



A senior policewoman in the provincial police headquarters in Herat, Afghanistan, April 2019. Photo: Evelien Schotsman/Oxfam.

## A TALE OF TWO PRAGMATISMS

### How to increase the meaningful participation of women in Afghanistan's police force

The process of including women in the Afghan police force goes back to the 1960s. It was boosted after 2001 by international support for the Security Sector Reform and Women, Peace and Security agendas. Nevertheless, progress has been slow because of persistent societal and institutional barriers. Inclusive security is generally approached from two perspectives: the security sector's pragmatic operational perspective, which prioritizes effectiveness; and a pragmatic feminist perspective, based on women's rights and equality. Both play an important role in achieving inclusive security in Afghanistan, but they can only succeed if they increasingly complement each other.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Oxfam discussion paper is to contribute to the debate on ‘what works’ when it comes to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. It zooms in on inclusive security in Afghanistan by looking at the meaningful inclusion of Afghan women in the police force from two perspectives:

- the pragmatic operational approach of the security sector, which tends to prioritize the effectiveness of security operations; and
- the pragmatic feminist approach,<sup>2</sup> which primarily adopts a women’s rights and women’s equality perspective on inclusive security.

The question is not whether we need women in the Afghan police force, but how the force can be improved so that it becomes more effective, legitimate and representative. Both perspectives play an important role in achieving this objective, but they can be successful only if they stop being divisive and start complementing each other.

There is no single definition of the WPS agenda and what it tries to achieve. However, there tends to be agreement that it is still a work in progress.<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in the active community of practice that, building on the nine existing United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR), keeps developing the theoretical underpinnings of the normative WPS agenda as well as debating the practicalities of its implementation. Examples include research at the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics (LSE); the special edition of the *International Affairs* journal<sup>4</sup> launched on International Women’s Day in 2016; and *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, a vast volume published in early 2019.<sup>5</sup>

The challenge of implementing the WPS agenda is shared by scholars and practitioners alike – from researchers to advisors and mentors, from civil servants in line ministries to servicemen and women in the security forces implementing provisions of a National Action Plan (NAP), or similar norms in countries that do not (yet) have an NAP. Organizations such as Oxfam have been stressing the need to move from commitments to actual implementation and impact when it comes to women’s participation and protection.<sup>6</sup>

## INCLUSIVE SECURITY DEFINED

Inclusive security can be broadly defined as the active and meaningful participation and structural inclusion of citizens, women and civil society organizations in policies, structures and mechanisms for addressing basic security and protection.<sup>7</sup> However, this paper uses a narrower definition: the meaningful inclusion and full and equal participation of women in the security sector. The concept goes beyond representation – that is, women merely being present. We need policewomen, not ‘women in the police.’<sup>8</sup>

This paper looks mostly at the inclusion of women in the police force. The author acknowledges that the challenge of inclusive security is probably even bigger for the Afghan army and Ministry of Defense, and that gender is only part of a much broader debate<sup>9</sup> about the meaningful inclusion of many different groups in order for the police and security sector to become more representative, legitimate and effective.

## 2 INCLUSIVE SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan can be considered the biggest laboratory for the normative agenda of inclusive security. This is partly because the scope of international security and military assistance is unparalleled in the post-Cold War period. Between 2001 and 2014, a military coalition of more than 50 countries worked together under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission;<sup>10</sup> 39 countries still train and assist Afghan security forces under the Resolute Support mission.<sup>11</sup> It is also because a new security sector was basically built from scratch after 2001, and such an example of virtually total Security Sector Reform (SSR) offers many opportunities to aim for inclusive security – especially when almost all these reform efforts, as well as the salaries of police officers and soldiers, are paid by international donors.<sup>12</sup> The dependence on foreign assistance, however, also produces challenges in terms of local ownership and sustainability.<sup>13</sup>

Despite international structural support and large-scale investment, inclusive security has been far from straightforward in Afghanistan. Part of the challenge relates to the Afghan NAP: though adopted in June 2015, it took until April 2018 to reach a temporary agreement between donors and the Afghan government about the activity-based budget,<sup>14</sup> and it still has not been fully implemented. This is problematic, but perhaps not surprising given the structural challenges. WPS-related activities have, of course, been implemented since 2015 – but the NAP could not fulfil its potential as a catalyst of international support and national implementation. Even if it were to be fully implemented, the NAP has limitations. Wazhma Frogh, founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organisation (WPSO<sup>15</sup>) in Afghanistan, writes in an LSE Working Paper: ‘While women’s engagement in the police and security sector is a priority for the women’s movement in the country, the plan lacks clear procedures on how to increase the number of women in the security sector, and how to ensure a safe and enabling environment for women in [the] police and army that should include their recruitment, retention, promotion, capacity building, and protection mechanisms.’<sup>16</sup>

Based on the earlier research referenced above, Table 1 below summarizes the most important structural challenges related specifically to the Afghan police force. This paper will not go into the details of these challenges.

**Table 1: Structural challenges limiting women’s meaningful participation in the Afghan police**

<b>Cultural</b>
Conservative and patriarchal nature of Afghan society, preserving cultural norms, traditional taboos and stigmas related to women’s inclusion and certain roles in the police force.
Discrimination and stigmatization of policewomen in society.
Lack of awareness in society about the roles and added value of women in the police.
Lack of support from families to allow their wives and daughters to join the police force (linked in general to negative image of the police).
Unequal family responsibilities of women and a lack of childcare centres for women to leave their children in during work.
General lack of interest among women in joining the police force, even apart from the societal pressure and institutional barriers that make it a challenging career choice.
<b>Institutional</b>
Discrimination and stigmatization of policewomen within the police force.
Various forms of harassment by male colleagues.
Lack of respect from colleagues or superiors.
Limited availability of and access to complaints mechanisms or female superiors to report discrimination or harassment.

Lack of career opportunities, including training and promotion for female staff, and a lack of succession and career planning.
Denial of responsibilities and authority of senior female staff, which often translates into a restriction of roles: for example, having most women involved in body searches and administrative work, not patrolling the streets or other operational duties.
Masculine culture of the police force and the Ministry of Interior, sometimes reinforced by the predominant focus on counter-insurgency and military-type operations for police units.
Limited number of senior female role models and lack of a critical mass of women within the police force and the Ministry of Interior.
Limited availability of tailored facilities such as women-only changing rooms, washrooms or areas for eating or praying.
Illiteracy and lack of capacity among female police officers, preventing them from performing well, taking on more responsibilities or reaching higher positions.
Limited availability of (literacy) training programmes and schools for women recruits.
Limited transportation possibilities for women to and from work.
<b>Political</b>
Lack of prioritization and political will of the Afghan government.
Reduced international security presence and programming.

Source: Compiled by the author.

Some of these challenges may gradually diminish: when more women have finished higher education, for example, or as the women currently serving in the police force incrementally contribute to normalizing women's inclusion and participation. Other institutional and societal barriers may take more time and effort to resolve, such as stigmatization and cultural taboos and other changes to social norms and cultural values. As the challenges are myriad, any approach taken to address them will need to be pragmatic, and two pragmatic approaches have been used so far. As discussed in the following sections, they are roughly the same approaches that practitioners of WPS and SSR are taking in other countries and contexts, and the problem lies less in the individual approaches themselves than in conflicts in their basic methods and objectives.

### 3 CLASH OR COMPLEMENTARITY?

Two types of pragmatism are simultaneously being used to put the WPS agenda into practice: the pragmatic operational approach and the pragmatic feminist approach.

While increasingly aware of the need to incorporate women and gender perspectives, the security sector tends to approach the incremental change process from the pragmatic perspective of institutional operations or strategic objectives. Davies and True write about this approach: 'In the case of WPS, militaries and security sectors seek gender inclusion for operational effectiveness (...)'<sup>17</sup>

While this could be called an 'instrumental approach'<sup>18</sup>, it is more correct to call it an 'operational approach' as the emphasis is more on the functioning of the security sector and the effectiveness of security operations than, for example, using women as instruments in security processes. Women may, of course, be perceived or deployed as instruments of policing – whether effectively or ineffectively – but that is also true of their male colleagues. When women are sidelined, or their participation is merely symbolic, they might be considered instruments – but, again, as part of broader institutional or strategic objectives (e.g. pleasing donors or boosting numbers).

On a continuum that runs from the extremes of rights-based to results-based SSR, the pragmatic operational approach to inclusive security tends to be towards the results-based end. But the pragmatic operational approach is a theoretical construct – it does not mean that all security actors in all countries have the same

approach to implementing the inclusive security agenda. Nor does it necessarily result in negative, counter-productive or harmful outcomes: for example, it does not involve a blanket attempt to militarize gender relations or gender equality.

Towards the rights-based end of the continuum is the pragmatic feminist approach. Like the pragmatic operational approach, it is a theoretical construct. And like the pragmatic operational approach, it tends to be too one-sided to be effective in fulfilling the true potential of inclusive security, which requires the combination of different approaches to solve a wide range of societal and institutional challenges. Beyond those similarities, the two approaches are quite different.

The feminist pragmatic approach focuses on women's rights – which is often seen as the original normative agenda of WPS, with its roots in the women's movement.<sup>19</sup> Davies and True write: 'WPS represents a pragmatic attempt on the part of women's rights activists to address the significant violence and inequality that characterizes conflict, particularly, women's experience of it.'<sup>20</sup> Although ideological in nature, this approach is pragmatic in the sense that it involves a constant process of trial and error to advance the women's rights agenda through peace and security processes – reflecting how, despite its upcoming twentieth anniversary, the WPS agenda is still in its early stages in terms of impact.<sup>21</sup>

This paper argues that many errors are caused because of the disconnect between the pragmatic feminist approach and the pragmatic operational approach. The optimal point for creating impact on inclusive security in Afghanistan lies somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

The two approaches can be complementary – but they can clash if they are applied at the same time by different actors making different choices about how to work towards inclusive security.

In addressing the Swedish case of implementing a gender perspective in the military, Egnell, Hojem and Berts sum up these choices by asking: 'Do we pursue change because it is the right thing to do, or because it is the smart thing to do?'<sup>22</sup> The next two sections look in more detail at each form of pragmatism, before attempting to bridge the gap between them.

## 4 THE PRAGMATIC OPERATIONAL APPROACH OF THE SECURITY SECTOR

Egnell, Hojem and Berts argue that the success of the Swedish model of inclusive security was in part based on the principle of operational effectiveness: '(...) the benefit of the Swedish structure is that it considered a gender perspective to be an issue of operational effectiveness rather than just a largely politically-laden human resources issue of women's rights and participation'. However, their reasoning is undermined by mentioning that arguments about women's rights and gender simply do not generate interest in an organization that is trained to fight wars or apply threats of violence – in effect, they avoid the need for change by claiming that women's rights perspectives will cause resistance in a conservative, male-dominated institution.<sup>23</sup> This type of thinking leads to ostrich policies rather than sustainable SSR, which should allow room to reconsider and re-develop the objectives, approaches and beneficiaries of security.

A more nuanced view comes from the Netherlands.<sup>24</sup> A 2015 report on the Dutch NAP 1325 Partnership notes: 'The main strategy of both the Dutch armed forces, NATO and the Dutch police force when it comes to make [sic] military and police men, their own and those in countries of deployment, understand why it is important to incorporate women in the forces is to stress the operational relevance. The idea is that without female troops or female police officers it is hard and sometimes even impossible to gather intelligence from local women; intelligence that is vital for both security and the success of operations. Improving the male-female ration [sic] in the forces is thus not seen and presented as being about women's rights or about changing gender dynamics (...) but as a way to improve the efficiency of the operations.'<sup>25</sup>

To better understand what such an approach means for the Afghan context, the author had several conversations with Joke Florax, gender project manager with the National Police in the Netherlands and in 2011 and 2012 gender advisor with the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan. Florax is a strong champion of women's inclusion in the police force. She argued during her time with EUPOL that it could countervail the negative image of Afghan women as victims: 'If you can replace that image by strong policewomen as role models, you can work towards changes in conservative societies.'<sup>26</sup> She argued that the inclusive security agenda is compatible with the reality of a still very conservative society, as WPS is part of a step-by-step social and cultural process of bringing positive change and greater stability.

Florax stressed that this change should not always be brought about from the perspective of the women's rights agenda. She preferred to speak of a 'business case' in which 'good policing should be the guiding principle. Only in that way, the added value of women in the security sector can effectively be made visible in a conservative society.' This instrumental approach is, however, not a completely standalone strategy. Florax explained: 'Of course this also means that you have to invest in the acceptance of female police officers by colleagues and citizens. You have to make sure that husbands, fathers and other family members agree with the police training of women.'<sup>27</sup> However, in her view the most important factor is to assess the results of the work done by female police officers and soldiers – for example, in terms of increasing women's access to the police, the number of cases women report, and the intelligence gathered by women because of their access to women in local communities.

To really establish the 'business case' in Afghanistan, Florax said the police commanders must be increasingly convinced about the added value and societal importance of deploying female police officers. Such a change will not happen overnight in a country where commanders are often still accustomed to speaking only to male village elders and other men. Often, change will depend on superiors starting to perceive the incorporation of women as part of their own prestige – though this is not exactly a priority of the women's rights agenda.

The Dutch perspective is, of course, that of a donor and provider of security assistance – yet it also finds support among some Afghan women leaders. For example, Palwasha Hassan, director of the Afghan Women's Educational Center, agrees with Florax<sup>28</sup> that Afghan women have a lot to bring to the security sector: after four decades of conflict, they have gained a lot of experience in building resilience and mediating disputes in a context where the formal security apparatus has often been absent.

Convincing as it may seem at first glance, however, the pragmatic operational approach can never be effective as a standalone strategy. A focus that is mainly or exclusively on the added value of women within the police force will always be incomplete: it will, by itself, never be able to break through structural institutional barriers related to stigmatization, discrimination and harassment. It can give the dangerously false impression that everything is fine as long as women are able to perform roles that boost the operational effectiveness of the police force. It risks reinforcing a discourse in which women are instrumentalized as a 'means to an end' within the security sector.

Even if the importance of policewomen as 'role models' is stressed, it is easy to fall into the trap of putting the burden of institutional and societal change on the shoulders of women. Sima Samar, former Minister of Women's Affairs and now president of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, argues that the role model effect can make Afghan communities more comfortable with their wives, sisters and daughters serving in the security sector<sup>29</sup> – but she stresses that the key is awareness raising, among both men and women, in the security sector and the public. Women's participation can help to bring about normalization, but it should be considered as much more than only a means to an end.

# 5 THE PRAGMATIC FEMINIST APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE SECURITY

The WPS agenda was driven by civil society and particularly the women's movement.<sup>30</sup> Inequality clearly lies at the heart of this normative agenda because it aims to address the unequal effects of fragility and conflict on women and girls. It also aims to rectify their unequal participation in peace and security processes, structures and institutions, from decision making and negotiations to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This inequality runs deep: for example, while the United Nations aims to reach gender parity by 2030, women still account for less than 5% of the uniformed personnel in peacekeeping missions.<sup>31</sup>

In Afghanistan, unequal representation and participation is also part of a general pattern of elite bargaining which structurally excludes women (and many men) from political processes related to the security architecture and peacebuilding.<sup>32</sup> Women's participation in the security forces has gradually increased over recent years, but seems stalled at numbers far below the targets of the Afghan government. The official goal of having 10,000 policewomen by 2020 was unrealistic<sup>33</sup> and the same target is now set for 2025.<sup>34</sup> At the time of finalizing this paper (January 2020), there were a reported 3,814 female police officers, out of a maximum force size of around 125,000 (3%).<sup>35</sup> By comparison the Afghan army has around 2,000 women out of a total of 190,000 (1.5%).<sup>36</sup> While these numbers show the limited representation of women, they say very little about whether policewomen are currently supported, safe, functioning well in their positions, respected and have reasonable merit-based opportunities for advancement.

The feminist perspective is about much more than working towards equal numbers. It aims for gender mainstreaming, which can be understood as integrating a gender perspective into all activities and the whole institutional fabric of the security sector.<sup>37</sup> The feminist approach to inclusive security generally intends to change the processes and structures that maintain unequal power relations within organizations such as the police force or the Ministry of Interior. It applies a broader gender equality perspective to these specific domains. Heidi Hudson writes: 'A feminist perspective extends the general arguments about the nature of society to the realm of security and reminds us that comprehensive security can only be achieved if the relations of domination and submission in all walks of life are eliminated and gender justice is achieved.'<sup>38</sup>

The feminist perspective sees it as a fundamental right for women to be part of the security sector. It also sees any progress on peace and security as intrinsically linked to the advancement of women's rights and women's empowerment, both within security institutions and in society in general. Part of this approach is the critique of security institutions that are perceived as maintaining or reinforcing militarist or statist approaches to security.<sup>39</sup>

## CHANGE FROM WITHIN AND FROM OUTSIDE THE SECTOR

The pragmatic feminist approach is ideologically sound. There can be no denying women's protection or participation from a human rights' perspective. Progress requires shifts within institutions and discourses.

But such a transformative approach will be ineffective if it essentially tries to de-securitize, or de-militarize, an issue that is strongly related to the security realm. In some cases, such as Colombia, disarmament can be portrayed as critical for gender equality and sustainable peace.<sup>40</sup> However, many of the peace and security processes related to WPS depend on the proper functioning of the official security forces, including the police and army, which by definition cannot be disarmed or de-securitized. Even when the police or army are not directly involved in peace or security processes that affect people's lives, those processes cannot be fully isolated from their military and security dimensions.

In other words, one cannot work in a vacuum on WPS. Change cannot come only from inside this security sector, but nor can it come solely from outside. Progress in making security and justice services more

effective and accountable depends on matching the supply side (service delivery) with the demand side (the services and opportunities people need). It involves striking a delicate balance between critical and constructive engagement with security institutions, which are also part of ‘the modalities through which practical change can be achieved.’<sup>41</sup>

So, while the pragmatic feminist approach can rightfully claim the moral high ground, for inclusive security to be effectively implemented, the two pragmatic approaches need to meet somewhere in the middle.

## 6 BRIDGING BOTH PRAGMATIC APPROACHES

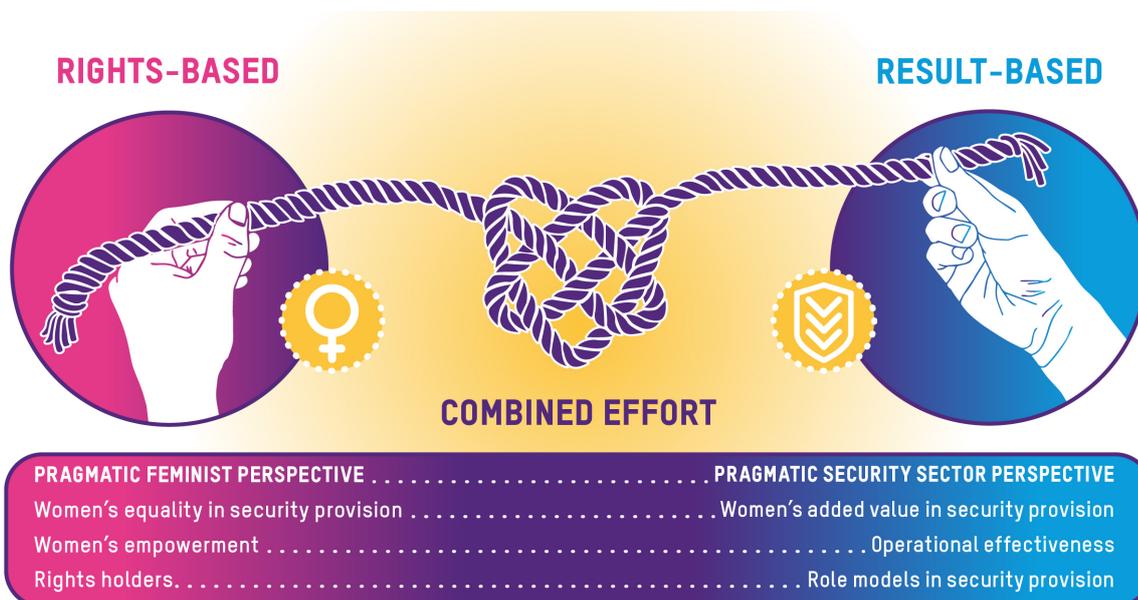
Inclusive security depends on women’s rights activists and the security sector working together.

A security sector without a real gender lens<sup>42</sup> or a critical mass of women will never be able to effectively provide security in a society where women and girls are roughly half of the population. A critical mass entails numbers, and therefore representation, but it is not about numbers alone – it is about numbers that can help create an enabling environment in which judgements, decisions and arguments about inclusive security slowly shift as a result of persisting, genuine efforts. Even if the security sector puts in place gender-mainstreaming strategies, if it only pays lip service to inclusive security it will simply not be perceived as legitimate or able to serve the entire population.

Similarly, those stressing women’s rights and women’s empowerment as the basis of inclusive security will not be able to create impact singlehandedly. They depend on security institutions, as part of the change needs to come from within. The security sector did not invent the WPS agenda, but it has been working to include women and incorporate gender perspectives since long before 2000. Many Western countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, now have over a century of experience with the incremental process of working towards the equal integration and meaningful participation of women in the police force. These country contexts illustrate frequent setbacks but also provide lessons learned, in terms of legislation, safeguarding measures and changes to policies and norms.

The objective of inclusive security goes beyond the security realm but remains part of it, and it is within this realm that the two approaches need to find each other (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Meeting in the middle**



Credit: Anouk Klinkers/Oxfam.

To help start a broader debate, three ways to bridge the divide are suggested below.

## **1. Use WPS as a shared, constructive way forward, not as a divisive agenda**

Despite its shortcomings, the international WPS framework has clearly worked as a catalyst for more attention to gender-related issues within the security sector and more outside pressure to take inclusive security seriously. There are illustrations that security institutions are increasingly committed to WPS: for example, NATO has had a Special Representative for mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 since 2012, and the UN Police Division has increasingly recognized the centrality of a gender lens.<sup>43</sup> Such steps may not immediately guarantee better outcomes, but they signal willingness to be held accountable for progress or lack thereof on the WPS agenda.

On the other end of the spectrum, women's organizations' advocacy and relationship-building with the security sector is creating opportunities for greater dialogue about the need for inclusive security. Although SSR now always includes a gender lens in theory,<sup>44</sup> this does not mean that gender perspectives are effectively included in practice. The WPS agenda includes many contentious issues, but also establishes clear norms about inclusive security that both pragmatic approaches can agree on. It can help to inform security analysis and contribute to awareness about why gender in the security sector should be more than a box-ticking exercise.

Oxfam's current WPS programmes in Afghanistan show that gender units in line ministries often lack capacity, and civil servants still have a low level of knowledge about inclusive security. Nevertheless, there is now often a door you can knock on, and it is important to have the international reference of the WPS agenda that can frame discussions on changes that need to be made at the national or local level. At forums such as the WPS Working Group in Kabul, which brings together ministries, embassies and civil society on a monthly basis, the security sector and civil society working on women's rights can come together and forge a constructive partnership.

## **2. Introduce sequencing to bridge both perspectives around the concept of incremental normalization**

The pragmatic operational approach does not rule out the women's rights agenda. It can be considered a matter of temporarily setting priorities, in terms of operational effectiveness and strategic objectives, in the complex reality of a conservative Afghan society that cannot change overnight. The security sector should realise, however, that such priority setting can never constitute an end state or, in the long run, be an alternative to the full and equal participation of women in security processes. The women's rights perspective can help the security sector not to lose focus on the long-term objectives of gender justice and women's equality, empowerment and protection in security institutions and processes as a way to effectively fulfil the institutional goal of serving the whole of Afghan society.

Inclusive security requires addressing the patriarchal and conservative nature of the security sector, and that needs both approaches. Hudson provides a good example: 'SSR practitioners may (...) justify bargains with warlords (...) as an attempt to respect local culture, but this may lead to an entrenchment of patriarchal values.'<sup>45</sup> That is a huge dilemma in Afghanistan, as Oxfam programming over the years shows that you need to bring conservative police commanders, governors, ministers, elders, mullahs, fathers, husbands and brothers on board to achieve sustainable progress on inclusive security. That requires striking a balance between the two approaches and coming up with the right level of sequencing for each situation. Often, this balance will be reached if the desire for change can be matched with enough political will and institutional capacity to make the change happen in a sustainable way.

The objective of women's rights should never be discarded or postponed to protect patriarchal norms and traditional values or maintain male-dominated power structures. This is not a donor agenda: the equality of men and women is enshrined in the Afghan Constitution and several laws,<sup>46</sup> and is part of Afghanistan's commitment to international human rights law. Yet in certain situations and stages of developing inclusive

security in post-conflict societies, waving the flag of women’s rights can be counter-productive – for example, because it can be interpreted or framed as a Western attempt to undermine the Islamic faith, or because it antagonizes and closes the door to the very conservative actors who need to be reached and convinced. Advancing on gender equality in the security sector is highly complex in countries such as Afghanistan, as it is not an isolated endeavour but part of an SSR process that in post-conflict contexts implies a ‘fundamental redistribution of power and resources.’<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the multiple barriers that Afghan women still face in society, there is widespread opposition to inclusive security due to pressure to conform to cultural norms – not only from security institutions, but also from the families of female recruits.<sup>48</sup> That means we have to be careful and smart about when and how to push for more inclusion of women at different levels of the police force, not least to avoid endangering women. For example, while putting Afghan policewomen out on patrol seems a great achievement from a Western perspective, it can confront them with discrimination and a greater degree of harassment and violence than their male colleagues may face.<sup>49</sup> the Taliban has targeted policewomen directly,<sup>50</sup> and wearing a uniform on the street has even been described as a ‘death sentence’ for women.<sup>51</sup> It will take time for the work of role models such as Afghanistan’s first female District Police Chief, Colonel Jamila Bayaz, to effectively challenge societal and institutional resistance.

The pace of sequencing between the operational and feminist approach is not fixed, but determined by the degree of progress on societal and institutional issues that stand in the way of effective inclusive security. It can be quickened by smart programming in capacity building and awareness raising, but there is a limit, as shown by the many decades it took for Western societies to achieve progress on inclusive security. Structural progress will often be achievable only if the longer-term changes of cultural norms and societal and institutional consciousness have caught up with the faster tempo of the internationally driven WPS agenda – which goes nowhere without local ownership. Whatever rationale is chosen to foster inclusive security, women should not be put into harm’s way by pushing change faster than the local context allows.

### 3. Match results-based with rights-based arguments

Both results-based arguments (for example, that Afghan women can perform body searches of other women) and rights-based arguments (for example, that equal access to police jobs is a fundamental human right) are important and will always have their defenders. As neither can be excluded from the debate, there is a need to match results-based with rights-based arguments and find common ground. This exercise should be undertaken jointly by advocates for both pragmatic approaches – it cannot be done by either side individually. Table 2 below offers a first attempt.

**Table 2: Matching results- and rights-based arguments for inclusive security**

Category	Results-based argument	Rights-based argument	Common ground
<i>Ideological</i>	Enhancing the meaningful participation of women in the police force can make security and justice services more effective for women suffering from gender-based violence.	Enhancing the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in the police force is part of their rights, as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution and international human rights law.	Afghan women have the right to be protected and to serve in processes and institutions that provide security – but merely having women represented in such processes, without full and meaningful participation, will not contribute to normalization or the creation of an enabling environment in which women can properly fulfil their rights. In fact, it will backfire as women lose faith and society’s negative perceptions will be reinforced.
<i>Tactical</i>	Policewomen can add value in roles that entail reaching	Fostering inclusive security would be important even if	Policewomen can simultaneously perform tasks that are tactically important for

	or questioning women in the community. Their presence can help to counter violence that results from the dominance of men – particularly important in post-conflict settings. <sup>52</sup>	policewomen did not add value to police work in tactical terms.	security, and further the cause of women’s rights by helping to normalize women’s inclusion in other realms of society.
<i>Operational</i>	When a gender lens will make police operations or actions more effective, policewomen are better placed to notice this.	Women must be meaningfully included as only they can fully understand the impact of policies on women and girls.	Meaningful inclusion of women in the operational branch of the police is necessary both to effectively implement gender-sensitive policies and improve policing by creating a more protective environment for vulnerable social groups. <sup>53</sup>
<i>Strategic</i>	Policewomen have the ability to positively affect decision-making choices, including options for security and leadership.	Women have the right to access senior management and leadership positions within the police.	A security sector with women in more positions of influence will be both more gender-just and better able to serve Afghan society, including through the protection of women and girls.
<i>Symbolic</i>	Women role models in the police can inspire more female recruits and social acceptance of policewomen, enhancing their operational effectiveness.	Women role models in the police, especially in meaningful positions, can further women’s equality and empowerment.	Role models are important as they create a self-reinforcing cycle in which cultural taboos are broken, equal rights and women’s empowerment are advanced, and it becomes easier for policewomen to do their jobs effectively.

Source: Compiled by the author, building on discussions during the DCAF-ISSAT Advanced Training Course on Security Sector Reform in The Hague, 26–30 November 2018.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Progress on inclusive security will not be achieved through a dogmatic approach: pragmatism is required, especially in a society that is still quite conservative. This entails trial and error and requires strategic patience. Neither the pragmatic feminist approach nor the pragmatic operational approach can succeed singlehandedly. Inclusive security cannot only be built on operational arguments, and it cannot only be ideological in nature. For the effective implementation of inclusive security, these perspectives need to be bridged.

Both approaches offer important arguments, and there is scope to find common ground – but only if the adherents of each perspective are willing to be constructive and meet each other somewhere in the middle of the continuum on inclusive security. The internationally-backed WPS framework can be used as an important tool to help find this middle ground, especially if the security sector is truly committed to it and women’s rights activists do not see it as their exclusive ideological turf.

Female police officers are not merely symbols and should not be used as a Trojan horse for the normalization and acceptance of women’s presence in Afghan society. Women, as well as other (gender) groups, are needed to fulfil the promise of inclusive security, while also promoting gender justice. As Rula

Ghani, Afghanistan's First Lady, told a seminar about the Strategic Implementation Plan for Integrity of Female Police in October 2015: 'The presence of women in the Afghan National Police is not a luxury, it is a necessity'.<sup>54</sup> She reminded participants of the various pragmatic reasons why the country needs female police officers, such as protecting, searching and questioning women. As such, female police officers are a crucial part of a broader strategy that should produce an environment in which women can not only feel safe but also contribute actively towards providing security. This contribution is both their mission and their fundamental right.

The question is not whether we need women within the Afghan police force, but rather how the force can be improved so that it becomes more effective, legitimate and representative. This requires a much broader gender approach than only focusing on the meaningful inclusion of women. It also requires a much more nuanced view than either seeing inclusion only as a right or only as a means to an end.

# NOTES

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- 17 *Women, Peace and Security: A Transformative Agenda, op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 18 *Women, Peace, Security and Justice in Afghanistan after Brussels and Warsaw, op. cit.*, p. 10; R. Egnell, P. Hojem and H. Berts, *Gender, Military Effectiveness, and Organisational Change: The Swedish Model* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 8; *Women, Peace and Security: A Transformative Agenda, op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 19 *Reintroducing Women, Peace and Security, op. cit.*
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- 21 Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. UN Women, 2015, p. 5. <https://wps.unwomen.org/>
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- 23 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
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