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Women's Participation in Peace Processes

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Introduction

Engendered in a peace tent and then driven forcefully by women's organizations from conflict areas, the argument on the importance of improving women's participation in peace processes was translated into an explicit objective in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. In October 2000, this objective was declared important for international peace and security by the UN Security Council in Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted under Namibia's Presidency. This thematic resolution, and the additional ones on Women, Peace and Security which have been adopted since, stressed two points. First, the importance of women's participation in the formal stages of a peace process. Second, the centrality of recognizing more informal contributions to peace by women's organizations. Unfortunately, however, there is near consensus that progress on reaching these objectives has remained extremely slow. For example, between 1990 and 2017, women have constituted only five percent of signatories of, and witnesses to, peace agreements (Council on Foreign Relations 2019). Consultations with women's organizations and support of their ongoing work in societies in war have progressed but still constitute a very limited, and sometimes marginalized, dimension of a peace process. This is despite the fact that women's inclusion in peace negotiations and peacebuilding appear to contribute to a decrease in the risk of a return to war (Gizelis 2009; 2011; Krause, Krause, & Bränfors, 2018). In relation to the 15-year anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in 2015, women's continued lack of access and influence on peace processes therefore became a central theme

(Aggestam 2019; Coomaraswamy et al 2015; Olsson and Gizelis 2019; Paffenholz, Ross, Dixon, Schluchter, & True, 2016).

A post-2015 wave of policy efforts followed as outlined in the UN Secretary-General's yearly reports on Women and Peace and Security. This time, there was an increased emphasis on seeking to turn words into actions. This meant creating and utilizing more concrete approaches to including women, such as rapid response mechanisms to allow women to join peace negotiations even if these were announced on short notice (UN 2018). Other examples include Women's Advisory Boards or Women Mediator Networks. The Secretary-General's reports further recognized the need for practical steps in eliminating barriers for women's participation, such as providing travel expenses and child care. While these practical aspects are difficult but solvable, a more fundamental aspect unearthed by these efforts was the difficulties of 'token' representation, a critique that was regularly levelled against women participants whether or not they had been symbolically appointed members or relations from the warring parties. As a response, the Secretary General introduced the term "meaningful participation". This is meant to challenge superficial efforts of participation without voice and influence, demanding instead participation that can shape the content of negotiations (UN Secretary-General 2018).

The debate on meaningful participation highlighted further questions about what and who women represent and why representation is important, centring around two core points. First, peace agreements do set in place the foundation for transformative political, legal, social and economic reforms that have the potential to affect the trajectory of women's empowerment and to shift gender hierarchies (Joshi and Olsson 2019; Krause et al. 2018). Hence, if women are included in peace negotiations to represent 'women's interests' for change, what do such interests entail? This debate on the relationship between women's representation and women's interests is not unique for peace processes. A similar discussion has ranged in relation to regular political processes ever since Hanna Arendt differentiated between formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive representation already in 1967. Even though women hold many different political standpoints and interactive identities research has found that women's inclusion does result in more gender equal political choices (see Mechkova and Carlitz 2019). Peace agreements with women signatories include more provisions that address social inequality and women's rights and also demonstrate higher implementation rates for these provisions than agreements without direct women's participation (Krause et al. 2018). Consequently, women's meaningful inclusion is relevant for the quality of the peace (Melander 2018; Olsson 2018). Second, research indicates that women's exclusion from peace negotiations undermines the durability of peace (see Krause et al. 2018). Women's inclusion is thereby important for ensuring a positive

development trajectory for the whole of society. The reason is that women's representation broadens public support for peace processes through an interaction between women negotiators and women's groups. This increases the quality and legitimacy of an agreement and can assist its implementation (see Krause et al., 2018). This finding puts the spotlight on the fact that women constitute mobilized political actors in many contexts. Furthermore, we need to recognize that the core of this debate concerns how we should understand representation in peace processes and its role for ensuring a positive overall trajectory for a society over time (see also Nilsson 2012 and Nilsson et al. 2020). With the exception of cases such as Northern Ireland where parties to the negotiations were selected through a popular vote, the representativeness of all parties in a process – both male and female dominated ones – can be debated.

Elaborating further on these points, this chapter will proceed as follows. The first part of the chapter will identify and discuss key issues for a more nuanced understanding of women's participation. We begin by discussing challenges in the different stages of a process – pre-negotiations, negotiations, peace agreement formulation (i.e. bargaining), and peace agreement implementation – providing examples of what these can mean for women's participation. We then further problematize this in light of the fact that many processes do not progress in a *linear manner*. Thereafter, we will look closer at women's participation per se, both in terms of representation issues and practical approaches to their inclusion. The second part of the chapter will then focus on the last two stages of a peace process, that of the bargaining of the peace agreement and of the implementation and peacebuilding. This debate includes central considerations of the role of women's participation for the quality of the peace outcome as regards gender equality, transformation of hierarchical or patriarchal power structures, and why it is relevant for understanding peace durability. We conclude by highlighting future venues for research and policy.

1. Understanding Participation in Peace Processes

Previous research highlights three key areas where we need to improve our understandings of women's participation: a) We need to be able to differentiate between different stages of a process and recognize that many processes do not follow a linear development. Rather, they should be perceived as repetitive; b) We need to start from the perception of women as a diverse category of political actors and better connect that to a discussion on what 'women' are expected to represent. In so doing, we need to c) consider the implications of the practical and technical

approaches used to promote women's inclusion and if that contributes to forming 'women' as one consisted group rather than ensuring a more diverse representation.

Stages of a peace process

Stages of a peace process can range from pre-negotiations, negotiations, peace agreement formulation (i.e. bargaining), to peace agreement implementation.[1] A critique directed at existing international efforts to improve women's meaningful participation in a peace process is that they too generally span all stages of a process without recognizing important differences between each stage (Olsson and Gizelis 2019). For example, supporting women's inclusion in pre-negotiations – a stage often surrounded by secrecy and restricted inclusion – can require different forms of support than seeking to promote participation during bargaining of the agreement – a stage with a high level of competition and often a rising number of involved actors (Nilsson 2018). In addition, each stage has its own practical and technical complexities requiring specific forms of expertise. For instance, the bargaining stage can include the formulation of a wide set of various legal and policy documents. Notably, the Peace Agreements Database, PAX,[2] include declarations of intent, substantive agreements, process agreements, and new constitutions.

It is important to recognize that women's participation is embedded within a broader peace process with multiple negotiations on specific documents and decisions. These processes can span months or years and few follow a linear development. The number of protracted conflicts with their equally protracted, or repetitive, peace negotiations is substantial. In recent years, negotiations have taken place or continue in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Colombia, Myanmar, the Philippines/Mindanao, Mali, Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen. These peace processes overwhelmingly concern conflicts with repeated cycles of negotiations and renewed peace agreements. Protracted conflicts are complex. They frequently do not only involve the government and a well-organized opposition group but a high fragmentation within the armed opposition and numerous armed actors on the sub-state level. The latter may not be fully controlled by either the government or rebel organizations but pursue their own agenda.

[1] In a basic form, but different forms of categorizations exist. For example, PAX categorizes peace processes into seven distinct stages, ranging from pre-negotiations and process agreements to framework and partial agreement of substantive issues, to comprehensive agreements that address the whole conflict, to implementation and renegotiation agreements, and finally renewal or revitalization agreements.

[2] PAX uses a broad understanding of peace agreements and defines them as "formal, publicly-available documents, produced after discussion with conflict protagonists and mutually agreed by some or all of them, addressing conflict with a view to ending it". Peace Agreement Definitions:
https://www.peaceagreements.org/files/Definitions_v3.pdf

Such 'multi-level conflicts' demand innovation in peace process design for 'multi-level peace processes' (Bell, 2019).

For women's peace organizations, the nature of protracted conflicts and repeated negotiations require continuous mobilization and lobbying for inclusion at various stages of the peace process, often over years. This presents a significant cost to these organizations, often already burdened by survival struggles in conflict zones or situations of displacement. The implications for their ability to support peace can thereby decrease (Mai 2015). An informative example is the 2003 all-inclusive peace agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This included women's organizations who mobilized their own members in addition to being supported by international feminist networks. This combination of internal resources and external support enabled the women's organization to take part in the negotiations which were placed outside of the country, in the exclusive Sun City in South Africa. In addition to the cost of mobilization and participation, these women invested much resources into training of their members and time in agenda building to push for their meaningful participation in the negotiations. However, the 2003 peace agreement failed and new negotiations started in 2008. Women's organizations had to invest into mobilizing again while suffering from internal tensions and a struggle over leadership, thereby being unable to capitalize on their momentum and pressure the warring parties to include substantial women's representation and their political positions in the negotiations (Freedman 2016; Odimba et al 2012). Consequently, in protracted conflicts, women's organizations may gain as well as lose access and influence to the negotiations over time.

Women's agency - who do 'women' represent?

Women's civil society organizations were central for pushing for the recognition that women are political actors and that they have a right to be included in peace processes at both Beijing in 1995 and in the adoption of UNSCR 1325 (Tryggestad 2009; Gizelis and Olsson 2015). Further, research has demonstrated that more inclusive peace processes in which civil society groups (Nilsson 2012) and women's organizations in particular (Krause et al. 2018) can shape the negotiations are more likely to lead to durable peace. Civil society participation increases public representation, broad population support, and brings local context-sensitive knowledge to the table.

Currently, the debate about women's participation is increasingly characterized by recognition of the need to move beyond essentialist stereotypes of 'peace women' and 'women' as a homogenous category. Instead, it is important to note the diversity of women, including women

civil society activists, female combatants and women within the political wing of armed groups, as well as female government representatives; all of which could be vital for building peace (Olsson and Gizelis 2019). This means that their situation and ability to affect different stages of the peace processes can differ but also that they are likely to represent different interests. Recognizing such diversity and intersectionality is particularly important in the context of protracted and multi-level conflicts. Women from different ethnic, religious, or political groups; women from urban and rural areas; and women from the civil society sector versus women in government or within the rebel group may hold substantially different understandings of the conflict, the main perpetrators, obstacles to resolution, and the very meaning of peace. Recognizing diversity among women leads to the question of who should be involved in peace negotiations and 'represent women'. Although the questioning of women's participation has often been criticized by feminist NGOs, the question is legitimate from a bottom-up point of view. National-level civil society and women groups can be disconnected to local-level groups or perceived as "out-of-touch" and tokenistic (Aulin, 2019).

Recognizing the diversity of women and their views further means acknowledging women as political actors influenced by political agendas, group interests, as well as the trauma and hardship of civil war. An illuminating example of the complex composition of women regards their participation in South Sudan's peace process. Since the outbreak of civil war in 2013, the country's peace process included numerous rounds of negotiations. In the fall of 2017, South Sudanese women groups, who have a long history of mobilizing for peace and supporting peace negotiations (e.g. see the 1999 Wunlit peace agreement), met in Uganda, to prepare their participation in renewed peace negotiations in 2018. This brought together an impressive array of women representatives. Their discussions produced a statement signed by 40 South Sudanese women's organizations from within the country and those displaced in the region. This was a major achievement given that the country's diversity and deep conflict divides challenge women's mobilization and peacebuilding.[3] The illiteracy rate for women in South Sudan is at about 80 per cent of the population (Mai 2015). For the South Sudanese women groups, agreeing on a joint political agenda, selecting representatives to take part in the negotiations, establishing priorities for the negotiation process to jointly advocate for gender-related provisions was hard work and should be understood as an important act of reconciliation and good will that is fundamental for political collaboration and peacebuilding.

[3] https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/09/South-Sudan-Women-Position-on-the-Promotion-of-Durable-Peace-and-Reconciliation-in-South-Sudan-Final.pdf

How can women's participation be strengthened?

The 2018 Secretary-General's report acknowledged the need to turn words into actions and implement more concrete steps to include women, eliminate barriers for their participation, and institutionalize rapid response mechanisms (UN 2018). Since 2015, we can observe several forms of attempts, where the peace negotiations on Syria is an illuminating example. The first Syria peace talks under mediator Kofi Annan in 2012 in Geneva (Geneva I), while failing to result in any progress, excluded civil society and women representatives. The Geneva II talks, led by Lakhdar Brahimi in 2014, again saw no formal participation of women and civil society representatives. This time, there was more of an active exclusion as UN Women had brought women representatives from Syria to Geneva to take part in consultations. The talks broke down after a few days. A third round of negotiations then took place in 2016 under then mediator Staffan de Mistura. While Annan and Brahimi led "exclusionary processes" (Hellmueller & Zahar, 2019), de Mistura institutionalized civil society's participation. Practically, this meant establishing the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR), which developed into a platform of Syrian civil society actors to influence the political process. As for women's participation, this process demonstrated a concrete example of methods and rapid response mechanisms. Women were organized into a Women's Advisory Board to participate as third-party observers, at the time heralded as an innovative solution for women's inclusion in peacemaking.

The Syrian process also unearthed a debate on women as political representatives. Criticism arose as to whether the members 'represented Syrian women'. Here, the visible cooperation between women supporting the Assad government and women supporting opposition groups seemed to ignite strong reactions.[4] Still, the political 'inclusiveness' of the Women's Advisory Board demonstrated that women could find common ground across the conflict divides despite severe tensions. After the January 2016 negotiations in Geneva, members of the Women's Advisory Board met with members from the Syrian Women Initiative for Peace and Democracy in Beirut and produced a statement of unity.[5] Two years later, almost 200 Syrian women leaders met again in Beirut to discuss ways to safeguard and advance women's rights in Syria, and participants identified some key elements for a common framework for the Syrian women's movement. However, after more than two years of collaboration, members of the advisory

[4] https://www.passblue.com/2016/05/10/how-syrian-women-landed-at-the-un-peace-talks-and-what-it-all-means/.
[5] http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news%20and%20events/stories/2016/syriawomen-conference-statement-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5009.

board found themselves 'depoliticized' and unable to represent a constituency of women.[6] Under the Russian-led diplomatic initiative for Syria, civil society and the Women's Advisory Board were excluded from the 2018 negotiations in Sochi, where negotiating parties agreed on a new constitution.

2 Participation and the Peace Agreement

Peace agreements have been noted to increasingly include not only the interests of the warring parties but the population's concerns, even if the latter can meet with specific challenges during the implementation. It is in this context important to raise questions as to the inclusion and realization of women's interest (Joshi, Quinn, and Regan 2015; Joshi and Wallensteen 2018). In fact, a number of surveys have found that women, on average, hold more negative attitudes to peace outcomes than men. One reason is argued to be that the manner in which women have been affected by the conflict has not been prioritized in the post-war period (Brouneus et al. 2017). In combination with a) armed conflict constituting a shock to society with the propensity to upset gender hierarchies, b) increased levels of local women's mobilization for improved power and resources access, and c) rising global calls related to women, peace and security, arguably make a latent demand for improvements in women's rights a factor that is relevant to all post-conflict settings (Ni Alolain, Haynes and Cahn 2011; Tripp 2015; Webster et al 2019; Joshi and Olsson 2019). To take that demand seriously can contribute to ensuring that the peace has legitimacy among the women. In extension, this can be important for peace durability (Krause et al. 2018).

This raises two central points. First, that the bargaining of the peace agreement sets in place reforms and institutions which can have both short-term and long-term effects on gender equality, women's empowerment, and peace. Second, while a peace agreement creates the foundation, the implementation and peacebuilding stages are central for realizing actual social change. Women's inclusion is critical for ensuring progress.

Peace agreement bargaining and women's inclusion

Joshi et al. (2015) have shown that a comprehensive peace agreement, on average, contains provisions for 21 multi-sectoral reforms. This means that peace agreements constitute a roadmap for future political and constitutional processes as well as for significant socio-economic changes.

[6] See Mouna Ghanem's statement, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-conflict-resolution-women-sexism-war-a8792271.html.

Being able to affect the bargaining of this 'roadmap' is therefore imperative. The exclusion of women might perpetuate a marginalization in the post-war period. I.e., the peace might entail a lower quality for women than men in terms of less access to resources and security (Krause et al. 2018; Olsson 2018; Melander 2018). For example, armed conflicts involving human rights abuse or systematic sexual violence, such as those in Timor-Leste, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have highlighted that women and men need different forms of protection in order to become equally secure when peace is to be created after war. New legislation and provisions for transitional justice need to cover crimes, such as sexual violence and discrimination, if women's security is to be improved (Olsson 2009; Brouneus et al. 2017). A positive example was the peace process in Colombia where victims of violence were given a voice in the negotiations. This resulted in the inclusion of provisions related to many different forms of violence, including violence against women (Carvajal and Álvarez-Vanegas 2019).

Bell (2015) argues that we need to distinguish between processes which include a 'a robust 'gender perspective' in the formulation of the agreement and those which only give symbolic recognition to gender dynamics. She notes some learning among the international community as "substantive measures on equality for women and sexual violence have improved over time", particularly regarding the role of women's participation (Bell 2015). While the inclusion of women in bargaining have also often come after international pressure, it is important to connect international support to ongoing local mobilization processes. In many conflict zones, women's political representation and economic participation have been improving as a result of women's mobilization, the questioning of existing gender norms, and changes in the structures of society (Berry 2018; Tripp 2015).

One example is the peace process in the Philippines resulting in the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro conflict. In this process, women and women's organizations came to play key roles in the formulation of the agreement, not least through the actions of the organization We Act 1325. This organization had originated as a women's network that aimed to monitor and support the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security adopted by the government for the 2010-2016 period. A former chair of this network, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, later came to play a key role in the peace negotiations where she also became instrumental for promoting women's rights. She contributed to so called gender provisions being included in the agreement: clauses which focus specifically on improving women's rights post-war and on addressing gender aspects of the conflict. In the subsequent process, We Act 1325 together with two other women's organizations and supported by Conciliation Resources, pushed for women's rights to be included as the agreement's clauses

were translated into implementable actions. In addition, women's organizations prioritized seeking to be included in the mechanisms created to monitor an implementation process (Duque-Salazar et al. 2020).

Women in implementation and peacebuilding

The implementation of a peace agreement after a civil war is central for the peace to hold (Joshi and Quinn 2016; 2017). That said, implementation and peacebuilding are challenging and costly processes with a substantial risk for a return to war. Women's inclusion could be essential for increasing legitimacy and social capital, thereby improving the chance for peace durability (Gizelis 2009; 2011; Krause et al. 2018). Due to the challenges of the implementation stage, however, research has found that different categories of clauses in an agreement tend to be prioritized differently. Those related to security tend to take priority in the eyes of the former warring parties whereas social aspects rank the lowest. This can have a detrimental effect on implementation related to gender equality and could help explain why women have more negative attitudes to peace than men (Lee, Mac Ginty and Joshi 2016; Brouneus et al. 2017; Duque-Salazar et al. 2020).

One method to promote women's interests, as displayed in the case of the Philippines, would be to ensure the implementation of any gender provisions adopted in the agreement. Such provisions can come in many different forms. One form focuses on core issues for the post-war society, such as improving protection from sexual violence, strengthened land rights, or increased political representation of women. Other clauses are process related, that is, used to formalize the implementation process, including dictating women's formal participation. Research suggests that both these forms of gender provisions meet with challenges in the implementation stage, such as being deprioritized or suffer from low state capacity on gender equality (Gindele et al 2019). Bell further proposes that in agreements where the gender provisions have merely been added on – without much buy-in or understanding of the warring parties – the chance of the clauses resulting in actual change is slim (Bell 2015).

An example of this dynamic can be found in the Colombian Final Agreement from 2016 where 130 out of 578 stipulations recognize gender differences (Gindele et al. 2018). Unfortunately, data from University of Notre Dames' Kroc Institutes Barometer project show that the implementation of gender provisions is lagging behind the other, non-gendered – provisions. As of August, 2019, the Barometer project find that 42% of the gender provisions had not been initiated. This can be compared to 27% of the general commitments (Kroc Institute 2019). A

possible explanation, as discussed by Bell (2015), concerns the ownership of these provisions – who had an interest in them being included and who can promote their realization? As noted by the Kroc Institute: "Women's organizations and actors pushing for gender equality often start from a weaker power-base and their efforts challenge existing power hierarchies at the national and local levels." They also note that resistance to many of the gender provisions in the Colombian agreement became visible already in the political debate leading up to the public referendum in 2016 (Gindele et al. 2018).

While gender provisions can be one tool for including women's interests, it is important to observe that research has yet to examine their role for actual advancements in gender equality post-war. In fact, Krause et al. (2018) and Joshi and Olsson (2019) do not find that gender quotas or other provisions included in the peace agreement necessarily have an effect. That does not mean that we should remove gender provisions – these bring in critical issues for women. However, we need to ensure that these are implemented and work in tandem with the entire agreement toward an equal peace (Joshi and Olsson 2019). The study by Joshi and Olsson (2019) further underlines this and suggests that women's rights can actually improve post-war due to how the broader political reforms set in place by an agreement are realized. While Anderson (2013) argues that the warring parties often categorically resist change in gender equality, Joshi and Olsson instead propose that we should nuance the understanding to consider the opportunity, willingness and capacity of the former warring actors in instituting and realizing positive effects on women's rights and in addressing gender hierarchies post war. Ensuring women's formal inclusion in the core implementation processes and recognizing and supporting women's informal efforts for peace instead remained central. As advocated by the lessons learned from the UN Decade for Women and the Beijing Conference – all issues are in fact women's issues.

Conclusions and future research

While at a first glance, increasing women's participation in a peace process might seem straight forward, research has started to highlight that we need to consider a number of core issues in order to comprehend this fully. First, it is important to consider the different conditions which exist under each stage of a peace process. These can provide different openings and present different challenges for inclusion. Importantly, as highlighted in many of the examples, just because women managed to obtain entry during one stage does not necessarily entail that they will be included in the next. Second, many peace processes are protracted and non-linear, requiring long-term investments for women. This might be particularly challenging for women's

civil society organizations which might have very limited resources. Third, women do not represent one group or one interest. Women, like men, come from various political standpoints. In some conflicts, we see women unite on common gender equality interests across the conflict divide, as in Syria. Still, we must develop a much better understanding of women as political actors in order to fully understand what conditions shape their participation. Fourth, we are currently seeing the development of new forms of mechanisms to include women in peace processes, again demonstrated by the Syrian process. Yet, we have limited knowledge of what the effects are for women's influence on the outcome.

As regards the last stages of a peace process, peace agreement bargaining and implementation, research is under development but suggests a number of key areas for further investigation. First, as the peace agreement will constitute the road map for future societal development – politically, legally and socio-economically – UNSRC 1325 argues that it is central to ensure that women's participation is promoted and that the agreement addresses gender dynamics in the post-war state. For research, an improved understanding is important for measuring the quality of the peace and when examining the conditions for creating a durable peace. Second, the implementation of an agreement is central for creating peace but also for the post-war trajectory of women's rights. The manner in which peace is created and if provisions specifically targeting gender equality dynamics are realized, are therefore central. Future research should here consider women's formal and informal efforts but also variations in the former warring parties' willingness and opportunity to realize gender equal reforms. In conclusion, it remains imperative that research clearly connect women's involvement and the understanding of gender dynamics to core processes in contemporary peace-making. Recent research findings underline the importance of the norms established in UNSCR 1325 that women should be considered as political actors indispensable for societal development.

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