CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies
Department of Security Studies

Master's Thesis

Women's role in Conflict Resolution: A comparative study of women's participation in conflict resolution in Kenya and Northern Uganda

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Declaration of Authorship

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Prague, 2024   *Madlene Ngina Karimi*

Abstract

In conflict settings and conflict-related written literature, the role of women is often that of victims, and women being fighters just gained popularity. Although women may not directly be involved in a conflict or are involved in a conflict, the majority of them have been found in the victim group. With women's roles differing in conflict phases, women's role in conflict resolution needs to be studied and recognised. Women play various roles in conflict resolution as mediators, negotiators, facilitators, peacemakers, and peacebuilders, among other roles, during the different stages of conflict. The women play these roles during the various stages of conflict, which finally lead to peace and cessation of hostilities.

This paper aims to highlight the roles and contributions of women in the conflict resolution process, whether in the formal and informal ways. The study was conducted using a literature review technique, using written materials from desk research, such as books, articles, journals, student thesis, documents prepared by international and national organisations, government reports, and related institutions. Case studies mentioned in the thesis demonstrate that women were actively involved in conflict resolution peace processes, preventing further escalation of violence and making space for peace to prevail. Their involvement ranged from grassroots activism to leadership roles, and contributions included fostering dialogue, addressing the underlying roots of conflict, addressing the needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups, which were often overlooked and neglected during peace negotiations associated with male domination, inclusive solutions and joint actions to prevent conflict.

In Wajir, the women have been instrumental in resolving inter-clan conflicts through community-based approaches emphasising on dialogue and reconciliation. Their local initiatives and somewhat government collaboration have successfully mediated disputes, reduced violence, and fostered a culture of peace, showcasing the power of local women in conflict resolution. The local initiatives formed a grassroots/local peace group started by the women of Wajir that was later recognised and established as a peace committee to deal with communal violence in the North-Eastern region.

Similarly, in Northern Uganda, women were and have been instrumental in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts following the long-lasting civil war. They have played key roles in facilitating the reintegration of former combatants, addressing the trauma and needs of affected communities, and

advocating for justice, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. Their contribution has been pivotal in prompting healing and social cohesion.

The experiences of Wajir and Northern Uganda illustrate the roles of women in conflict in a positive limelight, their unique yet inclusive approaches to addressing the root issues/causes of conflict that significantly contribute to sustainable peace, and the necessity of incorporating women in all stages of conflict resolution peace processes.

Title: Women's role in conflict resolution: A comparative study of women's participation in conflict resolution in Kenya and Northern Uganda.

Abstraktní

V konfliktním prostředí a v literatuře související s konflikty je role žen často obětí a ženy jako bojovnice si právě získaly popularitu. Ačkoli ženy nemusí být přímo zapojeny do konfliktu nebo do něj zapojeny, většina z nich byla nalezena ve skupině obětí. Vzhledem k tomu, že role žen se ve fázích konfliktu liší, je třeba prostudovat a uznat roli žen při řešení konfliktů. Ženy hrají při řešení konfliktů různé role jako zprostředkovatelky, vyjednavačky, facilitátory, mírotvůrci a budovatelky míru, mimo jiné v různých fázích konfliktu. Ženy hrají tyto role během různých fází konfliktu, což nakonec vede k míru a zastavení nepřátelství.

Tento dokument si klade za cíl zdůraznit roli a přínos žen v procesu řešení konfliktů, ať už formálních či neformálních. Studie byla provedena technikou revize literatury s využitím písemných materiálů ze sekundárního výzkumu, jako jsou knihy, články, časopisy, studentské práce, dokumenty připravené mezinárodními a národními organizacemi, vládní zprávy a související instituce. Případové studie uvedené v práci ukazují, že ženy byly aktivně zapojeny do procesů mírového řešení konfliktů, zabraňovaly další eskalaci násilí a vytvářely prostor pro zavládnutí míru. Jejich zapojení sahalo od místního aktivismu až po vedoucí role a příspěvky zahrnovaly podporu dialogu, řešení základních kořenů konfliktu, řešení potřeb marginalizovaných a zranitelných skupin, které jsou často přehlíženy a opomíjeny během mírových jednání, v nichž dominují muži, inkluzivní řešení a společné kroky k předcházení konfliktu.

Ve Wajiru byly ženy nápomocny při řešení konfliktů mezi klany prostřednictvím komunitních přístupů s důrazem na dialog a usmíření. Jejich místní iniciativy a do jisté míry vládní spolupráce úspěšně zprostředkovaly spory, snížily násilí a podpořily kulturu míru a ukázaly sílu místních žen při řešení konfliktů. Místní iniciativy vytvořily místní/místní mírovou skupinu založenou ženami z Wajiru, která byla později uznána a ustavena jako mírový výbor pro řešení komunálního násilí v severovýchodní oblasti.

Podobně v severní Ugandě byly a byly ženy zásadní v pokonfliktním úsilí o obnovu a budování míru po dlouhotrvající občanské válce. Sehráli klíčovou roli při usnadňování reintegrace bývalých bojovníků, řešení traumat a potřeb postižených komunit a při obhajobě spravedlnosti, rehabilitace a usmíření. Jejich příspěvek byl klíčový pro podněcování uzdravení a sociální soudržnosti.

Zkušenosti z Wajiru a severní Ugandy ilustrují role žen v konfliktu v pozitivním světle, jejich jedinečné, ale inkluzivní přístupy k řešení základních problémů/příčin konfliktů, které významně přispívají k udržitelnému míru, a nutnost začlenit ženy do všech fází mírové procesy řešení konfliktů.

Název: Role žen při řešení konfliktů: Srovnávací studie účasti žen na řešení konfliktů v Keni a severní Ugandě.

Klíčová slova: postkoloniální feminismus, řešení konfliktů, gender, bezpečnost, mír, Afrika, ženy, činitelé změny.

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To my daughter, Melissa Munari, the sky is not the limit; I hope you reach and go beyond the sky; there is more greatness up there than the sky. This thesis is a dedication to you. Whenever you feel you can't achieve anything, I hope this brings back your hopes and dreams that you can do anything you set your mind and heart to. I did it so that you can do it, too. And I will always be here for you and with you every step of the way, even academically.

I thank myself for pushing myself every writing chapter of this thesis. It was never easy, but I made it to the end. I believe that the young girl in me is proud we followed and pursued our dream master's study even when we were told it was impossible and not worth pursuing due to the circumstances around me

during that difficult time. I am glad I believed in myself, however small it was and kept pushing forward to date.

And to all the women, your efforts are recognised, and your voices are heard. To the women I wrote about, especially the Northern Uganda women, you hold a special place in my heart. The women in my case studies are admirable; nothing can compare. Your strength and positivity in difficult times are one for the books to be remembered and not taken for granted. Thank you for reminding us that peace is and has always been the answer, and women, just as men, are essential in the quest for positive change.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1
<u>Introduction</u>

When it comes to the role of women in violent conflict situations, many works of literature investigate and report on women as either victims, active participants in fighting fronts, or passive actors. Until recently, women actively involved in the fighting fronts in conflict gained popularity. They participated in acts of violence as soldiers or collaborated actively with fighters. Women joined non-stated armies, such as guerilla or rebel groups, and irregular armies, such as traditional militias, voluntarily or forcibly, for various reasons. For various reasons, an example, in Mozambique between 1964 and 1974, the guerilla army *Frente de Liberacao de Mocambique* (FRELIMO) carried out a liberation war against the Portuguese colonial power that resulted in the independence of Mozambique (Coulter et al., 2008, p.11). The group was also composed of girls and women fighters alongside male fighters. According to Coulter, it was in the interest of women and girls to contribute to the struggle as FRELIMO would liberate the women from *"traditional forms" of oppression and exploitation* (Coulter et al.,2008, p.11) and colonial rule.

Another example given by Coulter was the abducted Sierra Leonean women who became fighters. *"...but there were some who mentioned the prestige and resources involved in being a fighter as their prime motivator. (...) that becoming a fighter was their best option; not only would they have a gun for protection, they would also get more opportunities to loot and acquire resources"* (Coulter, 2008, p.61). This is because being a fighter could improve the lives of the abducted women than being "*bush wife"* which consisted of continuous sexual abuse and domestic slavery.

When women are not directly involved in violent fighting, they passively participate in the conflicts as passive participants. Bouta et al. 2005, in their paper *Gender and Warfare: Female Combatants and Soldiers' Wives,* state that women who joined combat voluntarily or forcibly tend to play three roles: combatant [as discussed above], supporter, and dependent. For the supporter role, women were cooks, messengers, health workers for those injured in and during combat, and bush wives for the men in combat armies. Such functions were common during the Sierra Leone civil war in 1991-2002. During World War II, some women were valuable spies who subverted the enemy and collected vital intelligence for Allied forces; they also conducted espionage and sabotage to aid local resistance movements. Some of these famous women were American agent Virginia Hall and Indian-British radio operator Noor Inayat Khan;

both were recruited by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and deployed as spies for Europe as much of it had fallen into the hands of the Germans (Nazis), leaving Britain vulnerable (Haynes, 2020).

When violent conflicts occur, it affects the whole society, both men and women. However, their experiences differ during these conflict situations. More often, women and girls are more likely to be disproportionately impacted by violent conflicts. Sadly, most refugees and internally displaced persons are women and children, and women and girls face sexual and gender-based violence. Perpetrators use acts of rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence as weapons of war in violent conflicts. In Rwanda, during the genocide in 1994, such acts were subjected against women and girls on a larger scale, especially towards Tutsi women. The act of rape perpetrated was to send a message: *"the destruction of the Tutsi group"* (Nowrojee, 1996), as, according to Hutus militia, this ethnic group was "trying" to infiltrate and control the Hutu community.

Drawing attention to women's negative experiences in violent conflicts has been the norm of many scholars in literature and reports written by international non-government organisations, think tanks and national governments. This language has perpetuated the notion that women are always victims of conflicts, even when violent clashes have created other opportunities and spaces that do not require this monolithic view.
Women are not only victims but are also active agents of change in peace and conflict resolution. Their roles and involvement have either ended or stabilised the conflicts. Their contributions have successfully brought peace, security, and positive change(s) to their communities and the countries involved. However, pieces of literature surrounding this matter are often challenging to find and even fail to capture their works, hence the motivation from the author in writing this thesis to fill this gap.

Some scholars report women's contribution to conflict resolution as under-studied, as there is a lack of research on their particular roles in peace processes. Additionally, the few pieces of literature catching up with this matter focus on the factors that exclude women from the peace processes rather than their contributions or particular roles, creating another victim discourse for women in peace processes. With such literature in place, it gets harder for other scholars to establish women's contribution, and it also blocks out their positive roles in peace processes during violent conflicts.

With this thesis, the author will draw attention to women's contributions to conflict resolution by attempting to identify their roles and involvement in peace processes, especially in conflict resolution. The author aims to bridge the gap created and established by other literature on women's positive contribution to conflict resolution and add to the few pieces of literature already done by past scholars on this topic. I will address the following research questions: -

1. ***What are women's contributions to conflict resolution?***

This research question focuses on identifying and describing the (specific) actions, strategies, styles, initiatives or interventions women contribute to resolving conflicts. It is more outcome-oriented as it seeks to highlight the tangible impacts women have had in formal or informal processes such as in negotiations, mediations, ceasefires, and local peace efforts/grassroots efforts that were aimed at ending hostilities. Additionally, the unique yet innovative ways the women have employed to address and mitigate conflicts and de-escalate the violence, that bring about significant change in their respective communities. We will examine the historical cases of Liberia, Northern Ireland and Burundi, and how the women contributed to conflict resolution through negotiations, community outreach, dialogue facilitation and other peace efforts. Similarly, the case studies are contemporary instances that fall into this research question category, and how these conflicts are resolved.

2. ***What roles and involvement do women have in conflict resolution peace process?***

This research question targets on the various roles the women play and the extent of their involvement in the different stages and aspects of conflict resolution. This is more process-oriented; it looks into the processes, capacities, and participation of women in their respective communities. This involves examining the leadership roles where applicable, decision-making positions, if any, and any kind of representation in peace negotiations/talks. It is not limited to their involvement in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The author explores the participation of women in formal and informal peace processes where the women have acted as mediators, activists and advocates as they lobbied for peace, marched in peace marches and used any form of media to influence mass opinion, negotiators, also been part of official peace talks whether from political institutions, international, national and local organisations in promoting and supporting the involvement of women in peace processes while as observers or main actors, and the roles women have played in reconstruction and reconciliation efforts after the end of conflict through community healing, education and training, and rebuilding livelihoods. This question might

explore barriers to their involvement, the nature of their participation and how their roles are perceived by others (and even by themselves) in society. For example, in this research study, we will see how the women leveraged their societal roles as caregivers, peacemakers, and mothers, and used traditional conflict resolution methods, tailored to the needs of the community-to-community reconciliation and restorative justice.

By conducting a comparative analysis of the case studies, we will be able to identify the unique contributions (outcomes) and processes (roles and involvement) of women in their specific contexts and provide a comprehensive understanding of women's impact and participation in conflict resolution in Wajir-Kenya, and Northern Uganda.

Women from Kenya, particularly women who founded the Wajir Peace and Development Agency (WPDA) and women from Northern Uganda, stand out in this context as excellent case studies. These women have played influential roles in conflict resolution amidst violent conflicts. The author strongly believes in the importance of a comparative study approach to analyse and examine the similarities and differences between these two case studies.

The case of Wajir is a well-documented topic across pieces of literature. The women founded WPDA as a grassroots peace initiative in the quest for peace in the region. Over the years, the WPDA grew and expanded its scope of work to become an effective peace organisation in Kenya. Started by local women to fight insecurity and tackle conflicts in their region, it grew to tackle the same issues across Somalia, Ethiopia and other areas within Kenya and bring peace. The organisation, whose leading members were exclusively women, has expanded to get on board *"the youth, elders, professionals, religious groups and even workers from the Government"* (Konde, 2019, p. 2). The organisation has been credited for *"diffusing many inter-ethnic tensions (...) and dealing with deeply rooted community conflicts"* (Konde, 2019, page 2).

On the contrary, women's work in conflict resolution in Northern Uganda is hardly unrecognised, with a lack of documentation of their activities. The author did not find much research on them, as much of the literature reported on the same topic: the war and the effects of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), especially the brutal sexual violence on women and girls, and women's absenteeism in significant peace processes. Sidonia Angom has echoed this, as she states, *"the suffering of the people in northern Uganda*

is well documented and widely disseminated by the human rights monitoring organisations" (Angom, 2017, p.57).

After much digging, the author found little insight into their contributions. In 1989, women organised themselves and formed the Gulu District Women's Development Committee, mobilised other women, and marched through Gulu town in a peaceful protest when no other groups dared to speak about the war, demanding an end to the violence. While there are no available statistics to substantiate the outcome of the demonstrations, Sidonia Angom, in her book titled *Women in Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda* (2017), summarises that the protest resulted in the prominent leader of the rebel group LRA, Joseph Kony and his group being pushed out the country by the Ugandan government and into the neighbouring territories, and a period of relative calm followed. This period of peace provided an opportunity for the various agencies within the region to resettle the displaced populations in Gulu due to the war. Additionally, the absence of documentation on women's contribution to conflict resolution in Northern Uganda was another motivation for this thesis.

This thesis will make use of both primary and secondary sources. Given this new topic of research, taking a different approach from the usual victim discourse of women in conflict and peace, the author will primarily rely on (specific) student theses, journals, given speeches, reports, official documents such as peace agreements and publications written by institutional organisations (local, national and international), experts, and scholars, and critiquing pre-existing written literature. The method employed will be qualitative. A qualitative method was selected to delve deeper into the subject matter and provide accurate evidence of the topic. This method is essential for various reasons, and one of the reasons that aligns with this thesis is exploring underexplored topics or issues in which little is known about a phenomenon or perspective.

1.1 <u>Structure of the thesis</u>

The following section, *Literature Review,* briefly overviews the existing and relevant academic sources supporting the thesis topic. This section will also give examples of women contributing to conflict resolution in formal and informal settings in the past and present. By examining the literature, we can identify gaps, answer our research questions, critique existing literature, and, importantly, guide the author in establishing a theoretical and conceptual framework.

This section will help us determine whether women's roles are assigned or self-selected, that is, whether women "find" themselves in these roles without the role of another party involved. Additionally, the author is aware of the limitations and scarcity of literature in documenting women's roles and involvement in conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution has to be defined, forming the basis of the *Conceptual and Theoretical Framework* section. While there are various definitions of this term, the author will choose the one most accurately or closely related to the study. This section will also discuss the relationship between women and conflict resolution. The concept of gender and sex will be addressed in this section as it is fundamental in providing a theoretical overview.

A chosen theory relating to the topic and its phenomena will guide the study. The study will employ a feminist lens approach, and while this theory is broad, I will choose a specific feminist branch that will relate to my research questions and make sense of my findings.

The methodology overviews how the data was collected, ethical considerations and limitations met. The next chapter describes the theory in use, its characteristics, and how it applies to the thesis research. In-depth comparative case studies will follow this. Introduces and explores women's roles in conflict resolution by examining Kenya-WPDA in particular and Northern Uganda by providing exploratory data and comparative analysis for the two case studies.

The findings will follow in the next chapter. This chapter involves recapping the data, addressing the gaps found, and generating insights about the research topic. The closing chapter will wrap up the entire research by highlighting the significance of the study, providing a final perspective on the research topic, and also offering a recommendation(s) based on the findings.

Chapter 2

<u>Literature Review</u>

"the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution and management, peace-making, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and reconstruction processes can no longer be minimised or ignored because sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men" (Kofi-Anna, United Nations 2002)." Kofi Anna Speech at the Security Council, 21st October 2002

As mentioned, scholars and researchers must record more literature on women in conflict resolution. While some literature report on this, these resources neglect their positive contributions and instead focus on the challenges these women encounter in this process or link them to conflict resolution and consider them victims. As is quoted by Mwangi, "*painting women purely as victims can obscure women's agency and undermine the positive work which some women do in resisting conflict and violence, and can weaken future potential".* (Mwangi, 2015, p.28). For this reason, the author will exclude literature that focuses on the negative and narrow it down to the positive contributions.

Suppose more specific roles need to be mentioned. In that case, the author will analyse the data from each reputable and relevant source and synthesise the information to highlight women's contributions to the process. The review aims to explore and highlight women's positive impact on conflict resolution.

2.1 <u>Definition of Conflict Resolution</u>

Conflict resolution evolved as a discipline after the changing nature of conflicts after the Cold War. The Cold War was a period of tension between the Eastern Bloc, mainly the Soviet Union and its allies, and the Western Bloc-United States and its allies. Though international conflicts were happening around the world, there were more bloody and an increase in violent conflicts within countries and inside these countries that were threats to peace and security in the international arena. Some of these violent conflicts include the genocide in Rwanda and some parts of Burundi, the ethnic cleansing in the Bosnia War, civil war in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, the repression in East Timor, contested border disputes in Kashmir and Taiwan, among other conflicts. Conflicts were no longer between nation-states alone; the increase in intergroup and interstate conflicts was factored in the evolution of the field and the increase in the role of actors; non-state groups, and third parties in the conflicts.

Other developments include a growing concern for human security in addition to state security, as these conflicts violated many human rights and also the methods used initially to prevent or mitigate conflicts, such as *"using threats of armed force (deterrence, coercive diplomacy, defensive alliances such as NATO): economic sanctions and other tangible nonmilitary threats and punishment, such as the withdrawal of foreign aid; and direct military force to establish demilitarized zones"* (National Research Council, 2000, p.3), were not the resolution of the conflicts. Using these methods of armed force would only bring more conflicts or change the nature of conflicts to be more volatile. For this reason, CR blossomed to a growing need for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict by means other than conflict/violence to settle the ever-changing nature of conflicts, specifically the interstate and intrastate conflicts, and eliminate or alleviate the underlying sources of conflicts by methods/efforts that will cease all violent actions against parties involved.

Establishing the definition of conflict resolution (CR) that will be used for this research study is necessary. According to John Burton (1993), *"conflict resolution means very different things to different people"* (Burton, 1993,p.1). He adds that preventing and dealing with conflict situations means a process. It may mean resolution when a lawyer resolves the conflict by waiting on a court decision based on legal norms and legal arguments. To military personnel, any form of deterrence, even the first strike against a potential enemy to avoid confrontation, could mean a solution to the problem, etc. All these are some examples of what conflict resolution means and what its processes are.

Burton (1993) argues that conflict resolution is an analytical problem-solving that gets to the root of the problem and with the parties involved, whether a social conflict, family or ethnic dispute, *"is a permanent solution to the problem"* (Burton, 1993, p.1). Therefore, the aim of CR is not only to solve the problems or seek to get at the source of the problem; this process also *"provide insights into the generic nature of the problem and thus to contribute to the elimination of its sources and the prevention of other instances"* (Burton, 1993, p.1).

National Research Council defines it as *"efforts to prevent or mitigate violence resulting from intergroup or interstate conflict, as well as efforts to reduce the underlying disagreements"* (National Research Council, 2000, p.2).

Wallensteen defines conflict resolution as "*a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central compatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other*" (Wallensteen, 2012, p.8). He later redefines the definition, to consider the various accounts and perspectives of conflicts, "*as a social situation where the armed conflicting parties in a (voluntary) agreement resolve to live peacefully with-and/or dissolve- their basic incompatibilities and henceforth cease to use arms against one another*" (Wallensteen, 2012, p.50).

For our purposes, this is the closest definition to be used for our thesis study.

2.2 <u>Elements of Conflict Resolution</u>

With this definition, we can establish conflict resolution as a peace process that involves only peaceful efforts to maintain peace and security and prevent violence and further violence due to the consequences and repercussions of conflict. The term conflict has been made to have different meanings, while some define it to mean behaviour or action. Wani cites that "*according to Bercovitch, a situationalist thinker defines conflict as a 'situation which generates incompatible goals or values among different parties*'" (Wani, 2011, p.105). An incompatibility is "*a severe disagreement between at least two sides, where their demands cannot be met by the same resources at the same time*" (Wallensteen, 2012, p.15). He continues to add, the term *resources* should not only mean economic matters. This term "*covers all kinds of positions that are of interest to an actor (...) demands that something is desired which is scarce, be it positions of power, attractive land, or access to airwaves*" (Wallensteen, 2012, p.16). This brings in the different types of incompatibilities defined by Wallensteen that give rise to conflict. Geopolitik conflicts (conflicts over territory), Realpolitik conflicts (over power and the power capabilities), Idealpolitik conflicts (over ideological issues), and lastly, Kapitalpolitik (over economic matters). While a conflict(s) can contain all four types, other factors can cause conflicts that have yet to be mentioned above.

Therefore, where there is incompatibility, conflict(s) will exist. Problems will arise, and some action or behaviour will occur. Actions constitute the conflict. Actors or parties perform these actions. These actors can be state or non-state actors. State actors can be governments or sovereign countries, while non-state actors can be categorised into non-violent such as international/regional organisations, non-governmental organisations, and violent actors, such as terrorist organisations, insurgents, individuals, etc. "*From this we can conclude that conflict consists of three components: incompatibility, action and actors*'' (Wallensteen, 2012, p.16).

Conflict, therefore, precedes conflict resolution. The word resolution means *"the action of solving a problem or dispute(...)."* (Wani, 2011, p.105). Given the nature and context of conflicts, a conflict can change over time. There have been recorded instances where conflict that started as an ethnic or resource conflict blew up to be a full-fledged war. An example is the Sierra Leone civil war, which was initially a resource-based conflict. Given this scenario and many others, the processes of conflict resolution imply the capability to extend to conflicts that are complex, intense, and violent and *"to deal with all forms of conflict at all social levels from the interpersonal to the international"* (Burton, 1993, p.6). The processes of conflict resolution are a whole range of methods and approaches that deal with conflict *"from negotiation to diplomacy, from mediation to arbitration, from facilitation to adjudication, from conciliation to conflict prevention, from conflict management to conflict transformation, from restorative justice to peacekeeping"* (Wani, 2011, p.105). This concept sits well with the thesis as we will get to see some of these approaches used by women in their communities for conflict resolution activities. *"it is in this arena, in fact, that conflict resolution demonstrates its unique usefulness"* (Burton, 1993, p.6)

Conflict resolution process(es) can be initiated both during the end of the conflict or after the conflict. As mentioned, the process evolves to apply to the different stages of conflict. When tensions and emotions are high during the conflict, the method(s) used is aimed at transforming the conflict from violent to non-violent, finding immediate solutions to address the issues before further escalation of the hostilities, and finding a middle ground. One of the techniques that can be used is mediation. Mediation is a process that *"involves the intervention of a third person, or mediator, into a dispute to assist the parties in negotiating jointly acceptable resolution of issues in conflict"* (O'Connor, 2024). The third person must be a mutually agreed neutral participant chosen by parties in conflict. This can involve the parties not resorting to violence, arms no longer in use, and initiating some form of disarmament.

After the conflict, the process shifts and involves the use of sustainable long-term peace efforts. Such techniques involve reconciliation and restorative justice, long-term peacebuilding, and peacekeeping frameworks. This can include engaging conflicting parties and affected communities in dialogue to foster healing, rebuilding relationships and inclusivity to ensure all parties participate and their voices are heard, utilisation of transitional justice commissions and tribunals for accountability, closure, and justice, settling of displaced communities, and rebuilding of infrastructure. Some examples are *"the so-called truth commissions in South Africa and some Latin American countries"* (...) *"when they work to construct a*

shared understanding of history that can be a basis for emotional reconciliation, tension reduction, and the creation of a more cooperative political climate" (National Research Council, 2000, p.6)

This stage also involves signing agreements to address the underlying issues and establish conditions for lasting peace. Wallensteen defines an agreement as a *"formal understanding, a document signed under more or less solemn conditions"* (Wallensteen, 2012, p.8). This can be formal in the form of a treaty/formal document or an informal agreement where no accords are signed. Still, there is considerable trust, understanding, and crucial promises to be worked out between or among the parties. An example of such an agreement can be the exchange of prisoners or hostages as a goodwill gesture or marrying off a family member between two or more conflicting clans in a community as a token of peace.

In summation, conflict resolution is a peace process that involves formal and informal ways of resolving conflicts, achieving peace and security, and fostering sustainable peace and positive change for all parties concerned. War is the last resort, as violence begets violence; therefore, the process involves peaceful and non-violent methods of settling disputes or any type of conflict through peaceful techniques. Since conflicts are of various types and can have multiple stages, the efforts are not limited to a single phase but evolve over time as conflict changes. Thus, CR is often an ongoing and complex process.

2.3 <u>Women, Peace, and Security Agenda</u>

Resolution 1325, also known as the WPS, is an important document to view and summarise. This global policy recognises that women must participate in all peace and security processes. It is based on the United Nations Security Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) through the Security Council and was adopted in October 2000.

The resolution addresses the disproportionate effects of conflicts on women for their protection in times of conflict and the pivotal role they should and already do play *"in conflict prevention, [conflict resolution], conflict management and sustainable peace efforts"* (USIP 2023). It became one of the first international policies addressing women, peace, and security, especially the importance of women's active participation and decision-making in all phases of peace processes.

Subsequent resolutions with objectives similar to Resolution 1325 (2000) have expanded this resolution. These include 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019). Collectively, they make the women, peace, and security agenda.

Resolution 1325 (2000) was a result of a global campaign of women and a group of NGOs called "Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table" (Oriol, 2015, p.8) sharing their experiences with the Security Council on matters relating to women (and girls) in conflict. The nature of conflict had changed "*from inter-state military based wars to more complex intra-state confrontations, involving non-state actors and increasing the number of civil casualties*" (Vodickova, 2018, p.16). The conflicts increasingly targeted civilians, and women, girls, and children were primarily affected, "*often as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs)*" (Vodickova, 2018, p.17). This led to the increasing need for the international community to rethink its approach towards peace and conflict.

Additionally, the document does not only address the disproportionate impacts of conflicts/war on women, but it also addresses "*the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict prevention, conflict management and sustainable peace efforts*" (The United States Institute of Peace, 2024) and to include women in these peace efforts, including peace talks, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Before the passing and adoption of the resolution, other significant policies advocated for the rights of women and girls. The Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly, which called on member countries to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and elevate gender equality. In 1995, came the UN Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, which resulted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), which championed the role of women in peace processes at all levels, such as negotiating tables at the decision-making levels and recognising their role in conflict resolution at the grassroots level.

The UNSCR 1325 recognises the BPfA, the CEDAW, and the Geneva Conventions, among other laws. The Resolution binds all UN member states and puts the resolution into action by developing National Action Plans (NAP). The Resolution cannot impose implementation; it depends on the willingness of the government, who then introduced the NAPs. The NAPs are an essential element in the implementation of the resolution. Although women have participated in peace processes in some countries before adopting the Resolution, it is still a vital document for peace and security efforts.

2.4 <u>Women in Conflict Resolution</u>

Women play crucial roles in conflict resolution and contribute their perspectives, needs, and concerns, as well as those of other vulnerable groups, to this peace process. Some of these roles include negotiators, advocates of peace, activists, mediators, and policymakers, among other roles.

Despite their significant roles in this process, their presence is often limited to informal processes, usually grassroots activities. Grassroots activities include various peace techniques such as dialogues, negotiations, and reconciliation, among others, outside official peace talks or formal peace engagements. Formal processes involve the same methods "*among civil society actors, diplomats, academics and other actors*" (Dayal & Christien, 2020, p.70).

It is argued that informal peace processes are usually complementary (not substitute) to formal peace processes but not limited to them; the main difference is gender, as more women are active in informal processes than men. Men are primary actors in formal peace processes; "*they are mainly male peacekeepers, male peace negotiators, and male politician and formal leaders*" (Munro, 2000, p.2). Accordingly, "*women-who are rarely the belligerents-are unlikely to be considered legitimate participants*" (O'Reilly et al., 2015, p.1). This is because "naturally" men and boys are associated with violence in a way that is not associated with women and girls. Therefore, if the goal of the peace process is only to end the violence, the men who are the "primary" perpetrators of violence will dominate the process and be considered as legitimate participants by sitting at the negotiating table.

The formal peace process also contains other constructed notions/perceptions, such as "*women are not often perceived as "not political"*" (Bouta et al., 2005,p.66), "*that men, in relation to women, are the warriors, while women, in relation to men, are the peacemakers (...) where men are perceived as the aggressors, protector, killer, and women play the opposite role of pacifist, care giver, and the protected*" (Munro, 2000,p.3), "*mothers of the nation*" (Bouta et al., 2005, p.51), and many other gender divisions/stereotypes tend to create and perpetuate an exclusionary attitude and culture towards women. As a result, only a few to no women become involved in formal peace processes during and after conflict, leading to many women choosing to work or be engaged outside of the formal activities "*with various CSOs, and/or with political parties that advocate social and political change*" (UNDP 2003 as cited by Bouta et al.,2005, p.51).

Regardless of their substantial presence in informal activities, there is still less documentation of their roles and involvement in this work. Kezie-Nwoha, in her blog, *Women and Grassroots Peacebuilding in South Sudan,* states, "*Grassroots women's efforts are rarely documented and recognised*" (Kezie-Nwoha, 2022). The same sentiments are also voiced by Dayal & Christen (2020), who express that there is "*little systematic evidence about women's involvement in these informal peace processes*" (Dayal & Christien, 2020, p.70) and little information on most of their peace works even though these women were instrumental to Resolution 1325's adoption. This thesis hopes to bring to life the informal ways, through the case studies, the women were involved in to increase their visibility, also in the literature world.

Interacting with the texts in literature, the author came across the terms *Track I diplomacy* and *Track II diplomacy.* Also, common vocabulary in conflict resolution, *Track I diplomacy* are formal and official interactions that involve government officials, high-level representatives such as politicians, NGO representatives, heads of state, among other high-level actors "*and is aimed at influencing the structures of political power*" (Mapendere, 2000, p. 66). *Track II diplomacy* refers to the unofficial and informal interactions involving conflicting groups or nations intending to develop strategies to influence public opinion and organise human and material resources to help resolve their conflict. Due to their complexity, the author will stick with formal and informal activities as the keywords for a simple understanding of the texts. Where these words are directly quoted, the author will replace them with these keywords for the same meaning.

2.5 Case Studies of Women in Informal and Formal Peace Processes

2.5.1 Women in Informal Peace Processes

It is argued that women's limited access and participation in formal activities encourage them to engage and participate in informal activities. Regardless of their exclusion from formal activities, this has not rendered them passive bystanders as men forge peace. Instead, the women have worked towards peace in informal ways: "*peace marches, reconciliation ceremonies, regional consultations, lobbying, and media campaigns*" (Bouta et al., 2005, p.69). "*Women have long filled important functions as unofficial envoys, behind-the-scenes negotiators, and informal mediators*" (Dayal & Christien, 2020, p.72). Additionally, their active engagement in informal peace processes "*at times they have managed to enter formal peace processes or played important roles in propping up key institutions and services during conflict*" (Bouta et

al., 2005, p.69). Informal peace processes may form a critical fertile breeding ground and bridge into formal processes.

The author will highlight one commendable example of women's role and participation in this process to demonstrate their valuable and extensive work.

The women in Liberia were very influential in transforming the country from a conflict landscape to a peaceful environment. *"Liberian women have a dynamic history of working for peace. Their instrumental role in bringing about the 2003 Accra Peace Agreement is well documented"* (Pillay et al., 2010, p.89). Women played significant roles as mediators, peace agents, peace architects, and other roles in resolving prolonged conflicts under the umbrella of women's organisations. Liberia `experienced two major conflicts that brought devastating instability to the country during and under Charles Taylor's reign. These civil wars were from 1989-1996 and 1999-2003.

Shulika (2018) states that these civil wars instigated the formation and rise of women's organisations. Some of these prominent organisations include the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI), Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace led by Mother Mary Brownwell and Leymah Gbowee, Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) organised by Crystal Roh Gawding, and Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) which was founded by women from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The establishment and growth of these women-founded organisations were committed to ending the war "*with the focal point of ensuring normalcy, where peace and security could be restored to Liberia*" (Kamara,2021, p.4)

The organisations engaged in advocacy campaign strategies for the end of these conflicts and the restoration of peace. One of the advocacy strategies used was lobbying. The lobbying exercise was a form of the communicative process "*which may or may not trigger political or policy considerations in every circumstance*" (Christopher E. Miller as cited by Shulika, 2022, p.110). These women used lobbying to request leaders and rebels to dialogue and disarm. Inspired by this strategy, the women also used it to influence and persuade the presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to resolve the cross-border crisis and hostilities, as some factors causing conflict in Liberia were also rooted in these countries. The women realised that petitioning and influencing the positions of these leaders to resolve the cross-border crisis was a way to peace. It involved persuading the presidents of these countries "*to attend the regional peace dialogues that convened in Rabat, Morocco in March 2002*" (Shulika, 2018, p.128). The presidents

agreed to the peace talks, began a dialogue with the Minister of Defence from the three countries, and re-opened the borders to "*decrease the proliferation of small arms and increase economic co-operation in the Mano River Basin*" (Diop, 2002, p.149).

This lobbying exercise propelled the platform for dialogue as women, especially from the MARWOPNET group, travelled to Conakry-Guinea, where they met President Lansana Conte and agreed to meet with the other two presidents for dialogue. The women took advantage of this tour and lobbied the international organisations present "*such as UNHCR, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA the Red Cross, Medecin Sans Frontiers*" (Diop, 2002, p.149) for meetings and support, and visited several refugee camps as they also advocated for more humane treatment and increased aid to refugees.

At the grassroots and national levels, the women would use collaborative advocacy that would attract a massive support base that would entail networking with religious institutions and other civil society organisations such as "*the Council of Chiefs, the Inter-Faith Mediation, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and the Muslim Women Federation*" (Shulika, 2018, p.126) to develop on strategies and efforts to minimise the conflicts and drive negotiations to peace processes. This involved rallying around institutions and advocating for the need to raise consciousness for the women affected mainly by the war and for the need to support by providing relief services and basic necessities for these women.

It also involved working with women from communities where tensions and strained relationships were volatile. This included engaging with these women in formal and informal gatherings that conveyed messages of reconciliation and forgiveness. The women in these affected communities were fully involved in advocating the need for and importance of forgiveness and urging this consciousness of reconciliation among the population. According to the women's organisations, placing women at the centre was strategic in advocating for their cause and "*valuing them as vital instruments of positive transformation*" (Shulika, 2018, p.127)*.*

The women used the lobbying mechanism to persuade and convince the rebels and combatants to stop the fighting. This involved travelling to the areas where the warlords were based to have a dialogue with them, which also included talking to their sons and brothers engaged in the conflict in their languages to put down their arms. They took various items with them for symbolism, such as white chickens to mean peace, kola nuts to symbolise the women who gave them life and the palm branches to represent "*the welcoming of Jesus to Jericho, meaning they are welcome to disarm and return back home*" (Tripp 2015

as cited by Shulika, 2018, p.129). While some of the attempts were futile, such as being denied entry into the rebel camps to engage the conflicting parties in dialogue, the women continued to engage in other peace efforts that would involve the warlords and for peace and stability.

These women's organisations also adopted activism by orchestrating and engaging in peaceful demonstrations to advocate and negotiate for peace and stability and *"address the victimisation and marginalisation of women brought by conflict occurrences"* (Shulika, 2018, p.130). Shulika states that peaceful demonstrations were the most used strategy by women during both Liberian conflict times. The women demonstrated and marched in front of embassies and government institutions, the streets, stations and also warlords' quarters with banners and placards that carried messages of peace and chanted, *"we want peace not war; we are your mothers and sisters; stop the fighting, the rape of our girls, the killings of our children, sisters, brothers and husbands and let peace reign"* (Shulika, 2018,p.130) to echo their predicaments to all parties concerned.

After the peace negotiations in Morocco in 2002, the conflict situation worsened in Liberia, which drove the women to further strengthen their fight for peace and resolution of the conflict. In 2003, a group of women gathered together to form a peaceful campaign under the WIPNET group, Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace.

The women in this campaign still held peaceful demonstrations, gathered in marketplaces to sing in prayers and fast for peace cause, used media forums and sent letters to spread their message of peace, and picketed with placards and banners chanting various messages and slogans of peace. Interestingly, all backgrounds of life and gender; male, female, Muslim, Christian, and grassroots-rural-urban settings unwaveringly supported the cause and actively supported the struggle for peace. In addition to the peace demonstrations, the women added the sex strike and refused to give their men sexual pleasure.

The sex strike sufficed to authenticate their seriousness for the peace cause *"and appeal to the faculty of men to also take responsibility for their part in the conflict and join the struggle for peace"* (Shulika, 2018, p.133). This form of peaceful resistance "compelled" the men to join in the struggle for peace and support their cause alongside the women, as an end to the conflict also meant an end to the sex strike.

Encouragingly, women's significant strides in navigating the conflict space and contributing towards ending conflict laid the groundwork for women's involvement and participation at formal peace talks and

decision-making levels. Some women from the organisations were selected for various peace talks and conferences but under the observers' status. According to Shulika (2018), while still in these peace talks and under the observers' status, the warlords in the meeting kept referring to the women and asking about their opinions and decisions. This act was fundamental to the women, as the opportunity presented an empowering space to influence and shape the peace negotiations for women and society. One of the yields included women securing seats at the Accra negotiating tables and were official signatories to the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreements (CPA) in 2003 "*and the appointment of Gyde Bryant to chair the Transitional Government of Liberia*" (Leymah Gbowee 2011 and 2013, as cited by Shulika, 2018, p. 136). This agreement signalled the official end of the Liberian civil war *"and was welcomed as a milestone achievement by many, especially women"* (Shulika, 2018, p.137). Liberian women were instrumental in transforming the country's conflict landscape into peace and Liberia's current stable environment.

While not exhaustive, this excerpt shows women's roles in conflict resolution as active agents who adopt diverse roles as activists, negotiators, advocates, and contributors to peace by adopting different actions and strategies to address the conflict situation and promote peace under different women's organisations.

2.5.2 Women in Formal Peace Processes

Multiple pieces of literature showcase that women are excluded from formal peace processes and focus on the factors of their exclusion. While this is true in some aspects, scholars in various disciplines, such as social sciences and women's studies, have perpetuated this central discourse when discussing women and their involvement in formal peace processes.

Due to the prolongation of this discourse over long periods of time, it is unlikely to find suitable resources on the positive contributions of women in formal processes. This has been one of the factors that has overshadowed women as active and positive agents in conflict resolution. The argument does not mean that women do not face challenges and barriers while contributing and participating in formal peace processes in their respective communities, that much we are aware of; however, drawing attention to their contributions is as important as continuing to point out the factors to their exclusion. As Goyol states, "*this is motivated by a growing need to draw attention to the plight of women as a particular vulnerable group in conflict settings*" (Goyol,2019, p.123). The author also believes that this literature solely reinforces the perception that women being excluded from formal processes is solely a gender issue while overlooking other intersectional dimensions for their exclusion.

As defined by the United Nations, formal peace processes include "*early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building and global disarmament involving activities like conflict resolution, peace negotiations, reconciliation, reconstruction of infrastructure and the provision of humanitarian aid*" (Porter, 2003, p.246). Porter argues that women in informal peace processes should be included in formal peace processes to establish peace and gender equality. I agree with the scholar as we have seen that women's understanding of resolving conflicts and fostering peace through their actions and strategies goes far broader and more holistic than the UN or standard usages, as will be discussed in this section.

One interesting argument was that women's participation in formal peace processes relies on the actors and cause of conflicts. Women are not considered belligerent; the men are the cause and actors of conflict and, therefore, are brought to the table. The women are unlikely to be considered participants at the negotiating table. However, this concept is far from the truth, as we have had cases where women took up active roles as combatants and conflict instigators. Perhaps best reflected, in Sierra Leone, the women, usually called the 'female combatants' perpetrated inhumane acts on civilians, such as holding down victims to be gang raped and inserting objects and other substances in their bodies. In other former conflict countries like Liberia, as the women bore the social burden of the conflicts, they prompted the male figures in their communities and families by expressing their grievances about the effects of the conflicts and the role the men should play, and this "encouraged" more men in the community to take up arms and engage in the conflict.

Nevertheless, women are still involved in formal peace processes. Scanlon (2019) has voiced other scholars, like O'Reilly et al. (2015), addressing the exact quote that women between 1992 and 2011 compromised "*2 per cent of chief mediators, 4 per cent of witnesses and signatories and 9 per cent of negotiators*" (Scanlon, 2019, p.9) in formal peace processes. There was progress, as new data indicates that between 1992-2019, women constituted *"13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories"* (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

The following section will introduce two relevant case studies to this thesis. The case studies will help us analyse whether the women directly participated in formal peace processes or if another party assigned them roles.

2.5.2.a <u>Women in Burundi</u>

The women were instrumental in conflict resolution and integrating gender equality into the government. In the first round of negotiations in the Arusha peace talks in 1998, the women were absent, which did not sit well with the women as they wanted to sit at the negotiation table.

Therefore, they found a way to be included in the second round of negotiations held in Arusha in 2000 and determined to have their voices heard; "*women were prevented from entering the negotiating room (...) they decided to intercept representation of political parties in the corridors of the government buildings after meetings, urging representatives to integrate women's perspectives into the peace process*" (Agbalajobi, 2009, p.14). While this act angered the male delegates, their lobbying received tremendous support from the facilitator of the negotiations, the late former president of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, whom the late former South African president, Nelson Mandela, later replaced.

The women were allowed to participate in the negotiations as observers and gained permanent observer status, but they had no right to partake in the talks. However, the women pushed and voiced their concerns about the Burundian women and how to address these concerns in the peace process despite the "no-right-to-partake-observer-status", and their concerns were accepted and incorporated in the final peace agreement document (*Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation*).

These concerns include:

1. 30% quota of women's representation in all decision-making levels, positions and political parties.
2. An end to gender-based war crimes, including domestic violence, and an end to impunity for these gender war crimes.
3. Their rights to land, inheritance, and property, equal access to education, both for women and girls.
4. Women should be represented in all aspects of the peace process, and all issues discussed should include a gender perspective.
5. Put special and specific measures in place for Burundi women's security and consider the special needs of female refugees.
6. "*A woman's charter to be included in the constitution and the elimination of all laws discriminatory to women*" (Agbalajobi, 2009, p.14).

The 30% women's representation quota was later incorporated in Burundi's constitutions of 2004 and 2005, and there has been some significant progress in increasing women's representation in decision-making positions. Women represent 42.3% of vital governmental ministries such as Justice, Labour and Social Security, Finance, and the East African Community, among others.

The Burundi women's presence in the peace negotiations formally ended the violence period and proved the importance of including women in peace talks. "*Women rose above the endemic conflict in their country and became a force for positive change*" (Ogunsanya, 2007, as cited by Vodickova, 2018, p.27)

2.5.2.b Women in Northern Ireland

In the Northern Ireland context, the women were very instrumental in shaping the peace process and reconciliation during "*The Troubles*", and their work led to the promotion and signing of the peace agreement, the Belfast Agreement, also called the Good Friday Agreement in some pieces of literature. For this purpose, the author will use the Belfast Agreement in this thesis. Also, the conflict is known internationally as the Northern Ireland Conflict; the author will use the words, The Troubles, about this conflict.

A brief history of The Troubles was a period of violent conflict from the 1960s to the 1990s between "*Protestants unionists who desired (...) to remain part of the United Kingdom and the Roman Catholic nationalists who wanted Northern Ireland to become part of the Republic of Ireland*" (Wallenfeldt, 2023); a united Ireland. This conflict was not religious despite the terms Protestants and Catholics being used for these two factions. Some of the literature I interacted with, such as *Engendering Democratic Transition from Conflict: Women's Inclusion in Northern Ireland's Peace Process* by Racioppi and O'Sullivan See (2006), categorise the conflict as having a political, ethnic and sectarian dimension. The critical issue was the status of the country, Northern Ireland.

The unionists were the British, while the nationalists were Irish. Tensions were among the nationalist paramilitary forces such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Irish National Liberation Army, unionist security forces such as the British Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and other splinter paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Ulster Defence Association (UDA). The groups carried out several acts of assassinations and terrorism, such as shootings of civilians and

bombing of public buildings, recreational facilities and political targets, leading to increased tit-for-tat violence.

There were ongoing negotiations among the groups to end the conflict in response to the paramilitary retaliation violence. It involved a ceasefire and a declaration among the three governments of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Britain. It outlined that any unification of Ireland would only occur with the consent of majority votes from Northern Ireland and that only Northern Ireland and Ireland had the right to solve their disputes. The ceasefire was approved and followed with an agreement plan "*for power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly (...) and future relationships between Ireland and Britain*" (Imperial War Museums, 2022). The Belfast Agreement was signed in 1998 and was viewed as marking the end of the 30-year conflict period, The Troubles.

During the violent period, what followed was a group of women who organised themselves who opposed the violence and also made sure their presence was included in the agreement negotiations. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was founded in 1996 by Pearl Sagar (Protestant) and Monica McWilliams (Catholic). The NIWC was a group acting on behalf of women; it involved women of either the unionist or nationalist side and those who did not define themselves in any of these categories. The group did not represent or advocate for any of the causes of either side of the conflict; it, however, sought to find common ground between the nationalists and unionists and also voice the issue of women's representation and participation in the peace negotiations. The group also provided a channel for the bi-communal civil society to be involved in the official resolution process.

This group took some action to be involved in the peace negotiations. NIWC leaders lobbied for the existing political parties to include women in their candidate lists; however, this exercise was ignored, and the government published their own ideas for the electoral system. The leaders formed a political group to contest the elections, as they believed their issue of women's representation and participation was either ignored or not taken seriously. Encouragingly, the NIWC attracted and received major support from most groups.

During the negotiation votes, NIWC "*gained one per cent of the vote and (...) thus secured two seats in the negotiations, where its delegates had the status of full participants*" (Fearon, 2002, p. 32). This was a

significant opportunity for the NIWC as the representatives chosen and won through public elections would fully participate in the peace process.

While the other political parties were overwhelmingly exclusively male at the negotiating table, the NIWC delegation remained solely with female candidates, and they ensured that there was a balance between nationalist and unionist women present at the table. This meant that most concerns were heard from the male delegation; interestingly, the NIWC delegates challenged this dynamic, ensured their voices were heard and confronted those who tried to monopolise the debate. The NIWC voiced its opinion on issues concerning the nationalists and unionists, the civil society, and members of the public.

The group promoted an inclusive process and was later "*able to broaden the negotiating agenda to include such issues as victims' rights and reconciliation"* (Fearon, 2002, p.32). How was this achieved? The NIWC provided information to other community and NGO leaders on specific issues under discussion, forthcoming agendas and developments in the negotiation process in their monthly meetings and the group considered their views. They also regularly contacted several community and NGO leaders on issues under discussion.

Since the group was bi-communal, they guided on approaches acceptable to either or both communities. The group also produced papers that gave a fresh outlook and approach to politics "*based on politics, non-competitiveness and a willingness to share ideas"* (Fearon, 2002, p.32) grounded in human rights and equality policies.

The NIWC women were instrumental in promoting the peace agreement. For the agreement to take effect, it had to be endorsed through a public referendum. NIWC was the only group that had worked closely with the public and spoke with the public about the ongoing negotiation process.

Using this "window of opportunity", the members of the group "*helped prepare a 'user friendly' version of the agreement, using plain speech to make it more comprehensible"* (Fearon, 2002, p.33). They organised public debates to be able to speak simultaneously to their own members, individual members of the public and the civil society. They also supported and promoted the civil society 'Yes' campaign in favour of the Belfast agreement by allowing them to put their logo and messages on a piece of literature sent to every voter, including the NIWC message on the other side of the paper, as NIWC being a political party was entitled to free postage of political literature.

The involvement of the NIWC in the peace and political negotiations had a changing significance in the peace agreement and dynamic politics in Northern Ireland. Most people voted for the agreement as some issues included in the agreement agenda by the NIWC, such as victims' rights and reconciliation, were severe issues that the people needed to address. Their involvement also promoted women's political participation as the agreement appointed more women to the new Assembly. Due to their presence in the Assembly, they pushed for the development of a Civic Forum as part of the Assembly, which was later incorporated into the agreement.

The Forum was a mechanism for promoting the social inclusion agenda in formal politics, institutionalising opportunities for public participation, political mobilisation, and political inclusivity. The Forum "*draws its members from business, trade unions, churches and voluntary associations, with attention to creating a balance in gender, community background, geographical spread and age*" (Racioppi & See, 2006, p.199). The scholars state that twenty-two of the sixty members in the Forum are women.

NIWC played a critical role in the opportunity for peace in Northern Ireland in 30 years. The women were negotiators for the Belfast Agreement and played various roles during the conflict. They brought solutions to the table, worked collectively with other parties and governments involved, recognised the differences and worked to accommodate them. Reports claim that if the agreement had not touched on the issues put on the agenda by NIWC, such as victims' rights and reconciliation, the people of Northern Ireland would have voted against the agreement, thus jeopardising the most significant opportunity for peace in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 3

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Women and Conflict Resolution

Drawing from the literature review excerpt and women's experiences, we can see the complex inter-relationship between women and conflict resolution. Indeed, women, much like men, are involved in the informal and formal peace process. One thing is sure: Women's work in this process is varied, complex and multi-layered. Women play various changing roles in this process and go far broader than the conventional or UN usages.

Just like conflict is a gendered experience, so is the process of resolving conflicts and promoting peace. Perceived discourses such as "women are more peaceful and peace-loving than men", "women's peace", or that peace is a "women's issue" could guarantee more women in peace processes, but that is quite the contrary. Peace is also a gendered experience, a male-dominated peace process. Although women are more conspicuous in informal peace processes, there are some instances where women are excluded from the informal peace process.

In Somalia, more specifically on Somalia women and conflict resolution, women are considered symbols of peace, and "*taking actions to build peace and end conflict is a (...) role for women*" (Life & Peace Institute, 2018, p.20). During warring clans' conflict, for peace and stability to be achieved, young women are exchanged to be married off to one of the warring clans as the brides are said to seal the peace. In this context, if a conflict breaks out between the two clans or sub-clans of this exogamous marriage, the bride can use this position as a peace negotiator and peace envoy for the warring clans.

However, in contrast, even though women are well-placed to intervene in clan conflicts and have been at the forefront of resolving conflicts and "*serving to bridge clan-based divisions*" (Affi et al., 2021, p. 82) during the civil war in Somali clustered by divisions of clans and fighting among these clans; according to Somali culture, "*women can build peace but only men can make peace*" (Life & Peace Institute, 2018, p.20). Women were, therefore, excluded from local peace processes due to their clan affiliation. The women's clan loyalty was questionable and perceived as unpredictable, and therefore, they were not

included as delegates in negotiations or even decision-making forums. This has also become a significant barrier to women's participation and involvement in formal processes in Somalia.

The women are forced to seek and appeal for participation from clan elders who are exclusively male. When the women were included, their attention was to serve their clans and what their clans needed rather than advocating for women's issues if they wished to retain their positions. If they did voice their demands or concerns, the clan elders would reject them for religious and cultural reasons.

With such an abstract, the author can recognise that the experiences of peace are intersectional and vary by gender, culture, religion, educational and socio-economic background and other intersecting identities. Commonly, women were excluded from any peace process due to gender, but different case studies, such as those mentioned above, highlight that there is more than the gender aspect in play for their exclusion. There are other factors in the society in which women and men live that are related to each other and affect their experiences in the process of achieving peace.

With this, the author can also add another observation that women mobilised and lobbied under the umbrella of organisations, women organisations, regardless of their class, race, religion or other intersecting identities, to advocate for peace and stability in their communities and fight for their inclusion in the formal process, including using the Resolution 1325 (2000), through NAPs, "*as a tool to get parties of the conflict to consider their rights in peace negotiations*" (Oriol, 2015, p.12).

Women's approach to conflict resolution is multi-faceted. While the parties in conflict are likely to be considered the participants at the negotiating table, the women focus on the inclusivity of the rest of society, including women who carry and shoulder the burden of the conflicts. When the women are involved in the process, they bring to the table a range of issues beyond the cessation of hostilities and the end of the violence through a peace agreement or political settlement. These issues range from gender equality, education, security reforms, human rights and women's issues, and a gender perspective to peace and conflict, among other issues that affect the community. Their inputs rely on a bottom-top approach, which includes gaining diverse inputs from the rest of the society through grassroots activities and discussing with the community leaders, individual members of the society, and other public members, such as faith-based leaders, as they will be affected by these decisions made at the negotiating table.

Additionally, I can add that women devise various actions or strategies to achieve peace, address inhumane injustices and fight against their exclusion in peace and political talks. The most common action

mentioned, besides peaceful demonstrations and lobbying exercises, was stripping naked. Women threatened to strip bare if a peace negotiation was not arrived at. In some cultures, a woman's body is said to signify sacredness and "*motherhood as a 'producer and reproducer' of both genders in society"* (Shulika, 2018, p.133). Therefore, for men to publicly see the nakedness that symbolised motherhood is/was "forsake" that life or a curse to the men. Such narratives have been conveyed in Liberia during the Accra peace negotiations and in Somalia, Nigeria, and other cultures.

Building on this, I can broaden the concept of conflict resolution. Initially, the idea was to encompass women in conflict resolution as showcasing their roles in this process, the prevention and resolution of conflicts, their equal participation and involvement in both formal and informal resolution processes, and the need to recognise their efforts as positive agents of change. The author includes their equal participation and involvement in decision-making levels and the need to increase their presence and roles in legal frameworks and political involvement with regard to conflict resolution in this concept.

Overall, the relationship between women and conflict resolution is complex and multi-faceted. It involves common characteristics such as exclusion, diverse and changing roles, and seeking to promote gender equality and women's rights/issues, among other aspects that define women's specific and unique experiences and vary across countries and communities.

3.2 <u>Historical perspectives of women's roles in Africa</u>

To better understand the subject of women and conflict resolution in Africa, the author looks into history and how these women were perceived in society. While current experiences showcase that women's roles were chosen for them and women "chose" for themselves, their roles did not emerge just from conflict situations or evolve in a vacuum. Women's roles in peace and decision-making levels are as ancient as their experience of violence and precede the colonial period.

In the structural setting of the pre-colonial African continent and societies, women had positions available to them and were not restrictive, regardless of gender and/or sex. Women had the same legal right as men to participate in socio-political platforms, leadership positions and affairs, and any peace processes. This is not to say that patriarchy did not exist; it did exist. However, gender divisions were flexible and

accommodating as both genders were fully involved with each other and could still assume the roles of the other, creating gender equity.

In most African societies, the societal structures were of matrilineal descent, ancestral descent traced through a woman's lineage. This was attributed to a community that placed a woman and her relations at the centre of family and kinship. A woman was highly respected as she symbolised the existence and continuity of society through family permanence by bearing children, motherhood by "*educating and instilling in children the appropriate moral, ethical, cultural and societal values*" (Shulika, 2016, p.12), the success and unity of the family and society through the guidance of family and societal virtues, uniting tribe and communities in marriages, supported families and societies financially by providing material resources through agricultural activities such as engaging in farming and cultivating food and animal husbandry activities outside their everyday household activities.

Even in the political context, though the women did not hold the same positions as their male equals, they were still active in politics and government affairs. They maintained some form of governance, power, and public authority over their families, primarily by influencing their spouses and male family members, in their communities through established women's organisations in resolving community disagreements while ensuring peace, and in their ability to organise revolts against other communities and colonialism; an example is the *'Women's War'* in 1929 in south-eastern Nigeria, where women from the Ibibio and Igbo ethnic tribe rose against the British rule and policies. Through the women's groups, the women could voice their views privately and publicly, enjoy political seats in their communities, and be proactive in their political, social and cultural activities.

With their social, economic, political and even cultural roles in the pre-colonial area, women could also position themselves at the centre of peace processes. Women assumed roles such as advisors, consultants, peace envoys, peace facilitators and mediators of communal conflicts, engaged in different resolution strategies like prayers, consultations, arbitration, and mediation, and also crossing over group and ethnic boundaries to influence and work together for peace and in the resolution of pre-colonial conflicts. Women in Africa "*were recognized and respected in their communities as intermediaries and connoisseurs of conflict resolution*" (Shulika, 2018, p.35).

The positioning of women varied from one pre-colonial African society to another, and it was often balanced and harmonised with the men's roles. Regardless of the patriarchal society where a man was seen as the leader, marginalisation and hegemonic ideologies of maleness like women being considered the property of their husbands, the women had tremendous respect, authority and standing in the society. The women also had statuses like leaders and queen mothers, chiefs, farmers, warriors, co-rulers/rulers, and advisors, among other roles—concepts such as ability, seniority, family, and not gender, determined status and authority in pre-colonial Africa.

This all changed after the arrival of the European colonial powers. The dawn of Western colonialism brought about radical masculinised and feminised roles of women that bred inequality between them. Women's traditional roles in society were lost, and their functions were confined to household activities and *"subordinating them to men"* (Shulika, 2018,p.36); the introduction of Christianity and Western education systems and criminalisation of indigenous way of life, the problems of marginalisation and patriarchy reached its peak, exclusionary colonial practices and systems like centralisation of leadership and decision-making structures and property inheritance, conflicts emerged as a form of anti-colonial resistance and struggle for independence that infringed on human rights and severely affected women as they become targets of sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of cruelty perpetrated against them. Likewise, the conflicts forced women to join resistance movements and take up assorted roles of combatants and instigators.

In light of this, women's roles in traditional pre-colonial African societies were highly respected, and they assumed various roles and responsibilities. The vibrancy of women's roles changed with the presence of colonialism, which transcended to the post-colonial and modern eras. Factors like gender, religion, and other intersecting concepts became situated within the African context and helped to explain present-day inequalities and exclusion.

3.3 Conflict situation

A series of conflicts have occurred in African continents, some unending. These conflicts range from intra-state to inter-state wars and sometimes internationalised armed conflicts involving varying degrees of external involvement.

Conflicts in Africa have been reported to be caused by multiple factors. The most common factor is the colonisation of the European powers, as they created arbitrary borders, division of ethnic groups and other adverse lasting effects of colonialism. Other factors include corruption, misdemeanour in leadership, poverty, resources, and power struggles, among nuances.

Examples include the Liberian fourteen-year civil war 1989-2004, the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, and the decade-long war in Sierra Leone in 1991 that began as a revolt against a longstanding dictatorship and which was later fueled by the diamond resource. This conflict also spilt over into neighbouring Liberia.

Kenya, bordered by South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, and Tanzania, hosts two of the world's largest refugee camps at Dadaab and Kakuma. It is a multi-ethnic country with over 42 ethnic groups, the majority of which are from the Bantu linguistic group. Recently, the 45th tribe was recognised by the government in 2020.

Like the states in the United States of America, Kenya has 47 counties, which are geographical units that the devolved government created in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. Our research study will look into Wajir County, the origin of WPDA formation.

Wajir County is the eighth county in Kenya, bordered by Ethiopia and Somalia. Somali-speaking clans and ethnic groups such as the Ajuran, Degodia Ogaden, and Garre, as well as a small population of non-Somalis, greatly inhabit the county. WPDA was founded by local women in Wajir County in 1994. The county is prone to insecurity characterised by terrorist attacks, resource-based violence, clannism violence and high cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

While the country is relatively peaceful and has maintained stability, it has its share of conflicts ranging from inter-communal violence, cycles of electoral violence and unrest, resource-based conflicts and an increasing number of terrorist attacks.

Uganda borders Kenya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. The country boasts over 56 tribes, the largest being Baganda from the Bantu linguistic group. Over nine indigenous communities were formally recognised in the 1995 constitution amendment of 2005. Uganda is divided into Central, Western, Eastern and Northern regions. The four areas are then divided into districts, which are divided into counties and municipalities, and the county into sub-counties. In the four areas are 135 districts, plus the capital city, Kampala.

The country has experienced a relatively peaceful environment; however, since independence in 1962, it has been marked by a series of violent conflicts, including a violent military dictatorship under Idi Amin. The most prolonged conflict was between Yoweri Museveni's government and opposition from various groups, specifically the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) under Kony's command. This was between 1987-2006, with LRA insurgency, surprise attacks and terrorisation in Northern Uganda. Moreover, while in recent years, the LRA's activities have diminished as the group was dispersed out of the region and into neighbouring countries, scars that reign of terror continue to haunt the communities in Northern Uganda to this day. Many scholars discuss this juncture in their literature, mainly focusing on the effects of the prolonged conflict even though the group is no longer active in Northern Uganda.

3.4 Historical Context and Theoretical Framework: Women's Roles in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Times in Kenya and Uganda

Before the British colonial rule, Kenyan women's lives were influential in society. Even though they lived in a patriarchal community and the traditional culture was predominantly patriarchal, "*they held respected places in society (...) in a way they never have since "*(Chege, 2022, p.33). Their functions ranged from working on farms and being responsible for food production, leadership aspects of their people, having household autonomy, and working in marketplaces as market vendors, weaving baskets, etc. An example is how the Kenyan communities were governed by a council of elders, primarily older men and women. Wangu wa Makeri was a female community chief in the Kikuyu tribe "*who stood as a powerful icon of female leadership during colonial rule*" (Chege, 2022, p.33). This position of a headman was male-reserved, and Wangu became the first female headman of the Agikuyu community to be appointed. Her tasks "*involved collecting taxes, brokering peace in the community and communicating the colonial rules to the people*" (Nyotuoro, 2023)

Under colonial rule, women became increasingly unimportant, and their functions, powers and rights faded, such as losing autonomy in the family unit, "*the right to property and inheritance, the right to representation, or the right to discuss political policies*" (Chege, 2022, p.34). Women's status was relegated to the domestic sphere, and their matters only mattered domestically. The colonialists gave the men new rights and new responsibilities and emphasised male dominance in what was already a patriarchal society. Consequently, this colonial rule removed and abolished "*women's voices in conflict*

resolution and peace making" (Chege, 2022, p.36). As a result, women joined in the Mau Mau rebellion. Their roles were multifaceted, and they fought to regain their rightful place and have a voice in society. After gaining independence, these issues persisted. The women faced other challenges, such as sexism and arranged marriages such as from the Maasai and Samburu tribes, where "*many girls were not sent to school and were instead married off as early as 12 years old"* (Kariuki, 2010) and a more patriarchal order "*emerged where the male dominated the female"* (Kariuki,2010). Colonialism instilled in the men a feeling of superiority over women. "*This order suppresses women, restricts the full development of their potential, prevents them from exercising their rights, makes them live for others, forces them to reproduce, and usurps their right to self-determination"* (Kariuki, 2010).

The same goes for Uganda, which gained independence from the British. The women enjoyed significant political power and governance roles, such as the queen's sister and the king's mother, as Uganda was divided into four kingdoms. However, with the coming of the British, these roles were undermined, and the women's authority declined. The missionaries who arrived in Uganda then closely worked with the colonial government to educate women about domesticity and brought their own ideas about gender, further limiting women's power. During the mission schools, whether Catholic or Protestant, the teaching for the girls was different as the content stressed: "*basic literacy and domestic skills in class (e.g., cooking, cleaning, handicrafts, sewing) and training girls for Christian marriage and motherhood (...)"* (Selhausen, 2014, p.80). It has been noted that female domesticity was at an all-time high for the Christian missionaries as "*female domesticity was a central component of the 'civilizing mission' which spread the British Victorian ideal of the proper role for women, emphasizing patriarchal ideology sidelining women as housewives"* (Selhausen, 2014, p.80). The situation worsened during the long civil war between Uganda's government and the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), which affected lives in Uganda and mainly in the Northern Uganda region, where the LRA terrorised them by carrying out atrocities such as massacres, targeted killings, abductions of youths and "*cutting off the hands, feet, noses, ears, lips, or breasts of their victims as punishments for allegedly collaborating with the Ugandan government"* (Anderson, 2009, p.62).

In both cases, women organised themselves in women's groups, organisations, and forums to resolve community conflicts, bring peace and stability, express their concerns, and advocate for equality. From this postulation, we can apply a theory that will support my research study.

This thesis research will employ a feminist theory. Using a feminist lens illuminates discover the limitations of sex, race, and gender, among other identities. It offers insights and solutions to confront and eradicate these oppressive and complex hierarchies of differences. Contrary to the opinion that this theory considers only women's lives, feminist theory considers the lives of every living person, not just women. "*Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. I liked this definition because it does not imply that men were the enemy*" (Hooks 2000 as cited by Arinder 2020).

3.5 Feminism (Feminist theory) and Post-colonial feminism

This theory "*attempts to explain the systemic causes and effects of inequality among the sexes including how factors such as race, class and sexuality affect these inequalities*" (Brown University Library). The theory is a mode of critical theory or falls under the umbrella of critical theory. Critical theory is the works of "*Mark Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Jurgen Habermans and Herbert Marcuse*" (Crossman, 2019) that developed a theory that would critique and change society. That is to uncover and explore "*the cultural and ideological sides of power and domination*" (Crossman, 2019) that are facilitators and barriers to or prevent freedom for human beings. Over the years, theories have adopted the principles and doctrines of critical theory, among them being the feminist theories. Although feminist theories are varied and diverse, the principles and doctrines that are shared with critical theory are "*to reveal obvious and subtle gender inequalities*" (Martin, 2002, p.2) and "*to reduce or eradicate those inequalities*" (Martin, 2002, p.2). Both theories work towards system change and "*critiquing the status quo than changing it*" (Martin, 2002, p.3).

Though these two theories have grown and evolved independently and have become "stand-alone" theories, their divergence has occurred since "*feminist theorist use sex and gender as the fulcrum of their analyses (usually, but not always, with secondary emphases on class, race and ethnicity) (...) critical theorists often place class at the crux of their analyses, with sex, gender, race, and ethnicity being less emphasized*" (Martin, 2002,p.3).

Feminism theory has undergone development since its emergence. The first familiar works were those of a liberal tradition "*arguing that women should enjoy the same political and economic rights as men, including rights to speech, religion, bodily autonomy, and political expression*" (Zeigler,2023). These feminist movements were led expressly by middle-class white women in the United States and the United Kingdom. While their activism focused on the right to property, abortion rights, etc, their activism shifted

and primarily focused "*on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage*" (GWANET-Central Asia, 2024), which is securing women's right to vote. This can be termed as liberal feminism that "*sought to bring women into a position of equality with men within the existing legal framework*" (Ziegler, 2023). However, this was not enough as many feminists believed this was not enough to ensure women's full equality, leading to separated feminists. This gave rise to the second wave of feminism that focused on social and cultural inequalities.

The second wave was a continuation of the suffrage of the US and UK women, and while the first wave focused on suffrage, this wave was concerned with equality issues such as discrimination, sexism and systemic racism. Feminist author Betty Friedan helped ignite this wave with her book '*The Feminine Mystique',* which "*not only employed philosophical thought to discuss feminism, she also incorporated oral histories and her personal experiences to address the issues many women were facing*" (Alexander, 2020). In her book, she researched and conducted interviews with white middle-class women who were confined at home as housewives and discovered that many women were unhappy being confined at home. She criticised the separate sphere that was created; women were relegated to motherhood and homemaking while the men were allowed to thrive at work, politics and power. The book, which was published and quickly fueled a resurgence of the feminist movement, "*encouraged women to step out of their "sphere" and fight gender oppression, which she called "the problem that has no name""* (Alexander, 2020). Consequently, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was signed into law by President John F. Kennedy and stipulated "*that women could no longer be paid less than men for doing "comparable work" at the same job*" (Alexander, 2020). Just like the first wave, the second wave of feminism began to lose steam, and other debates within feminism grew, and this wave came to a close, springing forth alternative feminism. The third wave emerged, which was "*a continuation of, and a reaction to the perceived failures of second wave feminism*" (GWANET-Central Asia, 2024).

Women of other races proposed alternative feminism, such as Black Feminism, as previous theories were focused on and over-emphasized the experiences of upper-middle-class white women. "*This trend accelerated in the 1960s with the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the collapse of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia*" (GWANET-Central Asia, 2024). Since then, feminists in former European colonies and the so-called Third World countries have proposed Post-colonial feminism and Third World feminism. For this thesis, the author will use post-

colonial feminism. With this theory, we will analyse and examine literature produced in colonised countries and the post-colonial effects, especially on women.

Feminist theory emerged from these waves. It "*would not exist as a theoretical endeavor without the political struggles for women's empowerment that have emerged in all regions of the world*" (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016, pp.1-2). While the feminist theories are diverse and "*more fruitfully conceived as a multifaceted, multisited project than as a bounded field*" (Disch & Hawkesworth,2016, p.1), all these theories "*analyze women's experiences of gender subordination, the roots of women's oppression, how gender inequality is perpetuated, and offer differing remedies for gender inequality*" (Jones & Budig, 2008, p.1).

3.6 <u>Concept of Gender</u>

The concept of gender is related to this topic as it is viewed as an analytical tool in society, especially in power relations, as it looks at relations and differences between men and women, between men and between women in several ways, such as "*responsibilities, roles, needs, opportunities and obstacles*" (Masitoh, 2020, p.77). Gender can be defined as "*the difference and social relations between men and women in the roles, functions, rights, responsibilities and behaviours that are formed by social values, cultures and customs of community groups that can change at any time and local conditions*" (Masitoh, 2020, p.76). Often misconception, gender is synonymous with women and girls. A relational approach is understanding that both males and females are gendered beings with socially constructed gendered identities and are constructed with each other.

While some people use sex and gender interchangeably, the term sex differs from gender. Sex refers to the biological characteristics that define differences between a man and a woman. This is mainly associated with the reproductive anatomy, chromosomes and gene expression. Therefore, for this context, sex and gender are different terms and have different meanings.

Gender is influenced by and influences other identity markers such as social class, ethnicity, age, race, geographical environment, and others, which consequently affect and influence individual women's and men's positions, responses and experiences. Within gender itself, we can examine the interrelationship

or intersectionality between gender and identity markers. Intersectionality also reveals to us the hierarchies of power that exist both between men and women, between men and between women.

While feminism's contribution is to give voice to the marginalised (usually/especially women) during times of war and peace and seek to include these voices, its other key contribution of feminism is "*exposing and deconstructing socially constructed gender norms*" (Smith, 2018, p.2). The concept of gender is central to feminism, at the heart of feminist theories and even debates.

Initially, gender was considered a personal characteristic. In the male-dominated scholarly communities before women academics began to organise themselves inside disciplines such as social and political sciences, gender was confined "*to the study of character traits and sex roles*" (Abdulsada, 2023, p.3). This term, sex roles, was developed "*as a way of characterizing the socially appropriate functions performed by men and women*" (Abdulsada, 2023, p.3). it was backed by "*the notion that men and women have specific characteristics that make them well-suited to the performance of specific social roles*" (Abdulsada, 2023.p.3).

Feminist theorists view gender differently and "*focus less on sex as an empirical variable and more on gender (as a systematic analytical category) and its ideological effects*" (Abdulsada, 2023.p.4). According to them, "*Gender is understood as the socially constructed assumptions that are assigned to either male or female bodies- that is, behaviour that is assumed to be appropriate 'masculine' (male) or 'feminine' (female) behaviour*" (Smith, 2018, p.2). These set socially constructed assumptions or characteristics vary across time and place and are not inherent biological distinctions. This distinction is crucial as it sets the difference between sex and gender. Sex is viewed as biological, while gender is socially constructed. Cited by Maruska 2010, Peter Beckman and Francine D'Amico (1994:6) have given differing understandings of gender "*as gender-as-difference and gender-as-power. Gender-as-difference tends to keep intact the binary between sex and gender, men and women, and femininity and masculinity. Gender understood as difference is a static difference is a static character, socially constructed but not relational*" (Maruska, 2010, p.4).

Therefore gender "*relates to expectations and identities attached to both men and women*" (Smith, 2018, p.2). The gender considerations and gendered identities do not rest on the analysis of only women, nor should they. Feminism highlights these gendered constructions and identities that "*perpetuate normative ideas of what men and women can do*" (Smith, 2018, p.2) or what is expected of men and women. An

example is the terms *masculinity* and *femininity.* The term *masculinity "is often associated with rationality, power, independence and the public sphere,"* whereas *femininity "is often associated with irrationality, in need of protection, domesticity and the private sphere"* (Smith, 2018, p.2). Additionally, previous theories have been linked as having masculine characteristics and "*linked with the idea that men are warriors and protectors, that they are legitimate armed actors who fought to protect those in need of protection- women, children and non-fighting men"* (Smith, 2018, p.2). Additionally, this has been highlighted in this thesis when we discuss men and women in peace processes since the men carry the arms, the men make peace and are primary actors on the negotiating table. Women are not belligerent and therefore are not included in the peace table; however, their efforts "*in settling and influencing the agenda for peace in many societies have generally been treated as a 'token' of goodwill and not as a significant cornerstone in the peace processes (...)"* (Angom,2017, preface vii).

Consequently, the gendered distortions about who should do what and why create gendered identities that are "*imbued with power, in particular patriarchal power, which subordinates women and feminine gender identities to men and masculine gender identities"* (Smith, 2018, p.2). This is also what is referred to as *gender-as power.* Gender-as-power "*reveals the power relations within and between societies, and is able to describe the historical roots and eventual outcomes of the public-private divide"* (Maruska, 2010, p.4). Given the example above about men and women in peace processes, these produced gendered identities end up shaping and influencing global interactions, "*define distributions of power(..)"* (Abdulsada, 2023, p.4), which impact women who are in international politics and the public sphere.

This brings the importance of intersectionality, as discussed below; feminism makes us understand that gender is shaped by other identities such as class, race, economic background, religion, etc. As a theory, it highlights that as much as gender is an appropriate analytical tool for understanding oppression, sexism, exclusion, discrimination and other types of inequalities, other identities such as race (black, white, etc.) and socioeconomic background, among other identities "*intersect* (with gender)*, and in turn how different groups of people are marginalised, suggesting that we must consider each in tandem rather than in isolation"* (Smith, 2018,p.2). These identities "*intersect to create a "matrix of domination""* (Weldon, 2008, p.194). Intersectionality doesn't only apply to women or "disadvantaged women"; "*rather, intersectionality is an aspect of social organization that shapes all of our lives: gender structures shape the lives of both women and men"* (Weldon, 2008, p.194).

Whereas feminist theorists "*calls for highlighting* (gender) *and gender construction of international relations, where men and women are essential actors in global phenomena*" (Abdulsada, 2023,p.4) and illustrate the role of gender in the theory and practice of International Relations by stating "*that gender has always existed in international relations, but the male-centered perspective of International Relations theory neglected it*" (Abdulsada, 2023, p.4), in conclusiveness "*feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. I liked this definition because it does not imply that men were the enemy*" (Hooks 2000 p.vii, as stated by Arinder 2020). Additionally, intersectionality is a social-theoretical contribution of feminist theory "*to efforts to understand and conceptualize social relations*" (Weldon, 2008, p.195). According to Weldon (2008), social relations are gender, race, and what we mentioned as gender identities. It continues, "*it refers to a form of relationship between social structures, specifically one in which social structures combine to create social categories to which certain experiences and forms of oppression are unique*" (Weldon, 2008, pp.195-196).

3.7 Post-colonial feminism

A form of third-wave feminism that emerged as a response to the failures of the first and second waves of feminism and the "*essentialist definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women*" (GWANET-Central Asia, 2024). These theories were led by mostly white women, such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, etc. and "*was centered on issues affecting white women*" (Gale, 2022) additionally "*focused on concrete changes at an institutional, political, and governmental level (...)*" (Gale, 2022).

These issues ranged from "*reduce male domination through rational discussion among women and men, to remove legal barriers to women's work force entry, and to ensure their equal treatment in the paid labor force*" and "*(...) improving the situation of middle- and upper-middle-class women by affording them somewhat greater opportunities for career mobility*" (Shelton & Agger, 1993, pp.27-28). These issues are brought on by "*male power and male-dominated culture as a source of women's oppression*" and "*women's subordination (...) as a function of patriarchy (...)*" (Shelton & Agger, 1993, pp.27-28). This, in turn, created the universal notion that "*women were/are oppressed as women, that experience is an appropriate analytical tool for understanding women's oppression, and that the personal is political; that is, the system of gender oppression, which is political, is manifested in interpersonal relations*" (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2016, p.3).

Once again, the first and second-wave feminist theories failed *"significantly (to change) the plight of women of color, working class women, working-class men or Third world men and women"* (Shelton & Agger, 1993, p.27). This sparked debates within the feminist discipline, which proposed "third-wave feminisms", such as post-colonial feminism and the rise of intersectionality.

Post-colonial feminism theory developed from the post-colonial works of "*theorist Edward Said, particularly his books Orientalism (1978) and Culture and Imperialism (1993)"* (Mills, Chapter 8, 1998, p.98). Said argues that Europe produced and shaped many of the cultures it encountered through imperial expansion. These other cultures were referred to as *Other,* and the "*other peoples were described as lazy, degenerate, uncivilised, barbaric as Other to the civilised, hard-working British"* (Mills, Chapter 8, 1998, p.98). The postcolonial theory broadly focused and was concerned with analysing and theorising the impact of European colonisation of Britain and France on countries such as India and Africa and the range of different colonial and imperial relations during colonisation that still have a major impact on these countries and on the way that cultures see themselves to date.

As well as other theories in International Relations (IR) that have a masculinist field, what makes feminism different in IR is "*the centrality of the concepts of gender and gendering within feminist IR"* (Maruska, 2010, p.3). In other words, gender and rights of women (and children and men) matter too, and not just states; war and peace were issues of concern anymore to be analysed. "*Feminists raised the question of what a feminist perspective applied to world politics would reveal and how different it would be to traditional perspectives of the discipline"* (Abdulsada, 2023, p.3). The possibility of gender analysis and feminist approaches were welcomed in the IR disciplines and integrated into the theories.

Postcolonial feminists have echoed against the lack of theories to address gender issues in post-colonial theory and "*against the universalising tendencies within Western feminist thought"* (Mills, Chapter 8.1998, p.98). Post-colonial feminist theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Algerian writer Assia Djebar, etc, reject "*to the idea of the commonality and universality of women's lives"* (Shenmugasundaram, 2017, p.384). Mohanty critiques the Western feminist works/texts that discuss the other woman "*as a composite, singular, third world woman"* (Shenmugasundaram, 2017,p.387) and the word *Third World woman* is represented as a homogenous group and "*as someone who leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being "third world"*

(read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family oriented, victimized, etc)" (Mills, Chapter 8, 1998,p.106). She further argues that this type of theorising and notion of women in the Third World as a homogenous category has the potential to constitute these women as powerless, "*colonizes and appropriates the pluralities"* of their complex location and *"robs them of their historical and political agency"* (Goulimari, 2020, p.15). Additionally, Mohanty argues against the universalisation from Western feminist works that assume "*women are 'an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions' and this 'implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy … which can be applied universally and cross-culturally' "* (Mills, Chapter 8, 1998,p.106).

Post-colonial feminist theorists argue that the oppression of women is not global; instead, women born and raised in former colonies of Western imperial powers have different experiences than women in the Western world. "*...postcolonial experiences vary widely depending on each culture's specific history and culture"* (Shenmugasundaram, 2017, p.390). Thus, it would then be impossible to speak of all women as having universal/common experiences, issues, or traits.

The theory considers women's diverse experiences and multiple voices "*since each of them has a different thrust influenced by different socio-cultural, political and economic situations"* (Shenmugasundaram, 2017, p.387). This is because issues such as exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination of women across countries that gained independence, these issues were also based on race, class, culture, etc, alongside gender. This means that their experiences were not just influenced by gender "*but also by the specific contexts of the historical situations that they live in"* (Shenmugasundaram, 2017, p.388). The theory uses the interconnections between gender, ethnicity, class, race and post-colonial history to draw attention to these issues and issues of the marginalised.

Post-colonial feminist theory has been influential in not just being seen as a critique of Western feminist theories or post-colonial theory; it has forced post-colonial theorists to address the issue and question of gender, as post-colonial theory has somewhat neglected gender issues. Secondly, it has led to a productive debate in mainstream Western feminism "*to think about who they are speaking for when they speak of 'woman' or 'women', and (...) subject to scrutiny (...)* on the *act of 'speaking for' someone else"* (Mills, Chapter 8,1998, p.98). Lastly, the theory has established itself as a form of analytic theory than just

Western feminism and post-colonial theory critique, "*it has developed both a position from which to speak, and a set of issues to be addressed*" (Mills, Chapter 8, 1998, p.99)

3.8 <u>Conflict Resolution: A Feminist Perspective</u>

Gender is significant when analysing conflict resolution. A feminist perspective allows us to uncover the hidden gender power relations and deconstruct them. A feminist approach reveals how gender is embedded in the field of conflict resolution, how it is based on gender inequalities and "*to create a space to make those inequalities visible*" (Puechguirbal,2012, p.6). An example is patriarchy, which is constructed without a gender perspective. "*Deconstructing patriarchy requires both making inequalities visible and leading a feminist investigation to uncovering the subtle way patriarchal relationships use to operate*" (Puechguirbal, 2012.p.14)

Conflict resolution and feminist theory do share many things in common. Aside from the fact that conflicts are inevitable and a natural phenomenon as they "*emerges in human society due to clash of interests and gains*" (Wani, 2011, p.110), it can be gendered. Women and men experience conflicts with a gender-based perspective. "*Women and men can be civilians, combatants, at the same time victims and actors; (...)*" (Puechguirbal, 2012, p.4). As conflict resolution involves resolving all conflicts in human society through peaceful and non-violent methods, such as mediation and negotiation, among other non-violent means, peace is also gendered. Women are sidelined in peace talks and negotiations, while the men are considered actors on the peace negotiating table.

This leads to the concentration on the importance of women's visibility in the peace table and a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face during this process. Women's informal efforts to resolve a conflict have been highlighted and declared a valuable contribution; however, "*peace is feminised and skills women can bring to the (...) process are defined within an essentialist realm with the aim of "preserving the social order", thus maintaining women in a pre-war pattern of caregivers and providers*" (Puechguirbal, 2012, p.5). Additionally, the international community has employed these same definitions and blended women and children into one category that incorporates innocence, vulnerability and the need for protection; the man is promoted for the protection of women "*who are defined as powerless individuals*" (Puechguirbal, 2012, p.5). This creates the myth of man as the protector of the weak and innocent. The women are not vulnerable (per se); they are made more vulnerable and

maintained in the category of victims "*because of existing inequalities and discriminations in peaceful societies reinforced by gendered power hierarchies"* (Puechguirbal, 2012, p.8)

As a result, women are rarely invited to participate in the peace processes and are seen as unsuitable actors. Consequently, the "*focus on vulnerability and protection continues to form part of a stereotype of women which aims to justify their exclusion from negotiation and powerful roles, as they are portrayed as weak and thus, not suitable for the roles involved in peacebuilding and security"* (Speake, 2013, p.3). This, in turn, allows a gender hierarchy to prevail and continue prevailing.

Feminist perspectives in conflict resolution challenge women's marginalisation and absence, which have led to their voices, perspectives and experiences being excluded both at the negotiating tables and in literature "*suggested that paying attention to women's experiences would greatly contribute to both analysis and the resolution of conflicts"* (Sharoni, 2017, p.3). Additionally, feminist scholars such as Anita Taylor and Judi Beinstein Miller (1994) argue that since women constitute half of the population alongside men, girls, boys and children, "*their experience should be counted and carefully considered alongside the experience of men"* (Sharoni, 2017, p.3). At the same time, others argued that due to the different experiences of men and women, "*mostly due to a gendered socialization and experiences in conflict, they may be uniquely positioned to offer creative approaches to conflict resolution (...)"* (Sharoni, 2017, p.3).

A feminist lens helps us to expose the hidden power relations, gender distortions and myths about men and women, such as "*a masculinised war and a feminine peace"* (Puechguirbal, 2012, p.6) that maintain a patriarchal system. It also brings to attention the gender hierarchies that have been constructed within the field and allows us to deconstruct gendered social and political norms and discriminations that are against women in times of peace, i.e. "*deconstruct the gender subordination that has been naturalised in discourses, behaviours and cultural symbols"* (Puechguirbal, 2012, p.5). Making women's experiences visible, voices heard and "*documented allows us to stop taking men's experiences and privileges for granted"* (Puechguribal, 2012, p.5); the body of works will include/document "*women's experiences not only as victims of violent conflict but also perpetrators, and as agents of change"* (Sharoni, 2017.p.14). A feminist perspective is indeed valuable in conflict resolution, not only because it calls attention to gender inequalities "*but also what are the assumptions, processes, and practices that have enabled and perpetuated these exclusions"* (Sharoni,2017, p.12).

3.9 Concept of intersectionality

The roots of intersectionality, though it originated in critical race studies, were highlighted and introduced by Kimberle' Crenshaw in 1989. She expressed how intersectional systems of society, such as gender, race, sexuality, etc, help to explain the oppression and discrimination. She used the term *intersectionality* specifically concerning women of colour, African American women in America (black women in America) who were discriminated against for both their sex [*which in this thesis we use gender*] and race. Crenshaw highlighted legal cases where these women who made a claim were required to choose between racism or sexism and could not claim that they had been double discriminated against on accounts of both race and gender.

While the concept was articulated on behalf of black women, it became a helpful tool "*for thinking about how different characteristics intersect with systems and structures to shape a person's experience*" (Scottish Government, 2022, p.10), a rapid increase in its usage and application of the term into various academic disciplines and political environments. Since its first use was exclusive to black women and discriminated against on race and sex, it expanded to include "*a range of 'social categories' in addition to race and gender, such as disability, sexual orientation, occupation and socio-economic disadvantage, and wider life experiences*" (Scottish Government, 2022, p.11). Additionally, "*scholars and activists have broadened intersectionality to engage a range of issues, (...), power dynamics, legal and political systems, and discursive structures in the United States and beyond*" (Carbado et al., 2013, p.304)

Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality is as follows: *"intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking"* (Crenshaw,1989, as cited by Scottish Government, 2022, p.9).

This concept broadened the scope of the first and second waves of feminism, as these early feminists focused on the experiences of Western white women from the middle class and failed to consider women who had different experiences from them. For example, while the first wave was characterised by gaining women the right to vote and have political rights or be involved more in the political sphere (an example can be viewed from the women of Northern Ireland), this was not the case for all women worldwide. Some

women fought for their rights to property rights and inheritance, while in other countries, they fought for their liberation/freedom.

The intersecting and overlapping identities can be advantageous, have disadvantages, and be both empowering and oppressing. While these intersectional identities, specifically concerning women, have been used to discriminate and marginalise them, these same identities have also been used to bring these women together and fight for their inclusion, visibility, emancipation and empowerment.

From the Northern Ireland case, the author observes how a group of women from different religious factions and those not affiliated with any religious factions were able to come together to form a peace group. Later, during the peace negotiations, the women incorporated ideas from different public members regardless of their social class, religious affiliation, and economic background to be included in the peace agreement and gradually be involved in the Civic Forum. Intersectionality can be used to bring social change, transformation and inclusivity.

The Somalia case is another way the author (I) views intersectionality in play. While women were married off to clans to preserve the peace between or among clans, they were not involved in the peace processes due to their clan affiliation, as their loyalty would be questioned. Women, despite their gender, were not involved in the peace process or allowed to voice women's issues at the negotiating table due to cultural and religious reasons. One interesting piece of information that I found is that both men and women marry outside their clans and are encouraged to do so; however, "*men's loyalty is not questioned when they marry outside their clan, but a women's is*" (Affi et al, 2021, footnotes, p.81). These men end up representing the clan, playing a leading role in their communities and applying traditional laws that are specifically discriminatory to women. Using the intersectionality lens, we can see the discrimination and exclusion against Somali women based on their clan/tribe affiliation, the Somali culture and the Somali religion, either Islam or the traditional Somali religion.

Some scholars state that women who are involved (or chosen) in formal peace processes tend to have higher levels of education, "*come from more homogenous class backgrounds*" (Dayal & Christien, 2020, p.73), and have better access to formal systems of employment. Hardly women who are involved in informal peace processes, who come from rural settings, etc, are involved in formal settings. We can

examine these kinds of conditions set to exclude women and not men, as men are involved in these formal settings despite their multiple social characteristics in society.

In summary, intersectionality is the study of intersections such as gender, race, class, etc and how they interact and intersect with each other and affect an individual's life. By adding the idea of intersectionality to post-colonial feminism, gender is not the only analytical tool to analyse women from post-colonial systems. Women from these countries face intersectionality of oppression, discrimination, patriarchy and other forms of disadvantages in terms of tribe, social class, culture, economic background, ability, etc. Therefore, it becomes inclusive and allows all women of all standings, across any geographical space and time, to be represented, to have their different experiences included, and to have their voices heard. The intersectional approach reveals how women from different groups and social, economic, and political backgrounds come together and work to contribute to peace and stability. Their social identities, not just gender, intersect and interact with each other for an advantageous yet empowering cause.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This thesis adopts a qualitative research design to explore and analyse women's roles and contributions to conflict resolution within the broader peace process framework. The research focuses on two comparative case studies: Northern Uganda and Wajir-Kenya. These case studies are region-specific and do not represent the whole of Kenya and Uganda. They aim to provide a nuanced understanding of women's involvement in these distinct contexts.

The literature review examines previous case studies of women's involvement in conflict resolution, specifically in Burundi, Liberia and Northern Ireland. These cases highlight the dynamics of role assignment versus self-selection in peace processes. This background informs the comparative analysis of Northern Uganda and Wajir, guiding the exploration of whether women in these regions were assigned roles or actively chose their roles in conflict resolution.

4.2 Case Study Selection and Rationale

A case study is "*an instance, incident, or unit of something, and this can also be things like a person, an action, an event, a decision, an organisation or a location such as a nation-state or neighborhood. It refers to whatever object or event is under scrutiny*" (Liamputtong,2019, Chapter 10). The case studies chosen are of interest for theoretical understanding and in-depth understanding of the issue(s) in which the author is interested. The case study research is also valuable in discovering phenomena/anything we know little about. Multiple case studies "*are chosen in order to exemplify the issue*" (Liamputtong, 2019, Chapter 10) and illustrate different aspects of the issue.

The selection of Northern Uganda and Wajir as case studies is based on their distinct conflict histories, women's roles, and the outcomes of their involvement. Northern Uganda has experienced protracted conflict, with significant grassroots women's participation in conflict resolution, while Wajir is notable for its community-driven peace initiatives led by women. These cases provide contrasting yet complementary insights and ways women contribute to conflict resolution.

4.3 <u>Qualitative Methodology</u>

The methodological approach of this thesis is qualitative, utilising case studies to provide an in-depth examination of women's roles and contributions in conflict resolution. Qualitative research is suitable for this study as it is "*used in various disciplines including behavioral sciences and social sciences to understand human experiences and situations, as well as individuals' cultures, beliefs and values*'' (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017, p.43); in this instance the complex dynamics of peace processes. Using case studies exemplifies how qualitative research works in the real world as they are used '*for in-depth examination of individuals or groups of people*'' (Kalu & Bwayla, 2017, p.47).

From the description above, it is clear that the qualitative research methodology used here is the case study. The case study method is to "*conduct inquiries into a theoretical proposition*" (Yazan,2015, p.136). Employing a qualitative case study research methodology helps to explore and understand women's contributions and roles in conflict resolution, and the different ways they contribute to it. Furthermore, using two case studies enables the comparison of different contexts (cultural, social and political) and highlights the similarities and differences in women's involvement in conflict resolution, capturing their diverse experiences, strategies and complexities across regions or situations.

A qualitative case study "*facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of sources*" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.544). This involves documentary analysis of various sources to examine and interpret data to uncover meaning, gain understanding and develop knowledge. A wide selection of documents is preferable as the phenomenon is explored not only through one source but also through various sources that allow the multiple aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. In this instance, data sources from various topics on women, such as their pre-historical roles in respective communities, were used to answer our research questions. While a wide array of documents will be used, the issue should not be about the quantity of documents but rather the document's quality to provide us with the information.

This research method also plays a major role in the triangulation method. The use of two or more sources is to achieve convergence and corroboration. The most important purpose of triangulation is "*to establish credibility through a convergence of evidence. Corroboration of findings across data sets reduces the possibility of bias, by examining data gathered in different ways*" (Lumivero,2023). An example is using the documentary to cross-verify the information and events discussed in written materials based on Wajir

women and the conflict that occurred in the region. Both sources supported the same findings and conclusions, which strengthened the validity of the author's results.

By employing triangulation, we provide a detailed and well-rounded understanding of their roles and involvement.

4.4 <u>Data Collection and Sources</u>

Given the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection relied on qualitative methods, focusing on primary and secondary sources such as theses/dissertations, books, articles, some government and institutional reports, documentaries, etc. No interviews or any other form of direct interaction with individuals was conducted.

The data collection and selection process involved identifying, sourcing and choosing documents and sources relevant to the research question. The sources were selected based on their relevance, that is, documents sources that were/are directly related to women's roles in conflict resolution, on their credibility; this involved sources from reputable authors, institutions and also publications to ensure the reliability of the information. There was also broad coverage of various topics related to the research questions and the accessibility and availability of these documents for their review and analysis. Lastly, the scope of the research: although the study did not cover any specific period, the data (case studies) covered the conflict from the beginning till the current period.

The data sources selected include government and NGO/institutional reports such as peace treaty documents and United Nations resolutions that provide official accounts and evaluations of peace processes that detail women's participation and their impact. Academic literature includes peer-reviewed articles, journals, student theses and books that offer theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on women in conflict resolution. This scholarly literature also provides insights into the historical accounts of women's roles in their respective communities, as well as media articles such as newspaper websites, blogs, and documentaries that provide public perceptions of women's roles in conflict resolution.

These data sources were identified through digital database searches. The selected documents were downloaded, accessed on/through physical archives, or requested from libraries, thesis repositories and institutions for their full-text review and analysis. Examples of these digital databases include Charles

University online library (UK Point), YouTube for *The Wajir Story* documentary, JSTOR, Google Scholar, institutional databases, Semantic Scholar, reference lists from thesis bibliographic sections, articles, journals, and university/institutional websites. While each source was chosen for detailed analysis, and the data selected had to be as comprehensive and relevant to the research question and direction of the research study, a screening had to be conducted to assess the relevance of each document to the research question. As mentioned before, it was crucial to avoid documents that emphasised the victim discourse of women. This involved careful examination of abstracts, summaries and even introductory sections. This also involved skimming and scanning reading techniques over the general material/body of text.

4.5 <u>Data Analysis</u>

The qualitative data was analysed using content analysis, which focused on identifying patterns and themes related to women's roles and contributions to conflict resolution. Qualitative content analysis is a research method employed to analyse textual, visual or audio data to interpret the content's meaning by focusing on both manifest (explicit) and latent (implicit) aspects. This analysis involves identifying the themes or patterns within the data, categorising them into manageable units and interpreting the underlying messages or context conveyed.

This method is well suitable for this research as it allows for an in-depth examination of women's contributions through various published sources, enabling a detailed understanding of their roles in conflict resolution. Moreso, content analysis application in comparative case study research facilitates the comparison of textual data across different contexts, such as across different groups, time periods or cultural contexts, enhancing the depth of comparative studies.

Content analysis involves coding the data from primary and secondary sources; such codes include conflict resolution, women and conflict resolution, and peace process. The following framework includes categories and subcategories relevant to the research questions and captures the topic's nuances. The segments were coded according to the established framework when the initial readings were reviewed. This entailed tagging these segments to/that relate to specific themes, such as women's contribution, roles played, and outcomes of their involvement. However, these are not the key themes that emerged from the data. The key themes that emerged and were identified from the data include women as agents

of change/peace/women in conflict resolution, grassroots roles/involvement, leadership/decision-making roles, and strategies for conflict resolution.

After the above steps are carried out, the data is analysed to identify patterns, trends, and relationships. This step is critical as it helps in understanding how women's roles in conflict resolution are portrayed and their impact.

The final step is interpreting these themes and drawing inferences from them in the context of the research questions and related theoretical framework. This approach gave a comprehensive understanding of how women participate and contribute to peace processes/conflict resolution and how these roles evolve. Similarly, this step will also help us understand how women's roles are constructed and identify the narrative or metaphors that contribute to the victim discourse versus the "peace agent" discourse, i.e. uncovering the underlying ideologies, assumptions and power relations in texts that describe women's involvement in conflict resolution peace process. This method examines the narratives and metaphors used in societies that contribute to the discourse discussed above.

By employing content analysis, this thesis aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the social phenomenon of women's contributions to conflict resolution, highlighting their critical yet often overlooked roles. This method allowed for a systematic examination of multiple data sources, revealing patterns and themes contributing to the broader understanding of women's roles in peace processes.

4.6 <u>Addressing Limitations</u>

One limitation of this study is the scarcity of recent literature on Northern Uganda's post-conflict roles of women. To mitigate this, the research relied on comprehensive historical data and cross-referenced multiple sources to ensure reliability. Due to the scarcity of literature on this dataset, this case stood out as one of the main motivations for writing this thesis: to change the repetitive narrative associated with women and the effects of war and to add findings to the few existing literature on women and conflict resolution as agents of change/peace in Northern Uganda.

Focusing on well-documented cases like Wajir also helped balance the analysis, providing a richer comparative perspective.

4.7 <u>Ethical Considerations</u>

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. All sources were critically evaluated for credibility and reliability. The author aims to uphold integrity in academic rigour. These characteristics "*relate not only to the correct interpretation of the (...) writings, but also to the diversity in the number of authors and their backgrounds, as well as their (self) critical perspective and assessment of events*" (Silva, 2023, p.19).

The documentary '*The Wajir Story*' captured the environment of the region, especially the neglect/alienation and lack of development in the area, clannism and the actors in their authentic voices and lived experiences. The documentary was used primarily for cross-checking information rather than direct citation to ensure the authenticity of the data. Furthermore, care was taken to represent the voices and contributions of women accurately and respectfully, acknowledging their roles in their respective contexts.

4.8 <u>Conclusion</u>

The methodology of this thesis, based on qualitative case study research and content analysis, provides a robust framework for exploring the roles and contributions of women in conflict resolution. By focusing on Northern Uganda and Wajir, the study offers valuable insights into the diverse ways women engage in this peace process, highlights the importance of their involvement in achieving sustainable peace, and calls attention to the "peace agent" discourse.

Chapter 5
Northern Uganda Women and Wajir Women

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the women's roles in each case study: Kenya, with a particular case of the Wajir Peace and Development Agency (WPDA), and Northern Uganda-unrecognised yet undocumented actors in conflict resolution processes.

While there is sufficient and reliable literature on women in WPDA and their role in this peace process, limited to no literature is found on women in Northern Uganda, as several literatures solemnly choose to focus on the long-running conflict in Uganda and its effect on women and the Northern Uganda population.

Fortunately, some scholars criticised this repetitive literature and produced new findings in their research, revealing that Northern Ugandan women are positive agents of change involved in peace processes and not just victims.

What will become evident in this thesis is the roles and ways women have played in conflict resolution and significantly contributed to peace in their societies.

5.2 Women's Role in Conflict Resolution in Northern Uganda

Other than the effects of the prolonged violent conflict in Northern Uganda, some scholars have come forward in their pieces of literature to discard this victim narrative and reveal the roles and efforts of the women in Northern Uganda. Interacting with these pieces of literature has shown the author the substantial contribution the women have made towards conflict resolution and peace. However, due to the lack of recognition and documentation of their efforts, invisibility, victimhood, exclusion, and other negative consequences run parallel.

The women are active in informal grassroots peacebuilding activities; however, they were noticeably absent in the formal official peace processes, including the Juba Peace talks held in South Sudan in 2006. Despite this challenge, the author will highlight these women's overlooked and undocumented roles and efforts in their grassroots activities.

When LRA abducted girls from a school (St. Mary's School in Aboke) in October 1996, one woman by the name of Sister Rachele Fassera followed the LRA group to negotiate with the rebels to release the girls.

This was followed by a campaign, *A Concerned Parents Association (CPA)* and *"their aim was to campaign for the release of the girls"* (Angom, 2017, p.151). Out of 152 students that were abducted, 139 were set free. The campaign extended to include other children who were kidnapped and remained in captivity. This paved the way for more children to be returned to their families. She established a rehabilitation and reintegration centre, *Rachele Rehabilitation Centre,* in 2003 to receive and support former children soldiers and returnees.

Another pioneer of conflict resolution is Rosalba Oywa. In 1989, she mobilised women in a peaceful public demonstration and marched through Gulu Town, demanding an end to the conflict. She later formed a local NGO in 1995, *People's Voice for Peace (PVP),* which supported the victims of war: men, women, children, and youth, and advocated for including grassroots perspectives and women in peace processes. It achieved its aims of conflict resolution and peace through training, collaborative initiatives with other organisations and peace movements, lobbying and advocacy work, peace marches and community mobilisation. The PVP was a very instrumental organisation in Northern Uganda that used various strategies to resolve conflict by non-violent means, and many victims of war have benefitted from her work. As Rosalba Oywa stated, *"the main aim is to turn vulnerable victims into peace agents"* (WikiPeace Women, 2023).

In addition to women forming various community-based organisations to address the scars of wars, these women played a role in negotiating a peace settlement to the conflict. The first peace initiatives between LRA leader Joseph Kony and the government of Uganda in 1994 were led by Betty Bigombe and, through dialogue and negotiation, resulted in a return of security and cessation of hostilities before its collapse in the same year. This act by Betty Bigombe showed women that they could be influential participants in conflict resolution. Because of the positive signs of the peace initiatives, various stakeholders such as Riek Machar, Vice President of South Sudan, convinced President Yoweri Museveni to hold another round of peace talks, and the peace talks called the Juba Peace Talks began in 2006.

When the peace talks started in Juba, the absence of women and lack of representation at the negotiating table was noticeable. For this reason, the women's civil society organisations came together and formed the Uganda Women's Peace Coalition (UWPC), which pushed for women's involvement in the peace process. These women also mobilised women from all levels, from grassroots to women lawyers, to seek

a more inclusive approach. The aim of this group was "*to put pressure on the negotiating teams to include women on the teams and to include women's issues in the discussions (...)*" (Angom, 2017, p.158).

The women advocated for peace nationally, regionally and internationally through this group. They organised a peace caravan that started in Kampala and went to Juba to highlight the importance of women's participation in the Juba Peace Talks and "*boosting morale for the peaceful resolution of the LRA war*" (Alupo 2020, p. 34). The peace caravan carried the Historical Women's Peace Torch on a continental tour in African countries. The torch was an international symbol of peace, delivering messages of peace. Coincidentally, it arrived in Uganda during the launch of the women's peace caravan.

The peace caravan trekked into the areas affected by conflict in Northern Uganda; along the way, the women collected signatures of people supporting peace. When it reached Juba, the women handed over the peace torch to the mediator, Riek Machar, and negotiators in the peace talks.

When the women's caravan arrived in Juba, the negotiating teams were at a standstill with the talks. The women urged the teams to continue with the negotiations regardless. While in Juba, the peace caravan tried to push for their involvement in the peace process. In a positive response, the negotiating parties added women to their team, while other members were allowed as observers.

Undoubtedly, a ceasefire between LRA and the Government of Uganda was reached, and a ceasefire deal was signed in 2006. As quoted by Angom, "*(...) the agreement by the LRA and the Uganda government to sign a ceasefire in 2006 had been positively influenced by the efforts of a number of other actors, including women*" (Angom, 2017, p.159).

Consequently, due to the success of the negotiations, life in Northern Uganda improved, and by creating a 'normal' environment, the women were inspired and became involved in the reconstruction process. Women established supportive organisations, structures and activities for the resumption of peace, such as "*reception and trauma counselling centres for war-affected children and LRA combatants*" (Angom 2017,165). The women also appealed through radio talk shows and encouraged the LRA fighters to stop the violence and return to their communities while urging the government to promote peace. Through their supportive structures, the ex-combatants and returnees of war, including children, were received warmly, counselled, resettled and reintegrated. They also organised meetings to promote reconciliation and accountability "*between the perpetrators, victims and the local communities in Northern Uganda*" (Angom, 2017, p.167).

While most initiatives were started at the grassroots levels, top-level and middle-level leaders by women with the Government of Uganda have jointly worked with the grassroots to bring change at the grassroots level and for "*greater synergy in matters of advocacy, mobilisations, facilitation and training that target reconciliation messages and approaches*" (Angom, 2017, p.163).

These initiatives and joint work with various actors have helped "*women found a way of advocating for a peaceful resolution of the conflict*" (Angom, 2017, p.166) and have brought peace and healing to the region and the people of Northern Uganda.

5.3 <u>Women in Wajir-WPDA</u>

The Wajir Peace and Development Agency has a rich history of formation. Before it evolved into a peace organisation, WPDA started as a small peace group of women in the area. The group was the Wajir's Women Association for Peace/Women Association for Peace (WWAP/WAP), founded by the late Dekha Ibrahim in 1993.

Due to its peace efforts, the group became the Wajir Peace and Development Committee and was formalised in 1995. The committee was then registered as an NGO in 2003 and renamed WPDA.

5.3.1 *Context and Historical Background*

To better understand the origins and works of WPDA, the history of its formation is vital in assessing how the women spearheaded the peace process in Wajir in various styles.

As noted before, Wajir County has been prone to insecurity due to several factors ranging from terrorist attacks and clannism violence to violence resulting from alienation and marginalisation over access to political resources from the Kenyan Government. However, in the 1900s, some specific factors played a role in a series of regional conflict outbreaks.

In 1991, the government declared a state of emergency in the region following a drought that displaced people searching for food, degradation of pasture lands and lack of available water points, and significant loss of livestock. This triggered a conflict between clans due to the scarcity of resources and competition over the few available grazing and water resources. Though it involved few casualties, the communal tensions over resources were "*addressed through local structures and processes (...)*" (Abdi & Lind, 2018, p.29). Similarly, the drought not only affected the region but also affected Ethiopia and Somalia countries. Somalia also experienced a collapse of its central government, Siad Barre, in 1991, and it became a failed

state. Following this was an outbreak of violence by various clans in Somalia fighting for control of the territory due to the absence of a central government. Ethiopia was also experiencing a civil war between the rebels and the government.

These factors contributed to the worsening of the situation in the Wajir region, as there was an influx of refugees escaping the drought and violence and the proliferation of arms. The new ethnic groups further harmed the region's clan divides with insecurity incidents, and "*violence erupted between clan groups, particularly over control of towns and trade routes*" (Abdi & Lind, 2018, p.29).

Amid these events in the Wajir region, another major event was happening in the country. After ruling the country under one political party, Kenya had its first multi-party general elections since independence in 1992. This shift of political power dynamics, together with the challenge of refugees and proliferation of arms, and the unresolved drivers of conflict sparked fierce violence following the outcome of the elections in December 1992. It is reported that these elections were viewed as competition by the clans/new clans in the region for territorial and resource dominance; "*these elections were viewed as high-stakes (...) clans were fearful that victory by rival clans would institutionalize the rival's hold on resources and eventually disenfranchise the losers*" (Menkhaus 2008, p. 25). By 1993, the region was unsafe, the violence was spreading, and the situation overwhelmed the government. A state of lawlessness was created in the area.

Violence had spread to the women and market women in Wajir. The women in the market refused to sell their products to different clans, especially women from other clans. Efforts to end the violence began when the late Dekha Ibrahim Abdi (1964-2011) and other women started a peace initiative/group, Wajir's Women Association for Peace, that engaged issues in the market. The local Wajir market had been viewed as a sanctuary from violence. It was a safe place with a sense of belonging as people from all walks of life- the young, old, child(ren), men, women and even strangers. This proved a great asset because the local market had access to the broader community.

5.4 Peace through the Market

At the market, the late Dekha and the other five Somali women started a mediation process and started with the local women at the market. This involved dialogues with the local women and other women's clans to stop the market violence and ponder the possibilities of a peace process. When trust and

confidence were built among the warring women's clans, these women were willing to cooperate, and the group formed a multiclan Wajir Peace Group (WPG) comprised of members of each clan in the region. The market area had become peaceful.

While the group was only open for the local women in the region and started with a simple mission of ending the market violence and ensuring "*all had equal access to a safe market*" (Okure, 2009), the group members decided it was necessary to extend the peace sanctuary to other parts in the community. The women were very instrumental as they used their networks and connections to bring the warring factions to the market for the return of peace. As the author mentioned before, Somali women often marry outside their clans. The women used this chance to act as intermediaries and were able to assemble key stakeholders, specifically the elders and traditional authorities. A meeting of clan elders from all clan lineages was facilitated, and the minority group, acting as moderators, opened and led the dialogue. The talks were successful, and the elders agreed to work for peaceful relations.

From this talk, the elders formed a group called the Council of Elders for Peace, where the members met in highly populated areas, such as mosques, to speak about the need to end the violence. Additionally, rapid response and investigation teams were created that "*would move to the source of the conflict in a moments notice in order to negotiate settlements*" (Okure, 2009).

The women did not rest. They knew that to seal the agreements in the talks with the key community stakeholders; one other important stakeholder was to be brought in: the government. "*Through their persistence, diplomatic efforts and sensitivity, all stakeholders finally came together, (...) to discuss peace*" (Kiplagat, 2011, p. 6). With the government's help, a peace agreement, the Al-Fatah Declaration, was signed in 1993. It set out the guidelines for the return of peace and future relations between major clans in the regions and brought inter-clan fighting to an end.

The community managed to sustain peace with such a formidable force and working together for a common cause. The seeds to achieving peace were showing. Still, the women were not done with their work. After the peace agreement was signed, the group set up the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) in 1995.

While the declaration represented a code of conduct between clans in Wajir, it also called for the establishment of peace groups and committees "*encompassing elders, government officials, security*

personnel, and NGOs to prevent further conflicts" (Tongeren 2013, p.41-2 as cited by George Mason University 2024).

WPDC would bring all those involved in their efforts, including peace groups and women, under one umbrella to resolve conflicts in the region and achieve peace. The WPDC would later become a local district peace committee in the area that the late Dekha *"described as a peace and development committee- a structure for responding to conflict at a local level"* (Rights Livelihood, 2024).

In 1998, Dekha and her colleagues in the WPDC assisted in the formation of a disaster committee of Muslim women when violence erupted between Muslim women and Christian women in the region. Because the WPDC primarily had Muslim women members, they began to include Christian women in the committee. The disaster committee was to assist Muslim women in making amends with the Christian women's community. They held inter-faith dialogues and prayer meetings; the meetings opened with a Muslim prayer and closed with Christian blessings. Eventually, the committee included Christian women. This led to the formation of an inter-faith group in the committee for peace that undertook peace activities to intervene in religious conflicts in the region.

During and prior to the post-election violence of 2007/08 in Kenya, WPDC had spread the message of the need for peace and a violence-free society in the Wajir region. It is reported that Wajir was relatively peaceful during the electoral violence. Due to the recognisable success experiences of the WPDC, the committee's women group leader, Dekha Ibrahim, was called upon to intervene and "design" a way to stop the violence in the Rift Valley region, which had become a highly volatile place for electoral violence. One of the methods she and her group used was working with the women's organisations and the women using their mobile phones to report what they saw outside or at home through the windows.

When the information started pouring in, they were able to identify the hot spots and also the cold spots *"since it was important to know where people were running to, so they could be protected"* (Elworthy, 2011). They began developing strategies for each spot, and with the help of local leaders, the media, the youth, religious leaders, police and sports personalities, violence subsided. They later formed a group, *Concerned Citizens for Peace*, that pushed for mediation between the two presidential candidates and contributed to the peace agreement signed between them. In this instance, the women were critical for early warning messages and reporting.

WPDC, now renamed WPDA, was started by six women who spearheaded the Wajir peace process and worked tirelessly to achieve peace in the region. Their efforts helped to build peace and bring peace to the region. With this experience, the government and other organisations realised the need to solve conflicts and attain peace using local mechanisms like WPDC. The women in this peace process have been showcased globally as the best practice for community-led and community-based peace initiatives.

5.5 Comparative analysis

As observed by the two case studies in this research, women are indeed contributors to the peace processes of conflict resolution. Their roles vary and change over time as the conflict and peace situation change in the region. They use various means of conflict resolution, such as dialogues, negotiations, mediation, reconciliation, etc.

However, Angom believes that despite the realisation of women's involvement in conflict resolution, the efforts of Northern Uganda women were "*(...) inadequately documented and not well-known*" (Angom 2017, preface vii). Her book, *Women in Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda (2017)* shared valuable insights that were instrumental in my thesis research. I agree with the scholar, as it was difficult to find any material on the women involved in conflict resolution or peace processes. Many scholars focused and were interested in the war that was two decades over, the effects of the war on the community, especially on women and the factors that led to their exclusion in any peace processes. Moreover, some pieces of literature failed to document the roles when examining their contributions to any peace process and instead portrayed the women as victims. Significantly, a few pieces of literature were highlighted, and their roles and contributions to this peace process were assessed. Angom's book documented the positive contributions of women to conflict resolution in Northern Uganda from 1986 to 2016.

The experience of the WPDC is a well-documented case of Wajir women and their role in conflict resolution. Their success in bringing about peace and stopping violence in the region is a global case that attracted the world's attention. "*Their experience has been showcased globally as a best practice when it comes to a community lead peace initiatives*" (Konde, 2019, p. 5). This was an easy case study for my thesis research as the author was able to find relevant pieces of literature that not only wrote about Wajir women and their positive role in conflict resolution but also documented in a film that portrayed how the women realised their key traditional role in society and used this potential to play in peace and conflict

situations. The documentary, *The Wajir Story*, is a film series that documents women peacemakers and their roles in the region. The film is also referenced by academia to highlight practical action for responding to conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Africa.

The peace agreement in Wajir, Al-Fatah declaration signed in 1993, though it brought peace and stability to the region and ended banditry in the area, did not hold long enough. In 2000, there were clashes between two tribes in the region, Garre and Ajuraan (ethnic Somali clans living in Kenya). "*The clashes were sparked by a spiraling cycle of banditry and counter-raids*" (Menkhaus, 2008, p. 28) caused by grazing lands, "*control of constituencies and location*" (Menkhaus, 2008, p.28) and also spill-over conflict from the Ethiopian-Kenyan border when the Ajuraan were victims of a cross-border raid that involved "*gunman dressed in Ethiopian military uniforms (suspected to be Ethiopian Garre)* (Menkhaus, 2008, p.28). The conflict was beyond the control of the WPDC and the Kenyan Government to manage and resolve, as the cross-border dimension of the conflict complicated the situation. It was reported that the Ethiopian border offered protection for bandits and cattle raiders to avoid arrest and/or retaliation, *"(...) has created havens (...) allowing groups to prepare in one country to raid into the other and then retreat to the first"* (Galaty, 2016, p. 110).

Although the cease-fire agreement in Northern Uganda in 1994 that Betty Bigombe administered collapsed, also known as the *Gulu Ceasefire,* there were immediate talks for another peace talks to happen. This prompted the Juba Peace Talks in 2006 between GoU and LRA to end their conflict and bring peace to the region. Although Kony did not sign the peace agreement, the permanent ceasefire put an end to the two-decade war and the LRA forces were required to leave Uganda. Although it collapsed in 2008, the conflict was no longer in Northern Uganda but in the neighbouring countries of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Northern Uganda was relatively peaceful and had begun the process of conflict reconstruction, which includes justice, reconciliation and accountability, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes.

The WPDC works with traditional and modern mechanisms while handling and solving disputes. The WPDC, although with the local government collaboration, uses more traditional "Somali way" actions instead of the Kenyan penal code. The government also involves the community in solving any problems through non-violent means. The traditional mechanisms are "*customary law and blood compensation*

payment was utilized to manage murders, and collective punishment in the form of confiscation of a clan's cattle until a culprit was apprehended and stolen animals or goods returned" (Menkhaus, 2008, p. 26). The traditions of conflict resolution include *maslaha,* an informal justice system geared towards reconciliation and community cohesion, which involves monetary compensation or payment done in the form of money or livestock as a form of consolation and towards the affected party. Customary law is named *xeer* which governs societal relations and severe crimes like murder and is a resource for communal conflict resolution; *diya* is the compensation that is applied for cases of death, theft, rape, physical harm and defamation. The WPDC has demonstrated they can work together with the government and other local NGOs by "*giving official government blessing to largely autonomous civic and traditional action on matters (...) considered core functions of the state-policing, the judiciary (even over capital offenses like murder, employing extra-constitutional customary law), and cross-border diplomacy (...).*" (Menkhaus, 2008, p.27). As reported, "*Wajir Peace and Development Committee strives to achieve peace where conflicts resolved peacefully, by use of traditional and modern means*" (Jenner & Abdi, 2000, p.15). Their success is a combination of the two.

Despite the cessation of hostilities, one of the agenda items in the ceasefire was justice, reconciliation and accountability. A period of relative calm followed which allowed these structures to be implemented. According to Angom, KIWEPI (The Kitgum Women Peace Initiative) in Northern Uganda was founded with a mission to promote reconciliation and recovery. They held meetings between perpetrators, victims and local communities in the area. Although the International Criminal Court (ICC) was agreed upon as a formal justice procedure, more informal/traditional mechanisms of these structures played a role. Acholi traditions of justice are premised on communal accountability, punishment, forgiveness and reconciliation. These systems were based on oral spiritual ceremonies and cultural laws corresponding to the type of crime and its severity level. The most common was the drinking of the bitter root, *mato oput,* "*used in (...) accidental or purposeful killings (...) encompasses the same principles of truth, accountability, compensation and restoration of relationships (...)*" (Baines, 2007, p.104). Once the parties have drank the bitter drink, an appropriate ritual ceremony is conducted to help restore relationships between the clans, as a crime committed to the victim's family affects the whole clan/family of the victim. This ceremony "*is held as a means of promoting reconciliation between the clans of the victim and the perpetrator*" (Baines, 2007. p.104). To seal the reunification and harmony among the clans, in the ceremony, both clans are required to contribute food and drink, which are exchanged, cooked and consumed. The final

act of the ceremony is done by channelling the power of a spirit medium that will determine which family member of the victim will receive the bulk of compensation *"which is then used for the bride price and the conception of a child, who will be named after the deceased"* (Baines, 2007, p.105). Only once this is done will the reconciliation process be formally complete.

Both case studies promoted the development of other organisations. As discussed above, the initial successes registered by the women's initiatives in Northern Uganda inspired more women to create more organisations *"which epitomised women's dreams of a peaceful region"* (Angom, 2017, p.166). Some of these organisations include People's Voice for Peace (PVP) and Kitgum Concern Women Association (KICWA), *"that was formed to receive, counsel and reintegrate children and child mothers returning from LRA captivity"* (Angom, 2017, p.166) the Concerned Parents Organisation (CPA), among others.

Before the final reunification of the WPDC with other groups in the region, their work when the women were involved inspired other groups to form, including the elders, the youth and the local businesses. The traditional elders formed the Elders for Peace Group/Council of Elders for Peace, the Youth for Peace Group that created social activities in order to prevent the youth from turning into violence and participating in crimes as many youths were unemployed in the region and were used for violence, Religious leaders for Peace, Women for Peace (WFP), Pastoralists Association (PA), among many others. While the WPDC worked mainly in the Wajir region, the members began to realise that insecurity issues in the neighbouring countries and regions were affecting the peace situation in Wajir. They contributed to the neighbouring regions of Marsabit, Mandera, Garissa, and Isiolo and were reported to do so across the borders of Somalia's Gedo region.

WPDC was initially formed by local women directly affected by the conflict. No NGOs or other bodies formed it. In Northern Uganda, although the organisations were already grassroots bodies/initiatives by the women, the leading organisation that responded to the challenge of the lack of women present in the Juba Peace Talks was the Uganda Women's Peace Coalition (UWPC), which was formed "*under the direction of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (...)"* (Angom, 2017, p. 158). It comprised women's civil organisations at the national and district levels and was coordinated by the Uganda Women's Network. It was only due to the existing network of one of the women's civil societies, Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), at the grassroots level, that the organisation was able to mobilise the grassroots women's organisations. However, there is no record of any grassroots organisation that participated in the peace talks or any member from any grassroots organisation that was

selected to participate. The women from the grassroots level through the Isis-WICCE were mobilised from the affected areas for consultations. The UWPC acted as a spokesperson for women, "*speaking the voice of peace for all women (...) for decades*" (Angom, 2017, p. 163). As discussed above, only a few coalition members were allowed to observe the peace talks through this organisation. Fortunately, these organisations within UWPC worked with GoU to bring change at the grassroots level. The case for WPDC/WPDA is different as the local women "allowed" other groups to join and form the Wajir Peace Group, which later became a peace committee within the government institution. Lest we forget, in both cases, the women initially spearheaded the peace process.

In both cases, the women who spearheaded the peace process held different/multiple identities. In Northern Uganda, different women's organisations, including those affected by the conflict, were considered in the peace talks process. In the Wajir region, the group was exclusively for all women in and out of the market. The main difference I noticed in the Juba Peace Talks was that the main women allowed in the peace talks held senior positions. In WPDC, the women mobilised the groups/clans involved and affected by the conflict, and the minority/affected group commenced the talks while the other group, the majority, closed the meetings. In the Juba Peace Talks, the senior positions were held by former members of Parliament and lawyers. At the grassroots level, women from all walks of life supported peace in their homes and communities. This is not to say the women's work/presence in the peace talks did not bear any fruits. Their presence led to the success of the negotiations, and it also improved the behaviour of the male members; "*their presence increased the range of skills, approaches and perspectives within a mission, thus adding to its effectiveness*" (Angom, 2017, p.162). Unlike the women in WPDC, who had a participative role in the peace processes in and beyond the region and were also consultants, the women in Northern Uganda were just assigned an observer status in the peace talks. They were not participants nor consultative roles.

However, in the recovery and development plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP), the needs of the women were not considered. The women, through the UWPC, "*voiced their concern to the President (...) to analyse the PRDP from a gender and women's human rights perspective*" (Angom, 2017. p.163). As a result, the government responded positively to women's concerns. The PRDP, which did not initially have women's issues, rights, and positions, include a reasonable representation of women. Women members of Parliament and women drawn from civil society organisations were made part of the national monitoring team and national steering committee. Gender issues, such as women's rights not considered in the plan,

were discussed in greater detail. "*Unfortunately, gender-based violence; land conflict and reintegration are not specifically talked about with reference to women*" (Angom, 2017, p. 164).

5.6 <u>Summary</u>

Drawing from these case studies, we can observe that women are active agents of change in conflict resolution processes. Just as peace and cessation of hostilities, among other issues, are essential to the men at the negotiating table, so is the same for women.

Both cases show that these women, though from different geographical regions and possibly affected by structures of colonialism and other challenges amidst them, have remained focused on their mission to promote peace.

The Northern Uganda region, affected mainly by the war, gradually recovered after signing the agreement. The women were more involved in the reconstruction process activities, especially the resettling and reintegration of LRA returnees, physical and psychological recovery, reconciliation and accountability between perpetrators, victims and the local communities, formal and informal education and rehabilitation. "*In the process of implementing such activities, women found a way of advocating for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and this also shaped a peace agenda for the region*" (Angom, 2017, p.166).

There were no systems to deal with the conflict in Wajir. "*the conflict stemmed from (...) colonial legacy, previous inter-clan conflicts, (...), conflicts in neighbouring countries, chronic underdevelopment and marginalization, national and local leadership crisis, and environmental factors (...).*" (Ondiege, 2012, p.19). The conflict was multi-faceted, and the society waited for the government to help stop and resolve the conflict, but instead, a state of emergency was declared in the region.

The community took the initiative to solve it, and it began with the late Dekha Ibrahim and the local women. The group evolved into a national civil society organisation that deals with peace and security. Though patriarchal, following the elders' involvement in the organisation and the passing of the late Dekha Ibrahim, the women's engagement at WPDA/WPDC has increased to an extent. Per Konde's interview findings, the presence of women in the organisation has been attributed to an effective way of building peace and conflict resolution in the region and for the organisation.

Chapter 6
<u>Findings</u>

6.1 <u>Notes on Primary Sources</u>

Although the use of primary sources such as Resolution 1325, the NAPs and peace agreements such as the Al-Fatah Peace Declaration were utilised to generate a detailed and in-depth understanding of women's roles and contributions to conflict resolution, these sources failed to highlight the roles and contributions. These sources acknowledge and recognise women's roles as peacebuilders and agents of change, the importance of their contribution to conflict resolution and other peace processes and address the disproportionate impacts of conflict on women. However, the author understands that policy papers guide member states in implementing the UNSCR 1325 through the NAPs.

By analysing the respective case studies NAPs, we can see that the NAPs encompass all the pillars of UNSCR 1325, which are increased participation of women, the prevention of conflict, and the protection of women. However, by viewing these NAPs, more concentration was given to the protection of women: protection from sexual violence and domestic violence, protection from discriminatory actions such as abuse, exploitation and practices that inhibit their full and active participation in all decision-making levels and peace/conflict resolution processes, perpetuating the victim narrative discourse. Whereas peace agreements often include gender clauses that are provisions to safeguard human rights without or with the inclusion of women. This was observed in the Al-Fatah Declaration agreement between the major clans in Wajir District to bring the inter-clan violence to an end. There was only one clause about women, which was violence against women. The clause stated, "*that from the date of this ceasefire, the traditional law pertaining to blood feud will apply to those who commit murder namely the payment of hundred camels for a man and fifty camels for a women…*" (Al-Fatah Peace Declaration, 1993). This focus on women's protection tends to overlook women's roles and contributions in conflict resolution and jeopardise the agency of women who are already actors/agents of change in this peace process.

Not all primary sources were futile; institutional books focused on the need for increasing women's participation in peace talks, recognising their efforts and the complex roles the women play as agents of peace, and raising awareness about their practices and strategies to enhance their participation in high-political levels. Student theses were also analysed as these went in-depth by highlighting particular case studies and focusing on women's roles and strategies used by women. Their data was collected through

primary means such as interviews and questionnaires, which were well articulated and critically explained in the thesis. The literature, however, was repetitive by focusing on well-known cases such as Liberia women and Burundi. Their approach 'felt' more of academic purposes rather than expanding knowledge or adding new information.

While these two cases have been exemplary examples of women in conflict resolution, more cases of women in conflict resolution need to be 'discovered'. They have notable examples of women in Nigeria- from different regions in Nigeria, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Rwanda, etc. The author analysed a well-known case against a case that was well known for its conflict, but not the contributions and roles of the women in resolving the conflict and preventing of further violence. The latter will bring new information about the little to no literature on Northern Uganda women and also change the victim discourse narrative associated with these women concerning the prolonged conflict.

6.2 <u>Notes on Secondary Sources</u>

These sources were abundantly rich in information about this topic. While some criticised, the primary sources mentioned above for not acknowledging women's roles and contributions to conflict resolution, others delved deeper into the subject and showcased these roles and contributions.

These sources revealed the roles and the kinds/types of strategies employed by women in their unique socio-political environment. Each case study was explored in depth, showing the historical background of the communities, conflict, and unique efforts played by the women in conflict resolution. Unlike primary sources that highlight the need for women to participate, the secondary sources showcased the roles as they evolved over time. Women as mediators, women as peace architects, women as activists, women as observers, and women as peacebuilders were some of the 'titles' given to these women and found within this literature. It was evident that the women played various roles and evolved in the conflict phases.

Notably, there were debates on whether the need for peace and cessation of hostilities was 'only' a woman/women's idea. Some literature revealed that men and women have different conflict management styles. "*Studies have shown that women typically are more likely to use cooperative conflict management styles such as collaborating, compromising, or avoiding while men are more likely to use competing or avoiding strategies in situations of conflict*" (Shepherd, 2015, p.56). Such discourses tend to imply that women are interested in peace and men are not, even though conflict affects both men and women. In

both case studies, the actors involved, such as the male elders in the Wajir region and the President of Uganda, agreed to peace just as the women in their societies.

Interestingly, it was evident that women took on these roles based on the roles constructed for them in society. In the Wajir case, per the documentary, the late Dekha states that Somali women have the capacity to bring peace and create war. For this reason, the women urged other actors, like the elders and the women in the market, to wage peace instead of seeking revenge for the violence.

Additionally, gender, an analytical identity marker, was 'supported' by other markers for women's experiences in peace processes. It was pointed out that other identity markers, such as culture/tradition, economic class/background, etc, were reasons for their exclusion, discrimination, and marginalisation. The same scenario employed a collaborative approach with women to wage for peace and prevention of violence. Women mobilised together, regardless of their religion, culture, etc, to call upon actors of conflict and leaders to foster peace and prevent the escalation of violence.

6.3 <u>Wajir Peace and Development Agency and Women's Initiatives in Northern Uganda</u>

Comparing the two cases, we encounter similarities and differences in their roles and contributions.

As we can see from our cases, WPDA, which started with local women, grew to include other members of society. We can learn that from their methods; the women were very strategic and calculated by first going to the women in the market, involving them in the peace process, and having the women 'summon' the male elders who represented the clans in Wajir. The women also used their societal position to campaign and foster peace and mobilisation of communities. As the group grew, so did the peace efforts. The peace efforts were tailored to the society's needs, i.e., the use of conflict resolution methods indigenous to the particular clan/community involved, the type of conflict experienced, and compromised of modern and traditional techniques with all parties, including women involved. As time passed, the group/agency was integrated into the Kenyan Constitution as one of Wajir's local peace committee groups and began operations for peace and other non-violent methods. Their peace efforts have gone beyond Wajir and attracted national and international attention.

Women's initiatives in Northern Uganda were relatively different as these were more at a local level and have been so to date. More instances have been at either the grassroots level or the household level. Although the women's initiatives were advantageous to the permanent peace process in Northern

Uganda, their efforts have been more prominent during the post-conflict reconstruction efforts. These include the DDR process, rehabilitation and resettlement of the returnees, and restorative justice, including traditional methods. The area is inhabited mainly by the Acholi community, and they are very traditionalist in their methods, including peace efforts, such as restorative justice and reconciliation. The efforts toward restorative justice and reconciliation have a spiritual dimension. It involves performing ceremonies and rituals to appease the spirit medium in accepting their offering(s) and forgiveness.

Through the lens of the post-colonial theory, we can agree that there is no commonality in women's experiences in the conflict resolution peace process, even in their respective countries. The experiences differ from country to country, region to region, and woman to woman. Some of the issues/challenges encountered, although initially living in a patriarchal system, were exacerbated as a result of the colonial powers. In Wajir, people's lifestyles and traditional systems were undermined during British colonial rule. The colonial powers set administrative boundaries that led to conflict over access to natural and political resources. "*In the two world wars, Somalis were pitted against Somalis, fighting on the sides of warring European powers. More bitterness and rivalries were evoked*" (Ondiege, 2012, pp.8-9). After Kenyan independence, there was an attempt for the county to separate itself from Kenya to join fellow Somalis in a Greater Somalia, leading to the Shifta War (1963-1967). The war ended in 1967 "*when Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Egal, Prime Minister of the Somali Republic, signed a ceasefire with Kenya*" (Military Wiki, 2024). However, when the war ended, it led to periodical secessionist outbreaks of violence such as clan/inter-clan disputes, electoral violence, banditry, clan boundary disputes, etc.

In Uganda, the ethnicities are politicised, and particularly, the Acholi group has its roots in British colonialism. The British used the Acholi in the colonial police and army "*because of their supposed fighting ability*" (Davenport, 2011, p.9). After gaining independence, the Acholi were still used in the military till Idi Amin overthrew Milton Obote, "*and he saw the Acholi in the army as a threat to his power*" (Davenport, 2011, p.9). The Acholis served in the army and opposition groups such as NRM (National Resistance Movement) for quite some time; meanwhile, in Acholiland was a series of cattle raids from the Karamajong which "*removed the productive base of the Acholi rural economy*" (Davenport, 2011, p.10) and as such, attributed to the marginalisation of the Acholi people. The government failed to protect the Acholi people, hold the perpetrators accountable, and condemn the actions of the Karamajong. The war in Northern Uganda also became an impasse, marginalising and destroying this region.

Al-Fatah Declaration for Wajir and the PRDP (Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan) for Northern Uganda were established as the first step for sustained peace, cessation of hostilities, and the prevention of further escalation. These agreements were the beacon of hope for peace and security in these regions and resulted from women's involvement.

Chapter 7
<u>Conclusion</u>

This thesis highlights women's indispensable roles and contributions in conflict resolution, with case studies from Wajir-Kenya and Northern Uganda. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. ***What are women's contributions to conflict resolution?***
2. ***What roles and involvement do women have in conflict resolution?***

Through an in-depth analysis of these case studies, the research has provided detailed insights into both questions.

Firstly, regarding women's contributions to conflict resolution, the thesis has demonstrated that women have played critical roles in ceasing hostilities and promoting peace and security. Specific contributions include brokering peace agreements, leading community rebuilding efforts, and initiating successful grassroots programs. Women's involvement has often led to including broader societal issues, such as human rights, equality, and social justice, in peace negotiations and final peace agreements.

Secondly, research has shown that women participate in various capacities in conflict resolution, from grassroots activists to high-level negotiators. Despite operating within patriarchal societies, women have used their unique positions to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and collaboration among conflicting parties and high-ranking authorities such as the government. Their efforts have also focused on addressing the needs of marginalised and minority groups, demonstrating inclusive and collaborative decision-making processes.

This thesis has provided detailed information about women's roles and contributions to conflict resolution in each case study. It has acknowledged the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives in addressing the complex dynamics of conflict. As we are typically used to intersectional approaches that marginalise and discriminate against women in conflict resolution, this research has recognised women's intersecting identities, such as religion, class, ethnicity, etc., for their mobilisation to make their voices heard, demands, and issues known.

Despite coming from different geographical areas, the women in these case studies share commonalities in their conflict resolution processes. They often go beyond the UN definition of conflict resolution, bringing

unique and alternative perspectives focused on grassroots and community levels. As Fearon (2021) notes, *"they also often speak up for excluded groups and the need to address underlying causes of conflict"*. In contrast, male-dominated peace talks focus on political settlements and the needs of those directly involved.

Their inclusive and collaborative decision-making processes have incorporated the voices of all stakeholders, ensuring the needs and issues of marginalised and minority groups are addressed. Women have introduced new perspectives that foster dialogue and reconciliation, finding common ground among conflicting parties. Their broader agendas include protection from violence, women's empowerment, increased representation, equality, social justice, education and training programs, ceasefire agreements, human rights, and more.

This research underscores the need for continued and expanded documentation of women's roles in conflict resolution. Future research should focus on other case studies beyond the commonly discussed examples, such as Liberia, Burundi, and Northern Ireland. Recognising and documenting the contributions of unrecognised women worldwide who are engaged in conflict resolution but lack/need proper recognition is necessary.

Additionally, future studies could explore the long-term impacts of women's involvement in conflict resolution and the mechanisms that enable their participation. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of how to support and enhance women's roles in peace processes globally.

In conclusion, this thesis has comprehensively analysed women's valuable roles and contributions to conflict resolution, offering new insights and encouraging further exploration and documentation in this vital area.

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