deadly impact». Council on Foreign Relations. 20th August 2018. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/article/boko-harams-deadly-impact [accessed 10/11/2019].

[73] United Nations Development Programme, «Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience», Human Development Report, 2014

[74] *Ibidem.*

[75] CARTNER, H., «I Will Never Go Back to School: The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls». Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018.

[76] MARKOVIC, V., «Suicide squad: Boko Haram's use of the female suicide bomber». *Women & Criminal Justice*, vol. 29, nº 4-5, 2019 pp. 283-302 (p. 288)

cause they were not risking their mobile armed units, but instead achieved psychological victory by creating terror within the population through the use of fellow civilians to cause carnage.

But more pertinently the identification of most women as suicide bombers created fear of women as combatants and sowed future seeds of suspicion among communities whose daughters had been abducted for example by Boko Haram. This deep feeling of insecurity was directed at all weaponised women whether they had been coerced to join the terror organisation or not. The use of female suicide bombers by these two groups was done on the premise that women, with their feminine characteristics, are less likely to be suspected of causing harm; hence, many suicide bombings were carried out successfully without any deterrence to the perpetrators.[77] It is in this regard that the Global Extremism Monitor[78] highlighted that by the end of the year 2017, 454 women and girls deployed by Boko Haram were arrested in 232 incidents which killed more than 1,225 people. The Islamic State likewise used women to carry out suicide attacks on civilians, thus leading to several atrocities. According to the Global Extremism Monitor (2017)[79] in the conflict of Syria and Iraq, there were 411 suicide attacks by ISIS. This violence killed 2,299 people including 876 civilians and 939 members of state security forces. However, as Campbell and Harwood[80] point out, in these incidents, some suicide bombers self-detonated and thus lost their lives. Others suffered critical injuries resulting from the suicide bombings.

4.2. *The human security impacts on weaponised women*

The weaponisation of women by Boko Haram and the Islamic State tampered with the human security of these women to further their group's interests. According to a report by Cartner[81] published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), after the success of Nigeria's

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[77] *Ibid*., p. 289

[78] Global Extremism Monitor, «Violent Islamist Extremism in 2017». Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017, pp. 256-257.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 264

[80] CAMPBELL, J. and HARWOOD, A., «Boko Haram's Deadly impact». Council on Foreign Relations. 20th August 2018. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/article/boko-harams-deadly-impact [accessed 10/11/2019].

[81] CARTNER, H., «I Will Never Go Back to School: The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls». Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018, pp. 49-50.

security forces in driving Boko Haram out of some of its strongholds and previously controlled territories, many people were rescued, most of them women and children. Their experience of sexual violation and forced marriage under Boko Haram's control translated to highly traumatic experiences and thus, these females desperately needed care and treatment.

Yet most of the women were securitised, regardless of whether they were coerced into becoming part of Boko Haram. This is noted by Campbell and Harwood[82], who argue that many of the rescued women and girls, some of whom had children fathered by Boko Haram fighters, were treated with hostility on returning to their communities due to fears that they had been indoctrinated and brainwashed to further the Boko Haram agenda.

Cartner[83] notes in a 2016 study by UNICEF and International Alert, that women who were previously abducted and kept in Boko Haram territories were often labelled as «Boko Haram wives» in their communities, and there was little distinction made between those who were coerced into marriage or had been married to Boko Haram fighters before the conflict. Moreover, Human Rights Watch[84] reported that on returning home, these women were never trusted by their community.

The securitisation of women once held by Boko Haram is further accentuated by civilians like Adamu Isa, who told Dionne Searcey of the *New York Times*: «I will never trust them... The government should detain them for the rest of their lives»[85]. This blanket perception was extended to the Chibok girls when pressure was put on their parents to reject them.

Further perceptions from the communities include the views of Hazida Ali on the securitisation of the women who lived with Boko Haram:

> All women who lived with Boko Haram are also soldiers... The military should not make the mistake of releasing them. If they can't execute them, they should figure out what to do with them... They should not be allowed to live alongside those who suffered.[86]

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[82] *Ibidem.*

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[84] Human Rights Watch, «Razed to the ground. Syria's unlawful neighbourhood demolitions in 2012-2013», 2013. Available at: https://www.hrm.org/report/2014/01/30/razed-ground/syrias-unlawful-neighborhooddemolitions-2012-2013 [accessed 03/03/2019].

[85] SEARCEY, D., «Victims of Boko Haram, and Now Shunned by Their Communities». *The New York Times* 19 May 2019. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/19/world/africa/boko-haram-victims-nigeria.html [accessed 05/06/2020].

[86] *Ibidem.*

Searcey[87] further highlighted the comments of a community leader who referred to children fathered by Boko Haram fighters as «hyenas among dogs». Moreover, further comments are noted from Abba Aji Kalli, a state coordinator for the Civilian Joint Taskforce, who argues that children born of the enemy cannot be accepted. Matfess[88] suggests that the women living in camps for the internally displaced were not viewed as worthy of being married.

When focus shifts to Syria, similarities on the plight of women in captivity emerge. For example, Asaf[89] found that women who had been systematically raped did not have access to proper facilities if they fell pregnant (Trends, 2016)[90] or if they needed physical treatment for genital and non-genital injuries. Meanwhile, Malik[91] further stated that women who were raped in ISIS camps and managed to escape or were rescued after the demise of the ISIS caliphate, ended up being stigmatised by their communities, which at times led to suicide or murder (which became known as honour killing). Most of these women suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder emanating from witnessing extreme violence and terror.[92] In some cases, there was a fear that they had been indoctrinated and would, in turn, recruit the locals to ISIS.[93]

In other instances, as noted by Vale,[94] women faced prison and death once the Islamic caliphate began to collapse. For example, in April 2018 the government of Iraq charged at least 100 foreign women and sentenced them to death, while dozens more were sentenced to life in prison.

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87 *Ibidem*.
88 MATFESS, H., «Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses». Zed Books Ltd, 2017.
89 ASAF, Y., «Syrian women and the refugee crisis: Surviving the conflict, building peace, and taking new gender roles», 2017. Available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/socsci [accessed 28/04/2019].
90 TRENDS, U., «Relevant COI for Assessments on the Availability of an Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative (IFA/IRA) for Yazidis in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)». United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016.
91 MALIK, N., «Trafficking terror: how modern slavery and sexual violence fund terrorism». The Henry Jackson Society, 2017, p. 24.
92 IBRAHIM, H., ERTL, V., CATANI, C., ISMAIL, A.A., NEUNER, F., «Trauma and perceived social rejection among Yazidi women and girls who survived enslavement and genocide». *BMC Medicine*, vol. 16, n.º 1, 2018, pp. 5-6.
93 Global Extremism Monitor, «Violent Islamist Extremism in 2017.» Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. 2017, p. 252.
94 VALE, G., «Cubs in the Lions' Den: Indoctrination and Recruitment of Children Within Islamic State Territory». International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, July, 5, 2018, p. 3.

According to Gardham,[95] others, like British citizen Shamima Begum, who had travelled to Syria as a minor to join the Islamic State, has had her British citizenship revoked, as she was deemed a national security threat. Yet the British government's decision to make Ms Begum stateless contradicts the UN 1961 convention on reduction of stateless people[96], although the British government had grounds under article 8 3b of the 1961 convention, as Ms Begum's action could be construed as a determination to repudiate her allegiance to Britain. Further justification is seen in Article 83.a), relating to conducting herself in a manner that was seriously prejudicial to the interests of the United Kingdom.

Thus, Shamima Begum's case shows similar characteristics emanating from the securitisation of women in the case of ISIS and Boko Haram. These cases also highlight the challenges arising from little or no scrutiny of state policies relating to weaponised women in jihadist movements.

For example, former British prime minister Theresa May's spokesperson argued that «Anyone who travelled to Syria for whatever reason puts themselves in considerable danger but also poses a serious national security risk to the UK»[97].

A similar case is that of Hoda Muthana, a United States citizen who travelled to Syria to join the IS when she was 20 years of age. In judging Ms Muthana's plea to return home, the US president, Donald Trump, argued that a woman who had left the USA to become a propagandist for an enemy of the USA, should not be allowed to return to the country. Although Muthana still holds US citizenship as stated by her family and lawyer, the US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, argued that Ms Muthana is not a US citizen and thus will not be allowed back into the country.[98]

Australia also took a hard stand against women who were suspected of being affiliated to ISIS and were in refugee camps. In December 2019, the home affairs minister, Peter Dutton, argued that some Australian women in

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[95] Gardham., D., «Shamima Begum faces extreme scenario in citizenship appeal.» The Guardian 24th October 2019

[96] United Nations, «The United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness». United Nations: New York, 1961.

[97] WALKER, A. and WINTOUR P., «UK will not put officials at risk to rescue Isis Britons, says minister». *The Guardian* 14th February 2019 Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/feb/14/uk-isis-britons-officials-risk-syria-schoolgirl-shamima-begum [accessed 04/03/2020].

[98] CALLIMACHI, R., and YUHAS, A., «Alabama woman who joined ISIS can't return home, U.S. Says.» *The New York Times* 20 February 2019. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/world/middleeast/isis-bride-hoda-muthana.html [accessed 07/04/2020].

the al-Hawl camp in Syria were 'hardcore' and had «the potential and capacity to come back here and cause a mass casualty event».[99] He further noted: «I don't think it should come as a surprise when we say we're not going to send our soldiers to rescue people of this nature».[100] This, even after 19 Australian women and 44 children who were in refugee camps in the north of Syria had offered to be placed under restrictive control orders if the Australian government was willing to take them home. However, they noted that the offer was not an admission of guilt but an acknowledgement that community protection in Australia took primacy.[101]

These political leaders' messages to those involved with ISIS were clear: that they were not welcome to return home. As mentioned earlier, this policy contradicts international conventions by leaving other countries with the responsibility for these people, and apart from the human security challenges faced by the women and children, the possibility of further radicalisation is increased.

Furthermore, the political nature of the decisions cannot be ignored. For example, the case of women in refugee camps became more prominent in late 2019, when the United Kingdom was going into elections and the Conservative government did not want to deal with the publicity around the cases. Advocating for the return of ISIS fighters, both male and female, was seen as political suicide.[102]

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, conflict in the contemporary era is evolving as the world witnesses many non-state actors involved in asymmetric warfare, mainly with state actors. In the early 1990s, the world witnessed what came to be known

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[99] DOHERTY, B., Birth of boy sparks renewed calls to rescue Australians in Syria's squalid al-Hawl camp. *The Guardian* 11th December 2019. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/11/birth-of-boy-sparks-renewed-calls-to-rescue-australians-in-syrias-squalid-al-hawl-camp [accessed 04/05/2020].

[100] *Ibidem*.

[101] DAVIDSON, H. and DOHERTY, B., Australian Families trapped in Isis Camps offer to be put under control orders if they can return. *The Guardian* 26th October 2019, Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/26/australian-families-trapped-in-isis-camps-offer-to-be-put-under-control-orders-if-they-can-return [accessed 03/05/2020].

[102] MAI, H.J, «Why European Countries are Reluctant to Repatriate Citizens who are ISIS Fighters». NPR, 10th December 2019. Available at https://www.npr.org/2019/12/10/783369673/europe-remains-reluctant-to-repatriate-its-isis-fighters-here-s-why?t=1590162368356 [accessed 02/05/2020].

as 'new wars', where rebel movements challenged the state and were driven by what Collier and Hoeffler (2014)[103] defined as 'greed vs grievance'. These conflicts were ethnic and at times resource-driven, as witnessed in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, among others. As explored earlier, in post-September 11 2001, the weaponisation of civilians to commit atrocities became the new norm, and apart from Al-Qaeda, groups like Boko Haram and the Islamic State perfected the art of using women as weapons of war both to cause harm to perceived enemies and to keep the soldiers within their ranks happy. It should be noted that although the weaponised women had some sort of agency that allowed them to express themselves, in the end, they were more victims than perpetrators because they had no control of the levers of power within these organisations. Thus, their presence in these groups has created human security challenges for them and their communities of origin, leading to their rejection. Abandoning them to refugee camps or marginalising them on their return to their countries of origin could radicalise them further. Thus, there is a direct link between the weaponisation of women and their subsequent securitization. Once identified as a member of a violent extremist group one cannot easily renounce their affiliations and perceptions of the person persist even in the situation where an individual change her ways or is rescued from the terror organisation.

Nevertheless, there is a need to rethink the position of these weaponised women in society, once the conflict is over. As Matfess[104] noted, the centrality of women to the insurgency in Nigeria could not be ignored, yet they were marginalised. Conversely, as ISIS continued to lose territory, the centrality of women as victims and perpetrators has taken central focus, even though their agency in defining their post-conflict role is missing. As they continue to be marginalised, the human security challenges they face may remain vivid.

Although the United Nations has been at the forefront of a gendered counter-terrorism initiative as explored earlier, the lack of strong impetus to get states to respect human rights and limit the blanket securitisation of these women remains. With states struggling to maintain a balance between pursuing their security interests and protecting the few nationals who joined or

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[103] COLLIER, P. and HOEFFLER, A., «Greed and grievance in civil war». *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 56, n.º 4, 2004, pp. 563-595.

[104] MATFESS, H., «Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses». Zed Books Ltd, 2017.

were coerced into joining terror organisations, the enactment of international legislation to deal with this particular grey area is crucial. As Sempijja and Nkosi[105] noted, when torn between national interest and human rights, national counter-terrorism measures usually gravitate towards the former. Overall, a gendered approach is vital in building peace once the conflict ends. Just as peacebuilding initiatives have incorporated gender, it is vital to do likewise to resolve the human security challenges that are likely to emerge following terrorist insurgencies.

Since disarmament, demobilisation, re-rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) has been crucial to restoring peace in countries like Cambodia, Angola, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone, a similar process could be used to cater for weaponised women and mitigate the human security challenges they and their communities of origins may face. Therefore, it would be important to utilise the demobilisation rehabilitation and re-integration (DRR) of weaponised women so that states do not fall foul of international law but also respect human rights and above all show a desire for peace and reconciliation. Moreover, without DRR women will be left at risk of falling prey to remnants of these terror organisations and the consequences could be devastating.

The DRR process will help identify the different circumstances that each woman faces to develop a tailored programme for her. The states will need to strike a balance between justice and peace and the risk posed by the weaponised women. Plus, the DDR programme will put into context the local perspective. States and international organisations will need to involve stakeholders in communities to ascertain the possibilities of reintegrating the women. Sensitivity will be paid to the perception and fear connected to weaponised women in the communities. This will in the end inform the human security risk the women face if reintegrated into society.

DRR could be combined with counter violent extremism programmes, though as Fink notes, most of the CVE programmes are in pilot stage[106] so there is not enough evidence to test their viability. Nevertheless, Fink finds

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[105] SEMPIJJA, N. and NKOSI, B., «National Counter-Terrorism (C-T) Policies and Challenges to Human Rights and Civil Liberties: Case study of Kenya». In: *International Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism. International Human Rights.* Singapore: Springer, E. Shor and S. Hoadley (eds.) 2019, pp. 431-444.

[106] FINK, N, S., «The Blue Flag in Grey Zones: Exploring the relationships between Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in UN field operations», in *UN DDR in an era of violent extremism. Is it fit for purpose?* Cockayne J. and O'Neil, S. (eds.) United Nations University, 2015 (pp. 62-79).

synergies between DDR and CVE programmes especially regarding the primacy of the role of the family in building social bonds that should endure years after the programme has been implemented.[107]

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