

# Women in Security Policy-making: A Case Study of Pakistan

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## Abstract

*Traditionally and historically masculine attributes are attached to the concept of "Security." Therefore, security itself and the issues related to it are dominated by male members of a society. Such a situation leads to the absence of gender perspective from security policy-making in most of the countries in the world. Women's perspective is absent from macro to micro level. Keeping in view the fact that women comprise almost 50 per cent of the world's population, it is pertinent to give them their space in security policy-making. Women are the prime victims of conflicts, wars and poor security. Moreover, according to various researches, they view conflict differently and in a more holistic manner than males. This research study, while highlighting the significance of women's role in the society, explores the situation of female participation in security policy-making in Pakistan against the backdrop of social, political, religious and gender perspectives. Finally, it offers recommendations for the way forward.*

**Keywords:** Women, Security, Participation, Audibility, Visibility, Decision-making, Peace-building, Change.

## Introduction

In 2000, Kofi Anan said, "For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls."<sup>1</sup> According to different quantitative studies, women empowerment and gender equality

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<sup>1</sup> Kofi Annan, Secretary-General Calls for Council Action to Ensure Women Are Involved In Peace and Security Decisions, UNIS/SG/2699, October 25, 2000, <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2000/sg2699.html>

are associated with peace and stability in a society.<sup>2</sup> Although it has not been acknowledged generally but like men women too have the right to participate in the advancement of peace, conflict prevention and resolution and in rebuilding post-conflict societies like men.<sup>3</sup> At times, the dominance of male participations suppresses the voice of women in security policy-making. According to different theories of peace and conflict studies, if women are influential in decision-making, they take the lead against extremism in their communities, therefore it is more likely that crises will be resolved without recourse to violence.<sup>4</sup> It is evident in different researches on the subject that gender equality is a better indicator of a state's peacefulness than other factors like democracy, religion or GDP.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, gender inequality has been revealed as a predictor of armed conflict in a number of empirical studies, whether measuring conflict among states or within states.<sup>6</sup> The basic premise of this research study is that a greater role of women in the decision-making process leads to less violence, less extremism and greater social stability. This research study aims to focus on female voices in security policy-making in Pakistan so as to understand the relevance of this issue to our socio-political environment.

Statistical analysis of the data from several countries in the world during the period 1977-1996 showed that the higher the proportion of women in a parliament, the lower the likelihood that the state carried out human rights abuses such as political imprisonments, torture, killings and disappearances. Women are, often, the first ones to stand up against terrorism since they are among the first targets of orthodox interpretation of religious ideology which in most of the cases restricts their rights and frequently leads to increases in domestic violence before this orthodox

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<sup>2</sup> Marie O'Reilly, *Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies* (Oct 2015), <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/why-women-inclusive-security-and-peaceful-societies/>

<sup>3</sup> UN Women, *Women and Peace and Security: Guidelines for National Implementation*, 3, <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/02BPlanonWomenandPeaceandSecurity.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

religious interpretations translate into an open-armed conflict. Advocates of women participation in decision making argue that “when women influence decisions about war and peace and take the lead against extremism in their communities, it is more likely that crisis will be resolved without recourse to violence.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover “equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice. It is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development.”<sup>8</sup>

The significance of women’s participation is evident in the following mentioned facts. Peace agreements are 35 per cent more likely to last, at least 15 years, if women participate in its negotiation. When a state has a 5 per cent increase in the number of women in its parliament, it is five times less likely that violence is adopted as a means when faced with an international crisis. Yet, when it comes to ending violence, women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators and 9 per cent of negotiators in official peace talks between 1992 and 2011. In the same manner, only 2 per cent of funding dedicated to peace and security is channelled to gender equality and women empowerment.<sup>9</sup>

Recognising gender equality as vital for women empowerment and democratic governance, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, recommended two strategies: First, taking measures “to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.”; Second, “increasing women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.” Both strategies are proposed to be addressed by “governments, national bodies, private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers’ organizations, research and academic

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<sup>7</sup> Margie Warrell, “Women, War And Ending The Sexism That Fuels It,” *Forbes*, November 11, 2015, <https://www.Forbes.Com/Sites/Margiewarrell/2015/11/11/Women-War-And-The-Sexism-That-Fuels-It/#50d63e7737bd>

<sup>8</sup> Excerpt from Mission Statement of Beijing Platform for Action.

<sup>9</sup> “Women Fighting for Peace: Lessons for Today’s Conflicts,” Testimony submitted by Jacqueline O’Neill Director, The Institute for Inclusive Security on March 22, 2016 to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20160322/104721/HHRG-114-FA00-Wstate-ONeillJ-20160322.pdf>

institutions, sub-regional and regional bodies, and non-governmental and international organizations.”<sup>10</sup>

The Security Council adopted a resolution (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security on October 31, 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all the United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.<sup>11</sup>

With this resolution the UN Security Council acknowledged that armed conflicts affect women and girls differently than men and boys. Such acknowledgment called for a change in the way that the international community moved towards conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and peace building.<sup>12</sup> This realization at the UN level has given them confidence in their capabilities pertaining to conflict management and transformation. At the international level, the UN Security Council has adopted eight resolutions on Women Peace and Security:<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rosa Linda T. Miranda, Impact of Women’s Participation in Decision-making, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Expert Group Meeting on Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership, October 24 to 27, 2005, 2. EGM/EPWD/2005/EP.7

<sup>11</sup> Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

<sup>12</sup> UN Women, Women and Peace and Security: Guidelines for National Implementation, 2, <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/02BPlanonWomenandPeaceandSecurity.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Women, peace and security, UN peace Keeping, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml>,

## Importance of Women Participation in Decision-making

Men and women perceive peace from divergent dimensions. For women, violence is not only caused by war but is also resorted to by their husbands, neighbours, family members and cultures.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, women adopt a broad definition where peace “includes not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities but also the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within society.”<sup>15</sup> In contrast, men have a greater tendency to associate peace with the absence of a formal conflict.<sup>16</sup> In Pakistan, the majority of boys and men regard peace in terms of relations with their neighbours and at community, village and district levels.<sup>17</sup> This makes inclusion of women and their perspective on security policy-making even more relative and important. Involvement of women in a peace process and conflict resolution leads to progress towards understanding conflict related complexities from different dimensions. Research has proven that the countries where women actively participate in the political processes are more socially stable and use less military violence.<sup>18,19</sup>

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Security Council resolution 2122 (2013), Security Council resolution 2106 (2013), Security Council resolution 1960 (2010), Security Council resolution 1889 (2009) Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)

<sup>14</sup> Anna Alissa Hitzemann, No Sustainable Peace and Security without Women, *Sustainable Security*, September 27, 2012, <https://sustainablesecurity.org/2012/09/27/no-sustainable-peace-and-security-without-women/>

<sup>15</sup> Political Decision Making and Conflict Resolution: The Impact of Gender Difference, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Expert Group Meeting, <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/cn6/1997/conflict/egm-prdc-1996-rep1.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Women Make Peace but Men Negotiate it, Institute of Developmental Studies, Sep 20, 2012, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/news/women-make-peace-but-men-negotiate-it>

<sup>17</sup> From the ground up Women roles in local peace building in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone, TAW Design and Print, [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/from\\_the\\_ground\\_up\\_-\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/from_the_ground_up_-_full_report.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Margie Warrell, “Women, War And Ending The Sexism That Fuels It,” *Forbes*, November 11, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2015/11/11/women-war-and-the-sexism-that-fuels-it/#e67196f47fc8>

Theorists and scholars working in the field present different arguments in favour of female participation in decision making such as:<sup>20</sup>

- *The justice argument* – women account for approximately half the population of the world and therefore have the right to be represented as such;
- *The experience argument* – women’s experiences are different from men’s, which need to be represented in discussions leading to policy-making and its implementation. These different experiences mean that women ‘do politics’ differently from men;
- *The interest argument* – the interests of men and women are different and even conflicting at times, therefore women are more needed in representative institutions to articulate the interests of women;
- *The critical mass argument* – women are able to achieve solidarity of purpose to represent female interests when they achieve certain levels of representation;
- *The symbolic argument* – women are attracted to political life if they have role models to emulate;
- *The democracy argument* – equal representation of women and men enhances democratization of governance in both transitional and consolidated democracies.

### **Case Study of Pakistan**

Pakistan faces multiple issues of peace and conflict in internal and external spheres. Over the past decade, Pakistan has experienced a significant rise in violence in terms of frequency, scope, and magnitude. This has made the situation of women even more vulnerable as they are not only victims but also survivors of these conflicts. Pakistani women have long faced violence and discrimination. Although women comprise 50 per cent of the total population of Pakistan, they remain under-represented in the process of national policy-making.

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<sup>20</sup>Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Processes with Particular Emphasis on Political Participation and Leadership, Report of the Expert Group Meeting Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, October 24-27, 2005, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/FinalReport.pdf>

A few women are certainly pursuing peace and conflict studies but there is negligible female participation at the actual strategic or decision making level regarding a conflict and its resolution. Women are not a part of any peace negotiations and their interests are largely neglected in any negotiated settlements. The structure and functioning of Pakistani society can explain the context of “not audible” women in all spheres of life.

The government of Pakistan has constitutional and international obligations, under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to combat gender inequality and remove such barriers to women empowerment. By repealing discriminatory legislations and enforcing laws that protect women and by ensuring their access to gender-responsive police and courts, the government can substantially decrease violence against women.<sup>21</sup> The near absence of female voice is contradictory to CEDAW. Therefore, the constitutional laws which are in favor of women, such as The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016<sup>22</sup> are ineffective. Women’s invisibility as victims, survivors, leaders and peace- makers needs to be understood as the fundamental obstacle to ameliorating the predicament of women towards ensuring the safety and welfare of the women affected by conflict.<sup>23</sup>

The exclusion or invisibility of women is rooted in Pakistan’s systemic gender disparity. Ranked 141 in the annual Global Gender Gap Report, Pakistan is second to last in terms of gender equality worldwide.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Pakistan ranks 141 for economic

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<sup>21</sup> Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan, Asia Report N265 (April 2015), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016, <http://www.lawsopakistan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PUNJAB-Protection-of-Women-Against-Violence-Act-2016.doc.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, “Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building,” 20, <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/3F71081FF391653DC1256C69003170E9-unicef-WomenWarPeace.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> “Pakistan Second to last in global gender equality report,” *Express Tribune*, with the *International New York Times*, Web Desk,

participation, 132 in education, 119 for health and 85 for political empowerment.<sup>25</sup> According to the reports, Pakistani women face the world's worst inequality vis-à-vis health-care, education and work.<sup>26</sup>

Despite 33 per cent representation of women in parliament<sup>27</sup>, and Pakistan being the recipient of billions of dollars in development projects on gender equality, women in Pakistan still face an uphill battle when it comes to inclusion of women in decision making at all levels.<sup>28</sup> Particularly affected is the peace and security sector where despite women being incorporated into the armed forces, judiciary, police and foreign services, women rarely rise to positions of power. There are notable exceptions in each field but they remain exceptions not the general norm. On the one hand, Pakistan has not had a female three star general; no woman rose to the rank of foreign secretary<sup>29</sup> or has been appointed as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. On the other hand, Islamist militants are targeting women's rights activists, political leaders and development workers with impunity.<sup>30</sup>

The convention-ridden, patriarchal society of Pakistan has a great bearing on specification of gender roles.<sup>31</sup> Women have to face gender discrimination both in their public and private life, forcing them to settle for a lower social, economic and political status than those of males<sup>32</sup>

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<http://tribune.com.pk/story/782310/second-to-last-pakistan-ranks-141-out-of-142-countries-in-gender-gap-report/>

<sup>25</sup> Bekhouche, Yasmina, Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2014," *World Economic Forum*, October 28, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Pakistan at bottom in gender equality in global ranking, AP, October 28, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1140919>

<sup>27</sup> Saira Bano, "Women in Parliament in Pakistan: Problems and Potential Solutions," *Women's Studies Journal*, Vol.23 No. 1 (September 2009): 19-35, 24.

<sup>28</sup> Leah Horowitz, "Getting Good Government for Women: A Literature Review, Agriculture and Rural Development" Discussion Paper 43, *The World Bank*, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARD/Resources/336681-1220903855412/GenderandGovernanceLitReview.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> This article predates Tehmina Janjua's appointment as foreign secretary in February 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan, Asia Report N265 (April 2015), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> Situation of Women in Pakistan, *Chapter 02*, P.P 01, <http://pr.hec.gov.pk/Chapters/749S-2.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Maliha Gull Tarar and Venkat Pulla, "Patriarchy, Gender Violence and Poverty amongst Pakistani Women: A Social Work Inquiry," *International Journal of Social*



These patterns of patriarchal society have not only belittled women's legitimate role in the society but have sometimes eliminated women from public spaces and can continue to impact a female throughout her life.<sup>33</sup> It is not the women but the society which defines their roles. What happens to her, when she becomes an adult, is subjected to all sorts of exploitation ranging from mental and physical torture to sexual abuse.<sup>34</sup> In a patriarchal society like Pakistan, the family is the basic unit which sets the norms for males and females differently.<sup>35</sup> Within this system, fathers and husbands are recognised as the guardian of women and the decision-making powers are vested in their hands only.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, a gender responsive approach is pertinent in this benighted cultural setting, ranging from gender sensitization to transformation of gender roles.

In Pakistan, the history of laws related to women's rights and empowerment involves a complex pattern of advances and setbacks. The state's efforts to define female rights are complicated by the need to balance divergent views on the place of women in the society.

Gender relations in Pakistan are highly inequitable. Women have been systematically kept disadvantaged and subordinated by patriarchal traditions, with significant differences between women and men in terms of literacy, economic activity, and enrolment in primary education. The vast majority of economically active women is engaged in agriculture or in private households as domestic helpers. Many women are denied ownership and control of resources especially land, and there are very high levels of violence against women, including forced marriage and so-called honour killings.<sup>37</sup> Violence against women is widespread across all socio-economic classes, with some reports suggesting it occurs up to 21 per cent to 50 per cent of households in the country.<sup>38</sup> The lack of knowledge, fear, absence of public support, social shaming and structural and legal irritants perpetuate violence against women.

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*Work and Human Services Practice* (April,2014), 56,

<http://www.hrpub.org/download/20140405/IJRH8-19200116.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> A Pilot Study on 'Honour Killings' in Pakistan and Compliance of Law, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Faiza Ilyas, "Every second woman suffers domestic violence in Pakistan," *Dawn*, November 06, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1294475>

The status of women is the result of systematic subordination. Moreover, familial 'honour' is closely linked to women's sexuality and behaviour, placing heavy restrictions on women's mobility and decision-making power.<sup>39</sup> Although there are legal quotas, women are systematically excluded from all levels of decision-making. Moreover, tribal and feudal mindsets also discourage female political participation.

A key challenge for professional women, who desire to progress, also relate to their social role. Employers are hesitant to advance women to higher positions for the fear they will abandon their post in the future on becoming mothers or housewives. Furthermore, increased demands of their own families may also push them to neglect career advancement.

The way women and men are socialised creates psychological barriers for women in pursuing leadership and decision-making roles. Women are socialised with an inherent sense of insecurity, weakness and subordination, which does not make it easy for them to overcome and occupy 'traditionally male' roles. Similarly, men are socialised to consider themselves to be in power, not leaving any room for female career advancement. This creates a mindset where women are always considered secondary even if they are occupying leadership roles.

Moreover, the role of technology and women's lack of access to equal education opportunities and other training and skill-building resources are major reasons for their low levels of participation in power and leadership roles. As women are socially and culturally conditioned to select certain socially-accepted areas of studies, they are often left behind in several other fields which are considered as suitable for men such as technology-related businesses, knowledge and skills.

It is also pertinent to understand that political parties rely on male vote bank to win elections. This is one of the reasons that issues related to women, their status and their rights, have never been part of electoral politics, neither as election slogans nor as political agendas.

Women currently hold 21 per cent of seats in the Lower House (National Assembly), and 16.3 per cent of seats in the Upper House

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<sup>39</sup> From the ground up Women Roles in Local Peace-building in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone, TAW Design and Print, 27.

(Senate), placing Pakistan within the top third in world rankings of women's political participation. By 2009, more than 80 per cent of private bills were put forward by women parliamentarians. However, female parliamentarians feel their voices and issues do not receive adequate attention. A number of organizations have been formed to raise awareness of women's peace-building efforts, their integration and leadership in policy discourses and processes, and against discrimination and exclusion of women.

Most of the female parliamentarians and politicians are representing their wealthy political families.<sup>40</sup> Thus one may surmise that, there is a greater probability that women who make it to political mainstream are likely to come from the elite. Hence, they may not be inclined to challenge the interests of their class especially when reinforced by traditional values of loyalty and gratitude to one's family and patrons.

When women become candidates for political office some of them and/or their political parties purposely avoid getting perceived by male voters as a threat to male interests. To get more votes, they do not wish to be perceived as championing gender concerns or favouring women in their constituency.

## **Current Scenario**

Greater knowledge, economic assets and income-earning capacity leads to confidence and self-esteem resulting in increased participation in private and public decision-making.<sup>41</sup> The security paradigm for women

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<sup>40</sup> Rosa Linda T. Miranda, "Impact of women's participation and leadership on outcomes," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Expert Group Meeting on Equal participation of Women and Men in Decision-making Processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership October 24-27, 2005, 4, [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/docs/EP.7\\_rev.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/docs/EP.7_rev.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Women in Power and Decision Making, The e-discussion "Women in Power and Decision-Making" was co-hosted by UN Women and UN Global Compact from July 16 to August 6, 2014 and served as a contribution to the ongoing Beijing+20 campaign with discussions and reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, [http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe\\_documents/publications/Policy%20Areas/gender/EN/\\_2015-07-](http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Policy%20Areas/gender/EN/_2015-07-)

is inclusive in nature and is based on the understanding and experience of different regional, national, sub-national, ethnic and sectarian conflicts as well as familial, communal, social, political and economic issues with direct and/or indirect bearing on the accumulative sense of female security. The early warning indicators prompt women of different classes, ages, ethnic, sectarian and professional backgrounds to take necessary action. This is why that even though the Constitution of Pakistan, Acid Throwing Bill, Harassment at Workplace Act, Pakistan Penal Code (Amendment 509 particularly), Domestic Violence Bill (ICT) and Anti-Women Practices Bill are great milestones and are very comprehensive in protecting women's interests and wellbeing, they fail to address the question of security from women's perspective.<sup>42</sup>

Pakistan is home to over a hundred peace-building groups with thousands of workers.<sup>43</sup> "Women need to be present and visible in the decision-making process."<sup>44</sup> Several countries have come up with their national action plans on women's inclusion in peace building but Pakistan lags behind.<sup>45</sup> Ideally, "A solid women's presence in Pakistan's political life and decision-making is central to sustainable reforms and economic development. Without investing in their empowerment and putting their priorities at the heart of Pakistan's counter-insurgency efforts, peace and security will remain elusive and the country's democracy fragile."<sup>46</sup> The focus on developing a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, however, is still deficient in this regard.

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16\_\_UN\_Women-UN\_Global\_Compact\_E-

discussion\_Women\_in\_Power\_and\_Decision\_Making\_Recommendations\_2014.pdf

<sup>42</sup> Mohammed Asif Rana and Kishwar Sultana, Women and Security in Pakistan, [http://www.womensregionalnetwork.org/images/uploads/Security\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.womensregionalnetwork.org/images/uploads/Security_in_Pakistan.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Zahid Shahab Ahmed, "Peacebuilding in an impossible context? Perspectives from Pakistan," *Open Security Conflict and Peace Building* (2012).

<sup>44</sup> Our Correspondent, "International Peace Day: Include women in peace building: experts," *Tribune with the International New York Times*, (2015).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> "Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan," Asia Report N265 (April 2015), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.aspx>

Women in the past were the principal victims of state policies to appease violent extremists.<sup>47</sup> Religious conflicts restrict women from fully exercising their right to education or work. According to a study, *Understanding the Dynamics of Conflict and Peace-building in Pakistan: A Perception*, due to socio-political and religious radicalization “Women fall prey to stringent restrictions on freedom of movement. Women become totally homebound.”<sup>48</sup>

According to a news report, “Despite some helpful laws, since democratic transition began in 2008, chronic violence and discrimination against Pakistani women is amplified by the Parliament’s unwillingness to repeal or reform discriminatory laws; by the absence of a national domestic violence law; and by a gender-insensitive, dysfunctional criminal justice system. This becomes more important when women have 33% seats in the parliament and despite that they are unable to safeguard their interests and bridge the gender gap. In this regard, Pakistan must live up to its constitutional obligations and its signed international commitments.”<sup>49</sup>

Political participation of women is evident in the fact that out of the 262 elected seats of the National Assembly of Pakistan, only eight women have contested general elections and made it to Parliament. That said, although the parliament is more often than not unable to challenge social norms to improve the condition of women of Pakistan, there are some instances when it has attempted to do so through legislation. However, efforts such as the Women Protection Bill continue to face resistance from entrenched social attitudes and vested political interests.

- In order to build the capacity of the female parliamentarians, an organization, Women Parliamentary Caucus, was formed in 2008, under the guidance of first female speaker of the National Assembly

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<sup>47</sup> “Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan,” Asia Report N265 (April 2015), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/265-women-violence-and-conflict-in-pakistan.aspx>

<sup>48</sup> From the ground up Women roles in local peace building in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal , Pakistan and Sierra Leone, TAW Design and Print, [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/from\\_the\\_ground\\_up\\_-\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/from_the_ground_up_-_full_report.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Our Correspondent, “International Peace Day: Include Women in Peace-building: Experts,” *Tribune with the International New York Times* (2015).

of Pakistan, Dr. Fehmida Mirza. It must be understood that the Caucus is a young body that is developing its course given the political realities and challenges of operating in a male-dominated milieu. The main objectives of the Caucus are:

- To take up gender concerns through the institutional structures of the parliament ensuring that the norms promoting women's rights and empowerment were translated into national legislations.<sup>50</sup>
- To coordinate and communicate with major women's organizations for implementation of gender sensitive policies and programmes.<sup>51</sup>
- To connect with women parliamentarians across the globe by forming and strengthening alliances with other parliaments.

## **Problem Areas**

Women face multiple barriers as they attempt participation in their communities including the following:

- a) Restrictive social norms and attitudes that reinforce traditional gender roles, making it difficult for women to participate safely and meaningfully.<sup>52</sup>
- b) Violence against women and girls, fuelled by the long-term impact of conflict and militarisation, impacts on women's freedom to participate. Women face intimidation and threats to their safety when they try to take active roles in their communities. Access to justice also remains a significant challenge for survivors of violence against women and girls.<sup>53</sup>
- c) Poverty and economic inequality is also an irritant in women participation. It is that it inflicts double burden of their domestic roles

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<sup>50</sup> Formation of WPC – The Initial Efforts, *Women's Parliamentary Caucus*.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations Population Information Network (POPIN) UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with support from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

<sup>52</sup> From the ground up Women roles in local peace building in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone, TAW Design and Print, and Women Make Peace but Men Negotiate it, Institute of Developmental Studies, September 20, 2012, [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/from\\_the\\_ground\\_up\\_-\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/from_the_ground_up_-_full_report.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> "Women Make Peace but Men Negotiate it," *Institute of Developmental Studies*, September 20, 2012, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/news/women-make-peace-but-men-negotiate-it>

and income-generation activities as well as a lack of control over household income.<sup>54</sup>

- d) Inequality in access to education for women and the resultant low levels of literacy were identified in many communities as barriers to women's active participation.<sup>55</sup>
- e) Women often de-value their own role as an agent of social change.<sup>56</sup>
- f) In politics, there has to be a popular demand for transformative goals; unfortunately-women equality is not a popular demand in Pakistan as it is often perceived as Western agenda and un-Islamic.
- g) Many government and non-government organizations often hire women just to meet specific quotas whereas in practice little is done to genuinely ensure equitable treatment.
- h) Sexual harassment is a major reason why women hesitate to enter into certain roles, jobs and public spaces. The degree and type of sexual harassment varies from place to place and can be a significant barrier.

## Way Forward

It is an established fact that for women 'security' is inclusive. It appears to defy the principle of 'the art of defining something' because it is about their inner feeling of dignity, self respect, protection, sacrifice, aspirations, vision and hopes; it is about their immediate surroundings; it is about their families and even extended families; it is about their neighbourhood and communities and also of strategic nature. In fact, a very detailed research work is needed on how Pakistani women define security amidst a host of conflicts and issues existing at various levels.<sup>57</sup>

The rise of extremism in Pakistan has only compounded women's marginalisation. In addition to prevalent violence against women and increasing limitations on their participation in public life, terrorist violence has infiltrated almost all the communities. The conflict has, in true sense, come to women's doorsteps. Suicide bombers regularly target

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Mohammed Asif Rana and Kishwar Sultana, "Women and Security in Pakistan," P no. 11, , [http://www.womensregionalnetwork.org/images/uploads/Security\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.womensregionalnetwork.org/images/uploads/Security_in_Pakistan.pdf)

public markets that women frequent to sustain their families. Their workplaces have been bombed and their children's schools have been attacked.

In the face of intensifying extremism and terrorist violence, women in particular are experiencing high levels of insecurity. While many women are well-educated, economically independent, and politically active, feudal and tribal practices still control the lives of tens of millions of Pakistani women. By placing a strong emphasis on safeguarding women's honour, religious fundamentalists have increasingly limited their rights and mobility, and subsequently their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Further, parallel Islamic legal systems that serve as justice-dispute mechanisms in many parts of the country are largely discriminatory toward women. Gross gender biases toward women have subsequently resulted in gross economic and educational disparities.

Pakistan's official position with respect to UNSCR 1325<sup>58</sup> is not very encouraging. The state believes that if Pakistan signs the UNSCR 1325, it is tantamount to accepting the fact that Pakistan is at war and then NATO forces would have the legitimacy to land in here and take control. So, in different moots at Islamabad, the officials covertly and overtly maintained that only Article 6 of the UNSCR 1325 is relevant to Pakistan which asks to sensitise peacekeeping forces in gender related issues. However, in so believing, our state is denying women's inherent

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<sup>58</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on Women, Peace, and Security was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on October 31, 2000, after recalling Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000), and 1314 (2000). The resolution acknowledged the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. It calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the special needs of women and girls during conflict, repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction. Resolution 1325 was the first formal and legal document from the Security Council that required parties in a conflict to prevent violations of women's rights, to support women's participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction, and to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. It was also the first United Nations resolution to specifically mention women. The resolution has since become an organizing framework for the women, peace, and security agenda, which focuses on advancing the components of Resolution 1325.



right to participate even in those processes of decision-making that relate to their own safety, security and wellbeing. This is what makes “security,” “conflict resolution,” and even “policy formulation” but a masculine narrative. In believing so, the state defies 4Ps, i.e., Prevention, Protection, Participation and Prosecution (even though some at the higher corridors of power may agree, for the sake of rhetoric, that women have the right to participate).<sup>59</sup>

The research has proved that education is a sufficient factor to enable women to challenge gender relations but much is required to change social norms.<sup>60</sup> Literacy rate has improved in Pakistan, in terms of enrolment rate, but there are many structural constraints on women’s education and their work choices in terms of occupational rigidities and women’s own perceptions and aspirations for adult life.<sup>61</sup> There are clear indications that education and employment decisions of women taken by their parents channel them towards marriageability.<sup>62</sup>

Women’s equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for justice and democracy but it can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account. Without the perspective of women at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mohammed Asif Rana and Kishwar Sultana, *Women and Security in Pakistan*, P. 12, accessed April 15, 2016, [http://www.womensregionalnetwork.org/images/uploads/Security\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.womensregionalnetwork.org/images/uploads/Security_in_Pakistan.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Situation of Women in Pakistan, *Chapter 02*, P.P 20, Accessed March 16,2016, <http://pr.hec.gov.pk/Chapters/749S-2.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> *Women in Power and Decision Making*, The e-discussion “Women in Power and Decision-Making” was co-hosted by UN Women and UN Global Compact from July 16 to August 6, 2014 and served as a contribution to the ongoing Beijing+20 campaign with discussions and reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (accessed January 8, 2015), [http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe\\_documents/publications/Policy%20Areas/gender/EN/\\_2015-07-16\\_\\_UN\\_Women-UN\\_Global\\_Compact\\_E-discussion\\_Women\\_in\\_Power\\_and\\_Decision\\_Making\\_Recommendations\\_2014.pdf](http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Policy%20Areas/gender/EN/_2015-07-16__UN_Women-UN_Global_Compact_E-discussion_Women_in_Power_and_Decision_Making_Recommendations_2014.pdf)

## Recommendations

- Education is a sufficient factor to enable women to challenge gender relations.
- Pakistani women need to alter their perception of self and others (male).
- Since orthodox clergy uses religion to subjugate women, examples and orders for an assertive and meaningful role of women in decision and policy-making can also be taken from religious texts, highlighting, for example, the role of the Prophet (PBUH)'s wives in all domains of life.
- Media can be used as an agenda setter.
- The socio-political relationship between men and women should be improved to anchor interdependency.
- Despite a low literacy rate among Pakistani women, there should be reserved quotas to encourage women's participation in national affairs.
- Visibility of women as competent professionals is important to bring women's interests and gender equality issues into public policy discussion, formulation and implementation.
- A safer space for learning, experimentation and community activities is critical in leadership and development programmes for women.
- Mobilisation of women to launch a movement in governmental and non-governmental entities, social movements, political parties and other participatory processes can potentially challenge conventional approaches.
- Pakistan needs movements and groups which have the authority and determination to lobby for equal representation in order to support women's candidacies and undertake special measures for recruitment and selection. Similarly, inside political parties, activists pursuing women's movements must place pressure on the party leadership to take up all possible measures toward women's equality in political representation.

Change is the theme for any effort to give a voice to women and to involve them in meaningful decision-making; change itself requires a transformation of patriarchy-ridden culture, procedures (recruitment, selection, promotion, monitoring, reviews), strategic narratives, support system and an evolution in perceiving personal commitments of female employees as liabilities.