

Gender-Inclusive Arms Control: Advancing Disarmament Efforts In The Sahel And Horn Of Africa

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Abstract

Arms control plays a central role in international security by regulating the manufacture, acquisition, and circulation of weapons. However, conventional discussions on arms regulation often ignore gender-specific impacts, despite obvious evidence that armed conflict excessively affects women and marginalized groups. In counties such as the Sahel and Horn of Africa, where armed conflict, bad governance, and insurgency are prevalent, understanding the connection between gender and arms control is important. The study used a qualitative

approach, and the data were sourced through secondary sources, including academic literature, government publications, historical and online documents to explore existing arms control frameworks, highlighting gender-related gaps and advocating for more inclusive policies. Findings show that current arms control mechanisms fail to integrate gender-sensitive approaches, preventive their overall effectiveness. Even though armed violence has a significant impact on women, they are still under-represented in decision-making. The traditional arms control initiatives mostly overlook the social

and security aspects that affect different genders in favour of concentrating mainly on regulations governing the trade and stockpiling of weapons. The effectiveness of the disarmament efforts is further hampered by the fact that most of international agreements frequently lack legally binding clauses that address gender disparities in security initiatives. This study recommended strengthening international treaties with gender-sensitive provisions, integrating gender-disaggregated data into policymaking, and increasing women's involvement in security discussions as ways to address these deficiencies. Establishing training programs and quotas for women in security discussions will help guarantee their voices are included in peacebuilding. By integrating the gender-sensitive approaches to arms control, policymakers should foster more inclusive and sustainable disarmament strategies. Stressing the role of women in security efforts will lead to long-term peace and stability in conflict-prone regions.

Keywords: : Gender-Inclusive, Arms Control, Disarmament, Sahel and Horn of Africa

Introduction

Arms control is the collective-networks and treaties global effort resources to regulate the development manufacture

stockpiling proliferation and usage of arms of wmds such as nuclear chemical and biological weapons (WMDs) of war. (Hanson, 2017 & Adedeji, 2023) The major goal of arms control is to make the world a safer place and more stable by lessening the chance of an armed conflict and reducing the danger coming from the use of the weapons. (Jervis, 2018) Arms control can represent different sorts like treaties, agreements, and unspoken understandings among nations that are typically fulfilled-and-often-enhanced-by-verification-measures-to-observe-compliance (SIPRI, 2021). From the start, arms control has been the major aspect of international relations and it was especially during the Cold War period when the danger of a nuclear conflict was highly present (Cooper, 2021). The NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) along with the START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) are the two among the most prominent arms control treaties for the world to demonstrate their commitment after agreeing on peace and disarmament. (Disu, 2021 & Wambua, 2024)

Each and every moment, the arms control milieu is changing attributing to the shifting geopolitical situations, the progress in technology and security issues that are still to come. (Hersman, Williams, & Claeys, 2022) One of the areas where gender perspectives in

arms control are concerned is the new recognition of the different ways in which men and women are influenced by the conflict and violence. (Cockburn, 2013) Holistically taking the gendered issues of security into account, if arms control talks were consistent and they still frequently lack gendered input, the consequence would be incomplete analyses and thus policies that do not work. Gender perspectives provide a glimpse into the ideas of how the dynamics of power, social roles, and cultural norms influence the effects that the arms and the conflict carry with them to the different genders (UN Women, 2020).

Gender incorporation in arms control dialogues is very vital due to a number of reasons. The first one is that women and other minority groups are typically disproportionately affected by violence and war and therefore they can hardly be spoken of and their experiences are not heard in the decision-making processes. When gender perspectives are taken into consideration, the arms control initiatives can be more efficient in solving the problems of the affected populations of all sectors that thus, they are able to provide more inclusive and effective solutions (Cockburn, 2010). Women's presence in peaceful and security actions has been demonstrated by research as a boost for those results to be more sustainable. The United

Nations for instance conducted a study asserting that a peace agreement can last for at least 15 years if men and women take part in the negotiation process, which thus makes peace agreements 35% more likely to persist (UN Women, 2015). In short, the inclusion of gender perspectives in arms control not only promotes equality but also increases the disarmament effectiveness (Ehrenberg-Peters, Kappelmann, Plesch, & Wilson, 2023). This article aims to demonstrate the relationship between gender and arms control by illustrating the necessary inclusion of gender points of view in disarmament programs. In order to foster a gender-sensitive approach that acknowledges the different experiences of those affected by violence, this article will examine the nexus of these two themes - gender and arms control. The objectives of this paper are to identify current progress and tricky spots in gender-related issues in arms control as well as be able to uncover gender disparities through analysing the past attempts of arms control and how gender issues have been scarcely discussed. This paper will explore proposals for a gender-sensitive arms control implementation, reflect on past practices, and evaluate the role of international organizations in towards promoting gender inclusiveness in this new era.

Methodology

This study examines the relationship between gender perspectives and arms control through a qualitative methodology that consults existing literature, policy documents, and case studies. It uses a thematic analysis to identify trends and gaps in arms control frameworks, with an emphasis on how gender considerations are included or ignored in treaties, agreements, and security discussions. Primary sources include academic research that illuminates the gendered impacts of armed conflict as well as reports from international organisations such as the UN and SIPRI. This study also uses empirical results from previous research to assess the efficacy of gender-inclusive disarmament strategies and the role of women in peacebuilding efforts. By combining different points of view, this methodology aims to promote a more comprehensive understanding of gender-responsive arms control.

Arms Control and Gender in the Sahel and Horn of Africa: A Historical Perspective

In the past, arms control in the Sahel and Horn of Africa appears to be mostly influenced by local wars, the colonial period, and the circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) (Lung'ung'u, 2021). The traditional perspective of arms control was as the security matter

dominated by the state actors and without any consideration for gender issues (Ehmsen, 2022). The over-militarisation of societies in these regions contributed to the strengthening of gender roles, with men being considered as protectors and fighters, and women as non-protected but rather passive characters. Nevertheless, women were deeply involved in informal peacebuilding and arms control efforts; they were usually the ones who pushed the disarmament issue in the local communities. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) endorsed by the United Nations in 2013 was one of the regimes in the global arms control that has the Sahel and Horn of Africa as a target (Knudsen, 2014). The primary objective of the treaty was the elimination of the illicit arms flows and the regulation of the global arms trade that has become a main factor behind the reoccurrence of wars in these areas. The “Silence the Guns” campaign by the African Union is a parallel attempt to achieve the same goal by fighting the spread of SALW and creating conditions that are conducive to the peace and stability of the continent. These joint initiatives are indispensable in the fight against arms smuggling and the improvement of the management of security in the Horn and Sahel of Africa. However, these victories have yet to be implemented in practice to their full extent because of the weak institutional capabilities and unprotected borders. Women’s position has always been

limited in formal discussions, and their presence in arms control negotiations has been quite insignificant. Nevertheless, a positive trend is observable nowadays as more and more efforts are being made to include the gender perspective. The UNIDIR report on gender perspectives in arms control underlines the importance of having women at the center of disarmament activities. The women of the Sahel may be seen as those who have been central to the peacemaking process by mediating conflicts in the area, however, their efforts have remained unacknowledged for the most part.

While ECOWAS and the African Union have achieved some degree of partial integration of gender-sensitive policies, gaps still exist in their implementation. Furthermore, an approach to promote women's involvement in arms control and peacebuilding was provided by the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, in particular UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Male delegates conventionally dominated the arms control negotiations business, as part of a broader cultural trend in the diplomatic as well as political sphere. Even though the available data shows a gradual trend towards greater gender representation. Up to 2021, women comprised a mere 20% of the arms control negotiation delegates, as per the report issued by the United Nations Office for Disarmament (UNODA, 2021). The statistic indicates

the rampant gender gap that ruins the effectiveness and representation of these critical talks about arms control. Women have been underrepresented in most of the forums, including the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Women constituted just 18% of official representatives at the 2020 NPT Review Conference, as revealed by research carried out by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, 2020). Women have traditionally been excluded from the decision-making processes of disarmament and security because of systemic barriers and are therefore under-represented more than statistically. Furthermore, national delegations are not the only gender-unrepresentative ones. Women are also under-represented in international institutions that enable arms control negotiations. Women occupied only 30% of the senior roles in the UNODA, for instance, based on analysis in 2021, and this is one part of a broader trend towards underrepresentation of gender in decision roles (UNODA, 2021). Both representativeness of the arms control process and its ability to influence negotiations outcomes are undermined by this underrepresentation at national and international levels.

The inhibitions dissuading women from playing an active role in arms control talks are numerous and are primarily

institutional procedural and cultural. One of the most insidious barriers is the general perception that security and disarmament are masculine domains. This is supported by the existence of historiographies that write out women's roles and visions by aligning military and security issues with masculinity (Cockburn, 2012). Due to this, women may be discouraged from entering opportunities for careers in arms control with men or excluded from significant positions in negotiations. Lack of mentorship avenues and organizations catering to women engaged in the career is also a major hindrance. In the men-dominated environments with men, most women who venture into the career arena in arms control find themselves isolated. Their career development and access to influential networks that are critical to professional success could be ruined by this exclusion (Sjoberg, 2013). In addition, because young women may not be able to identify with themselves in positions of power within the arms control community, the absence of role models can likely continue the trend of under-representation.

Institutional practices also play an important role in how women engage in arms control negotiations. The majority of the negotiation processes are geared in a manner that fails to consider the multiform needs of the involved parties. For instance, the time and location to

conduct meetings may not be favorable to women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities (Bennett, 2016). Additionally, women may equally have unequal access to influence through non-formal channels to men since networking and decision-making within these forums tend to be informal. The fact that there are no gender-sensitive policies among the national delegations and international institutions worsens the situation.

The vast majority of institutions still do not have comprehensive measures to encourage women's engagement in arms control talks, although some of them registered significant strides for gender equality. Such a status quo can result from preserving male predominance in these discussions, with the absence of gender quotas or goals (UN Women, 2020). It is not likely that women's participation in the arms control negotiations will increase substantially unless genuine measures are taken to overcome these barriers. There needs to be a diversity of perspectives around the bargaining table for the outcome to be effective and believable, not only for fairness. There are more creative and problem-solving-capable multiple teams than homogeneous teams (Page, 2007). This logic, involving women and other vulnerable groups in the arms control process, can lead to more rational and effective solutions for complex security

concerns. Women's own perspective and ideas may enrich the bargaining process. For example, due to military strategy's broader social impact, women would be more likely to be attuned to the impact of disarmament and arms control on human security (Sjoberg, 2013). Their involvement can allow a broader understanding of security that accounts for both the rights and interests of involved people and communities entangled in armed conflict and state interests. Involvement of women in arms control negotiations can also bring more legitimacy to the process. This would mean that more and better solutions to complex security problems can be achieved if women and other excluded groups are involved in arms control. The gendered experiences and perceptions of women can be utilized to reinforce the negotiating process. For instance, since disarmament and arms control have more societal implications, women are more responsive to the human security implications of these matters (Sjoberg, 2013). Their involvement can help provide a wider context of security that considers people's and groups' interests and rights affected by armed conflict, as well as state issues. It can also render the process more legitimate through women's participation in arms control negotiate

Not only morally, but practically also does the inclusion of women have its

justification for being involved in arms control talks. The exclusion of women from decision-making stands out as a gross violation of the basic human right universally shared that one deserves to be treated the same irrespective of gender. Besides equity, the advancement of gender equality in arms control is that key towards a fairer and more pacific world. The validity and effectiveness of such valuable debates are conceded by the marked gender imbalance in arms control talks. Although things have been happening with some promise of late, there remain numerous barriers to participation by women. National governments, global institutions, and civil society must coalesce to remove these barriers and create an open environment in which plural views are invited.

It should be emphasized that the involvement of women in arms control negotiations is something very crucial. They would bring a different perspective and experience, therefore a more efficient and holistic approach to solving challenging security issues. Besides that, any progress toward achieving lasting peace and security requires gender balance, and this goes beyond equity. We must put high priority on gender participation in arms control talks since the global community is still beset with urgent security concerns. In doing so, we can make sure that everyone has a

voice and the findings of the talks are a reflection of the various needs and concerns of people worldwide.

Gendered Impacts of Arms Control in the Sahel and Horn of Africa

As the countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa face severe problems with armed conflict, violence, and instability, arms control is a crucial issue (Alemu, 2018). The most impacted countries by war and instability in the Sahel and Horn of Africa are Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad in the Sahel and Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan in the Horn of Africa. Noteworthy disparities exist between the ways that men and women are affected by the intersection of gender dynamics and arms proliferation. The effects of arms control on gender in these areas, with particular attention to the disparate effects that arms proliferation has on men and women, the consequences for gender-based violence and disarmament, and pertinent case studies that highlight these effects. Conflict and violence are made worse by the spread of weapons in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, and men and women frequently suffer from these consequences in different ways.

Historically, men are mainly involved in direct conflict as combatants, leading to higher mortality rates among them

during armed confrontations (Müller, 2019). However, this does not suggest that women are immune to violence; rather, they face different and often more insidious forms of harm. In these regions, women are frequently subjected to sexual violence, which is normally used as a weapon of war. The systematic use of rape and sexual assault in conflict has been documented, illustrating how arms proliferation contributes to gender-based violence (UN Women, 2021). Armed groups may exploit the chaos of conflict to commit atrocities, mostly against women and girls. Additionally, the outcome of conflict often sees women bearing the brunt of socio-economic instability. In post-conflict scenarios, men may enjoy preferential treatment regarding reintegration into society and access to resources, deepening existing inequalities (Peterson, 2020). This unequal distribution of resources perpetuates cycles of violence and marginalisation for women, who are often left to manage households and communities with little support. The economic impacts of arms proliferation also demonstrate significant gendered dimensions in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. In many conflict-affected areas, men are often employed in military-related sectors, while women typically engage in informal economies, which are less stable and more vulnerable to the effects of conflict (Chammartin, 2022). The diversion of resources towards

military expenditures often leads to decreased funding for social services, disproportionately affecting women who rely on these services for their livelihoods.

Women's economic participation is frequently curtailed in conflict situations, facing significant barriers to accessing employment opportunities. The presence of arms creates environments where women may feel unsafe pursuing jobs or engaging in economic activities, limiting their financial independence (UN Women, 2021). Furthermore, reconstruction efforts in post-conflict settings often overlook the specific needs of women, leading to inadequate investment in their economic empowerment. The link between arms control and gender-based violence is critical to understanding the broader implications of disarmament efforts in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. Disarmament initiatives that fail to consider gendered dimensions of violence may inadvertently perpetuate existing inequalities. While disarmament can reduce the overall incidence of violence, it is essential that these efforts also address the vulnerabilities faced by women. Gender-based violence tends to escalate in contexts where arms are prevalent. Disarmament initiatives must be accompanied by comprehensive strategies to address these issues, including legal frameworks

that protect women and support systems for survivors (Wierda, 2021). Without addressing gender-based violence effectively, disarmament can be ineffective in promoting true security for all genders. Moreover, including women in disarmament processes can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Women's insights into the local dynamics of violence can contribute to more comprehensive policy formulations (Heinemann-Grüder, 2020).

When women are involved in disarmament discussions, policies are more likely to address the root causes of violence and promote long-term peace. In Mali, the proliferation of small arms has significantly impacted both men and women, but their experiences differ markedly. The ongoing conflict has led to widespread sexual violence against women, with armed groups employing rape as a tactic of war (Amnesty International, 2020). Disarmament efforts face challenges due to the persistent gendered nature of violence, as many women do not feel safe returning to their communities even after disarmament initiatives are implemented. Furthermore, the economic ramifications of the conflict disproportionately affect women, who often carry the burden of household survival amidst instability. Limited access to resources and support perpetuates cycles of poverty and violence (UN Women, 2021). The

significance of incorporating gender perspectives into disarmament efforts has been brought to light by the peace process in South Sudan after years of armed conflict. In addressing the particular effects of violence on their lives and promoting peace, women have been instrumental. Provisions to protect women's rights and involvement in the post-conflict reconstruction process are part of the South Sudan peace agreement (Oxfam, 2018). This strategy emphasises how gender must be taken into account in disarmament efforts to bring about enduring peace. On a larger scale, the gendered effects of arms proliferation have been made evident by the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia. As armed groups vie for control, women have experienced higher rates of violence, including sexual violence. As armed groups compete for control, women have experienced higher rates of violence, including sexual violence. The unique needs of women are frequently ignored in attempts to disarm opposing parties, which results in insufficient support networks and protections (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The situation in Ethiopia serves as a stark reminder of the need for inclusive approaches to arms control that effectively address gender-based violence. In the Sahel and Horn of Africa, the gendered effects of disarmament and arms proliferation are intricate and multidimensional. Although the effects of violence and

conflict are felt by both men and women, their needs and experiences are very different. It is essential to comprehend these distinctions to create arms control laws that effectively advance universal peace and security.

Gender Perspectives into Arms Control Frameworks and The Role of Women in Arms Control Advocacy

The field of arms control advocacy has historically been dominated by male voices, yet the contributions of women in this field have been progressively recognised as vital to the development and implementation of effective policies (Schroeder, Farr, & Schnabel, 2005). The role of women in promoting arms control, with an emphasis on organisations and projects run by women, examples of effective female advocates and negotiators, and how women's participation affects policy outcomes. To emphasise the value of gender diversity in arms control discussions and the distinct vantage point that women contribute, this analysis will engage with academic literature. With a variation of programs, women-led organisations have become important actors in the arms control arena, encouraging disarmament and non-proliferation. These groups regularly address the relationship between gender and security, highlighting how

disarmament policies can be more successful when they take into account the needs and experiences of women. The trailblazer in women-led organisations promoting peace and disarmament was the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which was established in 1915. Since then, women's participation in peace talks and arms control debates has been greatly aided by WILPF. The organisation's "Disarmament Program" was anchored on the need for gender-sensitive approaches to disarmament; they argued that women's perspectives can lead to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions (WILPF, 2020).

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) is another important organisation that advocates for women's participation in peace and security processes, including arms control. GNWP works to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and decision-making processes. By organising training and resources for women in conflict-affected areas, GNWP empowers female leaders to engage in arms control advocacy (GNWP, 2021). Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) is a U.S.-based organisation that concentrates on reducing militarism and promoting disarmament. In addition to encouraging a change from

a militarised strategy to one that places more emphasis on diplomacy and conflict resolution, WAND places of interest are the significance of women's voices in forming national security policies. Their advocacy often frames arms control as a gender issue by stressing the disproportionate effects of militarisation on women and children (WAND, 2022). In the same vein, a group of non-governmental organisations known as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) played a major role in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty's ratification. In this crusade, women played a leading role in promoting the rights of landmine survivors and highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive mine action strategies. For impacted communities' voices to be heard in arms control discussions, women's participation in ICBL has been essential (ICBL, 2019). Case studies of effective female advocates and negotiators who have significantly aided disarmament efforts serve as additional examples of the influence of women in arms control advocacy.

Another important key player in arms control advocacy is former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane. She has been a vocal supporter of women's participation in disarmament talks and has focused her work on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Kane's leadership in

the UN Conference on Disarmament emphasised the importance of gender diversity in negotiations, arguing that women bring unique perspectives that can enhance the effectiveness of disarmament efforts (Kane, 2015). Ellen Tauscher, a former U.S. Congresswoman and Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, played a vital role in the negotiation of the New START treaty between the United States and Russia. Tauscher's advocacy for arms control was hinged on her belief in the importance of diplomacy and multilateralism. Her efforts to involve women in the arms control process were recognised as instrumental in nurturing a more inclusive dialogue around nuclear disarmament (Tauscher, 2010). Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), has been a major voice in the international movement for nuclear disarmament. Under her leadership, ICAN was awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for its efforts in promoting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Fihn's advocacy was based on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the necessity for a gender-sensitive approach to disarmament, highlighting how women are disproportionately affected by the consequences of nuclear weapons (Fihn, 2017).

Mary Robinson, the former President

of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has been a vocal advocate for disarmament and human rights. Robinson's work emphasises the interconnectedness of disarmament, development, and human rights, arguing that sustainable peace can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach that includes women's voices. International norms surrounding disarmament have been shaped by her support of gender equality in arms control discussions (Robinson, 2018). It has been demonstrated that women's participation in arms control advocacy improves policy outcomes. Gender-diverse negotiation teams have a higher chance of reaching successful agreements and putting effective policies into place, according to research. Decision-making processes that are more inclusive and collaborative can result from gender diversity in negotiation teams. Teams with a larger percentage of women were more likely to come to agreements and put policies in place that catered to the needs of various stakeholders, according to a Harvard Kennedy School study (Huang et al., 2019).

In the framework of arms control, where the stakes are very high and failure can have a grave, disastrous consequence, this finding is especially germane. More sustainable and long-lasting agreements result from women's involvement in peace processes. According to a United

Nations study, including women in the negotiation process increases the likelihood that peace agreements will endure for at least 15 years by 35% (UN Women, 2012). This emphasises how crucial it is to include women in discussions about arms control because their viewpoints can help create more thorough and efficient policies. The case studies of women-led initiatives and successful female negotiators illustrate the tangible impact of women's involvement in arms control advocacy. For example, the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty was significantly influenced by the advocacy of women's organisations and female negotiators who highlighted the humanitarian impact of landmines. The treaty's success can be attributed, in part, to the inclusion of diverse voices that emphasised the need for a gender-sensitive approach to disarmament (ICBL, 2019). Similarly, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was championed by ICAN under the leadership of Beatrice Fihn, reflects the importance of women's advocacy in shaping disarmament norms. The treaty's emphasis on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons aligns with the perspectives brought forth by women in the arms control community (Fihn, 2017). The role of women in arms control advocacy is critical to the development and implementation of effective disarmament policies. Women-led organisations and initiatives have

emerged as key players in promoting gender-sensitive approaches to arms control, while successful female negotiators and advocates have demonstrated the positive impact of women's involvement on policy outcomes. As the field of arms control continues to evolve, it is essential to recognise and support the contributions of women, ensuring that their voices are included in discussions that shape the future of global security.

The incorporation of gender perspectives into arms control agendas is an indispensable step toward creating more effective and equitable policies. This approach recognises that the influences of arms control and disarmament are not gender-neutral; rather, they affect individuals differently based on their gender. Including gender analysis into arms control policies requires a systematic approach that addresses the unique needs and experiences of different genders. An engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) that focus on gender issues is important for integrating gender perspectives into arms control policies. CSOs can provide deeper insights, advocate for gender-sensitive approaches, and help monitor the implementation of gender provisions in arms control agreements. The policymakers should establish partnerships with these organisations to guarantee that gender

considerations are prioritised in arms control initiatives. Promoting awareness about the importance of gender perspectives in arms control is central for fostering a culture of inclusivity. This can be accomplished through Training programmes for policymakers, military personnel, and arms control practitioners on gender issues and their relevance to arms control. However, continuous public awareness campaigns that highlight the gendered impacts of arms and the importance of inclusive policies, Workshops and seminars that facilitate discussions on best practices for integrating gender analysis into arms control frameworks

Examples of Gender-Sensitive Arms Control Initiatives

Quite a few initiatives around the world have successfully included gender perspectives into arms control policies (Doty & Burniske, 2023). These examples demonstrate the potential for gender-sensitive approaches to improve the effectiveness of arms control measures. The TPNW, adopted in 2017, is a landmark treaty that explicitly recognises the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons. The treaty clearly emphasises the necessity for equal representation of women in disarmament negotiations and acknowledges that the use of nuclear weapons affects men and women differently. This recognition is a major step toward integrating gender

perspectives into international arms control frameworks. In Africa, several countries have implemented gender-responsive small arms control measures (Sule, Mika'il & Tal 2024). For example, countries like Burundi, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone have put in place national action plans that incorporate gender considerations into Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) management. These plans include provisions for increasing women's representation in decision-making processes related to arms control and enhancing gender-sensitive training for security personnel. Gender inclusivity in arms control and disarmament initiatives has been actively promoted by UN Women. In addition to that, supporting capacity-building programs meant to increase women's involvement in arms control negotiations, the organisation has created guidelines for including gender perspectives into disarmament processes. The work of UN Women emphasises how crucial gender equality is to establishing long-lasting peace and security. Women's participation in peace and security processes, including arms control, is crucial, according to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, which was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Globally, several nations have created national action plans as a result of this agenda, giving gender considerations in arms control policies top priority.

For instance, Sweden and Norway have shown a dedication to gender inclusivity by incorporating WPS principles into their arms control plans. To promote gender inclusivity in arms control frameworks, international organisations are essential. Their work has the potential to greatly impact national laws and customs, promoting a more just approach to arms control. Leading the charge to promote gender inclusivity in arms control has been the United Nations (UN). The United Nations has created frameworks and guidelines for incorporating gender perspectives into disarmament processes through several agencies, such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Women.

Additionally, the UN organises workshops and discussions that bring together interested parties to talk about gender-sensitive arms control best practices. Gender inclusivity in arms control has also been promoted by regional organisations like the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union (AU). Women's involvement in peace and security initiatives, such as arms control, is crucial, according to the AU's gender policy. In a similar vein, the OSCE has put in place initiatives to strengthen women's representation in talks about security and arms control. NGOs are essential in promoting gender-responsive

arms control laws. International groups such as the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and Women in International Security (WIIS) seek to increase awareness of the gendered effects of weapons and encourage the participation of women in discussions about arms control. To have an impact on the creation and application of policies, these organisations frequently work with international organisations.

Countries looking to incorporate gender perspectives into their arms control frameworks can receive technical assistance and capacity-building from international organisations. This assistance may take the form of funding for gender-sensitive projects, training courses, and resource materials. International organisations can contribute to the development of a more inclusive arms control environment by strengthening the capabilities of national governments and Civil Society Organisations. As the world community continues to address the challenges of arms control and disarmament, gender inclusivity will be crucial for achieving sustainable peace and security. Including gender perspectives in arms control frameworks is essential for creating effective and equitable policies. Policymakers can ensure that arms control measures address the unique needs of all individuals by adopting a systematic approach that includes

gender analysis, conducting impact assessments, improving data collection, supporting collaboration with civil society, and promoting awareness and training. Examples of gender-sensitive initiatives and the role of international organisations highlight the potential for progress in this area.

Findings of the study

Previously, arms control policy has been national security and military strategy, rather than social categories such as gender. To the credit of deterrence, disarmament, and non-proliferation, the mainstream has neglected the specific vulnerabilities that various groups face in war. Policies have fallen back on the understanding that armed violence disproportionately impacts women, children, and minority groups. While there has been limited progress, including the inclusion of gender violence in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), translation into policy has been variable. The majority of agreements do not incorporate gender analysis into general security approaches, protection and participation being excluded from the equation.

The gendered conflict and violence dynamics expose ongoing gaps in experience and effect. Women and marginalised groups are prone to face intensified vulnerabilities during armed conflicts, for example, displacement, sexual assault, and irregular economies.

The instant social networks and minimal resources are ravaged, they will be in a weakened state, thereby reinforcing inequality. Nonetheless, militarising forces and propagating strict gender norms are likely to recruit men into armed groups. These assumptions continue to shape their social and economic destinies in the aftermath of conflict, creating a perpetuation of violence.

Despite empirical evidence of the benefits of gender equality in peace talks, women remain underrepresented in negotiations and decision-making platforms in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. It has been found that where women are active participants in peacebuilding, peace agreements have a greater likelihood of lasting more than 15 years. Nevertheless, systemic barriers, cultural norms, and entrenched power dynamics regularly prevent them from participating, constricting the potential for more participative security measures. These gendered realities need to be addressed to capture timely arms control policy that recognises and responds to the diverse realities of affected individuals.

Conclusion

Gender has been acknowledged in arms control, but impressive gaps remain in policy practice and participation. Conventional models of arms control

remain predominantly gender-insensitive, sidestepping how weapons impact men, women, and gender minorities in varied ways, leading to policy that is not able to consider the uneven harm caused by armed violence in marginalised sectors. Women and gender minorities remain under-represented at the negotiating table on arms control, a state that harms their leverage over security policy, even though their vital contribution to peacebuilding and conflict mediation.

Practice indicates that the effectiveness of security policies is undermined by gender unrepresentation in multilateral dialogue forums responsible for arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation diplomacy. Political resistance and patriarchal military culture also hinder gender-informed approaches from being incorporated into arms control discourse. State-centric strategies are prioritised in conventional security language, overlooking gender-based concerns and encouraging unilaterally conducted decision-making processes that do not protect vulnerable communities. Creating balanced and efficient arms control policies demands understanding of the specific ways weapons affect different demographic populations, particularly the increased vulnerabilities of women and children in conflict zones. Peaceful coexistence may be realised by embracing gender-sensitive action

like investing in community-based demobilisation programs, enhancing the law instruments with gender-enforceable sanctions, and enhancing women's presence on security platforms.

Policy Recommendations

Collect systematically sex-disaggregated data to gain greater insight into gender-differentiated armed violence impacts and to inform gender-sensitive arms control policy.

Provide women with meaningful involvement in arms control policymaking to promote peacebuilding, most urgently in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

Deploy International disarmament and non-proliferation agreements effectively to build on their impact and drive gender-sensitive security policies.

Encourage gender-sensitive education and awareness in educational, military, and diplomatic academies to enable wider institutional reform in arms control.

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