MAPPING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mapping Women’s Participation in Peace Processes conference brought together 50 practitioners, policy makers, women from conflict-affected nations, advocates, and academics from around Asia and the Pacific to discuss the barriers and opportunities for the effective implementation of gender-sensitive peace agreements. It was hosted as part of the Australian Research Council Linkage Project, Towards Inclusive Peace: Mapping Gender Provisions in Peace Agreements, 2000-2016, that is partnered with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The conference had three aims:

1. To discuss current research on women’s participation in peace processes and the implementation of gender provisions in peace agreements;
2. To explore strategies for advancing women’s meaningful participation in peace and post-conflict processes in Asia and the Pacific;
3. To build a gender, peace and security research network in Asia and the Pacific to encourage knowledge-sharing and promote collaboration on women’s peace and security participation.

In exploring these objectives, speakers and participants reflected on women’s experiences in peace processes and peace implementation in Bougainville, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Thailand. Representatives of governments (Australia, Canada, Colombia, Norway, USA) and international organisations such as UN Department of Political Affairs, UN Women, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also participated.

The following key points emerged from the conference discussions:

ADVANCING WOMEN’S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

- Safety initiatives to address the gender-specific insecurity women face in post-conflict situations should be prioritised;
- Peace mediators, negotiators, and facilitators must use gender-sensitive conflict analysis that draws from consultations with conflict-affected women’s groups;
- All parties to peace negotiations should be encouraged to adopt gender quotas in building their teams;
- Adequate resourcing for women’s caring responsibilities enables their participation in peace processes;
- Strategies to enhance women’s participation must recognise their diverse roles, identities and political contexts. There should be an intersectional and inclusive approach to facilitating women’s participation;
- Long-term, core-funding of women’s organisations is crucial to support women’s ongoing participation in post-conflict societies.

ADVANCING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

- Researchers should continue to document women’s experiences in peace processes to enable a solid knowledge base and comparison across cases;
- More research is needed on men’s performance in negotiations as men to highlight the androcentric bias that is present in peace processes;
- Strategic collaboration and coordination around research should be considered to avoid duplication and research fatigue;
- Translate research into local languages to ensure its accessibility and allow for its dissemination;
- Researchers should collaborate with local civil society and/or local universities to ensure research findings are disseminated into local communities and are used to support evidence-based policy and decision-making.
BACKGROUND

The Mapping Women’s Participation in Peace Processes conference draws upon the aforementioned three-year Towards Inclusive Peace research project, housed at Monash University’s Gender, Peace and Security Centre. This project has three goals: (1) to understand the circumstances under which gender provisions are included (or excluded) in peace agreements; (2) to explore the extent to which these gender provisions are then implemented; (3) to analyse the impact that their implementation (or lack of) has upon women’s participation and gender equality in post-conflict societies. The findings of this research are available on the project’s website, and key findings are highlighted in Box 1 below.

This research contributes to global efforts to increase women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has promoted a “surge in diplomacy for peace” that is underpinned by his commitment to gender parity in the UN and women’s participation in peace mediation. Most recently, in his 2018 annual report on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Secretary-General Guterres called for a redoubling of efforts to promote gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements and the meaningful participation of women in the design, monitoring and implementation of peace agreements, with a special mention of young women. This includes tangible mechanisms, modalities and commitments to implement gender provisions.

This call is being echoed by UN member states. During the October 2018 UN Security Council (UNSC) Open Debate on WPS, member states, including Australia, highlighted the importance of women’s participation in securing lasting peace agreements. Australia further noted that those peace agreements must be gender-sensitive. In a gender analysis of the 2018 UNSC Open Debate, 76 of the 81 representatives (94 per cent) discussed the importance of participation, with 38 of those representatives (47 per cent) referring specifically to women’s role as mediators, negotiators or participants during peace processes.

BOX 1: KEY FINDINGS

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE PEACE: MAPPING GENDER PROVISIONS IN PEACE AGREEMENTS

KEY FINDINGS:

To date, the research has found:

- There has been an inconsistent commitment to the inclusion of gender provisions in peace agreements since the adoption in October 2000 of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- However, the likelihood of achieving a peace agreement with gender provisions increases when women’s representation in national parliaments increases and when women’s civil society participation increases.
- Similarly, women’s participation in elite peace processes is critical to improving the likelihood of a gender-sensitive agreement;
- Where strong gender provisions are present in peace agreements, they are overwhelmingly more likely to be in the major agreements within a peace process, especially constitutions, but also final/comprehensive agreements.
CONFERENCE FINDINGS

Building upon this research, participants at the Mapping Women’s Participation in Peace Processes conference discussed the barriers, opportunities and unintended consequences of efforts to implement the gender provisions of peace agreements, and to enhance women’s post-conflict participation. Four themes emerged from these discussions:

1. WOMEN’S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

Defining women’s meaningful participation

Women’s substantive or ‘meaningful’ participation in peace processes has become a key component of the WPS agenda. Throughout the conference, however, participants noted that there is still a lack of clarity or consistency regarding what women’s meaningful is and how to ensure it. Questions were also raised as to how the international community promotes women’s meaningful participation, what enables and constrains it, and whether there are variations at local, national, regional and international levels.

It was noted that it was often left to women’s civil society groups and women activists to try and define, and then safeguard, women’s meaningful participation. Cate Buchannan, a representative from the UN Department of Political Affairs’ (DPA) Standby Mediation Team, identified four elements that are required for women’s meaningful participation (see Figure 1). She noted that what is missing in this explanation of women’s meaningful participation is a “door of access”, the opportunity for women to access decision-making and to influence outcomes. Mechanisms like gender quotas in peace processes (and politics) become important here, as without access, women’s participation will rarely become meaningful.

The term “meaningful” in the context of the right of women to participate is intended to challenge superficial efforts to include women without genuinely extending them the opportunity to influence outcomes.

Ensuring women’s meaningful participation

Participants then reflected upon how entering “the door of access” shapes their participation. Rose Pihei, a former Member of Parliament and Minister for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, described how once women have a “door of access”, they encounter double standards and extra burdens, where women’s morality is constantly questioned and they must always be perfect to stand for public office. Likewise, Khin Ma Ma Myo who works on the Myanmar peace process, told participants that when she participated in an Executive Committee for the Democratic Federation of Burma, she was the only woman out of fifteen committee members. During her first meeting, the male committee members asked her to make them coffee. These stories of how women’s substantive participation is undercut by gendered bias is common. Many participants noted that when women are included, they are often made to feel out of place, or as one participant described, “from Mars and like an alien”. Thus, ensuring that peace processes support and are accountable for women’s meaningful participation is critical to challenging deep-seated gendered attitudes towards women that restrict their ability to promote gender equality in peace processes.

FIGURE 1: ELEMENTS OF WOMEN’S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Elements of Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace and Security Processes

Deploying Agency through agenda-setting & coalition building

Exerting Influence, through gender perspectives forged in broader movements

Self Efficacy, knowledge and confidence to effectively represent women’s interests

Being Present, to seize opportunities to inform, influence and make decisions

Meaningful Participation
Impacts of violence and violent ideologies on women’s participation

Masculinist and patriarchal violence – particularly when matched with nationalism, ethno-nationalism or violent extremism – restricts women’s meaningful participation in a number of ways. Participants noted that it often results in increasing societal restrictions on women’s rights, clothing, mobility, work and ability to speak in public. This creates fundamental barriers to the “door of access” for women and denies them legitimacy as political actors.

Furthermore, participants noted that women stepping into public life continue to be intimidated by violence, whether it is becoming a locally elected official, participating in a peace process, or taking up roles in the public sector. Women who do participate in peace processes and/or in public spaces often encounter security challenges in their everyday lives including intimidation and harassment such as death threats, being followed, or disturbance calls during the night. One woman who participated in the Myanmar peace process received death threats and men visited her son’s school to intimidate her (see Box 2).

BOX 2: CHALLENGES TO WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE MYANMAR PEACE PROCESS

Balancing reproductive care burdens with women’s participation

Beyond physical and psychological insecurity, women also face huge pressures to maintain an acceptable work-life balance between their participation in a peace process and their other responsibilities. This includes financial challenges, where many women have to finance their own travel, accommodation and fees (see Box 3) in addition to family-related financial obligations. For instance, conference participants described how sometimes children blame their mothers for not financing their school fees if they are unable to go to school. One conference participant described the demands that were put on her when she was involved in the peace process in her country. She was frequently required to work until midnight, while her young son was often left in the care of her mother. Another participant described how a female Member of Parliament in her country could not send her seven-year-old son to school. The parliament was not close to any schools and transportation was more expensive than school fees. She did not stand in the next election so that she could move closer to a school and her son could receive an education. In Bougainville, many women leaders have limited opportunity for income generation where it is difficult to leave families and do “nation building work”. This highlights the necessity of financial and familial support for women participating in peace processes and broader peacebuilding.

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE MYANMAR PEACE PROCESSES

Conference participants from Myanmar described the barriers to their participation in the ongoing peace process. They outlined the following challenges for women.

1. Traditional gender socialization associates women with domestic tasks and not public decision-making thus reducing women’s confidence and authority.
2. Lack of support by close family members can result in psychological and emotional abuse perpetrated by some family members towards women who participate in the peace process.
3. The lack of women in key gatekeeper positions who can provide openings for more women to participate.
4. Only central committee members of an Ethnic Armed Organization can be nominated to participate in the Myanmar peace process. This can result in the exclusion of women and women’s civil society.
5. Time restrictions on women and greater pressures to achieve an acceptable work-life balance.
6. Safety and security restrictions on women’s travel and mobility.
7. Security challenges including death threats, denial of citizenship, disturbance calls during the night, and being followed.
8. Women being portrayed as puppets of the international community or other countries.
2. INTENDED AND UNINTENDED OUTCOMES OF GENDER PROVISIONS IN PEACE AGREEMENTS

The inclusion of gender provisions in peace agreements is often due to the influence of women elites and women’s civil society activism, sometimes with support from the international community. These provisions typically reference international standards and expectations concerning gender equality and, in cases of strong gender provisions, will provide details of how they will be translated into the post-conflict society. This might be through quotas for women, attention to gender-specific issues, or the establishment of a government agency for gender equality. In some cases, these provisions and the adoption of international gender norms challenge existing dominant patterns of gender relations within a country.

However, we know very little of how these challenges are navigated, especially when strong opposition is present. As such, while gender provisions in peace agreements are designed to provide space for women’s participation, there is also the possibility that they may also produce unintended consequences. For example, do these gender provisions perpetuate restrictive gendered stereotypes, facilitate corrupt practices, or create conditions that increase women’s vulnerability to violence? We asked participants to reflect on this issue at two levels. First, we sought their experience on the ‘transfer process’ of global gender norms into local practices and norms (particularly through gender provisions in peace agreements). Second, we discussed how we might support local strategies to advance the implementation of gender provisions and facilitate women’s safe participation.

BOX 3: CHILD CARE SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

CHILD CARE FUNDS FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN THE MYANMAR PEACE PROCESS

There were many discussions during the conference regarding women’s financial restrictions and the impact of these on women’s and children’s development, especially in the case of Myanmar. For instance, we were told of one women from a Karen Ethnic Armed Organisation (EAO) who is a committee member on one of the peace process related committees. She has a child with a mental disability. She had to send him to institutional care and is struggling to pay for these childcare costs as she is unable to work full time due to her peace process commitments. Another woman we were told about was from a student-based EAO and has a daughter with learning disabilities. To participate in the peace process, she had to remove her daughter from school in Thailand. She is able to access support to pay for her travel and accommodation and she can take her daughter to the meetings and events by putting her in the hotel room with television on for the day. However, she has deep concerns for the future of her daughter and her education.

After the 21st century Panglong Conference in July 2018, the government decided to consider ‘Social Protection’ as the fifth pillar of the peace process to serve as a catalyst for peacebuilding. Social protection is a policy aimed at preventing and alleviating economic and social vulnerabilities, promoting access to essential services and infrastructures, and building resilience from humanitarian emergencies and/or sudden loss of income in Myanmar. This includes targeting areas like education, healthcare and vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. One such program is the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) which prioritizes states and regions affected by conflict to contribute to peace processes. For instance, the MCCT will be implemented in Kayah State from 1 October 2018 from the Union Government budget. The MCCT is universal and all women in Kayah, who are pregnant on the implementing date, regardless of their social status and geographical location, will be entitled to access the MCCT. The cash amount is around seven US dollars per month.

Funding opportunities to encourage women’s participation in the Myanmar peace process were established in 2017. USAID for instance has women’s participation rapid funding, managed through DAI, and supports women’s childcare, including assistance for carers to accompany them, travel, visas and so on. It is aimed at lowering the barriers to women’s participation and is deliberately easy to access with minimal paperwork. The Paung Sie Facility Gender, Peace and Security Window funding stream is aimed at increasing the substantive participation of women in building social cohesion and increasing gender-responsive initiatives at the sub-national level in Myanmar. This fund has a childcare budget upon application for anyone caring for a child who has the opportunity to participate in a peace related process. The PSF also supports childcare costs when women (or men) attend workshops and seminars related to the Gender, Peace and Security Window funding program as it is also a capacity-building initiative. Another large grant from the Joint Peace Fund to the signatory armed groups has childcare built into all levels of the budget. This was designed by Nyein Foundation as part of their technical support to the armed groups to develop and negotiate this grant.
Unintended consequences as a result of poor planning
Participants noted that poor implementation infrastructure can sometimes be blamed for the failure to implement gender provisions, or the creation of negative unintended outcomes. To remedy this, participants recommended identifying existing institutional mechanisms and modalities that can be harnessed to implement gender provisions. This was recommended in preference to introducing new structures and processes that have more chance of failure. In addition, it is important to identify the new structures and processes that need to be introduced in order to implement gender provisions.

In short, we need to map how gender provisions are going to be resourced, implemented and supported to avoid unintended outcomes and neglect, as well as harness strategies that create positive outcomes.

Positive unintended outcomes of gender provisions
Participants noted that there can be positive, yet unintended, outcomes of gender provisions in peace agreements. This is particularly the case where women’s organisations have been able to harness an otherwise vague reference to international gender norms, and create a specific gender equality outcome.

This has particularly been the case when civil society groups use references in peace agreements to international gender norms to push for a state commitment to WPS. For instance, the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) developed a WPS National Action Plan (NAP) as part of its peacebuilding efforts, though it was not specified in the peace agreement. It has become a practical and operational tool for women to advance their participation in peacebuilding as well as holding the ABG accountable to their WPS commitments. In Nepal, after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006 and passing of the 2007 Interim Constitution, women’s civil society organisations sought to develop a WPS NAP with the newly established Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. The development of Nepal’s NAP on 1325 and 1820 was highly consultative, involving stakeholders from the government, civil society and broader community from national to grassroots levels. Although challenges remain, the peace and constitution-making processes in Nepal brought about a push by the women’s movement for equal participation and greater women’s rights in the context of opening up of discussions around advancing women’s rights.

However, conference participants noted the importance of the localisation of international gender norms, where activism for increasing women’s meaningful participation needs to come from grassroots communities. Here, participants noted the need to question whether implementing modalities such as NAPs are in fact a local initiative or have been transplanted by the peace process and/or the international community. All gender work is important, but countries adopting such documents may be doing it for show or under external pressure, while the actual commitment to WPS is tokenistic and not actually impacting local women’s lives in a positive way.

Negative unintended outcomes of gender provisions
However, gender provisions in peace agreements can also create unintentional negative outcomes for women.

For instance, transitional justice commissions that are established as a result of peace agreement provisions can get stonewalled due to the politicisation of transitional justice, with participants noting that this occurred in Nepal. This can serve to reinforce impunity as the state might not be willing or able to prosecute conflict-related crimes against women. This can also result in circumventing contentious amnesty issues, where conflict-related crimes are never prosecuted.
Another unintended outcome of gender provisions is the elite capture of gender quotas and gender-responsive funding. Conference participants discussed how funding can often be superficial, short-term and generally granted to existing organisations that already have access to public space. This is particularly prevalent in communities where identities are stratified by caste, ethnicity, indigeneity and geographical location, and where marginalised civil society organisations can often be overlooked for funding. One participant described it as “elite women capture” of opportunities. This also occurs with regards to gender quotas where elite women or existing leaders within the women’s movement dominate political opportunities.

Gender quotas can also lead to physical insecurity, where women who are either nominated or elected into public positions can face discrimination and/or physical violence, as mentioned above. Furthermore, reserved seat or nomination for gender quotas can often result in women being ghettoized into these particular seats rather than being elected in their own right. For instance, the ABG has three reserved seats for women, and consequently there is a perception from the community that women should not contest elected seats as they already have the reserved seats.

Conference participants identified that there is a need for greater research around this topic, identifying the unintended negative outcomes as well as harnessing the positive outcomes to be more successful and workable across contexts.

3. SUPPORTING WOMEN’S CIVIL SOCIETY IN PEACE PROCESSES AND PEACE IMPLEMENTATION

The project’s research has found that women’s civil society participation is crucial in promoting gender-sensitive agreements during peace talks.

However, civil society participation often remains informal throughout peace processes. Their influence comes from their being organised as networks, but we know little about how they navigate disagreements within the networks or strategies to overcome implementation hurdles. Nor do we know how the networks share information and financial support to operate in this space. Even when more numbers of women enter the ‘formal’ peace agreement space, whether through the security sector, government, or parliament, we still do not see civil society consistently being invited into the formal space. Furthermore, women’s civil society groups are often punished or dismissed if they are unable to speak with a “single voice”. In the group sessions, participants were invited to discuss how civil society groups – individually and through networks – can be supported during the peace implementation phase. From funding to information-sharing to organisation, how can civil society access local populations, capitalise on their governance skills, share their knowledge, and work collaboratively with the government and security sector? Furthermore, we asked participants what state agencies, international donors and partners should do to support civil society during post-conflict transition?

Mapping existing funding and identifying gaps

Participants argued that a process of mapping existing funding priorities would be useful. This would help to identify funding gaps, and provide visibility around what issues are being addressed and ignored. For instance, one participant described how, in Myanmar, many international donors are diverting funds towards the victims of violence from Rakhine state. While this is desperately needed, participants noted that there is not sufficient oversight over which organisations and what activities are being funded. Consequently, superficial projects are being established that may have perverse or negligible effects on women. Meanwhile, funding is being diverted from other sectors.

Participants also advocated for a multilevel consultation and planning process for funding that included the state, the international community, and women’s civil society organisations. This would create greater co-ordination and visibility over funding structures. This, participants argued, is required to avoid funding saturation of particular ‘hot topics’ and neglect of others. It will also create greater inclusivity of a range of civil society organisations.

I may not have convinced you…to really appreciate and feel how I perceive post-conflict peacebuilding in my region. But let’s continue. I want to invite you to come to my village and be a village woman just for a day. There you will touch and feel the reality of women’s livelihood from 6am to 6pm and thus design appropriate programs to assist that woman for a better and sustainable life, hence resilient communities.

Rose Pihei

Core-funding and resourcing women’s civil society activities

Conference participants identified the critical necessity for long-term funding for women’s organisations to support their participation, capacity building, and knowledge generation and sharing. As part of this, donors and governments need to
support women’s civil society organisations through core-funding for the administrative and technical functioning of an organisation, rather than prioritising short-term project-based activities. Furthermore, there needs to be strategies to ameliorate the politics of funding and competition for scarce resources, which can often result in divisiveness between women’s organisation rather than solidarity and support. This also means that funding needs an intersectional perspective, to identify marginalised women’s organisations that may not have access to funding proposals because they are not fluent in English (for the purposes of proposal writing) or ‘development speak’.

Inclusive sisterhood
Participants identified ‘inclusive sisterhood’ as being central to effective civil society participation. Women, and women’s civil society, are not homogenous. There needs to be a conscious effort to identify who are the most marginalised groups, who is not included, and who women are (and are not) representing when they participate in peace processes. In short, there needs to be efforts to make sure there is an inclusive approach to women’s participation.

Participants also discussed the need for donors to allow for (or even encourage) the localisation of gender norms. Global frameworks need to be unpacked in tandem with local knowledge so that local communities can use their own knowledges and processes to develop their own interventions and opportunities to implement international gender norms. This fosters local ownership and creative implementing mechanisms starting from the bottom up.

Sustaining women’s civil society participation
Conference participants highlighted the importance of women’s participation and representation in public life beyond and outside of the peace process. This means long-term and sustained support of women’s political participation. Here, participants noted that strengthening men’s engagement in the ‘gender agenda’ could prove critical to sustaining women’s participation.

Furthermore, when the international community supports peace processes, this external support must include women, and use a gender analysis of conflict. For instance, Brunei Darussalam has participated in international monitoring teams for peace processes outside of its borders. However, there has been no women participating in those monitoring teams. Although Brunei has made no actual commitments to WPS, women’s participation and gender mainstreaming in international monitoring and mediation teams needs to be a necessary requirement for all member states who send representatives. This is a glaring oversight in advocating for women’s participation in peace processes and one that can be resolved if the international community makes women’s participation a necessity, not an option.

4. ROLE OF RESEARCH

Finally, the conference addressed the role that research can and should play in supporting women’s participation in peace processes.

This raised a number of issues. First, participants agreed that women need to be recognised as knowledge co-creators and structures need to be put in place to ensure that research is appropriately disseminated back into local communities. This can be achieved, for example, through the translation of research into local languages, or through government endorsement or partnerships between international researchers and local universities. This allows the local community to use the research for advocacy and research-based policy and decision-making.

Participants noted that knowledge building within communities regarding gender provisions also increases the chances of holding governments accountable for implementing them. In other words, research and evidence does not only need to inform gender policies, but also highlight policies’ impacts and validate its implementation.

Participants made a number of suggestions regarding the possibilities for future research. One such suggestion was an analysis of men’s performance in peace negotiations. This was raised in response to frustration that women’s performance, and absence, in political life receives a lot of attention and analysis. In comparison, men’s participation and performance is under analysed and presupposed as the norm. More gendered analysis of men’s participation may highlight an androcentric bias and contribute to counter-narratives of what meaningful and inclusive participation might look like.

As previously noted, participants also highlighted the need for further research into what women’s substantive participation looks like in practice, and how it might be achieved. This can be achieved by drawing directly from women’s experiences in peace processes.

You have the feminist way: you have women and girls’ equal participation and consultation in research as knowledge co-creators... Dovetailing from women’s meaningful participation, this could be named as women’s ‘meaningful capacitation of knowledge-builders’

Ma. Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza
CONCLUSION

The Mapping Women’s Participation in Peace Process conference enabled researchers, policy-makers, civil society members and activists to share their knowledge and experiences of creating gender-inclusive peace processes. The conference validated the research undertaken to date by the Towards Inclusive Peace project by providing rich accounts of the positive impact that woman can have when empowered to meaningful participate in peace processes. Moreover, participants provided first-hand accounts of the many barriers they face to meaningful participation and the resources needed to overcome them. Importantly, the conference provided a foundation upon which a network of stakeholders can share and engage each other’s research, knowledge and experiences to find pathways to creating gender-sensitive peace agreements, and ensuring that they are implemented.
APPENDIX A: KEYNOTE LECTURE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR MIRIAM CORONEL FERRER

Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer headed the Government of the Philippines panel in the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that culminated in the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in March 2014. She led governmental negotiations, consultation, and strategizing processes, and was also responsible for setting up the peace infrastructure and supervising the first two years of implementing the accord. Prior to this, she was extensively involved in national civil society campaigns and co-led the initiative to draft the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security that was adopted by the Philippine government in 2010. She has also joined international CSO-led human rights/peace missions in Nepal, East Timor, Cambodia, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Sudan. She is a Professor at the University of the Philippines and is currently a Senior Mediation Adviser at the UN.

WPS IN PEACE PROCESSES AND AGREEMENTS: INSIGHTS FROM THE PEACE TALKS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The following is a transcript of the keynote address presented by Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer at the Mapping Women’s Participation in Peace Processes conference on the 5th October, 2018, in Bangkok, Thailand.

INTRODUCTION

The key actors in any conflict are mostly men, on all sides of the equations. Occasionally there are rare exceptions, but often, the top leaders who sit in the executive branches and/or committees of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) are men. Sometimes, leaders in the government also have had a military background. Therefore, since men led and did most of the fighting, they assume and it is assumed that they would also do the talking at the formal peace table.

I was recently at a workshop on ceasefires where one of the issues discussed was gender inclusivity in ceasefire mediation processes. Some participants in this group of jaded mediators expressed the difficulty of pushing gender inclusions in such a securitised environment of any armed conflict: that is stilling the guns. The concern for mediators around the room was that prioritising gender inclusion at the onset of the talks risks delay, if not derailing, the ceasefire negotiation or even the whole political process. This thinking is not without some self-fulfilling logic. Thus, this question: how early on should gender inclusions be pushed during a peace process, or if at all, especially in ceasefire negotiations?

I appreciated the honesty of the men who raised this concern, even during a workshop that was guided by the United Nations norm of inclusivity. They needed concrete answers, possibly even wanted affirmation. Before this line of thinking gained any more traction, I rushed to give a concrete example. I narrated to them that during the talks between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), the Norwegian facilitators used to meet with members of civil society as part of their scoping mission every time they visited the country. Our NGO at that time was founded and led by women and we worked with a lot of women on the ground. Although we were not at the peace table, our voices were carried to the negotiations by the facilitator. The point I was making was that there are many ways one can deliberately push for greater gender inclusions. In this example, it was through consultation, which is the least that could be done. Consultations with women bring in women’s perspectives on the conflict and the ways forward that consultations only with or dominated by men will not. It generates new priorities as well as new possibilities. It is also the stepping stone to eventually bringing in more women into the process who can directly participate.

This leads me to the ways and means of gender inclusivity, thanks to deliberate and conscious pushing to include women, though this doesn’t seem to be the dominant practice in many parts of the world.

First, a note on what inclusivity is all about. My perception is that inclusivity is all about empowerment, the main route to empowerment is through participation. Can you participate without yet being mentally emancipated? I say yes. Participation is a process that leads to greater emancipation of the mind. Power after all requires access to information, knowledge and decision-making processes. One gets this access and knowledge through experience and participation in different settings.

Participation in peace processes can happen in several ways, each as important and complementary as the other: they are all needed.
The anecdote I described above is one such form of participation, that is, through consultations. This anecdote occurred in the early 2000s. Fast-forward a decade later, I was part of the government Track 1 negotiating team in the Government of the Philippines and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) talks. I had crossed over from third-party civil society peace networks engaged in the Track 2 and 3 processes. As part of the negotiating team, we conducted or were invited to many consultations with women’s organisations and women conducted many such consultations among themselves. We did these consultations before, during and after the negotiations. We had women only consultations or mixed consultations where it was made explicit that women should also be invited. We ensured the intersectionality of these consultations through separate and joint meetings across groups, sectors and classes.

During one civil society organised forum in the early years of the talks, MILF representatives refused to sit beside me on the stage. At the time, their protocols prohibited them from informal engagements between the panels. Moreover, they said that “they do not sit beside women”. During the open forum, they answered from the floor and I sat alone in the front. I believe they were more embarrassed in front of the audience more than I was. But we broke this stricture eventually through creative ways and means. In one ceremony organised by the European Union, we arranged with the organisers to sit us beside the MILF panel members who were also invited. So, for the first time, we were seated beside our counterparts, not across from them. It was two women from the Government and two men from the MILF. The four of us sat on one side of the platform and the EU delegation of diplomats who came all the way to Cotabato City were squeezed on the other side with their aides standing behind them. They were all men. When my turn came to speak, I ribbed them and said “Look, the gender parity is better on this side of the room.”

The second and third modes of participation are through representation and direct participation. This is a little tricky as sometimes when a woman participates in an event or a process, we consider it representation. True, each woman is a representation of their gender, but a woman doesn’t necessarily formally represent other women. She may be there representing other groups or just herself. Although her being a woman cannot be disassociated by the fact of “women” existing as a whole, one cannot always make the assumption that a woman represents other women. As far as I know, no woman has sat in any Philippine negotiating table formally representing women’s groups. As chair of the government panel, I represented the Philippine president or the government in general.

A relatively good number of Filipinas have directly participated in Track 1 negotiations. Three of six in our government panel who signed the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro were women. Two women have become the presidential advisers on the peace processes, which is a Cabinet-rank position. The government panel in the talks with the NDF was once chaired by a woman and both parties have had at least one woman on their respective panels. Belying that ceasefire negotiations are men’s domain, Alma Evangelista chaired the Committee of the Whole of the two technical committees (TCs) on the Ceasefire and Agenda-Setting for the government during the ceasefire negotiations with the MILF that culminated in the 1997 ceasefire agreements. Alma was the executive director of the office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). Two other members of the government committee were women who were senior officials from the National Security Council and the Department of Justice. However, most members were male. At the time, the agenda was rather simple: to solve the Bangsamoro problem. This pertained to the question of identity and rights of the indigenous Islamic populations in southern Philippines who self-identify as Bangsamoro. The TC on Agenda Setting, which Alma chaired concurrently, had to break the problem down into manageable parts: ceasefire, humanitarian and human rights issues, and finally the issues of ancestral domain and governance. Although the TC on the Ceasefire were all men, the Committee of the Whole was chaired by Alma.

The government negotiating team during the late 1990s were mostly retired generals who earned their stars in the battlefields against the Moros. This war saw its peak in the 1970s but it lingered throughout the succeeding decades. Alma herself wasn’t certain if the generals’ intent was to defeat the enemy or to reach peace together with the other party. But she remained true to her peacebuilding goals, despite the constant troubleshooting due to continuing hostilities. In addition to this, it was just as hard for Alma to negotiate within her own party. At one point, Alma recalled, she argued with one general: “Why are we here? Because we want to defeat them? Let’s just try to fix the problem.” The internal rumblings were so intense that at one time, in transit from one province to another, she told them she was leaving them and going back. But Alma was a valuable member of the team. They relied on her to take the notes and to do what the generals called “language engineering” in the draft texts. It was she after all who thought of using ‘acknowledgment’ instead of ‘recognition’ of the MILF camps, which solved a major difficulty in the talks at that time for the government.

Looking back, Alma concluded: “I was constantly intimidated by the former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff. But by asserting myself, I earned his
upon women who have achieved high positions to opportunities that come along, for me it is incumbent because a lot of one's life chances are all about me.

"Oh, a woman can do it!" – women themselves have told capabilities are challenged. see women doing a good job, their biases about women's behavioural and relational impact. When men and women A woman or women in the public sphere do have a symbolically and cumulatively empowers women as a

A woman put in a position of direct participation The MILF had indicated their qualms. MILF panel chair Mohager Iqbal said: "We don’t know how to deal with a woman. In our culture, we don’t quarrel with women." (They did!) With the prodding of another woman, presidential peace adviser, Teresita Quintos Deles, President Simeon Benigno Aquino III (called P. Noy for short), took the risk on appointing me.

After we signed the CAB, Mr. Mohager Iqbal, the chair of the MILF negotiating panel, said: “I’ve negotiated with generals, retired ambassadors, and cabinet secretaries but it was the woman who proved the toughest.” After all, we eventually signed an agreement.

From beginning to end, the MILF delegation was all male. They argued that their panel was representative of the different ethnic groups in the Bangsamoro. But it was sorely gender-blind. One time, we told them: “The parity of esteem between the majority and minority populations that you ask is no different from the parity of esteem that we want to see between the men and women of the Bangsamoro.”

Through persuasion from all corners and logistical support provided by the international community, the MILF delegation eventually brought in women as consultants and members of their counterpart Technical Working Groups (TWGs). First just one, then two, then three. On average, out of 10 members of their panel and secretariat two were women, and around 12 technical working group female members joined their delegation. The number was still small, but they relied a lot on these women lawyers. They were NOT token women. They became a fixture in the negotiations, although they never officially chaired any of the bodies.

A woman put in a position of direct participation symbolically and cumulatively empowers women as a whole. It indicates a breaking of one ceiling, a crossing of the great gender divide. It challenges the status quo. A woman or women in the public sphere do have a behavioural and relational impact. When men and women see women doing a good job, their biases about women’s capabilities are challenged.

“Oh, a woman can do it!” – women themselves have told me.

Because a lot of one’s life chances are all about opportunities that come along, for me it is incumbent upon women who have achieved high positions to appoint other women who are equally capable for the job. We can achieve a multiplier effect: more women appoint more and more capable women if we give space and opportunities for women to blossom. I know the daughters of many of the MILF leaders have become good achievers thanks to their exposure to the world of peacebuilding and NGOs, both domestic and international. Several of them now lead women’s organizations on the ground where they persistently advance the WPS agenda.

Another outwardly change that manifests some reordering of perception (if not yet fully transformed gender relations) is in the use of gender-neutral language. I was surprised how in a press conference with Mr Iqbal, after we signed the agreement, I heard him speak of ‘he/she’. Increasingly, the usual reference to ‘our Muslim brothers’ have also given way to ‘our Muslim brothers and sisters.’

Direct participation more often happens at the ground level than in Track 1. Women who are respected in their communities are able to perform insider-mediator roles. Women help, if not lead, in organizing events in their villages. They come, tugging their children along, to women only and mixed events that address issues they want to know more about. We conducted a community event in a remote village school where the MILF had a strong presence. I had the pleasure of being enthusiastically received by the female, elderly school principal. In her excitement about the presence of so many guests, she excitedly introduced me as “the great womanizer!” I loved her dearly for that. I’ve had other humorous introductions. In another village during the series of school visits that we were making, I was described as one who has received several ‘posthumous awards’ even though I’m still very much alive.

During the peace process with MILF, we tried to draw in the direct participation of the Bangsamoro Islamic Women’s Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB). First, we had to convince the MILF leadership to enable us to meet with them. When this was arranged to take place in the MILF’s Camp Darapanan, we devised a scheme to get the men out of the room. After the formal opening ceremony of speeches, we requested that all the men leave and have their snacks outside. Then we broke down the hierarchical format inside the hall wherein the female elderly commanders had sat in front and done all the talking. We formed a circle with our chairs, the three of us from the government positioned ourselves in different parts circle. We asked everyone to speak about their plans once we are able to implement the agreement.

From the younger women in their late teens or early twenties, we learned of their desire to go back to school. The married ones in their 30s wanted credit to start up a business – a variety store, a rice stall, some buy-and-sell of goods like cosmetics. The senior women wanted to introduce some civic programs to assist the orphans and widows in their community. In this form of engagement, the women directly participated as themselves.
**REPRESENTATION**

Representation mechanisms for women are crucial to ensure their presence in any decision-forming or decision-making bodies. Modalities for representation can happen through certain institutional measures like the party-list, a quota system, or reserved seats in planning and decision-making committees, local governments, the legislature, and other decision-making bodies.

Several peace agreements in the Philippines provided for such typical means of representation. The 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) between the Government of the Philippines and MILF provided for ‘sectoral representation’ in the legislative assembly, including for women.

The 2013 Annex on Powersharing of the CAB allocated reserved seats for women in the Parliament and Council of Leaders of the Bangsamoro autonomous government that would replace the ARMM. The Bangsamoro Organic Law that was passed this year, in August 2018, stipulates these measures.

Unfortunately, most of the time, the traditional political elites attempt to circumvent such stipulations by the power of appointment vested on them. Often we see wives and other relatives prioritized, and not necessarily based on merit. But sometimes you do get women who eventually influence their powerful husbands or fathers to take the path of peace and equity.

Sometimes, implementation is delayed. For example, the needed law to put in place sectoral representation has not been enacted by the Regional Assembly of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) 22 years after the agreement. And very soon the ARMM will be replaced by the new Bangsamoro.

Finally, women should critically evaluate how democratic their processes are within their own organization, communities, and families. They have to reflect on their own voting behaviours and thinking processes and how these have perpetuated the corrupt status quo and shut out effective representation of women’s needs. Senior women should design ways and means for mentoring programs for younger women and girls, and not monopolize all the opportunities opened up.

**GENDER PROVISIONS AND PEACE AGREEMENTS**

In this conference, we are looking at the gender content of peace agreements. To my mind, we can categorize the substantive gender-related principles of a peace agreement into three: principles of inclusivity and empowerment, the principle of protection or security, and the principle of transformation.

All three are embedded in UN Security Council Resolution 1325’s comprehensive platform on which to advance the role and welfare of women in peace and security (WPS)—namely through protection, participation, and promotion and mainstreaming of gender and gender analysis. But as more recent critiques are doing, I also highlight here the transformative goals that must be part and parcel of WPS.

According to Christine Bell, “Before resolution 1325: 180 framework/substantive agreements were reached with [only] 37 (having) references to women; that is 21 per cent of framework agreements referenced women.” The Philippine peace process stands out for producing peace agreements with some provision on women’s rights prior to UNSCR 1325, as well as after.

**On the principle of inclusivity and empowerment:**

We refer here how women are able to give input and be part of defining and implementing the solutions through their direct and indirect participation and representation, in processes and institutions to be created or programs undertaken.

The foundational text found in all Philippine agreements is the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

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<th>Peace Agreement</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GRP-MNLF 1994 Interim Peace Agreement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1998 GRP-NDF Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) (post-Resolution 1325)</strong></td>
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The CARHRIHL also reiterated the right to universal suffrage irrespective of sex, etc. (Part II Art 2.7); and “the equal rights of women in all fields of endeavor and in all spheres of political, economic, cultural, social and domestic life and to their emancipation” (Part III, Art. 2.23). In these types of provisions, we usually see ‘sex’, women, and ‘gender’ interchanged. ‘Sex’ is drawn from the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions in the 1960s. Gender stems from more recent discourses, emphasising social constructs along with the biological givens.

The FAB provision above used ‘gender’ because a member of the MILF panel thought that conservative religious ulamas might disapprove finding the word ‘sex’ in the agreement. When we were asked for an alternative word, we heartily recommended ‘gender’, which is more encompassing in scope. Interestingly, Colombia had to amend the original 2016 signed agreement to replace ‘gender’ references with ‘women’ because of the conservative backlash against what the latter called the ‘gender ideology’. The campaign against the peace agreement in the Colombian referendum pounced on these gender provisions to generate ‘No’ votes and eventually won the vote with a slight lead.

Also in the GPH-MILF’s FAB, there is this quite famous clause on “the right of women to meaningful political participation”. We understand that the word ‘meaningful’ is increasingly deemed more meaningful than the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) language of ‘full and equal’. In May 2018, the High-Level Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on Women’s Participation was convened. According to the draft report:

Participants noted that since the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the term “meaningful” has increasingly been used by the international community to express an aspirational direction towards more inclusive decision-making processes. For instance, while the first six WPS resolutions of the Security Council call for women’s “full and equal participation,” the two most recent WPS resolutions, 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) place stronger emphasis on women’s “meaningful participation.”

After hearing our story of how we defended the inclusion of the word ‘meaningful’ during our negotiations with the MILF, which we defined simply as the opposite of meaningless, I was told that the Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom instructed her staff to always qualify participation as meaningful from then on. Wallstrom is the first foreign minister in the world who has adopted a ‘feminist foreign policy’ as official policy.

In addition, the CAB’s 2013 Annex on Power sharing mandates the future Bangsamoro autonomous government must establish appropriate mechanisms for consulting women and marginalized sectors, where women were a distinct category. The CAB’s 2014 Annex on Normalization mandated “access of women to eligible financing schemes, capacity building, institutional strengthening, impact programs to address imbalances in development and infrastructures, and economic facilitation for return to normal life.” These are very specific measures to advance the principle of inclusivity and empowerment.

On the principle of protection and security: This refers to vulnerabilities, and gender-specific needs and realities, the protection of women from all forms of violence, including sexism and misogyny. On this count, the 1998 CARHRIHL between the GPH and the Communist Party of the Philippines-NDF is a pioneer in the extent to which it has mainstreamed a gender perspective before the adoption of UNSCR 1325.

According to Christine Bell’s study on women and peace processes and agreements, the CARHRIHL’s stipulated right ‘not to be subject to rape [and sexual abuse]”, “appears to constitute the first prohibition of sexual violence in any peace agreement.” Moreover, long before the original Colombian government-FARC deal, what we now acknowledge as ‘LGBTQ’ rights were already referenced in the CARHRIHL through this provision protecting “the right to gainful employment … and form unions, to strike and participate in the policy and decision making processes,… and the right not be denied these rights due to… gender or sexual preference,”.” (III., Art 2.19, italics supplied).

Despite difficulties in negotiating peace with the Philippine communists, 20 years since then no other substantive agreement has been signed – we note this with pride.

Other specific protective provisions in the CARHRIHL in addition to provisions against sexual violence were on:

• “The right to equal protection of the law regardless of gender, civil status” (Part III, Art. 2.10)
• “The basic collective and individual rights of women, etc.; the parties commit to prevent or stop, punish such hRv’s and provide for indemnification of victims,” (Part III, Art. 10)
• “The right of workers, including the right of women workers to maternity leave and against discrimination vis-à-vis male workers.”
• Respect of non-combatants and humane treatment “without any adverse distinction founded on… sex…” (Part IV, Art 4.1)
• “Special attention to women and children to ensure their physical and moral integrity” (Part II, Art. 10).

It is also notable that the whole agreement used gendered language from the use of ‘he/she’ combined pronouns with reference to persons.

These women-provisions resulted without direct involvement of the international community, with Norway becoming the facilitator only in 2004. Nonetheless, the influence of earlier international norms were evident, as these were specifically cited, such as the Protocols of the
International Humanitarian Law and International Labor Organization Conventions.

But it was largely a product of the inter-generational efforts of Filipina feminists whose discourse and influence had by the 1990s penetrated government policy and CPP discourse. Specific credit should go to the negotiators and technical team members, many of whom were human rights advocates (on both sides). Notably, the negotiating panels included one woman each from each party (20 per cent) but they both had male allies in their respective teams who supported these provisions.

On the third principle of transformation: How have peace agreement carried the principle of transformation of gender relations and gendered structures and norms? Have qualitative social changes happened?

WPS advocates have argued that a real transformative approach requires a gender-sensitive conflict analysis as starting point, not as an afterthought, or an aside. Therefore, it should occur at the beginning. According to Bell, a gender-sensitive peace process is “a consultative conflict assessment of the power relations at the heart of the conflict, and its relationship with gender power relations, and technical support for women in addressing both sets of inter-woven relationships simultaneously.”

As such, the transformative principle might require assessing the totality of the peace agreement and the peace process along with peacebuilding on all sides that is engendered, and consequently accompanying and sustaining the political settlement so that these produce concrete changes in the lives of women. One may consider these dimensions as an intended consequence of a transformative, gender-sensitive peace process. On the other hand, some of these can be an unintended result of the political and social reforms formulated. At the same time, it can very well be the case that no real transformation of gender relations follows after the peace agreements, despite mainstreamed provisions and even with some measure of political democratization achieved.

Along this line, the Experts Group also recommended using ‘everyday peace indicators’ being developed, which among others would indicate how much women’s lives and the society have changed. For example, whether women are able to collect water and firewood without being fear of assaults; access to markets; and the number of days a child is safely able to go to school.21

CONCLUSION

One ambassador to the ASEAN asked me “what was hardest thing about being a woman in the negotiations and what, on the other hand, was the best thing about it?”

Let me start with the best things: how other women easily approached me, told me their stories, or explained the context to me in forums, consultations, and field visits. Such subtle exchanges opened windows and generated unexpected clarity that have allowed me to understand, feel and respond better to the situation.

I also drew constant encouragement from my women friends during very challenging times in the whole process. They were my eyes and ears on the ground. They kept me abreast of brewing sentiments. They held the fort. They defended me from sexist and violent assaults in social media from people who were grossly misinformed about the peace process and whose prejudice against the Moro population left little room for faith in a different future and tolerance.

That’s why I say: sisterhood rocks.

The other good thing is how we women are able to inspire each other in many different ways. In one forum on WPS in Hiroshima, I narrated how the Women Engaged in Action on UNSCR 1325 (WEACT1325) did a pretest on women participants to a workshop. The pretest highlighted the women’s feelings of lack of capacity to become active participants in the ‘normalization’ of the Bangsamoro. After the seminar, they did a post-test basically asking the same question about what the women believe they can do to become active peace actors. The post-test showed a complete change in attitude. They came out with many suggestions of concrete actions that they can undertake.

After I narrated this at the Hiroshima forum, a Japanese woman stood up and spoke from the floor. She said: “I am like those women. I believed I can’t do anything to change the way things are. Now I know I can.” Wow! This is the power of women inspiring other women.

As for the hardest things about being a woman chief negotiator, these are still the same: the biases and prejudices against women.

As a woman in public life, one gets tested two ways – against men, and against other women. You not only have to prove that you can be as good as other men, you also have to measure up to the standards of the best women, the pioneers. In other words, the ceiling gets higher each time and you cannot fall short.

It may be the case that women as negotiators are less trusted because women making up only four percent of signatories to peace agreements between 1992-2011. This is the irony: almost all negotiations were led by men and most negotiations actually failed. But trust concerns based on gender seem to handicap women more than men. Gender in itself should not be anyone’s handicap. At the same time, the gender awareness should always be there guiding the process.

Finally, there are no perfect peace agreements. All parties to a negotiation are imperfect human beings lodged in imperfect institutional settings and saddled by historical baggage. But we make all these more imperfect if we don’t bring in the women.
# APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT LIST

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REFERENCES

1. For more information and research related to the project, please visit http://mappingpeace.monashgps.org/ The ‘Toward Inclusive Peace’ project is led by Professor Jacqui True, Director, Monash University’s Gender, Peace and Security Centre together with Associate Professor Sara Davies (Griffith University), Dr. Nicole George (University of Queensland) and Associate Professor Katrina Lee Koo (Monash). It involves the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Assistant Secretary and Principal Sector Specialist, Gender Equality, Ms. Amy Haddad and Ms. Kris Tay from the Gender Equality branch. Four doctoral students are also involved in the project: Yasmin Chilmeran, Elliot Dolan-Evans, Sarah Hewitt and Alexandra Phelan. Located at http://mappingpeace.monashgps.org/ the-team/.


13. This point was also been highlighted in the 2018 Expert Group Meeting on Women’s Participation in Negotiating Peace convened by UN Women.


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Monash Gender, Peace & Security is a group of policy and community engaged scholars whose research is focused in the field of gender, peace and security. We seek to use our research to inform scholarly debate, policy development and implementation, public understanding about the gendered politics of armed conflict and the search for peace.

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