A Critical Analysis of Women's Agency in Terrorism: The Case of Al-Shabaab

Mini-Dissertation

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ii

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iii

ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a growing security issue for the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, most of what is understood or assumed about terrorism is based on traditional and realist understandings of the problem. There has been a skewed focus on male recruits and their participation. One way in which inaccurate research and representation of men in terrorist organisations has been portrayed is through the fact that behind women's participation in terrorist organisations, a motivation is always given to explain their participation. This is where a gap in literature has been identified. In order to fill this gap, this study uses the feminist theoretical approach to form an understanding of women's autonomy in Al-Shabaab through a lens that is not masculinist and free from gendered stereotypes. Furthermore, this ensures a broad bottom-up analysis of women in Al-Shabaab. A case study of Al-Shabaab found that women are victimised by Al-Shabaab, but also some women are autonomous actors of Al-Shabaab. Women are victimised in various ways including sexual and physical abuse, and through the limitations of various freedoms. However, some women do play more active roles, including acting as recruiters, fundraisers, teachers, explosive experts, suicide bombers, and spies among others. When comparing these two groups of women it is evident that even women who are victimised by Al-Shabaab do in some situations participate in the terrorist organisation's activities. However, the reason for victims' participation is purely due to their need for survival, whereas autonomous actors are motivated by diverse factors which include economic motivators, revenge, the need for power and influence, and a shared ideology and religion of Al-Shabaab. Motivation is also found to be an important tool in creating innovative counter-insurgency campaigns and strategies against Al-Shabaab. By questioning what Al-Shabaab's motivations are, it is found that not only are its motivations different from its goals and aims, but in many cases the importance of its motivations outweighs its ideological and religious importance. By exploiting the motivations of Al-Shabaab, it is possible to create doubt within its members or potential members' minds that Al-Shabaab' goals and aims are not what it projects; but rather, that it uses its ideology and religion to manipulate those that share similar beliefs to join the cause. Thus, creating cracks in Al-Shabaab, its legitimacy and its authority without the use of any weapon, creating an innovative counter-insurgency strategy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is an international security issue that has been on the rise for the past decade. This study focuses on women's roles in terrorism and women who are victimised by terrorism by using Al-Shabaab in Somalia as a case study. In order to reach a conclusion and recommendations, this study relies on the feminist theoretical approach to analyse the realities of women's lives within Al-Shabaab, from their motivations to ways in which they are victimised and their freedoms are limited by the terrorist organisation.

Terrorism is the use of politics, ideology, or religion to motivate the use of violence with the goal of influencing policies of governing regimes or even challenging acting government as well as their allies (Evan, Leverett, Ruffle, Coburn, Bourdeau, Gunaratna & Ralph 2017). Terrorism has increased since the 9/11 attacks, thus leading to a rise in governmental counter-terrorism. Unfortunately, recent governmental counter-terrorism campaigns have failed to distinguish between those that are innocent and those that are guilty of terrorism. These campaigns have also been critiqued for their disproportional response to acts of insurgent violence (Jackson, Murphy & Poynting 2011).

1.1 Introduction to research theme/ phenomenon

Within the field of security studies, there has been a skewed focus on men's participation in terrorism which has caused a limited explanation of terrorism. As an extension of this phenomenon, this skewed focus is also evident in studies on Al-Shabaab. The focus on men has diverted attention from women and their participation in, and victimisation by, Al-Shabaab. It is for this reason that it is important to shift the focus to the women in Al-Shabaab. Broadly, two categories of impact will be explored to discuss women in Al-Shabaab, namely victims and terrorists. However, women are not necessarily confined to one of these categories and often the lines between them are blurred. This furthermore emphasises the need to study and understand women's participation in Al-Shabaab and the victimisation of women by Al-Shabaab.

1

1.2 Research problem

A research problem can be defined as a few concise paragraphs in which the researcher identifies the intellectual puzzle that is to be investigated (Blaikie 2010). According to Blaikie (2010), reference can be made to some literature in the research problem and the research problem could be based on findings of prior research. It is here that the researcher has identified a gap in the literature. An examination of the existing literature revealed that there is a shortage of literature discussing both the roles that women play in terrorism and how women are victimized by terrorist organisations. To gain a more holistic understanding of how women are impacted by terrorism, with the objective of understanding and combating terrorism, it is necessary to examine both types of impacts and agency that women have in terrorism using the specific case of Al-Shabaab in Somalia. The Feminist Theoretical Approach is used in order to adequately address this gap found in the literature. The use of this theoretical approach will assist in shedding light on women's agency in terrorism.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

The goal of this study was to investigate the different roles that women can play in terrorism as well as the effect of terrorism on women using a case study of Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

The three research objectives of this study were:
- To examine how women are impacted as victims of terrorism
- To examine women's agency as autonomous actors in terrorism
- To examine the roles that women play as terrorist members of Al-Shabaab

1.4 Research questions

To attend to the research problem and in response to the contextualisation in Section 1.1, the following research questions were posed:

- What is the place of women in terrorism?
- How are women impacted by terrorism?

2

- What roles do women play as members of Al-Shabaab?

This research project aimed to answer the research questions by investigating and comparing women's place as victims and/or terrorists, with the goal of providing a nuanced understanding of women's multiple agency in terrorism.

1.5 Research methodology

A research design is a justification and statement of the technical decisions made by the researcher regarding the planning of the research project (Blaikie 2010). The research design that was selected for this study was a qualitative design. Creswell (2014) describes the qualitative design as an approach to understanding groups or individuals ascribed to a specific social or human problem. As the main focus of this research project was to understand terrorism's (social or human problem) impact on women (groups), a qualitative design was thus suitable for this research project in terms of the goal of the project and how the researcher intended to go about the research. Qualitative researchers find themselves immersed in the life of the people being studied, with a strong focus on field research/ ethnography (Blaikie 2010). This study focused on women in terrorism in terms of what their roles are and how they are impacted by terrorism. The researcher focused on a specific group of women and the design assisted in understanding the objects by assessing their lives.

Qualitative design also focuses on a group rather than participant observation (Blaikie 2010). This was helpful as the researcher assessed a specific group of women in order to answer the second part of the research question: "What are the different roles that women play in terrorism?" Another reason a qualitative design was selected as opposed to a quantitative design is that the purpose of a quantitative design is to give the researcher more control and predictability when it comes to outcomes (Blaikie 2010). In contrast, qualitative researchers endeavour to pursue research from the social actor's point of view (Blaikie 2010). This was an important aspect of this research, as it allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the subjects that were researched to infer adequate answers to the research questions.

By partaking in qualitative research, an inductive style of research is followed (Creswell 2014). The goal of this research strategy was to describe the social characteristics and nature of regularities by answering "what" questions. The strategy started with a collection of data which

3

arrived at generalisations using some sort of inductive knowledge (Blaikie 2010). The research question was a "what" question and the best way to answer the question of the role of women in terrorism was to collect data mostly from secondary sources on the different types of roles, behaviours and attitudes of women regarding terrorism to arrive at generalisations made by inductive knowledge. The data analysis techniques mostly used are descriptive analysis which describes what happened, and agnostic analysis which assesses why it happened. This is of course done in the context of terrorism in Al-Shabaab, which women are that which is observed and analysed, as mentioned above (Blaikie 2010).

1.6 Limitations of the study

Before a discussion of findings can be done, it is important to note limitations of the study. Firstly, as already discussed, women who make the autonomous choice to play an active and direct role in Al-Shabaab, have some sort of loyalty or empathy towards the terrorist organisation. Additionally, Al-Shabaab's intelligence network is extremely advanced and Al-Shabaab does a good job of assuring no information gets leaked by any spies, or anyone else in their intelligence network. What this means for this study, and more broadly the study of terrorism, is that there is potentially even more to be discovered regarding the roles that women play in terrorism and how women are impacted by terrorist organisations. One of the main limitations of this study thus is the access to information and testimonies.

1.7 The structure of the research

This chapter introduced the theme of the study; stated the research problem; explained the gaps in the literature; and provided the research questions, aim and objectives, and the research methodology. The following chapter will provide a discussion and analysis of the theoretical approach that was used for this research study, the feminist theoretical approach. In Chapter Three, Al-Shabaab is used as a case study to examine the role of women in terrorism including a background on Al-Shabaab, women as victims of Al-Shabaab, and the use of women as fighters for Al-Shabaab. This is followed by a discussion of the findings of the case study in Chapter Four. The final chapter (Five) of the study contains the researcher's conclusions and recommendations.

4

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature review

The focus of this literature review is to show that there are various sources who have already questioned the current discourse on terrorism, and the limitations of it. There are different kinds of literature reviews, and this one is a Thematic Literature Review, which focuses on the limited research of women's roles in terrorism. For a long time, studies of terrorist organisations and militant groups have tended to be male-focused (Stern 2019). This focus has been on male recruits and their participation making for a narrow treatment and understanding of agents of terrorism. One way in which ~~inaccurate~~ research and the representation of men in terrorist organisations have been portrayed is through the fact that behind women's participation in terrorist organisations motivation is always provided to explain their participation. However, the opposite is true for men, in the sense that their willingness and participation is assumed without the need for explaining their various motivations (Banks 2019). Furthermore, literature that discusses women's participation in terrorism has reduced women's agency in participation by correlating their recruitment to specific "conflict phases", and subsequently ignoring women's participation in the recruitment process (Israelsen 2020). This skewed focused has caused the concealment of an important component of Al-Shabaab, being the involvement of women in Al-Shabaab. The excessive focus on male participation in Al-Shabaab ignores the different ways in which women form part of the terrorist organisation (Stern 2019). This inadequate understanding extends beyond than just academia, as many policy-makers also fail to give due attention to women's participation in and victimisation by terrorist organisations (Bigio 2019).

There are two broad aspects of women's involvement in Al-Shabaab namely, as victims and terrorists. However, under these categories, women are responsible for and experience many different things. Al-Shabaab is not the first terrorist organisation in which women act as active terrorists or even recruiters, research has proved that women actively and voluntarily support terrorist organisations, both on an operational and ideological level (Garms & Wilkinson 2019). Furthermore, women's participation in terrorism in general has also increased (Bloom 2017). For example, Badurdeen (2018) contends that women have featured prominently in the recruitment process in Al-Shabaab. Another manner in which women actively participate in Al-Shabaab is through the generation of funds and even an involvement in operations

5

(International Crisis Group (ICG) 2019). Technological developments have also enabled women to have a more sophisticated outreach by being able to directly send target messages to radicalise and recruit other women (Bigio 2019).

The second category that should be taken into consideration when discussing women in Al-Shabaab is that of victimhood. The victimisation of women in Al-Shabaab is carried out in several different manners. Many women are recruited (by other women) against their will or through employing deceptive strategies (Badurdeen 2018). Once women are recruited, they are also trafficked. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab is known for its gender-based violence in which women are victimised (ICG 2019). Examples of GBV in Al-Shabaab include the physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and intimidation of women who are wives, daughters, sisters or even strangers of Al-Shabaab male fighters, soldiers and members. Often, the strict interpretation of Sharia Law is used to rationalise the behaviour of these Al-Shabaab members towards women and girls. Women are mostly victimised due to gendered stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are frequently manipulated and exploited by violent terrorist organisations in their propaganda to enhance recruitment; this is often overlooked in the law enforcement response (OSCE 2019).

It is important to note that there is a definite overlap between the different categories that women can be part of in Al-Shabaab (Stern 2019). It is thus clear that women play a prominent role in Al-Shabaab. The use of women in terrorist organisations is a wider trend that is followed by other groups, such as ISIS and Boko Haram (Badurdeen 2018). Furthermore, it is of importance to identify and further assess women's participation in Al-Shabaab, and consequently create a broader and deeper understanding of this terrorist organisation (ICG 2019).

There is a clear need to open up the field of terrorism, specifically with respect to women's participation in terrorism and their victimisation by terrorist organisations (and in this case in Al-Shabaab). From an academic perspective, a need exists for research into women and terrorism, with a specific focus on the nuanced relationship between the different categories of women and terrorist groups (Petrich & Donnelly 2019). This research project adds an additional dimension to the study of terrorism by focusing on the impact of terrorism on the lives of the women in the terrorist organisation's controlled areas through a feminist lens. Al-Shabaab is but one example of a terrorist organisation in which there is a clear lack of focus in

6

the participation by and victimisation of women in terrorism. The gap in literature that is to be filled by this research project is a discussion of the effects of terrorism on women from a feminist perspective, whilst simultaneously being open to the possibility that some women can and do play direct and active roles in Al-Shabaab, and more broadly in terrorism.

2.2 Theoretical or conceptual framework

Terrorism is one amongst many of the human security issues that the contemporary world faces. In the IR field there are various theoretical approaches that can be used to discuss human security issues, with the goal of finding sustainable and practical solutions to various human security issues. This research project applied the feminist theoretical approach to assess the different roles that women play in terrorism and the impact of terrorism on women.

The Feminist approach towards understanding terrorism, question various aspects of the traditional understandings of terrorism. One of these is women being underrepresented in the traditional understandings of terrorism. Feminism critiques this work on terrorism that gives "terrorist" a gendered definition that is exclusive to males (Sjoberg 2009). The feminist perspective is different from that of the traditional understandings of terrorism, in the sense that it views terrorism from the marginalised perspective, from the "bottom up". Feminism suggests alternative voices, like those from women, who can see and experience differently. The way in which we perceive terrorism will highly influence how we deal with it as according to social psychologist thinking, our mental image of a situation defines the way we respond to the situation (Isike 2012). Therefore, using the feminist perspective will provide an alternative to the traditional understanding of women and tell us more about terrorism than that we know through social investigation alone. Feminism also critiques the assumption that the state acts as the protector of the people inside it, when in actual fact that state's security is often achieved at the cost of people's security.

The feminist definition creates a broader and deepened understanding of what terrorism is, looking beyond gendered stereotypes and moving away from the state as the referent object. Both of these problems that feminism addresses regarding traditional understanding of terrorism, but also assist in fighting terrorism.

7

Feminism forms part of the critical security studies field that critiques traditional understandings of peace and security that are underpinned by a realist character. Feminism argues that international relations (IR) consist much out of discourse that is gendered and masculinist (Steans, Pettiford, Diez & El-anis 2010). The critique of the dominant view by feminists is that the international realm is masculine, which means that women have been marginalised in the study of security (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015). Feminists also critique the assigned gendered stereotypes and meanings embedded in security studies. Terrorism and violence are both highly gendered concepts that are being represented in a problematic way in the media and in scholarly work (Tervooren 2016). The traditional understanding of terrorism narrates the man's role as the protector and the women's as the victim (Sjoberg 2009). These preconceived gendered roles of men and women are problematic for multiple reasons. Firstly, this takes agency away from women. Women, according to this role, do not have the freedom/ ability to be a rational actor that decides to partake in acts of terrorism, but rather women who has either been manipulated or intimidated by a man. This leads to the second reason, a misunderstanding of women's roles or potential roles in terrorism are created. The goal of feminist and gendered approaches to security is thus to identify and resist ways in which the actions, views, and interests of men have been privileged over those of women in contemporary social life (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015).

This issue is something that feminism can solve both within the field and in the actual security of the world. This is because the latter would be the consequence of the former. If gendered stereotypes (especially about terrorism) are abandoned within Critical Security Studies field, a broader and more accurate understanding of the actors in terrorism will be created. Once women are seen as autonomous actors with agency, their actions and involvement in terrorism can be better understood. As long as women are seen through a gendered stereotyped lens as the weaker sex without agency, terrorist organisations will continue to use this deficiency in society's perspective to their advantage by using more females directly in acts of terror (Agara 2015). A feminist viewpoint is useful in order to create balance between the protection of the rights of women and identifying women's agency in the enforcement of counter-terrorism laws (Matias-Matinsen 2014).

This study answers the three-part research question by applying a feminist lens to terrorism as an international security issue. What this means is that it is assumed that gender is a central

category of analysis as well as an important variable within this study. Its focuses on how discourses in current IR are gendered (Steans *et al.* 2010). Furthermore, it draws attention to the divide between private and public discourses. Traditionally, aspects such as domestic violence and childcare were seen as "private", meaning that policy-makers would have no influence on these issues in the public domain. This study discusses themes such as these by bringing them into the public domain, due to their importance and their influence on terrorist organisations (Steans *et al.* 2010).

Furthermore, by adopting a feminist lens, this study sets out to revise the understanding of terrorism by challenging dominant assumptions about what is and ought to be marginal and central to the study of IR. This perspective brings to light the importance of understanding women's autonomy in terrorism as well as men's motivations for their participation in a terrorist organisation. By using the feminist theoretical approach, this study looks at terrorism in a new way, to uncover the realities and truths about terrorism and women's autonomy in terrorism which has thus far been concealed by traditional and realist understandings and studies of terrorism.

According to traditional definitions, terrorism is the threat of violence or use of fear to coerce, persuade, or gain public intention, motivated by political, religious, or ideological aims (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) indicates that one of the aims of terrorism is to compel a government to do or abstain from doing certain acts. Critical terrorism studies critique this state-centric understanding of terrorism with states as the referent object. Furthermore, another critique identified is how the label "terrorist" is assigned. It is often dependent on the political context and often gendered, in the sense that it is predominantly men who are assigned this label. An example of the label "terrorist" being given and taken away due to the political context is Nelson Mandela. Years after being imprisoned based on this label, he went on the become the democratically elected president of South Africa (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015).

Two gaps in the traditional understandings of terrorism have been identified by the researcher. The inaccuracy of who ought to be the referent object and who ought to be assigned the label of a "terrorist" are two critical factors that if it were to be mistaken, could have a devastating effect, not only on the critical security studies field but also on international security. Indications that this is already happening are evident in current terrorism. If this inadequate

understanding of terrorism is not identified and rectified, the way in which terrorism is dealt with will be equally inadequate.

This section critiqued common traditional understandings of terrorism. The focus on gendered stereotypes in terrorism showed the necessity for terrorism to be revised from a feminist perspective in order to broaden and deepen the understanding of terrorism and who terrorists are. This more comprehensive understanding will benefit both the field of Critical Security Studies as well as actual international security. Only when women are seen as the autonomous actors that they are, can their actions be adequately understood. This will not just mean empowerment for women, but potentially the difference between life and death.

3 AL-SHABAAB CASE STUDY

3.1 Background on Al-Shabaab

3.1.1 Conflict and instability in Somalia

The Horn of Africa (including Somalia) is one of the most underdeveloped regions in the world, filled with insecurity and conflict (World Bank 2011). Like the rest of Africa, Somalia suffered under colonialism but gained its independence in 1960 after which it had nine years of democracy. However, in 1969 there was a military coup led by Mohamed Siyad Barre who successfully overthrew the civilian government. Barre sparked a civil war between clan warlords that lasted for decades, causing the disintegration of central authority (British Broadcasting Corporation 2018). This military government remained in power through dictatorial rule for 21 years, until it was violently ousted from power by various clan rebel groups in 1991 (Elmi 2010).

Since 1991, violence, conflict, and political instability have run rampant in Somalia. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis have died through violence or starvation, and a further one million have been forced to flee the country, causing mass diaspora (Wise 2011). One of the explanations for the prevalence of social conflict in developing countries (such as in Somalia), is due to the state (more specifically state institutions) being too weak to effectively solve the competing claims of different groups (in this case different clans) or to prevent conflict (Ray & Esteban 2017). Thus, one of the reasons for conflict to occur within a state is due to weak state institutions. This is the case in Somalia. This is why in the late 1990s, neighbourhood Sharia courts were established to enforce law and order. These courts were known to carry out harsh judgements. In mid-2004, several of these different courts merged and formed the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), led by Sheikh Ahmed (Wise 2011). The ICU received support from local businesses until it was disbanded by the US-backed Ethiopia. On 24 December 2006, thousands of Ethiopian troops were sent into Somalia to destroy ICU and to take control of Mogadishu. The Ethiopian forces succeeded in taking over Mogadishu in 2007 (Ahmed, Ali, Harper, Chopra & Mydlak 2020). This caused Al-Shabaab (a young faction within ICU) to leave Mogadishu and to flee into the swampy south of Somalia. Al-Shabaab turned to guerrilla tactics against the Ethiopian military in Somalia. In 2007 and 2008, Al-Shabaab successfully prevented Ethiopian troops from advancing into the south of Somalia (Wise 2011).

11

In 2009 Ethiopian troops were replaced by thousands of Ugandan and Burundi peacekeepers under the auspices of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). AMISOM was, however, stationed mostly in Mogadishu. According to Dessu (2021), AMISOM is scheduled to exit Somalia in December 2021, after it was extended by the UNSC from the original deadline of 28 February 2021. When AMISOM started its activities in Somalia, Al-Shabaab was completely independent of the ICU. Al-Shabaab is now known as a terrorist organisation affiliated with Al-Qaeda that has had a growing influence and presence in Somalia due to its decades-long anarchy, political instability, conflict, and violence (Wise 2011). In 2006, Al-Shabaab, also known as "the youth", waged a war against Somalia and its neighbours in order to overthrow the Somali government and establish an extreme version of the Islamic law, known as Sharia law (Jones 2016).

3.1.2 Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab is an extremist franchise of Al-Qaeda that practices the "takfiri" ethos, which legitimises the killing of other Muslims if they do not follow the specific interpretation of Sharia law (Bryden 2014). In Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, the group implement "hudood", which is the physical punishment for the violation of Sharia law. Those who violate Sharia law can face public beatings, whippings, or even execution. Furthermore, in these areas it is prohibited to exercise various forms of human rights including the freedom of expression, speech, assembly, movement, and religion (United Kingdom Home Office (UKHO) 2020). Some of the primary aims of Al-Shabaab include the removal of foreign forces and influences in Somalia, and in doing so regaining territory taken by AMISOM (UKHO 2020).

3.1.3 Targets of Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab has various targets including foreign forces (including Ethiopian troops back by the US government) and AMISOM (UKHO 2020). Al-Shabaab's targets were mainly persons or institutions that were perceived to represent the international community or the Somali government. This includes clan leaders supporting the government, election monitors, parliamentary officials, government officials, members of security forces, and spies for the government (UKHO 2020). Another group of persons or institutions targeted by Al-Shabaab

12

based on the effect of their activities on Al-Shabaab and its influence in Somalia include journalists, employees of international organisations or non-governmental organisations, and humanitarian aid workers (UKHO 2020).

As will be discussed in the next section, Al-Shabaab underwent a transformation in 2008 which caused it to become more international and broaden its list of targets based on its new aim to fight for the formation of a global jihadi as an affiliate of Al-Qaeda (Wise 2011). This phase of Al-Shabaab marked the start of its global war against the West, led by Al-Qaeda. What this meant in terms of targets for Al-Shabaab is that any person, institution, or country that was perceived to be in support of the West, or even just a reflection of the West, were at risk of being targeted by Al-Shabaab under their new aim. Its list of potential targets thus grew with its purpose in its war against the West, as did its locations and type of attacks.

3.1.4 Al-Shabaab recruitment process

Al-Shabaab gains members/fighters through various recruitment methods. First, on a voluntary basis, the terrorist organisation makes use of family members, peers, religious leaders, and businessmen seeking protection to encourage recruitment to Al-Shabaab. Potential members are also lured with material objects such as guns and money to join Al-Shabaab (Hassan 2012). Potential recruits are enticed by economic, religious, and ideological factors. Economic factors such as money and gifts are especially alluring as these potential members do not have many opportunities to gain money due to the lack of economic stability and development in Somalia (Stern 2019).

Unfortunately, much of Al-Shabaab's recruitment is done on an involuntary basis. The first form of forced recruitment is through kidnapping (UKHO 2020). This method is often used when acquiring children to join the group. Al-Shabaab makes use of many child soldiers as a large number of the group are children or even young adolescents, staying true to the group's name Al-Shabaab, translated as "the youth". The second form of forced recruitment takes place through forced marriages (Stern 2019). This is one of the primary ways in which women are recruited into Al-Shabaab. The method of recruitment varies depending on whether the areas are under Al-Shabaab's control (UKHO 2020).

13

3.1.5 The transition of Al-Shabaab

Since its establishment, Al-Shabaab has gone through a transition, effecting change in not only its aims and affiliates, but also its choice of recruits, strategy, and implementation of attacks. Al-Shabaab was originally only active in the southern central parts of Somalia after the ICU was destroyed by Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu during its invasion in 2006 (Ahmed *et al.* 2020). For two years Al-Shabaab controlled various areas and carried out attacks independently. In 2008 however, a transition took place in Al-Shabaab. This big change happened due to Al-Shabaab aligning its interests with Al-Qaeda. The alignment of these terrorist organisations was mutually beneficial for Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab gained access to increased legitimacy and resources, while Al-Qaeda benefited from gaining a level of influence over Al-Shabaab (Wise 2011). What this meant for Al-Shabaab was the change in its ideological rhetoric by portraying Somalia as a front in a "global war" against the West and its affiliated supporters. Additionally, Al-Shabaab shifted its partnership strategy to reflect Al-Qaeda's movement more, as a sign of support to Al-Qaeda and its aims (Wise 2011). At this time, one of Al-Shabaab's activities included pursuing decentralised insurgency which made the provision for the centralisation of Hanbali-based adjudication (Ahmed *et al.* 2020).

3.1.6 Conclusion

Somalia is part of the Horn of Africa, which is underdeveloped and has experienced conflict, violence, and instability (both politically and economically). This makes Somalia an ideal breeding ground for extremist groups, such as Al-Shabaab, to thrive. This section has only scratched the surface regarding understanding Al-Shabaab, how it operates, its goals, and motivation. Understanding the region that Al-Shabaab finds itself in is however critical to understanding this terrorist organisation as many different factors of it reflect its region and its history. Al-Shabaab is a terrorist organisation that rose out of the ashes of a collapsing country. It is a group of young militants that broke free from the ICU to take over various territories and spread its ideology. Al-Shabaab has more resources now than ever before to reach its goals due to its transition leading to its affiliation with Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab makes use of the perpetual instability and conflict within Somalia and neighbouring regions to further its own cause. It is important to note that Al-Shabaab does create a reality of violence where many women are forced into participating in Al-Shabaab's activities. However, this does not remove the autonomy from women who play an active role out of their own choice. Just because Al-

14

Shabaab creates the situation under which violent extremism is likely to occur, does not mean that all autonomous choice is removed from the situation. This is an important factor that has to be taken into consideration of any analysis of Al-Shabaab.

3.2 Women as victims of Al-Shabaab

Women are traditionally exclusively seen as victims of violence, abuse, and exploitation. The following section will discuss this view as it applies to the women in Al-Shabaab controlled areas. However, it is important to note that this is only one side of the story, and it cannot be assumed that all women and girls are free of autonomy and choice based on what is found in the following discussion. Rather, this discussion serves as context into what Al-Shabaab is capable of. This discussion thus speaks to the character of Al-Shabaab and its male fighters, as opposed to that of not only their victims, but their wives, daughters, and any other female in Somalia.

3.2.1 Economic instability and violence in Somalia

As mentioned in the previous section, Somalia has faced many hardships over the past couple of decades in terms of political and economic stability, as well as armed conflict and violence. Circumstances like these perpetuate various issues, among these are gender-based violence (GBV) and the continued oppression of women in Somalia. One of the reasons that women and children are suffering in Somalia is that they belong to the group of individuals that suffer the most during armed conflicts. Women are especially often victims of both physical and sexual abuse (Amusan, Adeyeye & Ovewole 2019). This abuse is however not just perpetrated by Al-Shabaab fighters and members, but in Somalia security forces are also amongst the perpetrators. The importance of properly placing the victimisation of women by Al-Shabaab into context is based on the fact that GBV against women is classified as a form of discrimination against women, which is a violation of women's human rights. States have the responsibility of both the punishment and the prevention of GBV (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2019).

3.2.2 The limitations of various liberties for women by Al-Shabaab

15

From the perspective of the feminist theoretical approach, it is important to gain an understanding of Al-Shabaab by assessing the realities of life in Somalia (more specifically in Al-Shabaab controlled areas) through the lens of the women in the areas. This analysis on the individual level will ensure a broader and deeper understanding of how women's autonomy in terrorism, specifically Al-Shabaab, is achieved. In this section, women's victimisation is discussed using information derived from various interviews with women who either lived in Al-Shabaab controlled areas, were wives of Al-Shabaab fighters, or women who considered themselves to be members or fighters of Al-Shabaab. This ensures that the victimisation of women by Al-Shabaab is discussed through the lens of women that experienced it.

One of the ways in which women are victimised by Al-Shabaab is through the loss of various liberties. It starts with girls' low level of education (UKHO 2018). After a certain age, girls are not allowed to attend school at which time their normal school lessons are replaced by weekly religious classes/indoctrination sessions known as "madrasas", which was run by officials from Al-Shabaab's religious outreach department, or "da'wa". During these classes, women would teach the classes that focused on religious study, ethics, and outreach. One of the main goals of these religious classes is to ensure that women continue Al-Shabaab's indoctrination in their homes, raising their children with a commitment to Al-Shabaab. The classes would take place in an empty space outdoors, between afternoon and sunset prayers (Stern 2020). There are many women who enjoyed these classes and considered themselves better than those women who would try to stay away from the classes. Women had very little choice in attending these classes. Al-Shabaab fighters would arrive at their homes on the day of these classes and ensure that they attended. This highlights another loss of liberty, the liberty of free movement (Stern 2020).

At these religious classes, and everywhere outside of women's homes, Al-Shabaab controls how these women dress. The move to a more conservative dress-code started in the 1990s due to Salafi influence and as a way for women to protect themselves against sexual violence brought about by the war and conflict during that time (Stern 2020). In Al-Shabaab controlled areas, it is required that women wear full body cover, including a full-face veil, socks, and gloves (Stern 2019). Women in Al-Shabaab controlled areas are even prohibited from wearing bras as it is seen to be "deceptive" and immodest. Al-Shabaab practices "hudood", which is the physical punishment for any violation of the Sharia law, including disobeying the dress-code

(UKHO 2018). Women who step outside the house wearing the incorrect attire would be punished. Punishments include public beatings, torture, and even incarceration (Stern 2020).

Women in Baido (city in Somalia) explained that as soon as Al-Shabaab took control of their area, its affiliates arrived with a shipment of the clothing that women were required to wear. This implies that there is also an economic gain for Al-Shabaab and its affiliates regarding the loss of choice of clothing for these women. Furthermore, this strict dress-code also infringed on these women's right to freedom of movement, as many women do not have enough money to buy all the clothing that is required and would thus share one full outfit between multiple women, meaning that women would have to wait for their turn to wear the outfit and leave the house. There are cases where one of these women would be arrested while wearing the full outfit, which means that the other women would be forced to stay at home until this woman returns, or they find another way to obtain the complete outfit (Stern 2019).

Once women in Al-Shabaab are clothed correctly, they are allowed to leave their homes, but what they are allowed to do outside of their homes is also limited. Firstly, women are excluded from both the private and the public sector of the economy. It is a formal rule of Al-Shabaab that women are not allowed to work and many women who get caught working are beaten or incarcerated (Stern 2020). Another reason for women being prohibited from working is due to cultural norms and girls' low educational level (UKHO 2018). Women's participation in economic activities is seen as anti-Islamic despite it being a necessity for many women to work due to the inability of their husbands to support them and their children (Stern 2020). Many women work secretly for Al-Shabaab fighters, washing their clothes, cooking for them, or cleaning their homes to make a living. There are some women who do own or manage businesses; however, they are discriminated against. Many of these women are extorted through bribes and taxation to merely be permitted to run their business (UKHO 2020). This is another way in which women's victimisation in Al-Shabaab leads to economic benefit for Al-Shabaab.

Secondly, women's political participation is also restricted by Al-Shabaab. In 2016, the Council of Ministers of Somalia approved a nation gender policy plan which would increase women's influence and participation, empower women economically, and increase the level of education of girls. During June and July of that year, the only woman in the cabinet (the Minister of Women, Human Rights and Social Development) received death threats from

17

Islamic groups including Al-Shabaab (UKHO 2018). The message that was sent is that women have no role to play in politics. Al-Shabaab has imposed severe limitations on women's access to the public sphere (ICG 2019).

A third way in which women's actions outside their homes are controlled and limited by Al-Shabaab is that they are not allowed to be seen fraternising with men outside their home. Furthermore, women have to be escorted by a male guardian, also known as a "mahram" when they leave their homes (Stern 2020). This is a common practice under Sharia law; however, according to Al-Shabaab's conservative interpretation of Sharia law, any women not following these rules once again face various punishments including public beatings, torture, and incarceration. It is clear that one of the fundamental ways in which women are victimised by Al-Shabaab is through the restriction of various liberties causing women to perpetually have a worse place in society, the economy, and politics in Al-Shabaab.

3.2.3 Forced marriages

It is firstly important to note that due to the political instability and conflict in Somalia, many women are displaced from marginalised groups and are forced to live in Al-Shabaab controlled areas (UKHO 2018). Al-Shabaab has brought hardship, violence, and suffering to many women in Somalia (ICG 2019). Life for women under Al-Shabaab rule leads to various limitations of freedoms. Life for women is hard and, in most situations, it is difficult for women to even gain a sustained income.

One of the major tools used by Al-Shabaab to control women and limit their freedoms is forced marriages. This also a source of much of the sexual and physical abuse of women and girls. For Al-Shabaab, marriage is not only central to its project, it forms the foundation of the Islamic way of life. Al-Shabaab uses forced marriage as a way to improve clan relations by advancing various social-political interests. Furthermore, forced marriages are also central to the recruitment process. As a way to lure foreign fighters to join Al-Shabaab, fighters are promised wives on their arrival. Wives are however also promised to local fighters (Stern 2020). Many fighters usually have two to three wives from different clans. Often, women experience neglect and sexual abuse in these forced marriages. Women who bear children for the members of Al-Shabaab are granted more freedoms. However, many women are raped in order to conceive children with the hope of creating soldiers who are the future and will continue to fight for Al-

18

Shabaab's cause (UKHO 2020). Different women have different experiences with forced marriages to Al-Shabaab fighters depending on various factors, such as ideological support for Al-Shabaab, where they are located, their circumstances, and who their husbands are (Stern 2020).

Most women suffer in forced marriages to Al-Shabaab fighters and forced marriages should in themselves be perceived as a form of sexual assault. Al-Shabaab is guilty of perpetrating sexual abuse and violence (UKHO 2018). In Al-Shabaab, women are often used as sex slaves and more generally in Africa, the most popular form of attacks against women by terrorist organisations are rape, sexual slavery, and sexual assault (Amusan *et al.* 2019). Al-Shabaab attacks women in this way for tactical and strategic reasons, as well as due to their ideological aims. Sexual and gender-based violence against women is a form of discrimination against women, as well as a violation of their human rights. Al-Shabaab's treatment of women reflects the inequality that women face in Somalia (UNODC 2019).

It is important to note that sexual and gender-based violence are not exclusively committed by Al-Shabaab fighters in Somalia. There have been reports of fighters from the opposing side (thus fighters from the government, Kenya and even AMISOM) having committed the same atrocities against women. It can however be debated that Al-Shabaab is responsible for the perpetuation of conflict and instability in Somalia, necessitating different troops and fighters to be present, thus creating opportunities for sexual and gender-based violence to occur. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab's limitation of the rights and freedoms of women make it difficult for women to be able to protect themselves and Al-Shabaab is responsible for women being classified as property, or at least as less valuable than men.

Unfortunately, there are even more ways in which women are abused, including through Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This is a practice that is universal throughout Somalia (UKHO 2018). There is a strong societal requirement for all women and girls to undergo FGM. FGM is not only painful and invasive, but many women suffer negative after-effects due to the conditions under which it is performed. Many women undergo FGM against their will and without any form of anaesthesia or painkillers. Furthermore, many women experience infections, disabilities, or even death after undergoing the procedure (UKHO 2018).

3.2.4 Conclusion

Women face many hardships and atrocities under the rule of Al-Shabaab. Because of perpetual inequality, women are refused access to the economy (both the private and public sector) and politics, causing severe difficulties in making a living or even being able to do anything to change their circumstances given the totalitarian outlook of Al-Shabaab. Every single part of women's lives is controlled by Al-Shabaab, including the way they dress, who they marry, and whether they are to bear children. Unfortunately, the control also translates into violence and abuse, especially sexual violence. Most women experience sexual violence and even rape by either Al-Shabaab fighters or troops from the opposing side.

There is no dispute that women suffer under the control of Al-Shabaab. What is not as clear, however, is what Al-Shabaab is to gain from treating women this way and whether it is all to do with religion and ideology. Is Al-Shabaab's treatment of women purely based on its conservative interpretation of the Sharia law, or does Al-Shabaab stand to gain economically in terms of power and influence over a large part of the population? Could Al-Shabaab be disguising its real aims and goals under the umbrella of fighting for global jihad? Or could this be an effective way to manipulate Muslims to join the group and explain the use of power and influence over these girls and women? Not to mention the justification of the money that is being made through its control over women.

However, not all women share the same experiences under Al-Shabaab's control. Due to what Al-Shabaab witnessed during the wars of ISIS in Afghanistan and Iraq, the organisation realised that there are other uses for women than being a punching bag or another source to extort money from. Since Al-Shabaab's transformation, women have been playing an increasingly active role in Somalia. This is the main point of discussion in the next section.

3.3 Women as autonomous actors in Al-Shabaab

The use of women by terrorist organisations are seen to be for two reasons: tactical and strategic. On a tactical level, it allows the terrorist organisation to increase the number of operatives. On a strategic level, the use of women in attacks causes increased media attention and produces a psychological effect (Turner 2016). This challenges traditional gendered stereotypes within terrorism (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015). The utility of women in attacks is due to how they are perceived. Women are seen as less threatening and demonstrate less suspicious behaviour and covert criminal tendencies. It is also easier for women to conceal bombs or other weapons. This is a reflection of how terrorism is a highly gendered concept that is represented in a problematic way in media, which is why it is important to assess it through a feminist lens (Tervooren 2016). Thus, the rationale behind using women in attacks is primarily to beat security networks to carry out attacks with ease and success (Nnam, Arura & Otu 2018). Therefore, women are less likely to be viewed as suspicious or searched by security authorities, which makes the success of an attack more likely. Women have had so much success with concealing weapons and bombs under their clothing that many men have worn the traditional female dresses to conceal bombs, many of whom have carried out successful attacks.

3.3.1 Different roles that women play in Al-Shabaab

Women have played increasingly active roles in terrorist organisations, including in Al-Shabaab. One of the more active roles that women play is that of recruiters. As previously mentioned, women are required to attend daily lectures which are taught by other women within the community. This is one of the primary places where recruitment takes place. At the lectures, women are persuaded to become members of Al-Shabaab, albeit through indoctrination and other methods of persuasion (Stern 2019). According to West (2019), recruitment is one of the indirect yet key roles that women play which could be perceived as more critical for Al-Shabaab's survival than more direct and combatant roles.

21

Another way in which the recruitment process takes place is through the establishment of a "Wali" or shadow governor and a committee that takes responsibility for recruiting both the member (in this case women) as well as resources (financial and other). This committee is often formed out of wives of high-ranking officers that go to women's homes to educate them about Al-Shabaab and to ensure that they attend the lectures. These women encourage others to marry fighters and to support Al-Shabaab's cause and it is also reported that the women from these committees attempt to keep troubled marriages within Al-Shabaab stable by acting as marriage counsellors. This serves to keep these women's social networks strong (ICG 2019).

The importance of recruiting women for Al-Shabaab lies in that it gains access to an additional 50% of the Somali population, meaning that the potential size, influence, and resources of Al-Shabaab doubles (Bloom 2017). One of the reasons for the success of Al-Shabaab's recruitment process is due to the economic, political, and social situation in Somalia and its neighbouring countries. This is specifically true for Al-Shabaab's recruitment of young Kenyans (Al Jazeera 2018).

Women who play a more active role in Al-Shabaab are not only responsible for the recruitment of other women and the success of many marriages (forced or voluntary), but play a critical part in the collection of funds that ensure that Al-Shabaab is financed enough to keep on fighting for its cause and spreading its message globally. Women are responsible for convincing others to donate money, goods, and jewellery to finance Al-Shabaab and its activities (Stern 2019). This is one of the ways in which women help sustain Al-Shabaab and make it possible for the terrorist organisation to carry out attacks and spread its propaganda (ICG 2019). The first way through which fundraising for Al-Shabaab takes place is through various forms of taxation and extortion of small businesses. As was mentioned, due to the limitations that Al-Shabaab imposes driven by its conservative interpretation of the Sharia law, women who own and manage businesses are frowned upon. Women who do so however are forced to pay bribes and various taxes in order to stay in business. Much of this extortion is carried out by women playing an active role for Al-Shabaab as a means to raise funds for the terrorist organisation. In some cases, Al-Shabaab exploits female-owned business even further by forcing them to smuggle and launder money for them (ICG 2019).

Charity is another way in which funds are raised for Al-Shabaab. Women are not responsible for the collection of "zakat", but they are responsible for creating extensive social networks that raise community donations for special fundraising initiatives. In some cases, these community donation campaigns are continuous, offering to fund Al-Shabaab all-year-round. However, in other cases, it is more short term and situational, occurring thus due to either significant occasions such as Ramadan, or due to natural disasters and socio-economic shocks, such as floods and droughts (ICG 2019). Even though the role of fundraising is indirect, it has a direct effect on Al-Shabaab being able to carry out attacks, recruit fighters, and spread its propaganda. This reflects on the importance of women and the direct influence their participation in Al-Shabaab has.

Al-Shabaab has a highly sophisticated intelligence network called "Amniyat", with the main purpose of carrying out attacks and monitoring threats against the terrorist organisation (ICG 2019). Women play an indirect role in Al-Shabaab through intelligence and spying but this role is of importance in Al-Shabaab's intelligence network. Eight-five per cent of intelligence gathering for Al-Shabaab is done by women, demonstrating the magnitude of the importance of women in such a critical part of Al-Shabaab's existence (Stern 2019). Al-Shabaab has Kenyan and Tanzanian women working for the terrorist organisation.

In Nairobi, Kenya, Al-Shabaab utilises sex workers by buying information from them. This information is collected by the sex workers from their clients. Their clients are high-ranking members of society with influence and access to important information, including police officers, politicians, and businessmen (Stern 2019). Women who are based in crucial locations where attacks or counter-attacks happen provide Al-Shabaab with real-time information on military checkpoints, as well as information on military movement (Stern 2019). Women are also responsible for gathering intelligence on government facilities. One of the methods used to gain access to government officials or even foreign troops (such as African Union soldiers), is through the sale of food. The troops' various counter-insurgency campaigns often bring them in contact with these women who operate undercover (ICG 2019).

Additionally, women gather intelligence on persons of interest for Amniyat. These persons of interest are determined by identifying targets for extortion outside Al-Shabaab's direct control. Reportedly, there are many of these women who gather intelligence for Al-Shabaab who assist or even facilitate assassinations of these persons of interest. There are currently six women

23

serving jail terms for this specific crime (ICG 2019). Women are especially valuable as spies and intelligence gatherers, due to the fact that they raise less suspicion than men. It is thus easier for women to go unnoticed and they are generally not expected to be taking on roles such as spies; thus, individuals will have their guard down when women are around, as opposed to men (Stern 2019). Intelligence gathering and spying are important because it is central to Al-Shabaab's success of its operations (ICG 2019). Operations are only as effective and successful as the intelligence used to carry out the attack. Additionally, Al-Shabaab's intelligence and counter-intelligence campaigns need to be proactive in an operational theatre. The way in which Al-Shabaab's intelligence and counter-intelligence campaigns would be considered proactive, is by detecting bates and spies in an effective manner (Amusan *et al.* 2019).

Up to now indirect roles of women in Al-Shabaab were discussed. It is important to note that although these roles are central to the existence and function of Al-Shabaab, women play more direct roles in the terrorist organisation, meaning that female representation of Al-Shabaab can virtually be found on all its levels. This verifies the importance of female participation, both directly and indirectly, in Al-Shabaab.

3.3.2 Suicide bombers

Women are responsible for various attacks both inside and outside of Somalia. Suicide bombers are one of the more active and direct roles that women can and do play within Al-Shabaab. In April 2012, ten lives were lost through two female Al-Shabaab suicide bombers. These suicide bombers were not the first and will not be the last women to play an active and direct role in Al-Shabaab (Stern 2019). One of these women is a British national named Samantha Lewthwaite, also known as the "white widow". She was responsible for the Westgate attack and the death of 60 people. She is also believed to be involved in an attack in a bar in Mombasa that took place during the Euro 2012 soccer championship. It is speculated that she is under Al-Shabaab protection in Yemen. She is currently wanted in Kenya for possession of explosives and conspiracy to commit a crime (West 2019).

The emergence of female suicide bombers such as Samantha Lewthwaite is believed to have inspired women to take on a more direct active role in Al-Shabaab. Many women in Somalia are now trained as suicide bombers and are explosives experts. There has been an increasing

24

trend of Al-Shabaab using women and girls as suicide bombers (Amusan *et al.* 2019). According to the Qur'an, men and women have the same obligation when it comes to their responsibility for holy war, and they will be rewarded in the same way for taking up their responsibility (Bloom 2017). This means that in terms of their religion, women would be allowed to participate in various roles, including in more active and direct roles. Furthermore, within Al-Shabaab women are given the tools, knowledge, and space to not only become explosive experts (which is a role that many women play in Al-Shabaab) but also in some cases to carry out attacks such as suicide bombings for Al-Shabaab.

3.3.3 Fighters

Women are more than just victims in Al-Shabaab; many women play active direct roles in Al-Shabaab, including more combatant roles such as fighters for Al-Shabaab (West 2019). Even though this is not the norm, there have been reports of women being seen holding guns and fighting for Al-Shabaab. Additionally, women have been known to carry out operations for Al-Shabaab in Somalia (ICG 2019). In contrast to many conservative interpretations of Sharia law, women have been increasingly used for more combatant roles by Al-Shabaab (Amusan *et al.* 2019).

In both the cases of suicide bombers and fighters, it is important to understand why Al-Shabaab would allow some women to fulfil these roles and what Al-Shabaab has to gain from it. Firstly, as stated in Section 3.3, women do cause less suspicion (Bloom 2017). This is especially true at checkpoints where men will not invasively search women. This is due to there being respect for all women in Al-Shabaab and how searching women at checkpoints is viewed as undignified. Women are thus ideal for stealth operations and even to conceal and smuggle weapons or anything else that Al-Shabaab needs. Secondly, there is a greater psychological effect if women are involved in attacks, which leads to greater media attention. This kills two birds with one stone for Al-Shabaab. Firstly, a successful attack gets carried out. Secondly, due to the attack being carried out by a woman there is greater media attention on the attack, meaning that there is greater media attention for Al-Shabaab's cause (Bloom 2017). Media attention (especially from Western media) is one of the reasons Al-Shabaab carries out attacks in the first place.

3.3.4 Voluntary marriages

25

One of the ways in which women practice autonomy regarding both membership and participation in Al-Shabaab is through marriage, specifically marriage to an Al-Shabaab fighter or member. Women marry Al-Shabaab fighters through voluntary, arranged, and forced marriages (Stern 2020). However, forced marriages have already been discussed in Section 3.2.3; thus, the focus of this section is on the former. Many women join Al-Shabaab because their husbands are part of the group. Stern (2019) argues that many wives thus decide to be involved by choice.

This autonomous choice to join their husbands in Al-Shabaab is not exclusive to Somalians. Men from neighbouring countries, such as Kenya, decide to move to Somalia after being recruited by Al-Shabaab, often leaving their wives and families behind. Many women decide to join their husbands by not only moving to Somalia but by joining Al-Shabaab (West 2019). In this case, women make the autonomous choice to join their husbands for economic reasons. Even for women in Somalia, it is believed that marrying an Al-Shabaab fighter would secure physical protection and food (Al Jazeera 2018). Many would view any marriage to an Al-Shabaab fighter as forced, thus removing autonomy from the women, when in fact arranged marriages are not only common in Somalia but are the norm (Stern 2020). This means that the arranged marriages would in the context of Somali cultural norms and not seen as an act which victimises woman, even though the opinion on arranged marriages are different in Western societies.

There are various factors at play regarding women who either voluntarily marry Al-Shabaab fighters or marry them through an arranged marriage. An important factor that needs to be considered when women decide to marry an Al-Shabaab fighter is protection. Women who marry Al-Shabaab fighters receive protection for their family, including financial stability for the family (Stern 2020). It is also believed that marrying Al-Shabaab fighters or becoming a female combatant could give women physical protection from captivity, physical abuse, and sexual abuse (Amusan *et al.* 2019). Additionally, there are women who voluntarily marry an Al-Shabaab fighter due to the conception that Al-Shabaab wives lives a privileged life, at least compared to other women in Somalia (Stern 2020).

Another benefit that Al-Shabaab wives have is Al-Shabaab's judicial system. Al-Shabaab upholds Islamic family law, which in some cases protects women's rights in a way that the

Somalia judicial system does not. This is specifically the case regarding divorce and inheritance (ICG 2019). Wives and former wives do not often speak out about their experiences in Al-Shabaab, reflecting some sort of loyalty to the group (ICG 2019). Ideology and religion also play an important role in marriage in Al-Shabaab. Many women or their families approve of marriage to an Al-Shabaab fighter due to support for Al-Shabaab's ideology and goals (Stern 2020). These women come from conservative families and themselves have conservative views as well as strict adherence to Islamic principles. It is important to note that before Al-Shabaab fighters marry women, they first make sure that the woman is in fact a practising Muslim. The men will even tutor the women to be able to read the Qur'an (if she cannot already) before they marry, and the man then continues to be the woman's religious guide once they are married (Stern 2020).

A lot of women experience privileged and safe lives when they are married to Al-Shabaab fighters. Women in Al-Shabaab or those married to members of Al-Shabaab have some liberties that are not available to other women. Al-Shabaab women are allowed to divorce their husbands if they are not able to provide for their family (ICG 2019). Consequently, divorce rates are high in Al-Shabaab (ICG 2019). This demonstrates that even in ending marriages do women have a certain degree of control over their situation and that women do benefit from some form of protection.

However, women face certain pressures once they have married into Al-Shabaab. One of these pressures is that if they were to become a widow, it is expected of them to re-marry an Al-Shabaab fighter. This is done for two reasons. Firstly, to prevent women from sharing any intelligence that they have gathered for Al-Shabaab and any other sensitive information that can hurt Al-Shabaab to the government. Secondly, in Al-Shabaab, it is custom that it is the collective responsibility of the fighters to take care of families in the community of fallen fighters (ICG 2019). This means that Al-Shabaab fighters are likely to marry the widow of one of their fallen fighters to carry on their duty by providing for the widow and her family.

Wives play another vital role in Al-Shabaab activities through being married to an Al-Shabaab fighter. Specifically, they are responsible for psychologically preparing their husbands for suicide operations. Wives are also encouraged to fall pregnant in the final days of their husband's life to ensure that a soldier will be left behind for the cause (ICG 2019).

27

3.3.5 Motivation for participation

The discussion up to this point has made it clear that women have different active roles in Al-Shabaab and in many cases have autonomy and agency regarding their participation in Al-Shabaab. To understand their autonomy and the effects of their actions, it is important to discuss their motivations for their active participation in Al-Shabaab.

One of the primary reasons for women to become members or fighters or wives in Al-Shabaab is due to economic motivation (Stern 2019). The dire economic situations in Somalia and neighbouring countries such as Kenya cause many people, including women, to desperately find any means to provide them with financial stability. Kenyan women join Al-Shabaab due to the financial benefits it will bring them; even just association with the terrorist organisation will bring considerable financial benefit (Badurdeen 2021). For this reason, to date, there have been thousands of young Kenyans that have joined Al-Shabaab (Al Jazeera 2018). There are reports of women from Kenya being lured into joining Al-Shabaab through promises of jobs, thus financial stability (Stern 2019). Many of these women claim to have been misled and that the realities of joining Al-Shabaab were different than what was promised to them.

However, by joining a terrorist organisation due to the promise of work, women practice autonomous choice and should be labelled as terrorists, not victims. Furthermore, there are cases where these women that have been misled by the promises of jobs end up joining Al-Shabaab voluntarily as they adopt the ideology owing to the indoctrination in Al-Shabaab camps (Badurdeen 2021). Marrying Al-Shabaab fighters will equate to financial stability for these women's families, which is valuable for anyone in the region due to the economic situation in Somalia and neighbouring countries (ICG 2019).

The second motivation for women to join Al-Shabaab is to gain political power and influence (Stern 2019). Women in governmental positions are not supported by Al-Shabaab. This is reflected in the multiple death threats that the Minister of Women, Human Rights and Social Development received as the only woman in the cabinet, fighting for the equality and empowerment of women (UKHO 2018). The treatment of women is however different when they are part of Al-Shabaab. "Da'wa", the religious outreach department of Al-Shabaab, have lectures that all women have to attend. It is women that are given the responsibility to teach women and are subsequently given power and influence over other women (Stern 2020).

28

Additionally, it is known that in Somalia there is a certain degree of patriarchal and clan-based structures. According to the hierarchy, women would traditionally fall below men. However, women would raise above other women in the hierarchy depending on who their husbands are and the roles that they play in Al-Shabaab (Stern 2019). This could thus be a motivating factor for women to join Al-Shabaab by marrying an Al-Shabaab fighter.

The third motivation is linked to the second motivation, which is seeking revenge (Stern 2019). The reason why it is linked to the second is that political power and influence are essential in order to seek revenge. Due to the violence and instability in Somalia, Kenyan authorities have stepped in to fight against Al-Shabaab and any other violent actor. Unfortunately, some of these Kenyan authorities are guilty of the ill-treatment of many Somalis and Kenyans. The Kenyan authorities are reportedly brutal when dealing with suspects and extrajudicial killings have been blamed on the Kenyan police (West 2019). Many women consequently join Al-Shabaab to seek revenge on the Kenyan troops, police, and authorities who are responsible for the ill-treatment of their families or community. Revenge is not only sought after the ill-treatment or loss of loved ones but also due to the loss of property (ICG 2019). Revenge-motivated female participation in terrorist activities is a well-documented phenomenon globally. This concept is easier understood when women are viewed to have agency and autonomy, as seen through feminism (Matias-Martinsen 2014).

The final motivation for joining Al-Shabaab is to seek empowerment and liberation by living in a region where there is a belief system similar to their own (West 2019). It is found that Kenyan women participate willingly based on the fact that the extremist ideology resonates with their culture which is founded on the Islamic religion (Badurdeen 2021). This thus reflects a degree of sympathy towards the movement and its goals (ICG 2019). Many practising Muslims in Kenya find themselves in a country that is labelled as a Christian state, which is why many Muslim women would be inclined to join Al-Shabaab as a way of finding a place where they do not feel marginalised and can practice their religion freely (Badurdeen 2021). This is further evident in the fact that many women who join Al-Shabaab do so by their own occur. Thus, wives join Al-Shabaab without consulting their husbands about their decision, without notifying their husband once they have joined and without their husband joining the terrorist organisation. Many women decide to marry Al-Shabaab fighters, specifically for ideological and religious reasons (Stern 2020). This motivation can also be linked to various

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socio-psychological reasons for people joining terrorist organisations, including the desire for ultimate meaning, excitement, and glory (ICG 2019).

It is worth noting that the autonomy of women's choice to participate in Al-Shabaab's activities is not diminished by the fact that for many of them it is a necessary choice to improve the quality of their lives or give them the opportunity to gain financially, or even in the form of physical protection. In order to better understand this concept, it is useful to assess the difference between a "refugee" and an "immigrant". People fleeing their country to save themselves from persecution are labelled as "refugees", receiving various rights and forms of protection from the hosting country, who in return have the responsibility to protect them if they were to have a legitimate reason for fleeing their country (Edwards 2016). Those who try to move to a country for better economic opportunities, more security, social welfare, or any other form of gain which does not grant them protection from persecution or death would be labelled as an "immigrant".

In the same vein, this paper distinguishes victims and active terrorist/members/participants by their motivation. If women's motivation is purely a case of life or death, it is up for debate whether the women is a victim or an active participant practising her autonomy. However, if a woman gains from her participation in Al-Shabaab, there is proof of her autonomy; thus her participation in the terrorist organisation should be understood accordingly. This reflects the importance of understanding women's motivation for their participation in Al-Shabaab.

Furthermore, understanding women's motivation reflects the gendered stereotypes within the field of terrorism as understood in the feminist theoretical approach. Motivation is never considered when discussing male participation in terrorism (Banks 2019). However, in order to prove the fact that women are agents of terror, it is necessary to understand their motivation, to ensure that they are not in fact just victims. This does not mean that women's motivation to join Al-Shabaab should not be understood, but rather the men's motivation should also be brought into question in order form a deeper understanding of the terrorist organisations, their aims, motivations, and members. Furthermore, the best way to defeat one's enemy is to know one's enemy, and Al-Shabaab (or any terrorist organisation) cannot be fully understood if men's participation in the terrorist organisation and its actions are assumed and not questioned. It is necessary to understand what leads to any member joining Al-Shabaab and playing an active or passive role in it, to build sustainable and effective counter-insurgency strategies.

There are multiple implications of women being allowed to be used in more active roles in Al-Shabaab. According to Al-Shabaab's conservative interpretation of Sharia law, women cannot even be allowed to show their ankles, work, or exercise the freedom of speech (Stern 2019). Why would Al-Shabaab use women in active roles if their foundation and main motivation are to fight for a global jihad as part of Islam and based on the Sharia law? Is it possible that Al-Shabaab has other motivations for its actions and that the use of women in more active and direct roles (which seems to be contradictory to Al-Shabaab's conservative interpretation of the Sharia law) is an indication that Al-Shabaab's ulterior motives are overshadowing that which the terrorist organisation has built its core foundation on? Other motivations for Al-Shabaab's actions which could be overshadowing its war for a global jihad include economic gain, political gain, territorial gain, power and influence.

3.3.6 Conclusion

This discussion has demonstrated that women can be autonomous actors in Al-Shabaab. Women play both active direct and active indirect roles in the terrorist organisation. The roles that women play include spies, fundraisers, explosives experts, suicide bombers, recruiters, fighters, teachers, and wives. The women that have joined Al-Shabaab play more indirect roles than direct roles with more combatant purposes. However, the researcher believes that the various indirect roles that women play are more important at it is the crux of that which ensures Al-Shabaab's survival. Women's participation in Al-Shabaab is thus crucial and should form a big part of any analysis of the terrorist organisation.

The various motivations of women who have joined Al-Shabaab have indicated once again that women are in some cases autonomous actors in the terrorist organisation and that they do practice their agency often. The motivations of women who are autonomous actors in Al-Shabaab is more important than the role they play. This is because understanding the motivation provides a more comprehensive insight into a substantial portion of the members of Al-Shabaab. It is important to know one's enemy to defeat them. Knowing the female members and understanding why they sympathise with Al-Shabaab will provide a more comprehensive insight into how to defeat this terrorist organisation. As the two main motivations for women joining Al-Shabaab are economic and religious/ideological, understanding how these motivations influence the actions of these women will chart the way

31

to creating a sustainable and effective counter-insurgency campaign towards Al-Shabaab. It is thus important to comprehend the lived realities of the women who have joined Al-Shabaab, including where they live, their family/clan structures, and their financial situation, in order understand the autonomy of these women.

4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to advance studies on women's roles in terrorism and the impact of terrorism on women. To investigate this phenomenon, a three-part research question was formulated in Section 1.3 to assess women who are victims or participants of Al-Shabaab, with the goal of creating a comprehensive understanding of all the roles that women can play in terrorism. The impact of Al-Shabaab on women (victimisation of women), and the participation of women in Al-Shabaab's activities (through direct and indirect roles) were analysed through a feminist theoretical approach, and a clear understanding of these roles have been achieved. This understanding was arrived at free from gendered stereotypes and through the lens of the lived realities of the women in Al-Shabaab on an individual level. This bottom-up approach made it possible to analyse the realities of life for women in Al-Shabaab on a grass-roots level. However, to create a deeper and broader understanding of the relevance of understanding the difference between the impact of Al-Shabaab on women and the different roles that women play in Al-Shabaab, it is necessary to compare these two concepts.

There are various similarities between women victimised by Al-Shabaab as discussed in Section 3.2 and women who play autonomous active roles in the terrorist organisation as discussed in Section 3.3. First, Al-Shabaab's conservative interpretation of the Sharia law apply to both women who are victims and participants of Al-Shabaab. All women in Al-Shabaab controlled regions have a dress-code that they have to adhere to, all women have to be escorted by a male family member when they are outside their homes, and all of them have limited access to economic activities. Furthermore, both groups of women are required to attend lectures taught by other women within the community. Secondly, from the discussion it is evident that both groups of women can end up playing an active and more direct role in Al-Shabaab, regardless of how they were recruited. Due to the required classes, many women end up sympathising with Al-Shabaab and turn into active members, regardless of whether they were initially opposed to the terrorist organisation.

Thirdly, as ascertained in Section 3.2.3 and 3.3.4, both groups of women can end up in marriages with Al-Shabaab fighters and members. There are various ways that women end up married in Somalia with Al-Shabaab fighters, including forced marriages, arranged marriages, and voluntary marriages. Finally, both groups of women come from the same region of Africa

33

(from Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya). This means that both groups of women have experienced the same political and economic instability and the violence and potential abuse that stems from it. Both groups of women can and do face various forms of abuse. This abuse does not however exclusively come from Al-Shabaab, its members and its fighters, but also from foreign troops from Ethiopia, AMISOM, and Somalian authorities. Both groups of women's experiences once they arrive at Al-Shabaab controlled areas has the potential to be the same due to the various similarities of the experiences of both victims of Al-Shabaab and autonomous actors.

From this discussion, it can be argued that regardless of whether women are forced to participate in Al-Shabaab and how they are victimised by the terrorist organisation, or if women chose to be autonomous actors, there is the potential for them to lead very similar lives in Al-Shabaab. The feminist theoretical approach (see Section 2.2), which is free of gendered stereotypes, is critical for understanding the relevance of the differences between the women who are victimised by Al-Shabaab and women that are autonomous actors in Al-Shabaab. The one major difference between the victims and autonomous actors is not what they do within Al-Shabaab or their life and experiences within Al-Shabaab, but rather what happens before this. The major difference is their "motivation", in other words, that which affects their actions regarding Al-Shabaab. On the one hand, victims who end up playing an active role in Al-Shabaab are motivated by survival. On the other hand, autonomous actors' motivations include, but are not limited to, economic motivations, gaining political power and influence, seeking revenge, and personal empowerment and liberation.

The researcher argues that the main difference between women that are victims of Al-Shabaab or autonomous actors of Al-Shabaab is the same as the difference between refugees and immigrants: motivation. Similarities can be found between these women in various other aspects, from the activities that they participate in for Al-Shabaab to ways in which they are controlled or even abused by Al-Shabaab. It is important to note that implying women's agency in active participation in Al-Shabaab does not mean that the choices made by these women or the life they lead are easy by any measure. The purpose of recognising women's involvement in Al-Shabaab is not to villainise women, but to fully understand Al-Shabaab, its members, and its activities. Only in doing so can one start the process of creating sustainable solutions and counter-insurgency strategies against Al-Shabaab and its affiliates. It will change the way in which terrorism is perceived in the future.

The relevance of knowing that some women do play autonomous active roles in Al-Shabaab is that this creates a better understanding of the terrorist organisation. One of the points brought up in this study by understanding women's participation in Al-Shabaab better is that motivation is important. Not just women's motivation in participating in Al-Shabaab, but also Al-Shabaab's motivations for its actions. At face value, Al-Shabaab's motivations and aims seem clear: to fight for the global jihad under a conservative interpretation of the Sharia law. If this were true, then it does not explain Al-Shabaab's erratic behaviour regarding the treatment of women.

A logical argument offered is that Al-Shabaab's motivations are not ideological and religious, or at least not exclusively so. What is clear is that Al-Shabaab's actions are not only shaped by what it can gain in terms of religion and ideology, but also in terms of economy and territory. In some cases, Al-Shabaab's actions reflect economic benefit despite acting against its own interpretation of Sharia law. An example of this is by allowing women to actively participate in Al-Shabaab. One role in particular that is being referred to here is Al-Shabaab allowing women to be fundraisers for the terrorist organisation. By allowing women to be fundraisers, Al-Shabaab allows women to participate in the economy. This is a contradiction to Al-Shabaab's conservative interpretation of the Sharia law. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab gains by funding and networking activities that generate funds for the terrorist organisation.

There are numerous examples of how Al-Shabaab stands to gain through its treatment of women. These motivations only become clear through researching women in Al-Shabaab through a feminist theoretical approach or researching their realities from a bottom-up perspective. This perspective reveals that even the conservative interpretation of Sharia law regarding women's dress-code benefits Al-Shabaab economically. By requiring women to dress a certain way in which they would not usually, Al-Shabaab forces women to invest in more/ different clothing. This clothing is conveniently supplied by Al-Shabaab's affiliates who enter a territory shortly after Al-Shabaab has taken control.

A second example of this is Al-Shabaab's use of women in more direct combatant roles or as suicide bombers. The use of women in these types of roles used to be unheard of in Al-Shabaab. This is very likely due to Al-Shabaab's conservative interpretation of Sharia law. Women are not allowed to participate in economic activities or leave their homes unaccompanied, which

35

is why the same terrorist organisation that enforces these laws would allow women to participate in the terrorist organisation on the same level as men make no sense. In no other part of Al-Shabaab are women regarded to be on the same level as men. There is a clear hierarchical structure in Al-Shabaab, which begs the question of why Al-Shabaab would change its attitude regarding women's participation in the terrorist organisation? Once again it comes down to motivation, more specifically Al-Shabaab's motivation. The reason why women are permitted to act as suicide bombers is because an attack successfully completed by a woman would create bigger media attention. This, in turn, would create wider coverage for Al-Shabaab's message and propaganda, potentially at the cost of Al-Shabaab's ideology or conservative interpretation of the Sharia law.

By applying a feminist theoretical approach, personal and organizational motivation is revealed as an important factor when assessing women's roles and autonomy in terrorism, as well as assessing terrorist organisations' motivations for their actions. In Al-Shabaab's case, its motivations for its actions do not necessarily reflect its ideology or religion. More determining factors include economic motivations, gaining territory, and increased media reach.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditional understandings of terrorism are dominated by gendered stereotypes. Much of the narrative surrounding terrorism accepts men's participation without questioning their motivations, whereas women are merely seen as victims. This study set out to contest this general view of terrorism in order to create a broader and deeper understanding of this international security issue. In order to achieve this, the feminist theoretical approach was used. This theoretical approach assessed security issues from an individualistic point of few while critiquing gendered stereotypes and masculine narrative of security and security issues. Furthermore, a qualitative research design was used to create a better understanding of women in the human problem that is terrorism.

5.1 Answering the research questions

The three-part research question set out in Section 1.3 of this study can now be answered. The first part of the research question set out to answer what the place is of women in terrorism. According to traditional understandings of terrorism, which is underpinned by realism, women are merely victims of terrorism. This study established that this is only one way in which women are impacted by terrorism, which leads to the second research question. The second part of the research question set out to answer how women are impacted by terrorism. It was found that women are impacted through the victimisation of women by terrorist organisations or by playing active roles as autonomous actors for terrorist organisations

The third part of the research question set out to answer what roles women play as members of Al-Shabaab. In the Al-Shabaab case study in Chapter Three, it was found that women can, and do, play both the role of autonomous actor and also be victimised by the terrorist organisation. However, this does not mean that women cannot be victimised whilst being an autonomous actor. Often women can fall under both of these categories or start in one and over time move to the other. As victims of Al-Shabaab, it was determined in Section 3.2 that women experience physical abuse and sexual abuse as well as the loss of certain liberties such as the right to freedom of movement, speech, dress-code, and who they marry among others. However, when perceiving women as autonomous actors in Section 3.3, it is evident that women are responsible for several different jobs including spies, fundraisers, explosives experts, suicide bombers, fighters, recruiters, and teachers.

The researcher, therefore, argues that it is only through assessing the difference through comparing these two groupings of women (victims and autonomous actors) that it becomes possible to create a comprehensive understanding of women's autonomy in Al-Shabaab. By comparing both groups of women in Al-Shabaab, either as victims or autonomous actors, the researcher found various similarities but also some differences. In terms of similarities, both groups of women have the possibility to have similar experiences, from abuse and limitations that they can face which is brought on by Al-Shabaab or other foreign troops to their involvement in Al-Shabaab activities such as recruiters, fundraisers and suicide bombers. Once Al-Shabaab arrive or the women arrive in Al-Shabaab controlled areas, their fates can become virtually the same.

This begs the question of what differences can possibly be found. This includes everything that happens up to the point where women interact with Al-Shabaab. In other words, their motivation for participating in Al-Shabaab's activities or even just finding themselves in Al-Shabaab controlled areas. Thus, in Section 3.3.5 motivation was determined to be the only way to tell a victim apart from autonomous actors. The victims' motivation for joining Al-Shabaab is survival. Therefore, their reason for finding themselves in Al-Shabaab controlled areas (where they run the risks of abuse and various limitations) is that their lives would be at risk otherwise.

In contrast, the motivations of autonomous actors include everything apart from their survival. This includes economic motivations, revenge, the desire for power and influence, and finally because they ascribe to the same ideology as Al-Shabaab. Understanding the importance of motivations of women in Al-Shabaab is not only important in terms of telling the two groups of women apart, but also to understand more about the terrorist organisation itself. Women play critical roles in Al-Shabaab and understanding their lived realities will provide clearer insight into Al-Shabaab's activities, making the creation of more effective counter-insurgency strategies possible.

Motivation is not only important when analysing women in Al-Shabaab, but also when analysing the terrorist organisation itself. Motivation is different from a terrorist organisations' goals or aims because motivation is more silent and speculative. Al-Shabaab's goals and aims including the creation of global jihad, fighting against the West, and creating an Islamic State

38

of their own are underpinned by a conservative interpretation of Sharia law. Understanding Al-Shabaab's motivation clarifies what is important to the terrorist organisation and what they are willing to sacrifice.

This study found that Al-Shabaab's motivations do not necessarily correspond with its well-known goals and aims. For example, one of Al-Shabaab's motivations includes economic motivations. This is evident not only when the terrorist organisation forces women into a certain dress-code that cost them money, which is made by Al-Shabaab's affiliates who sell them these clothes, but also in the prohibition of women from participating in economic activities. Despite women being prohibited from participating in economic activities, it does not stop all women. Some women manage or own businesses by either bribing fighters or paying certain taxes to Al-Shabaab. In this case, Al-Shabaab values the money they can receive from these women more than enforcing their conservative interpretation of the Sharia law, which forms the ideological foundation of all their goals and aims. Additionally, women's actions in Al-Shabaab are very limited in general. However, this stopped when women were allowed to start playing more active and direct roles in Al-Shabaab. Women are also now known to play roles such as recruiters and suicide bombers. Al-Shabaab benefits from this by having access to more possible members as well as increased media attention for its cause.

Similar to women's motivation to participate as autonomous actors in Al-Shabaab, one of Al-Shabaab's motivations is the need for power and influence. It can be argued that by allowing women to play several critical roles in Al-Shabaab, the terrorist organisation does not respect its ideology and Sharia law enough and would sacrifice it for political power and influence, or other motivations. The relevance of this insight is that Al-Shabaab bases its legitimacy and authority on its ideology and religion. This is one of the reasons that people voluntarily join the terrorist organisation.

This study hopes to advance the argument (in an effective manner) that Al-Shabaab does not uphold the values on which its foundation was built, with the possibility of exploiting weaknesses within the terrorist organisation that would let current members reconsider their participation, or even prevent others from joining Al-Shabaab. Thus, by applying a feminist theoretical approach to assess women's autonomous participation in Al-Shabaab, the researcher offers that motivation is not only important to understand the terrorist organisation,

its members and its victims, but it can also be used as a tool in creating innovative counter-insurgency strategies and campaigns.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on its findings and discussion, this study suggests a number of recommendations for policy-makers, security strategists, academics and others involved in the war against terror. Firstly, it is necessary to accept the possibility of women's autonomy in the same way one would accept men's autonomy in their participation in terrorist organisations. Secondly, the point of this study was not to villainise women but rather to show that gender influences the way in which counter-insurgency and terrorism research occurs. The main recommendation is not that there should be a drastic change in the way women are treated, but rather in the way men are perceived and treated. Instead of taking for granted men's motivation for playing autonomous roles in Al-Shabaab (and terrorism in general), their motivation should be questioned, just as women's would. The effect of this is the creation of a more critical and accurate narrative of terrorism as well as a broader and deeper understanding of all participants in Al-Shabaab (and terrorism more generally). Only when this is achieved should an effective counter-insurgency strategy be formulated based on the individual realities of all people involved in terrorism.

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