Framing Female Returnees: Media Representations of Women Repatriated from ISIS in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This paper examines how female returnees from Syria are represented in Kazakhstani media through gendered assumptions. It focuses on women repatriated under Kazakhstan's Operation Jusan following the territorial defeat of the so-called Islamic State. The study draws on around 30 pieces of media content, including news articles from Tengrinews, Khabar, Sputnik Kazakhstan, ZTB News, Inform.kz, Caravan.kz, Azattyq, and Vlast, as well as official press releases from Akorda, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It explores how women are framed as victims, wives, mothers, or security threats, and how these portrayals intersect with national policy priorities. Gendered narratives simplify complex realities by relying on socially prescribed ideas of how men and women are expected to act during conflict. The findings show that Kazakhstani media often adopt a humane, state-centered discourse, presenting returnees as vulnerable mothers in need of rehabilitation, while simultaneously reinforcing state legitimacy through a protective, paternalistic tone. State-owned outlets tend to highlight a few "model cases" that confirm the official narrative, depoliticizing the issue and obscuring structural drivers of radicalization, which may may hinder genuine reintegration efforts. By contrast, independent media platforms offer more nuanced portrayals, granting women greater agency and situating their experiences within broader structural and social issues, although these accounts remain relatively limited. The study argues that even benevolent narratives can function as tools of political control. Recognizing the influence of gendered framings is therefore crucial for developing more inclusive approaches to transitional justice, gender equality, and sustainable security and reintegration policies.

Keywords: female returnees, Operation Jusan, media framing, Kazakhstan, ISIS, gender, critical discourse analysis

Introduction

This year marks the sixth anniversary of Kazakhstan's unprecedented repatriation effort, known as Operation Jusan, which aimed to bring back women and children from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq (National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). Named after the Kazakh word for the wormwood plant, a symbol of the steppe, memory, and homeland, the operation involved government officials, special forces, and humanitarian actors. 754 citizens from Syria and Iraq, including 37 men, 191 women, and 526 children were repatriated, making Kazakhstan one of the global leaders in such efforts (Sakenova, 2025). These returns occurred during the initial stages of the territorial and military defeat of the so-called Islamic State (IS, also commonly referred to as ISIS in media discourse) in Syria (Lammers, 2024). Approximately 40,000 people from 81 countries traveled to IS-controlled territories, including citizens of Kazakhstan (Kaliyev, 2021). Unlike earlier waves of foreign fighters, many entire families crossed borders together, a phenomenon described by some

analysts as "family jihad" (Atlantic Council, 2021). Motivations varied, ranging from religious fulfillment, adventure, and financial incentives to more complex structural factors such as socio-economic hardship, corruption, inequality, and identity crises (Martini, 2018).

For women and children who survived the collapse of IS territory, life often meant captivity, displacement, or time in Kurdish-run camps (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). Kazakhstan's decision to repatriate its citizens was therefore both a humanitarian response and a national security measure, complicated by the absence of a central negotiating authority in Syria, the legal status of children born abroad, and the risks of operating in an active war zone (OSCE, 2021; Suleyman, 2022).

While the repatriation itself has been internationally recognized, what remains underexplored is the aftermath, particularly how female returnees are represented in the media and how these narratives both influence and are influenced by public perceptions and national policies. This issue is important because women associated with IS occupy a highly contested discursive space. Although evidence suggests few differences in motivations between men and women joining the organization, media and public discourse frequently portray women as naïve victims or morally culpable actors (Eggert, 2016; Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Martini, 2018). These portrayals reflect dual and rigid gendered assumptions that also appear in broader discussions of women and political violence (Eggert, 2016; Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Martini, 2018). As Eggert (2016) notes, such assumptions reveal more about societal views of women in general than about the actual experiences of those who joined IS. Given the media's central role in shaping public understanding, examining these narratives is crucial for understanding how perceptions of female returnees are constructed and the potential consequences for society and policy.

Although existing research has examined media representations of female returnees in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands, studies focusing on Kazakhstan remain scarce, and this paper seeks to address that gap. The study adopts a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, well-suited for examining how the media construct identities and realities through language and framing choices, shaping what the public perceives as 'truth' and socially acceptable norms while simultaneously reflecting and reinforcing policy priorities (Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018). To build the corpus, the work draws on approximately 30 articles from the most consulted and popular outlets in Kazakhstan, including state-owned sources (Khabar, Akorda website, Inform.kz), widely read private online and print outlets (Tengrinews, Caravan.kz, Vecher.kz, Vremya, Liter, Qazaq Uni, ZTB News), and independent or opposition sources (Azattyq, Vlast.kz). Articles were collected through systematic keyword searches in Kazakh, Russian, and English (e.g., "female returnees," "Syria," "Jusan Operation," "IS women"), and all items directly addressing female returnees were included without repetition to ensure a comprehensive dataset. This selection captures a diversity of perspectives, reflecting both state-centered narratives and alternative framings in the Kazakhstani media landscape. Two periods are analyzed: the repatriation phase (2019–2021) and the post-repatriation context (2022–2025), allowing a longitudinal view of how narratives evolve over time.

The findings reveal several recurring patterns. Female returnees are often depicted as misled rather than radical, with identities primarily defined through motherhood. Terms commonly used in Western media, such as "jihadi brides" or "female foreign fighters," are rarely applied. Both state-aligned and independent outlets emphasize the humanitarian nature of repatriation, contrasting with the highly securitized or dehumanizing discourses seen elsewhere. Women's voices regarding ideology or motivations are largely absent, and narratives seldom address structural drivers of radicalization or reintegration challenges, including stigmatization, family breakdown, or psychological trauma. The

framing is protective, paternalistic, and depoliticized, appearing to prevent social tensions, limit criticism of domestic governance, and reinforce state legitimacy. Over time, female returnees are occasionally reframed as preventive actors, with their experiences used to deter others, while the discourse shifts from leader-centric to state-centric messaging. Despite the ongoing relevance of these issues, public conversation and media attention remain minimal.

These patterns highlight how media representations are selective and gendered, presenting a largely humane narrative while simultaneously serving as instruments of political control. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for examining the intersections of gender, media, and security in Kazakhstan. Building on this introduction, the literature review provides a theoretical framework for understanding how conflict is gendered and how women's agency is represented in media narratives about IS, drawing primarily on European examples before focusing on Kazakhstan.

Literature review

Gendered experiences and stereotypes in conflict

It is widely acknowledged that women and girls experience armed conflicts differently and often face disproportionate impacts (Martini, 2018; McKay, 1998; Thomson, 2006). The gendered-specific effects include but are not limited to gender-based violence and its sexual dimensions, including forced marriages, trafficking and exploitation, as well as disrupted access to healthcare and reproductive health complications (Martini, 2018; McKay, 1998; Thomson, 2006). Often overlooked in mainstream conflict studies in the past, these experiences have become the focus of much of early feminist scholarship. Yet, highlighting the victimhood and the victimization of women amid conflict, these works have risked accenting the victim-perpetrator binary outlook, where men are perceived as war-makers, and women as helpless victims. Feeding into larger stereotypical gendered assumptions and beliefs that women are inherently peaceful because they are "life-givers" and not "life-takers", this idea denies women's agency and complexity in times of war, dismissing them to "passive supporters", "fan girls", or "jihadi brides" (Elshtain, 1982; Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005; Stenger, 2023). This way, the other side of the coin, which is the phenomenon of female violence in global politics, has often been neglected and just recently received an increasing amount of media and academic attention.

When looking at some foundational works on gender and war, there are often two contrasting images of how men and women are defined and perceived (Azeez, 2019; Elshtain, 1982; Martini, 2018). These are "Just Warriors" and "Beautiful Souls" narratives, whereas, as the names suggest, men are viewed as brave fighters, while females as non-violent, domestic and caring figures (Azeez, 2019). Moreover, in this context, women are expected to stay away from the political realm, depending on governments (a strong state) for protection. Even in this setup, it is required for women to support men emotionally and materially so they can continue fighting. Thus, men are viewed as "naturally apt for" violence with all the assumed traits such as rationality, aggressiveness and risk-averseness as inherent ones, while women are not (Azeez, 2019).

These narratives, however, do not seem to explain situations of women engaging in violent conflicts, challenging the predefined societal norms and assumptions. When examining the existing literature and public discourse on politically violent women (violent extremism and terrorism), one quickly realizes that these constructions heavily rely on gendered stereotypes, often emphasizing personal explanations and factors behind their involvement (Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Martini, 2018). This way, women fighters (as well as their actions) are mainly comprehended through a narrow set of narratives: namely a physical appearance, a "family connection", romantic relationships, or

sexual violence experiences (Nacos, 2005). The oversimplification of the complex reality is accompanied by cliched tropes such as "the woman who acted for love" or rather "good girl gone bad" (Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005). The reason for that is argued to be the cognitive dissonance when seeing women taking up "intrinsically masculine" roles in violent conflict, which contradicts societal norms and the popular discourse (Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005). Generalization thus helps us make sense of the reality and, most importantly, preserves existing power structures.

Media and discursive constructions of female fighters

Before diving into the existing frameworks in more details, let us first conceptualize representations of women joining IS in media discourse, a main focus of the paper. Generally, they reflect the larger frequently used gendered narratives in conflict. Martini (2018) suggests placing them within Neo-Orientalist thinking, which portrays Western values and culture as universal, superior, and thus desired by all societies. This narrative maintains the idea of Western dominance over the so-called "Orient Other". In this regard, it is Islam that offers a powerful image of the "Other", as something inherently different and therefore opposed to the Western civilization (Martini, 2018). Following the idea that "a "civilized" world only makes sense if there is a barbarian other that lives outside of it.", this construction is further legitimized when this outsider resists or fights against "the West" (example of "Islamic" terrorism) (Martini, 2018).

In this broader context, the image of Muslim women in the West is that of helpless victims of violent Muslim men and their oppressive culture, often symbolized by the misunderstood attributes of Islamic clothing like burqa or hijab (Martini, 2018). The scholar then argues that these strong stereotypes have been instrumental in justifying the "war on terror" by reinforcing ideas of who needs to be saved and who has the power to do the saving (Martini, 2018). This way, while women in the West were depicted as mothers and wives of soldiers and fighters, Muslim women were presented as passive victims in need of rescue (Martini, 2018).

Foreign female ISIS fighters (here, specifically Western females), however, do not fit into this pattern, challenging the mainstream discourse and blurring the lines between "us" and "them" categories (Martini, 2018). Here, a "woman jihadi" does not only deny being rescued (turning against "their supposed liberators") but voluntarily joins up with the "terrorist oppressors" (Martini, 2018). This also disrupts and breaks many of the ideas of female peacefulness and passiveness (Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Martini, 2018; Nacos, 2005). It equally brings up uncomfortable and unsettling questions (what happens when "good women" living among "good men" willingly join the "bad men"?) (Martini, 2018). That is why, such a decision of a woman from a Western background, with supposedly better status, greater rights and freedoms, is seen as a "betrayal" (Martini, 2018). Finally, due to the patriarchal structure of IS, where females were mostly involved in the private sphere as mothers and wives (cannot be generalized though), this further disrupts the discourse with them being both "good" and "bad" women at the same time (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018).

Yet, there exists a number of common narratives used to safeguard the dominant discourse and these are often far from neutral with terrorist men and females being portrayed very differently with assigned fixed roles to them (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2011; Martini, 2018). Examples include the infamous "Jihadi brides" label, which imposed on women a unique predefined role of a fighter's wife, obscuring other possible motivations and framing their actions within the marriage and subordination lens (Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018). The men, on the other hand, despite a similarly problematic label of "foreign fighters" attached to them, were granted a sense of agency and autonomy in these media

categorisations (Martini, 2018).

Moreover, the media tends to focus more on their personal issues than on their actions. These are "naive and vulnerable" frames, where women joining the organization are often described as confused, young, misguided, and therefore easily manipulated (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018; Stenger, 2023). Similarly, terms such as "groomed" or "lured" are commonly used alongside the narrative of marriage as a motive, erasing their political agency and infantilizing them (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018; Stenger, 2023). Interestingly, the media also heavily emphasizes their physical appearance and consequent transformations ("from jeans to niqab"), redirecting attention from their actions to their looks (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018; Stenger, 2023). This choice of words invokes orientalist assumptions of these women as exotic and oppressed, "symbolizing" through clothing the process of radicalization and visually presenting them as "prisoners" (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Martini, 2018; Stenger, 2023).

In addition, by hiding these women's possible political commitments, emphasis is placed on personal traumas or the so-called quest for rebellion and adventure, which may have led them to join IS in the first place (Martini, 2019). In general, all these tropes, irrationalizing and infantilizing these women, have helped construct and maintain in the media the image of a "terrorist", yet who is not credible (Martini, 2018). In this way, with their actions depoliticized, the discourse on gender could be safeguarded.

Another interesting set of gendered narratives often used to analyze women's violence was proposed by Sjoberg and Gentry (2011). The "Mother", "Monster" and "Whore" frames (along with the additional "Victim" narrative later developed by Rachel Schmidt) are frequently employed when framing women joining ISIS (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2011; Martini, 2018). In these interpretations, women's involvement in political violence, viewed as violent and irrational, is explained through biological or societal functions and "dysfunctions" than through ideological or rational political agency (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Lammers, 2024; Margolin & Cook, 2023).

Briefly, the "Mother" narrative describes women as motivated by personal and familial loyalty (Lammers, 2024; Martini, 2018). Within it, we can distinguish between the so-called "good" mothers (those caring, nurturing, and supporting their male fighters as wives or mothers) and the "bad", vengeful ones, women framed as resorting to violence due to grief and personal loss (Lammers, 2024; Martini, 2018).

In contrast, the "Monster" narrative paints them as inhuman, abnormal, excessively deviant, or even evil. Since these women have broken the code of "what womanhood should entail", this perceived "dysfunction" is seen as the cause of their violence (Lammers, 2024; Martini, 2018). It underlines that they are "in denial of their femininity, and no longer women or human", eliminating any (political) rationality and dehumanizing them. They are thus often framed as even more dangerous than their male counterparts, precisely because "something is wrong with them" (Lammers, 2024; Martini, 2018). As such, they do not represent a "challenge for the discourse", as they were already positioned outside of it (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Krulišová, 2016; Lammers, 2024; Margolin & Cook, 2023; Martini, 2018).

The third "Whore" narrative, as Sjoberg and Gentry (2011) put it, attributes their violence to dysfunctional or excessive sexuality, with the sexual slavery narrative being most commonly used for "jihadi brides" – women framed as seduced and manipulated tools of male violence. This closely relates to the expanded "(Stupid) Victim" narrative, which echoes orientalist tropes of these women as helpless pawns in need of saving (Lammers, 2024; Margolin & Cook, 2023; Martini, 2018). Altogether, these frameworks suggest that if women, who are inherently caring and peaceful, engage in violence, it must be the result of some dysfunctionality, personal familial issues, desperation or

coercion (Krulišová, 2016; Lammers, 2024; Margolin & Cook, 2023; Martini, 2018).

Finally, the literature on the topic constantly demonstrates that women's own voices have often been ignored in these narratives. This way, despite the process of radicalization being multi-causal and exceedingly complex, the gendered media portrayals oversimplify the phenomenon, trying to put an unknown into the known box (Gan et al., 2019; Spencer, 2016). Moreover, often depicted as naive and manipulated, many of those females joining ISIS were in fact well-educated and might have joined the organization due to a vast array of factors (Gan et al., 2019; Spencer, 2016). Might it be religious ideology, escaping inequality, injustice and alienation in their home country. Obviously, one should not forget that often there was no choice, especially for those women living in the areas of Syria and Iraq that were largely governed by the Caliphate (Gan et al., 2019; Spencer, 2016). Being part of the group thus ensured the survival for them and their children (Gan et al., 2019; Spencer, 2016).

Equally, the roles these women undertook within the organization varied considerably (Gan et al., 2019; Margolin & Cook, 2023; Spencer, 2016). While the possibility of manipulation, abuse, trafficking, exploitation and coercion must not be dismissed by any means, the level of involvement and agency must be assessed individually. Moving beyond this rigid binary outlook of either victim or perpetrator is thus essential. And rather the spectrum of participation and agency should be acknowledged, where women can be simultaneously complicit and coerced (coerced into the organization but then becoming perpetrator at home while detaining a slave; or not directly participating in combat but supporting the fighters or even trafficking the arms, engaging in recruitment and facilitating logistics; travelling to Syria willingly but then doing everything just to protect family and children) (Gan et al., 2019; Margolin & Cook, 2023; Spencer, 2016). The research and personal stories of these women demonstrate that these functions can and do most of the time overlap.

Ultimately, reducing women either to passive non-threats or dangerously deviant anomalies can have major consequences (not only in relation to IS). Most importantly, females may not receive appropriate and necessary deradicalization and rehabilitation support due to a flawed understanding of the causes of radicalization in the first place, posing greater risks for long-term reintegration and prevention of similar cases (Stenger, 2024).

Consequences of these narratives

The final part of this literature review focuses on the implications of media framings of women returnees and how these narratives make certain actions possible. What purposes do they serve? Do they change over time, and if so, does this result in shifts in policy or public attitudes? Examining these questions helps assess whether similar dynamics are observable in the case of Kazakhstan.

It is important to note that discourse can be both a social construction and a social constructor at the same time, shaping and changing the way reality is understood (Martini, 2018). Constructivist approaches argue that terrorism derives its meaning not only from the act itself but also from how it is interpreted through discourse and language (Jackson, 2019). The words and ideas used to describe and discuss the phenomenon, reflecting dominant ideologies, influence how societies and governments react and respond. In turn, this can shape which actions and policies come to be seen as appropriate or unacceptable.

Framing theory similarly emphasizes the role of language (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Jackson, 2019). Language choices and metaphors used to describe women joining IS can reveal the underlying logic of these narratives. As Jackson (2019) notes, they fall into three main categories. First, natural disaster imagery, often water-based, as in immigration reporting, emphasizes an

unmanageable and unstoppable "flow" or "stream" of recruits, erasing individuality in the process (Jackson, 2019). Second, disease and vegetation metaphors, such as "evil seeds of hatred", "ideological poison" and "parasites", frame IS as an infection corrupting otherwise "healthy" young women, with the "ever-present virus of radicalization" implying that no one is immune and justifying extra-vigilance (Jackson, 2019). Third, supernatural and evil imagery ("good versus evil", "under the spell", "earthly hell") depicts women as bewitched or transformed into "monsters" both by the organization and the Syrian environment (Jackson, 2019).

Consequently, a critical question arises: what does it mean to represent people as "toxins", "tides" and "monsters"? Such (constant) imagery points to a particular approach of managing the issue, often implying the impossibility of rehabilitation (Jackson, 2019). Just as "we do not negotiate with terrorists", the implication is that "natural or supernatural forces" cannot be engaged with, and are inherently dangerous. The point is not to claim that these homogenizing and dehumanizing representations directly caused certain policies, military actions, or public indifference to the fate of the 'brides' (as in the UK and Denmark cases). Rather, these discourses, by framing women in a certain way and stressing the need for proactive security measures, helped make certain policies more acceptable and feasible (Jackson, 2019).

Likewise, assuming coercion or manipulation by default, while ignoring political, cultural, or personal factors, shaping women's engagement in violence, can serve as a deliberate strategy for regimes to discredit a struggle and justify harsh measures fighting against it (the case of the female self-martyrs in Dagestan and Chechnya) (Krulišová, 2016).

State responses and gaps in literature

Finally, varying state responses to repatriation depend on how these women are framed in prevailing narratives, as either victims or threats to national security (Stenger, 2023). Four major approaches emerged: unconditional repatriation (e.g., Kazakhstan), conditional repatriation, allowing return, and denying repatriation (Stenger, 2023).

While countries with stronger human rights records might be expected to take more proactive repatriation steps, many do not fall under unconditional repatriation (for example, Denmark and Australia) (Stenger, 2023). Conversely, states with weaker human rights reputations often undertook a different approach and repatriated, especially children and women, to (possibly) improve the international image, as seen in the case of Chechnyan leader Kadyrov (Stenger, 2023). This highlights the strategic role of public communication and media narratives, making repatriation a calculated decision (Stenger, 2023).

Interestingly, countries practicing unconditional repatriation tend to be young states, mostly in the Balkans or Central Asia, often Muslim-majority (Stenger, 2023). Supposedly, this may relate to national identity and nation-building efforts, as well as regional peer influence. However, traditional political, economic, or security explanations fail to fully account for repatriation policy differences (Stenger, 2023). Therefore, a qualitative, intersectional gender analysis is necessary, focusing on how gendered and racialized threat perceptions shape state policies. For example, Harmonie Toros shows that in Morocco, where returnees were framed as victims, rehabilitation prevails, whereas Tunisia, viewing them as threats, decided to go with criminal justice responses (Stenger, 2023) (where the state is positioned as a masculine "protector" in counterterrorism).

Does this pattern hold for women who departed and later sought to return to Kazakhstan? Building on these insights, this paper focuses on three key questions to understand the complex interplay between media, public perception, and policy in the case of Kazakhstan, which remains

underexplored despite the country's active repatriation efforts:

1. What are the dominant discourses surrounding female returnees in Kazakhstan, and how are they portrayed?
2. How does media framing reflect national political priorities?
3. To what extent have these narratives evolved over time?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis approach to examine how women returnees from the Islamic State are represented in Kazakhstani media. CDA was particularly suited for this research because it rests on the premise that these women "are what we say they are", meaning that identities are discursively constructed (Martini, 2018). Media narratives do not simply report facts but also actively shape what becomes accepted as "reality" and "truth" by privileging certain linguistic and framing choices that reflect existing power structures. As Jackson (2019) notes, what we believe we know about a phenomenon directly influences how we think it should be dealt with.

The analysis covered two main time periods: the repatriation phase (2019-2021), following the collapse of IS and the launch of Kazakhstan's repatriation operations, and the post-repatriation context (2022-2025). This division made it possible to trace changes in emphasis and evolving patterns in representation.

The dataset consisted of 30 articles drawn from widely read and diverse national media outlets to ensure diversity in source type and political alignment. The relatively small sample size is consistent with CDA as well, which prioritizes depth of contextual analysis and interpretation, rather than the quantity. A broad range of formats was included, including news reports, opinion pieces, interviews, official statements, expert commentary, civil society perspectives, and, where available, direct testimonies of returnees. State-owned sources included Khabar, Inform.kz, and official press releases from the Akorda and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Private outlets with large readerships such as Tengrinews, Caravan.kz, Vecher.kz, Vremya, Liter, Qazaq Uni, and ZTB News were also analyzed, along with independent outlets such as Azattyq and Vlast.kz. These outlets together illustrate the spectrum of Kazakhstan's media environment, which is formally plural but largely dominated by state ownership and pro-government editorial lines (Dumont, Solis, & Zaleski, 2023). For example, even Tengrinews, often described as privately owned, regularly promotes pro-government narratives, while Azattyq and Vlast.kz provide rare spaces for independent or critical reporting. Articles were identified through systematic keyword searches in Kazakh, Russian, and English, using terms such as "female returnees," "IS," "IS women," "Kazakhstan repatriation," and "Jusan Operation." Only items directly addressing female returnees were included, without repetition, and accessed directly from online archives to ensure first-hand engagement with original media content.

The analysis was conducted on several levels. Textual analysis focused on the use of language, including word choice, metaphors, adjectives, and grammatical construction. Framing analysis examined dominant representations, the role of visual imagery, the privileging of certain policy orientations, and the presence of alternative narratives. Contextual analysis situated these portrayals within broader discourses of security, gender and nationhood. The small sample allowed to better understand the recurring tropes, the subtle contrasts across outlet types and how specific framings aligned with state policy priorities and shaped public attitudes toward repatriation and reintegration.

Findings and Discussion

The Kazakhstani media coverage of women returnees from Syria reveals a number of recurring patterns of representation. Broadly, this coverage can be divided into three main categories:

1. News-based, neutral reporting, particularly focusing on the Operation Jusan, its logistics and results;
2. Humanitarian accounts, emphasizing Kazakhstan's unprecedented repatriation efforts, often aimed at international organizations or foreign audiences;
3. Personalized narratives, featuring interviews with mostly women and children, and detailed family stories.

Among these, the personalized narratives dominate the media landscape when it comes to the female returnees. Almost all of the articles contain testimonies describing how they left Kazakhstan, usually following their husbands, and often without realizing the true destination or conditions. For instance: *"Rimma claims that she learned halfway there that their final destination was Syria"* (Veber, 2019). Another article echoes similar naivety: *"I got married at 17 and obeyed him (husband) in everything… Only when we arrived did I realize there was a war"* (ZTB, 2025).

Generally, this naivety and deception trope appears consistently. Women are both framed by journalists and frame themselves as misled young brides, manipulated by or blindly trusting male authority figures. One recalls: *"My husband said we had to go if we wanted to live in paradise. He convinced me that there would be no restrictions on praying or wearing a headscarf… and that it was our duty to be with Muslims. He didn't say there was a war, he assured me it was peaceful"* (ZTB, 2025) The interviewer then goes:

- *So, as a young girl, did you understand where you were going?*
- *Not really. I didn't know that I was going to a country at war,* - she replies.

This framing resonates with official state discourse as well (Akorda, 2019; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). In articles from the President's official website, women are described as having been "*deceitfully taken to this crisis-stricken country, where they were held hostage by terrorists*" (Akorda, 2019). Finally, *"these innocent people, who found themselves in such a difficult situation, were immensely happy to be rescued"*. The emphasis is on victimhood, lack of agency, inexperience and deception, which aligns with the broader rehabilitation narrative: these were not ideological actors, but (passive) victims of circumstance who can be reintegrated. Probably, such a choice was taken to reassure society about potential security threats and anxieties quite common at the time.

At the same time, the deeply personalized portrayals repeatedly juxtapose horrific war experiences as well as Syria's destruction with Kazakhstan's safety and dreams of homecoming. One article says: *"The women speak tenderly about their homeland and recall the horrors of captivity with fear. They went to Syria in search of a 'righteous life,' but ended up in ruins"* (Tengrinews.kz, 2024).

Children are central to this imagery: *"They were constantly afraid of the bombs… They covered their ears in horror and screamed." "At that moment, I felt pain that I was leaving my country. I was promised paradise if I followed my husband, that I would be a good wife, and I wanted to achieve paradise. Children, it's scary to even think about what they saw"* (Baibatchanova & Kusanbekov, 2019).

Such contrasts elevate the homeland as a nurturing, protective space: *"There is no land like your homeland, no people like your own people."* Both pro-regime and independent outlets echo this homeland-centered rhetoric. Articles repeatedly underline: *"They sought happiness in Syria, but found it in Kazakhstan"* (Vecher.kz, 2024).

Alongside emotional and personal testimonies, the media underlines the state's role as savior. The role of the state in upholding its duty despite all risks and saving its citizens is attributed to Nazarbayev's leadership, specifically in the coverage during 2019. At the same time, emphasis is placed on Kazakhstan's uniqueness: *"Even European countries did not do that. Denmark only repatriated children under 10, Germany repatriated only 9 people, Switzerland only 18. And we repatriated about 600 people"* (Baibatchanova & Kusanbekov, 2019). The protective state discourse, giving its citizens "a second chance" despite their betrayal, is further reinforced by women's acknowledgment and gratitude (Sputnik, 2019). For instance, one returnee recalled: *"When I saw the rescuers from Kazakhstan with my own eyes, I realized that we had not been abandoned. Women from France and Germany looked at us enviously and begged us to ask Kazakhstan to take them too, or at least their children"* (Liter, 2019). Another stated: *"We are glad that we were accepted in Kazakhstan. Women from other countries sat and cried, saying they had nowhere to go"* (Veber, 2019). Finally, one woman shares: *"I am indebted to the state of Kazakhstan, to my President, and to my people… They could have left us in Syria, but they did not abandon us"* (Baymanova, 2021). The humanitarian-nationalist lexicon ("our women," "our children," "Kazakhstani citizens") might further underscore the regime's image as strong, benevolent, exceptional, and effective compared to other hesitant countries.

Media coverage also highlights the transformative journeys of women returnees. Many are depicted as not only rehabilitated victims but as actively engaged in prevention. As such, they share their stories in universities, schools, and forums, addressing young people and policymakers. The women themselves frame their mission as a way of repaying their debt to the homeland: *"My big mistake was that I didn't tell anyone about my husband's plans… That's why I share my story now, so others do not repeat my fate"* (ZTB, 2025).

Thus, the discourse reframes returnees from objects of state rescue into active participants in state-supported prevention and counter-extremism efforts. While these initiatives highlight agency and resilience and are positive, they also risk narrowing the field of possible narratives to those approved and sanctioned by the state. In practice, the state decides which voices are amplified, who is deemed safe and legitimate, and who remains excluded. Such framing not only bolsters Kazakhstan's counter-terrorism agenda but also consolidates the state's authority to define the terms of rehabilitation and redemption.

Interestingly, in one of the articles a returnee shares that she is grateful for her rescue, even though she left Kazakhstan on "bad terms" or "badly".

- *You said that you left "badly." What does that mean?* the interviewer asks.

- *We believed that we would be better off in another country. Although now I understand that I did not experience any oppression (back in Kazakhstan). We created these problems ourselves* (ZTB, 2025).

This exchange is revealing on several levels. First, this framing erases any structural conditions, such as economic inequality, social exclusion, or patriarchal norms, that may have made radicalization appealing in the first place. Instead, extremism is presented as a misguided, self-inflicted deviation, not the result of structural grievances. By acknowledging that "oppression" was not real but imagined, the woman simultaneously legitimizes the government's position that Kazakhstan is a stable, non-repressive society and discredits alternative accounts of marginalization.

At the same time, her articulation of gratitude for rescue, despite leaving on bad terms,

positions the state as both forgiving and paternalistic: even those who rejected Kazakhstan are welcomed back by the wise, protective homeland. Finally, what remains unsaid, or what cannot be said, is equally important. These might include accounts from women who may continue to feel ambivalent, critical, or resistant. Such silences underscore the limits of the public narrative and highlight how women's voices are mediated to sustain broader political projects of stability and legitimacy.

Generally, all articles reveal an ideological shift: *"We were very radical. We believed we would be better off elsewhere. We called our leaders kafirs, believing they didn't love religion as much as we did. Only in a foreign land did I realize how alien this was to me, and that there is nothing more precious than my native land."* Even convicted women are framed through citizenship logic: *"They are all citizens of Kazakhstan. When they finish serving their sentences, they will return in any case"* (Vaal, 2019). Citizenship is depicted as unbreakable and enduring, even after betrayal.

Coming back to the early saturation of Nazarbayev's personal role in 2019, one can suggest that the timing overlaps with political turbulence: his resignation, contested elections, and widespread heavily suppressed protests all across the country (Asylbek, 2019). The humanitarian rescue of women and children may thus be read as legitimacy-building, contrasting repression at home with benevolence abroad. By 2021 and especially 2024, articles still emphasize gratitude, regret, and Kazakhstan's exceptionality, but the president's figure is largely absent. Instead, the focus is on the state as an institution and on returnees' own testimonies.

Let us look at one of the articles closely to see the above-mentioned and other possible (gendered) narratives. In one of the articles published in 2019 on a widely consulted media platform, a Kazakh woman who was returned to her homeland as part of Operation Jusan shared her memories of how she lived and later escaped from Syria (Sputnik, 2019).

To begin with, the title of the article and its subtitles are far from neutral and immediately highlight the horrors and personal difficulties she had to endure, framed within strong mother and wife narratives. *"Fled from terrorists and buried her baby: Kazakh woman recounts life in Syria"* states the article, opening with *"The mother had to bury her own child."* This sets the tone of tragedy, victimhood, and suffering.

The woman shares: "*I was young and didn't know much. Today, I want to address everyone, especially young people. You need to be careful and vigilant. Slogans about Muslims needing help there and calls for 'jihad' are a way to bring people into the center of armed conflict*" (Sputnik, 2019).

The emphasis here is on regret, repentance, and preventing others from repeating her mistakes. Yet, one can see that little attention is given to her life before departure or her deeper motivations. Instead, the focus falls directly on her suffering in Syria. Subtitles such as *"Married Off Three Times"* and *"Escaped from Terrorists"* emphasize her lack of agency, portraying her as "passed around" rather than acting independently. This reinforces the rescued victim frame, which possibly suggests that rehabilitation and reintegration are possible if the woman is brought under state and (here) religious guidance.

What is especially interesting about the article and why it was chosen for a closer look is that it also includes testimonies from men right after that, yet presented in a different way. Their personal paths are described in more detail, highlighting motivations, decisions, and ideological influences. One man narrates how since 2005 he had been "searching" for some meaning in life and later turned to religion. Gradually, he was influenced by online lectures and in 2011 he attempted to cross into Waziristan, where he was drawn to jihad out of religious ignorance, and ultimately served a prison sentence (2011–2015) (Sputnik, 2019).

Another depiction of a man provides even more explicit detail: *"I have nothing to hide. I went*

to Syria for a number of reasons. In 2013, when we were at the mosque in Egypt on Fridays, there was open propaganda. They were calling on people to go to Syria. The residents in the video said that they were being killed and asked: where are the Muslims, why aren't they defending us? Hearing this, the guys started to leave. In 2014, I found the money for tickets, and they helped me find my way there. We underwent so-called military training" (Kaliyev, 2019).

Here, unlike the women, men's testimonies explicitly outline the "why" and "how" of their decisions, despite both male and female testimonies foregrounding "religious illiteracy" as the main cause of their choices. Thus, men here are framed as misguided but active agents, who made deliberate choices but are redeemable through correction, imprisonment, and state-sponsored theology. Their narratives are more detailed and demonstrate a journey, recruitment, travel, training, offering explicit accounts of motivations and actions. Whereas women's testimonies focus primarily on victimhood, motherhood and suffering (forced marriages, captivity, youth, naivety), and their voices are limited to regret and warnings.

At the same time, both depictions can depoliticize their decisions and frame it as a lack of knowledge rather than socio-political grievances or ideology. Moreover, both accounts highlight family suffering, reinforcing the idea of collective harm and the need for state intervention and protection. But more interestingly, reintegration is consistently tied to loyalty to national traditions and state authority. The man concludes: *"Now I have returned to the Hanafi school, I do not oppose national traditions or the state's politics. I would not want young people to repeat my mistakes. Islam is a religion of peace, which teaches mercy"* (Sputnik, 2019). While his point might be valid, this subtle "do not oppose state policies" phrase can be a telling one. Finally, the woman concluding her speech with gratitude to the President completes the points stated below about the state as a savior.

The second peculiar case is the story of Akmaral Almagambetova, a Kazakhstani woman who left for Syria in the early 2010s and was later sentenced to five years in prison on charges of terrorism propaganda and incitement to religious hatred after her repatriation (Zhursin, 2019). Her media portrayal differs considerably from broader coverage.

Early narratives framed Akmaral as a *"woman that escaped from happiness to hell,"* (Akniyet Centre for the Rehabilitation of Adherents of Radical Religious Movements, 2022). "Under the influence of extremist ideologues, she left her native Aktobe for Syria, abandoning her husband and three children, the youngest of whom was only one year old at the time," one article begins. After becoming more interested in religion, Akmaral started to consult various internet sources. According to her closed ones, *"very soon in the soft and smiley Akmaral, there was more and more aggression."* Reflecting on her past, Akmaral herself said: *"I left because of illiteracy, and, of course, I got carried away by emotions. I had issues in my personal life, some disagreements with my husband."* Despite her maternal instinct telling her not to leave her children, she went to Syria, knowing there was war and believing she needed to practice religion, but later admitted, *"I was wrong"* (Zhursin, 2019).

She describes her first husband as *"a very good person. He loved me, took care of me... I did not need anything. But under the influence of radicals I got off the right path."*

During her time in prison, she was in touch with her children by phone: *"After I left, my husband remarried. He met a good woman. He lives happily. She proved to be a good wife for him."*

The articles and, particularly the Akniyet Centre's reportage (2022), construct her story in a highly gendered way: Akmaral left a loving husband and happy family, initially did not want to return despite the destruction around her. One of the Centre's heads explains that when she was repatriated, Akmaral was withdrawn and irritable, which he attributed to the so-called "syndrome of an unfulfilled woman" (translated from Russian) (Akniyet Centre, 2022).

The coverage also stresses her isolation because of that: no one visited her in prison, and her

relatives turned away. Akmaral herself adds that she was *"infected with the ideology just like a virus"* (Zhursin, 2019).

This was the narrative in the early 2020s, yet more recent media highlight her transformation journey. Today, Akmaral is portrayed as active in deradicalization and prevention efforts, sharing her story as a cautionary tale. *"We did so much wrong, said so many bad things about our government back then, but the government did not abandon us." "She met her children and they forgave her,"* one report concludes (Maikozova, 2024).

This case is crucial for several reasons. First, it shows that even within a single case, media depictions of women returnees evolve over time. During her trial, Akmaral was framed through the "bad mother" and "failed woman" narrative. She abandoned her children and betrayed a loving husband, which made her appear even more deviant, irrational and dangerous than male returnees facing similar charges. For men, the emphasis was not on failing as fathers or husbands.

At the same time, her actions were also demonized in ways that are unusual in Kazakhstani coverage of women returnees. One source described her as *"a striking example of a person infected with radicalism to the core… close to amirs, fluent in Arabic, and even married seven times in Syria"* (Akniyet Centre, 2022). The diagnosis of the so-called "syndrome of an unfulfilled woman" further highlights prevailing public attitudes that frame women's radicalization as a product of irrationality, gendered failure, or psychological weakness, rather than political or ideological motivation. In other words, a "good womanhood" is equated with being a loyal wife, mother, and obedient citizen. Moreover, this initial portrayal can suggest that there are limits of acceptable narratives and women who cannot be placed into victimhood or motherhood are demonized.

Yet, there is a transformation and the story is ultimately brought back into alignment with dominant frames: Akmaral realizes her mistakes and is rehabilitated into the role of a preventive messenger against radicalization. A story that once threatened to challenge the "misled mothers, not radicals" script eventually resolves into the same logic and preferred discourse. This reflects a broader pattern in Kazakhstani society as well, where women are usually represented through the lens of family roles, rather than as citizens or political actors.

Finally, this transformation shows how the media and the state selectively use and instrumentalize women's stories. This way, Akmaral, once seen as dangerous, is now presented as a "success story" because she aligns with state narratives, expresses gratitude to the government, and participates in community projects. However, we can ask what happens to women who do not or cannot conform. Do they remain invisible? These selective portrayals turn individual stories into examples of state benevolence and control rather than genuine representations of women's diverse experiences.

What is important to note is how state-owned and independent outlets diverge in their framing of repatriation and reintegration. While recurring discursive patterns are broadly similar, independent platforms such as Masa Media and Azattyq situate female returnees within a wider discussion of the structural drivers of radicalization. Masa Media (2021), for instance, identifies weak and corrupt governance, lack of the rule of law, social inequality, domestic violence, poverty, and gender inequality among the key factors. Likewise, Mostovaia (2021) draws attention to difficult cases, such as women becoming second wives after their return to Kazakhstan, thereby underscoring that rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes are uneven and not always immediately successful. One commentary stresses: *"We hope that this is not a 'regular event' on the international stage to make a name for itself. It is an important and complex undertaking. Many people were involved and continue to work on it"* (*Masa Media*, 2021).

Although independent outlets acknowledge Kazakhstan's pioneering role in repatriation, the

institutional support provided to returnees, and the returnees' expressions of gratitude, they do not reduce the narrative to a simple success story. Instead, they demonstrate the complexities of women's lived experiences, often depicting them as agents navigating coercion and survival. Veber (2021), for example, cites Zhazira, who explained that marrying under duress was a strategy to protect herself and her children from rape and starvation. She further noted her fear of being labeled a "terrorist's wife" and the possible repercussions this might have on her children and her own life (Veber, 2021). Such portrayals, though often still filtered through the lens of motherhood and marriage, offer a more nuanced depiction of women during and after conflict, balancing vulnerability and agency.

These differences in framing reveal deeper power relations and ideological positioning. State-owned outlets largely reproduce narratives of benevolence and efficiency, reinforcing state legitimacy. Independent media, while not entirely rejecting this portrayal, complicate it by interrogating the structural drivers of radicalization and amplifying returnees' diverse voices.

Overall, depictions of women returnees in Kazakhstani media rely on a number of recurring frames. They are portrayed as misled but not truly radical, and as mothers whose identities are defined through their children. Notably, the term "Jihadi brides" or "female foreign fighters" commonly used in foreign media is rarely found in Kazakhstani coverage. Both state-aligned and independent outlets stress a humanitarian nature of repatriation, in contrast to the highly securitized or dehumanizing discourses observed in other countries. For instance, in the Netherlands, media and returnees often adhered to a victim narrative, while politicians frequently dehumanized female foreign fighters, using terms such as "inhumans" or "beasts" (Lammers, 2024). The "monster" narrative was pervasive in parliamentary debates and online platforms, and securitarian measures or denials of repatriation were justified through this framing (Lammers, 2024).

Especially in state-owned media, the issue is depoliticized and there is almost no mention of the structural factors leading to radicalization and recruitment in the first place, which prevents opening debates on domestic shortcomings and drawing attention to domestic weakness in governance or social policy. Women's voices on politics or ideology are largely absent, and their "why" is reduced to naivety. Existing scholarship shows that authoritarian regimes often seek to legitimize themselves, but effectiveness depends not only on official narratives, but on their co-production by governments, media, and pro-government supporters (Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2024). For example, the Saudi Arabian regime's effective handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, amplified by media and loyal commentators, translated trust in state capacity into broader performance legitimacy for the regime and its governance (Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2024). Similarly, Kazakhstan's state-managed repatriation narrative might frame humanitarian action in ways that reinforce trust in governance and consolidate both domestic and international legitimacy.

It might equally be possible that this depoliticized framing of female returnees and the operation, in general, has helped the state to prevent broader social tensions and possible backlash against certain groups, eliminating the possibility of fueling suspicion towards entire communities (e.g., rural, religious, or ethnic groups) that might have be perceived as "prone to radicalization."

In general, the state is depicted as protective, strong, humanitarian, and more responsible than other states, giving second chances and providing opportunities for reintegration. Over time, female returnees are reframed as preventive actors, sharing their example to deter others, while the discourse itself shifts from being leader-centric to more state-centric. So while the central message presents a humane and inclusive framing with positive impacts, it is crucial to interrogate the broader implications of such rhetoric. Independent accounts partly address this gap by acknowledging the existing difficulties and granting women greater agency, however they remain limited.

Finally, recommendations for preventing radicalization emphasize developing civic and

national identity, embracing secular state principles, and recognizing oneself as part of the broader Kazakhstani ummah (Counter-Terrorism Committee, 2021). This discourse can be understood as a projection of state sovereignty and control, as well as a reinforcement of its monopoly over justice, mercy, and reintegration. It communicates to the population that "we decide who belongs, we forgive, we punish and we protect". At the same time, Kazakhstan seeks to present itself as a moral and responsible international actor, particularly in a global context where many states have refused to repatriate its citizens. These actions can be seen as using humanitarian diplomacy to enhance Kazakhstan's international reputation in multilateral arenas. This strategy also reflects a broader pattern in many authoritarian regimes, which rely not only on repression but on hybrid tactics, including the performance of effectiveness, moral leadership, and national unity.

Conclusion

Women's participation in violence is not a new phenomenon. However, much of the existing literature tends to view them either as passive victims of conflict or as abnormal actors when they engage in violence. This framing limits our understanding of their roles and experiences. As Spencer (2016) notes, women who join violent groups are often portrayed through stereotypes rather than analyzed within the broader social, political, and personal contexts shaping their decisions.

The reporting of news is closely tied to power dynamics, as the media plays a key role in constructing and legitimising what is perceived as 'reality' (Azeez, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Nacos, 2005; Shepherd, 2010). From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, language is never neutral since it reflects and reinforces dominant ideologies (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). This article interrogates the discursive representations of female returnees in Kazakhstani media.

In Kazakhstan, female returnees are primarily depicted as mothers, wives, and/or naive passive victims - overlapping roles that align with state policies while reinforcing gender stereotypes. Although this approach avoids the harshly securitized or dehumanizing discourse common in Western contexts, it still strips women of political agency and silences critical or alternative perspectives. The result is selective visibility, where female returnees are acknowledged only when they conform to the roles of "ideal victim," "ideal mother," or "loyal and grateful citizen," which narrows public understanding of women's participation in violence. Instead of recognizing the diverse experiences, motives, and challenges of returnees, the media and state discourse focus on a few "model cases" that confirm the official narrative. By framing repatriation as a non-political act, the state can sidestep uncomfortable questions about the roots of radicalization and consolidate its legitimacy and image both domestically and internationally (Ingram et al., 2022; Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2024). Operation Jusan thus functions not only as a story of rescue but also a carefully managed performance of state benevolence and effectiveness, especially within an authoritarian context (Nathan, 2020).

In sum, this framing, while presenting a comparatively humane discourse, ultimately limits critical engagement with the deeper challenges of reintegration, radicalization, and gendered experiences. Acknowledging these dynamics is therefore essential for understanding how media and state narratives simultaneously support policy objectives and often constrain the voices and agency of female returnees. At the same time, independent outlets offer more nuanced portrayals of women's experiences and choices. Their accounts do not simply criticize but, while acknowledging Kazakhstan's unprecedented efforts, also question systemic issues and structural drivers of radicalization. They foreground returnees' motivations, concerns, gratitude and hopes, thereby complicating and enriching the often simple narrative.

The avenues for future research are both important and wide-ranging. Studies could examine how different media narratives shape public attitudes toward female returnees, addressing the current gap in empirical data on social acceptance, stigmatization, and support for repatriation and reintegration in Kazakhstan. It is also crucial to investigate whether portrayals as victims or threats align with the lived realities of returnees to determine whether humane representations translate into better access to employment, education, and social support, or whether they hinder ongoing challenges. In addition, recommendations for media and government bodies could include promoting greater public awareness, fostering open debates on the topic, and implementing critical media literacy initiatives to reduce stigma and strengthen community cohesion. Insights from such research and efforts could ultimately support more effective and equitable reintegration policies by prioritizing inclusive public discussion and ongoing dialogue.

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МРНТИ: 19.21.91

Әйелдердің оралуын фреймдеу: Қазақстандағы Ислам мемлекетінен репатриацияланған әйелдердің медиадағы көрінісі

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Аңдатпа

Бұл мақала Сириядан қайтарылған әйелдердің Қазақстандық БАҚ-та қалай бейнеленетінін, гендерлік болжамдар тұрғысынан талдайды. Зерттеу Қазақстанның «Жусан» операциясы аясында, "Ислам мемлекеті" территориялық жеңілісінен кейін елге қайтарылған әйелдерге бағытталған. Зерттеу шамамен 30 БАҚ материалына негізделген, оның ішінде Tengrinews, Khabar, Sputnik Kazakhstan, ZTB News, Inform.kz, Caravan.kz, Azattyq және Vlast жаңалықтары, сондай-ақ Ақорда, Сыртқы істер министрлігі және Ұлттық қауіпсіздік комитетінің ресми хабарламалары бар. Мақала әйелдерді құрбан, әйел, ана немесе қауіп-қатер көзі ретінде көрсету тәсілдерін қарастырып, бұл бейнелеулердің ұлттық саясатқа қалай ықпал ететінін көрсетеді. Гендерлік дискурстар күрделі шындықтарды жеңілдетеді, себебі олар ерлер мен әйелдердің соғыс жағдайында қалай әрекет етуі тиіс екендігі жөніндегі әлеуметтік нормаларға сүйенеді. Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, Қазақстандық БАҚ көбінесе гуманитарлық, мемлекетке бағытталған дискурс ұстанып, қайтарылған әйелдерді реабилитацияны қажет ететін әлсіз аналар ретінде бейнелейді, сонымен қатар патерналистік тон арқылы мемлекеттің легитимдігін нығайтады. Мемлекеттік БАҚ бірнеше «модельдік оқиғаны» көрсету арқылы ресми дискурсты растап, мәселені деполитизациялайды және радикалданудың құрылымдық себептерін жасырады, бұл шынайы қайта интеграцияны қиындатуы мүмкін. Керісінше, тәуелсіз БАҚ платформалары әйелдердің агенттігін кеңейтіп, олардың тәжірибесін кеңірек құрылымдық және әлеуметтік контекстке орналастырып, көпқырлы бейнелеулер ұсынады, алайда бұл есептер әлі де салыстырмалы түрде шектеулі болып отыр. Мақала көрсеткендей, тіпті гуманитарлық бейнелеулер де саяси бақылау құралы ретінде қолданылуы мүмкін. Сондықтан гендерлік фреймингтердің ықпалын ескеру өту кезеңіндегі әділеттілік, гендерлік теңдік, сондай-ақ тұрақты қауіпсіздік пен қайта интеграция саясатын қалыптастыруда шешуші рөл атқарады.

Кілт сөздер: репатриацияланған әйелдер, Жусан операциясы, фрейминг, Қазақстан, Ислам мемлекеті, гендер, критикалық дискурс талдауы

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Фрейминг женщин-возвращенцев: репрезентация женщин репатриированных из ИГИЛ в казахстанских медиа

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В данной статье рассматривается, как женщины, возвращенные из Сирии, представлены в казахстанских СМИ через призму гендерных стереотипов. Основное внимание уделяется женщинам,

репатриированным в рамках операции «Жусан» после территориального поражения так называемого Исламского государства. Исследование основано на примерно 30 материалах СМИ, включая Tengrinews, Khabar, Sputnik Kazakhstan, ZTB News, Inform.kz, Caravan.kz, Azattyq и Vlast, а также официальные пресс-релизы Акорды, Министерства иностранных дел и Комитета национальной безопасности Республики Казахстан. Статья анализирует, как женщин изображают как жертв, жен, матерей или источники угроз, а также как эти представления соотносятся с приоритетами национальной политики. Гендерные нарративы упрощают сложные реалии, опираясь на социальные нормы о том, как мужчины и женщины должны действовать в условиях конфликта. Результаты показывают, что казахстанские СМИ часто используют гуманитарный, ориентированный на государство дискурс, представляя возвращенных женщин как уязвимых матерей, нуждающихся в реабилитации, одновременно укрепляя легитимность государства через патерналистский тон. Государственные СМИ, как правило, выделяют лишь несколько «образцовых случаев», подтверждающих официальную нарративу, деполитизируя вопрос и скрывая структурные причины радикализации, что может препятствовать полноценной реинтеграции. Напротив, независимые медиа платформы предлагают более нюансированные и многослойные изображения, расширяя агентность женщин и помещая их опыт в более широкий структурный и социальный контекст, хотя такие материалы остаются относительно ограниченными. Статья подчеркивает, что даже благожелательные нарративы могут служить инструментом политического контроля. Осознание влияния гендерного фрейминга имеет решающее значение для разработки более инклюзивных подходов к переходному правосудию, гендерному равенству и устойчивой политике безопасности и реинтеграции.

Ключевые слова: женщины-репатриантки, операция Жусан, фрейминг, Казахстан, ИГ, гендер, критический анализ дискурса