Kashmir Through The Lens of a Feminist Human Security Approach: A Case Study of Half-Widows

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Abstract

Since 1989, militarisation in Kashmir has led to thousands of enforced disappearances of men and boys perpetrated by Indian forces, leading to many wives in a perpetual state of uncertainty, not knowing whether their husbands are dead or alive – these Kashmiri women are known as "half-widows." The aim of this thesis is to analyse the state of human security in Indian-occupied Kashmir, using half-widows as a case study. Throughout this paper, I will answer the question: How has militarisation in Indian-occupied Kashmir since 1989 impacted human security, and what have been the consequences for half-widows? I will do so by using scholars Reardon and Hans' feminist human security approach, identifying whether the four sources of well-being needed to reach human security are being met. First, I will investigate how the extraordinary militarisation of Kashmir, which has been justified in the name of "national security," has undermined the wellbeing of Kashmiris, impacting men and women differently. As half-widows are a particularly marginalised group in Kashmir, I investigate how militarisation in the region has contributed to their insecurity, highlighting the unique struggles they face. I conclude that the Indian government's securitisation of Kashmir has resulted in mass militarisation, contributing to a state of human insecurity for Kashmiris, and this insecurity has gendered consequences, which have been uniquely severe for half-widows. Overall, my research speaks to the dangers of widespread militarisation and its gendered implications. Additionally, I aim to provide insight into one of the most protracted conflicts in the world using a perspective that centres the lives of people, rather than the success or failure of a political agenda.

Key Words: *Militarisation, Feminist Human Security, Kashmir, India, Half-Widow*

Acronyms and Terms

Acronyms:

BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party
AFSPA – Armed Forces Special Power's Act
IPTK – International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-administered Kashmir
FIR – First Information Report
J&K – Jammu and Kashmir
APDP – Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons
IOK – Indian-occupied Kashmir
LoC – Line of Control
PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
GDP – Gross Domestic Product

Terms:

Azad – Free
Azadi – Freedom
Sadbhavana – Goodwill
Sharia Law – Muslim personal law
Qazi – Sharia judge
Purdah – The practice of secluding women from public observation
Mukhbir – State informer
Asal Zanan – Good woman
Haraab Zanan – Bad woman

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1. Introduction

Located at the junction of Pakistan, India, and China, with the beautiful Himalayas running through the region, Kashmir was once referred to as "paradise on Earth"[1] and was coveted by the British for its "strategic location, products, climate, and natural beauty."[2] Even throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, after British rule in South Asia had ended, Kashmir's lush landscape made for a thriving tourist destination.[3] Yet, today Kashmir is widely considered to be one of "the most heavily militarized regions on earth,"[4] and has been described as a "highly militarized site of punitive containment through the legal suspension of the juridical order."[5] Furthermore, overbearing laws in the region have enabled Indian forces to heavily monitor Kashmiri communities and perpetrate mass human rights violations without consequence, instilling fear and control over the population.

In 1989, there was a rise in insurgency throughout Kashmir, as calls for independence from India began to grow. As a result, somewhere between 500,000-1,000,000 Indian troops have been deployed in Kashmir,[6] claiming to be fighting against "Pakistani-sponsored terrorism" in order to protect India's "national security."[7] Since then, it is estimated between 8,000-10,000 people have been victims of enforced disappearances and 70,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed across the region.[8] The Indian government has approached the conflict in Kashmir using a traditional state-centric security approach, prioritising the protection of the state at the expense of Kashmiri people and justifying mass militarisation and human rights violations. Through my research, I will be using a feminist human security approach to analyse the impact that militarisation has had on Kashmiris' wellbeing.

Additionally, because of enforced disappearances, there are at least 1,500-2,000 Kashmiri women whose husbands have disappeared in armed conflict – also known as "half-widows."[9]

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[1] Rajat Ganguly, "India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute," *Asian Studies Institute*, Asian Studies Institute and Centre for Strategic Studies working paper, 1 (1998), https://books.google.nl/books?id=vBueAAAACAAJ.

[2] Chitralekha Zutshi, "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Issue: 1947 and Beyond," *Association for Asian Studies*, Asian Intercultural Contacts, 14, no. 2 (2009): 8.

[3] "History," Planning Development & Monitoring Department: Government of Jammu and Kashmir, accessed May 4, 2023, https://jkplanning.gov.in/history.html.

[4] Sehar Iqbal, "Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 8, no. 2 (August 1, 2021): 148, https://doi.org/10.1177/23477970211017483.

[5] Haley Duschinski, "Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley," *Anthropological Quarterly* 82 (June 2009): 712, https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.0.0072.

[6] "Five Indian Soldiers Killed in Suspected Rebel Attack in Kashmir," Al Jazeera, April 21, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/21/five-indian-soldiers-killed-in-suspected-rebel-attack-in-kashmir; Rifat Fareed, "India Imposes Kashmir Lockdown, Puts Leaders 'under House Arrest,'" Al Jazeera, August 4, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/4/india-imposes-kashmir-lockdown-puts-leaders-under-house-arrest; "India Has Deployed More than 1 Million Troops in Held Kashmir: Foreign Office," *Dawn*, November 30, 2016, http://www.dawn.com/news/1299621.

[7] Angana P. Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone," in *Kashmir: The Case for Freedom* (Verso, 2011), 69, http://prfjk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Tariq-Ali-Hilal-Bhatt-Arundhati-Roy-Kashmir-The-Case-for-Freedom-2011.pdf.

[8] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir" (Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir: Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), July 2011).

[9] Wasia Hamid, Mohmad Saleem Jahangir, and Tanveer Ahmad Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," *Race & Class* 62, no. 4 (April 1, 2021): 90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396821989199.

Besides the obvious grief and trauma they experience, they are a highly marginalised group of women, facing extensive social, legal, economic, and cultural discrimination. Hence, I will conduct a case study, analysing the unique experience of this community and the consequences of militarisation on half-widows' human security.

Throughout this paper, I answer the following research question: How has militarisation in Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK) since 1989 impacted human security, and what have been the consequences for half-widows? I will be analysing the state of human security in Kashmir since 1989 onwards, as this is the year that mass militarisation ensued.[10] Chapter one dives deeper into the historical context of Kashmir, explaining why Kashmir has been experiencing immense militarisation and securitisation since 1989. Additionally, this chapter will help explain why enforced disappearances have been occurring, and how this has contributed to the phenomenon of half-widows. Chapter two highlights the overall state of human security in Kashmir, where I use a feminist human security approach to analyse how militarisation has impacted the wellbeing of Kashmiris and how these consequences are gendered. Lastly, chapter three is a case study into the human security of half-widows, where I employ a feminist human security approach to explore the unique ways this community is uniquely impacted by militarisation and how it has affected their wellbeing.

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[10] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 89.

2. Research Approach and Methodology

2.1 Aim of Research

There are a few main outcomes I intended to achieve from conducting this research project. First, I aim to offer a deeper analysis of the impact that militarisation in the Kashmir region has had on the local community. So often, conflicts are discussed from a state-centric security perspective, highlighting diplomatic relationships, political struggles, nuclear tensions, and border control. However, within this narrative, people's lives are often ignored. In contrast, the feminist human security approach offers a people-centric perspective, analysing the well-being of civilians, which I will explain later in my introduction. By using a feminist human security approach to frame this thesis, I aim to fill a gap in general knowledge about the dangers of widespread militarisation. Additionally, I aim to add to a growing narrative about Kashmir that, through a feminist human security lens, centres Kashmiris, and in particular Kashmiri women, rather than the perspective of the Indian government.

Further, as Iqbal argues, "no analysis of human security in Kashmir is complete without taking into account Kashmiri women's experience of human security threats."[11] Therefore, I conduct a case study to dive deeper into the lived experiences of half-widows, using a feminist human security approach to analyse the impact that militarisation has had on their wellbeing. Through this, I aim to provide insight into the unique ways that half-widows suffer because of the conflict, and the role that gender has played throughout the marginalisation and violence that they face.

There are multiple reasons why I chose half-widows as a case study. First, I intend to generate more knowledge about half-widows as there is currently a lack of sufficient data and research that has focused on this specific community. Early on in this process, it became clear to me that half-widows in particular have largely been ignored. In his paper on half-widows, Inamul Haq writes, "The preliminary results show they are a hidden population that suffer in silence."[12] Therefore, I aim to fill a gap in research by highlighting the unique experiences of this marginalised population. Second, the obstacles half-widows face because of militarisation are distinct from that of Kashmiri men and other Kashmiri women. However, through this thesis, I aim to reveal some of the overarching struggles that Kashmiri women have faced while also uncovering the uniqueness of half-widows' existence. Although there are many other women around the globe whose husbands have been disappeared or gone missing because of conflict, this specific community faces unique challenges resulting from the political environment in Kashmir, as well as the broader Indian and South Asian culture they exist within.

The relevance of this research is that it fills a gap in knowledge about the ongoing conflict in Kashmir more generally. Although the situation in Kashmir is one of the most protracted, longstanding conflicts in the world, I have found that very few people outside of the South Asian studies sphere have any knowledge on the conflict. As India and Pakistan are two huge nuclear powers that are gaining global influence, this conflict presents a major threat to international

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[11] Iqbal, "Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir," 147.

[12] Inamul Haq, "The Half-Widows of Kashmir: A Discourse of Enforced Disappearance," *Torture Journal* 31, no. 2 (December 29, 2021): 92, https://doi.org/10.7146/torture.v31i2.123624.

security. Therefore, producing more information that analyses the situation Kashmir, which has served as a major point of tension between India and Pakistan, is absolutely integral.

Overall, I hope to contribute to a deeper level of analysis regarding the impact of militarisation on the wellbeing of people. Additionally, I hope to bring awareness to the human security crisis that has been ongoing in Kashmir for decades, highlighting gendered experiences and uncovering the unique ways that half-widows have suffered.

2.2 Methodology

My broad methodological strategy included qualitative research methods, mostly consisting of desk research using open-source primary and secondary materials. More specifically, the main research method I employed was the case study method. In terms of data, I collected a variety of sources including books, scholarly articles, news articles, non-governmental organisation reports, government press statements, and more. As Baxter and Jack write, "A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility."[13] Within many of these scholarly articles are first-hand testimonies from half-widows and other Kashmiri people, which I utilised in light of conducting my own field research. Additionally, I conducted one of my own expert interviews, which was intended to compliment my data collection. My interview was with Dr. Aditi Saraf, an Assistant Professor in Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University whose research focuses on the relationship between commerce and sovereignty in Kashmir.

More specifically, my study can be considered an "intrinsic" case study. When referring to an intrinsic case study, Baxter and Jack suggest that "researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should use this approach when the intent is to better understand the case."[14] In general, case studies are used to answer "how" and "why" questions, and while the focus is on a specific phenomenon, the larger context in which this phenomena occurs must be taken into consideration.[15] In this sense, the phenomena I attempted to further understand was the experiences of half-widows, and the larger context I considered was the overall state of human security in Indian-occupied Kashmir, with a particular focus on the experiences of Kashmiri women.

2.3 Ethics and Positionality

Going into this research project, the main ethical concern I had was that I would be writing about a culture that is not my own. Although this is not necessarily an ethical issue, being a white woman from the United States, I want to make it clear that I am not conducting this research to speak on behalf of Kashmiri people. Instead, I aim to fill a gap in research, bringing awareness to the immense violence and discrimination Kashmiri people face, which has been largely ignored. My research also challenges traditional notions of militarisation and securitisation efforts that the

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[13] Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers," *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 4 (January 14, 2015): 554, https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573.
[14] Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 548.
[15] Ibid, 556.

Indian government has taken in Kashmir, highlighting how these actions have impacted human security. Additionally, I felt it was my ethical responsibility to use local knowledge – therefore, I made sure to incorporate sources whose data centred Kashmiri testimonies, and reports from local Kashmiri organisations that work closely with half-widows and others impacted by enforced disappearances. Lastly, I want to acknowledge that because of my educational and professional experiences, I have been more exposed to Indian authors and perspectives regarding the topic of Kashmir. To combat this possible bias in my understanding, I offer insight into multiple perspectives on this complex, polarising topic, including those of Pakistani and Muslim academics.

3. Key Concepts and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Securitisation

The Copenhagen School, which was developed from the Conflict and Peace Research Institute of Copenhagen, is a school of thought that emerged in the 1980s from Barry Buzan's book *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*.[16] The concept of securitisation, which was introduced by Ole Wæver in the 1990s, is one of many concepts that the Copenhagen School has contributed to the broader field of security studies.[17] The definition that I follow throughout my research comes from the book *Security - A New Framework For Analysis,* by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, who define "securitisation" as, "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics."[18] Furthermore, they say that securitisation is "a more extreme version of politicization,"[19] as they are matters "which ask for extraordinary means, beyond normal political procedures of the state."[20]

According to the Copenhagen School, for something to be considered a security issue, it must "be staged as [an] existential threat to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind."[21] Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, define a "securitising actor" as, "actors who securitise issues by declaring something, a referent object, as existentially threatened."[22] Although the securitising actor varies, they are typically "political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups."[23] Additionally, a "referent object" is defined as, "things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival."[24] Similarly, depending on the type of security approach being used, the referent object varies – for example, it could be the state, individuals, collective identities, national sovereignty, physical environments, economies, etc.[25] As Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde write, a "traditional" approach to security considers the referent object to be "the state, incorporating government, territory, and society."[26] In my thesis, I often refer to this traditional approach as a "state-centric" approach, as it considers the state to be the referent object. In sum, the referent object is what needs to be protected, and the securitising actor is who decides that this referent object is being threatened, allowing for extraordinary measures to be taken in order to protect it. Again – all of these factors vary

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[16] Antonia Does, "Securitization Theory," in *The Construction of the Maras: Between Politicization and Securitization* (Graduate Institute Publications, 2013), 3.1.

[17] Does, "Securitization Theory," 3.1.

[18] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23.

[19] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 23.

[20] Does, "Securitization Theory," 3.3.

[21] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 5.

[22] Ibid, 36.

[23] Ibid, 40.

[24] Ibid, 36.

[25] Ralf Emmers, "Contemporary Security Studies," in *Securitization*, ed. Alan Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 110.

[26] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 21.

depending on the security approach that is being taken to address what is deemed as a "security issue."[27]

According to Emmers, the Copenhagen school uses a "two-stage process of securitisation" to explain how and when an issue is considered an existential threat to security.[28] The first stage is when an "issue, person, or entity," is portrayed as an "existential threat to referent objects."[29] Although both state and non-state actors can initiate this first stage of securitisation, it tends to be initiated by actors who hold more power – hence, most securitising actors are elite members of society or state officials.[30] The second stage of securitisation only occurs once the securitising actor "succeeds in convincing a relevant audience (public opinion, politicians, military officers, or other elites) that a referent object is existentially threatened."[31] Once the audience believes that there is an urgent need to protect the referent object, extraordinary measures can take place – essentially, actions that are "outside of the normal bounds of political procedures" are now justified and are therefore accepted by the audience.[32]

As I will go into more detail about in chapter one, India has taken a traditional state-centric security approach to the conflict in Kashmir. The Indian government, who is acting as the securitising actor in this case, has marked Kashmiris fighting for independence from India as an existential threat to India's national security, putting the state as the referent object, and using this rationale to justify emergency measures in Kashmir. As I will discuss in more detail later on, one example of an emergency measure is the Armed Forces Special Power's Act (AFSPA), which states that, "In the areas which are declared 'disturbed' the armed forces can make preventive detentions, do warrantless searches, and shoot and kill civilians."[33] In addition to other laws, the AFSPA has essentially allowed for complete impunity of state forces, who have committed mass human rights violations against Kashmiris for decades.[34]

Overall, I use the concept of securitisation to investigate how securitised policies and practices have led to mass militarisation in Kashmir, and in turn, how this impacts the wellbeing of Kashmiris, and more specifically, half-widows.

3.2 Militarisation

Kashmir is widely considered one of "the most heavily militarised regions on earth,"[35] and has been described as a "highly militarized site of punitive containment through the legal suspension

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[27] It is relevant to note that this literature is vast and I am unable to conduct an in-depth revision of it as this exceeds the purposes of this thesis and I do not have the space to do so.
[28] Emmers, "Contemporary Security Studies," 112.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Saqib Wani, "The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA): Legal Impunity to Kill," *The Public Sphere: Journal of Public Policy* 10, no. 1 (2022): 183.
[34] Wani, "The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA): Legal Impunity to Kill," 183.
[35] Iqbal, "Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir," 148.

of the juridical order."[36] In this sense, exploring the role that militarisation in Kashmir has played in the degradation of human security is vital to my research project.

Although the concept of militarisation is contested throughout the field of international relations, I will be following Cynthia Enloe's definition: "a step-by step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas."[37] It is relevant to note that militarisation cannot be separated from securitisation, as "militarization is a specific subset of securitization, referring to the use of and support for military means to respond to issues being securitized."[38] In other words, through a traditional security approach, governments, such as India, have marked groups, such as Kashmiris fighting for independence, as existential threats to their national security. In turn, extreme measures, such as mass militarisation, have been imposed in Kashmir to combat this existential threat. Subsequently, the Indian military has gained immense control over Kashmiris, as both deploying a tremendous number of forces and allowing them immunity has allowed the state to silence dissent and instil fear throughout the entire population.

Furthermore, Giorgio Agamben's theory of a "state of exception" is important to understand when discussing literature relating to militarisation and securitisation. Essentially, a state of exception refers to "the suspension of the legal system in order to protect the state from internal or external threats,"[39] as has been done in Kashmir with laws like the AFSPA. Haley Duschinski argues that the situation in Kashmir is what Agamben defines as a "legal civil war," in which militarisation allows for the government to eliminate anyone identified as "threats to national order" through enforced disappearances, killings, or imprisonment.[40] Furthermore, Duschinski says that emergency acts such as the AFSPA are "rendered legitimate through rhetorical invocations of order and security," but create severe insecurity for those groups who are marked as threats.[41]

Overall, militarisation is key to understanding the human security status of half-widows and Kashmiris more generally, as much of the violence and marginalisation they face is a result of both the immense military presence in the region as well as policies in place that allow for widespread impunity.

3.3 The Feminist Human Security Approach

For decades, India has continued to approach the conflict in Kashmir through state-centric security lens[42] – an approach which assumes that "only with strong militaries…can nations have

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[36] Duschinski, "Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley," 712.
[37] Cynthia Enloe, "How Do They Militarize a Can of Soup?," in *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (University of California Press, 2000), 3, https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520923744-002.
[38] Gretchen Baldwin and Taylor Hynes, "The Securitization of Gender: A Primer," *IPI Global Observatory* (blog), October 11, 2022, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/10/the-securitization-of-gender-a-primer/.
[39] Young-Ju Hoang and Noël O'Sullivan, "Gendered Militarisation as State of Exception on the Korean Peninsula," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 3, no. 2 (March 4, 2018): 164, https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2018.1471359.
[40] Duschinski, "Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley," 692.
[41] Ibid, 695.
[42] Iqbal, "Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir," 148.

an assurance of security."[43] Using this approach, the Indian government has justified the immense military presence in the region. Yet, rather than bringing peace to Kashmir, this has contributed to decades of human rights violations perpetrated by armed forces and placed Kashmiri human security in a vulnerable state.[44] As a pushback against the traditional state-centric security model, the human security framework was introduced as an approach that is "people-centred, comprehensive, context specific and prevention oriented,"[45] and which emphasises the "protection of human rights and freedoms and empowerment."[46]

According to Sehar Iqbal,

> *"The human security approach broadens the conception of security from its traditionally narrow focus on state security, with its preoccupations with territory and influence between and within states. Human security looks at human beings as the primary subject of security studies and policy, analysing how human security deprivations lead to the undermining of peace and security."*[47]

According to Mohd Aarif Rather, there are three main human security approaches.[48] First, there is the rights-based approach, which focuses primarily on "the promotion of rule of law, democratic system of governance as well as securing of fundamental human rights."[49] Second is the safety of people approach, which focuses on "the protection of people from violent threats…economic despair, social injustice and political instability," and "considers war as the greatest threat to human security."[50] Lastly, the sustainable human development approach aligns with the 1994 United Nations Development Programme's report,[51] *New Dimensions of Human Security,* where the term "human security" first emerged.[52] However, a throughline of all these approaches is that their main concern is with the individual, not the state[53] – which is in direct opposition to the traditional state-centric security approach outlined earlier.

Although there are many approaches to human security, the approach I will be using throughout my research comes from the book, *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs. State Security*, edited by Betty A. Reardon and Asha Hans, who outline a "feminist human security approach."

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[43] Betty Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," in *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs. State Security* (Routledge, 2010), 10.
[44] Iqbal, "Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir," 148.
[45] "What Is Human Security," *United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security* (blog), n.d., https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/.
[46] Iqbal, "Through Their Eyes: Women and Human Security in Kashmir," 152.
[47] Ibid, 149.
[48] Aarif Rather Mohd, "Identifying the Parameters of Militarisation in Kashmir Valley: Locating through the Prism of Human Security Approach," *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 4, no. 2 (July 24, 2021): 44.
[49] Mohd, "Identifying the Parameters of Militarisation in Kashmir Valley: Locating through the Prism of Human Security Approach," 44.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, 44-45.
[52] Annamarie Bindenagel Šehović, "Introduction: Origins of Human Security," in *Reimagining State and Human Security Beyond Borders*, ed. Annamarie Bindenagel Šehović (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72068-5_1.
[53] Mohd, "Identifying the Parameters of Militarisation in Kashmir Valley: Locating through the Prism of Human Security Approach," 45.

Throughout this book, the contributors use a feminist perspective in their understanding of human security, questioning whether a militarised state security approach can ever assure true human security.[54] Taking into account the three approaches that Rather describes, Reardon and Hans' feminist approach could also be considered a "safety of people approach," as it follows the assumption that human security can only be achieved if patriarchy is replaced with gender equality and war is abolished and replaced with non-violent conflict resolution processes.[55] Additionally, Reardon writes, "Through study of the gendered experience of women, a feminist perspective also sheds light on the ways in which human security is destroyed by armed conflict and is systematically weakened by all forms of militarized security."[56]

According to Reardon and Hans, there are four sources of wellbeing that must be met to reach "security" when applying a feminist human security approach. As Reardon writes, "The first of the core feminist assertions on the meaning of security, identifying the sources of its assurance, is that security is in essence the conditions that make possible the experience and expectation of wellbeing."[57] In her chapter, Reardon defines four fundamental sources of wellbeing, which I will be using to structure my analysis. These four sources are: A sustaining and sustainable environment, fulfilment of fundamental survival needs, respect for personal and group dignity and identity, and protection from avoidable harm.[58]

1. The first source, a sustaining and sustainable environment, requires that the natural and human environments we live in must "be able to sustain human life and health."[59] Reardon makes the point that environmental destruction is often caused by industrial and military activity, arguing that if ecological and economic means of survival have been destroyed, we cannot be secure.[60]
2. The second source, fulfilment of fundamental survival needs, refers to meeting "basic human needs"[61] such as "food, clothing, shelter, health-care, and education."[62] Reardon argues that the "excessive allocation of public funding to military expenditure" means less funding for public services that provide people access to basic human needs, causing disproportionate harm to marginalised communities.[63]
3. The third source, respect for personal and group dignity and identity, asserts that if our identities – sexual, racial, ethnic, religious, political, etc. – are not respected, or we are denied our dignity, we can never be secure.[64] Moreover, Reardon makes an important

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[54] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 11.
[55] Ibid, 7.
[56] Ibid, 11.
[57] Ibid, 16.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid, 19.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Kozue Akibayashi and Suzuyo Takazato, "Gendered Insecurity under Long-Term Military Presence: The Case of Okinawa," in *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs. State Security* (Routledge, 2010), 55.
[63] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 20.
[64] Ibid.

point that, "The institution of war relies in large part on the willingness of peoples to deny dignity and respect to others identified as enemies."[65]

4. The last source, protection from avoidable harm, is similar to the "Responsibility to Protect" – a principle adopted by UN Member States in 2005 after much criticism that the mass atrocities in the Balkans and Rwanda could have been prevented.[66] Through the adoption of this principle, member states "affirmed their responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and accepted a collective responsibility to encourage and help each other uphold this commitment."[67] However, Reardon argues that in order to establish actual human security, we must be both protected from avoidable harm and cared for in cases of unavoidable crises, such as natural disasters.[68] Furthermore, she says that we must be protected in cases of "misguided foreign and security policy decisions" that approach conflicts through unnecessary armed force, as this can create further human insecurity that could have been avoided.[69]

What is important to note here is that a traditional state-centric security approach considers the state to be the referent object, whereas all human security approaches consider people to be the referent object. Additionally, a state-centric security approach suggests that militarisation is necessary to reach security, whereas a *feminist* human security approach suggests militarisation undermines people's wellbeing, deeming security impossible under a militarised state.

By applying this feminist human security approach to my research, I aim to provide insights into the implications of conflict on the livelihood of Kashmiri people, and the ways militarisation has impacted men and women differently. Additionally, this approach allows me to identify how larger systems of oppression intersect with militarisation, looking closely at the roles that gender and religion have played in this conflict. Furthermore, I will use the four sources of wellbeing as a tool to analyse both the general state of human security in Kashmir and, more specifically, the human security of half-widows.

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[65] Ibid, 21.
[66] "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect," Responsibility to Protect, accessed June 5, 2023, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml.
[67] "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect."
[68] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 23.
[69] Ibid, 22.

4. Chapter One: Militarisation in Kashmir

Throughout this thesis, I will be analysing the state of human security in Kashmir since 1989 onwards. However, before I do that, I must answer the question: Why has Kashmir experienced immense militarisation since 1989? To understand the tragic history of Kashmir, we must first go back to 1947, when former British India gained its independence and partitioned into present day India and Pakistan.

4.1 Partition

Animosity between India and Pakistan has been ongoing for over seven decades, beginning with the 1947 partition, which instigated a major conflict over the state of Jammu and Kashmir (often just referred to as "Kashmir") – one of over 500 princely states under British India.[70] When the British decided to partition India into two different nations, they allowed for the rulers of princely states to choose whether they would join India or Pakistan.[71] Due to its location directly between the two new independent nations, this decision was especially challenging for Kashmir.[72] In addition, religious affiliation was a complicated factor because the state was majority Muslim, but was ruled by Maharajah Hari Singh, who was Hindu.[73] Furthermore, the Maharajah dreamed of independence for his state, which led him to remain undecided for some time in regards to which nation Kashmir would officially join.[74]

During this time of uncertainty, a young Kashmiri man named Mohammed Ibrahim Khan led a rebellion against Hari Singh's rule in August of 1947.[75] As rebels spread throughout the Kashmir Valley, the Maharajah turned to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for military aid, and in return, agreed to Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India, signing a document known as the "Instrument of Accession."[76] However, according to the Pakistan Mission to the UN, "The people of Kashmir and Pakistan do not accept the Indian claim. There are doubts about the very existence of the Instrument of Accession."[77] Nonetheless, in early 1948, the Indian government deployed troops into Kashmir and a full-fledged war broke out between India and Pakistan, who were both fighting for control over the region.[78] By early 1949, the United Nations stepped in and sponsored a cease-fire between the two countries, temporarily halting hostilities and creating what is now known as the "Line of Control" (LoC) - a line that acts as a *de facto* border separating Indian-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.[79] Since the first Indo-

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[70] Musarat Javed Cheema, "Pakistan – India Conflict with Special Reference to Kashmir," *South Asian Studies: A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (2015): 49.

[71] Zutshi, "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Issue: 1947 and Beyond," 10.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Leoni Connah, "Contested Kashmir: A Brief History," *EPOCH Magazine*, December 2020, https://www.epoch-magazine.com/connahkashmir.

[74] Zutshi, "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Issue: 1947 and Beyond," 10.

[75] Ganguly, "India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute," 2.

[76] Ibid.

[77] "Kashmir - The History," Pakistan Mission to United Nations, 2023, https://www.pakun.org/kashmir/history.php.

[78] Ganguly, "India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute," 2.

[79] Robert G. Wirsing, "War or Peace on the Line of Control?: The India-Pakistan Dispute over Kashmir Turns Fifty," Boundary and Territory Briefing (International Boundaries Research Unit, University of Durham, 1998), 3.

Pakistan war, three other official wars have been fought between the two countries, and numerous other conflicts have occurred over the decades.[80]

Eventually, the former princely state was broken up into three main territories. First, there is the Indian-occupied territory called "Jammu and Kashmir" (J&K) which consists of three major regions – the Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh.[81] According to the last available census, J&K is the only Muslim-majority state in all of India, with 68.3% of the population practicing Islam.[82] That being said, J&K has historically been a melting pot of religion, ethnic background, language, and culture. The Kashmir Valley is predominantly Muslim and Kashmiri-speaking, Jammu is predominantly Hindu and Dogri-speaking, and Ladakh is predominantly Buddhist and Tibetan-speaking.[83] (However, the Indian-occupied territory has recently been divided into two separate Union territories, which I will explain in more detail later.) There is also "*Azad* Kashmir," or "*Free* Kashmir," which is the Pakistan-occupied territory of Kashmir (officially referred to as Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by the Indian government).[84] In addition, there is a contested territory of Kashmir known as "Aksai Chin," that is currently occupied by China but is also claimed by India.[85] Moving forwards, when referencing "Kashmir" throughout this paper, I am referring to the Indian-occupied territory of Kashmir.[86]

Map of the region of Kashmir, 2019.[87]

[80] Abby Pokraka, "History of Conflict in India and Pakistan," Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, November 26, 2019, https://armscontrolcenter.org/history-of-conflict-in-india-and-pakistan/.

[81] Zutshi, "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Issue: 1947 and Beyond," 8.

[82] "Jammu and Kashmir Hindu Muslim Population," Population Census, 2022, https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/1-jammu-and-kashmir.html.

[83] Zutshi, "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Issue: 1947 and Beyond," 8.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] The term "Indian-occupied Kashmir" and "Indian-administered Kashmir" are used interchangeably by scholars.

[87] Bill Nelson, *Map of the region of Kashmir*, 2019, in Ather Zia, *Resisting Disappearance: Military Occupation and Women's Activism in Kashmir*, vol. First edition, Decolonizing Feminisms (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), xvii, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2664504&site=ehost-live.

4.2 The Fight for Freedom

Although the conflict in Kashmir has been ongoing since India and Pakistan's partition in 1947, tensions began to escalate in 1989, when insurgency groups fighting for independence from India appeared.[88] Starting in the 1980s, there was a rise in secessionism throughout the region, as Kashmiri Muslims grew tired of corruption and fraudulent elections driven by the Indian government.[89] In particular, a "blatantly rigged" state election in 1987 led to widespread mistrust and resentment against the Indian government and served as a major turning point for this secessionist movement.[90] Subsequently, armed resistance groups began organising in 1989,[91] and by the summer of 1991, Kashmir was on the brink of a complete insurrection.[92]

By the mid 1990s, the secessionist movement had divided into two main branches: those who wanted complete independence for Kashmir from both India and Pakistan, and those who wished for Kashmir to be part of Pakistan, or at a minimum, to be an independent Islamic state with ties to Pakistan.[93] As Chatterji writes, "The word *freedom* represents many things across India-ruled Kashmir. But these divergent interpretations are steadfastly united on one point: freedom always signifies an end to India's illiberal governance."[94] India has continuously accused Pakistan of funding and training armed militants to fight against Indian rule in Kashmir, but Pakistan has denied such accusations, only admitting to providing "diplomatic and moral support to the separatist movement."[95] Additionally, it is important to note that while violence was used by some pro-*azadi*, or pro-freedom groups in the late 80's and early 90's, the secessionist movement in Kashmir has largely been non-violent.[96]

4.3 The Armed Forces Special Powers Act

The Indian government quickly treated the successionist movement as an existential threat to their national security, instigated by what they deemed to be "jihadist" groups being funded by their enemy, Pakistan.[97] In response, they took two major steps. First, it is estimated that there have been somewhere between 500,000-1,000,000 Indian troops deployed in Kashmir since 1989

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[88] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 89.

[89] Ganguly, "India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute," 5.

[90] Ibid.

[91] "Kashmir Through the Ages," Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Government of Pakistan, accessed May 21, 2023, https://mofa.gov.pk/kashmir-through-ages/.

[92] Sumantra Bose, "The Evolution of Kashmiri Resistance," Al Jazeera, August 2, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/8/2/the-evolution-of-kashmiri-resistance.

[93] Ganguly, "India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute," 5.

[94] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone," 58.

[95] Fayaz Bukhari, "Around 300 Militants Active in Indian Kashmir, Indian Military Official Says," Reuters, November 22, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/india/around-300-militants-active-indian-kashmir-indian-military-official-2022-11-22/.

[96] Idrisa Pandit, "India Is Escalating Kashmir Conflict by Painting It as Terrorism," openDemocracy, December 2, 2019, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openindia/india-escalating-kashmir-conflict-painting-it-terrorism/.

[97] Kislay Kumar Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2019): 212, https://doi.org/10.1177/2455632719880851.

– although the exact numbers are unclear.[98] Second, the government imposed a series of laws which gave "immense power to the security forces, army and paramilitary forces to combat against the militancy,"[99] instigating mass human rights violations perpetrated by Indian state forces in Kashmir. One of the most controversial of these laws is the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which states that, "In the areas which are declared 'disturbed' the armed forces can make preventive detentions, do warrantless searches, and shoot and kill civilians."[100] Although the AFSPA was established in 1958, Kashmir was brought under the AFSPA in 1990 after it was declared a "disturbed area."[101] Overall, the AFSPA in conjunction with other controversial laws[102] allow soldiers to raid houses, arrest people without any real charges, commit custodial violence, hold people in detention without due process, and kill innocent civilians – all in the name of national security.[103] Moreover, these laws grant Indian forces immunity from prosecution, unless authorised by the central government.[104] Over the years, many have called the AFSPA into question and advocated for its removal, claiming that it simply serves as a tool for the Indian government to "trample upon the rights [of Kashmiris] with impunity and thereby kill dissent and disagreement."[105] Although some regions have removed the AFSPA and recent reports claim the Indian defence services want to remove the act entirely from Kashmir, many regions remain under its purview today.[106] As I will discuss in the next chapter, the consequence of these laws has been a widespread violation of human rights perpetrated against Kashmiris throughout the past three decades.

4.4 Unmarked Graves

According to a report published by the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-administered Kashmir (IPTK) in 2009, nearly 3,000 bodies were discovered across Kashmir, 88% of which were found in unnamed graves.[107] In most cases, these bodies were registered as "foreign militants" by Indian security forces, who claimed that they were

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[98] "Five Indian Soldiers Killed in Suspected Rebel Attack in Kashmir."; Fareed, "India Imposes Kashmir Lockdown, Puts Leaders 'under House Arrest.'"; "India Has Deployed More than 1 Million Troops in Held Kashmir."

[99] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 212.

[100] Wani, "The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA): Legal Impunity to Kill," 183.

[101] Sunil Bhat, "Centre Mulling Removal of AFSPA from Some Districts of J&K: Sources," *India Today*, April 4, 2022, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/centre-removal-afspa-districts-jammu-kashmir-jk-1933403-2022-04-04.

[102] Such as the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (Source: "India: Suppression of Free Speech, Minorities," *Human Rights Watch* (blog), January 12, 2023, https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/12/india-suppression-free-speech-minorities.)

[103] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone," 64.

[104] Xerxes Adrianwalla, "AFSPA: National Necessity or Human Rights Violation?," *Gateway House* (blog), May 30, 2012, https://www.gatewayhouse.in/afspa-national-necessity-or-human-rights-violation/.

[105] Naseer Ganai, "Why AFSPA In Jammu And Kashmir Is Not Just A Defence Act," *Outlook India*, December 7, 2021, https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-why-afspa-in-jammu-and-kashmir-is-not-just-a-defence-act/404114.

[106] Aryan Prakash, "Rajnath Singh Refers to 'removal of AFSPA' from J&K. Here's What He Said," *Hindustan Times*, April 23, 2022, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/rajnath-singh-refers-to-removal-of-afspa-from-j-k-here-s-what-he-said-101650707365175.html.

[107] Angana P. Chatterji et al., "Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-Administered Kashmir" (International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-administered Kashmir, November 2009), 11, https://www.kashmirprocess.org/reports/graves/01Front.html.

killed in "counter-insurgency operations," and given to local villagers to bury.[108] However, these claims have been disputed by many local residents and the IPTK to be "fake encounter" killings, defined as, "Extrajudicial killing of civilians, often while they are in the custody of state forces, recorded by officials as resulting from an armed confrontation with state forces instigated by the recently deceased."[109] Furthermore, the IPTK investigated 50 cases of unidentified bodies labelled as "foreign militants" and found that many were actually local Kashmiris.[110]

This is very noteworthy as it is direct evidence of the Indian government falsifying reports about the presence of foreign militants in Kashmir to fuel the narrative that there is a real threat of Pakistani terrorism. If India cannot continue to convince civil society that Kashmiris are a real threat to the nation, the excessive military action that has been taken in Kashmir becomes less justifiable. Thus, this sort of narrative becomes vital to the survival of Kashmir's securitisation. This is not to say that Pakistan has never supported militancy in Kashmir – in fact, there is sufficient evidence that Islamabad not only supported militants, but also trained and funded them.[111] However, the reality is that the secessionist movement in Kashmir has been predominantly peaceful, and any recent waves of militancy are "largely indigenous and appears to have no sophisticated weapons and little training."[112] Thus, exaggerating the level of foreign involvement in the secessionist movement, and depicting all pro-*azadi* Kashmiris as violent terrorists, simply serves as a tool to invoke fear across India and rationalise the extreme measures taken in Kashmir.

4.5 Abrogation of Article 370 and 35A

In 2019, there was a drastic change in the prior "special status" of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. For nearly seven decades, Kashmir has had political autonomy under Article 370, which was added to the Indian Constitution in 1949, allowing it to hold its own elections, have its own constitution and flag, pass its own laws, etc.[113] Additionally, Article 35A, which fell under Article 370 of the Constitution, gave power to the state's legislature to "define 'permanent resident' of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents," protecting indigenous populations right to property, employment, scholarships, etc.[114] But in August of 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, revoked Article 370 (and with it Article 35A), claiming that the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir into India would bolster the state's development.[115] Later that year, the Jammu and

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[108] Chatterji et al., "Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-Administered Kashmir," 49-69.

[109] Ibid, 10-11.

[110] Ibid, 69.

[111] "Keeping Kashmir on the Radar," Crisis Group, January 27, 2022, https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/india-pakistan-kashmir/keeping-kashmir-radar.

[112] "Keeping Kashmir on the Radar."

[113] Jon Lunn, "Kashmir: The Effects of Revoking Article 370," *UK Parliament: House of Commons Library*, August 8, 2019, https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/kashmir-the-effects-of-revoking-article-370/.

[114] "Kashmir Special Status Explained: What Are Articles 370 and 35A?," Al Jazeera, August 5, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/5/kashmir-special-status-explained-what-are-articles-370-and-35a.

[115] "Revocation of Article 370 Will Usher in a New Dawn in J&K: PM Modi," *The Economic Times*, August 9, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/narendra-modi-live-update-revocation-of-article-370-will-usher-in-a-dawn-of-development-in-jk/articleshow/70591359.cms.

Kashmir Reorganisation Act was passed,[116] which divided the region into two Union territories: Jammu and Kashmir, which has a state legislature, and Ladakh, which does not have a legislature and is governed by New Delhi.[117]

In addition to citing "development" as basis for this decision, Modi also claimed that this legal move would benefit women, saying, "We abrogated Article 370. Women got empowered. We have empowered people by scrapping Article 370,"[118] In particular, Modi was referencing a specific rule under Article 35A, which stated that, "once women from the state married outside, they lost their rights to hold immovable property, to work in permanent positions in the state, the right to scholarships and such other forms of aid as the state government provides."[119] Yet, some have pointed out that this could have been changed through an amendment, rather than removing the entire article.[120] It also begs the question – if the BJP actually cared about "women's empowerment," why have they actively allowed for state forces to commit mass sexual violence against Kashmiri women with impunity? Additionally, since Article 370 and 35A have been revoked, the government has disbanded the Women's Commission Cell.[121] As I will explain later, filing a police report in Kashmir is often extremely difficult, so the Commission stood as one of the only viable options for women to report instances of abuse.[122] This is just one example of the Indian government invoking ideas of "gender equality" and "humanitarianism" to justify power and control over Kashmir, hiding the negative repercussions their actions have had on women. Additionally, Qureshi writes that in making such a declaration, "the state postures itself as a patriarch, taking decisions for women, thrusting decisions upon them, making them believe it is the best protector of their interests."[123]

Many believe Modi's decision was actually a tactic to advance his Hindu-nationalist agenda by attempting to shift the demographics of Kashmir, which is the only Muslim-majority Indian state, to be a Hindu-majority state, as this legal change now allows for anyone from India to reside there permanently.[124] Additionally, revised electoral rolls have allowed for non-locals, including armed forces that are deployed in Kashmir, to become registered voters, and redrawn political constituencies have increased the number of assembly seats in Hindu-majority regions of Kashmir.[125] As a staunch Hindu-nationalist, Modi believes that "Indian national identity and

[116] "Article 370," Supreme Court Observer, 2022, https://www.scobserver.in/cases/manohar-lal-lohia-union-of-india-article-370-case-background/.

[117] Lunn, "Kashmir."

[118] "Abrogating Article 370 Empowered Women; Had There Been No Congress, Kashmiri Pandits Would Not Have Been Thrown out: PM Modi," *The Kashmir Monitor* (blog), February 8, 2022, https://www.thekashmirmonitor.net/abrogating-article-370-empowered-women-had-there-been-no-congress-kashmiri-pandits-would-not-have-been-thrown-out-pm-modi/.

[119] Arshie Qureshi, "Using Women to Justify the Removal of Article 370," TheCitizen, October 24, 2019, https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/7/17763/Using-Women-to-Justify-the-Removal-of-Article-370--.

[120] Qureshi, "Using Women to Justify the Removal of Article 370."

[121] Devina Neogi, "Women's Struggles in the Kashmir Militancy War," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 23 (May 2022): 1–13.

[122] Neogi, "Women's Struggles in the Kashmir Militancy War."

[123] Qureshi, "Using Women to Justify the Removal of Article 370."

[124] "Kashmir's Special Status."

[125] Yola Verbruggen, "Rule of Law: Tensions High in Jammu and Kashmir as Elections Approach," International Bar Association, accessed July 7, 2023, https://www.ibanet.org/rule-of-law-tensions-high-jammu-kashmir.

culture are inseparable from the Hindu religion."[126] Throughout his time as prime minister, he has implemented many policies that challenge India's secular Constitution and has continuously targeted minority religious groups in the country – specifically Muslims.[127] Furthermore, there has been much debate about whether the abrogation of Article 370 was constitutional.[128]

In the months following Modi's decision, Kashmiris expressed major dissent and widespread protests broke out.[129] For many Kashmiris, these articles had acted as "sources of identity and autonomy," and with them being tossed aside, they feared for their future and safety.[130] Subsequently, the government responded to protests by imposing "the world's longest internet shutdown," lasting about 18 months,[131] in addition to implementing curfews, lockdowns, and arresting thousands of political activists.[132] In recent months, Modi has attempted portray a sense of peace and normalcy in Kashmir, even hosting the G20 meeting there in May – which multiple countries boycotted, citing that such meetings are not supposed to be held in disputed territory.[133] However, nothing about the current condition of Kashmir speaks to peace or normalcy. Today, state surveillance persists and the right to free speech essentially ceases to exist for any opposing Kashmiri voices.[134] Newspapers are being censored, journalists are being barred from leaving the country, and even liking a social media post that is critical of the BJP can lead to imprisonment.[135] In the words of a local Kashmiri teacher, "If you don't allow anyone to speak, to write or to protest without facing detention, it is as good as being alive in a graveyard."[136]

4.6 Conclusion

India has historically and continues to portray Kashmiris' fight against Indian rule as "Pakistan-sponsored terrorism," in order to justify their military actions.[137] By claiming to be fighting

[126] Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "What Is Hindu Nationalism and How Does It Relate to Trouble in Leicester?," *The Guardian*, September 20, 2022, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/20/what-is-hindu-nationalism-and-who-are-the-rss.

[127] Ellis-Petersen, "What Is Hindu Nationalism and How Does It Relate to Trouble in Leicester?"

[128] "Abrogation of Article 370 Unconstitutional, People of J&K Bypassed: Petitioners to SC," *The Economic Times*, December 10, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/sc-commences-hearing-on-pleas-challenging-abrogation-of-article-370/articleshow/72454345.cms.

[129] Kelly Buchanan, "FALQs: Article 370 and the Removal of Jammu and Kashmir's Special Status," webpage, *The Library of Congress* (blog), October 3, 2019, https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2019/10/falqs-article-370-and-the-removal-of-jammu-and-kashmirs-special-status/.

[130] "Article 35A Abolished - Will That Be Highlight Of PM Modi's Speech On 15th August?," *The EurAsian Times*, July 28, 2019, https://eurasiantimes.com/article-35a-abolished-pm-modi-august-15-speech/.

[131] Aakash Hassan and Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "'Bulldozer Politics': Modi's Demolition Drive Fuels Muslims' Fears in Kashmir," *The Observer*, March 19, 2023, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/19/bulldozer-politics-modi-demolition-drive-fuels-muslims-fears-in-kashmir.

[132] Buchanan, "FALQs: Article 370 and the Removal of Jammu and Kashmir's Special Status"

[133] Patrick Wintour, "China and Saudi Arabia Boycott G20 Meeting Held by India in Kashmir," *The Guardian*, May 22, 2023, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/22/china-saudi-arabia-boycott-g20-meeting-india-kashmir.

[134] Shweta Desai, "India's Crackdown in Kashmir Has Brought Calm, but Not Peace," *World Politics Review* (blog), January 18, 2023, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/jammu-and-kashmir-article-370-human-rights-india-bjp/.

[135] Desai, "India's Crackdown in Kashmir Has Brought Calm, but Not Peace."

[136] Ibid.

[137] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone."

terrorism, the mass atrocities and human rights violations being committed are overlooked and justified, and the conflict in Kashmir is instead perceived by both Indian civil society and by the Global North as "collateral damage."[138] As a result, there has been very little international response to the conflict in Kashmir, and substantial action against widespread human rights violations has yet to take place.[139] Additionally, the Indian government has been able to convince the majority of Indian civil society that what is happening in Kashmir is necessary in order to protect national security. In a 2017 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, it was discovered that 60% of Indians approve of the approach that Modi has taken towards Kashmir.[140]

However, we know from reports, such as that carried out by the IPTK, that many bodies found in unmarked graves that were claimed to be "foreign militants" killed in "counter-insurgency operations," were actually local Kashmiris killed in fake encounters.[141] As stated by the IPTK, "In claiming these bodies as uniformly 'foreign militants/terrorists,' state discourse exaggerates the presence of external groups and cross-border infiltration."[142] Additionally, Kashmiri's themselves have continuously held that their fight for self-determination has always been "local and endemic."[143] Although the Indian government and Indian media outlets continue to depict any opposition from Kashmiris as terrorism, the IPTK report from 2009 described civil society opposition as "principled, peaceable, and locally conceptualized."[144]

In this chapter, I have shown how the Indian government has deployed a traditional state-centric security approach towards Kashmir, identifying Kashmiris as an existential threat to India's national security and imposing extraordinary militarisation. But the question remains – what has been the outcome of this approach? There have been many academics and policy analysts alike who have commented on the success, or failure, of the Indian government in achieving security for Kashmir, but have used the same state-centric lens to do so. However, this perspective is both overused and often ignores the implications of militarisation on Kashmiri civilians, and in particular, on women. So, what happens when we view this conflict from a feminist human security lens? Through this people-centric lens, has security been reached? In the next chapter, I will provide an overview of human security in Kashmir, using the feminist human security approach to analyse how militarisation has undermined Kashmiris wellbeing, and highlight the gendered consequences of militarisation.

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[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Hanyu Chwe, "How People in India See Pakistan, 70 Years after Partition," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed July 5, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/12/07/how-people-in-india-see-pakistan-70-years-after-partition/.

[141] Chatterji et al., "Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-Administered Kashmir," 10-11.

[142] Ibid, 16.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid, 27.

5. Chapter Two: Human Security in Kashmir

I have just shown how the Indian government has approached the conflict in Kashmir through a traditional state-security approach, considering the state as the referent object and Kashmiris as the existential threat – but what happens if we use a feminist human security approach to analyse the outcome? In this chapter, I will use the feminist human security approach that Reardon and Hans lay out to answer the question: What is the overall state of human security in Kashmir and how is it gendered? Below I will provide a brief overview of the impact that militarisation has had on Kashmir, applying the four sources of wellbeing in order to assess the state of human security. In particular, I will be highlighting the gendered differences in how Kashmiris have experienced militarisation. As a reminder, the four fundamental sources of wellbeing are: 1. A sustaining and sustainable environment; 2. Fulfilment of fundamental survival needs; 3. Respect for personal and group dignity and identity; 4. Protection from avoidable harm.[145] For the purposes of organisation and clarity, I have separated each source of wellbeing – however, much of the information provided is overlapping and can be used as evidence to prove a denial of multiple sources of wellbeing.

5.1 A Sustaining and Sustainable Environment

Militarisation has had an immense impact on both the natural and built environment in Kashmir. In terms of the natural environment, agricultural and residential land has been completely overtaken by armed conflict since 1989, as an influx of armed forces have progressively spread across the region.[146] Forests have been devastated as they have become a place for state forces to establish camps, and much of the wildlife has suffered from this deforestation.[147] State forces have also established camps near bodies of water across the region, which has degraded the local water resources.[148] This is a result of both increased pollution from army trucks and shelling, which has contaminated much of the water, as well as less access to water sources, as many fear they will be killed if they wander too close to these army camps.[149] Since women are usually tasked with fetching water for their households, they have been disproportionately impacted by this issue and now have to travel extremely far distances in order to find clean and safe water sources.[150]

As Reardon writes, if both ecological and economic means of survival have been destroyed, we cannot be secure.[151] Not only has militarisation contributed to a loss of wildlife and decreased

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[145] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 16.

[146] Mohd, "Identifying the Parameters of Militarisation in Kashmir Valley: Locating through the Prism of Human Security Approach," 47.

[147] Ibid, 47-48.

[148] Ibid, 48.

[149] Asha Hans, "An Experiment in Transition from Military to Human Security," in *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs. State Security* (Routledge, 2010), 392.

[150] "Women Pay for Kashmir's Water Woes," ReliefWeb, April 2, 2012, https://reliefweb.int/report/india/women-pay-kashmirs-water-woes.

[151] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 19.

access to water, but it has also contributed to the degradation of the local economy.[152] Much of Kashmir's economy was fuelled by agriculture, tourism, and handicraft – all of which have experienced "heavy setbacks by the armed conflict in general and intensive militarisation in particular."[153] The agriculture sector has mainly suffered due to a lack of access to markets, making it difficult to export crops.[154] Tourism, which at one point accounted for nearly 10% of the state's income, has become essentially non-existent.[155] Many of the historical landmarks that were previously visited by tourists have been occupied by state forces and the area has become dangerous to visit, with some tourists even becoming targets of violence.[156] Lastly, the production of handicrafts, which was once a booming industry in Kashmir, deteriorated over 20% from 2007 to 2010, mostly due to curfews implemented by state forces and mass protests that often shut down places of business.[157] Additionally, the price of raw materials has continued to rise and most local artisans do not have access to global markets, forcing them to work with middlemen who drive up prices.[158] Some have criticised the Indian government for not providing any financial schemes to help those in the handicraft industry – though it has historically contributed to major part of Kashmir's local economy, the government no longer views it as an important aspect to India's national economy.[159] Unlike most other professional sectors in Kashmir[160], women make up a large percentage of those involved in the handicraft industry, at 47.4%.[161] Consequently, the slow decline in the handicrafts industry has had a major impact on Kashmiri women's ability to find financial freedom.[162]

5.2 Fulfilment of Fundamental Survival Needs

The fulfilment of fundamental survival needs refers to meeting "basic human needs"[163] such as "food, clothing, shelter, health-care, and education."[164] Throughout the region, many Kashmiris have struggled to fulfil their fundamental survival needs as militarisation has contributed to

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[152] Mohd, "Identifying the Parameters of Militarisation in Kashmir Valley: Locating through the Prism of Human Security Approach," 48.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ishfaq Majeed, "Globalisation: A New Challenge for Women Artisan in Handicraft Sector in Kashmir," in *Contemporary Issues of Society in Jammu and Kashmir*, 1st ed. (New Delhi: Indus Book Services Pvt. Ltd., 2019), 64.

[159] Majeed, "Globalisation: A New Challenge for Women Artisan in Handicraft Sector in Kashmir," 65.

[160] This only refers to paid professional sectors, as women perform the majority of unpaid labor in Kashmir and across the globe. Additionally, women are highly involved in many other sectors, such as agriculture, but their contributions are often invisible and are not counted in statistics regarding participation in the work force. (Sources: Arka Chakraborty, "Women Professionals in Jammu and Kashmir," May 22, 2021, https://www.jkpi.org/women-professionals-in-jammu-and-kashmir/; Aisha Dev et al., "Occupational Categorization of Female Work Force in Kashmir Himalayas, India," preprint (University of Kashmir, August 23, 2021), https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-835362/v1.)

[161] Majeed, "Globalisation: A New Challenge for Women Artisan in Handicraft Sector in Kashmir," 63.

[162] Ibid, 65.

[163] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 19.

[164] Akibayashi and Takazato, "Gendered Insecurity under Long-Term Military Presence: The Case of Okinawa," 55.

widespread economic hardship.[165] According to the 2020-2021 Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir, it is estimated that the state's gross domestic product (GDP) has decreased by 9.92%.[166] Many are unable to buy basic necessities, such as food and housing, because of rising inflation, which is caused by many factors.[167] Firstly, Kashmir depends heavily on imported products, as there is an inadequate supply of locally produced goods, and these imported goods have become significantly more expensive over the years.[168] Secondly, it has become a challenge for the Reserve Bank of India to control inflation in Kashmir as there is "limited availability of data on price levels and trends."[169] Lastly, the conflict has severely disrupted Kashmir's economy – restrictions on movement and trade as well as businesses closures have resulted in a limited supply of goods and, subsequently, rising prices.[170] Moreover, Kashmir has one of the highest rates of unemployment in India, at 4.9%, and has the single highest female unemployment rate, at 20.2%, compared to 3.7% nationally.[171] The ongoing conflict has obstructed women from participating in the work force in many ways – fear of sexual violence has compelled many women to seldom leave their home, and access education has been severally interrupted by militarisation, disproportionately impacting women and girls.[172] That being said, women are an integral part of Kashmir's economy and, as I will discuss more in the next chapter, the conflict has contributed to a shift in traditional gender roles, as growing numbers of men have been killed or disappeared, forcing many women to become financially independent.

Access to education in Kashmir has been a major challenge. Throughout the conflict, students have faced numerous barriers to obtaining an education – many of which have been exacerbated since the abrogation of Article 370, which brought state-wide lockdowns and severely restricted internet access.[173] Firstly, there has been physical damage done to many schools as a result of armed military violence, shutting many down and forcing students to relocate to other schools in less dangerous areas, resulting in overcrowding.[174] Some university students have led protests against state forces, which led to stronger military crackdowns and temporary closure of schools.[175] Furthermore, frequent school closures have resulted in an overall decrease in the quality of education – in 2016, many schools had learned less than 40% of the planned school curriculum.[176] According to Ahmad and Balamurgan, "The education in Kashmir suffered absolutely because of the contention."[177]

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[165] Saad Haque, "Everything to Know About Poverty in Kashmir," *The Borgen Project* (blog), March 22, 2023, https://borgenproject.org/about-poverty-in-kashmir/.

[166] "Why Inflation Remains a Significant Concern in Kashmir?," *Kashmir Observer* (blog), May 12, 2022, https://kashmirobserver.net/2023/03/04/why-inflation-remains-a-significant-concern-in-kashmir/.

[167] "Why Inflation Remains a Significant Concern in Kashmir?"

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Zahoor Ahmad Dar, "Mapping the Unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir," *JK Policy Institute* (blog), February 26, 2023, https://www.jkpi.org/mapping-the-unemployment-in-jammu-and-kashmir/.

[172] Dar, "Mapping the Unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir."

[173] P.A. Ahmad and S. Balamurgan, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Eucation in Kashmir," *Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal* 12, no. 2 (June 2021): 618.

[174] Ahmad and Balamurgan, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Eucation in Kashmir," 617.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid, 618.

[177] Ibid, 619.

In particular, women and girls' access to education has been severely impacted. Many schools have been left in poor condition, leaving students with limited access to water and sanitation facilities[178] – this disproportionately impacts women and girls, as they are unable to properly manage their menstruation in a sanitary and safe way, forcing many drop out of school once their first menstruation starts.[179] Additionally, as women and girls face the brunt of sexual violence from state forces, schools' close proximity to military camps often leads families to keep their daughters at home, in fear that they will be attacked.[180] Moreover, the unsteady economy has left many Kashmiri families, especially those living in rural areas, in difficult financial positions.[181] This has forced many to choose between educating only some of their children, and when faced with this decision, boys are typically chosen, as they are considered to be a more "worthy" investment.[182] As a result, Kashmir has one of the lowest female literacy rates compared to other Indian states and Union Territories, at 58%.[183] Furthermore, there is a very large gender gap in literacy rates, especially in rural areas, where the literacy rate for males is 75.51% compared to 53.36% for females.[184]

Likewise, access to adequate health care continues to be a serious concern. According to Zubairi and Baqal, "Health care infrastructure has always been inadequate in Kashmir in terms of availability of health centers, equipment, and manpower."[185] A 2018 audit of health care facilities in Kashmir revealed that there is only one doctor for every 3,866 people, which is quite poor considering that the World Health Organisation recommends at least one doctor for every 1,000 people.[186] Throughout the conflict, innumerable civilians have been physically injured by the brutal force that military personnel often use during protests and other public disputes.[187] Furthermore, the conflict has taken a tremendous toll on the psychological health of Kashmiris. A report from Médecins Sans Frontières and Doctors Without Borders shows that although around 45% of the population is living under "significant mental distress," most do not have access to mental health services.[188] An array of severe government crackdowns since the abrogation of Article 370 have also had major consequences on the health of Kashmiri civilians – all of which were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.[189] As state-wide curfews and lockdowns were implemented, many were unable to leave their homes and seek medical care in a timely manner.[190] Additionally, the restriction of internet access and other forms of online

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[178] Ibid, 617.
[179] Leah Rodriguez, "Doctors in Kashmir Are Pushing for Better Sanitation and Education to Address Menstrual Health Issues," Global Citizen, January 8, 2020, https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/women-in-kashmir-india-report-mhm-issues/.
[180] Ahmad and Balamurgan, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Eucation in Kashmir," 617.
[181] Showkat Bhat, Aashaq Bhat, and Dr Chinnathurai, "Educational Status of Women in Jammu and Kashmir with Special Reference to Rural Areas," International Journal of Indian Psychology 3, no. 4 (September 25, 2016): 180, https://doi.org/10.25215/0304.150.
[182] Bhat, Bhat, and Chinnathurai, "Educational Status of Women in Jammu and Kashmir with Special Reference to Rural Areas," 180.
[183] Ibid, 179.
[184] Ibid, 181.
[185] Nida Zubairi and Omar Baqal, "Kashmir: Public Health and Human Rights Crises," Health and Human Rights Journal (blog), July 6, 2021, https://www.hhrjournal.org/2021/07/kashmir-public-health-and-human-rights-crises/.
[186] Zubairi and Baqal, "Kashmir."
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

communication meant health services such as tele-medicine and emergency helplines were almost entirely unavailable.[191] All of this has led to particularly negative repercussions for women's sexual, reproductive, and menstrual health. According to a doctor in Srinagar, "In many cases, there have been maternal as well as foetal deaths just because the patient was not able to avail timely treatment due to some conflict situation."[192] Additionally, rates of infertility in Kashmir have increased "at an alarming rate" over the past three decades.[193] Overall, mental health issues and decreased access to health facilities, both of which have been a greatly exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, have had a major impact on Kashmiri women's reproductive health.[194]

5.3 Respect for Personal and Group Dignity and Identity

In terms of respect for personal and group dignity and identity, it is relevant to note the large role that religion has played throughout this conflict. According to Chatterji, while the role that state forces have played in instigating violence has been largely ignored by Indian media outlets, Islamophobia has been used to instil fear across Indian civil society, equating both Islam and Kashmiri Muslims with violence.[195] The dominant narrative pushed by government officials is that an independent or separate Kashmir would be ruled by Islamist extremists and therefore threaten India's democracy.[196] As Chatterji writes, "Hindu nationalists have sought to weaponize religion and politics to incite the Hindu majority. Kashmiri Muslims and their allies have been repeatedly depicted as enemies of India, and as potential agents of terror."[197] This has been especially rampant under the BJP's rule since 2014, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.[198] The BJP has historically been associated with Hindu majoritarianism – a political belief that considers India to be "intrinsically Hindu and marks the non-Hindu as its adversary."[199] In this sense, there is a longstanding disrespect of Kashmiri Muslims' religious identity by the Indian government, who has fearmongered Indian society into designating Kashmiris as "the other" in order to justify violence and abuse. But in particular, it is Kashmiri Muslim *men* who are most often equated with terrorism and violence, being depicted as a threat to both national security and to Kashmiri women, who are often perceived as victims needing to be saved. As I will explain in the next section, we can see evidence of this when we investigate who is being directly targeted through violence inflicted by security forces. Additionally, there are many instances in which the Indian government has used the trope of Kashmiri women needing to be saved from Muslim Kashmiri men by the Hindu government – this narrative was

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[191] Ibid.

[192] Tara Adiga, "Women's Health in Kashmir: A Menstrual and Reproductive Health Crisis," *LSE South Asia Center* (blog), June 21, 2021, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2021/06/21/womens-health-in-kashmir-a-menstrual-and-reproductive-health-crisis/.

[193] Adiga, "Women's Health in Kashmir."

[194] Ibid.

[195] Chatterji et al., "Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-Administered Kashmir," 27.

[196] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone."

[197] Angana P. Chatterji, "Kashmir: A Place Without Rights," *Just Security* (blog), August 5, 2020, https://www.justsecurity.org/71840/kashmir-a-place-without-rights/.

[198] Chatterji, "Kashmir: A Place Without Rights."

[199] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone."

used by Modi to justify the abrogation of Article 370, and has been used in military operations, as I will discuss later.

5.4 Protection From Avoidable Harm

Throughout the conflict in Kashmir, there has been an immense amount of avoidable harm inflicted upon civilians by armed forces. Although the term "avoidable harm" is quite broad and can constitute a variety of actions taken during conflict, I will be highlighting examples of how Indian state forces have perpetrated physical violence against Kashmiris. In particular, Muslim Kashmiri men have been the main targets of this specific kind of direct violence – besides sexual violence, which has been largely directed at Kashmiri women.[200] As Cynthia Cockburn writes, "In warfare...but also in political terror, the instruments with which the body is abused in order to break the spirit tend to be gender differentiated and, in the case of women, to be sexualised."[201] However, as I have made clear throughout this chapter, and will discuss more in the chapter three, women have been deeply impacted by the conflict in Kashmir in many other indirect ways.

It is estimated that between 1989-2009,[202] 8,000-10,000 people, most of whom are men, have been victims of enforced disappearances, and 70,000 people have been killed across the region.[203] Due to a lack of reporting and accurate data available, these numbers are a conservative estimate – additionally, it is unclear how much these numbers have risen in the last decade. As defined by the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), "Enforced disappearance consists of a kidnapping, carried out by agents of the State or organized groups of individuals who act with State support or tolerance, in which the victim 'disappears'. Authorities neither accept responsibility for the dead, nor account for the whereabouts of the victim."[204] As Singh lays out in his article, there are two main motives behind disappearing people. One is for financial purposes, where kidnappings are perpetrated as a form of corruption.[205] The other motive is for political interests, where groups will attempt to subdue a political crisis by essentially removing opposing voices.[206] In Kashmir, political interest has been the main motivation. Since the rise of secessionism in 1989, enforced disappeared have been common practice across Kashmir, mostly perpetrated by Indian forces against Kashmiris – although there outlying cases of militants perpetrating enforced disappearances against surrendered militants and state informers.[207]

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[200] Though there are reports of sexual violence being perpetrated against Kashmir men, mostly during instances of torture. (Source: "Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War" (Asia Watch & Physicians for Human Rights, May 1, 1993), 1, https://www.hrw.org/report/1993/05/01/rape-kashmir/crime-war.)
[201] Cynthia Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence," in *In Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence,* ed. Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark (New Delhi: Kali For Women, 2001), 22.
[202] Chatterji et al., "Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-Administered Kashmir," 10.
[203] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir."
[204] "Enforced Disappearances," Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), May 18, 2016, https://apdpkashmir.com/enforced-disappearances/.
[205] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 210.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid, 212.

As a result of extrajudicial killings, which is largely targeted towards men, there is estimated to be 20,000 widows across Kashmir.[208] Additionally, the perpetration of enforced disappearances has resulted in at least 1,500-2,000 half-widows.[209] Again, as there is a lack of data available, these numbers are a conservative estimate.[210] As I will discuss in more detail in chapter three, not only do those who are abducted suffer immensely, but family members of the disappeared, especially half-widows and their children, face extensive trauma and hardship in the wake of this tragedy.[211]

Additionally, sexual violence is rampant across Kashmir and has been recorded since the beginning of the government crackdown in 1989, perpetrated by both Indian security forces and militants.[212] In a study conducted by the Médecins Sans Frontières in 2006, it was reported that "Kashmiri women are among the worst sufferers of sexual violence in the world."[213] Throughout the conflict in Kashmir, sexual violence has been systematically used as a weapon of war by Indian security forces, who have enjoyed impunity for their actions on account of the AFSPA.[214] According to a report by Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, "Rape most often occurs during crackdowns, cordon-and-search operations during which men are held for identification in parks or schoolyards while security forces search their homes."[215] In many cases, rape is used as a tactic by security forces to punish women who have been accused of being "militant sympathizers."[216] Infamously, a mass rape occurred in the village of Kunan-Poshpora in 1991, where it is alleged that more than 40 women were raped[217] and around 100 others were molested by state forces.[218] After a series of investigations which were handled with "much callousness and inherent biases," the victims of this horrible crime have yet to receive justice.[219] Pervez writes, "The Kunan-Poshpora case exemplifies not only the legitimisation of human rights violations in the Kashmir Valley by security forces in the name of 'national interest' and 'counter-insurgency', but also the structures of impunity which pervade all levels of the criminal and justice system in Kashmir."[220] The following year, the United Nations reported that 882 women were gang-raped by security forces in Kashmir in 1992 alone.[221]

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[208] Seema Kazi, "Between Democracy And Nation: Gender And Militarisation In Kashmir" (London, London School of Economics and Political Science: The Gender Institute, 2007), 193, http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/2018/1/U501665.pdf.

[209] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 90.

[210] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 6.

[211] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 211.

[212] "Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War," 1.

[213] Heena Qadir, "Social Issues of Widows and Half-Widows of Political Conflict: A Study in Anantnag District of Jammu and Kashmir," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research* 3, no. 10 (October 2017): 8.

[214] Ayesha Pervez, "Sexual Violence and Culture of Impunity in Kashmir: Need for a Paradigm Shift?," *Economic and Political Weekly* 49, no. 10 (2014): 10–13.

[215] "Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War," 1.

[216] Ibid.

[217] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 3.

[218] Lark Escobar, "The Mass Rape of Poshpura & Transitional Justice Possibilities in Indian Kashmir – Praxis," *Praxis: The Fletcher Journal of Human Security*, January 27, 2022, https://sites.tufts.edu/praxis/2022/01/27/the-mass-rape-of-poshpura-transitional-justice-possibilities-in-indian-kashmir/.

[219] Pervez, "Sexual Violence and Culture of Impunity in Kashmir: Need for a Paradigm Shift?" 10.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid, 10-11.

It is impossible to talk about avoidable harm done onto Kashmiri civilians without talking about the role the AFSPA has played in enabling such harm. As mentioned earlier, the AFSPA, or Armed Forces Special Powers Act, allows Indian state forces to commit a range of human rights violations and grants them immunity from prosecution.[222] According to Amnesty International, "[T]he AFSPA violates international human rights law, specifically the right to life, the right to liberty and security of the person and the right to remedy. In addition, it enables violation of the right to be free of torture or ill-treatment."[223] Under the guise of a state-centric security approach, the Indian government has justified this act as a way of protecting "national security" by taking extraordinary measures to combat what they claim to be "Pakistan-sponsored terrorism."[224] However, if we draw into question what constitutes "security," and who ought to be protected, this argument begins to fall apart. Looking at the AFSPA through the lens of the feminist human security approach – which considers people to be the referent object and does not consider people to be secure until all four sources of wellbeing are met – laws such as the AFSPA are no longer justified. Instead, the AFSPA would be considered a great obstruction to true security, as it not only allows for, but actually enables the state to commit avoidable harm onto civilians in an effort to control the population by fear. Overall, there is a widespread culture of "lawlessness which has been allowed to flourish due to political and moral impunity extended for the actions of the armed forces in Jammu and Kashmir."[225]

5.5 Operation Goodwill

Although militarisation has done a lot to undermine the human security of Kashmiris, there is one military program that, on the surface, can be seen as an attempt from the Indian government to improve that state of human security in Kashmir. In 1999, the Indian armed forces implemented Operation *Sadbhavana*, otherwise known as Operation Goodwill, in the Kargil region of the Kashmir Valley.[226] The operation was proposed by General Arjun Ray, who believed that the foundation of human security could be used in practice to "provid[e] the armed forces with an instrument of nation building and peace building."[227] Importantly, Ray's approach to human security was rooted in the assumption that human security will give rise to national security, whereas a feminist approach considers human security and militarised efforts towards national security to be fundamentally incompatible.[228] In theory, the goal of Operation Goodwill is to offer programmes that focus on education, health, gender equality, and community development to bolster human security. Furthermore, Operation Goodwill was created as a method of conflict prevention by means of building trust between the people of Kashmir and the Indian armed forces – which, for obvious reasons, had been severally damaged.[229] Although

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[222] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone," 64.
[223] "India: Briefing on the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958" (Amnesty International, May 8, 2005), 7, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa20/025/2005/en/.
[224] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone," 64.
[225] "Torture: Indian State's Instrument of Control in Indian-Administered Jammu & Kashmir" (Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) And Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), February 2019), 75, https://jkccs.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TORTURE-Indian-State%E2%80%99s-Instrument-of-Control-in-Indian-administered-Jammu-and-Kashmir.pdf.
[226] Hans, "An Experiment in Transition from Military to Human Security," 394-395.
[227] Ibid, 394.
[228] Ibid, 397.
[229] Ibid, 396.

some have benefitted from these humanitarian programmes, there have been mixed responses regarding the outcome of Ray's ambitious operation.

If we look deeper below the surface of Operation Goodwill, ulterior motives begin to show. Beyond its humanitarian programmes, one of the purposes of this operation is to combat what the Indian government perceives as "negative propaganda" and "counter Pakistan and separatists' argument for an independent Kashmir."[230] In an obvious way, this is done through government-facilitated youth exchanges, where boys and girls from Kashmir visit other Indian states.[231] However, in a more discreet way, this is done through education. Since the start of the operation, over 66 "goodwill schools"[232] have been created in the name of "humanitarianism" – however, it would be naïve to deny that schools created and run by the Indian military likely teach biased views about the politics of the conflict, discouraging ideas of separatism and independence. As Ahuja et al., write, "[C]ompassion can be a strategy to contain political dissension, regulate citizenship, and normalize extensive militarization."[233]

Looking at the outcome of vocational training centres, it is true that many women have gained useful skill such as computer literacy or learning to weave carpets.[234] However, because the conflict has contributed to a decrease in the number of jobs available, they are rarely able to apply these practical skills.[235] Ray had also promised to collaborate with larger corporations to purchase items produced by women during the training sessions – yet, these promises were never fulfilled.[236] According to Hans, many of these women felt abandoned, writing, "[O]nce General Ray left, time stood still for them."[237] Nabi and Ye argue that the military's involvement in humanitarian and development programs is problematic, as they lack the expertise necessary in order to create sustainable, long-term solutions.[238] Additionally, these trainings are marketed as an opportunity for women to break patriarchal barriers, allowing them to leave their homes and become more equal with their male peers.[239] However, this narrative depicts Kashmiri women as being in need of rescuing, serving as justification for the Indian military to involve themselves in "humanitarian" missions in order to expand their presence and control over Kashmiri society.[240] Women often have their agency stripped away from them during times of conflict, and are depicted simply as victims in need of saving. We can see here that the Indian government has used this narrative to their advantage, hiding their efforts to expand control over the population behind a screen of saviour imagery. Similar to how Modi has pointed to "women's empowerment" as his motivation to abrogate Article 370, this exemplifies how the Indian

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[230] Peer Ghulam Nabi and Jingzhong Ye, "Of Militarisation, Counter-Insurgency and Land Grabs in Kashmir," *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 46/47 (2015): 60.

[231] Nabi and Ye, "Of Militarisation, Counter-Insurgency and Land Grabs in Kashmir," 60.

[232] Samreen Mushtaq, "The Myth of Empowerment: Gender, Conflict, and 'Development' in Kashmir," in *Minorities and Populism – Critical Perspectives from South Asia and Europe*, ed. Volker Kaul and Ananya Vajpeyi (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 277–86, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34098-8_19.

[233] Kanika Ahuja et al., "Identities in Conflict: A Comparison of Drawings of Muslim Adolescents in Kashmir and Delhi," *SAGE Open* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 8, https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015623596.

[234] Hans, "An Experiment in Transition from Military to Human Security," 399.

[235] Ibid.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Nabi and Ye, "Of Militarisation, Counter-Insurgency and Land Grabs in Kashmir," 61.

[239] Hans, "An Experiment in Transition from Military to Human Security," 399.

[240] Mushtaq, "The Myth of Empowerment: Gender, Conflict, and 'Development' in Kashmir."

government has used the narrative of "saving women" to serve their own political agenda, but market their actions as "humanitarian good." Yet, the result of these actions has not proven to create more security for Kashmiri women – in contrast, this operation has increased military presence, which has in turn contributed to women's insecurity.

As Hans writes, "On one hand the army, and specifically Ray, brought the empathy needed by the common person in a warlike situation which was very important to the people. At the same time, it also raises questions of the armed forces using peace as a strategy of war."[241] Despite these controversial opinions, Operation Goodwill is still active today, and according to a recent press release, was allotted 88.2 million rupees in funds for the 2022-23 financial year.[242]

5.6 Conclusion

Using the feminist human security approach to analyse the conflict in Kashmir, the referent object becomes Kashmiri Muslims and the existential threat becomes militarisation perpetrated by the Indian government. Therefore, it becomes abundantly clear that Kashmiri Muslims are living in a state of constant insecurity, as they are being denied all four sources of wellbeing. Additionally, I have shown that although the entire Kashmiri population is suffering, this suffering is gendered. Although Kashmiri men are depicted as the foremost "threat" and are directly targeted by state forces through physical violence, women and girls face pervasive sexual violence and are disproportionally affected by the impacts that militarisation has had on the environment, education, health care, the economy, and other institutions. By approaching the conflict in Kashmir using a state-centric security lens, the Indian government has not only ignored the insecurity of Kashmiri Muslims, but has fundamentally undermined their security through acts of militarisation, depriving this community of their wellbeing. In this way, the traditional state-centric security approach has rendered the harm done onto Kashmiris as a by-product of the conflict, or an unfortunate accident in the fight for national security.

The conflict in Kashmir serves as just one example of the possible repercussions of using a state-centric security approach, which fundamentally views other nations or internal rebels of the government as the biggest threat to security.[243] In contrast, a feminist human security approach views harm done to civilians as the biggest threat to security, arguing that "security is greater when the presence or perception of threat is lessened."[244] All of this is to say that if we question the definition of security and who ought to be protected in order to reach security, the legitimacy and effectiveness of militarisation itself is called into question.

In the next chapter, I provide a case study exploring the consequences of militarisation on the wives, or half-widows, of those who have been disappeared by state forces, analysing the direct and indirect impacts on their human security.

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[241] Hans, "An Experiment in Transition from Military to Human Security," 402.
[242] Indian Ministry of Defence, "Operation Sadbhavana in Ladakh," Press Release, February 3, 2023, https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1895974
[243] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 26.
[244] Ibid, 31.

6. Chapter Three: A Case Study of Half-Widows

Now that I have provided a general overview of how militarisation has contributed to a lack of human security for the general population in Kashmir, and how these experiences are gendered, I will focus on half-widows. There are a few reasons that I have picked half-widows as my case study. Firstly, as I am using a feminist human security approach, it is necessary to highlight the different ways that men and women have experienced this conflict. In general, Kashmiri men have faced the brunt of physical violence perpetrated by state forces, including enforced disappearances.[245] However, this does not mean that Kashmiri women do not suffer the consequences of militarisation – they suffer in an extremely profound way, impacting nearly every aspect of their lives. Secondly, I have found through my research that most of the conversations around women's suffering in Kashmir is related to sexual violence, which is widespread and a very real danger to their livelihoods.[246] However, sexual violence is not the only way that militarisation has impacted Kashmiri women. As mentioned earlier, the experiences of half-widows, in particular, have been largely ignored,[247] and in many ways, their struggles are completely unique. In contrast to other Kashmiri women, a lot of the violence and marginalisation they face is at the hands of both the state and their own communities, and much of their insecurity is related to bureaucratic negligence and legal issues. At the same time, some of their struggles are representative of what other Kashmiri women, especially widows, endure. In general, half-widows serve as an example that although the impacts of militarisation on women are not always "obvious," when you look closely, the effects are extremely pervasive. In this way, their experiences make for a very compelling case study.[248]

Throughout this chapter, I will answer the question: What have been the consequences of militarisation for the human security of half-widows? In a very obvious way, the phenomena of half-widows are a direct result of securitisation and subsequently militarisation, as Kashmiri men have been victims of enforced disappearances by the state, which then leaves their wives in a perpetual condition of uncertainty, as they do not know whether their husbands will return. However, this chapter will explain what happens after their husbands are disappeared, and the profound impact this has had on their wellbeing. Below, I will provide an overview of the struggles that half-widows have historically faced, analysing their lived experiences through the lens of the four sources of wellbeing to assess the state of human security for this community.

6.1 Protection from Avoidable Harm

Even from the first moment that a woman's husband is taken, there is an immediate sense of insecurity. After reading many stories of disappearances from Afsana Rashid's book, *Widows and Half-Widows: Saga of Extra-Judicial Arrests and Killings in Kashmir*, and from the APDP's

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[245] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 209.

[246] "Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War."

[247] Haq, "The Half-Widows of Kashmir: A Discourse of Enforced Disappearance," 92.

[248] Although the phenomena of women whose husbands have been disappeared as a result of conflict is not unique to Kashmir, half-widows (a term that is only used to refer to this specific Kashmiri community) are a unique community in themselves when you take into consideration the political context of the conflict in Kashmir as well as the specific culture they exist within. By this, I mean Kashmiri culture, and more broadly, Islamic culture and South Asian culture.

report on half-widows, I noted some patterns that occur during an enforced disappearance. Most often, security forces enter a home and forcibly take one male family member into a police station for "questioning," never to return.[249] In other instances, family members simply hear from others around town that their husband, brother, son, etc. was seen being taken by security forces, and they do not know why or where they were taken.[250] As mentioned in the previous chapter, security forces in Kashmir have special powers under the AFSPA which allows them to conduct warrantless searches and arrest civilians without reason or due process.[251] Many have dubbed the AFSPA a "draconian act," claiming that it simply serves as a "license to kill, torture, arrest, and rape."[252]

Soon after realising that their husbands are not coming home, many wives go to a local police station and attempt to file what is known as an First Information Report (FIR), which needs to be filed for an investigation into a disappearance to officially begin.[253] However, this is not a simple process, as police often refuse to file such a report.[254] According to Amnesty International, although section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure requires police officers to take a complainant's statement in the form of an FIR, there is "systemic disregard for this right to file a complaint."[255] There are even records from the 1992 Superintendent of Police in South Srinagar (a city in Jammu and Kashmir) stating, "If there is any misdemeanour by the security forces during search operations or otherwise ... FIRs should not be lodged without approval of higher authorities."[256] If there is no FIR filed, there is no official data on that disappearance – so by refusing to file this report, the state has attempted to "disappear the very disappearances themselves."[257] However, it is not only negligence on behalf of the state that results in the absence of an FIR. According to a study conducted by Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, who interviewed 14 half-widows, some women never attempt to file an FIR in fear of the possible consequences for themselves and their families.[258] One half-widow from this study said that although she wanted to file an FIR, her father convinced her not to, explaining that he knew a man who was shot after speaking out against those involved in the disappearance of his father.[259]

If filing an FIR is unsuccessful, some will file a petition in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, requesting information regarding the whereabouts of their husband, although this is very rare.[260] This too is a very difficult process, and most cases are usually dismissed – typically,

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[249] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir" (Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir: Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), July 2011), 10.

[250] Afsana Rashid, *Widows and Half Widows: Saga of Extra-Judicial Arrests and Killings in Kashmir*, 1st ed (New Delhi: Pharos Media & Pub, 2011), 73-74.

[251] Chatterji, "The Militarized Zone," 64.

[252] Neogi, "Women's Struggles in the Kashmir Militancy War," 5.

[253] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 217.

[254] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 91.

[255] "India: 'If They Are Dead, Tell Us' - 'Disappearances' in Jammu and Kashmir" (Amnesty International, March 2, 1999), 29-30, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa20/002/1999/en/.

[256] "India: 'If They Are Dead, Tell Us' - 'Disappearances' in Jammu and Kashmir," 30.

[257] Ather Zia, "The Spectacle of a Good Half-Widow: Women in Search of Their Disappeared Men in the Kashmir Valley," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 39 (November 1, 2016): 167, https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12187.

[258] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 92.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid, 92-93.

the government will claim that they do not have any information available,[261] or they will accuse the "missing"[262] person of being involved in militancy, saying they have likely crossed the border into Pakistan.[263]

Additionally, legal action often becomes too expensive, complicated, and lengthy, leading many to lose trust in the judicial process and cease their legal efforts.[264] In her research, Zia talks to a half-widow named Sadaf, whose story is unfortunately similar to many others like her. As filing applications was too difficult, Sadaf took matters into her own hands, spending years going to police stations, courts, jails, and army camps looking for information about the disappearance of her husband.[265] However, her efforts were futile – instead of receiving the answers she was so desperately searching for, Sadaf's search "became rigmaroles of paperwork, endless waiting, referrals, and misinformation, not to mention sexual harassment."[266] Furthermore, her relentless search drained her of money, forcing her to sell her property, and ultimately had a huge impact on both her physical and mental wellbeing.[267]

6.2 Fulfilment of Fundamental Survival Needs

Relentlessly searching for answers about the disappearance of one's husband is an added financial burden to the already insecure financial position that most half-widows come from.[268] When their husbands are taken, half-widows become the breadwinner of the household – a title that most have never held and is exceedingly difficult, as many are illiterate and have never worked outside of the home.[269] As a result, most take up domestic assistance jobs that rely on physical labour and earn a minimal income, while others are forced to beg for money.[270] Additionally, many half-wives are suspected of resorting to prostitution in lieu of other earning opportunities and face social stigma as a result.[271]

Although there are government financial schemes available for widows, half-widows are not awarded such aid as they cannot produce a death certificate for their husband.[272] After a waiting period of seven years, the wife of a disappeared person can technically qualify to receive this widow pension.[273] However, in order to qualify after the waiting period, you must have an official record of the disappearance in the form of an FIR, which, for reasons stated earlier, many

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[261] Haq, "The Half-Widows of Kashmir: A Discourse of Enforced Disappearance," 97.
[262] Instead of filing an FIR in cases of disappeared person, police often report the person as "missing." (Source: "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 16.)
[263] Soudiya Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," *Sociological Bulletin* 61, no. 2 (2012): 261.
[264] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 93.
[265] Zia, "The Spectacle of a Good Half-Widow: Women in Search of Their Disappeared Men in the Kashmir Valley," 165-167.
[266] Ibid, 166-167.
[267] Ibid, 167.
[268] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 10.
[269] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 216.
[270] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 96-97.
[271] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 217.
[272] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 261-262.
[273] Ibid.

do not have.[274] Similarly, there are other forms of relief, such as government-issued ration cards, that half-widows do not qualify for.[275] This sense of interminable bureaucracy carries throughout a half-widows life, often leaving her emotionally and financially depleted.[276]

In Jammu and Kashmir, there is a rule called SRO-43 of 1994, which "provides a government job or cash compensation to a person who is a family member of a civilian, government employee or armed force personal killed in militancy-related action in J&K or a government employee who dies in harness other than due to militancy related action."[277] However, many half-widows are unable to reap the benefits as they cannot produce a death certificate for their husband, or the government claims the death was related to militant activities, deeming them unqualified.[278] In other cases, half-widows report that their in-laws were able to claim a job under SRO-43 through unfair means, leaving her family with nothing.[279] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan tell the story of a half-widow's son who, after years, was finally able to get a job under SRO-43, only to have it taken by his uncle, who produced a fake medical record claiming the son to be mentally unfit.[280]

There is some societal debate around whether half-widows should even accept financial aid from the government, as they are unsure whether their husbands will return, and they would be accepting money from those responsible for the disappearance.[281] However, from the information that the APDP has gathered through their work with half-widows, they say that most would likely accept such compensation.[282]

The inheritance rights of half-widows are widely disputed, and D'Souza writes that there is a lack of "any consensus among religious and community leaders regarding their [half-widows] right to property."[283] In Kashmir, Muslims follow Muslim Personal Law, otherwise known as *Sharia Law*, which governs matters of inheritance.[284] Generally speaking, there is a waiting period of four years that one must endure in order for a *Qazi*, or Sharia judge, to declare a disappeared person as dead.[285] Only after this happens can a half-widow qualify to inherit her husband's property.[286] However, a woman does not have an independent right to her husband's property and can only claim her share if it has been "divided by her father-in-law among the

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[274] Ibid.
[275] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 10.
[276] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 262.
[277] "Abolition of SRO-43 Arbitrary: Kashmir Employees' Panel," *Hindustan Times*, February 4, 2022, https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/abolition-of-sro-43-arbitrary-kashmir-employees-panel-101643926156145.html.
[278] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 98.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 11.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Paul D'Souza, "Life-as-Lived Today: Perpetual (Undesired) Liminality of the Half-Widows of Kashmir," *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 8 (April 27, 2016): 40, https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.168126.
[284] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 263.
[285] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 217.
[286] Ibid.

inheritors."[287] If she decides to seek action under the Indian legal system, she can only claim the property if it is in the name of her husband, rather than her in-laws, and has a waiting period of seven years.[288] Additionally, children of missing or disappeared persons are either denied a share of inherited property or their share remains undetermined until the death of their grandfather.[289] As a result, most half-widows never receive any share of their husband's land[290] – consequently, some become homeless and are forced to put their children in orphanages in hope of a better life for them.[291]

6.3 Respect for Personal and Group Dignity and Identity

As mentioned earlier, most half-widows do not inherit their husbands' property, so they typically resort to living with either their in-laws or their own parents.[292] Nevertheless, both of these circumstances come with a myriad of challenges. In many cases, half-widows develop a tumultuous relationship with their in-laws as they are no longer seen as the in-laws' responsibility to take care of.[293] Half-widows and their children often become a financial liability and an unwanted reminder of the family's lost son, therefore it is common for them to be kicked out and forced to return home to their parents.[294] However, it is a cultural norm for women to leave home once they are married, so returning home often deems half-widows a burden to their parents.[295] As a result, some choose to live independently, even if it is a huge economic struggle, refusing support from family members in an attempt to restore their dignity.[296]

Nonetheless, living alone as an unmarried Muslim woman in Kashmir comes with its own social stigma. As their husbands are no longer present, half-widows are expected to practice what is known as *purdah* – "the practice that includes the seclusion of women from public observation by wearing concealing clothing from head to toe and by the use of high walls, curtains, and screens erected within the home."[297] As a result, half-widows are not supposed to go outside too frequently or dress the same as they did when they were married.[298] If they do not observe *purdah*, they can be subjected to intense scrutiny and accused of attempting to gain the attention of other men.[299] In Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan's research, they tell the story of a half-widow named Haleema who hardly leaves her home anymore because of the harsh assumptions people would make, claiming her appearance indicated that she was unbothered by her husband's

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[287] Ibid, 217-218.

[288] Ibid, 217.

[289] Ibid, 218.

[290] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 10.

[291] Qadir, "Social Issues of Widows and Half-Widows of Political Conflict: A Study in Anantnag District of Jammu and Kashmir," 6.

[292] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 10.

[293] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 264.

[294] Qadir, "Social Issues of Widows and Half-Widows of Political Conflict: A Study in Anantnag District of Jammu and Kashmir," 6.

[295] Ibid.

[296] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 266.

[297] Susan P. Arnett, "Purdah," King's College History Department, December 18, 2001, https://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/purdah.html.

[298] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 99.

[299] Ibid.

disappearance.[300] During her interview, Haleema said, "Women like me become easy targets of character assassination."[301]

Further, Ather Zia discusses the idea of being perceived as an *asal zanan*, or "good woman," and the societal pressure that half-widows feel to portray such characteristics, similar to that of practicing *purdah*.[302] Zia describes *asal zanan* as the notion in which "women as a category are constrained to be modest, obedient, caring, responsible, and passive," and says that "in extreme interpretation may suggest that a good woman should not even be seen."[303] Zia follows the story of a half-widow named Sadaf, who goes to great lengths to be perceived as an *asal zanan* in order to protect herself from unwanted attention and possible sexual harassment from men, in addition to social stigma from her community.[304] Additionally, as Sadaf is a participant in a local activist organisation – the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) – she feels extra pressure to be "good," as being an activist can bring with it the brand of a *haraab zanan,* or "bad woman."[305] In doing so, she dresses very modestly, steers clear of public debates, and even goes so far as to avoid going to the gynaecologist as this is signifies that a woman is sexually active.[306]

In particular, being the wife of someone who has disappeared often brings unique stigma, as many half-widows are accused of being state informers and are further isolated.[307] Additionally, it is common for half-widows to be accused of being carriers of bad luck, and they are often blamed for the disappearance of their husbands.[308] In Singh's research, he tells the story of half-widow named Sabna, who was accused of being a *mukhbir* (state informer) shortly after the disappearance of her husband.[309] Consequently, even her closest friends and family were reluctant to offer Sabna any support as they feared repercussions from militant groups if they were seen helping her.[310] She constantly worried that rumours about her husband's disappearance would spread, saying, "I would not tell anyone, not even my landlord, about my husband. If anyone asked, I used to say that he works in Jammu as a daily-wage labour[er]."[311] Furthermore, as the lack of support from her community exacerbated her already insecure financial situation, she resorted to begging for money outside of a mosque in order to feed herself and her daughter.[312] As a result of the perpetual stigma they face, many half-widows seldom leave their homes or associate with community members, leaving them completely

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[300] Ibid, 100.
[301] Ibid.
[302] Zia, "The Spectacle of a Good Half-Widow: Women in Search of Their Disappeared Men in the Kashmir Valley," 165.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid, 168.
[305] Ibid, 170.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 215-216.
[308] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 12.
[309] Singh, "Half-Widows: Invisible Victims of the Enforced Disappearances and Their Status in Kashmir," 215-216.
[310] Ibid, 216.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.

isolated.[313] The children of half-widows also experience stigmatisation for being "fatherless," often facing a life of ridicule and isolation, similar to that of their mothers'.[314]

When it comes to the topic of remarriage for half-widows, there has been much debate and social stigma involved. Over the years, there have been differing schools of thought among Islamic scholars, and while some suggest a waiting period of four to seven years before remarriage, other extreme opinions suggest a 90 year waiting period.[315] However, in 2013, sessions among Islamic scholars were held in Kashmir to address the issue, and a decision was made to shorten the waiting period for remarriage among half-widows to four years.[316] Nevertheless, most half-widows never remarry for many reasons.[317] Firstly, although remarriage among widows is encouraged in Islam, it is generally rejected and considered social taboo throughout traditional South Asian culture, which is dominant in Kashmir.[318] Secondly, there is concern among many half-widows that their children will not be accepted by a new husband and will be treated poorly.[319] In some cases, they are propositioned to give up their children as a condition to be accepted into a new family via remarriage – therefore, many choose to remain single.[320] Thirdly, although many half-widows are quite young (usually in their 20s), it is common that only much older men will make a proposal in cases of second marriages, leading many women to refuse such offers.[321] Lastly, as most half-widows never receive any confirmation of their husbands' death, they live their whole lives with some hope that they will eventually return and feel guilty about the idea of moving on with someone else.[322]

In addition to the stigma they receive from community members, half-widows' identities and dignity are also disrespected by the state – most poignantly, this is seen through pervasive sexual violence. Although sexual violence is perpetrated against women across all communities in Kashmir, half-widows are particularly vulnerable as they are often targeted for being alone.[323] Furthermore, many half-widows are exposed to substantial sexual violence when they are searching for their husbands, with state forces and government officials demanding sexual favours in exchange for information.[324]

6.4 A Sustaining and Sustainable Environment

In his article, D'Souza describes how half-widows are in a state of "liminality," neither considered a wife nor a widow, and always waiting for the possibility of their husbands return.[325]

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[313] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 99.
[314] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 14.
[315] Ibid, 12-13.
[316] "Breakthrough Ruling on Kashmir 'Half-Widows,'" Conciliation Resources, January 2014, https://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/breakthrough-ruling-kashmir-%E2%80%98half-widows%E2%80%99.
[317] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 12.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] D'Souza, "Life-as-Lived Today: Perpetual (Undesired) Liminality of the Half-Widows of Kashmir," 36.
[321] Rashid, *Widows and Half Widows*, 84.
[322] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 12.
[323] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 12.
[324] Qadir, "Social Issues of Widows and Half-Widows of Political Conflict: A Study in Anantnag District of Jammu and Kashmir," 7.
[325] D'Souza, "Life-as-Lived Today: Perpetual (Undesired) Liminality of the Half-Widows of Kashmir," 28.

Furthermore, this liminal status of unknowing means they are never able to properly mourn the loss of their husbands or perform grieving rituals that otherwise would help them transition into the next "social status" as a widow.[326] As Bhat and Shah write in their article, "Unlike those whose near ones were killed outright through state violence, relatives of the vanished are deprived of certainty and the remains of their doted ones; they, ergo, feel unable to adequately mourn or perform grieving rituals."[327] As many half-widows continue to search for information about their husbands, they go back and forth between feelings of hope and disappointment, and therefore cannot reconcile the loss.[328] Some half-widows like Naseema, who was part of Qutab's study, are actually denied the ability to grieve.[329] Naseema recalls that she and her family "were not even allowed to cry or express grief openly," as their home was constantly under threat from armed forces, so her only option was to internalise and repress her pain.[330]

All of the financial instability, discrimination, violence, and trauma that half-widows face has an immense impact on both their physical and mental health. In terms of the psychological impacts, a study conducted by Bhat and Shah on 120 respondents indicated "evidence of grave psychological issues prevailing among half widows."[331] Not only did "the majority of respondents scored higher in anxiety, depression and loss of behavioral and emotional control," but they also scored low on scales measuring for "life satisfaction, emotional ties and positive affect."[332] In addition, many half-widows suffer from "Complicated Grief, Unresolved Grief, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder."[333] After the trauma of her husband's disappearance, Hajra, a half-widow interviewed by Qutab, shows signs of PTSD, saying, "If someone speaks loudly, I feel afraid. This happens ever since my husband was taken…"[334] Hajra also discusses how she has not moved any of her husband's belongings since he has disappeared – a behaviour that is very common in those experiencing "complicated grief."[335] Furthermore, these psychological issues tend to manifest physically, with many women experiencing symptoms such as "high blood pressure, chronic tiredness, and chronic pain."[336] However, as a result of financial insecurity, many of these mental and physical ailments go unaddressed[337] – therefore, some half-widows resort to self-medication and can become addicted to substances such as tranquilisers, sedatives, and anti-depressants.[338]

6.5 Conclusion

As I have shown throughout this chapter, half-widows are fundamentally insecure, as they are denied all four sources of wellbeing that Reardon and Hans consider necessary to reach a state of

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[326] Ibid, 29.
[327] Suhail Ahmad Bhat and Shawkat Ahmad Shah, "Women And Conflict: A Case Study Of Psychological Issues In Half Widows Of Kashmir.," *Communications* 25, no. 1 (2017): 51.
[328] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 271.
[329] Ibid, 272.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Bhat and Shah, "Women And Conflict: A Case Study Of Psychological Issues In Half Widows Of Kashmir," 50.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Qutab, "Women Victims of Armed Conflict: Half-Widows in Jammu and Kashmir," 273.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Bhat and Shah, "Women And Conflict: A Case Study Of Psychological Issues In Half Widows Of Kashmir," 51.
[337] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 13.
[338] Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan, "Half-Widows: Silent Victims of the Kashmir Conflict," 101.

human security.[339] Firstly, half-widows have no protection from avoidable harm, as made evident by the implementation of the AFSPA. This overbearing law allows for the infliction of avoidable harm onto civilians by virtue of "misguided foreign and security policy decisions"[340] made by the Indian government. As a result, between 8,000-10,000 Kashmiri men have been victims of enforced disappearances,[341] which has consequently led to the existence of at least 1,500 half-widows.[342] Additionally, the AFSPA has allowed for sexual violence to be swept under the carpet.[343] Furthermore, half-widows are systematically denied their right to file an FIR,[344] deeming them ineligible for a range of financial assistance – all of which is avoidable harm. Secondly, as they do not qualify for government financial schemes, half-widows are denied fundamental survival needs. These women come from already financially insecure backgrounds and have now lost their household breadwinner,[345] so without financial assistance, they lack access to basic human needs. Thirdly, half-widows' personal and group dignity and identity are not respected, as seen through the immense social stigma they experience. In addition, they are targeted by the state on behalf of their identities, as illustrated through the systematic way that sexual violence has been used against Kashmiri women.[346] As Raazia and Askari write, "Women are considered bearers of honour and markers of identity. By targeting women, the community's honour is targeted."[347] Lastly, the environment that has been created in Kashmir is unsustainable for human health, as made evident by the mental and physical health issues suffered by half-widows.

Additionally, as half-widows husbands have been disappeared by the state, there is a major shift in their gender roles, which are no longer just focused on being a homemaker, a wife, and a mother. Although this can be liberating in some ways, it is also burdensome and destructive in others. As I have shown, half-widows are often expected to hold on to both new and traditional roles, and there begin to be competing expectations. For example, they must not leave the home too often as this breaks *purdah* – but they have become the financial provider, so they must leave the home to earn a living. Additionally, they are expected to stand up for their husband's honour and seek justice – but, they must also maintain the identity of a "good woman," not drawing attention to themselves. These competing gender roles have forced half-widows to walk a very thin line to balance the expectations of the contradicting society they now exist within.

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[339] Reardon, "Women and Human Security: A Feminist Framework and Critique of the Prevailing Patriarchal Security System," 16.

[340] Ibid, 22.

[341] "Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir," 2.

[342] Ibid, 6.

[343] "India: Briefing on the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958," 1.

[344] "India: 'If They Are Dead, Tell Us' - 'Disappearances' in Jammu and Kashmir," 29-30.

[345] Half Widow, Half Wife? Responding to Gendered Violence in Kashmir, 10.

[346] Pervez, "Sexual Violence and Culture of Impunity in Kashmir: Need for a Paradigm Shift?" 10.

[347] Izzat Raazia and Muhammad Usman Askari, "Militarization and Violence against Women in Indian Held Kashmir: An Analysis of International Human Rights Discourse," *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 6, no. 2 (2022): 977, https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2022(6-II)80.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Findings

At the beginning of this research project, I asked the question: How has militarisation in Indian-occupied Kashmir since 1989 impacted human security, and what have been the consequences for half-widows? Through this thesis, I have answered this question, breaking it down into three different parts. First, I have shown that militarisation has been widely imposed in Kashmir since 1989 as the government has used a state-centric approach to security, marking Kashmiris, specifically Muslim Kashmiri men, as an existential threat to India's national security, therefore convincing civil society that the extraordinary measures they have taken are justified. Second, by analysing the impact of such militarisation using a feminist human security approach, I have shown that militarisation has not only undermined Kashmiris wellbeing, contributing to insecurity, but that this insecurity is gendered. While Kashmiri men face the brunt of most forms of physical violence (besides sexual violence), Kashmiri women are disproportionately affected by the broader, more indirect ways that militarisation undermines Kashmiri society, pervading various aspects of their lives. Lastly, I have shown that the consequence for half-widows has been an undermining of their human security that is unique from other communities as they experience direct and indirect violence from both the state and local society, leading to their complete isolation and particularly marginalised social standing. In sum, the answer I have concluded is that the Indian government's securitisation of Kashmir has resulted in mass militarisation, contributing to a state of human insecurity for Kashmiris, and this insecurity has gendered consequences, which have been uniquely severe for half-widows.

In a world that is becoming increasingly militarised, it is vital to take a step back and think deeply about the consequences of militarisation on the wellbeing of people. Reardon and Hans' feminist human security approach offers an important perspective, showing how if we consider the security of a nation's people, it questions the act of militarisation entirely. It argues that if we see people as the referent object, security cannot be achieved through militarisation, as it inherently undermines the wellbeing of people. Although I am not stating that this thesis alone proves such a vast argument, I do contend that it can serve as one example of an environment where militarisation has contributed to a degradation of human security. Additionally, using this lens allows us to see the role that gender has played in this conflict and the ways militarisation has impacted men and women differently. In only using a traditional state-centric approach to analyse the militaristic implications of this conflict, scholars often overlook the social implications. As Kazi writes, these types of narrow analyses "assume the state as central and gender as a marginal if not an altogether insignificant category of analysis."[348] However, using a feminist human security approach shows us that Kashmiri people, particularly women, have been at the centre of this conflict.

7.2 Limitations and Future Areas of Research

Like all research projects, this thesis had some limitations that must be addressed. One of the practical limitations that I ran into was that I do not speak any local South Asian languages with the degree of fluency necessary to read academic papers or reports, nor was I able to conduct

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[348] Kazi, "Between Democracy And Nation: Gender And Militarisation In Kashmir," 183.

interviews in any of these languages. Although this did not greatly hinder my ability to find relevant information, it is possible that I have some gaps in knowledge that could have been filled if I was able to read or communicate in another language besides English. Additionally, another practical issue I had was simply being able to contact people that live in Kashmir, as there are many internet blackouts, therefore it was extremely difficult to get in touch with people online. However, I was able to interview Dr. Aditi Saraf, who has significant knowledge of and experience working in Kashmir, so I gained valuable insight from our conversation. Lastly, as there was a limit on the number of words I could write, there were many key conversations about Kashmir and half-widows that I was not able to touch upon. This brings me to opportunities for future areas of research.

One topic that I was not able to discuss was resistance strategies that half-widows and other Kashmiri women have used to fight back against state violence, as well as the forms of activism that many Kashmiris are involved with. It is just as integral to highlight how women have resisted and stood up to violence and marginalisation as it is to bring awareness to how they have struggled, as this breaks down the harmful, and inaccurate, narrative of women being voiceless victims needing to be saved. To learn more about the resistance strategies that Kashmiri women have employed, I highly recommend reading *Resisting Disappearance: Military Occupation and Women's Activism in Kashmir*, by Ather Zia. Although great books like Zia's exist, it was quite difficult for me to find much information on the specific resistance strategies used by half-widows, or research that highlights their agency and activism – I see this as a future area of research to be explored. Additionally, I found very few participatory research studies that work with half-widows as collaborators, rather than just using them as subjects to study. There are great activist organisation, such as the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), that work with half-widows and have published reports on their experiences. However, participatory research offers marginalised communities the opportunity to speak for themselves about solutions that they would actually benefit from, rather than creating policy recommendations that are not rooted in first-hand knowledge. In turn, such participatory studies could result in the development of more inclusive, gender-sensitive policies that address the unique needs of half-widows in Kashmir.

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