Research Article

Beyond the Private Sphere: Intimate Partner Violence as a Transnational Security Crisis

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Abstract

This paper challenges the idea that intimate partner violence (IPV) is just a private crime. It argues that IPV is a transnational security crisis shaped by law, politics, and global structures. A key issue is the public-private divide, where the home is seen as outside the state's responsibility. This divide hides violence, protects perpetrators, and allows states to avoid accountability. Cases from London (Chkaifi), Lahore (Shaheen), and Oklahoma (Wilkens) show how these failures can have deadly results. States are not neutral in this process. Discriminatory laws, like Pakistan's Hudood Ordinances, reinforce women's subordination. Police often ignore abuse as a "family matter," and courts frequently silence survivors. The problem is also global—neoliberal economic reforms—policies that cut welfare and social support—trap women in dependence. Conflict zones like Uganda increase household violence, while strict migration laws expose women to dangers like deportation. Traditional security models focus only on borders and armies, ignoring violence inside homes and bodies. Using a conceptual approach, this paper develops a feminist view of security. It centers on bodily integrity, uses intersectional analysis, and calls for structural change. By framing IPV as a global security issue, the paper pushes scholarship and policy forward. It shows that true security means safety in everyday life.

1. Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) represents a devastating global epidemic, transcending national borders, cultural contexts, and socioeconomic strata. Defined as behaviour within a romantic or sexual relationship causing physical, psychological, or sexual harm. IPV encompasses acts of aggression, coercion, and control, rooted fundamentally in power imbalances and the desire to dominate (Bagwell-Gray, Messing, & Baldwin-White, 2015). Despite its pervasive nature and profound impact on individual lives, community stability, and societal health. Traditional paradigms within security studies and international relations have systematically marginalized IPV. They relegated it to the realm of "private" matters beyond the purview of state responsibility or international concern. This paper fundamentally challenges this exclusionary perspective. It argues that IPV constitutes a critical transnational security concern, deeply intertwined with global political-economic structures, patriarchal hegemonies, and the very fabric of state power. By illuminating the artificiality and detrimental consequences of the public/private divide, this analysis positions IPV not as an isolated criminal act. It is not a personal tragedy, but a manifestation of systemic gender-based violence. This violence is perpetuated and often facilitated by state institutions and international systems of power.

The failure of conventional, state-centric security models – preoccupied with military threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty (Tickner, 1995) – to recognize violence predominantly occurring within the home has profound implications. It renders invisible the daily insecurity faced by millions, predominantly women, obscuring how state structures themselves, through discriminatory legislation, institutional inaction, and the normalization of patriarchal norms,

actively enable and exacerbate IPV (Murshid & Critelli, 2020; The Sentencing Project, 2025). Furthermore, this paper contends that the roots of IPV are inherently transnational. Global forces, including neoliberal economic restructuring, migration patterns, conflict, and post-conflict dynamics, interact with local patriarchal structures to shape vulnerability and create fertile ground for such violence to flourish (True, 2010; Mootz et al., 2018; Park et al., 2021). The devastating consequences extend far beyond individual suffering, impacting community cohesion, economic productivity, and the long-term stability of societies emerging from conflict, often neglected in formal peace processes (Mootz et al., 2018).

To support this argument, the paper employs a critical feminist methodology grounded in Feminist Security Studies (True, 2010) and Critical Feminist Theory (Kappler & Lemay-Hebert, 2020). This approach examines the power structures and systemic inequalities that generate and perpetuate IPV, using a methodology based on multi-layered analysis.

1. It critically deconstructs key theoretical frameworks, particularly the public/private divide (Radacic, 2007; Jain & Bhartiya, 2024) and the limitations of state-centric security models (Tickner, 1995), demonstrating their role in obscuring IPV as a security threat.
2. It engages in critical discourse analysis of legal frameworks, state policies, and institutional practices (e.g., policing, judiciary) across diverse contexts to expose patterns of complicity, neglect, and the reinforcement of patriarchal control.
3. Utilizing an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991, 2013; Innes, 2024), the paper examines how factors such as race, class, migration status, sexuality, and geographic location intersect with gender to compound vulnerabilities to

IPV and shape differential access to justice and security. Crucially, this theoretical and structural analysis is contextualized and illuminated through detailed qualitative case studies drawn from both the Global North (e.g., UK, USA) and Global South (e.g., Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uganda). These cases serve not merely as illustrations but as critical empirical evidence. They reveal the lived realities of IPV victims and the concrete mechanisms – societal pressure, victim-blaming, police dismissal, judicial bias, discriminatory laws. Through these mechanisms, states and societies perpetuate violence and fail to provide security. By weaving together theoretical critique, structural analysis, and grounded case studies, this methodology provides a comprehensive and politically engaged examination of IPV as a transnational security crisis demanding fundamental reconceptualization and transformative global action. The paper ultimately advocates for a feminist redefinition of security centred on bodily integrity, human dignity, and the dismantling of the intersecting systems of oppression that fuel intimate partner violence worldwide.

The methodology of this paper is conceptual.

2. Defining IPV

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to any behaviour within a romantic or sexual relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to one partner. It includes acts of aggression, coercion, and control, whether physical or non-physical. While the nature and severity of IPV vary, it consistently violates the autonomy and safety of the targeted partner (Bagwell-Gray, Messing, & Baldwin-White, 2015).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Feminist Security Studies

Feminist security studies fundamentally challenge traditional International Relations (IR) paradigms that prioritize state-centric military threats, arguing instead for a comprehensive understanding of security that encompasses the pervasive violence women experience across the private and public spheres, including intimate partner violence (IPV) (True, 2010). It critiques the artificial separation between war and peace, highlighting a "continuum of violence" where women's experiences of violence, whether in the home during peacetime or as systematic sexual violence during conflict, are interconnected and rooted in systemic gender inequalities (True, 2010; Davies & True, 2015). Traditional security approaches, including UN frameworks like the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), often separate conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) from other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). They portray women mainly as victims needing protection by masculine actors such as peacekeepers. This framing reinforces gender essentialism and obscures the political-economic structures that reproduce vulnerability (True, 2010).

Central to feminist security studies is the concept of the gendered political economy. This perspective insists that women's physical security and freedom from violence are inextricably linked to the material basis of relationships governing resource distribution, entitlements, and authority within households, communities, and the transnational realm (True, 2010). It analyses how global processes like neoliberal economic restructuring, trade liberalization, and post-conflict reconstruction exacerbate existing gender inequalities and create new forms of marginalization and violence (True, 2010). For instance, men's loss of secure employment due to economic globalization can trigger violence to reassert masculine identity and control within the household,

demonstrating the interplay between economic disempowerment and intimate violence (True, 2010). Similarly, the creation of export processing zones reliant on young female migrant labour often coincides with environments where violence against women workers, including sexual harassment and femicide, thrives due to deregulation and lack of state protection (True, 2010).

Feminist security studies thus demand a reconceptualization of security that transcends the public/private divide. It asserts that violence against women, including IPV, is not merely a private or criminal issue but a profound security concern with transnational dimensions, fuelled by global political-economic forces and systemic gender discrimination. Ignoring the structural roots of this violence in normalized gender inequalities and discriminatory institutions, as mainstream security analyses often do, obscures its true causes and undermines effective prevention (True, 2010; Davies & True, 2015).

3.2 Critical Feminist Theory

The Critical Feminist Theory provides an analysis rubric to understand that intimate partner violence (IPV) is more than a domestic issue and needs to be viewed as a transnational and political security concern. The approach also challenges established dichotomies of public/private, peace/war, and domestic/international, by accentuating how gendered violence transcends these false divisions. IPV, traditionally a subject of the so-called private realm, becomes internationally significant upon being re-addressed through the eye of critical feminism, according to which the personal is also political (Kappler & Lemay-Hebert, 2020).

The breaking of these binaries shows the nature of cooperation between global orders of militarism, patriarchy, and state power and their ability to re-enact violence upon the female population. The given framework shows that the security of the nation is always put higher than the interests of individual lives, especially women who face violence that is either marginalized or apolitical. As a result, IPV becomes invisible within the mainstream security-related debates and discourses, which invoke masculinist concepts of war and peace and thereby obscure the prevalence of IPV.

Critical Feminist Theory, in turn, emphasizes the interrelation of gender, power, and violence. Underlining that the positions of women vary in accordance with race, class, nationality, and other indices of identity, it stresses the layers and complexity of the experiences of women (Crenshaw, 1991). This intersectional awareness shifts the focus from isolated acts of abuse to the structural and systemic nature of IPV, drawing attention to how global hierarchies shape vulnerability. In this context, IPV cannot be reduced to a purely personal or cultural issue. Rather, it reflects unequal gendered power relations embedded within both domestic and international structures.

4. The Public/Private Divide

The public/private divide, a cornerstone of liberal political thought and international human rights law, has functioned as a primary mechanism for the systemic marginalization of women's rights and the normalization of intimate partner violence (IPV). Historically, the public/private dichotomy has placed the public domain of state, market economy, and formal political institutions as the legitimate site of legal regulation and the enforcement of rights, while relegating the private sphere, including the family life, home, and other personal associations, to a space shielded from state intervention and public scrutiny (Radacic, 2007). Such a division is inherently gendered: the public sphere becomes linked with masculinity, rationality, citizenship, and authority, while the domestic sphere is tied to

femininity, depicted as apolitical, natural, and outside the domain of law (Jain & Bhartiya, 2024; Radacic, 2007).

Feminist scholarship has relentlessly exposed how this divide operated as the "main obstacle for the protection of women's rights" (Radacic, 2007). By defining violations predominantly occurring within the private sphere, such as domestic violence, marital rape, and reproductive control, as "private issues" or matters of "morality," international human rights law and domestic legal systems historically rendered them invisible and outside the scope of state responsibility (Radacic, 2007). The doctrine of state responsibility initially focused solely on direct actions by state agents in the public sphere, neglecting systemic failures to prevent or remedy violations by private actors (like intimate partners) within the "private" domain (Radacic, 2007). This conceptualization meant that widespread IPV was not recognized as a violation of human rights or a matter of public concern, but rather as an unfortunate, yet inevitable, aspect of private life. Archival practices reinforced this invisibility, often categorizing materials documenting women's lives, even of prominent politicians like Kerstin Hesselgren, within "private" ephemera or familial contexts, marginalizing their public contributions and the violence they might face (Pierce, 2024).

The consequences of this divide for IPV are profound and enduring. By framing the home as a "haven" beyond state reach, the dichotomy provided ideological cover for impunity, allowing patriarchal control and violence within families to flourish unchecked (Jain & Bhartiya, 2024). Despite legal reforms ostensibly extending justice into the private sphere (e.g., domestic violence laws), the legacy of the divide persists. Data reveals high rates of unreported IPV due to societal pressure, victim-blaming, and the enduring perception of such violence as private

family matter rather than a public crime (Jain & Bhartiya, 2024; Radacic, 2007). Furthermore, women entering the public sphere often face new forms of subordination and violence (like workplace harassment), while still bearing the primary responsibility for the private sphere, creating a "double burden" that exacerbates vulnerability (Jain & Bhartiya, 2024). The public/private divide thus constructed a legal and social architecture that systematically obscured IPV, minimized state accountability, and normalized violence against women within the very space designated as their domain.

5. IPV, State Structures and Power

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is structurally intertwined with the workings of the state through law and its apparatus of enforcement, as well as through institutionalized gender inequities. Patriarchal control was explicitly intertwined with the judicial system in Pakistan, where discriminatory laws, especially the 1979 Hudood Ordinances, existed, which required rape prosecutions to be conducted with four male witnesses. Consequently, many victims of rape were instead charged with fornication under Hudood Ordinances, and the victim was punished (Murshid & Critelli, 2020). The Domestic Violence Bill of 2010 was a reform, but poor implementation persists. Systems equate IPV with so-called domestic issues, where police regularly dismiss reports as a matter of the private sphere and treat it as normal (this reflects state-sanctioned indifference that normalizes abuse) (Murshid & Critelli, 2020). Comparable patterns are observed across 28 EU countries, whereby structural stigma involving gender-related disparities in health, income, and political influence is found to correlate with the increased rates of IPV. Women in high-stigma countries faced 18% greater risk of recent IPV and heightened fear of violence, highlighting

how state-level gender inequities perpetuate risk (Scheer et al., 2022).

IPV functions as a tool for patriarchal power by enforcing control and subordination. In Pakistan, 41.6% of women reported husbands using coercive behaviours (e.g., restricting movement, isolating them from social networks), directly linking control to violence (Murshid & Critelli, 2020). Adherence to patriarchal norms, such as justifying wife-beating for trivial infractions (e.g., burning food), increased IPV risk by 39%, revealing how cultural ideologies weaponize violence to maintain dominance (Murshid & Critelli, 2020). Similarly, in the EU, minority women, sexual minorities, immigrants, and those in poverty face disproportionate IPV risks (e.g., sexual minority women had 8× higher risk of abuse). This highlights how intersecting power hierarchies (e.g., heteronormativity, xenophobia) exploit IPV to marginalize vulnerable groups (Scheer et al., 2022). Thus, state structures legitimize and exacerbate IPV, while violence itself reinforces gendered power imbalances transnationally.

6. IPV as a Transnational Security Concern

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive issue and is transnational; it is a security issue rooted in established patriarchal institutions that systematically marginalize women and make IPV a norm in most cultures. Cross-cultural research reveals striking commonalities where patriarchal norms systematically subordinate women, creating environments where IPV is normalized and legal protections remain inadequate or unenforced (Mootz et al., 2018; Purohit et al., 2014). To illustrate, in Northeastern Uganda, the inflexibility of gender roles tends to lead to men controlling resources and decision-making regarding female healthcare, which only aggravates relational-level violence and leads to the development of serious mental health problems, namely depression and suicidality, in women exposed to both IPV and armed violence simultaneously (Mootz et al., 2018). A examination of social media discourse in India, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, and the United States demonstrates an even more fertile soil for implicit gender-based violence (GBV): the abundance of humour and metaphors, common in Philippine tweets which use more slang phrasing like "baka ma rape" (you might get raped) or sports-related rape analogies (unnecessary rape penalties in football), thus tending to downplay the atrocity of the act (Purohit et al., 2014). Accordingly, a unified international environment is created where both cultural approval and inadequate implementation of the law serve as conducive conditions of IPV, regardless of the development level and geographical location.

In Uganda, empirical research conducted shows that conflict areas aggravate intimate partner violence, shifting it from individual suffering to a broader societal danger. Women living in Teso experienced violence from both armed groups and their partners, which was worsened by men's traumatic experiences, broken community ties, and economic collapse (Mootz et al., 2018). The jointly exerted violence forms led to significantly elevated depression and suicidal ideation compared to women experiencing only one form of violence. This burden was exacerbated by displacement: Women who were displaced in Northern Uganda also subjected themselves to dangerous trips to collect firewood to feed their families, consequently exposing themselves to soldiers and rebels (Mootz et al., 2018). Crucially, peace processes consistently fail to address this nexus. Despite the profound impact of IPV on women's security and community stability during and after conflict, it remains conspicuously absent from formal peace agreements and

disarmament programs, as seen in Uganda's post-2006 disarmament efforts, which ignored ongoing IPV within "protectorate villages" (Mootz et al., 2018). This omission leaves a critical security vacuum, allowing patterns of violence established during war to persist and undermine post-conflict recovery.

The crossings between borders are deeply entangled with intimate partner violence (IPV), resulting in transnational dangers marked by a lack of clarity in the law and an increase in risk. Immigrating women, especially those who do not have a safe residential situation, such as visitors or temporary workers in Canada, are disproportionately affected: they are 1.65 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence compared to citizens (Park et al., 2021). The threat of being deported, being unaware of the laws that protect them, the reliance on the abusive sponsors, and worry about immigration policies do not encourage these women to reach out to formal institutions; instead, they refer to NGOs with limited resources like Changing Together (Park et al., 2021; Mootz et al., 2018). Such a climate of uncertainty blinds IPV to the protective mechanisms of the states. More so, mistreatment situations often trigger migration, which then subjects victims to new risks upon their arrival. Online analyses, too, indicate the existence of this phenomenon: in Nigeria, as elsewhere, the threat of retaliation (especially by Boko Haram) has generated much less retweeting and general discussion of violence against women (Purohit et al., 2014). Women moving abroad for marriage often find themselves isolated, facing language hurdles, unfamiliar laws, and potentially trapped in abuse far from home, leaving them uniquely vulnerable and legally invisible across nations.

Given its transnational nature, IPV must be acknowledged as a core human rights abuse demanding unified global action through existing agreements. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5.2 on ending violence against women and Goal 16 on peace and justice, set a universal framework requiring commitment beyond any single country (Park et al., 2021; Mootz et al., 2018). International treaties like CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention explicitly demand states prevent, protect against, and punish IPV, defining it as a state duty needing legal change, not a private affair (Park et al., 2021; Mootz et al., 2018). Meeting SDG targets and treaty responsibilities means creating consistent laws worldwide, guaranteeing migrant and refugee women can access justice regardless of immigration standing (Park et al., 2021.), embedding IPV prevention within peace talks and rebuilding efforts (Mootz et al., 2018), and promoting worldwide cooperation to challenge the patriarchal beliefs enabling global violence, visible even in widespread online talk (Purohit et al., 2014). Achieving this requires persistent, joint international work.

7. Case Studies- Global North

7.1 Case Study: Yasmi Chkaifi

This case study details the fatal Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against Yasmin Chkaifi (43, also known as Wafah or Yaz), occurring in Maida Vale, London, illustrating the breach of the private/public divide. Chkaifi suffered years of severe physical and coercive abuse at the hands of her estranged partner, Leon McCaskre (41). Despite residing in soundproofed flats, a neighbour reported frequently hearing "clumps and thumps," Chkaifi screaming, and McCaskre shouting during violent assaults. The neighbour's interventions (knocking on their door) would temporarily halt the violence, indicating McCaskre's awareness of external perception, yet the abuse persisted "at all times of the day and night." Police were called on multiple occasions following these incidents (Weaver, 2022).

The abuse extended beyond physical violence into profound control; McCaskre bullied Chkaifi, preventing her from speaking to others and dominating her life, making her visibly unhappy. Her well-being notably improved only during periods when McCaskre was absent, allowing neighbourly interaction. This chronic private terror culminated in a highly public act of lethal violence: McCaskre attacked Chkaifi on the street near St Peter's primary school just before 9 am, witnessed by children whose screams awoke residents. McCaskre died after being struck by a car during the incident. Chkaifi, described as kind, beautiful, and community-minded (child-minding, tending plants), leaves behind two teenage sons and a devastated family, originally from Morocco, with her mother hospitalized from shock. The case tragically demonstrates how sustained private IPV escalates into fatal public security threats, shattering lives and communities (Weaver, 2022).

7.2 Case Study: State Complicity in IPV - The Case of April Wilkens (Oklahoma, USA)

This case study examines how state structures actively perpetuate Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) through institutional failure and bias, using the case of April Wilkens in Oklahoma. Wilkens endured extreme, well-documented abuse from her former partner, including rape, beatings, kidnapping, stalking, and blackmail, detailed in over 14 police reports witnessed by multiple observers. Despite this extensive documentation and her repeated pleas, law enforcement consistently refused to intervene or protect her. This inaction is critically linked to the perpetrator's social privilege as the son of a prominent local businessman, demonstrating how state power (via police) selectively enforces protection based on social hierarchies, leaving victims vulnerable (The Sentencing Project, 2025).

The state's role in perpetuating violence extended beyond police inaction into the judicial system. After Wilkens killed her abuser during an hours-long sexual assault and beating, acting in immediate self-defense, she was charged with first-degree murder. During her trial, the court system failed her: the novel "Battered Woman Syndrome" defense was met with skepticism, her own attorney failed to present crucial expert testimony, and key evidence was suppressed. This resulted in her life sentence. The state apparatus, through its police and courts, thus transitioned from failing to protect her from private violence to publicly punishing her survival response. Wilkens remains incarcerated, advocating for legal reform (DVSJA-type bills) to challenge the systemic state structures that enabled her abuse and subsequent imprisonment (The Sentencing Project, 2025).

7.3 Global South- Case Study: Institutional and Social Complicity in IPV - The Case of Rumana Manzur (Bangladesh)

This case study examines Rumana Manzur's experience in Bangladesh to illustrate how state and societal structures perpetuate Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the Global South, reinforcing the private/public divide. Manzur, a Dhaka University professor and University of British Columbia postgraduate student, suffered years of abuse from her husband, Hasan Sayeed Sumon. The violence culminated on June 5th when Sumon gouged her eyes in their Dhaka residence, permanently blinding her left eye and severely damaging her right eye, witnessed by their five-year-old daughter. Despite seeking treatment in Bangladesh and India, her sight could not be restored (Staff Correspondent, 2011).

The case reveals multiple layers of systemic failure. Firstly, the abuse persisted privately for years. Secondly, post-assault, Manzur faced public victim-

blaming, including fabricated allegations of infidelity spread by media and social media, actively attempting to justify the attack, a form of societal complicity condemned by academics, lawyers, and activists. Thirdly, concerns arose regarding potential state institutional bias, with Manzur's lawyer fearing influence from Sumon's lawyer uncle on the judicial process, despite his arrest and remand. While the education minister assured justice, the demand to shift the case to a Speedy Trial Tribunal reflects underlying distrust in the regular system. Manzur's public plea, "Please, press for his punishment," underscores the victim's struggle against structures that transition private violence into public injustice without adequate accountability (Staff Correspondent, 2011).

7.4 Case Study: State and Societal Perpetuation of IPV - The Case of Musarrat Sultana Shaheen (Pakistan)

This case study examines the brutal attack on Musarrat Sultana Shaheen in Pakistan, demonstrating systemic complicity in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and the collapse of the private/public divide. On February 7th, Musarrat's mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law's husband amputated her legs below the knees, falsely accusing her of adultery. This extreme act of violence occurred within the "private" family sphere, reflecting entrenched patriarchal norms where women are controlled through accusations of infidelity, used to justify crimes, and gain social acceptance (Rizvi, 2004).

The case underscores critical institutional failures. Pakistan lacks specific domestic violence legislation; existing laws offer lenient penalties and fail to address violence by non-spousal family members, as highlighted by Musarrat's ordeal. The state's failure to enact proposed laws signifies neglect. Furthermore, societal structures actively perpetuate violence and impede justice: Musarrat and her family

faced immense pressure from their clan ("biradari") to withdraw charges and compromise, reflecting the social stigma against challenging familial authority. Cultural attitudes prioritise keeping marriages intact at all costs, discouraging reporting and support for victims, with divorced women seen as burdens. While the perpetrators are jailed, Musarrat's plight reveals how state inaction and societal collusion transform private abuse into a severe public security and human rights crisis, demanding transnational feminist intervention (Rizvi, 2004). In this case, the in-laws act as proxies for the husband and perpetuate IPV.

7.5 Case Study: State Response to Extreme IPV - Islamabad Axe Attack

This case study examines the attempted murder of an Islamabad woman by her husband using an axe, demonstrating the state's reactive role in addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) after private violence becomes publicly visible. The attack occurred within the marital home (private sphere), but intervention only commenced when the victim's father filed a formal complaint with Phulgran Police (transition to public sphere). Police responded by registering a case, deploying modern technology and forensic evidence to arrest the suspect, and publicly committing to "strict action" through prosecution (APP, 2025).

Two critical dimensions emerge:

1. Third-Party Reporting Necessity: The victim required her father's intervention to trigger state action, highlighting institutional passivity toward IPV until external actors' demand accountability.

2. Selective Institutional Efficacy: While police efficiently apprehended the suspect post-complaint, this juxtaposes this with pervasive gender-based violence across Pakistan (per Human Rights Commission data), including an honour killing days prior in Quetta. This highlights systemic

inconsistency in protecting women (APP, 2025).

The case reveals how states in the Global South often treat IPV as a private issue until extreme physical harm forces public institutional engagement, failing to dismantle the root structures enabling such violence.

8. Feminist Reconceptualization of Security

8.1 Deconstructing the State-Centric Model of Security

Traditional security paradigms, heavily influenced by realist thought, prioritize the state as the primary actor and referent object, defining security almost exclusively in terms of military threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty achieved through power balancing and deterrence (Tickner, 1995). This state-centric model, dominant during the Cold War, constructs sharp boundaries between the "ordered" domestic sphere and "anarchic" international realm, viewing security as zero-sum and achievable only through state military capabilities (Tickner, 1995). Feminist Security Studies fundamentally challenges this model, arguing it is analytically inadequate and normatively flawed for contemporary security challenges, particularly concerning violence against women like Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (True, 2010). The state-centric model's core flaw lies in its artificial separation of the public (state, military) from the private (family, home), rendering pervasive violence within the "private" sphere, such as IPV, invisible to security analysis and state responsibility (Radacic, 2007; Jain & Bhartiya, 2024,).

By privileging state security and interstate conflict, this model systematically neglects the security of individuals, especially women, within state borders. It obscures how state structures themselves, through discriminatory laws (e.g., Pakistan's

Hudood Ordinances), police inaction (e.g., April Wilkens case), judicial bias, and the perpetuation of patriarchal norms, actively facilitate and normalize IPV, transforming the state from a presumed security provider into a complicit actor in insecurity (Murshid & Critelli, 2020; The Sentencing Project, 2025; Staff Correspondent, 2011). As Tickner notes, critics argue that state-centric analysis, focusing solely on political/military dimensions, is insufficient in a highly interdependent world facing multiple, non-military threats that defy border protection (Tickner, 1995). IPV exemplifies such a threat: it is transnational in scope, fuelled by global political-economic forces and patriarchal structures, and devastates individual lives and community stability, yet remains marginalized within state-centric security frameworks that cannot conceptualize violence crossing the public/private divide (True, 2010; Mootz et al., 2018). Deconstructing this model is therefore essential to recognizing IPV as a profound security concern demanding a reconceptualization centred on human, rather than exclusively state, security.

8.2 Centring Bodily Integrity in Security Discourse

Feminist security studies fundamentally challenge state-centric security paradigms that prioritize territorial sovereignty over individuals' physical safety, demanding a reconceptualization centred on bodily integrity as a core security referent (True, 2010). Bodily integrity, the inviolability of the physical self, is systematically violated by intimate partner violence (IPV), which remains obscured within traditional security frameworks that relegate violence occurring in the "private" sphere to the margins of political concern (Radacic, 2007; True, 2010). This exclusion ignores how IPV is intrinsically linked to transnational political-economic structures. Global processes like neoliberal restructuring exacerbate women's economic precarity, trapping them in

violent relationships by limiting access to resources, safe housing, or independent migration status, thereby directly undermining bodily autonomy (True, 2010; Park et al., 2021). Furthermore, state institutions often perpetuate this violence through discriminatory laws, police inaction treating IPV as a "private matter," and judicial systems biased against survivors (Murshid & Critelli, 2020; The Sentencing Project, 2025; Staff Correspondent, 2011). Centring bodily integrity necessitates dismantling the public/private divide in security discourse. It requires recognizing that the pervasive threat of IPV, enabled by global inequalities and state complicity, constitutes a profound human security crisis demanding transnational responses focused on ensuring women's fundamental right to physical safety and autonomy within and beyond national borders (True, 2010; Davies & True, 2015).

8.3 IPV as Structural, Not Individualized Violence

IPV is more than the isolated instances of violence; it must be viewed as a manifestation of structural inequalities and structural weaknesses. Feminist scholarship has clearly challenged these explanations and instead, depicts the inseparability of IPV and the greater power structures in society and across national boundaries (True, 2010, Tolmie et al., 2018). The government also contributes to IPV by promoting discriminatory laws like the Hudood Ordinances in Pakistan and that permit the perpetrator with impunity (Murshid & Critelli, 2020) and as well as the institutional neglect, as seen in the dismissal of IPV by the police as a "private matter" in key cases like April Wilkens being denied justice by the courts (The Sentencing Project, 2025). This acts of state complicity turns the supposed security providers into actors that perpetuate insecurity.

IPV is also a patriarchal tool of control that enforces gender hierarchies on a transnational basis. Adherence with patriarchal norms already increases the risk of IPV to a higher degree (Murshid & Critelli, 2020), whereas combined oppressions of race, class, migration status, and sexuality increase their vulnerability (Scheer et al., 2022; Crenshaw, 1991). Entrapment model explains this dynamic and shows how the victims' and survivors are trapped not only by the coercion of the partner but by a system that fails to provide adequate safety responses, and perpetuate structural racism, economic precarity, that restrict autonomy and access to justice (Tolmie et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2019). Consequently, IPV is inextricably linked to global political economies, colonial legacies, and state-sanctioned gender inequities, demanding analysis and intervention beyond the individual level (True, 2010; Davies & True, 2015).

8.4 Intersectional Security: Race, Class, and Gender

An intersectional security framework fundamentally challenges monolithic state security by revealing how insecurities are co-constituted by race, class, and gender within global power structures (Crenshaw, 2013; Innes, 2024). Securitization processes, such as restrictive immigration controls or health surveillance, rarely operate neutrally; instead, they calcify existing hierarchies, disproportionately targeting racialized, low-income, and migrant women (Innes, 2024). For instance, migrant women experience heightened vulnerability to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), 1.65 times more likely than citizens in Canada, due to intersecting barriers like deportation threats, economic dependence on abusive sponsors, and lack of culturally safe services, creating a state of "entrapment" that transcends borders (Park et al., 2021; Tolmie et al., 2024). Health securitization, exemplified by pandemic border closures

and healthcare charging (e.g., the UK's 150% fees for migrant maternity care), exacerbates these vulnerabilities by limiting access to crucial support systems for IPV survivors, particularly women of colour and those in poverty (Innes, 2024). Consequently, the state's security practices often reproduce the very patriarchal, racist, and class-based violence they purport to mitigate, rendering women with marginalized identities perpetually insecure (True, 2010; Innes, 2024). True security demands dismantling these interlocking systems of oppression to centre the bodily integrity and lived experiences of the most marginalized.

8.5 From Protective to Transformative Security

Traditional security paradigms prioritize protective measures, such as UNSCR 1325's focus on conflict-related sexual violence, which often isolates interventions from broader socio-economic contexts and reinforces women's victimhood (True & Tanyag, 2017; True, 2010). This protective approach fails to address the root causes of intimate partner violence (IPV), such as gendered economic precarity, discriminatory laws, and patriarchal power structures that persist across peace and conflict (True, 2012; Murshid & Critelli, 2020). For instance, post-conflict peace operations frequently prioritize military stability over livelihood restoration, neglecting women's material needs and trapping survivors in cycles of abuse (True & Tanyag, 2017).

Transformative security, by contrast, demands dismantling structural inequalities through integrated political-economic justice. It shifts from merely shielding women to empowering their agency by ensuring access to resources, legal autonomy, and participation in decision-making (True & Tanyag, 2017; Davies & True, 2015). This requires embedding IPV prevention within macroeconomic policies, such as valuing unpaid care work, guaranteeing migrant women's healthcare access, and challenging neoliberal austerity that exacerbates household tensions (True, 2012; Innes, 2024). Transformative frameworks also reject siloed interventions, instead linking physical security to sexual/reproductive rights and economic justice to disrupt the continuum of violence (True & Tanyag, 2017). Without such structural change, protective measures risk perpetuating the very insecurities they aim to resolve.

9. Conclusion

This analysis has unflinchingly demonstrated that intimate partner violence (IPV) is not a private misfortune confined within the walls of a home, nor merely a criminal justice issue. It is, fundamentally and undeniably, a profound transnational security crisis. The pervasive myth of the public/private divide, deeply embedded in liberal political thought and international law, has served for centuries as the primary ideological shield, rendering IPV invisible to the state's security gaze and absolving institutions of accountability (Radacic, 2007; Jain & Bhartiya, 2024). We have seen, tragically and repeatedly, how this artificial separation operates: the neighbour's knocks temporarily silencing the screams in Maida Vale, but not stopping Yasmin Chkaifi's terror until it exploded onto the street; the police reports piling up uselessly for April Wilkens while state power protected her abuser; the societal whispers blaming Rumana Manzur even as she lost her sight; the clan pressure silencing Musarrat Shaheen after her limbs were severed; the desperate need for a father's intervention in Islamabad to trigger any state response. These are not isolated tragedies; they are the predictable, systemic outcomes of a world order that systematically devalues women's security within the so-called private sphere.

The evidence presented here shatters the illusion that states are neutral security providers. State structures are deeply complicit actors in the perpetuation of IPV. Discriminatory laws like Pakistan's Hudood Ordinances codify patriarchal control into the justice system itself (Murshid & Critelli, 2020). Police inaction, dismissing abuse as a "private matter," is not negligence but a form of state-sanctioned indifference, as Wilkens' case so starkly illustrates (The Sentencing Project, 2025). Judicial systems frequently fail survivors, replicating societal biases and punishing resistance, as seen in Wilkens' wrongful conviction and the fears surrounding Manzur's case in Bangladesh (Staff Correspondent, 2011). Furthermore, the data is unequivocal: state-level gender inequities, measured through structural stigma in health, income, and power, directly correlate with higher IPV prevalence, demonstrating how institutionalized discrimination fuels intimate terror (Scheer et al., 2022). The state, therefore, is often not a bulwark against violence but a key pillar enabling it.

Critically, the roots of this crisis extend far beyond any single nation. IPV is intrinsically transnational, fuelled by global political-economic forces. Neoliberal restructuring creates the economic precarity that traps women in violent relationships (True, 2010). Conflict zones like Northeastern Uganda expose the deadly synergy between armed violence and IPV, where broken communities and male trauma dramatically escalate abuse and mental health devastation, yet peace processes consistently ignore this nexus, leaving a critical security vacuum (Mootz et al., 2018). Migration, rather than offering escape, often compounds vulnerability; the heightened risk faced by migrant women in Canada, isolated and threatened by deportation, lays bare how immigration regimes intersect with patriarchal control to create transnational

"entrapment" (Park et al., 2021; Tolmie et al., 2018). Online spaces, reflecting global patriarchal attitudes, normalize and trivialize gender-based violence across cultures, as seen in the disturbing social media discourses analyzed from India to the Philippines (Purohit et al., 2014). IPV thrives in this interconnected web of global inequality and normalized misogyny.

Consequently, the traditional, state-centric model of security – obsessed with borders, military might, and interstate conflict (Tickner, 1995) – is not merely inadequate; it is analytically bankrupt and morally indefensible when confronting the daily, global insecurity inflicted by IPV. It fails utterly to conceptualize violence that crosses the threshold from the public to the private, or to see the state itself as a source of insecurity for half its population. A feminist reconceptualization of security is not an optional theoretical exercise; it is an urgent necessity. Security must be centred on the fundamental, inviolable principle of bodily integrity. It demands dismantling the corrosive public/private divide in security discourse and practice. It requires embracing an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991, 2013; Innes, 2024) that recognizes how race, class, migration status, sexuality, and location compound vulnerabilities to IPV and shape vastly different experiences of (in)security. It necessitates moving beyond merely protective measures, which often isolate interventions and reinforce victimhood, towards genuinely transformative security (True & Tanyag, 2017). This means tackling the root causes: embedding IPV prevention within macroeconomic policies that value care work and ensure economic justice. It also means guaranteeing migrant women's unconditional access to healthcare and safety. It requires overhauling legal systems to ensure real accountability and survivor-centred justice. It involves challenging the patriarchal norms glorified in cultures worldwide. And crucially, it calls for integrating IPV

prevention and survivor support as core, non-negotiable components of conflict resolution and post-conflict rebuilding.

The case studies from the UK to Pakistan, the US to Bangladesh, are not just stories; they are indictments. They reveal a global system where violence against intimate partners is systematically enabled, ignored, or punished only when it becomes too publicly grotesque to ignore. Recognizing IPV as the transnational security crisis it truly is constitutes the essential first step. The next, and far more demanding step, is the relentless pursuit of the transformative change outlined here – a world where security is measured not by the strength of borders, but by the safety of every individual within their own home and body, everywhere. This is the only security worth striving for. Anything less perpetuates the cycle.

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