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'Appropriate'ing grief: mothers, widows and the (un) grievability of military death

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ABSTRACT

The article interrogates the grievability of military lives by studying female next of kin as subjects of the post-colonial Pakistan military and suggests that these non-masculine and non-military bodies act as a symbolic embodiment of grief associated with soldier death, and as its material benefactor. A study of their affective and material management, the article traces national and local commemorative practices of grief around soldier death instituted by the Pakistan Military during the War on Terror. Female bodies are conscripted in the war effort, as dependents whose destructive affect needs restraint and channelling into *appropriate* grief, and as vital resources whose excessive affect can be harnessed to express *productive* grief and support for unpopular war policy. Drawing on fieldwork in villages, analysis of military commemorations, and interviews with officers and female next of kin, the article traces the overwhelming sense of loss that refuses closure within militarised grieving rituals. It concludes that the surfeit of public and collective grief around military lives paradoxically renders these deaths ungrievable.

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Introduction

Saturated with tropes of honour, nation and gender, military deaths are political instances that tie private grief with public mourning (Martinek, 2019; Mosse, 1990; Nagel, 1998). Commemorative rituals for the war dead by states attach meaning to private loss and produce a 'politics of contemporary collective mourning' (Acton, 2007; Basham, 2016, p. 883). These embodied and emotional practices of grieving enable wars where military lives and deaths (of largely men) are mourned publicly and collectively, not as passive collateral but as necessary and expected consequence of wars waged by nation-states (Wolfe & Bryant, 2003; Zehfuss, 2009). Military lives as worthy yet expendable occupy a space of liminality that invoke conditions of grievability and ungrievability at the same time. This article is an inquiry into the gendered practices that animate the grievability of military death and argues counter intuitively that the surfeit of collective grief around military lives renders them ungrievable. To support its claim, the article interrogates

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commemorative practices instituted by the Pakistan Military during the War on Terror (WOT) that aimed to symbolically and materially bring wives and mothers of dead soldiers into the masculine folds of the military institution.

Historically representations of military death have been gendered with men portrayed as legitimate soldier-subjects (Goldstein, 2003; Inglis, 1987; King, 1998). In masculine framings of war, women's connection to the nation is through their identities as widows and mothers of soldiers where their bodies and grief rationalise war's most poignant burden, war death (Carden-Coyne, 2003; Damousi, 2001; Managhan, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 1997). This is a frame that is hard to dislodge despite the inclusion of women within the armed forces and their deaths in combat (Baumel, 2010; Millar, 2015). In the case of armies of the global south, the gendered framing of loss at the time of soldier death is additionally driven by the composition of combat troops that despite the inclusion of women within the armed forces is almost exclusively male. Beyond the question of composition of armies, the gendered management of military death is also emblematic and '(re) produces a gendered division of violent labour', where women's grief-stricken and dependent bodies are juxtaposed with heroic and protective soldiers (Elshtain, 1987; Young, 2003; Zarzycka, 2016; Millar, 2017, p. 554). Women historically are associated with emotionality, a state opposed to reason and emotions are linked with weakness and lack of control, and regarded as constitutive of femininity (Acton, 2007; Ahmed, 2004; Parashar, 2015). Masculinity is constructed through contrasting notions of strength and self-restraint (Connell, 1995). Grief then becomes the labour of women and it is this labour that militaries seek to conscript at the time of soldier deaths (Ase, Quirico, & Wendt, 2019; Noakes, 2015). Although this labour is female and its desirability ensues from femininity, enlistment demands that it be suitably altered along masculine framings that make war and war deaths 'intelligible' and 'acceptable' (Hutchings, 2008, p. 389). In these rendering, the management of grief requires a masculinising of affect that entails restraining and shaping uncontrolled grief through splitting masculine from feminine grieving (Jalland, 2011; Parr, 2015).

In investigating contemporary commemorative practices, the article contributes to critical scholarship on militarism and gender, in particular armies of the global south and their particular contexts of post coloniality, rural patriarchies and participation in international wars (Babar, 2000; Barkawi, 2017; De Mel, 2007; Saigol, 2013). Vron Ware in her examination of commemorative war monuments for European soldiers lost in WOT suggests that gender can also 'intrude into, interrupt or help to re-frame deep rooted ideas' about a nation's commitment to new and unfamiliar wars (2019, p. 69). Building upon this insight, this article will show that women's acquiescence to the war project in Pakistan becomes a primary concern of the military machinery despite (and because of) the lesser status and visibility accorded them in other contexts. Soldier deaths in times of unpopular war within staunchly patriarchal societies are made meaningful and acceptable through particular attention to the bodies and lives of female next of kin.

Death in military service highlights the 'paradox of liberal citizenship' that risks and sanctions the death of some (soldiers) to safeguard the larger citizenry (Millar, 2017, p. 545). These deaths are to be rationalised, honoured and the sacrifice ennobled so that they do not undermine the legitimacy of the state or the wars it chooses to engage in (Ase, 2019; Mosse, 1990). Rationalising the violent death of its soldiers in combat requires setting up these lives and deaths as intensely grievable but dispensable

in the service of the nation-state. Grief in these regimes of military discipline, an intensely painful state that arises in response to meaningful loss, ceases to be an emotion experienced by those deeply attached to the lost soldier, and is instead materialised through tropes of duty, honour and pride (Acton, 2007; Granek, 2014; Holst-Warhaft, 2000). Drawing upon Judith Butler's (2004, 2009) notion of grievability, soldier deaths within public commemoration are constructed as noble deaths representing lives that were socially intelligible and worthy. Nonetheless these lives are not always saved and must be sacrificed and hence mourning for them entails setting up 'hierarchies of grief' that legitimates the violence of their death and in doing so also the war that they died fighting in (Wolfe & Bryant, 2003; Zehfuss, 2009). The privileging of emotion mediated through nationalist and militarist frames 'eclipses the lived and experienced emotions of the everyday' where grief sits heavy, burdensome, and persistent (Parr, 2015, p. 164). This article complicates the grievability of soldiers that die in wars and that are ostensibly grieved collectively and publicly. I contend that grief can refuse closure even as these lives lie inside 'frames of war' that mediate our affective responses to its conduct and consequence (Butler, 2009). These rituals produce *productive* and *appropriate* grief that complicate the possibilities of closure and resolution for families.

A powerful institution, the Pakistan Military has a history of hard and soft coups with civil–military boundaries blurred through interference in governance, defence and foreign policy (Shah, 2014). An all-volunteer, overwhelmingly male force, the Pakistan Military has historically drawn its subaltern soldiers or non-officer class (non-commissioned officers and junior commissioned officers) from villages in Punjab in Pakistan and select areas of its north western province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This recruitment focus derives from its colonial roots where these provinces supplied much of the labour for the British Indian Army, a focus that continued for close to fifty years after independence (Rizvi, 2003; Yong, 2005). The quota-based regime for soldier enlistment that aimed at representation from all parts of Pakistan introduced towards the end of the 1990s has yet to dispel the entrenched racialised logic of military service in these local rural terrains (Pasha, 1998; Rashid, 2020).

War commemorations and compensation regimes have been an intrinsic feature of the military custom and policy in Pakistan. As military operations, part of the global WOT, intensified in the north west of Pakistan and soldier casualties began to mount, practices of commemoration and compensation took on new political salience. In 2005, the military enhanced its compensation schemes and in 2009 it set up a new wing known as the Shahuda (Martyrs) Cell as part of the Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate.¹ This cell was tasked with management of relationships with the families of deceased and to ensure smooth transfer of emoluments to female next of kin after death.

New ceremonies to commemorate the soldiers dying in these wars were also instituted in response to the growing nervousness around the war against a Muslim enemy (Jaffrelot, 2015; Shahzad, 2011). Fatwas (ruling on a point of Islamic law) were issued by religious and religio-political parties that soldiers dying in the war were not *shaheed*² (martyrs) as they were fighting America's war and that these bodies should not be buried in Muslim graveyards. For much of Pakistan's history, even as ethno-nationalist conflicts within its borders have resulted in military operations, this was the first sustained war effort against an enemy that claimed religion as its primary identity (Rashid, 2020, pp. 25–28, 177). The military declared a separate day of marking this war's

dead and the military public relations wing instituted what were called the Youm-e-Shahuda (Martyrs' Day) ceremonies. 2010 onward, as the unpopular war raged on in the north west of the country, annual national mega-ceremonies were held within military headquarters in Rawalpindi. The Youm-e-Shahuda (YeS) events were presided over by the Chief of Army staff and attended by next of kin of the dead, civilian government officials, media representatives and foreign dignitaries. They were beamed live across the nation on all private and state-run channels. The visibility of wives and mothers of soldiers already a focus of military iconography was accentuated further as the military PR strategists struggled to amplify grief and sympathy for the casualties of this war.

In Pakistan, families of soldiers (non-commissioned officers and junior commissioned officers) live in civilian often rural environs, outside the fold of the military institution. The research for this article involved the study of the military's national and local commemorative ceremonies including ethnographic field work, conducted as part of a larger study in five villages in Chakwal, a famed martial district that lies the north of Pakistan's largest province Punjab. Juxtaposing the national with the local, the public with the private, provides a contextual reading of grief and through that of military power and its permeation in non-masculine and non-military terrains and bodies. It allows for a comparative study of the affective and material management of widows and mothers in military policy and practice by drawing attention to the differential handling of female subjects in varying temporal and spatial frames, such as ceremonies held in the nation's capital, and in rural spaces where these women reside. It also permits tracing of grief and the burden of loss experienced and lived by the families.

The analysis in the article draws upon content analysis of video recordings of seven YeS ceremonies held between 2010 and 2016³, 26 interviews and ethnographic field work in villages in Chakwal. Village interlocutors included 13 female (widows and mothers) and 5 male (fathers and brothers) family members of deceased soldiers (non-commissioned officers and junior commissioned officers). Interviews were also conducted with a village clergyman and seven military officers involved in coordination of commemorative ceremonies and personnel administration. Military compensation policies instituted during the WOT were also reviewed.

The next two sections delineate how the Pakistan Military masculinises grief through rituals of commemoration and compensation. The first section traces the ways through which *productive* grief is made possible and visible in a national commemorative space, the Youm-e-Shahuda ceremonies. The second section is set up as a comparison between the disciplinary techniques deployed in the national space versus those deployed in the rural. In these intimate locales, the military's attention to the wives and mothers is mediated through other (male) actors in order to set up *appropriate* ways of grieving. The section also highlights how the resolution of grief is limited by these mechanisms of control by studying the lived experiences of women caught up in alien ways of dealing with loss and death. The article concludes by discussing the implication of acknowledging the ungrievability of military lives on our response to the conduct and consequence of war.

Productive grief and the national stage

(...) Youm-e-Shahuda is dedicated to each shaheed, whose martyrdom is a brick that strengthens the foundations of this homeland. Dedicated to the father, who sacrificed the

propagation of his seed and then named his future heirs: Pakistan. Dedicated to the mother that used to give *sadqa*⁴ (propitiation) in the name of her dearly loved son every day and then when she was called upon to give *sadqa* that was owed this land, she offered her son to the soil. Dedicated to the sister, who even today wipes her tears on the scarf of her brother's sacrifice and then covers her head with it. And dedicated to the wife, who even today does not complain of loneliness but instead celebrates the joy of forever being married because a shaheed never dies.

The dramatic opening lines of the 2014 Youm-e-Shahuda ceremony above are indicative of embeddedness of gender, kinship and religion within the discourse of Pakistani nation-hood (Khattak, 1997; Saigol, 2013). It is no accident that three of the four next of kin mentioned above are female and that all four depictions affirm traditional gender roles with the male as protector and propagator of the family name and the female as the nurturer of sons who fight wars and accepts the sacrifice and accompanying pain it may bring. The dedication suggests that the loss experienced by each family member is different, filtered through his or her gendered position and role in the family and the nation. It acknowledges this differential loss, opens it up, almost lingering over it. The voice of male commentator reverberates through the large open-air auditorium and hangs in the air for a brief burdensome minute for full effect. As the unbearable sadness of loss builds up, the words that follow move in to close the space for suffering by offering a platitude that suggests resolution and closure. In doing so, the space for grieving and expression of this loss is sealed: the father finds solace, the mother gives willingly, the sister wipes away her tears, and the wife celebrates. These are deliberately poignant depictions that invoke emotion but also restrain it.

The grievability of military lives is on full display in these ceremonies that are replete with images of the military dead and their families. These grand extravaganzas are a mix of live and recorded testimonies of family members, ceremonial military parades, patriotic anthems by popular songsters and musicians, and the Chief of Army Staff's (COAS) address to the nation. These segments are stitched together with a fiery oratory on the meaning of sacrifice and honourable death by well-known media celebrities. Expressions of grief within these spectacles are intense and contagious. They travel through the bodies of the family, more often female than male, to the audience that watches, both within the pavilion and the homes where these shows are telecast. The camera captures the raw emotion unleashed when the mother or wife of a soldier expresses her loss regularly shifting to the audience that weeps along with the women (Rashid, 2020, pp. 40–43). What is striking in these spectacles is the deeply affective nature of the performance and the focus on the female next of kin.

Echoing anti-colonial nationalist struggles and the horrific violence against women during the country's partition from United India, the nation continues to be 'narrated on the body of women who become an emotionally laden signifier and symbol of the nation, the self, the inner spiritual world, and the home' (Saigol, 2013, p. 244). Post-colonial nationalism in Pakistan also remains steeped in religious identity where martyrdom and sacrifice in the service of the nation-state is a religious duty (Jaffrelot, 2015; Racine, 2002). The focus on the mother in these ceremonies reinforces the importance of the bond between the mother and her son, a popular cultural and religious trope that elevates her relationship with the soldier as the most significant. According to the officers in the military PR wing women deserve more attention because of their ability to express and

more importantly invoke affect in others. Through her interpellation as a subject within militarism, the military secures approval of the soldier's death and through that of the war that he fought in. Excerpts below from a poem addressed to the mother, read out during the show by a muscular male actor, highlight the prescriptive guideline on grieving military death:

Mother, your son is no more on this earth

He is being crowned in the skies (...)

Mother your son, fought with honor (...)

Mother, I swear on your piouness

He was a lion in front of whom falsehood collapsed (...)

But this dying is not really dying (...)

Mother your son is the son of the nation

The mother here is given three reasons for why excessive grief is not an appropriate reaction. One that though the son is not on earth anymore, he now exists in heaven and thus continues to live on. This is an almost direct reference to Quranic verses oft repeated during these ceremonies that suggest that martyrs do not die but live on forever. His death, according to this understanding, is not 'really dying' and hence should not be grieved. Second, the cause is righteous and the death meaningful, making this is a moment for festivity and rather than mourning. Third, that the deceased soldier is not just her son but belongs to the nation, making the loss collective, where grief is shared and hence not experienced as overwhelming. Through these three assertions; that he is not dead, is joyously rewarded for his righteousness, and because her bond with him is not exclusive and the grief not hers alone, the military asks the mother, singled out by military as the most important next of kin, to not grieve.

Pride in the sacrifice and the need to honour the dead is expressed by family members as they come on screen or stage to testify. A widow says 'we are proud of him, other than pride there is nothing else'. She is emphatic that pride is the *only* emotion she feels, implying that grief would be perhaps incompatible with this. The mother below acknowledges her struggle with pain and refers to the *truth* of grief that she must struggle with hinting that it may lie at odds with her suggestion that she finds solace in the status and prestige that such a death brings:

It is *true* that this sadness, this grief is too much for me to bear, that my son is separated from me but if you reflect in terms of status and prestige, he (son) and God have given me so much. It is *true* that he is separated from me and for the rest of my years I will not forget and yet, even If I spend my life in prayer, I would not get what my lion (son) has given to me. (emphasis mine)

The military showcases *productive* and restrained grief versus non-productive and overwhelming suffering. The images of grieving families followed by depictions of closure and peaceful resolution run through the show, where more often than not female bodies of family members act as conduits to showcase how to grieve the military dead and how to do so without suffering. Grief is allowed expression and then edited out of sequences

and narratives, the camera swinging away when it gets too intense. Suffering is minimised and we see valiant members of the family, as masculine and stoic as the soldier image they mourn, stand resolute. In a video testimony, a sister reminisces about the last time her brother said goodbye to her, remembering how he had told her to not worry and assured her that he would be back. As she says this her voice falters and her shoulders heave as she starts to cry. At this moment the scene is cut and is followed by another clip, where she is composed and says firmly, 'it [death] is not a loss, but a huge reward'.

Women's depiction as weak and in need of masculinist protection sits well with militaristic frames, a depiction further strengthened by including children within these representations. The male next of kin is visible in these ceremonies as the father or the young son, positioned as lower ranking versions of manhood, aspiring to or commending the martyrdom. The young son is depicted as desirous of joining the service to continue with the father's mission. This latter appeal to war and continued war and sacrifice runs through the script of the show, and the need to honour the sacrifice through the willingness to offer more is a motif repeated often.

Officers in charge of scripting and putting out these spectacles allude to the difficulties of putting together these emotive performances, challenges that have to do with a delicate balance between productive and non-productive grief. They mention excessive and unrestrained emotion of family members especially women who may be overwhelmed as they speak of their loved ones. These are considered counter-productive and must be avoided or edited out in these depictions. As a result, there is the careful vetting of the kind of female figure permissible on stage. What appears on stage as a deeply emotive and natural response to death requires considerable management involving extensive script writing, selection and preparation of testimonies and vigilant editing so that the degree of grievability displayed through the female body is just right (Rashid, 2020).

A formal speech by the COAS, a traditional feature of this event reiterates the emphasis on the female next of kin, 'we salute the passion of mothers, sisters, and daughters and other next of kin of the shahudas (martyrs) who offered their loved ones for the protection of this homeland'. The representation of the female subject within these scripts of war is that of an active sufferer as opposed to one that passively responds to the loss for she is deemed to have willingly offered up her son or husband for the nation. In later speeches, as civilian casualties in the WOT in Pakistan grew, a similar willingness to offer sacrifices for the homeland is attributed to civilian bodies killed. This serves to dissolve the boundaries between the masculine and martial bodies conscripted and the feminine (and civilian bodies) that are to be protected. Instead, feminine (and civilian bodies) are pulled into masculinised scripts and the slogan 'we are all army, this is our war', is often repeated in ceremonies. This masculinisation is made possible through the displacement of the 'hierarchy between emotion and thought/reason' to produce a 'hierarchy between emotions: some emotions are 'elevated' as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain 'lower' as signs of weakness' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 3, emphasis in original). Irrational emotion best experienced and absorbed through the bodies of women, the inferior, less rational gender is cultivated and harnessed for the pursuit of rational and masculine ends by the military.

Grief in these ceremonies is *productive*, it infects and spreads to other's bodies to create grief and brings forth support for military/state policy. For grief to be productive, it must be invoked and filtered through affectively charged, gendered bodies. The

grievability of these lives is a political project, and must be on display for an absence of grief is deemed detrimental for the project of war especially when the war is locally contested. These scripts of suffering are more authentic for not only is a female perceived to be unable to 'transcend the body through thought, will and judgment' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 3), the spectators of these performances are also socialised into responding more affectively to the grief of a dependent woman left bereft after the death of her provider. In heavily patriarchal societies these scripts are more moving for the acquiescence of the mother or the wife, considered a non-military, non-worldly subject, one that is driven by her attachments to the son or husband, serves as the ultimate seal of approval to stifle critique of the war.

Pain, discipline and discontents

My sweet child,
 where do I look for you.
 You have disappeared into the river.
 When will it be time for me?
 And I can join you
 so my bones too can dissolve alongside yours
 (A mother reciting a vaen (Punjabi mourning ritual) in rural Chakwal)

The Chakwal district in north Punjab is largely rural, marked by low rates of industrialisation, insecure agricultural produce and an unirrigated land mass. Its population relies on government service and migrant labour for employment. As is the case with the rest of North Punjab, the Pakistan Military has been one of the largest providers of labour in the district (Cheema, Khalid, & Patnam, 2008). Chakwal's willingness to offer its young men to the military has been consistent including during the WOT with reduction in annual enlistment from the district reflective of a revision in the military's own recruitment quotas rather than any disenchantment with military service.⁵ Women within these rural spaces are typically married off early and remain financially dependent on men throughout their lives. Female education ranges from five to ten years of schooling depending on the availability of schools within villages and where they may be engaged as agricultural labour as part of the family unit they rarely receive monetary remuneration independently. Based on post office records of two of the five villages studied, over 55-60% of village households had a direct relationship with the military, as soldiers or pensioners (retired soldiers or wives/mothers of retired or martyred soldiers).

Like other modern militaries, the Pakistan military also invests in bureaucracy that deals with the logistics of managing the soldier's body, the funeral and bereaved members of the family (Bartone & Ender, 1994; Ben-Ari, 2005). Military disciplining in the local continues to rely on tropes of gender, religion and family and on the surface narratives in rural areas seem almost identical to the script audible within national ceremonies. However, in rural environments, where death rites are community events and losses are made meaningful through open displays of intense emotion and suffering, the military treads more carefully. This is a project fraught with tension for it involves subjects that are less amenable to disciplining because of the private, less readily controlled nature of the environs and the immediacy of loss.

In these surroundings, pain is disciplined through setting up distinctions between (masculine) appropriate and (feminine) inappropriate grief, a subtle departure from the earlier focus on productive and non-productive grief mediated through the body of the female. The mother and the widow so integral to representation on the national stage become suspect figures and are looked upon as inappropriately grieving subjects that need careful management. The military's interest with the female next of kin continues, but in these intimate spaces they also become a focus of concern. The centre becomes the periphery in these death rituals, a periphery that nevertheless must be attended to carefully. Women's ability to produce devastating affect capable of invocation and spread, so useful in military commemoration becomes a cause of suspicion. In this setting, women's affect is constructed as destructive and attributed to her primitive nature that cannot reason or accept the nobility of death for the nation (Ahmed, 2004; Noakes, 2015). A brigadier from the Personnel Administration Directorate of the GHQ explains why women are treated differently in these settings:

War has no ethics, in films and in imagery it [martyrdom] seems easy, in real life, it is horrible. Reminders [in films and imageries] are important, they do not harm (...). In real life it is not a good sight, sometimes the body can be in pieces or it takes time to transport it so it has physically deteriorated. The family, especially the wives and mothers, they can't handle it.

The officer alludes to the difference between portrayals of death and its brutal less palatable reality and between productive and non-productive 'reminders' that have the potential to 'harm'. The concern is with the female subjects and their inability to handle this grief *appropriately*.

Within these village settings, the male members of the family receive the most attention from the military.⁶ Called upon to coordinate the funeral arrangements with the military, these male members are also expected to police the affect of women whose lives are disrupted by this loss. Fathers, uncles or brothers and the village clergy are sought by the military to ensure that death rites stay in line with military protocol and not involve uncontrolled expressions of grief. Overwhelmed by loss themselves, the men in the family rise to the occasion and display a stoic and masculinised version of grief, and manage the women in their families by telling them to not cry. The village clergy in the traditional funeral prayer emphasises that this death must not be grieved like other deaths. The clergy will ask the family to grieve in a way that is in line with the status given to a martyr and to let go of the pain and instead be grateful. Open or loud displays of weeping are discouraged at least as long as the military soldiers remain in the village. *Vaen*, a ritual by professional weepers involving loud wailing and singing about the dead is prohibited and the collective refrain by men – members of the family and the male clergy – is to grieve appropriately and silently. Despite this many women talk about weeping, wailing and sometimes fainting with intense grief, slip-pages that are permissible in the local for the military remains conscious of the limits of its control at this distressing time. A widow explains why professional weepers in villages that visit houses at the time of death are turned away and how the military suggests appropriate versions of grieving to women:

You don't cry for the Shaheed. These women [professional weepers] will come, they are illiterate and ask where did the bullet hit him, how much blood did he lose (...). The soldiers said to us, all of you [women] sit on the side and try to be silent and try not to cry.

Women do not attend funerals in the village but will often go and watch the all-male military funeral, albeit from the side lines. Those too distraught are not taken to the funeral that is attended by a large number of male villagers from in and around the area. The elaborate funeral is managed by the military soldiers who take the body after the prayer and march with it to the village graveyard. Only two male civilians are given visibility in this performance, the father who receives the soldier's cap and flag and the village clergy who is invited to read an additional prayer after the burial. Within this ministering, there is no expectation that the female subject will relay productive grief. Instead, the goal becomes to contain and often when that is not possible, attribute her inappropriate grief to the primitiveness of her feminine nature (Rashid, 2020).

It is this less amenable subject that the military seeks to recompense for the death. The female next of kin remains a central figure within the military's compensation packages for soldiers, with its focus on the nuclear family (wife and children), a remnant of its colonial past. Unlike Islamic inheritance laws that prescribe a lesser share in inheritance for women, military emoluments are made out in the name of the widow if the soldier is married and the mother if unmarried unless the soldier has nominated otherwise. If the widow has no children, emoluments are often divided equally between the mother and the widow. Depicted as helpless and primitive, and therefore unable to regulate her grief appropriately, she also becomes the ideal subject to be protected by the state patriarch, the military. This protection is from her own destructive affect and also from the vicissitudes of life without a male provider. The village cleric refers to this. 'After the funeral we come back and the soldiers go to the shaheed's home. Obviously, the army has its own systems, laws and paperwork. Obviously that poor man's widow has been left behind, she needs to be looked after and they have to work out compensation'.

Compensation regimes rarely mentioned within national commemorative ceremonies are predominant within rural terrains and money for funeral arrangements is handed over once the body arrives. Discussions around procedural arrangements such as registering with the local office of the District Armed Services Board that facilitates the mother and/or the widow in obtaining emoluments guaranteed to her as a subject of the military ensue. Driven by pragmatic concerns as these families are poor and often will need immediate financial assistance and the reassurance that more is to follow, this material management is also one way that the military conscripts the female subject directly. In these encounters, where affective management is more tenuous, fraught with intense grief, material compensation becomes the mesh through which the female is brought into the project of war.

Compensation regimes are amplified in these local terrains in which 'the materialist narrative cannot disappear, and hidden in other (national) spaces in which the ideological narrative must remain dominant' and the 'woman suddenly finds herself centre stage' and 'a visible political subject' (Rashid, 2020, p. 153). Within these rural environments, where women are rarely educated beyond secondary or high school or allowed independent mobility or livelihood opportunities, this can mean getting a national identity card or a bank account for the first time. In case of the widow, there is anxiety within the deceased's family around the possibility of her remarriage or of leaving home to move back in with her paternal family. Disputes can ensue. Men on either side of her family attempt to retain control of her and through her of the emoluments granted the deceased soldier. Marrying her off to a younger brother or cousin in the deceased's family is

encouraged at this point and the lived experience of widowhood despite her being named as the recipient of military emoluments is rarely financially empowering. Within these staunchly patriarchal terrains, emoluments such as pension and land in the name of the mother and even more in the case of the wife, serve to entangle these subjects further with the institutions of the family and the military (Rashid, 2020, pp. 159–160).

What came through in almost all interviews as conversations deepened over time was an experience of loss that refuses closure despite elaborate military rituals of grief as well as regimes of military compensation. Grief is stubborn, it clings and broods, and once the rituals and practices are over – for they must be – and military presence fades, experiences of grief that are more personal emerge. These narratives diverge from military scripts of meaningful, willing and noble sacrifice and like the vaen that opens this section, voice the heaviness of grief and the longing for a loved one. They speak of the economic necessity of military service, of a grief that lingers and a sense of loss that is unassuaged by platitudes offered.

Resolution is made harder by the emoluments accepted and often contested between members of the family. For they are also considered burdensome as they represent what was received in exchange for their son's life. As a mother said to me 'they cannot return my son, but the military has given clothes on my body, I have food in my belly, I have a home, but he is no longer with me'. For families, grief continues its relentless arc, sweeping away tales of heroism and honour, and leaving in its wake, unsettling reminders of lives cut short by violent death in distant and unfamiliar wars. Ambivalences around the war and its purpose trickle into these more personal moments of grief, away from the charged spectacles that publicly mourn the dead (Rashid, 2020, p. 199).

For these women, the ability to process, accept and resolve is arrested by the constant need to filter the death through tropes of nation and sacrifice. Where these afford some measure of comfort and also allow status and prestige, the overwhelming experience shared is one of deep continuing anguish. A mother whose son died in the war expresses these tensions when she confesses her inability to grieve appropriately, 'I pray that he will come in my dreams, but he doesn't. They say he is alive and is watching over us. They say you shouldn't cry, but my tears never stop. Maybe that is why he doesn't come in my dreams because I can't accept or grieve appropriately'. Grief hangs heavy refusing to settle and its resolution remains incomplete signalling the inability of the masculine military to fully absorb the intense grievability of these lives despite, and I argue because of the surfeit of public grief that surrounds these deaths.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, management of military death involves non-military and non-masculine bodies that lie outside the official military discipline. Wives and mothers of soldiers must in the terrible moment of grief not only subject themselves to the military's ministering but also act as a symbolic representation of meaningful and willing sacrifice. Disciplining is a double move that requires careful and contradictory management, one that demands an exaggerated heightening of affect in some spaces and its regulation and containment in others. Through these moves that are manifested through the bodies of women that were once attached to these men, the military seeks to channel *appropriate* and *productive* grief for a nation meant to grieve military deaths in unpopular wars.

Maja Zehfuss (2009, p. 419) reminds us:

In Butler's scheme of grievable Western lives versus ungrievable non-Western lives no consideration is given to members of the military whose lives are grievable and yet put at risk in order, apparently, to protect other lives. Introducing this complication makes it possible to examine further how hierarchies of grief enable the possibility of war.

Zehfuss proposes that Butler's omission of worthy lives that are risked (and killed) hampers the examination of the 'hierarchies of grief' that enable wars waged by Empire in its post colonies. Lives that Butler suggests are counted, considered worthy and ostensibly grieved are also lives that are expendable for the state. The article contends that at the heart of the politics of grievability of military death is the setting up of the paradoxical idea that these deaths are ungrievable, in that they are necessary and inevitable for the sovereignty of the nation-state. In examining these 'hierarchies of grief' through notions of appropriate and productive grief relayed through the bodies of women, I have suggested in this article that military lives occupy a space of liminality that renders them ungrievable even as they are intensely grieved.

Acts of public grieving for soldiers are acts of war, where mourning is not about suffering, but national projects that masculinise affect through female bodies and call for continued war and the meaningfulness of violence unleashed in them (Zarzycka, 2016). To enable these acts, the military restrains and hides suffering, actions that I have argued complicate the possibilities of grieving for whom the loss is more personal. In delineating these rituals of disciplining as acts of grieving that restrain and inhibit grief, the article highlighted the sense of loss that refuses closure within these managed rituals. In these masculine scripts, grief no longer remains an emotion that connects with the pain of loss but becomes appropriated in the service of war, a glorification of violence that causes the loss in the first place.

To suggest that grief becomes complicated and its resolution hindered by the masculinisation of affect is an invitation to read beyond public scripts and to explore how these lives continue to be mourned intensely despite and as I suggest because of them. A public and choreographed surfeit of grief creates conditions of ungrievability and renders permeable the boundary between lives that Butler suggests are considered grievable and those that cannot be grieved. Recognising the porousness of this boundary would indicate that the instruments of violence and the subjects of violence no longer stand quite so far apart. If Butler (2009, p. 24) is correct in assuming that the 'differential distribution of grievability across populations has implications for why and when we feel politically consequential affective dispositions such as horror, guilt, righteousness, sadism, loss and indifference', then the visibility of the porosity between *all* lives that die in wars also opens up the possibilities of uncommon solidarities and different paths to challenge the war project.

Notes

1. Information based on Interviews in 2014–2015 with officers from Personnel Administration Directorate, GHQ and District Armed Services Board, Chakwal.
2. Although the term has a broader application in Islamic faith, it is used here in the context of dying in a battle waged in defence of an Islamic state. This honorific is used by the Pakistan military for soldiers that die in combat.

3. Specific references used in the article are taken from the 2010 and 2014 shows.
4. Sadqa in Islamic faith refers to an act of charity to incur divine protection. Often given in the name of a loved one to protect them from misfortune.
5. Information based on interviews in 2014–2015 with officers from Personnel Administration Directorate, GHQ.
6. I give a detailed rendition of the gendering of military grieving rituals in local spaces in my book *Dying to Serve*, 2020, pp. 114–124.

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