The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding:
Examining how Women have actively contributed to Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Liberia

Author: Matilda Andersson, Lova Simonsson
Supervisor: Susanne Alldén
Examiner: Manuela Nilsson
University: Linnaeus University
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Abstract

Women’s roles in peacebuilding are often marginalized, necessitating a reevaluation of their contributions to peace initiatives. Research has shown that participation of women in peace processes and peacebuilding activities can increase the chances of democratization as they are less violent and more caring, i.e more suitable for these activities. To be able to analyze the long-term changes and consequences of female participation in peacebuilding this study focused on the women's organization the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET). Through this organization, this research sought to understand if Resolution 1325 made any long-term differences for women in peacebuilding in Liberia from 2003 until 2023.

Scholars underscores Liberian women’s pivotal role in shaping peacebuilding strategies, advocating for gender-inclusive measures. While post-conflict countries have increased women’s participation in governance, Resolution 1325’s impact needs scrutiny. Despite progress, substantial investment is needed to achieve gender parity, especially in local governance and public service.

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on the analysis of existing data with a specific emphasis on women’s rights organization in Liberia. The goal is to enrich understanding of women’s peacebuilding roles and the lasting effects of international resolutions from their engagement.

It was the advocacy efforts of women that led to a recognition of the interrelation between gender equality and sustainable peace. Women were included in various post-conflict mechanisms and transition processes as a result of this recognition. It is evident that the journey toward gender equality is both complex and intertwined between international resolutions, local advocacy, and the subsequent inclusion of women in leadership roles.

**Keywords:** Resolution 1325, Liberia, Women, Peacebuilding, Conflict, Gender
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List of Abbreviations

CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement

ECOMOG - Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

ECOWAS - Economic Community Of West African State

GOL - Government of Liberia

ICGL - International Contact Group on Liberia

IOs - International Organizations

LNP - Liberia National Police

LURD - Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy

MARWOPNET - Mano River Women’s Peace Network

MODEL - Movement of Democracy in Liberia

NAP - National Action Plan
NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

NTGL - National Transitional Government in Liberia

NTLA - National Transitional Legislative Assembly

OGA - Office of Gender Advisor

TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN - United Nations

UNMIL - United Nations Mission In Liberia

UNSC - United Nations Security Council

UNSCR - United Nations Security Council Resolution

WANEP - West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

WACPS - Women and Children Protection Section

WIPNET - Women in Peacebuilding Network

WFP - World Food Programme
1. Introduction and Research Problem

1.1 Introduction

In 2000, The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 which was the first to devote an entire session to debate women’s experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations and that was intended to encourage women's participation in peacebuilding and peace promotion (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings, 2004; Tryggestad, 2009). The focus of the implementation of Resolution 1325 is to partly increase the protection of women and girls during the war, thus also increasing their participation in UN peacekeeping operations and decision-making processes at regional, national, and international levels (Cohn, Kinsella, and Gibbings, 2004; United Nations, 2019). The contribution of women in decision-making processes is arguable as they contribute to preventing and resolving conflict more than others as well as contributing to post-conflict reconstruction (United Nations, 2019). Their contributions during the Liberian civil wars showed just how important it is to involve women in the decision making process.

Liberia found itself engulfed in two civil wars shortly after each other from 1989 to 2003 (Rashed, 2019, as cited in Masitoh, 2020). The first civil war took place from 1989 until 1997 and the second civil war began just two years later in 1999 and ended in 2003 and led to great instability (Rashed, 2019, as cited in Masitoh, 2020). This led to women in the country taking the lead in 2002 forming a mass action campaign set up by the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and the Liberian chapter of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The women’s groups were highly influential in Liberia’s peace processes both as formal observers and through mass action. This concerted effort marked a significant turning point in Liberia’s socio-political landscape (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2018).

This was a successful act as their action, as well as the pressures mounted by The Economic Community Of West African State (ECOWAS) leaders, led to the signing of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (United Nations, n.d; United Nations Mission in Liberia, 2015). The signing of the Peace Agreement in 2003 between the Government of Liberia (GOL), the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement of Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and the Political Parties paved the way for a transitional
government and the eventual election of Africa’s first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, in 2005 (McKenna, 2020). Women's involvement in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and the impact of their accomplishments are contextualized in this unique historical context. This context provides a great opportunity for studying women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and the long-term effects of Liberia's transition from conflict to democracy (Kamara, 2021). Although women had achieved great success in their involvement during the peace agreement in 2003, women’s political representation in Liberia started to decrease from 16% in 2006 to 10% in 2021 (UN Women, 2023).

Liberia stands out as a compelling study in the global landscape, reflecting a notable emphasis on the involvement of women in peace-related initiatives. This focus is not only academically intriguing but also holds immense importance for several reasons. From a human rights perspective, the study of Liberia’s experiences addresses key principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment, integral aspects of the international human rights framework (Ababa, 2021). This research into women’s contribution to peacebuilding and conflict resolution fits seamlessly into the broader field of peace and development studies. It sheds light on the intricate interplay between gender dynamics and peacebuilding efforts, emphasizing the critical role of women in lasting peace and fostering development. Peacebuilding involves long-term efforts to reconstruct, reconcile, and restore post-conflict communities. It includes activities aimed at addressing physical and structural sources of conflict (Galtung, 1976). Recognizing and understanding these contributions of women in peace processes is essential for sustainable peace and development, aligning seamlessly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, it resonates with Goal 5 on gender equality, and Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions (United Nations, 2023).

1.2 Research Problem

In spite of the global impetus provided by The United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325 emphasized to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding, however, a significant gap persists between what the Security Council envisioned and what has actually been achieved in terms of enhancing women's participation (UN Women, 2015a). Research in Liberia has been
less focused on understanding how women’s participation in peace processes affects post-conflict societal dynamics over time.

Although Liberia appears to have made significant strides in the representation of women and gender equality compared to neighboring countries, the overall record on women’s rights is mixed in the country (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2018). A closer examination reveals that despite some advancements in women’s empowerment, they still face challenges in gaining adequate space in the political sphere and having their voices heard.

The envisioned reality of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peacebuilding remains elusive even though the evidence shows that women’s participation contributes to longer-lasting peace (Cohen & Karim 2022, cited in United Nations Security Council 2023).

Research findings indicate that despite the adoption of Resolution 1325, women's participation in the peace process falls short of anticipated levels (Baumann, 2018; Coomaraswamy, 2015; UN Women, 2015b). This study aims to explore the factors contributing to ongoing challenges in achieving significant women's participation in peacebuilding efforts, focusing on Liberia as a case study. The research problem centers on the marginalization of women in both wartime and peacemaking initiatives, prompting a reevaluation of their potential contributions to peacebuilding. Despite their pivotal role in shaping peacebuilding strategies in Liberia, obstacles persist in attaining gender equality within Liberia (Letouzé et al., 2021; UN Women, n.d.).

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to analyze women's participation in peacebuilding processes in Liberia since the adoption of Resolution 1325. Thereby filling a research gap on the long-term impact of women’s participation and the role they’ve played. Women's active involvement in post-conflict societies, particularly Liberia, is intended to contribute to sustainable peace and development. This involves evaluating the long-term outcomes and consequences of women’s involvement in peace initiatives. Such as, what specific strategies have been adopted in Liberia to promote inclusive and sustainable peace in the country. This will enable us to look at whether their participation has led to positive changes in terms of women’s participation and gender equality in the country.
1.4 Research Questions

1. To what extent have women in Liberia been able to sustain their success in the peace process and what is the current state today?
2. What specific strategies have Liberia adopted since Resolution 1325, to promote women’s inclusion in efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable peace in the country?
3. How does women's participation in peacebuilding get influenced by their conformity to gender expectations?

1.5 Research Structure

The introduction chapter of the thesis provides a comprehensive overview, discussing the core features such as the research problem, research objectives, the research questions and the structure of the thesis.

Following to the second part, this paper engages in a thorough literature review.

The third chapter contains our chosen theoreticalanalytical framework clarifying the theoretical lenses through which our research will be approached and applied.

Our methodological framework is explained in the methodology chapter, which is the fourth chapter of this thesis. This part outlines the research design, data collection methods, and the foundation behind our chosen qualitative methodology. This chapter serves as a guiding framework for understanding how we navigate the difficulties of our research.

Following, a brief background will be presented in order to get a thorough understanding of Liberia's history.

In chapter six, our research findings are presented, followed by, in the seventh chapter, a comprehensive analysis of these findings is undertaken. The analysis dives into broader understanding of the complex findings of our research.

Finally, chapter eight concludes our research with our recommendations and will serve as an endpoint of our thesis.
2. Literature review

2.1 Resolution 1325

Resolution 1325 was the first of its kind, recognizing that gender matters in and to international peace and security (Cohn et al., 2004; Swaine, 2009; Tryggestad, 2009; in George and Shepherd, 2016). Originally adopted in 2000, Resolution 1325 included the following key elements: “Representation and participation of women in peace and security governance; protection of women's rights and bodies in conflict and post-conflict situations; prevention of violence” (Shepherd, 2021 p.2). According to Resolution 1325, civilians, particularly women and children, make up the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including refugees and internally displaced individuals.

Resolution 1325’s main focus was to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2000).

Although the 2023 report continues to emphasize the importance of women in peace processes, the results show otherwise (United Nations Security Council, 2023). It shows that the goal of ensuring full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the building of sustainable peace has yet to be realized nearly a quarter-century after Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. Several barriers remain in the way of women's involvement in peace negotiations, including a lack of power to influence peace negotiations, geopolitical divisions that hinder progress, and security concerns related to the proliferation of digital weapons (Letouzé et al., 2021).

Kathrin M. Baumann’s (2018) research delves into the aftermath of Resolution 1325, revealing that, despite its noble intentions, barriers such as institutionalized gender biases, cultural norms, and a lack of meaningful representation continue to impede the active participation of women in peacebuilding efforts. The study suggests that the envisioned transformative impact of the resolution has not materialized to the extent desired, prompting a critical examination of the factors hindering progress (Baumann, 2018).
A follow-up report 23 years later, from the UNSC, continues to emphasize the importance of women, but their results show otherwise (United Nations Security Council, 2023). Women still have not been fully, equally, or meaningfully included in the building of sustainable peace nearly a quarter-century after Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted. Women's participation in peace negotiations has been hindered by a lack of power to influence negotiations, geopolitical divisions that impede progress, and security concerns associated with the proliferation of digital weapons. This is further discussed by Radhika Coomaraswamy’s work in 2015.

Coomaraswamy’s (2015) work complements this perspective scrutinizing the global implementations of Resolution 1325. The study examines how various nations have incorporated the resolution into their policy frameworks and whether these efforts have translated into tangible improvements in women’s involvement in peace processes. Coomaraswamy’s (2015) findings underscore the persistent gaps and challenges faced by women seeking to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding initiatives, shedding light on the need for more effective strategies to bridge these divides.

Torrun L. Tryggestad (2009) contends in his work ‘The UN and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security’ that the resolution has effectively elevated women's interests on the UN security agenda. The argument posits that how it has been implemented catalyzes the development of new norms. Tryggestad (2009) emphasizes the necessity for patience, highlighting that the adoption of the resolution marked a formal breakthrough in recognizing the interconnectedness between the advancement of women's rights and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The work “Resolutions 1325: Women as Agents of Peace” by Aiman Nadeem, Roha Babar and Sahar Amjad (2022), broadens our study as it gains a new perspective on Resolution 1325 as well as the challenges in Liberia. Their study observes the obstacles Liberian women peacekeepers encounter due to misogynistic nature, furthering their limitation in project assignments and field missions despite the active contributions to post-conflict reconstruction through established NGOs and peacebuilding institutions (Nadeem, Babar and Amjad, 2022).
A quantitative study looked at a possible gender perspective adopted in the peace agreements signed between the years 1990-2010 and evaluated if Resolution 1325 have had an impact on women and their role in peacebuilding. It indicated that references regarding women had enlarged during the later years after the adoption of Resolution 1325. The study also showed that while the references concerning women do increase, the issues raised in Resolution 1325 concerning women’s role in peace and security are rarely addressed in peace agreements and thus had a debatable impact on women’s increasing role in peacebuilding (Bell & O’Rourke, 2010; Kamara, 2021).

2.2 Women’s Role in Post-Conflict

According to Veronica Fuest (2008), the body of literature concerning women’s roles in post-civil war and conflict resolution in Liberia can be broadly categorized into two distinct groups of thought. The first school primarily views women as either victims or beneficiaries of civil conflicts, often overlooking the critical discussion of gender equality within the post-conflict political institutions, which is essential for the advancement of democratization processes in post-conflict settings. Nadeem, Babar and Amjad (2022) discuss this as women are beneficiaries in civil conflicts as peacekeepers, but face obstacles as they are mostly given short-term projects rather than being preferred for field missions. Therefore they are viewed as victims.

The second group, in contrast, claims that the active involvement of women in political processes significantly contributes to the democratization of societies, as women are recognized as pivotal actors within their communities, and their political equality stands as a fundamental prerequisite for long-term democratic progress (Fuest, 2008). The latter perspective is favored for the theoretical framework, as it underscores the positive influence of women in post-conflict democratization. However, it is noted that the literature often neglects the potential of women’s participation in post-conflict institutions to promote democratization, instead focusing on their experiences as conflict victims or beneficiaries (Fuest, 2008).

efforts until the end of the civil war in 2003. Despite being initially excluded from formal peace negotiations where only men were seated, women engaged in various behind-the-scenes and high-profile tactics to facilitate and participate in the peace process. Motivated by the devastating impact of the war on their families and communities, including loss of life, starvation, and violence, the women took on leadership roles and actively contributed to conflict resolution. Press (2010) challenges the stereotypes of women as passive victims in conflict situations emphasizing their agency as peacemakers.

2.3 Women in Liberia

In a data study by Kodila-Tedika and Asongu (2015) they analyzed if there was a difference in women’s engagement in politics before and during the first mandate of former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The evidence is based on the period of 2000 to 2011, and after applying a plethora of tests they concluded that women had not become more politically active under the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Kodila-Tedika (2013) proves that there is an improvement in gender equality in political rights from female representation in politics. However, it does not influence the legislature on violence against women.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was the first woman to lead an African country where the majority to elect her belonged to the WIPNET network, advocating for peace, and supporting her promise of gender equality (Lawson, 2017; Kamara, 2021; Ababa, 2021).

From a presentation made by Euphemia Akos Dzathor in 2020, he discusses the implementations of WIPNET’s initiatives in Liberia and the role it played in developing the National Action Plan (NAP). Even with all of these efforts, there are still some obstacles preventing women from participating fully, equally, and meaningfully in the peacebuilding process (Dzathor, 2020).

Mary H. Moran examines the ranking and relationships between genders among Liberians in her book "Civilized Women, Gender and Prestige in Southeastern Liberia.". Notably, there exists a significant difference between women and men when it comes to access to education. Liberian families tend to invest more in their sons' educations than in those of their daughters and the explanation given is that parents are reluctant to spend money on their daughters' education if
they are concerned they will become pregnant at a young age and will not be able to utilize their education professionally.

In 2010 and 2011, Peace A. Medie undertook qualitative research, engaging with a total of one hundred and fifty various stakeholders, including women's rights advocates, police officers, bureaucrats, international organization (IO) staff, and victims of violence in two Liberian counties (Medie, 2013). The article researches into a broad review of social movements, policy implementation, and African women's movements before describing the methodology. It then addresses the issue of GBV in Liberia, examines the strategies adopted by women's groups post-civil war, and analyzes their impact on police enforcement of rape laws. The conclusion highlights opportunities for further studies to deepen our understanding of the implementation of women's rights policies. In essence, this research sheds light on the transformative role of women's movements and their collaboration with the state and international organizations in influencing policy implementation and law enforcement (Medie, 2013). The women’s peacemaking activities are described as a social movement, where female leaders formed alliances, voiced a shared sense of injustice, and took steps to end the war. Press (2010) notes the barriers women face in participating in formal peace negotiations, despite these challenges Liberian women persisted in their efforts, and their activism is framed as a social movement with a clear message for peace and an end to war.

3. Theoretical / Analytical Framework

Throughout this study, we apply feminist theory as a theoretical framework with a specific focus on representation as an important analytical lens. Through feminist perspectives, we can reveal and challenge entrenched gender inequalities. We aim to explore not only the ways in which gender dynamics are portrayed but also to critically assess the implications of these representations on broader social constructs. This theoretical framework enables a critical examination of societal perceptions, with a particular emphasis on representation as an analytical tool. Through this methodology, our goal is to scrutinize the portrayal of gender dynamics and
evaluate the wider social consequences of these representations. We can examine power structures, agency, and the relationship between gender, and the narratives that shape our understanding of the world through this analytical approach.

What they have in common is to make visible how gender is connected to power structures and these power structures are reflected in masculine and feminine gender identities in society (Svedberg and Kronsell, 2003).

### 3.1 Feminist Theory

The Liberal feminism centers on reaching fairness in the public sphere between women and men through legal changes (Griffin, 2017).

The Feminist theory will help explain and analyze women's role in decision-making processes and the gender roles differences between men and women. Gender is explained to be the characteristics of women and men, girls and boys, and are socially constructed (World Health Organization, 2019). Some of these norms and socially constructed roles, Porter (2007) explains as women who are usually prime nurturers and therefore play a crucial role in peacebuilding, but in informal and unofficial ways and seen more as victims of war. This is further discussed by Judith Butler (1999) who argues that gender is not just anything we are, but in accepting and learning, we become. It’s a social performance and can be explained as schemas. Within the first few years of life, children learn and internalize societal gender norms. According to Sandra Bem (1983), children acquire cultural norms regarding appropriate behavior during these formative years. Girls are nurtured toward traits associated with empathy and care, while boys are encouraged to embody strength and power. As a consequence, women and men exhibit different behaviors shaped by their internalized motivations. Based on gender schemas and societal roles ingrained in the community fabric, they adapt their conduct (Bem, 1983).

Butler (1999) contends that feminist theory offers a perspective that sheds light on how politics and culture are systematically constructed and perpetuated. By challenging traditional assumptions and highlighting the performative nature of gender, feminist theory unveils the
mechanisms through which political and cultural systems shape and perpetuate societal structures (Butler, 1999).

Feminist analysis underscores the societal construction of gender roles, with particular emphasis on specific notions of masculinity and femininity (Kronsell, 2006, cited in; Runsala and Källström, 2018). It is plausible that the creation and perpetuation of Resolution 1325 have been shaped by this theoretical framework. The core tenets of feminist theory revolve around examining the social manifestations of gender, viewing it as a pivotal categorization in society. Consequently, a nuanced hierarchy of gender power has evolved, consistently placing traits associated with masculinity in higher esteem than those linked to femininity (Kronsell, 2006, cited in; Runsala and Källström, 2018).

To comprehend the cultural and societal norms governing women in Liberia, exploring the extent of their recognition, experiences, challenges, and more from a gender-centric perspective can be illuminating (Nilsson, 2019). Such an approach is vital when delving into the study of women in a peacebuilding context. Feminist theories offer a valuable lens for dissecting power dynamics, both within the peacebuilding process and within broader societal structures. This perspective is crucial for unraveling how gender norms and inequalities contribute to shaping women’s roles and agency (Nilsson, 2019).

The Liberal Feminism with its focus to achieve equality in the public sphere resonates with Duncanson’s critique of pre-1325 peace operations (Griffin, 2017). Duncanson (2016) argues that pre-1325 peace operations faltered due to the absence of feminist perspectives on peace and security. This deficiency results from an analytic failure to recognize the gendered nature of war, where peace operations remained oblivious to the differential impact of conflict on men and women. Moreover, the failure to acknowledge gender as a relational power dynamic underpinning and sustaining the war system further compounded the shortcomings in achieving effective and inclusive peace (Duncanson, 2016). In this perspective, liberal feminism supports the demand for acknowledging the variance effect of conflict on women and men.
3.2 Representation

The research we conduct in this area will use a combination of feminist theory with a focus on representation which will allow us to analyze women’s voices (i.e their political presentation), in formal and informal representation (Disch and Hawkesworth, 2018).

Yvonne Galligan (2007) discusses political representation in three forms, who represents, what is represented, and how is it represented. Recent findings suggest that female representatives are more likely to endorse the advancements of gender equality in society. There is a political landscape to actively address and pursue this issue, however, these conditions are not widespread. The worldwide representation of women in parliaments, currently standing at 17 percent, underscores the persistent obstacles women encounter in attaining political inclusion across numerous regions (Galligan, 2007).

Philips (1998) mentions the importance of having diverse voices and perspectives represented in political decision-making processes. As women’s representation focuses on ensuring equitable and adequate portrayal of women across various societal realms. The advocacy for women’s representation is inherently grounded in the principles of gender equality, seeking to rectify historical imbalances and foster decision-making processes that are both diverse and inclusive (Lovenduski, 2005).

In feminist theory, women are emphasized as agents of change and their representation (voice) is important in decision-making processes; this can be particularly relevant when assessing the impact of women's involvement in advocating for peace and influencing policy (Disch and Hawkesworth, 2018).

This study examines women's roles in peacebuilding from two angles: assessment of whether these roles conform with societal norms and examination of women's roles in peacebuilding. The lens of representation seeks to understand whether women's participation is confined to predetermined areas within peace agreements and beyond, or if it extends to a variety of contexts. Through representation and feminist theory, the analysis chapter examines how women are portrayed as peacebuilders and whether their contributions go beyond conventional gender roles. The purpose of this approach is to provide a comprehensive understanding of
representation dynamics and to explore the intricate interplay between women's roles, peacebuilding efforts, and societal expectations.

Fuest’s (2008) perspective discusses the view on women and their engagement in political processes and the importance of that in fostering democratization. According to this viewpoint, women contribute positively to democratic consolidation in post-conflict societies, in line with the tenets of representation theory. Despite this, existing literature tends to overlook the significance of women's participation in post-conflict institutions as a catalyst for democratization, focusing on either their roles as victims of conflict or as beneficiaries (Fuest, 2008).

It is clear that women have committed themselves to influencing the peace process through demonstrations, protests, strikes, and sit-ins. This aligns with both Representation Theory and Feminist Theory, emphasizing the significance of diverse voices in shaping political agendas and challenging traditional power structures.

4. Methodological framework

4.1 Research design

The research design for the study on the “Role of Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Liberia” will use a qualitative research method that prioritizes a desk study. This desk study will involve a comprehensive review of existing literature, official reports, and policy documents related to women’s roles in peacebuilding in Liberia. This analysis will help us build a foundation of knowledge and understand the existing research landscape. By examining the Liberian experience, we gain in-depth insight into the roles and contributions of women in the country’s peacebuilding and conflict-resolution process.

The research will employ a qualitative methodology to investigate the involvement of women in peacebuilding, aligning with Alan Bryman’s (2012) characterization of qualitative research, which builds upon the exploration of words and meanings as opposed to numerical data typical
of qualitative research. This implies a thorough examination of the content, context, and interpretations within the selected materials. Numerous qualitative methods exist, such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and discourse analysis. However, because of a lack of time and resources, this research will concentrate on a qualitative collection and analysis of texts and documents.

This research was conducted from the 27th of October to the 5th of January 2024. The first three weeks were dedicated to gathering research followed by two weeks of structuring up our theories, methodology and research objectives. Lastly, the final five weeks were devoted to presenting all our research findings, starting the analysis and writing our conclusion.

4.2 Theoretical framework: Feminist and Representation Perspectives

The feminist theory contributes to the formulation of the research questions and overall design. The literature review has a significant impact on the choice of qualitative methods, emphasizing a thorough review of official reports, policy documents, and official literature. According to feminist perspectives, it is imperative to understand societal and gender dynamics.

This research focuses on women's voices and political presentation, incorporating representation theory explicitly. We examine both formal and informal representations through the lens of representation theory to gain insights into the extent of women's participation, both within and outside of peace agreements.

This research endeavors to provide a comprehensive and contemporary analysis of a topic that has been explored to some extent in previous studies. It aims to incorporate recent development and changes in Liberia, utilizing a meticulous text analysis of selected materials to address the research question. Through this approach, the materials have been scrutinized individually and then comparatively to ensure a nuanced understanding.

4.3 Liberia’s position

Our focus and interest in Liberia stems from its unique position as the first African country with a female president and the substantial role women played in forming the peace agreement. At
first glance, Liberia appears to have made significant strides in the representation of women and gender equality compared to neighboring countries, a closer examination reveals that despite some advancements in women’s empowerment, they still face challenges in gaining adequate space in the political sphere and having their voices heard.

4.4 Text Analysis and Sources

To gather the most relevant information, we have used primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include documents from the UN, and first hand material like the Peace Agreement. Additionally, the use of secondary sources have included other journals and articles made on Liberia and being analyzed and compared through a text analysis when gathering the data.

In a text analysis, various approaches can be employed to scrutinize the content, argumentation, or concepts. However, a pivotal aspect, central to this study, involves how we interpret the written text. The interpretation of a text encompasses considerations of multiple objectives, such as identifying the author, discerning the intended purpose, and understanding the context (Bryman, 2012).

In our research we will use an integrative approach to understand the research questions/problems. According to Hannah Snyder (2019), there are three ways an integrative review aims to assess, critique, and synthesize literature on a research topic. It allows us to bring together and synthesize diverse perspectives, theories and findings related to women in Libera. It offers a structured approach to reviewing the literature on women in peacebuilding, contributing to the depth and richness of our research objective. This integrative review methodology offers a structured way to explore the literature and enhance our understanding of the complexities surrounding women’s roles in Liberia.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

As this study adopts a qualitative desk research approach, it predominantly relies on secondary sources. Reliability is most important when doing a quantitative study so the results are
repeatable (Bryman, 2012). Consequently, the research is confined to existing studies conducted by other researchers. Given the case methodology employed, the investigations drawn upon in this thesis are diverse, conducted by multiple scholars with varying perspectives and approaches. This diversity contributes to nuanced findings across different cases, reflecting the individual lenses through which scholars interpret and analyze the subject matter.

Moreover, this research is facing limitations that some relevant studies are available only in the languages other than English and Swedish.

The comprehensive review of existing literature, official reports, and policy documents demonstrates a methodological rigor that enhances the validity of the study. While our focus is on text and document analysis due to time constraints, the acknowledgement of alternative methods suggest a consideration of multiple perspectives, contributing to the robustness of the study.

The use of an integrative review methodology, as per Snyder (2019), demonstrates a systematic approach to assessing, critiquing, and synthesizing literature on the research topic. This contributes to the validity of the study by providing a well-organized framework for understanding diverse perspectives.

Given Liberia’s unique conditions, such as its post-conflict status, historical context, and the lack of women in political and economical spheres, it is plausible to suggest that other African countries facing comparable conditions may exhibit similarities in the challenges and advancements related to women’s roles, a key aspect of generalization (Bryman, 2012).

Liberia’s deeply embedded patriarchal societal norms contribute significantly to the challenges faced by women in gaining prominence in political and economic spheres. This pervasive patriarchal structure is not exclusive to Liberia, as many African countries share similar historical legacies and traditional norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. As a result, women across the continent may encounter similar obstacles in their pursuit of political and economic empowerment. This assertion encapsulates the essence of generalization, the idea that challenges and advancements observed in one specific setting may have relevance to a larger population facing comparable circumstances (Bryman, 2012).
5. Background

After gaining independence from the USA in 1847, Liberia was governed by an authoritarian regime consisting of Americo-Liberians (Karim and Beardsley, 2017). This regime was overthrown in 1980 through a military coup led by Sergeant Samuel Doe, however, a dictatorial rule persisted while Doe was in power. Nine years following, an internal conflict erupted when American-Liberian rebel forces attempted to regain control in Liberia. Throughout the civil war, multiple attempts were made to negotiate peace in Liberia by the West African organization ECOWAS, succeeding only after ten attempts in 1996. However, this peace agreement did not immediately quell the unrest (Karim and Beardsley, 2017). The Women in Peacebuilding Network group advocated for peace from the beginning of 1991 and up until the war ended with various attempts (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2018).

ECOWAS and the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL), including key entities such as the African Union, European Union, France, Morocco, the UN, the UK, and the US, extended invitations to the conflicting parties for peace negotiations in early June 2003 (Nilsson, 2003). Former Nigerian President General Absulsalami Abubakar served as the chief mediator, with ECOWAS leading the peace process. However, just as the talks were set to commence, an indictment against former Liberian President Charles Taylor for his involvement in the Sierra Leonean conflict complicated matters. The negotiations proceeded without Taylor, however, his influence persisted throughout the representatives of the GOL in close contact with him (Nilsson, 2003).

WIPNET intensified their campaign in March in order to get a peace agreement, this they did by promoting a ‘sex strike’ until the war ended (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2018). Simultaneously, rebel forces LURD and MODEL approached the Liberian capital, Monrovia, intensifying pressure on the government to reach a deal. After two weeks of negotiations, a ceasefire agreement was signed on June 17, 2003. Following the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the situation stabilized enough in 2005 for free elections to be held (Nationalencyklopedin, 2018).
Despite this, heavy fighting resumed in Monrovia not long after the agreement. The peace talks continued in Accra amid the ongoing conflict. While the initial negotiators included the three warning parties (GOL, LURD, and MODEL), broader segments of society later joined the peace talks. The negotiations extended for over two months, with mediator Abubakar reportedly listening to the parties' concerns without exerting pressure on an agreement (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018).

One significant hurdle was Charles Taylor’s reluctance to step down from power, a key demand from both LURD and MODEL. Under international pressure and a weakened military, Taylor eventually agreed to hand over power to Vice-President Moses Blah, who entered exile in Nigeria on August 11, 2003. Taylor’s departure was crucial for the peace talks' momentum, coupled with the dire situation in Monrovia and lessened funding for the negotiations. The CPA was presented to the parties shortly before they signed it on August 18, 2003, marking the conclusion of the peace talks (Nilsson, 2003).

The agreement reaffirmed the ceasefire deal signed on June 17, 2003, urging ECOWAS to promptly deploy a force to enforce the ceasefire and separate the parties. Central provisions focused on establishing the National Transitional Government in Liberia (NTGL) and creating the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA). A crucial aspect of the peace accord was the request for a United Nations Chapter VII force to assist in implementation and peacekeeping in Liberia. The agreement also mandated the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and urged the NTGL to consider a recommendation for a general amnesty. Additionally, the CPA addressed electoral reform, the creation of a Governance Reform Commission, the return and repartition of refugees, human rights issues, and humanitarian relief (Nilsson, 2003).

According to Nilsson (2003), Liberia seemed to be transitioning away from violence, and while it is debatable how much credit the CPA deserves for this success, the country has experienced a period of relative stability since the agreement was signed. Many provisions outlined in the peace accord have been successfully implemented. Initially, the ECOMOG (The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) force was swiftly deployed for the first two months following the CPA’s signing, and later, the UNMIL force, with approximately 15,000
peacekeepers, was deployed in October 2003, playing a crucial role in preventing a relapse into civil war. The consistent presence of UNMIL forces throughout the implementation phase has been a key factor in maintaining stability, with the force responding forcefully to occasional outbreaks of violence (United Nations Mission in Liberia, 2023). According to a 2006 public opinion survey made by Dr Jean Krasno, many Liberians perceived an improvement in their security situation under the presence of the peacekeeping force (Krasno, 2006).

While Liberia has since made significant strides, there are also reasons for concern according to Nilsson (2003). Similar to many post-conflict nations, Liberia has witnessed an uptick in criminal violence, exemplified by a surge in armed robberies. This escalation raises apprehensions about the limited progress achieved in reforming the police force. Additionally, the newly established army is not yet fully operational, and it remains to be seen whether it can effectively carry out its responsibilities (Nilsson, 2003).

6. Presentation of research findings

6.1 Women's Participation in Liberia's Peace Process

Numerous women’s organizations emerged in the aftermath of the Liberian conflict, with the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) standing out as one of the largest and most impactful. WIPNET is a dynamic organization comprising over 2000 women from diverse backgrounds, spanning various societal levels from grassroots to leadership positions (Tripp, 2015). In 1991, these resilient women orchestrated multiple marches as a poignant demonstration of their commitment to advocating for peace (Tripp, 2015).

By 1993, WIPNET elevated its engagement by actively participating in and organizing peace talks. The pinnacle of their efforts was evident in leading the “Liberia Mass Action for Peace” campaign to counteract rebel forces (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2018). Collaborating with local churches and mosques, the women courageously ventured into the streets, witnessing the turmoil while maintaining a steadfast commitment to peaceful and
nonviolent principles (Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, 2018). Throughout the negotiations, selected WIPNET members traveled to Ghana, where they rallied Liberian women residing in refugee camps. These determined women organized protests outside the negotiation venues, obstructing the entrance to the meeting room and issuing a compelling ultimatum to undress, unless substantial progress was achieved (Nilsson, 2003).

The success of their endeavors was buoyed by robust public support, the presence of supportive regional women’s groups, and the resilience of Liberian women’s groups with well-established personal networks (Tripp, 2015). The international community, including entities like the United Nations and ECOWAS, played a crucial role in reinforcing the widespread perception of women as effective peacemakers (Tripp, 2015). Through perseverance, collaboration, and financial inequity, the women of Liberia navigated these multifaceted challenges to ensure that their voices resonated on both national and international stages.

6.2 Women's Participation in Liberia's Peacebuilding Post-Resolution 1325

Over the years, WIPNET has implemented various initiatives to achieve its objectives, one significant effort involved developing a manual aimed at enhancing the capacities of grassroots women in the subregion (Dzathor, 2020). This manual, translated into local languages across Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, and the Gambia, has been instrumental in mobilizing grassroots women for active participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The training process facilitated increased awareness of human rights and gender-based violence throughout the subregion (Ababa, 2021). WIPNET members in West Africa have played pivotal roles in advancing the development of NAPs on Women, Peace, and Security under UNSCR 1325 (Dzathor, 2020). An innovative initiative spearheaded by WIPNET is the establishment of ‘Peace Huts' in Liberia; they serve as secure spaces empowering grassroots women while addressing their issues. Sexual and Gender-based violence victims can get the help of lawyers, doctors, and clinical psychologists who offer pro bono services (Dzathor, 2020).

Women’s organizations such as WIPNET and MARWOPNET (i.e. Mano River Women’s Peace Network) played an important role in pushing for peace talks (Nilsson, 2003). Notably, the CPA
stood out for its inclusive nature, involving all three warring parties, political entities, and representatives from civil society, however no women were present (Nilsson, 2003; Press 2010). MARWOPNET, is an NGO that was created to form a union between Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to foster economic integration between the three countries (The New Humanitarian, 2001).

In 2005, WIPNET undertook significant risks to support the first female president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on the promise to sustain peace and make gender equality central (Lawson, 2017). Some women took daring steps, such as concealing their son’s voter ID cards to prevent them from supporting the opponent. Others persuaded young men to exchange their cards for beer, meanwhile, some women took charge of market stalls, allowing their female counterparts to register to vote and look after infants, enabling mothers to participate in the electoral process on Election Day (Lawson, 2017). The women faced dangers, including threats from rebel leaders like Charles Taylor, but they persisted in their efforts. They organized public meetings, petitions, vigils, and marches, drawing support from a diverse spectrum of the female population, including literate and illiterate women, those from various ethnic and religious backgrounds (Press, 2010).

Another one of WIPNET initiatives was to start a radio program called “Voices of Women” to reach out to a greater number of women engaging in community issues. As a result, WIPNET members have played a vital role in the development of NAP on UNSCR 1325 on Women's Peace and Security (Dzathor, 2020). According to Dzathor (2020) and Ababa (2021) challenges remain for WIPNET to reach women’s full participation in peacebuilding processes like battles with patriarchy, low education levels of women, high illiteracy levels, and the majority of women in West Africa continue to be less empowered economically.

Thanks to the women's advocacy efforts, leading to international pressure and the inclusion of provisions regarding women's rights and gender equality in the final agreement. A recognition of their significant contribution led to the inclusion of women in various post-conflict mechanisms and transition processes, and when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became president in 2006, a milestone for women in politics and the country (Fleshman, 2010; (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018).
During her presidency a comprehensive set of strategies were implemented to empower women in Liberia and to foster inclusive and sustainable peace (Lawson, 2017). Such as; the importance of education and making it compulsory, the right to land ownership for women and empower female farmers (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018). Following the year after Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first female president of Liberia she discusses her challenges and achievements at the 2007 National Press Club Luncheon in Washington D.C (Johnson Sirleaf, 2005). Some of the implementations included a multi-faced strategy, focusing on four pillars: enhancing peace and security, revitalizing the economy, strengthening governance and the rule of law, and rehabilitating infrastructure and basic services (Johnson Sirleaf, 2005).

6.3 History of Women in Liberia

The history of Liberia goes a long way back and one of the biggest challenges in Liberia is women's rights. Liberia has for long faced challenges in gender-based violence and traditional norms that may contribute to inequality (United States Agency International Development, n.d.).

Sexual and gender-based violence is prevalent in Liberia. The number of rapes, including group rapes, is alarmingly high. Often, underage girls are victims, and very few cases result in convictions, according to the UN study "Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia" from 2016 (Utrikesdepartementet, 2016). Medie’s qualitative research from 2013 involved interviews with various stakeholders, including women's rights advocates, police officers, bureaucrats, staff of International Organizations (IOs), and individuals of violence. The research focused on two counties in Liberia and documented how women's groups, in collaboration with the state and IOs, have actively contributed to changing rape laws, creating institutions to address rape, and providing education on rape to both police officers and the public since the end of Liberia's civil war in 2003 (Medie, 2013).

In interviews conducted with Sallimatu Kamara from Women Aid Incorporated (Monrovia, 28 June 2010) and through insights from the Women and Children Protection Section's (WACPS) 'Case Disposal Statistics,' a discussion arises regarding the decline in violence post-war and
discusses the drop of violence since the war's end (Medie, 2013). Despite this, physical and sexual violence persist as significant issues and most of them include minors.

However, due to limitations on data before the war in Liberia, there is debate about whether gender-based violence has become more or less widespread. Some argue for an actual rise in incidents, while others attribute it to improved reporting (Medie, 2013). However, statistics show that reported in 2007 that rape was the most common crime in that year, and currently also the most reported alongside domestic violence, according to the Liberia National Police's Women and Children Protection Section's 'Case Disposal Statistics' (Cited in Medie, 2013). The unwillingness to report crimes stems from fears of retaliation, stigmatization, and the risk of false accusations, especially in rape cases. The prevalence of poverty in Liberia also exacerbates survivors' willingness to accept payments from perpetrators to avoid involving the police and courts (Medie, 2013).

A study by the UNMIL from 2008, on rape prevalence and attitudes in Liberia, identifies these factors as contributing to the withdrawal of cases after they have been reported to the police (Medie, 2013). This study further dedicated that the majority believe and agreed that ‘women contribute to rape by flirting with men or being alone with a man in a room ‘, and when/if being raped, victims are stigmatized and viewed as non-worthy (UNMIL, ‘Research on prevalence’, p. 41 cited in Medie, 2013).

In context of these challenges, gender norms remain a determinant factor that limits women to domestic roles. The socially constructed norms are making it more difficult for women to get out of their ‘caregiving roles’ in their home to more public roles (Kangas et al. 2015 cited in Sekou Bility, 2023).

In 2019 The Embassy in Monrovia, did a study on gender norms in Liberia, together with UN Women. Involvement from 25 participants described how they view ‘women’ and ‘men’ (Swedish Embassy Monrovia, 2019). The figure below shows the most common words when thinking of women contra men.
6.3.1 Figure 1. Study on Gender Norms Liberia (Swedish Embassy Monrovia, 2019).

A significant gender gap was found in attitudes toward emotional expression, with 67.7% of female respondents believing that "Men should not demonstrate emotions," compared to 86.3% of male respondents. Men in focus group discussions perceived expressing emotions as something that might lead to self-control issues and even violence due to the belief that men are discouraged from expressing their emotions. The patriarchal structures in Liberia are shaped by these deep-rooted gender norms rooted in tradition, culture, and religion, which affect societal perceptions of gendered behavior (Swedish Embassy Monrovia, 2019).

This could be seen as an obstacle to women's participation in politics, however, Adjei (2019) provides interesting research. This discussion revolves around the attributes that women have in politics and peacebuilding. As women are seen as caregivers, givers of life, trustworthy and calm, this makes them more suitable for such activities (Adjei, 2019). According to this perspective, an individual's gender category is seen as a determinant of crucial aspects of their social behavior. It posits that men are more inclined towards assertiveness (if not aggression), calculative reasoning, and rationality, while women are more prone to being reserved, cautious, and emotional (Shepherd 2013, cited in Adjei, 2019).

### 6.4 Challenges

Kathrin M. Baumann focuses on the role of women in post-conflict societies, particularly their contributions to transitional governments and their influence on democratization in her article,
"Women, Transitional Power-Sharing, and Post-Conflict Democratization: Evidence from Liberia.” (2018). The author uses a comparative case study of Liberia's civil war periods to argue that democratization after a conflict is positively influenced by gender equality.

Baumann’s (2018) research discusses more of the barriers such as the cultural norms, institutionalized gender biases, and a lack of meaningful representation that continue to impede the active participation of women in peacebuilding efforts. The study suggests that the envisioned transformative impact of the resolution has not materialized to the extent desired, prompting a critical examination of the factors hindering progress (Baumann, 2018). The article discusses the existing gap in scholarly research regarding women's roles in post-conflict transitional governments and power-sharing arrangements. As a result, a better understanding of women's participation in peacebuilding and democratization is advocated, rather than focusing on them as victims or beneficiaries.

The main focus of the adoption of Resolution 1325 was to ensure the representation of women at decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions (United Nations Security Council, 2000). Caroline Bowah, a prominent advocate for women’s rights, underscores the concerning decline in women’s political representation in Liberia (UN Women, 2023). The statistics reveal a diminishing trend as 16 % in 2006, 13 % in 2012, 11 % in 2014 and a further drop to 10 % in 2021. Notably this decline persists despite the fact that there are more female voters than male voters in the country (UN Women, 2023).

6.5 Progress

Liberia became the first ever post-conflict country to launch its NAP’s to implement Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security in 2009. The significance of the resolution is that it urges the international community and UN Member States to enhance women’s participation in peace processes (Gibson Caesar et al., 2010).

The NAP, in Liberia, implemented for the period 2009-2013, played a pivotal role in the development and operationalization of policies and strategies to protect women’s rights. The plan
included specific measures such as the establishment of the Women and Child Protection Unit in the police service, the Anti-trafficking Act, and the Social Protection policy (Government of Liberia, 2019).

Building on the successes of the first NAP, a second NAP spanning from 2019 to 2023 was developed. This plan, constructed on five pillars: Prevention; ensuring the prevention of relapse into conflict and all forms of structural and physical violence against women and girls, encompassing gender-based, sexual and terrorism-related threats. Protection; prioritizing the protection of women and girls, with steadfast commitment to respecting their human rights while guaranteeing their physical and mental well-being. Participation; facilitating the active participation of women and girls, in decision-making processes concerning conflict prevention, management, resolution, humanitarian action, and counter-terrorism efforts. Relief and recovery; addressing the specific needs of women and girls in relief, recovery and peacebuilding initiatives, especially those most vulnerable to violence, even in the face of terrorism threats. Coordination and accountability; maintaining coordination and accountability by ensuring the capacity and resources necessary to coordinate, implement, monitor, and report on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) plans and programs (Gibson Caesar et al., 2010; Government of Liberia, 2019).

The resulting second NAP spans five years, from 2019 to 2023, builds on the successes of the first NAP and addresses the challenges to achieving full and successful implementation (Gibson Caesar et al., 2010; Government of Liberia, 2019).

Resolution 1325 has helped to incorporate women as peacekeepers and in 2021, more than 7 percent of all uniformed military, police, justice, and corrections personnel in field missions were women (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). The Office of Gender Advisor (OGA) has been given a prominent role in the peacekeeping work and has received recognition from both the UN and the new government of Liberia. The OGA facilitates a gender-sensitive approach to achieving Mission objectives, aligning with UNSC Resolutions on women, peace, and security. UNMIL’s OGA aims to promote women's participation in all of their mandated priorities (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).
Many women thus still feel exposed to violence and feeling an insecurity according to the UN study "Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia" from 2016. This study stated that rapes are alarmingly high (Utrikesdepartementet, 2016). Basini's (2013) research emphasizes that by the conclusion of 2008, out of 112 peace agreements, only five incorporated provisions related to accountability for gender-based violence. This indicates that UNSCR 1325 and gender mainstreaming still have a significant journey ahead before they can positively impact the lives of women in post-conflict situations (Basini, 2013). In an interview conducted by Sofia Larsson in 2006, with a former UNMIL soldier, Johan Runesson, he confirmed that even after the war, many abuses were carried out against women (Larsson, 2006).

When discussing the effectiveness of Resolution 1325 in Liberia, it becomes evident that the challenges lie not in the absence of a well-planned and organized mandate or effective NAPs, but rather in the therapeutic capacities of the NAP. Discrepancies often arise between the blueprints outlined in the NAPs and the available facilities. Notably, there is a lack of a robust collaboration or “iron triangle” between the government, civil society, and women’s organizations, each of which plays distinct roles (Nadeem, Babar and Amjad, 2022).

Investors favor short-term projects with easily achievable targets over long-term plans requiring substantial energy, time, and resources. Another pressing issue revolves around the ambiguous role of the justice system and judicial authorities, causing delays in cases. Consequently, citizens are compelled to resort to out-of-court settlements, exploiting victims of violence and sexual assault (Nadeem, Babar and Amjad, 2022).

In Liberia, the challenges extend to women peacekeepers who face obstacles due to the misogynistic nature of certain working organizations (Kamara, 2021). They are predominantly assigned short-term projects rather than being preferred for field missions. Even when participating in field missions, they encounter difficulties in implementing mandates in the presence of their male counterparts. Despite these obstacles, Liberian women have established numerous Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and peacebuilding institutions, actively contributing to post-conflict reconstruction (Nadeem, Babar and Amjad, 2022).
According to Nadeem, Babar and Amjad (2022), resolution 1325 has demonstrated greater success in Liberia, garnering more positive feedback. Notably, Liberia is widely regarded as successful in implementing the four pillars of Security Council Resolution 1325 such as participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery, as noted by members of the international community (Freese, 2019). Furthermore, the effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations has been notably higher in Liberia, particularly with the successful conclusion of UNMIL in 2019. However, despite women’s extensive achievements in their engagement during the peace agreements in 2003, in the later years, there has been a weakening in women’s political representation in Liberia, dropping from 16% to 10% (UN Women, 2023).

Despite the improvements in Liberia, there is a call for perseverance. This recommends that it will necessitate time for the resolution to efficiently recognize the interconnectedness between the advancement of women's rights and the maintenance of international peace and security (Tryggestad, 2009).

7. Analysis

In the analysis we are going to discuss and analyze our findings with help of the analytical frameworks that we chose to use. Our chosen analytical frameworks, rooted in feminist and representation theories, guide the analysis process. Through the feminist lens, we delve into the power dynamics, societal norms, and gender roles that shape women's roles in peacebuilding.

7.1 Power Structures

The strategies that were implemented in the country during Ellen Johnson Sirleff’s presidency, focus on the emphasis of women’s rights and protection and not losing focus on these issues as it aligns with one of the subgoals presented in Resolution 1325 (Runsala and Källström, 2018).

One crucial aspect of Johnson Sirleaf’s strategy was the prioritization of women’s empowerment through education. This involved the implementation of compulsory and free primary education, accompanied by literacy training and improved working conditions (Runsala and Kjällström,
Sirleaf expresses a desire to increase awareness and knowledge about women and their role in society within the educational system. This aligns with the goals of feminist theory, which seeks to enhance women’s participation and rights (Duncanson, 2016).

During Sirleaf’s tenure, aimed to focus on empowering women in various societal areas like encouraging families to educate all their children not only the males, providing economic programs that enable Liberian women - particularly the market women to assume their proper place in the economic process and enforce the law against rape (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018). Sirleaf's proposals aim to create a more realistic and comprehensive society by challenging the traditional gender schemas and roles deep-rooted in the community fabric, as discussed by Bem (1983).

Women’s rights to ownership have improved as women today can own land, properties, and inheritance. By giving women these rights, their status increases generally in all areas as ownership can provide them with a new type of status in society, where they are more equal to men (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018). Improving women’s rights to ownership is a positive step, aligning with feminist goals of dismantling legal barriers to gender equality (Luttrell, 2020).

Johnson Sirleaf emphasizes the importance of empowering women through education, strategies she implemented such as making primary education compulsory and free, however, noting free education was insufficient alone, she also provided literacy training and working conditions, enabling women to experience upward mobility (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018). One of the biggest accomplishments during Sirleaf’s presidency was that she increased school enrollment by 40% (EPDC, 2018). With the recognition of education as a significant barrier to women’s leadership, the implementation of special programs to support girl’s education was implemented throughout Liberia. With the increase in literacy rate Sirleaf was hopeful this would enable women to actively participate in elections. The goal was for women to read and understand ballots, providing them with a voice in decision-making at their levels. This strategy aimed to empower women through increased political participation and civic engagement (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018).
Through a joint collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) to support women farmers, an initiative aimed to boost the production and sale of female farmers produce, reducing the need for women to cross borders to fetch food. Economic programs were also designed to enable Liberian women, especially those involved in market activity to play a significant role in the country’s economic processes (Runsala and Kjällström, 2018).

Although Sirleaf did implement a variety of improvements for women and girls, this however did not increase women’s participation during the third election. As only 163 out of 1,026 approved candidates were women which constitutes to a mere 16% (Pailey and Williams, 2017). This represents only a marginal increase since 2005 and 2011, when women accounted for 14% and 11% of candidates respectively. When Sirleaf took office in 2005 only 13 women were elected to the national legislature, this number decreased to 8 in 2011 when Sirleaf was elected president for a second mandate. According to Pailey and Williams (2017) they find Sirleaf over-glorified as a feminist icon, troubling considering her 12-year presidency only served the interest of a small elite group of women and men in politics and therefore upheld long-standing patriarchal norms.

7.2 The Failure and Achievements of Resolution 1325 & Societal Norms Affecting Women

7.2.1 Gender: Challenges in Implementing Resolution 1325 and Societal Norms

According to the previous statements, Resolution 1325 has had some successes over the years. A number of studies have demonstrated that Resolution 1325 has led to the inclusion of women as peacekeepers, as indicated by Freese (2019), Dzathor, (2020), Kodila-Tedika (2013), Nadeem, Babar and Amjad, (2022), with over seven percent of uniformed military, police, justice, and corrections personnel in field missions being women by 2021 (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).

In analyzing the implementation of Resolution 1325 from a feminist perspective, the focus is on women’s representation, guided by feminist principles aimed at enhancing women’s involvement during and after conflicts. However, in post-conflict scenarios, particularly in Liberia, feminist representation encounters limitations, primarily due to the substantial gap between policy intent
and its on-the-ground impact. The Resolution 1325 does not influence the legislature on violence against women and societal norms (Bell & O'Rourke, 2010).

The failure of Resolution 1325 to safeguard women's rights in Liberia appears from a feminist standpoint as a systemic issue that is deeply rooted in gender norms. This situation parallels with Duncanson (2016) critique of pre-1325 which failed in recognizing the gendered nature of war where peace operations remained oblivious to the differential impact of conflict on men and women. Women are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence due to these norms, as outlined in a study conducted by Utrikesdepartementet in 2016 (Utrikesdepartementet, 2016).

Liberia is a country embedded in traditional gender norms, which are deeply rooted in the dynamics of social power relations. Norms such as these are also linked to larger structures of power in politics, economics, and religion, which have a significant impact on women and girls in a variety of ways (Letouzé et al., 2021).

The exposure of women and children to SGBV is greater when there are other disasters than just conflicts, for example, economic downturns, ebola epidemics, COVID-19 crises, etc. Child marriages are also increasing, which also increases the exposure of women to their 'caregiving roles', which make it difficult to exit (Sekou Bility, 2023; United States Agency for International Development, 2023; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015). That aligns with Bem's (1983) statement that gender norms are adopted during the early years of life.

As a result, representation theory highlights the inadequacy of formal policy structures in providing meaningful representation and protection to women. Although the policy was intended to protect women's rights, the lived experiences of women in Liberia's post-conflict settings demonstrate a stark disparity. Butler’s (1999) theory emphasizes how gender is a fundamental categorization in society and focuses on the nuanced hierarchy of gender power, with qualities related with masculinity often placed in higher esteem than those linked to femininity.

The divergence between policy ideals and real-world outcomes underscores the imperative for a more comprehensive integration of feminist and representation theories. This integration is essential for advancing and enhancing the protection and participation of women.
It calls for a reevaluation of power dynamics and structures shaping the representation of women's interests and an assessment of their inefficiency in translating these representations into tangible empowerment and protection.

7.2.2 Cultural and Social Norms: Impact on Women's Roles in Liberia

Women's roles in Liberia are deeply shaped by cultural beliefs, as well as socially constructed norms, as illustrated by this research. As Moran (1990) discussed, the prevailing notions, such as; responsibility for managing their households that makes them discouraged from pursuing formal education. Because of this, Liberian women find themselves heavily reliant on their husbands for economic support and employment opportunities, rather than having direct access to them. As a result of these deeply ingrained social norms, women have difficulty adjusting to a new setting and organizing themselves to take on socially diverse roles outside the home (Kangas et al., 2015, cited in Sekou Bility, 2023). This underscores the predetermined roles and future in Liberia due to cultural beliefs and socially constructed norms, as some believe that women’s role is to take care of the home and therefore do not need a formal education (Moran, 1990).

In Baumann's (2018) research, she explores the aftermath of Resolution 1325, discovering persistent barriers that hinder women's active participation in peacebuilding efforts, including institutionalized gender bias, cultural norms, and a lack of meaningful representation. Bem (1983) further argues that individuals' perceptions and behaviors are shaped during their formative years, with children internalizing gender norms that are prevalent in society and that cultural expectations regarding behavior and others are made during childhood. A lot of effort is put into cultivating empathy and care in girls, while power and strength are promoted in boys in an early stage of life. From a feminist perspective, women should be allowed to take on diverse roles and contribute meaningfully to public spheres by breaking down these norms. The need for meaningful representation is crucial for achieving gender equality in decision-making processes and peacebuilding initiatives to dismantle such barriers (Baumann, 2018; Disch and Hawkesworth, 2018).
The policy and the implementation of Resolution 1325 was to ensure to help and improve women's participation and protect women and children during and after the war. However, in the Liberian context, Resolution 1325 has fallen short of adequately protecting women’s rights in post-conflict situations. This is evident in the continued vulnerability of women to sexual violence and gender-based violence (Utrikesdepartementet, 2016; United States Agency for International Development, 2023).

Challenges persist, particularly when confronted with deeply rooted norms in culture, society, history, and religion. The 2019 study conducted by The Embassy in Monrovia, in collaboration with UN Women, involved 25 participants and explored gender norms in Liberia. The study revealed the use of certain words to describe ‘women’ and ‘men’, shedding light on the prevailing attitudes and perceptions in Liberian society (Swedish Embassy Monrovia, 2019).

In order to achieve help and improvement of women during and after war, and represent them in peace processes, the gender norms must look different. This centers around Griffin's Liberal Feminism on reaching fairness through legal changes (2017).

7.3 The Feminist Perspective of Women’s Participation in The Peace Agreement in 2003

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003 can be much thanked because of women's involvement. The involvement of women played a crucial role in the peace process that led to the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003 in Liberia. WIPNET and WANEP, and other women's groups were instrumental in advocating for peace and influencing the negotiations (Dzathor, 2020). Women represented the civil society; they were instrumental in demanding formal talks, organized mass actions campaigns and pressured negotiators, which efforts contributed to building national and international pressure on key stakeholders to find a resolution to the conflict (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023b).

Considering resolution 1325 and the policy and wants it outlined in 2000, as well as women's actions for peace, one would assume that women would be able to participate in the peace agreement negotiations and would be represented at the negotiation table. Despite this, no
women were specifically represented at the negotiating table when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed by both sides (United Nations Security Council, 2003).

Based on Representation Theory and Feminist Theory, the absence of explicit provisions regarding women's representation at the negotiating table highlights the broader problem of gendered exclusion within formal peace processes (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023a.). Clearly, there are systemic challenges that women face in gaining access to decision-making spaces as a result of this gap in representation. In the formal negotiation sphere, women face structural barriers to inclusion resulting from representation theory, which investigates the depiction and representation of marginalized groups (Baumann, 2018).

In spite of this, feminist theory sheds light on how women's advocacy efforts can transform these systemic barriers. Even though the peace agreement did not include specific women's rights provisions, the activism and pressure of women's groups played a crucial role in convincing international stakeholders to recognize the need to address women's rights. Women have the capacity to influence policy changes and challenge patriarchal structures as a result of Feminist Theory (Disch and Hawkesworth, 2018; Fuest, 2008).

Together with Galligan's (2007) view on political presentation and feminist theory, they both recognize the significance of varied voices and sides in decision-making processes. Galligan’s (2007) focus together with Philips (1998) lays on political representation and gender equality in a much broader context, this research focus lays on more formal peace processes and the need to address gender exclusion.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, the goal of this thesis was to study women’s role in peacebuilding and examine how women have contributed to this in Liberia. This study has illuminated the multifaceted dynamics of women’s participation and women’s rights in post-conflict Liberia, with a particular
focus on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the feminist perspective on women’s involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Liberia.

Exploring Liberia’s history marked by conflict and gender inequality, this subject was interesting to research about, as it offered diverse insights and opportunities for women to engage in peace processes. This due to the impactful strikes and rallies engaged by women in order to achieve and perceive peace in Liberia.

The great success of the first female president in Africa marked a great breakthrough for stability in the country. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s presidency marked a significant effort towards advancing women’s rights and empowerment, especially through educational initiatives and economic programs. However, the tangible impact on women’s political participation remained limited, as evidenced by the low representation of women in elections before, during and after her tenure. While progress was made in granting women rights to ownership and improving literacy rates, the gap between policy intent and real-world outcomes persisted. WIPNET also contributed greatly to women’s empowerment, in its commitment to sustainable peace, as they implemented various initiatives including developing a manual for grassroots women, establishing “Peace Huts” and launching the “Voices of Women” radio program. The organization’s role extended beyond peace talks, contributing significantly to the development of National Action Plans (NAPs).

The analysis of Resolution 1325’s implementation revealed both achievements and failures. The notable increase in the representation of women in peacekeeping forces demonstrated progress, yet the policy falls short in addressing deep-seated gender norms that perpetuate violence against women. The study highlighted the enduring challenges stemming from cultural and social norms, which intersect with economic downturns and health crises, further exposing women to vulnerabilities.

Finally, while Liberia has made strides in recognizing the important role played by women in peacebuilding, there remains an urgent need for a comprehensive societal transformation. In order to achieve gender equality, it is necessary to dismantle entrenched norms, advocate for educational opportunities as universal rights, and challenge the deeply rooted structures that
perpetuate inequality. A number of Liberian women's stories, both as peacebuilders and survivors, demonstrate their tenacity and commitment to creating a more equitable society.

The feminist perspective in Liberian context underscores the vital significance of women’s dynamic participation in peacebuilding endeavors, a role exemplified by their meaningful contributions to the 2003 peace agreement. Despite their notable absence from the negotiating table, women’s unwavering advocacy and pressure played a vital role in gaining international recognition of the imperative to address women’s rights in post conflict settings. This study sheds light on the ongoing struggle to bridge the gap between policy ideals and lived experiences, advocating for a more comprehensive integration of Feminist and Representation theories to cultivate a nuanced understanding of women’s roles in peacebuilding in Liberia.

In the broader context, Tryggestad’s (2009) emphasis on patience aligns with the overarching narrative of this study. The implementation of Resolution 1325 in 2000 indeed marked a formal breakthrough, acknowledging the vital link between advancing women’s rights and fostering international peace and security. However, the tangible impact of the resolution became apparent through the sustained advocacy efforts of women, whose tenacity and dedication led to international pressure and the incorporation of provisions addressing women’s rights and gender equality in the final agreement.

The women’s advocacy efforts were pivotal in recognizing the interconnectedness between gender equality and sustainable peace. This recognition resulted in the inclusion of women in various post-conflict mechanisms and transition processes. The interplay between international resolutions, local advocacy, and the subsequent inclusion of women in leadership positions highlight the complexity of the journey towards gender equality.

Further research should delve deeper into the persisting challenges faced by women in post-conflict settings, particularly dismantling deeply ingrained cultural and societal norms. These recommendations include sustained efforts to challenge gender norms, enhance meaningful representation, and address systemic barriers through comprehensive policy changes.
In conclusion, this study not only sheds light on the complex landscape of women’s rights in post-conflict Liberia but also advocates for the transformative approach that transcends policy rhetoric to create tangible improvements in the lives of women.

These narratives resonate not only with the codes of Liberal Feminism, but also with Representation, that centers around achieving equality in the public sphere. This underlines the deep importance of varied voices in shaping political agendas and challenging traditional power structures. The result underscores the tireless gaps and challenges that are faced by women who seek to contribute to meaningful peacebuilding, which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals on Gender Equality and on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.
Bibliography


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