

# The Paradoxes of Securitising Gender in the Af-Pak Region

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## Abstract

*Does the enhancement of women's rights and gender equality lead to greater security? The answer depends on how security is defined and by whom. Gender equity and equality will improve the human security of women, if enacted rather than just promised, and if women are protected from any potential backlash from society or individual men. However, the relationship of gender equality to the security of a nation, such as Pakistan, of a security complex, such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, or of the wider community of nations, is somewhat contradictory, as social stability can require non-interference in certain gender regimes that continue to subordinate women. This inaction undermines women's individual security. Whilst modernisation theory insists that women's equality is integral to the social underpinnings of liberal governance and thus of the liberal peace, those very processes of modernisation cause the social disruptions that create both localised and globalized grievance-based movements, that can be both violent and socially reactionary. Gender equality was both a promise and a justificatory discourse in the post 9/11 military action in Afghanistan, but has been frequently compromised or discarded in favour of an interpretation of "security" that privileges stability and social pacification. Modern Pakistan has seen similar oscillations. Can gender equality be promoted in Pakistan in a manner that enhances individual human security, national security and regional security?*

**Keywords:** gender; securitisation; modernisation; development; Pakistan; Af-Pak region.

## Introduction

One of the intentions of the INSPIRE project was to connect the dots between gender relations as a key part of social systems of power, inequality and inequity, women as political agents, and current discourses about security and development in Pakistan and among those offering security and development assistance to the country. This was the rationale behind the engagements between the University of Bradford's Division of Peace Studies, the Fatima Jinnah Women University's Department of Diplomatic and Security Studies, and women representatives in the national parliament in Pakistan. However, the connections between these three elements are neither obvious nor straightforward. This article examines the ways in which (unequal) gender relations have been "securitised" in recent years, that is, spoken about not just as a threat to individual women's own safety and well-being, but also as a security threat to national states and even to the international community. In particular it focuses on a paradox evident in the actions of both states and international actors. Whilst it is increasingly argued

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that unequal gender relations are not conducive to development, democracy and security, there is nonetheless still a marked tendency in weak states to reverse gains in gender equality because of a desire to appease certain groups of men who threaten violent rebellion. Pakistan's history around gender relations, its oscillations between secularisation and Islamisation, between extending women's rights and curtailing them, has helped to frame the West's view of Pakistan as an object of security anxiety, especially as part of the post 9/11 "Af-Pak" security complex. Will the enhancement of gender equality in Pakistan lead to greater "security" in these international terms, or will it continue to fuel the social, political and ideological swings that have been so destabilising in this region in the last hundred years? There is, of course, a principled moral and legal argument in favour of gender equality and ensuring women's physical security, not least because Pakistan has a responsibility to meet its commitments to international human rights instruments.<sup>1</sup> However, this article is also concerned with how the policy community understands the relationship between gender and security (that is, how it "securitises" gender), and what impact policies on gender relations may have on the security situation in Pakistan. In short, if women politicians in Pakistan engage in the areas of both gender relations (specifically women's rights and security) and security for the country, how can they resolve the tensions and the paradox at the intersection of these two areas of policy?

## The paradoxes of gender, development, modernisation and security

The term "gender" refers to the social roles and behaviours assigned to men and women in a specific moment and place.<sup>2</sup> Gender is also *relational*, that is, men's and women's social status and access to resources – such as personal safety, livelihoods and dignity – are interlinked. This is important because although power does not have to be construed as a finite resource, it is often seen in zero sum terms – that is, women's empowerment is experienced by many men as undermining their net quotient of power and authority. This is why it has been so difficult to eradicate the most extreme forms of gender inequality and violent patriarchy,<sup>3</sup> evidenced in men's control and abuse of women, and why regime change and post-conflict situations are so frequently accompanied by violent backlashes against women.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pakistan signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996, but failed to submit any implementation reports until 2005, when the Ministry of Women Development took responsibility for compiling one (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women *Combined Initial, Second and Third Periodic Reports of States Parties: Pakistan* CEDAW/C/PAK/1-3).

<sup>2</sup> Three different categories get commonly conflated in discussions about gender. "Sex" refers to *biological* characteristics that are used to categorise someone as "male" or "female". While we may think of such physiological differences as self-evident, stable and binary, they are not. There is wide variation between and among men in relation to, for example, hairiness, hormonal levels, muscularity etc. However, observable, or supposed, biological features lead us to assign people to the *social* category of girl/woman or boy/man. Once assigned, individuals are expected to conform to the locally determined norms of femininity or masculinity.

<sup>3</sup> Patriarchy refers to "rule of the fathers", thus it describes not only the domination of men as a class over women as a class, but also and specifically that of the elder men over the young men as well as over women.

<sup>4</sup> Pankhurst, Donna (2008). Post-war backlash violence against women: what can 'masculinity' explain? In: Pankhurst, Donna (ed.). *Gendered Peace: Women's Struggles for Post-war Justice and Reconciliation*. London: Routledge.

The paradox at the heart of this article is this: greater gender equality and equity<sup>5</sup> are correlated to less violent, more stable societies, yet (male) political leaders and policy-makers often respond to the threats of violence from other men by disempowering women and undermining their status, rather than the opposite. In order to understand this, the article looks first at the ways in which the position of women has been at the heart of the project of liberal modernity, which insisted on reshaping all social relations, public and private. In this project gender relations are both implicitly and explicitly present because every community's notion of the "good society" is grounded on ideas about cohesion and stability. These are in turn built on normative ideas about division of labour, power and distribution of resources, starting within the family. These micro-level social arrangements are reflected in community relations and structures, and eventually within the institutions of the nation-state, in a multiplicity of overlapping "gender regimes", that is, norms for gendered behaviour in different aspects and domains of social life.<sup>6</sup> The nation-state, as a product of modernity, required social secularisation and a redefinition and reconfiguration of "traditional" power relations, from the intimacy of the family through to the national government. The newly founded nation-states of the nineteenth and twentieth century were never absent from the bedroom or the kitchen, because the regulation of marriage, sexuality, reproduction, inheritance, and the education of children were all fundamental bricks in the construction of modern, national societies. This represented the transition from private to public patriarchy and fraternity,<sup>7</sup> from the rule of the church to the rule of the secular state. The aspiration of equality is what constitutes a specific "liberal" approach, even if it took many decades for women to make and win their claims for equality within the framework of the liberal promise.<sup>8</sup> As they gradually won rights and equalities, partly because the state needed to include them in its nation-building schema (for example, by giving them access to higher education and jobs), so the empowerment of women came to be seen as both the product of, and a key building block in, modernity and social development. In the all-good-things-go-together paradigm, development (that is inclusive of women) increases human security and human capital, and makes citizens more likely to make rights-based demands on their governments for accountability, elements that form the bedrock of liberal democracy. This in turn leads to more responsible governments that rein in the power of the military, repress rather than encourage non-state armed actors, and thus make the region, and the world, a safer place. And in liberal peace theory, liberal democratic states do not engage in hostilities with one another; ergo the empowerment of women reduces the likelihood of inter-state conflict, particularly against other Western democracies. As we will see in the next section, these arguments about the

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<sup>5</sup> The term *gender equality* is used to refer to the principle of non-discrimination under the law. However, men and women's life courses and experiences are not identical, not least due to the biological fact of reproduction. Acknowledging this, and the cultural assignment of gender roles, *gender equity* refers to equality in accessing appropriate resources in order meet, in the context of this article, one's human security needs.

<sup>6</sup> See Walby, Sylvia (1997). *Gender Transformations*. London: Routledge and (2004). The European Union and gender equality: emergent varieties of gender regime. *Social Politics*. Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 7-11. These different domains would include the home, workplace, religious institutions, education, armed forces, the legal system, government and political spaces. See also her (1990) *Theorising Patriarchy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>7</sup> Pateman, Carole (1988). The Fraternal Social Contract. In: Keane, John (ed.). *Civil Society and the State* London: Verso.

<sup>8</sup> Carole Pateman makes a compelling argument about how liberalism promised freedom, equality and *fraternity* but the first two were not intended to extend to women and the third (brotherhood) by definition excluded them. Pateman, Carole (1988) *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

connections between gender equality and national well-being have been more clearly articulated in terms of security in the last fifteen years.

However, this rather teleological narrative about inevitable social convergence around secular liberal Enlightenment values of equality and liberty is counter-balanced by an increasing recognition, that began in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in those locations with the most rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, that such political, economic, demographic and cultural upheaval created rifts in the social fabric. The key proponents of post-Second World War modernisation theory, such as Walt Rostow, saw the destruction and reconfiguration of social and cultural norms as essential and desirable paving stones on the road to modernity. However, sociologists such as Durkheim were very concerned at the feelings of alienation that these dislocations were engendering and foresaw social, political and ideational backlashes against this project.<sup>9</sup> Fast-forward to the end of the twentieth century and the debates about globalisation as super-accelerated modernisation, and many analysts of the "new" types of protracted conflict, of which Islamic fundamentalism is just one, attribute reactionary or millennialist movements to the inevitable social reaction against market expansion that Polanyi predicted in *The Great Transformation*. Economic integration and globalisation are very hard to resist due to the nature and flows of global trade and capital. The sites of resistance and retrenchment become, therefore, pre-eminently cultural and social. When fundamentalists and traditionalists want to retreat to some imagined, idealised version of the past, women are made hostages to tradition. They are also integral to the social imaginary of national communities, now perceived as under threat from the forces of global modernity. Women are seen as carriers of cultural authenticity and are thus regarded as essential to the physical embodiment and reproduction, and the social signification and reproduction, of the national subject. As Nira Yuval-Davis notes, "gendered bodies and sexuality play pivotal roles as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations and other collectivities."<sup>10</sup>

So, the question arises, which is the more stable? A society in which the disruptions of globalisation (economic, political, neo-colonial) are offset by women's subordination to men within a violent patriarchy? Or one in which secular modernization – including gender equality – is being attempted but creating a violent backlash? As the next section shows, notions of security have been revised in the last two decades, and gender relations have become ever more salient, as both cause and effect of security conditions.

## Securitisation of gender relations

During the Cold War period, security tended to mean, at least within the field of international relations and security studies, the military security of the state. However, in the 1980s and increasingly in the 1990s the security agenda was widened to include "new" threats both to the security of individual

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<sup>9</sup> This sense is conveyed by Marshall Berman when he notes that to be modern is to have a will to change, yet also a "terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart", to be "both revolutionary and conservative", indeed, even to be "anti-modern" (Berman, Marshall (1982). *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* London: Verso. p.14.

<sup>10</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira (1987). *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage.

nations and to the community of states: these include economic, environmental, epidemiological and criminal threats.<sup>11</sup> In addition to expanding the list of phenomena that could undermine the sovereignty and governance power of the state, the very state-centric nature of "security" was challenged, with the United Nations (UN) developing the notion of "human security".<sup>12</sup> This encompasses seven key aspects of human well-being: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security, encapsulated in the phrase "freedom from fear and want". Some have made the argument that poor human security, on these measures, is itself a destabilising factor, as poverty, types of inequality and lack of opportunity lead to grievances and collective action, or recourse to illegal activities, such as trading conflict goods.<sup>13</sup>

Human security is a notion that bridges the arenas of security and of development in a *human-centric* manner. While it is true that these two epistemological and policy fields had developed in parallel and there appeared to be little dialogue between academics and practitioners of both in recent decades, it is worth remembering that modernisation theory, as Rostow articulated it, explicitly connected the two, seeing development of the Global South as necessary to defend the North from the threat of Communism. In the post-Cold War era, the War on Terror takes much the same tack as development has increasingly been regarded as being at the service of security, rather than as a good in itself, a subordination dubbed the "securitisation of development".<sup>14</sup>

These revised discourses and conceptualisations of security and development began to make the relationship between gender and security visible in two ways. Firstly, they highlighted how women were especially vulnerable in times of conflict and crisis, and also more likely to be excluded from development interventions designed to improve human security. Secondly, *gender relations per se*, that is, an analysis of the gendered distribution of power, resources and violence, began to be linked as a causal variable to security at all levels – from personal security right up to international security. From the 1990s, the second argument came to be attached to the first in international discussions and norm-creation.

That the exclusion of women was functionally bad for growth and welfare was hardly news to those working in the field of development, informed as it was by the ideas of liberalism and modernisation discussed above. Discrimination against women in development projects and processes had been recognised since the 1960s. The UN Decades for Women that followed increased this awareness and efforts were made to bring women into development, often for instrumental rather than intrinsic reasons. For example, the 1973 "Percy Amendment" to the Foreign Assistance Act required that the USA's bilateral assistance "be administered so as to give particular attention to those programs,

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<sup>11</sup> Buzan, Barry; Waeber, Ole; de Wilde, Jaap (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Development Programme (1994). *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*. New York: UNDP.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, Frances (2008). *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, and, with Valpy Fitzgerald and others (2001). *War and Underdevelopment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Duffield, Mark (2001). *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*. London: Zed Books.

projects and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort," a principle that has been transferred across now to the policy area of peace-building (which is essentially conflict-sensitive development policy).<sup>15</sup> This classic "Women in Development" approach, best articulated by the World Bank with its mandated focus on economic outputs, sees women's education, status and employment as crucial to creating social, economic and human capital, both in the private and public sphere.<sup>16</sup>

The rationale now offered by inter-governmental agencies for including women in development policies, or in post-conflict reconstruction efforts, in fact echoes many of the arguments made by developmental states over the last 150 years, namely that promoting women's social development (not necessarily rights and equality) was good for society because of: their key role within the family socialising children and creating human capital, thus reproducing not only the workforce but also social values; their key role in communities in promoting social cohesion and social capital; their potential income-generating role in sustaining their own and their family's livelihoods and contributing to the national economy (especially in sectors that are strongly sex-segregated); the different set of behaviours and values (regardless of whether this is attributed to biology or socialisation) that they bring to the public sphere, whether economic activity or political activity; and the economic cost to society of excluding women from economic activity, failing to use their labour in all these spheres, or actively victimising them, which are seen as demonstrable and measurable negative externalities.

### Gender rights and UNSC Resolution 1325

But what of the intrinsic nature of women's claims to gender equality and equity? At the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, global women's networks began to press for women's well-being and equal status to be regarded as a *right*, not simply as a vector of development, with the result that women's rights were defined as human rights and vice versa.<sup>17</sup> Thus the denial of human security to women was reframed as a rights violation, not simply as a missed development opportunity. This definitional shift came in a decade that saw the old Cold War dynamics unravel, and protracted and complex conflicts break out around the globe, in which civilians were predominantly the victims and women were frequently targeted with sexual violence as an integral strategy in inter-community violence. These two factors laid the groundwork for UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which, like the women's rights shift, was the product of much lobbying by women's organisations globally and within the UN.<sup>18</sup> The Resolution addressed two aspects of the relationship between gender and conflict. The first was to recognise women and girls as especially vulnerable *victims* in conflict situations, especially in regards to sexual violence and displacement. Thus it recommended that particular attention be given

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<sup>15</sup> US Government (2011). *US National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. Washington DC: The White House.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank (2001). *Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice*, World Bank Policy Research Report. Washington DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press; Blumberg, Rae Lesser (1989). *Making the Case for the Gender Variable: Women and the Wealth and Well-Being of Nations*. Technical Reports in Gender, No. 1. Washington DC: Office of Women in Development, Agency for International Development.

<sup>17</sup> Bunch, Charlotte (1990). Women's rights as human rights: towards a re-vision of human rights", *Human Rights Quarterly*. Vol. 12, No.4, pp. 486-498.

<sup>18</sup> Resolution 1325 replaced a number of preceding resolutions: 1261 (1999), 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1314 (2000).

to women's welfare in the rehabilitation, resettlement, repopulation and post-conflict reconstruction phases. Experience of a number of conflicts that had been resolved in the 1990s had shown how easily women were excluded from economic opportunities and political voice as those drafting the peace accords preferred to appease the men who had previously held the guns.<sup>19</sup> The second was it recognised women as *political agents*, recommending that they be involved in all phases of the peace negotiations so that they could use their voice to articulate their own interests and thus avoid such post-conflict outcomes. In this sense Resolution 1325 treated women both as victims, with claims and rights, and as peace-builders, whose status and well-being was critical to social cohesion and livelihoods in the post-conflict period. It echoed the Women In Development framework discussed above: improving women's status is a prerequisite both for development and for peace.

It also set up a tension in post-conflict reconstruction that mirrors that posed by this article in relation to conflict prevention. Should post-conflict resources be targeted at women, because of their demonstrable contribution to community building and family welfare, or to the ex-combatants, whose threat in the short term seems to outweigh the more medium and long-term benefits of putting women first? Moreover, if prioritising women means enhancing their social standing beyond the *status quo ex ante*, or maintaining elements of autonomy acquired when the conflict disrupted prior gender norms and institutions, will this provoke a backlash from men? This seems fairly well proven to be the case so, in short, here is the paradox. Enhancing women's rights seems to make sense in terms of long-term, structural conflict prevention, but appeasing men's desire to shore up their masculine identities and social dominance over women at moments of intense social disruption (whether due to economic globalisation, external shocks or conflict situations) seems more likely to avert renewed social conflict in the short term.

No sooner had Resolution 1325 been agreed, than the war on terror after 11 September 2001 was launched in Afghanistan. In the build-up to military action, the US government made public pronouncements that used women's rights as a totem and measure of modernity, rationalism and secularism. Thus President George W. Bush and his wife promised that they would liberate the women of Afghanistan from their burkhas, and in so doing would modernise Afghan social relations and destroy the cultural and ideational basis of the Taliban and of its presumed allies, Al Qaeda, and thus ensure the security of the West.<sup>20</sup> The unveiling of women, as the symbolic casting off the garb of traditionalism, had of course, already been carried out in the region by native and colonial secular modernisers and nation-builders: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (president of the new Turkish national 1923-38), Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (Shah of Iran, 1941-1979), Gamel Abdel Nasser (president of Egypt 1956-70), and in Afghanistan under King Amanullah Khan (1919-29), Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud (1953-63) and the Soviet-backed government of the 1980s. The Western discourse of "protecting" women or, as Gayatri

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<sup>19</sup> Meintjes, Sheila; Pillay, Anu; Turshen, Meredith (eds.) (2001). *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*. London: Zed Books; Pankhurst (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Cloud, Dana L. (2006). 'To veil the threat of terror': Afghan women and the <Clash of Civilizations> in the imagery of the U.S. war on terrorism. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol. 90, No. 3, pp. 285-306; Stabile, Carol A. & Kumar, Deepa (2005). Unveiling imperialism: media, gender and the war on Afghanistan. *Media, Culture and Society*. Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 765-782.

Spivak put it, "white men saving brown women from brown men",<sup>21</sup> has been enmeshed with orientalism and colonial relations so that even when the modernisers are local elites, they are resisted as instruments of Western hegemony.<sup>22</sup> The UN doctrine of Responsibility to Protect was not articulated until 2005 – and has been accused by many in the Global South of constituting yet another justification of Western imperial and post-colonial interference – but there is plenty of evidence in previous colonial engagements of how the West had historically used its "responsibility" to protect women in just this way.

However, the promise to ensure Afghan women greater personal security, autonomy and educational opportunities was fulfilled in patchy and contradictory ways: the new government of Afghanistan was obliged to keep onside potential spoilers in the political process by offering policies that reinforced patriarchal norms, and thus give dissident and disadvantaged men a stake in the status quo.<sup>23</sup> This includes: the notorious 2009 Shia Personal Status Law stipulating that husbands could punish wives for failing to fulfil their conjugal "duties", which President Karzai used to get Shia votes; a surge in the post-Taliban level of female imprisonment - there are currently some 700 women in prison, mostly for fleeing domestic violence or for "moral crimes" such as alleged adultery; and toleration of the Pashtun custom of settling feuds or debts by giving away female relatives like chattels. As NATO forces prepared to leave Afghanistan and attempts were made to reach out to so-called "moderate" elements of the Taliban (if such a term is not an oxymoron in relation to a fundamentalist group), in March 2012 President Karzai endorsed a statement by the Ulema Council, which advises the government on religious issues, that declared men to be "fundamental" and women "secondary" in society and recommended that women should not travel without a male relative, that husbands had the right to beat their wives in particular circumstances, and encouraged segregation of women.<sup>24</sup> This demonstrates well the tension between the opposing interpretations of what modernisation of gender relations will provoke in terms of security outcomes. Oxfam predicts a "quick fix bargain for peace" in the run-up to 2014 that will lead to a reversal of the gains made in girls' education and women's political education.<sup>25</sup> This was echoed even by Former First Lady Laura Bush, who remained engaged with Afghan women's fate throughout and after her husband's presidency. She also feared that departing NATO forces would permit women to be used as a "bargaining chip" between the government and armed groups, restoring violent

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<sup>21</sup> Spivak, Gayatri (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In: Nelson, Cary & Grossberg Lawrence (eds.). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

<sup>22</sup> A key reason that the British government gave for occupying Egypt in the 1880s was precisely that Christians were required to rescue and liberate Muslim women from Muslim men. Ahmed, Leila (1992). *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Sippi (2007). On living with negative peace and a half-built state: gender and human rights. *International Peacekeeping*. Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 127-142; Clark, Kate (2004). Afghan women on the margins of the twenty-first century. In: Donini, Antonio; Niland, Norah; Wermester, Karin (eds.). *Nation-Building Unravelling? Aid, Peace and Justice in Afghanistan*. Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press.

<sup>24</sup> Cortwright, David & Wall, Kristen (2012). *Afghan Women Speak: Enhancing Security and Human Rights in Afghanistan*. South Bend, IN: Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame; Human Rights Watch (2012). 'I had to run away': *The Imprisonment of Women and Girls for 'Moral Crimes' in Afghanistan*: New York: Human Rights Watch.

<sup>25</sup> Oxfam (2012). *A Place at the Table: Safeguarding Women's Rights in Afghanistan*. Oxford: Oxfam.



patriarchy in order to keep the "peace".<sup>26</sup> To borrow Deniz Kandiyoti's phrase, this is the international community "bargaining with patriarchy".<sup>27</sup>

### Sexual Violence and UNSC Resolution 1820

Resolution 1325 and its immediate predecessors were notable not so much for what they articulated about the relationship between the status of women and development/conflict outcomes as for the fact that they were issued by the Security Council, rather than by some other entity of the UN responsible for women, human rights, or human development. This high-level security framing of gender relations continued with the issuance of UN Security Council Resolution 1820, on the use of systematic sexual violence in warfare, in 2008. Resolution 1325 "gendered" the ending of conflict and post-conflict processes, and "securitised" the lack of women's involvement in the peace settlement and the distribution of post-conflict goods by seeing more equal gender relations as functional to greater long-term and sustainable security. However, Resolution 1820 gendered the actual conduct of armed conflict, specifically the use of sexualised inter-personal violence, and securitised sexual violence by defining it as a tactic of war with definable and intentional *purposes and outcomes*, that is, "destabilize, terrorize and humiliate communities".<sup>28</sup> The Resolution focused the attention of the security community on a form of violence that is largely invisible in its effects, rarely named due to the powerful nature of the cultural taboo and shame attached to it, often conducted in private spaces, and all the more potent in its destructive force for these very reasons. Awareness of the ways in which gender-based and sexual violence constituted a very particular way of attacking the collective security of a community, over and above violating the personal security of individual women, was undoubtedly raised by the use by Serbian nationalists of rape camps to hold and impregnate Bosnian Muslims during the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia (1992-95)<sup>29</sup> and the sexual violence that accompanied the genocide in Rwanda (1994).<sup>30</sup> Again the Bush administration put its imprimatur on this framing of gender and security, with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice championing the Resolution in the UN Security Council. Like UNSC Resolution 1325, Resolution 1820 both frames women as victims, and highlights *unequal gender relations* as an impediment to peace, this time focussing on the conflict, not the aftermath, and on violation of women's bodies, rather than on their political voice or engagement in development and peace-building policies. However, by contrast to the 2001 intervention in Afghanistan, widespread sexual violence has not yet been a motive to invoke a Responsibility to Protect

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<sup>26</sup> Bush, Laura, Don't abandon Afghan women, *Washington Post*, 18 May 2012. She is honorary chair of the US-Afghan Women's Council.

<sup>27</sup> She used this phrase originally to indicate that women living within the concrete constraints of patriarchy are nonetheless able to deploy coping mechanisms and strategise to maximise their personal security and optimise their life options, even if that means defending a status quo that subordinates them. Kandiyoti, Deniz (1988). *Bargaining with patriarchy*. *Gender and Society*. Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 274-290.

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, Letitia. (2010). Politics by other means: when does sexual violence threaten international peace and security? *International Peacekeeping*. Vol. 17, No. 2, p.245.

<sup>29</sup> Stiglmayer, Alexandra (1994). *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

<sup>30</sup> Turshen, Meredith (2001). The political economy of rape: an analysis of systematic rape and sexual abuse of women during armed conflict in Africa. In: Moser, Caroline and Clark, Fiona (eds.). *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. London, Zed Books.

response, rhetorical or otherwise, from the international community, despite the continuing epidemic levels of rape in conflicts such as Darfur and Eastern Congo. Nor has the Resolution been used to empower women in such contexts to ensure their own security.<sup>31</sup>

### Unequal gender relations and (in)security

Although the majority of the world's armed actors are men (and for Paul Collier, it is the availability of young unemployed *men* that is one of the critical factors in the formation of armed militias),<sup>32</sup> rarely is women's dissatisfaction and poor human development seen as a *direct* contributor to conflict: it is always linked in a rather diffuse way through the argument of modernity and liberal peace laid out above. It has been much easier to address gender relations within development talk than within security talk. It is also still easier for the foreign policy community to frame women as requiring outside protection than it is to take seriously the proposition that unequal gender relations are not just the outcome of violent conflict, but actually a root driver of conflict. This is the difference between talking about women and conflict, and gender and conflict. However, as gender is a relational concept, women's (in)security cannot be separated from the identities and behaviours of the men who keep them unsafe. What, then, is the causal linkage between gender relations and conflict, which is asserted by the two UN Security Council Resolutions, but not explained as such?

Feminist international relations and security theorists have taken a number of different approaches to proving and explaining the causal connections, starting with "ethnographic case studies, process tracing and poststructuralist discourse analysis", but have not yet provided the empirical data and testable hypothesis that would constitute a general theory, as Collier has done with resources and conflict.<sup>33</sup> Hudson et al use as a starting point the findings of socio-biology, which suggests that male dominance over females is an evolutionary development for survival and reproduction and constitutes an "ultimate cause" of unequal gender relations *and* a fundamental template for all other kinds of human hierarchies. That said, human culture does not mechanically mirror primal instincts: it also seems to have created alternative, non-violent channels for male-male rivalries, such as forms of democratic decision-making. This, to draw an analogy from Freud, is culture as "super-ego" putting the lid on the primal drives of the "id". In short, if patriarchy and violence derive from some evolutionary impulse, they are neither inevitable nor universal in human society, and are (re-)produced culturally by the mechanisms of modelling, reinforcement and male-bonded groups. Hudson et al cross-correlate the physical security of women with other variables commonly used in liberal peace theory: the level of democracy, level of wealth, and prevalence of Islamic culture,<sup>34</sup> and find that, of all these, women's security is the best predictor of the relative peacefulness of states and the degree of threat they pose to the international community. There is, of course, a causal relationship between women's

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<sup>31</sup> Otto, Dianne (2009). The exile of inclusion: reflections on gender issues in international law over the last decade. *Melbourne Journal of International Law*. Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 11-26.

<sup>32</sup> Collier, Paul & Hoeffler, Anke (1998). On economic causes of civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*. Vol. 50, No. 4, pp 563 – 573.

<sup>33</sup> Hudson, Valerie et al (2008/9). The heart of the matter: the security of women and the security of states. *International Security*. Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> To take into account Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis.

security and the three other variables tested, because each one of them has qualitative dimensions (quality of democracy and the real ability of women to influence public policy; distribution of wealth along gender and other dimensions; and the highly varied character of Islamic culture in different national contexts). The point is that, if these three political phenomena do not inhibit violent patriarchy, then they do little to offset the likelihood of instability and violent conflict.

## Women, Gender Relations and Security in Pakistan

So, how does all this relate to the situation of women and gender relations in Pakistan and the possibilities for female political representatives to engage in debates and policies about the security status of women, and the way in which gender inequality is continuing to fuel instability and political/social violence in that country?

First, we examine how Pakistan's women fare in relation to the seven types of security enumerated by the new human security paradigm. Women's physical survival relates to several, inter-related aspects of human security: personal, health, environmental, food, and economic security. In relation to personal security, in 2011 despite the passage of the prevention of anti-women practices law, there was a sharp increase in reported honour killings, violence against women, murder and rape of women compared to the previous two years.<sup>35</sup> It is not clear whether this rise constitutes some kind of backlash against women, or increased reporting by women following the Women's Parliamentary Caucus' initiatives in regards to police training (see Buxton, this issue). Pakistan does not yet have women's police stations as they are understood and set up in many other countries, that is, as places where women can report crimes committed against them. When a handful were first set up in the mid-1990s under the Benazir Bhutto government, they were actually intended to conform with Islamic requirements on sex-segregation to employ female officers to "handle cases concerning female felons", not to protect women victims. This is part of a wider pattern in the Af-Pak region, where women are likely to find the state more interested in them as criminals than as victims.<sup>36</sup>

Women's bodily security is linked not just to direct physical assault, but also to denial of healthcare. Pakistan has a higher than average male/female ratio, in common with other countries in this part of Asia.<sup>37</sup> This, as economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen and others have pointed out, is the product of social discrimination in the form of sex-selective abortion and infanticide of girl babies, high maternal mortality (320 deaths per 100,000 live births in Pakistan currently) due to poor ante-natal care and three quarters of mothers lacking to trained birth attendants, and discrimination throughout the life cycle.<sup>38</sup> Not only is this a gender and human rights issues, with girl children highly insecure even in

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<sup>35</sup> Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (2012), *Assessment of the Quality of Democracy in Pakistan*. Islamabad, PILDAT. See also Aurat Foundation (2011a), *Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan: A Scoping Study*. Islamabad, Aurat Foundation.

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch (2012).

<sup>37</sup> The CIA Factbook gives this as 1.06 for the total population, where a more normal ratio would be closer to 1.0.

<sup>38</sup> Sen, Amartya (1990). More than 100 million women are missing. *The New York Review of Books*, 20 December 1990; Klassen, Stephan & Wink, Claudia (2003). 'Missing women': revisiting the debate. *Feminist Economics* Vol. 9, Nos. 2-3, pp. 263-99 and (2004). A turning point in gender bias in mortality? an update on the number of missing women. *Population and Development Review*. Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 285-312.

the womb, but it has also been posited as a security threat to countries that have this demographic imbalance. Hudson and Boer's Bare Branches argument is that "exaggerated gender inequality" – for which this demographic skewing is a powerful proxy measure -- is an under-rated "wellspring of insecurity". The problem is not so much the missing women, however, as the surplus men whose "behavioural syndromes" -- evidenced in violent criminality, gang membership, rebellion and public disorder -- have been associated with instability and violence within and between societies.<sup>39</sup> These single men are socially unconstrained by the norms of behaviour expected in the context of marriage and family. However, in a highly gender unequal society, women do not gain more social leverage and autonomy by being keenly sought after for marriage – quite the opposite. They are already regarded as tradable commodities by their families and so their scarcity value simply increases their value (which others command), evident in the continuing practice in Afghanistan of using women to settle debts.

In relation to environmental vulnerability, women were more adversely affected by the 2010 floods than men in some respects. For example, they tend to have poorer survival skills than men – they are less likely to be able to swim or climb trees. The floods also disrupted women's sources of income, wiping out the cotton and rice harvest, for which they would have received modest cash wages, and livestock. They are also prevented from accessing relief schemes because they need a National Identity Card and only 79 per cent of eligible women have one compared to 99 per cent of eligible men, and inhibited from joining lengthy queues to receive food by the social requirements of purdah and family care responsibilities.<sup>40</sup> This has exacerbated an existing situation of food insecurity and malnourishment: half the women of reproductive age weigh under 45 kilos and they tend to produce low birthweight babies, who then go on to become malnourished mothers, creating a vicious circle.<sup>41</sup> The disaster also demonstrates the precariousness of women's labour market participation. The UN's Gender Inequality Index puts the percentage of women in the labour market at 21.7 per cent. This low level is related in part to women's educational opportunities, which remain very poor in Pakistan, especially in rural areas and in the most conflict-affected areas. The likelihood of a woman having completed secondary school is under half that of a man's. In rural areas, 52 per cent of girls are not enrolled in school and 67 per cent of women are illiterate.<sup>42</sup> This is not just due to the disruptions and displacement occasioned by conflicts and natural disaster, but the result of a campaign of violence targeted by armed groups at girls' education, such as the shooting of a 14-year old schoolgirl, Malala Yousefzai, by the Taliban, in the Swat region, in an attempt to stop her campaigning for girls' education. As in Afghanistan, girls' education has become the symbolic battleground that challenges the boundaries that Islam attempts to maintain between masculine public space and feminine domestic space.

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<sup>39</sup> Hudson, Valerie M. & den Boer, Andrea M. (2002). A surplus of men, a deficit of peace: security and sex ratios in Asia's largest states. *International Security*. Vol. 26. No. 4, pp. 5-38 and (2005). *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population*. Cambridge MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

<sup>40</sup> Aurat Foundation (2011b) *Effects of the 2010 Flood on Women in Pakistan: A Scoping Study*. Aurat Foundation Gender Equity Program. Islamabad: Aurat Foundation.

<sup>41</sup> Aga Khan University (2011). *Pakistan National Nutrition Survey*. Karachi: Aga Khan University.

<sup>42</sup> UNDP Human Development Indicators; PILDAT (2012), p. 28.

### *Gender and nation in Pakistan*

So, how have women's rights, empowerment and political voice been invoked within the context of Pakistan, both in the narratives that it tells about itself as a political community and in the narratives that currently frame Pakistan as a security risk? Pakistan was born in a paradox, founded by liberal secular Muslims as a mono-religious state. The status of women was therefore always going to be caught in the contradictions between the intentions of a liberal modernising state, and the constant recourse of civilian politicians and military rulers to religious creed and dogma. Rights are rarely gained in an entirely linear manner. However, this contradiction has resulted in the erosion of women's rights in some areas since the initial foundation of Pakistan as a nation state. In this vein, the recent history of Pakistan reveals a pendular swing between secular nationalists and conservative Islamists, with the former (such as the Bhutto governments) often feeling forced to resort to religious authorities as a means of legitimating their rule, even if it meant that the modernisation project was fatally compromised. The most notorious period was the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88), which saw a full-scale Islamist project that severely undermined women's rights and equality through the Hudood Ordinances. In particular the Zina Ordinance made adultery a crime against the state, punishable by death, and blurred the distinction between rape and consensual intercourse. It was countered by a second period of military rule, this time under General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008), which was notable for its modernising and secular character, and attempts to undo the most anti-women laws.<sup>43</sup> His actions demonstrated a belief that women's equality was necessary for development, democracy and security in the country, not the other way round. Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index* (2011) gives Pakistan a score of 2.5 out of 10, and neighbouring Afghanistan an even lower one of 1.5. Pakistan is ranked in 145<sup>th</sup> place in the UNDP's 2011's *Gender Inequality Index*, with Afghanistan number 172 out of 187 countries. In neither country do women have the demographic weight, economic autonomy or political voice to reshape the violent masculinities that are emerging in response to the forces of incomplete modernisation and exclusionary globalisation.<sup>44</sup> Such is international anxiety about the status of women in Pakistan and its wider negative impacts that a full one quarter of all bilateral overseas development assistance by sector – that is US\$5 billion out of US\$20 billion -- is focussed on gender equality.<sup>45</sup> The Aurat Foundation alone is currently acting as project manager for a US\$40 million investment by USAID in gender equality in Pakistan for the period 2010-2015.

### *Women and Political Voice in Pakistan*

Women, and indeed largely male political elites, have made various arguments for giving women voice in the political sphere through voting and occupying positions of elected representation, but rarely has this addressed state security. Women have been accorded access to the political sphere for a number of reasons historically: to give electoral advantage to parties whose fortunes were

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<sup>43</sup> Zia, Atiya Shehribano (2009). Faith-based politics, enlightened moderation and the Pakistani women's movement. *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol.11, No. 1, pp. 225-245.

<sup>44</sup> Aslam, Maleeha (2012). *Gender-based Explosions: The Nexus Between Muslim Masculinities, Jihadist Islam and Terrorism*. Tokyo: United Nations University.

<sup>45</sup> Aurat Foundation (2011a), p. 18.

flagging (even religiously-based parties whose doctrinal orientation is eventually to remove women from the public sphere),<sup>46</sup> to boost the support base of populist leaders, to reward them as true citizens for having joined armed struggles against repressive political regimes, to act as a moralising or cleansing force, counteracting the grubbiness of male-dominated politicking, or to act as peacemakers. This article has argued that there is a paradox in our understanding of gender relations, patriarchy and violent conflict. There is a growing consensus that reducing structural, cultural and physical violence against women is the single most effective way to achieve gains in security and stability. Yet these are long-term benefits that male politicians are generally unwilling to aim for in a situation of political competition and negotiation. Women's rights too often get bargained away. In that case, if the political class were not overwhelmingly male, would that change the calculus? This is, in part, why gender quotas for political representation have become part of the post-conflict reconstruction package. However, it is not the numbers (or critical mass) of women politicians that matter, but rather what they are able to do and how they understand and frame women's rights and their relation to 'High Politics' that is, state security.

In both Pakistan and Afghanistan the numbers do not reveal the degree of women's political agency. Women's political representation in Pakistan may be at an all-time high, but the majority of women in parliament (that is, those in the 60 reserved seats) are selected by their male colleagues in the parties and have no direct mandates from the electorate. Indeed, that electorate is highly skewed. Of the 86 million voters registered out of a total population of 177 million, 48 million (56 per cent) are men and 38 million (44 per cent) women. Many more men (50.9 million) have national identity cards enabling them to vote, than do women (38.5 million), and the Electoral Commission sends round male inspectors to check the elector rolls, thus preventing them from talking to potential women voters. It has also been unable to stop political parties actively preventing nearly all women registered voters participating in certain by-elections.<sup>47</sup> At a local level, the reserved seats quotient of 33 per cent is rarely fulfilled and, as with 17 per cent of reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies, these are often captured by male politicians who use women as "placeholders".

That said, women in parliament have begun to find their voice with the formation of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in 2009 and to assert their right to debate conflict and security issues as Julia Buxton (this issue) notes. The Women's Caucus has been instrumental in passing key bills relating to women's security, tackling workplace harassment, domestic violence and anti-women practices (including acid-throwing). The human security of women – their vulnerability to disaster, need for protection from male violence, food security, access to justice – is the easiest basis on which to ground such a cross-party coalition of women. However, if the caucus wants to tackle the linkages between gender relations and security issues, and promote women's security not just as an intrinsic right to human dignity but also as a fundamental element in social stability, then it means confronting those

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<sup>46</sup> This is the case with religiously oriented movements or parties that mobilise women in the public sphere in the name of an ideology that promises exactly the opposite. Women are involved in this regard in Islamist groups in Pakistan: Haq, Farhad (2007). *Militarism and motherhood: the women of the Lashkar-i-Tayyabiya in Pakistan*. *Signs*. Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 1023-1046.

<sup>47</sup> PILDAT (2012).

who continue to promote and benefit from violent patriarchy, not all of whom are outside parliament. I would suggest then that direct moral and material support – and physical protection – to women political representatives at all levels of Pakistan's polity is one of the most effective means for securing the stability of that country and the security of its citizens in the longterm. It will be Pakistan's women – in assemblies and civil society – that will resolve the paradox, and ensure that women's security is not traded for national security because, as many now believe, the latter is fundamentally dependent on the former.