

## Engendering Violence: An Analysis of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Pakistan

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#### Publication History:

**Received:** September 11, 2024

**Revised:** September 26, 2024

**Accepted:** October 09, 2024

**Published Online:** November 01, 2024

#### Keywords:

Security,  
WPS Agenda,  
Gender Security,  
Conflict,  
Security Policies,  
Structural Inequality.

#### Research related to Academic Areas:

Pakistan Studies, Social Studies &  
Gender Studies

#### Acknowledgment:

This paper is a sole academic venture of the author, extracted from her PhD dissertation under the directions of supervisor.

#### Ethical Consideration:

This study has no aim to hurt any ideological or social segment but is purely based on academic purposes.

#### DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.14009231

#### Abstract

Pakistan has been engulfed in various forms of violent conflicts since its inception. Since the past two decades state has responded to these violent and radical activities via various security-oriented policies. The focus of this study is to have a gendered analysis of these security-oriented policies particularly with respect to the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The WPS agenda is the first comprehensive UN agenda that acknowledges the unique impact of conflict on women and girls. Employing the Feminist Security studies lens this study first discusses the impact of conflict and violence on women and the implementation of the WPS agenda. The second part of the article deals with the gendered analysis of the security policies in place since 1997. Gendered lacunas as well as pros and cons of each policy are discussed in detail and it is concluded that a Gendered Action Plan as per the WPS agenda is the only way forward to address gender concerns in Pakistan.

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### Introduction

Since the inception of Pakistan, the country has been through different phases of violent extremism and conflicts off and on. Despite the improvement in the overall internal national security environment in the recent years it is still prone to conflict and violent extremism at the sub national level. It is an established fact that conflict is mostly rooted in structural inequalities. Pakistan is no different. Various forms of conflicts plague the country such as conflict between

state and militants, violent ethnic and sectarian crimes, organized crime, tribal disputes and disputes over land and natural resources. Though it is noteworthy that violent extremist organizations have driven most of the violence in the recent years and the state has responded through security means such as launching military operations like Zarb e Azab<sup>1</sup>, Operation Raah-e-Haq and Operation Rah-e-Raast<sup>2</sup> etc. The security response of the state resulted in internal displacement of the population and large-scale destruction of properties<sup>3</sup>. These counter measures have been effective but the end of the conflict creates a post conflict society. Women have to face unique challenges in a post conflict society. In a society like Pakistan where most women lack education and skills, access to economic opportunities in a post conflict environment is a Herculean Task.

This gendered aspect of impact of violence in a society has been absent from security debates in mainstream International Relations and security studies till 2001. Even though civil society and women activities have been advocating to mainstream gender issues in security policies<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, due to their efforts the significant frameworks such as Convention on the Elimination of All forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)<sup>5</sup> and the Beijing declaration and platform for Action (BPFA)<sup>6</sup> were established. These frameworks undoubtedly provided momentum to the gendered perspectives of the security discourses but women continued to be marginalized in global security. In April 2000 the Brahmi Report<sup>7</sup> was proposed to provide detailed reviews to both UNSC and UNGA but the Report mentioned women in merely two brief references<sup>8</sup>. In 2001, the United Security Council passed a resolution called the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolution. This resolution acknowledges that “Conflict uniquely affects

<sup>1</sup> Sajad Rasool and Zahid Anwar, “Operation Zarb-e-Azb, IDPs, and the Life in Camps,” *Review of Human Rights* 5, no. 1 (September 15, 2020): 33–54, <https://doi.org/10.35994/rhr.v5i1.99>.

<sup>2</sup> Saqib Khan Warraich, Muhammad Mumtaz Ali Khan, and Imran Alam, “Terrorism, Military Operations and Counterterrorism Strategies for Pakistan,” *Journal of Politics and International Studies* 7, no. 1 (September 3, 2023), <http://111.68.103.26/journals/index.php/jpis/article/view/6779>.

<sup>3</sup> Rasool and Anwar, “Operation Zarb-e-Azb, IDPs, and the Life in Camps”; Warraich, Khan, and Alam, “Terrorism, Military Operations and Counterterrorism Strategies for Pakistan.”

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, second edition, Completely Revised and Updated (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

<sup>6</sup> “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome” (UN Women, 2015), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>.

<sup>7</sup> “Report of the Panel on the United Nations Peace Operations (Brahmi Report)” (UN), accessed June 6, 2022, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/report-of-panel-united-nations-peace-operations-brahimi-report-a55305>.

<sup>8</sup> “Report of the Panel on the United Nations Peace Operations (Brahmi Report).”

women and girls<sup>9</sup>". This UNSCR 1325 have generated a huge debate on the relationship between gender and security. Currently, there is a humongous discourse on the limitations and efficacy of the framework of this resolution it encompasses but is not limited to economic and political empowerment of women, political participation, women rights protection, prevention of crimes against gender and social inclusion. This article does not deal with the whole spectrum of the WPS framework it has a narrower focus. It attempts to explores how violent extremism, frameworks related to terrorism in Pakistan and the counter measures to terrorism have impacted the gender dimension of security and the implementation of the agenda.

The article is divided into three sections. Firstly, it analyses Pakistan's national securitization response to counter the threat of organized violence and extremism and its impacts on women and girls. This section also deals with the government actions and security establishment to counter terrorism and how those responses have affected the integration and implementation of the WPS agenda. The second section outlines the role of women and girls in violent extremism in the context of Pakistan and it will identify policy gaps in the counter violence and preventing violence policies of Pakistan. Lastly, it suggests pathways of purposeful female participation in preventing violent extremism.

### **Women Peace and Security Agenda and its Implementation**

Pakistan is a member of the WPS agenda and it has repeatedly reaffirmed its support for the Women Peace and Security agenda. Indeed, Pakistan lags far behind in taking any meaningful action for the implementation of the agenda or having a framework to develop a National Action Plan like other states for instance Bangladesh. Pakistan actively participated in the open Debates on the agenda that took place in 2015<sup>10</sup> and 2017<sup>11</sup> respectively, even then it failed to fulfill the commitments to ensure to further a plan to streamline gender sensitization trainings or to respond to females in need. Pakistan lacks a gender action plan and no budget has been allocated so far to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. It is noteworthy that the implementation of the agenda does not require any formal requirements in fact the agenda proposes doable measures that induce the promotion of its four pillars (Protection, Prevention, Participation, Relief and Recovery). The government till date has taken no considerable measure in support of the agenda even though it has vibrant civil society organizations for promoting and advocating the role of women in peace building.

Interestingly, despite the lack of formal progress in implementing and promoting the agenda, there has been significant progress on gender friendly legislations. Since the inception of the

<sup>9</sup>"What Is UNSCR 1325? An Explanation of the Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security" (United States Institute of Peace, 2000), [https://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325).

<sup>10</sup>"Statement of Pakistan at the 2016 WPS Debate," Annual Statement (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, October 2016), <https://www.peacewomen.org/node/97372>.

<sup>11</sup>"Security Council Open Debate on Women Peace and Security," Annual Statement (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, October 27, 2017), <https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/security-council-open-debate-women-peace-and-security-october-2017>.

agenda in 2001 Pakistan has improved its key development indices for women. Several gender-based legislations have been added in the past two decades for the protection and preventions against gender-based crimes. For instance, some significant gender-based legislations include Anti Rape Bill<sup>12</sup>(2016), Anti acid attack Bill and Prevention against acid crimes<sup>13</sup> (2010), Protection against Workplace Harassment Bill (2010) etc. Unfortunately, these legislations and protections have failed to provide significant protections and inclusion to women and girls<sup>14</sup>. Structural challenges encompass poverty, low human development; social norms that restrict women's mobility and access to protections, these restrictions in turn reduce the chances of participation to play a significant role in prevention of violent extremism and conflict resolution. One might say that despite of the improved security environment in the past decade, counter terrorism response in Pakistan has had a serious impact on the protection of women and girls in Pakistan<sup>15</sup>. When it comes to security reforms and peace building measures state seriously ignores the access of women to economic resources such as property (as most of the population in Pakistan is rural based land is the basic source of income) and employment opportunities. There are several cultural practices in the country that deprive women of their due share in inheritance these include Tanazul (transferring property to brothers), Haq bakhshwana (voluntarily disowning property)<sup>16</sup> etc.

### **Growing regional disparities in Pakistan and the WPS agenda**

A general glance at the key development indicators in Pakistan portrays glaring disparities in growth and economic development across and within regions. Such inequalities have serious implications on access of women to legal and regulatory safeguards and governance structures especially in conflict prone peripheral regions of the country. The military operations in conflict prone areas have destroyed the infrastructure, homes and livelihood, terrorism and violent extremism have worsened the situation women and further restricted their access to legal aid. These unusual circumstances in the conflict prone areas have created a huge difference in the socio-economic standing of women living in these regions compared to women living in peaceful regions. This situation coupled with the pre-existing urban-rural divide further deteriorated the disparities among women. The National Poverty rates have dropped to 39.2% in 2021 compared to 55% in 2004, the level of development and economic growth within the regions of Pakistan is

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<sup>12</sup> "Pakistan Passes Legislation to Stop 'Honor Killings' | CNN," accessed August 31, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/06/asia/pakistan-anti-honor-killing-law/index.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Sumera Khan, "Women-Specific Bills Passed: Fourteen-Year Jail Term for Acid-Throwers," *The Express Tribune*, December 12, 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/305482/unanimous-vote-senate-passes-women-protection-anti-acid-throwing-bills>.

<sup>14</sup> Anita Weiss, "Moving Forward with the Legal Empowerment of Women in Pakistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, accessed August 31, 2024, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2012/05/moving-forward-legal-empowerment-women-pakistan>.

<sup>15</sup> Farah Naz and Zahid Shahab Ahmed, "Women and Violent Extremism in Pakistan: A Critical Assessment of Policies and Actions," in *Religion, Extremism and Violence in South Asia*, ed. Imran Ahmed et al. (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022), 213–35, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6847-0\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6847-0_10).

<sup>16</sup> "Status of Women Land Rights in Pakistan," *Daily Times* (blog), May 16, 2020, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/613448/status-of-women-land-rights-in-pakistan/>.

not the same<sup>17</sup>. These disparities can be clearly noticed by comparing the gender Indices in FATA with National Gender Indices in Pakistan.

In erstwhile FATA and Balochistan the poverty rates are highest that is 73% and 71% respectively. When it comes to Multidimensional poverty the disparities are even graver. According to the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index in erstwhile FATA approximately 73.7% people fall into Multi-Dimensional Poverty<sup>18</sup>. This is the highest in Pakistan. The female literacy rate in FATA is only 13% whereas the national literacy rate for women in Pakistan is 47%<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, access of all kinds of media to women is so restricted that over 87% of women lack access to all kinds of media especially internet only 1.5% women have access to internet<sup>20</sup>. 44% women in erstwhile have never acquired an identity card and most women are unaware of their fundamental human rights<sup>21</sup>. Evidently, Erstwhile FATA and Baluchistan have been most prone to violent extremism and conflict. Keeping this in mind with the existing set of skills and lack of education access to economic opportunities and education in these regions is a great challenge. Coupled with the restriction of mobility the formal legal aid and justice system seems out of reach for these women.

### **State's Legislative and Policy Response to Violent Extremism and Terrorism**

The “War on Terror” coupled with increasing internal extremism had a huge financial and human security impact on Pakistan. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2024 Pakistan is ranked fourth most terrorism affected country in the world<sup>22</sup>. On the sub national level Erstwhile FATA and Baluchistan are the most effected regions. As per the same index 77% of the total attacks and 85% of the total deaths in 2019 were recorded in these regions collectively<sup>23</sup>. Terrorism and violent extremism have transformed the social landscape of the KPK region especially the Swat Valley. Extremists are still trying to undermine state sovereignty by intimidating businessmen and the day-to-day social activities of people in the KPK region. Gender based violence, attacks on security forces and security infrastructure in KPK regions and security threats to the CPEC related infrastructure in Baluchistan continue to haunt the state authorities. These instances are a clear

<sup>17</sup>“Poverty Data Pakistan” (Asian Development Bank, 2021), <https://www.adb.org/countries/pakistan/poverty#:~:text=In%20Pakistan%2C%2021.9%25%20of%20the,day%20in%202021%20is%203.7%25.>

<sup>18</sup>“Multidimensional Poverty in Pakistan,” Annual Statement (UNDP, 2019), <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/MPI/Multidimensional%20Poverty%20in%20Pakistan.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup>“FATA Development Indicators Household Survey (FDIHS),” Annual Statement (HPSIU, 2014), <https://phkh.nhsr.org/knowledge-article/fata-development-indicators-household-survey-2013-14>.

<sup>20</sup>“Report on Gender Profiling Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Merged Districts” (UN Women, May 4, 2020), <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/11/pk-Gender-Profiles-of-Merged-Districts-of-Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup>“Report on Gender Profiling Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Merged Districts.”

<sup>22</sup> “Global Terrorism Index 2024 - World | ReliefWeb,” March 6, 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2024>.

<sup>23</sup>“Global Terrorism Index 2020,” Annual Index Report (Vision of humanity, 2020), <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>.

manifestation of the fact that despite the deployment of extensive security infrastructure the extremists retain the capability to harm and threaten human and economic security. A deeper analysis will show that men and women are affected differently by this situation. Taking into consideration the impact of extremism on the lives of women and girls Pakistan have taken following policy and security measures. This article specifically looks at three policies namely, National Internal Security Policy 2018-2013, Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 and National Counter extremism policies through the feminist security lens. The next section of the article will deal with the analysis of these policies.

### What is Feminist Security Perspective?

International Relations have predominantly been a Masculinist field since its inception in the early 1900s. This was first highlighted by J. Ann Tickner in her PhD thesis and later her seminal works “Gender in International Relations<sup>24</sup>” and “Gendering World Politics<sup>25</sup>”. She argues that gender experiences have been neglected by IR scholars and women have been on the margins of the discipline. Later on, Cynthia Enloe built on the literature and tried to answer two main questions “Where are the women?” and “Does gender matter?”. Her groundbreaking works “Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making sense of Feminist International Politics<sup>26</sup>” and “Globalization and Militarism: Feminists make the link<sup>27</sup>” correlate feminism and militarism and argues that tough war and conflict affect women uniquely they aren’t the subject of mainstream IR. Ann Tickner and Cynthia Enloe can be called the pioneers of feminist International Relations. Since the past two decades Feminist International Relations have taken a security turn. We have been witnessing literature on gender, security, peace and war from a feminist centric point of concern. This literature is termed as Feminist Security Studies <sup>28</sup>(FSS).

Previously Security was limited to traditional narratives and revolved around state security. This conception of security while intersecting with gender and other human security aspects reinforces insecurity<sup>29</sup>. Feminist security studies views security and its related aspects with a gendered lens. Feminist security analysts argue that security cannot be perceived and manifested unless every aspect of safety is considered<sup>30</sup>. This makes it the most likely approach for this study as we will discuss further how Pakistan’s security policies are highly gendered and excludes

<sup>24</sup> Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, second edition, Completely Revised and Updated (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link*, Globalization (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Maria Stern and Annik TR Wibben, “A Decade of Feminist Security Studies Revisited,” *Sage*, Virtual Collection series, 2012, 4, [https://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/SDI/Introduction\\_Feminist\\_Virtual\\_Issue-1469204055013.pdf](https://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/SDI/Introduction_Feminist_Virtual_Issue-1469204055013.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Annick T. R. Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (Routledge, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*.

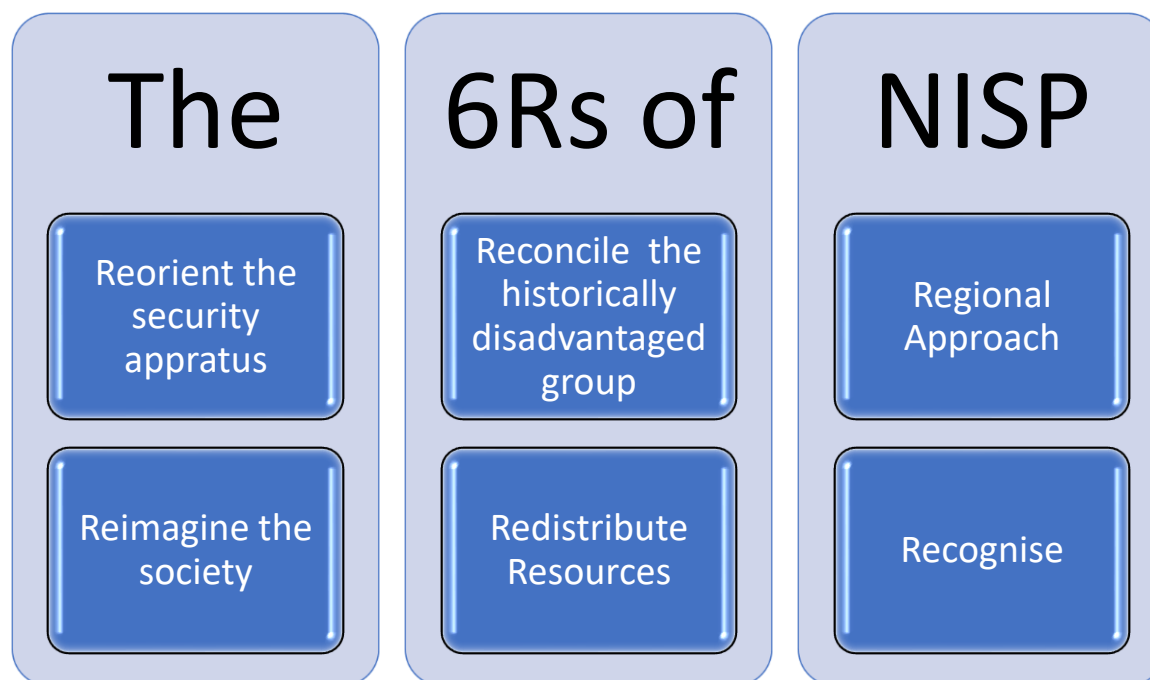
gender security. The unique impacts of conflict are ignored in these security policies. The study notices that this is due to the under representation of women in decision making institutions.

### **National Internal Security Policy (2018-2023)**

This Policy was approved by the federal cabinet of Pakistan in 2018. The policy commits towards gender mainstreaming especially it focuses on the inclusion of women and marginalized communities such as minorities in policy making, decision making and policy implementation this policy is unique as it provides a holistic approach. The NISP acknowledges the exclusion of marginalized communities on the basis of gender, religion, sect ethnicity and also endorses that this exclusion contributes to the growing radicalism in the society<sup>31</sup>. The NISP repeatedly refers to the 1973 constitution of Pakistan and the life and saying of the founding father Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah to stress on the fact that gender equality can lead to social cohesion and peace in the society. Previously, the traditional mechanisms to draft policies in Pakistan have been mechanical. Policy makers normally narrow their focus down to the policy problem and ignore the broader social and cultural context of the problem. NISP sets precedence in this regard it deviates from the traditional mechanical approach and provides a rational and discursive approach. The framework of NISP encompasses six significant components which are dubbed as the 6Rs approach to understand violent extremism in Pakistan. The policy approach is based on the understanding that extremism and different aspect of the society such as economy, culture and politics are intertwined like a double helix and have synonymous impact on each other. The 6R approach is as follows.

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<sup>31</sup>Rafiq Adnan et al., "National Internal Security Policy 2018-2023" (Islamabad, Pakistan: Ministry of Interior, May 2018), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342083754\\_Pakistan\\_National\\_Internal\\_Security\\_Policy\\_2018-2023](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342083754_Pakistan_National_Internal_Security_Policy_2018-2023).



Multiple studies suggest that gender inequality renders conflict in societies<sup>32</sup>. Pakistan is ranked as the sixth most dangerous country for women and Pakistani society is plagued with gender-based spectrum of peace in the society. Women in Pakistan live under the endemic of violence. 33% married Pakistani 90% Pakistani women face some kind of physical, verbal or sexual abuse<sup>33</sup>. Violence against women is normalized in Pakistan and is also justified on social and cultural grounds. Children and youngsters who witness violence against women internalize it as a social norm and believe that one can resort to gender-based violence in order to resolve a conflict. This kind of socialization has twofold impacts. Firstly, the male population of the society sees violence against women as a social norm and acceptable. Some people shrug gender-based violence off as family issues. Secondly, Due to the lack of access along with the legal recourse against the perpetrators of violence women generally feel trapped and become indifferent and insensitive towards violence. In such a society it is most likely that young people are psychologically vulnerable and become hostage to violent extremist ideologies without even consciously aware about it.

The policy makers while devising the NISP had this context in mind. They mentioned that the mindset of the young people can be transformed through education. The first step in this regard should be eliminating sexist, misogynist and hateful content from the curriculum. The exact words of the document are *"In collaboration with the provinces, curriculum guidelines and standards will be developed to ensure that textbooks are free of hate content, racial, gender and regional stereotypes/prejudices and glorification of war and violence. Content on the modern*

<sup>32</sup>Hilary Charlesworth and Christine Chinkin, *The Boundaries of International Law: A Feminist Analysis*, MellandSchill Studies in International Law (Manchester: Juris Pub.: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>33</sup>Huma Yousaf, "Domestic Abuse," *Dawn*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1568713>.



*concept of citizenship, which stresses commonalities among all people, irrespective of their backgrounds, and which derives its values from the basic fundamental rights enriched in the constitution, will be developed. In this regard, a review of the curriculum of Pakistan studies and Islamic studies shall be prioritized<sup>34</sup>*. The policy also acknowledges the significance of enforcing gender sensitive laws such as Anti-Honor killing Act, Anti Rape Bill, Women Protection Bill and Burn Crime Bill. It also calls for modern scientific and technologically advanced techniques while investigating such crimes against women and girls for instance using DNA sampling in rape cases<sup>35</sup>.

On the socio-cultural front while advocating the participation of women in economic and domestic activities the policy suggests recognizing the unpaid labor of women at home for the family. Most women compromise their jobs and careers for their domestic responsibilities. The policy suggests introducing Family Laws that take their support to the family into consideration<sup>36</sup>. The policy also endorses economic empowerment of women as a means of preventing violence. It orders to enforce that in letter and spirit strict observance of quotas for marginalized communities in jobs and education is stressed. Women have not been included in preventing violence against extremism at the policy level previously this has been noticed as a lacuna by the NISP. To remedy this lacuna the policy calls for including women and marginalized communities in future. This policy is a significant document but it is not free of shortcomings even with it comes to the 6Rs presented by the policy itself these shortcomings are discussed as follows.

The first component dubbed as first R (Reorientation of the Security Apparatus) calls to revisit the state security apparatus and reforms in law-enforcement agencies. Increased female representation in security policy making and peace keeping agencies is the need of the hour to tackle gender sensitive nature of violence and extremism. For instance, the policy argues that *“The state security apparatus must modernize not only its infrastructure and capacity but also by redefining its raison d’etat and adopting a people-centric approach<sup>37</sup>”*. One of the criticisms on the policy is that despite recognizing that Pakistan is a patriarchal society and gender inequality exists in all aspects of the society the policy used the word “people-centric” instead of woman centric. The second component reimagining the society deals with deconstructing the current national narrative and reconstructing it to inculcate pluralism, inclusivity, peace and social cohesion. The policy states *“Reimagining the society as a tolerant, inclusive and democratic polity will be pursued to strengthen a shared vision for the nation”*. The policy doesn’t outline that for such a society it is pertinent to deconstruct the existing gender hierarchies. But the policy fails to encompass the significance of gender mainstreaming.

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<sup>34</sup>Adnan et al., “National Internal Security Policy 2018-2023.”

<sup>35</sup>Adnan et al.

<sup>36</sup>Adnan et al.

<sup>37</sup>Adnan et al.

The third component reconcile is more focused on the conflict prone areas such as Erstwhile FATA, KPK, Baluchistan and Karachi. It calls for mainstreaming the national and religious extremists by reconciling with them. It states that *“The incentives for shunning of violence and militancy and for re-integration have to be made greater than the continuation of militancy and anti-societal discourse and practices. Moreover, a process of reconciliation will be started especially in regions affected by sub-nationalist and ethno-political militancy”*. The fourth R of NISP is “Redistribute” this calls for the economic inclusion of the marginalized communities in the society such as women, minorities etc. It suggests distributing resources on the basis of social justice. The policy states that *“A key priority in this regard includes the social economic and political uplift of the marginalized groups such as youth, women and minorities”*. Here one must be cognizant of the fact that these groups overlap when comes to gender. Women are both minorities and Youth and vice-versa. In my point of view these three groups are generally disadvantaged. Women hailing from minorities are more disadvantaged compared to men. This brings us to the fifth R i.e. “Regional Approach”. This approach basically calls for a paradigm shift from geo politics to geo-economics. It also insists on establishing mechanism to promote regional cooperation among South Asian states to fight terrorism and violent extremism.

The policy argues that *“some security issues such as terrorism are transnational and require collaboration at the regional and international levels”*. The last R of the NISP is “recognize”. This element of the policy points towards a very significant issue. It calls upon the recognition of Social Sciences and Humanities as equally important disciplines as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. It argues that a collaboration of Social Sciences and Humanities with STEM education will create a more pluralistic and tolerant environment in the Pakistani societies and will also enhance the analytical capacity of the policy makers. The policy states that *“Promotion of quality research in academia and universities is essential in identifying the causal factors which push social actors towards extreme viewpoints and actions.”*

From the standpoint of Feminist Security Studies in order to understand gender and security and their impact on each other it is important to understand the pre-established constructs of gender especially while discussion how gender plays a significant role in security decision making<sup>38</sup> (also one of the claims of the WPS agenda). It is obvious from a quick look at all the Rs that the pre-established constructs of gender have made the policy makers ignored gender mainstreaming in their policy which was supposed to be more inclusive. Gender focus is absent in this policy.

### **National Action Plan (NAP)**

The National Action Plan was drafted before the NISP. It was a response to the 16 December 2014 APS attack. School shootings are a regular occurrence in places such as United States of America but in Pakistan this was an unprecedented act of terror where more than a hundred children were gruesomely murdered. Pakistan’s political parties and peace keeping forces were in a state

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<sup>38</sup>Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

of exigence after this incident. The government presented a 20-point agenda dubbed as NAP. The summary of the plan is as follows:

- 1) Capital punishment for terrorists.
- 2) Military courts to implement quick justice (within 2 years).
- 3) Militant outfits banned
- 4) NACTA\*<sup>39</sup> will be strengthened
- 5) All printed media to be monitored and strict actions to be taken against hate speech, sectarianism and intolerance.
- 6) Obstructing terror financing
- 7) Ensuring banned militant organizations don't reemerge
- 8) Initiating and deploying a counter terrorism force
- 9) Deploying effective measures against religious persecution.
- 10) Regulating religious institutions especially seminaries.
- 11) Banning media from glorifying terrorists and terrorist organizations.
- 12) Reforms in FATA and repatriation of IDPs
- 13) Dismantling communications network of terrorist organizations
- 14) Monitoring social media and internet
- 15) No tolerance for militancy
- 16) Operation in Karachi to reach logical end
- 17) Empowerment of Baluchistan
- 18) Sectarian terrorism to be dealt with iron hands
- 19) Policies to be drafted for Afghan refugees and their registration processes.
- 20) Reforms to be introduced in criminal justice system<sup>40</sup>.

A quick glance at this agenda shows that the word woman hasn't been mentioned once in the agenda. The implications of violent extremism on women are totally ignored. This gendered approach of the agenda is one of the main shortcomings of the agenda after point two where state apparatus is being bypassed and rendered incompetent further corrugating the confidence of people in the judicial system.

### **National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines (NCEPG)**

As per the fourth point of the NAP the National Counter Terrorism Authority presented their guidelines for a policy in lieu with NAP. The strategy was presented by the state as a milestone to counter non-traditional security threats. The country coordinator Mr. Ihsan Ghani stated "the guideline will be the cornerstone of the country's response to non-traditional threats and to deal

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<sup>39</sup> \* NACTA (National Counter Terrorism Authority) is the anti-terrorism institution in Pakistan. This institution drafted a counter extremism policy four years later following the NAP.

<sup>40</sup> "National Action Plan" (Islamabad, Pakistan: NACTA, 2014), <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/>.

with extremist ideology<sup>41</sup>". The policy guidelines are closely related to the already discussed NSIP. In fact, it has been dubbed as a connect strategy to achieve national cohesion in Pakistan. The basic aim of the document is best understood from the following quote "principles of inclusiveness, integration, human rights and gender mainstreaming as per Para 53 of NISP have been woven in the NCEPG framework".

The guidelines acknowledge that a gendered lens is needed for drafting an inclusive framework for preventing violent extremism. While focusing on the inclusion of women and marginalized communities in order to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism the NCPEG doesn't ignore the fact that women can be party to encouraging violent extremism. It states that "*the role of women as victims, sympathizers and problem solvers of extremism has been given due attention*<sup>42</sup>". The policy also calls for a supervised living (in prison) and ensuring economic relief by immediate family and community. It is safe to assume that the NCPEG acknowledges that women and girls are affected differently by conflict and violence and female inmates need a gender sensitive approach for their rehabilitation in everyday society. Similarly, the policy also endorses the role of female role models as follows "*A module of on women rights should be sensitively developed without segregating women rights as separate from human rights. Behavioral patterns of acceptance, rights and duties should be developed with regard to women. Our heroes are not to remain limited to men but female figures should be included too*<sup>43</sup>". Including female role models positively impacts women and girls. Seeing women in leadership roles normalizes the representation of women in decision making and peace keeping institutions. Furthermore, the guidelines suggest including women in "Illaqa Aman-o-Behbud" committees<sup>44</sup>. This is a very important suggestion as women can notice the push factors of violent extremism within the family easily. It also makes responsible female citizens active members in countering terrorism instead their traditional passive standing by role.

In theory this policy sounds like a huge leap forward towards gender inclusivity in the area of securitization. But in spirit these guidelines never suggested any concrete measures for mainstreaming gender in counter violence. It ensures no representation of women DMG and Police officers in conflict prone regions. Likewise, there are 1.5 million women in FATA and all of them have been ignored and excluded in legislative and consultative process both in the traditional Jirgas and the colonial FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulations). For example, in 2019 Anita Mehsud MNA from FATA was not allowed to attend the Jirga in South Waziristan by conservative

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<sup>41</sup>"NACTA Creates Policy Guidelines to Counter Extremism through 'War of Ideas,'" *Express Tribune*, May 12, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1708143/nacta-creates-policy-guidelines-counter-extremism-war-ideas>.

<sup>42</sup>"NCEPG Guidelines" (Islamabad, Pakistan: NACTA), accessed June 2, 2022, <https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NCEP-Guidlines.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup>"NCEPG Guidelines."

<sup>44</sup> These committees (comprised of local people) are formed to spot activities that may lead to terrorism and violent extremism.

and religious factions in FATA<sup>45</sup>. Another aspect where the women have been ignored by NCPEG is “strategic planning”.

Despite the discrepancies and shortcomings, the guidelines take note of the areas omitted by the NAP and the general narrative of Pakistan’s security policy. It is an upgrade on the NISP.

### **Anti-terrorism Act (1997) and its 2004 Amendment**

The Anti-terrorism act was passed back in 1997 and has been recently amended in 2004. This Act uses a much-gendered language. It uses the word woman only once and that’s the only time it refers to women as well. The scenario where the word woman is used about an SHO (police personnel) visiting an educational institution and what SOPs he has to follow. The Act states that “He shall no visit or go within surroundings specified in the order including any of the under mentioned places, without the written permission of the officer in charge of the police station with in whose jurisdiction such place is situated, namely: schools, colleges and other institutions where person under twenty-one years of age or women are given education or other training or are housed permanently or temporarily<sup>46</sup>.”

This statement is entirely sexist as it categorizes women and minors under the same head. One of patriarchy’s most frequently used arguments is that women and children are physically weak hence they need protection. This statement is on the same line of thought. Secondly, the whole document is written in a masculine language by using third pronouns he/him only. Women and reference to women is absent in this document. The WPS agenda and Feminist Security Studies scholars have repeatedly highlighted that women are excluded and ignored in policy making if and when they are not present there are policy makers.

### **Critical Analysis of Pakistan’s Security Policies under the lens of WPS**

WPS is an adaptive and inclusive framework, it stresses upon women representation in peace building and security policy making. The framework calls for a paradigm shift and asks to see women not are passive affectees of violence but to engage them as active members in peace building and conflict resolution. My study deals with the three pillars of the WPS agenda that is a) Protection, b) Prevention and c) Participation I will briefly sum them up one by one.

Protection: This pillar calls for an inclusive approach to protect women and girls in conflict and post-conflict societies. Pakistan is predominantly a patriarchal society. Women and girls go through different experience when violence strikes them for instance during the Swat Operation

<sup>45</sup> \* The following link leads to a video about the incident. The man speaking in Pashto roughly translates to “Anita Mehsud has been cast away from the Mehsud Jirga. We Pashtoons are honorable people and don’t let women in Jirgas” ([https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=620179155354258&extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN\\_GK0T-GK1C-GK2C&ref=sharing](https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=620179155354258&extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C-GK2C&ref=sharing))

<sup>46</sup>“ATA 1997” (Islamabad, Pakistan: Majlis-e-shoora, 1997), <http://sindhlaws.gov.pk/setup/Library/LIB-18-000002.pdf>.

the female IDPs biggest problem after clean water was access to the washroom<sup>47</sup> their traditional norms locked them in their tents and they had to wait till nightfall for excretion. Similarly, if a man dies as a result of violence in a Pakistani household his wife has to restrict and arrest her mobility for a four months period (called iddat). Men don't have to go through such circumstances hence these unique experiences remain out of the sight of male policy makers. Moreover, women have to face multidimensional forms of gender-based violence and sexual violence. Such instances have negative effects on their mental wellbeing. Keeping in view these instances the Protection aspect of the WPS stresses the inclusion of female policy makers in order to include gender specific problems and experiences while designing security policies.

We briefly reviewed three policies (ATA, NISP and NAP) and one policy guidelines (NCEGP). All of them lacked the gender perspective and they did not acknowledge the unique experiences females go thorough during and after violence. Although NISP and NCEGP were an upgrade compared to the rest but even these policies lack concrete measures. Following the WPS framework and including women in security policy making can help to overcome this discrepancy.

**Prevention:** This pillar calls for gender mainstreaming for prevention of crimes in a society. Women must be active members and must be engaged as equal citizens to fight violence and terrorism. We noticed that Pakistani Security policies are patriarchal in nature especially the ATA and NAP. However, the suggestion of including women in the Behbud committees in NCEGP guidelines is a welcome change. In a report by BBC titled "Shamima Begum: Why women support terror", it was stated that women support militant organizations to escape the life of humiliation and helplessness at home<sup>48</sup>. In a country like Pakistan that scores low on all accounts of women empowerment excluding women from preventing violence as active agents is likely to backfire. Violence has a complex relation with different socio-economic problems gender exclusion in economic and political spheres being one of them. Gender mainstreaming is indispensable to prevent violent extremism in Pakistan.

**Participation:** This pillar calls for participation of women and girls in decision making, law enforcing, police and monitoring institutions. Globally, police is the most gendered institution. Women and most underrepresented and in some countries unrepresented when it comes to Police Force. The situation in Pakistan is dismal both regionally and globally. According to a news piece in "Dawn" in January 2022, women comprise of only 1% workforce of Pakistan which is the lowest in South Asia<sup>49</sup>. There are many reasons for women not joining the police force and all of them are socio-cultural. Police is considered to be a life-threatening job and is considered unsuitable for women in our society. The male domination in the police force especially the

<sup>47</sup>BushraKhalig, "Pakistan. Women Voices from inside IDPs Camps" (CADTM, May 26, 2009), <http://www.cadtm.org/Pakistan-Women-voices-from-inside>.

<sup>48</sup>GayatriSehgal and Martin Zeuthen, "Why Women Support Terror," *BBC*, April 17, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47653190>.

<sup>49</sup>ShehrayarRizwan, "Sexism and Gender Imbalance in Punjab Police Force," *Dawn*, January 31, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1672423>.

higher ranks in police are predominantly male is all one of the reasons women are discouraged to join the Police force<sup>50</sup>. Other factors such as education and permission of male guardian (father or husband) also result in low participation of women in Police. Even though a 10% quota is reserved for women the workforce is just 1%.

The Acts discussed above propose no reformative measures that addresses in loophole. The NISP does suggest women inclusion in policy making but doesn't present any concrete measure. It also suggests including women in the "Advisory Committee on Internal Security" but that too remains undone so far. In terms of policy making Pakistan never had a female Federal Internal Minister. This discussion shows that Pakistan's Security policy making mechanisms and framework are extremely gendered and fuels gender inequality in the society.

### **Gender Action Plan; A Way forward for Pakistan**

The abovementioned debate shows that the Pakistani government has taken repeated measures to counter violent extremism and terrorism in the country. It would be biased to say that the government has not taken the gender dimension into consideration. The ATA and NAP are extremely gendered but the later guidelines do acknowledge gender absence. They also proposed a more gender sensitive approach towards policy making. Although room for improvement still exists this can be start. Including gender as a social variable, that affects and can be affected by violence in a huge step towards gender inclusion. Firstly, the security policy making in Pakistan is exclusive and doesn't include civil society stake holders who might refer to the importance of gender inclusion. It's about time Pakistan recognizes the fact that women are not just passive victims of violence. Former General Secretary Kofi Annan remarks as follows on the subject:

"The leadership of parties to conflict is male-dominated and men are chosen to participate at the peace table. The desire to bring peace at any cost may result in a failure to involve women and consider their needs and concerns. In addition, women's organizations often do not have the resources needed to effectively influence lengthy peace negotiations process<sup>51</sup>".

Women inclusion is imperative for preventing violence but so is giving women the opportunity to speak for themselves which is completely absent when it comes to state responses to security on a national level as have been noted above. In a patriarchal society of Pakistan gender can be a focal point while allocating resources both economic and political to a conflict-ridden area. However, it shouldn't be ignored that women are not inherently pacifists the recent D.I Khan and Karachi University incidents bear witness to this fact. I argue that gender sensitive security needs in depth analysis and investigation is Pakistan. The push and pull factors of radicalization women must be researched. One can see that even in NISP and NCPEG women are dealt as passive subject which is a very narrow approach. Our security policy making need to broaden their

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<sup>50</sup>Rizwan.

<sup>51</sup>"2004 Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security," Annual Statement (UNO, 2004), <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/sg2004.htm>.

approach by including academician to go through the scholarship of conflict-ridden countries such as Iraq and Syria and identify the factors that how women and teenage girls were attracted towards the messages of ISIS. The impact was so huge that girls from developed countries married men in ISIS (Netflix even made a documentary on three of them). The UNSC called for reassessing the role of gender in conflict and conflict prevention in this context<sup>52</sup>.

It is important to understand women's agency over themselves when it comes to violence and conflict. Scholars of feminist security studies believe that women are often considered weak and victims of war due to patriarchy and the essentialist approach that because women give birth hence, they have a nurturing role. Whereas men are considered inherently violent and inclined towards crime, conflict and ideological inspired militancy. These social constructs when deeply embedded are depicted in security policies. This makes the policymakers assume that women have no agency over themselves and do not think for themselves. A study of Indonesian female fighters concluded that those women joined ISIS voluntarily whereas a similar study about female fighters in Kurd army, Sri Lanka and Ukraine found that women were even eager to join misogynistic organizations.

If we assume terrorism as a dependent variable then I may argue that so far gender have been dealt as a control variable whereas it is an explanatory variable. If it is treated as an explanatory variable the dependent variable (terrorism) might vary.

Pakistan has taken modest steps to include gender in security and prevention of violence if gender is made the focal point, it may reduce violence in the society. Policy makers shouldn't make just preventive and protective laws and deal with women as passive victims of violence but they must think of mainstreaming them in all aspects of everyday life. We are yet miles away from mainstreaming gender.

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<sup>52</sup>“What Is UNSCR 1325? An Explanation of the Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security” (United States Institute of Peace, 2000), [https://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325).



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