



Research Paper: Snapshot on the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) negotiations: in the Perspective of Sudanese Women Participation

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Abstract

The paper evaluated the extent to which the wants, needs and preferences of women were reflected in JPA negotiations, including the UNSCR 1325 agenda. Based on the interviews repertoire, women particularly at the official track were misleadingly represented, given no real space to reflect perspectives. Women's substantive representation was hindered, the processes of the peace talks were top-down semi-militarized and men dominated. However, the paper reveals that advocacy and mobilization efforts in track two resulted in 40% in JPA accord percentage. The paper goes on to say that women's participation in post-conflict peace-making efforts in Sudan requires change of attitudes and structures which separates women and peacebuilding decision making.



Introduction:

After the December 2019 revolution, Sudanese people were passionate, ambitious and had the brightest expectations for their national future. In late 2020, the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) was negotiated and signed by transitional government, armed groups and other groups representing the civil opposition. The JPA was formed from the DNF of the December revolution DNA; it embodied its iconic slogans. The agreement would have never come to be realized without the peaceful revolution that demised the dictatorship. The constitutional charter was amended to include JPA, in a way meant to achieve the revolution's mottos which were freedom, peace and justice. It was seen by many as an opportunity to build a new Sudan on new foundations.

The agreement aimed to end the war in Sudan, reform the security sector to build a professional military address the root-causes of conflict, address exclusion and the marginalization and find a suitable system of governance that could manage heterogeneous interests, make development responsive to need of country's peripheries, ensure participation and inclusion of marginalized groups, and all community segments in peace processes and laying the foundation for democracy and political stability.

The JPA was divided into geographic tracks; Darfur, Eastern, northern, central the Two Areas (the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, both partly controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement – North) tracks, of the JPA. The agreement divided into tracks to prioritize issues according to the specificity of the regions, and to ensure more inclusion and participation in a political decision making. It covers eight protocols, including: power and wealth-sharing, justice, accountability and reconciliation, compensation and reparations, internally displace persons and refugees, development of the nomadic and herders sector in the Darfur Region, land and hawakeer (customary land tenure), and permanent ceasefire and final security agreement.

Negotiating the agreement was itself a huge challenge, signing it was seen as true step toward achieving the transition to democracy, particularly, since it was after 2019's peaceful democratic revolution "the Sudanese people rightfully wondered whether the signing of the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan (JAPS) in 2020 would usher in a new period of stability and democracy" (Bormann and Elbadawi, 2021) The JPA was to engage all community segments in comprehensive, participatory and inclusive peace processes. Therein, building on the repertoire established by UN Women Peace and Security agenda, more importantly, the resolution 1325, which acknowledges and uplifts the role of women to reach peace and justice, and necessitates the participation of women in peace and security decision-making.

This study evaluates the extent to which women leaders/groups/grass-roots and the women activists, advocates, journalists and women in different aspects of life, involved the negotiating processes leading to the final agreement including in the design, consultations and negotiations.



The study sheds a light on the role of Sudanese women in engaging UN security council's resolution 1325, on Women Peace and Security WPS agenda at negotiation. Moreover, this study aspires to contribute to the current debate on women and peace in Sudan.

The topic is worthy of in-depth study, because many scholars have focused on security, economy and political side of JPA, but the linkage between peace and women role has been ignored, the paper endeavors to fill the gap in literature, and demonstrates the linkages between peace and women role in Sudan.

The paper based on studies, observation and has employed peace anthropology, to get substantiated answers from the four semi-structured interviews I conducted. The interviews aimed to test with more quantitative work. Then providing out the findings, and the recommendations for women and post-conflict peace strategies.

Literature review:

The review analysis works undertaken by meritorious scholars who overview JPA, resolution 1325, and the women war and peacebuilding.

The JPA was divided into geographic tracks to ensure broader participation of Sudanese community segments, and for the respect of region's specificity and issues, has to some extent affected the power relations in Sudan, as many representatives of armed movements join transitional government.

The approach is being criticized by scholars, Thomas stated that: "One of the reasons the JPA has been singularly unsuccessful in addressing the spatial and social inequality shaping Sudan's crisis is its five-track approach." (Thomas 2022).

Though approach didn't sustain peace; in a country like Sudan, with many experiments of failed bilateral, a single platform for dialogue, even if it is divided into geographic tracks, Instead of fragmented bilateral or regional round tables. A single platform of dialogue that brings together many stakeholders representing many regions and community sectors, like women in a one round table it provides spaces for marginalized segments to reflect diverse perspectives.

Women face huge risks during conflict – and these risks often reflect gender inequality, they lose intimate partners, children, financial resources and properties. Their caring responsibilities may increase, and they, get exposed to forms of GBVs including abduction for physical, sexualized slavery and or sex as tools for war to provoke opponents. "Women and girls comprise 80% of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually, with the majority (79%) trafficked for sexual exploitation" (UN Women n.d.).



Women are prerequisite for the establishment for durable peace, in war and peace women engages positively to can enhance morals, penetrate notions and more skills and tools for peace, communications and relationships with perpetrators, tolerance and advocating nonviolence strategies, interpositioning conflicts, establishment of EWER systems, monitoring and or negotiating peace these engagements women are more likely to manage, more than men. is a prerequisite for the establishment for durable peace.

Therefore, the United Nations has passed the resolution 1325, on women's protection and the participation in peace processes, which has found great acceptance. Notwithstanding, women are largely marginalized and neglected, in many communities and their role is determined at housework and childcare. "Women consistently remain a minority of participants in peacebuilding projects; receive less attention than men in peacebuilding policies; and gender analysis rarely informs peacebuilding strategies" (Donna, 2000). Yet, the world is not a solid block, there's spectrum of diversity in each nation's cultures. In brief, Sudan is a country where markets are unevenly spreading and creating new forms of inequality, that are both spatial (geographic) and social, in addition, women are being neglected in peace decisions, is mostly in a pre-capitalist states or transitional state, in which socio-cultural characteristics strictly govern gender roles, and causes conflicts, exclusion and marginalization. Also governed by contemporary processes, like market production overtaking household production, new labour arrangements within households, migration, displacement, urban labour markets, militarization of male youth – as well as mass violence.

Despite of fact confirmed by evidence researches: that women participation on peace decisions is more likely to promote and sustain peace. Yet, the approach is criticized by some feminist scholars "Women's participation in peace processes is no longer seen as essential by feminist theorists like Elshtain and Goldstein who instead support a more thorough examination of female coping mechanisms in civilizations that have experienced war and civil war" (Goldstein, 2003).

In contrast to Elshatin argument, women's effective inclusion in peace processes is a prominent thought in this modern era, and it proved to be successful, it's a part and parcel of their rights, all people are equal and free in rights and duties, and have the same rights of citizenship without discrimination for meaningful participation in policies of their countries, it helps articulate perspectives of all, to the future that concerns all.

It should be taken for granted that the inclusive peace processes through equal gender participation is more effective and last longer. "The attempts for peacekeeping and resolution of conflicts are ineffective without taking a gender-specific context into account".(Reimann, 2012).

In the vein of women participation, it has been stated by research: "It is founded on the view that groups of women often have a stronger commitment to the ending of violence and the maintenance of long term



peace than groups of men, and thus often constitute a highly motivated and able group of stakeholders for peacebuilding, who nonetheless are often ignored” (Donna, 2000).

Certainly there will not be real positive peace, without gender justice in peace decision making, without consulting women who are much impacted. “political correctness to have a gender-specific framework for peace processes; rather, it’s a matter of factual analysis and the viability of an equitable approach” (Gokarn, 2023).

In addition, bringing beneficial impact of post-conflict peace processes, the primacy of diverse civil society groups perspectives is indispensable, particularly women, rather than only official parties involve. women inclusion in transitional periods is hopeful to all, its instrumental to ensure the inclusion of issues and solutions, it reduces recurrence of wars, and brings greater legitimacy and the successful peace results.

The greater participation of women from various backgrounds in peace-processes provides spaces address their issues, needs and preferences of all levels, the greater transparent and painstaking efforts in the fulfilment of resolution 1325’s objectives, as so to bring sustain peace, gender justice and social change. their experience of violence confirms the likelihood of women to use peaceful mindset seeking containment to prevent, mitigate, resolve violent conflicts.

In Sudan women continue to underrepresented, because the imbalance in gender power dynamics preventing women to play a real role in peace processes, in tandem with patriarchal concepts that frames women as inferiors. Most explicitly, the 30 years long last theocratic governance that undermined equal gender citizenship are factors downgraded women.

The theocrats ignored the women groups participation and inclusion in the peace processes as indispensable key strategic to peace and success of transition. If women feel that they effectively been participated, it brings the sense of ownership, more importantly, it brings diverse perspectives, skills and experiences and it facilitates the peace and nation building.

Spotlight on WPS agenda and resolution 1325 in JPA processes:

Oct 2000, marked a significant event in international arena, the United Nations Security Council has passed the Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security WPS, which globally acknowledged and found momentum as intrinsic central charter for durable peace. “The biggest potential of affecting the prospects for peace, however, still seems to lie in 1325's invitation for the participation of women in decision-making "at all levels" concerning peace and security” (Cohn, 2017).



The rationality which lies at heart of peace studies assures that women are best placed to understand their own issues, conditions, preferences and potential solutions. Consequently, they have the right to go to the table to discuss, determine and decide important decisions affecting their own future, that certainly brings positive impact on peace processes.

Therefore, the resolution aimed to; counter oppression, exploitation, and marginalization of women in war zones, and to magnify women participation in peace, security decision making agenda efforts. UNSC and international agencies encourages states and parties to conflict all where to consider protection and the immunity of vulnerable women from all forms of GBVs and SGBVs.

The operative part of Resolution 1325 (2000) states that the security Council “urges member states to ensure the representation of women at all levels of decision-making in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for preventing and resolving conflicts.” (Secretary – General, 2002).

It demands that every side in the conflict take extra precautions to safeguard women and girls in conflict situations against gender-based violence, notably rape and other kinds of sexual abuse (Secretary-General, 2002).

Therefore, the absence of real representation of women in conflict transformation tables has dire ramifications, particularly since the UNSC specify 1325 (2000), and the other resolutions that goes along with; 1820 (2008). 1888 (2009). 1889 (2009). 1860 (2010). 2106 (2013).

Although, UN has no specific mechanisms to impose the resolution 1325, yet it is considered as binding on states, stakeholders and all parties to conflict. For peace deals to achieve the declared conflict resolution and peacebuilding goals, they must take into account the women, and their diverse issues, starting from consultations phase, key negotiations to post-conflict peace activities implementation.

The desperate need to recognize women, to articulate women’s agenda and ensure meaningful participation of women in peace and security issues in post-conflict peace arrangements. If women did not go to the table, to meaningfully participate in peace negotiation tracks, lots of their issues will not be addressed, and their important insights in post-conflict peacebuilding implementation strategies, and in the development stage will be lost.

Therefore, women engagement is effective way in peace-making, feeling of being participated evokes human sympathy, increases the ownership and belonging, consequently love of the home, curiosity, enhancement of community cohesion and shared vision to play a real role in the national processes. In in another words, broader participation reduces elites capture and corruption; it strengthens community oversight and durable peace.



The question of women and peace in the Sudanese political sphere remain current, particularly given the critical role played by women during the December revolution, but the late participation of Sudanese women in JPA negotiations drew the attention of many observers. The JPA architects designed the peace processes given utmost attention on security sector reform, while some extent overlooked human security, protection of civilians particularly women protection.

In 2020, Sudan has ratified the resolution 1325, redress grievances of largely neglected women, the resolution and hailed by national and international actors and was thought to usher in a new period of women advancement in peace processes, democracy and nation building.

As a response, Sudan has developed and validated national action plan (SDNAP) with four pillars prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. It was hoped to execute through a joint initiative between the Ministry of Labor and Social Development with the Geneva Institute for Human Rights – Sudan Office, and funded by the Embassy of Norway in Sudan.

SDNAP Aimed to operationalize the resolution, and amplify WPS agenda in policy programing regarding peace and security, it defined some main objectives; women participation in peacebuilding, peacekeeping, women participation at the all levels of peace negotiation, participation in relief, rehabilitation and development, the recognition of women rights during, pre and post-conflict and the protection of women from all forms violence against women.

The advent of SDNAP was a high time to start crystalizing strategic agenda, synergizing tremendous efforts and was time for women to feel safer, be tokens, ambassadors and guardian of peace in a country torn and fragile by prolonged lean violence conflict between the heartland and marginalized peripheries.

Women Leaders Interviews Analysis:

To delve deeply into the impact of women participation in JPA negotiation, summarizes the women role in the official track negotiations of protocols, and analyze women role in the track two, resolution 1325, women and peace elements, and some other issues; interviews were conducted with five women leaders, three represented in the official tracks; government, SLM – TC official track, SPLM- North, one political activist/observer and one represented "MANSAM" the largest women group in Sudan. And There were only slight discrepancies observed when interviewing them.

Although the women representation in track two of the negotiations has found explicit political and diplomatic acceptance from the parties to the peace process, mediators and international agencies. Yet it has come after several sessions of official negotiations commenced, most of the interviewees attributed to the two factor; first the negotiations were based on a sovereignty council-rebel dyad, which has given a



greater role for military mentality who do not put importance upon women's participation, resulted in making some indirect degrees of barricades to filibuster women's genuine engagement in the official process, and the second; at the get go, there were no initiatives from relevant actors to encourage, urge or awake women's mettle to participate.

Interviewee confirmed that the effective coordination between few women who participated early in the commence of track one negotiation, with the Sudanese Women Movement Institutions such as: women members of revolutionary front coalition parties, "MANSAM" group, Women Union and No for Women Oppression and other activists, were able to lobby, pressure and carve out greater spaces to mainstream the agreement and pass provisions through the resolution 1325, which were very successful to enhance broader participation at track two. Yet, women contribution at official track remained weak and narrowed into general talks, rather than engaging in major issues, mysteries and secrets of the important protocols like security sector reform, power-sharing...etc.

One of the major issues that negatively impacted effective participation of women at official track table was the military control over the negotiation processes. Interviewee stated that the civilian side was supposed to be more influential, but by virtue of the partnership military presence was a higher and powerful, their influence was stronger, because they were able to control over the transitional government at the expense of civilians, but the civilian voice was supposed to be the higher, because most of the issues on discussion table were civil-based including women issues.

In the official track, men were overwhelming majority or more than 70% of participants while women were 14 only, two government representatives and the rest 12 were represented at negotiation per each party two women, except for Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), which was able to bring five women to the table. While the track two representatives were 19; 15 for "MANSAM" group, 2 for Women Union, 2 for No for Oppressing Women. Women efforts in the two track culminated into considerable success, as they were able to unify and consolidate women agenda through the resolution 1325, and articulate provisions and get 40% in JPA accord, which was included in constitutional charter and enhanced with SDNAP for the implementation.

the women from Abdulaziz Al Helu and Abdul Wahid Nur administrate areas didn't participate as the two movement didn't signed the agreement. some interviewees consider this impropriety as the resolution 1325 includes women in war and peace and their voices are important in their areas.

Notwithstanding Some interviewees confirmed the terrific welcome reception of women in the second track, others confirmed that some leaders and or negotiators tried to undermine women engagement at official track, and attributed saying: men cannot perceive women in the official track to discuss the power-sharing or security arrangement protocols, simply they think is the role for men.



Therefore, she believes that despite the small number of women in the official negotiation process, is still considered as an achievement, as it was achieved after the uphill efforts, communications and coordination between women in both government and parties to peace processes, who were able to pressure their party leaders and negotiate percentage for participation based on the number of women in their parties and the importance of their role in peace decisions as stated by international community.

The all official delegations were led by men, leadership in charge managing the negotiation processes were also men take-turns. E.g the head of the negotiating delegation and the rapporteur were circulated among political factions which are all led by men, the official spokesperson of the peace process was also a man and the most of peace protocols sessions were managed by men, while women are given minor tasks in the official track, sometimes they can only provide opinions in plenary sessions.

It is clear that negotiations vision, strategy, and attitudes were built on a male based mentality, women participation was a misleading par excellence. Yet, through track two efforts, and the support by United State Department of Global Women Issues, UN women and INGOs were able to discuss and include many in gender provision, in addition to the 1325 national action plan.

One of the interlocutors stressed that the best thing she saw in Juba was the resolution 1325, with the four pillars, Sudan national action plan, and the data she gathered, and the rest of the time spent in the hotel with her friends chatting, sleeping, enjoying food and beverages.

So the absence of vision and strategy for women participation was very clear, they were overlooked in the official kick-off of JPA, preliminary meetings, delegations and committee's formation and negotiations. The official process structure of JPA wasn't deigned to maintain women participation and inclusivity or to repose to the wants, needs and preferences which was obvious at the formation of transitional government that politics are led by men, although women were given 40% of power but at implementation the percentage was less than 25% as stated, transitional government institutions were men led, and men dominated, the act of patriarchy was very clear.

The exclusion and the marginalization are the top of the issue need to be addressed, including gender-based exclusion added a layer of marginalization and gender inequality, the reason lay behind are; indifference, lack of political foresight to advance women's participation, long standing period of theocracy governance, patriarchal mentality, conservative backgrounds of the society.

The paper conclusions and findings:



The paper explored the literature on the women and post-conflict peace-making, and penetrated analytical arguments on participation and or representation of wide array of women representing different groups to enhance gender-based perspective, and the necessity of WPS agenda in durable peace.

Despite the fact that women have participated and gained relative progress in JPA, comparing with other Sudanese agreements. Yet, it was a top-down semi-militarized agreement negotiated in a narrow framework controlled by military faction at parties to peace processes, the matter that undermined the effective participation of women at track one. The representation of women in both government and opposition side was mere misleading, while agreement was like a political coalition between military elites, which was virtually culminated into Oct 2021 coup.

The agreement disclosed a huge gap between the broad aspirations of the women who led the December revolution and the structure of the politics in Sudan. Then, the prerequisites for realizing women's objectives run counter JPA processes which designed by patriarchy consciousness. Yet, women movement proven the ability to mobilize efforts and enhance gender equality and WPS agenda, they employed variety of advocacy techniques to broaden the participation, driven by real desire for peace and democracy.

Although women at official track maintained the right of women participation in track two, yet women in track two were able to fill the representation gap to actual participation, it was a key for creating policy platform for women to express their wants, needs and preferences and connected women with relevant actors and worked for policy programing. while their counterpart at track one, were misleadingly represented, because of military elites' capture to the negotiation spaces.

It's visible that women have no leading positions at Sudanese political parties. This has effected at their status in peace decision-making, and makes men forefront and women back. there's need for openness and development of women within the role as political party's leaders, bearing in mind women role not only in gender issues but also in national future decision making.

In Sudan the fragile context the UN agencies, states and other international agencies to provide consistent support and remain diligent, hopeful and mindful to international accord relating to women, to integrate gender issues social, political, security and economic aspects of life.

Women's successes in Sudan are true step in the right direction, yet the emphasize shouldn't be only focused on securing women's participation at the peace table, but ever the value is in-depth discussion on minds that produces structural barriers and sustains them. to change the attitudes, institutions, structures and cultural norms which separates women and power. Otherwise, it would be entering and exiting the negotiations halls and without positive results.



Also what does matter is how the agreement is gender sensitive and not about the percentages, to what extent the agreement considers women needs in different peripheries of Sudan, and how it does consider IDP women, the agreement was not gender sensitive.

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