CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

Regional gender and conflict analysis (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan)

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WPS Women, Peace & Security Helpdesk

The Women Peace and Security (WPS) Helpdesk, managed by Saferworld in partnership with Conciliation Resources, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) UK, the University of Durham and Women International Peace Centre (WIPC), was established in December 2021 to increase capability across the UK Government on WPS policy and programming in order to make its work on conflict and instability more effective. If you work for the UK government and would like to send a task request, please email us at: wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk. If you do not work for the UK government but have an enquiry about the Helpdesk or this report, please email us at: enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk

Direct audience:
The primary audience will the CSSF programme team and thematic advisers involved in or assisting programme design, implementation and adaptation. They will use it to assess/add to their existing conflict/context analysis and develop ideas for programme adaptation and new projects.

Suggested internal distribution:
It will also be of interest to the wider High Commission, including to enable their understanding of the importance, relevance and applicability of gendered analysis.

Confidentiality status:
Not confidential

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Acronyms

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CBM	confidence building measure
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (UK HMG)
DRIVE	Documentation Renewal and Information Verification Exercise
FATA	Federally Administrated Tribal Areas
GBV	Gender-based violence
GGI	Gender Gap Index
IaK	India-administered Kashmir
IWT	Indus Water Treaty
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
LoC	Line of Control
NAP	National Action Plan
NCRB	National Crime Record Bureau
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSS	National Statistics Survey
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Introduction

This report focuses on understanding how drivers of conflict, instability and violence within and between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and India and Pakistan, are gendered; how gendered inequalities and gendered drivers of conflict and instability could affect regional stability dynamics; and possible entry points for addressing gendered drivers through the UK government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programmatic interventions, which are currently focused on de-escalating cross-regional tensions through dialogue. As recommended and wherever feasible, the report focuses on issues and data that may not be commonly known or accessible.

The report is structured in two main sections, as agreed with CSSF. The Country Context and Drivers section provides a country-by-country overview of the situation for women's rights and participation in peace and security processes in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Gendered Analysis of Regional Drivers of Conflict and Instability section explores gendered drivers of conflict and instability between India and Pakistan and Pakistan and Afghanistan. In a final paragraph, opportunities to address data gaps and further explore sensitive issues are highlighted.

Limitations and scope: where gaps in peer reviewed literature exist (for instance, because of the rapidly developing situation in Afghanistan), the report consults credible media sources and references anecdotal information from authors' networks. Due to timeframe constraints, the report provides a broad analysis rather than diving into detail on key themes. It is also important to recognise the vastness and diversity of contexts analysed; for example, although India ranks 140 out of 156 in the Gender Equality Index, Kerala in South India has a stronger set of benchmarks in gender equality. As such, we have sought to qualify findings wherever possible. The report has also avoided duplicating information contained in an accompanying report submitted to the CSSF WPS Helpdesk ('Pakistan Gender and Conflict Analysis') and therefore should be read in conjunction with that.

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Country Contexts and Drivers

This section outlines how gender norms, roles and expectations drive conflict, instability and violence in each country, while exploring the key actors, structures and institutions involved. Where there are data gaps or limited evidence, this is stated.

1

India

The status of women in India varies widely based on their socio-economic and cultural background. The country displays regional differences, urban / rural differences and caste-based differences, all of which intersect with gender to increase disadvantage and vulnerabilities. While India's ranking at 140 out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) of 2021 places it in a significantly better position as compared with Pakistan and Afghanistan, its overall global position in the lowest quarter is indicative of a disturbing gender gap that stands as a roadblock to peace. As such, it is useful to understand the causes and patterns of this gender gap and its correlation with violence and instability to shape CSSF's cross-border engagement in the region.

Gender norms, systems and structures

There is a clear division of labour at the domestic level, with women performing the bulk of total unpaid care work. They are consequently unable to participate in significant numbers in the workforce, which limits their agency. According to the 2019 India National Statistics Survey report, women spend 299 minutes per day on unpaid domestic work while men spend 97 minutes.[1] The media continues to promote traditional gender roles relegating women to the domestic sphere; for example, advertisements for cleaning and cooking items rarely show men carrying out chores, while those for banking and financial planning primarily portray this as a man's responsibility.[2] The literature suggests that these norms and perceptions drive domestic violence, with women being 'deserving of beatings' if they do not conform with expectations of being a dutiful wife or properly looking after the house and children.[3] States with 40 per cent or higher rates of spousal violence include Tripura, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Assam, with this being more prevalent among Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu women as compared with Sikh, Christian or Jain women.[4]

The gendered division of labour within the family, dictated by norms which largely define men as protectors and women as carers, has to a large extent determined the nature of women's 'softer' involvement in conflicts. Women play a leading role as informal and 'natural' mediators of family and localised conflicts (see, for example, the work of the Naga Mothers Association[5]). However, there is a lack of consensus in the literature as to whether this is because such conflicts are considered trivial or whether this is a sign of women's relative power in these spheres. Women's positions within families

1 The Wire (2020), 'NSS reports Confirms Women Shoulder Unpaid Household Work, Care Giving Duties', 20 September.

2 Mukhopadhyay S, Banerjee D (2021), 'Bollywood, Popular Visual Media and Sex in India: A Critical Glance Back', 8 July.

3 Oxfam India (2016), 'Understanding Social Norms Underpinning Domestic Violence in India', August.

4 Ibid.

5 Ishita Varma (2022), 'Naga Mothers' Association: The Role of the Mothers of Nagaland in Peace-Keeping', Feminism in India, 5 April.

and informal circles have also been exploited by armed rebels in conflicts between state and non-state actors, with women providing background support as informants and being tasked with spreading messages through domestic and community chores.

School and religious institutions in India also reproduce patriarchal values that permeate society, including sometimes promoting rhetoric that exacerbates regional, religious, caste and class conflict fault lines. While education in India is the responsibility of both the state and the central governments, it is guided by the specifications set by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The literature highlights examples of a recent move to infuse far-right ideology in the mainstream curriculum – for example, by printing books with a religious bias, promoting leaders and movements that have traditionally excluded women and girls, and by making resources containing bias freely available as supplementary reading to school children.[6] In 2017, there were protests from parents and political parties in the south Indian state of Kerala over books in schools that allegedly distorted historical facts circulated by the Hindu far-right organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) without the state government's permission.[7]

Far-right religious movements have also been known to manipulate traditional gender norms and expectations for their own gain, while maintaining strict control over women's behaviour. Hindu movements and parties such as the RSS, Bharatiya Janata Party or Indian People's Party (BJP), and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), have highlighted an ancient Hindu mythical past whereby women were superior to men and afforded the status of a goddess, blaming Muslims for women's loss of liberty to incite inter-religious violence. According to Gupta (2017), women involved in such movements have assumed powerful roles in driving conflict behaviours among men: for example, by urging male counterparts to attack Muslim shanties. While such movements teach women how to fight, use weapons and conduct public meetings in the day, they are careful not to challenge the patriarchal institution of the family and its associated injustices, expecting women to return home as faithful, 'passive' wives and mothers in the evenings.[8] Nevertheless, the RSS–BJP–VHP have particularly targeted unmarried women when it comes to senior leadership aspirations, providing them with thorough ideological, physical and military training to set up new branches and recruits, while turning them into martyrs if arrested or killed. The literature does not specifically explain why unmarried women are targeted, though it could be because it is regarded as more 'acceptable' for women to rise to senior positions when this does not interfere with their duties to husbands.

Some scholars also argue that far-right religious movements have been used to 'reclaim masculinity'. For example, Clerk (2015) argues that India's Hindutva movement (a far-right Hindu ideology represented by the BJP) is both a product of and response to post-colonial anxiety, whereby former British and Muslim governance had emasculated Indian men by portraying them as effeminate and incapable of self-governance.[9] This has led to some men striving to 'make India great again' through various forms of political, social and cultural violence, while implementing strict control in the household in an effort to reclaim their masculinity and control over women.

Popular culture is another powerful phenomenon driving harmful gendered norms and behaviour in India, portraying vulnerability, delicacy, chastity, submissiveness and sacrifice as feminine qualities and strength, wealth and assertion as male qualities.[10] Bollywood films have been particularly influential in driving gender biases and impacting public perceptions. For example, in older films, female characters were usually portrayed as mothers or romantic interests, providing 'beautiful relief'.

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6 Raksha Kumar (2014), 'Hindu Right Rewriting Indian Textbooks', Al Jazeera, 4 November.

7 Ameerudheen, TA (2017), 'Protests in Kerala over saffron books in schools', circular calling for a tribute to Sangh leaders, 26 October.

8 Gupta, S (2017), RSS Women's Wing Camp Teaches Girls to Be Good Mothers, Feminism in India, 16 June.

9 Clerk, M (2015), 'Women in Crisis: The Colonial Roots of Epidemic Violence and Oppression', Afficio Undergraduate Journal.

10 Mukhopadhyay, S, Banerjee, D (2021), 'Bollywood, Popular Visual Media and Sex in India: A Critical Glance Back', 8 July.

On the other hand, 'liberal' women and those defying traditional norms were typically portrayed as mistresses or 'vamps', harbouring habits such as smoking, drinking and promiscuity, which equated gender independence with rebelliousness, ultimately devaluing the concept of gender equality. Links between these portrayals and violence against women and girls are also evident; multiple sexual crimes have reportedly been influenced by films such as 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge', 'Darr', 'Tere Naam' and many others that have normalised stalking, sexual harassment and assault, while depicting male perpetrators as 'martyrs in the name of love'.[11]

Constitutional and legal provisions versus practice

India has strong constitutional, and several legislative, provisions[12] that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, but these are often poorly enforced. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by India in 1993 brought about key legislation, such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005, the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act of 2019, the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Protection, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013, the Companies Act of 2013 and the Industrial Relations Code of 2020, which all seek to limit and disincentivise violence and harassment of women.[13] The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women of 2001, still in use today, further aims to provide equal access to participation and decision-making for women in social, economic and political life across the nation, mainstream gender perspectives in development processes, and build and strengthen partnerships with women's organisations. Despite these provisions, there has been limited success in practice. In response to particularly low progress in women's participation, the report of the High-level Committee on the Status of Women in India in 2015 made an important recommendation that at least 50 per cent of seats should be reserved for women in local bodies, state legislative assemblies, parliament, at the ministerial level and decision-making bodies of the government.[14]

Despite progressive provisions on paper, gender discrimination continues to be deeply rooted in the patriarchal mindset that governs society. The most prominent manifestation of this inequality is gender-based violence (GBV), which is commonly used to control women's bodies and is noted as being an 'epidemic' in India by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB).[15] Statistics from the NCRB indicate that in 2020, 35,331 crimes against women were registered (compared to the previous year's record of 44,783), though this was likely to significantly underrepresent actual rates. Most cases were registered under 'cruelty by husbands or his relatives' (30.2 per cent), followed by 'assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty' (19.7 per cent) and rape (7.2 per cent).[16] Of the 32,033 rape cases reported from all states and Union Territories in India in 2019, more than 94 per cent of survivors knew their abusers. In 2019, there were 4,977 reports of children below the age of 18 being raped in India, with gang rape becoming increasingly common.[17] Acts of violence such as bride burning, acid throwing and mutilation are also perpetrated by husbands and their families to control wives who are perceived as being disobedient or uncooperative.[18]

The literature highlights the role that colonial principles have played in producing a 'two layered' misogynistic framework, which has interacted with pre-existing patriarchal norms to govern the legal identities of women and queer people in India. For example, the concept of *Pater Familias* – a

11 Ibid.

12 India's constitutional provisions include: equality before law for both men and women (Article 14); the right to life with dignity (Article 21); and personal liberty for all (Article 15). The Constitution further supports governments to take gender-affirmative actions related to health, reproductive benefits, education and the right to property.

13 National Human Rights Commission India (2021), 'Women's Rights in India: An Analytical Study'.

14 Ibid.

15 International Centre for Research on Women (2004), 'Violence against Women in India; A Review of Trends, Patterns and Responses', ICWR report.

16 National Human Rights Commission India (2021), 'Women's Rights in India: An Analytical Study'.

17 National Crime Record Bureau (2019), 'Women and Girl Victims of Rape'.

18 Yee, A (2013), 'Reforms Urged to Tackle Violence against Women in India'.

patriarchal hierarchy within families that sees men as heads and women as inferior – originates from British culture, while laws granting immunity for men committing marital rape (still present in the Indian Penal Code today), the criminalisation of same-sex activity and definition of women as the property of men, are rooted in colonial-era law.[19] The dowry system, meanwhile, originates from the caste system and British arranged marriages; the system continues today as a means of male dominance over women.

Judicial arbitration, judicial lobbying, social action lawsuits and the duty of regulation of fundamental rights have all been used by Indian Superior Courts to address such discrimination.[20] However significant barriers exist for women to access justice, including unequal inheritance laws, persistent workplace harassment, limited knowledge about their own rights and entitlements, and the high financial burden of court cases. Further challenges, including the limited space for civil society, are experienced in different ways by women. In practice, freedom of speech and assembly have often been unreasonably restricted through laws such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and the National Security Act, which have enabled the government to detain citizens – both women and men – who have opposed laws such as the recent Citizen Amendment Act.[21] At the other extreme, freedom of speech has been used to justify and normalise hate speech and cyber bullying targeting women. Female celebrities, leaders, journalists and activists have been cyber stalked, harassed, bullied and trolled for questioning patriarchal values and raising issues of women's rights. This gathered momentum after the #MeToo movement, when memes and trolls targeted celebrity survivors challenging perpetrators.[22] Nevertheless, there are some successful examples of women mobilising to protest instances of child rape,[23] while feminist movements such as the *Pink Ladies* (taking its name from a 'feminist colour' as a sign of solidarity) directly confront abusive men.

Women, Peace and Security

India is one of many countries yet to develop a Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP) two decades after the adoption of UN Security Resolution 1325,[24] and ranks 148 out of 170 countries on the WPS Index of 2020.[25] Indicative of India's disconnect with the WPS agenda is its Armed Forces (Special Power) Act of 1958. One of its more criticised laws, this act grants special powers to the Indian Armed Forces to maintain public order in 'disturbed areas'; it has been applied to Jammu and Kashmir since 1990 to the present day. In practice, it prevents prosecution for sexual violence against women perpetrated by members of the armed forces or uniformed personnel under ordinary criminal law. This is in stark contrast to the purpose and ethos of the WPS agenda. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women highlighted in 2013 that the act, '*allows for the overriding of due process rights and nurtures a climate of impunity and a culture of both fear and resistance by citizens*'.[26] Further, cases of sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces and state

19 Dadhwal, A (2019), Tracing the Colonial Past of Modern Indian Regressive Laws, 22 July.

20 For example, the case of *Vishakha v State of Rajasthan* set an important benchmark when the Supreme Court held that, 'gender equality can be established by fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution, and that sexual harassment at work is a direct violation of these fundamental rights'. Employers were given guidelines to obey to provide an equitable, clean and relaxed working atmosphere for workers, including women. The court has also ruled in favour of a woman who was denied maternity leave because the child was born by surrogacy. In another case, the court held that the rights of sex workers under Article 21 (right to life) must be respected and directed governments to provide technical and vocational training opportunities to all sexually exploited women.

21 The Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 seeks to make persecuted migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan eligible for Indian citizenship. It excludes Muslims from this list and has been criticised for discriminating on the basis of religion; see: Yadav, S (2020), 'Right to Freedom of Speech is Democracy's precious gift but not when it stifles others' voices', 2 December.

22 Saldana A, Lavanya R 2022), 'Freedom of Expression or Medium for Violence', 4 March.

23 Gowen A (2018), 'An 8-year-old Girl's Gang Rape and Murder Trigger New Outrage over India's Rape Culture', 19 April.

24 Khullar A (2020), 'A Lukewarm Commitment: India and Gender Equality in Security Affairs', South Asian Voices, Stimson, 16 January.

25 Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security (GIWPS), 'The 2021 Women Peace and Security Index'.

26 Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, Addendum: Mission to India (A/HRC/26/38/Add.1), 1 April 2014, para 23.

police are severely under documented and reported: the Asian Centre for Human Rights recorded only 114 instances between October 2000 and October 2020 in 11 states affected by armed conflict (including in India's northeast, parts of Andhra Pradesh, Central India, and Jammu and Kashmir).[27]

The institutional ethos of India's military is inherently masculine and patriarchal. After previously being only accepted as short-term commissioned officers, women can now join as full commissioned members of the armed forces.[28] Successive elected governments in India have defined security in terms of 'national' rather than human or comprehensive security, therefore overtly or covertly promoting a masculinised discourse that emphasises military prowess. In conflict-affected areas such as Jammu and Kashmir, India's northeast and Central India, where the Maoist conflict rages, armed forces have been deployed as 'aids to civil authority'.[29] Once the armed forces are called in, legitimacy for their actions is provided by special legislations such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

However, there are examples of women taking an increasing role in the security sector. For instance, India has deployed an all-women's police unit to the peacekeeping mission in Liberia and selected judgements have opened the way for women's participation in the Indian army.[30] Women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes, however, remains uneven. On the one hand, at the community level, the *Naga Mothers Association*, the *Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons* (APDP) in Kashmir, *Soni Sori's Fight* in Chhattisgarh and *Paramjit Kaur Kalra* in Punjab provide examples of women demanding accountability and remedy for conflict-specific acts. Yet this action is mostly carried out in line with their expected roles as mothers and family members and involves them advising on and advocating for what are perceived as 'softer' issues. In terms of influencing hard security issues, women tend to be more excluded, partly due to perceptions that they have less expertise on issues relating to military strategy, nuclear de-escalation or crisis management, and also because they are often deemed be better 'suited' for conversations relating to education, health and social matters.[31]

2 Pakistan

Pakistan was ranked 153 out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index of 2021, with a widening gap compared to the previous year. Its Gender Development Index (GDI) value is 0.777, placing it in the lowest of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) five categories. In 2019, Pakistan ranked 135 out of 162 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), indicating a vast loss in human development caused by gender inequality.

Please refer to the separate **Pakistan Gender and Conflict Analysis**, developed by the CSSF WPS Helpdesk, for a more in-depth analysis of how gender norms, roles, responsibilities and expectations drive conflict. These are summarised briefly below.

27 Pragati KB (2021), 'By denying women justice and equal opportunity, India falls far short of the UN Women's peace and security agenda', 28 November.

28 Live Mint (2018),'Delhi HC paves way for recruitment of women in Territorial Army', 9 January.

29 Ibid.

30 These include *Secretary Ministry of Defence v Babita Puniya and Ors* 2020, which allowed women a permanent commission in the army; and *Kush Kalra v Union of India and Anrin* 2018, where the Delhi High Court opened the doors of the Territorial Army to women.

31 Saferworld (2021), 'Women's voices in regional dialogues: A case study of South Asia', July.

Gender norms, systems and structures

Women constitute almost half of the Pakistani population of 220 million people.[32] Similar to India, patriarchal values heavily govern the social structure, conceptually segregating women and men into two distinct worlds. This means a woman is generally expected to take care of the home as a wife and mother, whereas a man tends to dominate outside the home as a breadwinner. Gender norms, roles and power relations are primarily driven by a conservative social fabric shaped by religion, history and customs.[33] This has enabled patriarchy to strengthen over time and discriminatory behaviours to flourish, contributing to wide prevalence of GBV and the socio-political and economic marginalisation of women in Pakistani society.[34] While there have been some positive developments in recent years, and encouraging social and political mobilisation to influence these (for example, economic change, increased access to education and positive changes to legal frameworks), changes have been slow. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that attitudes towards women's roles at home and in the public space are in flux and moving towards greater gender equality – at least in aspiration.[35]

Two recent and innovative reports have delved into the concept of masculinity and its impact on violence, peace and security in Pakistan. The Aurat Foundation's research argues that masculinity is associated with men's ability to control power dynamics, women's bodies, decision-making, mobility and relationships, leading to their subjugation.[36] The narrow social definition of manhood and perceived failures to live up to these expectations can compromise men's health and invoke anti-social behaviours.[37] Another study by Rozan (one of the few organisations working on masculinity in Pakistan) explores how perceptions and practices of masculinity influence and inter-connect with issues including relationships, sexuality and violence.[38] A significant finding was that:

> *'traditional notions of masculinity put men in positions of dominance where relationships are often characterised by unequal power relations and violence is seen as a tool for maintaining control… These expectations are particularly unstable in the context of rapidly changing demographics with shifting gender dynamics, reduced livelihood opportunities, and an increased need for women to work and supplement family incomes.'*

The literature further suggests that there is little effort being made in schools, religious institutions or families to promote gender sensitivity among boys and young men. Any men digressing from expected norms and roles – for instance, in advocating for gender equality – are generally perceived as being more 'docile' and 'feminine' and risk becoming socially marginalised.[39]

Beyond cultural norms, both print and electronic media have contributed to reinforcing gender stereotypes: women are typically portrayed in advertisements as homemakers dependent on men, while men are portrayed as dominant, authoritative figures.[40] Masculinity comes with expectations that men should express their masculine authority by taking up arms to defend their community or supporting militarised solutions to violence. National military institutions further promote this

32 48.76 per cent, as per the 2017 census of Pakistan.

33 Minardi AL, Akmal M, Crawfurd L, Hares S (2021), 'Promoting Gender Equality in Pakistan Means Tackling Both Real and Misperceived Gender Norms', August.

34 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2021), Pakistan's Gender and Human Rights based Response to Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, January, p 5

35 Amir S, Shah Durrani A (2018), 'Why should we care about changing attitudes on gender roles in Pakistan?', June.

36 Aurat Foundation (2016), 'Masculinity in Pakistan: A Formative Research Study'.

37 Ibid.

38 Rozan (2010), 'Understanding Masculinities: A Formative Research on Masculinities and GBV in Pakistan', January.

39 Ibid.

40 Ullah H, Nidar Khan A, Nisar Khan H, Ibrahim A (2016), 'Gender Representation In Pakistani Print Media: A Critical Analysis', *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 12, pp 53–70.

messaging by idealising men as warriors, echoing both faith-based and customary decision-making systems.[41]

Women, Peace and Security

The new National Security Policy of Pakistan (2022)[42] places a significant emphasis on promoting the WPS agenda and ensuring the 'integration of gender equity into national security narratives through full and meaningful participation of women in decision-making, law enforcement, justice sector, and peacekeeping'. Nevertheless, women's participation in formal mediation, negotiation and peacebuilding efforts is quite low, with an underlying assumption that they do not have the wide-ranging skills necessary for higher levels of mediation.[43] At the Track I (state) level, the low number of women with prior diplomatic and policy experience is reflected in the lower numbers of women in high-level and formal peace processes. This can also be seen in the number of female representatives for the Pakistani side for Track II (civil society) and Track 1.5 dialogue processes.[44] At the Track II and Track IV (community mediation) levels, women coming from remote regions and conflict contexts (including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) or Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) by the Line of Control), often lack the connections and networks required to advance peacebuilding or they face increased pressures to conform to certain norms in order to carry out their work.[45]

Gendered drivers of conflict and instability

Four specific gendered drivers of conflict are explored in the **Pakistan Gender and Conflict Analysis**. In summary, these include:

1. How a lack of opportunities and access to rights are exacerbating women, girls and other minority groups' vulnerability to violence and conflict.

2. The drivers behind women's involvement in religious extremism, as well as the impact this is having specifically on different groups.

3. The reasons for increased youth violence (of men in the overwhelming majority) and the gendered impact of organised crime in Pakistan.

4. The role of climate change in exacerbating social, economic and environmental inequalities and disproportionately impacting women in conflict contexts.

41 Findings from a Gender Conflict Analysis facilitated by Conciliation Resources in 2017 with key thinkers and participants from the Pakistan Government and civil society.

42 National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022–2026 (https://onsa.gov.pk/assets/documents/polisy.pdf)

43 Sattar N (2019), 'Women peace mediators', Dawn, 4 March.

44 This statement is informed by Conciliation Resources' own experience in coordinating a Track 1.5 dialogue process between India and Pakistan, which only had one woman member for four male members on the Pakistani side. It also considered a past Track II initiative (Neemrana Dialogue), the Chaopraya Track II dialogue process.

45 This is evidenced by Atia Anwar Zoon' story within the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth's latest report; see: Conciliation Resources (CR), Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) (2021), 'Beyond the Vertical: What enables Women Mediators to Mediate', p 8, p 14

3

Afghanistan

Afghanistan was ranked last out of all 156 countries assessed in the World Economic Forum Global GGI of 2021. It is a traditional country with 74 per cent of the population living in rural areas,[46] where customary practices have a significant influence.

Following the US invasion and the fall of the Taliban regime, a period of increased rights and opportunities opened up for women with the Republic Regime. The 2004 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan[47] stipulated equal rights for men and women and their access to education, healthcare and employment. By 2018, girls made up almost 38 per cent (3.8 million) of students in the country as compared to only 5,000 girls enrolled in schools in 2001.[48] By 2020, women made up 21 per cent of Afghan civil servants (16 per cent of them in senior management levels) compared to none during the Taliban regime in the 1990s. Several women served as ambassadors, ministers, deputy ministers and representatives in the UN. They also made up 27 per cent of Afghan members of parliament.[49] Since the Taliban regained control in August 2021, it has rapidly reversed gains made on women's freedom and rights over the last two decades.

Gender norms, systems and structures

Women's rights have been politicised throughout Afghanistan's history, resulting in tight control of women and girls' behaviour to demonstrate protection of traditional customs and values. In the 1920s, King Amanullah granted more freedom and rights to women, but conservative Afghans and religious figures gravely objected,[50] which, combined with other factors, ultimately led to his removal.[51] In the 1970s, reforms including increased freedom for women faced serious backlash.[52] As *Jihadist* groups took power in the 1980s and early 1990s, pro-women policies promoted under the previous Soviet-backed government were abandoned and new rules restricting women from public life and forcing them to veil were enforced, which severely restricted their employment and educational opportunities.[53, 54] Following its resurgence in 2005, the Taliban used a similar rhetoric, pledging to protect Afghanistan's highly conservative society and preaching in its constituencies that Western values risked replacing traditional *Pashtunwali* customs.

Women in Afghanistan's rural areas have tended to experience the effects of stringent customary practices more than those in urban settings. For example, women in most rural areas cover their faces when interacting with non-relative men, which was not the case in urban settings until the Taliban's recent requirement.[55] The ratio of girls' early and forced marriage is also higher in rural areas, where the decision to marry girls or sell them off to settle disputes or debt rests with male members of the

46 The World Bank (2020), Rural population (% of total population) – Afghanistan (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=AF)

47 The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004.

48 The Diplomat (2021), 'Women's Education: Afghanistan's Biggest Success Story Now at Risk' (https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/womens-education-afghanistans-biggest-success-story-now-at-risk/)

49 Allen JR, Felbab-Brown V (2020), 'The fate of women's rights in Afghanistan', Brookings, September.

50 Cole JRI (2003), 'The Taliban, women, and the Hegelian private sphere', Social Research.

51 Emadi H (2015), 'Women in the post-Taliban Afghanistan: Dialectics of oppression and token recognition', *Race, Gender and Class* 22 (3–4), pp 248-49.

52 Atran S (2010) 'A question of honour: Why the Taliban fight and what to do about it'. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 38 (3), p 348.

53 Emadi H (2015), 'Women in the post-Taliban Afghanistan: Dialectics of oppression and token recognition', *Race, Gender and Class* 22 (3–4), p 249.

54 Cole, JRI (2003), 'The Taliban, women, and the Hegelian private sphere', Social Research.

55 *The Guardian* (2022), 'Taliban order all Afghan women to cover their faces in public spaces', 7 May.

family.[56] Nevertheless, the situation for younger women is in some ways better than for older generations: in recent years, the level of violence against women decreased, opportunities for education and work increased, and men were more open to accepting gender equality principles. This intergenerational change is the result of a post-Taliban regime whose constitution gave equal rights to men and women.[57] However, with the Taliban coming back to power in August 2021, such progress has seen a dramatic regression.

In contrast, until recently, the media in Afghanistan depicted women on television, radio and newspapers as primarily being urban, educated and modern citizens. This both created a very strict and unattainable model of womanhood for rural women and girls – the country's largest demographic – while contributing to a perception in rural areas that educated, modern women who worked outside of the home were 'not of a good character'.[58]

Gendered cultural norms play an influential role in driving violence against women and girls and inter-familial and inter-communal conflict in Afghanistan. In many rural areas (particularly Pashtun areas), girls who have reached puberty age are viewed as family honour. At this stage, families become stricter in controlling their behaviour, given the reputation of young women and adolescent girls is closely tied to that of their family's (*Namoos*), with men viewed as the guardian of this. Efforts to protect girls' honour generally focus on preventing them from being in risky situations rather than discouraging discriminatory or predatory behaviour from men and boys. This effectively absolves the latter of responsibility. For example, many girls upon reaching puberty are no longer allowed to attend schools to prevent unwanted attention or behaviour from boys. The matter also drives conflict among families if honour is not respected or violated, with fathers, husbands and brothers committing violence against sisters, daughters and wives as a disciplinary measure if they talk to or receive unsolicited attention from men outside of their family.[59]

The traditional tribal practice of *Pashtunwali* also promotes the use of women and girls in settling inter-communal conflict and disputes. One of its essential tenets is the concept of *badal* or 'bad', whereby revenge can be taken to enforce justice and girls can be exchanged to settle a blood feud between two families. Further, although the physical separation of men and women can be found within all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, it is far stronger among Pashtuns mainly in the eastern and southern parts of the country.[60]

In another example of so-called protection of women's honour and dignity, the Taliban has driven extremist patriarchal attitudes defining women as the private property of men and limiting their basic human rights and freedoms. Although Afghanistan's civil and criminal codes were derived from the Sunni Hanafi school of thought, the Taliban regime institutionalised Islamism for the first time in the country's history.[61] This mixed rural Pashtun customs with religious teachings, claiming to Islamise urban areas and prevent what the Taliban interpreted as 'corrupt behaviour', particularly penalising women living urban lifestyles.[62, 63] As such, women's visible presence in public spaces is seen to breach privacy and undermine men's honour, which is entrenched in the *Pashtunwali* culture.[64] As far back as 1996, a decree was issued banning 16 activities considered to be 'women-related', such as the

56 UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Afghanistan (2020), 'A former child bride in Afghanistan finds hope and new life during Covid-19', October.

57 Allen JR, Felbab-Brown V (2020), 'The fate of women's rights in Afghanistan', Brookings, September.

58 Frogh W (2012), 'The Emerging Afghan Media: Beyond the Stereotyping of Women?', 23 April.

59 Hamidi N, Vaughan C, Bohren MA (2021), "My father told me 'child, there is no son in this house, so you should wear these boy clothes'": perspectives on gender norms, roles, and bacha posh among Afghan migrant women in Melbourne, Australia, ScienceDirect.

60 Cultural Property News (2021), 'Pashtunwali: Pashtunwali Traditional Tribal Law in Afghanistan'.

61 Yadav V (2010), 'The myth of the moderate Taliban', *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 37 (3), p 140.

62 Maley W (2002), *The Afghanistan Wars* (Palgrave Macmillan), p 232.

63 Kuehn F (2018), 'Taliban history of war and peace in Afghanistan. Incremental peace in Afghanistan', Accord 27.

64 Cole JRI (2003), 'The Taliban, women, and the Hegelian private sphere', Social Research, p 776.

tailoring of women's clothes by men, and women walking alone in the city or taking taxis without *Mahram*[65] (a male relative).[66] High-heeled shoes – along with other symbols such as nail polish – are considered as a manifestation of women's femininity in public, risking attracting male attention and inappropriate behaviour. In late 1996, 255 women were arrested and lashed in public by the Taliban, and one woman in October of that year had her thumb cut off for wearing nail polish.[67] At some stages, even the windows of houses in Kabul were expected to be painted to hide women from public sight.[68] As highlighted recently by a senior Taliban member on television, women's faces are viewed as a source of desire, which must be veiled to prevent corrupt behaviours by men.[69]

Women, Peace and Security

Such rhetoric around the subjugation of women has created an enabling environment for violence. Hundreds of cases of rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery have been perpetrated by the Taliban.[70, 71] In enforcing Sharia's *Hudood,*[72] the Taliban would stone to death any woman charged with adultery (including, for example, survivors of rape)[73] or lash them in public, depending on their marital status. In July 2021, there were reports of the Taliban ordering religious leaders to provide lists of girls over the age of 15 and widows under the age of 45 for forced marriage with fighters.[74]

Although women played wide-ranging roles in conflict under the Soviet occupation (as mobilisers, sympathisers, intelligence gatherers, active combatants, informants and preventers), their participation in recent years has been much more limited. The literature highlights that the 'battlefield' is not one of the religiously and traditionally accepted roles for women in society, and feminine clothes and burkas have sometimes been used by male violent extremists as disguise so they are perceived as less threatening by security forces.[75] Gender expectations of women have, on the other hand, been used to incite violence in men – for example, through the Taliban showing videos of Afghan women dancing with American soldiers and reminding men of their 'religious and social duties to protect their religion and honour' or *Namoos*.

Afghan women have, however, played a crucial role in advocating for concerns and increased participation in peace and security efforts. This has included the direct engagement of women civil society activists with the Taliban in formal and informal talks convened in Norway, Moscow and Doha.[76] The Afghan Women's Network (AWN), among other women-led organisations and individual activists, has also communicated the voices of Afghan women to the government, the Taliban and the international community.[77] It placed emphasis on the miserable plight of women under Taliban rule, warned that 'peace should not be at the price of losing our [women's] rights'[78] and noted that women

65 Any male relative unmarriageable to the woman or having sexual relations prohibited based on Islamic law. These include blood-kin such as brother, father or nephew or marriage-kin such as male members of in-laws.

66 Cole JRI (2003), 'The Taliban, women, and the Hegelian private sphere', Social Research, pp 132–136.

67 Ellis D (2000), *The Taliban. Women of the Afghan War* (Greenwood Publishing Group), p 64.

68 Rashid, A (2001), *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (Pan Books, Pan Macmillan), p 105

69 He further added, quoting a Hadith ascribed to Prophet Mohammad that a woman's body as entirety is like the special parts of human beings (*Auwrat*), which must be always covered. So a woman's body as a whole should be always covered to protect women and men from possible commission of sin or corrupt behaviour, alluding to sexual attractiveness. This is from Director of Reform and Training of Preachers of the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Bamdadi Khosh TV programme.

70 Maley, W (2002), *The Afghanistan Wars* (Palgrave Macmillan), p 238.

71 Khan, IG (2012), 'Afghanistan: Human cost of armed conflict since the Soviet invasion', *Perceptions*, 17 (4), pp 212–213.

72 According to the Vocabulary Dictionary, *Hudood* is: 'Islamic laws stating the limits ordained by Allah and including the deterrent punishments for serious crimes', such as robbery, adultery, drinking alcohol, etc.

73 Farooq MO (2006), 'Rape and Hudood Ordinance: Perversions of Justice in the Name of Islam', 1 December.

74 Narain V (2021), 'The World Must Not Look Away as the Taliban Sexually Enslaves Women and Girls', 23 August.

75 US Institute for Peace (USIP) (2016), 'Afghan Women and Violent Extremism: Colluding, Perpetrating or Preventing?', November.

76 Koofi F (2021), 'Afghanistan Can't Achieve Stability Without Women', *Foreign Policy*, 30 April

77 *The Indian Express* (2020), 'Afghan women in Doha talks team: "Taliban have to face, respect us"', September.

78 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) (2019), 'High Risk-List', SIGAR report, p 42.

would suffer forever if excluded from the initial stages of peacebuilding.[79, 80] However, despite Afghanistan launching its first WPS National Action Plan in 2015, women's absence in formal and informal peace talks was still felt. For instance, during the 23 rounds of intra-Afghan and international peace talks (2005–2014), women were only included on two occasions. They were then excluded from the US–Taliban talks throughout 2019, while only 4 women were among the 21-member government negotiating team in the intra-Afghan talks.[81, 82]

More recently, the Taliban has taken several measures to deter the participation of women and girls in public life. These include disbanding the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and its provincial offices: by September 2021, women working in government ministries had been told to stay at home, while women lawyers, judges and prosecutors were effectively dismissed from their jobs and forced into hiding.[83] The Taliban has also burned down schools,[84] imposed stringent conditions on girls' education, and carried out intimidation of and direct attacks on women active in public life.[85] Since 2005, and increasingly since August 2021, female politicians and leaders have been either warned by Taliban forces and informants to stop speaking out on political matters, or have been directly killed (Malalai Kakar, Sitara Achakzai, Zakia Zaki and Safia Amajan, to name a few). Many other prominent women politicians, such as Shukria Barakzai, have escaped suicide attacks several times. Fowzia Koofi was attacked a few days prior to her travel to Doha to negotiate peace with the Taliban as a member of the Republic negotiating team. There have also been widespread targeted killings of human rights defenders, women activists and humanitarian workers, with non-Pashtun ethnic groups and religious minorities being at particular risk.[86] This has had a demoralising effect on women all over the country, deterring them from participating in peace and security issues.[87]

Certain new rules also directly serve to institutionalise male control over women by threatening men if women digress from expected behaviours.[88] For example, the Taliban's recent order for women to cover their full body and face states that if they do not follow the rules, their male family members will be sued in court. Within this context, very few women peacebuilders are currently operating in Afghanistan, with anecdotal reports suggesting some have relocated to Pakistan or shifted to highly private 'underground' activities within Afghanistan where they continue to operate at risk.

79 Belquis Ahmad had personally experienced the Taliban regime in the 1990s; see Ahmadi B (2019), 'Afghans Want the Right Peace Deal, Not Just an End to Violence', United States Institute of Peace.

80 Afghan Women's Network (AWN) (2019), 'Afghan Women call for fair and lasting peace, and lasting peace requires the full, equal and meaningful participation of women'.

81, National Action Plan.

82 Al Jazeera (2021), 'In the Afghan delegation for Moscow talks, "only one woman in room", 19 March.

83 Amnesty International (2021), 'Afghanistan' (https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/)

84 From 2005 to mid-2006, a total of 204 physical attacks leading to the closure of 300 schools, both for boys and girls, were recorded. Some of these schools were partially or fully destroyed; see Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2006), 'Lessons in Terror – Attacks on Education Afghanistan', pp 31–32.

85 In November 2005, a group of five girls in Kandahar province had acid thrown at their faces, leaving two of them gravely disfigured. Likewise, in 2007 in Logar province, two schoolgirls were killed and six others injured by unidentified men, who were believed to be Taliban members From HRW (2006). Lessons in Terror- Attacks on Education Afghanistan. 31-32

86 Amnesty International (2021), 'Afghanistan'.

87 Human Rights Watch (2010), *The "Ten-Dollar Talib" and Women's Rights: Afghan Women and Risk of Reintegration and Reconciliation,* p 33.

88 Al Jazeera (2022), 'Afghan women deplore Taliban's new order to cover faces in public', 8 May.

4

Summary

Overall, the analysis shows that the formal legal environment in India and Pakistan is more enabling than it is in Afghanistan from a gender – and more specifically, WPS – perspective, albeit limited. Pakistan's National Security Policy places an emphasis on WPS and evidence suggests a gradual shift in support for gender equality in households and the public sphere. Although India does not have a NAP, there are several policies and laws in place to protect women's rights and participation. Its relatively higher ranking in global gender indices also demonstrates greater access and opportunities for women in terms of literacy, health and the labour market. Nevertheless, all three contexts still rank poorly across all four WPS pillars[89], largely due to a much stronger influence of customary norms, laws and practices, which promote control and isolation of women in order to protect both female and male honour. This is important to highlight in terms of shaping CSSF's engagement with senior (mostly male elite) power-holders and decision-makers in the region.

89 Protection, participation, relief and recovery and prevention.

Regional Drivers of Conflict

For this report, we have selected two drivers of instability and tensions at the Indian–Pakistan level, and two at the Afghanistan–Pakistan level. The analysis touches on a range of sub-issues, including masculine interstate aggressions, cyber and social media, migration, pollution and water management, and trade. For each, we focus on how gender norms and expectations may have influenced the drivers, and how conflict or tensions may also have had an impact on different groups.

1

Gendered drivers of conflict, instability and violence between India and Pakistan

DRIVER 1: Unresolved territorial dispute around Kashmir

Background

The unresolved territorial dispute around Kashmir has been driving India–Pakistan hostility since the two countries became independent in 1947. The dispute has caused two out of three major wars between the South Asian nations (October 1947 to December 1948 and April to September 1965) and several war-like crises.[90] Islamabad defines Kashmir as a 'core' issue and the 'root cause' of tension with India. India describes it as *'Atoot Ang'* (integral part) and insists that its accession to India is final. For both countries, Kashmir is an essential part of their identity and nation-building history.

Kashmir has long been considered the world's most militarised zone.[91] In August 2019, India repealed Article 370 of its Constitution, which accorded special autonomous status to India-administered Kashmir (IaK), adding further complexity to the conflict. In IaK, decades of clashes between Indian security forces and Kashmiri insurgents have hit civilians the hardest, with forced disappearances, torture, rape and a brutal response to protests becoming a normal part of life.[92] India holds Pakistan responsible for cross-border terrorism and attacks, including attacks on the Pathankot Airbase (2016), an Army Camp in Uri (2016) and a convoy of Indian security forces in Pulwama (2019).[93] It has also repeatedly asked Pakistan to punish perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

Analysts agree that the main trigger for potential war between India and Pakistan and a regional crisis could be a major terrorist attack on Indian security forces or civilians that is traced to Pakistan, or a bilateral border clash between India and Pakistan.[94]

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90 The third war was over East Bengal, now Bangladesh (December 1971). The 1999 Kargil conflict over Kashmir is not considered a war, but seen as a military confrontation nonetheless between the two countries (https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/3/1/timeline-india-pakistan-relations)

91 Amin Akhoon A, Ali S (2020), 'Foreign Policy, In Kashmir, a Year of Exploding Memories'.

92 Ibid: between 1990 and March 2017, an estimated 41,000 people were killed, including some 14,000 civilians.

93 High Commission of India (in Islamabad, Pakistan) (no date), 'Bilateral Brief: India-Pakistan Relations': while Pakistan holds India responsible for terror attacks carried out by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) in Balochistan and Karachi, including those targeted the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

94 USIP Senior Study Group Final Report (2022), 'Enhancing Strategic Stability in Southern Asia'.

Influence of gender norms and gendered structures on the conflict

The Kashmir conflict is multifaceted (with a direct India–Pakistan confrontation as well as a strong independence and militancy movement within IaK). For this report, we focus on gender norms and structures that shape the engagement of men and women differently. On both sides, the narrative constructed around this conflict uses masculine overtones around territory and possession.[95]

Militarised vs 'Kashmiri' masculinity

The concepts of military and hegemonic masculinity and how they shape conflict offers an interesting starting point for our analysis. In a gender analysis of the Indo–Pak escalation of tensions following the February 2019 Pulwama attacks, Shah (2019) examines how states are in constant competition to prove their masculinity and deny their femininity, because political power systems consistently valorise characteristics associated with (hegemonic) masculinity over characteristics associated with (subordinated) femininities.[96] This sends a message that states should aspire to masculinity for their survival, but also that there are different 'competing masculinities'. She argues that both India and Pakistan consider themselves the 'stronger of the duo' and this is achieved through 'tactical indoctrination as well as an inflated reputation of the respective armies'. Examples of masculine behaviour include Indian Prime Minister Modi's consistent, aggressive stance on those responsible for Pulwama (threatening to kill them in their houses) and Pakistan's cultivation of more 'refined' and 'mature' macho behaviour, such as capturing prisoners of war and shooting down fighter jets. In this context, 'feminised' is understood to mean being subordinated or undermined by the other.

Both countries' military forces, which have played an important role in defining the Kashmir conflict, are overwhelmingly male dominated,[97] without significant women's engagement in the security space. Sjoberg writes that because manhood is regarded an achievement rather than a pre-existing status, war heroism is considered a way to attain this.[98] Shah (2019) goes on to highlight a military–masculinity complex – a heavily interdependent relationship whereby young men draw validation from the military and state militaries project themselves as paragons of masculinity, with the two drawing validation from one other.[99] Along these lines, the military sustains its operation and attracts recruits by promoting masculinity, while the credibility of and struggle to attain masculinity strengthen as it becomes associated with joining the military.

Conciliation Resources' exploratory work on the link between masculinity and conflict in Kashmir found that masculine identities were influenced by many factors, including a highly securitised environment and ongoing armed conflict.[100] These shaped the gendered identities of young men who otherwise felt powerless and emasculated due to a lack of socio-economic opportunities and political belonging. These feelings can trigger, and be a cause of, increased levels of domestic violence, as they sustain more belligerent behaviours. As a partner in Kashmir explained, using force and taking up arms

95 DasGupta S (2011), 'Renegotiating internal boundaries by women of Jammu and Kashmir', in P Banerjee and A Basu Roy Chaudhary, *Women in Indian Borderlands* (New Delhi: Sage).

96 Shah Z (2019), 'Who's man enough?: How competing masculinities inform Pak-India escalation', Dawn, 20 March.

97 Before 2006, women could only join the armed forces for non-combat jobs, such as the medical corps, or operations such as military logistics, administrative offices. In 2006, the Pakistani Air Force (PAF) inducted four women as fighter pilots for the first time; see BBC News (2006), 'Pakistan gets women combat pilots', 30 March. In 2002, Shahida Malik, a doctor within the Army Medical Corps, became the first female Major General; see Dawn (2002), 'Dr Shahida becomes first woman general', 18 June.

98 Sjoberg L (2010), 'Women fighters and the 'beautiful soul' narrative' in *International Review of the Red Cross.* Sjoberg also mentions that 'masculinised warrior-hero narratives' are targeted specifically to boys and young men, while women and girls also internalise and perpetrate this. Women too perpetuate such narratives onto men; the symbol of the grieving widow and/or mother is widely co-opted by state-sponsored valorisations of martyrdom on both sides of the border.

99 Shah Z (2019), 'Who's man enough?: How competing masculinities inform Pak-India escalation', Dawn, 20 March.

100 Conciliation Resources (2021), 'Integrating masculinities in peacebuilding: shifting harmful norms and transforming relationships', Practice Paper, p 13.

becomes the dominant model of expressing masculinity among men who feel insecure in their gender roles.[101]

Factors driving young men into militancy

An analysis workshop facilitated by Conciliation Resources showed that factors driving young men's engagement in violent armed groups in Kashmir (including from the Pakistani side) included unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities, easy access to weapons, lack of political participation / disillusion with participation in politics, and social constructions around masculinity and violence.[102] In IaK, Parashar (2018) discusses a recent phenomenon of young Kashmari Muslims reclaiming a form of 'indigenous masculinity', which is being positioned in contrast to the militarised masculinity associated with the Indian state and rise of the BJP.[103]

The more recent rise in the number of young, educated men joining the militancy provides another angle of analysis, with politicians providing different interpretations as to why this is happening.[104] For Mehbooba Mufti (former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and president of the People's Democratic Party (PDP)), "*the othering of Muslims across India*" is one reason, as is "*the global atmosphere of political radicalization and wrong interpretation of jihad*". For Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (Chairman of a moderate faction of the pro-independence All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC)), it is the "*intensity of Indian repression (which) pushes educated Kashmiri youth*" to the wall. This he says combines with disillusionment with political and democratic processes as a means of conflict resolution, and reinforcement by the apathy of the international community. Swayam Prakash Pani (Inspector General of Jammu and Kashmir Police) believes that militants thrive on publicity, attributing propaganda (social media presence) as a key factor.

Women's role in Kashmir

As highlighted above, women's role or influence in the military has remained limited both in Pakistan and India. Interviews conducted through Conciliation Resources' work with the few women involved in Track II processes between India and Pakistan[105] have indicated that as far as the Kashmir issue is concerned, even women 'think like men' and define the conflict in terms of their respective national security rather than bringing in a human security approach. Personal interviews have indicated that issues related to gender are either side-lined or treated in separate sessions under the rubric of 'women's issues' instead of being integrated in the main agenda of discussions.

In IaK, women have aided the militant movement as protestors, motivators and facilitators, despite not taking part in direct combat. The main discourse in the conflict, however, remains one of 'dominant masculinities', excluding women as meaningful contributors to the militancy or as peacebuilding partners.[106] More research could be conducted on what is currently driving young men and women to participate in the conflict, recognising that the prevailing securitised and highly polarised environment does not always leave room for choice.

101 Ibid, p 13.

102 Findings from a Gender Conflict Analysis facilitated by Conciliation Resources in 2017, with key thinkers and participants from the Pakistan Government and civil society.

103 Parashar S (2018), 'Competing masculinities, militarization and the conflict in Kashmir', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*.

104 Geelani G (2018), 'The rise of educated young Kashmir militants: propaganda or unpalatable truth?', The Defense Post, 30 November.

105 This includes the Sulah Dialogue process led by Conciliation Resources since 2015, bringing together former heads of intelligence agencies, military generals and diplomats from Delhi and Islamabad to dialogue over Kashmir.

106 Shekhawat S (2014), *Gender, Conflict and Peace in Kashmir: Invisible Stakeholders* (PeaceWomen, WILPF).

On the Pakistani side, women in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) are not located in the direct conflict zone or involved in combat operations,[107] but their lives are directly or indirectly impacted by the larger conflict of Kashmir. Living in a very conservative society shaped by patriarchal values and attitudes that determine their status and role, the narrative of women of Kashmir in general and AJK in particular does not provide much space in the political discourse and their voices remain marginalised on issues relating to war or peacebuilding.[108] The highly securitised and militarised environment prevailing in Kashmir – on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) – indicates that this is as detrimental to women's participation in peacebuilding processes as it is in other parts of India and Pakistan that face internal tensions and violence.

Gendered impacts and consequences

Impact on women

The major gendered impact of the conflict is that the perspectives and experiences of women facing overt or covert violence have been virtually erased from national narratives and bilateral discourses. Such narratives have been framed by men in power with a national security perspective. The role of women – whether as peacemakers, supporters of armed conflict or as community members trapped between different armed entities – is largely absent in the literature.

From a WPS perspective, in IaK, high-profile cases of rape and sexual aggression have been documented through reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights[109] and international human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Although more recent literature is limited, a significant report from Human Rights Watch assessing the early 1990s' cases of rape perpetrated by Indian security forces alongside cordon and search operations, found that women were more at risk just by living in a certain area.[110] The report also referenced armed militant organisations targeting civilians (assaulting and murdering Hindu residents in the Kashmir Valley and committing rape – though noting that this was less common). In 2019, it was reported that no security force personnel accused of torture or other forms of degrading and inhuman treatment had been prosecuted in a civilian court since allegations started in the 1990s, contributing to a culture of impunity.[111] In a 2013 report on her mission to India, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women noted:

> *'Information received through both written and oral testimonies highlighted the use of mass rape, allegedly by members of the State security forces, as well as acts of enforced disappearance, killings and acts of torture and ill treatment, which were used to intimidate and to counteract political opposition and insurgency.'*[112]

The 1990s was the peak period for insurgency and counter insurgency attacks in the Kashmir Valley. This resulted in hundreds or thousands of 'half widows',[113] who could not remarry and were

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107 Akhtar S (2006), 'Women and peacebuilding in Azad Jammu and Kashmir', in WP Singh Sidhu, B Asif and C Samii (eds.) *Kashmir: New Voices: New Approaches*, p 99.

108 Akhtar S (2012–13), 'AJK Women and Strategic Peace building in Kashmir', *Regional Studies* **XXXI** (1), Winter, p 4.

109 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2019), 'Update of the Situation of Human Rights in Indian-Administered Kashmir and Pakistan-Administered Kashmir from May 2018 to April 2019; OHCHR (2018), 'Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir: Developments in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir from June 2016 to April 2018, and General Human Rights Concerns in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan'.

110 Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch (1993), 'Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War', Vol.5, Isssue 9.

111 OHCHR (2019), 'Update of the Situation of Human Rights in Indian-Administered Kashmir and Pakistan-Administered Kashmir from May 2018 to April 2019', p 5.

112 Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, Addendum: Mission to India (A/HRC/26/38/Add.1), 1 April 2014, para 23.

113 Women whose husbands had disappeared during the conflict but who were not declared deceased; see Al Jazeera (2013), 'The Dilemma of Kashmir's Half Widows'.

particularly marginalised, facing added barriers in terms of property rights and access to livelihoods given that their husbands were not formally considered deceased.[114]

On the Pakistani side, there are three groups of women in AJK who are directly affected by the larger Kashmir conflict. The first group is part of families divided by the conflict in 1947–48 and thereafter in the 1965 and 1971 wars and the 1990s. The second group comprises women who are living with their families by the LoC, which becomes frequently volatile, especially in times of high tension between the two countries. The third consists of women who have fled the conflict zone due to insecurity and repression, especially in the post-1990 period.[115] Heavy cross-LoC shelling and firing has impacted everyone living by the LoC, with a more profound and multidimensional effect on women in the Neelum Valley.[116]

Increased communal tensions

Because of this 'everyday normalisation of violence' in a highly militarised environment, greater violence among communities and in households occurs. This was shared in Conciliation Resources' 2019 workshops on masculinities and conflict on both sides of the LoC. For example, following the Pulwama attack in February 2019, major protests ensued across India with reports of mobs targeting Kashmiri Muslims living and working across the country.[117] Hatred and violence against Kashmiri Muslims was encouraged on social media by individuals, journalists and some political leaders. While communal tensions are not new, the role played by violent mobs with an extreme nationalist Hindu agenda has increased – with clear targeting of Muslims (men, in particular) and Dalits.[118]

The phenomenon of hybrid warfare through social media is also highlighted in the literature, whereby the government in India is allegedly exploiting socio-ethnic and religious fault lines in Pakistan:

> *'They are creating a sense of insecurity among the Pakistani people and hatred towards the state by disseminating fake news, information and propaganda through modern digital technology, i.e., social media. India is working below the threshold and using both conventional and unconventional means to target Pakistan.'*[119]

This phenomenon appears to be gendered, with women at the receiving end.

DRIVER 2: Climate stress increasing bilateral tensions between India and Pakistan

Background

As highlighted above, issues of cross-border terrorism and control over the territory of Kashmir are central to Indo–Pak tensions. This tension has been further exacerbated by a growing environmental crisis.[120] South Asia is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to climate change, with the melting of the Himalayan glaciers, increased rainfall intensity in the Indus River Basin, and increased frequency of natural disasters (particularly floods and flash floods and earthquakes). Both India and Pakistan are

114 Conciliation Resources' partner in IaK, Ehsaas, has done significant work in facilitating engagement between half widows, the Ulema and local government structures to advocate for their rights to remarry and access property, among other things: see Conciliation Resources (2014), 'Breakthrough ruling on Kashmir "Half Widows"'.

115 Akhtar S (2012–13), 'AJK Women and Strategic Peace building in Kashmir', *Regional Studies* XXXI (1), Winter, p 11.

116 Anwer Zoon A (2017), 'Voices Unheard, Stories Untold: The Plight of Women in Neelum Valley – AJK', Kashmir Institute of International Relations.

117 OHCHR (2019), 'Update of the Situation of Human Rights in Indian-Administered Kashmir and Pakistan-Administered Kashmir from May 2018 to April 2019', p 29.

118 Bajoria J (2019), 'India's Violent Mobs are a Menace to Minorities – and Democracy', HRW.

119 Ullah Shah I (2019), 'Indian Hybrid war: Challenges for Pakistan', 18 June.

120 Shidore S (2020), 'Climate Change and the India-Pakistan Rivalry', Council on Strategic Risks, Briefer 4, 23 January.

highly water-stressed countries, with Pakistan projected to become 'water-scarce' by 2025.[121] The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) – which governs sharing of the basin's water and was signed by the two countries in 1960 – is under unprecedented stress due to climate change.[122]

The most likely conflict trigger in this regard would be a natural calamity in the Indus River Basin, a major flooding event triggering release of waters by upstream dams in IaK.[123] There is a risk that Pakistan could accuse India of deliberately manipulating such an event to magnify damages which could – whether true or untrue – lead to an armed clash. Climate change could also escalate tensions between the two countries in more subtle and less direct ways. For example, if the frequency and scope of natural disasters deepens stress on local populations and stalls economic growth, external rivalries could be played up to appease domestic audiences.[124]

Other environmental issues also contribute towards tensions. For example, levels of air pollution are exceptionally high in Delhi and Lahore. Stubble burning in the two Punjabs is a major contributor to this[125] and is fast becoming a political dispute, with each country blaming the other for not doing enough to control the air pollution.

Influence of gender norms and gendered structures on climate stress

While the impact climate stress is having on exacerbating conflict is increasingly shown, there is little evidence available in the literature on how gender norms and gendered structures are interfacing with this driver.

Deep disagreements over interpretation of certain clauses of the IWT are becoming an increasingly important factor in the India–Pakistan conflict, with each side accusing the other of illegal water usage.[126] Climate change is going to add complexity to this conflict over water. The more intense water conflicts also play out within each country at the local and sub-national levels (for example, in Pakistan between the states of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and in India, between IaK and other states).[127] The IWT remains an inter-governmental instrument and does not call for the involvement of local communities in water management processes.

Water discourse seems to be dominated by male narratives on both sides and is increasingly becoming a tool of hostility, as reflected through militarised threats and assertion of power. For instance, in 2010 the Pakistani militant and Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Hafiz Saeed accused India of using water as a tool of hostility and blamed the country for floods in IaK and Pakistan.[128] In in the wake of the Pulwama attack in February 2019, the Indian water resources minister tweeted that India had "decided to stop our share of water which used to flow to Pakistan".[129] Pakistan's responses were based on a similar narrative, warning if India was to revoke the IWT, this would be perceived as an 'act of war'.[130] Women, on the other hand, are deeply linked with water as users/carriers in the community and are affected by water shortages,[131] yet their narrative and role in water debates is

121 Ministry of Water Resources, Government of Pakistan (2018), 'National Water Policy'.

122 Shidore S (2020), 'Climate Change and the India-Pakistan Rivalry', Council on Strategic Risks, Briefer 4, 23 January, p 15.

123 Ibid, p 15.

124 Ibid, p 15.

125 Other environmentally unsustainable agricultural practices mentioned include extraction of surface and groundwater, and excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides; see Shukla S (2021), 'Winter air pollution and stubble burning in North India: A regulatory governance perspective', 20 November.

126 Shidore S (2020), 'Climate Change and the India-Pakistan Rivalry', Council on Strategic Risks, Briefer 4, 23 January.

127 Ibid, p 9.

128 Times of India (2014), 'Hafiz Saeed blames India for Pakistan floods, calls it "water terrorism"', 9 September.

129 Gadkari N (2019), Tweet, 21 February.

130 Reuters (2016), 'Pakistan warns of "water war" with India if decades old treaty violated', 27 September; Behal A, Bhal D (2021), 'India's water crisis: It is most acute for women', 16 August.

131 Ahmad M (2022), 'Easing the water carriers' burden', *The News on Sunday*, 20 February.

missing. There is an absence of secondary data explaining this, but it is likely driven by the lack of space for women's participation in decision-making more generally, and associated assumptions made around their lack of skills and expertise on the matter.

Initial research highlights how gender norms, expectations, and roles and responsibilities in India shape how women and men are exposed differently to air pollution. For example, gender inequalities shape women and men's mobility. If a family owns a car, the male head is more likely to use it, while women and girls will rely on alternatives such as walking and public transport, increasing their exposure to air pollution (walking near roadways is shown to result in 40 per cent higher exposure).[132] Additionally, women are often more at risk due to the impacts of roadway emissions as they have reduced lung function due to indoor air pollution from domestic duties, such as using biomass fuels for cooking. Taking public transportation is not always a preferable alternative as nearly 90 per cent of female riders say they have been subjected to harassment at least once.[133]

Women's professional occupations also increase their exposure to air pollution. For example, most street sweepers in India are women from 'lower' castes, with a risk of respiratory morbidity 4.24 times higher compared to other groups.[134] Women working in the informal sector also often work in street vending or small retail shops. Here, they may have to choose between working on busier streets close to high-traffic roadsides (where they have greater exposure to emissions) or on quieter streets where they might face increased risk of GBV attacks.[135]

Gendered impacts and consequences of the above

The literature argues that the unequal treatment of women during climate disasters is a driver of violence against women. As it is predominately men who migrate to find jobs following climate-induced crises, women face challenges staying at home, including running the household in water-scarce conditions. In Pakistan, the absence of male family members also leaves women more vulnerable to sexual violence by strangers, limiting their freedom of movement.[136] There is a lack of data available on how coping strategies are gendered and the impact that this has on conflict dynamics, which could be an area to prioritise in future analysis.

A lack of awareness and confidence in disaster preparedness among women also amplifies the effect that climate-induced stresses have on them. The findings of a recent survey carried out in AJK showed that only 69.1 per cent of women surveyed were confident in their knowledge of disaster preparedness, compared to 82.7 per cent of men; while only 26 per cent of women were aware of who to get additional help from compared to 34 per cent of men respondents.[137] This gender imbalance could be attributed to multiple factors, including lack of outreach to women, a conservative environment and limited social interaction for women in AJK. Women are also further victimised by physical and emotional violence within households and relief-settlement camps. For example, cases of sexual violence and harassment, including of young girls, were reported following the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir.[138] There is no more recent data available on this issue.

Research also predicts that the impact climate change will have on agricultural outputs (crop losses and food insecurity) will differ among women and men in Pakistan and India. In times of food

132 US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2021), 'Women, Transportation and Air Pollution in India', 20 July.

133 Ibid.

134 Johncy SS, Dhanyakumar G, Kanyakumari, Samuel TV (2014), 'Chronic Exposure to Dust and Lung Function Impairment: A Study on Female Sweepers in India', *National Journal of Physiology, Pharmacy & Pharmacology*, 4 (1), pp 15–19.

135 USAID (2021), 'Women, Transportation and Air Pollution in India', 20 July.

136 Hadika Jamshaid S (2022), 'Opinion: Women bear the brunt of the Pakistan's water crisis', *The Third Pole*, 28 March.

137 Kashmir Institute for International Relations (2022), 'Disaster Preparedness in AJK – A study on the Level of Disaster Management in the region'.

138 Shad Memon F (2020), 'Climate Change and Violence Against Women: Study of Flood-Affected Population in The Rural Area of Sind, Pakistan', p 67.

insecurity, women bear the largest burden due to their inferior social position and unequal intra-household food division that favours men. The impact will further vary depending on other factors such as marital status, age, socioeconomic status and whether the household primarily depends on farming.[139]

2

Gendered drivers of conflict, instability and violence between Afghanistan–Pakistan

DRIVER 1: Tensions at the Afghanistan–Pakistan border with increased migration following Taliban resurgence

Background

The Afghanistan–Pakistan border has always been a source of tension and conflict between the two countries, limiting their ability to cooperate with each other and contribute to regional cooperation, stability and prosperity. Afghanistan has never recognised the border between the two as official but rather accepts it as the Durand Line, which should allow free movement of people belonging to the same tribes and families. Strict control over the border has been continuously disputed by Afghan leaders and continues to be disputed by the Taliban.[140] However, Pakistan considers the border to be final, and argues that its recently constructed border fence is not a violation of the Durand Treaty as the construction work is being carried out on the Pakistani side.[141]

The issue of cross-border terrorism has further strained relationships between the two countries since the late 1990s. Terror groups used the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as safe havens after the US launched war against Taliban in 2001.[142] Members of al-Qaeda, including Arabs, Uzbeks and Chechens, fled Afghanistan and took refuge in these areas.[143] The absence of mechanisms to tackle the problem of unauthorised border crossings then created a major security concern for Islamabad.[144]

In recent months, tensions have flared up partly due to the ongoing unilateral fencing of the border by Pakistan (initiated in March 2017 and set to be completed in 2022), but also because of the recent influx of migrants from Afghanistan trying to enter Pakistan since August 2021. In June 2022, Pakistan's Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), with support from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), completed the verification of 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees under the Documentation Renewal and Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE). Disaggregated data is intended to support the gender-specific protection needs of Afghan refugees, with the exercise revealing more than half of the registered refugee population are children, 76 per cent are women, children and older groups, and over half are residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.[145] Prior to August 2021, approximately 2.5

139 Mortensen S, Pandey D (2018), 'Ozone air pollution and gender inequality in India', Stockholm Environment Institute, 5 June.

140 USIP (2022), 'Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Dispute Heats Up', January.

141 Ibid.

142 Omrani B (2009), 'The Durand Line: History and Problems of the Afghan-Pakistan Border', *Asian Affairs* **40** (2), July, p 189.

143 Musharraf P (2006), *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (London: Simon & Schuster), pp 237, 263, 268.

144 Qayum H et al. (2019), 'Conflict and Cooperation in Pak-Afghan Relations to Reconcile the Mistrust in Bilateral Relations', *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, **57**, February, p 143.

145 UNHCR Pakistan (2022), 'Government, UNHCR verify 1.3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan', 3 June.

million Afghan refugees already lived in Pakistan, of which 1.5 million were registered as Afghan refugees and one million were unregistered.[146]

Gendered drivers of migration across the Afghanistan–Pakistan border

The literature does not yet offer a wide array of analysis on the gender-specific factors driving Afghans leaving the country since August 2021, though there are some initial indications. Many people fear Taliban reprisal due to their former occupation, particularly if they or a family member worked for or was associated with the Republic regime or the international community.[147] Currently, there is no secondary data to suggest that risks within these categories differ by gender, though those previously promoting human rights – including women's rights – are at heightened risk. Most of these groups have registered with UNHCR and were hoping to be evacuated from Pakistan to a third country as asylum seekers or refugees, although many face challenges and remain in Pakistan.[148]

For others, crossing the border is linked to their fear of Taliban reprisal due to belonging to certain identity groups. For example, a report from Human Rights Watch highlights the specific risks facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people and others who do not conform to 'traditional' sexual orientations and gender identities. Some have fled their homes following attacks from the Taliban and its supporters, including being subjected to sexual violence, blackmail, being labelled *Dokhtar chap* ('sissy') and being forcibly 'outed'.[149] Social media has provided a platform for these attacks, with gay men and trans women reporting being contacted over Facebook, Tik Tok and Grindr by people pretending to offer them support in escaping the country before attacking them. Most of those interviewed believed their only path to safety was to relocate to a third country, though many have ended up in Pakistan, which also criminalises same-sex relations and places them at ongoing risk. For lesbians and bisexual women, fleeing Afghanistan is less viable given they are not permitted to travel without male companions.

A significant proportion of those leaving Afghanistan are young men and unaccompanied boys, with women and girls reportedly being more likely to stay behind and seek refuge in family reunion programmes.[150] For example, a survey by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2019 found that unaccompanied women and girls constituted only 13 per cent of migration flows compared to 50 per cent for men and boys, a trend at odds with DRIVE data presented at the beginning of this sub-section.[151] This is potentially due to women and girls facing higher costs for their journey, relying on expensive people smugglers, and being more at risk of sexual and gender-based violence on the way. Nevertheless, the literature does highlight that widespread Taliban closure of domestic violence shelters has left thousands of women at risk, which may serve as a driving factor for seeking refuge in Pakistan. For example, the Taliban closed 32 shelter homes between August and December 2021, the majority of which had been supported by international donors.[152]

Many Afghans have also fled to seek economic and healthcare relief in the face of a looming humanitarian crisis: 97 per cent of the 37 million Afghan population are purely dependent on international humanitarian aid, while the health system has almost totally collapsed.[153] The crisis has

146 Amnesty International (2019), 'Afghanistan's refugees: forty years of dispossession', 20 June.

147 Foreign Policy (2021), 'Afghan refugees get cold welcome in Pakistan', 22 November.

148 The New Statesman (2022), 'Afghans who fled to Pakistan now find their lives blocked at every turn', 7 February.

149 Human Rights Watch (2022), '"Even If You Go to the Skies, We'll Find You": LGBT People in Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover', 26 January.

150 McAuliffe M, Iqbal M (2022), 'Struggling to Survive: Gender, Displacement and Migration in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan', 23 February.

151 International Organisation for Migration (2019), 'Afghanistan: Survey on Drivers of Migration'.

152 Shaheed (2021), 'Taliban Closure of Domestic Abuse Shelters Leaves Thousands at Risk, Experts Say', 20 December.

153 International Rescue Committee (2022), 'Crisis in Afghanistan: Unprecedented hunger after conflict', January.

led to an increase in normally preventable deaths, including of expecting mothers due to a lack of medicine and healthcare professionals.[154]

Impacts and consequences of migration across the Afghanistan–Pakistan border

There is almost no secondary data on the gender-specific consequences of those migrating from Afghanistan to Pakistan. Pakistan has closed its border several times to Afghans, asking refugees to leave within 90 days or requesting national identification cards – which many do not have. This has reportedly created hardships, particularly for marginalised men, women and children who have had to sleep on rough roads and in extreme heat after being turned away when attempting to cross into Pakistan following the Taliban's takeover.[155] Rights activists in the adjoining provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have noted that Pakistani officials provide security clearances required to enter the country 'selectively', often denying them to those most in need, such as women's and other rights activists.[156] Reports also highlight hostility towards those seeking refuge (for example, through protests and hunger strikes in Sindh province, which is already home to refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar), and suggest recent deportation efforts do not necessarily afford protections to refugee women and children.[157] Previously, human rights groups have provided accounts of threats and abuse experienced by Afghan refugees, notably of Afghan settlements being raided and young men being rounded up, detained or beaten on suspicion of carrying out terror attacks in Pakistan.[158]

More broadly, undocumented Afghans face a myriad of legal, financial and other problems. Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and, while Afghan refugees have been allowed to move freely, they have not been able to access formal education opportunities, open a bank account, work or buy property and have been denied access to healthcare.[159] A Pakistani politician reflected that, 'Afghans are being thrown to the wolves.'[160] As most refugees are living in the two least developed provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, issues around resource scarcity are likely to further exacerbate conflict in the near future.[161]

DRIVER 2: Pakistan concerns following the Taliban resurgence around national sovereignty, counter-terror and regional security

Background

Only by recognising the tensions and ties that have historically defined Pakistan–Afghanistan relations, and the implications that this has on regional security issues and relations with India, can a durable resolution be forged.

The Taliban's assumption of power in 1996 ushered in close Pakistani ties, with Pakistan providing covert assistance and safe havens following the 9/11 attacks and receiving subsequent blame for

154 Voice of America (2022), 'Afghanistan faces return to highest maternal mortality rates', 7 March.

155 McKay H (2021), 'Afghans dying at border as tensions intensify between Taliban, Pakistan', *New York Post*, 23 September.

156 International Crisis Group (2022), 'Pakistan's Hard Policy Choices in Afghanistan', February.

157 ur-Rehman Z (2021), 'Afghans Flee to Pakistan. An Uncertain Future Awaits', 8 September.

158 Human Rights Watch (2015), '"What Are You Doing Here?" Police Abuses Against Afghans in Pakistan', 18 November.

159 Amnesty International (2019), 'Afghanistan's refugees: forty years of dispossession', 20 June.

160 Foreign Policy (2021), 'Afghan refugees get cold welcome in Pakistan', 22 November.

161 This article – albeit particularly negative on the impact of Afghans' refugees presence in Pakistan – gives an overview of some of the concerns raised by some sections of the public in terms of economic and social impacts; see Anwar S, Hassan M, Kakar A (2021), 'Afghan Refugees: Implications on Pakistan', *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* **4** (3). This article offers insights into more 'positive' aspects of Afghan migration into Pakistan; see Amin Ahmadzai A (2016), 'How Refugees Changed the Afghan-Pakistan Dynamic', *The Diplomat*, 15 September.

enabling a resurgence of the Taliban and al-Qaeda from across the border.[162] Saleem (2021)[163] argues that Pakistan's ties with the Taliban have been driven by aims to protect Pakistan's border and allow Pakistan to focus on Kashmir. The US institute for Peace (USIP, 2021)[164] similarly notes that Pakistan sees the Taliban through an India 'prism', whereby developing strategic relationships will limit New Dehli's involvement in Afghanistan. India, meanwhile, has provided a range of assistance to opposition groups seeking to unseat the Taliban. Pakistan has blamed India and the ousted Afghan government for terrorism spilling into Pakistan, and more recently viewed India's funding to the Shahtoot Dam on the Kabul River as an effort to restrict its downstream water supply during a crisis.

The Taliban's takeover in August 2021 threatens Pakistan in several new ways, including affecting its economic outlook and derailing its fiscal plans. Heightened migration, explored earlier in this report, also risks a spillover of violence and invigoration of like-minded groups, as well as a heightened risk of unauthorised attacks taking place in IaK.[165]

Many Taliban members resent Pakistan for its cooperation with US-led operations, perceived mistreatment of their leaders and undue influence over their actions. Their resistance to Pakistani pressure could risk reprisal actions from the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) – an insurgency with operating bases in Afghanistan and growing presence in Pakistan's western border regions, which Islamabad has previously accused Kabul of supporting. Research highlights TPP's increased energy following the Taliban resurgence, despite the Pakistani government long arguing it was the biproduct of US presence in Afghanistan and support for the former Afghan government in cahoots with India.[166]

Trade has also increased tensions as well as presented opportunities for trust. In 2010, the two countries negotiated the Afghanistan–Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), which aimed to counter smuggling initiatives, strengthen custom facilities and provide one-way transfer of Afghan goods to India. In practice, evidence suggests business communities on both sides have seen a lack of compliance, with Afghan traders complaining of costly documentation, being unable to transit Pakistan en route to India, as well as corruption among border officials and police.

Although these issues are deeply rooted and unlikely to be resolved in the current climate, there are some entry points to begin building confidence through dialogue. It is also important to recognise that Pakistan has played an influential role in recent years by facilitating meetings between Taliban and Afghan government officials and third parties.

Gendered drivers and impacts of Pakistan–Afghanistan tensions

There is limited secondary data on the gender-specific drivers of Pakistan–Afghanistan tensions, but some evidence of emerging gendered impacts.

The resurgence of the TTP could have grave implications for women and girls in Pakistan's northwest region bordering Afghanistan. Its re-emergence as a prominent group could jeopardise the hard-won gains made by women in this deeply conservative region in recent years. Women's activism in the region contributed to the July 2018 passage of the 25th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution, integrating the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This granted the former FATA full constitutional rights and judicial protections, whereas it had previously been ruled by an unaccountable federal bureaucracy in partnership with *maliks* (a patriarchal elite). This former situation had dire consequences for women: *rewaj* (customary law) prevailed, *jirgas*

162 USIP (2021), 'Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan', August.
163 Saleem A (2021), 'What's driving the conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan?', November.
164 USIP (2021), 'Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan', August.
165 Ibid.
166 Mir A (2022), 'After the Taliban's Takeover: Pakistan's TTP problem', January.

(councils of male tribal elders) sanctioned abuse against women and practices such as *swara* (using women to settle disputes), and *ghag* (men forcibly claiming rights to women in marriage) were common. Although the TPP and other Islamist militant jihadist groups tried to appeal to women by presenting their agenda as 'a revolutionary alternative to oppressive tribal elites', women in the region ultimately became strong opponents of the militancy as its agenda became apparent. Despite many harmful gender norms and taboos in this region being successfully challenged, these gains have not yet been consolidated and the TPP's resurgence could lead to a major backslide on the contributions women can make to peace and security.[167]

There is limited evidence on the impact of trade tensions on marginalised groups. For communities on both sides of the Durand Line, trade is a crucial lifeline amid limited economic prospects. Seventy-one (71) per cent of respondents from two Afghan border towns in an Asia Foundation (2019) study,[168] almost half of whom were women, reported that business activity in their community depended entirely or mainly on cross-border trade. Ongoing closures of trade borders have resulted in a loss of income and rotting produce, as well as deterioration of health conditions for those in Afghanistan, which increases the likelihood of migration to Pakistan.

Although a government information minister in Pakistan recently denounced the Taliban's curbs on women as 'retrogressive' (signalling rare public criticism),[169] both USIP and the International Crisis Group caution against raising concerns on women's rights in initial dialogues. They instead recommend focusing on bilateral topics that do not directly challenge either state's sovereignty to help build trust and drive demand for future engagement. Examples include confidence-building measures (CBMs) such as easing frictions on traders, the shared impacts of climate change (including, for example, water cooperation – recognising that the Kabul River joins the River Indus),[170] or the prospective return of Afghan refugees. The Pakistan–Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Group is a promising initiative that has cultivated productive working relationships at the bilateral level on these issues.

167 Fazil S (2022), 'Building a Just Peace for Women in Pakistan's Tribal Belt', February.

168 Asia Foundation (2019), 'Trade and Livelihoods in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands'.

169 Gul A (2021), 'Pakistan Slams Taliban Curbs on Afghan Women', 27 December.

170 A large component of the water of the Kabul River entering Pakistan is contributed by the Chitral River, which flows from Pakistan to Afghanistan and joins the Konar River. The assets of the Kabul River are crucial for both countries to meet their drinking water, sanitation, irrigation and power-generation needs. However, there is no treaty or any formal arrangement concerning the sharing of the waters, let alone institutional arrangements for their joint, cooperative development and utilisation.

Connectors and Entry Points for Engagement

Four key themes have emerged that may be of relevance to regional CSSF programming; some of these apply to all three countries and some are specific to either India–Pakistan or Pakistan–Afghanistan. Recognising the sensitivity of subject matter and gaps in secondary data, priority themes would benefit from further exploration through a participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis workshop. This could bring together a wider range of perspectives and enable the Helpdesk to understand more about current CSSF programmes and specific, practical and realistic opportunities for integrating findings.

Below we summarise the common themes and suggest potential entry points for shaping CSSF's engagement in regional dialogues and its aims to diversify subject matter and de-escalate tensions.

1

Masculinities

Patriarchal norms are prevalent across all three contexts, primarily driven by religious and customary traditions. This is especially prominent in the household (driving GBV, inter-familial and inter-communal conflicts) and is mirrored in public life (through strict control over women's participation in peace and security issues) and inter-state aggressions (the use of masculine overtones around territory and possession). The gendered impacts of this are wide ranging: women are isolated from public life and punished for demonstrating 'femininity', they are used to settle disputes and protect honour, and endure all forms of GBV as a result of male efforts to demonstrate masculinity. Young men and boys are being driven into joining the military or far-right religious movements for validation and to achieve or reclaim masculinity, with institutions often promoting and exploiting this. The literature suggests little effort is being made in schools, religious institutions or the media to counteract this or promote gender sensitivity.

Potential entry points – *Pakistan–Afghanistan*

Research suggests a potential opportunity to mobilise male scholars and religious networks in support of feminist peace, which could be built into cross-border dialogues. A 2022 study by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Afghanistan found that a growing number of men, having seen first-hand the devastating effects that Taliban policies have had on female family members, are publicly questioning their exclusion by the regime.[171] Men interviewed in the study highlighted the potential to begin engaging with the Taliban on these issues using well-trusted, well-connected moderate religious networks and male scholars, exploring gender equality through Islamic teachings. There could also be opportunities to bring in perspectives from young women and men taking part in the Pak–Afghan Youth Dialogue, a CBM which provides a platform for young people to discuss bilateral concerns and exchange ideas.

171 Yousaf F, Hashim H (2022), 'Making Visible the Afghan Men Who are Working for Women's Rights and a Gender-Just Society', 11 April.

Potential entry points – *India-Pakistan*

Evidence indicates that leaders on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) hold different interpretations of the reasons for young men joining violent armed groups in Kashmir, ranging from radicalisation, intensity of Indian repression and social media. There is an opportunity for the CSSF to engage more diverse male perspectives on the issue and deconstruct notions of militarised masculinities prevailing in the region. This could include exchanging stories between diverse groups of men about how violent conflict has affected them negatively and resulted in high-risk behaviour, sharing these with particular organisations and exploring opportunities to engage men across both sides constructively.

2

Women's participation

Across all three contexts, women and other marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by conflict but also excluded from meaningful participation in peace processes. The literature shows that in Pakistan and India, women are more often mobilised in terms of the 'soft' support they can provide either in direct combat or peacebuilding (for example, as facilitators, spreaders of information, inciters of violence and mediators of localised conflict, sharing insights on issues such as health or education instead of 'hard' security issues). In Afghanistan, the 'battlefield' is not religiously or traditionally accepted as a place for women. Nevertheless, despite shrinking civic space in all three countries and threats of reprisal, women politicians, human rights defenders and peacebuilders continue to operate and there are opportunities to subtly promote, diversify and facilitate their inclusion in cross-border dialogues, even if indirectly.

Potential entry points – *India–Pakistan*

Both India and Pakistan's militaries hold a stake in Kashmir, but third-party involvement is strongly discouraged – which affects who is at the negotiation table for any formal de-escalation talks. In terms of diversifying the agenda and those involved in these issues, Conciliation Resource's support to the Track 1.5 Sulah Dialogue process has managed to include retired senior women officials. The women previously held important diplomatic positions and bring a different set of skills and networks to the table. They could be mobilised to promote the role of women involved in less formal dialogues and to facilitate connections between these.[172] There is also scope for the agendas of Track 1.5 and Track II dialogue processes to broach WPS issues, one entry point being confidence building measures such as cross-LoC trade (while active). While there may not be women cross-LoC traders, local female entrepreneurs have been involved at different stages of the trade ecosystem and could provide valuable insights. At the community level, there are opportunities to amplify the voices of women by providing dedicated platforms for engagement. For example, in IaK, Conciliation Resources supports *Samanbal* (women-only dialogue spaces) and, in AJK, Women Peace Circles (WPCs) as dedicated spaces for dialogue.

Potential entry points – *Pakistan–Afghanistan*

USIP highlights an opportunity to involve Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line for trust building, recognising their shared language and culture. Involving influential Pashtun representatives with ties to mainstream political parties and security agencies initially would reduce concerns from Pakistan's side of Pashtun nationalism, while leveraging cross-border ties and paving the way for the voices of

172 The Chao dialogue – a Track II process that focuses on wider bilateral issues supported by Saferworld – does have 23 per cent of women participating; see Saferworld (2021), 'Women's voices in regional dialogues: A case study of South Asia', July, p 12.

women Pashtun activists in tribal areas to be included in dialogues. Recognising the precarious position of women activists and peacebuilders in Afghanistan and those continuing to operate at high risk in Pakistan, programmatic interventions could also seek to foster mentoring and solidarity between these groups, including those currently in the diaspora. This could help to enhance local capacities for conflict prevention and resolution, potentially addressing some of the push factors driving dangerous migration routes for certain groups, while creating bottom-up pressure for more inclusive approaches at a time when national engagement is not feasible.

3

Climate change

Climate-related issues emerge as a clear transnational security threat between India and Pakistan, as well as an area of mutual interest. Although this presents a timely and potentially less 'contentious' entry point for de-escalating regional tensions,[173] climate issues are becoming an increasing driver of hostility, dominated by male narratives on both sides as seen through militarised threats and assertion of power. Although the gendered vulnerabilities and impacts of climate stress are clear (for example, women are more exposed to air pollution and more deeply affected by water shortages), there is less evidence on how gendered coping mechanisms (both among communities and decision-makers) drive conflict. Women's involvement in climate-related dialogue also remains largely absent.

Potential entry points – *India–Pakistan*

There is a need for primary research into how gender norms, power dynamics and structures exacerbate climate stress, how these interplay with conflict dynamics at the cross-regional level, and how cross-border environmental patterns and resource management are affecting groups differently. This would help to inform *what* climate-specific issues to build into CSSF dialogues, *how* to approach this and *who* to target. Initial entry points for dialogue and cooperation could include a focus on a shared issue such as air pollution between the two Punjabs as a CBM.[174] Wherever possible, dialogues should be used to increase community engagement on watershed management projects and controlling pollution of water bodies and streams, especially in the Upper Indus Basin region. There are diverse groups, including young women and men, who are already advocating on the aforementioned climate issues in both countries and who could be mobilised as part of CSSF dialogues.[175] Initiatives such as the Emerging Leaders Forum (instituted in 2018 alongside the Chao Track dialogues) could also provide an opportunity for increased involvement of young men and women on topics such as climate change and water management on the side-lines of Track II dialogue platforms.[176]

Cyber security: Although limited, there is emerging evidence of digital platforms, fake news and social media being used to target specific groups from a gender perspective (e.g., LGBTQI+ or women politicians) or to drive hostile masculine aggression and rumour-spreading between states. This would benefit from further research and analysis if relevant to CSSF interests.

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173 Examples of bilateral talks in 2012 following deadly avalanches in the Himalayas also highlight potential for further cooperation on cross-border environmental issues; see Yamin S (2012), 'How a glacier could thaw dangerous India and Pakistan freeze', 25 April.

174 InterMediate and Conciliation Resources, in partnership with peacebuilding and environmental policy organisations in India and Pakistan, are supporting the set up of a platform for environmental collaboration across the Punjab border. This initiative was launched in the margins of CoP 26 in November 2021 and focuses on the environmental crisis affecting the Punjab region in terms of agricultural practices and air pollution.

175 India is known for a strong green environmentalist movement, which is now being taken up by young activists (here).

176 Saferworld (2021), 'Women's voices in regional dialogues: A case study of South Asia', July, p 8.