

Investigating the adverse consequences of armed conflict on the socio-economic status of women

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Abstract: Conflict is an open clash between two opposing individuals, groups, organizations, ethnics and states. In conflict times, the violence against women assumes the form of savagery, soldiers, militias, or gunmen from both sides ravage women and rape them and the law comes to a standstill and there is no punishment for crime. But the important question is why women are violated and harassed during conflict time?

It is estimated that millions of people around the world have lost their lives in various wars over the past century. Although men and women go through similar experiences and traumas in the midst of these conflicts, the type of death is often different. In times of war, all men and women are forced to leave their homes and livelihoods, are injured or lose their lives and find it difficult to make a living during, and even after the conflict. But during regional wars, the fate of women is often disproportionately affected by the conflict between the groups involved, and the experience of women and children in these periods is fundamentally different from that of men.

Keywords: conflict; violence; Gender; Direct Violence; Indirect Violence; Unorganized and Organized Threats.

Introduction

Human social life began with strife and conflict and throughout history has been embroiled in bitter and devastating wars and conflicts, and the occurrence of wars among human beings has usually been considered as an inevitable thing. On the other hand, in every age and generation that war has taken place, it has unfortunately been painful and has led to human rights violations, especially in armed conflicts in recent centuries where war has taken place in the most deadly and pitiful way possible and is ongoing. It is widespread, especially in the internal armed conflicts in different countries, and the worst type of bloody wars and anti-human dignity behaviors and encounters have occurred in the armed conflicts.

Unfortunately, in most disputes, the least attention has been paid to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, and violations and disregard for them are spreading and are ignored and ignored in various areas by the parties involved, especially the parties involved, such as murder and killing innocent and impartial people, beheading them, brutally killing women and children, targeting

civilians, raping, using human shields, taking hostages, attacking religious and educational centers, destroying hospitals, destroying and looting public property And private, forced migration of civilians, threats from the media and human rights defenders, etc. are obvious examples of violations of humanitarian law.

While most men are killed or wounded in the war, women are often the target of sexual violence and their bodies are deliberately infected with the AIDS virus or they have forced to implant a fetus in their womb that has been raped. Women experience other forms of violence during the conflict by losing relatives or being unaware of the status of loved ones who have disappeared during the conflict

Researches show that domestic violence is on the rise in war-torn areas and the number of women being trafficked out of the region to work as forced laborers or sex workers is increasing. Has been on the rise. It has been reported that in most cases, each party involved considers harassment and violence against women as a powerful weapon to weaken the other, and for this reason, women and girls face all forms of violence, especially exploitation and sexual violence, such as torture. Rape, gang rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and trafficking have been extremely vulnerable. Studies by international organizations have shown that such violence against women in most cases continues after the end of the conflict, in addition to during the war.

With the growing global awareness of the need to protect fundamental human rights, the issue of violence and conflict, especially the harmful effects of war on all human beings, especially women, has received increasing attention in recent years. The course of the armed conflict has been severely damaged.

Methodology

This research paper was conducted by two professors of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Kabul University. In this research, the library method has been used, in which initially the resources related to the research problem have been collected and studied, and in addition to that, scientific articles and materials available on Internet sites that are directly related to the subject of our research have been studied and used.

This research is based on women`s experiences and their harsh memories from the armed conflict period. In this research we trying to picture the real situation of women and the fact of their life in the conflict time. For this reason, this research is designed as exploratory research in nature and it is qualitative research.

Qualitative research gives a scope to develop an in-depth understanding of the various levels at which conflict has affected women`s lives. Qualitative method was considered the appropriate method that could have facilitated this in-depth understanding.

In this study the core question is:

How has the armed conflict affected women`s lives? What have been its implications on the various aspects of their lives?

- To explore what kind of violence women experienced during the conflict time.
- To explore the impact of conflict on women`s socio-economic lives.

Understanding of armed conflict

Conflict is a fact of our lives. Conflict occurs when two or more than two people, groups, organizations, ethnicities or states have, or think they have incompatible goals. Conflict often occurs because of the lack of respect for one another's needs and views. It is important to understand that conflict can be creative. Conflict is sometimes necessary to bring justice where injustice exists. It can provide an opportunity for new social and political systems to be established and can help to shape the future. Nevertheless, while conflict becomes violent it will usually do more harm than good. In this study, the second or negative face of the conflict is under consideration which is named armed conflict.

Already in the sphere of everyday language, the term of conflict has no positive intonation. Usually dysfunctional phenomena like discord, dispute or fighting is associated with it, as this notion obviously visible in scholar's definitions of conflict, which here we refer to some of them.

"Conflicts as violent disputes in which at least one of the combatant parties is a state, and there are at least 100 battle-deaths, this definition covers exclusively soldiers and other military staff. Civilian victims are however not considered" (Jurgen, 2006:2)

"Conflict is a type of behavior which occurs when two or more parties are in opposition or in battle as a result of a perceived relative deprivation from the activities of or interacting with another person or group" (J. A. Litterer, 1966:1)

Conflicts as violent disputes in which at least one of the combatant parties is a state, and there are at least 100 battle-deaths, this definition covers exclusively soldiers and other military staff. Civilian victims are however not considered.

"Conflict occurs when the interest of one party come by accident or design into engagement with those of another or others" (Tony Cooper, 2003:1)

As we know in conflict time civilians are the most vulnerable party, and there are also conflicts in the time of political vacuum when there are no central state and the parties fighting for obtaining political power. This definition has been criticized by some others. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) define armed conflict as follows: "A 'major armed conflict' is defined as the use of armed force between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, resulting in the battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people in any single calendar year and in which the incompatibility concerns control of government and or territory."(Jurgen,H,2006:3) Similar to this definition the Upsala Conflict Database (USDP) defines armed conflict with very small difference "An armed conflict is defined ... as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a state." (Gleditsch, 2002:618) moreover there are some other definitions of armed conflict which they define it, in a different manner for instance the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, defines armed conflicts as: "... the clashing of interests (positional differences) on national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (organized groups, states, groups of states, organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their cases." (Jurgen, 2006:3) Like these definitions, there are too many other definitions of armed conflict which there are some resembling

as well as some differences between them so because of these diversities, Wasmuth (1992) summarizes four characteristics or essential points for better understanding of the conflict.

Firstly, the conflict shall be considered as a social fact, which should not be confused with its form. Secondly, no limiting evaluation is allowed by definition, in order not to predetermine the analysis of conflicts. Thirdly, it is to be warned of unnecessary reduction of conflicts' contextual Conflict categories characteristics, since this would not suit the complexity of its notion. Fourth, cause and effect should not be compounded or interchanged by defining conflicts.”(Jurgen, 2006:3-4).

Type of armed conflict:

Although warfare is commonly thought of as a state of armed conflict between two or more than two separate parties, social scientists classify armed conflict into some different types, though a division of armed conflict as international armed conflict and national armed conflict. It is nevertheless important to underline that a situation can evolve from one type of armed conflict to another, depending on the facts prevailing at a certain moment.

International armed Conflict

International armed conflict occurs when two or more nations engage their formal militaries in combat. The combat can take place in one nation or it can be spread across multiple nations or theaters. “The term international armed conflict refers to situations that involve two or more states engaged in armed conflict. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the 1949 Geneva Conventions according to International humanitarian law define international armed conflict like this “International Armed Conflict are those which oppose "High Contracting Parties" meaning States. An International Armed Conflict occurs when one or more States have recourse to armed force against another State, regardless of the reasons or the intensity of this confrontation.” (ICRC, 2008:1)

Non-international armed Conflict

Non-international armed conflict or national armed conflict includes conflict kept entirely within the borders and forces of a single state, such as the use of government military forces to quell dissidents or a traditional civil war between two opposing factions within a state.

The International Committee of the Red Cross describes Article 3; national armed conflict like this “armed conflicts not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties. These include armed conflicts in which one or more non-governmental armed groups are involved. Depending on the situation, hostilities may occur between governmental armed forces and non-governmental armed groups or between such groups only.” (ICRC, 2008:3) As this definition describes the national armed conflict or non-international armed conflict occurs between some armed parties internally in one particular state. So it is mentionable sometimes the hostile armed groups will get support by outsider states. “It is important to recognize national or non-international conflicts are not only internal but transnational in nature, insofar as they take place within a particular international context.”(Jack, 2003:9) For instance, this situation happened in Afghanistan during civil war between of 1992 – 1996, in which different armed parties got support by different states from outside of Afghanistan. Hence scholars divided the both types of armed conflict into two other kinds, so the term of international armed

conflict refers to interstate and extra-state armed conflicts and national or internal armed conflict covers both internationalized internal and internal armed conflicts. “Gleditsch, Nils Petter et al” in the table give more clarification on these kinds of armed conflict.

Table (1) Types of Armed Conflict

Conflict Type	Definition	Common denotation
Interstate armed conflict	Occurs between two or more states	International armed conflicts
Extra state armed conflict	Occurs between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory	
Internationalized internal armed conflict	Occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups with intervention from other states	Internal armed conflicts
Internal armed conflict	Occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups without intervention from other states	

Source: Gleditsch, Nils Petter et al.(2002)“*Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset*”, *Journal of Peace Research* ,39 (5), pp. 615-637.

In addition, scholars have paid attention to stages of conflict and specify different stages for conflict as follow:

1. Run-up to conflict (pre-conflict)
2. The conflict itself
3. Peace process (or conflict resolution)
4. Reconstruction and reintegration (or post-conflict)

But in the conflict situation, it is difficult to specify the exact boundary between these stages. Some scholar`s mention that it is difficult to identify the beginning and end of the conflict.

...war can surely never be said to start and end at a clearly defined moment. Rather, it seems part of a continuum of conflict, expressed now in the armed force, now in economic sanctions or political pressure. A time of supposed peace may later come to be called ‘the pre-war period’. During the fighting of a war, unseen by the foot soldiers under fire, peace processes are often already at work. A time of postwar reconstruction, later, maybe re-designated as an interbellum – a mere pause between wars.”(Jack, 2003:9)

Similarly, in the post-conflict period, it is often difficult to see the opportunities for a better future due to the widespread destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods, the breakdown of trust, and the suffering caused through bereavement, trauma, grief, and anger. This kind of conflict affects the lives of civilian in society and brings a lot of difficulties, calamities, and adversities, especially for women, girls, and children.

How women experience violence during conflict time

Girls and women experience violence during armed conflict differently from men and are subject to gender hierarchies and power inequities that exacerbate their insecurity. Because of their lower status, girls and women are less able to articulate and act upon their security needs, as compared with boys and men. “A 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report noted: “In no society are women secure or treated equally to men. Personal insecurity shadows them from cradle to grave...And from childhood through adulthood they are abused because of their gender.”(Mckay: 2004:153).

Kristen Timothy “emphasized that the most pervasive threat to women’s security is violence in its various forms during armed conflict.” (Mckay, 2004:158) During armed conflict, women face direct (physical) violence as well as indirect violence.

Direct (physical) Violence

Charlotte Bunch and Roxanna Carillo asserted that gender-based violence is the primary human security concern for women: Women in both the global North and South live with the constant risk of physical harm. The experience and fear of violence is an underlying threat in women’s lives that intertwines with their most basic security needs at all levels -- personal, community, economic, and political. In virtually every nation, violence (or the threat of it) shrinks the range of choices open to women and girls, limiting their mobility and even their ability to imagine having control over their lives. (Mckay, 2004:159)

Structural (indirect) Violence

In addition to the importance of preventing and reducing direct violence, women point to the insecurity of structural (indirect) violence. Deborah DuNann Winter and Dana Leighton define structural violence as follows:

“Structural violence is embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions, and regular experiences. Structural violence occurs whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic, or cultural traditions. Because they are longstanding, structural inequities usually seem ordinary -- the way things are and always have been. But structural violence produces suffering and death as often as direct violence does, though the damage is slower, more subtle, more common, and more difficult to repair.” (Mckay, 1994:159)

The following table is a feminist security framework, which shows in detail threats to women’s human insecurity from direct and structural violence during conflict and after conflicts. Feminist scholar Birgit Brock-Utne originally developed a model to analyze the presence (or absence) of negative and positive peace at organized (macro or institutional/ societal) and unorganized (micro) levels. This adaptation of her model provides a feminist human security framework that can be used within any context to analyze existing threats to girls and women’s human insecurity during armed conflict.

Table (2) Indirect and Direct Violence/ Unorganized and Organized Threats

	Direct Violence	Structural Violence (indirect)
Unorganized: violence occurs from individual acts at the micro-level	<p>Cell 1 Violence from rape, partner battering, verbal/emotional abuse by partner and family members, “honor” killings. Exposure to sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, during and after armed conflicts from partners or individual acts of rape. Harassment, injury, and murder of women and girls in post-war</p>	<p>Cell 2 Fewer household resources compared with boys and men, compromised health because of poor-quality water, food, and housing. Environmental damage that affects the quality of life and life span. Lack of personal and political freedom of choice. Forced marriage. Difficulty marrying post-war due to stigma,</p>
Societies	Shame and psychological trauma resulting from forced maternity. Lack of economic opportunities. Prostitution for economic survival and to feed children. Pressure to wear garments to cover the head and body despite personal choices.	
Organized: at institutional/ societal (macro) levels	<p>Cell 3 Violence from military or other organized groups including murder, beatings, abductions, systematic rape with high risk for sexually-transmitted diseases, forced abortions, gender-specific torture, abductions into a fighting force, sex slavery, physical and psychological assaults. Gendered effects of land mines planted as a military maneuver. Sex trafficking. Female genital excision.</p>	<p>Cell 4 Neglect during formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes. Exclusion or marginalization within peace negotiations and post-conflict peace accords. Lack of decision-making authority within political and economic systems. Inability to participate in elections and public life. Lack of gender justice. Religious-based oppression. Lack of access to skills training, schooling, primary health care, and reproductive health services.</p>

“Conflict and human security: English Research report.” (Mckay: 1994, 160-161)

This human security framework contains threats of direct and structural violence at unorganized and organized levels, emphasizing girls and women’s human security in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Cell 1 contains examples of threats of direct violence towards girls and women that are unorganized by a political, economic, military, or other institution.

Cell 2 contains examples of human security threats that occur because of unorganized structural violence. Fueled by a lack of opportunities for securing an income, the inability to secure a livelihood is a key form of structural violence.

Cell 3 contains threats to human security that are organized at societal (macro) levels. For example In Afghanistan, in the conflict time, many girls and women have been afraid to leave their homes for work or school because they fear rape or abduction by armed groups.

Cell 4 contains threats that occur from organized (macro-level) structural violence. For example,

inadequate reproductive health services, including lack of prenatal and postnatal care, jeopardize the health of girls and women and result in high death rates in their infants. In Afghanistan, maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world. In Afghanistan, only 15 percent of births are presently attended by a trained birth attendant.

According to this model, girls and women are the worst affected in times of conflict as they are at the receiving end of all forms of violence. Women are at a very high risk of being subjected to sexual violence, of losing the male members of the family, of facing economic hardships, and of being left to fend for themselves and their family. They may experience an absolute shift in their role from being that of being protected to that of the protector. Feminist scholars have brought about, an understanding of rape and sexual violence as instances of violence during conflict times to show dominance and control aimed at maintaining patriarchy and women's subordinate situation in society. It becomes pertinent to understand here sexual violence against women is used as a strategy in conflict.

“The use of sexual violence against women during conflict times is systematic and carried out by fighting forces for the explicit purpose of destabilizing populations and destroying bonds within communities and families. Rape is a public act aimed to maximize humiliation and shame.” (Ward and Marsh, 2006:4).

It can also serve the purpose of instilling fear in the local people in order to prevent them from opposing the armed groups. According to Skjelsbak (2001) during a war different rules apply and the modes of behavior that are permissible are high, such that if a particular behavior is strictly prohibited in normal times during the war times this can be permissible. Sexual violence takes place in such times to reinforce the hierarchy and power that men have over women.

Meznaric (1994) talks about rape being a political act, ‘Sexual assault on citizens of different ethnicities was considered more aggravating than regular rape this indicates that the rape has become a political act.’ (Meznaric, as cited in Skjelsbak, 2001: 219) She also questions whether the use of rape has different political effects as compared to other forms of violence. In times of conflict, it is a fact that the majority of the population at home are women and children and in order to disseminate fear and demonstrate control over the civilian population sexual violence is effective.

Thus, the victim of sexual violence in the war zone is victimized by feminizing both the sex, ethnic, religious, political identity to which the victim belongs, likewise the perpetrator's sex and ethnic, religious, political identity is empowered by becoming masculinized. Further, the masculinized and the feminized identities are situated in a hierarchical power relation where masculinized identities are ascribed power and feminized identities are not. Thus it adds on to the above two conceptualizations, it acknowledges that women are more susceptible to sexual violence more than men, in the time of conflict. It also acknowledges that within the war zone targeted groups of women are at a higher risk as compared to the others.

According to McWilliams (1997) “there is increased control over women during the times of conflict. There is also a subsequent rise in the incidence of domestic violence. During times of conflict violence against women is used to keep women in their place, to limit their opportunities to live, earn, and care as human beings. It works as an obstacle towards their empowerment and their participation shaping the economic, social, and political life of their countries. It becomes important to understand how women deal with violence and the consequences they suffer. What are the forms of violence that are

problematized and which are the ones that are accepted” (McWilliams,1997:78).

Normalization of violence is taking place in these situations. Acts that seemed to be violating to the individuals earlier with reference to the conflict get normalized so that there is less recognition given to it apart from being routine. Violence happening due to the political scenario gains much more priority and visibility over the violence that is taking place inside the house. It is difficult for women to go and report cases of abuse since the machinery of the state itself is patriarchal, and they have nowhere to go when they confront violent situations arising out of the household domain. The different forms of violence include disappearances, killing, rape, molestation; massacres of minorities, physical or verbal abuse, loss of property, and livelihood have a huge impact on people. Indirect forms of violence that include loss of freedom, insecurity, and limited access to resources are not easy to quantify as compared to the other variables.

Conclusion

The conflict has a severe impact on women's lives, and many of women's issues and problems are rooted in armed conflict. Women have been the most vulnerable and injured during the armed conflict between different groups to any other class. Conflict and armed conflicts have prevented women from experiencing well-being and playing an active role in the development of their society.

Armed conflicts in various countries have resulted in large numbers of women losing their lives, being injured, forced to emigrate and leave their homes, and suffering psychological trauma and sexual violence. In times of armed conflict and periods of instability, armed groups often use civilians, especially women, as a deliberate tactic of war. Women's armed rights, including the right to life and immunity, have been undermined during armed conflict, even due to the spread of violence, which allows powerful groups to inflict great harm on women with impunity.

The present study shows that the ongoing armed conflict in a number of countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya. With domestic and international forms, it has very negative and tragic effects on different strata, especially women. During the armed conflict and its continuation, fewer families are left unharmed. Armed conflicts have affected all civilians of all ages, ethnicities, classes, etc., and inflicted irreparable human and financial losses on them

The physical violence which women experienced included murder, disability, loss of a family member, beating and torture, and sexual violence. Poverty and economic hardship which is the other result of armed conflict which imposed extra burdens on women and changed the form of familial livelihood system, forcing women to take entire responsibility of family so some of these women are forced to submit to different inferior work like beggary and even prostitution. In addition, armed conflict became the cause of women's deprivation from schools and education which has affected younger women. At the same time, women's economic vulnerability has increased so they cannot manage their children's education.

This study also reveals the consequences of the psychological impact of armed conflict is no less than physical effects. Women lost their self-esteem and confidence and in some cases even the will to live. This situation is dangerous for their families as well.

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