Chapter I

Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction:
Theoretical Framework

In most post-conflict societies, women comprise more than 50 percent of the population and are actively engaged in peace building activities while addressing the basic survival needs of their families and communities. Women are often portrayed as passive victims, and little regard is given to their potential roles in fostering development and nation-building. Within the post-conflict security context, women participate not only as victims and combatants but also as protectors and peacemakers—all difficult and complex roles that deserve our attention. In October 2000, for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council acknowledged that women have a key role in promoting international stability by passing Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. The resolution called on all parties to ensure women’s participation in peace processes, from the prevention of conflict to negotiations and postwar reconstruction. The Women Waging Peace Policy Commission was established to examine peace processes with a particular focus on the contributions of women.

While researchers emphasize the role of women in post-conflict areas in terms of economic development, they often ignore the role of women in setting priorities, developing policies, allocating budgets, strengthening legal framework and reforming security sector. In any post-conflict situation, the main aim is to prevent the renewed outbreak of violence and to set the foundation for a stable society with a lowered

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2 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted unanimously on October 31, 2000, after recalling resolutions 1261 (1999), 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1314 (2000), the Council called for the adoption of a gender perspective that included the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. It was the first formal and legal document from the United Nations Security Council that required parties in a conflict to respect women’s rights and to support their participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction.
propensity for war. Unfortunately, the goal of preventing renewed violence often overshadows important ingredients such as gender mainstreaming. This has led to tensions between civil-society actors, including advocates of women’s interests, and the architects and implementers of the reconstruction efforts. Yet in the case of Afghanistan, women’s empowerment became a central feature of the policies of the US, UN, World Bank, and other international stakeholders.

Recognizing the importance of women as subjects and participants in the development process, this study analyzes gender dynamics and social change in post-Taliban Afghanistan with specific reference from 2001-2010. Moral sentiment argues that a post-conflict society must respect the human rights of women, even if that respect comes at a cost. Any policy operating on that assumption—which has far-reaching consequences—must be evidence-based or it can be considered only as highly irresponsible. In fact, the available empirical evidence points to an opposite conclusion: those societies placed on the path of equity and the rule of law is more peaceful and more prosperous, and the status of women is not merely a litmus test, but also an active agent in bringing about such an outcome. This is true in the case of Afghanistan. Hence one of the theme of the study is to better understand women and security during reconstruction and nation-building missions, highlighting recent examples from Afghanistan. It asks three questions: How has the security environment impacted women in Afghanistan? How have women impacted the security environment there? And how can the security situation be improved for women and for the country more broadly?

Like research on post-conflict nation-building in general, the study has been hampered by...
the lack of availability of data, particularly on the role of Afghan women in reconstruction processes during post-Taliban era. A significant body of literature specifically addresses the issue of women with regard to conflict and nation-building—however much of that literature is declamatory rather than analytic, originating with advocacy groups, consisting of assertions of the importance of gender and the potential beneficial role of women as a pacifying force in international relations. However, there are important exceptions, as will be seen. While the study found that the data on women and reconstruction process to be limited in general, data showing a correlation between a policy of gender equity and stabilization are non-existent. The preparatory work for the study also revealed that descriptive and analytical studies are still scarce, fragmented and unfortunately shows a remarkable lack of coherent conceptual frameworks.

Hence, apart from studying available primary sources, a field trip to Kabul, followed by three periodical online surveys (with women Parliamentarians, NGO officials, government officials, academics and students) was undertaken. The field visit in October 2007 offered sufficient substantive information to allow for preliminary observation on a number of levels and for several reconstruction sectors. Through the data collected via periodical online surveys, this study has been able to derive at least some preliminary markers on this evolving topic. The findings indicate that greater stability and improved outcomes would likely result from a shift in the usual emphasis of post-conflict reconstruction processes. This shift involves three elements: First, security must be understood and implemented more consistently with the concept of gender security. Second, governance should be placed on a foundation of gender equity and consistent rule of law from the start of the reconstruction processes. Third, women must be included even in the earliest phases of political, economic and legal reconstruction.

While many studies show that conflict occurs with the involvement or acquiescence of women, several new studies portray women as a principal driving force in peace
Women generally show a keen interest in peace processes. However, the *rituals* of peace often preclude their full participation. When peace negotiations and rebuilding destroyed economies become formal exercises, women fade into the background. Other peace activities by women, such as reviving economies and rebuilding social networks, are seen as peripheral to the formal mechanisms, and have received little recognition. The literature on women’s participation in conflict resolution and peace processes takes two approaches – Hill approach and Root approach. The Hill approach focuses on their representation and participation at high political levels and in decision-making mechanisms for conflict resolution. The Root approach is a disparate collection on women’s grass-roots peacemaking initiatives. The first approach includes the ongoing debates in international agencies. These discussions of women’s participation in decision-making about war and peace predate recent discussions of their role in post conflict reconstruction (Camille 2006). Calls to involve women in matters of war and peace began seriously in the 1980s. However, a review of these strategies in 2005 concluded that women were no more prominent in decision making about conflict than they had been in the past. This appraisal recommends that, “... the United Nations and the international non governmental organizations [NGOs] ... continue to monitor and support women’s increased involvement in peace processes” (UNIFEM 2005).

Recommendation XX from the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement

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15 Ibid.,
of Women further states that: "Governments should be encouraged to increase the participation of women in the peace process at the decision-making level, including them as part of delegations to negotiate international agreements relating to peace and disarmament, and establishing a target for the number of women participating in such delegations (UNIFEM, 2005)."

Since the early 1990s there has been a flourishing literature on gender, war, violent conflict, and reconstruction (Jacobs et al, 2000; Benjamin and Fancy, 1998, Turshen and Twagiramariya, 1998, Lentin, 1997; Bennett et al, 1995; Wallace, 1993). Moser (2001), in particular, provide a comprehensive global understanding of the complex gender issues in armed conflict and political violence. This study has particularly benefited from Moser and McIlwaine's analysis of gender and social capital (2001), which the authors define as 'the rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity, and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, and ... institutional arrangements that enable its members to achieve their individual and community objectives' (Moser and McIlwaine, 2001; Narayan, 1997). They argue that, in the wake of war and violent conflict, it is essential to reconstruct social capital within communities as well as to intervene to improve economic and physical capital (e.g. infrastructure, employment opportunities, etc.), political infrastructure (formation of state and other institutions), and human capital (education, health, etc.). In the context of Afghanistan, this analysis is

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17 Ibid.
22 Bennett et al O (1995) Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women speak out about conflict, Panos Institute, London
24 Moser C (2001) 'Gender Planning in the Third World: meeting practical and strategic gender needs, World Development, 17(11)
important because, with notable exceptions (for instance, Mertus\textsuperscript{27} 2000; Moghadam\textsuperscript{28} 1994a and 1994b; Wolfe\textsuperscript{29} 1992; Collett\textsuperscript{30} 1996; Langen\textsuperscript{31} 2001; Masuda\textsuperscript{32} 2005), the dominant portrayal of women has shown them as passive victims of war, violence, and political repression, to be liberated only by Western military intervention. Twenty-two years of war and violent conflict has eroded social capital in Afghanistan. However, women organised around gender-related survival strategies and, in the process, became aware of more gender-specific concerns.

The efforts to promote democracy and women's participation in Afghanistan's political development are remarkable given the country's recent history. The level of women's empowerment in Afghanistan varied significantly over the last century, but beginning in the mid-1990s it was abysmal. When the Taliban took control of large swaths of Afghan territory in the mid-1990s, the country had been devastated by more than 15 years of warfare. While in power in Afghanistan, the Taliban became notorious internationally for their treatment of women\textsuperscript{33}. Their stated aim was to create "secure environments where the chasteness and dignity of women may once again be sacrosanct," reportedly based on Pashtunwali beliefs about living in purdah. A government-sponsored religious police force, named the Department for the Preservation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice after a similar institution in Saudi Arabia, publicly beat and flogged Afghan women and girls for displaying any part of their face or ankles, wearing white socks or making noise when they walked, traveling without a male family member, talking to unrelated men, participating in education as a teacher or student, or seeking employment.\textsuperscript{34} While

\begin{itemize}
\item Mertus J A (2000) War's offensive on women, the Humanitarian challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan (Kumarian Press)
\item Langen S (2001) Tea With Taliban, BBC Television
\end{itemize}
abusing and torturing "immoral" women for the slightest perceived violations of rules, the Taliban allowed themselves virtually any liberty, murdering thousands of people, kidnapping women for forced 'marriages', raping countless women, and looting houses and even whole cities.\textsuperscript{35}

Unfortunately, the protests of international agencies carried little weight with Taliban authorities, who gave precedence to their interpretation of Islamic law and did not feel bound by UN codes or human rights laws, legislation it viewed as instruments for Western imperialism. Look at this: After the Taliban takeover of Herat in 1995, the UN had hoped the gender policies would become more 'moderate' as it matured from a popular uprising into a responsible government with linkages to the donor community.\textsuperscript{36} The Taliban refused to bow to international pressure and reacted calmly to aid suspensions. In November 1995, UNICEF suspended all aid to education in regions under Taliban control, as they argued the ban on mixing males and females in education was a breach of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. In 1996, Save The Children (UK) also withdrew support as communication with women, the primary child carers, was most difficult. In 1999, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright publicly stated "We are speaking up on behalf of the women and girls of Afghanistan, who have been victimised...it is criminal and we each have a responsibility to stop it" after the Taliban refused to hand over alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden.

Given this background, it is impracticable to field-test this premise, to separate nation building cases into two parallel scenarios, one in which women are fully included in the peacebuilding and the reconstruction efforts from the start and another in which they are marginalized, with other circumstances being largely comparable. Fortunately, a large and growing body of empirical work addresses the component parts of stabilization and nation-building, enabling us to extrapolate details with some confidence. Nation-building

\textsuperscript{36} United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations/Department of Filed Support-Department of Political Affairs. Joint Guidelines on Enhancing the Role of Women in Post-Conflict Electoral Processes. United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support in cooperation with the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs, October 2007.
requires the establishment of a system of governance, including the ability to maintain order, guarantee the fulfillment of international obligations and human rights, and deliver essential social services. Empirical findings are available for each of the essential components of nation-building. They contain a great deal of information about the role of gender in these processes, even where that issue is not part of the original study design. These studies indicate the following: The conduct of states in their foreign relations tends to mirror their domestic conduct. If the political culture of a country shows earners to dependents who must be supported, but also because women have been found to be significantly more likely to reinvest their earnings in things that benefit the family than men are. In many settings, including women in the labor force has proven to be the one step that lifts families out of the cycle of poverty. The presence of women in institutions such as the police and administrative bureaucracies is associated with decreases in corruption. These findings, combined with the observations from the field visit and surveys, incline to argue for an earlier rather than a later emphasis on the values known to be associated with stable democratic societies governed by the rule of law. Among these, gender equity and women’s inclusion play a central role. At the heart of this issue lies a question that should concern anyone interested in reconstruction processes. The question pertains to the timing, cost, methodology, and mix of the assorted international actions associated with genuine peacebuilding - military interventions to end the conflict, stability operations, peacekeeping operations, state-building, and ‘nation building proper’.

1.1 Women and Reconstruction Efforts: A Brief Survey of Literature

Much of the early academic and policy work done in the area of mediating armed conflict ignored gender and started from the ‘false assumption that peace processes are gender neutral.” The past designs of dispute resolution processes have similarly proceeded –


consciously or unconsciously - from a gender neutral assumption. The gender neutrality of traditional peace processes is also informed by general assumptions that dispute resolution systems are gender neutral in their function and effects - including in mechanisms and arrangements that address non-violent and more mundane conflicts in the domestic sphere. These assumptions of gender neutrality need to be understood and, where appropriate, reassessed for the purposes of reforming current international dispute resolution institutions.

a. Gender and conflict dynamics

The study of war and peace within political science and international relations has contributed to perpetuating the false assumption of gender neutrality in war. First, although the effect of war on gender within society has been broadly explored, the role of gender has been an infrequently examined factor in the causes of war. Second, because most of the wars of the past few decades have been internal conflicts, examinations of the roots of those conflicts have led to systematic exploration of religious, political and ethnic factors, without inquiries behind the apparently gender-neutral lines along which these political, religious and ethnic factions might align. Third, because men, with notable exceptions, generally carry out the military dimension of war, as political and military leaders and as warriors, they are largely viewed as the natural representatives of the parties of interest to a conflict.

These assumptions are beginning to be challenged and tested. Ethnicity, religion and ideology are important factors to understanding both causation of war and lasting solutions to underlying conflicts. However, researchers now recognize that limiting research along these dimensions may mask profound gender issues. At the same time, it is being recognized that feminist theories, which for more than 100 years have posited the perpetuation of patriarchy as the root cause of war, may have brushed over important interactions between gender, ethnicity, religion and ideology that contribute to armed conflict. These helpful critiques within the international relations and feminist literatures are forging the way for more sophisticated understandings of the role of gender in armed conflict.
Consider feminist theories about the outbreak of war. As Jack Levy noted in 1998, feminist theories propose that states, cultures and international organizations among states and cultures are patriarchal, and thus their very structure is a contributing factor to the frequent occurrence of war. However, Levy observed that because peace is more common than war, a theory of patriarchy is unhelpful for understanding why wars occur. Rather than treating patriarchy as a constant, feminist theories might be more helpful if they looked at patterns of war and peace that took into account how culture and gender relations in various political systems interacted in historical situations to provoke or prevent the outbreak of war. 40

An examination of this interaction between political systems, gender equality and armed conflict in a recent study by Mary Caprioli confirms a "gender corollary" to the democratic peace theory. The democratic peace theory, generally accepted by international relations scholars, posits that states at a higher level of democratic development tend not to go to war with one another. The civil war corollary of the democratic peace posits that democracies are also less likely to experience civil war. The gender corollary to the democratic peace argues that, since the level of women's legal, social and political equality is often dependent on a higher level of democracy, societies with higher levels of women's equality are less likely to go to war with one another or experience civil war. Caprioli demonstrated that states with higher levels of gender equality resort less frequently to the use of military action to settle international disputes. Caprioli's empirical examination of internal conflicts between 1960 and 2001 similarly showed a positive correlation between gender inequality within a state and the likelihood that the state will experience intrastate warfare. Together, these studies demonstrate that societies with higher levels of women's equality are less likely to experience either interstate or civil war. The presence of larger numbers of women in political decision-

making affects the content of political outcomes. Given that the majority of wars that have taken place since the end of the Cold War are internal conflicts, the "gender corollary" of democratic peace theory suggests that international legal and political efforts toward achieving women's equality are not only important to improving the lives of women, but that they are central to the project of international peace and security.

b. Women and Nation-Building

There are excellent studies available on the role of women in nation-building exercises. Most of the studies deal about the experiences of women in conflict ridden societies in Europe, Asia and Africa. However there are fewer sources available to discuss about the post-conflict Afghanistan. A case in point is the recent study commissioned by the RAND Corporation titled "Women and Nation-Building". The report examines the role that women have played in the recent reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and its impact on the post-conflict nation. The study suggests that the prime objective of nation-building is to leave behind a society at peace with itself and its neighbors. The RAND project did not initially foresee a gender dimension. However, once the data were compiled, gender emerged as a particularly relevant factor. The fact that strong performance on gender measurements correlates closely with stability may come as a surprise to some. To a certain extent, the correlation between gender development and stability mirrors the relationship between development and stability; indeed, the 2003 GDI (Gender Development Index) correlates with HDI (Human Development Index) at over 0.99%, suggesting the two indices actually capture virtually identical performance measures. In other words, it was not simply a matter of more-developed societies being

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41 Sue Thomas, *The Impact of Women on State Legislative Policies*, 53 J. Politics, 958, 974 (1991). This study examined the relationship between the percentage of women in state legislatures and the policy priorities of those legislatures. In states where women were of higher percentages in the legislature, the women introduced and passed more legislation that dealt with women's issues than women in legislatures that had lower percentages of women. See id. at 973. A study of the Arizona legislature that showed that as the percentage of women in the legislature increased, the number, subject matter and rate of enactment of bills that dealt with women's issues tended to increase. See id. at 961. In legislatures with a high percentage of women, women gave priority to bills dealing with women's issues more than men did, while in legislature with lower percentages of women, women gave lower priority than men, or equal priority to bills dealing with women's issues. See id. at 967. The study also found that at least 10% of the legislature has to be made up of women for women's interests to even make an appearance in the legislation.

42 Benard, Cheryl, Seth G. Jones, Olga Oliker, Cathryn Quantic Thurston, Brooke K. Stearns, Kristen Cordell. 2007. 'Women and Nation-Building', RAND.
more stable and coincidentally characterized by certain advanced societal features, including greater gender equity. Rather, the findings pointed to the conclusion that "gender parity may . . . play a strong and measurable role in the stability of the state," even when separated from another known correlation, that between general societal-development levels and stability. By contrast, a similar correlation was not found between democracy and stability. Full autocracies and full democracies tended to be the most stable; transitional and partial democracies were more likely to be volatile. The study argues that Nation-builders who push with determination for the installation of new democracies but are cautious on issues related to the status of women thus may be approaching matters in the wrong order—at least if stability is their principal aim.

The literature of nationalism and nationalist conflict illustrates gendering process. Nations and nationalism are discussed and formulated in the public sphere, from which women have been excluded, leading to the formation of national identity without women (Julie43, 2003). As a result, writes Roberts, 'issues of the flag' become those of "war, trade and imperial expansion" and women's participation is 'edited out' of nationalism (Lisa44 2007). Yet women are essential to the image of nationalism, becoming a sign or marker of cultural identity, having symbolic value as 'maidens and mothers' (Susan45 2004; Jean46 2000; Pearson et al47 1998). Women are assigned roles in the nationalist project. In effect their bodies are appropriated and utilised for political goals (Cristina48 2001; Niamh49 2007). Cristina and Niahm list the main roles attributed to women as reproducers of the community, reproducers of ethnic boundaries, transmitters of communal

values, markers of ethnic distinctiveness and active participants in war (Fiona\textsuperscript{50} 2002; Pablo de Grieff\textsuperscript{51} 2007). Jacoby illustrates this in the Afghan context, where women are recruited to fight in war, yet are relegated to hearth and home when not in use, referred to as the 'mobilisation-marginalisation' phenomenon (Camille\textsuperscript{52}, 2006). Women are therefore appropriated to the furthering of a national project for which they are absent at the point of formulation.

Women's participation in post-conflict nation-building is an important ingredient in achieving an equitable, peaceful and more prosperous society, according to a study by Thelma Ekiyor (2008)\textsuperscript{53}. While many policymakers and development agencies fear that pursuing a stronger role for women in nation-building “too soon” will lead to instability. Cheryl argues that a society that shows greater concern for the rights of the weaker strata of its society -- including women -- will be less likely to initiate violence, while economic and social development are strongly elevated when women enter the marketplace. Gender equity and women's inclusion play a central role both as a litmus test and as an active variable shaping a more democratic, stabilized and developed society. She also questions whether women's participation in nation-building make a difference to the post-conflict trajectories of very volatile societies. She concludes that when Afghanistan started to embrace a new and expanded public role for women in 2002 after the fall of the Taliban, that effort encountered less pushback than critics expected. Based on this case study and lessons from experiences in other regions, researchers concluded that the goal of establishing stability -- defined as avoiding a renewed outbreak of hostilities -- and the goal of establishing a more equitable society do not contradict one another, as is often feared. However what the book lacks is a role of women in economic development, justice sector development, and legal framework development and to some extent the participation of women in the political processes at the provincial levels.

Another work with special relevance to the issue of women and nation-building has examined the relationship between external bellicosity and domestic gender equality. Not illogically, it appears that the “political culture” of a state is reflected in both its domestic and its international behavior. Thus, countries with repressive, hierarchically stratified social orders are more inclined to show a proclivity toward violence and oppression in their foreign policy: “State domestic culture in both its behavior and underlying values helps predict state international behavior during interstate disputes and crises.” The World Bank in 2003 supported a study\(^{54}\) to test this relationship by examining the 141 states represented in the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) database. It found a robust correlation between domestic gender inequality and external aggression, leading the author to conclude that “gender equality is not merely a matter of social justice but of international security in predicting state aggressiveness internationally.

c. Women and Peacebuilding:
Several initiatives to involve women in conflict resolution followed these recommendations. All of them emphasised the importance of increased sensitivity to the needs and capacities of women in programmes relating to peace building and post conflict reconstruction (UNIFEM,\(^{55}\)2007). UNESCO’s Culture of Peace Programme and UNIFEM’s South Asian Women in Crisis Programme (SAWIC) emerged from developments in the 1990s. While both organisations have projects in countries besieged by conflict, they have yet to establish comprehensive programmes in South Asia\(^{56}\). This limitation means that women’s participation takes place outside comprehensive international frameworks and support mechanisms.

The 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women\(^{57}\) in Beijing, was a

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\(^{57}\) The United Nations convened the Fourth World Conference on Women on 4-15 September 1995 in Beijing, China. The principal themes were the advancement and empowerment of women in relation to women’s human rights, women and poverty, women and decision-making, the girl-child, violence against
watershed for thrusting women to the forefront of peace activities. This conference provided a platform for deliberations on the role of women at two levels. First, it followed up on concerns about increasing decision-making roles of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels. The conference specifically called for including “... a gender perspective in the resolution of armed and other conflicts ... to ensure that bodies are able to address gender issues properly” (UN 58 1995:61). More significantly, this conference provided a rationale for looking beyond high politics to the grassroots level. Participants turned their attention to women’s roles in preventing and resolving conflicts around the world. This conference aimed to involve women in crushing the prevailing logic of war and moving toward a culture of peace. It was a major step in recognizing and legitimating the role of women in conflict resolution and peace making at the grassroots level (UNESCO 59 2000). Since Beijing, women and their participation have received special attention because, it is argued, they represent a vital resource for sustaining peace efforts at all levels. The UNESCO programme is expanding to include participation at the lowest levels in areas afflicted by conflicts. UNIFEM has embarked on programmes that support women’s concrete efforts in peace building, governance, and consolidating international partnerships. UNIFEM also supports documentation and distribution of information about such activities.

Examples of women's organisations engaging in the process of urging, making or building peace are a global phenomenon, a random sample being the International Women's Peace Service (Palestine), Bat Shalom (Israel), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (International), Journee de la Femme et Paix (France), iene za Mir (Former Yugoslavia), Frauen fur den Frieden (Switzerland), Le Tre Ghinee (Italy), Kvinna till Kvinna (Sweden), Osterreichische Frauenfoderation fur Weltfrieden (Austria), Follow the Women (Basque Country) and Association des Femmes pour les Initiatives de... 

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women and other areas of concern. The resulting documents of the Conference are The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This outcome of the Beijing Conference is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. It deals with removing the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.


Paix (Mali). Specific studies of peace movements have highlighted the centrality of women to the concept, such as the Derry Peace Women in Northern Ireland, the Women's Unarmed Uprising Against War in Sweden, the Women's Peace Union in the United States or the Greenham Peace Camp in the United Kingdom (Marianne60 2000; Henry61 2002; Hilary62 2000). There are also specific studies of women in the context of a conflict area, such as Afghanistan, or profiles of individual women taken from a variety of contexts (Babbit et al63, 1998; El Bushra et al64, 1995).

In the international context, examples such as the International Alert programme of 'Gender and Peacebuilding' and the United Nations Development Fund for Women emphasise the essential role of women in projects of peace. Significantly, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 in 2000 to increase the participation of women in all UN field operations and ensure a gender element in all peacebuilding initiatives. Clearly, the association of women with peace is considered strong and is internationally recognised. However, it is not clear whether Resolution 1325 is a product of an acknowledgement of the particular role of women in peacebuilding initiatives or simply an extension of a general policy of gender mainstreaming in UN activities. While it is accepted that international efforts to include women in official peacebuilding processes is addressing an absence, there appears a wider tendency to associate peace movements with women. One explanation of the relationship between women and peace is that women are naturally more peaceful. Women, writes Johann Galtung65, have innate qualities that make them more peace-loving. High in empathy, their characters are horizontal and centripetal, making them more prone to peaceful relationships, combined with the chemical programming of the cyclical and complex oestrogen and high levels of

mono amino oxidase, the chemical responsible for controlling violence.

If conflict generates a restrictive nation for women, there is little wonder that it is women who appear more aligned to peace. The picture of women passively accepting a symbolic role for the benefit of the nation does not sit comfortably with other writers, however. Nor are projects of nationalism universally accepted as being detrimental to women's goals. The national liberation movement in Algeria involved the whole of society and women actively elevated themselves from their subservient position under colonialism, but they were eclipsed after the war was over (Grace 2006). Likewise, the short-lived Saur Revolution in Afghanistan brought about a range of reforms that benefited women (Mogahdam 2009). As Carbonnier explains, nationalism can create opportunities for women to "acquire a more positive and esteemed identity" (Carbonnier 2000). Contrary to the stereotype, writes Sadiqa, women play an active role in combat and, while women suffer in the same way men do, they can also gain from conflict situations (Sadiqa 2003). The evidence is therefore ambiguous. Women are not universally passive and opposed to male-imposed nationalist doctrines, so the apparent dominance of women in peace movements cannot be explained by a blanket assumption about the passive nature of women.

A useful example of the complex relationship between women, conflict and notions of national liberation is provided by studies of the RAWA in Afghanistan. Women were active in paramilitary organisations and cultural practices dividing men and women were subverted by their mutual engagement in political activity, forcing a discourse between women's groups and the more conservative notions of 'women in the family' perpetuated by organisations such as RAWA (Moghadam 2002). In addition, women become

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sustainers of community in times of conflict, suffer disruption of social and economic life and, with children, make up over 80% of refugees (Lisa71 2004). Yet women participate in conflict and men also suffer terribly. If women generally experience conflict disproportionately to men, an affinity with peace is unsurprising. While an aversion to conflict may explain some women’s motivation in the pursuit of peace, this would not provide a universal understanding of the phenomenon. Birgitte72 (1998) claims that due to United Nations’ insistence following the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, Afghan women participated in both of these historic Loya Jirga gatherings. They were nominated as political representatives of their provinces, and there was even one woman, Dr. Masouda Jalal, who ran as the first female candidate ever in the Presidential Democratic Elections in October 2004. However, Afghan women representation is solely lacking in the Shuras, where tribal elders and village leaders discuss and deliberate about important community matters which affect the entire village. Afghan women are denied access and participation in these gatherings.

Astrida73 (2002) observes that the insecurity of Afghan women, discursive and material, also reflects and inflects some rather long-running theoretical debates within feminism. Disputes about the representation of race and class (or lack thereof) in feminist politics, for example, fragmented numerous organizations and movements over the past several decades, just as theoretical debates about difference and essentialism have splintered feminist intellectuals. The case of the U.S. appropriation of Afghan women and the burqa demonstrates the unsustainability of these theoretical divides. The material oppression of women in Afghanistan cannot be reduced to an array of floating signifiers; equally clear, however, is the danger of reducing representations of material conditions to the purported essence of Afghan women. Chandra Mohanty observes, “faulty and inadequate analytic frames engender ineffective political action and strategizing for social transformation”.

Some feminist scholars have used the poststructuralist disarticulation of linguistic

representation from ontological essence to demonstrate both the arbitrariness of various ideas about gender and the role of language in constructing those ideas. Postcolonial feminism has been particularly critical of representations of “third-world women” in Western feminist discourses. Gayatri Spivak argues that, in some of these discourses, “‘woman’ is important, not race, class, and empire”.

Ramsey Donna⁷⁴ (2000) observes that there seems to be considerable agreement that the burqa, the heavy garment that covers the entirety of a woman’s body with only a narrow mesh screen for vision, has become the universal symbol of women’s oppression in Afghanistan. In the context of the Taliban’s harsh imposition of the mandatory burqa for all Afghan women, where the smallest deviation in dress was often met with public violence, such symbolism is easy to understand. It has been well documented that women in Afghanistan have been beaten simply for accidentally letting an inch of skin show. Of course, the Taliban’s overwhelming misogyny neither began nor ended with the imposition of the burqa, and the wide range of oppressive policies that the Taliban inflicted upon women has certainly been discussed in the U.S. news media. Yet in many cases, representations of the burqa have come to stand in for all of the other violence done to Afghan women by an either visual or linguistic synecdoche. According to Jennifer ⁷⁵ (2007), post-9/11 archetypal representations of oppressed burqa-clad women often ignore its utilization by Afghan feminists. The burqa provided an effective cover for smuggling books and supplies to a network of underground schools, cameras for documenting Taliban abuses, and women fleeing persecution. Some feminists have vehemently challenged the idea that these practices can be “empowering”. However, as Mohanty remarks, “[t]o assume that the mere practice of veiling women in a number of Muslim countries indicates the universal oppression of women through sexual segregation not only is analytically reductive, but also proves quite useless when it comes to the elaboration of oppositional political strategy”. The consequences of such analytical reductionism are not merely theoretical; homogenization of Muslim covering practices

partakes in exactly the paternalistic logic that underlies the neocolonial politics of U.S. efforts to “liberate” Afghan women according to an explicitly Western model of liberal feminism.

d. Identity and Construction of Afghan Women:
Afghan women suffered under Pashtunwali and also as victims of decades of war before the rise of the Taliban. In Gender and National Identity, Moghadam describes how the tribal nature of Afghanistan has historically defeated all attempts at social reform, especially reforms concerning the status and education of women. Traditional Afghan people living in the countryside in regions like Kandahar are resistant to and suspicious of outsiders and foreign programs they feel threaten their cultural ideals. It reinforces the fact that the Afghan society is consistent in its attitudes toward the underlying principles of gender. It is the application of these principles that varies from group to group; and there is a wide range of standards set for accepted female behavior, as well as differences in male attitudes toward correct treatment of women. In order to understand the Afghan society, it is essential to first understand Afghan tribalism. There are several customs that have existed relatively unchanged for hundreds of years and all historical attempts at top-down, governmental social reforms have failed partly due to the opposition of powerful tribal rulers (Moghadam “Reform”). Afghan-born political scientist Hamed Madani defines Afghan tribal culture, called ‘Pashtunwali’, as typically referring to the customs of the Pashtun ethnic group blended with conservative interpretations of Islamic law; it is neither fully Muslim nor fully tribal. Some of the basic tenets of which the identity of Afghan women is constructed are mentioned below:

"Women in Afghanistan are discriminated against from birth," says Louis Dupree, in a monograph on the village-town of Aq Kupruk, a peasant tribal society. Nevertheless, according to Dupree, women do manage to achieve positions of social and economic power and indirectly influence local political decisions. Village women usually control

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the sale of home industry products—those produced in the home for sale outside and in urban areas, women often make economic decisions, such as whether or not to rent out a house owned by the family and how much rent to charge. Much of what Louis Dupree wrote about the role of women is generally true today. If anything, circumstances have been made more difficult for women, owing to the accumulated hardships of decades of warfare, four years of drought and the illegal trade in drugs, arms, and other goods. It is important to note women’s status in the family, given the adoption of the new Afghan Constitution on January 4, 2004. Since the 2001 Bonn Accord, Afghanistan's provisional governments had functioned according to the terms of the relatively progressive 1964 Constitution. The place of Islam in the new Constitution is critical for women's status in the family, since Muslim personal law is the area "most vulnerable to hijacking by radical Islamists." 79

In spite of positive provisions in the new Constitution, to be mentioned in Chapter 3 and 4, concern among women's rights and human rights advocates remains over language in the document, which states: "In Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam." 80 This language and another article, leaving matters where there is no specification in the Constitution or law to adjudication by religious laws, may render individual rights, human rights, and women's rights vulnerable to extremist interpretations of Islam. Moreover, the Constitution creates ambiguity by permitting judges to be trained in either civil or Islamic law. Ineluctable Patriarchy Afghan society is characteristically patriarchal (authority lies in hands of the oldest males), patrilineal (inheritance of property and status is through the male line), and patrilocal (women move to the husband's place of residence). Marriage is primarily within the group or village, so a woman is seldom far from her family and is often closely related to her husband 81. The political, social, and financial implications of upper class

urban marriages remain too important to be turned over to the young.\textsuperscript{82}

A recent women's conference in Kabul distributed an appeal that the forced marriage of women be condemned as a criminal offense and that women subjected to forced marriages be granted the status of victims. In a society dominated by warfare under the Taliban, young girls and women faced kidnapping by Taliban fighters. \textsuperscript{83} Islam and Family Laws are an integral part of Afghan culture. Given the pastoral, tribal underpinnings of the country's social structure, norms related to family matters are of special importance. The Qur'an also makes reference to matters of inheritance, child custody, witness testimony, divorce, and adultery as they pertain to women.\textsuperscript{84} The condition of health care in Afghanistan is among the most deplorable in the world.\textsuperscript{85} The situation is even worse for women, for they have tended to be the overlooked patients in Afghanistan. Women also seem to be on the bottom of the list for receiving foreign assistance, as needs such as children's health attract the majority of health aid. According to Dr. Friba Hayathamayum, a maternal and child health-care worker for the World Health Organization (WHO), "Families don't like sending patients to hospital for cultural reasons, and many cannot even afford to pay for transport, so (women) end up giving birth at home with help from relatives.'"

Few authors focus on the strictures of Islam on the role and status of Afghan women. In post-war Afghanistan, Islam remains the primary source of political and social legitimacy. Conservative traditionalist interpretations of Islam place women in an inferior position to men. Proponents of this position use Qur'anic injunctions similar to the following to justify their position: Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that

\textsuperscript{82} Rostami Povey, E. (2001) 'Women's contestations of institutional domain in Iran & Afghanistan', Feminist Review Collective 69 (Winter):44–73.


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{85} A UNIFEM Afghanistan report states that "73.5% of the total violent acts committed against women were perpetrated solely by one person; The most common perpetrators were family members, including intimate partners (82.0%); Physical (30.7%) and psychological (30.1%) violence were committed in equal proportion, and sexual violence represents 25.2% of the violence. The remaining percentage (14%) represents combinations of the three types of violence or unavailable data." See UNIFEM, Uncounted and Discounted: A Secondary Data Research Project on Violence Against Women in Afghanistan, May 2006, p. 2.
God has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have expended of their property. Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret of God's guarding. And those you fear may be rebellious, Admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them. If they then obey you, look not for any way against them -Qur'an, Sura Modernists respond that there is no evidence in the Qur'an to support an inferior status for women. Apologists attempt to reconcile education for women and other progressive ideas with the Qur'an and the Sharia. Some assert that the low status of women is due to prior cultural practices of southern and western Asia and not the result of religion. They point out that the Prophet Muhammad married an older woman, Khadija, an established merchant in the caravan trade between the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent. She bore him four daughters and an unknown number of sons who died in infancy. One daughter, Fatima, married the prophet's cousin, Ali, and constantly accompanied her father and husband during the battles between Mecca and Medina. Aisha, Muhammad's youngest and favorite wife, became politically involved in organizing the opposition to Ali, the fourth caliph and the prophet's son-in-law.

**e. Afghan Women and Taliban:**

The 20th century saw a gradual improvement in the status of women in parts of Afghanistan, primarily Kabul and the other major urban areas. Especially important were the modernizing reforms under Amir Habibullah Khan (1901–1919), who introduced modern education to Kabul; King Amanullah (1919–1929), who attempted to educate women, reform discriminatory marriage practices and free women from the veil; and King Zahir Shah (1933–1973), during the later years of his rule. Led by members of the

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86 Modernists also make historical arguments that undermine traditionalists' claims. For instance, the practices of veiling and purdah (seclusion of women) came from the Christian Byzantine Empire of Anatolia and the Sassanian Zoroastrians of Persia. The institution of harem originated in urban society, far removed from the stringent codes of tribal, pre-Islamic Arabia. However, the conquering Muslim Arabs became urbanized and absorbed many cultural practices of their subjects. Under the Ottoman Empire, the institution of the harem reached its zenith. Young girls begin wearing the burqa at the age of puberty, signaling their availability for marriage, at least physically. The garment is less common among rural women since it interferes with their daily work. Most women wear a head scarf, which can be worn comfortably in the fields while they work with men or be used for other purposes, such as carrying goods or wrapping and feeding a baby in privacy.

royal family, women were educated in larger numbers from the 1950s onwards and, especially in Kabul, they were able to work in government offices, drop the veil (after 1959) and run for public office (from 1965). These freedoms continued under the leftist nationalist government of Mohammad Daoud (1973–1978). The Communist takeover in Afghanistan in 1978 began the process that led to the current decline in women’s status there. During the period of Communist rule (1978–1992), women in Kabul and the other government-controlled large cities such as Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif enjoyed greater freedom than ever before, becoming a majority of the student population at Kabul University, serving in paramilitary units, working in all professional sectors and serving in high ranking government positions (including one Politburo member, Anahita Ratebzad). The majority of Afghan women, however, lived in the contested countryside or were driven into exile as part of the world’s largest refugee population from 1981 to 1996. The refugee camps of Pakistan provided sanctuary for the mujahideen (holy warriors) who eventually defeated the Soviet Union and its puppet government. The camps also became a fertile ground for the new Islamist ideology of many of the mujahideen groups, which in combination with the dramatically different living conditions than traditional Afghan villages, curtailed women’s freedom of movement and led to a retreat once again to the veil. The camps also bred a new generation of Afghan fighters, who came of age in a drastically altered society, where women’s status and control over women’s behaviour and activities became symbols of the differences between the Communist governments and their mujahideen opponents.

According to Cheshmak (2004), despite these opportunities and the potential contributions of millions of Afghan women, their ability to engage in the economic and political reconstruction of their country remains severely limited, due to a lack of security. Although the status of women in Afghanistan has improved since the ousting of the Taliban, conservatives have re-instituted constraints in the past year, and the national government has failed to solidify its authority nationwide. He adds that it is

unfortunate that women activists, particularly those who attempt to educate and mobilize women around issues related to gender equality and women’s empowerment, continue to face harassment, threats, loss of livelihood, and death. Sally in her book titled *Veiled Threat: The Hidden Power of the Women of Afghanistan* attempts to chronicle the horrors done to Afghan women, the ways in which they fought the oppression from within the system, and how things are changing since the Taliban was overthrown in 2001. Sally Armstrong’s goal is to give voice to Afghan women, to contextualize (socially, politically, and religiously) how the Taliban took and maintained power, and draw connections between human rights and women’s rights. Sally Armstrong offers a picture of Afghan society under the Taliban that is both shocking and horrific. The specifics of the ways in which women were oppressed, tortured, controlled, and silenced are an embarrassment to the international community that stood by and allowed it to happen. The most problematic aspect of the book, however, is that Armstrong does not adequately address the variety and diversity of Afghan women. Armstrong seems to assume that the women she encountered are similar to all Afghan women, despite the fact that there is a wide spectrum of class and educational levels evident in the country as well as a multiplicity of different identified ethnicities within the borders of Afghanistan.

Susan 90 (2004) observes that the Bonn Agreement laid out basic guidelines for the development of women’s roles. It pledged to include them in political life, particularly by participation in the Loya Jirga and the interim administration. She also argues that the donors also pledged that women’s rights would be respected in the rebuilding of Afghan institutions and government. Important progress has been made. For example, more than three million children, including 921,290 girls, have returned to school. To address the structural impediments to women’s rights and the manifold effects of the war, she suggests that women’s interests will need to be incorporated into all areas of policymaking. By this she means that the development of effective institutions of government and a substantial role in civil society will also be necessary if constitutional protections

are to be more than paper promises, as in the past.

Mark Sedra\textsuperscript{91} (2002) notes that the U.S. government and media made substantial use of "the maltreatment of women and their exotic attire" to represent the "moral, cultural and political deficiencies of the Islamic world" as part of the warrant behind the 1991 Gulf War. More recently, gender oppression under the Taliban became a justification for U.S. military intervention to topple the oppressive regime. In a televised address to Congress on 20 September 2001, George W. Bush identified the Taliban prohibition on education for women as part of the background for his demand that the Taliban give up the al Qaeda members hiding in Afghanistan. Significantly, the succor of Afghan women was not going to be achieved in any way by the fulfillment of Bush's demands; at that moment of history, the Taliban's compliance would have left gendered oppression in Afghanistan intact because surrendering bin Laden would have kept the same regime in power. The representation of women's oppression was employed partly to demonize the Taliban and to prepare the U.S. public (and the world) for the air strikes that began on 7 October 2001. However, the epistemic violence done by eliding the agency of Afghan women in their representation only as passive victims played a crucial role in justifying the particular forms of military action taken, even after the fact. Because U.S. discourses about Afghan women suggested that they could not "save" themselves, "liberation" had to come from the outside. While the sheer number of these portrayals makes an exhaustive analysis impractical, one particularly well-publicized event provides an explicit illustration of the appropriation of feminist struggles against gender oppression in the service of the war on terrorism.

According to Fulvia\textsuperscript{92} (2003), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has invested significant resources in program development in Kabul. The commitment of donor nations is further illustrated by the substantial funds they have committed and by creation of a donor-government policy coordination body, the Gender


Advisory Group. Yet, he argues that in any analysis of gender policy for Afghanistan, physical security must be an overarching concern. Olter (2003), while discussing about the Ministry of Women Affairs observes that a combination of factors – including its own lack of capacity and the lack of priority given to gender issues within the cabinet as a whole – has left the Ministry of Women’s Affairs particularly reliant on the international community for technical and financial support. This has meant that its emphasis on project implementation has been reinforced by donor preferences for high-visibility, quick impact projects. Within the international community, however, sharp differences have emerged over whether such projects are the most effective use of funds, or indeed, whether they are sustainable. He further adds that a major component of the proposed ministry budget is for establishing community development centres in fourteen provinces. Funded by a U.S.$2.5 million grant from USAID, the centres are intended to provide women access to skills training, health education, literacy, and accelerated learning. They will be established in the provincial capitals, with an eventual goal – not covered by the current grant – of establishing a centre in all 32 provincial capitals. Such centres have already been set up in Kandahar and Parwan.

Amrullah (2007), a Kabul-based gender and development specialist argues that the emphasis on targeting illiteracy, both within the ministry and among Afghan women’s NGOs, is misplaced. Instead, he says, greater emphasis should be directed toward those women who had partial access to education during Taliban rule. There are a lot of women who attained literacy during the Taliban through home study, but don’t have sciences or maths. A lot of women want to study medicine, pharmacy, and civil engineering – these are the areas that [educated] women traditionally went into. He also observes that an accelerated learning is presented by centre proponents as a way to reintegrate women into the educational system. According to a USAID official, the intention is to close the education gap for women and girls between the ages of 12 and 20 that developed under the Taliban; in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs will design special classes to allow women to obtain primary school certification.

Helen Rizzo (2002) observes that the experience of other post-conflict societies suggests that education and vocational training are indeed key to economic independence and participation in political and decision-making processes. Labour shortages caused by the lengthy conflict can translate into opportunities for women to participate much more fully in the economy. Women in post-conflict environments seek employment outside the home, often for the first time. An enormous constraint on their economic (and political) participation is lack of access to education and training. A huge proportion of Afghan women are simply not equipped with the skills to participate more fully. Their systematic exclusion from the education system under the Taliban makes this problem even more acute and urgent.

*f. Women in the Design of Reconstruction Processes*

Studies of third-party mediation in domestic contexts have also demonstrated strong gender effects when it comes to the nature or design of reconstruction systems. Women have been found to face particular harms in certain formal legal processes, such as trials. Harm arises, for example, when women are forced to deal with abusers or others who have caused them physical or psychological harm on an equal footing at a time when women are particularly vulnerable because of the stakes of the outcome (for example, custody and welfare of their own children is at issue.) Where women are the subjects of or parties before mandated mediation processes, for example, they can encounter many of the same negative experiences associated with formal legal processes such as trials.

Gender also matters when it comes to selection of the actors within a dispute resolution system. The gender of a mediator or judge can affect the perspective of the parties and the substantive outcomes. Women judges, for example, have been shown to have systematically different voting patterns in appeals cases than their male counterparts facing the same issues. In a study of the effect of a judge’s gender on the outcome of divorce proceedings showed women fared better with female judges than they did with

male judges. Gender may also affect the participants' perception of dispute resolution processes and actual results. In a study of gender bias in federal courts, women attorneys were more likely than men attorneys to perceive judges' gender bias. Understanding gender effects within processes is an important step to reforming current international approaches to the resolution of armed conflict. Just as in domestic negotiation and mediation, presence of women matters if we are to shift patterns of zero-sum negotiations framed in the context of status quo military and political power toward more integrative solutions that include the other half of the affected population.

Empirical studies demonstrating correlations between women's equality and peace and between women's participation in reconstruction processes and the content of the outcomes confirms a few core assumptions at the heart of the women's movement. Historically, there has been a strong link between peace movements and the political struggle for women's equality. Women were deeply involved in the abolitionist-pacifist movements of the 19th Century, which sought to abolish slavery, but more specifically aimed to eliminate structural violence throughout society. In the early 20th Century, the suffragist-pacifists pursued a dual agenda that sought to outlaw war and secure the vote for women. The two issues were explicitly linked: If women participated in voting and political decision making, wars would not be supported. Following War World War I, women formed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which joined the goals of legal, social and economic equality for women with the goal of ending the scourge of war. Nonetheless, neither the issue of women's political and legal equality nor women's participation in peace and security processes was a top priority for the founders of the United Nations system after World War II. To be sure, the suffragist movement influenced broad notions of human rights and women's political participation, and both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights include the promotion of non-discrimination on the basis as sex among the foundational aspirations of the international human rights system. But an international movement to promote the

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role of women within the work international organizations or to require member states to extend full political and legal rights to women within their territory did not gain momentum for several decades following the creation of the UN.

**Women in Informal Reconstruction Processes:**

Theories of armed conflict resolution typically separate formal processes from informal processes. In typologies of peace processes, formal processes, those that involve interactions between states or political groups seeking statehood, are typically referred to as Track One. Track Two is used to describe negotiations or processes that include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or private citizens. Within a particular conflict, Track One is typically the intergovernmental process aimed at a legally binding result in the form of a cease-fire agreement or a more comprehensive settlement of the conflict. As such, Track One tends to focus on the central political and military dimensions of the conflict. Track Two is generally considered to be informal, in that it can take place wholly outside formal governmental or intergovernmental institutions. However, Track Two can be a means through which formal governmental actors accommodate issues that might otherwise be difficult to address in the Track One process. The idea of separating the types of process into two tracks “arose from the realization by diplomats, social scientists, conflict resolution professionals, and others that formal, official, government to government interactions between instructed representatives of sovereign nations were not necessarily the most effective methods of securing international cooperation or resolving differences or conflicts.”

Women have been involved in informal peace processes forever – at least since war has been a feature of human experience. In modern times, women have worked outside of formal legal and political structures to prevent war before it begins, end wars that are ongoing, and to help heal the wounds of wars that have ended. Informal processes can encompass everything from individual or small group acts, to systematic organized events, to women’s nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and political groups

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engaging in lobbying and other collateral processes that often accompany formal peace talks. There are perhaps hundreds of more recent examples. In many recent conflicts, informal mechanisms represented the only opportunities for women to participate in peace building and bring the central concerns of women – health and safety, education, accountability for lost family members, and community rebuilding – to the attention of the parties engaged in the formal peace process. Throughout the 1989-1998 conflict in Papua New Guinea, for example, women organized networks of local groups. When conflict broke out between the government and a secessionist group, the women worked as intermediaries between the parties. They organized peace marches and protested against soldiers who prevented delivery of humanitarian aid. Women also created a “peace area” in 1991 from which they excluded all armed men. As a result of the women’s leadership, the community initiated the disarming of the Bougainville Resistance Army and agreed to keep resistance forces from the area.

Informal women’s organizations have played an important role in countering internal government violence. During the years of military rule in Argentina, a group that called itself “Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” was formed by women whose children and grandchildren had been kidnapped by the military and “disappeared” during the “Dirty War.” The mothers demonstrated regularly in the plaza in front of the presidential palace – in defiance of the military government – to raise questions about the fate of the victims of the disappearances. Their peaceful protest raised awareness and the group garnered support both from within Argentina and the international community. Their efforts played an important role in the process of democratization and post-regime accountability in Afghanistan.

Despite the many ways in which women have made a difference through these informal processes, there is a danger that complacency with or an overemphasis on participation in informal processes may be counterproductive to the long-term interests of women. First, by focusing on informal processes, women may be forgoing opportunities to be heard

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within formal processes where permanent and lasting decisions are made, including constitution drafting, design of post-conflict dispute resolution, and political participation. Second, informal processes may unnecessarily perpetuate the view of women as victims of conflict rather than agents of change. Because these informal processes evolved, at least in part, as a reaction to marginalization and exclusion from formal structures, expression of satisfaction with them may signal that women are content with a secondary role, one that may be tangential to legal and political institution building. If women are not represented in formal processes in numbers large enough to create a shift of focus to issues of importance to them, their relegation to informal processes may be perpetuated.

Women in Formal Reconstruction Processes:

One way to avoid this marginalization is to increase participation of women in a range of formal institutional roles that bear on when and how armed conflict is avoided, shortened or resolved. The success of women to transform some informal movements into formal political action suggests that the distinction between informal and formal mechanisms may shift according to circumstances. In a recent article examining the role of multilateral institutions in resolving war, I included the non-military legal and political processes of armed conflict resolution within the category of “intermediation” function. Intermediation includes non-binding diplomatic, negotiation and third-party mediation efforts to resolving war, and also the binding adjudicatory processes that are available through treaty arrangements or ad hoc institutions created by the UN, including binding arbitration, adjudication before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), or prosecution by an ad hoc criminal court or the International Criminal Court (ICC). When viewed through the lens of intermediation, the role of gender is implicated along two dimensions: (1) as actors in these formal processes (e.g., as advocate, judge, mediator, negotiator, or diplomat); and (2) the issues to be addressed and the form of solutions to those issues.

Women are currently underrepresented both as representatives of the parties in traditional diplomacy and party-to-party negotiation; as judges and adjudicators at national courts and international courts and tribunals; and as third-party mediators and
conciliators. There is no legal impediment to improving on this dismal record. In fact, all Member States of the United Nations have agreed to take steps to ensure meaningful participation of women in peace processes\(^9\). The 184 states parties\(^6\) to the 1980 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have committed themselves to “take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.” This obligation supplements the commitment of the States Parties of CEDAW to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country,” and ensure the rights to vote, participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy, hold public office, and participate in NGOs and associations “concerned with the public and political life of the country.” In addition to CEDAW, a range of international human rights treaties and declarations provide aspirational statements of a commitment to equality or commit member states to incremental obligations to improve the level of women’s political participation. Further, the obligations arising from membership of regional and international organizations – in particular the UN – implicate policy obligations.

Beginning at the Beijing Conference in 1995, the UN initiated a series of commitments to improving the representation of women in peace processes\(^9\). The Beijing platform included Strategic objective E.1, which called on actions to be taken by governments and regional and international institutions to: Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and


other conflicts or under foreign occupation. The Beijing platform took an integrative approach to formal processes, noting for example, that women need to be considered in national decisions about whom to include in diplomatic positions, in nominations for international judicial positions (such as judges for ad hoc tribunals and the ICJ), as well as in representation at the UN Secretariat, which is largely responsible for nominating the special representatives and rapporteurs who serve in range of peacemaking roles from human rights fact-finding to direct mediation between the parties. I generally agree with the broad approach, which tends to parallel my own thinking about the intermediation role played by multilateral institutions in the process of resolving armed conflict.

As a follow up to the Beijing commitment, in October 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325, which called specifically on Member States to expand the role of women in UN field operations and in a range of post-conflict positions, including civilian police, military observers, human rights workers and humanitarian personnel: Other international organizations, notably the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU), have been moving to “mainstream gender” concerns into their peace and security work. On balance, however, very little measurable progress has been made to make the commitments to Resolution 1325 a reality.

For all the reasons discussed above, and taking into account the demonstrated links between women’s equal political participation and enduring peace, it is essential that women have a seat at the table. But the international community does not have to wait for gender parity – or the critical mass at which point policies shift – of women in the UN Secretariat or the legislatures and foreign offices of member states in order to begin to address the substantive outcomes of peace processes that most affect women. Academic studies demonstrating the salience of gender in causation and resolution of armed conflict can be used to lobby the institutions and mediating teams to take into account the concerns of women on an ongoing basis. Indeed, studies of recent peace processes in the Balkans (Bosnia and Kosovo) provide important lessons for structuring the terms of the peace in ways that can promote gender equality and a role of women in post-conflict civil
g. **Afghan Women and Reconstruction Processes:**

Any activities in reconstruction activities should include women for three main reasons. For one, during times of war women are frequently affected differently than men, and so, peacebuilding and reconstruction should therefore include the voices of women in a concerted effort to construct solutions that can right their unique wrongs. What is more is that when attempting to reconstruct a country after war, everyone's views and needs should be met so that a more equal society is had. A society based on justice and equality is more likely to successfully keep the peace. Lastly, women have an important role to play with regard to peacebuilding. Given the opportunity, women can make an enormous contribution to the success of peace efforts, based on their unique experiences and perspectives\(^{100}\).

Firstly, it must be seen that the vulnerability of women during war is great. Women are usually specifically targeted and violence against them is often used as a war strategy to dehumanize and weaken not only them, but their entire community. They are maimed and killed, but also raped, sexually assaulted, and tortured. Since violence against women is widespread and sometimes unique, then so too must be their participation in peacebuilding so that any strides made will also include benefits for women, e.g. justice for gender-based violence. Women need to be recognized as being an invaluable part of peace activities, and be allowed to get involved in the peacebuilding process. They need to move from being seen solely as victims, to being seen as agents of change in the reconstruction of their own communities following conflict, so that they can put an end to the bias that normally favours men.

Moreover, women's efforts are needed since previous activities have shown that when rebuilding takes place after war, oftentimes it does not take place on an equal scale for everyone. Women are very often compelled to resume traditional roles while men tend to benefit most from any improvements that may have taken place. Women return to dealing with familial issues for the most part, while men resume taking charge of

societal, economic, and political issues\textsuperscript{101}, leaving the society, once again, without the valuable influence of the female voice. If male dominated peace accords are reached and male influence guides the direction of any changes made, then it stands to reason that women's priorities will be overlooked (whether voluntarily or otherwise) by the hands of post-conflict reconstruction. Without their contribution to community peacebuilding efforts, women may continue to be denied their basic rights to things like health care, education, and other social services. Their voice is needed and their actions are fundamental in decision-making processes and other post-war reconstruction efforts. It is reasonable, and only fair, that any decisions made regarding post-conflict peacebuilding be to the benefit of the entire population. Decisions made and steps taken should never be to the exclusion of some.

Finally, women are eager to contribute on the peacebuilding front, and more than capable of doing so. Women have often been said to be well suited as mediators. Described as being more empathetic to the plight of others, they are seen as more likely to successfully engage in reconciliation efforts. With regard to this, some theorists tend to assert the 'essentialist feminism' perspective, which speaks of women and men being quite different from each other and, as such, where the peace process is concerned, women (assumedly more tolerant and peaceful) are more equipped to assure peace\textsuperscript{102}. Of course, generalized statements such as this tend to ignore the fact that depending on their nationalities and societies, women have different realities, so to classify them under the one umbrella of 'inherently peaceful mediators' tends to undermine the argument by leaving the point open for theoretical attack. Absolute proclamations and stereotypes such as these should be replaced with more qualified statements that take into account the diversity of global women, as well as their aptitude to establish peace. Moreover, the point that women are more capable of enacting peace should be established, not from an innate biological standpoint (which will be difficult, if not impossible to prove), but from a social one; providing the evidence that attests to women's tangible successes in achieving


peacebuilding will be indisputable proof.

Neamat et al\textsuperscript{103} (2002) describes two aspects of recent Afghan history that present a challenge to the current reconstruction project. The first of these is a fierce resistance on the part of Afghans to foreign interference and the imposition of values or ideologies that are perceived to be alien. According to them, this is a thread that runs through British imperial support for Amir Abdur Rahman Khan during the 1880s, efforts at reform by Amanullah during the 1920s and to attempts in the late 1970s by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan to create a socialist revolution in a largely feudal society. The second trend is a political fragmentation across the country. The issue of gender is a timely and hotly contested subject in Afghanistan, as it still is, or has been, in the recent past of most countries. To the extent that media represent and support women in a modern-day context is an area of critical importance to this study. Whether media help to provide a voice for women, and specifically in this case Afghan women, is a key point of discussion in this study. From the outset, democracy in the modern world produced not only a discourse but a practice of gender difference, contributing to the imbalance and inequality of women in most societies.

McNerney\textsuperscript{104} (2006), in her essay adapted from remarks at the 2006 Symposium, "Gender, War & Peace: Women's Status in the Wake of Conflict", argues that women and girls experience particularized harms from armed conflict, including, for example, the psychological fall-out and physical damage of sex-related war crimes, the permanent displacement of women and children from their homes, and the destruction of families and livelihoods. Redressing these harms through post-conflict accountability mechanisms is an important, but incomplete response. Peace processes - the informal and formal mechanisms through which wars are ended and transitions to post-war order are managed and regulated - may have longer term consequences for the welfare of women than the

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underlying armed conflicts. Domestic and comparative studies tend to demonstrate that women behave differently from men within dispute resolution processes. Given these differences, and because war carries particularly devastating effects for women and girls, efforts to end war and prevent the recurrence of armed conflict should systematically consider the role of women and include women as active participants in peace building.

Few authors argue that as innumerable feminists have insisted, the public/private dichotomy has thereby served to reinforce and perpetuate social hierarchies and inequity between the sexes in all spheres of life. This has denied women full membership in the political community and equal opportunity in economic life. Thus, women's civic participation and citizenship have been severely curtailed by "legal, practical and discursive barriers" that were erected against their becoming full citizens, and from participating in the public domain at all. In Rama Mani's (2003) view, discrimination in everyday life perpetuates political discrimination now masquerading as universally accessible democracy. In other words, the inequities and prejudices run deep under the surface appearance of equality and democracy for all. Democracy does not necessarily provide life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all.

According to Sima Samar (2007), a certain universalism regarding the subordinate status of women exists in most human societies. History might vary in terms of time, space, and actors, but the issue of women's oppression or women struggling to enter the political sphere share a commonality giving rise to global feminism or the notion of sisterhood. In most national histories, countries have idealized the private virtues of women and public roles of men. Democracy has not recognized women as political citizens in the fullest sense, due to which women's participation in public life has remained low. A big part of empowering women lies in ensuring that they have the means through the mass media to express their own opinions about inequalities on their own behalf. In the very act of obligating states to eliminate 'all forms' of discrimination against women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women (CEDAW) requires signatory states to find out what women themselves think about laws, policies and practices. Afghanistan is one of many signatory states with CEDAW. According to Hunt\textsuperscript{106}(2007) due to the low civic participation of Afghan women and ongoing cultural restrictions against their involvement in public life it is very difficult to ascertain an accurate reflection of their viewpoints about the inequalities they face. However, Afghan media and, in particular, Afghan women journalists, are beginning to break these cultural barriers within the development of a dynamic new media movement in Afghanistan.

According to Felicity\textsuperscript{107}, (2002), it is useful perhaps to view the totality of Afghan women as a pyramid. The sound base is broad and consists of a majority who live in rural areas cherishing aspirations that are almost exclusively oriented towards children and family. At the tip is the small number of Western-oriented, assertive working women who have taken a leading part in the emancipation process begun in 1959. These women call for the right to participate fully at all levels of decision-making. In the centre is the solid core of professional teachers, medical practitioners, engineers, judges, administrators, businesswomen, social workers and civil servants of every sort, which has grown in magnitude and strength since the beginning of the century.

These viewpoints on active citizen participation through discussions in open forums are translated into reality in Afghanistan, where a long held, respected tradition of the Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) and Shuras (Gathering of Tribal Elders) has existed for hundreds of years, and is still used today for purposes of deliberation about important issues of community and national importance. An Emergency Loya Jirga was held in Kabul in June 2002, to vote for the Transitional Government of Afghanistan, placing Hamid Karzai in the position of Transitional President. A Constitutional Loya Jirga was held in December 2003, ratifying the new Constitution of Afghanistan in January 2004, and setting the political stage for the first Presidential Democratic Elections, held in


Ashraf (2003) states that women in Afghanistan have demonstrated their willingness to support ethnic pluralism in the country. In addition to leading the AIHRC (the country's human rights instrument), Afghan women have already proved valuable allies in efforts to recognize and manage the country's inter-ethnic conflicts. She quotes an event where in, during the Constitutional Loya Jirga, women signed requests by the Uzbeki minority to gain official status for their language in regions where it is most widely spoken in exchange for Uzbeki support for increasing women's representation in government. Both the Afghan women and minority groups recognized that negotiating and allying with each other increases their respective political influence. Indeed, while the need to account for women and girls as victims in the peace process is becoming increasingly recognized, the contribution of women to the process itself and their expertise at the grassroots and civil society levels is still underappreciated in international and national policy circles, as well as in security scholarship. With expertise in grassroots activism, political leadership these women bring new approaches to the security sphere process. Sustainable peace, and therefore international security, depends on such innovations.

The vital contribution of women to the peace process - including the various roles women can play throughout conflict - was recognized in 2000 through the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UNSC. Resolution 1325 urges all states and parties to peace negotiations to account for the perspectives and needs of women, and that their equal participation in the peace process be ensured; regarding not only post-conflict reconstruction, but also in conflict prevention and in negotiations for peace. Importantly, and in addition to calling for the recognition of the impact of armed conflict on women, the importance of involving women at all levels of negotiation, and to support women's peace initiatives at the local level, Resolution 1325 draws special attention to disarmament, demobilization and reintegratation (DDR) programmes by encouraging all involved, to consider the

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different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependents.

According to Hudson-Weems, eighteen descriptors should inform any analysis of the Afghan woman's existence. The Afghan Womanist is therefore: (1) a self-namer; (2) a self-definer; (3) family-centered; (4) genuine in sisterhood; (5) strong; (6) in concert with the Africana man in struggle; (7) whole; (8) authentic; (9) a flexible role player; (10) respected; (11) recognized; (12) spiritual; (13) male compatible; (14) respectful of elders; (15) adaptable; (16) ambitious; (17) mothering; and (18) nurturing. Indeed, Afghan Womanism is "grounded in Afghan culture and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Afghan women."

During some of the violent conflicts, especially in Afghanistan, many women took on the roles of men who were at the frontline fighting. Some women played important roles on the frontline as administrators, nurses, and fighters. At the time of peace, some of these women used their positions to advocate for other women during the post-conflict environment. It should be noted that not every woman received the privilege of maintaining their position which they occupied during conflicts; many women were forced to take back their traditional roles as a result of patriarchal societies. This was not done by force, but by not having opportunities and structures in place that could help women during peacetime. This is referred to as "gendered peace". It is called gendered peace because governments form structures that marginalize women based on the existence of patriarchy and this restricts the rights of women. Women also suffer due to their subordinate positions in their societies.

The role of women in peacebuilding is multidimensional; it requires the participation of both men and women where women have to be made central because of their different experiences during violent conflicts. However, including women in peacebuilding is not

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an ultimate solution to solving gender inequality in societies. It will require the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislations, and policies at all levels. Gender equality in post-conflict societies will depend on reforms at the structural base of power relations based on class, power, and international support of gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding. There is a need to establish law during post-conflict in order to ensure that those who commit violence against women are brought to justice.

Afghanistan has undergone many drastic changes in the past five years. The country is currently engaged in a complex process of reconstruction, at all levels of civil society and infrastructure, from the formation of political associations to the building of roads, schools and hospitals. He claims that after enduring a quarter century of violent instability, from the Soviet invasion of 1979 to the rule of the Taliban, Afghanistan has much to rebuild and reconstruct. Foremost in this process is the reconstruction of governance, the construction of a democracy. He focuses on how Afghanistan, a war torn country, rebuilds and in doing so how it attempts to build a stable and functioning democracy for the first time. According to Kandiyoti (2005), the international community is and has been heavily involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It has been said that the goal of developing democracy in Afghanistan was a knee jerk reaction to the American led military invasion. He further argues that the conquering force felt the need to legitimate its overwhelming presence in Afghanistan by installing a democracy in its wake. Whether this was the true motivation on the part of the United States and other international actors in whole or in part is up for debate.

Parto et al.\textsuperscript{110} further identify four key challenges in the way of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan, including as the fourth, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. Further, they put forward the argument that, "It is only by understanding the role of poverty and inequality- of resources, of access, of

\textsuperscript{110}Parto, Saeed et al. (2007), 'Enabling or Disabling? The Operating Environment for Small and Medium Enterprises in Rural Afghanistan', AREU.
participation - in conflict, that we can find more sustainable and therefore realistic solutions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding”. Indeed, one could argue that the other three challenges they discuss - (1) establishing peace and security, (2) fostering good governance, and (3) gender mainstreaming - will not be achieved without the establishment of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Nevertheless, Poku (et al.) also make the distinction between positive and negative peace, in that human security requires the active creation of structures and agencies to address the developmental sources of injustice that promote conflict, rather than peace being defined as simply the absence of conflict. In post-conflict countries like Afghanistan, this is indeed a poignant distinction.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The current transformation of post-conflict Afghanistan from a war-torn nation to an emerging democracy, and the evolving role of Afghan women in politics, and society in post-Taliban Afghanistan are the backdrop against which the theoretical framework is prepared. This study employs the theories on Feminism, Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Reconstruction as sociological tools to understand the case of women in Afghanistan.

a. Feminist Theory:

The root of feminist theory is solidly based on the notion that women have been on an unequal playing field to men vis-a-vis political, economic, and social conditions. On the whole, all strands of feminist theory seek to bring out this asymmetry, understand the oppressive social practices that underlie the inequitable treatment of women, examine the reasons why this difference in power and privilege exists, and also put forth ways and means that these injustices might be overcome. However, feminists differ as to what they identify as the major reasons for women's oppression, the theoretical questions they put forth, and the strategies for change. Yet all feminist schools of thought look at how different social phenomena like socialization and production have determined women's

status in societies, and feminists as a whole believe that there should be equality. Joshua S Edwards defines feminists as "those who believe that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex; women should be recognized as having human dignity equal with men and the opportunity to live as freely chosen lives as men"\textsuperscript{112}. However, feminism should never be seen as being one standard belief. It is made up of many different ideologies, and there are a variety of approaches employed by feminist thinkers. Three of the main feminist schools of thought are liberal, socialist, and radical.

Socialist feminism puts forward a response to liberal feminism. These theorists contend that there is virtually no point to offering women equality and freedom if the basic social and economic structures are not changed. With socialist feminism, structure is more focused upon, as are the inter-sectionalities of inequalities, such as gender and class. This school of thought postulates that as a whole, women are oppressed by the capitalistic economic system, in much the same way that the working classes in society are subjugated. The only difference is that, within a system that is capitalistic as well as patriarchal, women are also subjected to other forms of oppression\textsuperscript{113}.

Like socialist feminists, radical feminists agree that there is a marked difference in power between men and women, and this stems from the fact that women are assigned certain roles based on their sex, and are therefore automatically placed on a subordinate rung of society. Women are expected to be submissive, and men have asserted control over women's "sexual, procreative, and emotional labour"\textsuperscript{114}. Radical feminists believe that it is impossible for women not to be oppressed in any kind of dealing with men. This perspective reasons that the removal of barriers to women's inequality in society would not actually stop the discrimination against women, since that prejudice, and ensuing oppression, stems from deeply rooted beliefs and values in patriarchal society, something which has existed for far too long. They suggest that only the elimination of patriarchy would solve this problem. Accordingly, radical feminists feel that, rather than having

\textsuperscript{112} Edward, Joshua S. 2001. War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


women attempt to be equal to men, women's unique talents and abilities should be celebrated. Ultimately though, they see female separatism as the only way to have the liberation of women in society.

b. Feminist Theory and Armed Conflicts
Feminist theory argues that armed conflicts are always gendered because men and women experience impacts of civil wars differently. This is important because this characteristic can be used during peace processes and peacebuilding to bring about changes that will help women during peace transitions. During war, women are excluded through economic deprivation, displacement, poverty and gender violence. However, during peace, women are regarded as 'victims'; and this notion undermines women's efforts to participate, hence, their exclusion in peacebuilding. Until the 1970s, it was recognized that women's participation could be beneficial to development through economic and social processes. Some scholars like Ester Boserup started talking about the lives of women in the developing countries and how it was different from those in the global North. This period was also marked by a few NGOs acknowledging women and dedicating some projects towards women in developing countries, though many bilateral and multilateral agencies were still slow to use the concept of gender because of the meaning and politics that was behind the concept. Within that timeframe, there was the formation of the international women's movement, which led to four UN conferences. The first conference took place in Mexico City in 1975, followed by those in Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995.

Women and Development (WAD) emerged as a result of the critique of modernization theory. It argued that women were not integrated into the process of development. WAD viewed both sexes as disadvantaged within the oppressive global structure based on class and capital. It also assumed that once international structures became equitable, women's position would improve. The problem with Women and Development was that it emerged from dependency theory. Dependency theorists call for self-reliant development

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115 Fraser, Nancy. 1990. "Rethinking the Public Sphere" Social Text 61 (25-36).
while radical feminists argued that women could only develop outside patriarchy power structures. WAD did not question patriarchy and it completely ignored the roles of women in production and their subordination and oppression. The third approach is Gender and Development (GAD), which is the newest and most accepted approach. This perspective focuses on the role of states providing women with childcare, health, education and food security. It encourages women's economic independence, giving them a role in political activism, advocacy strategies such as community organization, transformative actions, public education and coalition building.

Many grassroots, national and international organizations are using the term gender as an agenda of lobbying for funding and activism. This is because development agencies are under pressure to integrate gender and development in their policies. While this may be a feature in policy papers, in reality, not much is done. Gender is wrongly used by these bilateral, multinational organizations; it is used in place of women. They advocate for a mainstream approach that does not look at differences among women, but rather differences between men and women. In the 1990s, a coalition of women started lobbying the United Nations Security Council regarding the effects of armed conflicts on women and also the possibility of involving women in peace processes and peacebuilding efforts. This as a result, led to the signing of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 in 2000 on women, peace and security.

Women's role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding is now becoming more known than it was in the past. However, this does not mean that women are included more in peacebuilding. The problem is that many nations due to the social construction of gender, are still resisting the inclusion of women in peacebuilding. It is also important to make it clear that not every woman is a peace activist. Women can be both actors and victims during armed conflicts, playing supporting roles, hiding and smuggling weapons and

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providing supports and care for fighters. For example, some women during violent
conflicts in Afghanistan were caught supporting the rebel forces by smuggling weapons
through checkpoints in Pakistan, under their clothes, and through their children (UN, 2000). As a result, by including and by appreciating women's role in peacebuilding, more
women will become involved with the peacebuilding mission. During conflict and post-
conflicts, some women, through peace activists create awareness in their communities of
the issues that are affecting them, and press for change. Some women's role as activists
helps in pressuring governments and other peace activists around the world to hold the
government responsible for their actions. As a result, this has never been an easy task for
women involved in peacebuilding at grassroots and at the national level\textsuperscript{120}. Many women
are jailed while others hide in other countries for fear of their lives. As this happens, there
is usually another group of women who pick up the new tasks. These groups are mothers
and grandmothers. They organize themselves to continue pressuring governments for
change that will bring about truth and justice. A case in point is the emergence of RAWA
as a powerful movement.

The gender lens theory argues that women facilitate and mediate talks through education
and development processes. As a result, including women in peacebuilding will help
communities in capacity building. These workshops help women to train other women so
that they can subsequently go into their communities and pass on that instruction. This is
important because this kind of capacity building helps in bringing about sustainable peace
and development. With the role that women play in conflict zones, during peace process
and peacebuilding, it is important to include women in post-conflict reconstructions of
their countries so that they can bring different perspectives to these processes\textsuperscript{121}.

Feminist theory puts a lot of emphasis on the empowerment of women. It argues that
sexism makes it difficult for women because people in their communities believe that a
woman's life is 'less' important than a man's. This at times, leads to violence against

\textsuperscript{120} Miller, Erroll. 2001. "Gender, Power and Politics: An Alternative Perspective" in Skjelsbaek,
Inger and Smith, Dan (Eds.) \textit{Gender, Peace & Conflict}. London: Sage Publications (80-103).
\textsuperscript{121} Sinha, Mirnalini. 2002. "Gender and Nation" \textit{American Historical Association Pamphlet Series}.
women during conflicts and during peace time. Hence, engaging women in peacebuilding will help in challenging sexist beliefs and other factors that undermine women's efforts in rebuilding their communities. Providing women with opportunity through training will mean that women will be better equipped to take part in planning, implementing and evaluating the processes of peacebuilding programs. Feminist perspectives to peacebuilding argue that during war, masculinity gives men advantages over women for certain positions. This masculinity prevails itself during conflicts where women are left without a voice and this set of attitude is usually accepted within various cultures. During peacebuilding, this attitude is maintained by international organizations and the United Nations Security Council through its mission of peacekeeping where men are always sent to keep peace since women cannot 'keep peace'. This furthers the marginalization of women in peacebuilding.

c. Peacebuilding Theory:
The second theory that is relevant to this research is that of peacebuilding theory. The theory argues that the concept of peacebuilding represents an advancement of peacekeeping and conflict management. This theory offers active solutions to dealing with violent conflicts through short-term and long-term approaches to peace. It addresses peacebuilding by looking at the underlying causes of conflict before offering solutions to conflict. It hardly uses the concept of offering humanitarian relief as a solution to conflict without addressing the problem. Peacebuilding theory argues that the concept of peacebuilding has changed since its introduction to the international relations by Boutros Ghali, the former United Nations Secretary General. Peacebuilding addresses conflicts and solutions through bottom-up processes. Peacebuilding transforms societies from cultures of violence to a culture of peace and non-violence. This theory combines problem-solving and critical approaches to peacebuilding. It also takes into account economic and political factors being the major challenges affecting peacebuilding.

125 Secor, A. J. 2001. "Toward a feminist counter-geopolitics: Gender, space and Islamist politics in
Peacebuilding theories reflect and acknowledge the feminist approach to peacebuilding. Peacebuilding from a gender perspective requires a multidimensional approach and there is no single approach to building peace in war-torn regions. Reconciliation is a major component to peacebuilding. Feminist theory places more emphasis on gender and has only been applied to the recent theory of peacebuilding. It argues that the majority of people affected by modern war today are women and children; hence, women should be included in peacebuilding since they have a unique experience during and after conflicts. The feminist approach to conflict argues that mothers unify families and communities and they take care of their children during wars. They live to tell stories of the war. Whatever stories they tell their children can either bring reconciliation and peace or bring revenge in the future. This might continue for generations. As a result, involving women in peace processes and peacebuilding will help in bringing sustainable peace so that women can advocate peace and forgiveness to their children when they are young.\textsuperscript{126}

Peacebuilding theory argues that putting resources, personnel and a humanitarian approach to peacebuilding in place to bring solutions to the problems is not of use if the underlying reasons are not addressed. Its central objective for sustainable peace is development. The theory argues that once development (economic, social and political progresses) starts to prevail in a society, this will deviate people's attention from conflict to development because the presence of conflict in an area can be a result of the failure of development. However, this will all depend on the commitments of donors and recipients to use the aid that they are given for peacebuilding to include participation of both men and women in order to achieve sustainable peace.\textsuperscript{127} Further, reconstruction will mean that there will be confidence built within people especially on the conflicting sides. Deconstruction will include the three major activities of peacebuilding which are; disarmament, demobilization, and demilitarization of societies. This is important because it helps rebuild societies that foster and support tolerance, stability, socioeconomic


structure and development\textsuperscript{128}. The feminist approach to peacebuilding advocates for gender awareness and women's empowerment politically, socially, and economically. It involves personal and group accountability where there is room for condition of non-violent, equality and justice. The theory also argues for complete security and the absence of personal, physical and direct violence at all structural levels\textsuperscript{129}.

d. Post-Conflict Reconstruction Theory:
Francis Fukuyama defined post-conflict reconstruction as the first phase of nation-building, which applies to failed states after violent conflict and where international community has to provide security and all essential needs and/or services. The second phase of nation-building, according to Fukuyama, is the creation of self-sustaining state institutions which are providing security and all essential needs with the help of international community. It normally starts after the completion of the first phase and once the international forces have assured security and stabilised the situation. The third phase involves strengthening of weak states. Following Fukuyama's definition of nation building, post-conflict reconstruction is only needed when international community is dealing with failed states, the government institutions of which are not functioning effectively. As a term, postconflict reconstruction was first defined by the World Bank in 1995 as the rebuilding of the socioeconomic framework of society and the reconstruction of the enabling conditions for a functioning peacetime society [to include] the framework of governance and rule of law.

Security encompasses collective and individual security to all actors and "addresses all aspects of public safety, particularly the establishment of a safe and secure environment and the development of legitimate and stable security institutions. Security pillar has the following tasks: “control of belligerents; territorial security; protection of the populace; protection of key individuals, infrastructure and institutions; reform of indigenous security institutions; and regional security. Provision of security is one of the most important tasks because not before the assurance of security can other reconstruction

tasks be successfully implemented. International military forces are normally responsible for providing security in failed states. It is not until later that the security provision can be handed over to local security institutions, military and law enforcement that have been developed. It is very important that security provision structures are sufficient in number and quality. It is assessed that for sufficient security at minimum 20 security personnel are required for every 1,000 inhabitants. However, security cannot be sustained if justice, social, and economic well-being or governance are not reconstructed and implemented.

**Justice and reconciliation** addresses the need to deal with past abuses and create an impartial legal system. It includes the following key elements:

1. Law enforcement instruments that is effective and respectful of human rights;
2. An impartial, open, and accountable judicial system;
3. A fair constitution and body of law;
4. Mechanisms for monitoring and upholding human rights;
5. A humane corrections system; and
6. Formal and informal reconciliation mechanisms for dealing with past abuses and resolving grievances arising from conflict.

This pillar not only includes elements about building law enforcement structures, but has a long-reaching aim of building and implementing justice system, which should eliminate causes leading to future conflicts or failure of a state. It is one of the most difficult because local population and legal system can have different approach to human rights and law. For instance Islamic countries are exercising *Sharia Law* which is different from Western Law. Security and governance pillars are crucial in supporting and providing conditions for justice and reconciliation. However, sufficient justice system cannot be sustained if social and economic well-being is not ensured.

**Social and economic well-being** addresses fundamental social and economic needs, in particular providing emergency relief, restoring essential services to the population in areas such as health and education, laying the foundation for a viable economy, and initiating an inclusive and sustainable development program. This pillar is orientated
towards providing emergency humanitarian relief for local population at the beginning of post-conflict reconstruction. Later it should concentrate on long term development especially in the areas of education, infrastructure and economic development. However, social and economic well-being cannot be implemented and sustained until there is a security or justice system that is fully functioning coupled with building sufficient governance.

Governance and participation addresses the need to create legitimate, effective political, and administrative institutions and participatory processes, in particular, establishing a representative constitutional structure, strengthening public-sector management and administration, and ensuring an active and open participation of civil society in the formulation of the country’s government and policies. Effective governance is normally absent in post-conflict situation because the failed state’s public sector is in most cases incompetent and corrupt or non-existent. Moreover, there are not any fundamental political agreements about the state’s political system and wider representation. Post-conflict reconstruction has to start from creating some transitional administration which would prepare political and legal conditions for the future governance and wider population participation in governance. Creating a legitimate and effective political system is the most difficult and critical task in post-conflict reconstruction because it ought to ensure that the state can function properly in the future. However, governance and wider participation cannot be implemented if there is no security because all governmental institutions or officials should be protected from any possible lethal threats. Otherwise, post-conflict reconstruction would fail. These are four main pillars of post-conflict reconstruction. However, a lot of different actors are participating in implementing these activities: international organisations, states, national governmental organisations, international non-governmental organisations, local institutions, local non-governmental organisations, etc. Each organisation has its own agenda and aims which are not always orientated towards the same direction. These are very often looking and working at different directions. An effective co-ordination structure has to be developed and implemented. This structure ought to ensure that all
actions, taken by these actors, are co-ordinated and that there is no overlapping or competition.

The four main pillars of post-conflict reconstruction, their complexity and the amount of different actors, make post-conflict reconstruction very complicated. Afghanistan is a classical example of a failed state in Fukuyama’s words, in which international community had to conduct nation building starting from the first phase – post-conflict reconstruction. Since the Soviet withdrawal at the end of the 1980’s, Afghanistan was falling into disorder and chaos; no state institutions were functioning; there was no police or judicial system; everything was decided by force or religion leaders; those who had weapons were in power – gun power policies were flourishing; education and health care systems were non-existent, and so forth. This paper will look at the security pillar of post-conflict reconstruction in more detail and focus on the level of security and safety of the Afghanistan environment established so far.

1.3 Rationale, Scope and Objectives

The study seeks to examine the role of women in post conflict reconstruction processes and, conversely, to better understand the impact of post-conflict societal circumstances and nation-building processes on the status and situation of women. The central research question guiding this study is what role women play in the midst of or in relation to social change especially promoting democracy in Afghanistan? Few other questions of interest would be: What has been the impact of the prolonged conflict on women? How did the conflict affect their economic, social and political roles and responsibilities? What are the major problems and challenges facing women in post conflict Afghanistan? What types of women’s organizations have emerged in the post conflict era to address the problems faced by women and promote gender equality? What unique contribution do women’s organizations make? What has contributed to their establishment and growth? What has been the nature and goal of assistance provided by donor agencies to women’s organizations? How has the assistance affected their priorities and sustainability? How to facilitate the transition to democracy and development of civil society in post-Taliban
Afghanistan, if at all? What further developments need to occur to foster the transition to
democracy in post-Taliban Afghanistan? Do Afghan women have the potential to play an
important role in fostering openness and religious and political moderation in
Afghanistan by providing important social services and pioneering human rights
education and reforms?

This study assumes that because of their experiences in times of conflict, their
increased responsibilities in communities, and their vulnerability to insecurity and
violence, women often bring new perspectives to post-conflict reconstructions and
issues of transitional justice. In the context of peacemaking and peace building, women
should therefore be recognized as active agents rather than passive victims. The present
study, therefore, proposes to examine the effectiveness of the international
community’s decision to emphasize Afghan women’s rights and participation in
advancing the status and role of women in Afghanistan. The study also seeks to provide
an overview of women’s initiatives and activities in Afghanistan, and examines the
potential contributions Afghan women could make to the struggle for peaceful and
democratic change in their country. It will make the case that because women can foster
stability and be a force for moderation, women’s capacity must be further strengthened
and their rights must not be bargained away. Added to this, the study aims to look at the
fledging democracy now taking shape in Afghanistan. Against the evolving backdrop
of Afghanistan, theories of democracy will be explored, investigating the ideals set
forth by scholarly sources in several key areas such empowerment of women, and
development of civil society in a post-conflict environment. The veracity of such ideals
will be tested against the reality that now exists in this war-torn nation. The changing
role of Afghan women in politics and society is yet another new phenomenon to be
studied.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To shed light on how post-conflict reconstruction processes influence the
   reconfiguration of gender roles and positions in the wake of war, and how
   women’s actions shape the construction of post-conflict social structures.
2. To identify theoretically, the role, representation and construction of affirmative image of women in the post-conflict situation in Afghanistan.

3. To examine the limitations and difficulties Afghan women face in the reconstruction processes.

4. To bring out a fresh perspective from the efforts of the external actors (civil society, donor countries, international organizations and NGOs) to strengthen the capacity of women in strengthening the democratic governance.

The hypotheses identified for testing include:

1. The presence of international security forces and the NATO-led ISAF troops guarantees continuing security for the women's participation in the reconstruction process.

2. The affirmative action, such as quota, does not guarantee by itself a strong participation of women in politics in Afghanistan.

3. The focus on gender inequality and attempts by external actors to influence the status of women in Afghan society would foment a backlash.

1.4 Methodology Employed:

The qualitative research techniques employed for this thesis consists of interviews and email exchanges with qualified experts in their field (based primarily on first-hand field visit in Afghanistan), including senior Afghan Government representatives, Parliamentarians, United Nations and humanitarian NGO (non-governmental organization) officials, human rights senior representatives, and media development experts. The study also reviewed and analyzed secondary sources, including United Nations studies, Afghan Government official documents, and reports done by leading institutions such as the World Bank, NGOs and researchers.
The interview subjects are all experts in their respective fields, and have had experience and exposure to the effects of emerging media, political and societal change, the electoral process, and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Additionally, they have experience with gender issues in the country, and have worked to promote the legal, political and human rights of Afghan women. Information gathered from each area of expertise provides insight, broadens the scope of the thesis, and gives weight to the overall research argument and central research question by considering first-hand accounts and informed opinions of experienced professionals who have had significant exposure to the issues this thesis has investigated. This study draws information from data collected via interviews and/or questionnaires. Interviews or questionnaires use a semi-structured format and a few open-ended questions to which the subjects were asked to respond. The questions posed were structured to elicit specific information about the role of media, empowerment of women, and the development of civil society, freedom of the press, and human rights in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Additionally, the questions were designed to identify key factors and provide comparisons and contrasts with regard to the specific areas of interest mentioned above. Provisions were made allowing the interview subjects to provide any additional commentary they wished to make regarding the issues addressed in the questionnaire. Half of the interviews were conducted in person and half were conducted on the email using a semi-structured questionnaire. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their level of experience and expertise in their respective fields, and exposure to key areas which emerged and were identified in the theoretically-focused analysis found in the following chapters. Some of the interviewees are active in all of these key areas in post-conflict Afghanistan, and some were specifically focused on one or more area of expertise. Each interview lasted approximately 10 - 15 minutes. When deemed necessary, follow-up discussions with the interviewees were conducted through email exchange.

Once the interview subjects had indicated a willingness to participate in this study, they were electronically sent a list of semi-structured and open-ended questions through the
use of email. During the actual interviews, there was room allowed to ask spontaneous questions of the interviewees, prompting more candid and open responses. A total of 25 women Parliamentarians were approached for interviews. A total of 25 interviews were conducted over a 4 day period, in October 2007. The interview approach adopted was largely based on exploratory and standard interview techniques.

The major limitation of the interview method is that it relies on a self-report method of data collection. Each interview was transcribed in totality, and then quotes deemed critical and relevant to the study were extracted into a separate document. A sample questionnaire of the questions posed to the interview subjects may be found in Appendix. In addition to the data obtained from the interview subjects, a number of materials and primary documents were drawn upon to illuminate the processes being examined in this thesis. There is a growing body of United Nations studies, Afghan government documents, world institutions reports (World Bank, IMF, Asian Development Bank), non-governmental organization (NGO) reports, and academic papers offering supportive documentation and substantial discussion on the role of media and gender in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Documentary analysis was conducted to achieve a contextual understanding of relevant documents to the proposed thesis. This study collected and analyzed data from these documents and reports to provide further support to the guiding central research question. Critical analysis and research has been conducted by the Afghan government, United Nations agencies, world institutions, and non-governmental organizations, which have had a focus and played a part in Afghanistan's renewal and

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130 All women parliamentarians of both houses were invited to participate in the survey. Those responding positively were presented with a questionnaire, including closed and open questions, by Dari-speaking Afghan female interviewers. The answers allow for the assessment of Afghan women parliamentarians' self-perceived experiences, self-understanding of their political agency, and effective exercise of their mandate in the given structure of Afghan power politics and the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural setup. At the same time, the data presented only mirrors the self-assessment of women parliamentarians; some of their answers might be influenced by how they would like to be perceived by the general public. Validating all answers given – for example, on the frequency and modes of interaction with their constituents and civil society actors, or the level and content of cooperation among women parliamentarians themselves – is beyond the scope of this study. Of the current 91 women parliamentarians in both assemblies, 18 responded to the questionnaire about their personal backgrounds, their paths into politics, their political agendas, and legislative interests – with special regard to women's issues – as well as with whom and how they cooperate in policy- and lawmaker inside and outside of both houses of parliament.
reconstruction efforts. These documents provide insight to the working thesis, offering supportive evidence to the key themes which have been established in prior chapters, underpinning the transformation of post-conflict Afghanistan. Additionally, these supportive documents are not based in theory but in actual practice, stemming from organizations and individuals who are working on the ground in Afghanistan. Utilizing analysis and interpretation of these documents and reports yields key revelations to the benefit of the study.