

# Afghanistan: Are Human Security and Gender Justice Possible?

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It has been nearly a decade since the U.S. invaded and occupied Afghanistan. What are the origins of the conflict? And what are the prospects for conflict resolution, peace-building, reconstruction, and development? In this paper, a conceptual framework drawing on world-system theory, feminist insights, and the economics of war literature is applied toward an explanation of the structural roots of the ongoing conflict. I argue that U.S. intervention in Afghanistan should be seen as a key element in the building of a post-Cold War world order predicated on the (re)assertion of U.S. hegemony and the global spread of neoliberal democracy, justified by the so-called global war on terror. But the conflict also unveils the injurious effects of hyper-masculinities, whether on the part of the occupiers or the insurgents. Next, the paper describes the humanitarian actions of transnational feminist networks, which have mobilized to oppose militarism and neoliberalism and to promote economic and gender justice in Afghanistan (among other conflict zones). Finally, the paper offers a (gendered) *human security* policy framework as an alternative to the U.S. preference for a military solution. Such an approach would replace the current focus on privatization, national security, and military escalation with a virtuous cycle of people-oriented economic development, regional cooperation, social protection, and gender justice.

## **Theoretical Approaches To Conflict and War**

Debates on the sources and origins of conflicts and wars typically have emphasized the role of grievance, ideology, or (since Paul Collier) greed. I argue that we need to begin with the world system and with the pervasiveness of gender, and then move on to examine the other factors. World-system theorists associate wars with hegemonic rise and decline, changes to and challenges within the interstate system, and upswings and downswings of the Kondratieff wave, including changes in world economic growth and activity (Chase-Dunn, 1998). For some time there has been evidence that the U.S., as the world-system's hegemon since the end of World War II, has been in historic decline. On the other hand, following the in-

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vasion of Afghanistan in late 2001 and the routing of the Taliban, it appeared that the neoconservative project for “the New American Century” was being successfully implemented. Some argue that the resurgence of U.S. militarism represents “the new imperialism” while others maintain that it is in fact evidence of hegemonic overreach, decline, and transition (Wallerstein, 2003).

But understanding the role of gender is critical, too. Fighters and those who decide to wage war or begin a conflict are almost invariably men. This is because economic, political, and military power remains in male hands and because of gender socialization patterns. Characteristics associated with conflict and war—swagger, aggressiveness, violence—are also associated with what we may call hegemonic or hyper- or heroic forms of masculinity. Conflict and war are damaging to women and men, young and old, but for women there are distinctive risks and consequences, such as sexualized violence or the reinforcement of traditional controls on female mobility and autonomy, as has been observed in Afghanistan. As feminist scholarship has shown, constructions of masculinity and femininity have tended to “normalize” and “naturalize” violence against women (Breines, Connell and Eide, 2000). Governments may also seek to placate challengers by passing laws restricting women’s rights within the family, as has occurred in Afghanistan. Gender injustice is pervasive.

Insurgencies may be driven by legitimate grievances, especially about poverty, government corruption, basic needs, and basic rights. Mohammad Hafez claims, in his book *Why Muslims Rebel*, that those who adhere to the political Islam worldview are reacting against “predatory state repression” (Hafez, 2003). Ordinary citizens may attach themselves to insurgents—or they may try to migrate—because of the same issues or because of infrastructural damage, the loss of livelihoods, and other grievances concerning both the occupying armies and the insurgents. Afghans still suffer from underdevelopment as well as from U.S. aerial bombings.

As Collier has pointed out, greed is a factor in conflict. Insurgents, government officials, and external powers may be interested in the control of natural resources or the acquisition of wealth. In Afghanistan, the insurgents control the country’s lucrative narcotics trade, although some government officials and warlords have been implicated as well. Aid to Afghanistan has been largely diverted to private contractors. Such greed tends to instigate or perpetuate conflict; ending the dependence on aid and natural resources should be a key objective of a post-conflict agenda for reconstruction and development.

The role of ideology (or religion) in fomenting or perpetrating conflict may be found among the insurgents, the government, and the occupiers. Under the Bush administration in particular, the U.S. “war on terror” was accompanied by the goal of establishing a market economy and a political system of electoral democracy. In Afghanistan, the Taliban are motivated at least in part by Islamic fervor, while the Karzai government has sought to placate a vocal Shia minority through a highly controversial family law restricting women’s mobility and requiring that they have sex with their husbands at least once every four days!

Collier (2008) mentions “three underlying economic characteristics which make a country particularly prone to conflict: low income, low growth rate and a substantial contribution to the economy of primary commodities exports. In addition, small countries, those with many ethnic divisions, those which are mountainous, and those with a high proportion of youth have increased risks” (p. 4). These are useful insights and explanatory factors, but the analysis is devoid of consideration of “external” causes of conflict. In contrast, the world-system framework examines a particular conflict in terms of features of the international state system, including economic zone location and the role of the hegemon. In neither framework, however, is there acknowledgement of the role played by gender in fomenting or perpetuating conflict. When combined with other factors, gender is a key explanatory factor. Addressing gender inequalities and injurious forms of masculinity must be included in strategies to minimize rivalries, crisis, and conflict.

### **On Hyper-Masculinities, Conflict, and Women**

Here the longstanding feminist critique of patriarchal state systems, international relations, and militarism, along with recent studies of masculinities, is especially compelling (Eisenstein, 2004; Enloe, 2007; Marchand and Runyan, 2000; Tickner, 1992). Armed conflict has dire effects on all citizens, but women face specific risks. Pre-existing patriarchal concepts and practices can exacerbate the vulnerability of women during conflict. Wars, and especially occupations by foreign powers, often are accompanied by crises of masculinity that lead to restrictions on women’s mobility and increases in violence against women (Enloe, 1990). Women become the symbols or markers of contending ideologies or competing cultures. A culture of “hegemonic masculinity” prevails among the major political actors, be they the occupiers, the resistance, or the state. As Anne Sisson Runyan (2002, p. 362) has aptly noted, “The world is awash with contending masculinities that vie to reduce women to symbols of either fundamentalism or Western hypermodernity.”

“Hegemonic masculinity” has become a key concept in gender analysis since Connell (1998) identified it as a particular culture’s standards and ideal of real manhood at a particular time in history. In countries such as America and Australia, Connell explained, hegemonic masculinity is defined by physical strength and bravado, exclusive heterosexuality, suppression of “vulnerable emotions” such as remorse and uncertainty, economic independence, authority over women and other men, and intense interest in “sexual conquest.” What Connell has defined as “emphasized femininity” is constructed around adaptation to male power and acquiescence to male authority. Its central feature is attractiveness to men, which includes physical appearance, ego-massaging, suppression of “power” emotions such as anger, nurturance of children, exclusive heterosexuality, sexual availability without sexual assertiveness, and sociability. Both standards and ideals may be observed in many cultures, albeit with variations on the sexual element. In Muslim cultures, for example, female modesty is valued far more than sexual availability.

And rather than intense interest in sexual conquest, hegemonic masculinity in a typical Middle Eastern context might consist in the capacity to “protect” family or personal honor by controlling the comportment of the women in the family (and sometimes in the community). Cross-cultural specificities notwithstanding, hegemonic masculinity is reproduced in various social institutions, notably the family, religion, the sports arena, the media, and the military. The masculinist institution par excellence is the military, but hyper-masculinity is also a defining feature of the corporate domain with its risk-takers, rogue traders, reckless speculators, and manipulative financiers.

In a similar analysis, Lauren Langman and Daniel Morris (2004) discuss “heroic masculinity,” although they tie it more to militarism than is the case in Connell’s analysis. They point out that civilizations and cultures based on conquest or expansion, societies where politics and militarism are fused, or countries where the military is a central and valorized institution, all exhibit discourses, images, and practices of heroic masculinity. In considering American society and the role of its military in both capitalist accumulation and expansion of U.S. power, and in considering the foundational narratives of heroic masculinity in Islam, one can easily imagine a “clash of heroic masculinities” (as Langman and Morris put it), between the American security state and Islamist rebel groups.

Contemporary rivalries in hegemonic or heroic masculinities mirror the inter-capitalist rivalries of the early part of the 20th century—which, as world-system analysts have noted, led to World War I and World War II. Rival masculinities underlie, too, many of the factors that have been attributed to the “new conflicts” of the post-Cold War era, such as the emergence of a global weapons market, the decreasing capacity of states to uphold the monopoly of violence (Kaldor 1999; Kaldor and Luckham 2001), inter-ethnic competition (Chua, 2004), and what Benjamin Barber famously termed “Jihad vs. McWorld” (Barber, 2001). Indeed, rival masculinities constitute a key factor in the conflicts that emerge over natural resources, such as oil or diamonds; in aggressive nationalism and ethnic rivalries; and in politicized religious projects. From a feminist perspective, hegemonic, heroic, or hyper-masculinity is a causal factor in war as well as in women’s oppression.

If hegemonic/hyper-/heroic masculinities can trigger war, the reverse is also true. Wars, and especially occupations by foreign powers, are often accompanied by crises of masculinity that lead to restrictions on women’s mobility and increases in violence against women, both at home and on the streets. In areas where honor is all-important, such as many Muslim-majority societies, concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity may be heightened, and the protection of women and girls may become an exaggerated feature of the society, with increases in honor killings or veiling or the reassertion or strengthening of traditional gender ideology and its legal frameworks. In societies where the issue of women and the public space is already fraught with the legacy of guardianship and segregation, women may be compelled to remain at home or to venture outdoors only when accompanied by a male

relative. Governments may be complicit in these forms of the “disciplining” of women, or they may be too weak to exercise control and protect women’s rights.

In times of conflict, therefore, women are caught between weak states, occupying powers, armed opposition movements, and patriarchal gender arrangements. Some may be co-opted into carrying out questionable acts of resistance, such as the increasing number of young women in Iraq being recruited by al Qaeda as suicide bombers (Steele, 2008). In post-conflict reconstruction, politics often remains masculine and male-dominated, with women largely excluded from political decision-making (Moghadam, 2007). Despite the adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace, and security, we continue to see the sidelining of both women actors and gender issues in many contemporary conflicts, peace-keeping initiatives, and reconstruction efforts.

### **Afghanistan, War, and Hegemony**

It is almost a banality to note that armed conflict destroys resources and lives and sets back socio-economic development, but it is worth repeating some details here. Afghanistan has seen nearly three decades of conflict and also has experienced invasions and occupation by foreign troops. It is a country beset by ethnic, communal, and sectarian divisions.

The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) came into being in 1978 with the Saur (April) Revolution. A revolutionary program was announced to include land reform, formal rights for the various nationalities, women’s rights, and compulsory schooling. A tribal-Islamist uprising emerged in the latter part of 1978; covert U.S. military support for the insurgency began in the summer of 1979, six months before the intervention of the Soviet army, which had been requested by the Kabul government. During the Reagan Administration, U.S. military support through its proxy, Pakistan, drew the Soviet military into a protracted international war. What should be underscored is that the United States backed an Islamist rebellion opposed to girls’ schooling—in contrast to the Soviet Union’s support for a modernizing, left-wing government dedicated to women’s emancipation and social development in its impoverished country. The U.S. involvement in Afghanistan in the 1980s would have long-term and very adverse effects.

After the departure of the Soviet army in February 1989, the conflict raged until April 1992, when the government of Dr. Najibullah fell to the Mujahideen, the seven-party alliance of insurgents. The consequences were the collapse of a modernizing state, a civil war among the Mujahideen (1992-94), the decline of Afghan women’s participation and rights, and the rise and victory of the Taliban in 1996. The Taliban instituted a medieval-like regime and what international feminists called “gender apartheid.” In addition, the Taliban offered hospitality to the likes of Osama bin Laden. Following the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Afghanistan was invaded by American troops, in concert with former

Mujahideen commanders, now known as the Northern Alliance, and the Taliban was removed from power later that year.

For a while, the so-called Bonn process for Afghanistan (involving assistance from the U.S., NATO, and the EU) was considered a success story of international intervention and post-conflict reconstruction through development aid, even though the first Afghanistan Human Development Report (UNDP, 2004) emphasized the continued risks and threats. Donors made much of the introduction of elections, the “restoration of women’s rights” and the introduction of a 25% gender quota, the building of schools especially for girls, and the start of an array of businesses.

But conditions began to stagnate and then to deteriorate, especially after the Taliban resurgence in 2006. When the Taliban began to target schools and schoolgirls, it was clear that the experiment had failed. Afghanistan is among the poorest countries in the world, ranking 174th out of 178 countries on the UNDP 2007-08 human development index. A large percentage of the population suffers from shortages of housing, clean water, and electricity and cannot afford the rising cost of food. Afghan women face the highest rates of illiteracy and maternal mortality in the world. Educated youth have few job prospects; such male youths in particular are likely to attempt illegal migration to Europe.

Afghanistan was said to have an economic growth rate that averaged 9% per annum since 2002. However, much of that growth was attributed to foreign aid, opium poppy cultivation, a construction boom in a few cities, and cottage services such as restaurants that cater to international workers and a small business elite. What is more, the government’s liberal economic policies allowed for the importation of cheap Chinese shoes that threatened to put domestic cobblers out of business (Constable, 2009). The Bush Administration focused on generating quick “success stories” and a “leave-it-to-the-hands-of-the-private-sector” approach rather than the arduous and long-term task of building a viable and self-sustaining economy through carefully planned public-private partnerships (Chandrasekaran, 2009a, 45). Private U.S. firms such as Chemonics profited from their contracts in Afghanistan but have had little to show for their USAID-financed work. Inside USAID, there are few agronomists or agricultural experts left following the budget cuts of the 1980s and 1990s. When a proposal was made to USAID to subsidize Afghan farmers and wean them away from poppy to cotton production, the agency rejected it; the free market model made farm subsidies anathema. A proposal to counter poppy production in southern Afghanistan through agricultural credit and price supports also was nixed. As one observer put it: “The aid program has been driven at the operating level by people who are very ideologically private-sector, by people who have an antipathy toward government programs to assist farmers” (Chandrasekaran, 2009b, A1). The result has been continuing poppy cultivation, U.S.-led aerial destruction, and rural discontent.

International aid levels to Afghanistan remain low and consistently lag behind stated requirements: “The little aid that has been delivered tends to be supply-driven and to reflect donor preferences rather

than addressing the population's real needs. According to the highly critical March 2008 OXFAM/ACBAR report on aid effectiveness, only \$15 billion of the \$39 billion originally pledged has been disbursed. Out of that, a 'staggering' 40% of the aid has returned to donor countries through company profits and consultants' salaries. More than half the international aid is bound by national procurement rules that require resources and services be purchased from the donor country" (Kaldor and Theros, 2008, p. 2).

Small wonder, then, that the main source of wealth remains the drug economy. This is of considerable concern to Afghanistan's neighbor Iran, which has seen very high levels of drug addiction, resulting largely from the illicit cross-border drugs trade. As of 2007, Afghanistan supplies 93% of the world's opium. Kaldor and Theros (2008, p. 2) cite a U.N. report to the effect that the drug economy purportedly funds more than one-third of Taliban operations. It has become the single largest source of revenue for warlords, insurgents, and criminal organizations as well as government officials including police (p. 2-3). Efforts to eradicate poppy production have been neither successful nor popular. The U.S. favors aerial spraying—although the U.N., NATO, and the Afghan government oppose it, concerned that it alienates farmers and drives them to support the Taliban. Without real options for alternative livelihoods, peasant farmers feel that poppy production is the only means to guarantee their family's welfare. Even so, they receive less than 20% of drug revenue while the rest goes to a nexus of traffickers, traders, corrupt government officials, and factional commanders" (Kaldor and Theros, 2008, p. 3). President Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, who is based in Kandahar, has been implicated in the opium trade (Klein, 2008).

Afghanistan's problems, therefore, are compounded by the pervasive nature of corruption. In turn, corruption and impunity—on the part of government officials and warlords—have eroded public confidence and trust. One consistent criticism, which has emanated largely from the women's rights community and especially bold women leaders and members of parliament such as Malalai Joya, concerns the sinecures given to former Mujahideen commanders guilty of war crimes, including sexualized violence against women (Joya, 2009). Citing a report by Human Rights Watch as well as comments by an advocate in the Afghanistan Human Rights Organization, one analyst refers to Afghanistan's "criminal state" (Baker, 2009, 40). Afghan police have reputations for torture and blackmail (Filkins, 2009).

And what of the gendered effects of conflict and war in Afghanistan? During the Bush years, officials liked to point to regular elections and the 25% female parliamentary quota as achievements. Yet progressive women lack political power or influence, which is enjoyed mainly by those men who were attached to the Northern Alliance or otherwise associated with president Karzai. The gendered effects of conflict and war go beyond the limits of the electoral process, however. They include: destruction of girls' schools by Taliban fighters and acid attacks on school girls; assassinations of female leaders and rapes of young women; persistence of female illiteracy; passage of the patriarchal Shia family law.

It is worth pausing here to reply to a longstanding argument that the Soviet “invasion” is what triggered the country’s turmoil, descent into conflict and fundamentalism, and the rise of the Taliban. In fact, an Islamist rebellion in Afghanistan would have occurred even if the 1978 revolution had not taken place; Islamism was on the rise throughout the region. What is more, the revolutionary government was arguably in a stronger position than any preceding one to prevent a successful Islamist challenge: it had highly ideologically motivated cadres in party cells, social organizations, and the military. And it had the financial and diplomatic support of the socialist bloc. In other words, had the U.S. not decided to undermine the revolutionary government and support the Mujahideen through Pakistan, fundamentalism would have been quickly defeated in Afghanistan, the Soviet troops would have returned home in weeks, Osama bin Laden and numerous Arab militants would not have received training in the CIA-sponsored “resistance” camps, Pakistan would not have become a rogue state, the Taliban would never have come into existence, Afghanistan today would not be awash with narcotics, Afghans would have higher educational attainment, and at its worst, the country would resemble contemporary Uzbekistan or Tajikistan.

### **Resistance and Alternative Visions: Towards Human Security with Women**

The crisis in Afghanistan belies the promise of a post-Cold War world order serenely led by the United States toward the eventual triumph of liberal capitalism. In fact, the multiple tragedies and crises that we have observed in the new century have triggered not only national-level resistances but also transnational mobilizations, including demonstrations against war and neoliberal globalization, and mobilizations by transnational feminist networks (TFNs) in defense of women’s human rights (Moghadam, 2005, 2009). TFNs are structures organized above the national level that unite women from three or more countries around a common agenda, such as women’s human rights, reproductive health and rights, violence against women, peace and antimilitarism, or feminist economics. They work with each other and with transnational advocacy networks to draw attention to the negative aspects of the world order, to try to influence policy-making, and to insert a feminist perspective in global advocacy and activism. TFNs emerged in the mid-1980s and they continue to grow. Some formed to criticize neoliberal economic policies and their effects on women workers and the poor (e.g., MADRE, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, or DAWN, and Women in Development Europe, or WIDE), and others arose in response to the growth of fundamentalism and political Islam (notably, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, or WLUML). These networks and older groups such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) have been joined by new groups such as Code Pink, criticizing U.S. foreign policy, calling for an end to war and suffering, and seeking a world characterized by equality and solidarity. (See Table 1.) In early October 2009, Medea Benjamin of Code Pink traveled to Afghanistan to meet with Afghan women



Table 1. Types of Transnational Feminist Networks

## Critique of Economic Policy

Transnational Feminist Network	Website	Location
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)	<a href="http://www.dawn.org.fj/">http://www.dawn.org.fj/</a>	Fiji
Network Women in Development Europe (WIDE)	<a href="http://www.eurosur.org/wide/home.htm">http://www.eurosur.org/wide/home.htm</a>	Brussels etc.
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)	<a href="http://www.wedo.org/">http://www.wedo.org/</a>	New York
Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ)	<a href="http://www.wicej.addr.com/">http://www.wicej.addr.com/</a>	U.S.
International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC)	<a href="http://www.iwtc.org/">http://www.iwtc.org/</a>	U.S.

## Advocacy for Women's Human Rights and Anti-Fundamentalism

Transnational Feminist Network	Website	Location
Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA)	<a href="http://www.awsa.net/">http://www.awsa.net/</a>	U.S.
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)	<a href="http://www.awid.org/">http://www.awid.org/</a>	Canada
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)	<a href="http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/">http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/</a>	U.S.
Equality Now	<a href="http://www.equalitynow.org/">http://www.equalitynow.org/</a>	U.S. & Kenya
Madre	<a href="http://www.madre.org/index.html">http://www.madre.org/index.html</a>	U.S.
Sisterhood is Global Institute (SIGI)	<a href="http://www.sigi.org/">http://www.sigi.org/</a>	Canada
Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)	<a href="http://www.wluml.org/">http://www.wluml.org/</a>	Nigeria, Pakistan, U.K.
Women's Caucus for Gender Justice	<a href="http://www.iccwomen.org/">http://www.iccwomen.org/</a>	U.S.
Women's Human Rights Network (WHRNet)	<a href="http://www.whrnet.org/">http://www.whrnet.org/</a>	N/A
Women's Learning Partnership (WLP)	<a href="http://www.learningpartnership.org">http://www.learningpartnership.org</a>	U.S.
Women for Women International	<a href="http://www.womenforwomen.org">www.womenforwomen.org</a>	U.S.

leaders, including Masooda Jalali, the minister of women's affairs. Code Pink calls for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from both Afghanistan and Iraq and the increase of development funding. Following the meeting, and in deference to the concerns expressed by the Afghan women leaders regarding an early exit of U.S. troops, Benjamin said her group would be "more flexible about a timetable" for the exit strategy while continuing to call for an end to the military intervention (Mojumdar, 2009).

MADRE and Code Pink—as well as other TFNs such as the Marche Mondiale, DAWN, and WIDE—are part of the Global Justice Movement, which has been extensively studied in recent years. Jackie Smith (2008, p. 224) shows how the World Social Forum, a key institution of the Global Justice Movement, is an alternative arena for the cultivation of "skills, analyses, and identities that are essential to a democratic global polity." Christopher Chase-Dunn and his students have examined the rise of a "global left," comprised of transnational social movements that meet at the WSF, as well as a number of left-wing governments currently concentrated in Latin America (Chase-Dunn et al., 2009). Positioning themselves against both neoliberal capitalism and the new American imperialism, the "democratic globalizers" (Smith) and the "global left" (Chase-Dunn) exhibit the potential to form a counter-hegemonic bloc in global politics. But if the bloc is to succeed, it will have to include transnational feminist networks and its alternative frameworks will have to integrate feminist insights.

Global feminism has much to offer in the way of analysis of international relations. Catherine Eschle has discussed "globalized feminist movement democracy" created by "transversal feminist activism" (2001, p. 279). Cynthia Enloe (2006) explains: "Focusing our attention on the military-industrial complex, oil and empire isn't enough. If we dismiss the politics of femininity and masculinity, we will never get to the bottom of what fuels militarization. We will never roll it back because we won't know what propels it forward." Christa Wichterich, a WIDE scholar-activist, argues that feminists have to go beyond the legitimate liberal perspective of gender equality and women's human rights to push for "interventionist reform in favor of poor people, social justice and gender equality on the one hand, and on the other hand fight against the overexploitation of human and natural resources, against the commodification and privatization of everything, the destruction of livelihoods and alternative economic arrangements" (cited in WIDE, 2007, p. 30). Ann Tickner aptly put it thus: "the achievement of peace, economic justice, and ecological sustainability is inseparable from overcoming social relations of domination and subordination; genuine security requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social relations" (1992, p. 193).

Although the conflict in Afghanistan is rooted in the restructuring of the international state system under U.S. hegemony, prospects for its resolution are not good. Since the Taliban resurgence, the "international community" has been faced with the question of how to address the insurgency. In early December 2009, we learned that the Administration of President Barack Obama had decided to es-

calate the conflict by committing 30,000 more U.S. troops. It is highly unlikely that the U.S. will “prevail” or militarily withdraw with a sense of “mission accomplished.” To this observer, the defeat of the government of Najibullah in 1992 marked the end of a valiant attempt to centralize power, implement long-term economic and social development, and modernize the country. Since then, neither the Mujahideen nor the Taliban nor the Karzai government has been able to unite the country and embark upon economic and social development. And the Taliban appear to be able not only to hold its own in Afghanistan, but to replicate in Pakistan.

This paper began with a conceptual framework drawing on world-system and feminist insights and a critique of the greed and hyper-masculinity of both the hegemon and the insurgents. Here I turn to a policy framework that rests on concepts of human security, human development, and human rights. The short-term (and apparently elusive) goals of winning battles against the insurgents in Afghanistan should be replaced by a longer-term strategy for the establishment of human security through international and regional cooperation and financing.

With the end of the Cold War, new concepts were introduced, in particular human development and human security. The UNDP’s Human Development Reports of 1990, 1994, and 2000 were largely responsible for both concepts. The concept of security was broadened from its traditional associations with state sovereignty, military preparedness, and balance of power to encompass economic, health, environmental, personal, community, and political securities. Personal security, water and food security, rights to healthcare and political participation, and economic security came to be considered fundamental to and inseparable from human development and provide the foundation for human rights policies and practice. Efforts were made, therefore, to connect human security with human rights, and to establish links among security, rights, and participation toward a holistic goal of the empowerment of people and communities.

The UNDP’s Human Development Report Office first offered a conceptualization of human security in its 1994 report for discussion at the World Summit for Social Development, which took place in Copenhagen in March 1995. In the present context of military escalation in Afghanistan, it is interesting to note the Report’s assertion that “the search for human security lies in development, not in arms.” The 1994 Report also argued that the attainment of human security was in the interest of not only the Global South but also the rich countries of the North. And it called for “a new world social order” through a 20/20 compact for human development that would allocate 20% of donor aid to social development and 20% of government budgeting to the social sector (UNDP 1994).

In this alternative policy framework, security, development, and rights are understood to be applicable to all and not only to the most powerful. It will be recalled that in the wake of 9/11, the U.S. was concerned with its own national security (as well as with the re-assertion of its international power and the success of its private-sector contractors). When the U.S. chose to bomb Afghanistan in 2001

(and Iraq in 2003) in the name of national security, it was denying security to the citizens of those countries. Quite apart from the fact that the mission backfired, one may well ask if the attainment of security by one country can legitimately and morally come at the expense of the security of another. And when the very presence of U.S. troops instigates an insurgency, the result is continued insecurity for ordinary citizens and stalled economic and social development. In what sense, then, can the military option be said to have brought anything close to security, development, and rights for women and men?

The global war on terror, the emphasis on national security, and the spread of neoliberal globalization have offered diminishing returns for human security as a concept or program. To date, the concept has yet to find its way into conventions and norms, though it has been the subject of many UN and academic discussions and publications. Still, it has captured the attention of intellectuals and academics in countries suffering from stalled development or unending conflict.

In 2004, the first Human Development Report on Afghanistan was published with a focus on human security. Most recently, human security is the subject of the 2009 Arab Human Development Report. The Arab report addresses human security through attention to pressures on environmental and natural resources; the efficacy of the state and prospects for human security; the insecurity of vulnerable groups; economic vulnerability, poverty and unemployment; food security and nutrition; health and human security; occupation and foreign military intervention. To its credit, the Arab report includes attention to gender inequality and women's participation and rights, but gender is seen mainly as a variable rather than a fundamental building block of society that shapes and indeed can predict attitudes and behaviors, whether on the part of individuals or collectivities. Forms of gender socialization that entail notions of male privilege and female subordination—when combined with patriarchal governance and external interventions—can lead to the highly damaging forms of violence against women that we have come to observe across the globe. The implications are clear, if profound: human security requires new forms of gender socialization. It also demands gender justice, especially for women victims of sexualized and other forms of violence.

One way to accomplish the above is to ensure that women's policy agencies have adequate budgets so that they can address the problems of war widows, implement or supervise income-generating projects for women in the provinces, work with the judiciary to ensure justice for victims of sexualized violence, and help implement international instruments pertaining to women's rights. Another is to focus on economic, infrastructural, and social development. Farmers need subsidies and other government support. In many developing countries, food supply policies are part of a social contract based on state provision of essential needs in exchange for the people's loyalty. Such an approach could prove highly effective in Afghanistan, where more than 80% of working-age men are small farmers, and where concerted efforts also should be directed toward

incentivizing the shift from the drugs trade to legal agricultural production for domestic consumption as well as for export. Alternatives for Afghan farmers could be wheat, pomegranates, pistachios, and dried fruits, as well as the legal production of opium for medicines such as codeine and morphine. In addition to serving local needs, these products generate considerable demand in rich countries.

In the alternative conflict-resolution framework proposed in this paper, economic, infrastructural, and social development—as well as border and national security—would be achieved through a regional approach to peace-building and cooperation. What is needed for Afghanistan is a multilateral regional framework involving governments and civil societies from neighboring countries. The reasons are simple: the conflict in Afghanistan has spread to neighboring countries, and client networks abound. In particular, the insurgency in Afghanistan, as well as the drugs trade, has affected Iran. There is now a Taliban in Pakistan, and porous borders allow easy access to Iran as well as Afghanistan. China and India share borders with Afghanistan. Thus all the neighboring countries have a stake in Afghanistan's stability and security.

Iran could offer much-needed development cooperation as well as assistance for social development, especially in the areas of education and health for Afghanistan. Iran also could help solve its 25% youth unemployment rate by dispatching graduates to teach or undertake service learning in Afghanistan. To ensure security in Afghanistan, the region could consider an international force drawn from neighboring countries; that force should work alongside local civilian leaders to understand and develop localized security strategies and tactics.

A new human security approach within a multilateral regional framework supported by the United States and with the active participation of international NGOs could prioritize the protection of civilians in Afghanistan as well as in neighboring states. Such an approach also would help the Afghan government earn the trust of its population and establish legitimacy through good governance, programs for social development, and a commitment to citizen welfare and the rights of women. But for now, this approach is only a distant dream, while the nightmare of war continues.

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