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Feminism in Peacebuilding:
a Case Study of the inclusion of women and gender-related topics in the peace process in Colombia

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Introduction

Throughout history, the role of women in the peacebuilding processes has been overlooked by national and international policymakers.

The fact that war and peace are gendered activities, virtue to the fact that women's experiences, responses, and needs differ from men's, has been disregarded. As a matter of fact, women are more severely affected by war than men because discrimination and gender-based violence are unfortunately common in war environments. The neglect of the impact on women of conflict and post-conflict dynamics has resulted in gaps in the design and implementation of support and protection.

The theory of peacebuilding processes has been slow to acknowledge the important role that women and gender-related topics play for the construction of a lasting peace. The Peace Agreement of 2016 in Colombia broke new ground in this respect. As a consequence, we will deal with a number of research questions that arise from the Peace Agreement:

1. How have women and gender-related topics been incorporated in the Peace Agreement in Colombia?
2. On which ideas and institutional resources could that particular process build in order to successfully implement a feminist perspective in peacebuilding?
3. What were the limitations and obstacles to including a feminist perspective in the Colombian Peace process?
4. What can this particular case teach us in general terms about the inclusion of a feminist perspective and gender-related topics in peace mediation?

In order to address these research questions, the first chapter provides a historical overview of feminist theories. By examining various feminist theories, we will gain an understanding of how gender-sensitive policies can transform conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The same chapter highlights how different theories of peacebuilding uncover the struggles that women have to endure during conflict periods. Gender violence, which has been largely ignored by male peacebuilders, is the reason

why there must be a strong implementation of women in peace operations, who can add their strong viewpoint into this.

The second chapter offers an overview of the conflict in Colombia and the following peace process, including the Comprehensive Peace Agreement reached in 2016, with an introduction to the UNSC Resolution 1325.

The third chapter, moving from this evidence, analyzes (RQ 1) how women and gender-related topics have been incorporated into the Peace Agreement to highlight (RQ 2) on what ideas and institutional resources this particular process was built in order to implement a feminist perspective in peacebuilding. The limitations and obstacles to including a feminist perspective in the Columbian Peace process are then analyzed (RQ 3).

Concluding, (RQ 4) what this case teaches us about the inclusion of a feminist perspective and gender-related topics in peace mediation will be addressed.

1.0 Chapter 1 - FEMINISM AND PEACEBUILDING

1.1 Feminist Theories

1.1.1   Background

Before focusing on the explanations behind the importance and the efforts to include women in the peacebuilding processes, it is necessary to highlight the historical changes in the perception of the role of women within society and the consequent theories that have been elaborated since the end of the nineteenth century.

For *feminist theories,* we intend "those theories which emphasize the centrality of gender for any analysis of the social world. All strands of feminist theory share the desire to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them."[1] This means that, in addition to playing a major role in social stratification, gender shapes people's possibilities and chances throughout their lives in many facets of society. Men and women now have different roles in terms of power, reputation, and income due to the existing division of labor between the sexes. Gender differences still form the cornerstone of inequality, notwithstanding the progress women have made globally. Examining and explaining gender disparity has gained prominence, and several theoretical stances have been put out to explain why males continue to dominate.

Summarizing the presentation of feminist theories in the standard sociology manual by Giddens and Sutton, one can categorize feminist movements into three waves. The first wave, which can be collocated between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, emerged out of an environment of urban industrialism and was defined as "liberal feminism." This movement emphasized individual rights, equality, and freedom and was based on classical liberalism's tenets.

The second wave started in the 1960s and lasted until the 1990s. This wave, defined as "radical or Marxist feminism," occurred against the backdrop of the civil rights and anti-war movements, as well as the rising self-awareness of numerous minority groups

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[1] A. Giddens and P.W. Sutton, *Sociology*, Hoboken: Wiley, 2021, ninth edition, 957.

worldwide. Taking a more fundamental stance against gender inequality, radical feminism contends that patriarchal structures, that are ingrained in all facets of society, are the true cause of women's subjugation. Radical or Marxist feminism main goal was the liberation and emancipation of women from male power structures. To conclude, the third wave emerged midway through the 1990s and was influenced by post-colonial and post-modern studies. Defined as "diversity feminism and gender", numerous concepts, such as "universal womanhood," body, gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity, were thrown into disarray at that time. The goal of this third wave of feminism was to expand the program of emancipation and equal rights to all marginalized groups by integrating the concept of "intersectionality."

With an emphasis on several feminist theories, this chapter seeks to offer a theoretical framework for comprehending women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives. A comprehensive understanding of the achievements and obstacles associated with implementing gender-sensitive policies in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction can be obtained by analyzing feminist peacebuilding theory, intersectional feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, postcolonial feminism, and feminist peacebuilding theory. This theoretical underpinning will be essential for delving into the Colombian case study and assessing the significance of women's involvement in this specific peace process and, in general, in ongoing peace processes.

1.1.2   The First Wave: Liberal feminism

As previously mentioned, liberal feminism served as a foundational theory that significantly influenced the development of subsequent feminist theories. Liberal feminism, which has its roots in the Enlightenment principles of justice, liberty, and individual rights, asserts that women and men ought to enjoy equal rights and opportunities in all domains of life, including the political, economic, and social ones. The fundamental tenet of this theory is that laws and policies that support equal rights are instrumental in addressing gender inequality, which is largely caused by discriminatory laws, policies, and social practices.

John Stuart Mill, one of the main proponents of nineteenth-century liberalism, made one of the strongest arguments for women's equality in social and political life of his time. Feminists of all ages have praised Mill's groundbreaking essay, "The Subjection of Women,"[2] written with his wife Harriet Taylor Mill as a strong case for women's participation in the national political sphere. For their time, the Mills theories were revolutionary. They maintained that, in addition to being unfair, the subjugation of women posed a significant obstacle to societal progress. By advocating for women's equal rights and opportunities, the Mills challenged conventional thinking and called for a review of the legal and social structures that upheld gender inequality.

Throughout the nineteenth century, national movements were greatly impacted by Mill's style of liberalism, which propelled efforts to include women and other excluded groups in politics. Progressives at the time were committed to bringing previously marginalized groups into the political arena in order to increase the size of the democratic electorate. The goal was to reshape the country by implementing a representative and inclusive democracy. Both feminists and progressives saw the fight for women's equality as an essential part of the larger liberal agenda. The goal of this agenda was to topple the deeply ingrained social and political structures that prevented women and other oppressed groups from fully engaging in public life.[3]

Liberal feminism contends that women will be able to fully engage in public life and improve society if they are granted the same legal rights and opportunities as men. This viewpoint is especially pertinent in the context of peacebuilding, where it is believed that including women in decision-making processes will improve the efficacy and long-term viability of peace agreements in addition to being an issue of social justice. Being liberal feminism a simple and direct theory, the ongoing challenge of liberal feminism is to go beyond formal rights to support effective participation and political power for women.

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[2] J.S. Mill and H. Taylor Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869).

[3] Rogers, Dorothy, 'Women's Rights, Suffrage, and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century America', in Lydia Moland, and Alison Stone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of American and British Women Philosophers in the Nineteenth Century* (online edn, Oxford Academic, 18 July 2023).

1.1.3 The Second Wave: Marxist and Radical Feminism

During the second wave of feminism, Marxist or Socialist feminism and Radical feminism have emerged as two of the most significant and influential movements. They have guided a dramatic change in attention towards broader social and cultural issues. Marxist feminists, who focused on the exploitation of women's work in capitalist countries, studied the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Their theories mainly developed from Marx's conflict theory, but it was Engels who provided an account of gender inequality from a Marxist perspective, especially in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State.*[4] Indeed, Engels claimed that the bourgeois family structure, the idea of private property, and social conditions all contribute to the subjection of women. Moreover, in order to eradicate the oppression of women, a radical revolution of the economic structures is mandatory, leading to the abolition of private property, the economic independence of women, and the total eradication of the bourgeoisie.

Following Engels ideas, Marxist feminists analyzed women's oppression through the lenses of capitalism, seeking the elimination of patriarchal gender relations as an integral aspect of socialist transformation. They demanded that the family be reorganized, that "domestic slavery" be abolished, and that some sort of collective system be put in place to take care of the housekeeping and raise the children. On the other hand, radical feminism focused more on the patriarchal systems, considering them responsible for the exploitation of women. Indeed, patriarchy was viewed as a universal phenomenon that existed across time and cultures, meaning that family has always been one of the main causes of the societal oppression of women. They contend that men take advantage of women by profiting from the unpaid domestic work that women perform at home. For instance, regardless of their income or number of hours worked in a formal capacity, women still perform a greater share of household chores than males. This is despite the fact that they now comprise a sizable portion of the workforce. Men have the collective

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[4] Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*, original edition 1884.

ability to create gendered barriers to entry through processes of group closure, which effectively keep women out of many positions of influence and power in society.

Although there are differences among radical feminists regarding where they situate the origins of patriarchy, most of them concur that it is rooted in the appropriation of women's bodies and sexualities. An early radical feminist writer, Shulamith Firestone,[5] maintained that men dominate women's roles in childrearing and reproduction. Because women are naturally capable of bearing children, they become materially dependent on men for support and security. The nuclear family is the social structure that organizes this "biological inequality." According to other radical feminists, a major component of male supremacy is male aggression against women. Such a perspective holds that sexual harassment, domestic abuse, and rape are all components of the systemic oppression of women rather than singular incidents with separate criminal or psychological causes.

Gender inequality is influenced by everyday encounters as well, including nonverbal cues, listening and interrupting habits, and women's perception of security in public. In addition, men force popular ideas of sexuality and attractiveness on women to create a particular kind of femininity. Women are thus becoming "objectified"[6] by the media, the fashion industry, and advertising, making them sexual objects whose primary purpose is to amuse and satisfy males. Radical feminists contend that since patriarchy is a systemic phenomenon, the only way to achieve gender equality is to topple the patriarchal system. In this line, radical feminists argue that this set of beliefs leads those supporting, and willing to socially reproduce, the patriarchal system to hold that since war is a male business, peace processes are a male business too. Women's participation is not to be encouraged.

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[5] S. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, New York: William Morrow, 1970.

[6] Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21(2), 173–206.

1.1.4 The Third Wave: Intersectionality and Black Feminism

As mentioned in the introductory remarks, the third wave of feminism was not characterized by specific theories and ideas and cannot be seen as a reaction to the second wave. On the contrary, it offered a different tactical approach and different viewpoints that were not previously considered.

Indeed, following the explanation of Claire Snyder, third-wave feminism mainly integrated three important perspectives and problems: intersectionality, multivocality and sex wars.[7] First of all, for "intersectionality" we mean the approach coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her work *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*.[8] Crenshaw, including a wider range of categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, meant to show the significance of recognizing that multiple types of discrimination can be found within one subject and can intertwine with each other. In other words, intersectionality examines how power relationships between different categories are not mutually exclusive and independent, but rather are constructed and function together, affecting all aspects of the social world.

Crenshaw also stated that black feminist theory relies heavily on an intersectional approach.[9] Indeed, based on the critiques made by black feminist scholars, it is not right to generalize about women's subjugation as a whole from the experience of one particular group. Black feminists argue that it is unrealistic to expect a philosophy of gender equality that ignores racism to effectively explain the oppression of black women.[10]

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[7] Snyder, R. C. (2008). What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay. *Signs*, *34*(1), 175–196.

[8] Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989, n. 1: 139–167.

[9] Crenshaw, K. (1991) "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color". *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1241-1299.

[10] bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 15-20.

Moreover, black feminist scholars frequently emphasize historical details that shed light on the contemporary issues that women of color face starting from civil rights struggle, segregation and the strong heritage of slavery. Indeed, they argue that early black suffragettes were in favor of the women's rights movement but understood that racial issues could not be disregarded because black women faced discrimination on the basis of both race and gender. Black women have not played a major role in the women's liberation movement in recent years, in part because ideas of race have dominated their identities far more than "womanhood."[11] That is to say, Hooks explores these concepts also questioning the strongest points sustained by her predecessors - as the perception of family as the nest of patriarchy - making them inapplicable to black communities, due to the strong bonds in families against racism. Indeed, contrary to white communities, the oppression of black women can be found in different locations.

Following black feminism, postmodern feminism contested the concept that all women have the same identity and experience. Namely, postmodern feminists reject the idea that there is a broad theory that can explain how women fit into society or even that there is a single, universal definition of what it is to be a "woman." As a result, they dismiss as "essentialist" alternative theories of gender inequality that are based on patriarchy, racism, or class.[12] On the contrary, postmodernism encourages the acceptance of many different individuals and groups, who all have such distinct backgrounds, such as heterosexuals, homosexuals, and black women- amongst others - and celebrates them for their diversity. In addition, postmodern feminists promote the importance of deconstructing male language and masculine views of the world, in an attempt to create open and fluid terms which reflect women's personal experiences. Deconstruction challenges all binary ideas[13] by reinterpreting their opposites in a way that is constructive and novel.

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[11] Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 229-235.

[12] Beasley, Christine. *What is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory*. (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 45-50.

[13] Men are cast as normal while the female is always cast in the role of the 'other' (Szitanyi 2020, 24).

Pursuing this trend, the foundation of queer theory, which defies many accepted sociological notions about identity, is the theory that gender and sexuality can be completely separated. Poststructuralist theory, especially that of Michel Foucault (1978) and Judith Butler (1990), had a significant influence on queer theory, which questions the idea that persons' "identity" is something that is generally established or given to them by socializing. [14] Queer theorists believe, drawing on Foucault, that gender, sexuality, and all the phrases associated with these concepts are not references to something objectively real or 'natural,' but rather form a special discourse[15] Therefore, all identities that seem stable or "authentic," including those that seem to defy the heterosexual norm that is dominant in society, are called into question by queer theory.

To conclude, the analysis of the three waves of feminism offers an exhaustive understanding of how feminist theories have transformed and evolved to better comprehend the needs of women and the barriers they had to overcome. Without any doubt, the theories are different from each other, but are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, liberal feminism has paved the way for women's legal rights and suffrage; radical and Marxist feminism has investigated the structural and economic roots of gender inequality through the concept of patriarchy; intersectionality, black feminism, postmodernism, and queer theory have marked a significant turn by involving different perspectives into feminist theories, criticizing the binary and simple distinctions that characterized their predecessors.

In the context of peacebuilding, this wide theoretical framework allows for a deeper understanding of how gender intersects with identity and oppression, acknowledging the historical struggles of women from different contexts and highlighting the relevance of incorporating different perspectives to create an overall strategy to address gender inequalities and peace processes.

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[14] Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[15] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

1.2 Peacebuilding theories

1.2.1 Background

Having offered an overview of feminist theories and their importance in comprehending the role of women in social structures, it is time to dive deeper into the concept of "peacebuilding." Since the end of the Cold War, international peacebuilding operations in post-conflict contexts have grown in number; yet, they seldom lived up to the expectations of the international community, leading to disappointments and reversals. The idea that a well-planned process of institution-building towards democratization may introduce modern political order to post-conflict countries forms the basis of the international community's strategy for establishing lasting peace in war-torn states. In fact, this is a challenging and complex process that encompasses different actions aimed at rebuilding a society after an armed conflict. True justice for victims and members of society and, if possible, forgiveness – all fundamental ingredients of a lasting peace – are made possible only by an inclusive and exhaustive peace. Indeed, in a postwar context, leaders should never wave in their commitment to helping the victims, even after it has ended, and they should continue their efforts to create and maintain peace.

Particular attention should be paid, in this context, to the condition of women. As mentioned, in fact, peacebuilding processes often fail to recognize the critical environments that women are forced to endure in war times. Inevitably, this leads to gaps in the building of post-conflict safe provisions and institutions, especially when peace actors are only or mostly men. Consequently, processes of peacebuilding need to include more women not only because they are more sensitive to the needs and expectations of female war victims, but also for the attention women usually pay to all the services, like health and education, that in postwar settings make a state legitimate.

In this section, I will provide an overview of the process of peacebuilding and peacemaking. Starting from the analysis of the relations between war and women – gender violence, sexual slavery, and exploitation – in conflict zones, I will link these

theories to a broader feminist discourse. Indeed, in order to understand this complex topic better, it is important to examine also the relations between women and peace processes.

1.2.2   Women and War

The concept of *Gender-based violence* (GBV), that is "violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately" (European Commission)[16] is key to building a sound argument on women in war and peace.

During war times, violence against women is one of the most common atrocities committed, but unfortunately is still understudied.

Unfortunately, civilians, mostly women, are the primary victims of groups that use terror as a weapon. Women and young girls are enslaved and imprisoned during looting practices. Usually, these are brought to the battlefield, serving soldiers and meeting their needs, which are predominantly domestic and sexual.[17]

In some cases, "enemy" women are taken to areas where they are sold into the human trafficking market, or, in other remote cases, they are forced to marry their kidnappers and spend the rest of their lives in fear and pain.

Frequently, the purpose of raping, exploiting, and harming women is to degrade their relatives, who are frequently made to witness the assault.

Soldiers on the battlefield, as Eriksson Baaz and Stern point out in their work, commonly think of women as "objects of desire", and this is the consequence of the patriarchal structures they belong to and of all those values, passed by previous generations, they grew up with. In their work, the two authors also show how soldiers, who are men at war, in specific circumstances where abuses were not a reflection of a "spiral of violence," explained that these were motivated *just by* a "need" coming from their masculine libido.

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[16] European Institute for Gender Equality accessed August 11, 2024.

[17] Manjoo, Rashida & McRaith, Calleigh. (2011). Gender-Based Violence and Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Areas. *Cornell International Law Journal*. 44. 11-31.

So, we can conclude that men, when they feel threatened in their masculinity, develop a sentiment of aversion to women and channel this anger into gender-based abuses.[18]

The violence that women experience during conflicts is thus closely linked to the violence that they may experience in their daily lives in times of peace; it does not result only from the conditions of war but from the underlying patriarchal societal structures highlighted by feminist thinking. Because they are women, and frequently because they lack the same rights or autonomy as men, they endure violence all around the world and in many different situations, including war. They experience sexual assault and slavery, as well as persecution, prejudice, and oppression based on their gender. When they lack political power or rights, they frequently have few options but to endure this sort of harassment. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women has identified this sort of violence as "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private" but the issue is still the implementations of effective policies worldwide to ensure that women actually enjoy such rights.[19]

 Unfortunately, as widely documented by international organizations themselves, horrible violence goes on with the risk that it may become an accepted "modus operandi," especially in war zones. Additionally, still today, transitional justice procedures either ignore or fail to adequately address the concerns of women who have been victims of gender-based violence. This means that there is a strong need to accomplish more in terms of safety, law enforcement, protection, duty of care, legal compliance and implementation in peace processes. This is more likely if women themselves are included in such endeavors.

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[18] Baaz, Maria & Stern, Maria. (2009). Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence, and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC). *International Studies Quarterly*. 53. 495 - 518.

[19] General Assembly Resolution A/48/49, 1993.

1.2.3 Feminism and Peacebuilding

The necessity of addressing gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings linked feminist theories to peacebuilding theories.

Feminist scholars have examined the intricacy of patriarchal-rooted sexual violence.[20] First, this literature emphasizes the significance of the institutional violence that women experience during conflict. According to feminist researchers, processes for transitional justice have established a "gendered hierarchy of abuses" that fails to take into account the socio-economic harm that mostly affects women who are internally displaced, heads of households, and refugees.[21] Second, institutional processes alone are shown to be inadequate to address how armed conflicts affect women. Testimonies have been limited to particular venues - when they have been heard, and the violence that was made visible in such hearings was limited to that which occurred in public areas.[22] Nonetheless, other scholars have tried to dig deeper to understand better the relationship between women and peacebuilding, concentrating more in the details.

Initially, Porter, examined the role of agency, particularly the one of women in post-conflict societies. In fact, Porter stresses the fact that it is crucial to analyze the role of women not as passive victims, but as agents of change. So, instead of picturing women as vulnerable or victims, he argues that it is important to consider them as contributors to fundamental change in achieving peace.[23] Manchanda, following Porter's work, explains the multiple modalities by which women act as agents: the first one is mainly based on the idea that women intervene to protect their families from violence, showing their

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[20] Reardon, B. A. *Sexism and the War System*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985); Enloe, C., *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[21] Bell, C., & O'Rourke, C. "Does Feminism Need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay." *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007, 23-44.

[22] Hamber, B. "Masculinity and Transitional Justice: An Exploratory Essay." *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, vol. 3(3), 2009, 375-390.

[23] Porter, E. "Women and Peacebuilding: The Importance of Recognizing Women as Agents of Change." *Peacebuilding Review*, vol. 2 (1), 2003, 50-67.

immediate and reactive responses; the other one is that women participate in campaigns against human and rights abuses, fighting for justice; and the last one is that, women have a crucial role in promoting peace and constructing trust between parts of the conflict. [24]

Following this trend, scholars such as Pankhrust, Cohn and Ruddick, have examined how the representation of gender in peacebuilding documents shapes the perception of the policies. Indeed, they criticize the representation of women as *just* peacebuilders because this can also result in undermining the complexity of their experiences and possibilities.[25] To wit, this rigid representation could shade the other dimensions of their lives – combatants, leaders, supervisors – and create a non-exhaustive understanding of their roles and necessities.

More recently, other feminist scholars, such as Puechguirbal and Otto, tried to examine the role of language in drafting policies in the context of peacebuilding. Indeed, they have concluded that language is not merely a representation of reality, but also contributes to the construction of social reality itself. To better understand this, when a policy is written, the words used, the language and how it is constructed, they all play a role in shaping the social world and have consequences. In the case of women described as "victims" in drafted policies, the image of women that are "broken" and need to be "fixed" can construct a distorted perception that can influence the way in which they are treated. [26]

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[24] Manchanda, R. "Women's Agency in Conflict and Peacebuilding: The Case of South Asia." *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 10(2), 2005, 55-76.

[25] Pankhurst, D. "The Role of Women in Peacebuilding: A Comparative Analysis" *Gender and Development*, vol. 12(3), 2004, 80-92; Cohn, C. "Women and Wars: Toward a Conceptual Framework." *Gender and Development*, vol. 12(3), 2004, 64-75; Cohn, C., & Ruddick, S. "Gender and the Post-Conflict Agenda." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 6(1), 2004, 1-22.

[26] Puechguirbal, N. "Discourses on Gender, Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents." *International Peacekeeping*, vol.17(2), 2010, 172-187; Otto, D. "The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade." *Melbourne Journal of International Law*, vol. 10(1), 2009, 11-26.

To conclude, the analysis of feminist theories linked to peacebuilding theories is an effective "lens" to address the research questions related to the peace agreements reached in Colombia. Indeed, having a deeper comprehension of the role of women in wars – as victims, leaders, peacebuilders, mothers, housekeepers and so on – and of the related theories, is key to comprehending the positive and negative aspects of how women can contribute to peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes.

2.0 Chapter 2 - CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

2.1 Background

Colombia has suffered the longest armed conflict in the history of the Western Hemisphere. Many lives have been lost and the rule of law has been undermined by waves of conflict between guerrilla, government, and paramilitary groups. For those seeking redress for previous wrongdoings and human rights violations, the blurring lines separating drug trafficking from political crimes and the heightened focus on counterterrorism present formidable obstacles.

Without any doubt, managing conflicts and achieving peace remained a persistent challenge throughout history that requires the involvement of different actors, mainly state actors but not only. Indeed, in recent years, external actors have proved to be essential in conflict resolution universally. Moreover, as I have highlighted before, introducing gender perspectives into peacebuilding has been one of the main difficulties in the history of conflict management. This is why, in 2000, with Resolution 1325, the UN acknowledged the nature of warfare, including the exclusion of women from participation in peace processes and stressed the important role that women should play in peacebuilding efforts.

As mentioned before, this chapter offers an overview of the Colombian conflict that started in 1946 – the 'longest spell of internal political violence anywhere in the modern world'[27]-with a specific focus on its evolution and end over the last three decades. Furthermore, I will analyze the role of the state and the international actors that took part in the resolution of the conflict, highlighting the importance of UNSC Resolution 1325 whose goal was the promotion of the participation of women in peace processes. The analysis developed in the first chapter and in this second chapter will be helpful for

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[27] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, Tatiana Acevedo and Juan Manuel Viatela, 'Violent Liberalism? State, Conflict and Political Regime in Colombia, 1930-2006,' *Crisis States Working Papers*, Paper No. 19, 2007, 3.

understanding this specific conflict and answering the research questions in the third, and last, chapter.

2.2 The Armed Conflict: causes and evolution

2.2.1 *La Violencia*

The majority of the narratives surrounding violence in Colombia in the 1940s and 1950s centers on partisanship. Although there were other Liberal and Conservative political parties in Latin America, Colombia had the highest degree of party affiliation. It is the only nation where the political parties that dominated politics in the 1800s are still in positions of authority today. In fact, party loyalty was practically inherited in Colombia due to the country's extreme party affiliation. One important aspect of violence in the mid-1940s was partisan violence which erupted across the nation in 1946, when the Liberals lost control of the government to the Conservatives.[28]

This violence led to the period defined *La Violencia* which was characterized by a ten-year civil war from 1948 to 1958. This internal conflict, which was fought between the Colombian Conservative Party and the Colombian Liberal Party, can be defined as the starting point of the most violent and bloodiest civil war that history has witnessed.
The tension between the two political parties can be traced back to years before but skyrocketed after the assassination of the liberal party leader, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. This murder triggered a violent riot in Bogotá, named '*el Bogotazo'*, which escalated on a national level causing the rise of armed paramilitary groups aligned with both parties.

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[28] Daniel Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia: Evolución Socio-Política de Colombia entre 1930 y 1953* (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2001); Paul Oquist, *Violencia, Conflicto y Política en Colombia* (Bogotá: Instituto de Estudio Colombianos, 1978); John C. Pollock, 'Violence, Politics and Elite Performance: The Political Sociology of La Violencia in Colombia,' *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 10(2), (1975) ,22-50.

This civil disorder also sparked in rural zones, between farmers, turning from political violence to social violence as well, an exacerbation that led to massacres, homicides and terror acts. Since the republic's founding, the landowners and the peasantry had competing interests due to the commercialization of agriculture. The agrarian question with time passing, led to the collapse of public power. Even before the cultivation and manufacturing of drugs and the current wave of globalization, the use of violence to settle disputes had been deeply ingrained in Colombia due to the state's inability to mediate rural conflicts.

La Violencia, which ended in 1958, is thought to have killed 200,000 people, another 600,000 were injured and thousands of Colombians fled their homes.[29] Notwithstanding the fact that *La Violencia* is frequently interpreted through a purely political lens and is thus ignored as a starting point for the so-called "contemporary Colombian conflict,"[30] economic and security complaints were its main drivers. The different manifestations of violence, such as political persecutions, banditry, rural insurrection, conflict amongst neighbors, and official repression, serve to support this conclusion. The essential aspects of violence continue to determine the structure and texture of the Colombian conflict even in the present, despite an increase in the quantity and diversity of non-state players participating since *La Violencia*.[31]

In order to officially put an end to the dreadful and complex period of *La Violencia*, the Conservative and Liberal parties decided to implement a power-sharing governmental plan of sixteen years known as *Frente Nacional* in 1958.
Colombian elites tried to put aside their disagreements to bring an end to a brief military regime and created a new agreement that effectively stopped inter-party killings, but did not resolve old tensions and brought about more frictions. Indeed, the coalition excluded

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[29] Bushnell, David. *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 203.

[30] Palacios, Marco. *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia,* 1875–2002. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 167.

[31] Dugas, John C. "The Colombian Conflict: Political Violence and Organized Crime." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41(3), 2009: 507-509.

other political parties and organizations from participating in politics or elections. Because of this rule, Colombians were led to believe that the *Frente Nacional* was an elite coalition that curtailed democratic rights by restricting and suppressing political participation. The political elites merely preserved both mainstream parties without tackling the problems the nation was facing. This worry and the nation's increasing unemployment rate served as the catalyst for the emergence of left-wing guerrilla organizations.[32]

2.2.2   *Conflicto Armado Interno de Colombia*

Due to the failure of the bipartisan coalition in addressing the problems and difficulties of the Colombians after *La Violencia,* the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) acquired prominence and began to attract more people who aspired to become members of the group and adhere to "the self-defense of the masses."[33]

In other words, the historical ties between Communists and peasants, as well as the disenchantment with the National Front and its military assault against Communist self-defense groups) resulted in the founding of *The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo*[34] (FARC or FARC-EP) in 1964. By the 1970s, the Colombian government had identified four main guerrilla factions in the country's rural areas that lacked any kind of governance and were driven by hatred for the government. These groups included the FARC; the April 19th Movement (M-19); the Popular Liberation Army (EPL); and the Army of National Liberation (ELN).[35] These organizations sought to upend Colombia's political and socioeconomic system, by fueling a violent rise in the 1970s that jeopardized Colombians' sense of safety and security going all against the governmental structure of the nation.

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[32] Martz, John D. *Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 27.

[33] Gott, Richard. *Rural Guerrillas in Latin America*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), 176.

[34] Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

[35] Dugas, John. "The Colombian Conflict: Political Violence and Organized Crime." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41(3), 2009, 507.

Moreover, during the rise of these guerrilla factions and the ending of the National Front era, the problem of narcotics surfaced in Colombia. Indeed, in this period, two major drug cartels took root: one in Medellín - led by Pablo Escobar - and the second in Cali. Colombia thus rapidly became the major dealer in the world of marijuana and cocaine, which were exported to Europe and the United States. The political and economic systems received money from drug trafficking and the legalization of drug lords' profits was possible due to the lenient positions taken by certain government figures. Due to the drug cartels' expanding power, violent crime quickly "reached epidemic proportions" and quadrupled during the 1970s and 1990s. Homicides almost doubled from 57 to 95 per 100,0000 inhabitants from 1985 to 1993. Furthermore, early in the 1990s, the estimated homicide rate in the capital city of Medellín, the province of Antioquia, was 400 per 100,000.[36] In this environment, cartels attempted to pay their way into political protection and use judicial intimidation, murder, and bribery to corrupt government institutions, which is how Colombia came to be known as a "narco-state."[37]

The birth of a future "paramilitarism" in the nation can be attributed to this period (1974–1982) when private self-defense groups combined their hatred of guerrilla groups with funding from drug traffickers and landowners. These paramilitary groups, for example the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), were formed initially by ex-militia, farmers and criminals but also by all citizens who were against the guerrilla groups inspired by the ideology of Marxism and Lenin – as he FARC – and were right-wing oriented. Similarly to the FARC, these armed forces took part in the narcotrafficking trade, enhancing their economic might but also contributing to the violence and control of their respective areas of interest.

Consequently, after 1974 the level of violence (both political and general) started to intensify again. The scene was one of a "sharp crisis of legitimacy, exacerbated [...] by financial scandals, the emergence of drug trafficking (narcotráfico), and the strengthening

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[36] Rosen, Jonathan D. *The Losing War: Plan Colombia and Beyond*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 45.

[37] Méndez, Álvaro. Colombia's National Security Dilemmas: Political Violence, Governance, and Strategic Studies. (London: Routledge, 2017), 134.

of guerrilla movements". [38] These various organizations engaged in a war that resulted in the deaths of a great number of innocent people as they battled for control over major portions of Colombia. This was a war in which violence, extrajudicial executions, mutilations, forced disappearances, torture, genocides, and massacres were all acceptable. Unfortunately, these terrible practices continued until the Peace Agreement of 2016.

2.2.3   Women and War in Colombia

The analysis of the historical context is important for understanding the background of the situation in Colombia during the civil war and consequently for analyzing the peace processes initiated by both state and non-state actors. However, in order to answer the research questions in the third chapter, it is also necessary to understand the role played by Colombian women in the conflict and the specific consequence of the war they suffered most compared to other groups.

Unfortunately, the violence against women and their bodies is an issue that has long remained silent in Colombia, but today it is very much present in public debate and in the academic community, especially with the onset of the transition and then the post-conflict phase. Although the phenomenon began to be recorded late (the National Institute of Legal Medicine started to collect this sort of data only in 2004), women have been the primary victims of sexual violence (which has also affected men and children but in much smaller proportions), in contrast to political violence (disappearances, murders, torture, arbitrary detentions, kidnappings, etc.) primarily directed towards men.[39]

One of the very few attempts to provide a full picture of the impact of the war on women can be found in the dossier of 2013 of the Ruta Pacífica. This is the result of a "collective effort," the fruit of the work of a commission created "from the ground up," aimed at

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[38] M. Palacios, *Entre la legitimidad y la violencia*, 240.

[39] Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. *Violence and Discrimination Against Women in the Armed Conflict in Colombia*. Thematic Reports, n. 67. (Washington: Organization of the American States, 2006).

recounting violence through the experiences and memories of the victims.[40] The group of women interviewed is extremely broad and diverse. The age ranges from 17 to 83 years, with an average age of 45. Although the memory of horror and the condition of "survivors" are common in the context of armed conflict, the places of origin are different (the interviews were conducted in 11 departments out of a total of 32, although many women report events that occurred in other departments where they were forced to flee to protect themselves from violence) and the ethnic identities (46.8% mestizo, 26.3% Afro-descendant, 5.7% Indigenous, and 21.2% other ethnic identities) of the interviewees.

What emerges from the interviews is a multifaceted violence, to the extent that 25% of the interviewed women report having experienced more than six different types of violence throughout their lives. The dossier, as mentioned, is divided into two volumes: the first proposes an analysis of the victims' experience in light of concepts derived from social studies and feminist thought. The second one gathers the "voices" of women, that is, their stories about incidents of violence.

The report explains how the forced disappearance of women was always accompanied by inhumane and degrading treatment, violence, and torture. The dossier mentions 19,625 missing women – 11,297 between 2004 and the 2006, with a decline in the number of disappearances starting from 2010 – but the phenomenon is clearly underestimated, as noted by the Attorney General's Office, due to high levels of secrecy and widespread impunity, especially for this type of crime.[41]

Therefore, gender violence is a deeply ingrained phenomenon in the Colombian setting, one that was rendered even more dramatic and aggravated by the state of conflict. This is why it is common in Colombia to refer to violence against women as a *continuum* that originates in the home and expands to the public domain, driven by prejudice and

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[40] Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres. *Dossier: La violencia en la vida de las mujeres en Colombia*. (Bogotá: Ruta Pacífica, 2013), 28.

[41] ABColombia. *Colombia: Women, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the Peace Process*. (Bogotá: ABColombia, 2013), 40.

stereotypes. The level of violence inflicted upon women severely disturbs their physical and mental well-being, hence highlighting the growing strategic significance of body control in armed conflict.[42]

This situation explains why the Colombian Peace Agreement of 2016 particularly focuses on the fundamental rights of women, LGBTQIA+ people, and ethnic minorities. Indeed, the international community praised the agreement's gender viewpoint as "an example of successful integration of a gender perspective."[43] Indeed, in the agreement there is a prioritization of rights and equality with a promise of exposure of all the crimes related to GBV perpetrated during the Colombian conflict.

However, the "truth of women," or the reality "told by women," is still buried behind official narratives or hidden by the pervasive silence surrounding crimes against women. For this reason, the path ahead is still lengthy.[44] Many victims, both male and female, have been left by the Colombian conflict in an almost never-ending cycle of violence and misery, prompting some commentators to refer to the conflict as a real "war against society." [45]

2.3 The peace process: resolution, institutional actors, local actors

2.3.1   Background

During the Colombian conflict, there have been many attempts by state and non-state actors to reach lasting peace agreements and peace processes. Unfortunately, the long-

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[42] Kairos Canada. *Gender-Based Violence in Colombia: From the Utopia of Norms to Reality*. (Toronto: Kairos Canada, 2021), 52.

[43] Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies*, Report on Implementation Status of Gender Approach within the Colombian Peace Agreement*, University of Notre Dame, 2023.

[44] UNFPA, *"A Fight Against Oblivion: How Colombia Empowers Communities to Combat Conflict-Related Sexual Violence"*, 2023.

[45] "Gender Dynamics During the Colombian Armed Conflict," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*. Accessed August 23, 2024.

lasting and complex conflict which has involved many armed actors, guerrilla and paramilitary groups, has not allowed the actors involved to find a final and resolutory agreement that would be acceptable by everyone. [46]

Moreover, until UNSC Resolution 1325, despite playing a significant role in peace movements, women were rarely given specific attention in the wording of peace agreements, which frequently served as nothing more than demobilization plans. Nonetheless, the early 1990s agreements witnessed a broadening of the process through extensive social participation, involving women and women's organizations, and allusions to "civic participation," if not outright mentioning women, did start to appear in the agreements.

In fact, the Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2016 established a global standard for women's participation in peace processes. Taking up their seats at the table, women addressed some of the main complaints of the impacted communities, such as the right to justice and compensation for victims as well as the return of land. They were successful in getting provisions on the rights of women, girls, LGBTQIA+ and indigenous populations included in the agreement. These provisions aimed at preventing gender-based violence, encourage women's political participation, ensure equal access to rural property for women, and denounce the amnesty of crimes involving sexual violence committed during the conflict.[47]

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[46] The Challenges of Peacebuilding in Colombia," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 4 (2012): 610-634; Claudia Romero, "Colombian Peace Processes: Lessons Learned and Future Prospects," *Latin American Politics and Society* 62(1), 2020, 45-68.

[47] Idris, I., *Conditionality and other approaches to secure women's rights provisions in peace processes.* K4D Helpdesk Report 713. (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2019).

2.3.2 The peace process from the early attempts to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2016

The UNSC resolution 1325 is strictly related to the Colombian Peace Agreement of 2016. Indeed, it settled the basis for a comprehensive peace agreement that would take into consideration gender policies and the implementation of women in the peace processes. First of all, it is important to take a step back and analyze the long and complicated peace processes that took place before the final one in 2016.

As a matter of fact, In the late 1980s, under the Barco government, began a peace process following the multiple demands for a negotiated end to the conflict. This peace process, which was meant to continue beyond Barco's Presidency into the early 1990s, consisted in two major events: the demobilization of M-19, and the Ejécito Popular de Liberación (EPL), Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) and Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (MAQL), and constitutional reform which opened up democratic participation, leading to the innovative 'peace agreement-constitution' - the Colombian Constitution, 1991.[48]

However, while this process was fairly successful in bringing the above groups into Colombia's political settlement, conflict with the FARC escalated, as did violence from paramilitary groups. Between 1993-1999, "a 'comprehensive war' was declared by President Gaviria and the crisis related to allegations of drug traffic donations to the next President Samper's election campaign were defining political events of this period. They led to mass demonstrations and joint action across civil society to create the conditions for a negotiated peace. Peace mobilization and organization grew massively in this period. The Committee for the Search for Peace, the Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War and National Conciliation Commission launched by the Episcopal Commission were established." [49]

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[48] Bell, C.; O'Rourke, C.; Matzner, S., *A Chronology of Colombian Peace Processes and Peace Agreements*. Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP), (Edinburgh, 2015), 15 [Briefing Paper 01].

[49] Nacla "The Evolution of the FARC: A Guerrilla Group's Long History." Last accessed August 28, 2024.

However, in 2000, the rebels' collapse of the peace process had a significant effect on the dynamics of peace organizations and the nation's willingness to engage in peace processes. Consequently, these groups were in a state of instability and crisis when the talks came to a conclusion. The public's disenchantment with peace processes and agreements peaked at this time. [50]

In 2003, following this disappointment and the election of President Uribe, there was a noticeable shift away from peace talks and processes with guerrilla groups and toward signing "peace agreements" with the coalition of pro-state forces known as Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). During this time, right-wing paramilitaries were engaged using the "language" of the peace process, and efforts were made to marginalize the FARC and ELN rather than talk with them.

However, in 2011, President Santos replaced Uribe and gave a new impulse to the peace process with FARC. This process lasted until 2016, when in October the peace agreement was put to a referendum where the "No" won by 50.21%.[51] Representatives of the "No" campaign added new contributions to the Final Agreement during its revision. Concerning the gender focus, it was reinterpreted as acknowledging that women and men have equal rights and that women were disproportionately harmed during the conflict, promising positive action to further gender equality, as stated in the Agreement. The text was changed to better align with these two definitions. The agreement's language did, however, clarify that no part of it would be interpreted as diminishing or negating a person's rights, regardless of their gender, age, sex, race, religion, or ethnicity, or for any other reason.[52] This welcome change of approach to gender issues was fostered by the UNSC Resolution 1325, which will be discussed in the following paragraph, in particular with respect to our case study.

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[50] Bell, C.; O'Rourke, C.; Matzner, S., *A Chronology of Colombian Peace Processes and Peace Agreements*. Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP), (Edinburgh, 2015) ,15 [Briefing Paper 01].

[51] With a low participation of just 37.43% of the electorate.

[52] International Crisis Group. *Shaping the Peace Process in Colombia*. (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2017).

2.3.3　UNSC Resolution 1325

The UNSC resolution 1325 had been adopted on the 31 October 2000 in order to provide a range of measures addressing the inclusion of women in peace negotiations. It represented an important step forward for the UN because it was the first time that the UN Security Council focused on the role of women as "agents" for peace. Indeed, according to the Resolution, women must participate on an equal footing with men and fully in all initiatives aimed at preserving and advancing peace and security. In order to shield women and girls from violations of their human rights, such as gender-based violence, it reiterates the goal of implementing international humanitarian and human rights law in its entirety.[53] Moreover, it determines the necessity of mainstreaming gender views in regard to post-war rebuilding and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration projects, humanitarian assistance, peace negotiations, and conflict prevention.[54] The resolution also makes different references to Member States, UN agencies, and all parties involved in armed conflicts.

Since 2000, a group of women's organizations in Colombia, including Casa de la Mujer, Limpal, Codacop, Humanas, Colombia Diversa, Red Nacional, and Ciase, had been fighting nonstop to create and carry out a 1325 National Action Plan.[55] In 2010 six conflict-affected regions of the country (Meta, Caquetá, Huila, Nariño, Oriente Antioqueño, Montes de María) wew involved in specific dedicated workshops attended by over 600 women, who developed ideas for implementing the resolution. Eight areas of focus were addressed: women's security in humanitarian crises; gender justice; women's citizenship, leadership, and participation; equality in lowering the risk of disasters; recovery processes from a gender perspective; and changing the political system to provide solutions for women.[56] In addition, the Humanas organization

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[53] Paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12, SC Res 1325.

[54] Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 13, SC Res 1325.

[55] Maria Elena Díaz et al., "Women's Organizations and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Colombia," *Colombian Journal of Gender Studies* 15(2), 2018, 112-129.

[56] Díaz Susa et al., "Addressing Women's Security and Gender Justice: Key Areas of Focus," *Journal of Gender Studies* 21(3), 2012, 345-367.

established the Observatorio Mujeres, Paz y Seguridad, or "Women, Peace and Security Observatory," with funding assistance from the Norwegian platform FOKUS.

Furthermore, in 2013 women's rights activists and local authorities worked together to create Municipal Action Plans and accompanying resolutions for 18 municipalities in the departments of Bolivar, Santander, Cauca, and Valle del Cauca in order to execute UNSCR 1325. The Municipal Action Plans have goals that are specifically connected to UNSCR 1325's three pillars: promotion of a gender perspective, prevention and protection, and participation. The draft plans include a number of concrete tasks under each target, together with indicators, implementing actors, a timetable, and a budget. For instance, one activity under the goal of women's involvement in decision-making in the Popayán Municipal Action Plan (Cauca department) is to create an accredited diploma program to increase women's ability to enter politics. To address and respond to the violence committed against LGBTQIA+ people by armed organizations, a UNSCR 1325 Sectoral Action Plan for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQIA+) population was created in Popayán as well. When armed gangs discovered lesbian women, they would rape them and cut off their breasts, making them victims of particularly terrible atrocities.[57]

To conclude, Colombia has experienced one of the most long and complex civil wars in the history of the world. The internal rupture between the government and the citizens, that has arisen due to the needs of the latter and also the upsurge of narcotraffic, did not pave the way for a simple and short conflict resolution. Consequently, the physical and psychological abuse that women had endured during the conflict has made their living conditions worse. This is why it was mandatory to negotiate a final agreement between the guerrilla groups and the government. One that would include not only men but also women and, more importantly, not just in writing but also in the drafting phase of it. Without any doubt, the final Peace Agreement of 2016 was inspired by the UNSC

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[57] Carolina Morales and Claudia Gómez, "Implementing UNSCR 1325: Municipal and Sectoral Action Plans in Colombia," *Colombian Journal of Human Rights* 29(4), 2015, 210-235.

Resolution 1325, which did not include only women but also LGBTQIA+ people and indigenous people.

3.0 Chapter 3 – ANALYSIS

3.1 Background

Without any doubt, men and women in Colombia have suffered two different types of violence during the civil war. As I have analyzed in the first chapter, gender-based violence is used globally as a *weapon* in war times. Especially in Colombia, which has suffered a longstanding conflict, this brutal practice has destroyed women both physically and psychologically, hindering their political participation.
Unfortunately, the peace processes that were attempted from the late 80s did not take into consideration women either as victims or as agents of peace. Mainly because rape, assault, abduction, exploitation and violence on women, were - and still are - all accepted and socially internalized practices. That is why scholars and IOs have been trying to push for a radical change towards the inclusion of women in peace-building processes.

The UNSC resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, represents the first attempt to promote the inclusion of women in both policy design and practice. Following this change of approach, the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) was the first breakthrough since the start of the Colombian peace processes. Indeed, not only were women included in the drafting of the agreement, but they were heard for the first time after 70 years of conflict.

As planned, this final chapter will provide answers to the research questions, stemming from the 2016 Peace Agreement itself, that have guided the first and second chapters:
1   How have women and gender-related topics been incorporated in the Peace Agreement in Colombia?
2   On which ideas and institutional resources could that particular process build in order to successfully implement a feminist perspective in peacebuilding?
3   What were the limitations and obstacles to including a feminist perspective in the Colombian Peace process?

3.2 The incorporation of women and gender-related issues in the Peace Agreement of 2016

With the 2016 Peace Agreement between the government and the FARC, the then-President Juan Manuel Santos paved the way for a less violent future in Colombia. The historic involvement of women and LGBTQIA+ organizations in the peace process, which made the final agreement by far the most inclusive in history, is an underappreciated dimension of the peace process. When formal peace negotiations began in Cuba in 2012, there was just one woman among the twenty participants. However, everything changed when hundreds of representatives from women's organizations from all over Colombia came together for a national summit on women's involvement, organized by leaders of civil society. The summit forced the topic of gender into the conversation. In 2015, women accounted for 43% of FARC delegates and 20% of the government negotiating team.[58]

The most creative institutional instrument for involving women was the official bipartisan gender sub-commission, which was established in 2014 and consists of five to six delegates from each party. It was the first of its sort in global peace efforts and it was mandated to make sure that the peace agreements reached included a sufficient focus on women's issues.

The primary task of the sub-commission was to conduct a gender-based evaluation of all peace accords, encompassing the agreements made on rural development, political involvement, and drug control.[59]

Importantly, it extended an invitation to multiple delegations of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, impacted by the conflict, to attend the formal negotiations in Havana and speak with the negotiators. Experts and survivors of sexual violence, women farmers, indigenous women, and former fighters were all invited to share their perspectives. The

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[58] Barometer Initiative, Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. "*Towards implementation of women's rights in the Colombian Final Peace Accord: Progress, opportunities and challenges.*" (University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN and Bogotá, Colombia, 2020).

[59] Salamanca R. E., Ramirez L., Cárdenas M., Yousuf Z., and Close S., *Indigenous Women and Colombia's Peace Process: Pathways to Participation* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2016).

government and the FARC panels gathered 60 testimonials and recommendations from survivors of sexual abuse and conflict, 36 of whom were women. This method was unprecedented.[60]

Somewhat surprisingly, among those invited to Havana in 2016 there were groups offormer women fighters from South Africa, Indonesia, Guatemala and Northern Ireland. The participants discussed the difficulties they had when readjusting to civilian life. They thus advised the sub-commission on potential initiatives to be taken, emphasizing the value of employment, education, and psychosocial assistance, in order to foster a more active role of women in society.

Looking at the agreement itself, it includes specific sections, related to all the topics covered by the accord, focused on women, their rights, their needs and values. For example, in the section of the principles that guided the "Toward a New Colombian Countryside: Comprehensive Rule Reform" we can find:

"Acknowledgement of women as independent citizens with rights, who, irrespective of their marital status, or relationship to their family or community, have access, on an equal footing to men, to ownership of land and production projects, funding options, infrastructure, technical services and training, inter alia; attention is to be given to the social and institutional conditions that have prevented women from gaining access to the assets of production and to public and social benefits. Such recognition requires the adoption of specific measures in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring of the plans and programs covered in this agreement so that these can be implemented whilst taking account of the specific needs and distinct conditions of women, in accordance with their lifecycle, painful experiences and needs." [61]

Another example can be found in the paragraph 1.3.2.1 related to health:

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[60] Barometer Initiative, Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. "*Towards implementation of women's rights in the Colombian Final Peace Accord: Progress, opportunities and challenges.*" (University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN and Bogotá, Colombia, 2020).

[61] Colombian Government & FARC-EP, *Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace*, 2016, 12.

"The adoption of an equity- and gender-based approach that takes account of the health requirements of women, in accordance with their life cycle, including measures to address sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial care and the special measures for pregnant women and children in the areas of prevention, health promotion and treatment."[62]

The most important passage is focused on the recognition of the role of women as agents of peace and their right to participate in the peace accord and more generally in the everyday political life:

"The National Government and the FARC-EP acknowledge the important role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in the consolidation of peace, and also the need to promote and to strengthen women's political and citizen participation even more within the context of the end of the conflict. Their leadership and participation on an equal footing are necessary and essential in terms of public decision-making processes and the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of government policies aimed at achieving a stable and long-lasting peace". [63]

This means that adopting policies that ensure equal representation of men and women in all forums mentioned before is part of the effort to promote women's political and civic engagement on an equal basis. Similarly, it is necessary to encourage women's leadership and balanced involvement in political parties, organizations, and social movements. Training programs focused on women's political rights and forms of political and citizen involvement were implemented with the purpose of increasing knowledge of women's rights and advocating for new leadership roles for them.

To conclude, the 2016 Peace Agreement, by incorporating various gender-related policies, set an important precedent for a feminist peacebuilding. Involving women from diverse backgrounds and prioritizing gender justice were significant steps in understanding and

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[62] Colombian Government & FARC-EP, *Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace*, 2016, 22.

[63] Colombian Government & FARC-EP, *Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace*, 2016, 38.

changing the historical marginalization that Colombian women suffered in conflict and post-conflict settings. The Peace Agreement's recognition of women's rights, needs, and contributions to public life was a major step towards gender equality in the country. Effective implementation and monitoring of these commitments are necessary for the success of these efforts, especially with the help of institutional resources and international organizations. The peace process can serve as a powerful vehicle for achieving lasting gender equity and sustainable peace by fostering inclusive policies that promote women's participation and leadership at all levels of government and society.

3.3 Ideas and institutional resources to successfully implement a feminist perspective in peacebuilding

As I have highlighted in the first chapter, many feminist scholars believe that peacebuilding has long been part and parcel of a socio-political patriarchal system. Unsurprisingly, many peace accords have failed and still fail to address the role of women as *victims* of war and, at the same time, as *agents* of peace. The most common motive behind these failures is that processes behind peace agreements are mainly led by men and not by women, who often are granted overall limited participation in the decision-making. As a matter of fact, this vicious cycle perpetuates a male-dominated environment, causing the marginalization of the experiences and roles of women.[64] Consequently, the UNSC resolution 1325 can be seen as a reaction to the exclusion of women from peace processes. Indeed, the resolution encourages the participation of women in the promotion of peace, preserving their rights and especially those of the women directly affected by conflicts. Moreover, it tackles gender-based violence by taking a more gender-sensitive perspective into account during humanitarian interventions, in the reconstruction phases that take place during and especially after violent conflicts, but also in preventing violent conflicts as well as in dealing with the past.[65] In other words, thanks to UN institutional backing, feminist ideas finally started impacting the practice of peacemaking.

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[64] Cohn, C., Kinsella, H., & Gibbings, S. (2004). Women, Peace and Security: Resolution 1325. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6(1), 130-140.

[65] UN Women, *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, (New York: UN Women, 2015).

By taking inspiration from the Resolution 1325, the Colombian Peace Agreement of 2016 represents a radical change with respect to how peace agreements were previously reached and drafted. An important factor of the peace accord is that it takes into consideration the concept of *intersectionality* of women. Therefore, it designs the policies not considering women as a single category, but it concentrates on the needs of each marginalized group-indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and LGBTQIA+ women-acknowledging that peacebuilding needs to address each community. For example, the peace agreement includes an Ethnic chapter, to ensure the representation of and oversight by indigenous and Afro-Colombian social organizations in the implementation process.[66] Moreover, the Special High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples (Instancia Especial de Alto Nivel con Pueblos Étnicos, or IEANPE) was established as a vehicle to oversee and encourage the implementation of the agreement's various provisions. In addition to serving as a representation of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion, and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (Comisión de Seguimiento e Impulso y Verificación a la Implementación, CSIVI), the IEANPE also serves as an ethnic consultative organization.[67]

It is important to underline the fact that the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia was made possible also by the participation of different institutions both local and international. Certainly, the women's organizations in Colombia, including Casa de la Mujer, Limpal, Codacop, Humanas, Colombia Diversa, Red Nacional, and Ciase, fought to implement a feminist perspective both within and outside the peace agreement. These organizations established the "Gender Sub-Commission for the talks," formed by ten representatives, with Victoria Sandino and Maria-Paulina Riveros in charge of their respective five-person teams. Laura Cardozo, Victoria Sandino's personal consultant and the FARC's gender advisor, arrived at the table sponsored by the Norwegian government. The Norwegian government paid for three gender experts—Cuba's Magalys Arocha Domínguez, Norway's Hilde Salvesen, and Sweden's Camila Riesefeld—to help with the

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[66] Rodríguez, S. (2017). Gender, Intersectionality, and Peacebuilding in Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 12(2), 46-60.

[67] Pardo, D. (2019). Ethnic Representation in Colombia's Peace Process. *Peacebuilding Journal*, 5(3), 67-82.

negotiations. These specialists arranged a number of gatherings, such as the one in 2015 that brought together female members of the FARC and other former rebels from El Salvador and other parts of the globe.[68]

Throughout the peace process, also the Swedish government provided more than SEK 67 million, or 6.6 million euros, as a guarantee of the agreement's execution. The joint Swedish-Norwegian Fund for Support to the Colombian Civil Society (FOS) was established to provide funding to Colombian groups working on peace-promoting, victim-reparations-related, human rights-advocating, and democratic-strengthening initiatives within the framework of peace consolidation.[69] The lone female military participant in the negotiation and Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, Juanita Millán, felt that "*the role of the governments of Norway and Sweden were key to the strengthening technical capacities in gender matters. It was possible to invite many experts who advised the Gender Subcommittee, and also supported social processes to strengthen the capacities of women's collectives. For example, financing of the Women's Summit Cumbre de Mujeres por la Paz, an event that brought together rural women, victims, displaced women, and feminist actors, amongst others, to start advocating the peace process*".[70]

Furthermore, the role of UN Women was crucial for the creation of the Gender Sub-commission. It had a key role in ensuring that GBV was addressed in the peace accord, monitoring the implementation of provisions, after the accord was signed, and supported the empowerment of women both socially and economically. The Colombian agreement calls for the establishment of certain procedures to guarantee the successful execution of these gender-based obligations.[71] The International Accompaniment Component and the

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[68] Fajardo, D. (2016). The Gender Dynamics in Colombia's Peace Process, *Latin American Perspectives*, 43(4), 135-142.

[69] Embassy of Sweden in Colombia, Sweden's Contribution to the Colombian Peace Process, 2016.

[70] Millán, Juanita. *The Role of the Armed Forces in the Colombian Peace Process*. (Oslo: NOREF Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2016).

[71] UN Women. *Women's Leadership Vital for Success of Peace Processes: Colombia's Women Lead the Way*. (New York: UN Women, 2016).

Special Forum for the Implementation of the Gender-Based Approach are two instances of such mechanisms. The specific goal of the Special Forum is to oversee the transversal gender approach's implementation and protect women's rights all the way through. Eight women who represent national and territorial Colombian women's organizations make up this group. These include black or indigenous women, women who are victims, and women who have been nominated by LGBTQIA+ groups.[72] Regarding the International Accompaniment, the government and the FARC-EP decided on a consortium of nations and institutions to back the execution of certain points in the Accord, including them as the gender-based strategy. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Women, the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), and the Swedish embassy in Colombia are among the chosen members. The International Accompaniment Component's participation has aided in the advancement of the implementation of many gender requirements.[73]

3.1   Limitations and obstacles in including a feminist perspective

As stated before, the 2016 Colombian peace was finalized over many years. This was mainly because the violent conflict that took place for seventy years created a profound rift between the various actors of the conflict: the government, the military groups, the rural population and the citizens. From a wider point of view, although the state's battle with one of the biggest armed organizations in Colombia came to an end as a result of the peace accord, bloodshed sadly continued.

As new waves of violence emerged in various areas of the nation, particularly in zones that were formerly under FARC-Ep control and where drug crops and illegal mining are

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[72] Céspedes-Báez, Lina, and Kristin Bergtora Sandvik. "The Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Colombian Peace Agreement: Institutionalizing Women's Rights and Gender Equality." *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 12(1), 2020, 1–23.

[73] Bouvier, Virginia M. *Gender and the Role of Women in Colombia's Peace Process*. (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2016).

concentrated, debates over the accord's implementation took place against this backdrop.[74]

Moreover, we can find an example in the referendum for the peace agreement that took place in 2016 where the "No" won by 50.21%.

Due to religious values, a number of groups opposed the peace accord, claiming that its gendered perspective constituted an "ideology" that encouraged homosexuality, undermined family values, and advocated for the violation of conventional gender roles. The peace accord did not go beyond Colombia's progressive normative framework on women's rights and nondiscrimination, nevertheless, because its provisions were entirely compliant with the country's already-existing laws. An effective misinterpretation of the gender sections of the accord to mobilize conservative segments of society against the peace agreement was one of the reasons for the negative campaign against the gender approach.

The creation of commitments centered on gender does not exceed 20% of total commitments, according to reports from organizations like the GPaz group, a women's board tasked with overseeing the agreement's implementation. The main challenges are a lack of funding for the implementation, government officials' lack of technical expertise and training, and their general ignorance of rural contexts. Rep. Victoria Sandino[75] reiterates this, by saying: "the land fund decree says women should be prioritized but it does not say how to achieve this prioritization, that's why we are asking for a census of the rural population. Another frustration is everything related to sexual and gender differences has practically disappeared throughout implementation". [76]

This means that the implementation of the peace agreement is a very demanding process both in resources and capacity. Consequently, there is a limit to how many requirements may be handled at once in the implementation process due to institutional and resource

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[74] García Pinzón, Viviana., *Colombia: Between the Dividends of Peace and the Shadow of Violence*, 2020.

[75] Commander of the FARC until 2017, then member of the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force and in the committee for the implementation of the peace accord.

[76] GPaz, *Informe sobre el Proceso de Implementación del Enfoque de Género en el Acuerdo de Paz,* 2020.

constraints. Gender requirements for implementation outcomes will be addressed later in the process, if at all, as they are not regarded as important as they should be.[77]

Another obstacle that can be identified in the implementation of a feminist perspective, and consequently of the Colombian peace accord, is the role of power and hierarchies. The process of implementing peace agreements is dynamic and involves the mobilization of social, economic, and political actors at local, regional, and national levels. Actors and organizations dedicated to promoting gender equality among women frequently begin with a smaller basis of power. Furthermore, these initiatives question national and local power structures that are already in place. This may be the reason for their decreased effectiveness in promoting implementation. In fact, opposition to the peace agreement's gender requirements was visible in the political discourse preceding the referendum as early as 2016.

To conclude, there have been and there are many limits and obstacles in implementing a feminist perspective within the Colombian peace process and in different circumstances. A key issue stems from the reintegration of male guerilla members into society. Women are crucial in maintaining harmony following hostilities, but they are commonly affected by the patriarchal and masculine values of their communities. Indeed, returned fighters frequently act brutally and rape women. So, obstacles arise in private life and extend into public life, creating a cause-effect relationship by which women are marginalized and victimized.

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[77] Rebecca G.; Joshi M.; Olsson L.; Quinn J.; Ditta E., & Méndez R., Implementing the Final Colombian Peace Agreement, 2016–2018, *GPS Policy Brief*, 1. (Oslo: PRIO, 2018).

Conclusion

The Colombian Peace Agreement of 2016 represents the first comprehensive effort to include a feminist perspective in peacebuilding. Indeed, the outcome of this laborious endeavor shows that including and integrating gender perspectives and women's participation in peace accords may contribute to reducing the marginalization of women in society.

GBV is an internalized practice that unfortunately exists in most societies independently of conflicts. However, without any doubt, conflicts create a negative environment for both women and men and often exacerbate the bad habits and behaviors that already exist in societies. This happens because violence, terror, devastation, bloodbath and survival are all mechanisms that negatively impact individual behavioral standards. Consequently, men become in their turn perpetrators of violence - rape, torture, killings - both in the public and private sphere and mainly against women. That is why including a gender perspective into the 2016 Peace Agreement - and generally in peace accords -, was, and is, necessary in order to tackle the legacy of violence against women.

More recently, there has been an increasing recognition that the condition of women cannot be treated as a single block as it often intersects with other identities, such as LGBTQIA+, black or Indigenous. As a consequence, the 2016 Peace Agreement aims to draft policies for all the different sub-groups of women, a choice that represents an important progress towards a more inclusive and effective peace effort.

To establish whether this approach – and the lesson learned – can be generalized, first we must assess whether the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement has been effective. One important result to be noted, is that, thanks to its inclusive nature, for the first time a peace agreement in Colombia stands. Whereas in the past people resumed fighting very soon, this peace agreement is delivering on many aspects. Indeed, based on the report made by Antonia Urrejola in 2024, mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, progress has been made linked to comprehensive rural reform and transitional justice. Moreover, the 80% of the Agreement's signatories are still dedicated to their goal

of reintegrating themselves into society, notwithstanding the challenges and threats to their life.[78]

As I have analyzed in the third chapter, the process of implementing the gender provisions has faced many obstacles and limits. As a matter of fact, the protracted conflict had a significant impact on the Colombian society, causing a sharp division in the national community. The country has become even more corrupt and dangerous due to the stronghold of cartels and drug trafficking, which has further degraded society. Therefore, it has not yet been able to properly incorporate gender viewpoints and policies, especially over a time span shorter than a decade. Moreover, it has not been possible a 360° study covering every facet of the peace accord and, more importantly, beginning with Colombia's social foundations, due to financial constraints. Stated differently, the restricted funding permitted only surface-level monitoring of peace accord delivery and not an in-depth one.

However, if we analyze the report of PazDiversa, a local organization that supported the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement, if the policies are implemented, they can effectively change the situation. Indeed, PazDiversa analyzed some groups living in the regions affected by the conflict, such as Caquetá, Meta, and Norte de Santander, and the public institutions that served these people. The initiative supports government institutions and civil society organizations to implement gender-focused measures in order to fight unequal power relations and gender-based discrimination while the peace agreement is being carried out. So far, they achieved some progress in improving the participation of women and LGBTQIA+ people in politics and advocating for their social, political, and economic interests. Moreover, they conducted training sessions aimed at strengthening the citizens' supervisory bodies and tracking the implementation of the gender-focused measures outlined in the peace agreement. Finally, many people have improved their capacity to engage against unfair power relations and others received

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[78] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. "*Colombia: UN Expert Calls for Implementation of Peace Agreement as a State Policy.*" Press Release, March 26, 2024.

training to help them create plans for safety and self-defense, especially for women and LGBTQIA+ activists.[79]

These positive statistics only apply to a small number of Colombia's regions. On a larger scale, these achievements may be expanded if the local and international parties involved in the 2016 Peace Agreement make a greater commitment to support the policies' implementation. Indeed, the help and work of UN Women and some states, such as Sweden and Norway, have been crucial during the drafting of the agreement in 2016, and they still are today in the implementation phase.

To conclude, the experience of PazDiversa shows that a full implementation of the peace agreement can deliver significant progress in upholding human rights and fighting gender discrimination and violence. What is now needed is, on the one hand, a fully-fledged training of the all the parties involved in the peace agreement on the contents and the expected outcomes of the agreement; on the other hand, the ability to continuously monitor the progress in the implementation of the accord.

To conclude, the Colombian 2016 Peace Accord – from negotiation to implementation – offers quite a few lessons to be learned by the international community and the parties involved. Of course, every country is different, and every conflict is different: hence solutions that implement institutional blueprints such as the UNSC Resolution 1325 cannot be fully replicated but have to be adjusted to the case under review. Previous peace processes can teach how to avoid the main mistakes and the shortage of resources that are badly needed to make the most of a very costly, but also very promising effort.

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[79] Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). *Paz Diversa: Strengthening Gender Equality and Participation to Promote Peace in Colombia.* GIZ, 2024.

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