RESEARCH

Gender and countering violent extremism in Women, Peace and Security national action plans

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Using discourse analysis, this research explores the representation of gender roles and identities in relation to counter-terrorism/countering violent extremism in 38 national action plans for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and associated United Nations Security Council resolutions. Representations of gender in relation to counter-terrorism/countering violent extremism in the national action plans that we analyse fix women in subordinate and passive subject positions while presuming that men are inherently violent and extremist. These findings have implications not only for scholarship on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, but also for policy practice in this area.

Key words gender • representation • counter-terrorism • countering violent extremism • 1325 • women • peace • security

Introduction

In October 2015, the United Nations Security Council (hereafter, Council) adopted Resolution 2242, under the thematic agenda item of 'women and peace and security'. Formally a part of the suite of resolutions that form the architecture of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, Resolution 2242 takes into consideration the changing global security context, and attempts to revise and augment the priorities of the WPS agenda enshrined in the previous resolutions in light of the major shifts that have occurred in peace and security governance since 2000, when the first WPS resolution was adopted (United Nations Security Council Resolution [UNSCR] 1325). One of the new areas of concern represented in Resolution 2242 is the possibility of alignment with counter-terrorism/countering violent extremism (CT/CVE). Three paragraphs of Resolution 2242 are devoted to explaining how the WPS agenda could align better with CT/CVE, highlighting the following

elements: an emphasis on mainstreaming gender in the operations of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) (para 11); calls for better data collection in this sphere; and 'the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism' (para 13).

Resolution 2242 formally captures the Council's increasing concern about the gendered dynamics of terrorism and violent extremism. First articulated as a matter of concern to the WPS agenda in 2014, in a Presidential Statement, the Council recognised both the 'participation' and 'protection' dimensions of terrorism and violent extremism: the ways in which women and women's organisations contribute to the development of CT/CVE strategies; and the need for United Nations (UN) member states not only to empower women to take on these leadership roles, but also to protect the rights of women in the face of 'serious human rights violations and abuses committed against them including murder, abduction, hostage taking, kidnapping, enslavement, their sale and forced marriage, human trafficking, rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence' (S/PRST/2014/21, p 3). The threats and insecurities related to terrorism and violent extremism have continued to be threaded through the WPS agenda, surfacing, as discussed, in UNSCR 2242, in a Presidential Statement in 2016 and, most recently, in two new resolutions (UNSCR 2467 and UNSCR 2493). Researchers and practitioners working on the WPS agenda must therefore take seriously, and examine the dynamics of, the integration of CT/CVE initiatives and efforts with the WPS agenda.

One of the ways in which UN member states can govern gender-responsive CT/CVE efforts, in keeping with the principles outlined in the various artefacts of the WPS agenda outlined earlier, is through a focus on CT/CVE in their national action plans (NAPs) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and associated WPS resolutions. In a 2004 Presidential Statement, the Council 'welcome[d] the efforts of Member States in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) at the national level, including the development of national action plans, and encourage[d] Member States to continue to pursue such implementation' (S/PRST/2004/40, p 3). States thus began to write NAPs for the implementation of Resolution 1325 – at the time the only Security Council resolution adopted under the title of 'women and peace and security' – which could guide practice in the national context. NAPs guide the implementation of the WPS agenda at the country level, and sit alongside other implementation efforts, such as the regional action plans (RAPs) governing WPS in regional organisations, and guidelines and protocols developed by inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). There are also implementation initiatives across the UN system, and specific UN entities have WPS or WPS-related strategies.

Although there is much contestation about whether NAPs are the most appropriate means of guiding state practice in the sphere of WPS work (see Swaine, 2009; Fritz et al, 2011; Aroussi, 2017), there is no doubt that NAPs are worthy of critical interrogation because they can reveal much about how the WPS agenda is being (re)produced and with what political effects. This research seeks to explore how and in what ways NAPs reflect the incorporation of gender-sensitive initiatives to counter terrorism and violent extremism. In particular, the research examines the

ways in which gendered subjects are constructed within a sample of NAPs in order to understand the horizons of possibility that are created around women's involvement with CT/CVE efforts at the national level.

This research is thus guided by the question: how are gender identities and gender roles represented in relation to countering terrorism and violent extremism in NAPs? We argue that representations of gender in relation to CT/CVE in WPS NAPs fix women in subordinate and passive subject positions while presuming that men are inherently violent and extremist. Despite the existence of a body of research on gender, conflict and political violence (discussed later) that has demonstrated the problematic consequences of conventional gender stereotypes, and despite being grounded in the WPS agenda itself, which is a product of women's agency and seeks to transform *at a minimum* the governance of peace and security (and, maximally, the militarist international system), the move towards integrating CT/CVE with WPS is simultaneously a return to negative gendered assumptions that limit women's agency and preclude their meaningful political participation. We suggest that this retrogressive move is a result of the conventional association of terrorism and violent extremism with highly masculinised, 'hard' security concerns.

We build this argument in three stages. In the following section, we engage with existing research in this field, drawing on scholarship on gender, conflict and political violence, and specifically on gender and CVE, to develop a hypothesis regarding the configuration of gendered representations in the NAPs. Next, we elaborate on the analytical framework that guides our research and explain our research design, which includes the identification of a sample of WPS NAPs for analysis ($n = 38$ [see Appendix 1]). In the third substantive section, we present our analysis and discuss our findings. We conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of the argument presented and its significance not only for scholarship on the WPS agenda, but also for policy practice in this area as implementation efforts increasingly engage and seek to align with CT/CVE efforts and initiatives.

Gender, conflict and political violence

Decades of feminist scholarship, and scholarship that is attentive to gender as a category of analysis, has shown that the gender dynamics of conflict and political violence are complex and multidimensional (Alison, 2004; Gentry, 2012; Sjoberg, 2013; Eager, 2016). In contrast to stereotypes that position women as peaceful and nurturing while men are assumed to be aggressive and violent, research shows that individuals participate in violence and armed conflict for myriad reasons, and that they play many different roles during times of conflict and peace (MacKenzie, 2012; Eager, 2016; Henshaw, 2016). Although women's violence is frequently represented as 'monstrous' (see Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007), the fact is that women commit individual acts of violence in war and peace, and participate in organised violence, for all of the same reasons that motivate men. Large-scale quantitative analysis of women's participation in rebel conflicts between 1990 and 2008 reveals that the majority of women volunteered to join armed groups, for a variety of reasons, and that women who were initially coerced into participation made conscious decisions to remain connected to these groups (Henshaw, 2016).

Women's participation in politically violent and armed groups often begins with non-combative domestic duties, recruitment and strategic activities, such as gathering

intelligence and weapons for male fighters (Haeri and Puechguirbal, 2010; Henshaw, 2016); however, women have also engaged directly in combat roles through bombing and assassinations. For instance, women committed suicide bombing as part of Chechen rebel groups, women armed with weapons engaged in combat roles in the 2002 Moscow theatre siege and analysis of left-wing women's activities in Italy and America reveals that women encouraged and led men to perpetrate violence (O'Reilly, 2013; Eager, 2016; Henshaw, 2017; Thomas, 2017). Like men, women undertook these activities due to objectives to further their groups' political ideologies, improve their social status and seek revenge for harm imposed on their relatives (Eager, 2016; Henshaw, 2017). This research provides evidence of women's agency to perpetrate political violence, despite stereotypes of women as non-violent.

However, in mainstream government and media reports, women involved in terrorism and extremist violence are often portrayed as 'jihadi brides' and 'dupes' or victims of extremists; like men, though, factors such as adventure, redemption, unemployment, displacement and a sense of belonging influenced women's support of fundamental extremist ideologies (Saltman and Smith, 2015). As with other forms of violence, discussed earlier, women have planned and perpetrated extremist violence and acts of terror within various nations (Gentry, 2012; Ní Aoláin, 2013; Eager, 2016).

CT/CVE initiatives tend to disregard these documented experiences, portraying women as inherently peaceful and/or as vehicles to prevent male radicalisation (Patel and Westermann, 2018). Representing women as wives, mothers and sisters of radicalised men, CT/CVE strategies position women as nurturers, assuming that they are opposed to violence and promote peace within their private and public lives (Gentry, 2009; Brown, 2013; Patel and Westermann, 2018). Homogenising women, and defining their identity through their relationship with men, CT/CVE policy tends to perceive women as 'good' and as the first line of defence against male radicalisation, and further assumes that their radicalisation occurs as a result of association with males within their family and communities (Ansary, 2008). In her analysis of counter-radicalisation approaches in the UK, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, Katherine Brown (2013) shows how gender stereotypes and identities inform CT/CVE policies and programmes. Policies and programmes have been established in the UK to empower Muslim women to lead and challenge extremist messages and ideologies in their community, and Indonesia's government provides some wives with financial and welfare assistance to visit and support their husbands who are involved in its deradicalisation programme (Brown, 2013).

The WPS agenda reinforces the need for CT/CVE policies and programmes informed by gender analysis. As discussed earlier, Resolution 2242 recognises the impact of terrorism and violent extremism on women's peace and security, acknowledges women's roles in perpetuating violence, and emphasises women's agency in preventing terrorism and violent extremism (Ní Aoláin, 2016). UNSCR 2242 also requires states to include gender analysis within its security planning, policies and programmes (Ní Aoláin, 2016). Nonetheless, CT/CVE policy and strategy remain a highly masculinised domain of security practice that is frequently entirely gender-blind (Ní Aoláin, 2016; Davis, 2019). Despite the development of the WPS agenda, which should notionally govern UN member state practice regarding gender-responsive CT/CVE efforts, a lack of acknowledgement of women's agency has thus contributed to the adoption of policies and programmes that neglect women's experiences, and that

are ineffective both in deradicalising women who support extremist ideologies and in preventing those inspired to commit acts of terrorism (Patel and Westermann, 2018).

From the foregoing review of the existing research, we hypothesise that we will find conventional stereotypes of men and women represented in the WPS NAPs that we examine, which supports the theory that CT/CVE policy and strategy is so thoroughly masculinised as a domain that it remains impervious to contemporary efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into peace and security governance. In the following section, we lay out our research design and explain how we execute the research.

Analytical framework and research methods

This research proceeds from the theoretical position that representational practices have constitutive effects. The concept of representation, developed most fully in cultural studies, can usefully inform political analysis by drawing attention to the ways in which meaning is formed in specific cultural contexts. Stuart Hall (1997: 15), for example, argues that '[r]epresentation connects meaning and language to culture' through the representation of a person, place or thing in text.[1] People, places and things are described or depicted in text as subjects or objects with particular qualities and characteristics. Relations between these subjects and objects are also constituted in those representational practices. In this way, these subjects and objects, and the relations between them, are attributed particular meanings through the practices of representation. Thus, the practice of representation is the practice of meaning–making.

In order to interrogate the representational practices with which this research is concerned, we have selected Roxanne Lynn Doty's (1993, 1996; see also Åhäll and Borg, 2012) methods of analysis, involving the analysis of *predication* and *subject-positioning*. As Doty (1993: 307) explains, 'together, these methodological concepts produce a "world" by providing positions for various kinds of subjects and endowing them with particular attributes'. We – the interpretive community that receives and engages with these representational practices – then act towards this world on the basis of the meanings that it holds for us. Crucially, this world makes possible certain kinds of activities, outcomes and sensibilities, while other possibilities are foreclosed. From a policy perspective, given that the documents we seek to analyse govern the implementation of the WPS agenda, it matters a great deal what meanings are attached to the subjects of these policies, for example, whether women are represented as passive victims of violence or as agents of change within their communities (Shepherd, 2016).

The first method involves interrogating predication. Predication is the process through which characteristics or attributes are attached to subjects, that is, the articulation – or linking – of 'describing words' to 'words described'.[2] The predicate is the part of the sentence that bestows meaning on the subject. For example, consider the sentence: 'Due to the spread of extremism and exclusionary ideology, women have been exposed to multiple forms of violence and exploitation' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 17). Here, women are the subject. Through the act of predication, women are made knowable/known through their exposure 'to multiple forms of violence and exploitation'(Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 17). The use of the verb 'expose' and the noun 'exploitation' constructs women as passive recipients of 'extremism and exclusionary ideology'; the sentence is constructed

in the passive voice ('women have been exposed to'), which implies that the agents – the entities doing the exposing and exploitation – are someone other than women.

Predication goes hand-in-hand with subject-positioning. In the process of subject-positioning, the subjects and objects of discourse are positioned in relation to each other. Subjects and objects emerge as knowable/known, in part, through their relationship with other subjects and objects: 'what defines a particular kind of subject is, in large part, the relationships that subject is positioned in relative to other kinds of subjects.… Some of the important kinds of relationships that position subjects are those of *opposition*, *identity*, *similarity*, and *complementarity*' (Doty, 1993: 306). Thus, subjects/objects become knowable, for example, through their textual articulation as like, or unlike, other subjects/objects within the text. Consider this phrase: 'Provide support to programmes that analyse the direct effect on women and girls of violent extremism and radicalisation' (Government of Ireland, 2019: 29). This sentence positions women and girls as similar types of subjects, even equivalent, through the implication that 'women and girls' need and can receive the same kinds of support and are affected by 'violent extremism and radicalisation' in the same way. As with the construction discussed earlier, this diminishes women's agency through the equivalence of women with girls, as the subject of 'girl' is a child rather than an adult, immature rather than mature and in need of (parental/paternal) supervision rather than an autonomous and fully realised political subject.

Proceeding from this theoretical position, we developed a research design that would enable us to analyse representations of gender, terrorism and violent extremism in the WPS agenda. There are many possible sites at which we could conduct this analysis, for example, analysing the representations of gender, terrorism and violent extremism in the WPS resolutions would offer some insights, though these insights would be limited as the resolutions feature only a few such representations.[3] However, we are particularly interested in the implementation practices of UN member states, and so we decided to look at NAPs for the implementation of the WPS agenda.

The first NAP was released by Denmark in 2005. As mentioned, 82 UN member states have now released NAPs or NAP-like documents (the latter is true in the case of Bougainville and Tajikistan), with many states updating their NAPs over the last decade and a half. Norway, Switzerland and the UK, for example, are now implementing the fourth iteration of their NAPs. Developing multiple iterations of NAPs provides much opportunity for deriving good practice and lessons learned about optimal conditions for effective implementation. Furthermore, as NAPs are refreshed and revised over time, they reflect the expansion of the WPS agenda across areas other than the conventional 'pillars' of WPS activity, including terrorism and violent extremism.[4]

In this research, we examined a data set of all existing NAPs[5] to see whether the text mentioned terrorism and violent extremism using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. We deployed a simple search query for the terms: *terrorism OR terror OR terrorist OR extremism OR extremist OR radical OR radicalized OR radicalised OR radicalisation OR radicalization*. The results of this search are plotted in Figure 1. Notably, there is a spike in coverage within the NAPs after 2015, when Resolution 2242 was adopted, though substantive engagement with terrorism and violent extremism in the WPS NAPs dates back to the publication of the first Ugandan NAP in 2008.[6] This initial search excluded 77 plans from our sample, leaving an initial sample of 51 plans. We removed nine plans from this sample that had been superseded by more recent iterations, and a further four plans that returned 'false positives' in the initial search

Figure 1: Mentions of search terms in all NAPs over time
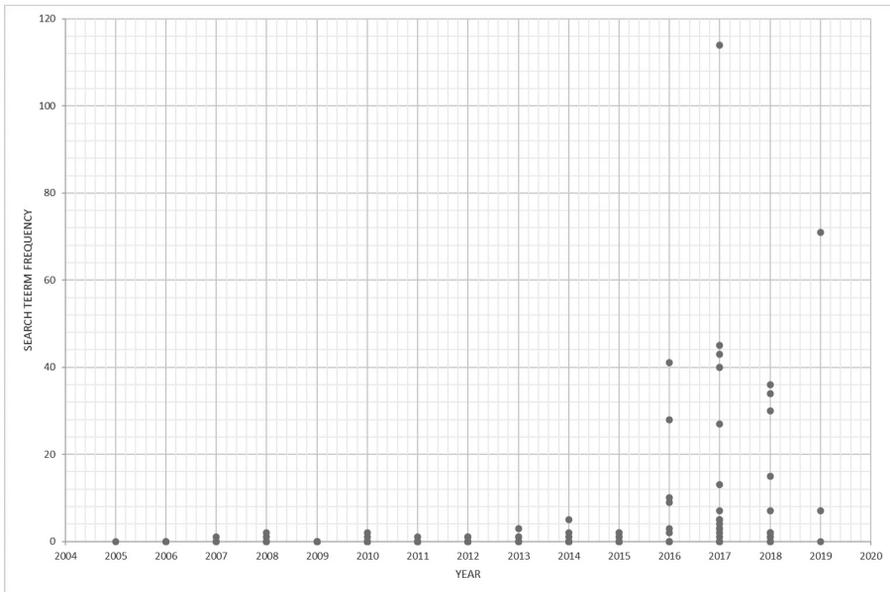
Note: *n* = 128.

Figure 2: Mentions of search terms in the sample of NAPs
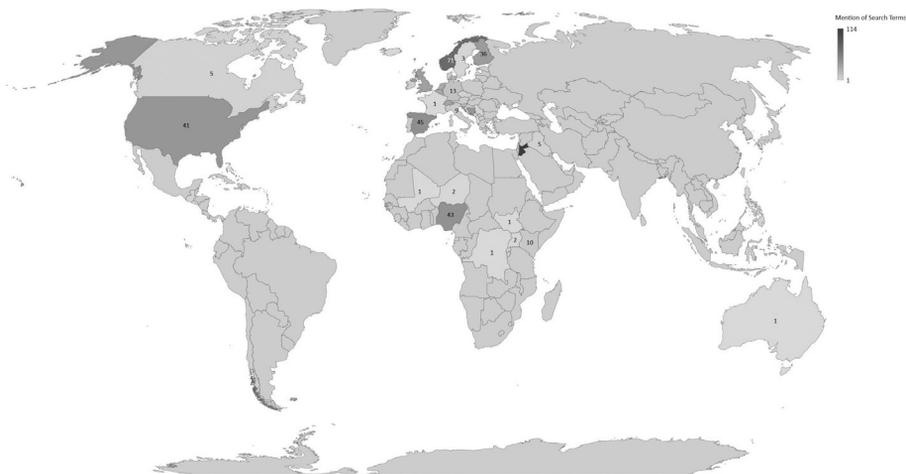
Note: *n* = 38.

query.[7] This process left us with a sample of 38 NAPs to analyse (see Appendix 1). The refined search results are plotted on a world map in Figure 2, which shows the global spread of NAPs in the sample, with the darker shading representing a higher number of mentions of the search terms. We applied the analytical techniques outlined earlier to the representations of gender, terrorism and violent extremism in the sample in order to draw out the construction of subjects and the relations between them within these documents.

Gender roles in CT/CVE: findings

In this section, we present our findings and discuss them in relation to the literature explored earlier. We identify four themes within which gender roles and responsibilities in relation to CT/CVE in WPS NAPs are constructed. These are: (1) gendering CT/CVE; (2) gendered perpetrators of terrorism and violent extremism; (3) gendered victims of terrorism and violent extremism; and (4) gendered agents of CT/CVE. Within each of these, we analyse the predicates attached to, and positioning of, gendered subjects, in order to explore the representation of gender and CT/CVE in the documents. We discuss each in turn.

Gendering CT/CVE

The majority (47 per cent) of NAPs in our sample report that 'gender perspectives' would be integrated within policies, political strategies and programmes that aim to address terrorism and violent extremism. This approach to counter-terrorism is identified as a new strategic approach, which aimed to improve states' awareness of and responses to extremist violence, and to address its unique impacts on women and men. This links an understanding of 'gender' to the efficacy of CT/CVE responses, though what it means to take a 'gender perspective' is often specified only in terms of an assumed gender binary (men versus women) and the idea that these two subjects experience terrorism and extremism differently. These binary approaches to gender undermine the social and structural inequalities that contribute to position women at greater risk of extremist violence and exploitation by terrorist organisations. For example, it is reported in Norway's NAP that:

> Originally, the action plan did not contain gender-specific measures because it was assumed that the plan's policies and measures covered women and men equally well. We have had to reassess the need for differentiation, however, as a result of new knowledge. This is because women and men have different motivations for joining extremist groups and play different roles in extremist groups, circles and organisations. (Norwegian Ministries, 2019: 54)

In states where gender perspectives had successfully been integrated into existing CT/CVE policies, according to their documentation in the NAPs, it is reported that these policies would be implemented in two ways. Implementation involves: first, imposing sanctions on both women and men who return from extremist territories; and, second, providing individuals with access to rehabilitation services regardless of their gender. This indicates that within states reporting the adoption of a 'gender perspective', there was recognition of women's capabilities to become both victims and motivators of extremist violence. There was also an acknowledgement of the need to punish, rehabilitate and deter people of all genders, as opposed to assuming that women's perceived peaceful nature or engagement in gender-related activities would be sufficient to lead to deradicalisation (Gentry, 2009; Brown, 2013; Patel and Westermann, 2018). For instance, Nigeria's NAP states that the government will 'develop and implement a regional and coordinated strategy that encompasses … de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, in line with strategies for prosecution, where appropriate, for persons associated with Boko Haram and [Islamic

State of Iraq and the Levant] ISIL' (Nigeria Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017: 49).

Two states – including Nigeria, cited earlier – set out a 'same and equal' model of gender-responsive CT/CVE in the NAPs, noting that the same consequences would affect male and female perpetrators of terrorism and extremist violence. Such an approach is not as attentive to how gendered power operates on and through bodies to create different life opportunities for differently gendered individuals in highly context-specific ways. Imposing the same level of penalty irrespective of life history and experience highlights a limitation in states' understanding of the differences within activities in which different groups and individuals engage as members of extremist organisations, and the factors that may influence their contribution to extremist activities. A lack of recognition of gender differences within experiences and roles within extremist organisations would affect governments' ability to develop gender-specific CT/CVE measures that prevent radicalisation and participation in extremist activities.

Some states (31 per cent) report that the factors that make individuals and groups vulnerable to extremism would be addressed through training, empowerment and the implementation of deradicalisation and reintegration programmes. As it is assumed that participation in extremist activities causes individuals to neglect their civil responsibilities, states report that education would be provided to both men and women on state values, ideologies and citizens' rights and duties as the first step to deradicalisation. These programmes reaffirm the values and behaviours that are normatively accepted by the state. In addition to these measures, to address social and economic disadvantages that act as incentives for individuals to engage in terrorist activities, states propose the provision of leadership and skills training. These measures aim to increase social and economic capital, enabling women and men to obtain meaningful employment and achieve financial independence, as opposed to seeking financial support from extremist organisations. For instance, the USA's NAP reports that 'USAID's efforts aim to empower young men and women through activities and training focused on civic education, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills, and leadership, and to foster moderate voices – both men and women's – and attitudes through radio, social media, civic education and conflict resolution events' (United States Government, 2016: 11). Although it notes in the NAPs that these programmes and support services would be made available to both women and men, the measures just listed were the only measures proposed for men, while additional measures were proposed for women. In this way, women are positioned as experiencing more significant vulnerabilities and being potentially in need of additional support in comparison to men in order to reduce the risk of radicalisation and to ensure that their security needs are met.

Gendered perpetrators of terrorism and violent extremism

In keeping with a binary construction of gender, 28 per cent of the NAPs report that 'men and women … influence the promotion and the prevention of extremist violence in CVE policies and programs' (United States Government, 2016: 11). These NAPs thus acknowledge each individual's ability to participate in activities related to extremist violence, as well as their potential willingness to provide support and assistance to individuals who engage in these activities. However, in other NAPs,

only men are portrayed as capable of perpetrating extremist violence. For example, Iraq's NAP states that 'clause 2 of Article 4 of the anti-terrorism law no. 13 for the year 2005 has punished by life imprisonment, everyone who intentionally conceals any terrorist action or harbors a terrorist with the aim of covering up for him' (Federal Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government, 2014: 9). The construction of male subjects in the NAPs tends to assume a propensity for violence and an association with terrorism or extremism. The Iraqi NAP, for example, uses the pronoun 'him' in association with the noun 'terrorist', suggesting that men are presumed to be inherently more likely to perpetrate terrorist or extremist violence. Conversely, other gendered actors are denied agency through their presumed exclusion from the group represented by the identity of 'terrorist' (Federal Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government, 2014), though they are not precluded from supporting activity: concealing terrorist action or harbouring a (presumed male) terrorist. These representations position women and other actors in supporting roles, suggesting that their involvement in extremist activities is due to their association with males who engage in these acts.

A small number (7 per cent) of NAPs indicate that as young men are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation, governments plan to implement and support initiatives that aim to reinforce their rights as state citizens and address the environmental factors that push young men to participate in extremist organisations. The NAPs also present plans to counter negative influences and 'deradicalise' those with extremist ideologies through social support programmes. This suggests that within the group of subjects considered terrorist (male-identified subjects), there is a smaller subgroup of particularly 'risky subjects': young men (on the construction of 'risky subjects' and the corollary impact on communities, see Vaughan–Williams, 2008; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Salerno, 2017). For example, the US NAP intends to 'address socioeconomic, political, and cultural drivers of violent extremism and focus particularly on addressing the concerns of young men … who are at greatest risk of being targeted or recruited by violent extremist organizations' (United States Government, 2016: 11).

Some NAPs (28 per cent) acknowledge women's role as perpetrators of terrorism. These NAPs tend to position women as supporters, rather than direct perpetrators, of violence. The NAPs report that women enable extremist organisations as they engage in activities that aim to assist fighters and extremist organisations in achieving their objectives. For example, Norway's NAP states that 'Women are extremist ideologues who recruit both men and women, and they put pressure on their families and acquaintances to take part in extremist violence' (Norwegian Ministries, 2019: 8). In this example, women are described as 'extremist ideologues' and 'recruiters', that is, enablers of violence rather than its perpetrators. They are constructed in relation to family members and connected to 'acquaintances', whom they 'pressure' to 'take part in extremist violence'. These NAPs, which position women within non-combatant roles, portray them as effective recruiters due to their relationship with men. Nurturing roles (mothers, sisters, wives, daughters) enable women to access men, who are, in turn, constructed as the perpetrators of violence through association with enabling women. These representations reinforce gender stereotypes by positioning men as violent and women as nurturers – both of life (in their maternal or wifely roles) and death (in their capacities as 'extremist ideologues' and enablers of violence). Thus, through these representations, women's agency is limited; they are portrayed as assistants, as opposed to individuals who are capable of perpetrating

violent extremist acts. For example, Jordan's NAP states that 'Mothers are seen as the primary pillars and influencers within families and subsequently are targeted by radicalised groups as an entry point to the entire family' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 17).

Although states did recognise some women as capable of occupying combatant roles, women's agency to perpetrate violence was also limited. For instance, Nigeria's NAP notes that 'some women also become fighters and join extremist groups, some against their will' (Nigeria Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017: 53). Through the modifying clause that explains away the participation in extremist groups as a result of coercion – where participation may be 'against their will' – the recognition of women's agency is limited. As it is indicated that women's decision to perpetrate violence may be a result of the influence of others, it assumes that women are 'naturally' non-violent, lacking the autonomy to make decisions with regards to whether they engage in violence, and that extremist violence committed by women is a result of external influences. Conversely, as the element of coercion applies only to the motivations of women, this construction also implies that men do not need to be coerced into participation, thus reinforcing the idea that men are inherently prone to violence.

Gendered victims of terrorism and violent extremism

A small number (5 per cent) of NAPs recognise men as victims of terrorism and report that men are adversely affected by extremist violence to the same degree as women. For example, Jordan's NAP reports that 'extremism poses a real threat to women and men' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 17). By placing both women and men within the same category (of threatened subject/potential victim), these NAPs recognise that extremist violence is a threat to peace and security for all (though the persistent use of binary language actually excludes those who identify as neither women nor men). The majority (55 per cent) of NAPs position women as vulnerable subjects, though some states (42 per cent) included statements within their NAPs that also recognised women's agency and capability to achieve peace during periods of extremist violence. Women are portrayed as experiencing the same vulnerabilities as children, greater vulnerabilities than men and restrictions on their fundamental rights and freedoms. For example, Jordan's NAP states that 'terrorism and violent extremism have a unique and disproportionate impact on women and girls during armed conflict, hindering their ability to protect themselves and their human rights' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 16).

To further situate women as vulnerable, like children, immature and incapable of responding to their own rights and protection needs, 10 per cent of NAPs reinforced these messages with quantitative evidence of the number of women and children who have been victims of extremism. For example, Palestine's NAP reports on the deaths of 'at least 1417 Palestinians (including 111 women and 412 children) and the wounding of another 4336 persons including hundreds of women and children caused by the direct targeting of civilians' (Palestine Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2015: 15). The deaths of women and children are emphasised here, presumably because they are considered particularly heinous. Women are portrayed as being as helpless as children, requiring various measures to protect them from harm, and as incapable of developing strategies to respond to their safety needs. Concomitantly,

these NAPs express a need to prioritise the protection of women and girls over the protection of men and boys. This construction influences states' proposals to protect women beyond military interventions, to include measures aimed at reducing women's vulnerability as targets of extremist violence and reintegrating those who have been co-opted into extremist organisations back into their communities. For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina's NAP emphasises that 'significant attention will be given to the issues of misuse of women and children for violent extremist and terrorist purposes. Special focus will be given to reintegration of women and children returnees from Iranian and Syrian battlefield' (Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, 2017: 25). In this construction, women and children are 'used' as instruments of violence, which is read as another form of victimisation.

Gendered agents of CT/CVE

Some NAPs (26 per cent) represent men as agents in addressing terrorism and violent extremism. These NAPs comment on the training needs of men working with state diplomatic and policing roles in order to enhance their effectiveness in addressing extremist violence; these men require education on the WPS agenda and training to implement the principles of the agenda within their practices. For example, the Slovenian NAP commits to the 'Training of male … employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular the employees seconded to diplomatic missions and consular posts, to international organisations and different international missions, [on] the gender perspective and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda' (Slovenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018: 16). Either the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs only employs men, or those employees who are not male-identified do not require training on 'the gender perspective and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda' because they somehow already possess this knowledge by virtue of not being male-identified.

Slovenia's NAP does not mention whether these measures will be included within regular training provided to diplomats before they engage in foreign activities, or whether this training and education will be provided to government employees working within roles that are not directly related to international affairs. These proposed actions represent the WPS agenda as only applicable to government departments and *male* state employees who address security issues. Similarly, in the Jordanian NAP, both 'men and boys' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 20) were to be included in state efforts to encourage the recognition of women's role as actors in instilling peace, suggesting that women always already know and understand women's peace work simply by virtue of being women. Further, the notion that men and boys are required to 'promote the participation of women' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 20) suggests not only that men and boys hold higher authority in society when compared to women, but also that they have greater agency than women, and are perceived as gatekeepers from whom support is required in order for women's role in addressing security issues to be accepted.

Some NAPs (26 per cent) represent women as particularly effective in CT/CVE due to their nurturing and peaceful natures; their roles within their communities are presumed to improve state CT/CVE efforts when women are provided with opportunities to participate in the development process. For instance, Jordan's NAP comments that 'women (female community leaders, mothers, teachers, professors,

youth, etc.), have the necessary skills to detect and address early signs of radicalisation in a safe and confidential manner' (Jordan National Commission for Women, 2018: 31). Through the portrayal of women as nurturers, it is assumed that their inclusion within state CT/CVE efforts will result in peaceful outcomes, regardless of whether their role within the process is meaningful or tokenistic. Women are thus constructed as peaceful and incapable of committing violence, and through their nurturing roles, they are further presumed to have acquired the skills required to identify anti-social behaviours that may give rise to extremism. The Jordanian NAP, for example, refers to 'community' and 'family' in connection to a discussion of women's peaceful natures enhancing preventive/counter-violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts.

In 23 per cent of the NAPs, when women are portrayed as agents in preventing extremist violence, an association is created between 'women and girls' and the need for measures that promote and bring 'the voices of women and girls to the forefront' (Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2012: 41) in state efforts to address extremism. Although this indicates that states propose to ensure that diverse perspectives inform CT/CVE activities and responses, these representations also depict women as immature through the relations of equivalence with 'girls', as the subjects of male authority and similarly as lacking in power.

Among the NAPs that referred to women as empowered leaders who can advocate and effectively contribute to national CT/CVE measures, 10 per cent indicated that they required capacity building and skills development before opportunities could be provided for them to participate in CT/CVE efforts. For example, it was reported in the NAPs that 'training for female civilians' would be provided, with the aim of enhancing 'capacity building, participation, protection and engagement' (United States Government, 2016: 11). The US NAP also suggests, vis-a-vis female civilians, that there is a need 'to empower women and girls to prevent and respond to challenges associated with violent extremism' (United States Government, 2016: 1). These statements indicate that although women's nurturing skills were perceived as sufficient to prevent terrorism and violent extremism within local contexts, within formal political environments, they are portrayed as disempowered, lacking confidence and requiring skills development to be able to participate in state CT/CVE activities beyond their 'natural' nurturing roles.

Relatedly, the German NAP suggests that there is a need to identify and locate women and girls in order to engage them within CT/CVE programmes and initiatives, committing to the 'Development of strategies in order to better reach women and girls in their social spaces; [and] awareness training against radicalisation attempts by hate preachers' (German Federal Government, 2017: 21). This construction confines women and girls to 'social' (rather than political) spaces, and assumes that they have particular needs in terms of outreach. It also perhaps implies that women are reluctant to participate in counter-terrorism activities, and that states thus need to develop strategies to locate women and girls and persuade them – and equip them – to contribute to CT/CVE efforts. This precludes recognition of the social and economic vulnerabilities and institutional gender inequalities that create a cycle of disempowerment and exclude women from CT/CVE efforts. In line with this theme, some (31 per cent) of the states commit to implementing legislation regarding women's role and participation in developing state security initiatives, and to supporting organisations that promote and assist women in developing their

skills to participate in CT/CVE activities. For instance, Iraq's NAP states that 'A law allowing women to work in the security services (Ministry of the Interior and the Intelligence) has been adopted' (Federal Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government, 2014: 8).

As discussed earlier, many NAPs make direct reference to women as the mothers and sisters of extremist males, and represent women as peaceful and nurturing subjects, thus assuming that women's participation in CT/CVE will result in peaceful outcomes. The influence of the WPS agenda is sometimes clear here: there is an association between women's participation and the achievement of peace and security. For instance, Montenegro's NAP comments that the inclusion of women in CT/CVE work is necessary because evidence 'clearly shows the substantial relationship between the participation of women and sustainable peace and security' (Montenegro Ministry of Defence, 2017: 3). This suggests that women are included both because they 'do peace differently' and also perhaps because they have a right to equal participation in security governance (on women's participation on peace outcomes, see O'Reilly et al, 2014; Stone, 2014). Stereotypes about women's peaceful natures contribute to their representation as non-violent but able to support communities in countering terrorism and extremism, and thus as prominent actors in deradicalisation activities. It also contributes to states assigning women roles such as peace advocates and peacebuilders within their CT/CVE initiatives. For example, it is stated in Norway's NAP that 'women are influential peace activists who build resistance to violent extremism and run effective de-radicalisation, reintegration and reconciliation programmes' (Norwegian Ministries, 2019: 8).

Finally, the need for gender-specific CT/CVE strategies was elaborated in some NAPs (52 per cent), including collaboration with women-led civil society organisations to develop gender-responsive programmes and campaigns to counteract extremist ideologies. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina's NAP, the document sees a need to 'support the activities undertaken by citizens and civil society organisations targeted at prevention and promotion of positive narratives (opposition to violent extremist narratives by emphasising positive examples about social values, tolerance, openness and peaceful conflict resolution)' (Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, 2017: 26). These proposed actions acknowledge the significance of local knowledge and existing relationships with community groups. It is assumed that this knowledge, and these relationships, can inform the development and distribution of community and national campaigns that advocate for the rights of vulnerable groups, raise awareness of extremist activities and counter ideologies that threaten national and international security. These measures further highlight the representation of women as non-violent peacebuilders, with the knowledge to achieve peace, social cohesion and stability. However, this is a qualified form of agency and a qualified admission of women's knowledge: it is (and women are) contained within and constrained by 'local' mobilisation and associated with civil society rather than the realm of formal politics.

Conclusion

Our analysis shows that the inclusion of CT/CVE within the WPS agenda does not guarantee women's inclusion within states' security strategic planning, and does not ensure that the developed policies empower and reinforce women's human

rights. As states frequently exclude women from political decision-making, women's participation in CT/CVE initiatives is often tokenistic and problematic (Ní Aoláin, 2016; Gender Action for Peace and Security, 2018; Heathcote, 2018; Trojanowska et al, 2018). Representations of gender roles and responsibilities in relation to CT/CVE in WPS NAPs disregard women's agency, positioning women in nurturing and passive roles while portraying men as having the agency to perpetrate (and sometimes prevent) extremist violence. Although some NAPs acknowledge that both men and women are victims of extremist violence, women are commonly represented as victims in need of state protection to ensure their well-being. Conversely, men are portrayed as inherently violent and requiring little state intervention to achieve security. Women's agency is further denied in NAPs through their representation as victims of extremist ideologies; as outlined earlier, according to several of the NAPs we analysed, women are depicted as having been coerced by male 'terrorist' associates to participate in extremist violence.

Women were also represented as conduits for information, as opposed to individuals with agency. The WPS NAPs positioned women as enablers of terrorism and violent extremism through their representation as recruiters within extremist organisations. These roles and women's nurturing positions (mothers, sisters, wives, daughters) within their communities were identified as providing them with ease of access to men (the real 'risky subjects'), and thus construct women as conduits of information on (potentially) radicalised individuals. Some NAPs also emphasised that women have 'naturally' developed skills that enable them to identify extremist ideologies and behaviours. However, the nurturing skills that are assumed to make them efficient CT/CVE actors in community or 'local' contexts are perceived as inadequate for them to participate in state CT/CVE security policy and planning. In national security spaces, NAPs portray women as requiring empowerment and skills development to be able to contribute to state CT/CVE activities; men were not portrayed as requiring similar capacity building to be perceived as capable national CT/CVE actors.

The representation of women as victims of terrorism, conduits of information and community or local actors, and the positioning of men as violent, has negative implications for CT/CVE practice. Gender stereotypes that inform the representation of women's roles and identities in relation to CT/CVE highlight limitations in how states are integrating gender perspectives within their current WPS NAPs. These limitations foreclose opportunities for women to gain leadership positions within security institutions and inhibit their ability to meaningfully participate in the development and implementation of national CT/CVE strategies. States' perception of men as always potential agents of extremism can increase the risk of men's radicalisation and engagement in extremist violence as it can decrease the likelihood that states will implement specific CT/CVE measures aimed at men to engage them in positive ways. These representations pathologise men, particularly those from minoritised communities, by constructing these men as inherently violent and prone to radicalisation. Furthermore, the lack of gendered analysis in state CT/CVE measures affects their effectiveness in addressing the differences within religious, social, economic and environmental factors that motivate women and men to support and participate in extremist organisations. This limits states' ability to discourage extremist behaviours and recognise all groups of men as potentially vulnerable to extremism.

In many spheres of security policy and practice, it is becoming increasingly common to find representations of women as fully agential political actors capable

of perpetrating violence and participating in peacemaking and peacebuilding. Achievements under the auspices of the WPS agenda, in the realm of women's participation in peace processes and in peace and security governance more broadly, are notable in this regard. However, it seems that when the security issues in question relate to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, these achievements are forgotten. Soon after the adoption of UNSCR 2242 in 2015, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin (2016: 276) commented that the integration of CT/CVE with WPS brought with it 'real risks of creating greater insecurity and gender essentialism' for women in the domain of peace and security. Our study shows that Ní Aoláin's initial evaluation was, unfortunately, both prescient and accurate. It will be interesting to explore in future research whether the inclusion of women in CT/CVE, as in peace and security governance generally, may begin to influence and reshape the gender dynamics of this domain.

Conflict of interest
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Notes
[1] Here, 'text' is considered broadly, encompassing any symbolic or communicative artefact and not limited to the written word; sculpture, paintings, textiles, film and architecture can all be considered texts.

[2] In analytical terms, articulation 'has a nice double meaning because to "articulate" means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an "articulated lorry" (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not be connected to one another' (Stuart Hall, quoted in Weldes, 1996: 285).

[3] 'Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts' are first articulated into the WPS agenda in S/RES/2122 (para 3). S/RES/2242 and, most recently, S/RES/2467 both expand on this concern, as discussed in the introduction to this article, which suggests that further new resolutions would likely also pick up on the theme of terrorism and violent extremism as well. However, at present, it is an emergent issue area with concomitantly limited coverage.

[4] Barbara Trojanowska, Katrina Lee-Koo and Luke Johnson (2018: 14) identify the following emerging issues: (1) violent extremism; (2) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (3) disaster response and climate change; (4) displacement; (5) the continuum of violence; (6) Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and human trafficking; (7) diversity; and (8) men and boys.

[5] This included both current and superseded NAPs, for a total count of 128 plans.

[6] As we suspect readers will be interested, the outlier high point in 2017, shown in Figures 1 and 2, represents the Jordanian NAP.

[7] We deemed the result a 'false positive' if the search term appeared in isolation, without being articulated into representations of gender, terrorism and violent extremism. For example, we excluded the 2017 Cameroonian NAP because its mention of terror is in the following context: 'At least 350, 000 refugees are currently present in Cameroon; victims live in fear, panic, terror and despair, loss of self-esteem, stress' (Cameroon Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, 2017: 35).

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Appendix 1: NAPs in sample for analysis

Document	Year of publication
Ugandan National Action Plan	2008
Australian National Action Plan	2012
Malian National Action Plan	2012
Iraqi National Action Plan (I)	2014
Kosovo National Action Plan	2014
French National Action Plan (II)	2015
South Sudanese National Action Plan	2015
Palestinian National Action Plan	2015
Italian National Action Plan (III)	2016
Kenyan National Action Plan	2016
Niger National Action Plan	2016
Swedish National Action Plan (III)	2016
Dutch National Action Plan (III)	2016
US American National Action Plan (II)	2016
Belgian National Action Plan (III)	2017
Bosnia and Herzegovina National Action Plan (III)	2017
Canadian National Action Plan (II)	2017
Czech National Action Plan	2017
El Salvadorian National Action Plan	2017
German National Action Plan (II)	2017
Guatemalan National Action Plan	2017
Jordanian National Action Plan	2017
Montenegro National Action Plan	2017
Nigerian National Action Plan (II)	2017
Philippines National Action Plan (II)	2017
Serbian National Action Plan (II)	2017
Spanish National Action Plan (II)	2017
Albanian National Action Plan	2018
DRC National Action Plan (III)	2018
Finnish National Action Plan (III)	2018
Icelandic National Action Plan (III)	2018
Kyrgyz National Action Plan (II)	2018
Luxembourg National Action Plan	2018
Rwandan National Action Plan (II)	2018
Slovenian National Action Plan (II)	2018
Swiss National Action Plan (IV)	2018
UK National Action Plan (IV)	2018
Irish National Action Plan (III)	2019
Norwegian National Action Plan (IV)	2019

Note: *n* = 38.