



Women at the Negotiating Table: Gender Inclusion and the Durability of Peace Agreements

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The inclusion of women in peace negotiations is a critical component of international peacebuilding processes in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. However, women's inclusion in peace negotiations is still low. This study seeks to explore the impact of gender inclusion in peace negotiations on the effectiveness and sustainability of international peace negotiations. This will be done through a systematic review of the literature, including a comparative case study of peace negotiations in Liberia, Nepal, and Colombia. The findings indicate that the meaningful involvement of women is linked to an expanded agenda in negotiations, robust social provisions in peace agreements, and the legitimacy of negotiated peace agreements. However, the paper also reveals that symbolic inclusion is not sufficient to produce these benefits. The findings conclude that gender inclusion is not just good in itself but is also good for peace agreements.

Keywords: women, peace and security (WPS), gender inclusion, peace negotiations, peace agreement durability, feminist peacebuilding, international peace processes

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1. Introduction

Women's participation in peace negotiations has become an important issue in international peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes in the wake of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. The Women, Peace, and Security agenda has pointed to the importance of women's participation in preventing conflicts, negotiating peace, and rebuilding societies (United Nations Security Council, 2000). Nevertheless, women's low participation in peace negotiations is a pressing issue. Research has shown that women have made low contributions as members, mediators, and signatories of major peace negotiations from 1992 to 2019 (UN Women, 2015). The disparity between commitments to women's inclusion in peace processes and actual implementation has led to an increased interest in examining the gender inclusion effects on peace negotiation outcomes.

Current research findings indicate that the participation of women could have an impact on the durability and quality of peace agreements. Quantitative research findings indicate that there is an increased level of durability and quality of peace agreements that involve the participation of women (Krause et al., 2018). Researchers argue that the participation of women could have an impact on the quality of peace agreements through the introduction of perspectives that expand the scope of the peace agreements beyond issues of military and political power-sharing arrangements (O'Reilly et al., 2015). The introduction of such perspectives could enhance the legitimacy of the negotiated peace agreements.

Feminist studies, on the other hand, show that just having women in the negotiation process doesn't mean they will have an impact. Several studies have underscored the need to ensure meaningful women's participation in peace processes, not merely measured by their presence but by their capacity to influence the agenda and the process of decision-making (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Women have been involved in several peace processes merely as observers or advisors, not as full participants. All these issues underscore the need to consider the quantity and quality of women's participation in peace diplomacy.

This paper seeks to examine the link that exists between gender inclusivity and the efficacy of international peace negotiations. The study seeks to understand how women's participation affects the substance, legitimacy, and long-term viability of peace agreements. The paper also seeks to understand under what circumstances women's participation in peace negotiations is likely to yield desired outcomes. The study is based on a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, as well as a comparative analysis of three peace negotiations in Liberia, Nepal, and Colombia. The study seeks to assess how women's participation in peace negotiations affects outcomes by combining theoretical analysis of feminist approaches to international relations.

2. Research Questions and Objectives

- **Research Questions:** (1) How does the inclusion of women in formal peace negotiations affect the quality and durability of peace agreements? (2) Under what conditions does women's participation translate into more effective negotiation outcomes? (3) What mechanisms (e.g. network linkages, agenda expansion) explain any observed effects?
- **Objectives:** Our objectives are to (a) systematically synthesize recent evidence (last 10 years, peer-reviewed and UN data) on gender inclusion in peace talks; (b) compare negotiation outcomes in illustrative cases with different levels of women's inclusion; (c) identify theoretical frameworks linking gender to peace processes; (d) draw policy lessons for mediators and peacebuilders.

This research assumes that the existing literature (peer-reviewed articles, UN/UN Women studies, credible reports) provides sufficient data – no original field interviews or surveys are conducted. We also assume that the selected cases (Liberia, Nepal, Colombia) are representative of different contexts where women's inclusion varied.

3. Literature Review

Recent scholarship on women in peace diplomacy has grown markedly. Quantitative analyses (e.g. Krause et al. 2018) demonstrate that peace agreement with female signatories have significantly longer "peace spells"-

(days without renewed conflict) than those without (Krause et al., 2018). Krause et al. conducted a study using a large-n design between 1989 and 2011 and discovered that agreements that included women led to a "robust" increase in conflict-free days after the signing of the agreement (Krause et al., 2018). This effect remained even when controlling for democracy, GDP, power-sharing, and UN missions, among other factors (Krause et al., 2018). Moreover, the study discovered that women-inclusive agreements have better-quality provisions, which encompassed more comprehensive social, economic, and rights-based reforms and achieved higher implementation rates (Krause et al., 2018). For example, Krause et al. report that agreements with women signatories had "better accord quality" and significantly better implementation of women's rights clauses (Krause et al., 2018).

The findings further reinforce an emerging body of empirical research that demonstrates the benefits of more inclusive peace processes in terms of more legitimate and socially responsive agreements. However, this inclusion should not be symbolic but should have some meaningful impact. Thus, in conclusion, the findings clearly demonstrate that gender inclusion is beneficial to international peace negotiations from both a normative and an instrumental perspective. (O'Reilly et al., 2015). At the same time, qualitative research underscores that not all inclusion is equal. Paffenholz et al. (2016) emphasize that simply counting women is insufficient; what matters is their influence. Their 40-case project concludes "making women's participation count is more important than merely counting the number of women included". In other words, token presence without decision-making power yields little benefit. Moreover, recent research has also indicated that the level of descriptive inclusion does not necessarily translate into influence, particularly when the deliberative bodies are still dominated by men (Kostovicova & Paskhalis, 2021). The authors indicate that the number of official women negotiators remains at only 25-30%. This reflects a broader critique: the liberal-peace model's institutions must be seen through a feminist lens. Feminist and inclusive-peace scholarship argues that women's participation can widen negotiation agendas to include social justice, political reform, and community security concerns (O'Reilly et al., 2015; True & Riveros-Morales, 2019).

For example, at the theoretical level Anderson et al. (2024) propose a "peace continuum" framework in which women's grassroots peace work complements formal talks (Anderson et al., 2024). Normative arguments (e.g. While UNSCR 1325) focus on placing the rights and perspectives of women as the objective of peace. As such, the range of the theoretical frameworks is from the norm diffusion theory that is used in the WPS agenda to the critical feminist theory that challenges the concept of liberal peace. Overall, the literature suggests that the full involvement of women is what improves the opportunities in negotiations, adds provisions for women, and improves the quality of peace in the communities (Krause et al., 2018) (O'Reilly et al., 2015).

However, the literature has also highlighted the challenges in the form of patriarchal values, hierarchies of power, and in some cases, tokenism, which may hinder the effectiveness of women. For example, in the case of Colombia, which is described as the most inclusive peace negotiation, the literature has highlighted the sluggish implementation of the provisions related to gender, which may indicate the limitations of the gains made during the negotiations (Joshi et al., 2020) (O'Reilly et al., 2015). The literature review has highlighted that the causal impact of gender inclusion is positive in general.

4. Theoretical Framework

Our analysis draws on several overlapping theoretical lenses:

- **Feminist IR and the WPS Paradigm:** This approach assumes that the inclusion of women is not only normatively good (i.e., equal sharing, human rights) and instrumentally good (i.e., the addition of new knowledge in peace negotiations) (O'Reilly et al., 2015) (Anderson et al., 2024). The approach points out the role of gender norms in security decisions and the unique priorities of women based on their experiences as civilian victims of conflict. The "peace continuum" approach conceptually places the peacebuilding of women beyond formal negotiations. This framework informs our interpretation of how women's informal networks and coalitions can feed into formal agreements.
- **Inclusive Negotiation Theory:** Literature on negotiations has emphasized the importance of

the legitimacy of agreements, where more parties are included in the negotiations, the more legitimate the outcome is likely to be. Thus, the inclusion of women as a large constituency is likely to increase the legitimacy of the outcome and make peace more sustainable (Krause et al., 2018) (O'Reilly et al., 2015). Relatedly, the critical mass approach argues that a certain percentage of women (~30%) may be required in the outcome of negotiations; we will test this in the case of the quota system in Nepal.

- **Constructivist Norm Diffusion:** The WPS agenda itself is a global norm. Constructivists would emphasize how adoption of norms (e.g. via UNSCR 1325, national action plans) can pressure parties to include women. Indeed, empirical studies (Anderson & Urlacher 2025) find that countries with WPS action plans are more likely to include women. Our framework thus sees national/international normative commitments as mechanisms enabling women's inclusion.

These frameworks collectively guide our case analysis: we look at how inclusion (normative/legal structures, movement pressure, or mediators' choice) affected the negotiation content and post-agreement implementation.

5. Methodology

This study uses asystematic literature reviewcombined withcomparative case analysis. We collected peer-reviewed journal articles (especially Scopus-indexed since 2013) on women's roles in peace processes, as well as key UN/UN Women reports and case studies. Search terms included "women peace negotiations", "gender inclusion peace agreements", etc. We prioritized sources that provided empirical data (statistical or qualitative) linking gender inclusion to outcomes.

For case analysis, we assumed no original fieldwork or interviews were conducted; all case data come from published sources. We selected three post-2000 conflict peace processes with ample documentation and differing levels of women's involvement:

- **Liberia (2003–2005):** West Africa, multiple rebel factions, famous women-led peace movement.

- **Nepal (2006–2008):** South Asia, civil war against Maoists, strong women's movements but initial exclusion at peace table.
- **Colombia (2012–2016):** Latin America, FARC peace negotiations, noted for first-time gender sub commission.

These cases offer variation (African vs. Asian vs. Latin American context; negotiated settlement vs. constitutional transition; varying WPS environments). For each, we trace who was included at the negotiating table (women mediators, delegates, observers), what gender-responsive provisions appeared in the final agreement, and short-term outcomes (peace durability, implementation of provisions).

Comparative analysis identifies patterns and differences. We synthesize across case findings and relate them to the broader evidence from the literature. Data on each case come from academic articles, UN Women/Peace Women reports, and peace accord databases (e.g. Peace Accords Matrix). We also assume that interview-based insights from other studies (e.g. interviews cited in secondary sources) accurately reflect participants' influence. A comparative case-study approach allows exploration of causal mechanisms linking gender inclusion and negotiation outcomes across different regional and institutional contexts.

The methodology is limited by available sources: quantitative data on women's roles in negotiations are incomplete, so we rely also on qualitative descriptions. We also assume the cases chosen are illustrative; we do not claim generalizability beyond demonstrating key mechanisms.

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Case (Year)	Women's Inclusion in Negotiations	Agreement Content (Gender Focus)	Outcomes/Durability
Liberia (2003–2005)	Women participated mainly via civil society (WIPNET mass protests, 8-member MARWOPNET delegation) (Paffenholz et al., 2016). No women were formal mediators or leading negotiators, but they were observers with some signatory roles.	2003 Accra CPA created a broad transitional government and DDR plan; it mentioned gender needs in demobilization and future governance. (Women activists also pushed for gender equality provisions.)	Conflict formally ended; elections held 2005 leading to Africa's first female president (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Peace proved fairly durable (civil war did not resume). Women's advocacy helped ensure at least symbolic gender commitments, and Liberia later mainstreamed WPS in security sector.
Nepal (2006–2008)	No women in the official negotiation delegations of Maoists or government (Markham, 2013). (Women's groups exerted pressure outside the table.) Women's networks successfully lobbied for electoral reforms though.	2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord focused on ending monarchy and integrating Maoists into politics. The Interim Constitution (2007) and 2008 CA election mandated 33% female candidacy and elected 33% women to the Constituent Assembly (Markham, 2013). Gender was recognized, but many women's issues (e.g. transitional justice for rape) received limited attention in the Accord.	Peace held and monarchy was abolished; broad reform agenda (though slow implementation). The quotas produced one of the world's highest female representations in parliament (about 33%). However, critics note that women's voices remained underrepresented in negotiations and many gender clauses (e.g. justice for sexual violence) saw delayed action. Overall peace has endured but socioeconomic and gender issues remain contested.
Colombia (2012–2016)	High inclusion: a Gender Sub-Commission was established early; both FARC and government delegations included several women; civil society (including many women's organizations) also participated in advisory roles.	2016 Final Agreement contains extensive gender-sensitive provisions across topics (e.g. 130/578 clauses on women, rural reform programs for women, reparations for gender violence) (Joshi et al., 2020). 13% of signatories were women. The accord explicitly enshrines women's rights (e.g. political participation, land access, anti-GBV measures).	Peace accord signed and a political transition begun; disarmament largely carried out. Implementation has been slower than planned: reports note substantial delays in key programs for women (e.g. land reform) and "limited progress in achieving equal representation of women" in transitional bodies (Joshi et al., 2020). Security has been uneven (some FARC dissidents renewed fighting). Women's inclusion made the accord more progressive, but its full impact is pending.

Table: Comparison of women's roles and outcomes in selected peace negotiations (sources: case studies above, Krause et al. 2018, UN Women 2015, etc.).

In summary, all three cases ultimately achieved a stable (or stable-to-date) peace, but the degree and manner of women's inclusion varied, with corresponding differences in agreement content and follow-through:

- **Liberia:** Although women were not formal negotiators, their mass mobilization (WIPNET) influenced the peace process (Paffenholz et al., 2016). They helped keep civil society engaged and pressed for gender issues (e.g. DDR of female combatants). The Accra Agreement did include some gender perspectives, and peace held (transitions to elections) (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Liberia's case fits the pattern that civil society networks led by women can strengthen peace durability, even if women aren't at the table (Paffenholz et al., 2016).
- **Nepal:** Women's absence at the negotiating table (Markham, 2013) meant that their issues were mainly pushed through the reforms that followed the agreement rather than the agreement itself. The peace agreement brought an end to the war and reformed the state, but the issues that many women sought, such as justice for crimes committed during the war, were not prioritized. The impressive quota success (33%) (Markham, 2013) came from women's activism *after* the peace deal, suggesting that inclusion through later constitutional measures can partly compensate. However, the lack of women negotiators likely limited the Accord's focus on gender. This case illustrates that peace can be concluded without women at the table, but may miss key gender dimensions and require additional measures to ensure inclusion.

- **Colombia:** This process demonstrates the positive potential when women are built into the negotiation framework from the start. The dedicated Gender Sub-Commission and high female participation led to an agreement with explicit gender provisions (e.g. land reform with women's needs, victim reparations for sexual violence) (Joshi et al., 2020). In line with the literature, the Colombian accord's breadth and gender inclusivity is unparalleled among such agreements. In practice, implementation has been partial – many provisions are delayed – so it remains to be seen whether the initial inclusion will translate into lasting gains. Still, Colombia confirms the literature's finding that gender-inclusive processes produce more progressive agreements (Krause et al., 2018) (O'Reilly et al., 2015). The main limitation is not the negotiation itself but follow-up.

In all these cases, some general patterns are identified: peace agreements that include the substantive participation of women are more likely to include general reforms within society (Liberia, Colombia), consistent with the theorized benefits of such an approach (Krause et al., 2018; O'Reilly et al., 2015). Conversely, when women are absent or only present symbolically (as in the case of the peace talks in Nepal, or the Liberian negotiators), the issues involving gender must be pressed using quotas. The evidence synthesizes as: (a) Women's presence correlates with higher implementation of agreement provisions, especially those on social and gender issues (Krause et al., 2018); (b) Women tend to push for addressing underlying causes and human security, which can make peace more resilient " (O'Reilly et al., 2015) (Paffenholz et al., 2016); (c) *Token inclusion* without real access to deliberation and decision-making is unlikely to reshape peace-making outcomes (Paffenholz et al., 2016; Kostovicova & Paskhalis, 2021).

6. Policy Implications

Our findings provide implications for mediators, negotiators, and their international supporters as follows:

- **Mandate Women's Participation:** Mediators (UN, AU, EU envoys) should include women as formal negotiators or mediators from the outset. Security Council resolutions and regional bodies should insist on this as a condition of support.

(As one UN expert put it: women should not be on the sidelines observing, but "*an integral part of negotiations and decision-making*" (O'Reilly et al., 2015)).

- **Facilitate Women's Civil Society:** Empower networks of women's organizations to engage with negotiators. The Liberian case shows how grassroots women's pressure (prayer vigils, sit-ins) can hasten talks and push gender issues (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2016). Donors and peace envoys should support these groups (track II) and consult them regularly. Their input should be linked to the formal process.
- **Ensure Substantive Roles: Prevent tokenism.** Providing women access to critical committees (such as the Gender Sub-Commission in the Colombian peace process) or the main delegation can increase their influence. Provide training and support for women negotiators. In Nepal, the lack of female negotiators meant women's priorities emerged only via constitutional quotas (Markham, 2013). Mediators should actively recruit women delegates and encourage parties to do the same (as Secretary-General and scholars recommend (O'Reilly et al., 2015)).
- **Include Gender Provisions:** Peace agreements should explicitly address gender (e.g. security guarantees for women, gender quotas, post-conflict services) to reflect women's demands and international norms. Our cases show that when agreements include these provisions, women's concerns are less likely to be neglected (cf. [37] on Colombia's gender provisions).
- **Monitor and Enforce Implementation:** The participation of women and monitoring gender provisions should also be ensured in the implementation bodies. The Colombian example shows that, in the absence of enforcement mechanisms (such as equal women's participation in the implementation bodies (Joshi et al., 2020)), the concessions reached could be undermined. International actors should condition aid on implementation of gender provisions and maintain oversight (as UN Women recommends (O'Reilly et al., 2015)).

These recommendations for policy assume the existence of political will, which in practice may not always be the case, given the power of spoilers and cultural barriers to women's inclusion. However, normative pressure (UNSCR 1325, national action plans) and incentives (e.g., donor country incentives to prioritize gender) have been shown to change the minds of elites. For example, in a study of several conflicts, Normative pressure generated by the Women, Peace and Security agenda and national action plans has encouraged governments and international mediators to increase women's participation in peace negotiations (Shepherd, 2016). Therefore, gender inclusion can be built into the mandate for mediation and logistical support (paid seats for women's groups, for example) provided to the mediators.

7. Limitations and Conclusion

This analysis has limits. First, causal inference is challenging; while correlations between women's inclusion and peace durability are robust (as seen in Krause et al. and UN data (Krause et al., 2018) (O'Reilly et al., 2015)), on-the-ground factors (local politics, economy) also matter. Our case studies are illustrative but not exhaustive; other contexts (e.g. Middle East, Asia) might show different dynamics. Second, the concept of "meaningful participation" is hard to measure. Many sources have cautioned that counting the number of women tends to underestimate the actual influence (Paffenholz et al., 2016). We used the documented number of women, but this does not necessarily reflect the actual influence. Finally, this study did not quantify outcomes beyond peace duration and general implementation; future work could systematically compare socio-economic postwar indicators by gender.

The findings further reinforce an emerging body of empirical research that demonstrates the benefits of more inclusive peace processes in terms of more legitimate and socially responsive agreements. However, this inclusion should not be symbolic but should have some meaningful impact. Thus, in conclusion, the findings clearly demonstrate that gender inclusion is beneficial to international peace negotiations from both a normative and an instrumental perspective. Women's full and substantive participation tends to produce more comprehensive agreements and increases the likelihood that peace holds (Krause et al., 2018) (O'Reilly et al., 2015).

So, policymakers should not see including women as an optional advocacy, but as an important part of effective mediation. Further research could explore emerging cases (e.g. Sudan, Myanmar) and long-term societal impacts. Our findings support the axiom in the Women, Peace and Security agenda: "Peace is not sustainable without women's participation" - and underscore that transforming this principle into practice yields measurably better peace deals.

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