



BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING: A DILEMMA IN THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract

South Asia is one of the most violent societies in the world, and also the most patriarchal. Both characteristics have led to continuity of violence, in which women are the silent and non-recognised victims. The situation is such despite the fact that women have occupied the highest office in their respective countries. The post-1991 wave of globalisation has led to the emergence of two parallel societies, based on different values, in almost all South Asian countries. In both societies women are being exploited and violence has been unleashed on them. Revolution in information and communication technology has helped in the dissemination of patriarchal values through 'objectification' of women in the name of 'liberation' from the grip of tradition. These patriarchal trends are clearly reflected in the making of domestic policies as well as formulating foreign policies of South Asian states. In such a situation, an academic argument for feminist foreign policy is relevant, though not encouraged by social actors.

Key Words

Domestic policies, Patriarchy, Violence, UNSCR 1325, Partition.

Ranked as India's number one squash player and eighteenth in the world, Dipika Pallikal boycotted the national championship over the issue of equal prize money for the winner in men's and women's categories. At present a winner in the men's category gets Rs 1, 20,000, while a woman winner receives Rs 50,000. Internationally, Dipika is ranked higher than

her male counterpart Sourav Ghoshal. Not only in squash, but almost all games are biased towards men; no reason is ever given for such flagrant discrimination, though the news of Pallikal appeared in several national newspapers of India in June 2015.

Pallikal's news is not shocking because it is a norm practiced in almost all sectors of the economy and forms of society, though the degree of inequality varies. In Bollywood, as the Hindi film industry is popularly known, female actors receive less payment compared to their male counterparts, even when they are in leading roles. This 'accepted' inequality is due to the categorisation of primary roles and work based on gender. Due to the requirements of a female labour force, and to fulfil the promise of promoting equality in democratic states, women have been allowed to participate in public spheres; but they have not been accepted as equal to men. Gender-based inequality "legitimises" discrimination and provides a reason for the exploitation of one gender by the other (Menon 2013, P.61). Gender-based division of work, which, at a later stage, embedded the notion of sexual inequality, has its origin in the rise of the monogamous family set up, associated with the capitalist form of economic production (Engels 1891, P.39). Throughout the ages, beginning from Aristotle who considered woman as a non-developed male, this inequality has been supported by social philosophers. As gender based inequality has its base in socio-economic and political philosophy, women face discrimination in all arenas: one of them is in the sphere of foreign policy, which is guided by Hobbesian values of war, security and interests.¹

As a part of the international system, South Asian countries too follow these set patterns. In this paper an attempt has been made to address the following questions: Why is an inclusive foreign policy needed? Is there a scope for feminist foreign policy? How can internal and external actors shape a lopsided foreign policy? Although this issue is of global concern, the scope of this paper is limited to South Asia. In addition to an introduction and conclusion, this paper is divided into three parts. The first part discusses foreign policy, its meanings, formation, and values. The second part highlights the status of women in South Asian countries. In the final part, the possibility of having a gender-bias free foreign policy in South Asia is discussed.

Foreign Policy: Meaning, Making and Implementation

Foreign Policy is an important tool which decides the role a country has to play or plays in international politics. It can be defined as authoritative, non-coercive policies towards

¹ Explaining his state of nature, Thomas Hobbes asserted that as individuals are guided by glory, security, greed and self-interest, war is a natural and normal act.

other states and towards non-state actors with a view to getting them to do what they otherwise might not choose to do so. Foreign policy is therefore an exercise in persuasion and power, where power is understood as getting another to do one's will (Bajpai and Pant, 2013). As foreign policy of a state is a means to protect its interests, there is no difference between a fascist, democratic or authoritarian state on this front; all of them act in a similar way to secure or attain their 'national interests'. Of course, the justification and degree of acceptance varies. For instance, in medieval times empires killed many innocents; during the Second World War fascists killed thousands of people; during the Cold War the two super powers, the United States of America (USA) and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), killed many; and after the end of the Cold War the sole 'protector' of the world, the USA, has killed many hundreds and so have the terrorists. All such acts have been carried out in order to promote the interests of an individual or group of countries. Justification of those acts has been accepted or criticised on the basis of the nature of their governments. For example, the normal feeling is that fascists are killers while what the USA is doing is to secure the world and promote democracy. The latter thought is strong in the non-Muslim world due to what Sigmund Freud said, the prevalence of 'Narcissistic Compassion' (Achcar 2006, pp.34-5).

The non-recognition and silence of women are mainly because of the way foreign policy of a country is formulated, structured and guided. Theoretically, foreign-policy making can be discussed from both an agency and a structural perspective. In the agency-based perspective, institutions like bureaucracy, ministry of external affairs and the head of the state take decisions over the issues related to foreign policy of a country. They take decisions on behalf of people because they consider themselves 'authorised' to do so. The second perspective is the social-institutional approach, which is based on a constructivist's idea of international politics. In this, the norms, values, identities are being given importance while formulating foreign policy (Carlsnaes, 2013).

In the post Second World War, Hans J. Morgenthau's views have been termed as prophetic for the majority of the students and practitioners of international relations. As a realist scholar drawing influences from Hobbes, Machiavelli and others, Morgenthau stated that international politics is all about power, which he has defined as an act of making others do what one wishes him to do. This power can be established through consent, persuasion and coercion (Morgenthau, 1948). Later on, this idea has been expanded and popularised by scholars representing variants of realist schools, such as neo-realist, defensive realists, offensive realist, and has been supported by liberals in international politics. Examining Morgenthau, J. Ann Tickner writes "international politics is a man's world, a world of power and conflict in which warfare is a privileged activity" (Tickner 1998). Feminist scholars like Susan Brownmiller, Cynthia Cockburn, Cynthia Enloe, and others have depicted the impact of the implementation of Morgenthau's ideas on women

in war zones, where invaders, to promote their country's interests, rape, molest and kill them. This scenario happened in Bangladesh in 1971, Rwanda in 1994, Bosnia in 1994 and in many other war zones around the world.

Not only theoreticians, but also practitioners of foreign policy, have raised their voices against 'accepted' established practice and norms. One of the voices was raised in February 2015, when the Swedish foreign minister Margot Wallström stated that her government would pursue a "feminist foreign policy"; she "met with considerable derision" (Rupert 2015). Explaining later what "feminist foreign policy" means, she said, "A feminist foreign policy seeks the same goal as any visionary foreign policy: peace, justice, human rights and human development" (Ibid). She also maintained "we won't get there without adjusting existing policies, down to their nuts and bolts, to correct the particular (and often invisible) discrimination, exclusion and violence still inflicted on the female half of us". As her remarks were based on the condition of women in Saudi Arabia, she was condemned by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the Arab League (AL). Earlier, the former foreign secretary of the USA, Hillary Clinton has also talked about inclusion of issues concerning women in foreign policy.

As both academicians and practitioners have expressed the need for inclusive foreign policy and strongly advocated for women's rights a few initiatives have been taken. Since ancient times, rape, mass rapes, and murder of women have become an 'accepted' norm in war zones. To address it in 1998, rapes and murder have been accepted as genocide by the United Nation's International Crime Tribunal. Yet it is very difficult to prove because of its social implications in post-war society where victims are ostracised because of being 'impure' and 'unchaste'. This fear has made many a woman commit suicide or even marry the perpetrator of violence against her. In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security, which was an important step forward in terms of bringing women's right and gender equality to bear on the UN's peace and security agenda (Barnes and Olonisakin 2011). It calls on member states to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout all conflict prevention and peace building activities, and reaffirms women's rights to be involved in decision making and to access and take on leadership positions. UNSCR has since been strengthened by other resolutions including 1820, 1880 and 1889 (Ibid).

Although a few incremental steps have been taken by global bodies to check increasing violence against women, these moves can not be considered a leap to make the foreign policy 'inclusivist' in nature. Theoretically, foreign policy still remains a masculine power-centred concept.

Foreign Policy of South Asian States: Following the ‘norm’.

South Asia is one of the most dangerous regions of the world , with two nuclear powers – India and Pakistan – who have fought three full wars (1947, 1965 and 1971) , and one limited war (1999), have been at the brink of war (1987,1991 , 2001 and 2008) and are engaged in constant cross-border firings and political tensions. As India and Pakistan are always engaged in conflicts, their foreign policy is power-centric in nature. The India-Pakistan relationship and perceptions of other South Asian states towards India have their impact on the two societies. Continuous tensions cause them to promote masculine social norms. The second factor which promotes patriarchal norms in South Asia is internal conflict based on primordial identities and demands for separatism/secessionism. Many such wars and demands have continued since the partition of India in 1947. Finally, the South Asian states have turned into a playground for wars between the global powers. The interference of external actors has influenced the political environment of the South Asian states. Many a time they have played important roles in triggering inter or intra-state conflicts. For example, violence in Afghanistan is attributed to the role played by western powers and their adversaries during the Cold War days.

The foreign policy of a country and its social structure influence each other. Domestic institutions and actors play a role in formulating foreign policy (Morascevik 1997). Patriarchy, as a social value, guides policy making. Such is the case despite having women like Mrs Indira Gandhi, Mrs Benazir Bhutto, Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga, Sheikh Hasina or Khalida Zia as the head of state in various countries of the region. None of them had made an attempt to even disturb the patriarchal set-up. Instead, their coming into power was due to their avowed subservience to the patriarchy. These women leaders were chosen to lead their respective countries by the patriarchs because of their subservient nature and co-option to the prevailing values. Anyone challenging those values was either thrown out by the power system or not accepted as part of it.

As post-colonial South Asian states have their separate but interrelated history, a better picture can be sketched out by analysing those societies by application of the above-mentioned factors, which influence their foreign policy.

Afghanistan

Since the spread of European colonialism in South Asia in the 19th century, Afghanistan has been the victim of foreign policy executed by other countries of the world. During the Cold War days, the former USSR and the USA turned it into an arena to contest their

ideological warfare, and sowed the seeds of present-day radicalism in Afghanistan and South Asia.

Internally, the present quagmire in Afghanistan is the result of a backlash against certain progressive policies taken by King Zahir Shah in 1964 to modernise the Afghan society. The political experiment opened up Afghan politics, marking the beginning of relatively free debates in parliament and criticism by the press. Autonomous structures of local authorities existed parallel to state institutions and performed state-like functions such as maintaining local order and providing dispute resolution (cited in Rais 2011). Those modern values were welcomed by a few, but at the same time also led to the birth of right and left extremist groups. The late 1960s witnessed a growing dissent, as young people came to the capital from other parts of the country to take advantage of expanded education opportunities, particularly at Kabul University, and found a system that was still highly elitist. As a result, radical movements found fertile ground amongst Kabul's student population. Some advocated a much faster process of reform and found a vehicle in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the first communist party, which was formed in 1965, and had backing from the former USSR. Others vociferously opposed the changes that had already taken place and fought for a return to Islamic values (Marsden 1998). Groups of radical Muslims and communists often went head-to-head in their competition to regulate the hearts and minds of the tiny, urban Afghan intelligentsia, mainly on the campus of Kabul University (Hagrety & Hagrety 2007). Gradually, it led to civil war in Afghanistan, followed by military intervention by the USSR in 1979.

After ten years of war (1979-1989), Afghanistan witnessed the Mujahidin fighting among themselves. To control them, the Taliban was formed by Mohammad Omar (famously known as Mullah Omar) (Marsden 1998). The Taliban successfully killed many Mujahidin warlords and forced many to surrender. Afterwards, it worked quickly on policies that would bring Afghanistan back to an Islamic-centred way of life (Meredith, 2007). It was both a symbol of Islamic chauvinism that aimed at recapturing political power and an attempt at reasserting the traditional dominance of their social group (Rais 2011, pp.195-219). By 1995, the Taliban had established power all over the country and consolidated their rule in Afghanistan. Taliban's closeness to Al Qaida and its decision to provide shelter to Osama bin Laden, especially after 9/11 proved suicidal to the former. The US establishment had no problems with Taliban. After coming into power in Afghanistan, the Taliban promised to open its doors and provide security for the construction of oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The main contender for the pipeline was American Saudi coalition of UNOCAL and Delta oil companies (Mackenzie 1999, pp.90-103).

In war zones, women's sexuality is highly controlled, regulated and sought after by the actors engaged in wars. Due to external interference and continuous civil wars, women in Afghanistan have suffered a lot. Violence has been unleashed on them by both external invaders and actors engaged in civil wars. There is no substantive data on how many women in Afghanistan have been raped by western soldiers during such a prolonged war period. The non-existence of data is not a reason to accept that rapes have not taken place. The reason for it may be because in a traditional conservative society any such data may unleash additional violence against women. To control women during Taliban rule, the *Wahabi* interpretation of Islamic rule was adopted. The Taliban set up a conservative society, which put women back in the veil. Rapes, public floggings and other brutalities were used against them by the Taliban soldiers.

In post-Taliban days, the US-monitored Afghanistan government relied on fundamentalists and Jihadists to secure 'women's right', 'human rights', 'justice' and 'stability'. They engaged in rape, insults, threats, acts of violence, sexual assault, and even murder (RAWA, 2014). Yet some changes have taken place: in the upper house and lower house of Parliament there are now 21 and 69 women, respectively; out of 1,472 judges, 142 are women, including one provincial governor; and the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary school has gone from 50,000 in 2001 to 3,230,000 in 2011 (Nashmi, 2014).

Bangladesh

Bangladesh was liberated in 1971 from West Pakistan's 'exploitative' rule. During the civil war, which turned into a liberation war, many women were raped and murdered by Pakistani soldiers and Bengali fighters. After Bangladesh was liberated, the term *birongana* was coined in 1972 by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to officially acknowledge the role of women in attaining sovereignty. But in a short time the term *birangona* folded into another level of men's speech, *barongona*, which refers to penetration and 'penetrated'; women obviously were deemed promiscuous like prostitutes (Saikia, 2011, P.59). Many of the victims were not accepted by their husbands or by their relatives. Only those who had more children were accepted by their husbands. The typical reaction of husbands accepting back wives who bore them several children was, "What can I do? She is *mother* of so many of my children" (Jahan, 1975). Aware of society's behaviour towards them, many rape victims migrated to European countries.

Post-war Bangladesh also committed abuses against victims of physical violence. The Bangladesh government mandated an abortion programme to get rid of the 'bastard Pakistanis' and women were compelled to accept the state's intervention if they wanted

inclusion within the newly liberated country and to live a normal life, at least, at an external level (Saikia, 2011,P.59). Abortion clinics were set up. Women who continued to defy the government injunction to be aborted and delivered their babies took a huge risk. Most of them could not keep their babies, though. Purity and impurity, belonging and exclusion were worked out and physically carried out on the body of women, the site of national dishonour and power for men to control the imagining of a new 'liberated' nation (ibid). For Bangladesh, fortuitously Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity, who had been working throughout the war in the refugee camps of West Bengal providing succour to the displaced and traumatised Bengali women and children, stepped in to 'rescue' the 'war babies'. A massive adoption scheme was devised and most of the war babies were exported to The Netherlands, Canada and other European countries through contacts established by Mother Teresa's foundation (ibid). To save themselves from agony, a few of the victims chose to marry their alleged rapists, and go to Pakistan (Bose, 2007). Symbols of such 'shame' still have their presence. The exhibit at the *Jadughor* (war memorial) on sexual violence is particularly noticeable because it is in English. While most of the exhibits have Bangla commentary with English translation, there is no Bangla translation beneath the wrenching photograph of a woman covering her face. The use of this picture has suggested to some that those who were raped were covered in shame, and could not lift their heads to face the country (Datta, 2014).

Contemporarily, the rise of Islamic fundamentalists has increased attacks on women. The situation is worse for women belonging to minority communities. They have been bonded into strong conservative traditions; any challenge to them or effort to amend them is considered as interference in matters of the minority community. In February 2015, a Professor of Law from Dhaka University informed me about a case she was handling. A Hindu woman in Bangladesh was forced to drink a glass full of acid by her husband and in-laws. This caused her eighty percent burning of her entire body system. Despite such a horrific crime, she was not allowed to divorce her husband because there is no such provision in the Hindu Personal Act through which affairs of the Hindu minority community in Bangladesh are regulated. The court cited this reason for not accepting the women's divorce petition. When the professor took up this matter and met with representatives of the Hindu community, she was warned against interference in personal matters of the community. As a result, the acid-burnt woman has to live with her perpetrators, though a repeat petition was filed under the general constitutional law of Bangladesh.

India

India's post-globalised economy has witnessed the parallel rise of two societies, although both forms were there in the past also; the gap, however, was not so wide. In modern India, women have played a significant role in the freedom movement and have affected various socio-religious reforms. They have been aptly supported by the Indian constitution and stable democracy. Despite reforms and amendments in the constitution, institutions and society remain under the grip of patriarchy.

Socio-political conditions of the country have affected women too. Unlike the past, the gradual communalisation of women caused them to actively participate in politicized acts. For the first time, communal involvement was witnessed during the 1992 Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid movement. During the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat, prominent BJP women leaders remained indifferent to the rape and humiliation of Muslim women, and refused to take a gender-sensitive stand on the State government's brutal attitude and calculated inaction of the police forces (Dutta, 2003). Women are also active participants in rising communal tensions. In 2008, during tensions over the Amaranth shrine's land transfer issue, Dogra Hindu women participated in large numbers. They shouted abusive anti-Kashmiri and anti-Muslim slogans. They were seen beating their chests, displaying swords and *trishuls* (tridents) and taking a pledge that they would keep going till the land was restored to the Amaranth Shrine Board (Bhatia, 2009). Even in 2014, during communal riots in Muzzafarnagar, women actively supported members in carrying out violence against women belonging to 'other' groups. This trend is seen among women belonging to the majority community and not among the minorities who are victims of rapes and molestation during such riots.

Then there are representatives of the Indian state who use violence against women in areas under the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) to establish the writ of the state in areas where people are fighting for separation or due to other grievances. In this category falls the Kashmir valley and India's north-eastern states where rapes have been carried out by security personnel with no one being punished by the law of the land. Both regions are part of India's foreign policy arena. Kashmir is a key to India's relationship with Pakistan over which the two countries have engaged in several wars and bilateral tensions. In the northeast, groups like the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), poses a challenge to the Indian state with their demand for a separate sovereign state. Their activities influence India's foreign policy towards Myanmar, China, Bhutan and Bangladesh.²

² In June 2015 the Indian Army carried out a limited operation inside the border of Myanmar against the NSCN (K) members, who a few days before had killed soldiers in an ambush. This sort

Nepal

Nepal is a land of surrogate mothers. Poverty has forced many Nepali women to act as surrogate mothers for European parents. In addition, abject poverty has turned many Nepali women into sex workers or, in the name of domestic-service, caused them to get sexually exploited by their masters in other countries. One such case of sexual exploitation of Nepali women by their master surfaced in New Delhi in September 2015. Nepali women hired as domestic maids by a diplomat from Saudi Arabia were used as sex slaves (Haider, 2015). The two women were not given money, were beaten by their employer and forced to have sex with guests of the diplomat. After the police rescued the women and the case surfaced, the cry of diplomatic immunity for its diplomats was made by Saudi Arabia (ibid).

Nepal has also witnessed years of civil war and violence. During the conflict many women and girls were subjected to abduction, displacement, trafficking, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by all sides involved in the conflict. An analysis from the NGO SAATHI indicated that 93 percent of women were exposed to mental and emotional torture, 82 percent were beaten, 30 percent were raped and 28 percent were forced into prostitution (Abdela, 2011). Positively, the conflict has increased women's visibility. Women began to take on leadership roles in villages and across civil society in grassroots peace building, human rights and disarmament movements (Ibid).

Pakistan

Pakistan was carved out of India in 1947. The demand for Pakistan was made on the basis of the 'two-nation' theory based on religious identity of the people. But this theory was shattered soon after its birth when many 'other' identity³-based movements erupted. To contain these movements, violence was unleashed by the state on the people. A few of them were silenced. East Pakistan, however, was liberated because of the geographical distance and assistance from India to its fighters.

With the beginning of the process of Islamisation of Pakistan during the General Zia ul Haq regime, many stringent laws were formulated to control women's sexuality. One

of operation was also carried out inside Bhutan in 2005 to flush out rebels. A low level operation was carried out in Bangladesh where India had signed an extradition treaty in 2011. China is alleged to support various insurgent groups in northeast India.

³ 'Other' identity included language, ethnicity, and territory.

such law was the *Hudood* ordinance introduced in 1979. This ordinance has re-defined adultery and extra-marital affairs. Under the *Hudood* law, raped women have to produce, at least four Muslim adult witnesses about whom the court is satisfied, that they are truthful persons and abstain from major sins. Because of it, no accused person has ever been punished for committing rape, while victims have been. This law was fully revised in 2006. As Pakistan is a feudal society, patriarchy and violence against women constitute 'normal' acts. Domestic violence is such that many upper class women prefer to remain unmarried or marry late that also due to societal pressure. During my interaction with three young Pakistani women who are educated and well settled, I was told that they do not want to marry because of pervasive domestic violence carried out by males. Religiously sanctioned customs of male polygamy and easy divorce have created havoc for many women.

Benazir Bhutto, after she became Prime Minister of Pakistan, had to wear so-called women like dresses and keep her head covered in public appearances. In parliament she had to ignore many gestures and taunts (especially when she was pregnant) made by the male members. Despite being a woman, she could not touch the draconian *Hudood* ordinance. Not only she but other women leaders also followed a similar trajectory. Those who failed to do so have been ostracised, the best example being Fatima Jinnah, who presided over many functions as the first lady of Pakistan in 1947-48, but led a reclusive life in the Mohatta palace (Zakaria, 2015).

The condition of women has become more dangerous after 9/11 because of the rise of violence in Pakistan. This violence is used by the state and terror groups to establish their supremacy over others. Such violence has also strengthened control of conservative forces and the state over the bodies of women. Describing women's condition in the post 9/11 situation, Afiya Seherbano writes:

there are two broad considerations that should be keep in mind when weighing the figurative, symbolic wrath of female kin of the (Muslim) Nation. First, in the post-9/11 decade , the post-secularist lobby has been pushing the bid that Muslim women have the right to aspire for a 'different' kind of equality (non-liberal and not 'western' freedoms), and that they have the right to organised spiritual piety as may be found in their hijabs, darses, mosques and madressahs. The second concern is: which social class is benefitting most when a political issue becomes displaced by an individual when she shines her distracting, bright, celebrity or divine light? (Seherbano, 2015)

The Pakistani state is also fighting a war against its people in Balochistan and North Waziristan. In both regions, many people have been killed, have disappeared, been

kidnapped and displaced. In such a situation women have to look after themselves to take care in both public and private spheres.

As Pakistan was demanded against Hindu India, the Hindu minorities (1.2 percent) living in Pakistan face wrath from radical forces. There have been many cases of abduction of young Hindu girls by Muslim youth. Some of those girls have been raped, converted and forced to marry their perpetrators. In 2012, the Hindu Council of Karachi took the case of three abductions before the Supreme Court, which was able to locate the three young women and allowed them to choose their own future. All three chose to remain with their husbands because they were aware of the consequences of re-integration with their families (Jafferlot 2015, P.625). Not only Hindus, but Christian and other sectarian minorities too are attacked by the Deobandi Sunni groups.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has been embroiled in ethnic conflict since its independence in 1948. Ethnic Tamils residing in the northern and north east of the country demanded autonomy against domination by the Sinhalese state. The conflict turned violent in the 1980s after the formation of the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Elam (LTTE). In 1987 thirteenth amendment was enacted by the Sri Lankan Parliament, which has a provision of devolution of power to the Northern Province but it has never come into force. Afterwards, the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE engaged into a series of wars to establish dominance in the Northern Province.

The last war, known as the fourth Elam war, was launched in 2005, and ended with wiping out of the LTTE in 2009. During the war, many cases of human rights violation were carried out by both groups (See Subramanian, 2013). Though data is not available on the number of rapes taken place during that war, strong evidence is there to support the assumption of physical violence carried out by personnel of the Sri Lankan Army against ethnic Tamils during this protracted war. About 1,60,000 Tamils were killed in that war.

Not only during the war, but afterwards also, Tamil women were raped by Sri Lankan Army personnel. According to the Human Rights Watch report, between 2009 and 2013 sixty-two cases of sexual violence involving security forces in Sri Lanka had taken place (Harrison, 2013). The war was a major part of Sri Lanka's domestic and foreign policy. After the war, the United Nations and several other countries refused to accept the state-sponsored Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report. They have accused the Sri Lankan government of committing war crimes against ethnic minorities.

Is there a possibility of Feminist Foreign Policy?

As mentioned, the two South Asian countries –India and Pakistan- are nuclear powers and were born in 1947 only to remain in conflict (Wolpert, 2012). In such a situation any chance of having peace, which a feminist foreign policy seeks, is just lip service. Other than India-Pakistan, violence takes place inside Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka which has an impact on the foreign policy of those respective countries. As patriarchy supports unleashing of violence to establish its control over others or impose its norms on others, it is not going to be stopped. Nationalism and wars are constructed among the people through various means, like school text-books. The gendered notion of war has not emerged suddenly; indeed, masculinities are socially constructed through various ‘gender based’ divided activities like competitive sports and war games which keep young males ready to fight even during ‘peace’ times (Cockburn, 2015). To fulfil both objectives, arms are being purchased by South Asian countries at the cost of development should South Asian countries want to move towards adopting feminist foreign policy, which is not different from any other foreign policy except for patriarchal norms, a few necessary steps are needed: First, as domestic institutions and actors play a significant role in determining the foreign policy of a country, their character has to be changed. This change will not be possible by giving a token representation to women, but must provide significant representation and space to issues related to or affecting women.

Secondly, South Asia is one of the most violent societies in the world, and violence never promotes the real interests of women. Therefore, to make foreign policy inclusive, the South Asian states have to stop promoting violence in any form, for any reason and in any space. Cessation of violence is very difficult to do because South Asian nationalism is based on fear and hatred of the other. Both emotions support violence for existence and to gain superiority over their defined other.

Thirdly, there are external actors and global arms suppliers whose interests lie in the continuity of inter or intra-state violence in South Asia. These interests have to be understood and steps must be taken to reduce expenditure on wars and weapons.

Finally, though the regional organisation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) talks about women’s issues it promotes patriarchal values. Women participating in the meetings under it are expected to promote such values. The women of the region must act to promote their interests and set up an alternative forum to represent their values. These forums should not be a stage to promote ‘nationalism’ as patriarchy does; rather, the collective interests of women in the region should be focussed on.

Conclusions

This paper has discussed the 'exclusive' nature of foreign policy, where women's interests and values related to them find no space. The paper has discussed how plights of some South Asian countries are directly related to their foreign policy. In such a situation there is the utmost need for a feminist foreign policy, which must be an inclusive one, taking into consideration issues related to women. But any thinking about a feminist foreign policy has to begin with an improvement of the position and status of women in the domestic sphere.

Although this paper has talked about adoption of a feminist foreign policy, which is inclusive in nature, there is a bleak probability of that happening because the dominant established norm does not want to share its space with other values. Any attempt to make foreign policy inclusive needs a well orchestrated challenge to patriarchy.

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