

Misogynistic Discourse, a Blind Spot in Definitions of Terrorism

MIREN GUTIERREZ
University of Deusto, Spain

MARÍA LOZANO
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

ANTONIA MORENO CANO
University of Deusto, Spain

Misogyny—understood as the hatred of women—is found in the objectives, strategies, and narratives of several terrorist groups. Some particularly violent groups, such as InCels, make misogyny their *raison d'être*. We examined 11 definitions of terrorism coined by international organizations, countries, and specialized agencies and six political manifestos that inspire terrorist groups to investigate misogynist discourse. Comparative text analysis shows that misogyny and women have not been included in any of the most established characterizations of terrorism from 1996 to 2022. However, it also indicates that misogyny and sexism are critical elements of narratives of different credos, including jihadism, far-right, male supremacism, and leftist-separatism, although to different degrees. Misogyny is missing in most working definitions of terrorism, and this blind spot may have consequences. Fighting against terrorism is typically prioritized in legislation, enforcement, policing, policymaking, and intelligence gathering in most countries; if a fundamental aspect of terrorism is missing, there is a considerable flaw.

Keywords: political communication, misogyny, terrorism, male supremacism, women

New gender perspectives in security studies focus on the role of female terrorists (Belew, 2018; Gentry, 2017; Moaveni, 2019), the ways in which “hegemonic masculinities” in the context of violence require a nuanced re-evaluation (Myrttinen, Khattab, & Naujoks, 2016), or the deployment of misogyny—understood as the hatred of women (Johnston & True, 2019)—by terrorist organizations to recruit followers (Manne, 2019). Scholarship is increasingly studying “the personal histories of domestic abuse or documented misogyny in most perpetrators of acts of violent extremism” and “the subordination of women” in some extremist groups (Castillo Díaz & Valji, 2019, p. 37). However, these approaches are relatively novel. This article focuses on the role of misogynist discourse in extreme violence.

Miren Gutierrez: m.gutierrez@deusto.es

María Lozano: marialozanoalia@gmail.com

Antonia Moreno Cano: antonia.moreno@deusto.es

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While research on the connection between misogyny and terrorism started earlier, “mainstream Terrorism Studies has never fully engaged with the idea” (Gentry, 2022, p. 209). Agius, Edney-Browne, Nicholas, and Cook (2022) draw attention to a “gender blind spot” in countering terror strategies, arguing that misogyny aligns with “the far-right’s valorization of order, hierarchy, and traditional values” (p. 681). Speaking about gender, Roose, Flood, Greig, Alfano, and Copland (2022) note that the analysis of terrorist attacks underestimates its role in extreme violence. Aoláin (2013) notes, too, that terrorism has been a “marginal interest” of mainstream feminist theorizing. Studies on women’s participation in terrorism have also been influenced by gender biases (Termeer & Duyvesteyn, 2022). In an analysis of 173 incidents, the US Secret Service said that “misogyny and domestic violence deserve increased attention from those tasked with mass violence prevention” (US Department of Homeland Security, 2023, p. v). There is a difference between how frequently misogyny is applied as an analytical lens to right-wing and jihadist versus left-wing extremism (Gentry, 2022; Purdue, 2022); however, the misogyny angle is largely overlooked.

This lapse is rooted in several problems, including the notion that violence against women is not political and cannot be terrorism, a lack of academic acknowledgment of the prevalence of misogyny in extremist violence (Gentry, 2022), and the absence of women’s perspectives in counterterrorism (Aoláin, 2013). These gaps result in limitations in confronting violent extremism (Agius et al., 2022).

This study weighs 11 institutional definitions of terrorism against the visions of society in six political manifestos inspiring terrorism. Men are also victims of violent narratives, but here we focus on misogynistic discourse. Although there is no consensus about the definition of terrorism, we draw from the idea that it is a violent form of *political communication*. We review literature on the intersections between misogyny and extreme violence, present the methodology, and use text analysis to compare how misogyny and sexism—sex-based prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination—appear in the selected documents and offer conclusions and a discussion.

Misogyny and Violence

Misogyny is a severe form of sexism constructed on the idea that women are inferior to men. It encompasses gender discrimination, sexual harassment, violence, and objectification (Srivastava, Chaudhury, Bhat, & Sahu, 2017). Misogyny is sustained through slavery and psychological techniques aimed at using women or excluding them from full citizenship. In some cases, misogyny rewards women for accepting a subordinate status. Misogyny is linked to gender issues, as it perpetuates women’s discrimination and maintains unfair social roles.

When examining the links between misogynistic violence and far-right groups, extremists are often portrayed as exceptional and White (Gentry, 2022). Nevertheless, Leidig (2021) states that the kind of misogyny InCels (or *involuntary celibates*) thrive in is widespread. Social isolation, weak support networks, and problematic profiles may not be predictors of gender-based violence, while the beliefs of many of those who are attracted to extremism are mainstream (Roose et al., 2022).

However, there is an association between feminist progress and violent backlash upsurges. Siapera (2019) argues that misogyny is a political strategy rather than a sentiment. Silva, Capellan, Schmuhl, and

Mills (2021) suggest that women's empowerment encourages "the likelihood of men engaging in extreme forms of performative violence" (p. 2170). For instance, the attacks involving offenders with grievances against women in the United States coincide with the advent of third-wave feminism (Chaiken, Boland, Maltz, Fiske, & Targonski, 2001). Comparing shootings in the United States, Silva et al. (2021) conclude that attackers targeting women were unlike others in their history of domestic violence. Thus, the Southern Poverty Law Center (2021) proposes that the hatred of women is a standalone extremist ideology blaming women and feminism for men's ills.

Diverse violent groups embrace the hatred of women. Bartlett, Birdwell, and King (2010) argue that "Al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism in the West shares much in common with other countercultural, subversive groups of predominantly angry young men" (p. 9). Far-right terrorist ideology is based on, among other ideas, extreme *pro-life* Christian doctrine (Schori Liang & Cross, 2020). Perliger, Stevens, and Leidig (2023) speak of "extreme misogyny" to talk about an array of violent groups, including InCels. Extreme jihadist ideology is grounded in men's superiority over women, too (Meleagrou-Hitchens, Crawford, & Wutke, 2021). The jihadist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIL) is "overtly misogynistic" (De Leed, Hauptfleisch, Korolkova, & Natter, 2017). ISIL has "institutionalized sexual violence and the brutalization of women as a central aspect of their ideology and operations" (Bangura, 2015, para. 7). Castillo Díaz and Valji (2019) conclude that misogyny is the contact point between White Christian and Muslim extremism.

However, Agius et al. (2022) say that countering violent extremism strategies rarely connect them to misogyny and that, when gender is considered, it is mainly to investigate women's roles within terrorist organizations (p. 681). While the women traveling to the so-called Caliphate have generated much consideration (e.g., De Leede et al., 2017; Lia, 2017), this study is centered on the connection between misogynistic discourses and terrorism.

Is the Violence Against Women Political?

While not all forms of political violence can be considered terrorism, Schmid (2020) acknowledges that "terrorism is, in most (but not all) cases, a form of political violence" (p. 50). Considering the reliance of economic sectors on women's semislave labor (International Labor Organization, 2017), the emergence of organized neochauvinism, and the promotion of antifeminism, it is easy to see the political component in the violence against women.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) partially defines terrorism (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). An act of terrorism is the perpetration of a criminal and transnational deed to either spread fear among the population, coerce an authority to act, or refrain from acting (UNODC, 2018). Based on a definition agreed on by prominent academics, Schmid (2020) says that "terrorism" refers to either a *doctrine* about the effectiveness of "coercive political violence" or a *practice* of calculated violent action targeting mainly civilians, "performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects" (p. 50). A key concept is *political communication*, since the goal is to transfer terror to groups beyond the immediate casualties. "The core of terrorism is the combination of violence and communication" (Schmid, 2020, pp. 52–53). Inducing terror via communication strategies seems to be a *sine-qua-non* rationale behind terrorism.

Meanwhile, systematic, structural, and political violence against women sustains whole sectors; it thrives in some men's reactions to unemployment, migration, sex trade, crises, armed conflict, and disasters (True, 2012, p. 40). "The globally increasing scale and brutality of violence against women" relates to "macro-structural processes" (True, 2012, p. 40). Samuel, Slatter, and Gunasekara (2019) write about the political economy of violence against women to show sexual regimes are linked to spaces of production, anchored in a patriarchal logic, and sustained through violence. On a different scale, Murphy (2015) talks about *domestic slavery*—exerted by husbands over wives—through sexual, economic, and symbolic abuse. Namely, violence against women serves as the basis for sustaining economies, from households to whole sectors.

Consensus is emerging that violence against women in politics threatens democracy (Krook, 2020; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2014). Until recently, femicides were tackled on a case-by-case basis, but they are now studied as a form of female suppression (Driver, 2015; Salguero, 2019). In *Terrorising Women*, Fregoso and Bejarano (2010) define femicide as structural violence rooted in inequality. Femicides' main characteristics include being systematic, since they are "continuous, conscious, sequential, desensitized, conditioned, and naturalizing violence against women" (Kayir & Kalav, 2015, p. 519). Some acts of misogynistic terrorism are ways of warning feminism that societal shifts toward gender equity will be punished (Ging, 2022). Feminist scholarship has seen the escalation in violence against women as an aspiration to preserve gendered power structures.

Understanding Online Misogynistic Discourse

Every new feminist wave has dealt with a backlash; in the age of platforms, they happen online. For example, the #MeToo campaign of 2018 against the sexual abuse of women was antagonized by #HimToo (Ellis, 2018). The people behind these responses are neochauvinists who think an excess of equality must be tempered to avoid discriminating against men. Neochauvinists take advantage of the possibilities of platforms, forming the *manosphere* (Hanash Martínez, 2018), which gathers bloggers, YouTubers, and others united by their belief in a world "polluted" by feminism (Landsbaum, 2016; Mantilla, 2015). Platforms encourage "hegemonic discourses and traditional power relations" (Demirhana & Cakir-Demirhan, 2015, p. 308). When these kinds of ideologies are promoted, disturbed men get organized (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019), and examples include InCels (Leidig, 2021)). Online misogyny is varied. Male supremacism—the system that privileges men over women—has always existed, but today, it thrives based on digital communication to promote antifeminist-resistant discourses (Flood, Andolina, & Pease, 2020). Meanwhile, ISIL employs digital platforms to groom, radicalize, and recruit women (Kibtiah & Tirajoh, 2019; Shaban, 2020; Termeer & Duyvesteyn, 2022).

The online misogynistic discourses of the far-right have attracted much scholarly attention. Far-right politicians are increasing their misogynist messaging. One example is President Trump's vocabulary on Twitter, which perpetuated "a male-centric hierarchy," conveying the idea that "women are weak, incompetent, and lacking physical and mental abilities" (Scotto di Carlo, 2020, p. 9). In addition, misogynistic language has been used to silence women activists in climate talks (Pettersson, Martikainen, Hakoköngäs, & Sakki, 2022), present them as security threats (Hunter & Jouenne, 2021), and scare them

(Southern & Harmer, 2019). Using platforms, neochauvinists bombard young men with rantings. Andrew Tate, for instance, says rape victims must bear responsibility for having been attacked (Das, 2022). The typical ideology of InCels includes "victimhood as justification of political violence" (Zimmerman, 2022, p. 166; Zimmerman, Ryan, & Duriesmith, 2018).

Extreme male supremacism has resulted in terrorist attacks, including the 2014 Isla Vista killings (California, United States) and the 2018 Toronto van attack (Canada). The first was a series of attacks by Elliot Rodger, who killed 6 people, injured 14, and then killed himself. In the Toronto incident, the driver, Alek Minassian, rammed his truck into targeted pedestrians, killing 11. Some of these attackers identify with the InCels movement. Male supremacist terrorism is ideological misogynist assassination (Driver, 2015). Though traditional definitions of terrorism do not include male supremacism, we could define misogynist terrorism as violent acts intended to terrorize society and punish women, communicate the hegemony of men over women, and inspire fear in women to make them controllable.

While these approaches are still rare, since 2018, counterterrorism organizations such as the International Centre for Counterterrorism (ICCT), established in 2010 in Europe, and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) in the United States, have tracked misogyny and male supremacy as ideologies that have motivated terrorist attacks. They describe this form of terror as a "rising threat" (DiBranco, 2020). However, male supremacy terrorism is difficult to define and persecute, as it embraces contradictory beliefs such as that all women are both cunning or manipulative and irrational or incapable (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021).

Paraphrasing Schmid (2020), not all violence against women can be considered terrorism. But if politics is about how people in communities agree, make decisions, and act, violent organized neochauvinism is indeed political. The fact that some social structures and economic activity are maintained through rape, slavery, and violence explains the interest of some men in overpowering women.

Methodology

The research questions are the following:

RQ1: How do women and misogyny feature in the definitions of terrorism?

RQ2: How do women and misogyny feature in jihadist, far right-wing, far left-separatist manifestos?

RQ3: What blind spots emerge when comparing them?

We chose text analysis based on the idea that terrorism is violent political communication. Arguably, not all the political communication displayed by terrorist groups is verbal. For example, al-Qaeda employed videos to broadcast its creed, providing nonverbal cues (Johnston & El Difraoui, 2008), and Hezbollah, a Shia terrorist organization, uses images (Matusitz, 2019). However, this study is limited to written texts.

Case Selection

The UN General Assembly agrees that there is no legally binding definition of terrorism. The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (United Nations General Assembly, 1996)—a proposed treaty to criminalize international terrorism—has been under discussion by the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee since 1996. In the *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, Schmid (2011) lists 260 definitions. We analyzed 11 common definitions of terrorism that have been the basis for counterterrorism in the UN, the United States, and the European Union since the 90s (Table 1). We preselected the sections that specifically address terrorism to avoid including irrelevant text.

Table 1. Definitions of Terrorism

Country/Origin	Year
UN General Assembly	1996
League of Arab States	1998
Legislation.gov.uk	2000
US Congress	2001
UN Security Council	2004
United Nations	2004
Schmid, A.P.	2011
UN General Assembly	2013
European Union	2017
US Department of Defense	2021
Federal Bureau of Investigation	2022

Then, we chose the ideologies sustaining terrorist groups active today. The number of deaths was not a good criterion to include ideological variety because it would exclude most. For instance, the Taliban, Islamic state, and Boko Haram accrue thousands of deaths (WorldData.info, 2022), while the far-right extremist attack on the Island of Utøya, Norway, in 2011 resulted in 77. Extremist groups' relevance is based on their capacity to disrupt democracies. For example, right-wing terrorism is considered an increasingly transnational threat (Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate, 2020). Because the goal here is to explore the principles of diverse terrorist groups, we relied on the typology used by the *EU terrorism situation and trend report* (Europol, 2022) to select six manifestos (see Annexes). The EU distinguishes between (a) jihadist, (b) right-wing, (c) left-wing or anarchist, and (d) ethnonationalist or separatist terrorism.

Because of availability and relevance, we included six manifestos representing four types of ideologies, seeking variety, and without considering when they were published or implying there are equivalents in any way: jihadist, right-wing, left-wing separatist, and male supremacist. This is a limited sample; however, some manifestos are lengthy, complex works (e.g., *Milestones* is 406 pages long). The aim is not to be statistically representative but to capture the relevance of misogyny in these texts and compare them with the definitions of terrorism (see Table 2).

Table 2. List of Studied Manifestos

Manifesto	Type
Milestones (Qutb, 1964/2004)	Jihadist
"The Hijrah" (Al-Muhajirah, 2017)	Jihadist
<i>Women of the Islamic state</i> (Al-Khansa' Brigade, 2015)	Jihadist
<i>The Great Replacement</i> (Tarrant, 2019)	Right-wing
"Retribution" (Rodger, 2014)	InCel (male supremacist)
<i>Capitalism</i> (Öcalan, 2009)	Left-wing-separatist

First, we examined *Milestones* by Sayyid Qutb (1964-2006), an Egyptian Islamic scholar and leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood until the 1960s. In 1966, he was hanged for a conspiracy to kill Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. He is the father of Salafi jihadism, underpinning the ideological roots of global jihadist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIL. According to Husain (2017), Qutb's views on women have been misinterpreted since he is sympathetic to them, establishing limits to polygamy (Husain, 2017, p. 81). Here, Qutb (1964/2006) outlines a plan to recreate the extinct Muslim world on what he believes to be Quranic grounds.

Second, "The Hijrah" (Al-Muhajirah, 2017)—meaning "departure" to the Islamic state—is an article published by Umm Sulaym Al-Muhajirah, who appears to be a prominent ISIL propagandist (Europol, 2021). Muhajirah—meaning "female migrant," possibly a pseudonym—conveys a "romantic vision" of an Islamic utopia (Björgum, 2016). It states that female jihadists' empowerment lies in contributing to the building of an Islamic state and seeking martyrdom (Europol, 2021). Stempien (2021) examines propagandistic discourses in these articles, in which masculine dominance interlaces with gender essentialism, including women's subjugation.

Third, we studied *Women of the Islamic State* by the Al-Khansa' Brigade (2015), an all-women religious enforcement unit of the ISIL, translated by Charlie Winter.

Fourth, the ideas found in *The Great Replacement*—disseminated by Brenton Tarrant (2019) before he killed 51 Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand—have circulated since the late 19th century. The term was promoted by Renaud Camus (2019), a French conspiracy theorist who connects the presence of Muslims with the obliteration of Western culture. Camus (2019) attributes demographic changes in Europe to policies imposed by global elites conspiring to cause *genocide* of Whites. These ideas drove Payton S. Gendron to perpetrate the 2017 shooting in Buffalo, New York (Farivar, 2022) and Tarrant's attack against two mosques (Bullens, 2021). Studies of these narratives miss the misogyny lens, focusing on xenophobia (Ehsan & Stott, 2020).

Fifth, we studied "Retribution" (Rodger, 2014), a video posted before his killing rampage and suicide. In the video, he explains that he wanted to punish women for rebuffing him and sexually active men because he resented them.

The sixth manifesto is Abdullah Öcalan's (2009) *Capitalism: the Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings (Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization)*. Öcalan is a founding member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party

(PKK), a leftist-armed guerrilla based in the Kurdish-majority areas of southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq. Öcalan helped found the PKK in 1978 and led it into the Kurdish-Turkish conflict in 1984. He was arrested in Kenya in 1999 and kept prisoner until 2019. Though initially pursuing an autonomous Kurdish state, PKK—designated a terrorist group by Turkey, the EU, and the United States—has fought for Kurds' rights within Turkey since the 1990s. This book is the second in a five-volume work published to explain how capitalism has engulfed the world and how a democratic alternative for the Middle East could succeed.

Text Analysis

We used Voyant Tools, an open-source application, to inspect the definitions and manifestos. Text cleaning techniques were employed to remove *stop words* (Fenoll & Rodríguez Ballesteros, 2017) (e.g., "and," "or," and similar terms). We used *stemming* to find similar ideas. For example, looking for "wom*" can help identify "woman," "women," "womankind," and "womenfolk." The relevant terms are "wom*," "misogyn*," "fem*," "sex*," "wif*," "sister*," "maid*," "she," "mother," "gender*," "prostitut*," "rape*," and "girl*." We focused on the context in which these words appear. We also visualized them to observe patterns.

The authors elaborated on the tables and figures.

Analysis Results

Unpacking the Definitions of Terrorism

The definitions we examined have common elements; for example, most speak of political violence. Some definitions dwell on the political, ethnic, religious, philosophical, and even environmental purposes of terrorism, although not all mention coercion, terror, or intimidation as the means. Of the most frequent 105 terms in the definitions, the most common are "international" (108 times), "offense" (71), "acts" (66), "state" (47), "against" (46), "measures" (41), "security" (41), "convention" (34), "threat" (32), and "public" (31). Other words that stand out are "political" (27) and "criminal" (21).

The three elements identified by UNODC (2018) as being key in terrorism are found here: "International," the most repeated word, and "foreign" (the transnational element); "offenses," "acts," "violence," "attacks," "activities," "against," "criminal," and derivatives (the criminal element), and "threat" and "terror" (the coercive element).

To avoid missing relevant information, we looked at the most frequent terms related to motivations: "political," "religious," "economic," "environmental," "ideological," "ethnic," or "philosophic," and derivatives (see Figure 1).

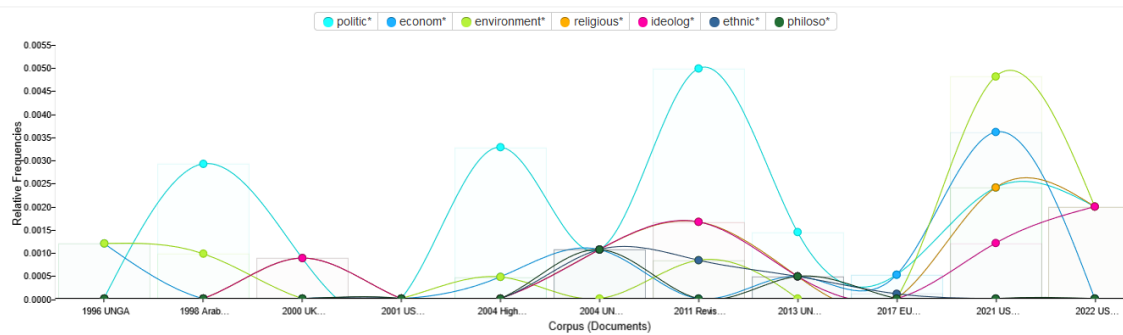


Figure 1. Motivations within terrorism definitions.

The definitions are arranged in chronological order. Political, economic, and environmental drives played an essential role in earlier definitions, while the motivations diversified in 2004. Religious goals appear more prominently in Schmid (2012) and the US Department of Defense (2021). Meanwhile, in a text by the League of Arab States (1998), "politics" is the most frequent. The historical moment when these definitions were issued and their issuers' perspectives explain the differences in emphasis.

We searched for references to the offenders and victims (e.g., "person," "civilian," "victim," "offender," "man," "woman"). Most definitions speak of "person" or "persons," and "victim" appears more often in Schmid (2012). While the term "woman" and its derivatives do not appear, "man" does. This happens in the US Department of Defense (2021) to refer to "natural or man-made incident" (twice) and in the US Congress (2001) to refer to "man-slaughter." It is debatable whether these terms are appropriate (e.g., many man-slaughter victims are women), but this matter is irrelevant here.

We searched for the words related to women; however, none of the related terms appear in any of the 11 definitions.

Unpacking the Manifestos

We explored Qutb (1964/2006), searching for terms related to women, finding references to "woman" (67), "wife" (33), "mother" (23), "sister" (15), "sex" (18), "feminine" (4), and "prostitute" (1), and derivatives (see Figure 2).

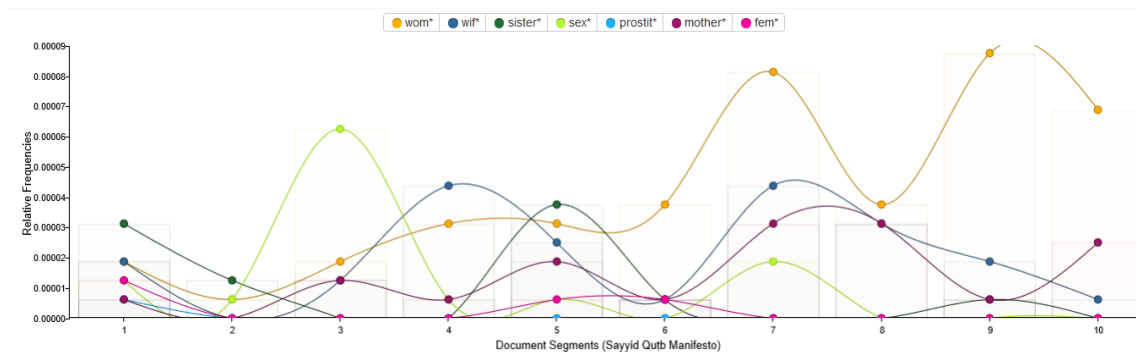


Figure 2. Terms related to women in Qutb (1964/2006).

We looked at some of the contexts in which these terms appear. “Woman” is often associated with sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and marriage. For example, Qutb (1964/2006) writes:

A third form of marriage was polyandry. A group of men, less than ten, would come to a woman and have sexual intercourse with her. If she became pregnant and then gave birth to a child, and a few nights passed after childbirth, she would call them. No one could refuse this call. When they would all gather, she would tell them, “You know the result. I have given birth to a child.” Then she would point to one of them and would say, “This is his child.” The child would then be named after that person and would be considered his, and he could not deny this. (p. 81)

Although Qutb (1964/2006) talks about the pregnant woman’s right not to choose a husband, he does not talk about consent, even when several men participate in what appears to be rape; the resulting children become the property of the husband. Polyandry is not symmetrical to polygamy.

Western societies, where sexual liberties generate illegitimate children and the relationships are founded on desire, are rejected. Qutb (1964/2006, pp. 110–111) praises the virtues of a “division of work” based on “family responsibility and natural gifts” and women’s “basic responsibility of bringing up children” and abilities to train children.

According to Qutb, only men can be lustful. A vision of paradise includes women who are “coquettish,” “sweet,” “gorgeous,” and willing to satisfy “everything that your (his) desires desire.” In paradise, “a person of intelligence”—that is, a man—can expect to find “wide-eyed maidens” (Qutb, 1964/2006, p. 286). Wives will also reappear in paradise but transformed into more beautiful beings, “cleaned from menses and bleeding, removed from her all types of impurities, and her crookedness straightened” (Qutb, 1964/2006, p. 286). “Maidens” and “virgins” appear four times each. Women taken by force by non-Muslim enemies must fight back, even risking death.

Al-Muhajirah (2017) talks about her trip from Australia to the Islamic state after her husband’s death as *mujahidin* and her ambition for her and her children to participate in the “noble campaign” of fighting against “immorality and glorification of sins” (p. 32). A woman may leave her home in circumstances

necessitating her service to society, but her quest will not be effortless. Ironically, as a widow, her dependence on her father and in-laws is an obstacle she must overcome. Other hurdles are her *jilbab* (a full-length outer garment covering the head and hands) and *noqah* (a veil covering the face), hindering her escape while “pushing several heavy bags of luggage while running after my two overly-excited children” (Al-Muhajirah, 2017, p. 32). The article narrates her ordeal, including detention in Turkey, until she reached the Islamic state.

Although this text is sparing in women-related words, it does not overlook them. When they are mentioned, it is to say that they can pursue the same objectives as men. She is harsh in her criticism of soft Muslim “scholars” in Australia, who are depicted as “lazy cowards, not true men!” (Al-Muhajirah, 2017, p. 32). In Australia, the Muslim community (“*ummah*”) is “humiliated, subdued, and defeated” because of the abandonment of *jihad* (the struggle against the enemies of Islam) and men deserting their responsibilities (Al-Muhajirah, 2017, p. 32).

In contrast, in Al-Khansa’ Brigade (2015), “woman” is the most repeated word (122 times), while many other related terms appear in great numbers too (see Figure 3).

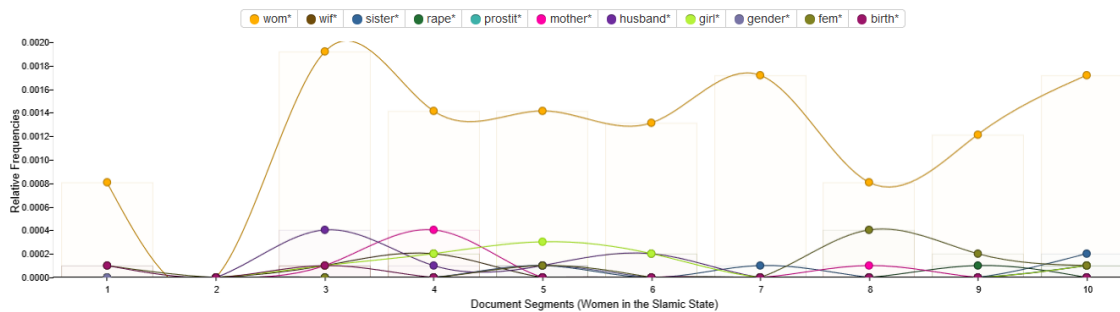


Figure 3. Terms related to women in Al-Khansa’ Brigade (2015).

Here, we observe women’s place in an ideal society. “To have a job is a task reserved only for men—he has been given the body and brain, and he must tend to his women, wives, daughters, and sisters according to his circumstances” (Al-Khansa’ Brigade, 2015, p. 23). Women’s obligations include guarding their bodies and obeying their husbands. “It is considered legitimate for a girl to be married at the age of nine. Most pure girls will be married by sixteen or seventeen while they are still young and active” (Al-Khansa’ Brigade, 2015, p. 24). Shariah law—supported by “punishments of any breach of sanctity”—is the guarantee of peace and protection for women, who can “wander in *souqs* and go on pilgrimage” safely (Al-Khansa’ Brigade, 2015, p. 30).

The Al-Khansa’ Brigade (2015) says that problems arise when women do not fulfill “their fundamental roles,” consistent with their “deepest nature” (p. 17). In Westernized cultures, such as Saudi Arabia (sic), women lose their dignity and work alongside men (Al-Khansa’ Brigade, 2015).

We looked at which terms that refer to women appear in Tarrant (2019) and found fewer references to “woman,” “she,” “sex,” “mother,” and “gender” (see Figure 4).

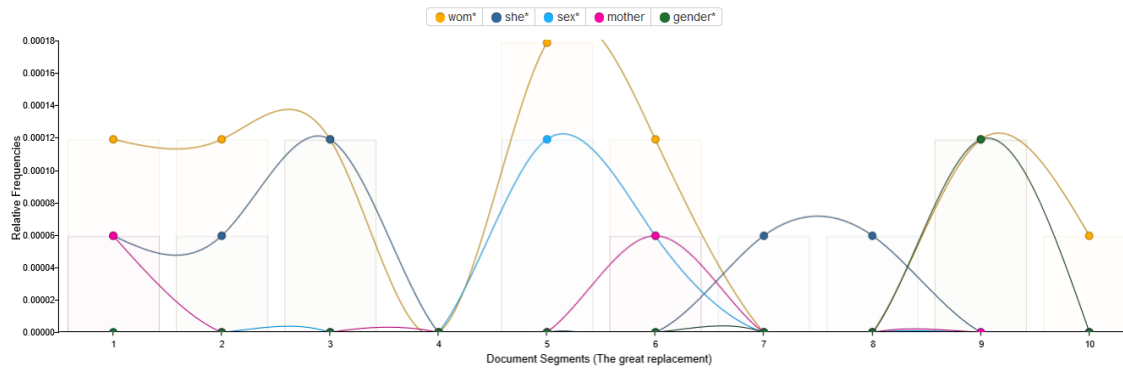


Figure 4. Terms related to women in Tarrant (2019).

“Woman” and derivatives appear 14 times, sometimes in pairs that look inclusive (e.g., “a true man or woman”). However, soon, other ideas emerge. White women must be protected from “invading forces” aiming at raping them. “She” refers to Ebba Akerlund—a child victim of a 2017 jihadist truck attack in Stockholm—and US conservative political commentator Candace Owens. Tarrant (2019) uses these cases to exemplify the Muslim threat. “Sex” is employed to refer to the child sexual exploitation ring that a group of five British-Pakistani men ran in Rotherham (UK) until the 2010s and other similar cases in which the perpetrators were men of foreign origin in the UK, Australia, Finland, and Germany. “Gender” appears only twice, but meaningfully:

We grow older, fewer, weaker, and more fundamentally closer to true death the longer we allow our birthrates to remain so catastrophically low . . . The only people that seemingly do not face such issues are those with strong traditions, gender norms, societal norms; the poor and the religious, usually a combination of all. This should give us an indication of what may be truly at the heart of the issue. What can we do to fix it? The issue is complicated, far more complicated, and difficult to fix than the issue of ethnic replacement. Likely a new society will need to be created with a much greater focus on family values, gender, and social norms and the value and importance of nature, culture, and race. (Tarrant, 2019, p. 9)

Women and girls in this manifesto seem critical to the survival of the White race because they can be mothers. Not acting means that White women will continue being raped by foreign men. The solution to this problem is to stick to traditional gender norms based on inequality.

Rodger (2014) does not mention the terms “woman” or “wife;” instead, he talks about “girls” (11 times) (see Figure 5).

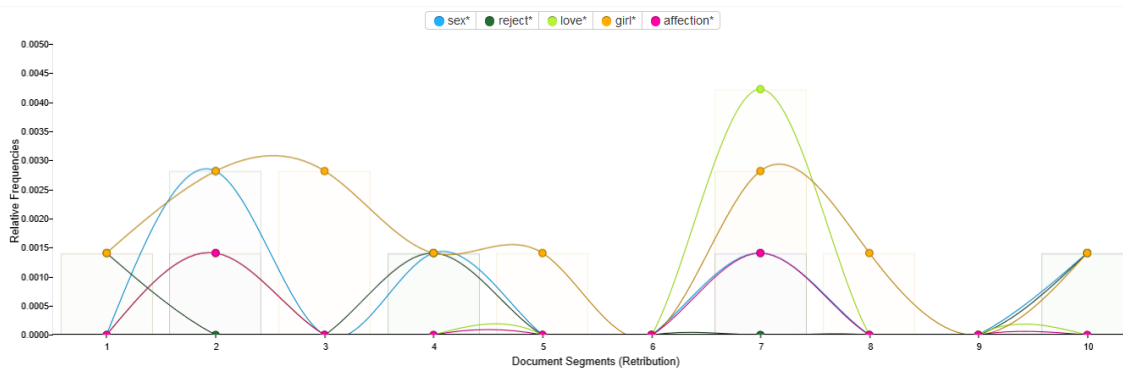


Figure 5. Terms related to women in "Retribution" (Rodger, 2014).

Here, we see correlations between the terms "sex," "girl," and "love." Rodger (2014) laments having never been kissed by a girl and being denied love. "Virgin" here is employed to describe himself, rotting "in loneliness." Girls are "sluts," "hot," and "spoiled;" men are "obnoxious brutes," while he is "perfect," "superior," and a "gentleman," the "true alpha male." This "crime" is to be punished by slaughter.

Meanwhile, in Öcalan (2009) women are featured prominently. Of the searched terms, these appear: "woman" (75), "sex" (53), "rape" (1), "mother" (39), and "gender" (3) (see Figure 6)

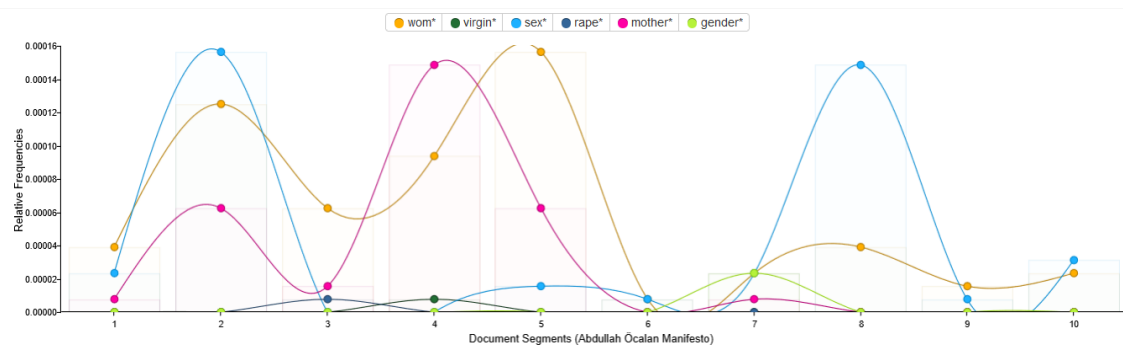


Figure 6. Terms related to women in Öcalan (2009)

Öcalan (2009) strongly criticizes how capitalism has turned women into sexual objects to satisfy men's appetites while men are enthroned as masters. To ensure a lawful heir, a woman's sexuality had to be administered, he protests. Today, a woman is forced to believe her worth is diminished if she fails to elicit sexual desire; she is a "childbearing and child-raising machine that is inexpensive to obtain and can be run cost-free" (Öcalan, 2009, pp. 45 & 129). During the capitalist period, "she is the object of inequality, freedomlessness, and democracylessness, not only at the ground level but at all levels" (Öcalan, 2009, pp. 45 & 129).

Öcalan (2009) believes women are drivers of the economy.

If we wish to meaningfully evaluate economy from a sociological perspective, we must see the woman (bearing, carrying, raising and nurturing children until they can be independent, as well as being the artisan of the house) as the fundamental power. (Öcalan, 2009, p. 124)

He uses the bionomy “woman-mother,” “mother-woman,” and “mother-goddess” to refer to a primordial force in antiquity, which has been replaced in capitalist societies with a subjugated, sexually abused, and enslaved woman.

Discussion

This study corroborates that misogyny is central to the ideologies that fuel extreme violence (Castillo Díaz & Valji, 2019; Johnston & True, 2019). Several scholars recognize a connection between male violence against women and attacks showing terrorist traits (Leidig, 2021; McCulloch & Maher, 2020). Misogynistic and sexist discourses are found in male supremacism and far-right narratives (Wilson, 2020) and the *jihadi* cause (Lia, 2017); to a certain degree, our study finds them in a leftist-separatist manifesto as well. But more crucially, our analysis substantiates that misogyny is often overlooked, as Agius et al. (2022), Aoláin (2013), Gentry (2022), and Roose et al. (2022), among others, note. The gap we have found aligns with other gender-related shortages identified in counterterrorism. For instance, Maddison (1999) argued two decades ago that focusing on the constructions of masculinity and fatherhood and on the ways they circulate could illuminate this discussion. Despite being “part of a comprehensive approach to understanding conflict drivers,” masculinities are still understudied in conflict (Dier & Baldwin, 2022, p. 12). Moaveni (2019) criticizes the failure of Western counterterrorism measures to engage with the troubles of the young women who are attracted to ISIL. For instance, two investigations found that widespread sexism interfered with US covert missions in Afghanistan (Greenburg, 2023) and surveillance operations in Israel (TOI Staff, 2023). That is, although gender issues—including misogyny—are increasingly considered, they are still a blind spot in counterterrorism.

Some elements in current definitions of terrorism could be less decisive than misogyny. One example is religion, which appears in the recent definitions of terrorism we have studied. A restricted MI5 analysis obtained by *The Guardian* concluded that “far from being religious zealots,” many terrorists do not practice their faith and lack religious literacy; “some are involved in drug-taking, drinking alcohol, and visiting prostitutes” (Travis, 2008, para. 11). On the contrary, according to the MI5 report, a well-established religious identity can protect “against violent radicalization” (Travis, 2008, para. 11). Thus, more academic and policy attention should be paid to gender issues and the prevalence of misogyny. Failure to address it “undermines society’s ability to understand better, prevent, and effectively respond to these attacks” (McCulloch & Maher, 2020, para. 5). Women should also be at the center of responses to terrorism, “just as misogyny is at the heart of so many terrorist groups’ strategies” (DiCarlo, 2020, para. 4).

Based on this analysis and the idea that violence against women is political, we propose that many forms of terrorism rest at the apex of a system based on the transmission of fear designed to keep women and society scared and compliant. We also contend that academic research on terrorism should broaden the scope to explore the prevalence of misogyny within terrorist and violent groups’ narratives and include more

interdisciplinary approaches in line with what Scrivens, Gill, and Conway (2020) recommend. Fighting against terrorism is typically prioritized in legislation, enforcement, policing, and intelligence gathering. If a fundamental aspect of how terrorists think and communicate is missing, there is a blind spot in current approaches to tackling terrorism.

Conclusion

Four ideas emerge from the analysis of the jihadist, rightist, White supremacist, and leftist-separatist manifestos, to different degrees: (a) that women are considered inferior to men and (b) should go back to their primordial functions; (c) that their bodies must be controlled; and (d) that men are inherently deserving privileges, and when those are denied, they are unduly disparaged, and society collapses. The comparison between the first and second analyses offers a stark contrast. While none of the 11 official definitions of terrorism includes misogyny or sexism as drivers of terrorism, these elements are essential in the six manifestos.

Maybe the most common notion in the jihadist and male supremacist manifestos is that **women are inferior beings** and that, paraphrasing Agius et al. (2022), women's submission is necessary to sustain order, hierarchy, and traditional values. Misogyny is substantiated by the supposed inferiority of women and maintained through sexist stereotypes (Castillo Díaz & Valji, 2019). The role of women in jihadist texts is subordinate to that of men. The ideas in Al-Muhajirah (2017) and Al-Khansa' Brigade (2015) resonate with Moaveni's (2019) *Guest House for Young Widows*, where the author talks about how a group of women arrived at ISIL-held territory in Syria and Libya and the roles they bore, from working for the moral police to becoming housewives.¹ Although women have rights, these depend on men's priorities. Al-Muhajirah (2017) admits that a woman can take her life into her own hands, but only in exceptional circumstances for the *hijrah*. Decent women publicly cover themselves and dedicate themselves to their husbands and homes. Meanwhile, White supremacists believe they are biologically and intellectually superior and feel threatened by any improvement women might obtain. Tarrant (2019) calls out several times to men and women on seemingly equal terms. However, women are reduced in his manifesto to their reproductive role or seen as rape victims. Also, though obliquely, he advocates for women to maintain their traditional roles as caregivers inside the home. While Tarrant addresses alleged societal changes, Rodger (2014) talks only about himself and considers girls unfair to him. The exception is Öcalan's (2009) text, which advocates restoring women's power in society.

Connected to this idea, Qutb (1964/2006) supports a division of work based on *natural gifts* that puts women in the home to care for the children. But the idea of **the primitive in women** is central to Öcalan's (2009) text:

Due to the female's stronger bonds with life, her natural emotional intelligence is better developed than that of the male. She is not only the mother of the children, that of labor blended with much pain; she is also the one primarily responsible for social life. She is not

¹ However, Moaveni (2019) also captures how some of the women who joined ISIL grew disparaging and tried to escape.

only aware of life; she also has more knowledge to sustain it. She is a gatherer, equipped for this by both her emotional intelligence and what she has learned from nature. Anthropological data indicates that for the greatest part of history, social accumulation centered on the mother-woman, making her the center of the society's prosperity and values. It can be surmised that she was also the mother, the creator-of surplus-value. The strong man, whose primary task was hunting. (p. 44)

Öcalan's (2009) defense of women's superiority ends up being contradictory; the primitive aspect is revered but is also supposed to be inferior because it is not fully developed. While nativism is often related to the radical right (Christley, 2022), Öcalan's (2009) stance comes from the left.

The **control of women's sexuality and bodies** is crucial in misogynistic practices; in these manifestos, we see the aspiration to exercise this control at different levels. Although it cannot be taken literally, Qutb (1964/2006) explicitly presents the visions of women as bodies for pleasure, child-rearing, or nurture. Apart from their reproductive function, Qutb (1964/2006) introduces the idea that women are pleasurable beings, even *things* ("most gorgeous of things"). For Qutb (1964/2006), menstruation is something distasteful that would disappear in paradise. Meanwhile, the Al-Khansa' Brigade (2015) states that girls as young as nine are to be married to grownup men. Both Qutb (1964/2006) and Tarrant (2019) say rape—by infidels or foreigners—should be confronted. Qutb (1964/2006) puts the onus on women, who should rather die than be violated. Tarrant (2019) is less clear about how to act on this predicament. The latter obsessively lists confirmed cases of rape of White underage girls by men of foreign origin to elicit a reaction from male readers, who are summoned to act. Motherhood is a critical element of the studied manifestos, without exception. Tarrant (2019) talks about White women as indispensable for the survival of the White race. Despite criticizing the sexualization of women and the violation of reproductive rights in capitalist systems, Öcalan (2009) places very much attention on women as mothers, which seems to be the primary source of their standing in his ideal society.

The jihadist manifestos analyzed here are full of **men's entitlements**. Connected with women's inferiority, this idea is perhaps more evident in Qutb's text (1964/2006): he addresses the reader in the second person, a man, who deserves a paradise full of devoted women; "person" refers to a man, too, while "thing" can denote a woman. Rodger's (2014) egocentric verbal abuse resonates with what Perliger and colleagues (2023) highlight as InCels' male self-pity and tendency to employ derogatory language. When men's entitlements are not recognized, societies decline. This idea is associated with the criticism in Al-Khansa' Brigade (2015), which speaks of emasculated men in Westernized societies who do not shoulder their responsibilities. Al-Muhajirah (2017), too, criticizes the softness and cowardice of men in Westernized societies. Tarrant's and implicitly Rodger's (2014) manifestos blame women and a feminist conspiracy for men's ills, in line with misogynistic ideology as defined by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2021). Rodger complains that girls' liberties are a personal affront, a crime to be punished.

Finally, there is **a gulf between the definitions of terrorism that underpin counterterrorism efforts and the misogynistic narratives that underpin said terrorism**. Whether leftist or rightist, religiously, ethnically, or politically motivated, the manifestos rely on misogyny and sexism to attract members, sustain and justify actions, disseminate their visions for society, or uphold their communication.

In contrast, the 11 definitions of terrorism we have examined do not consider misogyny as a driving force or even mention women. While terrorism definitions have acquired complexity over time, incorporating new motivations, they have not integrated misogyny at all, generating a divide.

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