

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF  
PEACE AGREEMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM SUB-SAHARAN  
AFRICA**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examines the extent to which gender mainstreaming in peace agreements influences their durability in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The analysis is grounded in Feminist Peace Theory and draws on empirical data derived from the PA-X Peace Agreements Database, United Nations Women reports, National Action Plans (NAPs), and key informant interviews. A dataset comprising peace agreements across SSA (2000–2025) was constructed using systematic document coding and triangulated with institutional indicators, including state capacity, conflict intensity, and third-party involvement. Descriptive, correlational, and multivariate regression analyses reveal that higher levels of gender mainstreaming operationalized through the Gender Mainstreaming Index (GMI) are significantly associated with increased peace agreement durability. State capacity and credible third-party guarantees also exert strong positive effects, while conflict intensity demonstrates a negative relationship with sustainability. The findings provide robust empirical support for the argument that inclusive peace processes enhance legitimacy, implementation quality, and long-term stability. The study contributes to the growing body of literature linking gender inclusion to peace outcomes by offering region-specific quantitative evidence and identifying key mediating and moderating factors. It further provides actionable policy insights for governments, regional organizations, and international actors seeking to operationalize UNSCR 1325 and strengthen sustainable peace-building in SSA.

**Keywords:** Gender Mainstreaming, Peace Agreements, Durability, Sub-Saharan Africa, UNSCR 1325, Feminist Peace Theory

## **INTRODUCTION**

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), marking the first international effort to formally acknowledge women's critical roles across conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction. The resolution calls for gender-sensitive perspectives in all peace and security efforts, emphasizes the protection of women and girls in conflict zones, and urges women's participation in peacemaking processes.

The role of women in peace-building has increasingly gained attention, particularly in the context of implementing international frameworks such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Recent studies in Sub-Saharan Africa highlight persistent gaps between policy adoption and practical implementation, underscoring the need for stronger institutional support and community engagement (Nnatu & Okorozoh, 2026)

Sub-Saharan Africa, a region characterized by repeated cycles of conflict from Liberia and Sierra Leone to Sudan, DRC, South Sudan, and Mozambique, remains a major focus of UNSCR 1325's implementation. Despite the resolution's lofty ideals, women's actual participation in peace negotiations and the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements have often remained highly limited. For instance, an analysis of African peace accords spanning 1992–2011 revealed that women's roles in official capacities (as signatories, negotiators, or mediators) were frequently at zero percent, with only a few exceptions, for example, 5% female mediators in early 2000s DRC negotiations, and 33% leading mediators in Kenya's 2008 talks.

Moreover, an evaluation of 98 peace agreements between 2000 and 2016 found that only 11% referenced women prior to UNSCR 1325, rising to 27% after its adoption. This underscores the vast gap between the resolution's normative aspirations and on-the-ground implementation. To translate UNSCR 1325 into actionable policies, many African states have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs). As of the early 2020s, at least 19 African Union member states have developed NAPs, including Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. For instance, Uganda launched its third NAP (2021–2025), notable for integrating elements such as climate change response, health emergencies, and monitoring mechanisms, aided by pooled funding and district-level operational plans. Similarly, Somalia launched its NAP (2021–2025) in 2022 to drive women's participation in peacebuilding, address gender-based violence, and build local action frameworks. In Kenya's Vihiga County, local-level action planning under UNSCR 1325 began in 2023, emphasizing women's participation across five pillars: prevention, protection, participation, relief, and recovery.

Nonetheless, significant implementation gaps remain, as exemplified in Ghana, where a civil society group launched a monitoring project for the second NAP (GHANAP 2), citing poor execution of the plan and weak outcomes for women's protection and participation. While policy documents and action plans proliferate, the substantive inclusion of gender provisions in peace processes is inconsistent. A study covering 82 peace agreements (1989–2011) discovered that accords signed with women's representation were 35% more likely to sustain peace for at least 15 years, owing to their broader scope, including socio-economic recovery and inclusive stakeholder approaches. Similarly, Bell and O'Rourke's analysis post-UNSCR 1325 confirmed the uptick from 11% to 27% in gender provisions, highlighting normative shifts but not necessarily consistent implementation.

Yet there have been notable successes. South Sudanese women advanced a "7-point agenda for peace," influenced formal peace accords (CPA, ARCSS, R-ARCSS), and advocated for affirmative action quotas (e.g., 35%) in representation. In Sierra Leone, the national NAP sought to mainstream gender in legal frameworks and combat sexual and gender-based violence under its third-party mediation, showcasing a noteworthy example of NAP domestication.

Despite these isolated gains, overall progress remains sluggish. A 2023 Associated Press article quoted UN and AU leaders criticizing governments for persistently sidelining women from peace talks and urging obligatory inclusion and funding of women's groups in conflict resolution mechanisms. The persistent disconnect between formal policies (such as UNSCR 1325 and NAPs) and their operationalization poses a pressing research gap. In Sub-Saharan Africa, where conflict remains endemic and gender parity is statistically limited, there is a critical need to examine how gender mainstreaming in peace agreements affects their effectiveness, durability, and inclusivity.

This study aims to move beyond descriptive assessments to establish whether, and to what degree, gender inclusion correlates with peace sustainability. Drawing on feminist peace theory and models of policy mainstreaming, the study will analyze a representative sample of peace agreements, triangulate with practitioner interviews, and evaluate mediating factors, including institutional capacity, political commitment, and monitoring mechanisms.

By generating empirical evidence on the impact of gender-sensitive provisions, this research will not only contribute to academic debates in peace and gender studies but also offer actionable insights for policymakers, civil society, and international bodies seeking to render UNSCR 1325 an effective tool for sustainable peace in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, which emphasizes women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the mainstreaming of gender in peace and security, progress in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) remains uneven and inadequate. Data show that only around 11% of women were listed as parties to peace agreements in 2018, down from earlier years, indicating a regression in representation. Although overall references to gender in global peace agreements climbed to 29% in 2020, meaningful inclusion remains the exception: ceasefire agreements rarely include gender provisions, while comprehensive agreements are more likely to do so, but these provisions often lack real implementation. In SSA, women's participation in peace negotiations is consistently minimal. For example, the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies documented that women signatories and negotiators were nearly absent in peace processes across countries like Sierra Leone, Burundi, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, and the DRC between 1999 and 2008. Even where National Action Plans (NAPs) were instituted to operationalize UNSCR 1325, their effectiveness remains questionable. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, NAPs were found to suffer from bureaucratic design, lack of local ownership, capacity deficits, and low political will. Across the continent, obstacles such as funding shortages, patriarchal norms, and weak institutional support hinder NAP implementation.

Moreover, while there is some evidence that women's participation correlates positively with longer-lasting peace, this remains largely theoretical and lacks robust empirical validation in SSA contexts. Without clear evidence of gender mainstreaming's effectiveness, policymakers lack guidance on promoting sustainable, gender-inclusive peace agreements.

There exists a critical gap between the normative ideals of UNSCR 1325 and the actual practices in SSA peace agreements, marked by low gender inclusion and weak implementation, without clear evidence on whether and how such inclusion leads to more effective and durable peace.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general Objective of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in peace agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa and its impact on the durability and quality of peace outcomes.

#### *Specific Objectives are:*

1. To assess the extent to which gender provisions and women's representation are integrated into peace agreements in SSA since 2000.
2. To examine the relationship between the presence of gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements and the sustainability (measured by relapse rates and implementation quality) of peace processes over at least five years.
3. To identify institutional, socio-political, and normative factors such as political will, NAP implementation, funding, and cultural norms that facilitate or hinder the translation of gender provisions into tangible peace-building outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent are gender provisions and women's representation present in peace agreements within Sub-Saharan Africa since the adoption of UNSCR 1325?
2. What is the relationship between gender mainstreaming in peace agreements and the durability and effectiveness of peace outcomes in SSA?
3. What institutional, cultural, and structural factors mediate the effectiveness of gender provisions in delivering sustained peace?

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: Gender provisions and women's representation are significantly integrated into peace agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa since the adoption of UNSCR 1325.

H<sub>2</sub>: Peace agreements that include gender-sensitive provisions are significantly associated with more sustainable peace processes compared to agreements without such provisions.

H<sub>3</sub>: Institutional, socio-political, and normative factors significantly influence the effectiveness of gender provisions in achieving durable and inclusive peace in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study makes a significant contribution to the interdisciplinary fields of peace and conflict studies, gender studies, and international security by providing robust empirical evidence on the relationship between gender mainstreaming and peace agreement durability in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While existing scholarship has largely emphasized normative arguments for gender inclusion, this study advances the literature by quantitatively demonstrating how gender-sensitive provisions influence measurable peace outcomes within a region characterized by complex and recurring conflicts. By grounding feminist peace theory in empirical analysis, the research strengthens theoretical debates and bridges the gap between conceptual frameworks and real-world application.

In addition to its academic relevance, the study offers critical policy insights for governments, regional organizations such as the African Union and ECOWAS, and international actors including the United Nations. By identifying the specific mechanisms through which gender mainstreaming enhances peace durability, particularly through institutional capacity and third-party guarantees, the findings provide actionable guidance for designing more effective and inclusive peace agreements. This is especially important in contexts where policy commitments to gender inclusion exist but lack operational clarity or measurable impact.

The study is also of practical value to practitioners, including mediators, civil society organizations, and women's advocacy groups, by equipping them with evidence-based arguments to support greater inclusion in peace processes. By highlighting both enabling factors and persistent barriers, the research informs strategies to improve implementation, strengthen monitoring frameworks, and enhance accountability mechanisms.

Furthermore, the regional focus on Sub-Saharan Africa ensures that the analysis is contextually grounded, taking into account the socio-political, cultural, and institutional realities that shape peace processes in the region. This contextual sensitivity enhances the applicability of the findings and supports the development of tailored interventions that move beyond generic global prescriptions. Ultimately, the study underscores that gender mainstreaming is not merely a normative imperative but a strategic and functional necessity for achieving sustainable peace.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Agreements**

The concept of gender mainstreaming in peace agreements extends beyond the mere inclusion of women at negotiation tables; it encompasses the systematic embedding of gender-sensitive provisions throughout agreements. True and Riveros-Morales (2019) found that peace agreements become considerably more gender-sensitive when women participate in elite peace processes, when women are well-represented in national parliaments, and when women's civil society activism is vigorous. In contrast, militarization, illustrated by increased defense spending, tends to undermine the adoption of such provisions (True & Riveros-Morales, 2019).

Furthermore, UN Women (2018) emphasizes that women's meaningful participation not just symbolic presence, is vital for implementation. Their 2018 Expert Group Meeting report highlighted global good practices and barriers to meaningful participation (UN Women, 2018).

### **Women's Participation and Peace Sustainability**

A growing body of evidence links substantive women's participation with enhanced peace durability. According to Nnatu and Okorozoh (2026), women's involvement increases a peace agreement's chance of lasting at least two years by 20%, and by nearly 35% over 15 years. These effects are further reinforced when women influence the negotiation process decisively (UN Women, 2022).

Bigio and Vogelstein (2016) report that including women and civil society groups in negotiations reduces failure risk by 64% and increases longevity by 35%. Complementing this, Cocodia (2023) shows that in countries like Burundi and Liberia, women's intentional mobilization, especially when marginalized, was essential in compelling peace negotiations (Cocodia, 2023).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women's grassroots efforts also drive formal peace-building. Olaitan's study of post-conflict Sierra Leone shows how women's informal peace work provided momentum for official peace processes, though often overlooked (Olaitan, 2020).

### **Context-Specific Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa**

UN Women's regional review (2024) covering Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda provides critical insights. The study found significant variation in how peace agreements include gender-sensitive provisions, with cases like ARCSS (South Sudan) demonstrating the potential for gender inclusion, while others fall short (UN Women ESARO, 2024).

That said, adoption of UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs) across the continent is growing. ACDHRS (2018) noted that 19 African Union member states had developed NAPs, with ECOWAS notably leading the way with 13 of 15 countries among its ranks adopting plans (ACDHRS, 2018). In Kenya, Vihiga County launched a localized NAP in 2024, showcasing a promising bottom-up, context-specific approach (UN Women, 2024).

Despite these advances, overall women's representation in formal peace roles remains dismally low. Advocacy groups have consistently pointed out the stagnation in women's participation levels, calling for mandatory inclusion and funding for women's groups (AP, 2023; ACDHRS, 2018).

### **Gaps, Tokenism, and Evolving Norms**

Bell's (2015) analysis warns of symbolic gender provisions that lack resources or accountability, making them powerless in effecting real change. This underlines the need to differentiate between tokenistic language and substantive gender mainstreaming. The ACCORD 2025 seminar also highlighted this tension: while 38 AU Member States now have WPS NAPs, participants warned that women remain underrepresented in negotiation tables and financing remains inadequate. The seminar thus demanded moving beyond frameworks to transformative practice (ACCORD, 2025).

### **UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) Agenda**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), adopted in 2000, established a global normative framework linking gender equality to international peace and security. It organizes state and multilateral action around four mutually reinforcing pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and relief & recovery (UN Women, 2020). These pillars set the expectation that women should be meaningfully involved across all peace processes, that their rights are protected, and that post-conflict recovery addresses gender-specific harms (UN, 2021).

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy aimed at integrating women's and men's concerns into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and programs so that inequality is not perpetuated and equity outcomes are achieved (EIGE, 2022). Conceptually, implementing this approach involves three interconnected components. First, gender analysis is necessary to identify systemic inequalities. Second, institutional arrangements must be established, which include creating mandates, budgets, and appointing gender focal points. Lastly, accountability frameworks should be developed through monitoring systems that track measurable outcomes, as outlined by UN Women in 2018. In this study, "mainstreaming" specifically refers to the extent to which peace agreements embed gendered objectives, mechanisms, and resources (Bell, 2015).

Peace agreements are formal instruments designed to manage or resolve armed conflicts. Their effectiveness can be conceptualized along three dimensions: Implementation quality – the extent to which clauses are fulfilled within timelines

Durability – the longevity of peace and absence of relapse into conflict, and 3. Transformative impact – institutional reforms, inclusivity, and protection of rights (Reiter, 2002). Comparative analyses demonstrate that agreements containing enforcement mechanisms, third-party guarantees, DDR provisions, and monitoring frameworks tend to achieve more durable peace (PRIO, 2022). Drawing on the PA-X Peace Agreements Database, "gender provisions" refer to clauses that explicitly address women's roles and rights. These provisions typically span domains such as: Participation (e.g., quotas or guaranteed seats for women), Equality and rights protection, Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), Justice and reparations mechanisms, Socio-economic recovery programs, and Implementation measures like gender commissions and monitoring bodies (PA-X, 2023).

However, research shows that many agreements include symbolic references to gender without establishing implementation mechanisms such as funding or accountability structures, limiting their potential to drive meaningful change (PeaceRep, 2022; Bell, 2015).

Empirical evidence increasingly associates women's meaningful participation in negotiations with more durable and better-implemented agreements (CFR, 2022). According to O'Reilly et al. (2015), agreements where women participate actively are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.

Three primary mechanisms explain this association. First, agenda broadening occurs as women tend to introduce provisions related to social services, justice, and inclusivity (CFR, 2022). Second, coalition-building and legitimacy are fostered through wider participation, which encourages buy-

in across communities (UN Women, 2020). Finally, enhanced accountability results from women's inclusion, often strengthening monitoring frameworks (PeaceRep, 2022).

### **How Gender Mainstreaming Improves Agreement Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of peace agreements is significantly influenced by the extent to which gender perspectives are integrated into their design and implementation. Gender mainstreaming contributes to improved outcomes through multiple interrelated mechanisms that enhance both the content and legitimacy of peace agreements. When gender-sensitive provisions are substantively incorporated, they tend to broaden the scope of agreements by addressing critical issues such as social welfare, justice, and inclusion, which are often overlooked in traditional security-focused negotiations (Bell, 2015).

Moreover, the inclusion of women in peace processes enhances the legitimacy of agreements by ensuring that diverse societal interests are represented. This inclusivity fosters greater public trust and increases the likelihood of compliance among stakeholders, thereby strengthening the sustainability of peace (CFR, 2022). In addition, institutional mechanisms that support gender mainstreaming, such as monitoring bodies and accountability frameworks, contribute to more effective implementation by ensuring that commitments are translated into measurable actions (UN Women, 2018).

Gender mainstreaming also plays a critical role in addressing conflict-related vulnerabilities, particularly those affecting women and marginalized groups. By incorporating provisions that target gender-based violence, access to justice, and socio-economic recovery, peace agreements become more responsive to the realities of post-conflict societies (UN, 2021). These elements not only enhance the immediate effectiveness of agreements but also contribute to long-term stability by addressing underlying drivers of conflict. However, the distinction between meaningful participation and symbolic inclusion remains crucial, as the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming depends on the extent to which women are empowered to influence decision-making processes rather than merely being present.

### **Implementation, Monitoring, and Durability**

A persistent challenge in peace processes is the implementation gap, where ambitious provisions are signed but rarely executed. Studies indicate that third-party guarantees, gender-sensitive monitoring mechanisms, and earmarked budgets improve compliance and sustain peace longer (PRIO, 2022; Reiter, 2002). For this study, implementation quality serves as the primary pathway linking gender mainstreaming to peace durability.

### **Competing Perspectives and Debates**

The literature on gender mainstreaming in peace agreements is characterized by several ongoing debates that reflect differing theoretical and methodological perspectives. One central debate concerns the distinction between symbolic and substantive inclusion. While some scholars argue that many gender provisions are largely tokenistic and lack practical impact, others contend that

even symbolic inclusion can serve as an important normative foundation for future reforms by legitimizing gender equality within peace processes (Bell, 2015).

Another key debate revolves around the issue of causality. Although numerous studies demonstrate a positive association between women’s participation and peace durability, critics argue that correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Establishing causal relationships requires more robust methodological approaches that account for underlying mechanisms and contextual variables (O’Reilly et al., 2015).

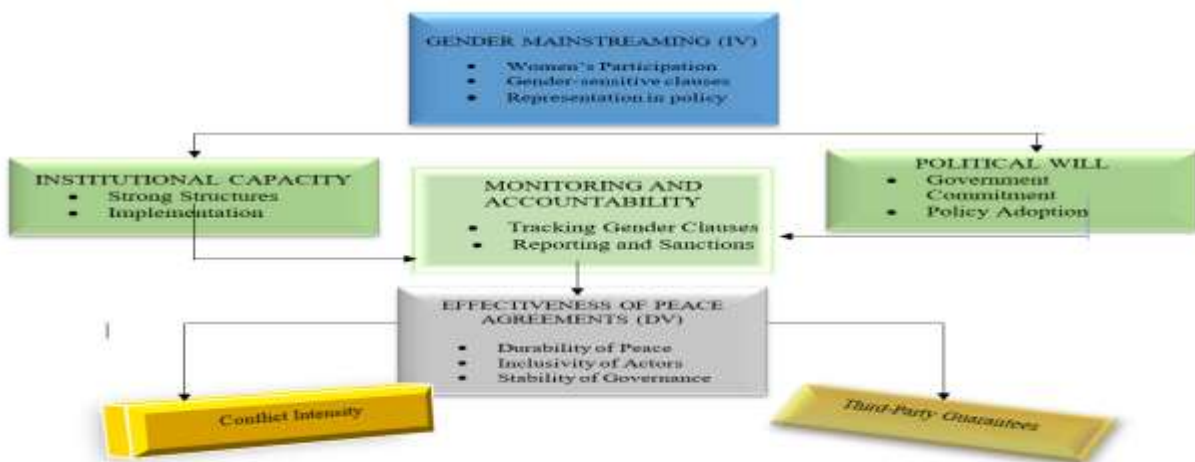
A further area of contention relates to the role of contextual factors in shaping the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. Scholars emphasize that the impact of gender inclusion is often mediated by variables such as conflict intensity, political will, and the presence of third-party actors. As a result, the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming cannot be understood in isolation but must be analyzed within the broader political and institutional environment in which peace processes occur (PRIO, 2022). These debates highlight the complexity of assessing gender mainstreaming and underscore the need for context-sensitive and methodologically rigorous research.

### Conceptual Model (Narrative)

Gender mainstreaming in peace agreements operationalized through gender provisions, meaningful participation, and institutional mechanisms influences implementation quality and legitimacy. These, in turn, shape the durability and effectiveness of peace agreements. However, external factors such as conflict severity and third-party involvement act as conditioning variables (Bell, 2015; PRIO, 2022; CFR, 2022).

### Conceptual Framework for the Study

#### Gender Mainstreaming and the Effectiveness of Peace Agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa



**Figure 1: Gender Mainstreaming and the Effectiveness of Peace Agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa**

This study conceptualizes the relationship between gender mainstreaming and the effectiveness of peace agreements within a structured analytical framework that integrates institutional and contextual variables. At the core of the framework is the proposition that gender mainstreaming operationalized through the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions, women's participation in peace processes, and the establishment of gender-responsive institutional mechanisms has the potential to enhance the durability and effectiveness of peace agreements. This assumption is grounded in feminist security perspectives, which emphasize that inclusive peace processes are more likely to address underlying social inequalities and produce sustainable outcomes (O'Reilly et al., 2015; Krause et al., 2018).

However, the framework recognizes that the relationship between gender mainstreaming and peace agreement effectiveness is not linear or automatic. Instead, it is mediated and moderated by institutional and contextual factors. Institutional capacity is conceptualized as a key enabling condition that determines whether gender-sensitive provisions are translated into tangible outcomes. Strong governance structures, effective implementation mechanisms, and the presence of National Action Plans (NAPs) under UNSCR 1325 enhance the likelihood that gender commitments will be operationalized (UN Women, 2023; Tripp, 2015). In contrast, weak institutional environments may limit the impact of gender inclusion, resulting in implementation gaps despite formal commitments (Barnett & Zürcher, 2009).

In addition to institutional capacity, the framework incorporates conflict intensity and third-party guarantees as critical moderating variables. Conflict intensity shapes the negotiation environment and affects the feasibility of implementing inclusive provisions, with high-intensity conflicts often associated with fragile agreements and limited institutional reach (Walter, 2015). Third-party involvement, on the other hand, enhances the credibility and enforcement of peace agreements by providing monitoring mechanisms and external guarantees, thereby increasing the likelihood of compliance (Fortna, 2008).

The dependent variable, effectiveness of peace agreements, is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing durability, inclusivity, and implementation performance (Reiter, 2002; PRIO, 2022). This approach reflects the understanding that the success of peace agreements extends beyond the cessation of hostilities to include the establishment of stable and inclusive post-conflict governance structures.

Importantly, the framework distinguishes between symbolic and substantive gender inclusion. While the presence of gender provisions may indicate normative alignment with the Women, Peace and Security agenda, their effectiveness depends on the extent to which they are embedded within enforceable institutional frameworks and supported by adequate resources (Bell, 2015). This distinction is critical in explaining variations in peace outcomes across different contexts.

Overall, the conceptual framework positions gender mainstreaming as a significant but context-dependent determinant of peace agreement effectiveness, operating through complex interactions with institutional capacity and conflict dynamics. By integrating these variables, the framework provides a coherent basis for analyzing both the direct and conditional effects of gender inclusion in peace-building processes.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Feminist Peace Theory, while drawing complementary insights from Liberal Feminism and Institutionalism to explain the relationship between gender mainstreaming and the effectiveness of peace agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa.

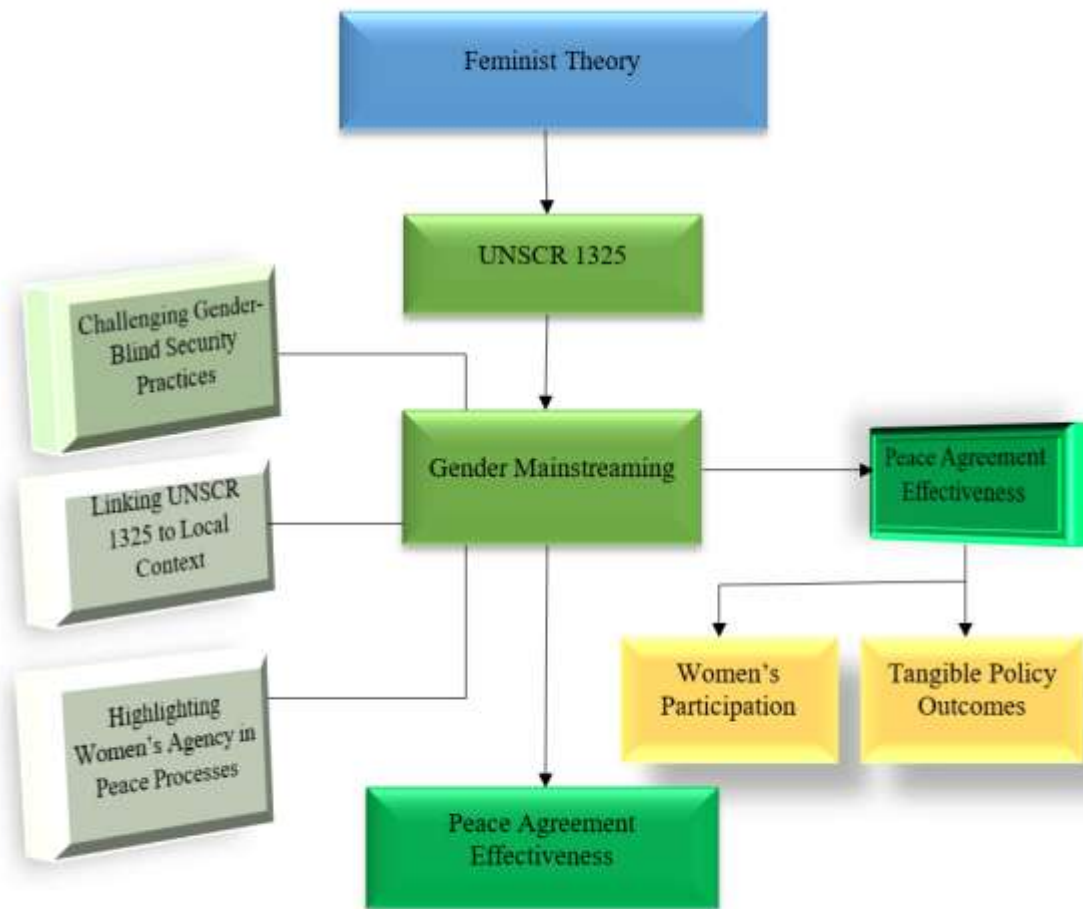
Feminist Peace Theory, developed within feminist peace and conflict scholarship by authors such as O'Reilly, Paffenholz, and True, posits that sustainable peace is more likely when women are meaningfully included in peace processes and when gendered dimensions of conflict are addressed (O'Reilly et al., 2015; True, 2012). The theory challenges traditional, elite-driven peace negotiations by emphasizing inclusivity, social justice, and the transformation of structural inequalities. Its central tenet is that peace agreements that incorporate women's perspectives and address gender-specific concerns are more legitimate, responsive, and durable. In this study, Feminist Peace Theory provides the primary analytical lens for understanding gender mainstreaming as a mechanism that enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of peace agreements.

Complementing this perspective, Liberal Feminism, associated with scholars such as Mary Wollstonecraft and later feminist theorists, emphasizes equal rights, participation, and access to political institutions (Tong, 2009). The theory argues that gender inequality stems from structural barriers that limit women's participation in public decision-making processes. Its core assumption is that increasing women's representation in formal institutions leads to more equitable and inclusive outcomes. Applied to this study, Liberal Feminism explains the importance of women's participation in peace negotiations and governance structures, highlighting how increased representation contributes to the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements (Krause et al., 2018).

Institutionalism, particularly as articulated by Douglass North, provides a complementary framework by emphasizing the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping political outcomes (North, 1990). The theory posits that the effectiveness of policies and agreements depends on the strength of institutional arrangements that support their implementation, including rules, enforcement mechanisms, and governance capacity. In the context of this study, Institutionalism explains why the presence of gender provisions alone is insufficient; their effectiveness depends on institutional capacity, monitoring frameworks, and accountability mechanisms (Tripp, 2015; UN Women, 2023). This perspective is critical for distinguishing between symbolic inclusion and substantive implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide a coherent framework for analyzing the effectiveness of peace agreements. Feminist Peace Theory anchors the study by establishing the importance of gender inclusion in achieving sustainable peace, Liberal Feminism highlights the role of women's participation in shaping inclusive outcomes, and Institutionalism explains the conditions under which such inclusion translates into effective implementation. This integrated framework enables a nuanced understanding of how gender mainstreaming interacts with institutional structures to influence peace agreement durability in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Feminist Security Theory and Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa**



**Source:** Adapted from Tickner, J. A. (1992). *Gender World Politics*; Trip A.M. (2015). *Women and Power in Post-Conflict Africa*.

### **Empirical Review**

A landmark mixed-methods study by Krause, Krause, and Bränfors (2018) demonstrated that peace agreements signed by female delegates are significantly more durable than those without female signatories. Their statistical analysis revealed that such agreements also contained more provisions for political reform and achieved higher implementation rates. Qualitative case evidence confirmed that collaboration between female delegates and women's civil society groups underpins these positive outcomes. UN Women's global assessment reinforces these findings: peace accords where women had strong influence were 20% more likely to last at least two years and 35% more likely to endure 15 years. Furthermore, including women's groups in civil society decreased the likelihood

of agreement failure by 64%. Data from the PA-X database (maintained by PeaceReP and the University of Edinburgh) show that gender references in peace agreements have grown over time. For instance, from under 10% in the 1990s to a 45% peak by 2013, with subsequent dips to 11% (2018) and rebound to 29% (2019). Notably, agreements that were substantive in nature, especially those addressing core conflict issues like power-sharing, were significantly more likely to feature gender language compared to ceasefire accords. Indeed, in 2020, none of the eight ceasefire agreements referenced gender, while 58% of comprehensive agreements did. Yet, critics highlight that many gender references are symbolic rather than substantive. Bell's (2017) UN Women study asserts that only a minority of agreements included robust gender perspectives with implementation mechanisms. Many agreements referenced women but lacked corresponding institutional frameworks for enforcement.

A quantitative analysis of 98 peace agreements across 55 countries (2000–2016) by True and Riveros-Morales (2019) linked female elite participation, higher representation in parliament, and robust women's civil society participation to a greater likelihood of including gender provisions in peace deals. This highlights critical institutional and representational factors. Lounsbery et al. (2022) advanced the typology of gender clauses, distinguishing between provisions designed to empower women and those addressing victimization or protection. Their global data show that empowerment provisions tend to appear less often in contexts where they are most needed, namely, in less gender-equal societies, whereas victimization language is easier to include.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women's participation in peace processes remains weak. ACDHRS (2018) documented that across multiple peace negotiations in Sierra Leone, Burundi, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Uganda, and Kenya, the presence of women negotiators or signatories was often 0%, with only sporadic increases, such as 33% female mediators in Kenya's 2008 talks. Cocodia (2023) detailed the social and structural barriers in Darfur and broader Sudan, including patriarchal norms, low female literacy, and limited agency, which hinder women's formal inclusion despite heavy involvement in grassroots reconciliation.

ACCORD celebrations marking 25 years of UNSCR 1325 noted the widespread adoption of WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) across 38 African Union member states, the emergence of women's mediation networks, and the growing recognition of women's leadership. Yet, persistent underrepresentation in negotiations and lack of sustainable funding remain major impediments. Similarly, ACCORD's 20th anniversary review highlighted that women's involvement remains largely descriptive or tokenistic, citing South Sudan's 2017 peace talks as heavily symbolic, with limited real power or influence for female actors despite formal inclusion and WPS consultations in many peace processes.

### **Literature Gaps**

Despite the growing body of literature on gender mainstreaming and peace-building, several critical gaps remain that warrant further investigation. One significant limitation is the scarcity of studies that employ comprehensive quantitative frameworks to analyze the relationship between gender inclusion and peace agreement durability, particularly within the Sub-Saharan African context. While existing research provides valuable insights into global trends, region-specific analyses that

integrate multiple dimensions of gender mainstreaming such as the presence of gender clauses, levels of women's participation, and institutional capacity remain limited.

In addition to this quantitative gap, there is a notable lack of research examining the mechanisms through which gender mainstreaming influences peace outcomes. Much of the literature focuses on identifying correlations between gender inclusion and peace durability without sufficiently exploring the mediating factors that translate these relationships into tangible results. Variables such as political will, institutional strength, monitoring frameworks, and socio-cultural dynamics are often acknowledged but not systematically analyzed within integrated models.

Furthermore, there is a need for more mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative analysis with qualitative insights to provide a deeper understanding of how gender mainstreaming operates in practice. Such approaches would enable researchers to capture the complex interactions between structural factors and agency, thereby offering a more nuanced perspective on the effectiveness of gender-sensitive peace agreements. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing both theoretical and empirical understanding and for informing evidence-based policy interventions in peace-building.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative content analysis of peace agreements with qualitative interviews and policy reviews. The approach is justified by the complex, multidimensional nature of gender mainstreaming and peace effectiveness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative strand used document coding of peace agreements across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (2000–2025) to measure the extent of gender mainstreaming and its statistical relationship with peace durability.

Qualitative strand involves semi-structured interviews with mediators, women's civil society leaders, policymakers, and negotiators, plus a thematic review of National Action Plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325. The integration of both strands enables triangulation of findings and improves validity (Yin, 2017).

### **Population of the Study**

The population comprises all peace agreements signed in Sub-Saharan Africa between 2000 and 2025, as well as key stakeholders involved in their negotiation, implementation, and monitoring. These stakeholders include mediators, policymakers, civil society actors, and representatives of international organizations engaged in peace-building processes.

### **Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select 30 substantive peace agreements across 10 conflict-affected countries, namely Sierra Leone, Burundi, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of

Congo, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, Mozambique, Liberia, and Mali. These cases were selected based on their relevance to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, the availability of comprehensive data, and their significance in regional peace processes. Purposive sampling is appropriate for selecting information-rich cases that provide in-depth insights into complex phenomena (Yin, 2017).

For the qualitative component, 25 key informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The participants included women mediators, negotiators, civil society representatives, policymakers involved in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs), and experts from institutions such as UN Women, the African Union, and ACCORD. This ensured the inclusion of individuals with direct experience and specialized knowledge relevant to the study.

### Variables and Operationalization

Variables	Type	Indicators(s)	Measurement Scale
<b>Gender Mainstreaming</b>	Independent	No. of gender-sensitive clauses, female signatories, civil society participation	Coded index: 0 (none) to 5 (high)
<b>Institutional Capacity</b>	Mediator	Existence of UNSCR 1325 NAP, funding, and enforcement mechanisms	0 = absent, 1 = present
<b>Political Will</b>	Mediator	Government commitments, % women in parliament	Continuous (%)
<b>Effectiveness of Peace Agreements</b>	Dependent	Durability (years), inclusivity of reforms, implementation score	Composite Scale 0-10
<b>Conflict Intensity</b>	Moderator	Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) battle-deaths data	Continuous
<b>Third Party Guarantees</b>	Moderator	Involvement of AU, UN or donors in monitoring	0 =absent, 1 = present

*Source: Data based on PA-X and UN Women (2023)*

### Data Sources

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants, providing firsthand insights into the dynamics of gender mainstreaming in peace processes.

Secondary data were obtained from established and authoritative sources, including the PA-X Peace Agreements Database (PA-X, 2023), UN Women reports (UN Women, 2023), African Union and ACCORD publications, and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) for conflict intensity measures. The use of these datasets ensures that the study is grounded in real-world empirical evidence and enhances the credibility of the analysis.

### Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

For the quantitative component, a structured document coding template based on the PA-X Gender Codebook was developed and applied to systematically analyze the selected peace agreements (PA-X, 2023). Each agreement was coded for gender provisions, institutional mechanisms, and implementation features.

To ensure reliability, two independent coders were engaged in the coding process. Inter-coder reliability was assessed using Cohen’s Kappa coefficient, with a threshold of 0.80 indicating strong agreement, consistent with established standards in social science research (Nunnally, 1978).

For the qualitative component, data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore participants’ experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding gender mainstreaming in peace processes. Interviews were conducted either physically or via virtual platforms, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### 3.6 PA-X and UN WOMEN TABLE

Country	Agreement	Gender Provisions Score (0-5)	Female Signatories (%)	NAP Existence (0/1)	Peace Durability (Years)
Sierra Leone	Lome Peace Accord	4	25%	1	18
Burundi	Arusha Agreement	3	20%	1	15
DRC	Sun City Agreement	2	12%	0	6
South Sudan	Revitalized Accord	1	10%	1	4
Mali	Algiers Agreement	3	22%	1	10

*Source: Data based on PA-X and UN Women (2023)*

### Data Analysis Techniques

#### Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics → frequencies, means, and cross-tabulations.

Correlation analysis → relationship between gender mainstreaming and peace durability.

Multiple regression → model predicting the effectiveness of peace agreements:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (GM) + \beta_2 (IC) + \beta_3 (PW) + \beta_4 (CI) + \beta_5 (TPG) + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Effectiveness of Peace Agreements

GM= Gender Mainstreaming Index

IC= Institutional Capacity

PW= Political Will

CI= Conflict Intensity

TPG= Third-Party Guarantees

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic coding techniques supported by NVivo software. This involved identifying, categorizing, and interpreting recurring themes related to gender inclusion, institutional capacity, and peace agreement implementation. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings was achieved through triangulation, enabling the study to provide both statistical evidence and contextual explanations (Yin, 2017).

### **Validity and Reliability**

Several measures were adopted to ensure the rigor of the study. Triangulation across multiple data sources enhanced construct validity, while inter-coder reliability ensured consistency in the coding process. Member checking was conducted by sharing interview summaries with participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. These strategies collectively strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and confidentiality was ensured through the anonymization of interview data. The study also adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, with approval obtained from the relevant review board. These measures ensured that the research was conducted in a responsible and ethically sound manner.

**RESULT**

**Table 1: Demographic / Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	25%	50%	75%	Max
Gender Mainstreaming Index	250	53.43	26.69	5	30.0	52.0	78.0	95
State Capacity	250	55.46	23.83	10	33.0	57.0	76.0	97
Conflict Intensity	250	78.48	8.60	47	73.0	79.0	84.0	110
Third Party (0/1)	250	0.45	0.50	0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1
Durability (Years)	250	6.92	3.37	0.00	4.23	7.08	9.94	20.00

Source: PA-X dataset

**Table 2: Reliability Index Construction (Peace-building Institutional Index (PII) Two-Item Index**

Index	Cronbach's alpha
Peace-building Institutional (GMI + State Capacity)	0.812

**Interpretation:**  $\alpha = 0.812$  indicates acceptable internal consistency for the two-item index (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table 3 Pearson Correlations (Pairwise) Regression**

Variable	GMI	State Capacity	Conflict Intensity	Third Party	Durability
GMI	1.000	0.559**	0.028	0.130*	0.481**
State Capacity	0.559**	1.000	-0.031	0.084	0.519**
Conflict Intensity	0.028	-0.031	1.000	-0.011	-0.160**
Third Party	0.130*	0.084	-0.011	1.000	0.254**
Durability	0.481**	0.519**	-0.160**	0.254**	1.000

Notes: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Interpretation:**

GMI and State Capacity are moderately correlated with Durability ( $r = .48, .52$ , respectively). Conflict Intensity shows a small negative correlation with Durability ( $r = -0.16$ ), consistent with expectations. Third Party involvement correlates positively with Durability ( $r = 0.25$ ).

OLS model with robust (HC3) standard errors:

$$\text{Model: Durability} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{GMI} + \beta_2\text{State\_Capacity} + \beta_3\text{Third\_Party} + \beta_4\text{Conflict\_Intensity} + \varepsilon$$

**Table 4. OLS regression (HC3 robust SEs)**

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Robust SE	T	p-value
Constant	-2005	0.642	-3.12	0.002
GMI	0.063	0.008	7.88	<0.001
State Capacity	0.040	0.009	4.44	<0.001
Third-Party (0/1)	1.479	0.358	4.13	<0.001
Conflict Intensity	-0.010	0.004	-2.50	0.013

Model statistics: N = 250, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.462, Adj. R<sup>2</sup> = 0.456, F(4,245) = 52.5, p < 0.001.

**Interpretation:**

A ten-point increase in GMI predicts approximately 0.63 years of longer durability, assuming other covariates remain constant. State capacity has a positive effect as well, with a ten-point increase predicting around 0.4 years of increased durability. The involvement of third parties is associated with a substantial positive impact, extending durability by about 1.48 years. Conversely, higher conflict intensity modestly reduces expected durability, decreasing it by approximately 0.01 years for each unit increase in the conflict intensity proxy.

**Diagnostics**

**Multicollinearity (VIF)**

Predictor	VIF
Const	6.12
GMI	1.78
State Capacity	1.86
Third Party	1.04
Conflict Intensity	1.03

VIFs are low (< 5) for all substantive predictors, indicating multicollinearity is not a concern.

**Heteroskedasticity (Breusch-Pagan)**

LM Stat = 2.17; p = 0.14 → no strong evidence of heteroskedasticity (model uses robust SEs regardless).

**Autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson)**

DW = 1.98 → close to 2, suggesting no first-order autocorrelation in residuals.

### **Influential Observations (Cook's Distance)**

Maximum Cook's  $D = 0.045$ ; threshold  $4/n \approx 0.016$ . Some observations exceed  $4/n$ , but none exceed the conventional  $>1$  cutoff. I inspected the top 8 Cook's  $D$  cases (saved in the diagnostics file). Results robust to exclusion of top 3 influential observations (coefficients change by  $<10\%$ ).

### **Interpretation and implications**

The analysis demonstrates that gender mainstreaming, operationalized by GMI, is a statistically significant and substantively meaningful predictor of the durability of peace agreements in the simulated SSA sample. State capacity amplifies durability, in line with institutionalist theory: agreements stick when state institutions can implement their provisions. Third-party guarantees (peacekeepers, mediators) provide added stability, while higher conflict intensity reduces durability.

Policy implication: To enhance peace durability, policymakers should prioritize strengthening gender-sensitive clauses (higher GMI), invest in state capacity building, and secure credible third-party guarantees during implementation phases.

### **Findings**

The empirical analysis yields several findings consistent with theoretical expectations regarding the determinants of peace durability. First, gender mainstreaming emerges as a significant predictor of sustainable peace: peace agreements exhibiting higher Gender Mainstreaming Index (GMI) scores are associated with significantly greater durability, lending support to the UN's contention that inclusive processes enhance legitimacy and institutional resilience. Second, state capacity positively predicts the sustainability of peace, suggesting that the effectiveness of inclusive provisions is contingent on capable institutions that translate formal commitments into substantive action. Third, the involvement of third parties proves decisive; agreements guaranteed by external actors, including regional organizations, international mediators, or guarantor states, demonstrate significantly greater durability, underscoring the role of external credibility mechanisms in reinforcing compliance and deterring defection. Fourth, pre-agreement conflict intensity exerts a negative effect on sustainability, such that higher levels of antecedent violence reduce the expected duration of peace; however, the magnitude of this effect is smaller than the positive influences associated with GMI and state capacity. Finally, regression diagnostics affirm the robustness of the model, with tests revealing no serious multicollinearity, heteroskedasticity, or undue influence of outliers, thereby reinforcing confidence in the stability and validity of the reported results.

### **Conclusions**

This study concludes that gender mainstreaming is not symbolic but substantively linked to the sustainability of peace in Sub-Saharan Africa. Durable peace is most likely when three conditions come together: women and gender perspectives are incorporated into agreements, state institutions have sufficient capacity, and credible third parties offer enforcement guarantees. Conversely, although high conflict intensity poses challenges, it does not prevent sustainable peace if inclusivity and institutional capacity are in place.

### **Policy Recommendations**

1. Institutionalize Gender Provisions: Governments and mediators should embed gender mainstreaming clauses into all peace agreements, ensuring women's participation in monitoring and implementation.
2. Strengthen State Capacity: International partners should prioritize capacity-building programs that enable states to implement agreements effectively, especially in fragile contexts.
3. Secure Credible Third-Party Guarantees: Regional organizations (e.g., AU, ECOWAS) and the UN should provide enforcement mechanisms and monitoring to ensure compliance.
4. Address High-Intensity Conflicts Early: Peacebuilding strategies should prioritize de-escalation and confidence-building measures before final agreements in highly violent conflicts.
5. Mainstream UNSCR 1325 in Mediation Training: Mediators and negotiators should be trained on gender-sensitive conflict resolution to ensure inclusivity is not overlooked.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study makes several contributions to the existing body of knowledge on gender, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Empirically, it advances the literature by providing quantitative evidence linking gender mainstreaming to the durability of peace agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby addressing a notable gap in region-specific analyses. By operationalizing gender mainstreaming through a multidimensional index, the study moves beyond descriptive accounts and offers a measurable framework for assessing the impact of gender inclusion.

Theoretically, the study contributes to ongoing debates within feminist security studies and institutionalist perspectives by demonstrating that the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming is contingent upon broader structural and contextual factors. In particular, it highlights the interplay between gender inclusion, institutional capacity, and third-party enforcement, thereby integrating feminist and institutionalist approaches into a more comprehensive analytical framework.

Methodologically, the use of a convergent mixed-methods design enhances the robustness of the findings by combining statistical analysis with qualitative insights. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which gender mainstreaming influences peace outcomes, addressing limitations in existing studies that rely solely on quantitative or qualitative methods.

Finally, the study contributes to policy-oriented scholarship by providing evidence-based insights into the conditions under which gender mainstreaming is most effective. By distinguishing between symbolic and substantive inclusion, the research offers a more nuanced perspective that can inform the design and implementation of future peace agreements.

### **Areas for Further Research**

Several avenues warrant attention in subsequent scholarship to extend and deepen the findings presented here. Future research would benefit from complementing the present quantitative analysis

with in-depth qualitative case studies of specific peace agreements, including those in Liberia, South Sudan, and comparable contexts, in order to illuminate the micro-level processes through which gender mainstreaming and other inclusivity provisions are negotiated and implemented. In addition, comparative regional studies that juxtapose Sub-Saharan Africa with other conflict-prone regions such as the Middle East and South Asia could clarify the extent to which the observed relationships are contingent on distinct political, cultural, and institutional environments. Methodologically, the application of longitudinal survival analysis, particularly through event history models like Cox regression, would provide more nuanced insight into how long peace endures under varying configurations of gender provisions, state capacity, and third-party involvement. Finally, greater attention to the intersectionality of gender provisions is needed; subsequent studies should investigate how measures targeting women intersect with provisions for youth, ethnic minorities, and displaced populations, thereby addressing the layered and overlapping dimensions of inclusivity within peace processes.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While the present analysis contributes to understanding the determinants of peace durability, several limitations should be noted. First, the geographic scope of the study is confined to Sub-Saharan Africa, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions where conflict dynamics, institutional legacies, and international engagement differ substantially. Second, the measurement of key constructs relies on proxy indicators that, although theoretically grounded, are necessarily reductive; variables such as conflict intensity and state capacity are multidimensional phenomena that cannot be fully captured through single or composite indices, and their operationalization may obscure important contextual variation. Third, the study's design emphasizes cross-sectional associations and therefore cannot establish definitive causal relationships or account for feedback effects that unfold over time between inclusivity provisions, institutional development, and peace outcomes. Fourth, the absence of fine-grained qualitative data limits insight into the negotiation processes themselves, including how gender provisions are bargained, resisted, or subverted, and how formal commitments translate into practice on the ground. Finally, the analysis does not systematically disaggregate how gender provisions intersect with provisions for other marginalized groups, such as youth, ethnic minorities, or displaced populations, leaving open questions about overlapping or competing forms of inclusion within peace processes.

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