

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## New Wars, New Victimhood, and New Ways of Overcoming It

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Contemporary conflicts, asymmetric conflicts, or New Wars as they are now called differ in nature and context from earlier, traditional, or Old Wars. As a result, the effects of these New Wars on women have also altered in various ways. However, when we say that women are suffering in conflicts nowadays, it does not negate their suffering in earlier or traditional wars. The assertion here is that because of the changing nature of conflicts, more civilians, and therefore an increasing number of women and children, are being negatively affected than in the traditional forms of war.

This paper will look into how New Wars have made an impact on the lives of women and how they have been rendered more vulnerable as a result. It will also look at the ways in which women have worked towards bringing about positive changes in their societies and tried to influence their governments to prevent violence and work towards sustainable peace. Examples from Jammu and Kashmir will be analyzed to show how women's groups from across the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan have come together to build a platform for people-to-people interaction, reduce stereotypes of the 'Other' and focus on arriving at a common ground. Individual case studies of women having moved beyond victimhood will be highlighted to show how women can make a positive impact and act as role models.

### Introduction

The New Wars thesis identifies and delineates certain characteristics that are peculiar to the nature of contemporary, post-Cold war conflicts. Critics of the thesis hold that there may not be as thorough a demarcation in the causes and nature of warfare as is made out to be, or the supposed changes may be exaggerated (Newman 2004). This is true of many

a theory where the beginning of a structure does not necessarily imply the abrupt end of the one preceding it. There are certain characteristics that are carried forth, others that are modified and still others that become extinct in this process of evolution.

The use of the term 'new' for the purpose of this paper means a 'continuum of the old', rather than an abrupt break from it. Therefore, when the term 'new' is used, it refers to the changes that have taken place in the nature and structure of wars/conflicts, the new challenges it has thrown up in the form of an increased (willing and unwilling) participation of women, and how women