Chapter 1

The Theory and Practice of Gender and Security in South Asia

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The crisis of development in South Asia in combination with the deepening patterns of conflict—political, ethnic, and religious—underscore the need to develop an alternative perspective on security in the region. We believe that one important initial step toward creating an alternative discourse on security will be to privilege the experience and voices of women who speak from a women-sensitive perspective on their security and whose ideas must form an integral part of a revised discourse on security. Such a discourse has already been articulated in its initial theoretical forms and now needs to be supported by country-specific data.

The purpose of this volume, therefore, is to bring a gender-sensitive approach into the discourse and practice of human security in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Within this broad framework, our specific objectives are:

a. To provide an intellectual understanding of the concept of gendered human security through synthesis of academic discourse and scholarship, good practices and policies;

b. To document and analyse prevailing practices on gendered human security; and

c. To contribute to the building of standards and norms of measuring human security by developing a conceptual basis for the rationale behind the need for a separate framework for women's insecurity through the introduction of the issue of (direct and structural) violence against women into the framework. This is needed because the emphasis in the indicators used by different indices varies, and often ignores the direct threats and the structural discrimination women encounter in their everyday life.
The present work thus makes the case for reconceptualising women's security by highlighting the gender blindness of prevailing scholarship at several levels, ranging from the lack of data to the lack of conceptual categories. We analyse women's relationship with security from two major standpoints:

a. Women's security as ensured/threatened by the state.

b. Women's security and the intersections of cultural norms and traditions practiced at the community and family levels, such as honour killings, bride price, anti-women fatwas (religious edicts), and other forms of domestic violence.

Keeping these two key standpoints in view, we examine the indices developed by multilateral agencies that take into account economic, legal, social and political rights in the public and private contexts. We also connect the issue of insecurity with direct and structural violence, emphasising that the links between these two types of violence constrain women's options.

This chapter discusses the larger masculinist politics and framework within which human security and human development have been conceptualised and discusses both their mainstream as well as feminist critiques. The second chapter provides a lens into the political and social contexts in Bangladesh and Pakistan and locates different types of sectoral human securities in the two countries within the larger framework of political development. This helps place the multi-faceted development issues confronting the two countries in their historical and current complexities. Although this chapter does not focus on gender as a category within the different sectors, it sets the context for our understanding of the gender issues discussed in Chapter 3. The latter brings out the different and overlapping ways in which women face insecurity at the level of the state, the local community and the family. It highlights the dual roles of the state in providing protection and exacerbating inequalities at the legal and social policy levels. This chapter also examines local customs that push women back and ensure that their status remains secondary within the community and the household. In so doing, this chapter also problematises the public/private dichotomy that acts to the detriment of women. Specifically, the situation of women in Bangladesh and Pakistan is examined through indices of human development in each country, the extent of criminal

1 This was first explicated by the famous peace researcher, Johann Galtung, in 1969. See, his “Violence peace at peace research,” Journal of Peace Research, Vol.6 No. 3, 1969.
violence against women such as trafficking, rape and honour killings, and the legal and political rights ensured by each state. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of emerging trends in both Bangladesh and Pakistan over the years and provides policy recommendations.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF SECURITY DISCOURSES AND FRAMEWORK

This subsection discusses the tensions between defining security as pertaining to the territorial boundaries of the state on the one hand, and as being concerned with the security of the individual on the other. In addition, it considers the politics behind the emergence of the alternative security debates as a post-Cold War phenomenon that allowed the focus to shift from the state to the individual. It discusses the overlaps and differences between human security and human development and provides information on the different indices of human development and security. The last subsection provides a feminist critique of these concepts and the shortcomings of the indices that depend only upon measurable indicators and thus are unable to address or include the different aspects of threats of violence that constrain women from enjoying their rights to the fullest.

How did the discourse on human security emerge with so much force in the 1990s? Pointing to the larger canvass of masculinist politics within which the human security paradigm operates, we contend that the 1990s as the interregnum between the Cold War and the War on Terror was able to provide space for these debates to emerge. The end of the Cold War made it possible to question state-centric notions of security at the cost of human development, especially in the third world, because the critical role of the state in containing the communist menace was no longer required. A unipolar world could afford to dilute security and focus on the individual as a form of consolidating empire and capitalism. A new wave of globalisation required that states begin to focus on human capital. This is a theme to which we will return later in the chapter.

We assert that the future of the security debates depend upon the manner in which the War on Terror collapses the statist and human security debate. The new War has blurred the boundaries between the state and the individual: if the threat to state and individual security can emanate from individuals without state involvement, or extra-state entities such as the Al-Qaeda, then it is obvious that neither the state nor the individual is secure. The enactment of a still new paradigm is
therefore, underway and from the initial responses of the United States, it appears that both individual and state security will make civil liberties and human rights secondary concerns. Within this larger framework, we will need to question the direction of the security debate as well as raise questions about the inclusion of women. The War on Terror operates along the classic lines of national interest; thus what may be in the national interest of the United States will be supported even if it means that the rights of local communities and women are made redundant. The track record in South Asia (especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan) testifies clearly to the fact that misogynist leaders and military regimes are being kept in power for upholding US interests even as they trammel upon women's rights and are putting women a century back in time. This of course, does not differ from the politics of the Cold War in the region, which also supported right wing parties and created many of the ‘fundamentalist’ leaders who believed that women did not have a role in the public sphere and punished them severely for speaking out. It is this nexus that will have to be constantly deconstructed and challenged. Within this larger context, we will need to understand the limits and opportunities presented by the discourses on security both for the state and for ordinary people, especially women.

Conventionally, security is defined in terms of the security of a nation-state in the modern state system. It essentially focuses on territorial security. The whole discourse of security revolves around “security of borders;” other socio-political, economic and environmental concerns figure only in their relationship to territorial security. Such a conventional view is inherently flawed due to its monolithic focus on territoriality. Territoriality dictates a vision of security based on a monopoly of the instruments of coercion and violence. It translates into acquisition of conventional and nuclear weapons and large standing armies. Such security can be realised by making perceived belligerents insecure through muscle flexing.

An important critique of this conventional view was offered by positing the question: “whose security?” In other words, if we transcend territoriality and take into account the security of a living entity, we still need to qualify who needs to be made secure. An alternative vision is to shift the focus from territory to people and argue that people and particularly marginalised groups, that is to say, people living below subsistence level, especially women and minorities need to be made secure against hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, unemployment, and
socio-political and legal discrimination. The question of “whose security” shatters the linear state-centric approach to security and introduces the concept of human security.

This criticism has generated an intense debate and a number of issues related to refugees, women, terrorism; linkages between external and internal state policies amongst others are being discussed as non-traditional or soft security issues. Now there is more willingness to discuss security issues in a broader framework.

1.2.1 Human Security: Theoretical Background

We can trace the evolution of the concept of universalist human security in the “contractarian” thinking of the Enlightenment period. The Treaty of Westphalia was followed on by the creation of modern nation-states in the West in the 18th and 19th centuries. John Locke’s social contract in The Second Treatise of Government, and similar ideas of Rousseau shifted the theoretical premise of sovereignty from King to a potential citizen (or group of citizens). People wilfully give away certain rights to the state in exchange for state protection to ensure property rights and safety of lives. The French Revolution and the rebellion of colonies in North America against Great Britain in the 17th century politically instituted governments based on the ideals of contractarianism.

However, the birth of the modern nation-state system did not imbibe the contractarian spirit of the Enlightenment period. The modern nation state was occupied with the agenda of securing territorial boundaries, achieving economic development and promoting national cohesion through both coercive and non-coercive means. The economic inertia of the technological revolution of the late 19th century resulted in the massive conflicts of the early 20th century. There was no mediator at the world level to prevent the outbreak of international conflicts. In the post-World War II period, civil rights and anti-war movements brought forward concerns related to human security into

---

2 The paper tries to qualify human security with universality because human security has always been a concern of human beings throughout their existence on this planet. However, in pre-industrialised societies and kingdoms, human security was discussed in the context of particular kingdoms, religious affinities, communities, ethnicities, tribes and clans. While we retain our primary and “primordial” identities and they have a significant impact on the process of policy-making even in today’s world, human security is discussed more in terms of a secular and universal idea.

3 Although, only propertied white male members of society were treated as individuals in the context of the rebellion of colonies against the Great Britain at the cost of the exclusion of Native Americans, slaves and women. Even in the case the French Revolution, the declaration was entitled “The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen.”
mainstream thinking in industrialised countries. The post-War era also led to a wave of decolonisation across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Although the post-war decades till the late 1980s were marked by state-centric concepts of security, whether for the newly independent third world states or states from the western or eastern blocs, many scholars believe that this had its basis in the neo-realist conception of security that takes the state as its primary referent. The premise is that the state is the main provider of security for individuals, and so if the state is secure, individuals will also be secure. The perceived threats to the security of a state are from violence and coercion by other states.

The UN Commission on Human Security defines human security as a concept that protects vital freedoms. This means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations and building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that provide people with the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms — freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one’s own behalf. To do so, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers. It requires concerted effort to develop norms, processes and institutions that systematically address insecurities. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision-making. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing and both are required in most situations.4

The Commission’s report further stresses that human security complements state security, furthers human development and enhances human rights. It complements state security by being people-centred and addressing insecurities that have not been considered as state security threats. By looking at “downside risks,” it broadens the human development focus beyond “growth with equity.” Respecting human rights are at the core of protecting human security. The report also states that promoting democratic principles is a step toward attaining human security and development as it enables people to participate in governance and make their voices heard. This requires building strong institutions, establishing the rule of law and empowering people.5

Some scholars see the emergence of human security as the conceptual response to two changing dimensions of the international order: globalisation and the end of the Cold War. These political and economic transformations had increased the risk of internal conflicts and shifted

5 Ibid.
the locus of “insecurity” from the nation-state and its allies to the individual and community in the post-Cold War era. This shift, defined and explicated in the 1994 UN Human Development Report, has led to the recognition that to protect and promote human development in the future, the question of human security will have to be addressed first.6

While human development is relatively easier to define and measure, the concept of human security is far more complex. It is a contested notion with varying definitions. For the purposes of this study, four main frameworks are briefly reviewed. These frameworks differ on the basis of how they define human security and the indicators they use.7

**Generalised Poverty**

Gary King and Christopher Murray define human insecurity as a state of “generalised poverty” which occurs when an individual lives below the threshold of well being, particularly in the domains of income, education, health, political freedom and democracy. The indicator used for each domain is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>GNP per capita converted to purchasing power parity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Quality of health scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Literacy rate of average years of schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political freedom</td>
<td>Freedom House measure of societal freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Fraction of adults able to participate in elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If any individual falls below the basic level, in any one of the indicators, s/he is seen as being in a state of generalised poverty. Three different methodologies have been proposed for gauging this: Years of Individual Human Security (YIHs) which refers to the number of years an individual can expect to live outside the state of generalised poverty; Individual Human Security (IHS) which represents the proportion of total life span that an individual can expect to live outside of generalised poverty; and an aggregation of the YIHs, for a particular segment of the population.8

---


8 Taylor Owen, ibid, p.4.
The Global Environmental Change and Human Security Project (GECHS) Index of Human Insecurity

GECHS defines human security as the availability of options necessary to end, mitigate, or adapt threats to their human, environmental and social rights. The index developed by this project, the Index of Human Insecurity (IHI), looks at two main domains (social and environmental) and uses four indicators for each domain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Urban population growth; young male population; maternal mortality ratio; life expectancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Net energy imports; soil degradation; safe water; arable land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Human Security Report

This framework limits the criteria of human insecurity to deaths caused by armed conflict and criminal violence. It attempts a composite human security index, based on indicators such as the number of deaths from armed conflict, the statistics relating to criminal violence and refugee numbers. The report does not take into account injuries from war and criminal violence due to lack of data, but does consider the number of deaths caused as a suitable quantitative criterion.

The Human Security Audit

This framework has been proposed by Kanti Bajpai, who defines human security as the protection from threats to the personal safety and well-being of the individual. Similar to Galtung's categorisation of violence into structural and direct, Bajpai divides threats into direct and indirect. The indicators used are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Threats</th>
<th>Local: violent crime, abuse of women and children; Regional: terrorism, genocide, government oppression National: societal violence, international war, banditry, ethnic violence, International Interstate war, weapons of mass destruction, landmines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Threats</td>
<td>Societal level: Lack of basic needs, such as food, water and primary health care; diseases; employment levels; population growth or decline; natural disasters. Global level: population movement; environmental degradation, unequal consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of security is measured by examining the level of threat and the institutional mechanisms in place to enable the individual to deal with those threats. In explaining this concept, Bajpai likens it to the human body, which is attacked by various infections, but whose level of immunity determines the seriousness of the threat.\textsuperscript{10}

All four frameworks take into account the dual role of the state as an agent of insecurity, as well as a provider of security. Besides, they are quite different in terms of their conception of human security and key indicators.

Most indicators proposed by the Generalised Poverty framework are similar to the ones used by the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI), discussed in the subsection that follows. Income, education and health are already being measured for men as well as women. The last two indicators of political freedom and democracy are welcome additions, but they fail to capture the complexities. For instance, the indicator used for gauging democracy is the fraction of adults able to participate in elections. Women have the right to vote in most countries, but the extent to which they are able to actually assert themselves is debatable.

Two main criticisms usually levelled against the GECHS are that while it focuses on social and environmental dimensions, the indicators used (urban population growth, young male population, maternal mortality ratio, life expectancy, arable land etc.) do not really differ from the indicators used in the HDI. Moreover, the difference between development and security is unclear as the indicators used are equally applicable to development measures. In terms of the issue of women’s security, aside from the maternal mortality ratio, there is no other indicator that directly addresses women’s security concerns.

The Human Security Audit qualifies as the most gender sensitive of the four. It outlines the nature of threats and takes into account not only the national and regional level, but also the level of the family, a factor that is quite significant in terms of women’s security. The threat of dehumanisation and disablement enables one to incorporate indicators such as trafficking and domestic violence. Bajpai also incorporates the freedom to associate, as a key value, in terms of human security. This can translate into the freedom to form relationships (marriage) or other significant life choices and enable the mapping out of important areas of women’s experiences. However, in this case, when women’s security

\textsuperscript{10} Kanti Bajpai, ibid.
concerns are taken into account, these are inadequate. For instance, women are not really equal partners in associations such as marriages which are usually decided by parents and if a girl decides against her parents’ wishes, she can suffer in multiple ways ranging from incarceration to physical torture or cutting off of ties. The division between threats as direct and indirect reproduces the public/private dichotomy that has always disadvantaged women by reproducing gender hierarchies. Additionally, there are so many indicators present in Bajpai’s model of direct and indirect threats that the focus on women’s concerns is somewhat ‘lost’.

In sum, while these are all useful indicators and will the enable mapping out of important areas of human experience, a framework focused specifically on women’s security concerns is lacking. Our research aims to address this gap, by aggregating different indicators: development as well as security, and providing a conceptual basis for why there is a need to develop a framework purely from a women’s perspective.

1.2.2 Human Development

While, the concept of human development is certainly universal, it needs to be interpreted in the context of political institutions, and the state is one of the most important political institutions. Till the 1960s development was largely seen in economic terms to be ushered in by the state. Development meant infrastructure development and economic progress such as building of large-scale industries and dams. Consequently, GDP was the main criteria for gauging the development of a country. Ester Boserup (1970) wrote one of the most powerful and ground-breaking critiques of the development paradigm for discounting the role of women. This gave rise to a host of critiques whereby fields such as women and development, women in development and gender and development were introduced by development theorists and practitioners. These fields grew in tandem with the dependency and world systems schools originating from Latin America.

Gradually too, the work of people like Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen entered mainstream development discourse and the concept of human development became important. Amartya Sen and other scholars like him argue that development had to be seen in human terms as development of capacities of the individuals living within a certain country. Only when the individuals living within a country have
the institutional mechanisms available to avoid impediments to happiness such as poverty, under-education and malnutrition can a country be called developed.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 to gauge the human development level of each country. The key indicators used for this index are health, education and income, which are then averaged. To introduce a gendered aspect into the mainstream development analysis, the Gender Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure were introduced. The Gender Related Development Index (GDI) measures the unequal achievements of men and women in life expectancy, education and income. These are the three components used by the Human Development Index (HDI). Thus the greater the gender disparity in a country, the lower would be its GDI value, as compared to its HDI. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) captures gender inequalities in the economic and political life of a country. It looks at aspects such as the number and percentage of women in leadership (i.e., political representation of women) and managerial positions, professional and technical jobs and the per capita product generated by the female population.

While both the GDI and GEM are useful tools of analysis, there are nevertheless several problems with these indices. The GDI as the simple difference of the averaging of life expectancy, education and GDP indices for men and women fails to capture complexities such as the cross relation and interdependence of these three variables. Moreover, important ‘ground realities’/aspects such as the political empowerment of women and legal rights are not taken into account. For instance, women in Saudi Arabia might do well on the index in terms of education, and life expectancy, but the fact that they cannot drive, which in turn restricts their freedom of mobility, is not reflected. Moreover, the three components used in the HDI and the GDI are given arbitrary weights, which do not reflect the varying importance of these components. For instance, literacy is given the same weight as life expectancy, when for a majority of women, literacy, defined in the narrow sense of the term, might not be as important as freedom from disease, reproductive health, and life expectancy.
1.2.3 The Human Development/Human Security/Human Rights Debate

Here we attempt to trace the concept of universalist human security vis-à-vis the development of the modern nation-state and post-colonial state structures to grapple with the concept of human security and human development. Mahbub ul Haq has contrasted human security with national security in the following way: 11

- Security of people, not security of territory.
- Security of individuals, not just of nations.
- Security through development, not through arms.
- Security of all people everywhere in their homes, jobs, streets, communities, and environment.

The large body of recent literature on human development has attempted to both globalise and ostracise it. Emphasis on human development belongs to the post-Cold War era. Human development indices published by the UNDP's annual Human Development Reports are country-specific and offer a commendable commentary on the state of human development or underdevelopment of listed countries. The more recent annual World Development Reports by the World Bank also deliberate over the question of human development in detail. However, the conceptual content of these similar sounding reports and set of recommendations depoliticise the process of development. At the cost of making an oversimplified statement, one can assert that these reports treat development as a managerial exercise rather than as a socio-political process. Despite this critique, we acknowledge the enormous efforts that have gone into bringing out these annual reports since 1990, a process that has helped introduce human development into the global political agenda.

While using the relevant data from Human Development Reports, we root the concept of human development in the historicity and politics of the state and link it to the concept of human security. The concept of human security is inherently more political than the concept of human development. Security is a commodity provided by the modern nation-state. If human beings or citizens do not feel secure, the spotlight gets focused on the role of state.

We do not treat the concept of human security and human development as binary constructs. They are different ways of looking at the dignity

of human life along the same continuum. Human development is part of human security. Human security encompasses socio-political and economic human needs and rights to develop. Human development deals with building or facilitating the capability and potential of people to develop. Human security takes into account people's right to make decisions about their lives at the individual and collective political levels, their ability to make policies about an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities available to them to develop and secure social, political and economic safety and rights.

Amartya Sen has compared the concepts of human rights and human development in an exclusive chapter in the Human Development Report 2000 of UNDP.\(^\text{12}\) He looks at human development and human rights in terms of capabilities and freedoms. He maintains that normative thinking on human development and human rights is "compatible and congruous." Human development deals with "progress of human lives and well-being," "enhancing certain capabilities" and substantial freedoms to be "able to live as we would like and even the opportunity to choose our own fate." Human rights literature focuses on "political liberties, civil rights and democratic freedoms." However, these rights were not made part of the Human Development Index (HDI) because it is difficult to "quantify" them. Human rights literature also deals with "rights to education, to adequate health care and to other freedoms that have received systematic investigation in *Human Development Reports*." Human rights deal with "individual entitlements" and are complemented by the human development approach of moving towards "an enabling environment in which people's capabilities can be enhanced and their range of choices expanded." Human development also adds the element of "institutional complementarity and resource constraints and the need for public action to address them."\(^\text{13}\)

The comparison Amartya Sen has made is a valuable comparison. However, we disagree with Amartya Sen on the question of "institutional complementarity" in human development literature. The lack of analysis about the institutional dimensions of human development literature leaves it with relatively poor focus. It would be appropriate to introduce the concept of human security and social justice. It is not the "resource constraint" that hampers possibilities of human development; it is the

---


\(^\text{13}\) Ibid, pp. 19-26.
policy formulation and (often people-insensitive) policy making of dominant classes and groups that has contributed to human underdevelopment in post-colonial countries. Similarly, political rights, civil liberties, protection from undue state prosecution, due process of law, and political empowerment in the realm of human rights cannot be secured unless there is a political will to do so. The crucial point of reference is: where do ordinary people come in the policy making process? How much do they participate in the process of policy formulation? Who are the dominant groups and classes whose voice is heard in the decision making processes? Which classes, groups and genders are marginalised from this exercise? How do different groups and classes negotiate their space, interests and development potentials? Does anyone speak on behalf of the people who have no voice and margin in the decision-making processes?

In a way, all three concepts of human security, human development and human rights do not dig deep into the processes that can transform the ideals of capabilities, freedoms and rights into a meaningful and relatively just development through political participation. Following a contractarian approach, we can say that these concepts are normative and progressive extensions of the "social contract" oriented political philosophy. The question is how to change them. True, people are born with certain inalienable rights to be secured and developed; however, who is going to ensure those rights?

The concept of human security is relatively comprehensive due to its pro-people emphasis. It argues for an alternative way of conceiving security with the priority to make people safe from lack of opportunities to develop such as political non-participation, socio-political and economic inequalities and injustice. Feminist scholars, activists and policy makers have noted that the human security concept fails to emphasise gendered contexts of security at the human, material and symbolic levels.

1.2.4 Feminist Critiques of Human Security
This section briefly discusses the feminist critiques of human security from a women-centred perspective. It is concerned both with feminist scholarship about the state and its security apparatuses as well as with placing women within this framework. Further, and in a similar fashion, it examines the different types of development indices to seek to uncover women-centred ways of defining security in the context of people's lives.
In contrast to the state-centric doctrines of security that are rooted in military security, human security is a comprehensive notion that emphasises sustainable development, social justice, human rights, gender equality and democracy. It encompasses physical security and protection of human rights and basic liberties. In broad terms, human security lays emphasis on access to economic opportunities, freedom of speech and association, legal and political rights, freedom of religious practice, fair and equitable treatment within legal systems, and the ability to exercise choices freely and safely. In other words, human security means going beyond state power and taking into account human aspirations.

In the post-Cold War era, much of the literature that questions state-centred military security and makes a case for a people-centred security has gained wide acceptance. The international women's movement has continuously lobbied against arms races and nuclear testing. Feminist scholarship interpreting international politics, the state and militarism has surfaced in the last twenty-five years. From questioning the very basis of the concept of the state, the inter-state system and issues of citizenship, identity and representation, this body of scholarship has helped to open up new ways of making sense of the international system. In addition, this scholarship has provided incisive input into development thinking and has effectively brought women into the heart of development issues. Furthermore, it has examined the links between domestic violence, structural violence and violent conflict.

The concept of human security proposed by the UN Commission on Human Security (CHS) and discussed earlier, is praised for a holistic approach that connects and fills in the gaps among development, human rights and security agendas and is considered a step forward in the right direction. Nevertheless, feminist scholars have articulated their concerns regarding the definition of this concept. Bernedette Muthien comments on the inter-disciplinary approach of the human security concept and asserts that these concepts are connected and compartmentalising them does not serve our purpose, because, in reality one cannot speak of human rights without development, nor can one speak of security without human rights. Her critique of the concept

---

14 Susan Mackay, [http://www.gmu.edu/academic/hsp/McKay.htm](http://www.gmu.edu/academic/hsp/McKay.htm).


16 A South African Gender and Peace Studies scholar.
is that it falls short in its understanding of current gender and human security discourse. Many of those who worked on the CHS report do not come from security backgrounds; rather most of its members have a development perspective. She further argues that although the development aspect of human security is important, the CHS concept needs a more balanced representation of the other kinds of thinking that it claims to amalgamate. Had the CHS consulted with peace and security academics, their framing of human security in this report could have been far better informed. In Muthien's view, the definition of human security put forth by Betty Reardon is much better than that in the CHS Report as it effectively encompasses human rights and human development. Pointing to an important feature of Reardon's definition, she says that it locates violence against women centrally as both a private and public issue, resulting from a system of domination and oppression. This, indeed, is a human security issue that should be addressed at all levels.

Sharing similar concerns about the definition of the human security concept, Charlotte Bunch notes that though conceptually it provides a more holistic framework, in practice it is only useful insofar as its parts are given due weight. She believes that, without the continued strength of the human rights and development frameworks the human security concept will be undermined. On what is lacking in the CHS definition of human security, Bunch maintains that it does not adequately address the security issues in women's lives — including the question of everyday violence and reproductive rights. These insecurities, she believes, are not spelled out because the human security report is essentially still a male-centred and public view of security. The report does not sufficiently address security issues in the private sphere or the ways in which such insecurities affect women. Bunch's explanation for this deficiency is that CHS does not adequately develop these concepts because it is still operating with a male gender bias.

17 Betty Reardon, a pioneer feminist critic of the concept of security and peace, visualised a feminist global agenda for human security and argued that security should be redefined to emphasise a life-affirming stance and to incorporate social justice, economic equity, and ecological balance such as the agenda developed by the Women's International Network for Gender and Security (WINGHS) with its four critical dimensions of human security: a healthy planet, meeting basic human needs, respecting and fulfilling human rights, and renunciation of violence and armed conflict in favour of non-violent change and conflict resolution.

18 Interview with AWID. Resource Net Friday File, Issue 195. AWID Stands for Association for Women's Rights in Development, based on South Africa and other locations.

19 An American Gender and Human Rights academic.

20 Interview with AWID. Resource Net Friday File, Issue 195.
However, the positive side of the CHS reframing of security is that it can be used to tackle issues that adversely affect women's lives. Muthien asserts that the human security concept adds further layers of possibilities for women to interrogate, charge and change structures of patriarchy that affect them and gives women more tools to become agents for change. She further adds that it provides feminists with a new language and space to confront oppression and cause things to shift. With the mainstreaming of human security we have a better capacity to change the lens from which security is viewed by many actors and can force gender into that perspective.  

Looking at gendered human security discourse at large, we can see that there seems to be a general agreement among feminist scholars that for women each element of human security is more difficult to attain due to their unequal status throughout the world. They believe that existence of gender hierarchies and power structures are keys to women's security (and insecurity) because status inequality impacts their ability to articulate and act upon security needs. Reardon asserts that girls and women experience human insecurity differently from men and are subject to gender hierarchies and power inequities that exacerbate their insecurity. Holzner and Truong also argue that human (in)security is gendered, even though their manifestations, patterns and degree of intensity may be specific and context dependent, because social structures, practices and symbols in societies are gendered. Ulf Kristofferson also notes that whether it is economic, food, health, personal or political security, women and young girls are affected in a very specific way due to their physical, emotional and material differences and due to the important social, economic, and political inequalities existing between women and men.

The links between structural violence and inequalities and direct violence in women's lives have been brought out in the context of laws and policies. For example, unequal inheritance and marriage laws upheld by state apparatuses make women more vulnerable to direct violence at the level of the family and community. Similarly, the judicial system with its male biases ensures that few women approach courts and those who do so have no surety of receiving justice. In South Asia,
state investments in armaments and militaries have meant a commensurate decrease in investment in the social sectors. While such policies have affected the poor and their access to education, health, water and other utilities, this access is not uniform across the different classes. In general, girls and women have to bear the brunt of the lack of access.

South Asian women activists and scholars have already shown their concern about the effects of militarisation and institutional and structural violence. What is unique about their interpretations is that they are able to move beyond the nation-state debate because of feminism's understanding of patriarchy. For example, the South Asian Feminist Declaration of 1989 says: “The notion of ‘national interests’ becomes a ready rationale for governments in our countries to increase their level of militarisation. National and religious chauvinism built on mutual hostility becomes the binding force to maintain the nation-state.”

Writing about the impact of militarism, Rita Manchanda (2001) highlights the impact of conflict upon women in South Asia. She notes that women have been absent from the meta-narratives of histories except for their roles as grieving mothers or victims of rape. She brings together the strains of international peace and feminist scholarship to bear on South Asia. She states, “South Asia is one of the most conflict-prone regions of the world. It has witnessed three inter-state wars, two partitions, intermittent low intensity conflicts and a powder keg of intra-state class, caste, communal, ethnic and nationality conflicts.”

The consequences for women of rape and other forms of sexual violence experienced during conflict are especially onerous in the South Asian context. Since women’s bodies are a particularly strong symbol of religious/community identity throughout South Asia, women’s vulnerability to the abuse of their bodies during times of political or ethnic-religious strife has increased enormously. As Sri Lankan feminist scholars Jayawardena and de Alwis explain, the enemy has been accused at various times in South Asian history of representing “the threat of rape and thereby the possible “pollution” of the “daughters of the soil.” ... This is why the issue of rape takes on such a charged emotional aspect. As


26 South Asian Feminists Declaration, Bangalore, 1989: 3

property of the national collective, the woman-mother symbolises the sacred, inviolable borders of the nation." 

Many other South Asian writers have explored the interconnections between nation and gender as well. For example, Neluka Silva's *The Gendered Nation* (2004) explores the manner in which gender is represented in literature at critical moments. These are ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, the Liberation and post-liberation struggle in Bangladesh, India during the emergency of Indira Gandhi and Pakistan during the rule of Zia ul Haq. Silva outlines how gender roles and representations undergo change during these moments in the four South Asian countries.

The more difficult issues revolving around the 1947 Partition of India and the second 1971 Partition, separation/liberation of East Pakistan, need to be examined by all three countries — Pakistan, Bangladesh and India to understand how nationalist agendas could give rise to random/unpredictable and mass violence on the one hand and targeted violence against women and particular communities on the other.

In recent history the rape and abduction of women by Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims during the Partition of India has been one the greatest, yet virtually silenced, traumas suffered by South Asians. A comprehensive and excellent examination of the issue is by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin in *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (1999). Their analysis explores the testimonies of Hindu women raped and/or abducted by Muslims during the upheavals of Partition. It analyses the structures of community/religious identity, which also resulted in forced suicides by women and girls to avoid being raped and caused fathers to murder their daughters rather than expose them to possible sexual violence by the enemy. Further, they examine the post-1947 nationalist project of forcibly recovering abducted women from across the borders. At every phase of their experience, women were not permitted to assume any decision-making power over their own fate. This research is evidence that women's experiences during times of conflict as well as peace must be understood first in terms of the patriarchal structures of control and identity formation in order to explain how it is that women's bodies can become, in effect, a part of the battle-field within states, within communities, and within households.

---


30 For a more personalised but deeply critical and theoretically sophisticated account of the Partition, see also Urvashi Butalia, *The other side of silence*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998.
Urvashi Butalia has addressed the issue of silence in multiple contexts in her 1998 book *The Other Side of Silence*. She uses the paradigm of silence over Partition histories and events as the motif for developing a new understanding of the different and complex events comprising Partition. For example, she talks about the conspiracy of silence (page 190) between uncle and nephew in which both betrayed vulnerable family members (women, children, the infirm and old) by being complicit in the decision to kill them to avoid being dishonoured as a community. Butalia points out that there are not only silences surrounding women's experience of Partition but also that silence surrounds the issue of abducted children as well as those born of mixed blood and left behind in camps by weeping mothers (pp 201-215). Similarly, she states that Partition is seen in predominantly religious terms and identities, not in class and caste terms of the marginalised Harijans and Dalits — the scheduled castes, and the untouchables (page 223). She explores the different ways in which women identifying themselves primarily as Harijan have been silenced and how little is known about their specific experience of Partition. Similarly, little has been written about the inter-community cooperation that also accompanied Partition violence where friends and neighbours protected one another or looked after properties and valuables left behind and returned these to the rightful owners (pages 277-278). Her book is thus a powerful account of the many ways in which dominant experiences serve to silence other experiences that a dominant way of thinking barely allows to emerge.

Developing Urvashi Butalia's paradigm of silence in the Bangladesh context of 1971 points to the nationalist project of valorising the experience of men while silencing that of women, especially those who suffered physical violence at the hands of the West Pakistani soldiers, referred to as 'Pathans.' She analyses the case of two women from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1971 to demonstrate the "inter-dependence between 'national' and social security in an attempt to show that the dichotomy between the two is quite an artificial one, and more importantly, that this dichotomy only strengthens the gendered nature of the state, thereby excluding women from the security discourse of the

---

31 We are grateful to Amena Mohsin for pointing out Butalia’s paradigm of silence as a powerful tool for understanding gender and violence in the subcontinent.

state.” Discussing the case of a rape survivor, she poses the question if the survivor’s silence is due to the protective mechanism of social values or society’s attempt to protect its values. She concludes that that in order to maintain the honour of society, “the nation keeps the voices of rape victims silenced.” Thus women’s security is not only about bringing women’s voices to the fore but also understanding the silences in their narratives and highlighting these. It is precisely these silences that security indices are unable to capture.

In continuation with the paradigm of silence, we assert that this is not restricted to women’s voices alone. The Pakistani state has been silent about the carnage in 1971 and similarly the Pakistani people have been more or less silent for over a quarter of a century about the events of 1971. However, over the last fifteen years or so, the Pakistani state and its security policies have come under increasing scrutiny from women’s groups. For example, the ASR Women’s Resource Centre and the Simorgh Women’s Collective in Lahore have organised workshops and conferences as well as published on these issues from a feminist perspective. Much of this work questions the centrality of the state in its ideological context, but not always state-sponsored security policies and violence. One exception to this is the support provided by women’s organisations to the Bangladeshi demand that the state of Pakistan officially apologise for the systematic rape of 250,000 women during Bangladesh’s 1971 War of Independence. The Women’s Action Forum (WAF) has tendered an apology to the women of Bangladesh and this has been repeated at several other feminist forums. However, attempts at official level have not succeeded till now, with President Musharraf only expressing “regrets” over 1971 when he visited Dhaka in 2000. Such silences will have to be addressed at the public and collective level if the subcontinent is to achieve any advancement in its political and social structures.

Given the current negative trends within South Asia whether in the context of nuclear proliferation or structural and direct violence against women, this is a critical time to question the existence of an entire political order based on systems of injustice, discrimination, and myths of an outside “enemy.” In the current security environment, it is vital to include more women’s voices and experiences from a diverse set of situations in the region. It is also essential to broaden existing feminist scholarship with a view to promoting an alternative, peace-based

33 Ibid., p.148.
approach to relations among countries in South Asia and to discussing unresolved security issues. To do so, development indices and indicators cannot be ignored. While women have contributed significantly to the development of such indicators, we believe that there is still vast room for improvement. Also, it would be important for us to examine how Pakistan and Bangladesh have fared as countries and how women within these two states have fared post-1971. This manuscript provides a review of the different development and human security indices, and the need to make additions as well as add dimensions that we consider to be critical for women. The next chapter provides a background to the manner in which the state has operated in Bangladesh and Pakistan as a means of understanding the larger masculinist statist and cultural background within which policies and societal attitudes toward women have developed.