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Women, Peace, and Reconciliation

Evidence from Women's Participation in Mali's Peace Process

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Abstract

This thesis addresses women's inclusion and influence during the Mali peace process by doing a qualitative content analysis. After the 2012 rebellion, years of crisis ensued that devastated the country. Finally, in 2014, the main conflict parties – the Malian Government, the Platform, and the Coordination of Azawad Movements – were open to starting the peace process. By looking at the Mali peace process (2014-2017) in 3 phases, pre-negotiation, negotiation, and implementation, this thesis analyzes women's inclusion in 7 possible modalities in each of these subsequent phases. This thesis also identifies barriers to women's inclusion in Mali, such as cultural, religious, and social norms. Overall, it was found that women's participation in and influence on the peace process was low. Although through informal processes women and women's organizations made clear efforts to have their issues on the peace agenda, they succeeded in this minimally. Women remained underrepresented in major decision-making bodies and parties.

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Abbreviations

APRM	Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
'the Coordination'	The Coordination of Azawad Movements
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSA	The Commission, Agreement Monitoring Committee
CVJR	The Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission
GATIA	The Self Defense Group of Imghad Tuaregs and Allies
HCUA	The High Council for the Unity of Azawad
ICC	International Criminal Court
MAA	Arab Movement of Azawad
MINUSMA	The Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MOCs	The joint patrol mechanisms
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
S-G	Secretary-General
UA	African Union
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

Introduction

This thesis has The Republic of Mali as its focal point. In 2012, this northwestern African state experienced a secessionist rebellion in its northern region, which in turn caused a military coup that overthrew the incumbent Toure government (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Years of crisis and international involvement in the country followed, resulting in thousands of deaths (UCDP, n.d.). In 2014, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, which played an important role as a mediator, started efforts to draw the main conflict parties – two armed movements and the government – to the negotiation table (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). This started a peace process that involved numerous mediators and negotiators with often diverging interests. The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (Accord pour la Paix et la Reconciliation au Mali or APRM) was initialed on March 1st, 2015, which initiated a 2-year implementation period that ended on June 20th, 2017. In its November 2022 report, The Independent Observer of the implementation of the APRM stated that “lasting peace remains a daunting challenge” (The Carter Center, 2022, p. 6). As will be seen in this paper, the Accord has remained sparsely implemented. This, in turn, has recently caused rebels to declare that they are suspending their participation in the Bamako Agreement altogether (Agence France-Presse, 2023). It remains to be seen if efforts by the Malian and Algerian governments are sufficient to relaunch the deal (Agence France-Presse, 2023). As the security situation has remained volatile for the Malian people and international peacekeepers alike, creating sustainable peace is of the utmost importance.

With this goal of sustainable peace in mind, this thesis will center around women and their role in Mali’s peace process; thereby providing a gender dimension. Throughout history, women have been actively involved and played an important role in peace processes, although their contributions are often marginalized or overlooked (Demmer et al, 2019). With this in mind, the gender perspective presents a necessary analytical dimension to conflict transformation. The gendered lens can help reach a better understanding of the intersecting dynamics of conflict and ways to transform them. On a macro level, the root causes of conflict can be viewed as the (in)equalities that stem from patriarchal structures. Women are often excluded from social, political, and economic spheres by a system that prefers male dominance. This structural exclusion is most obvious in formal peace processes. On a micro level, overly

simplistic stereotypes, such as women being passive victims of conflict, hinder them from actively participating in peace processes; thereby only perpetuating the stereotype and fueling further violence (Demmer et al, 2019).

In recent history, women's involvement in peace processes has become increasingly visible and influential. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security in 2000. This Resolution was groundbreaking, as it recognized women's important role in peacebuilding and called for the increased participation of women on all levels of the peacebuilding process. Women were no longer simply seen as victims of war. Since then, women have played key roles in peacebuilding in various contexts, such as that of mediator, activist, and politician. As will be seen, including women in peace processes allows for a more inclusive and sustainable peace, one where women's rights are recognized and their unique perspectives are valued (Demmer et al, 2019; Adjei, 2019). Thus, analyzing their role in any given context is principal.

Emphasizing, then, the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes, this thesis looks at the Mali peace process (2014-2017) through a gendered lens. In doing so it aims to answer the following research question: In what ways have women been included in the Mali peace process and what has been the extent of their influence in the process? This thesis is divided into multiple chapters that have the purpose of providing background information on peace processes and women in peace processes, before going on to focus on the case study of Mali.

First, there will be a focus on the meaning of peace and how peace processes are structured in the chapter on 'Defining Peace Processes'. Operationalizing peace processes in this way is necessary to increase the replicability of this research. It also creates a clearer understanding of the research question. Following this, there will be a chapter on 'Women, Peace, and Security', as it mainly gives a historical perspective on women's participation in matters of peace and conflict. Giving the reader this perspective can also help demonstrate the importance of the topic of women's inclusion. There will be a chapter on 'Women's Contribution to Peace Processes' and a chapter on 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Peace Processes' as it is found important to contextualize women's contributions to peace processes and the barriers they often find when trying to access peace process before conducting an analysis to answer the research question. This general information on women in peace processes can help when researching a specific case study, such as Mali. Having created a

clearer understanding of the meaning of peace processes and women's contribution to them, this thesis will then follow with a chapter on 'Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes'. This chapter will delineate the various ways in which women can participate in peace processes. In other words, the various roles they undertake. These roles will form an important part of operationalizing women's inclusion. The 'Methodology' section will provide a description of the method and procedure used to conduct the study with the intention of creating a clear view of how the research was carried out. After the methodology, this thesis will go on to use the previously established structure of peace processes to divide the Mali peace process into clear phases that can be analyzed in the chapter on 'The Mali Peace Process'. Before doing so, this thesis also provides historical background on the Mali crisis in the chapter on 'Mali's historical context' to create a deeper understanding of the conflict, and thereby, of the following peace process, which can be important to the analysis. Following this, in reference to the section on 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Peace Processes', there will be a chapter on 'Barriers to Women's Inclusion in Mali' which can identify possible barriers that Malian women face when trying to participate in peace processes. Then, different findings from the analysis on Malian women's inclusion will be presented in the chapter 'Findings on Women's Inclusion in the Mali Peace Process', which will be discussed in the chapter on 'Discussion of the Findings on Women's Inclusion'. After this, a section on 'Limitations' will follow, which will discuss limitations that became evident while conducting the present study. Lastly, a conclusion will follow that will reiterate the most important findings of this research.

Before commencing with this work, the following should be stressed, as was done in the Global United Nations (UN) Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325. When it comes to the inclusion of women in peace processes, it is important to emphasize that they are not a homogenous group. Resolution 1325 recognizes women as both active and passive during conflict. While there is often a focus on women as victims, there are also women who carry out violence themselves. Furthermore, gender is only one of the multiple intersecting identities that affect women every day. Think about their age, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. These multiple identities make the individual unique but can also make them more vulnerable. Additionally, it should be emphasized that even when someone does not ascribe to their gender, they can still be perceived as 'female' and be treated as such. When

advocating for or simply writing about broader representation and inclusion in peace processes, it can be important to remember the above.

Defining Peace Processes

With the intention of providing a thorough answer to the research question, this chapter will set out to define the meaning of a 'peace process' as it is understood in this work. It is often maintained that there are 3 approaches to peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding (Erzurum & Eren, 2014). None of these terms have an agreed-upon definition, making it sometimes difficult for researchers and practitioners to deal with them. Peacekeeping generally refers to interventions by third parties that keep the belligerents apart (with their consent), thereby stopping or containing hostilities. Third parties often do this by using neutral soldiers, such as UN peacekeepers or soldiers from neutral states, that only use weapons for self-defense (Adjei, 2019). Peacemaking is the method that is used when trying to settle armed conflict. It is a process of diplomacy, whereby through non-violent dialogue conflict parties are trying to reach a peace agreement, resolve issues and normalize relations between opposing parties (Erzurum & Eren, 2014). Tackling the root causes of violent conflict is the key to building sustainable peace, as it prevents relapses into conflict. It is instrumental that local and national actors are committed long-term to avoiding relapses into conflict, as is the technical and financial support from international actors. Peacebuilding, then, covers a wide range of activities that cover many sectors: political, economic, and social. Examples include democratic institution-building, transformative justice, and reducing economic inequalities (Erzurum & Eren, 2014). Thus, peacekeeping serves to lower the destructive behavior of belligerents, peacemaking serves to change the conflict parties' attitudes, and peacebuilding aims to overcome the conflict's root causes.

Nonetheless, negotiations are a crucial first step for peace to take hold. (Anderlini, 2004). Peace agreements are the blueprint for a state's political, social, and economic future. As such, when gender is absent from this stage, it has huge consequences for women's rights. Peace agreements' contents can differ hugely. For example, the 1991 Paris Peace Accords that ended the Cambodia conflict stipulated a ceasefire and an end to international involvement in the conflict, whereas the 1996 Guatemala agreement was extensive; providing a structure for reform and transformation on many aspects and levels of society (Anderlini, 2004).

This section will now go on to discuss the different stages of peace negotiations. It is important to remember, however, that very few peace processes progress in an

orderly manner (Anderlini, 2004). Traditionally, they have been understood as linear, “evolving from armed conflict or non-violent change to formal negotiations and a peace or political agreement, followed by implementation (often including a constitution drafting or amending process), and (free and fair) elections ending the process with the transfer of power to a post-conflict government” (Inclusive Peace, 2021, n.p.). In practice, peace processes make up parts of political transitions that often take place over decades and are subject to progress and setbacks (Inclusive Peace, 2021). In general, however, it can be said that there are 3 key phases: pre-negotiations, negotiations, and implementation (Anderlini, 2004).

The pre-negotiation phase involves preliminary steps that are taken before formal negotiations commence. Also called the ‘talks before talks’ phase, pre-negotiations are a series of private and informal talks between conflict parties where they can freely discuss their concerns and aspirations (Anderlini, 2004). The most important goal here is to ensure that all parties are committed and willing to move forward with the process. This can prove quite the challenge, as parties often use pre-negotiations to stall or distract while they reinforce military efforts. Issues that are addressed during this phase include setting realistic goals, building trust between parties, agreeing on agenda topics and which topics are prioritized, who gets to participate in the negotiations (who are stakeholders), where the negotiations will be held, logistics, security issues, and the potential role of mediators and their responsibilities (Anderlini, 2004).

During the pre-negotiation phase, a variation of Track 2 and Track 1.5 efforts can be found. Track 2, Track 1.5, and Track 1 describe different ways of diplomacy during peace processes (Anderlini, 2004). They will be highlighted here based on at which phase of the peace process they take place. Track 2 processes are dominated by non-state actors, mainly civil society actors, interested in promoting negotiations. Participants also use Track 2 processes to try and get issues of their concern on the official negotiation agenda. Track 1.5 processes involve unofficial discussions and activities between adversaries to create an environment favorable for formal negotiations (Anderlini, 2004). They can include back-channel talks and shuttle diplomacy, where negotiators conflict parties have no direct contact, but covey messages by using intermediaries.

Track 1.5 processes can also bridge the gap between negotiations (Track 1) and informal interactions (Track 2), by bringing government and non-government

actors together; thereby enabling the transfer of ideas from Track 2 to Track 1 processes (Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021). Actors include representatives of civil society, government officials, and academics. In 1996 Guatemala, for example, the Oslo Accord opened up a Track 1.5 process where the insurgency and civil society organizations discussed their concerns (Anderlini, 2004). This contributed to the commencement of formal negotiations. Tracks 2 and 1.5 are also part of what is called multi-track diplomacy, where multiple and diverse actors engage in peace processes, thereby allowing the process to be more inclusive; although this is rare (Anderlini, 2004).

The negotiation phase is said to be the core of any peace process (Anderlini, 2004). During this phase, official talks, also named ‘track’ 1 talks, are usually considered the most important; these are formal discussions between adversaries’ leadership or official representatives, usually mediated by a third party. In many cases, the mediating role is fulfilled by the UN and/or a regional intergovernmental organization. But governments and civil society organizations can also play a role as mediators and sponsors/facilitators of the process. Lastly, individuals whose neutrality is trusted can also fill the role of mediator. They can be insider neutrals, who are familiar and active locally, or outsider neutrals, who are trusted due to their having no direct stake in the peace process. The goal of negotiations is to reach a mutually acceptable agreement, sometimes through multiple rounds of talks. The 1995 Dayton Peace Talks, mediated by nations including the United States, Russia, and Germany, are an example of negotiations that ended the Bosnian War. (Anderlini, 2004). The peace agreement generally includes the terms the conflict parties agreed upon, their commitments, and mechanisms for implementation.

The last phase of the peace process, the implementation phase, is the transition from ‘words into action’. Signing the agreement may have created peace, but it is often still fragile (Anderlini, 2004). During this time, extremists or spoilers sometimes try to take advantage of this fragility by forcing a breakdown of the whole process. Moreover, conflict parties can be hesitant about being the first to implement the agreement. Therefore, building confidence between parties remains important during this phase. If implementation fails, there is not only a risk of a resurgence of violence but also of that violence intensifying. Thus, peace processes carry extremely high costs when they lack adequate preparation and are not committed to concrete implementation.

Another international, regional, or even local actor may be employed to monitor compliance with the peace agreement and its effectiveness (Anderlini, 2004).

Women, Peace, and Security

When discussing peace processes, it seems remarkable that one-half of the population has largely remained excluded from them over time (Adjei, 2019). “Between 1992 and 2019, women were, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. About seven out of every ten peace processes did not include any women mediators or women signatories (UN Women, 2022, n.p.). Since 2000, however, there has been a double increase in peace agreements that have made references to women; bringing the number up to 27% (Coomaraswamy, 2015). Women have also made strides in other aspects of the peace process. This chapter will delve into what caused this change. In other words, how concerns regarding the inclusion of women in various aspects of peace and conflict were brought to the fore.

Perhaps the most important landmark in feminist peace studies is UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). The existence of this resolution – and the subsequent ones – is a consequence of over a century of peace activism by women internationally (Coomaraswamy, 2015). Motivated by the destruction caused by World War I, a global women’s peace movement first emerged out of small-scale local and national civil society organizations and movements. In 1915, women came together in The Hague at the International Congress of Women to study the causes of war with the intention of eliminating them. During the Congress, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom was founded, which remains an important actor in WPS to this day. The movement continued throughout World War II, keeping peace as an end in itself at the top of their agenda. Shortly after its founding in 1945, the UN created a body specifically addressing gender equality and women’s advancement: the Commission on the Status of Women. The CSW frequently addresses WPS-related topics, such as women’s and children’s special protection during conflict. Then, during the Cold War period, the focus shifted toward advancing international human rights standards. Civil society pushed for the adoption of treaties and conventions that codified gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Coomaraswamy, 2015). Although not referencing peace negotiations, CEDAW does address topics fundamental to the WPS agenda, such as the inclusion of women in leadership in all contexts, in articles 7 and 8.

The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 Beijing was another important moment for WPS (Coomaraswamy, 2015). Women's civil society was principal in shaping the Beijing Platform for Action, which included Women in Armed Conflict (Coomaraswamy, 2015). This area called for, amongst other things, the increased participation of women in conflict resolution and the protection of women during armed conflict. Encouraged by their success in Beijing, the women's movement set its sights on achieving a Security Council resolution on WPS. Months of hard work by civil society organizations were finally rewarded with the adoption of Resolution 1325 on WPS (Coomaraswamy, 2015). The document (2000) advocates for the recognition of women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding and calls for women and girls' protection from sexual violence amidst conflict. For an intergovernmental body that has often been criticized for maintaining a very narrow and traditional interpretation of peace and security, the UNSC's Resolution 1325 was considered a radical step toward gender equality. Since 2000, the UNSC has adopted 9 follow-up resolutions: resolutions 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019) (Basu & Nagar, 2021). All these documents together form the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and have the general purpose of increasing gender equality in international decision-making.

Each of the resolutions is related to at least one of the 4 basic pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery (UNDPPA, 2019). Firstly, is the need to ensure the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in all processes of decision-making. This includes conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding processes. Data shows that women remain underrepresented in peace processes worldwide, as negotiators, mediators, and signatories, and within national governments (UN Women, 2022). It is absolutely necessary to ensure women's participation so that they can fully access their human rights (UNDPPA, 2019).

Secondly, there is a need to improve strategies that are aimed at preventing violence against women. This is done by improving intervention strategies, such as the prosecution of perpetrators under international law, strengthening women's rights, and supporting women's inclusion in peace processes locally and nationally (USIP, n.d.). Thirdly, there is the protection of women's rights and the protection of girls and women from sexual violence and gender-based violence. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) is often used strategically during terrorism and war (UNDPPA, 2019).

It is essential to address it for various reasons, such as holding perpetrators accountable for violations of international (and/or national) law. CRSV also comes with the risk of vengeance by the affected parties, which, in turn, can undermine conflict prevention and peace processes (UNDPPA, 2019). However, violence against women can also take place in emergency and humanitarian situations. It is, thus, important to strengthen and promote the rights of women on an international and national level to prevent, deter, and respond to violence against women.

The last pillar relates to relief and recovery and covers whether women's specific needs are met during and after conflict (USIP, n.d.). Moreover, special attention should be paid to the most vulnerable girls and women, such as survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence, displaced people, and those with disabilities. Additionally, it is important to increase women's participation when it comes to the relief and recovery processes. In other words, the WPS agenda mandates gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding (Demetriou, 2019; UNDPPA, 2019).

Since the first WPS resolution's arrival, considerable effort has been made to mainstream gender into international peace and security. Peace agreements increasingly recognize the importance of women's inclusion. "The recognition of women in formal peace agreements has, for instance, increased from less than 20% before 2000 to about 50% in 2015" (Adjei, 2019, p. 135). Other examples include the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2010, the adoption of the WPS resolutions by member states, and the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) that address the implementation of WPS resolutions (Basu & Nagar, 2021). However, efforts to implement the WPS agenda remain hindered considerably by a limited allocation of funds to the cause and a selective rather than comprehensive approach to implementation. This also relates to a lack of political will that is often shown by member states and important UN bodies. Consequently, the WPS is an afterthought rather than a priority during decision-making (Basu & Nagar, 2021). However, the importance of mainstreaming the WPS agenda makes each peace process an interesting case study.

Women's Contribution to Peace Processes

Although gaps remain in our understanding of women's inclusion in peace processes, there is a growing body of empirical research that confirms the positive effect of women's inclusion in peace processes (Adjei, 2019). This helps with conflict prevention, peacemaking, and sustaining security post-conflict; so, in all stages of the peace process. Given this positive effect, this section will focus on what women contribute to peace processes.

Simply put, gender equality is a predictor of peace, and gender inequality is a predictor of conflict (O'Reilly, 2015). In fact, "gender equality is a better indicator of a state's peacefulness than other factors like democracy, religion, or [Gross Domestic Product]" (O'Reilly, 2015, p. 2). Many studies have shown a direct negative relationship between women's participation and the likelihood that conflict will break out. Similarly, the higher the percentage of women in parliament, the lower the chance of their government violating human rights. Beyond inclusion in official decision-making, women's inclusion in other roles, such as in civil society, is also shown to be effective at preventing violence and extremism. As women are usually one of the first targets of fundamentalism, they are also often the first to take a stand against it. In police forces, women bring with them a complementary perspective that increases the police's understanding of the environment in which they serve. Additionally, female officers are less likely to use excessive force and more likely to de-escalate tensions compared to their male counterparts (O'Reilly, 2015).

When it comes to peacemaking, mediation still has mixed success (O'Reilly, 2015). However, new research shows that women can change this for the better. When women's groups were given a voice and were able to exert influence on the process, an agreement was more likely to be reached. Moreover, women's influence was associated with higher levels of implementation of the peace agreement and a more sustainable peace. "A peace agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at 15 years if women participate in its creation" (O'Reilly, 2015, p. 4). There are several reasons for this. To start, women have a reputation for being honest brokers during peace processes. Because they are often perceived as passive victims rather than agents for change during conflict, they are seen as less threatening by belligerents. As such, they are granted access to conflict parties that male leaders are often denied and are more likely to be trusted as intermediaries. Furthermore, women are said to

be skilled at bridging divides and mobilizing coalitions, both horizontally between different ethnic, political, and religious groups and vertically between the grassroots and elite levels (O'Reilly, 2015). Because they are often marginalized themselves, women would be better able to understand the importance of having all voices heard during negotiations (Anderlini, 2004). This also increases the chance of enduring peace. It has been found that women across different cultures, compared to men, are more likely to reject the hierarchies of different groups in society (O'Reilly, 2015). This is significant, as one of the root causes of conflicts is often inter-group hostility (O'Reilly, 2015).

It is clear that women, on average, experience conflict much differently than men (O'Reilly, 2015). Whereas men are more likely to die from the direct effects of conflict due to their role as combatants, women are more likely to die from conflicts' indirect effects, such as the spread of disease and the breakdown of the social and economic order. Consequently, women's unique perspective makes them raise other priorities during the negotiation process (O'Reilly, 2015). Their focus goes beyond simply 'ending the violence', as women tend to prioritize peacebuilding and social cohesion; they are more likely to want to address the conflict's root causes (Adjei, 2019). Therefore, including women leads to a more effective and comprehensive peace agreement. Moreover, as gender inequality directly affects women, they raise issues of women's rights much more frequently (O'Reilly, 2015). This is important as gender equality strongly correlates with peace, as mentioned above.

When it comes to peacebuilding, women's political and social inclusion has been shown to lower the chance of a relapse into conflict (O'Reilly, 2015). This relationship can be explained partly by women's inclusive approach to peacebuilding and governance and how they are often perceived as trustworthy and less corrupt (Anderlini, 2004; O'Reilly, 2015). This perception of women's trustworthiness also has to do with women's ability to empathize and communicate better on average than their male counterparts (Anderlini, 2004). Therefore, including women in political institutions often improves the public's confidence in politics, which is fundamental in fragile post-conflict nations (O'Reilly, 2015). It also enhances the legitimacy and ownership of peace agreements. Even outside of official institutions, it was found that in states where women had a higher social status, peacebuilding was more likely to be successful (O'Reilly, 2015).

Obstacles to Women's Participation in Peace Processes

In recent years, women's inclusion in formal and informal peace processes has seen some progress. Nonetheless, women remain left out of many peace processes; with only 27% of peace agreements making references to women (Coomaraswamy, 2015). Women lack direct access to mediators and negotiators; between 1992 and 2011, women made up less than 10% of negotiators. There is still "no official, standardized mechanism for accessing information about the peace process and for developing women's interests'" (Adjei, 2019, p. 137). This section will focus on the barriers women face when trying to get access to peace processes. When it comes to high-level decision-making, so beyond women's immediate social relations, women's participation in peace processes is restricted by social, economic, cultural, and institutional obstacles (Justino et al., 2018).

Often named are cultural, religious, and social norms, which are based on patriarchal values that are harmful to women in general and discourage them from participating in peacemaking processes (Justino et al., 2018; Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019). Women having a role as peacebuilders is often seen as 'difficult' or 'dangerous' by both women and men in a given context (Justino et al., 2018). This, unfortunately, enforces the idea that women are victims instead of agents during and post-conflict (Erzurum & Eren, 2014). As such, they are absent from decision-making bodies. This is not just on a local and national level, but also in international decision-making bodies. In fact, UN Resolution 1325 has been criticized for using 'women' and 'gender' interchangeably, thereby ignoring that the gender binary is a social construct and that the feminine category is seen as subordinate within it (Basu & Nagar, 2021). This 'gender essentialism' maintains the view of women as mothers, women as vulnerable, and women as civilians, and thus limits the role they can play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In the same way, men are limited to being perpetrators of violence or as women and children's protectors (Basu & Nagar, 2021).

When women do participate in peacebuilding, they often face intimidation and insecurity (Justino et al., 2018). Especially those women working for women's rights organizations are met with a lot of resistance from the community and often within their own families. Women can face the threat of gender-based violence when engaging in peacebuilding. It has also been found that even when men acknowledged the importance of women's rights, they rarely mentioned women's contribution to peace

processes (Justino et al., 2018). Moreover, a lack of awareness about women's rights and entrenched gender norms prevent women from thinking they can challenge their given traditional family role, which, in turn, inhibits their participation in peacebuilding (Justino et al., 2018; Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019). When women do feel ready to challenge these norms, they are met by an additional hurdle: (elite) men unwilling to share power. "[…] Peace processes and important governmental structures are still generally 'a boys' club'" (Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019, p. 37). In Nepal, for example, women had little influence over the Constitution's content, even though they made up over 33% of the Constituent Assembly. Unfortunately, patriarchal norms led to a disregard for gender equality. In addition to social norms about women's roles, their restricted access to justice and the inequality often existing in the justice systems further make it incredibly difficult for women to challenge the status quo (Justino et al., 2018). Enduring social and cultural norms have been institutionalized in a way that consistently prevents women from participating. They face a lack of access to political life and often public life in general (Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019; Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021).

Further related to cultural and social norms is our general understanding of what is meant by 'peace and security', as it masks the gendered nature of war (Basu & Nagar, 2021). In simple terms, peace has been defined as the absence of war or violence. As such, those who hold arms – politico-military elites (usually men) – are invited to the negotiation table. This is highly problematic, as different skills are needed to build peace. Exclusion during the negotiation phase can also lead to exclusion in the post-conflict society. Moreover, from a feminist perspective, violence includes the structural inequalities that perpetuate violence (against women) (Basu & Nagar, 2021). Ignoring this leaves an important part of peace unaddressed.

Women also face economic barriers to their participation in peace processes. Engaging in them demands time, finances, and material resources (Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019; Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021; UN Women, 2018b). Women will need to cover the costs of traveling to the (often foreign) location and childcare expenses. They can also face a loss of daily earnings, which especially prevents poorer women from being able to participate (Justino et al., 2018). Additionally, funds are needed to organize collective action from different civil society organizations (Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021). However, women's networks and women-led organizations remain chronically underfunded. This presents a huge obstacle to inclusion during peace agreements

and their implementation (Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021). Additionally, education has often been named as a barrier to women's inclusion; not only in negotiations but also in work outside their family life (Justino et al., 2018). Nonetheless, many women still believe that they can give a valuable contribution to peace processes. However, in some cases, their lack of education is used as an excuse to prevent their engagement in peace processes (Justino et al., 2018). Furthermore, when wanting to participate in peace negotiations women's groups often face higher criteria for participation than other actors engaged in the process (Justino et al., 2018; UN Women, 2018b).

Lastly, women lack the confidence to participate in peacebuilding (Justino et al, 2018). Especially in contexts where there are already low levels of education, lack of financial support, lack of employment experience, and cultural traditions that have negatively impacted women in the past, they lack the confidence to participate in collective discussions. It has been found, however, that when Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are present to offer support and training on women's rights and women in peacebuilding, women felt more confident to participate (Justino et al., 2018). There is a need to increase women's skills in the areas of leadership, networking, negotiation, and organizational and analytical skills (Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019). Similarly, it has been found that when women's groups and networks were already active in a country prior to the peace process starting, it positively influenced women's participation in the process (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Existing experience and resources in addition to support from regional and international organizations are fundamental for women's confidence (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Furthermore, men's support of women's participation in peace processes has also helped to increase women's confidence (Justino et al., 2018).

Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes

Women's rights activists often focus on the number of women present at the formal negotiating table, to measure women's inclusion in peace processes. However, just because there are representatives of women at formal negotiations does not mean they can influence the process. Instead, there should be an emphasis placed on women's meaningful inclusion. Women's participation in peace processes goes far beyond their presence at the official negotiation table. Thus, Paffenholz et al. (2016) maintain that women's inclusion can be seen in multiple modalities. Specifically, their quantitative research led to their finding of 7 modalities of inclusion.

Firstly, is women's direct representation at the negotiation table, which happens most often during the negotiation phase (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Either, women are delegates for "the state or opposing armed groups or their political representatives", or they have their own delegation as a 'women's negotiating team' alongside the main parties (Bell & Turner, 2020, p. 4). Research suggests that women have a higher chance of exercising influence when working together with other women across delegations or within their own delegation (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Besides being a negotiator, women can also take on roles as signatories and mediators (Diaz & Tordjman, 2012).

Secondly, women can be included in the peace process as observers or witnesses, usually during the negotiation phase (Paffenholz et al., 2016; Diaz & Tordjman, 2012). Although they have no official role, women's observer status ensures they are well-informed about the negotiations (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Furthermore, this may allow them to act as a watchdog, informally advise mediators and negotiating parties, and form an alliance with other observer groups to finalize an agreement. Depending on how they use their observer status women can have some influence, but their overall influence on the process remains low in this role. The sidelining of observers by official delegations is common and, as they are often selected in small numbers, observers can never represent the diverse group that is women (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

Thirdly, women can be included in the peace process through consultations. Paffenholz et al. (2016) divide this modality into 3 different kinds of consultations: official consultations, which can be a formal advisory body meant to channel public demands into formal negotiations, unofficial consultations, which are meant to

generate support for the starting of official negotiations (or official consultations), and public consultations, which are used to spread the results of negotiations and generate the people's suggestions. When it comes to public consultations, the goal is to bring together the public's opinions and proposals to set these on the agenda of the formal negotiations and to increase public ownership of an agreement and increase its long-term sustainability. In general, public consultations are found to be more representative than official and unofficial consultations, which can often be elite-based. Nonetheless, there is a risk that the main conflict parties use consultations to further their own agenda. Thus, for women to have influence there needs to be a clear and effective transfer strategy from the consultation to the official negotiations (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

Fourthly, women can be found in inclusive commissions, which is a relatively new phenomenon (Paffenholz et al., 2016; UN Women, 2018b). "There are three types of commissions: a) commissions preparing/conducting a peace process; b) post-agreement commissions such as transitional justice mechanisms, ceasefire monitoring, or constitution-drafting commissions; and c) commissions set up as permanent constitutional bodies" (Paffenholz et al., 2016, p. 33). Commissions are especially important for keeping track of the implementation of a peace agreement (Paffenholz et al., 2016). A concern that has been named during the UN Women's 2018 conference on Women's meaningful participation in peace processes when it comes to both (gender) commissions and consultations by way of advisory boards is that these "may relegate women to indirect roles with limited influence" (UN Women, 2018b, p. 8). Nonetheless, the design and functioning of these modalities may change over time and can still play a vital role in women's inclusion.

Fifthly, are high-level problem-solving workshops, also called Track 1.5 (Paffenholz et al., 2016). These workshops allow representatives from different conflict parties to come together unofficially. It creates a space for them to discuss their positions and the possibility of opening official negotiations and reaching an agreement through what is called 'shuttle diplomacy' (Bell & Turner, 2020). The mediator often works with the conflict parties individually to see if issues can be resolved (Bell & Turner, 2020). Women often remain underrepresented during Track 1.5 processes, unless the workshops were intentionally designed for groups of women to come together and overcome their grievances. In these cases, women are often

able to overcome their own tensions and develop joint positions that can influence negotiations (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

However, there is a real opportunity to use multi-track diplomacy to increase women's inclusion in peace processes (Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021). Women's inclusion in informal processes, called Track 2 or Track 3 processes, has been well-documented. Women, through informal peace processes, have massively contributed to formal peace processes, or Track 1 peace processes, by pushing for political will and gender inclusion and by building broad support. However, the successful transfer of knowledge and recommendations from the informal process to the formal peace process has lagged. Therefore, there needs to be a normalizing and institutionalizing of efforts that strengthen the link between formal and informal peace processes, called 'multi-track diplomacy'. A solution, then, could be the Track 1.5 process, when official negotiators and participants in informal processes are brought together to transfer ideas (Fal-Dutra Santos, 2021).

Sixthly, women can be included in public decision-making (Paffenholz et al., 2016). This way, the public can ratify the new constitution or peace agreement through a referendum, thereby legitimating it. However, it is important to remember that when voting shows the public is against an agreement, referenda can put the entire peace process on hold. Unfortunately, data on women's voting in conflict areas is often missing or incomplete. Therefore, it can be difficult to draw conclusions about women's inclusion in this modality (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

Lastly, mass action, most often in the form of public demonstrations, is an important instrument to encourage negotiations and the signing of peace deals (Paffenholz et al., 2016). They can also have other goals, such as ending authoritarian rule or ending hostilities. Women's mass action also advocated for their participation in the formal peace process, which allowed them more influence. Interestingly, more than any other group, women's groups have organized and participated in mass action to support peace deals (Paffenholz et al., 2016). An example is the 2001 Stand for Peace campaign in Sri Lanka (Anderlini, 2004). The female president of Sri Lanka First, a local NGO, launched this campaign to spread public awareness and increase support for peace negotiations that would finally end the 20-year-long civil war. On September 19th of 2001, over a million Sri Lankans took a stand against the conflict; thereby pressuring political leaders to finally enter negotiations (Anderlini, 2004).

Methodology

To answer the research question: In what ways have women been included in the Mali peace process and what has been the extent of their influence in the process? This thesis will be an explanatory single case study (de Vaus, 2001). Case studies have been essential to the social sciences' methodological development. The 'case' or unit of analysis will be the Mali peace process. Case studies have the ability to achieve strong internal validity, as they develop a thorough, well-rounded causal analysis. Their conclusions, then, are often highly trustworthy. Case studies are, however, often critiqued for lacking external validity. In particular, for single case studies, such as this thesis, it can be difficult to generalize beyond this particular case (de Vaus, 2001). Nonetheless, the aim of this thesis is not to generalize statistically. The goal is to provide an in-depth analysis of Mali. Given the demonstrated importance of women's participation in peace processes and the disastrous consequences of the Mali conflict, this can be a valuable case study.

Before conducting an analysis of women's inclusion, a temporal boundary needs to be established (de Vaus, 2001). To this end, this thesis will devote a section on Mali's historical background and divide the peace process into the 3 phases that were previously established in the chapter on 'Defining Peace Processes': pre-negotiation, negotiation, and implementation. Furthermore, in reference to the chapter on 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Peace Processes', this thesis will devote a section to possible barriers to women's inclusion in peace processes in Mali. It is believed that contextualizing the Malian state in this manner will contribute to an in-depth and thorough analysis of women's inclusion in Mali's peace process.

Each of the 3 phases shall be analyzed by looking at women's participation in the 7 inclusion modalities established by Paffenholz et al. (2016). These modalities give a broader view of the possible roles that women undertake during peace processes than when one would simply look at women's participation in direct negotiations. As has been mentioned, women's roles and contributions to peace processes can be much more complex than simply being a delegate. Especially in states where gender equality is an often-contested matter, women would have to find other ways to participate in and influence a peace process. Using the established theoretical framework, then, could possibly provide new or unexpected insights into the Mali peace process. Furthermore, having these insights could possibly contribute

to improving women's inclusion in the Malian peace process or Malian society in general.

As the research question also pertains to women's influence on peace processes, this thesis will look at if the found actors' demands and resolutions were met. Influence, here, is defined as women being able to bring their issues to the peace agenda and their issues being found in the resulting APRM (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Furthermore, influence can relate to women's ability to push peace negotiations and implementation forward (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

This case study aims to create a full picture of women's inclusion in the Malian peace process through the use of qualitative content analysis. To collect the data for the case study, this thesis will use primary and secondary data sources: scientific journal articles, (newspaper) articles, reports, and agreements. It should be acknowledged that these data sources can be qualitative, such as articles that use interviews. As such, there is a risk of researcher bias, as their and this researcher's perspectives or preconceptions may have an influence on the reliability and validity of the analysis (de Vaus, 2001). Specifically, how data is interpreted. For example, having a Western cultural background can affect how one looks at a case study such as Mali.

As will be seen, the work of Jenny Lorentzen, who is currently a post-doctoral fellow at Lund University, provided particularly helpful source material as she focuses on Malian women's participation in peace negotiations. Additionally, Boutellis and Zahar (2017) and reports of the Secretary-General (S-G) were fundamental when it came to creating a contextualizing of Mali historically. The Carter Center also served as an important source when it came to agreement implementation, as it was named the independent observer of the APRM. Furthermore, UN Women, MINUSMA, and reports of the Secretary-General also provided helpful information. Lastly, this thesis looked at primary source material in the official agreements of the peace process.

The modalities of inclusion and definition of influence from Paffenholz et al. (2016) will be used to guide the content analysis and provide an answer to the research question. Sources will be examined based on these criteria. To provide a thorough analysis, the author used various search engines and online libraries to look for sources using keywords pertaining to the investigation, such as 'women', 'participation', 'inclusion', 'Mali', and 'peace process'. Keywords derived from Paffenholz et al. (2016) were also used, such as 'observer', 'consultations',

‘commission’, and ‘workshops’. Findings can be seen in the chapter ‘Findings on Women’s Inclusion in the Mali Peace Process’.

Mali's Historical Context

This section focuses on Mali's historical context. Knowing this context can help one understand the events that influenced Mali's peace process and the durability of the peace. When it comes to the current situation in Mali, it is remarkable that the 2012 rebellion, which was the instigator for the 2014-2015 peace negotiations, is the fourth rebellion in the north since the country became independent in 1960 (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; Kone, 2017).

The first rebellion (1963-1964) started soon after Mali's independence from France (Kone, 2017). The Tuareg people in the north, traditionally a nomadic pastoralist group, demanded more autonomy. Due to their nomadic past, they have a complex ethnic and religious history. While some Tuaregs refer to themselves as 'Kel Tamasheq', which means People of the Tamasheq language (not shared by all Tuaregs), others refer to themselves as "Kel Tagelmust", which means People of the Veil and goes back to Islamic origins. Many Tuareg maintain their traditional way of life and hierarchical social structure, which is seemingly a difficult fit in modern nation-states, such as Mali (Kone, 2017). As such, it has been said that the recurring rebellions correlate with the start and development of Mali's modern state system (Keita, 2018)

Instead of giving the region special status and more autonomy, Mali's president, with the support of the Soviet Union, brutally repressed the region with his mainly southern Malian army (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Later on, in the 80s and 90s, many northerners were forced to leave Mali due to droughts in the region. Consequently, many of them joined existing Tuareg rebel movements in Algeria and Niger and a Libyan-sponsored mercenary group called the Islamic Region. These forces together would go on to start the second rebellion (1990-1991). Their demands, however, remained the same: for the Malian government to recognize northern political identity. Again, the government chose to repress the population rather than negotiate with them. The rebellion, however, proved strong enough to force the government into negotiations. This resulted in the Tamanrasset agreement, which granted special status to northern Mali and allowed northerners to manage much of their own affairs. The APRM, however, fell apart due to a military coup. A new agreement, the National Pact (Pacte National) between the Malian government and the Coordination of United Movements and Fronts of Azawad (an alliance between Arab and Tuareg rebels)

included “special status for the north, the withdrawal of the Malian armed forces from the north, integration of rebels into the Malian army, an ambitious development program, and deepened decentralization extending to the entire country” (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017, p. 5). In return, the rebels stopped their demand for the independence of northern Mali. However, in the following years, divisions within the northern rebel group would increase while economic and political reform slowed down (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Between 1994 and 2000, there were various local revolts and mutinies said to be motivated by the delays in the National Pact’s implementation and frustrated ethnocultural groups from the north (Keita, 2018). Over time, this created the conditions for what would become the third rebellion (2006-2009).

The third rebellion was due to various factors. Mainly, northern grievances combined with aggravating southern responses, the relatively slower development of the north, and southern distrust towards northerners (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). When the Malian army withdrew in 2006, northern fighters joined forces, forming the Alliance for Democracy and Change, and rebelled once more. The Algiers Accord, initialed in 2006, was meant to end this rebellion but infighting in the northern rebellion, criticism of the Malian government, and a lack of implementation quickly rendered this APRM obsolete (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; Wing, 2013). Moreover, the government, going against its earlier promises in the 1992 and 2006 Peace Agreements, increased its military presence in the region. This legacy of rebellions and previous peace agreements has directly influenced the 2012 crisis and will continue to affect Mali’s future. Mainly, the lack of implementation of past agreements has increased mistrust on both sides and has only radicalized armed forces further; thereby making compromise more difficult. Furthermore, Mali’s history of earlier peace processes where Algeria acted as a mediator has cemented Algeria’s position as lead mediator. However, Algeria’s ability to act as an objective mediator has been questioned as the situation in Mali affects Algeria’s territorial integrity and national unity (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

The fourth rebellion (2012-2014) started in 2012 when Tuareg rebels joined the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (Mouvement National de Libération de l’Azawad, or MNLA) and occupied a big part of northern Mali (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; Wing, 2013). On April 6th, they declared this territory, which they call ‘Azawad’, independent. The MNLA and Ansar Dine, an Islamic Tuareg group, attacked Malian forces on January 17th; reportedly executing around 100 Malian soldiers after their

surrender (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; Wing, 2013). Afterward, frustrated with the government's poor handling of the rebellion, army officers orchestrated a coup that overthrew the Malian president in March (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; Lackenbauer et al., 2015). MNLA's occupation, however, was short-lived. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, a terrorist organization, and its offshoot, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad West Africa managed to take control of Gao and Timbuktu. Simultaneously, Ansar Dine managed to take control of Kidal. Following this, Burkina Faso attempted to start negotiations. These, however, were abruptly ended when the Islamist groups started to move south. Panicked, the Malian government asked for French military assistance, which would add to the African-led International Support Mission that was already on its way to Mali. MNLA then claimed to support French intervention in the hopes that it would help the MNLA regain control of the north later on (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; Lackenbauer et al., 2015).

As the end of major combat came in sight, the UN deployed a Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) that was tasked with supporting Malian political processes and carrying out security-related operations (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). However, achieving the mandate required Mali to re-establish a constitutional order. This would be the main goal during the Ouagadougou peace talks. The Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement achieved a cease-fire that allowed for new Malian elections to take place. However, deep mistrust between the conflict parties and a lack of political will due to decades of animosity made building confidence between the parties extremely difficult. With this lack of progress tensions only continued to rise, resulting in more violent confrontations between Malian defense forces, armed groups, and security forces. Consequently, the MNLA and another Tuareg group, the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (Le Haut Conseil pour l'Unité de l'Azawad, HCUA), together with their ally, the Arab Movement of Azawad (Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad, MAA) were able to control a large part of the north and set up a parallel administration here. In the meantime, extremist groups reorganized and increasingly targeted UN peacekeeping forces. It is in this incredibly complex environment that mediator Algeria attempted to start Mali's peace process in January 2014 (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

The Mali Peace Process

In January 2014, Algeria started informal discussions with northern Mali's armed movements to see if it was possible to join them together into a coherent platform from which it would be able to start negotiations with the Malian government in 2014 (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; "Report of the S-G", 2014b). The movements were able to create two separate groups: An alliance between the MNLA, HCUA, and MAA-Coordination, calling itself the Coordination of Azawad Movements (hereinafter 'the Coordination') and an alliance between the MAA-Platform, Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance, and the Coalition of the People for Azawad (an offset of the MNLA) calling itself the Platform. Initially, the Coordination of Azawad Movements was the stronger military force, made up of mainly Tuareg and Arabs. The Coordination was made up of the armed groups that started the 2012 crisis. The Platform, in contrast, had never taken up arms against the government and claimed to present Arab, Tuareg, and other central and northern Malian populations. As such, it was perceived as being closer to the Malian government (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; "Report of the S-G", 2014b).

The three conflict parties all officially recognized Algiers as the chief mediator in the negotiations (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; "Report of the S-G", 2014a). In doing so, they effectively sidelined the Economic Community of West African States' mediation efforts and, in some ways, also MINUSMA (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). What mainly makes the following peace process so different from previous peace processes in Mali is the Involvement of multiple co-mediators, invited by Algeria, with differing interests and various links to the different conflict parties. One can find these parties in the APRM as "the Economic Community of West African States (la Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de Ouest, CEDEAO), the African Union (l'Union Africaine, UA), the United Nations, the European Union (EU), and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (l'Organisation pour la Coopération Islamique), Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Chad" (2015, p. 2). In particular, the neighboring countries, most of which were hosting Tuareg populations of their own, had a stake in the negotiations' outcome (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). The large group of mediators met in Algiers in July 2014 before the start of official negotiations (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

The pre-negotiation phase concluded on July 24th, 2014, after a two-week process that ended with the signing of a roadmap (feuille de route) (Boutellis & Zahar,

2017). This roadmap gave those involved guiding principles and a framework for the impending negotiations. In retrospect, the signing ceremony gave some clues about how the negotiations would go. Namely, the Coordination refused to recognize the Platform as a real conflict party because it believed it should have been part of the government delegation. Consequently, the Coordination and the Platform signed the document separately. Although resisted mainly by the Coordination, the road map enshrined the Malian government's set red lines, which included territorial integrity, unity, and secularism. This last aspect was contested by the HCUA in particular. The unity aspect was contested by the MNLA, as the group's demands remained independence, autonomy, or federalism. Furthermore, the Coordination envisioned a long negotiation process, whereas mediator Algeria opted for negotiations to be done within 100 days (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

During the pre-negotiation phase, the conflict parties participated in a confidence-building measure in the form of a prisoner's release in July (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; "Report of the S-G", 2014b). At the same time, there were still armed clashes happening between the parties. "These clashes shed light on some of the underlying conflict dynamics, including economic dynamics (control of strategic geographical locations on trafficking routes), inter-community dynamics (between Arab and Tuareg communities), and intra-community dynamics (between different castes within the Arab and Tuareg communities)" (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017, pp. 13-14). The formation of the Self Defense Group of Imghad Tuaregs and Allies (Groupe d'autodéfense Touareg Imghad et alliés, GATIA), a new armed group with significant military strength, was also due to these intra-community dynamics (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). GATIA was made up of Tuareg Imghad clans that were considered subordinate in the traditional Tuareg hierarchy. The various conflict parties blamed one another for the outbreaks of violence (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

Because the conflict parties were opposed to the idea of including civil society actors in the official talks, an attempt was made by some in the mediation team to create more inclusiveness in the negotiation phase (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; "Report of the S-G", 2014b). During the course of one week, there were civil society hearings with 18 civil society representatives appointed by the 3 conflict parties. Representatives included traditional and religious leaders, refugees and diaspora, and women and youth (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; "Report of the S-G", 2014b). Mirroring the direction of the future negotiations, the delegates discussed 4 themes: "(1) political-

institutional issues; (2) defense and security issues; (3) economic development, social, and cultural issues; and (4) reconciliation, justice, and humanitarian issues" (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017, p. 14). Although initially adopting the same position as their designating parties, the delegations, to the Malian government's detriment, ultimately came to agree on the government's responsibility to provide basic services and security for all citizens (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

The beginning of the negotiation phase was delayed due to the parties being in disagreement over how the official talks would be sequenced (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). While the government and mediation team maintained the opinion that the 4 themes should be worked on simultaneously, the Coordination insisted on political-institutional issues being discussed first. Additionally, the Coordination continued to resist the Platform being included in the talks as a conflict party. These issues were ultimately solved by creating two parallel tracks, one where the Coordination and the government would have informal discussions and one where the Platform and the government would have informal discussions. Both tracks discussed the themes simultaneously but only communicated through the international mediation team; almost never directly. During the informal talks, there were clear divergences when it came to the parties' wishes for a new institutional framework for Mali. Mainly, the Coordination opted for a federal structure including 'Azawad', whereas the Platform and the government opted for decentralization and regionalization. This important difference also negatively affected the parties' engagement on other themes. Nonetheless, the parties were able to agree on sketching a document of principles (Eléments pour un accord de paix et de réconciliation au Mali), which broadly outlined what would become the peace agreement. The plan proposed making northern Mali a zone of 'special development' and "giving 'territorial collectivities' a broad range of powers" (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017, p. 15).

Starting October 23rd, 2014, the conflict parties had time to review the document and submit their reactions before the commencement of negotiations on a final draft agreement (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Although some positive steps were made during this time, namely, a direct dialogue on the two parallel tracks, key issues remained undiscussed. For example, the Coordination continued to push for federalism, criticizing the document for focusing too much on economic development ("Report of the S-G", 2014c). In the meantime, clashes between the armed parties persisted, in violation of the 2013 cease-fire agreement (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). The continuation

of hostilities further delayed negotiations and the signing of the official agreement, which was set to take place in January 2015. Following separately held meetings between the mediators and different conflict parties, the revised draft agreement was finally submitted in late February. The government and the Platform signed the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (Accord pour la Paix et la Reconciliation au Mali) on March 1st, 2015. The Coordination initially refused to sign the APRM, as they believed it would ignore their main wishes to recognize 'Azawad' as a political entity within Mali. The international mediating team, however, refused to reopen negotiations. Instead, the mediators pressured the Coordination into signing the agreement, which they finally did on June 20th, 2015 (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

After the APRM was signed by all parties, the implementation phase of the agreement could commence. The APRM provided a 2-year interim period, until June 2017. As such, this interim period provides a time frame during which the agreement's implementation will be assessed. However, this is not to say that the peace process ended after this time. As was seen in the above section on 'Defining Peace Processes', peace processes, in particular implementation phases, can take up many years or even decades. The interim period is chosen to serve as the implementation phase during this study for reasons of measurability.

Various barriers to implementation can be identified. Importantly, due to the contents of the APRM, most of the burden of implementation would fall on the Malian government (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Article 3, for example, states, "The Malian State institutions shall take the necessary measures to adopt the regulatory, legislative and constitutional measures needed to implement the provisions of the present…" (p. 4). However, the peace agreement's implementation has lagged massively. The focus has been on security over justice and development (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; The Carter Center, 2018). However, development is incredibly important to maintaining peace in any state. For example, an Operational Coordination Mechanism (Mécanisme de Coopération Opérationnel) was established on the security front, but the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission saw less progress. This has also been due to ongoing violence in northern Mali. Another barrier present throughout the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and also during the implementation phase is the ongoing hostilities between different armed movements and their fragmentation and recomposition (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017; The Carter Center, 2018). This has made it more difficult for conflict parties and mediators to keep track of the process and

implementation (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017). Moreover, the APRM has largely ignored inter-community and ethnic tensions within northern Mali, even though these have been important causes of conflict in the past. Within the peace process, terrorism and organized crime have also been ignored and therefore been allowed to persist, as the focus has been on northern Mali. Lastly, the international mediating team, as it is made up of many actors with varying national interests and geopolitical considerations, has had trouble maintaining unity (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

In conclusion, the objective of the Mali peace process was to resolve the conflict and reach an agreement that acknowledged both the unity of the northern Mali territory and the secular and republican Malian state (Lorentzen, 2021). For the purpose of this paper's research, the pre-negotiation phase is said to pertain from January to July 2014. It begins with Algeria exploring the possibilities for discussions with armed groups in northern Mali and ends with the conflict parties signing the roadmap (feuille de route) for impending negotiations. Thus began an 8-month-long mediated negotiation process with the Malian government, the Coordination, and the Platform, which ended with the signing of the APRM in March 2015. Although initially only the government and the Platform initialed the agreement, the Coordination signed it at the end of June. The signing of the agreement started the implementation phase. This paper will set the implementation phase's end to June 2017, according to the APRM's 2-year interim period.

Barriers to Women's Inclusion in Mali

This section is devoted to contextualizing women's rights in Mali. In doing so, it aims to identify possible barriers to women's participation in Mali's peace process, mainly by using the theoretical framework from the chapter 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Peace Processes'.

Mali's population is ethnically and socially diverse (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic background are important factors that determine a person's status in society. Additionally, traditional and modern systems of governance coexist and complement one another. "Some of these traditional systems are local and/or regional in scope and influence, and many "Malians regularly seek out local leaders such as village heads (chefs) and/or religious leaders (Muslim, Christian, "traditional" or "animist") to assist in conflict resolution." These so-called traditional mechanisms for managing conflict therefore often play a very prominent role in society" (Lorentzen et al., 2019, p. 11). Age precedes even gender hierarchies, which means that within the household, an older woman has more power than a younger man (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). Consequently, power in Mali is mainly distributed among older men, giving younger people less agency (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). Nonetheless, women make up half of the population, and 48% of women are under 15 (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Structural gender inequality limits women's public life. For example, women are significantly more illiterate than men: 45% to 22%. However, depending on the social group a woman belongs to, she might occupy a stronger position. This has happened, for example, in the Tuareg communities in the north. As such, women can sometimes play an important role in conflict resolution on a local level, although their role is seldom valued (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Moreover, even though Malian culture tells women to refrain from public life, older women often fulfill an Important role In mobilizing young people for political candidates and their parties (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). However, this is said to be due more to gerontocratic values than gender (Lackenbauer et al., 2015).

Education was also identified as a possible barrier to women's participation in peace processes (Justino et al., 2018). In a 2015 report, the CEDAW Committee reported a considerable gap between genders when it comes to education, although there have been some improvements over time. Several factors play into a lack of education for women. As girls are often subject to early marriage, their husband's

refusal or a cultural tradition of closely-spaced pregnancies can often prevent them from getting a full education. A lack of finances and teaching materials were also mentioned to inhibit education. Furthermore, time constraints, especially for women living in rural areas of the country, also play a role as they often struggle with excessive (domestic) labor. Lastly, the school curriculum does not tailor to women's participation. And even if it would, the job opportunities for women, especially in the villages, remain so low that there is often no incentive to get an education in the first place (CEDAW, 2015). The National Democratic Institute similarly identified the main barriers to women's meaningful participation to be "lack of education, employment, and electoral opportunities" (2014, n.p.).

A lack of finances and material resources was also named as inhibiting women's inclusion in peace processes (Fal-Dutra Santos et al., 2019). Poverty in Mali is high overall but affects women disproportionately, suggesting there are clear financial constraints (CEDAW, 2015). Not just the Malian state, but international actors can play a fundamental role in financially supporting efforts to increase women's participation in peace processes (CEDAW, 2015).

There are several legal documents meant to safeguard women's rights in Mali. Mali's 1992 constitution guarantees equal rights for all (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Additionally, although not fully implemented, the country also has had a national gender policy since 2010. International documents CEDAW and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Right of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) have also been ratified by Mali. Nevertheless, women's rights have been a controversial topic for many years. Although the Malian state is secular, the vast majority of Malians (90%) are Muslim. Consequently, religion strongly influences both private and public life (Lackenbauer et al., 2015; Lorentzen et al., 2019). Especially over the last 2 decades, conservative Islam has gained more attraction, with religious leaders strongly opposing gender equality reforms. In 2009, the Islamic High Council blocked a revision of the Family Code, which has control over how both sexes are treated by society and how they are expected to behave. The Family Code also allowed child marriage for girls (from 15-16 years) by accepting marriage without consent and other forms of discrimination. Malian women's activists, however, brought this case to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights claiming it was in violation of the Maputo Protocol; and they won (Lorentzen et al., 2019; Lackenbauer et al., 2015).

In 2012, Mali adopted its first NAP for the implementation of Resolution 1325 (Lorentzen et al., 2019). However, the NAP lacked implementation, which was partly due to the 2012 crisis that happened almost simultaneously. In 2015, the second NAP was adopted for the period 2015-2017, with the main intention of including women in the peace agreement's implementation. However, due to a lack of funding, and, perhaps, political will, only half of the NAP's planned activities were carried out (Lorentzen et al., 2019). A third NAP was launched for the 2019-2023 period ("Mali – 1325 NAP", n.d.).

Thus, gendered divisions causing women and men to have different responsibilities and roles due to culture, religion, and tradition, can pose serious barriers to Malian women's inclusion in peace processes and in public life in general. All in all, research concurs that African women, in general, but Malian women, in particular, are usually the least involved social group in conflict resolution and conflict management mechanisms (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

Findings on Women's Inclusion in the Mali Peace Process

Having divided the peace process into its 3 phases and presented the 7 modalities for women's inclusion, the following chapter will present findings on women's inclusion in the Mali Peace Process for each subsequent phase.

Pre-negotiation Phase

The pre-negotiation phase falls within the January – July 2014 timeframe. The roadmap, signed in late July, includes the preliminaries for the following negotiations (2014). 'Women' or 'gender' is not mentioned in the roadmap and is said to not have been an important topic during the pre-negotiation phase (Lorentzen et al., 2019). What can be seen in the roadmap (2014) is that the emphasis during this phase was placed on ending the violence and building confidence between the parties. What was mentioned in the roadmap, however, is that the conflict parties have a responsibility to create awareness surrounding the agreements. This should be done by informing the population and other national actors, such as civil and political organizations and community leaders, through meetings and forums. This suggests some inclusion of women, although little evidence was found to support claims thatwomen were meaningfully included in the pre-negotiation phase in any of the 7 modalities. This is highly problematic, as during this phase participants agree on agenda topics and who gets to participate during negotiations (Anderlini, 2004). When women are excluded from this phase, bringing their issues onto the peace agenda becomes more difficult, and there can be a greater likelihood of them being excluded for subsequent stages.

Negotiation Phase

As the goal of this phase is to reach a mutually acceptable agreement, women's presence is of crucial importance (Anderlini, 2004). If women are excluded, their perspectives and issues cannot be taken into account in the following peace agreement. Moreover, there is a risk of women's issues being overshadowed by the power dynamics between political and military elites (Lorentzen, 2021).

Interestingly, women had succeeded in being included in the negotiations for the drafting of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement, which landed the 2013 ceasefire (Goetz & Jenkins, 2015; Lorentzen, 2021). With support from international organizations such as UN Women, 4 women were able to travel to Burkina Faso's capital and demand a seat at the negotiation table. Sadly, this did not set a precedent

for the following peace negotiations (Goetz & Jenkins, 2015; Lorentzen, 2021). Initially, the UN and the EU prioritized women's inclusion in the peace process (Lorentzen, 2021). However, they were in the minority, as many other international mediators, most notably lead mediator Algeria, were reluctant to pursue women's participation due to cultural considerations and fear of delaying the negotiations. In terms of cultural implications, patriarchal norms are said to have had an effect on women's exclusion. In his introductory statement, for example, the lead mediator suggested that women are better placed in the kitchen, as they would not be able to handle the complexities of mediation. Such a statement from the main mediator could set the tone for the rest of the peace process (Lorentzen, 2021). This fits with Malian tradition, also discussed in the section on 'Barriers to Women's Inclusion in Mali', which holds that women are confined to the private sphere and should not be included in public affairs (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Thus, religious and traditional authorities, including male family members, can play an important role in encouraging women's inclusion in peace processes (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

As mentioned in the 'The Mali Peace Process' chapter, the negotiations revolved around 4 themes. Solving this range of issues in the correct manner was supposed to ensure lasting peace in Mali. Mainly, the Algiers negotiations included plenary sessions and negotiating groups that discussed one of the themes (Lorentzen, 2021). There were several rounds of negotiations, as the conflict parties worked toward and evaluated a draft agreement. It has been said that the process was somewhat transparent, as the negotiations were highly mediatized. Nonetheless, the process has been heavily criticized for excluding important stakeholders and the wider Mali population, as negotiations were mainly among political elites (Lorentzen, 2021). Together, the three conflict parties – the Platform, the Coordination, and the Mali government – sent approximately 100 delegates. Only 5 of these were said to be women (Lorentzen, 2021). There was no evidence found that female mediators were active during the negotiations.

The inclusion of more women in the delegations was likely influenced by the Platform for Women Leaders (Plateforme des Femmes Leaders du Mali), which did so through TV and radio advertisements, peace caravans, public debates, training, and awareness raising (UN Women, 2015). The Platform for Women Leaders, or Women's Platform is a national body of prominent activists and human rights defenders, as well as female political leaders, parliamentarians, and ministers. When they started their

efforts in July 2014, there were no more than 3 women among the Government delegates at the peace talks. By September 2014, however, more than 8 women were reported to have joined the delegates during the negotiation phase (UN Women, 2015). Other reports claim that 11 women participated in the 2015 negotiations; 3 from the government and 8 from civil society (Hendricks, 2017; Lackenbauer et al., 2015).

Interestingly, it has been reported that the Coordination and, specifically, the MNLA consulted their supporters more than the other conflict parties (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). During the negotiations, the Coordination was said to have consulted with both youth and women regularly in Kidal, northern Mali. This created more tensions between the parties, as the consultations sometimes delayed the negotiations. “Interviewees from northern Mali pointed to the paradox that the international community hastened the signing of a peace agreement, without even accepting the Coordination’s ambition to anchor the process and the agreement among men, women, and youth at home, even though in other instances, the same actors maintain that popular participation and women’s involvement are important principles” (Lackenbauer et al., 2015, p. 40). Although women were sparsely represented among the delegations, including the Coordination, women from the Coordination were said to be visibly present during the negotiation phase (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). All in all, given the secrecy that can often surround peace talks and the fact that the composition of delegations can change throughout the negotiations, this can provide an explanation for the different reports on women’s participation. Nonetheless, between 5, 8, and 11, these are all relatively low numbers when considering the large number of delegates.

It has also been said that women’s Issues were overshadowed by the power dynamics between the negotiating parties (Lorentzen, 2021). As such, priority was given to ‘more urgent’ issues. Frustrated with their expulsion, women’s organizations, with UN/MINUSMA and EU financial and technical support, launched a mass action campaign and a press conference to call attention to their objectives (Lorentzen, 2021). The main network through which women’s organizations collaborated to advocate for broader inclusion in the Mali peace process is the Women’s Platform (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Other important NGO partners include the Coordination of Malian Women’s Associations (Coordination des Associations Féminines du Mali) and Peace Huts (Woye Siffa) (UN Women, 2015). Joining together under one name helped women’s organizations speak with a unified and stronger voice (Lorentzen et al.,

2019). Consequently, the conflict parties managed to make some concessions. For example, the Minister for Reconciliations had been supportive of women's participation and, with Swiss support, provided training in conflict resolution and negotiation for some women (Lorentzen, 2021). Training and capacity building for women have been identified as being able to provide a positive contribution to women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

Furthermore, mass action contributed to organizing one week of civil society consultations wherein women representatives of the conflict parties' delegations were able to share their opinions (Lorentzen, 2021). However, as these women represented one of the conflict parties, some challenged their objectiveness (Lorentzen, 2021). Moreover, research suggests that when women want to push a women's agenda, it is better if observers see them as a unified group. This was also seen in Paffenholz et al. (2016), where it was suggested that women have a higher chance of exercising influence when working together with other women across delegations or within their own delegation. As such, contentions between women delegates can undermine their position in the peace process. It should also be mentioned that animosity between different ethnic groups in Mali affects women coming together as one (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). There are several reports of physical fights between women from different ethnic groups, such as Songhay, Tuareg, and Fulani; even in UN-supported peace huts (Lackenbauer et al., 2015). This also shows how not including enough women can be a problem for representation, especially when intersectionality is at play. Even the women who are elected may not be able to speak for all Malian communities. Lastly, the civil society hearings were not a part of the official peace talks. Thus, although some concessions were made to include women, they did not directly participate at the negotiation table (Lorentzen, 2021).

Another form of indirect participation used during the negotiation phase was the conveying of women's organizations' points of view to the mediation team through MINUSMA (Lorentzen, 2021). Specifically, women's organizations would hold meetings after big events in the peace process, for example, when the roadmap became public, where they would discuss and try to form a common message that could be shared with MINUSMA. This contact with MINUSMA also meant that women's organizations remained updated on the goings-on of the process (Lorentzen, 2021). Moreover, women's organizations such as the Platform for Women Leaders of Mali managed to organize various information sessions to increase awareness, which

were attended by hundreds of women from all regions of Mali (UN Women, 2015). They even organized a march for peace in support of the APRM, in which thousands of Malian women partook (UN Women, 2015). Some women's organizations have said that they felt that this way of being included was sufficient, but only insofar that they were able to still exert influence on the peace process (Lorentzen, 2021). Sadly, many women activists felt their concerns were ignored in the final peace agreement (Lorentzen, 2021).

Nonetheless, it has been mentioned that although women active in NGOs and civil society organizations and female civil servants were aware of the APRM's content, the majority of women were unfamiliar with the agreement's implications (Lorentzen et al., 2019). One participant in a case study said that the agreement in general was not really discussed on radio or TV. Moreover, it was said that "national channels […] are not watched by women. So you have to go to the tontines [(women's savings and loans groups)] to explain the agreement to women" (Lorentzen et al., 2019, p. 13). Some believe that "the content of the Agreement to be confined to "elitist circles" that prevented ownership of the document by the communities that were most affected by the crisis" (Lorentzen et al., 2019, p. 13). Research has shown that, in general, an overwhelming percentage of citizens claim to have no knowledge of the existence of or hardly any knowledge about the peace agreement (Crisis Group, 2020). This does not only pertain to the APRM but also to other existing political and legal women's rights structures, both national and international.

Implementation Phase

The implementation phase is said to be the peace process' last phase (Anderlini, 2004). While peace is often still fragile and resurging violence is a risk, it is important to make sure the peace agreement is implemented (Anderlini, 2004). This section will present findings on the implementation of Mali's peace agreement.

Article 63 of the APRM stipulates that the conflict parties should appoint an independent observer that would objectively evaluate the implementation of the agreement. It is not uncommon to bring in an outside party to monitor compliance with a peace agreement and report on its effectiveness (Anderlini, 2004). The Agreement Monitoring Committee (le Comité de Suivi de la mise en œuvre de l'Accord, CSA) chose The Carter Center to perform this role, which was a choice also welcomed by the UN, as can be seen in UNSC Resolution 2391 (2017). Starting from its

appointment, the independent observer would release a report on the APRM's implementation every 4 months. When it comes to women's representation, it should be mentioned that the Carter Center's mission is led by a woman (The Carter Center, n.d.). Namely, former U.S. ambassador to Niger, Bisa Williams. Jean Ntolé Kazadi, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, serves as deputy resident in Mali. He is also a former UA official. The composition of the team in Bamako was not found on the website (The Carter Center, n.d.). Circa 1 year after the interim period, the Observer released its first report, which has as its observation period January to April 2018. The Carter Center somewhat positively notes that although the implementation of the APRM had suffered considerable delays, the conflict parties had adhered to the agreement (2018). Moreover, the conflict parties were said to be open to substantive discussions. Nonetheless, the Carter Center also reports that the underlying tensions, mainly between the Coordination and the platform, have remained throughout the peace process. Violent splinter dissident groups and terrorism also remain problems (The Carter Center, 2018).

With the purpose of creating sustainable peace in Mali, the Bamako Agreement seeks to adopt implementation mechanisms, including the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Commission, the CSA, the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (la Commission Vérité, Justice et Réconciliation, CVJR), and the National Council on Security Sector Reform (Lorentzen et al., 2019). It also established interim authorities and joint patrol mechanisms (MOCs) in the northern regions (Lorentzen et al., 2019). DDR involves collecting and disposing of combatants' weapons, demobilizing combatants, and successfully reintegrating combatants into society. This can include matters such as supporting them in their livelihood, increasing access to education, or providing psychological support. SSR has to do with making the security sector more effective, while also increasing its transparency and accountability. Attention is also given to making sure the security sector adheres to national and international human rights laws.

It was mentioned by the Independent Observer that key topics of the APRM, such as creating a new governance structure, restructuring the national army, and increasing development in northern Mali, seem to be ignored (The Carter Center, 2018). Instead, the focus has been on components that are rather preliminary or temporary, such as the MOCs, Interim Authorities, and operationalizing the Ménaka and Taoudénit regions in the north (The Carter Center, 2018). This also fits with

another point mentioned, which is that as many of the implementation mechanisms pertain to military and security themes, a broad segment of the population, including women, has felt minimally included in the implementation on a more local level (Lorentzen et al., 2019). This is also due to the state's neglect to deliver necessary basic services to the wider population (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

The APRM also envisioned the creation of a Charter for Peace, Unity, and National Reconciliation with the purpose of reconfirming Mali's national identity and history while appreciating its cultural diversity (2015). In order to do so, a special commission was created on May 3rd, 2017 ("Report of the S-G", 2017). In terms of female inclusion, the commission was made up of 53 members, of whom only 6 were women. Although women were said to have made a substantial contribution to the conference that created the set of recommendations that would inform the Charter, they seem to have had insufficient influence to secure themselves a stronger position within the committee ("Report of the S-G", 2017).

As was mentioned in the 'Mali peace process' section of this work, implementation of the peace agreement has proved extremely difficult (Crisis Group, 2020). Even as late as 2020, only 23% of the APRM's provisions had been implemented (Crisis Group, 2020). All conflict parties seem to carry part of the blame for this (The Carter Center, 2018). Indeed, neither the Coordination nor the Platform take sufficient responsibility to proactively implement the agreement. However, the Government, which has been said to have an obligation to maintain a leading role in this process, has also taken little responsibility for providing the means, strategies, and structures needed for implementation (Lackenbauer et al., 2015; The Carter Center, 2018). It has been said that this was mainly due to the conflict parties' lack of will, as they had felt pressured by the international community into signing an agreement in 2015 (Crisis Group, 2020). Nonetheless, a consequence of the utmost importance of this has been a lack of funding for the Interim Authorities, thereby inhibiting them from fulfilling their full responsibilities since their February 2016 installment (The Carter Center, 2018).

While women's organizations emphasized the importance of women's inclusion during the official talks, the conflict parties instead thought that women's role could be more prominent during the implementation phase (Lorentzen, 2021). This rhetoric fits with the common definition of peace as the absence of war, which has the consequence that only those who hold arms are invited to the negotiation table. Even

so, women would only get to implement what men decide. Furthermore, even the supposed commitment to include women in the implementation phase seemed unlikely to be realized, as “there are no specific quotas in the [peace] agreement that detail how women should participate in the implementation mechanisms and reform projects that would follow” (Lorentzen, 2021, p. 8). The Independent Observer has noted a lack of civil society participation in the implementation phase, including from women (The Carter Center, 2018). Even though Article 51 of the APRM clearly stipulates that “the political class, as well as civil society, particularly women and young people, the media, traditional communicators and the traditional and religious authorities” should all be involved. However, it has also been said that Article 51 is not explicit enough when it comes to political and civil society organizations’ formal role in successfully achieving the agreement’s objectives (Keita, 2018). Failure of leaders to involve or even inform civil society during the peace process leads to populations feeling estranged from the peace agreement and political leadership (The Carter Center, 2018). This can create a growing mistrust in politics that could be detrimental to lasting peace in Mali (The Carter Center, 2018).

Women’s knowledge about the APRM’s implementation mechanisms is said to be generally very low (Lorentzen et al., 2019; The Carter Center, 2018). This contributes to many women’s belief that 2 years of CSA political discussions were only a means to stall real decision-making (The Carter Center, 2018). Some civil society members have said the agreement’s objectives have gotten lost in the implementation process, leading to disappointment and frustration for many. They stress the need to address long-standing grievances, such as unchecked violence, a lack of services, and unemployment. Northern Malian women have named demobilization and disarmament of men as priorities (The Carter Center, 2018). Next to The Carter Center, there is also a sanctions committee that was established under UNSC Resolution 2374 that tracks implementation. As it was established in September 2017, it falls outside of the timeframe of this thesis.

In June 2015, after the signing of the APRM by the conflict parties, the Women’s Platform organized consultations that would lead to the creation and presentation of a list of priorities meant for national institutions (UN Women, 2015). They also released a joint statement to the Malian President, asking for equality in all implementation mechanisms of the agreement. In particular, the Statement mentioned the CSA, the National Council for Reconciliation, the DDR, the CVJR, the Technical Commissions,

the Consultative Commissions, and the transitional justice committees (2015). They also asked for the allocation of 10% of profits from natural resource exploitation, mainly from mining, to initiatives that strengthen women's economic independence (UN Women, 2015). In response to the Statement, President Keïta signed a decree in December 2015 that called for a 30% quota for female appointees in national and legislative bodies (Lorentzen et al., 2019; UN Women, 2015). It has been said that the President also did this under increased pressure from international partners and donors who wanted to see women's rights progress (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Lorentzen et al. (2019) have claimed the law has been irregularly applied: "Local elections in November 2016 and the minister cabinet appointments following the 2018 Presidential election have met the 30% standard, but the peace process and its related bodies and mechanisms fall short" (p. 10). Moreover, women remained absent from the CSA and related mechanisms (UN Women, 2020). "Mali's highest committee overseeing the peace agreement is composed entirely of men" (UN Women, 2018a, n.p.).

With this same intention to further gender equality, Mali also adopted its second NAP for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 for the period 2015-2017 based on the Women's Platform's presented priorities (Lorentzen et al., 2019; UN Women, 2015). Its main efforts centered around promoting women's inclusion in the Bamako Agreement's implementation phase (Lorentzen et al., 2019). However, having assessed the NAP in 2018, UN Women concluded only half of the planned activities were implemented, mainly due to funding issues and troubles transferring the activities from the national to the local level (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

It has been argued that women's role in monitoring the implementation of the APRM has remained limited (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Considering this, it is worth noting a relatively recent development, namely, the July 2018 creation of an independent consultative forum, led by women, that would monitor the agreement's implementation. This was done with the support of the UN/MINUSMA (Lorentzen et al., 2019; UN Women, 2020). However, this forum has not yet been made operational, mainly due to a lack of political and financial support (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Neither has it defined its working methods or terms of reference. When it receives the right support, the forum is said to have serious potential for promoting women's meaningful participation (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

Also, part of the implementation phase is the issue of transitional justice. On this matter, the Malian government passed a law with the purpose of understanding,

reconciliation, and reintegration of those who committed crimes in the 2012 crisis; although only when they express genuine repentance (Lorentzen et al., 2019). As this law was passed in 2018, it falls outside the scope of this research (2015-2017). The only crimes that do not fall under the law are rape, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, which are referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC has been active in the Malian state since 2013 when it got an official request from the state to investigate the abovementioned crimes committed since the 2012 conflict. Though seemingly a promising development, as of 2019, the ICC still had not posted any convictions on CRSV, including rape. This crime in particular remains difficult to prosecute due to an often lack of physical evidence and the reluctance of survivors to testify. It has been said that the CVJR can possibly play an important role concerning women's rights, as it has a clear working method and gender perspective in its mandate, unlike any of the other mechanisms in the peace agreement. The CVJR is a truth commission that investigates both collective and individual violations of human rights, in particular, those committed against women and children. This gender perspective was mainly made possible by the presence of experts on transitional justice and gender endorsed by UN Women. As the body also investigates human rights violations against women, its regional offices around the country have hired female officers that female victims often feel more comfortable talking to. Unfortunately, Lorentzen et al. (2019) mention that the CVJR has only consisted of collecting testimonies, and it remains unclear what will happen with those collected statements.

Another aspect that was noted in the report of the Independent Observer in Mali, was the feeling among conflict parties and the political class, as well as civil society, that the international community was not committed to the peace process (The Carter Center, 2018). Specifically, the governments that acted as part of the mediation team and as political guarantors of the APRM. From their side, international actors that are engaged in the African state have expressed that they feel that they are making significant investments in an incredibly complex environment. In this matter, the Observer determines that strengthening mutual communication is necessary. Relating this to women's role in the implementation phase, it does seem that international actors, notably, UN/MINUSMA, have had an important role in supporting women's meaningful participation (The Carter Center, 2018). The UN has strongly promoted women's inclusion by using its Peacebuilding Fund, for example, to organize

workshops with women's organization leaders ("Report of the S-G", 2015; 2017; UN Women, 2018a). Nonetheless, although UNSC Resolution 1325 emphasizes the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, procedural rules or guidelines on women's participation in this matter are still lacking (Lorentzen, 2021).

This can also have affected international actors such as MINUSMA, as it has been said to not have done a good job at mainstreaming women's issues into all its actions and decision-making initially, even though WPS was part of its agenda (Van Der Lijn, 2019). In the beginning, for example, MINUSMA's Gender Unit was hugely under-resourced. Fortunately, there has been a progressive development in this aspect. As mentioned above in this section, MINUSMA has played an important role more recently in increasing women's inclusion. Due to the efforts of the Gender Unit, the number of women government ministers in Mali has gone up from 8% to 34%. Nonetheless, MINUSMA's representation of women is relatively low. Despite efforts to increase women's deployment, it remains below 10% (Van Der Lijn, 2019). This can further demonstrate the important role that international actors have, in any of the roles they assume during a peace process, of setting an example of honoring the WPS agenda. The way women are presented by mediators, for example, could have an impact on the attention given to women's meaningful participation in the process.

Discussion of the Findings on Women's Inclusion

The above section presents findings on women's inclusion in the Mali peace process from the qualitative content analysis. When it comes to the pre-negotiation phase, this paper was not able to find claims of women's meaningful participation in any of the modalities from Paffenholz et al. (2016). As emphasis was mainly placed on limiting hostilities and building confidence between the conflict parties – the Coordination, the Platform, and the Malian government – there was little attention given to women's issues or the participation of women. As such, women were also not found to have had an influence on the peace process proceedings during this phase. To reiterate, influence means that women are able to put their ideas and problems on the process' agenda and the extent to which they are able to push the peace process forward (Paffenholz et al., 2016).

During the negotiation phase, evidence was found of women's direct participation at the negotiation table, albeit very limited (Hendricks, 2017; UN Women, 2015). Sources have also claimed that the main conflict parties were incredibly hesitant to include women at all (although there were some suggestions made that the Coordination was less hesitant) (Lackenbauer et al., 2015; Lorentzen, 2021). The presence of women was said to mainly be due to some international actors, such as the UN and EU, who supported women's inclusion (Lorentzen, 2021; UN Women, 2015). Furthermore, mass action campaigns from women's organizations, such as the Women's Platform, were also said to have contributed to women's direct participation (UN Women, 2015). Mass action is another modality through which women can be included in peace processes. They seem to have had little effect; women's presence was in relatively low numbers (under 10%) (Hendricks, 2017; UN Women, 2015). Nonetheless, some concessions were made in the form of training and capacity building for women, which suggests that women had some influence on the peace process (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

Mass action campaigns also contributed to the organization of a week-long civil society consultation during the negotiation phase (Lorentzen, 2021). Consultations are another modality through which women can be included in peace processes. Evidence suggests, however, that although women were included in this modality, they had little influence on the proceedings of the peace process. This was mainly said to be due to infighting and women being present as representatives of the conflict party

(Lackenbauer et al., 2015). In this manner, it was claimed that they advocated on behalf of their party rather than on the topic of women's issues. Moreover, excluding the civil society hearings from the official peace talks further diminished the weight the consultations had in the overall peace process.

Track 2 talks also seem to have been present during the negotiation phase, as sources suggested women's organizations held meetings after important occasions in the peace process (Lorentzen, 2021; UN Women, 2015). However, as track 2 talks are not frequented by officials, they are more a part of the mass action modality than any of the other modalities. Another form of mass action was when women's organizations organized a march for peace in support of Mali's peace agreement, which could have pushed the conflict parties to initial the agreement (UN Women, 2015). Nonetheless, women's organizations were said to have felt insufficiently included, or not meaningfully included, in the peace process (Lorentzen, 2021). Women's influence through mass action on the APRM was minimal; the issues they brought to the agenda were not included or minimally included in Mali's final peace agreement. In general, public ownership of the agreement was said to be low.

The presence of track 2 processes, in the form of meetings among women's organizations and workshops, and 1.5 processes, in the form of civil society hearings seem to suggest the presence of multi-track diplomacy during the Mali peace process. Although multiple and diverse actors in Mali did engage in the peace process in various ways, the link to the track 1 process or formal peace process seems to lack massively. As stressed previously, the civil society consultations were not part of the official talks (Lorentzen, 2021). Neither was there evidence found of officials from the conflict parties being present at the track 2 processes. Multi-track diplomacy has been named an important contributor to women's inclusion in peace processes as it helps with successfully transferring knowledge and recommendations from informal to formal processes. Its absence in the Mali peace process, then, can be said to have possibly contributed to lower participation and lesser influence of women.

During the implementation phase, there was reportedly more of an expectation that women would have higher levels of participation and more influence as the conflict parties had concurred during the negotiation phase that this would be so (Lorentzen, 2021). Unfortunately, evidence suggests this has not been the case, due to the APRM not having specific provisions that address the need for women's inclusion in reform projects and implementation mechanisms (The Carter Center, 2018). The Carter

Center, an international organization that was named as an independent observer of the implementation of the peace agreement, has noted a lack of civil society participation in the implementation phase, including from women.

Some evidence was found of women's inclusion in the observer status modality. Namely, The Carter Center has a woman leading its mission in Mali (2018). Nonetheless, as an observer, an actor's influence on the process is often said to remain low. Furthermore, one of the consequences of the APRM was the adoption of various implementation mechanisms, including the DDR Commission, the CSA, the CVJR, the National Council on Security Sector Reform, Interim Authorities, and MOCS. An important critique of these mechanisms has been their focus on military and security, thereby causing a broad segment of the population, including women, to feel excluded from implementation locally; thereby also having little influence on it (Lorentzen et al., 2019; The Carter Center, 2018). Moreover, it has been said that women have remained absent from the CSA and related mechanisms, suggesting that women's direct participation has lacked massively (UN Women, 2020). For example, the creation of a special commission that would oversee the new Charter for Peace, Unity, and National Reconciliation, included 6 women out of 53 members ("Report of the S-G", 2017). Again, there seems to be a big gender imbalance. In terms of influence, women's representation is insufficient for women to secure a stronger position for themselves within the commission. Another example is the CVJR, which, unlike the other mechanisms from the peace agreement, is said to have a clear method and gender perspective in its mandate (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Nonetheless, throughout the implementation phase, the CVJR has only collected testimonies and thus, is not working effectively as of yet (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Thus, this thesis found women's presence to be lacking in major decision-making mechanisms, which also indicates low levels of influence through this modality. However, it can be questioned if there was any influence to be had through these mechanisms in the first place, as some evidence was found that claimed that they were massively underfunded (Lorentzen et al., 2019).

Evidence also suggests women's inclusion was found in public consultations during this phase (UN Women, 2015). By using this method, women were able to formulate a statement demanding equality in all implementation mechanisms, along with other priorities. They seem to have had some influence on the peace process by using this modality, as the decree calling for a 30% quota was said to have been

signed in response to this statement (UN Women, 2015). Nonetheless, some evidence also suggests that the President's reaction could have been due more to pressure from the international community than due to women's organization's efforts (Lorentzen et al., 2019). Furthermore, it should be mentioned that this law was found to be irregularly applied (Lorentzen et al., 2019). This suggests that although some influence was had, it was not enough to be sustainable for women.

Lastly, noticeable was the role of the international community throughout the peace process. In particular, the role of those who were part of the mediation team. They were said to have an influence on the proceedings of the peace process. It was said that they could 'set an example' in terms of women's inclusion. For example, lead mediator Algeria's supposed opposition to women's inclusion could have been detrimental to increasing women's participation and influence on the process (Lorentzen, 2021). International actors that had a positive influence on women's inclusion were found to mainly be the UN/MINUSMA and EU, as they financially supported and organized women's involvement. Nonetheless, sources were also found that critiqued these actors for being so focused on making sure the peace process proceeded that they forgot to pay attention to women's inclusion (Lorentzen, 2021; The Carter Center, 2018). Furthermore, representation of women among these actors was also found to be lacking.

Overall, women's inclusion has been recognized as crucial to reaching sustainable peace. It has been seen that efforts were made to include women in various modalities. The most notable modality of women's inclusion is, perhaps, mass action. Even when women were excluded from formal negotiations, they were able to advocate, often with financial support from international organizations, for their issues in this way. Women's organizations, through means such as informal discussions, mass action, workshops, and consultations, made considerable efforts to further women's rights and women's issues onto the peace agenda. Despite these efforts, however, women's representation at the negotiation table, during all phases, was found to be incredibly lacking or practically non-existent. Various barriers to women's participation were identified. Mainly, there was simply a lack of will from conflict parties and mediators alike. This could be due to the emphasis being placed on ending the fighting and tensions between the conflict parties, which remained a risk throughout the peace process. Because of these tensions, other issues, such as development were pushed to the background in favor of security issues. Another important barrier

seems to have been cultural and social norms in Mali, which maintain women have a subjugated position to men. In Mali's patriarchal culture, the belief is widely held that women should remain in the private sphere. As such, women are not supported or downright rejected in their efforts to increase women's participation in the peace process.

Women, mainly through women's organizations, could be said to have had an influence on the Mali peace process. Some examples of this influence have been mentioned above, such as the 30% quota that followed after a mass action campaign (UN Women, 2015). This thesis maintains, however, that this influence, overall, was strongly lacking during the peace process. The APRM and following implementation mechanisms sparsely mentioned women's issues. Furthermore, implementation mechanisms had relatively low numbers of women members. Thus, when wanting to change women's inclusion in Mali for the better, it is important that these topics be addressed.

Limitations

With the intention of being transparent, this chapter will focus on some of the limitations of this research. Some limitations, such as researcher bias and generalizability, pertain to case study research in general and were therefore already mentioned in the 'methodology' chapter. This section will focus on limitations that were found to be more specific to conducting a case study on the Mali peace process (2014-2017).

Mainly, it cannot be denied that the Mali issue is incredibly complex. As was shown, the current crisis is a consequence of decades of tensions within the African country. Moreover, there are a large number of actors and dynamics at play. As such, there can be limitations to how much can be understood from a decade-long crisis with various conflict dynamics in the relatively short time span in which this thesis was written. However, having an uncomprehensive understanding of historical complexities and contextual factors can make establishing causal relationships more challenging. One important contextual factor to take into account, in particular when it comes to Mali, is cultural context. As mentioned above, Mali has a rich and complex cultural heritage, and various ethnic groups call the country their home. This makes understanding different customs and cultures more difficult, perhaps especially for a researcher from a Western background. Also related to culture is language. What could have further affected the access to quality information or even inhibit the presence of information is a language barrier. Consequently, this thesis could only examine data from English sources. Mali, however, has French as its official language but knows numerous other languages. Not having access to quality data could have somewhat affected the study's accuracy. Nonetheless, it is maintained that the data that was found has credibility.

Due to the country's history of political instability, conflict, and even terrorism, it may have been more difficult to access information. Sources availability and also their quality can be affected in certain regions of the country, the north in particular, but also on specific topics. It was found that statistical data on women's inclusion in politics and the peace process in Mali was either lacking or often difficult to find. Lastly, due to time and financial constraints and security concerns, this thesis chose to use the method of qualitative content analysis of written texts. Although the reasons for choosing this research method are thought to be valid, it should still be acknowledged that another

method, for example, interviewing, may prove even more fruitful for future researchers of this topic.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to answer the research question: In what ways have women been included in the Mali peace process, and what has been the extent of their influence in the process? To be able to answer this research question, the meaning of peace processes was looked at. Simply put, peace processes revolve around a series of negotiations and actions that conflict parties undertake in order to end hostilities, resolve conflict, and create sustainable peace. Due to their complexity and the fact that they can take place over a long time, they rarely progress in an orderly manner; they can be subject to progress and subjects. There are, however, said to be 3 key phases: pre-negotiation, negotiations, and implementation. Pre-negotiations are the start of any peace process, as they take place before formal talks begin. The goal is to ensure all conflict parties are willing and committed to continuing with the process. During the negotiation phase – the core of any peace process – formal and mediated discussions between conflict parties take place. The goal here is to reach a mutually acceptable peace agreement. Last is the implementation phase, where agreed-upon provisions from the peace agreement are put into action. The goal is to maintain confidence between parties and commitment to implementing the peace agreement's commitments.

When looking at peace processes, it is remarkable that one gender has largely been excluded from them throughout history. More recently, however, important strides were made in furthering women's inclusion in peace processes. An important landmark was said to be UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (2000) and its subsequent UNSC resolutions. This Resolution was a consequence of decades of activism by women from all over the world, who were seeking to increase gender equality in international decision-making. An important instigator of this quest for women's inclusion was said to be World War I and the destruction it caused. The WPS agenda revolves around 4 basic pillars, of which the 'participation' pillar is the most relevant to the present study. Emphasized is the need to ensure the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in all processes of decision-making, including conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding processes. Simply, inclusion is fundamental as it enables women to fully access their human rights. Although gender issues have become more mainstream in international peace and security, efforts to implement the WPS agenda remain considerably hindered.

This thesis aimed to add to a growing body of literature that studies and demonstrates the importance of WPS and women's inclusion in peace processes. Research has found that gender quality is an important indicator of the peacefulness of states; more so than factors such as religion, democracy, or the Gross Domestic Product. When women are included in peace processes and able to exert influence on these processes, higher levels of implementation are reached, increasing the chances of creating sustainable peace. This is due to various reasons, such as women's reputation as honest brokers, they are perceived to be less threatening, skilled at bridging divides and connecting different groups, their often more inclusive approach to peacebuilding, and the unique perspective they bring to the peace process. Having demonstrated the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes adds urgency to researching this topic.

As was seen, although women's inclusion is said to be fundamental to sustainable peace, they are still widely excluded from peace processes. This thesis identified various obstacles to women's participation in formal and informal peace processes. An important obstacle in many nations is cultural, religious, and social norms based on patriarchal values that are harmful to women in general and discourage them from participating in peacemaking processes. An extension of this is the understanding of peace as the absence of violence. As such, those who hold arms, politico-military elites, are invited to the negotiation table; who are usually men. Moreover, this way of thinking glosses over the fact that different skills are needed to build peace. Other identified barriers to participation are financial and time barriers, a lack of education, a lack of material resources, and a lack of confidence to participate in peacebuilding. Thus, these barriers can provide an explanation for how much women are included in peace processes and how much they are able to influence them.

With the intention of answering how women have been included in the Mali peace process, it is necessary to operationalize what exactly is 'women's inclusion'. Women's inclusion can be found in 7 different modalities across different phases of peace processes: (1) direct representation at the negotiation table as a negotiator, signatory, delegate, or mediator, (2) observers or witnesses, (3) consultations, which can be official, unofficial, or public, (4) inclusive commissions, which can be preparing commissions, post-agreement commissions, or permanent constitutional bodies, (5) high-level problem-solving workshops or track 1.5 workshops, (6) public decision-

making, and (7) mass action. The most influence on the peace process is said to be had by those who are able to participate directly in it. Nonetheless, looking at the other modalities provides a fuller picture of women's inclusion. Having these insights could possibly contribute to improving women's inclusion in the Malian peace process or in Malian society in general.

With this theoretical framework, this explanatory single case study set out to conduct a qualitative content analysis to answer the research question. Analyzing Mali as a case study gave more insight into its peace process. To this end, this thesis devoted a section to Mali's historical background and divided the peace process into 3 phases. Each of these 3 phases was analyzed by looking at women's participation in the 7 inclusion modalities. As the research question also pertains to women's influence on the Mali peace processes, this thesis looked at if the identified actors' demands and resolutions were met. 'Influence' was defined here as women being able to bring their issues to the peace agenda and their issues being found in the resulting APRM. It further relates to women's ability to push peace negotiations and implementation forward. Primary and secondary data sources were selected using various search engines and online libraries, and the modalities of inclusion and the definition of influence were used for the content analysis.

This thesis provided historical background on Mali, as knowing this history can help understand events influencing Mali's peace process and the peace's durability. Mainly, the 2012 rebellion, which was the instigator for the 2014-2015 peace negotiations, was the fourth rebellion in the north since the country became independent from France in 1960. The rebellions were from 1963-1964, 1990-1991, 2006-2009, and 2012-2014. The first rebellion started when the northern Tuareg people demanded more autonomy for the region but were brutally repressed. During the second rebellion, there was a similar demand for the government to recognize northern political identity. An agreement between the conflict parties averted another crisis for the next 15 years. During this time, however, the north-south divide would only increase. This growing divide was mainly due to the slow development of the northern region, unresolved grievances, and mutual distrust. After the third rebellion, most of these issues remained unresolved, thereby directly causing the fourth rebellion and affecting the subsequent peace process. The fourth rebellion started when the MNLA occupied a large part of northern Mali and declared this territory independent. Shortly following these events, upset army officers overthrew the Malian government;

thereby causing further instability. To make matters worse, terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida gained ground in the country. In this complex environment, Algeria had to attempt to start a peace process.

For the purpose of this study, the Mali peace process was divided into the 3 phases that were established above. The pre-negotiation phase was said to pertain from January to July 2014, beginning with the start of informal discussions between Algeria and northern Malian armed movements and ending with the signing of the roadmap. The conflict parties were identified during this phase as the Mali government, the Coordination of Azawad Movements, and the Platform. The negotiation phase was said to go on from July 2014 to June 2015, as the Coordination was the last conflict party to sign the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in June. The APRM provided a 2-year interim period until June 2017, which is taken to be the implementation phase for this study.

This thesis also looked at possible barriers to women's participation in the Malian context. It was found that cultural, religious, and social norms based on patriarchal values can form important barriers to women's inclusion. Consequently, women are often confined to the private sphere and banned from public life. Furthermore, age can have an important influence on someone's power in society. The example named was that within the household, an older woman holds more power than a younger man. Mali suffers from structural gender inequality. This can also be seen in education, financial resources, and the labor market. In turn, these also form important barriers to women's inclusion. Consequently, women are usually the least involved social group in conflict resolution and peace processes.

This thesis presented findings on women's inclusion in the 7 modalities within the 3 phases of the Mali peace process, which were also discussed. Within the pre-negotiation phase, little evidence was found that claimed women were included meaningfully in any of the 7 modalities. This was found to be highly problematic in terms of women being able to bring their issues to the peace agenda, thus influencing the process and being included in the subsequent phases.

In the negotiation phase, women were found in various modalities, such as workshops, civil society consultations, mass action, and a direct seat at the negotiation table. It was found that through the informal peace processes, women's influence was rather low, as there was not a clear connection with the formal peace processes. Civil society consultations, for example, were not part of the official peace talks. Perhaps

the most notable modality of women's inclusion is mass action. Even when women were excluded from formal negotiations, they were able to advocate for their issues in this way. Despite these efforts, however, women's representation at the negotiation table, during all phases, was found to be incredibly lacking or practically nonexistent. Nonetheless, some concessions were made by the conflict parties in the form of training and capacity-building for women, which suggests that women had some influence on the peace process. It was also found that the international community had played a part in strengthening and unifying women's voices.

Furthermore, this thesis looked at the implementation of the APRM (implementation phase). With the intention of creating sustainable peace, the peace agreement sought to adopt various implementation mechanisms. Overall, implementation of the agreement has proven extremely difficult. Furthermore, including women in the implementation phase seems unlikely to have been realized. To begin, the agreement has no details on exactly how women would be included in its implementation. A lack of civil society participation was noted, including among women. Malian women's knowledge of the APRM's implementation mechanisms was found to be low. Women's role in monitoring the implementation has also remained limited. When it comes to transitional justice, the CVJR does have a clear gender mandate but is only collecting testimonies so far. Thus, this thesis found women's presence to be lacking in major decision-making mechanisms, which also indicates low levels of influence throughout this modality. However, it was questioned if there was any influence to be had through these mechanisms in the first place, as some evidence was found that claimed that they were massively underfunded. Remarkable was women's organizations' success in pushing for the 30% quota and the adoption of Mali's second NAP, although both achievements had low implementation. Lastly, it was found that there was criticism expressed from the Malian side that the international community was not fully committed to the peace process.

Overall, this thesis maintains that women's influence was strongly lacking during the peace process. The APRM and following implementation mechanisms sparsely mentioned women's issues. Furthermore, negotiating parties and implementation mechanisms had relatively low numbers of female members. Thus, when wanting to positively change women's inclusion in Mali, it is fundamental that these topics be addressed.

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