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Women, Peace and Security in Pakistan: Institutional Change, Women's Influence and Comparative Lessons from Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is typically measured using the formal indicators of adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs), the representation of women in peace and security institutions, and the presence of women in formal peace processes. This article contends that while significant, these signs cannot completely explain Pakistan's institutional evolution. Development of WPS related architecture in Pakistan has not been through a single, cohesive national WPS framework. Rather, gender responsive functions have been introduced gradually in various institutions that have a role in national security, the prevention of violent extremism, policing, justice, women's rights and humanitarian responses and community peacebuilding. The article therefore does not just suggest that Pakistan is a case of institutional absence of the WPS, rather it is a case of institutional dispersion and increasingly connected institutionalization. Historical Institutionalism offers an understanding of this path in terms of path dependence, critical junctures, institutional layering and conversion and Human Security expands the focus on security from state protection to lived security of individuals and communities. To make this argument more concrete, the article presents a Representation, Participation, Influence and Institutionalization (RPII) framework. The framework clearly separates numerical representation from substantive involvement; and it captures the ability of women to impact decisions and the sustainability of gender responsive practices. Five main findings emerge from the qualitative documentary case study of Pakistan with the bounded comparison of Nepal. First, institutional dispersion should not be confused with institutional absence. Second, reforms that are entrenched in the mundane mandates, procedures, capacities and accountability systems of government are more likely to last. Third, women's influence is a more complex indicator of WPS progress than representation. Fourth, international support is most impactful when it enhances the capacity of nationally owned institutions and links them with women's groups and women's expertise. Fifthly, coordination and consolidation, not the establishment of a new policy field, are Pakistan's next institutional requirement. The case of Nepal shows that a formal NAP has a coordinating role as well as limitations in implementation. The article concludes that a future Pakistani WPS framework needs to build on existing institutional gains, enhance the federal-provincial linkages, provide for responsibility and funding, enhance monitoring, and establish durable pathways for women to influence policy and implementation.

Keywords: Women, Peace and Security; Pakistan; Historical Institutionalism; Human Security; institutional layering; Women's Agency; Women's Influence; Violent Extremism; National Action Plan; Nepal.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) set a precedent in terms of the norm that connects women's involvement to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian action and post-conflict reconstruction. It recommended more people of the opposite gender be in decision making positions and that women and girls be protected from conflict related violence. The resolution thus introduced two interlinked propositions: that women suffer from conflict and insecurity disproportionately, and that women also have a role to play as political and security actors --they are not just victims (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2000).

States' recognition of WPS norms is no longer the main obstacle to implementation. It is about how those norms become part of institutions and how women's involvement affects institutional practices. One of the key documents that have helped structure commitments on WPS is the NAP. However, study indicates that a NAP does not guarantee effective implementation. While NAPs can provide incentives for State action, they should not be seen as a panacea for the implementation gap between international commitments and domestic practice, in and of themselves (Swaine 2010). Similarly, Fritz et al. (2011) stress the need for clear processes, timelines, civil society participation and assessment mechanisms, and Jacevic (2019) points out that the implementation gap between formal WPS commitments and safer and more stable communities remains.

This is a significant difference in Pakistan. The security institutions have evolved in Pakistan following a path of violence, terrorism, violent extremism, internal displacement, regional instability, policing, justice sector delays, and frequent humanitarian crises. These advances have yet to create a single "institutional pathway" like some post conflict States. Instead, gender responsive functions have been seen in various institutional places and times. Gender security is explicitly mentioned in the National Security Policy of Pakistan (2022-2026), which demands women's meaningful participation in the decision making, law enforcement, justice and peacekeeping sectors (National Security Policy of Pakistan [NSPP] (2022). The National Counter Terrorism Authority [NACTA] (2024) has expanded the roles for the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Ministry of Human Rights and others in women's participation and capacity building in PVE in the National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy 2024.

This trend is further illustrated by more recent institutional developments. On 29 January 2025, NACTA met with the Interim Chairperson of the NCSW and discussed possible cooperation under the NPVE Policy 2024, both parties highlighting its importance for women's role in preventing violent extremism (NACTA, 2025). In the same vein, engagement with NACTA has also generated momentum towards a National Action Plan on WPS and institutional capacity building in government, parliamentary and justice institutions have been reported in the 2025 results of UN Women Pakistan (UN Women, 2026). The developments do not mean that the area already has a solid WPS architecture in place in Pakistan. They do, however, warrant attention as an institutional process rather than taking the assessment to mean that a formal NAP exists or does not exist.

This article, therefore, makes a specific argument that Pakistan is a case of institutionalization of WPS as dispersed and increasingly connected. An argument that does not confuse all gender responsive programmes with WPS or make this argument about the relative quality or coherence of dispersed activity and a national framework. Instead, it seeks to understand how women's engagement has led to measurable influence on policy, procedures, resources or oversight, how these functions are sustainable, and how they have been introduced into institutions.

The analysis is guided by three Research Questions:

RQ1: How have WPS principles become part of the current peace, security, justice and governance structures in Pakistan, despite the lack of a known historical peace, security justice and governance framework in WPS?

RQ2: How can the differential progress of institutionalization reforms be accounted for in terms of their formal representation versus substantive participation, influence and institutionalization?

RQ3: What have we learned from Nepal's formal WPS institutionalization experience about the opportunities and constraints of Pakistan's more incremental and diffuse approach?

The article is threefold: First, it unites strands of Pakistani research and policy that are typically dealt with in isolation from each other: countering violent extremism, policing, justice, women's rights and community peacebuilding. Second, it introduces Historical Institutionalism to account for the fact that gender-responsive functions can be placed on top of institutions of another sort. Third, it focuses on the influence of women as the key factor in analyzing change in institutions, not their numbers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: FROM PRESENCE TO INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE

2.1 WPS, National Action Plans and the implementation gap

The literature in the WPS has gradually shifted from awareness of the state of marginalization of women to questions related to implementation, localization, institutional design and political influence. Resolution 1325 was the first to set out the three connected spheres of interest of participation, prevention, protection and recovery. NAPs in turn became significant tools to mediate these principles into national policy. But as the literature demonstrates, formal adoption and substantive implementation are not one and the same. Swaine (2010) suggests that action plans can be motivating and organizing, but their effectiveness is dependent on the process and content of their creation and enactment. In their analysis of 16 NAPs, Fritz et al. (2011) highlight the need for: timelines; responsibilities; civil society participation and assessment. Similarly, Jacevic (2019) notes the institutional promise of NAPs and its implications on communities and security should be separated from its impact.

This implementation literature is directly relevant to Pakistan as it provides analytical space to consider functions of WPS that are not part of a single national plan. It also helps to avoid the opposite problem of seeing any gender sensitive activity as proof of effective WPS implementation. The big issue is institutional depth -- how are gender responsive commitments linked to formal mandates, recurrent procedures, capacities, funding, data, coordination and accountability.

2.2 Representation, participation and influence

A second strand of WPS scholarship calls into question the notion that women simply transform institutions when they are present. Access does not guarantee authority, and representation does not guarantee access. Participation is more robust than presence as it suggests an opportunity to discuss, act on or monitor. Influence is even more powerful when there is evidence that women's involvement had an impact on an institutional result. Such a division is especially significant in the security sector where women are recruited to work or advise in organizations that are still highly masculine.

This problem is representative of recent research in Pakistan. Salman (2025) looks at the experience of the female security experts in Pakistan and finds that the women are under-represented, inaudible, performative and discriminated against by the security epistemic community. The study is relevant to the current piece because it warns against the assumption that entry into the space of security equals equality in that space. The presence of women is not

the only question, it is also the question of hearing their knowledge, taking it into account and making it the basis of institutional authority.

2.3 Pakistan: scattered evidence on security, PVE and peacebuilding

The evidence on Pakistan-specific issues is scattered in different literatures. The narrow depiction of women as passive victims is challenged by research on women and violent extremism. Research on women and violent extremism provides challenges to the narrow representation of women as passive victims. In his study, Qadeem (2018) recounts women who have been involved in roles of teachers, community leaders, political and religious leaders, media representatives, and civil society activists in the prevention and countering of violent extremism. Her analysis is particularly timely as it shows how in some cases in the absence of a consolidated NAP, civil society has been able to implement WPS principles by empowering women, preventing and non-violently addressing security at the community level.

Women also play an active role in peacebuilding as community-level evidence shows. In this article, Gul and Fayaz (2022) explore the Khwendo Jirga (Women's dispute resolution forum), which was formed in Swat in 2013. They conducted qualitative interviews with them and their study details how they were excluded from conventional jirga decision making and created an alternative space for women. Significance of the case to the present case is not that it proves system-wide institutional transformations, but that it shows that women themselves have been attempting to gain decision making power in an institution traditionally male dominated. In more recent scholarship, the Khwendo Jirga is treated as an important negotiated space of visibility, identity and women's claim to institutional space (see Gul & Fayaz, 2022 and the 2026 study in the references).

The policy environment has also evolved. Gender security has been made part of the NSPP 2022-2026, which explicitly mentions about meaningful involvement of women in decision making, law enforcement, justice and peacekeeping (Government of Pakistan, 2022). The NPVE Policy 2024 provides greater clarity on the institutional responsibilities of NCSW and the Ministry of Human Rights for PVE and identifies women teachers, policewomen, activists, political leaders and parliamentary members as actors who need to be strengthened for PVE. It further recommends gender-sensitive research and gender data on the roles of women in violent extremism and impact of PVE strategies (NACTA, 2024). General statements about the importance of women are less evidence of institutional embedding than provisions that designate functions and actors for implementation.

2.4 Nepal as a focused comparator

Nepal offers a useful contrast since its WPS institutionalization has taken place in a post-conflict setting. In the aftermath of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2006), the Government of Nepal (2011, 2022) has approved a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 for 2011-2016 and a second NAP for 2022-2025. According to the UN Women, countries with well-designed WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) in the Asia-Pacific include Nepal, and planning periods were reported for both countries (UN Women Asia-Pacific, n.d.).

The utility of Nepal as a comparator is its contrast with formal coordination and implementation. Yadav (2020) discusses the implementation of Nepal's first NAP and challenges the notion that the implementation of WPS is solely the responsibility of the government and is dependent on several actors, among which international donors play a crucial role. Luna and Whetstone (2022) also show that grassroots women's experiences and realities can be under-represented in NAPs activities, even when NAPs are in place at the national level. Nepal thus offers no model to emulate and no evidence that formalization necessarily leads to transformation. Rather, it invites

the article to consider what institutional impacts of formalization could be beneficial for Pakistan: greater clarity of responsibilities, coordination, monitoring and avenues for women involvement.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Historical Institutionalism

Historical Institutionalism (HI) sees the political and institutional results as being the outcome of sequences of events that are themselves explained by the institutional structures that are inherited and the consequences of previous institutional choices. HI is one of the principal new-institutionalist approaches as identified by Hall and Taylor (1996) and Pierson (2000) illustrates the importance of sequence and timing in political change. Thelen (2004) and Mahoney and Thelen (2010) offer a more dynamic picture of institutional change, including cases in which new rules are added to current sets or in which current institutions are transformed for new uses.

In this context four HI concepts are of special use. Path dependence highlights the impact of the current security and governance structures on the future of the reform process in Pakistan. Path dependence focuses on the influence of current security and governance institutions on future reforms in Pakistan. The Critical junctures are defined as opportunities that change as a result of shocks or political changes. Institutional layering refers to the process of new tasks and/or rules being added to existing ones, not to the complete replacement of institutions. Institutional conversion refers to settings where there is an existing institutional setting whose interpretation or use is adapted to new functions. Given this, the present article focuses on layering, as gender-responsiveness can be integrated into security, prevention, policing, justice and humanitarian institutions without developing new WPS bureaucracies.

The moments of the 2014 Army Public School attack, the merger of the former FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2018, the emergence of the National Security Policy, and the preventive paradigm shift in the NPVE policy can be considered as moments that shifted institutional opportunity structures in Pakistan. The moments of the attack on Army Public School in 2014, the merger of the former FATA with KP, the development of the National Security Policy and the emergence of the NPVE policy of prevention can be seen as moments that changed the institutional opportunity structures in Pakistan. This is not to say that these events necessarily caused gender responsive change. Instead, they established institutional environments where new duties and relationships could be added to old ones.

3.2 Human Security as an auxiliary framework

Historical Institutionalism (HI) offers an account of institutional change but it neither says who is being secured nor lay out what the security is. In a complementary way, Human Security offers an alternative view by refocusing security from territories and the security of State institutions to the security of people. The term human security has been popularly defined by UNDP Human Development Report 1994, which described human security as a concept that involves security in people-centred language and makes a connection between security and development rather than arms (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 1994).

For the purposes of this study, Human Security does not make any social or economic problem a WPS problem. It has more specific functions. It highlights the impact of terrorism, displacement, violence and recovery on access to justice, mobility, livelihoods, documentation, education, health and community safety. This is crucial because institutional outcomes can lead to fail to capture insecurity at the community level.

3.3 Representation, Participation, Influence and Institutionalization (RPPII)

The article builds a framework of Representation, Participation, Influence and Institutionalization (RPPII) to link theory with evidence. Representation is about the presence of women in the institutions. Participation: Do they have important opportunities to debate, execute or review?

Influence poses the question about whether women's participation can be shown to influence the content of policies; institutional priorities; procedures; resources; or decisions. Institutionalisation questions how the change is captured in mandates, recurring functions, procedures, budgets, data systems, professional routines, and accountability systems.

The categories are intentionally not hierarchical. Representation need not lead to participation, participation need not lead to influence, and influence need not be continuous but may be sporadic. It is, therefore, a historical sequence followed by a critical juncture, then a response from the institutions, and then a layering and/or conversion, representation, participation, influence and institutionalization. The framework does not represent a sequence of steps that all institutions have to go through.

3.4 Analytical propositions

The analysis is structured in four propositions. Proposition 1, functional institutionalization, is that gender-responsive functions can be institutionally meaningful prior to the establishment of a single consolidated WPS structure where institutions with real authority over prevention, security, justice and recovery are gender-responsive. Proposition 2 (depth of embedding) suggests that the deeper the reform is embedded, the more durable it is likely to be, with deeper embedding occurring in temporary activity to formal mandates, procedures, recurrent capacity, coordination, data, financing and accountability. Proposition 3, influence threshold, posits that representation and consultation are not enough, there must be stronger institutional change and that women's participation should be linked to institutional policy and/or procedures, resources, implementation, or oversight. Proposition 4: Catalytic partnership agrees that international support is most impact when it reinforces nationally owned institutions and engages women's organizations and WPS knowledge.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design and case selection

The study takes the qualitative explanatory case study design including thematic document analysis and structured, focused comparison. This is mainly the case in Pakistan. Nepal is bounded comparative case for testing propositions related to formal coordination, institutionalization and women's influence. The time frame covered from 2000 to 2025, starting from the UNSCR 1325 and focusing more on Pakistan since 2014 as this period saw the introduction of important measures in the field of counter-terrorism, PVE, merger of FATA with KP, national security policy and recent institutional involvement on WPS.

The range of cases and institutional developments is purposively selected because they have a clear link with at least one WPS concern, include documentation evidence on women's participation or gender responsive institutional change, are linked to an identifiable institutional mechanism, and offer adequate documentation evidence for analysis. Special focus is on federal institutions, KP and Swat as there is comparatively more literature available about link between violent extremism and displacement, peacebuilding and women agency.

4.2 Evidence and analytical coding

The study is based on a hierarchy of sources. State documents related to each primary are formal documents, mandates, policies and institutional responsibilities. Reported programmes, institutional partnerships and outputs are identified using UN and development partner documents. Peer-reviewed scholarship is interpretation and independent criticism. This is because civil society research is utilized in a specific manner for community level experience and women's agency. No single source category will be deemed to be adequate for the purpose of establishing long-term impact.

Evidence is coded by WPS concern, by historical trigger/critical juncture, by institutional location, by formal mandate, by layering or conversion, by representation, by participation, by influence, by institutionalization, by coordination, and by dependence on temporary external assistance. The following are the same questions used in Nepal. This design enables the study to differentiate between what is said in the formal statements and what evidence can be found of participation and influence within the institution.

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Finding One: Institutional dispersion should not be mistaken for institutional absence

The evidence shows that the institutional set up in Pakistan for WPS is more developed than a binary classification (yes vs. no) of a specific WPS NAP would suggest, but less coordinated than a coherent national framework. Functions relevant to the situation are spread across the national security, PVE, policing, justice, women's rights institutions, provincial systems, civil society and humanitarian systems.

The NPVE Policy 2024 is a key one. It goes beyond the narrow definition of counter-terrorism by recognising community engagement, tolerance, women's participation, capacity development and gender-sensitive research as attributes of prevention. In certain areas, the policy gives NCSW lead roles, while other partners such as NACTA, law enforcement, and education departments and other institutions are identified to support NCSW (2024). This is an example of the institutional layering in gender-responsive prevention as it is being layered onto an existing PVE framework but not created via a new WPS bureaucracy.

This newly formed link is evident in the meeting that NACTA has with the NCSW in January 2025. The meeting was held to discuss possible collaboration under the NPVE Policy 2024, and both sides agreed that women play a crucial role in preventing violent extremism (NACTA, 2025). The evidence should, however, be taken with a grain of salt. A meeting is a sign of institutional contact and policy interest but not institutional implementation or women's influence over PVE decision-making. This is the key difference in the RPII framework.

Reach is a measure of the strength of dispersed institutionalization. Functions can enter institutions which already have legal authority, staff members, budgets and implementation systems. The problem with it is fragmentation. In absence of coordination, responsibilities can overlap, data can be disconnected, and consultation cannot result in a lasting access to decision making. Pakistan thus has an institutional starting point more nuanced than the absence of institutions, but less robust than an integrated architecture.

5.2 Finding Two: Durability improves as reform comes into the regular government system

It is important to note that the term institutionalization should not be confused with programme activity. Training, workshops, and short-term projects may be significant, but their effectiveness will rely on their ability to be integrated into normal government operations. Measures of institutional depth, such as formal mandates, standard operating procedures, recurrent budgets, professional training, referral systems, staffing arrangements and data functions and accountability mechanisms, are more reliable predictors of institutional depth than the number of activities carried out.

The results reporting of UN Women Pakistan 2025 highlights the institutional capacity building efforts undertaken in government institutions, parliamentary and justice institutions. It also reported on enhanced capacities related to gender-disaggregated data, justice sector actors and gender-responsive governance, and leveraged its work with NACTA to create momentum for a national WPS NAP (UN Women, 2026). The same report also documents six Anti-Rape Crisis Cells which were established in 2024 and their reported provision of medico-legal, psychosocial and

legal support to women and boys in 2025. They are good indicators of service delivery capacity, however more efforts will be needed to make an institutional change.

The bigger lesson is that the impact of technical cooperation is greatest when it is internalized. The absence of a training session at the end of a project is not the same as a training session that is part of a curriculum at a judicial/police institution. Consultation is not the same as the permanent coordination mechanism. A pilot data collection exercise is not a recurrent function of the government. The distinction offers a useful tool to understand future WPS interventions in Pakistan.

5.3 Finding Three: The key issue is not the numbers of women, but their influence

There is a greater amount of evidence on women's presence and participation than evidence of influence on decision-making in the evidence base. This is not an isolated incident in Pakistan. Attendance, representation, consultation/institutional membership are often documented in WPS monitoring, as they are more easily documented than causal influence. Influence is therefore the crucial link between the RPPI and participation and institutionalization.

This concern is further substantiated in Salman's (2025) study on women security experts in Pakistan. The study records women's lesser engagement in the security epistemic community and experiences of inaudibility, discrimination and gendered expectations. What is being suggested is that there is a possibility of numerical inclusion along with organizational culture that limits authoritativeness. Representation needs to be evaluated with reference to agenda and decision shaping abilities.

The Khwendo Jirga is a case in point of the power and the powerlessness of women. Gul and Fayaz (2022) report on the formation of a women led jirga in Swat and its function in terms of dispute resolution and peacebuilding. It's important because women have established an institutional forum where traditionally men have exercised leadership in the jirgas. However, the evidence available so far is insufficient to assert that the effort had a transformative impact on either the formal justice system or the broader governance system. Its best evidence is in showing the agency, participation and local institutional innovation of women. Evidence of influence beyond the immediate community setting is required.

This is also true for PVE. The NPVE Policy provides opportunities for women to enter, but entry is not necessarily decision making. Future monitoring of women's involvement in priority setting for prevention should include: the role played by women in priority setting for prevention; if women's recommendations changed the priority setting or action; if resources followed the priority; and whether women were involved in monitoring the implementation of the priority. The shift in next generation WPS measurement should then be to measuring institutional consequence rather than participant numbers.

5.4 Finding Four: Domestic ownership and international support can reinforce each other

The connection between international WPS norms and domestic institutions is more aptly viewed as interaction than transfer. External standards come to institutional environments that are influenced by national policy, legal requirements, security architectures, civil society and local experience. These are understood and modified, whereby they are interpreted and adapted. This reflects the institutionalist focus on the influence of institutional legacies on the impact of new ideas.

UN Women Pakistan plays a pivotal role in the process. It has a country programme that includes partnerships with NACTA, academic institutions, religious stakeholders and civil-society organizations, with a clear linkage between its work in Pakistan and the national security policy and national peace and security architecture (UN Women, n.d.). UN Women, 2026, reports that momentum building for a NAP on WPS has been observed, with engagement with NACTA, and

that there is more institutional strengthening activities recorded through engagement with NACTA. Catalytic and convening activity is represented by credible evidence from these sources. They do not, however, claim that the institutional development of Pakistan is due to UN Women exclusively. The more defensible opinion is that UN Women has provided technical assistance, convening power, partnership building and institutional capacity within a framework of work being led by several actors at national and international levels.

The concept of institutional complementarity is thus applied in this article. State institutions bring legal authority, policy ownership, continuity and reach of implementation. Women's groups and peacebuilders bring lived experience, community legitimacy and understanding of local insecurity. International partners, such as UN Women, can provide technical expertise, comparative learning, standards and convening capacity. Institutionalization is best when these capacities complement each other.

5.5 Finding Five: Coordination and consolidation is Pakistan's next challenge

The previous analysis leads to the fifth finding. The main institutional challenge in Pakistan is not only that WPS functions are absent but relevant functions are also spread across institutions that do not necessarily work as a connected whole. There are a number of institutions that address prevention and these are the police and security institutions, those that provide remedies are justice, the provincial and local institutions that deliver many services are NCSW and provincial commissions, and those that address emergencies and recovery are humanitarian bodies.

Insecurity is not restricted to any of these institutional categories, but is lived experience. A displaced woman can have issues related to documentation, mobility, property, livelihood and security and justice at the same time. The victim/witness of violence may be contacted by Police, Health, Prosecution, Courts and Social services. Access to local and national prevention networks can be ongoing for an engaged woman community leader in PVE. Fragmentation thus raises issues of access and continuity of protection and participation.

Additional value could be added to a Pakistani WPS National Action Plan by engaging with this coordination issue. It should not be a scheme to establish another bureaucracy. It should outline existing mandates, institutional gaps, federal-provincial relationships, responsibilities and funding, monitoring indicators and long-term processes for the involvement of women in implementation and oversight. Formalization would be consolidating an existing trajectory not building them up from scratch in this regard.

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: WHAT NEPAL REVEALS

6.1 Different critical junctures, different institutional pathways

Nepal and Pakistan have taken different historical paths. The 10-year long armed conflict in Nepal ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006, which provided a post-conflict environment in which a re-negotiation of political and institutional structures took place. The country subsequently adopted formal WPS National Action Plans for 2011-2016 and 2022-2025 (Government of Nepal, 2011, 2022). The modern trajectory of Pakistan, however, in the context of WPS, has emerged as a result of the reactions to the threat of terrorism, violent extremism, displacement, governance and institutional change without a formal negotiated post conflict settlement on a national scale.

Under HI, the institutional forms will depend on the starting conditions. In Nepal, the organization of WPS was possible due to an explicit policy framework that was developed in the wake of the conflict. In Nepal, an explicit post-conflict policy framework enabled the organization of WPS. Pakistan has tended to add gender-responsive functions to institutions established for other reasons, such as security, prevention, justice, and governance. The difference is in the

route of institutionalization and not in the mere dichotomy of a country with and a country without WPS.

6.2 Formal architecture can enhance coordination, but not ensure transformation

Formalization has a coordinating effect in Nepal. A NAP can create shared language for policies, define roles, link between national and subnational actors, set expectations for monitoring, and offer a point of reference for civil society. The first NAP was written in the wake of the transition from conflict and the second NAP further institutionalised participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery (Government of Nepal, 2011, 2022).

However, the literature from Nepal also shows that it is not transformative implementation identical to formal architecture. Proponents of multiple actors and multiple donors in implementation and against single responsibility on government have been highlighted by Yadav (2020). Luna and Whetstone (2022) demonstrate that grassroots women can be under-represented in the national WPS processes. The lesson for Pakistan is thus not that a NAP is a prescription for success, but that formal coordination can provide the institutional opportunity and require resources, localization, participation and accountability.

6.3 Women facing conflict, and avenues for influencing it

The most relevant lesson from Nepal is to have ongoing and enduring pathways to engage women in conflict and insecure situations in policy design and policy realization. The literature on localization highlights the importance of making sure national WPS processes have a link to community lived experience and not to policy decision making processes (Luna & Whetstone, 2022).

The same institutional challenge for Pakistan relates to women victims of terrorism, violent extremism and insecurity in the context of displacement. The country does not require to recreate the Nepal's post-conflict structures. It requires processes to enable affected women to be engaged in implementation and monitoring beyond a single consultation. These mechanisms can be through state-owned national and provincial structures, women commissions, local peacebuilding networks, PVE coordination networks or a future NAP monitoring mechanism.

6.4 Instead of institutional forms, transfer institutional effects

This comparison gives a better lesson than giving the advice to Pakistan to emulate Nepal. Nepal illustrates institutional effects that a formal WPS framework can enable: policy direction, a shared mandate, coordination, monitoring and institutionalised pathways for participation. It also shows that these effects can be sensitive to financing gaps, different levels of localization and limited connection between participation and transformative influence.

Pakistan should thus try to achieve similar institutional impacts through an institution that is conducive to its security trajectory and federal system. The question isn't whether the Pakistani institutions need to resemble Nepalese institutions. It is whether Pakistan can join the dots of WPS related functions in a meaningful way to generate continuity, accountability and meaningful influence for women.

7. DISCUSSION

The results indicate a re-evaluation of the WPS situation in Pakistan. A compliance centred assessment starts by formal markers and queries about what Pakistan is missing. The institutionalist approach starts with the historical development and finds out where WPS relevant functions are already present, how they got there, how long they last and what impact they have. The two ways are not conflicting. Although a formal NAP is still key, its benefit should be judged by the institutional issues it resolves and not on mere symbolism.

Historical Institutionalism (HI) argues that there are three mechanisms to the Pakistani pattern. Path dependence is also the reason that new WPS related roles are introduced to institutions

that were formed based on the initial security and governance decisions. Layering refers to the process of adding gender responsive functions without replacing the entire institutions. The chapter on conversion describes how pre-existing organizations can gain new functions that are related to prevention or gender responsive. These mechanisms account for the fact that the institutional trajectory in Pakistan is dispersed as opposed to having a single WPS bureaucracy. The RPII framework highlights the primary problem with this architecture: it is easier to prove evidence of representation and activity than evidence of influence. The problem is not just a methodological one. Inclusion is likely to become performative if institutions can't prove that women's participation influences policy, procedures, priorities, resources or oversight. Women can be present but there may be little to no change in institutional authority.

Evidence also elucidates the role of a future NAP. It is not the claim of international conformity for itself that gives it its strongest claim. This is the need to link institutions at home and to define responsibility. Existing functions could be mapped via a well-designed framework, coordination could be established, federal and provincial roles could be specified, financing expectations could be defined and women's organization participation in implementation and oversight could be defined. Formalisation would, therefore, formalise an institutionalisation process, which is already taking place.

Nepal comparison reinforces this argument, as it shows the positive and negative aspects of formal architecture. A NAP can provide a common frame, but implementation, resources, localization and meaningful participation are necessary for transformative capacity. Adopting the post-conflict pathway from Nepal as a blueprint for Pakistan is not advisable, but there are lessons to be learnt from Nepal. The transferable lesson is practical: formal policy is important if it alters institutional relationships and relates commitments to authority, resources and accountability.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR A PAKISTANI WPS FRAMEWORK

Future Pakistani WPS framework should be focused on consolidation not proliferation of institutions. The first should be an institutional mapping of mandates and functions already in place in NACTA, NCSW, the Ministry of Human Rights, policing and justice institutions, provincial governments, disaster management institutions and relevant civil society institutions that are relevant to activities in WPS. The mapping should highlight responsibilities that are formalised, gaps in implementation and duplication in responsibilities.

Second, the implementation should be an integral and fundamental part of the design. The experiences of terror, displacement, social conflict and humanitarian insecurity are different across provinces and districts, and in Pakistan, many services in the protection, justice and welfare and local governance sectors are provincial and district level. A national framework that is basically federal will face the risk of re-creating the gap between policy pronouncement and lived institutional access.

Third, indicators need to shift from representation to influence. Questions to ask about monitoring should relate to whether women's recommendations made it into final policy, whether women were involved in setting priorities, whether resources were allocated in line with women's priorities, whether institutional procedures were changed and whether women took part in monitoring implementation. The WPS agenda would be more effective if indicators were developed to demonstrate institutional consequence.

Fourthly, it should differentiate between temporary programme support and institutionalised capacity. Where it supports the strengthening of the government system and women's organizations and relationships, international assistance is useful. Property development, and the projects themselves, should not be the focus of assessing sustainability; instead, it should be

assessed through mandates, procedures, repeated functions, financing, data systems and accountability.

Last but not least, a WPS framework should not consider women as a homogenous group. Institutions are experienced differently by women impacted by violent extremism, displacement, poverty, disability, and minority status and geography. Human Security supports the maintenance of these differences and the linkage between WPS and violence, peace, security, protection, recovery and participation. But women need not be portrayed as essentially passive. It is instructive to see that women can be agents of prevention and peace and that the stereotype that the gender itself determines political behaviour needs to be challenged.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is mainly documentary with no original key-informant interviews. This is especially relevant as institutional influence can be very informal. A recommendation does not necessarily have to be recorded in the final policy record and a consultation may be recorded but not have any material impact on the decision. Future studies should therefore include an analysis of the RPII through interviews with UN Women and other UN Agencies promoting women's peace and security, women officials, women's organisations, police and justice actors, NACTA, women's commissions, and provincial institutions and communities impacted by terrorism and displacement.

It is also not evenly distributed geographically. There is some evidence from other provinces, but a fair degree of variability exists between them, with comparatively little being visible in the literature from the federal institutions or from KP and Swat. The article does not, therefore, assert the uniformity of institutional development of WPS in Pakistan. Further research at the national level is needed to compare provincial variation and the effectiveness of specific institutional structures in terms of the link between participation and influence.

The case of Nepal is bounded, not matched, with comparative cases. The comparison is not to determine the ranking of national performance, but to shed light on institutional mechanisms. The model can be adapted to other federal or conflict affected States, but with equivalent depth of evidence, meaningful comparison could be made.

Last, HI has greater explanatory power for the development of institutions than lived experience. Though some of this is addressed by the Human Security approach, future studies should consider an institutional analysis framework that includes feminist and intersectional frameworks that can explore how gender, class, geography, disability, ethnicity, and other inequalities influence institutional access.

10. CONCLUSION

This article started off with a question, not the typical one on compliance with WPS. Instead of simply asking the question of whether Pakistan has formalized the architecture of the global WPS agenda, it asked what is happening to the principles that are relevant to WPS, and to understand whether women's participation leads to influence in Pakistan.

The evidence lends itself to an explanation by developmental change. Prolonged response to terrorism, violent extremism, displacement, policing, justice and governance have led to the development of security and governance institutions in Pakistan. Gender responsive functions were integrated within existing institutions with the increasing of policy that included prevention, resilience, rights and institutional reform in the policy. In the end, a fragmented WPS structure is left: some meaningful functions do exist, but they are not uniform in terms of level of depth, coordination and proven impact.

The five findings are drawn from this interpretation. Not all institutions are the same and cannot be confused with their absence. WPS reforms are more likely to be more enduring if they are put

into regular governmental processes. Representation is a less challenging indicator of progress than women's influence in decisions and institutional practice. Domestic ownership and international support can complement each other where international support increases rather than undermines national institutions. The upcoming challenge for Pakistan in WPS largely lies in the coordination, consolidation, accountability and provincial implementation.

Nepal experienced it. It also resulted in a more explicit institutional pathway for coordination and participation in post conflict settlement and formal NAPs, while Nepal literature reveals that formal institutional structures do not necessarily result in transformative implementation. Thus, the institutional effects should be transferred, not institutional forms, to Pakistan, which includes clear accountability, long-term engagement, financing, localization, monitoring and accountability suitably oriented to the Pakistani historical and federal context.

The policy implication is that nothing should be built, only what has been built should be consolidated. All this, along with the growing relationship between NACTA and NCSW, gender-sensitive justice and security reforms, women's engagement in community peacebuilding, and the continuous technical and convening role of UN Women, offer a more and more pertinent institutional basis. These could be integrated in a national WPS framework to establish responsibilities, incentivize federal-provincial implementation, provide links between commitments and financing and monitoring, and establish durable spaces for engaging women. The quantity of women present and consulted should, therefore, not be the ultimate measure of progress. It should ask what women's participation meant for policy, institutional practices, resource allocation, accountability and lived security and whether any changes have become routine ways of working in the institutions.

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