

**FROM VIOLENT VICTIMS TO EMANCIPATORY AGENCY OF PEACE:
EXPLORING FEMALE JIRGA AS LOCAL GENDERED PEACE
FORMATION AND COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDING IN KHYBER
PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN^{© Σ}**

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ABSTRACT

For years, the insecurity and violence against women in many parts of Pakistan have magnified the danger of the prevalent worldview of strong and protective men. In contrast, women are weak and protected by men. Inevitable victimisation and powerless women are counterproductive since women are central to the community's household institution. This paper explores local community peacebuilding initiatives of women's first Jirga by a local activist Tabassum Adnan in Pakistan's Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Exploring women's Jirga as an agency of regional and gendered peace formation in a salient patriarchal Pakhtun worldview underscores women's security and gendered Peace perspective in recognising the need to consider the missing systemic and unpeaceful change and transformation in contemporary Pakistan and South Asia. Adopting qualitative methods of Feminist Peace research unravels the potential and pitfalls of how women can embark upon alternative dispute resolutions (ADR) when patriarchal conceptualisations of conflict resolution prevent their active participation. Findings show multidimensional links between local community peace and global systemic and peaceful transformation of international relations (IR). Recognising the transformative roles of women in overcoming GBV is a critical transnational shift from the past and minimal human rights protection of women to the present and maximal recognition of women as emancipatory agents of peace.

Keywords: First's female Jirga and Tabassum Adnan, peace formation and peacebuilding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, gendered peace, CEDAW and UN Resolution 1325, contemporary dynamics of peace and conflict in Pakistan and South Asia

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**DARIPADA MANGSA KEGANASAN KEPADA EJEN EMANSIPASI
KEAMANAN: MENEROKA JIRGA WANITA PERTAMA SEBAGAI FORMASI
KEAMANAN GENDER SETEMPAT DAN PEMBINAAN KEAMANAN
KOMUNITI DI KHYBER PAKHTUNKWA, PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRAK

Bertahun-tahun, ketidakselamatan dan keganasan wanita di beberapa bahagian Pakistan meningkatkan bahaya pandangan lazim bahawa lelaki itu kuat dan menjadi pelindung. Wanita pula adalah lemah dan hanya boleh dilindungi oleh lelaki. Penganiayaan yang berlaku dan wanita yang tidak berkuasa adalah tidak produktif kerana wanita adalah pusat kepada institusi rumah tangga masyarakat. Kertas kerja ini meneroka inisiatif pembinaan keamanan komuniti tempatan Jirga wanita pertama oleh aktivis tempatan Tabassum Adnan di Wilayah Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Menerokai Jirga wanita sebagai satu agensi keamanan tempatan dan pembinaan keamanan berasaskan gender dalam pandangan dunia patriarki Pakhtun yang menonjol, telah menegaskan perspektif keselamatan wanita dan perspektif keamanan gender dalam menyedari untuk mempertimbangkan perubahan dan transformasi sistemik yang tiada di Pakistan dan Asia Selatan kontemporari. Menggunapakai metod kualitatif penyelidikan Keamanan Feminisme membongkar potensi dan keterbatasan bagaimana seorang wanita boleh mengendalikan penyelesaian pertikaian alternatif (ADR) ketika konsep partiaki mengenai penyelesaian konflik mengekang partisipati aktif mereka. Penemuan menunjukkan hubungan multidimensi antara keamanan komuniti setempat dan transformasi sistemik dan keamanan dalam hubungan antarabangsa. Mengiktiraf peranan transformasi wanita bagi menangani keganasan berasaskan gender (GBV) adalah titik perubahan transnasional kritikal daripada perlindungan hak asasi manusia secara minima pada masa lalu kepada pengiktirafan maksima wanita semasa selaku ejen emansipasi keamanan

Kata Kunci: *Jirga wanita pertama dan Tabassum Adnan, formasi dan pembinaan kamanan, penjagaan keamaan di wilayah Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, keamanan gender, CEDAW dan Resolusi 1325, dinamika kontemporari keamanan dan konflik di Pakistan, Asia Selatan CEDAW and UN Resolution 1325, contemporary dynamics of peace and conflict in Pakistan dan Asia Selatan.*

Introduction

Casualties of women's security in Pakistan have magnified the plausible reality of extreme misogynistic in South Asia (Chinkin and Charlesworth 2006). Despite the pandemic and lockdown, a Ministry of Human rights spokesperson in October 2022 revealed over 60,000 cases of women violence recorded over the last three years alone (Ahmed 2022). Towards the end of 2022, apart from Punjab Sind provinces, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa made the World Bank report for the highest grave breaches in gendered based-violence (GBV) and multidimensional women abuse in Pakistan (Hussain 2022). The salient patriarchal assumption of a strong and protective man, while a weak woman could rely on men to be protected (Behera 2018), can no longer be accepted. If women are a principal object of sexual crime and violation, how do we explore their potential as emancipatory agents of peaceful change and localised gendered peace actors? Furthermore, the cultural and religious peculiarity of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is ambiguously complex. Understanding them from peace formation and local peace perspective is very pivotal (see Burn and Aspeslagh 2014).

Given the increasing multi-layered debate between former human rights dimensions of protection discourse by the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and expanding gender dimensions of women empowerment roles in peacebuilding by the UN Resolution 1325 of WPS (UNW 2015; UNSC 2022), global women security commentators call for an immediate prerequisite to illuminate over complex nexus and nemesis of tradition, sexual subjugation and normalisation of violence masked by religious and cultural distortions (Mullaly 2011; Smith 2021; Tryggestad 2009). This article explores local community peacebuilding initiatives of women's first Jirga in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by a local activist Tabassum Adnan (Khwendo 2022). It illustrates how women could potentially embark upon conflict resolutions in the wake of prevalent hurdles to their participation. It is argued that recognising the current role of women in such struggles is also needed in the patriarchal Pashtun worldviews in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Azim 2022; Khan 2006). The increasing and prominence discourse of GBV or women insecurity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not only part of the country's conflict, security, development, and peace encounters but also a persistent inequality crisis in the foreseeable modernity transitions of many emerging societies (Krampe and Swain 2016; Ginty 2015; Gizelis 2011). Adopting qualitative methods of informal conversations and Gender Peace research instruments of unstructured interviews with former survivors of GBV during the recent pandemic predicament of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, findings show multidimensional links between peace formation and community empowerment to overcome GBV (Walensteen 2011).

Subsequent discussions began with brief literature on WPS issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, women in Pashtun worldviews of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and neotraditional institution, a male-dominated Jirga as controversial and outlawed indigenised or alternative conflict resolution. The second part of the discussion operationalised theoretical assumptions of Oliver Richmond's peace formation

discourse on considerations of Women's First Jirga in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by a local activist Tabassum Adnan. Retrospective Critical Peace and Security readings of these women peace activists contemplated contemporary peace dynamics, gender security and women violence in Pakistan and South Asia (Jafree 2018, Janice *et al.* 2013). Finally, findings from local community peace of Tabassum's works on women Jirga provide grounded theoretical refines of everyday peace (Howe 2020) and multidimensional dimensions of women's security in Pakistan, South Asia, further bringing the interplay of global CEDAW and WPS discourses of Feminist perspectives in International Relations (IR).

Literature Review

Women Insecurity and Legal Framework Protection Failure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan

Pakistan is ranked 151st (out of 153) in the 2020 Global Gender Gap and other global matrixes in the human development index and human security ranking for peace, security, and safest countries in the world (see Hussain 2022). For years, exhaustive literature on women's insecurity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province alone reported horrific violence against women (Bhattacharya 2014; Gopinath and Manchanda 2019). The literature also elucidates the multidimensional of these unspeakable moments of horror. They include intimate partner violence (IPV) by the spouse (Nadeem and Irfan 2019), underage girl kidnapping and murder (Quresh *et al.* 2021), persistent honour killing and forced marriages (Sajid *et al.* 2010), surged numbers of wife and girl-to-death gang-rapes in broad daylight and the presence of their helpless husbands and parents (Thanvi 2018 Shah 2016). Thus, GBV and women's security is multidimensional in Pakistan, and analytical distinctions between the unique peculiarity of women abuse at the local and provincial level and more national gendered types of discrimination are essential (see also Waseem 2022). Meenakshi and Manchanda (2019) caution over the distinction between invisibility and protagonist aspects of women violence and victims are crucial because the former illuminates the complex entanglement of unique and more dangerous provincial customary views and pressures for victims to reconcile with controversial beliefs of normal and acceptable tenets of society. In short, decades of colonialism and contested postcolonial narratives of long *duree* of national and regional South Asian conflicted political project of nation-building, the politicisation of religious extremism and Cold War tensions and insecurity lingered with present and post-Cold War's intra-national and local tensions (Waseem 2022; Paul 2015; Qayyum 2018). The transition to post-Cold War and transnational Pakistan resurfaced and entangled unabated civil-military conflict with non-traditional securitisation of the present-day country; as such Human security is a central projection of the WPS and militarisation of existing prejudice, even during vulnerable conditions of the pandemic (Yousaf and FurrkhZad 2020; Yousaf and Ponchian 2019; Weis 2018).

Despite national health data showing more men than women died from the coronavirus, it was not overestimated when Jafari (2021) pointed out the gendered

pandemic of covid in many cities in South Asia. During the pandemic lockdown, women are more vulnerable to being exploited. Given the existing gendered injustice of pre-covid against women amplified, survivors of GBV excessively bear more household burdens in bracing the vulnerable livelihood during the endemic transition and expected new norms (Gul and Fayaz 2022). Thus, it is nearly unspeakable, bizarrely gruesome crimes against women happened. On the night before the Eid Ul-Adha of July 2021, in the elite locality of Islamabad, a 27-years old female hostage was earlier kidnapped, tortured, raped, and decapitated by a famous local tycoon's son (Kirmani 2021). These known cases are the tip of the iceberg since many unreported and widespread GBV cases are systematically subject to unresolved, where perpetrators remain unpunished and victims reluctant to report (Ismail Khan 2018). It is ferociously bizarre for the twenty-first century of inhumane versions of present-day women violence in Islamabad can be easily treated as isolated and disconnected from numerous infamous historical women victimisations during Pakistan's War of Independence, partition and military clashes with former East Pakistan and India (Chatterjee and Maitra 2021; Chatterji 2021).

Consequent to national GBV patterns, attempting to explain and understand the constant surge in women as an object of sexual abuse and peculiar casualties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa seems more challenging and uniquely tricky to research (Saeed and Gabrielle 2019). Women abuse has become a taboo peace and conflict debate in the prevalent conservative and religious Pashtun-dominated populations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Saif 2022; Noreen *et al.* 2022). While many seem reluctant to engage the GBV perspective or would instead express their uncomfortable associations with the discourse of WPS (see also Mio *et al.* 2021), it will be inevitable to wonder if the Pakistani government failed its women and how and why Pakistani women still survive (Sukhera 2021).

Further ironic, Pakistan is a party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Ali Khan 2010). In the maxims of one Pakistani founding father, Quaid-e-Azam, "no nation could ever be worthy of its existence that could not take its women along with the men and no struggle could ever succeed without women participating side by side with men." (Ahmed 2017, 15). As such, explaining the "sharp rise in violence against women," (Abbasi 2022), "relatively peaceful" Pashtun-populated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa does not seem to make sense (Asef 2018), exceptionally compared to another notorious conflict zone of Taliban-ruled in Afghanistan and the "rape capital of the world" in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Cassidy 2018).

As argued by Siddique (2013), despite civil society pressures and protests for legal reforms and better protection of GBV victims and women's rights, guaranteed bill of rights and equality by provisional within the 1973 Federal Constitution, recent legal crusades and judicial activism suffered from the politicisation of legal protection of women by various influential local and national religious actors (Gul 2018; Brewer 2021). Despite the robust development of a national and provincial legal system in many areas of property rights, sexual harassment, family laws and penal codes (Barkey *at al.*

2021; Abbasi 2022), at the heart of impunity and politicisation of Islamic discourse in national identity and distortions of immemorial and contested functions of present-day Jirga in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resonate a debate over intrinsic and construction of a culture of peace and violence within the worldview of Pakhtun (AI 1999; Ataullahjan et al. 2022; Ahmed, 1980; Anderlini 2007).

Pakhtun Worldviews of Women in Different Times and Space

Contending narratives of conflict, security and crisis in Pakistan is complex and multidimensional, national or local (Basrur and Estarada 2022). To begin, an inquiry into explaining the underlying definitions and characteristics of the provincial level of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or the national level of Pakistan as a conflict-prone society is also tricky (see also Waseem 2022). Compared to other fragile societies and constant states of chaos and anarchy. However, contemporary Pakistan confirmed the geopolitical placement and local contextualization of state-society relations within South Asia's multi-layered and spatiotemporal peace and conflict (Ruhland 2019). A careful analytical distinction between conflict and peace experiences by different individuals is required, even within a single province (Avruch 1998).

To begin with an inquiry into the interlinked between culture and conflict and patriarchal aspects of ancient Pashtun's Jirga in the present-day context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, we must dissect the worldview of modern-day Pakhtun (Bari 2014). In short, what formed as similarities and constituted differences between modern-day Afghanistan's Pashtun society and the specific focus of Pakhtun people within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan must be recognized (Boege 2021). Explicit and implicit Pakistan and particularly in large areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tribal districts suffered from discontinuity and renewed conflict challenges (Ahmed and Yousaf 2022). Multiple layers, causals, and consequences of conflicts over land, money and honour have been one of many features of social life in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Tribal districts or, for that matter, the Pakhtun society, the dominant ethnolinguistic group residing in the area (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2016). However, constructing a sweeping blanket of narcissistic views of Pakhtun as a society and tradition encouraging violence against women is dangerous.

Nevertheless, the social structure of the Pakhtun society is fundamentally tribal, ultra-conservative and, most importantly, patriarchal (Ahmed 1980). The ultra-conservativeness and general likeness for maintaining the status quo among the members of the society and resistance to change and thus its inability to adapt to the changing World has resulted in the emergence of complex conflicts in that society. The most important is the extremism and terrorism perpetrated by particular groups in the name of Islam (Ahmed 2017). Apart from that, the traditional conflict over land, money and domestic affairs have also got convoluted due to the increasing complexity of society in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tribal Districts (Ahmed and Yousaff 2022). An essential aspect of the conflicts in the Pashtun society is the extremely marginalized role of women members (El Bushra 2000). In this society, women have largely been confined to domestic affairs or rearing children and taking care of the needs of food and

clothing of the men of the family. The powerlessness of women over their own lives and families has significantly contributed to societal conflicts (Gizelis 2011).

The higher number of illiteracy and marginality of half of the members of society has seriously affected its functionality (Gopinath and Manchanda 2019). The conflicts arising from the Pakhtun society have become so huge that they have assumed regional and international character, as is evident from the emergence of the so-called Taliban groups there (Pashtun's Afghanistan) and the region becoming host to international militant groups like Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban (Hamber *at el.* 2006). Consequently, while operating out of the Pakhtun regions of (Swat Valley) Pakistan together, some of these radical groups have unleashed an unprecedented wave of terrorism in Pakistan (Jordan 2003; Maley 2018). This wave has already killed nearly 45000 people, mainly in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tribal Districts, and has inflicted economic damages to the tune of a mind-boggling US\$ 100 billion. The local and international extremist and terrorist groups have also got hold of significant chunks of territory in the Tribal Districts and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which has given rise to a profoundly complex conflict situation. These groups' presence and activities have earned them both admirers and antagonists, which has polarized society (Khan 2006). In addition, the presence of these groups has transformed the nature of traditional conflicts in Pakhtun society. As the women members of Pakhtun society, as mentioned above, have had an extremely marginalized role in the male-domineered society, they have little, if any, role in creating these conflicts (La Rey *at el.* 2006). They have been silent spectators in this whole situation; however, they are the ones who have suffered the most due to the killings of their male family members and their large-scale displacement due to the insurgency of Taliban and Al-Qaeda and the consequent military operations in Afghanistan.

As mentioned by Lederach (2010); Francis (2015) and LeBaron (2003), peacebuilding and peace formation process cannot be segregated from the prevalent socio-political and cultural context. The patriarchal structure of Pashtun society is reluctant to provide a small role to women in socio-political affairs. A woman's participation in the public sphere is looked down upon and is considered a matter of shame and humiliation for the family. Hence, local traditions do not cater to women's active participation in peacebuilding. Similarly, the state needs to show more interest in providing opportunities for women to access the state's institutions/resources (Severine 2014). That is why women are marginalized, and we see them absent from peacebuilding discourses. The history of Pakhtun in different time and space recognize more egalitarian and flexible Pashtun's ancient and precolonial period in social mobility and women as a leader at different levels. A disagreement between local and international scholars over this subject will be beyond the scope of this paper.

However, suffice to highlight the present contested of patriarchal solid conceptual limits of women's space and autonomy are part and product of colonial and post-colonial dispossession of the people with repeated clashes with multiple battles, encounters of inter- and intra-despotic political actors and resulted in more rigid, conservative, and exploitative of limited women roles in the society (Trujillo *et al.* 2008). This is well

expressed in the locally famous but controversial says of "*Khaza ya da kor da ya da ger da*", in which women are confined to preordained private space of household and graveyard (Terchek 2011). Understanding these historical distortions is vital since it provides a complex and challenging space for women to be empowered in the male-dominated features and dictated decisions of neo-institutional functions of Jirga as an indigenous form of conflict resolution mechanism.

Now we turn toward Jirga's traditional conflict resolution mechanism, the prevalence of Pashtun culture, and the role of women in these processes. It can be argued that Pashtun culture maintains peace and resolves conflicts through cultural institutions and practices such as Jirga, *nanawatay*, and *Swara* (linguistic and name mutations are varied and depend upon the provinces of Pakistan). These practices are part of the Pashtun traditional code of life called *Pashtunwali*. It is like an unwritten constitution for Pashtun communities, guiding people in overall socio-economic and political matters. These elements have been critically examined from a gendered perspective to highlight that these traditional institutions and practices of Pashtun culture are biased against women, especially in the peacebuilding process.

From Male-Only Traditional Jirga to Women's First Jirga

This section begins with a brief explanation of the Pashtun ideal of peace and the traditional exclusion of women from indigenous traditions of the peace process. Accordingly, Jirga is essential for indigenous conflict resolution in Pashtun society (Yousaf and FurrukhZad 2020). It has been considered a useful traditional instrument for resolving Intra/inter-communal disputes (Yousaf and Ponchian 2019). In a broader sense, it is synonymous with parliament, court, and the police, which may take essential decisions relating to community affairs, resolving conflicts between persons and tribes, sustaining peace, and implementing decisions through various social sanctions (Wardak 2002). It consists of elders, "*speengiri masher*" (white-beard elders), who are culturally empowered to negotiate between the conflicting parties. It is often believed that Jirga is egalitarian, giving space to the whole community for participation/contributions; however, it is highly patriarchal, and only a few older men can be its members (Zaman *et al.* 2018).

Jirga uses various indigenous mechanisms for the resolution of conflict and to resume a peaceful environment in society (Marcoux 2010). These mechanisms have now become essential rituals like *nanawatay* and *Swara*. *Nanawatay* means "entering [the house of the offended party]" (Jat 2015, 14-15). *Nanawatay* is a procession (including members of the guilty party, *jirga mascaras* and some tribal leaders, along with a sheep to be slaughtered at the opponent's house) that goes to the opponent's place to ask forgiveness (Gul and Fayaz 2022). Sometimes women accompany the *nanawatay* procession, as taking women to the opponent's place shows extreme submissiveness (Noreen *at al.* 2022). However, the women being used as a commodity/tool are not given the acknowledged role in *nanawatay*. Another custom where women play a direct role in ending the conflict between two opposing parties is called "*pessa*", meaning dupatta/shawl of women. Women put their veil/shawl/dupatta on the feet of the

opposing party and ask for forgiveness for the males who have done some harm to them (opponents) (Mai 2006). That party must grant forgiveness and end the enmity as a cultural obligation to them. *Swara* is the other method for traditional conflict resolution, where women play a direct role in peacemaking. In order to end up the long-lasting bloodshed activities, a girl is married to one of the offended party members to replace the conflict with peace. The girl given in *Swara* is a sacrifice made by the girl to protect the males of her family, brothers, and father. The above examples of dispute resolution among Pakhtuns demonstrate women's passive yet essential contribution to the peace process. Although most of the time, her sacrifices are taken for granted by the family, the practice of such Pakhtuns customs is only possible with women.

Nevertheless, controversial revivals and present contexts of Jirga, as a neo-traditional institution, support the powerful in many respects; it not only excludes the weaker segments of the society, women and children, from the process of decision-making during jirga proceedings. Thus, women do not enjoy any recognized role in this ADR mechanism. Allowing women in jirga proceedings (or, in other words, in the peacebuilding process) threatens the doctrine of *Pashtunwali* and leaves an impression of biases against women. Several scholars highlight the systematic violation and dispossession of women's embodiment of equal human agency in this traditional conflict resolution (Bibi and Khan 2020; Khan and Nawaz Alla 2020).

Given the past exclusion and violation of women from justice practices of neotraditional Jirga, in May 2013, a local peace activist from Swat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Tabassum Adnan, started her Jirga, which is the first run by women in the history of Pakistan. Together with 25 other female members, they founded *Khwendo Jirga* (Sister's Council) (Kureshi 2013). Since 2014 a child rape case, Tabassum's *Khwendo Jirga* organized a protest (LaBore *et al.* 2022). It later pressured traditional male-dominated Jirga to include Tabassum as part of the Jirga's dispensation of justice where the alleged crime suspect was apprehended (Nitin 2006). Since then, Jirga has become a symbol of everyday resistance and rejection against the traditional denial of women's rights in justice but a spark of many similar local organizations to many women peace activists in Pakistan (*Pakistan Gender News* 2014). At this critical juncture, Tabassum's *Khwendo Jirga* illustrates women's collective solidarity as peace frontliners against social injustice, political exclusion of public institutions and direct assaults against the underlying patriarchal attributes of traditional male Jirga (Zaman *et al.* 2018). Through this micro-level local peace momentum of all females Jirga, the movement symbolized a potent institution of everyday resistance and a "complex dialectic" (Tongeren *et al.* 2005) of victimhood and agency in which nonlinear and nuanced explanation of denied space becomes "enabling space" (Wu 2018) for women negotiated peace (Lee 2021). As such, it will be argued that these emotionally dramatic public performances of politics of motherhood and injustice outcries of Tabassum's *Khwendo Jirga* harness moral power to speak truth against the power and undermine existing prevailing views of normalization of patriarchal violence (Kelly 2021; Lisa 2005).

In such an environment, another step is women Jirga. Although this seems like two contradictory words in a Pakhtun society; however, Tabbasum Adnan has made it a reality. Few women who have surrendered to the patriarchal institution of Jirga have raised their voices for themselves (Haywar and Marshal 2015), and Tabassum is one of them (Ruhland 2019). This daughter of Swat has taken a step toward the recognition of the unseen role of women (Odendaal 2021). She asked for a proper place for women in the regular *Jirga (Qaumi Aman Jirga)* of Swat, but her requests remained unheard but the community elders. So, she formed an all-women jirga consisting of 25 females, the first-ever female-only Jirga in the country (*Dawn: Today's Paper* 2013). The first female Jirga got a mixed response from the community. The traditionalists condemned this step as contradictory to the existing setup (Kureshi, 2013). As reported in daily *Dawn* (2013), the head of the new form of Jirga expressed that it is a step to free women from the prevailing unjust holds of the cultural practices of sacrifices. This act is praised by women supporters who said that this has "created a separate space for themselves which is subversive as it defies the cultural ethos while staying within the cultural metaphor." (Yousaf and FurukhZad 2015, 11). This all-women Jirga has helped various women of Swat getting their due rights and ending the conflict and maintaining peace in Swat. They have also extended their voices from the local area to the national level and urged the need to end terrorism in the country (*Pakistan Gender News*, 2014).

The controversy of the first's woman, Jirga, in 2013 is a defining moment to understand and explore WPS discourse and women's roles as emancipatory agents of peace transformation. Previous literature discussions have also explored the multidimensionality of peace, women's security, and prevailing cultural views of women within the traditional Jirga. While the popular depictions of men significantly contribute to violence and conflicts, the casualties from GBV disproportionately affect all all-types of recognized and unknown gender. Moreover, stereotypical victimization and powerless, vulnerable women are counterproductive since women are central to the community's household institution. Due to socio-culture and political factors, women are entangled in the vicious circle of 'dependence' which mitigates their inclusion in all walks of life (Mohammed 2009). An egalitarian or emancipatory peace can only be materialized if women are given more chances to participate in the local processes (Richmond 2020; Pankhurst 2003). Suppose both men, women and children are often subject to violation and capable of being victimized. In that case, there is overwhelming evidence that gender's powerful argument about unstable binary and fixed gender roles of perpetrators and victims can no longer be rejected (Lee 2015). Contending and exploitative attributes of patriarchal structure in many societies are complex and should not be underestimated in conflict resolution works and capacity-building to overcome structural violence. Within this Tabassum Adnan's *Khwendu Jirga*, we should explore everyday peace transformation from violent victim to agent of emancipatory peace.

Theoretical Explorations: Engendering Peace and Localized: Peace Formation of Women' Jirga

To explore women's first Jirga since 2013, I utilised the distinction between peacebuilding and peace formation from several seminal works of Oliver Richmond (Richmond 2014, 2016, 2021, 2022). This allows peace formation discourse in microlens of community engagement projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Richmond highlights in which IR narrative of war and state making tend to privilege state actor in the international actor (Richmond 2016). Immediate association of state building with the external imposition of liberal peacebuilding is unstable in the long run as the shift toward substantial state order is a form of peace exclusion (Richmond 2014). To value an emancipatory peace which recognises the role of local actors, he distinguished peacebuilding from peace formation, especially given the fluid dynamics of the latter to provide empowerment and ownership space (Richmond 2022). The literature on local ownership needs more discussion over two crucial aspects, whose ownership and ownership of what (Donais 2021).

Only by understanding every day of the local agency and emancipatory peace in Feminist and post-structuralism intellectual strands may we uncover local and peripheral marginalised actor and their resistance to the state hegemony and reluctance to empower (Mortenson 2010). In peace formation discourse, unsymmetrical power relations between actors are being mediated and transformed. As such, what is understood as peace formation or organic formation of peace from below differs from top-down impositions of building or institutionalised rigid peace. In Richmond's view, peace formation provides several creative avenues for transformation and emancipation (Richmond and Ginty 2022).

First, local processes provide context and legitimacy in which the critical agency of the local peace actor determines and negotiates what is deemed as emancipatory peace for the underprivileged community. *Second*, complex positionality and multiple ongoing attempts to adopt non-violence strategies to resist oppressive structures that support violence. *Third*, contextualised networked agency in support of a progressive form of self-determination and in fighting oppression, *fourth*, assemblage transnational layered and transverse peace discourse beyond binary rigidity of western and non-western, external, and internal dimensions and formal and informal aspects of peace, and finally, peace formation actors emerged from direct resistance and quiet or undetected perseverance when dealing with dangerous, robust structure in which careful peace work avoids risk and cost from the peace spoiler and benefactors of injustice, impunity, oppressive and despotic corrupted political actors. To further examine peace formation agency, Richmond (2021, 593) draws four analytical and critical questions:

- a) Who is the local agency of peace formation, and how do they envision meaningful peace?
- b) Can the marginal presence of peace formation actors and dynamics mitigate and neutralise the continued or renewed cycle of violence?

- c) What is the subaltern critiqued oppressive dominant views and structures of the tyranny of liberal peace?
- d) Does local peace formation action modify existing prevailing oppressive and injustice? Do they accentuate their alternative paradigm of emancipation of peace and justice?

Richmond, also illustrate four plausible scenarios or outcome of peace formation strategy:

- a) They survive within the informal power shadow and away from the powerful actor,
- b) They moved and became mainstream and national agenda, even supporting liberal peace agenda that benefitted the underprivileged and marginalised actor,
- c) They only select positive benefits from the liberal peace that empower and support their operation or presence,
- d) They build alternate parallel or hybrid dimensions in which they may have some stake, and negotiations with them are unavoidable.

Findings and Discussions

From Victim to Localised Gendered Peace Formation

Informal discussions and unstructured interviews with anonymous participants of victim-survivors and those who have participated with women's Jirga the following key themes:

- a) Before 2013, all jirgas were dominated by men and women were excluded. Given that most cases involved are family disputes, property inheritance and land ownership, and there is a sense of optimistic hope where those appeared felt as part of the justice and mediation process (Group Discussion One, May 29, 2015),
- b) Women's decision-making status and authority at Jirga are against the local norms, and females must rely on their male representatives if they wish to seek justice at traditional male-dominated Jirga. Underlying this structural injustice encourage more women and survivor of violence to seek to explore alternative avenues of women's Jirga (Group Discussion Three, June 5, 2015),
- c) The entire existence operation and dispute arbitration of Jirga are against women and at the exclusion of women. In return, alternative strategy and discourse of women's Jirga represent women's symbol of rejection upon GBV and women abuse (Group Discussion Two, May 29, 2015),

- d) Tabassum, the founder of women's Jirga, is a victim of domestic violence, abuse, and divorce. Her dedication to championing women's rights and seeking to mediate a better space for women inspired many other victims to be part of the movement, (Group Discussion Four, August July, 2016)
- e) While the existing male Jirga and newly created women's Jirga is considered customary and traditional institution, the tendencies of many to avoid lengthy process and the cost of official justice have brought many to explore popular Jirga. The institution provides legal support and empowerment rooms for many unfortunate women (Group Discussion Five, September 12, 2016).
- f) Female Jirga is a critical peace formation agent because they seek to empower and transform women beyond perceiving them as victims and incapable of contributing justice.

'Peace Committees' and Women Empowerment

People who participated in the Women Jirga felt they were allowed to be part of the peace and justice decision-making process. Eventually, some of these former victims transformed their passive role as a victim and became a beacon for social justice and gender equality; several formal and informal education process helps many women to understand better their avenues when dealing with injustice. Though eventually, many similar traditional males-dominated Jirga or swaraj was outlawed by different provincial governments, females' Jirga continued to adapt and become a forum for many local women to share and promote awareness about women's health and hygiene issues. Through female jirga activism, many operations of traditional jirgas were considered unconstitutional and sparked discussions of many pressures. However, some small numbers of various village levels jirgas existed.

Broader Reflections of Contemporary Peace and Conflict Dynamics in South Asia

What begins as an observation of women's security and violation at the local level constitutes a compelling reflection of critical juncture and women not only addressing violations but opportunity to become local agents for emancipatory peace and potential exploration of Tabassum's peace activism as her team efforts in speaking the truth against power and transformed her previous passive roles into an active agent of peace formation. Inevitably this gave birth to prospects and investigations upon visualisation and investigations of local marginalised peace agencies to become central active figures in mediating peace and justice. However, the nature of her Jirga functioned more like a forum and embraced egalitarian features of peace and plausible future avenues for researching WPS discourse and UN Resolution 1325 in various forms of everyday peace. As such, researching peace is no longer confined to technocratic expertise and ivory tower scholar-exclusive domain of knowledge production. As such, Tabassum activism and women jirga though limited, permit what Rangadang (2021) recently coined as an impermeable knowledge-making space.

Secondly, the local level of gendered views of conflict and women's security at the provincial level raised the fundamental question of overall Pakistan and South Asia placement within the global narrative of peaceful change. As argued by Basrur and Estrada (2022, 681), the present microlens of peace and conflict dynamics at the local level challenge dangerous tacit assumptions of oppressive and disconnected views of peaceful change in the state-centric mainstream of IR literature, especially Neorealism views. In today's controversial views of the region of peace and conflict, generic assessments from a bird's eye view of an international system consider present-day Pakistan more stable and peaceful than Afghanistan or any conflict zones of Africa and Latin America. The legacy of colonial violence and the Cold War hostile environment of post-colonial Pakistan are occupied with more external threats, international and regional levels of proxy warfare, and nuclear-armed races with India. Contemporary Pakistan suffered from the expansions of multidimensional and intra-state local-level conflicts. Hence, while Pakistan is considered to have benefitted from "peaceful change" from a great power transition to a post-Cold War international system, the country does not go through systemic change and meaningful, peaceful transformation. The existing literature on peaceful change discusses the distinction between system and systemic change and peace transition with peaceful transformation. Given limited peaceful change and no genuine peaceful transformation to overcome internal dimensions of problems and humans' security concerns of Pakistan, the characterisation of little peace in Pakistan can be understood in several key attributes:

- a) From former intense regional tensions, present-day Pakistan displayed mixed hostile and accommodative relations with neighbouring states.
- b) Slow appearance in peaceful change, wherein a significantly higher tendency for national and provincial ruling elites to adopt reform and openness, including in GBV, faced resistance from sub-national actors.
- c) Domestic political contentious appeared to be more prominent, and in the extended run capability of the state to address multidimensional human security sources of threats magnified fragile state risk.

Concluding Remarks

Conflict and related issues affect men and women differently (Onyejekwe 2005). Various studies show that the most suffered segment of the conflict-affected is women; however, the peacemaking mechanisms are sometimes discriminatory towards women (Chinkin Charlsdeworth 2006; Cohn *et al.* 2004). The reasons revealed by the paper include the patriarchal hold of Pakhstun society. The peace mechanisms do not include or even do not acknowledge women. At the forefront of violent conflicts, women are often ignored in post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building programs. It was evidence that local peace formations in which women played an important role in peace and security discourse can no longer be dismissed.

The past and limited views of women as an object of victim violations of human rights under CEDAW discourses are now mutated and transformed into WPS discourse and women-empowered roles as part of an emancipative agent of peace transformation (Howe 2020; Onyejekwe 2015). Thus, lessons reflections from women's peace and security at the provincial level have revived the relevance of previous Anne J Tickner's Feminist original reformulation (1988) of Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism (1948), bringing gender and WPS into today's discourse of transformative peaceful transformation can no longer be dismissed by parochial Neorealism views of IR.

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