Gender Dynamics in Sustainable Peacebuilding

Challenges faced by Muslim Women

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Outline

Key concepts:
- Peace
- Peacebuilding
- Gender dynamics

- Women and peacebuilding
- Challenges for Muslim women
- Challenges by Muslim women
Resolution 1325

UNSC res: Women, Peace and Security

• Key points:
  • Equal participation of women in promotion of peace and security
  • Inclusion of gender perspectives in:
    » Peacemaking
    » Peacekeeping
    » Peacebuilding

Implementation?
Key Concepts

Peace:

“a state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended”

“freedom from disturbance, tranquility”

(Oxford Dictionary)

Negative peace vs positive peace
Key Concepts

Peacebuilding:

• Addressing root causes of conflict

• Supporting capacities for conflict resolution and peace management
Caveat

• Caution against notion of “universal peace”

• Peacebuilding efforts:

“more likely to be effective and sustainable if they relate to local visions and priorities and draw upon capacities embedded in indigenous culture..... Awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity to power imbalances is necessary....”

(Funk and Said, 2010, p113)
Gender Dynamics

• Gender: socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

• Understanding of gender relations key to women’s effective participation in peace process.

• Men and women experience conflict differently with challenges to traditional gender roles.
Women and Peacebuilding

• Women’s contributions unrecognised:
  • outside official forums
  • beyond the negotiating table

• Huge gap between policy and practice of UNSC res 1325

• Subsequent resolutions:
  • concern at slow pace of progress
  • obstacles to women’s involvement.
Further Developments

UN Sec Gen report 2010:
“Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding”
- 7 point action plan for gender responsive peacebuilding

Independent Review on Gender for UN Peacebuilding Support Office 2014:
- gap between policy commitments and implementation.
- Need to understand barriers that limit women’s economic and political participation.
Muslim societies

• Prevalent gender inequality

• Rooted in interpretations of religious discourse:
  • superiority of men forms basis of themes of dominance, authority and hierarchy in gender relations.

• Women’s public and private lives subject to religious evaluation
What comprises the religious tradition?

- The Qur’an – divine word
- The Sunna – practice of the Prophet
- Jurisprudence of the classical schools.

- Primary source – the Qur’an
- Written text of Qur’an not subject to debate.
- Interpretation different matter.
Gender Justice

• Derived from Qur’anic precepts:
  – Created equal
  – Within Islamic community no distinction by sex, class, race or colour.

• Integral part of social justice.

• Interpreted by theologians subject to prevailing patriarchal norms

• Discrepancy between Qur’anic ideology and Muslim practice.
Theorising Equality

• An equal creation

• *Reverence your Rabb who created you from a single nafs [person], and created, of like nature, its zawj [mate] and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women...*  
  (The Qur’an, 4:1)

• *Nafs* – self, person, living entity
• *Zawj* – mate, spouse, one of a pair

(Both ungendered concepts)
Theorising Equality contd...

• If men and women created equal by God, cannot become unequal later (ref: Hassan, 1996)

• No verses in the Qur’an to suggest:
  — man created prior to woman
  — woman created from man
  — woman created for man

• These ideas derive from secondary texts that borrowed from previous scriptures.
Moral-social equality

• Same standards of behaviour for men and women in ethical/moral/religious/social spheres
  (Qur’anic verses 33:35, 4:124, 4:32…..)

• Only difference on basis of taqwa

• “People, we have created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into nations and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most aware of Him: God is all knowing, all aware”  
  (Qur’an 49:13).
Moral-social equality contd...

• Men and women *awliya* of one another (Qur’an 9:71)

• *Awliya* - protectors, in charge of, guides.

• *How can women be in charge of, or guide men if they are inferior to them?* (ref: al-Hibri, 1982)

• Traditional interpretations insert inequality by differentiating between moral-religious and social spheres.
  – Women equal to men in the former but unequal in the latter
  – Equal in relations with God but unequal in relations with each other
  – Specific verses translated as advocating male superiority
The Hermeneutic Challenge

- Hermeneutics study of textual interpretation

- Traditional exegesis of Qur’an criticised:
  - methodologically atomistic
  - Content influenced by context
  - Reflected prevailing patriarchal ideology in which gender inequality taken for granted.
  - Exclusion of women
Qur’anic hermeneutics

• “it was not the text that restricted women, but the interpretations of that text” (Wadud, 1999)

• Focus is on textual unity of the Qur’an

• Specific terms to be analysed in the context in which used as well as context of whole revelation

• Socio-historical context

• Address dynamics between the universal and the particular.
Verse 4:34

Traditional exegesis: Mawdudi

• “Men are the managers of the affairs of women because Allah has made the one superior to the other and because men spend of their wealth on women. Virtuous women are, therefore, obedient; they guard their rights carefully in their absence under the care and watch of Allah. As for those women whose defiance you have cause to fear, admonish them and keep them apart from your beds and beat them. Then, if they submit to you, do not look for excuses to punish them: note it well that there is Allah above you, who is Supreme and Great.”
• *Qawwamun* – those who provide a means of support or livelihood

• *Faddala* – to favour, to provide, blessing

• Men favoured with double the share of inheritance and charged with maintaining women from their economic resources
• *Daraba*: traditionally translated “to beat”

• Scholars emphasise symbolic nature

• Also means to confine, prevent, restrain or set an example

• *Daraba* used many times in the Qur’an in terms of setting an example

• Plurality of meanings

• Need to look at how gender relations addressed in other verses.
Recommendations

• Gender dynamics need to be addressed in efforts for peace and development.
• Root causes of inequalities need to be addressed for international resolutions and national action plans to be implemented.
• Gender inequality rooted in religious discourse needs to be challenged.

Efforts of Muslim women to reinterpret the Qur’an is a step on the pathway to sustainable peace and development.