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## **‘Del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho’. Women’s Inclusion, the Colombian Peace Accords and DDR: Performativity, Pragmatism or Progress?**

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Master Thesis International Relation, Track: Global Conflict in the Modern Era

**‘Del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho’. Women’s Inclusion, the Colombian Peace Accords and DDR: Performativity, Pragmatism or Progress?**

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# **‘Del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho’. Women’s Inclusion, the Colombian Peace accords, and DDR: Performativity, Pragmatism, or Progress?**

## **Introduction**

In 2016 the longest-running conflict in the western hemisphere ended in Colombia, after more than 50 years of violence. A historic peace accord was passed, ensuring an end to fighting between the Colombian government and Colombia’s largest and most powerful rebel group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP). But the peace accords not only made history as it finally brought peace to Colombia, it was also revolutionary and unprecedented in its gender inclusion and gender-sensitive approach (Hauge, 2020; Bouvier, 2016). With its high participation of members of women’s movements, female politicians, and female FARC-EP fighters in the peace process and its comprehensive gender subcommittee, the Colombian peace accords are often perceived as one of the truest champions of resolution 1325, which called for the inclusion of women in security and peace issues, acknowledging the active role women play in security and peace matters, that women experience conflict, security and peace different from men and stressing the need for gender mainstreaming in security and peace issues (Hauge, 2020; Oion-Encina, 2020; McLeod, 2011; Bell & O’Rourke, 2010). Moreover, for the very first time, female ex-combatants were included in the peace process (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015, Berrio, 2013).

The Colombian peace accords’ gender inclusion stands in stark contrast with many other peacebuilding processes. Women are most often not included in official peace talks, because many people believe in the false dichotomy of women being solely victims of conflict and men being the only agents of conflict (Henshaw, 2020a; 2013; Kirby & Shepherd, 2016; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Coulter et al., 2008). This belief creates the idea that there is no need to include women in peacebuilding efforts as they are only passive casualties (De Alwis et al., 2013). However, the exclusion of women is problematic on many different levels. Peace accords created by exclusively male actors rarely address the sexual violence and mass displacement women have experienced and tend to reintroduce the same power dynamics that caused the conflict (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019; De Alwis et al., 2013; De Langis, 2011; Cupples, 2004). Moreover, more than 50% of all peace accords fall apart within 5 years (King, 1997). Because of this in both the political and academic sphere, the theory has been developed that the inclusion of women in peace processes might be the missing link to achieve sustainable peace (De Langis, 2011).

The exclusion of women in peace processes is also problematic as it does not match with the reality of conflict. Women are actually active as combatants in 40 % of all conflicts between 1979-2009 and in over 60% of all intra-state conflicts between 1990-2008, and in many cases in considerable numbers too (Braithwaite & Ruiz, 2018; Henshaw, 2016). In Colombia, women participated in the majority of guerilla and paramilitary groups, with FARC-EP enjoying one of the highest participation of women ever seen in rebel organizations (Herrera & Porch, 2008). Moreover, civilian women’s movements have been some of the biggest advocates for peace (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Nevertheless, women and especially female ex-rebels are regularly sidelined as soon as a ceasefire or conflict resolution process is introduced (Henshaw, 2020; 2013; Heaton, 2017; Moser & Clark, 2001). The absence of women ex-fighters has been observed in the peace processes of other Latin American countries, in which women consistently participated in revolutionary forces, but were denied a seat at the negotiation table and the post-conflict political process (Heaton, 2017; Viterna, 2013; Beaver, 2010; Hauge, 2008; Cupples, 2004; Moser & Clark, 2001). This tendency to downplay the

role women have played in rebel groups and to exclude women from peace processes can also be seen in earlier peace accords between other Colombian rebel organizations and the government (Burton, 2018).

The exclusion of female rebels is detrimental to one critical component of any peacebuilding phase which is the DDR (Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration) process for ex-combatants (Henshaw, 2020a; Hills & MacKenzie, 2017; Moser & Clark, 2001). Female fighters have through their participation in the conflict transgressed traditional gender roles and experienced gender equality in the rebel group making it difficult for them to reintegrate into traditional *machista* society (Henshaw, 2020; Beever, 2010; Moser & Clark, 2001). DDR policies lack a gender-responsive approach and tend to exclude and marginalize female ex-combatants (Berrio, 2013; Beever, 2010; Theidon, 2009; Moser & Clark, 2001). Because of this far less women officially reintegrate into society than have been present as rebels. This poses great risks for the political stability of a nation as the reintegration of ex-combatants plays a vital role in ensuring the peace process is a success in the long run (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019).

With its never-seen-before gender-based approach, the Colombian peace accords provide an excellent opportunity to research the impact of women's inclusion on the peace process and the DDR policies it brought forward. Especially as in 2021 more is beginning to become known about the implementation phase. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that although the Colombian peace process is one of a kind in its approach to gender, it has also received critique from scholars and policymakers. While the accords have been ambitious in regard to gender, experts have stressed that it lacks a cohesive plan to implement these ambitions (Oion-Encina, 2020, Ramljak, 2020, UN, 2020). In the case of the land reforms aspect of the peace accords, the implementation shortcomings have recently started to come to light (Revelo & Peters, 2017). Besides, research has shown that even when peace accords include some sort of gender perspective, these gender aspects tend to disappear in the implementation phase (Bell, 2015). In Colombia, the gender elements of the peace accords are particularly in danger to slip away in the implementation phase as they sparked a lot of controversy and resistance (Koopman, 2018).

Few studies have analyzed the current reintegration process from a gender perspective, even though it is crucial to investigate what the long-term impact of the gender-approach is and how it affects peace implementation (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019; GPAZ, 2017; O'Neill, 2015). This study, therefore, aims to investigate the impact of the women included in the Colombian peace process on the peace accords documents on DDR itself and its DDR policy for female ex-combatants in practice. This thesis will especially focus on complementing the findings of Paffenholz and colleagues' (2016) work on women's inclusion and its impact on peace accords by reflecting on the case of Colombia. It seeks to find an answer to questions of; What has been the impact of women's inclusion on the key documents on DDR and the current DDR implementation phase for women combatants? And how can we explain this outcome?

This study will firstly provide a historical context to the conflict between FARC-EP and the Colombian government and its current peace accords and earlier attempts. Secondly, this paper offers a literature review on the topic of gender inclusion, peace accords, and DDR policy for female combatants. Thirdly, it will analyze the DDR section of the Colombian peace accords and two official state documents on DDR policy for women to investigate the impact of the inclusion of women on the accords and DDR policy. Fourthly, this thesis will

review the latest policy evaluation studies and studies on the implementation of the peace accords in regard to DDR policy for women. Lastly, this study includes a discussion of the findings and a conclusion.

## **The historic context of intra-state conflict, gender, and peace accords in Colombia**

Colombia is a former Spanish colony located in the northern part of South America. It is known for its ecological diversity, vast natural resources, its culture, and music. It is also one of the nations with the world's largest income inequality; it long held the reputation as one of the most dangerous nations in the world, and it is strongly associated with corruption and narco-trafficking (Koopman, 2018). But Colombia is above all known as the nation with the longest-running civil conflict in the Western hemisphere (Koopman, 2018). The Colombian state has been at war with different Non-State Actors (NSAs) such as right-wing paramilitary groups, narco-traffickers, and leftwing guerilla organizations. The primary conflict has been between FARC and the Colombian government (Koopman, 2018).

The next section will provide a short overview of the development of the conflict. The following section delves into women's participation in FARC-EP. The third section discusses some of the key developments in Colombia's women's movements. The last section addressed women's inclusion in the 2012-2016 peace accords.

### **The conflict**

Due to its colonial legacy, most of Colombia's resources have been in the hands of white and mestizo elites (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2016). With its closed political system and social and economic inequality Colombia has been in a state of recurring internal conflict since the 1800s (Rojas et al., 2004). In the 1940s this power imbalance together with cold war pressures, a moment of state weakness, and the abuse of the landless by landowners transformed into internal conflict that escalated with the assassination of Liberal Party presidential candidate Gaitan in 1948 into *La Violencia* (Koopman, 2018; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2016). In the 1950s and 1960s, different campesino self-defense movements were born out of this partition conflict (Onion-Encina, 2020). FARC emerged in 1964, made up out of peasant rebels and *La Violencia* veterans, and was one of the first and most class-conscious guerilla organizations. Other guerilla groups such as EPL (Ejercito Popular de Liberacion), ELN (Ejercito Liberacion National) and M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril) developed soon thereafter (Cespedez-Baez, 2019). Land reforms has been one of the main demands of FARC and in response to this ruling elites organized police forces to protect their land and combat the leftwing guerilla movements. These elite-controlled police forces supported by the Colombian army developed into rightwing paramilitary groups in the 1980s (Koopman, 2018; Paarlberg-Kvam, 2016). But while the Colombian government has tried to defeat activists and guerilla movements through repression and torture, guerilla activity and social mobilization only increased (Rojas et al., 2004). Moreover, with the rise of cocaine production and trafficking a new elite group emerged, who hired the paramilitaries to protect their neoliberal megaprojects and the narco-trafficking class. Through this development, the paramilitaries became consolidated into the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) (Tausig, 2003). With the creation of these counter-insurgent paramilitary groups, the conflict started to worsen (Onion-Encina, 2020). These developments resulted in new heights of bloodshed and terror in the 1990s.

The 50 years long struggle officially has caused 262,197 deaths of which 80% have been civilians. In reality, this number is even higher as there is a severe undercount. As state and para-state actors have been some of the main perpetrators many people have been afraid to report deaths to the state and many statistics do not include people who have disappeared as



deaths (Koopman, 2018; Cosoy, 2015). Moreover, the conflict has resulted in the victimization of another estimated seven to nine million people and one in every ten Colombians have fled their homes due to the war (Henshaw, 2020b; Koopman, 2018). Women have experienced the consequences of conflict in their own way, due to the loss of (male) family members, means of livelihood, and public services (Koopman, 2018; Rojas et al., 2004). Moreover, women have been the main victims of sexual violence (Oion-Encina, 2020).

The great majority of the conflict has taken place in the rural areas of Colombia. Those living in urban areas have had less experience with the direct consequences of war while campesinos (people living in the Colombian countryside) have been the overwhelming majority of victims, due to displacement, violence, land mines, and the use of herbicides (Jiménez Ocampo, 2009). Furthermore, it is the people in the rural areas who have politically, economically, and socially speaking the most marginalized position in Colombian society while Colombia's (political) elites almost exclusively reside in urban areas while also being the owners of most rural land. These facts are vital to understand the voting behavior during the peace agreement referendum and to understand what obstacles stand in the way of the implementation of the provisions developed during the peace process (Koopman, 2018).

Over the years there have been many attempts for peace. But, while other violent actors came to an agreement with the government over the years and disbanded, none of the talks resulted in an official peace agreement between FARC and the state until 2016 (Koopman, 2018; Rojas et al., 2004).

### **Women and FARC**

Women did not immediately play a significant part in the conflict. Initially, there was resistance to the expansion of the role of women within FARC and elsewhere. However, this attitude transformed gradually over time, and in 1985 FARC women obtained equal status as combatants within the movement and new opportunities for leadership positions (Darden et al., 2019; Herrera & Porch, 2008). Many of the leftwing guerilla movements were aware of the weak position of women in rural areas and played into this with their propaganda (Darden et al., 2019). FARC started to move away from its classic national Leninist-Marxism to a more progressive interpretation of communism to accommodate for the specific needs of women in regard to gender equality (Stanski, 2006). Darden and colleagues (2019) point out that this ideology evolution is a by-product and not the cause of the participation and advancement within Colombia's guerilla movements. The inclusion of women is above all a pragmatic development within FARC. The civil conflict knows many leftwing and rightwing insurgencies who all competed with each other for power, members and territory. The mobilization and expansion of the role of women in guerillas was an intersubjective process, driven by competition between the different movements in a crowded marketplace. This process of outbidding provided women with agency and an opportunity to create strategic openings to advance their position within the movements and led to the adoption of a progressive stance on gender issues (Henshaw, 2020c). By embracing gender equality FARC was able to recruit far more fighters than any other group, securing its survival and position. Studies have estimated FARC's women's membership between 24 to 40% (Herrera & Porch, 2008).

The women were promised that if they joined, they would be equal to their male counterparts in the movement and work towards women's emancipation in Colombia (Welsh, 2015). At



the same time, women's emancipation is considered a bourgeoisie 'side distraction' within FARC-EP. Class struggle remains to be seen as the real main structure of oppression in society (Phelan & True, 2021). There is no place for female fighters to educate themselves on feminist theory within the movement (Dietrich Ortega, 2010). It should then also not be surprising that FARC's position and commitment towards gender equality have been inconsistent and messy over the years (Henshaw, 2020b). For example, at the beginning of the peace talks, FARC-EP had not developed a gender perspective (Céspedes- Báez, 2019)

Regardless of the true intentions behind FARC's inclusion of women in the movement, *las Farianas* have been key to FARC's territory control and longevity (McDermott, 2002). At the same time, no woman has ever obtained a position in FARC's highest leadership body, *the secretariat* (Castrillón Pulido, 2015).

### **Women's movements and peace in Colombia**

It is important to pay attention to the political developments in Colombia and the development of the women's movements of the last three decades, as the gender-sensitive approach and the inclusion of women in the 2012-2016 Colombian peace process is for a large part the result of their struggle (Gómez & Montealegre, 2021).

The 1991 constitutional process in Colombia gave way to a new engagement of women with issues regarding peace and security. The process gave birth to new peace organizations with women in leadership positions (Rojas et al., 2004). One of the first cases in which women rose to the role of important actor for peace has been the Pastrana-FARC peace dialogues of 1991-2002 in which women's groups successfully pressured former President Andrés Pastrana and FARC into peace talks (Rojas et al., 2004). During the peace dialogue, women were present in the negotiating teams of both FARC and the government and took upon official and civil leadership roles. This inclusion of women in the peace talks was demanded by women's groups and led to the women's public forum on June 25, 2000. This event pushed the women's peace movement to a new level. At the same time, the government was noticeably absent during the event and Pastrana continued the peace dialogues without much consultation of civil society (Rojas et al., 2004).

Despite the efforts from women's networks, the peace talks collapsed in 2002. The women's peace movements, however, did not. In July 2002, 40.000 women came to Bogota, demanding the end of violence and positioning themselves as national actors for peace. Afterward, the women movements continued to organize themselves, held campaigns, and raised awareness, even gaining funding from the Swedish government (Gómez & Montealegre 2021; Rojas et al., 2004). A collective of 266 women's organizations developed a peace agenda. While the women delegates had different views on the conflict, they shared the idea that the exclusion from political and judicial processes, cultural discrimination, and economic marginalization were at the heart of the conflict and their experience with it. Through this they not only illustrated how women were impacted by the conflict, it also questioned the dominant discourse of narco-trafficking and terrorism through which the outside world understood the Colombian conflict (Rojas et al., 2004).

After Pastrana, Alvaro Uribe became president of Colombia in 2002, who did not support the peace talks. He launched an aggressive military operation with the aim to eliminate FARC once and for all. Though this approach did considerable damage to FARC, the organization resisted defeat. It became apparent that FARC would never disappear from Colombia's

political stage as a violent actor by strictly using violent means. At the same time, FARC realized that they would never achieve military victory and that leftist movements in neighboring countries managed to obtain political control through voting instead of using bullets. These factors triggered new political will for a third peace attempt when Juan Santos won the 2010 elections (Herbolzheimer, 2016).

In the following years, the women's groups appropriated international legal language to advance their case in which they created a narrative grounded in terminology of humanitarian, and criminal law, and international human rights to frame the experience of women with the conflict. They had learned from cases such as Bosnia and Rwanda to use the letter of law to create a women-based agenda and the ratification of the Rome Statute in 2002 introduced a new paradigm for conflict resolution in Colombia (Céspedes-Báez, 2019). Moreover, the 2005 peace accords between the government and paramilitaries had exposed blind spots regarding gender issues that the women's movements were desperate not to repeat. The accords included a provision in which paramilitaries could receive amnesty for sexual violence committed against civilians. This provision pushed conflict-related sexual violence to the center of the debate as it provided no transitional justice for the thousands of women victimized by paramilitaries (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018).

These developments in the Colombian political landscape coincided with the international development of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, changes in international transitional justice, and the passing of resolution 1325 by the UNSC, which shifted the international paradigm of peacebuilding to be gender inclusive and sensitive (Gómez & Montealegre, 2021). At the same time, the Colombian government never formulated a plan to implement resolution 1325 on its own (Herbolzheimer, 2016).

### **The 2012-2016 Peace negotiation process**

Despite the introduction of resolution 1325 and the efforts of the women's movements, the first two years of the peace process were marked by a notable absence of gender issues on the list of topics for discussion (Hauge, 2020, Oion-Encina, 2020, Céspedes-Báez, 2019; Boutron, 2018; Bouvier, 2016). Moreover, women found themselves once more excluded from the official peace process as only FARC had appointed one female rebel as a representative, the notorious Tanja Nijmeijer (Phelan & True, 2021; Céspedes-Báez, 2019). Her inclusion is generally understood as an attempt of FARC to strategically employ her notoriety and not as a genuine commitment to women's inclusion (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). The state had failed to appoint even one woman as representative of any sort (Boutron, 2018). Showing the ingrained belief that war is a men's affair and that peace talks only pertain to them (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). When in 2012 civil leaders and women movements raised gender issues during the peace process they were told 'now is not the time' (Phelan & True, 2021). In response, LGBTQ and feminist movements, mobilized. Forty NGOs came together under the platform Mujeres Por La Paz (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). Protests broke out all over Colombia. The protesters demanded the inclusion of women and people of the LGBTQ community, and a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach that would acknowledge the grievances and recognize the role of women, members of the LGBTQ community, and native and Afro-Latinos as both rebels, victims, and peacebuilders (Ramljak, 2020). International pressure also rose from UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, and facilitating governments such as Cuba and Sweden (Kroc Institute, 2018).

Through their collective efforts, two women plenipotentiary negotiators were appointed in 2013. And in 2014 a gender subcommittee was established to bridge the gender gap which was led by Maria Paulina Riveros, representing the government, and Victoria Sandino, representing FARC-EP, and more women were appointed as negotiators for all parties involved (Segura & Mechoulam, 2017). The late introduction of women as negotiators and gender perspective directly limited the influence of women and the potential for gender mainstreaming as three of the six points to be negotiated, that of political participation, land reforms, and illegal drug solutions, had already been decided upon (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). Moreover, both Riveros and Sandino had no experience with gender issues (Koopman, 2018). Nevertheless, the appointment of 2 women plenipotentiary negotiators and the creation of the gender subcommittee were a real victory for the women's movements and the international community.

A second blow to the influence of the women involved in the peace process came when Juan Santos decided to speed up the negotiation process. Because of this, the gender subcommittee never officially formulated advice on the topics of sexual violence and DDR for female combatants (Ralmjak, 2020). Moreover, female FARC members used social media as an important tool to communicate with the general public about the negotiation process. With the sudden haste to bring the peace accords to a vote, the female FARC members were robbed of the opportunity to communicate with the general public about the content of the peace agreement (Henshaw, 2020c; Koopman, 2018).

The first negotiated accords included the most progressive gender-based approach ever established in a peace accord. However, due to its focus on LGBTQ issues, the peace accords did not land well with Colombia's large and powerful evangelical community nor with other conservatives, resulting in a close vote in which the accords were rejected by the public (Lemaitre, 2020; Perez et al., ND). The influence of the evangelical community on the peace accords became apparent as Juan Santos after the rejection of the initial peace accords immediately met up with evangelical leaders (Koopman, 2018).

The direct impact of the involvement of women's organizations and the international community opened the floor for a gender-based approach and the inclusion of women in the peace process. But they were not the only actors for women involved. While getting a foot between the door for women was a difficult process, the idea that women are differently and disproportionately impacted by conflict as victims was not widely contested by the general public in Colombia. The real friction is located in the existence of the *farianas* who challenge this narrative as they have been perpetrators of war. The official mandate of gender mainstreaming and the topic of DDR created the need to invite these other actors into the talks and thus FARC-EP female combatants entered the peace process as well (Céspedes-Báez, 2019).

## **Theoretical framework**

Conflicts end in many different ways, but there is limited analysis to understand their implications for long-term peace (Pankhurst, 1999). The grand majority of peace accords are not successful in bringing long-term peace. More than 50 % of all accords fall apart within 5 years (King, 1997). Regardless, whether conflict resolutions or peace processes are the result of a negotiated settlement or of military victory, women's voices are commonly absent or marginal (Pankhurst, 2003; Karam, 2000). The failure of many peace agreements is in part because the negotiated accords rarely address the underlying roots of conflict, or seek to prevent their resurgence. Another suspected cause is the absence of women and the topic of gender in peace talks (De Langis, 2011). Women make up less than 13% of negotiators and even less than 6% of the signatories to peace accords and less than 16% of peace agreements make reference to women (Council of Foreign Relations, ND; Bell & O'Rourke, 2010). On the flipside, when women are included in peace processes as negotiators and signatories, peace accords are 20% more likely to last at least 2 years and 35% more likely to result in sustainable peace (Paffenholz et al., 2016). Besides the exclusion of women in peace processes, gender and its related issues are often absent in peace negotiations and accords, generating new male-dominant visions of post-conflict society (Karam, 2000).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of gender and political stability. One investigation suggests a significant positive relationship between the physical security of women and the relative peacefulness of states (Hudson et al., 2009). Others suggest a relationship between gender inequality and conflict (Davies et al., 2017). So, while women and gender issues are often overlooked more and more studies have started to indicate that the relationship between gender (issues) and conflict and should not be ignored in peace processes.

Women are often thought to not be part of conflict as fighters or agents of conflict and this general misconception of the role of women has led in many cases to the idea that women do not need to be included in the peace process (Henshaw, 2020; 2013; Kirby & Shepherd, 2016; Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; De Alwis et al., 2013; Coulter et al., 2008). The UNSC attempted to address this gender gap in security and peace matters through the passing of 1325 resolution. However, resolution 1325 does not adequately acknowledge the role women play as combatants in armed conflict, reinforcing the unsubstantiated idea that women are either victims or bringers of peace when it comes to security and peace matters (Kirby & Shepherd, 2016).

Before we discuss how the inclusion of women can change peace processes, we must define what a peace process entails. Peace process refers to the political processes and strategies for through peaceful means resolving conflict. Peace processes can offer a crucial space within which gender relations in post-conflict societies can be restructured. However, they also can become spaces within which women could lose some of the gains made during the war. Peace processes are like all social processes strongly gendered and regularly reiterate gendered power structures and other inequalities (De Alwis et al., 2013).

### **A different definition of peace**

We cannot talk about peace processes without conceptualizing peace itself. The concept of peace is contested, complicated, and often reductively interpreted as 'not-war' (Koopman, 2018). Offering another definition to peace is one of the ways in which the inclusion of women impacts peace processes as feminist theory on peace and its accompanied research

demonstrate that women often have a definition of peace that diverts from more traditional and common notions of peace employed in peace accords (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019). The great majority of peace accords operationalize peace as what is often called ‘negative peace’, in which peace is seen as the absence of violent conflict (Koopman, 2018). Peace is often juxtaposed with war. In this dichotomous formulation, peace is viewed as a static condition, the absence of overt (state-perpetrated) violence. Patriarchal intellectuals have neglected to give adequate attention to the meaning and gendering of peace, as peace is often defined in negative and feminine. While war is seen as heroic, active, and masculine, peace is merely the absence of these qualities (Enloe, 1987). Some feminist scholars start from the conditions of women’s lives, and because they perceive how many forms of violence, distress, and unhappiness women experience, peace is for them defined as women’s achievement of gaining agency over one’s life (Enloe, 1987).

One representative of a Colombian women’s movement defines positive peace or *real lasting* peace as one that guarantees conditions under which war cannot start at any moment (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019). Positive peace actively addresses power dynamics that reinforce oppression. Betty Maina views positive peace not just as the absence of war and violence but it also includes economic and social justice, equality, and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within society. Structural violence arises out of unjust, repressive, and oppressive political structures. Systems that breed repression, poverty, and food insecurity also breed a lack of peace (Maina, 1995).

This positive interpretation is also found in the vision of Colombia’s women’s movements on peace. Representatives of these movements express that for them peace would not only mean an end to the armed conflict between FARC-EP and the Colombian state, but a complete demilitarization of society, civilian life, and territories, including ending mandatory conscription. Moreover, they stress that ‘real’ peace would address market hegemony and the patriarchy. The women expressed frustration with the peace accords as the Colombian peace accords emphasize negative peace, in which peace is understood as the absence of violent conflict between FARC and the Colombian government with an emphasis on demobilization and disarmament. In contrast, what the women demand is a conceptualization of positive peace, in which the social, political, and economic structural causes of conflict would be addressed and in which special attention is paid to the gender-based violence women experience in their day-to-day lives (Paarlberg-Kvam, 2019).

### **How women’s inclusion change peace processes**

Prior research on gender issues in peacebuilding provides insight into what differences we can expect with the inclusion of women in peace negotiations. Other scholars stress that not only does the inclusion of women lead to a greater gender sensitivity in peace agreements, it also influences the content of peace accords, such as changes in transitional justice and DDR policies (Gómez & Montealegre, 2021; Henshaw, 2020a). Paffenholz and colleagues (2016) found that women were particularly influential in multi-stakeholder negotiation processes, as they pushed for more concrete and fundamental reforms. Women organizations in different peace processes commonly pushed for 1) the cessation of hostilities and long-term ceasefire agreements, and pressured for the start of or continuation of peace negotiations. 2) women exerted pressure for the signing of peace agreements, 3) enhancing the representation of women both in the ongoing peace process as well as in the political structure of the post-conflict state and 4) and offer additional gender-sensitive legal and political reforms, such as



demanding land ownership reforms, transitional justice issues and post-conflict reconstruction concerns in regard to DDR.

Since the introduction of resolution 1325 the inclusion of women in peace processes has increased with each single year (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015). But it is important to underline that the inclusion of women does not magically lead to more sustainable peace. Scholars stress that too often the call for the inclusion of women in 1325 has been understood in a strictly numeral sense (Kaufman & Williams, 2013) The impact of women depends, however, on how much influence they are allowed to have, not per se on the number of women included (Paffelholz et al., 2016; Karam, 2000; Jayawardena, 1986). One study observed a positive correlation between the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and more peace agreements reached and implemented (Paffelholz., 2015). However, this correlation depended on how much power and influence women held in the peace process. The number of peace agreements reached was substantially higher for women with a strong influence than for women with a moderate or weak influence (Paffelholz et al., 2016). Moreover, the influence of women on the peace process also depended on whether they were organized and belonged to women's movements (Paffenhof et al., 2016). Others stress that *which* women get to participate in the peace process also matters. Women from rebel groups and political parties tend to “toe the party line” or are actively discouraged from raising gender issues (De Alwis et al., 2013; Kilmurray & McWilliams, 2011; Jayawardena, 1986).

This commitment of female politicians to their party agenda has also been found in the case of Colombia. The women representing the government in the negotiation process were often explicitly not feminist and did not bring a gender perspective to the negotiation table. Instead, they - like their male counterparts - represented the interests of their party (Pábon & Aguirre, 2021). At the same time, it is important not to downplay the role of female politicians in the Colombian peace accords. Female politicians like former senator Piedad Cordoba Ruiz have played an important role in building the trust between FARC and the state necessary to enter into the peace dialogue phase (Bouvier, 2016). While FARC-EP initially did not have a gender perspective, over the years female FARC members have developed their own notion of feminism which demands an overhaul of the economic model of Colombia (Céspedes-Báez, 2019). This attitude resonates with the wider women's organizations' demands who also located the source of the problem in Colombians neoliberal economic system (Paarberg-Kvam, 2019). But while male FARC representatives emphasized class and social justice in negotiations female FARC representatives more often stressed gender and LGBTQ issues. In addition, female rebels used social media more often than their male counterparts to communicate with the general public about the developments in the negotiations phase (Henshaw, 2020b). It is an interesting diversion of traditional negotiation experiences as previous all-male conflict resolution negotiations have been notorious for their 'behind closed door' approach (Amaral, 2019). It seems that women not only change which topics are addressed and how they are approached but also improve the communication with civilians about the negotiation process making it more transparent.

### **The different places for women in peace processes**

In the past, the inclusion of women has occurred throughout different phases and multiple modalities of peace processes. Paffenholz and colleagues (2016) identified three different phases in peace processes; the pre-negotiation phase, the negotiation phase, and the post-agreement implementation phase. Moreover, she found seven modalities for the inclusion of women of which the following are important in the Colombian context: direct representation

at the negotiation table, inclusive commissions, and mass action. There are also different process and context factors enabling and hampering women's influence such as: decision-making procedures, monitoring, early access, transfer strategies, funding, elite support or resistance, public buy-in, regional and international actor's influence on peace processes, the presences of strong women groups, preparedness of collaboration, heterogeneity of women's identities, societal and political attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles, regional and international women networks and the existence of prior commitment to gender sensitivity and the inclusion of women. Especially the monitoring of gender provisions during the implementation phase has been a major obstacle for the impact of women on the peace process. Even when women elsewhere played an important role in the peace process, rarely were they also included in the monitoring and implementation of the peace accords. It is important to note that in societies where gender-sensitive provisions and women's rights remain contentious issues, the participation of women is often met with resistance. This can range from doubting the independence and legitimacy of their participation to harassment and serious threats (Paffenholz et al., 2016; de Alwis et al., 2013). In the case of Colombia, the murder rate of women's activists and human rights advocates has drastically increased since the accession of women to the negotiation table (Gómez & Montealegre, 2021; Ehasz, 2020; Guadán, 2018). So, while research suggests that there is much to gain by including women in peace processes, it would be naïve to think that women will only have a positive impact or are met with open arms. Moreover, in the transitional phase that follows after the signing of a peace agreement, what is actually implemented often falls short of what was promised. Even when women are included in the negotiation process, their inclusion is no guarantee for the implementation phase. The enforcement of the proposals on women's interests in the aftermath has proven to be the most difficult task (Gómez & Montealegre, 2021; True & Riveros-Morales, 2019; Goetz & Jenkins, 2016; Paffenholz et al., 2016; McWilliams, 2015).

## **Women and DDR**

DDR is a relatively recent phenomenon in peacebuilding. DDR is an important aspect of a peace agreement (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015). DDR programs encourage (ex)combatants to hand in their arms and to either integrate into the legitimate armed forces or to go home and to become part of civil society again (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015; Mazurana & Cole, 2013). DDR can stand for several phases, but in general refers to Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration programs. Disarmament can be a means to reduce weapon circulation but can also be a symbolic measure for rebels to renounce their identity as combatants (Gomes-Porto et al., 2007; Gleichmann et al., 2004). Demobilization is the controlled discharge of fighters from an armed group (Méndez, 2012). Reintegration encompasses the most complicated and long-term aspect of DDR in which ex-combatants and their families get reintroduced in civil communities. Reintegration policy facilitates the socioeconomic and political reintegration of ex-combatants with the intent to transform combatants into civilians (Torjensen, 2013; Gomes-Porto et al., 2007). While initially, the emphasis has been on demobilization, disarmament, and temporary security in military terms, over the years a shift has taken place to 'second generation' DDR in which long-term human-based security and the resocialization, reintegration, and reconciliation of ex-combatants have taken center stage (Ramljak, 2020; Carranza-Franco, 2019; Mazurana & Cole, 2013; Muggah, 2010). The reintegration process most often takes place at the local level (Mazurana et al., 2018). While the UN has played a leading role in most DDR programs, many NGOs and aid organizations are also part of the DDR process (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015).



With the shift in the debate from a minimalist security-focused conceptualization to a maximalist understanding encompassing state-building and development of DDR and the introduction of resolution 1325 the focus also shifted to women and gender (Hauge, 2020; Mazurana, et al., 2018). A gender approach to DDR entails three different aspects; 1) it includes employing gender analyses to enhance the standards of support for female ex-combatants in DDR programs 2) gives priority to parallel programs and funding for female ex-combatants 3) demilitarizes masculinity and femininity among participants (Mazurana, et al., 2018). Nevertheless, despite the surge in attention to gender and DDR, policymakers and political organizations struggle to align DDR with the specific needs of female combatants (Hauge, 2020; Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). Moreover, DDR in general and reintegration specifically are poorly understood in both academia and the policy-making world. DDR programs rarely receive adequate evaluation, short-term successes tend to be overemphasized and not enough studies pay attention to the experience of ex-combatants themselves (Gomes-Porto et al., 2007).

As a consequence of the general exclusion of women in peace processes, women are also absent in the making of DDR policy (Hauge, 2020). Furthermore, female ex-combatants are the least likely to be involved in the creation of DDR policy, even though DDR directly concerns them (Henshaw, 2020). Because women are not recognized as rebels DDR programs lack a gender-responsive approach and tend to exclude and marginalize female ex-combatants (Hauge, 2020; Berrio, 2013; Mazurana & Cole, 2013; Beever, 2010; Dietrich Ortega, 2010; Theidon, 2009; Gleichmann et al., 2004). Of the 585 peace agreements analyzed by Shekhawat and Pathak (2015), only 7 made specific reference to the need for special provisions in DDR for woman and girl combatants. The exclusion of women in the making of DDR and the absence of a gender perspective has for a part led to the underrepresentation of female combatants' participation in DDR programs worldwide (Mazurana, et al., 2018; Shekhawat and Pathak, 2015; Coulter et al., 2008). In Colombia only 6% of 31.000 fighters that had undergone a collective reintegration process were women. And of the thousands of rebels that went through an individual DDR scheme only 14 % were women (Schwitalla & Dietrich, 2007). Women tend to self-mobilize which increases their vulnerability to end up in prostitution, poverty, drug trafficking, and to turn to war (Bouvier, 2016).

Serrano Murcia (2013) researched all DDR-programs in Colombia noted that not one single program considered the specific needs of women or their disadvantaged position. Male and female ex-combatants experience DDR differently. Men are often integrated into the state army while women are being integrated back into traditional society and family life. This is, however, highly problematic as these female ex-combatants have often experienced gender equality within their rebel group and transgressed gender norms. Returning to civilian life, they are regularly ostracized in society and rejected by family as they have 'lost' their femininity. The women are expected to give up the freedom and autonomy they had in the rebel group. This is something male combatants do not struggle with (Mazurana et al., 2018; Castrillón Pulido, 2015; Henshaw, 2013; Schwitalla & Dietrich, 2007; Coulter, 2009; Theidon, 2009; Herrera & Porch, 2008). Moreover, because the notions of masculinity and femininity of ex-combatants have been militarized by their war experience it is important that DDR helps ex-combatants develop new understandings of masculinity and femininity that are not connected to a propensity to violence. However, traditional gender notions reintroduced in Colombian DDR rob women ex-combatants of autonomy and agency while for the men they reinforce ideas about dominance and violence (Dietrich Ortega, 2010; Theidon, 2009). The reintegration experience of men and women also differ regarding their ability to build new romantic relations. Many rebel organizations promote sexual freedom within the organization

and female combatants consistently get branded as ‘sluts’ and are seen as undesirable romantic partners when returning to society while this stigma is absent for rebel men (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015). These sexual stigmas are often so strong that even other rebel men do not want to have relationships with ex-rebel women. Male ex-combatants said nobody wants to have a woman ex-rebel as a partner because ‘*la mujer guerillera es muy puta*’ (the female guerilla is a real whore) (Theidon, 2009, p. 29).

For DDR programs to be effective they need to be responsive to the women and girls present in armed groups and their specific experiences and needs (Mazurana & Cole, 2013). Interestingly, when women are included at the negotiation table, they press for creating transformative DDR and introduce a gender-sensitive perspective to DDR policy, which in turn results in higher participation numbers for women in DDR programs (Paffenholz et al., 2016; Luciak, 2001).

The goal of this study is not to prove that women are inherently more peaceful than men. Nor does this study attempt to answer the question: why should we include women? A better question would be, why not? Afghan women in 1996 already pointed out the irony of letting the same men who fought the war also build peace by saying, ‘Why are you (UN) talking to warlords, they benefit from war and gain power, they do not want peace?’ (Collet, 1996, p. 401). The risk of any research endeavors on the impact of women on peace processes and DDR is that potential results of improved sustainability of peace accords are hastily generalized to the notion ‘women are bringers of peace’ or ‘more peaceful than men’, pushing women back in stereotypical ‘maternal’ gender categories (Cockburn, 2001; Pankhurst, 2003). Which is the opposite of what this study wants to achieve. The study explicitly focuses on women ex-combatants and DDR to underline that women take on a significant role as agents in conflict and that the categories of victim, combatant and peacebuilder are not mutually exclusive, nor exclusive to a gender and that the role of women in peace and conflict is not singular. Some women combatants have also been victims, other women combatants have become prime advocates for holistic peace at the negotiation table (Henshaw, 2020b, Pankhurst, 2003). This study does not investigate ‘peaceful women’, instead, it examines the role of different women in the Colombian peace process.

## Document analysis

This study performs a document analysis of some of the key policy pieces of the Colombian peace accords in regard to the re-integration of female ex-combatants of FARC to understand what the gender inclusion has meant for the policy created for women ex-combatants and to assess the influence of the women participating in the peace process (or lack thereof) on DDR. The following documents or sections of documents are analyzed:

Section 3.2 of the Colombian peace accords which addresses the political and economic reintegration of ex-combatants of FARC. Originally the plan was to compare section 3.2 of the two versions however, no changes have been made in section 3.2 therefore this study will only analyze section 3.2 once.

The official policy CONPES 3931 created in 2018 of the government body ARN (*Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización*) which carries the responsibility of reintegrating ex-combatants. CONPES 3931 states the planning for the Reintegration implementation process and states the reintegration policy guidelines. This document addresses both the policy for male and female ex-combatants.

Lastly the 2020 #Soy Mujer Somos Cambio annual report will be analyzed as it is the first document on the ARN website released after the signing of the Colombian peace accords that specifically delves into the integration of female ex-combatants.

The included documents are all in Spanish. Spanish is however not the native language of the person analyzing the documents. While the researcher's Spanish is adequate enough to incorporate and analyze sources written in Spanish it is important to acknowledge the potential biases and risk for misinterpretation this creates.

For the document analysis this research project uses the qualitative analysis tool Atlas.ti. First all documents were uploaded to the program and any section referring the words *mujer/mujeres* (woman/women) or (*enfoque de*) *genero* (gender (focus)) are coded. The sections are also coded for what type of reintegration is addressed, if applicable. The categories are social reintegration, political reintegration and economic reintegration.

### Section 3.2

Section 3.2 is the chapter of the 310 page long official peace agreement addressing the integration of FARC ex-combatants. The word woman (*mujeres*) is used 4 times in section 3.2 and gender perspective (*enfoque de género*) 0 times.

The section is marked by its absence of a gender perspective. In the introduction it is mentioned that 'every component of the reincorporation process shall have an equity-based approach, with a particular emphasis on women's rights' but nowhere else in the 3.2 section is explained what this would entail or how this would be accomplished which stands in stark contrast with the other chapters. This is a recurring phenomenon in all of the documents analyzed for this research project. While documents include statements on the theoretical interpretation of a gender perspective, rarely do they get translated to practical implications for the implementation phase. While other parts of the peace accords have special paragraphs dedicated to what a gender perspective entails, this has not been done for the reintegration of ex-FARC members' chapter. No special provisions are mentioned for women combatants. Moreover, elsewhere in the document on the political participation of civilian women much

has been written about what policies will be created to aid women's political participation. Nothing is mentioned about this for female FARC members nor is it made clear if female ex-combatants can receive the same provisions for political participation as civilian women. This raises the suspicion that civilian women and women combatants will get slumped together in future projects to implement the peace accords and that no attention is paid in the accords itself to the intersection of being a woman and an ex-combatant. The paragraphs on the economic and social reintegration also do not mention a gender perspective or special gender provisions. Cóbar and colleagues (2018) created a text analysis chart of the gender perspectives in the Colombian Peace accords and they too did not find any evidence for the presence of a gender perspective or special gender provisions in section 3.2.

The lack of a gender perspective in 3.2. is both a surprise and not a surprise at all. On the one hand, with the general commitment to a gender perspective in the peace process and with its elaborated attention to gender elsewhere in the peace accords one would expect that a gender-based approach would also have been employed for section 3.2. At the same time, we also know that section 3.2. never has been officially been treated by the gender subcommittee. The gender subcommittee dealt with the 'easier and less controversial' components first and because of this the reintegration of female ex-combatants would be treated last. However, as President Santos wanted to speed up the peace process the gender subcommittee never got the chance to officially formulate any advice on the topic (Ramljak, 2020). So while it was one of the main objectives of the gender subcommittee to look at the reintegration policy for female ex-combatants they were inhibited from doing so due to the surrounding political developments. Moreover, in the gender narrative of the Colombian peace process the emphasis has consistently been on the role of women as victims and peace builders and significantly less on the female rebels or women as perpetrators of crime, and therefore the women's agenda on the reintegration of rebel women has not been as elaborated as other components of the peace process (Céspedes-Báez, 2019). Furthermore, the existence of women as perpetrators remains a controversial topic in Colombia due to its traditional and machista gender notions (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019).

Section 3.2 is in general fairly limited, the entire peace accords only provides 9 pages on the reintegration of combatants in total, mainly delving into the (financial) responsibilities of the state, and the division of tasks between FARC-EP and the government. It is not the case that the reintegration of male combatants has received more attention. It only stipulates under which conditions ex-combatants will receive money for their reintegration. There is one exception in the case of child soldiers, who have received their own paragraph within section 3.2 which stipulates that FARC-EP minors will receive the same treatment as victims of the conflict, are entitled to more care and for which a special reintegration program will be created. This shows that the people creating the agreement were aware that for certain groups it is necessary to develop DDR tailored to the experiences and needs of specific groups and either deemed it unnecessary to do so for women combatants or lacked the awareness that female and male ex-combatants have an inherently different experiences of the conflict and different needs that require to be addressed.

Because section 3.2 left much unsaid about the reintegration of ex-combatants a search was conducted to see if provisions for ex-combatants and their reintegration were stated elsewhere in the document, but no special mention of female ex-combatants in regard to a gender perspective or specific provision was made in any of the other sections of the peace accords. The strange thing is that female ex-combatants are recognized to be present in FARC-EP by the document as it consistently refers to *las y los integrantes* ((female and male members)

(and thus recognizes that combatants can be both male and female) when addressing FARC members. Yet somehow the translation of *las integrantes* (female members) to the inclusion of a gender perspective for women ex-combatants remains unconduted. Section 3.2. seems disconnected from the rest of the official peace accords as other sections elaborate much more on gender issues. While special provisions are stipulated for civilian women regarding education, political participation and livelihood, nothing is stated about this for female ex-combatants. In a sense the peace accords seem to be in denial about *las integrantes* being women for which special policy has to be developed.

### **CONPES 3931**

CONPES 3931 contains 139 pages and was the first policy document for the reintegration of ex-combatants (both men and women) released after the signing of the agreement. Women (*mujeres*) is used 52 times and gender perspective (*enfoque de género*) is used 9 times. The document state that it will take into account the gender perspective established in the peace agreement. It recognizes that men and women have experienced the conflict differently, and women experience different types of discrimination and inequality due to armed conflict. It emphasizes the rights of women ex-combatants and states that the gender perspective of the peace accords is designed to prevent possible disadvantages and gaps in the process of reintegration of women and their transition to civil life. It also states that the peace accords try to guarantee equal conditions by adopting measures that give preference to groups traditionally marginalized and discriminated.

CONPES 3931 constantly refers to the gender perspective stated in the official peace accords, yet it does not acknowledge that a specific gender perspective is never established in the peace accords for the reintegration of women ex-combatants. Therefore, it seems that the same interpretation of a gender perspective is used for female combatants as for civilian women even though it offers no justification for why this would be applicable. This reaffirms the suspicion first encountered in section 3.2. in which female combatants get treated as civilian women and not as ex-combatants who need DDR catered towards their intersection of both being women and ex-rebels.

While the document mentions that it is important that special policies will be developed for women, it often fails to state what these specific measures for women could be. It does not translate this acknowledgement to something more practical and tangible. It repeatedly acknowledges the position of women in society and women's rights, and emphasizes that special measures have to be taken to combat any disadvantage women can experience in their reintegration. It, however, rarely formulates what these disadvantages could be, how women are marginalized and what could be done to limit the negative implications of their gender for the integration of women. In the chapter on the economic reintegration of women attention is paid to the specific desires and interests of women in regard to higher education, pastime and work. Women ex-combatants express a higher interest in additional education than their male counterparts and CONPES 3931 underlines the importance of taking advantage of the women's military knowledge and the need for education for women ex-combatants not to reintroduce traditional gender roles. This way the CONPES 3931 acknowledges not only in an abstract manner that women have different needs and desires than men, it also clarifies what these needs and desires are. However, the sections on social and political integration are significantly less detailed. This makes one wonder how the people in the field working on the implementation of the accords are supposed to incorporate the gender perspective beyond vague theoretical statements. And studies have noted that this has been a problem during the

implementation phase. While the next chapter will go deeper into the implementation of DDR, it is relevant to underline here that workers seem to have no clue about the practical implications of such a gender perspective and how to achieve it in their work in DDR programs (Koopman, 2018; Ramljak, 2020).

To guarantee the gender approach in the political integration of ex-combatants CONPES 3931 states that public servants working on the implementation must come from diverse backgrounds to better understand the different particularities of ex-combatants and to make the supply of services more flexible in the framework of political integration. Moreover, CONPES 3931 states that in 2018 the ARN will promote strategies to strengthen capacities in forming and developing gender sensitiveness and new masculinities in the entities involved in the process of reintegration. The ARN will also articulate efforts to implement gender sensitivity at the national and local level entities involved in the reintegration of ex-combatants. Furthermore, it promises to identify the barriers women experience in their economic reintegration process and the state will prioritize finding direct measures and solution to combat the barriers. This shows us that during the peace process its participants have not taken the advantage of the strong presence of women to reflect on the reintegration of (female) ex-combatants and to take the opportunity to already formulate special policy for it. CONPES 3931 provides us with the dates for when a strategy has to be formulated or a study has to be conducted by which organization in regard to the integration of ex-combatants. None of these things seems to have been created during the peace process itself even though many ex-combatants were present. It also shows us some gaps in the peacebuilding timeline. The accords have been signed in 2016 but two years later everything still seems in the early stages of policy development.

Following the findings of Paffenholz and colleagues (2016) we would have expected clauses and policy documents on DDR to be more specific. While one cannot establish that the reintegration of women ex-combatants has not been discussed during the negotiation phase based on these documents, it does show that whatever has been discussed has not found its way into the official policy documents besides the vague promise that a gender perspective will be incorporated in the strategies and programs developed for the reintegration of ex-combatants. While it is not realistic to expect that every policy and strategy will be fully formulated and applied to every section of the peacebuilding process immediately after signing the peace accords, it is somewhat surprising that even with the many different forms of women's inclusion in the peace process the accompanied documents are devoid of any concrete policy approach, any indication of potential barriers and problems, or any reflection of previous studies on the reintegration of female ex-combatants in Colombia. Both section 3.2 and CONPES 3931 provide us with plans for the creation of policy and implementation of the developed strategy and the promise that a gender perspective will be employed but it does not go beyond a very limited statement of what a gender perspective means. The gender perspective mentioned is not comprehensive; it is a very basic understanding of gender in relation to peace and conflict. And with all the women involved, the years of preparation that went into establishing a women's agenda and with the creation of the gender subcommittee one would expect that more of their knowledge and real-life experiences would have found its way into the documents. Section 3.2 does not go beyond mere promises when it comes to the integration of combatants. Of course, all peace accords will for a big part contain promises, however, these promises should and usually are accompanied by plans for how to make them reality which the section 3.2. seems to severely lack. CONPES 3931 is more elaborated on the planning of the creation of policy for reintegration but does not go much further than providing a timeline.

## **Soy mujer**

Soy Mujer is the first annual report, released in 2020, on the ARN website solely focusing on the implementation of integration policies of women (ex-combatants) and reveals some of the suspicions of section 3.2. It is important to take the information provided in the document with a grain of salt. Official state reports on the implementation phase of the Colombian peace process are notorious for overstating successes and for not reflecting on any shortcomings (Peters, 2021). The document uses the word *mujeres* 145 times and *enfoque de género* 71 times. Soy Mujer does not reveal much new information. In the document the (political) reintegration of women ex-combatants gets conflated with the political participation of civilian women. While the document is initially only dedicated to female ex-combatants and their reintegration, further on in the text it starts to also bring in programs, numbers and successes of initiatives for civilian women. This particularly becomes apparent in chapter *Enfoque de género en la paz con legalidad* in which it is mentioned that 11.500 women have participated in strategies for political participation passively showing that for at least some part of the female ex-combatant's political reintegration they get lumped together with civilian women. It indicates that in at least some cases no special provisions or programs have been developed for their intersection of being both women and ex-combatants. This confirms some of the suspicions raised by Section 3.2. Moreover, the introduction of information on civilian women also seems to make the peace accords look better implemented and more successful than they really are.

What is also prominently missing in all three documents is an overt promise not only to make policy for women but also to include women in monitoring, policy writing and strategy executing roles. This seems to make the Colombian implementation phase as for women, but not by women, excluding women from one side of the implementation phase. CONPES 3931 states that caseworkers should come from a variety of backgrounds but does not provide any quotas. Women during the negotiation phase adopted the motto "*no queremos ser pactadas, queremos ser pactantes*" (we don't want to be agreed on, we want to participate in the agreement-making) but no residue of this mentality can be found in the text analyzed for this section (Oion-Encina, 2020).

## **Discussion**

The theory on the impact of women on peace accords says that when women are included, we are more likely to see a positive interpretation of peace and a peace agreement that pays attention to the underlying structures that caused the conflict and the marginalization of different people. The literature also suggest that women have a transformative effect on DDR. This study concludes that in the case of DDR policy we do not see these effects fully. Women are mentioned, which is already a drastic change from previous DDR policies and peace agreements. And the documents all acknowledge that women have a different experience than men, specific needs that should be addressed and face extra barriers in their integration due to their gender. But the documents lack a concrete plan to turn these ideas into a comprehensive strategy transforming the DDR experience of women ex-combatants. Other studies such as Ramljak (2020) and Wüstner (2017) conclude that section 3 technically does meet the standards to be qualified as having a gender-based approach. Important is to underline that both studies look at the entire section 3 and not just 3.2. The PA-X Peace Agreements Database concludes that section 3.2 makes consistent references to women (Bell et al., 2021). But interpreting a gender-based approach in such a manner would be underselling the



Colombian peace accords. If the mere mentioning of women counts as including a gender-based approach we have set the bar too low. It would not allow us to critically evaluate the influence of women on peacebuilding in a meaningful way. Moreover, it also does not match with the vision of Colombian women's movements and the *farianas*. They have a very well-defined definition of what a gender perspective is supposed to entail. They wanted the Colombian government to address the underlying causes of the marginalization of different groups in society such as its neoliberal economic system (Henshaw, 2020c; Paarlberg-Kwam, 2019). The women moreover wanted to be meaningfully included in all parts of the process, to advance their position in society and to move away from Colombia's machista culture (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2020; Paarlberg-Kwam, 2019). Neither Section 3.2., CONPES 3931, nor Soy Mujer address the underlying conditions of the conflict. The focus remains on disarmament and demobilization without a wider transformation of Colombian society (Cruz, 2020; Paarlberg-Kwam, 2019)

What is clear is that the reintegration of ex-combatants and women in specific is a controversial, difficult and unpopular topic (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). Many Colombians wanted hard punishments for ex-members of FARC and were not in favor of social DDR. So even if a comprehensive DDR would be to the benefit of the Colombian state in regard to preventing recidivism, offering elaborated DDR would be an unpopular move on their end. Especially the political and economic reintegration of ex-combatants has been a widely contested topic (Casey & Daniels, 2017; Angelo, 2016). This sentiment of the Colombian public can also be found in the 2018 election of president Duqué who opposed the peace agreement (Gómez & Montealegre, 2021). For FARC itself the right and ability to form a political party was one of its most important objectives to include in the peace accords. And that right is particularly well established in section 3.2. It seems that the individual integration of its ex-combatants was subordinate to the reintegration of FARC as an organization (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). This explains why section 3.2. is so short and limited compared to the many other sections of the peace accords. Probably there is not much to it because the negotiators just could not agree on more, they got what they wanted without stirring controversy or because there was more to score on other topics (Bell & O'Rourke, 2010). Moreover, the gender perspective of the peace accords themselves has also been controversial and received criticism in the years after the signing of the agreement (Gómez-Montealegre, 2021).

The lack of development in regard to gender and the policy and implementation of DDR needs to be understood in the wider context of the current peace process. Scientists and journalists are raising alarm, noting that the post-conflict progress is going at a 'snails' pace and that many of the things that should have been accomplished by now in regard to political integration, fighting illicit drugs and land reforms have not happened. In the last 5 years only 26% of the peace accords have been realized meaning that there is less than 10 years left to accomplish the other 74% and it seems that with each year the process loses more traction (Serrano, 2021; Redacción Política y Justicia El Tiempo, 2021; Cruz, 2020). While the pandemic plays a role in the stagnation of the process, the lack of the political will of the government is really at the heart of the problem (Serrano, 2021; Redacción Política y Justicia El Tiempo, 2021; Cruz, 2020; Revelo & Peters, 2017).

## **Observations in Colombian DDR for women**

This section offers a critical reflection on DDR experiences of women combatants in Colombia between 2008-2016 and 2017-2021 and identifies some of the key problems. This allows us to assess whether the inclusion of women in the peace process has benefited the DDR experience of women ex-combatants. This section will look at qualitative studies conducted between 2008-2021 and policy evaluation reports for the 2017-2021 period. This section will focus on the reintegration part of the DDR programs and looks into the impact of the inclusion of women on the socioeconomic and political integration of female ex-combatants. It also investigates the physical security of women ex-combatants. By focusing these two components we can assess whether DDR programs meet the goals it sets out to achieve; *“preventing civil war from recurring, mainly through improving economic development; preventing crime and violence by removing weapons from circulation and by offering ex-combatants alternative means to gain resources; stimulating civic and political participation in order to mend the feeling of injustice and to improve reintegration; healing trauma caused by the experience of war through reintegration and reconciliation with the community.”* (Ramljak, 2020, p. 17). Physical security is an important condition for ex-rebels in their decision to reintegrate and participate in a DDR program and has been promised by the Colombian state in section 2.1 of the peace agreement (Wüstner, 2017). There are however many more facets to DDR such as landownership, justice, health care, sexual and reproductive rights, stigmatization, and intersectionality in the form of sexuality and ethnicity (Ramljak, 2020; Wüstner, 2017; Sjölander, 2016; Méndez, 2012) that are not addressed by this thesis because they are beyond the scope of this study.

The studies included in this analysis are conducted in different parts of Colombia and at different ETCRs (Espacios Territoriales para la Capacitación y Reincorporación) which are camps/shelters for the reincorporation of ex-combatants. Including research from ETCRs allows us to get a more representative indication of what the effect of the peace accords have been on the current DDR experience of women ex-combatants. Moreover, this section will not solely focus on the DDR experience of FARC women as FARC combatants are often reintegrated alongside members of paramilitary groups and other guerilla movements. The research on the DDR experience of women ex-combatants is not ample enough to only include information on the reintegration of FARC combatants. Furthermore, this research project set out to study the impact of women’s inclusion on the DDR of women ex-combatants, not per se FARC women ex-combatants. However, it is important to acknowledge that the women could have different experiences due to their affiliation which this study cannot account for. For this study, the term ex-combatant is used for all women participating in a DDR program.

### **2008-2016**

#### **Socioeconomic integration**

DDR programs between 2008-2016 have been catered towards men without addressing gender or the needs of women. Moreover, they reinforced a gendered division of labor. Because family has been an important incentive for men to integrate in civilian life, DDR programs introduced a type of masculinity that was strongly tied to traditional notions of family at the expense of women (Theidon, 2009). Women were expected to stay at home with the children and DDR programs rarely provide childcare. This has posed a huge obstacle in the economic integration of women as they often missed educational training (Sjölander,

2016). Male combatants do not experience the lack of childcare provisions to hamper their participation because they are not expected to stay at home. Moreover, the monetary benefits combatants received from the government were tied to their attendance, meaning that women combatants were cut short on the financial support when missing training which put them in a vulnerable economic position (Sjölander, 2016). Moreover, some women paramilitaries expressed a loss of economic independence by demobilizing, because they used to receive an income for the AUC and had their own money (Méndez, 2012). This experience is however, specific to paramilitaries as guerilla movements do not pay wages.

The reintroduction of traditional gender notions in which women are understood as caregivers, wives and mothers clashed with the women's own conception of self. The gender identity of women combatants had been changed by their participation in the conflict. And both civilians and male combatants perceived them as not 'real' women (Theidon, 2009). Their experience as rebels made it difficult for women to return to the traditional gender roles of society and the women ex-combatants expressed that they also did not want to (Gjelsvik, 2010). Female ex-combatants were also found to struggle with integrating into their host community. Women ex-combatants rarely disclosed that they used to be combatants as they are often experienced as a danger to the host community as they transgressed both gender and societal norms. The women underlined that through their participation in DDR they felt pushed back in to the private sphere (Sjölander, 2016).

### **Political integration**

Gjelsvik (2010) found that disarmed women maintained the political ideas and principles from when they were guerillas and that women combatants have been especially frustrated with their political reintegration as DDR programs solely focused on socioeconomic reintegration even though many had political ambitions. Because of the lack of attention to their political integration there was no space for them in the Colombian political sphere. Though the women noted that this was also a problem for male participants in DDR they stressed that in their case their political participation was further hampered by Colombia's machismo in politics.

### **2017-2021**

Studies consistently underline that the gender-based approach in DDR is still not a reality (GPAZ, 2021, Kroc Institute, 2020; Izquierdo, 2018). Kroc Institute (2018) found that in 2018 only 4% of gender provisions had been fully implemented and 51% had not even been initiated. GPAZ, the main institute for the independent evaluation of the implementation of the peace process notes that provisions of the peace accords and its subsequent policy documents have only been partly achieved when looking at DDR. There is an absence of a gender-based approach in DDR programs and many barriers for women's reintegration remain present (GPAZ, 2019). Moreover, women's role in public decision-making seems to reduce with each year (GPAZ, 2019). Kroc Institute (2021) notes that while all action points established in CONPES 3931 had been initiated, barriers in women's reintegration are persistent, especially because of budget constraints and problems of different ministries and ARN.

### **Socioeconomic integration**

Childcare remains to be an obstacle in the socioeconomic integration of ex-combatants. One 2019 study states that 17% of the women sacrificed their participation in services because of childcare, and 26% of the women are sole caregivers, not participating in programs for socioeconomic integration. The only ECTRs that offer childcare are those led by the UN (Ramljak, 2020). Ramljak (2020) noted that DDR programs ignored women's request for economic care, and do not adequately address women's specific needs. Even though the women express a rejection of traditional gender notions they are rarely able to escape traditional culture and the power dynamics of society. Barrios-Sabogal and Richter (2019) found that women ex-combatants in transitional communities play a crucial role in its economic system, however, this positive relationship is dependent on the precondition of land-ownership. Women who were able to purchase land obtained economic independence while women who could not buy land tend to be dependent on others for work and income. The ability of women ex-combatants to own land fluctuated greatly between different ECTRs (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). Ramljak (2020) found a gender-based approach in ECTRs strongly dependent on strong leadership of gender committees, which differed between ECTRs. Moreover, the gender approach has not been translated well from a national to regional level and caseworkers often do not know how to interpretate a 'gender-based approach' and mistakenly think that if women participate the gender-based approach has been achieved (Perez et al., ND). Lastly many women combatants in individual reintegration processes have not been granted 'ex-combatants' status and not received financial support from the state, which disproportionately affects women as they more often opted for individual integration (Ramljak, 2020)

Moreover, the Colombian state fails to address the social stigmatization women experience, and is sometimes even an active participant in the negative discourse on women combatants, which reduces women's job opportunities (Ramljak, 2020). Both local transitional communities and women combatants support the reintegration process but on the national level there is major opposition towards their reintegration (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). The government - under Duqué's lead - has started to attack the gender-based approach of the accords. In this narrative the gender components get referred to as 'gender ideology' which installs a 'homosexual dictatorship' and aims to 'destroy' the traditional family (Pábon & Aguirre, 2021). The harmful discourse of the state also reduces women's agency as a political subject.

### **Political integration**

Like before, many of the women have political ambitions and through the peace process more spaces have opened up for their political participation. Women have expressed that they could run for mayor and form and partake in decision making boards (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). This is a big departure from signals of earlier studies in which women expressed frustration with having no opportunities for political integration. Further evidence of political integration comes from the women senators representing FARC (Ehasz, 2020). Voting remains a problem as only a small part is able to vote because of specific regulations in voting registration (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2019). The missed guarantees of physical security complicate women's advancements in politics. For example, FARC campaigns during the 2018 ended abruptly due to harassment and death threats former combatants received (Barrios-Sabogal & Richter, 2020; Ramljak, 2020). The increased murder rate of social leaders and women's right activists has further discouraged female combatants to participate in politics and has also hurt women's socioeconomic integration (Ramljak, 2020). GPAZ (2021) identifies physical insecurity as one of the key obstacles regarding women's DDR.

Duqué's 'gender ideology' narrative on the peace agreement further re-marginalizes women's combatants and inhibits their political reintegration as it delegitimizes them and their work as political entities (Ehasz, 2020). Moreover, the emphasis of the family in DDR only empowers women as mothers and wives, not as political beings (Izquerido, 2018). At the same time, *Mujeres Farianas* has become one of the most important women's political advocacy organizations in Colombia, providing ex-combatants with a new political space (Phelan and True, 2021; Henshaw, 2020)

Even with the new policy on DDR, many of the problems for women's reintegration remain in place. The Commission for Monitoring and Verification of the Peace Agreement (CSIVI) noted that the implementation of the gender-based approach in regards to female combatants is incredibly fragmented and insufficient because the state itself does not have a comprehensive understanding of the subject in public policy (Pábon & Aguirre, 2021). We can, however, see that through the peace agreements provisions on FARC's political integration and the formation of *Mujeres Farianas* during the peace talks women also obtain new opportunities for political participation. Any improvement in socioeconomic integration seems to depend on leadership and it fluctuates highly between ECTRs showing that CONPES and section 3.2 alone do not offer enough guidelines for caseworkers to implement a gender-based approach regardless of their leadership's commitment to it.

## Discussion

This study shows that the reality of women's inclusion and peace processes is much more complicated than a 'throw women in the mix and stir' mentality. To understand the moderate effect of women's inclusion on the DDR policy documents and implementation phase it is important to reflect on Paffenholz's framework introduced in the theory section of this paper. Paffenholz and colleagues (2016) pointed out how and where women were included matters for the size of their impact. In the Colombian case we observe that in the pre-negotiation phase women were excluded from the direct peacebuilding process and were only present through women's movements and politicians who encouraged the peace talks. They did not have a seat at the table during initial conversations in Norway (Burton, 2018). In the negotiation phase, women were initially again absent at the table. Women's movements were active outside of the direct talks but were told that 'now is not the time' for them to be heard, and this only started to change after international organizations and other governments started to press for women's inclusion and raised alarm (Ralmjak, 2020). This resulted in the appointment of two women plenipotentiary negotiators in 2013, which has been interpreted by some as tokenism (Ehasz, 2020; Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). A gender-subcommittee was formed in 2014 which was almost exclusively female but at the same time workshops on highly gendered topics such as a legal workshop on victims of sexual violence yet again did not include one single woman (Bouvier, 2016). For the current implementation phase, it is not always clear how and if women are included. While the Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (JEP) and CSIVI have included a considerable number of women, in the overall implementation phase the absence of women has been notable (Rijlaarsdam, 2020; Bouvier, 2016).

**Early access** is an important factor which the women in Colombia did not enjoy, they are completely absent during the first phase and are introduced half way through the second phase. By 2014 when the gender sub-commission has been installed three of the six points of the peace talks have already been decided upon (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). The factor of **direct representation at the negotiation table** also plays a role in the Colombian case, where initially there is no representation. The two women plenipotentiaries appointed by Santos later on in the process do not directly represent women's movements nor have any experience with gender issues, which makes their ability to directly represent women questionable (Phelan & True, 2021). Moreover, in **problem-solving workshops** we witness that women and other marginalized groups are not consistently included on topics that concern them directly (Bouvier, 2016). An **inclusive commission** is created but only holds advisory power, and negotiators were not obligated to do anything with their advice (Bouvier, 2016). **Public decision-making** in the form of a referendum has in regard to women's provisions only proven to be disadvantageous. The referendum was not a necessary component for the passing of the peace accords but was a strategic move of Santos which backfired, and resulted in gender provisions being revised or taken out (Butron; 2018; Kroc Institute, 2018). Women have been included in the peace process but when looking at how and where women are located in the process, their inclusion is consistently less than ideal. **Support structures** have also been identified as vital for the positive impact of women, and in the case of Colombia, support structures in regard to safety has been a problematic component. Guaranteeing the physical security of ex-combatants, civil leaders, activists and women is a crucial condition for rolling out the implementation of the peace accords adequately (Cruz, 2020; Pabón & Aguirre, 2021). In the last 5 years hundreds ex-combatants, civil leaders and activists have been murdered and NGOs stress that the government is not doing enough to create a safe environment that facilitates the process (Guadán, 2018; Perez et

al., ND; Cruz, 2020). Civilian and combatant women express not wanting to participate in peacebuilding projects fearing repercussions (Perez et al., ND). In rural areas previously under FARC-EP control the state has not stepped in, creating a power vacuum in which criminal (drug) organizations have taken control and exposing campesinos to more violence instead of less (Cruz, 2020). **Funding** forms another factor hampering the process. While the peace accords have been considered relatively low-cost (Peters, 2021), the government is not spending the money they had pledged resulting in peacebuilding projects being chronically underfunded. Some experts blame this on the structural corruption in Colombia but others stress the lack of political will of the state (Cruz, 2020). This problem is further worsened by the fact that with the presidential change of Obama to Trump no American money has been pledged to Colombia's peace process (Perez et al., ND). Lastly, scholars have not been able to find documents on the allocation of the budget for gender provisions, suggesting that there might not be any financial resources to realize the gender ambitions (Perez et al., ND) **Elite support** is also vital for the success of the peace accords which in Colombia has been rocky from the start. Political Christian elites have opposed the gender-based approach and publicly fought women and LGBT provisions even equating these provisions with 'the homosexual dictatorship' of Colombian society and are currently campaigning against its 'gender ideology' (Pábon & Aguirre, 2021; Perez et al., ND). Moreover, elites also deliberately hold back the process of rural land reforms and political participation as they are big land owners and benefit from a closed political system (Phelan & True, 2021). Analyzing **Preparedness for collaboration**, we see that the government takes no initiative in women's inclusion and is only willing to incorporate women after experiencing repeated external pressure (Céspedes-Báez & Ruiz, 2018). Regarding **public buy-in**, one can observe a strong split between those who want the conflict to end no matter what cost and those who believe that ex-combatants and FARC-EP got off too easy. Duqué has been campaigning for a peace accord's 'light' version which would roll back many of the gender and ex-combatant provisions potentially at the cost of the peace with FARC-EP. It is not just the resistance of the political and Christian elite that hampers the progress in the Colombian peace accords, civil society needs to overcome its deeply rooted structural grievances and discriminatory patterns to facilitate the implementation of the peace accords. While the gender-based perspective initially meant that these historical grievances needed to be reconciled and overcome, the later definition in the peace accords does not really address them (Phelan & True, 2021; Perez, ND; Burton, 2018) Which brings us to this gap between the ambitions of the peace accords and the reality of Colombian society. Colombia has a *machista* culture, many people are deeply religious and hold traditional attitudes, especially regarding gender roles. Colombia's society knows a lot of different forms of homophobia, racism and misogyny. This leaves us to the question 'how well can a progressive accord be implemented in a conservative society?'. **International and regional actors' influence**, Bouvier underlines that women's absence in the implementation phase in Colombia is not due to a shortage of competent women but that without external pressure peace process often start to reflect and reintroduce power dynamics found in broader society (Bouvier, 2016). While we cannot say no external pressure has been exercised in the last years however, the Duqué administration seems less receptive of this than Santos' (Cruz, 2020). Another important factor has been the immense **heterogeneity of women's identity** that is not reflected in women's inclusion in Colombia. While women have been civil leaders, politicians, victims and rebels, the incorporation of women in the Colombian peace agreement remained largely restricted to women's victimhood (Céspedes-Báez, 2019)

There is one important factor not included in the framework that has been important in understanding the Colombian case. There is a major lack of **trust** between FARC-EP and the government in which each other's shortcomings are constantly understood as a breach of trust



and a lack of genuine commitment. This results in the government threatening to overhaul the agreement to a conservative version, even though Duqué does not hold the political power to make these drastic changes (the peace agreement can only be revised after 3 presidential terms). Disenfranchised FARC members in turn have joined ELN and also formed a new guerrilla of ex-FARC members over the border in Venezuela. Both parties fear that the other party will abandon the peace project and especially people in the countryside are concerned the conflict will start again (Cruz, 2020). This lack of trust and its negative effect on the development of the Colombian peace accords is interesting in relation to gender. Women like Piedad Cordoba Ruiz who have played a key role in building the trust between FARC-EP and the government that opened up the possibility of talks in Norway. This suggests that the women's inclusion in the implementation phase might be important for maintaining trust between all parties.

Though experts think it is unlikely that returning to conflict is the true intention of the state, the lack of political commitment of the government to any aspect of the accords is profound (Cruz, 2020). While the government says it is committed to positive peace, no peace talks have been undertaken between ELN and the state, meaning that part of the conflict is still continuing (Cruz, 2020). The state has been an active participant in the negative discourse on the agreement and the gender-based approach (Phelan & True, 2021). This lack of political will in regard to the gender-based approach is especially apparent as there has been no **prior commitment to gender**. Not once has the women's inclusion in the process been initiated by the state. The accords make no reference to resolution 1325 and still to this day has not developed a plan to incorporate resolution 1325 in any peacebuilding project (Oion-Encina, 2020; Burton, 2018). The lack of political commitment has been noted very early on in the implementation process. In 2018, just two years after the signing of the agreement scholars pointed out that participation of women in the peacebuilding process was not receiving enough attention (Boutron, 2018) and that only 15% of the 119 gender dispositions of the agreement had been implemented at the operational level (Sabogal & Richter, 2019). One civil representative noted *todo se queda en el papel* (everything stays on paper), pointing out the huge gap between the promises of the peace accords and the current state of the implementation of gender provisions (Perez et al., ND).

Some have accused Duqué of spoiling the peace, arguing that with the ceasefire and partial demobilization of FARC the government has already gotten everything of the peace accords that they wanted, leaving no incentives for further cooperation and implementation (Sandoval, 2021; Cruz, 2020).

The one factor that stands out in favor of women's impact is the **presence of strong women's groups**. One could argue that despite all of the factors that reduce women's impact they have managed to transform the peace process. They have pushed for the initiation of the peace talks, put the victims of sexual violence once and for all on the map and successfully increased women's inclusion in the negotiation phase, transforming the accords to being the most progressive peace agreement in human history.

## **Limitations**

The thesis focused on the impact of women's inclusion on DDR for women combatants. This is, however, just a minor part of the entire agreement and because of the controversy surrounding the topic the findings of this study might not be representative of the impact of women's inclusion on other facets of the peacebuilding process. Caution is needed when generalizing from this study. Moreover, this study has only looked at socioeconomic and

political integration while there are many other components of DDR policy equally important that also need to be investigated. This project has focused on the influence of women's inclusion on the DDR for women combatants, however, it is just as important to investigate how women's inclusion has influenced DDR for male, LGBTQ and Afro and Native combatants. Lastly, civilians also benefit from women's inclusion regarding DDR, as women in communities near ECTRs run a high risk of experiencing assault and partners of ex-combatants experience higher rates of domestic violence, therefore future studies need to research if and how the new generation DDR has changed civilian life.

## Conclusion

Answering the research question of ‘what has been the impact of women’s inclusion on the key DDR documents and the implementation phase of DDR for women ex-combatants?’ this study finds a moderate effect of women’s inclusion on DDR documents and the DDR implementation phase for women ex-combatants. The role of women as combatants is acknowledged throughout the documents. Moreover, all three documents analyzed express an awareness of the fact women (combatants) have different experiences in relation to the conflict, different needs in the peacebuilding process and face barriers in relation to their gender that need to be addressed. This study, however, did not find a positive definition of peace throughout the documents. Neither the marginalization of many different people in Colombian society nor the daily violence against women is addressed by the documents investigated in this study. The gender-based approach is not fully formulated in key DDR policy documents, lacking a cohesive plan with concrete measures to realize the ambitions regarding women ex-combatants’ DDR process. This reduces the impact of women’s inclusion on the implementation phase and potentially suggests that gender provisions need to be specified during and not after the signing of a peace agreement to allow for greater impact by women’s inclusion and ensure the practical translations of a gender-based approach are incorporated.

This thesis also set out to answer ‘how can we explain this outcome?’. All three terms of performativity, pragmatism and progress are necessary in understanding what really happened. Including women in the process has been a pragmatic move for the state to gain international support and praise for the accords. It was also a way to silence criticism. Its performativity is exposed by the fact that both during and after the peace talks the government has been slacking in realizing the gender provisions of the agreement and actively has been campaigning against its gender-focus in some cases. This study illuminates the gap between what the government said it was going to do and what it is actually doing. At the same time, real progress has been made in regard to the political integration of women ex-combatants and the gender-based approach, though imperfectly applied, in DDR documents is still a huge advancement in Colombia and peacebuilding worldwide. One could argue that in spite of the lack of political will of the state to guarantee and facilitate many components of the peace process, some of the gender-based approach did find its way into the post-conflict peacebuilding process.

To better understand the lack of political will of the Colombian government regarding the implementation phase of the process and its gender-based approach, future research must explore the Colombian case at the hand of spoiler theory. This study also underlines the complexity of women’s inclusion in peace process and identifies an additional factor of trust (or lack thereof) between the actors involved which influences women’s impact on the peacebuilding process. Future research should further investigate the relation between women’s inclusion in peace processes and trust.

Lastly, this thesis recommends the Colombian state to formulate a concrete plan to incorporate resolution 1325 in the current peace process and those who might follow, and for the international community to reinforce their support to Colombia’s women’s movements to guarantee women’s inclusion in the peacebuilding process to improve Colombian’s chances to *real lasting* peace.

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