

# Buying Women's Rights: The Mediating Effect of Civil Conflict and International Actors on Women's Rights Reforms

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*This is a draft version. Please contact the author with any questions or comments.*

## **Abstract**

How does civil conflict moderate the role of domestic and international factors in domestic policymaking? While international actors have long played a key role in the adoption of domestic policy reform by offering material incentives, the susceptibility of states to material pressure varies. This manuscript examines how the effectiveness of international pressure in favor of women's rights is amplified in conflict and post-conflict states. Specifically, states which have experienced intrastate conflict are especially dependent upon international aid and investment. Therefore, due to the stronger effect of third party incentives, conflict-affected states may have greater political will and pressure to adopt and implement gender reform policies than non-conflict states. Using cross-national data on the adoption of several gender reforms and data on women's political empowerment between 1988 and 2016, the results demonstrate that while international actors do not appear to significantly increase the adoption of women's rights policies in post-conflict countries, they do have a significant effect on improving women's rights in these countries even in the absence of these policies. This study advances our understanding of the dynamic processes that influence women's rights policy diffusion and the complex interaction between domestic and international factors in policymaking more generally.

# Introduction

“The protection and empowerment of women and girls is key to the foreign policy and security of the United States...**the status of the world’s women is not simply an issue of morality - it is a matter of national security.**”

(emphasis added)<sup>1</sup>

In October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). As exemplified by the quote above from former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, women’s rights became an international and national security issue. As a result, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and states increasingly pressure domestic policymakers to adopt gender reforms using a variety of tactics, including normative appeals, direct assistance, the promise of future benefits, and threats of punishment for noncompliance (Bush 2011, Hafner-Burton 2008, Krook 2009, Montoya 2013, Paxton, Green and Hughes 2008, True 2016).

However, despite this international pressure, a great degree of variation exists among states in the number and character of their reforms (Bush 2011, Franceschet and Piscopo 2008, Hafner-Burton 2008, Huber and Karim 2018, Krook 2009, Montoya 2013, Paxton, Green and Hughes 2008, True 2016). While the progress of individual states, institutions, or regions to promote gender equality has been increasingly documented, relatively little is understood about the factors that promote women’s rights reforms cross-nationally.<sup>2</sup> Further, the connection between the adoption of women’s rights policies and their outcomes and impacts on gender equality remains unclear.

This project seeks to answer two main questions. First, what role do international third party actors play in promoting gender reforms domestically? Scholars have long considered how international and domestic dynamics interact to affect domestic policymaking (Gourevitch 1978, Jervis 1997, Pevehouse 2005, Waltz 1979). This manuscript extends theories of the

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<sup>1</sup>State Department’s Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, 2010

<sup>2</sup>For a survey of literature examining cross-national adoption of gender reform, see Basini and Ryan (2016), Charlesworth and Wood (2010), Farr (2011), Hughes, Krook and Paxton (2015), McWilliams and Kilmurray (2015), Olsson (2001), Pupavac (2005), Tripp and Kang (2008)

moderating effect of international factors on domestic policymaking by proposing that domestic context, specifically civil conflict, primes and increases the influence of international actors. More specifically, this manuscript explores which states are the most likely to adopt or improve women's rights?

I argue that international third parties promote gender reform by offering material incentives, including foreign aid disbursements and trade relationships, in exchange for gender reform. While some third parties may adopt and internalize the WPS agenda due to normative beliefs, they may pressure other states to adopt similar policies through both normative and material pressure. While all states are susceptible to material incentives, states which have experienced intrastate conflict are especially dependent upon international aid and investment due to conflict-related destruction and decreased economic activity. Further, post-conflict states often experience unique changes in gender relations and political opportunities that may increase political will for gender reform. Therefore, due to the stronger effect of third parties in conflict and post-conflict states, conflict-affected states may have greater political will and pressure to adopt gender reforms and improve women's rights than non-conflict states.

Drawing on a uniquely comprehensive dataset on the adoption of women's rights laws and policies cross-nationally between 1988 and 2016 and indicators of women's political empowerment, this study is the first to directly compare how international actors and conflict impact policy adoption and women's rights outcomes simultaneously. Importantly, the findings demonstrate that while conflict and international actors jointly do not significantly influence the adoption of women's rights laws, international actors do significantly increase the likelihood that women's political empowerment increases in post-conflict states. These findings clarify that international actors play a key role in improving women's rights after conflict and highlights that improvements in women's rights is often nonlinear and policy may not always reflect outcomes regarding gender equality.

## Women, Peace, and Security - A Rising Norm

While women's rights have long been promoted by advocates, a notable shift occurred at the turn of the 21st century when they began to be emphasized as crucial for international peace and security (Caprioli 2005, Caprioli and Boyer 2001, Goldstein 2003, Hudson et al. 2013, Koch and Fulton 2011, Melander 2005*a,b*, Shair-Rosenfield and Wood 2017). Despite the increased interest in gender reforms, variation remains in which states adopt women's rights policies. However, despite international pressure and growing domestic advocacy movements, a great degree of variation exists among states in the number and character of their reforms (Bush 2011, Franceschet and Piscopo 2008, Hafner-Burton 2008, Huber and Karim 2018, Krook 2009, Montoya 2013, Paxton, Green and Hughes 2008, True 2016). For example, as of 2016, only 79 states have adopted National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, around 50% of states have adopted a political gender quota to promote women's participation in the legislature. However, even within political quotas, the quality and scope of these policies vary between mandatory parity quotas and voluntary quotas targeting a relatively small amount of female participation, around 10% (Krook 2006).

Further, in addition to differing legal frameworks on women's rights, gender equality varies greatly cross-nationally. For example, globally, women comprise only 24% of legislators.<sup>4</sup> Parity in legislative representation has only been reached in three states, while women make up less than 10% of representatives in 12 states. Further, according to the World Bank, women's labor force participation hovers at less than 50%, ranging between 15% and 86%. Finally, although the average girls' secondary school enrollment ratio is relatively high, around 70%, in low income countries it averages 38%, reaching as low as 14% in the Central African Republic.<sup>5</sup>

While international organizations urge the adoption of gender reforms, such as legislative gender quotas, campaigns against domestic violence and rape, national action plans for gender equality, and the creation of governmental women's rights offices, little is known about the systematic diffusion of these policies. Given their increasing salience, it is imperative to analyze

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<sup>3</sup>According to the PeaceWomen Website, which tracks UNSCR 1325 implementation globally.

<sup>4</sup>Data on women's parliamentary representation comes from the Interparliamentary Union data set.

<sup>5</sup>Statistics from 2017 according to the World Bank.

their diffusion across states. Several models are commonly invoked to explain the diffusion of gender reforms. While these frameworks share common themes, they differ in the primary causal pathways. Importantly, no single framework explains gender reform diffusion across all states (Krook 2009).

Some scholars emphasize that states adopt gender reforms in an effort to appear modernized and to gain greater favor with the international community (Montoya 2013). Bush (2011) explains how political gender quotas are closely tied to conceptions of modernization and democracy. Similarly, McLeod (2011) argues that Serbia adopted several women's rights policies to demonstrate its legitimacy and modernity. Other scholars point to the role of NGOs in the diffusion of gender reforms (Irvine 2013). For example, Htun and Weldon (2012) argue that feminist mobilization domestically and transnationally is critical for the adoption of policies combating violence against women.

Finally, several models focus on domestic sources of norm diffusion. Democracy is often linked with the adoption of gender reforms. For example, True (2016) and Hughes et al. (2015) find that democracy promotes the adoption of NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and political gender quotas. Similarly, women's participation in politics also may increase the adoption of gender reforms due to substantive representation of female constituents (Bratton and Haynie 1999, Celis and Childs 2012, Koch and Fulton 2011).<sup>6</sup> Finally, conflict and post-conflict states are especially prone to adopt gender reforms, especially increasing levels of women's political participation. (Acharya 2004, Basini and Ryan 2016, Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015, Krook 2006, Tripp 2015, True and Mintrom 2001, Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019).

While previous studies have provided many important improvements in our understanding of the diffusion of gender reform, several shortcomings are present. First, many focus on the adoption of one type of policy, which obscures points of comparison and results in contradictory findings. Second, many studies do not consider the interactive effects which may occur between international and domestic diffusion pathways. That said, Hughes et al. (2015) present a major advancement by considering how transnational and domestic women's movements interact and

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<sup>6</sup>However, the direct link between women's representation and gender reform is unclear.

surprisingly find a negative interaction, underscoring the need for more investigation. Third, many of these studies remain agnostic about when certain diffusion pathways are more likely to promote the adoption of gender reforms. Many studies recognize the contextual dependency of some diffusion mechanisms, but do not empirically test how certain structural and institutional attributes may condition which diffusion pathway will be primary.

## **The Role of International Actors in Gender Reform**

Previous theories on the diffusion of gender reform often acknowledge that conflict plays a key role in promoting or degrading women's rights. Increasingly, studies have found that conflict can improve women's rights and prompt the adoption of gender reforms (Huber and Karim 2018, Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015, Tripp 2015, True and Mintrom 2001, Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). For example, Webster, Chen and Beardsley (2019) find that conflict may lead to shifting gender roles that increases women's empowerment after conflict in the short- and medium-term. However, the exact mechanism underlying the relationship between conflict and women's rights reforms remains unclear. This paper examines how international actors leverage material incentives to promote gender reform and how country context moderates the relative influence of domestic and international actors. While all states are somewhat susceptible to material incentives, the degree of susceptibility differs greatly across states.

The adoption of gender reform incurs costs on a state and therefore, given limited resources, states must prioritize gender reforms sufficiently to warrant committing their resources to it. These costs are manifested in a number of ways. First, and most directly, gender reforms require resources to be drafted, adopted, and implemented. For example, to adopt and implement a law on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), experts must be consulted, time must be spent drafting and passing the law, and resources must be spent to implement it. Therefore, gender reforms require the commitment of time, funds, and personnel.

Additionally, gender reforms may carry normative, cultural, social, and political costs that may lead certain states to reject their adoption. First, states may reject gender reforms if they

contrast the society's cultural or social norms. In these societies, leaders and politicians may bear large costs for adopting gender reforms in the form of criticism, lost support, possible loss of office, and social unrest.<sup>7</sup> As a result, some societies and leaders may view gender reforms as violating and undermining their culture, religion, or identity, increasing their willingness to resist international and domestic pressure in favor of these reforms. Similarly, politicians may be reluctant to adopt gender reforms if they threaten their political power. In other words, if politicians and leaders came to power in a gender inequitable state, they may fear that gender reforms, and the resultant increased women's rights, may decrease their support and increase the pool of potential challengers for political power (Krook 2016).

Therefore, the adoption of gender reforms may trigger costs for states in terms of resources, social and cultural authority, and political competitiveness. As a result, to adopt gender reforms two conditions must be present. First, states must have the physical resources to draft, adopt, and implement gender reforms. Second, state leaders must have the political will to adopt them. International actors can provide the crucial resources to offset these potential costs.

While international influence is manifested in several ways, international actors gain the greatest influence by offering material incentives in exchange for adopting desired policies. On one hand, they may promise direct "payments" to the state in return for the adoption of gender reforms. For example, several foreign aid distributors, including the U.S., Sweden, and the IMF offer economic aid to countries that propose to commit it to women's rights programs. Further, states may receive more indirect material incentives, such as the promise of greater economic cooperation and investment in the future (Hashimoto 2012). Similarly, as gender equality becomes an increasingly salient topic, states, their public, IGOs, NGOs, and businesses may withhold investment from states accused of violating women's rights.<sup>8</sup> In other words, third

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<sup>7</sup>For example, after a political gender quota was implemented in the Indian state of Nagaland in February 2017, riots and protests occurred, leading to property destruction, troop deployments, and two deaths. See Feliz, Solomon, 2017, "Tribes in India Demand an End to Local Gender Quotas, Sparking Deadly Riots" *Time* <http://time.com/4659204/nagaland-india-gender-quota/>

<sup>8</sup>For example, clothing factories in Guatemala and Mexico have been increasingly criticized by consumers and NGOs for discriminatory practices against women. Third party actors often invoke poor women's rights as justification for punitive action. For example, scholars argue that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were partly justified among the American and Western public by rhetoric which emphasized women's rights.

parties may offer both the promise of increased investment, aid, and cooperation in the future in exchange for the adoption of gender reform and the threat of withdrawing those material benefits if the state does not comply. On the other hand, international actors may also offer the necessary resources, assistance, and expertise to adopt and implement gender reform policies, negating the costs that would otherwise be borne by the state. Therefore, third parties can promote the adoption of gender reforms through offering direct and indirect material incentives ranging from immediate assistance in policy adoption to the promise of medium and long-term benefits in the form of greater investment, aid, and cooperation (Bearce and Tirone 2010, Hyde 2011, N.d., Stone 2011, von Borzyskowski and Vabulas N.d.).

One particularly strong form of direct international coercion occurs when UN peacekeeping missions are present as they often undertake agenda-setting and direct participation in policy-making to advocate for liberal reforms. Bush (2011) argues that peacekeeping missions increase the likelihood of political gender quota adoption in developing countries as the country hopes to leverage the resources and influence of the peacekeeping mission to demonstrate its level of democratization and modernity. Similarly, peacekeeping missions influence the adoption of security sector gender reforms in post-conflict states (Huber and Karim 2018). Finally, several studies trace how peacekeeping missions support a number of gender reforms in post-conflict states by providing critical resources and international support for women's rights initiatives (Bacon 2015, Karim and Beardsley 2016, McLeod 2011, Olsson 2001).

However, short of a UN peacekeeping mission, international influence can be exerted through the presence of UN personnel, technical advisers and experts, and funding. While various IGOs have adopted and promoted the WPS agenda, the UN remains at the forefront of the women's rights agenda as the first major IGO to recognize women's rights as a security concern and for its continued prioritization of gender equality. Specifically, the UN may promote gender reforms by providing expertise regarding gender issues and policy development, disseminating information regarding the benefits of gender equality, training government officials, assisting in implementation, monitoring and evaluating the progress of gender reforms, and providing funds and other resources. Therefore, as UN presence increases, the state may

be more likely to adopt gender reforms.

**International Hypothesis 1:** *As UN presence increases in a state, the state is more likely to adopt gender reforms.*

Additionally, international actors may also retain agenda-setting power through financial relationships, such as foreign aid. Donor countries and institutions often use foreign aid as a carrot (or stick) to persuade the recipient country to adopt certain reforms, including gender reforms (Bush 2011, Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015). For example, the U.S. foreign aid agency, USAID, has grants earmarked for women's rights initiatives. Therefore, as a state receives greater amounts of foreign aid, it will become more dependent upon donor states and more sensitive to international pressure for gender reforms. However, this effect is likely to be magnified when the donor is associated with liberalism and women's rights. In other words, donors with high levels of gender equality are likely to encourage recipient states to adopt gender reforms.

**International Hypothesis 2:** *Conditional upon a state's foreign aid donors adopting gender reforms, as a state's dependence on foreign aid increases, states are more likely to adopt gender reforms.*

Further, IGOs that prioritize women's rights may connect compliance on gender reform with several material benefits that result from membership, participation, and cooperation in the IGO (Pevehouse 2005). For example, EU member states adopted violence against women's laws in response to demands by the EU for compliance with EU standards of SGBV legal frameworks (Montoya 2013, Polack and Hafner-Burton 2000). As above, it is likely that IGOs will be especially likely to pressure for gender reforms as the members which make up the IGO become more committed to women's rights (Greenhill 2010).

**International Hypothesis 3:** *As the average level of gender equality of member states of an IGO increases, each individual member state is more likely to adopt gender reforms.*

Finally, many scholars argue that non-state actors play a vital role in promoting the adoption of gender reforms cross-nationally (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Paxton, Green and Hughes 2008, True and Mintrom 2001). Since 1970, women's international NGOs (WINGOs) have expanded exponentially in both number and membership (Hughes et al. 2015). WINGOs

are vital to uncovering violations of women’s rights, garnering domestic support, and calling international attention to gender equality in certain countries. Importantly, unlike domestic women’s movements, which are subject to similar resource constraints as the government and may possess limited power in relation to the government, WINGOs have independent resources and support (Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as WINGO presence in a state increases, there may be more international pressure on the ground and assistance offered to adopt reforms.

**International Hypothesis 5:** *As the presence of international women’s rights organizations increases, states are more likely to adopt gender reform.*

## **Conflict: Opening Doors for Gender Reform**

While all states face resource constraints, states that are currently experiencing conflict or have recently experienced conflict are especially likely to be sensitive to resource limitations and therefore, are more likely to adopt gender reforms in response to material incentives. Conflict is very draining on resources as a state must siphon funds into its fighting capacity and infrastructure repair, which may limit the resources available for other sectors or gender reforms. Moreover, after conflict, resources must be devoted to the rebuilding process as the country struggles to implement DDR, repair infrastructure, resume regular social service provision, and reform and rebuild the government. For example, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) calculate that the costs of armed conflict in a low-income country average about 64.2 billion dollars. Further, after Liberia’s civil war, donor flows to Liberia represented up to 771% of government spending and 39% of Liberia’s GDP (Bacon 2015). In contrast, while non-conflict states experience similar resource limitations and also face trade-offs regarding how to spend their limited resources, since they have not experienced a violent shock,<sup>10</sup> they may be able to consider a broader range of reforms on which to spend resources.

Therefore, conflict and post-conflict states may have more severe resource limitations, which may lead them to be highly dependent upon international donors, trade partners, and

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<sup>9</sup>Also, note that WINGOs and domestic women’s organizations may have different policy agendas

<sup>10</sup>However, states may experience other types of shocks, such as natural disasters.

organizations to augment their resources. Similarly, conflict-affected states are eager to rebuild to prevent further conflict and instability. Therefore, conflict and post-conflict states are highly susceptible to the material incentives of international actors who may offer reconstruction assistance, foreign aid, or investment in exchange for the adoption of gender reforms. Further, while international actors promote gender reform cross-nationally, special attention is paid to conflict and post-conflict states since UNSCR 1325 outlines them as most urgently needing gender reform.

In addition to the greater sensitivity to material incentives, the conflict and post-conflict environment shifts political will to favor gender reform by altering the needs and perspectives of the government, the security sector, and the population. Specifically, the experience of conflict may shift gender roles to grant women more access to political, economic, and security oriented duties, exacerbate women's insecurities, and damage the government's reputation.

First, the experience of conflict may challenge traditional gender roles (Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). Gender roles are most directly challenged by women's participation in the conflict as combatants, which highlights their agency to act as political agents (Sjoberg 2007, 2018). However, women's other experiences during and after conflict may also challenge traditional gender roles in less dramatic ways. For example, during conflict when able-bodied men may be absent, women often have to fill traditionally male roles, such as economic laborers, mediators of interpersonal conflicts, and community leaders (Carpenter 2005, Hoduck 2016). Further, women may mobilize as part of a peace movement. Women may be able to leverage these mobilization efforts to gain political office (Berry 2015). For example, Tripp (2015) argues that after civil wars in Africa, women increase their formal and informal political participation.

Second, although conflict may challenge gender roles to empower women in some ways, it also increases women's vulnerability as they may be displaced from their homes, disconnected from their communities, and are economically and physically vulnerable to SGBV (Cohen and Nordås 2014, Karim 2017, Karim and Beardsley 2016, Nordås and Rustad 2013). Therefore, the government may feel obligated to address women's unique insecurity through gender re-

forms. Finally, after conflict, the population may distrust the government. The government may undertake gender reforms to improve its legitimacy (Bush 2011, Karim 2016, McLeod 2011).

However, while conflict may provide an opportunity for gender reform, militarization and patriarchy can also be mutually reinforcing (Enloe 1989, 2000, Goldstein 2003, Hudson et al. 2013). The theory presented here does not necessarily contradict this perspective. For example, as acknowledged above, conflict can increase women's insecurity by exposing them to physical and sexual violence. Instead, this theory expands upon this scholarship by considering developments in the WPS norm in the past fifteen years, which may challenge traditional ideas regarding conflict and gender. Specifically, while previously the WPS norm was underdeveloped and had little support, many international and domestic actors now understand that conflict and gender inequality are linked and therefore, specifically target conflict countries for women's rights campaigns. However, it should be noted that conflict alone may not be sufficient to increase the likelihood of gender reform. In fact, if international intervention and pressure does not occur to advocate for these reforms, then the more traditional view of conflict as further embedding patriarchy is likely to occur. Thus, the presence of international actors and their material incentives may partially explain why some conflicts worsen women's rights, while gender equality increases after other conflicts.

While all states face resource constraints that may make them likely to respond to international material incentives, states that are currently experiencing conflict or have recently experienced conflict are especially likely to be sensitive to resource limitations and therefore are more likely to adopt gender reforms in response to material incentives. Therefore, conflict and post-conflict states are often highly dependent upon international donors, trade partners, and organizations to augment their resources. As a result, conflict and post-conflict states are highly susceptible to the material incentives of international actors who may offer reconstruction assistance, foreign aid, or investment in exchange for the adoption of gender reforms due to their immediate needs to stabilize and rebuild and their medium- and long-term need for economic growth and stability. Further, while international actors promote gender reform

cross-nationally, special attention is paid to conflict and post-conflict states since UNSCR 1325 outlines them as most urgently needing gender reform.

***Conflict Hypothesis:*** *Conflict and post-conflict states should be more likely to adopt gender reforms conditional upon the presence of international factors than non-conflict states.*

While this theory focuses specifically on the dynamics of conflict and international actors, its causal mechanisms could be robust to any shock to a state that results in an increased dependence on international support and increased international pressure, such as a major natural disaster, economic crisis, health epidemic, or regime transition. Further, it is most likely to occur when the shock also results in challenges to traditional gender norms that can further prime the domestic context to have increased political will for gender reform. Moreover, it is important to note that international actors are one possible factor that may influence the diffusion of gender reform and other factors, such as domestic women's rights movements, also influence women's rights in non-conflict and conflict-affected countries.

## **Pathways to Women's Rights: Legal, Regulatory, or Behavioral Change**

Conflict may empower women at multiple levels: through formal legal changes, changes in state regulations short of legal changes, or informal behavior. Increasingly, studies have shown women's political participation increases after conflict (Bush 2011, Hughes and Tripp 2015, Tripp 2015, Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). This increased participation could occur through legal changes that promote women's political rights, such as legislative quotas, electoral laws, or constitutional amendments. Further, it could also be the result of other types of government campaigns short of the adoption of laws, such as informational campaigns to encourage female voter registration. Finally, it could occur through changing gender norms that allow women to be more politically active even in the absence of legal guarantees or encouragements.

It is important to consider each level of reform separately because the process of women's rights reform is not necessarily linear and different types of women's rights may change at

different speeds. For example, Karim and Hill. (N.d.) find relatively low levels of correlation between women's aggregate level of security, inclusion, and equality. Similarly, gender reform at different levels, from the individual to legal to societal, may occur at different times and be affected by different domestic and international factors. Additionally, the adoption of gender reform does not always indicate sufficient implementation of gender reform and vice versa. Therefore, a wide range of gender reform must be considered to fully capture the dynamic relationships between conflict, international actors, and women's rights.

There are several reasons to believe that conflict primarily creates opportunities for women to gain rights through informal channels rather than through the adoption of formal laws. For example, women may join the government in larger numbers after conflict and therefore, the government does not feel the need to adopt gender reform. Additionally, the government may simply lack the capacity to adopt large gender reform laws. Further, policymakers may be aware that international actors support the adoption of these policies and due to concerns of neo-imperialism may actively reject adopting similar policies. Thus, while these policymakers may advocate for gender reform, they may not adopt the policies favored by international actors explicitly.

However, at the same time, post-conflict states may be eager to adopt formal women's rights policies if they believe that it is a relatively simple way to gain increased legitimacy in the eyes of the international community and the domestic public. For example, after the genocide and civil war in Rwanda, the legislature adopted a legislative quota, partially to mend the government's reputation with the international community and appear democratic and progressive. Additionally, women in the post-conflict context may mobilize to demand the adoption of legislative changes regarding women's rights. For example, Tripp (2015) argues that after the civil war in Uganda in the 1980's, women's movements mobilized to demand that the government amend the constitution to guarantee equal rights between men and women.

Therefore, to explore the multidimensional impact of conflict and international actors on women's rights and gender equality, it is imperative to simultaneously examine changes in women's rights laws, policies, and indicators. To the author's knowledge, this analysis is the

most comprehensive single analysis of different laws, policies, and outcomes on women’s rights to date.

## Research Design

To test the theoretical expectations above, two sets of analyses are conducted. The first examines the adoption of formal women’s rights laws and policies and the second examines women’s political empowerment. To examine women’s rights laws, a unique cross-national data set on the adoption of gender reform between 1988 and 2016 was created.<sup>11</sup> This data set includes information on the year of adoption of several gender equality reforms. These include the creation of gender machinery within the government whose responsibility it is to promote women’s rights and gender equality domestically, the criminalization of several forms of violence against women, and the adoption of a legislative gender quota.<sup>12</sup> The coding rules of these variables can be found in the Appendix.<sup>13</sup>

For each reform, a separate data set was created which contains country-year observations from 1988 until the year in which the reform was adopted at which point the country drops out of the data set. While some of these laws can be reformed, repealed, or adopted multiple times, the primary analysis only considers the initial adoption of the policy. There are several reasons for this. First, when a policy is initially adopted, the state may bear several costs unique to the first adoption, such as the resources needed to draft and campaign for the policy and initial cultural backlash. It is reasonable to believe that once a policy has been adopted for the first time, the process through which it is adopted again and the costs which must be paid are

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<sup>11</sup>Robustness checks also expand the time frame to 1970.

<sup>12</sup>Additional reforms in the data set, but whose results are not presented here, include the legalizing of abortion and the conditions under which an abortion is legal, the outlawing of child marriage, the adoption of a National Action Plan to promote gender equality (including NAPs for UNSCR 1325), and reforms to outlaw economic discrimination against women.

<sup>13</sup>Data on the adoption of these laws was gathered from a number of sources. Primary sources include IGOs, such as the UN (especially UNICEF, UN Women, and the UN Population Fund), the WHO, and NATO, NGOs, such as Girls Not Brides and Stop Violence Against Women, news reports and think tanks (including the Pew Research Center and the Center for Democratic Control of the Armed forces), and scholarly data sets, including the Quota Adoption and Reform over Time (QAROT) data set from Hughes et al. (2017) and the Women in Parliament data set by Paxton, Green and Hughes (2008).

significantly altered. Second, while it is possible for these laws to be repealed, it is extremely unlikely and is a rare occurrence in the data. Finally, the data set was limited to countries which are not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as OECD states generally have higher levels of gender equality, earlier adoption of gender reforms, and a lower incidence of conflict.

## Dependent Variables

Several dependent variables are examined in this analysis.<sup>14</sup> All of the dependent variables reflect legal, programmatic, or organizational changes made by a national government or its institutions to promote either women's rights or gender reform. First, three types of violence against women laws are examined, including laws that explicitly criminalize intimate partner violence (IPV), the criminalization of marital rape, and laws against sexual harassment either in the workplace or more generally.<sup>15</sup> Next, *Government Machinery* examines the creation of government offices that may promote women's rights<sup>16</sup> and *Government Ministry* captures the creation of a ministry-level government body created that is devoted to women's rights. Next, the analysis considers the creation of a legislative gender quota, or a legally mandated minimum level of representation for women within the legislative branch (Hughes et al. 2017).<sup>17</sup> Figure 1 plots the decade of adoption of *Gender Machinery*, *Intimate Partner Violence*, and *Political Quota*. As can be seen states vary greatly in the timing of their adoption across the reforms.

Since the data represent an unbalanced panel containing discrete country-years<sup>18</sup> and the theory focuses on time until a reform is adopted, event history analysis is the most appropriate form of modeling (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). While there are several models which can

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<sup>14</sup>Summary statistics can be found in the Appendix.

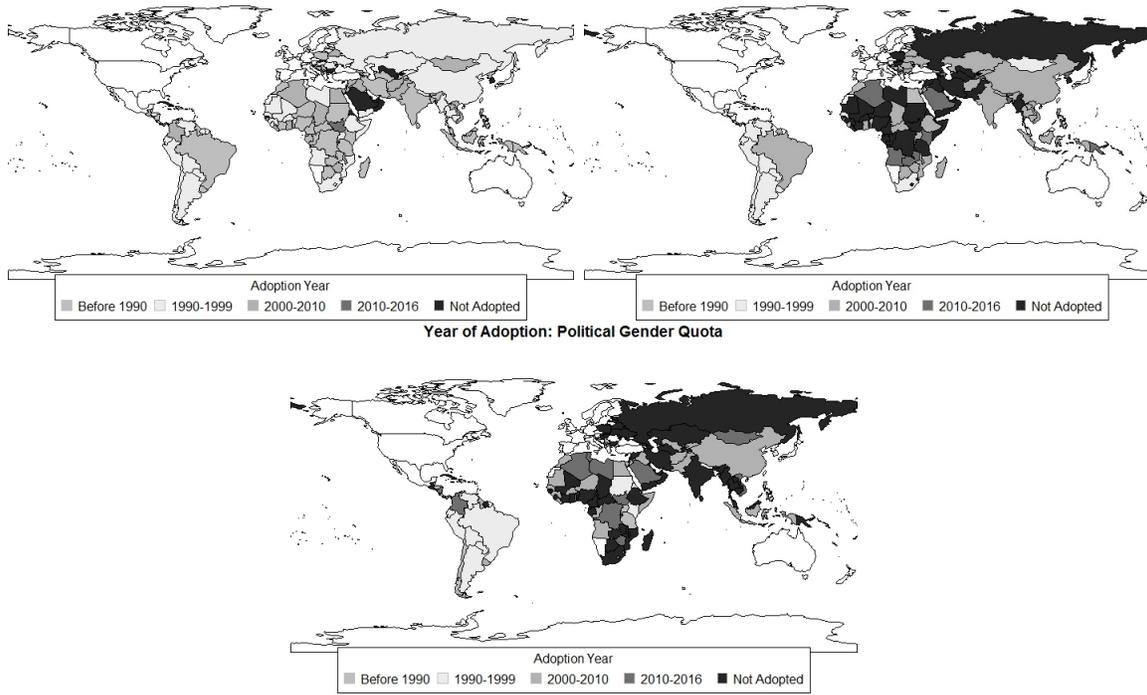
<sup>15</sup>These variables only considered laws that explicitly criminalized these forms of violence rather than laws which are either silent on the legality of violence against women or imply illegality under another statute.

<sup>16</sup>This can include offices and departments that operate within another ministry (even if that ministry is not primarily tasked with women's rights).

<sup>17</sup>This variable excludes voluntary party quotas.

<sup>18</sup>Since the adoption of laws and policies by legislatures or through other government processes is often recorded yearly, the data is organized into years rather than more continuous time units.

Figure 1: Map: Decade Of Adoption of Dependent Variables  
 Year of Adoption: Gender Machinery      Year of Adoption: Intimate Partner Violence



be used, the primary analysis presented here uses discrete event logistic regression. Logistic regression was chosen rather than Cox Proportional Hazard models due to important time trends that alter the effects of the independent variables over time (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004).<sup>19</sup> In other words, since the promotion of women’s rights and the adoption of these reforms vary over the decades, we should expect that the effects of the variables will also vary, which violates the assumptions of the Cox Proportional Hazard model. In contrast, with logistic regression, time trends can be explicitly modeled to avoid biasing the results. The time dependency of each model depends on the dependent variable tested and as a result, time trends are modeled as linear, cubic, or quadratic depending on the dependent variable.<sup>20</sup>

## Independent Variables

Several sets of independent variables are used in this analysis. The first set of independent variables measure international influence within the state-year. The first, *World Bank Aid* is

<sup>19</sup>However, the results remain consistent with Cox Proportional Hazard Models.

<sup>20</sup>Plots of the time trends within the dependent variables can be found in the Online Appendix.

the log-transformed one-year lagged amount of World Bank Aid that the country received. Ideally, there would be a variable to measure the degree of UN peacekeeping influence in the country. However, as UN peacekeeping missions are predominantly in conflict-affected countries, there is not a consistent measure of peacekeeping in non-conflict states. Thus, World Bank Aid is used as a proxy of UN presence. As the World Bank is a UN administered body, its aid can be considered an extension of UN influence. International Hypothesis 1 expects a positive relationship between World Bank Aid and gender reform and this effect should be magnified in conflict-affected states.

Further, to examine International Hypothesis 2, *Aid Context* was included in the models as a robustness check. *Aid Context* accounts for the average fertility rate of a state's foreign aid donors. Data on bilateral foreign comes from the the Aid Data project and includes multiple types of aid, including Official Development Assistance (ODA) and security assistance aid. Fertility rates are one indicator of a state's level of gender equality as it demonstrates the strength of traditional norms of women as child bearers/caretakers and proxies for a woman's participation in the public sphere. In other words, as the fertility rate increases, gender equality generally decreases. Therefore, the theory expects there to be an inverse relationship between the average fertility rate of a state's donors and the time until a gender reform is adopted. Due to a strong correlation between *Export Context* and *Aid Context*, the two variables cannot be included in the same model without inducing bias into the model. However, the results do not significantly change with the use of *Aid Context* in the place of *Export Context* as can be seen in the Online Appendix.<sup>21</sup>

*Export Context* accounts for the average fertility rate of a state's trade partners. Data on exports comes from the IMF's Direction of Trade Statistics Database. According to the "California Effect," importing countries may be able to leverage trade relationships to transmit their higher standards to exporting states with lower standards (Vogel 1997). Several studies have demonstrated that states which have greater export ties to states with higher levels of human rights are more likely to in turn increase their internal respect for human rights (Cao,

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<sup>21</sup>*Export Context* was used in the main models due to the higher reliability of the data.

Greenhill and Prakash 2013, Greenhill, Mosley and Prakash 2009). International Hypothesis 3 expects there to be an inverse relationship between the state's dependence on exports and the average fertility rate of a state's donors and gender reform adoption.

Next, to account for the pressure that IGOs can exert on states, *IGO Context* records the average level of gender equality among the member states of IGOs to which the state is a member in the year, weighted by the centrality of each member state. This variable was calculated in a similar fashion to Greenhill (2016). First, for each IGO to which a state is member, the average fertility rate of the IGO's member-states is calculated. This is then weighted by the number of states which belong to the IGO to account for the relative direct connections between IGO members.<sup>22</sup> Next, the average fertility rate of states across *all* IGOs to which a state is a member in the year is calculated.<sup>23</sup> International Hypotheses 4 expects that as *IGO Context* increases, indicating that a state's connection with IGO partners that have high levels of fertility (and thus, lower levels gender equality) increases, the likelihood of gender reform adoption should decrease.

Further, to account for the ability of WINGOs to pressure a state to adopt gender reforms, a count of the number of WINGOs in the state in the year was included. This measure was created using data from Hughes, Krook and Paxton (2015) and Cole (2012) which varies between 0 and 114.<sup>24</sup> International Hypothesis 5 expects that as the number of WINGOs present in a state increases, the likelihood of gender reform adoption also increases.

To account for a domestic source of pressure for gender reform, women's political leadership, the proportion of the legislature that is female as recorded by Paxton, Green and Hughes (2008)

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<sup>22</sup>Specifically, IGOs which have many members are weighted less than IGOs which have fewer members since as the number of members decrease, the more direct the connection between members in the IGO become. For a description of the weighting scheme, see Greenhill (2016).

<sup>23</sup>An additional variable to consider a state's context is the average fertility rate of a state's culturally proximate neighbors. The results remain consistent when a a control for culturally proximate neighbors is included.

<sup>24</sup>While the Hughes, Krook and Paxton (2015) is gathered from 1970 to 2013, it is gathered in five year intervals. Therefore, interpolation was used to fill in the missing years and extrapolation was used to update the data through 2016. Additionally, if data was missing for certain country-years from the Hughes, Krook and Paxton (2015), it was supplemented with the Cole (2012) data. While this is not ideal as the two data sets use slightly different methods to count the number of WINGOs, they are highly correlated.

and the World Bank (2016) is included.<sup>25</sup> Proponents of substantive representation argue that female legislators promote pro-women policies and therefore, as women’s representation in the legislature increases, states should be more likely to adopt gender reforms (Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015, Iyer et al. 2012, True 2016).

The final independent variable indicates the conflict status of the state. This variable is a categorical variable in which a state is coded as 0 if it is not experiencing a civil conflict and has not experienced a civil conflict within the past five to ten years, 1 if the state is experiencing an active civil conflict, and 2 if a state has experienced a civil conflict within the past five years (if the conflict caused less than 1,000 battle deaths) or ten years (if the conflict caused 1,000 or more battle deaths), but is not currently fighting an active conflict.<sup>26</sup> Conflict was defined according to the UCDP/PRIO data set as more than 25 battle deaths occurring between the government forces and a non-state actor within the territory of the state in the state-year.<sup>27</sup> Military coups were excluded from the analysis.<sup>28</sup> These variables are lagged by one year. In the full data set, around 19.5% of observations are active conflict state-years and 11.1% are post-conflict years.<sup>29</sup>

All of the independent variables are lagged by one year to account for endogeneity since affects the likelihood of conflict (Caprioli 2005, Caprioli and Boyer 2001, Karim and Beardsley 2017, Melander 2005 *a,b*, Tripp and Kang 2008). To account for the conditional nature between a state’s conflict status and the international influences on the successful adoption of reform, as expected by the Conflict Hypothesis, in every model, the state’s conflict status is factored to create two dummy variables for whether the state is experiencing an active conflict or is a post-conflict state (with non-conflict states as the excluded category) and this factored indicator is

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<sup>25</sup>An additional operationalization of women’s political leadership used as a robustness check is whether the state has a female head of state.

<sup>26</sup>If a state is within the ten year period after one conflict when it begins a new conflict or fighting is renewed, it returns to being coded as an active conflict state.

<sup>27</sup>Alternative measures of post-conflict, namely post-conflict as ending five years after a conflict ends or as a permanent state, are in the robustness checks.

<sup>28</sup>However, the results remain consistent when military coups are included.

<sup>29</sup>Controls for various characteristics of the conflict, including intensity, termination, the use of female combatants by the insurgent group, and the occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence, are included in the online appendix.

then interacted with each of the independent variables. The Conflict Hypothesis expects that international actors should have a stronger effect in conflict and post-conflict states compared with non-conflict states.

## Control Variables

Several control variables are included to account for other factors that may influence the adoption of gender reform, the occurrence of conflict, and the level of international intervention. All controls are lagged by one year. First, a state's level of democratization and its respect for political rights and civil liberties may influence its likelihood of experiencing conflict, the state's exposure to international actors, and its likelihood of gender reform (Cingranelli et al. 2019, Oneal and Russett 2001). To measure a state's level of democratization and its respect of political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom House* measures civil liberties and political rights within a country. Freedom House creates two seven-level categorical measures of a state's political rights and civil liberties, not including women's rights, which are averaged for this analysis. A coding of 1 indicates a state that has high respect of civil and political rights, whereas a coding of 7 indicates a less free society.

Moreover, wealthier states are more capable of adopting gender reforms due to increased budgetary resources. Further, wealthy states often experience increased gender equality and decreased conflict propensity (Hudson et al. 2013). Additionally, international material incentives may be less effective in wealthy states that are not as dependent upon foreign support. *GDP per capita* measures the state's gross domestic product per capita. *GDP per capita* is gathered from the World Bank and lagged by one year and log transformed.

Additionally, to account for the existing level of gender equality within a state, which affects the likelihood of gender reform, the probability that the state experiences a conflict, and the state's integration into the international community, the average fertility rate in the state-year is included as a control (Caprioli 2005, Caprioli and Boyer 2001, Melander 2005*b*). While there are multiple indicators of gender equality, for this analysis, fertility rates are the

most accurate and reliable indicator as they have been consistently tracked for many decades.<sup>30</sup> Fertility rates are gathered from the World Bank and lagged by one year.

Finally, other controls were included as robustness checks, but are not shown in the results below, including the state's dependence on oil reserves and several features of the state's conflict, including whether there were female combatants, the extent of conflict-related sexual violence, the conflict's intensity, the deployment and length of a UN peacekeeping mission, and the outcome, including whether the winner was a rebel or government, and whether there was a gendered peace agreement.

## Results

### Legal Gender Reform

Overall, relatively few consistent patterns appear with regards to the factors that promote gender reform. Each table presented below tests a different gender reform and contains three models: the first model includes full independent and control variables, but does not include interaction terms; the second model interacts both active conflict status and post-conflict status with each of the independent variables; and the third model only interacts post-conflict status with the independent variables.<sup>31</sup> For the sake of space, only three tables of results are presented here. The remaining tables can be found in the Appendix. Table 1 examines the adoption of laws criminalizing intimate partner violence, Table 2 examines the creation of national gender machinery, and Table 3 examines the adoption of a political gender quota.<sup>32</sup>

While there is some support for the hypotheses that international influence increases the likelihood of the adoption of several women's rights reforms in non-conflict states, there is not significant, consistent evidence that international influence has a significantly different effect in active conflict or post-conflict states compared with non-conflict states.

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<sup>30</sup>However, alternative measures of gender equality are considered and the results are consistent.

<sup>31</sup>Active states were recorded as "non-post-conflict" for these tests.

<sup>32</sup>In the appendix, Table 6 examines laws against sexual harassment, Table 7 examines the criminalization of marital rape, and Table 8 examines the creation of a gender ministry.

Table 1: Discrete Event History Model: Intimate Partner Violence Reform

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Intimate Partner Laws		
Active Conflict	-0.15 (0.36)	-0.53 (3.55)	-5.17 (3.85)
Post Conflict	0.29 (0.33)	-6.19 (4.17)	0.01 (0.02)
World Bank Aid	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.72* (0.38)
Export Context	-0.84** (0.34)	-1.28*** (0.47)	-0.77* (0.43)
IGO Context	-0.47 (0.42)	-0.57 (0.49)	0.01 (0.01)
WINGOs	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.04** (0.02)
Legislature Percent	0.06*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.31*** (0.10)
Freedom House	-0.29*** (0.09)	-0.30*** (0.10)	0.14 (0.14)
GDP Per Capita	0.11 (0.14)	0.12 (0.15)	-0.36*** (0.13)
Fertility	-0.36*** (0.13)	-0.43*** (0.13)	0.02 (0.36)
Muslim Majority	0.003 (0.35)	-0.03 (0.36)	0.16 (0.22)
Years to Adopt	0.16 (0.22)	0.18 (0.23)	-0.003 (0.01)
Years to Adopt <sup>2</sup>	-0.003 (0.01)	-0.004 (0.01)	0.0000 (0.0001)
Years to Adopt <sup>3</sup>	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.02 (0.04)
Active Conflict:World Bank Aid		1.56** (0.67)	
Active Conflict:Export Context		-1.48* (0.80)	
Active Conflict:IGO Context		0.003 (0.02)	
Active Conflict:WINGOs		0.08* (0.04)	
Active Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
Post Conflict:World Bank Aid		-0.01 (0.76)	-0.65 (0.70)
Post Conflict:Export Context		1.55* (0.92)	1.85** (0.88)
Post Conflict:IGO Context		-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Post Conflict:WINGOs		0.07** (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Post Conflict:Legislature Percent		1.58 (2.93)	0.18 (2.64)
Constant	-0.52 (2.57)		
Observations	2,829	2,829	2,829
Log Likelihood	-301.01	-292.14	-297.67
Akaike Inf. Crit.	632.02	634.28	633.33

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 2: Discrete Event History Model: Gender Machinery

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Gender Machinery		
Active Conflict	0.19 (0.32)	-3.63 (3.75)	-0.28 (4.27)
Post Conflict	0.10 (0.35)	-0.53 (4.33)	0.03* (0.02)
World Bank Aid	0.04** (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.87** (0.40)
Export Context	-1.05*** (0.39)	-0.78* (0.42)	-0.60 (0.39)
IGO Context	-0.52 (0.38)	-0.69 (0.42)	0.01 (0.01)
WINGOs	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.0005 (0.02)
Legislature Percent	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.30*** (0.09)
Freedom House	-0.29*** (0.09)	-0.32*** (0.10)	0.02 (0.16)
GDP Per Capita	0.03 (0.15)	0.02 (0.16)	0.09 (0.13)
Fertility	0.10 (0.13)	0.08 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.34)
Muslim Majority	-0.09 (0.33)	-0.15 (0.36)	1.43*** (0.51)
Years to Adopt	1.52*** (0.51)	1.42*** (0.51)	-0.14*** (0.04)
Years to Adopt <sup>2</sup>	-0.15*** (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.04)	0.01*** (0.002)
Years to Adopt <sup>3</sup>	0.01*** (0.002)	0.01*** (0.002)	-0.0001*** (0.0000)
Years to Adopt <sup>4</sup>	-0.0001*** (0.0000)	-0.0001*** (0.0000)	0.01 (0.04)
Active Conflict:World Bank Aid		0.01 (0.04)	-0.66 (0.68)
Active Conflict:Export Context		-0.66 (0.68)	1.35 (0.91)
Active Conflict:IGO Context		1.35 (0.91)	0.01 (0.02)
Active Conflict:WINGOs		0.01 (0.02)	0.14** (0.07)
Active Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.14** (0.07)	0.12 (0.13)
Post Conflict:World Bank Aid		0.12 (0.13)	-1.26 (0.83)
Post Conflict:Export Context		-1.26 (0.83)	0.70 (0.96)
Post Conflict:IGO Context		0.70 (0.96)	0.02 (0.02)
Post Conflict:WINGOs		0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.06)
Post Conflict:Legislature Percent		-0.01 (0.06)	-1.45 (2.63)
Constant	-1.56 (2.57)	-1.19 (2.75)	0.11 (0.13)
Observations	1,513	1,513	1,513
Log Likelihood	-279.33	-274.11	-276.90
Akaike Inf. Crit.	590.66	600.23	593.80

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 3: Discrete Event History Model: Political Gender Quota

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Political Gender Quota		
Active Conflict	-0.06 (0.41)	-1.17 (3.86)	18.33** (7.72)
Post Conflict	-0.15 (0.44)	18.25** (7.81)	0.06*** (0.02)
World Bank Aid	0.05** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.03)	-0.79* (0.43)
Export Context	-0.80* (0.42)	-1.28** (0.52)	-0.46 (0.49)
IGO Context	-0.70 (0.48)	-0.21 (0.56)	0.01 (0.01)
WINGOs	0.01 (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	-0.004 (0.02)
Legislature Percent	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.10)
Freedom House	-0.005 (0.10)	0.02 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.18)
GDP Per Capita	-0.10 (0.18)	-0.08 (0.19)	-0.26 (0.16)
Fertility	-0.26* (0.16)	-0.29* (0.16)	0.46 (0.37)
Muslim Majority	0.36 (0.36)	0.36 (0.37)	0.16 (0.23)
Years to Adopt	0.16 (0.23)	0.14 (0.23)	-0.01 (0.01)
Years to Adopt <sup>2</sup>	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Years to Adopt <sup>3</sup>	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.02 (0.05)
Active Conflict:World Bank Aid		-0.02 (0.05)	1.15 (0.77)
Active Conflict:Export Context		1.15 (0.77)	-0.62 (0.85)
Active Conflict:IGO Context		-0.62 (0.85)	-0.03 (0.02)
Active Conflict:WINGOs		-0.03 (0.02)	0.10* (0.05)
Active Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.10* (0.05)	-0.10* (0.05)
Post Conflict:World Bank Aid		-0.10* (0.05)	-1.51 (1.64)
Post Conflict:Export Context		-1.51 (1.64)	-3.01** (1.21)
Post Conflict:IGO Context		-3.01** (1.21)	-0.04 (0.03)
Post Conflict:WINGOs		-0.04 (0.03)	-0.15 (0.10)
Post Conflict:Legislature Percent		-0.15 (0.10)	-0.16 (3.08)
Constant	0.43 (2.77)	-0.16 (3.08)	-0.81 (2.84)
Observations	3,280	3,280	3,280
Log Likelihood	-258.12	-247.24	-252.23
Akaike Inf. Crit.	546.23	544.49	542.47

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

With regards to the criminalization of intimate partner violence, the results indicate that non-conflict states whose trading partners have relatively low fertility rates and who have higher levels of women's participation in the legislature are significantly more likely to adopt laws that criminalize intimate partner violence. Women's legislative representation and gender equitable trading partners also increased the likelihood of adoption in active conflict states, but not post-conflict states. In contrast to expectations, as the average fertility rate of a country's IGO partners increases, post-conflict countries are less likely to adopt intimate partner violence laws. As seen in the Appendix, the same pattern holds with the adoption of laws against sexual harassment with women's legislative representation and trade relationships increasing the likelihood of law adoption in both non-conflict and active conflict states. However, in contrast to intimate partner violence laws, IGO memberships have the expected relationship with post-conflict states. Additionally, the presence of WINGOs in non-conflict states also increases the likelihood of the adoption of sexual harassment laws.

When examining the creation of a gender machinery, both World Bank Aid and Export Context have significant relationships with the creation of machinery in the expected direction. Among conflict-affected states, the only significant relationship is in active conflict states with the women's legislative representation, which has a positive relationship with the creation of gender machinery.

A similar pattern is found with the creation of gender machinery also exists with the adoption of a political gender quota. For non-conflict states, World Bank Aid and more equitable trade partners both significantly increase the likelihood of the adoption of a political gender quota. Again, women's legislative representation is weakly, positively associated with the adoption of a quota in active conflict states. Equitable trade partners appear to also increase the likelihood of adoption in post-conflict states. Interestingly, the constituent term for post-conflict is significant and positive, indicating that in the absence of international actors, post-conflict states are significantly more likely to adopt political gender quotas, in contrast to the theoretical expectations. Finally, as seen in the Appendix, no significant, consistent patterns appear with the criminalization of marital rape or with the creation of a gender ministry.

Overall, relatively few consistent patterns emerge from the results. The most consistent relationship is between *Export Context* and the adoption of various gender reforms among non-conflict states. In other words, it appears that states which export to other states which have higher levels of women's rights, or low fertility rates, are more likely to adopt gender reforms. Additionally, the presence of WINGOs in non-conflict states is positively, although inconsistently, associated with the adoption of several gender reforms. For two of the gender reforms, *Political Gender Quotas* and *Gender Machinery, World Bank Aid* had a positive, significant association with adoption in non-conflict states. Among the remaining independent variables the relationships appear to be more tenuous and inconsistent. Therefore, while there is some limited support for International Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5, this support is not consistent across all gender reform types. With regards to legal reform, there is no support for the Conflict Hypothesis, or that conflict states with international actors present should be more likely to adopt gender reforms compared to non-conflict states with international actors or conflict states without international actors.

## **Women's Rights Reform "On the Ground"**

What do these results imply for women's rights after conflict? Increasingly, studies have shown women's political participation increases after conflict (Bush 2011, Tripp and Kang 2008, Tripp 2015, Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). The findings above that demonstrate a lack of relationship between conflict and the adoption of gender reforms is therefore rather surprising. However, as discussed above, conflict and international actors may have different impacts on other manifestations of gender reform and gender equality. One explanation for the contrasting findings is that if conflict does provide opportunities for women to gain rights, that process is happening "on the ground" informally rather than in the government through the adoption of formal laws. Further, policymakers may be aware that international actors support the adoption of these policies and due to concerns of neo-imperialism may actively reject adopting similar policies. Thus, while these policymakers may advocate for gender reform, they may not

adopt the policies favored by international actors explicitly.

Therefore, models were run which examine the influence of the primary international actors, specifically the UN, Export relationships, and IGO memberships on several indicators of women’s rights “on the ground” across non-conflict and conflict states. Using Ordinary Least Squares regression with country-year fixed effects, which replicate Difference-in-Differences models, this analysis examines whether the interactive relationship between post-conflict states and international actors proposed above appears when examining several indicators of women’s rights, rather than the adoption of women’s rights reforms. These include the percent of the legislature that is female and two indices of gender equality from the Varieties of Democracy project: the *Political Empowerment Index* which examines whether women have access to all chambers of the legislature and participate in civil society and the *Gendered Power Distribution* which is a five level ordinal variable examining the distribution of power between men and women ranging from men having a near monopoly on political power to equal distributions of power between men and women.<sup>33</sup> While largely the same independent variables are used, to account for both the influence of international and domestic women’s rights organizations, an indicator from the Varieties of Democracy project which examines women’s participation in civil society organizations (CSOs) and CSOs’ prioritization of women’s rights, replaces the previous *WINGOs* variable.<sup>34</sup> These dependent variables echo those used by Webster, Chen and Beardsley (2019) who find evidence that conflict increases women’s political empowerment in the short- and medium-term. This research designs deepens the theoretical and empirical findings of Webster, Chen and Beardsley (2019) to explore directly the causal influence of international actors in promoting women’s rights after conflict.

The results presented in Table 4 present some evidence that women’s rights do generally increase in post-conflict states, conditional upon the presence of international actors. Model 10 tests the relationship between international actors, conflict status, and women’s legislative representation. As can be seen, female representation increases in conflict affected states when

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<sup>33</sup>The use of OLS with non-continuous dependent variables is unlikely to induce bias given that the sample size is sufficiently large.

<sup>34</sup>The results do not change significantly if the original *WINGOs* variable is included.

Table 4: OLS Results: Conflict and Gender Equality

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Legislature Percent (10)	Political Empowerment (11)	Gender Power Index (12)
Conflict	3.79* (2.30)	0.05** (0.02)	0.40*** (0.15)
World Bank Aid	-0.02 (0.02)	0.0003* (0.0002)	-0.0005 (0.001)
Export Context	-10.78*** (2.62)	0.11*** (0.03)	-0.55*** (0.17)
IGO Context	2.90*** (0.98)	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.12* (0.06)
Female CSOs	1.08*** (0.29)		0.30*** (0.02)
Freedom House	0.50*** (0.11)	-0.02*** (0.001)	-0.04*** (0.01)
GDP per Capita	-0.51* (0.26)	-0.02*** (0.003)	0.003 (0.02)
Muslim Majority	0.27 (1.07)	0.02** (0.01)	-0.10* (0.06)
Legislative Gender Quota	4.50*** (0.31)		
Conflict:World Bank Aid	0.07*** (0.02)	0.001*** (0.0002)	0.002 (0.001)
Conflict:Export Context	-1.69*** (0.44)	-0.02*** (0.005)	0.03 (0.03)
Conflict:IGO Context	-0.11 (0.55)	0.004 (0.01)	-0.14*** (0.04)
Conflict:Female CSOs	1.02*** (0.33)		0.06*** (0.02)
Constant	64.11*** (11.45)	0.50*** (0.12)	2.81*** (0.76)
State Fixed Effects	X	X	X
Year Fixed Effects	X	X	X
Observations	3,446	3,537	3,702
R <sup>2</sup>	0.75	0.92	0.89
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.74	0.92	0.89
Residual Std. Error	4.69 (df = 3266)	0.05 (df = 3359)	0.32 (df = 3522)
F Statistic	54.66*** (df = 179; 3266)	231.19*** (df = 177; 3359)	161.30*** (df = 179; 3522)

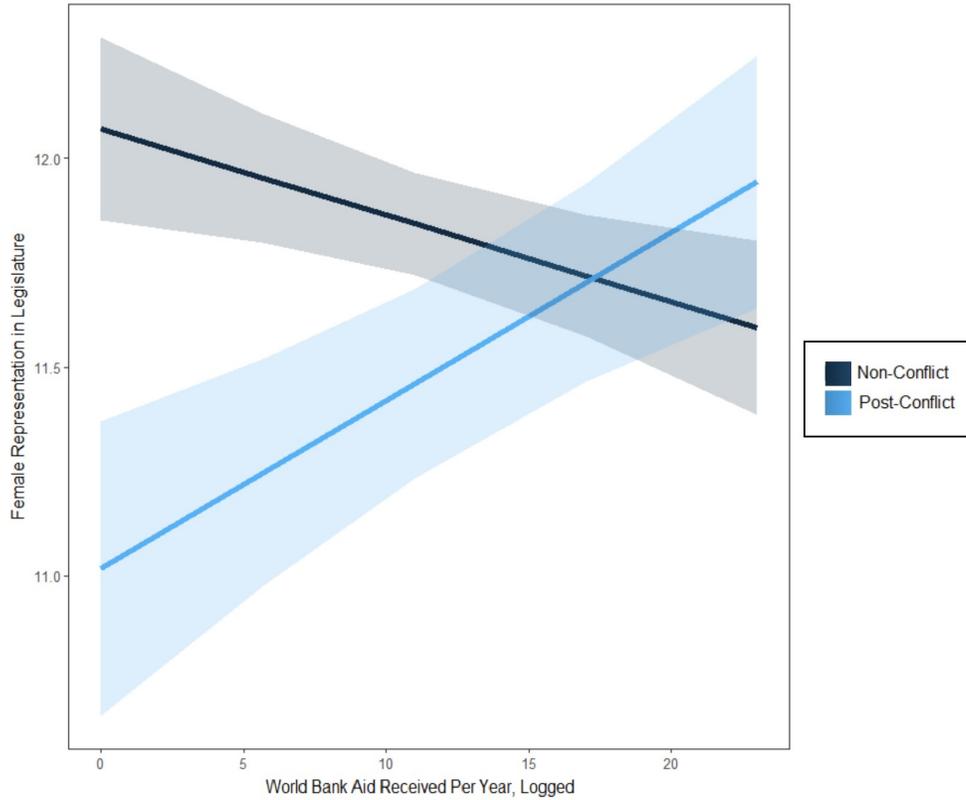
Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

the country receives World Bank Aid, has increasingly gender equitable trading partners, and has strong women's civil society participation, as can be seen in Figure 2, which plots the relationships between World Bank Aid, conflict-status, and women's legislative representation. It should be noted that in non-conflict states, international actors also often appear to have positive impacts on gender equality, however the relative effect of these actors is larger in post-conflict states.

Model 11 shows a similar pattern. Once again, the presence of international actors generally increases women's political empowerment. While Model 10 demonstrated that more women participate in the legislature, this model further supports the finding that women's political participation increases even outside of the legislature to include other chambers of government and women's civil society participation. While in non-conflict states, receiving World Bank aid and with more equitable IGO member-states increase women's political empowerment, gender equitable trade partners have a negative relationship with women's political empowerment. Therefore, there is somewhat mixed evidence for how international actors influence non-conflict states. This may occur because women's participation in other chambers of government or in civil society is relatively less observable and less prioritized by international actors compared with women's legislative participation. The positive effect of international actors on political empowerment, especially World Bank Aid, is magnified in conflict-affected states. Moreover gender equitable trade partners exert a positive influence on political empowerment in conflict states in contrast to non-conflict states. In other words, trade partners appear to specifically promote women's political empowerment in all chambers of government and political activity in post-conflict states compared to non-conflict states.

Model 12 examines the gendered power index and once again demonstrates that while certain international and domestic actors often have a positive influence in non-conflict states, this influence is magnified in conflict-affected states. While the two previous models tested women's physical presence within the government, Model 10 examines their level of power within these institutions, distinguishing between simple physical presence and the power to affect political outcomes. Among non-conflict states, World Bank Aid, IGO memberships, and

Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities: Conflict, World Bank Aid, and Female Legislative Representation



gendered civil society organizations all increase women’s power within political decision-making. This effect is further magnified for IGO memberships and women’s civil society organizations in post-conflict states. While World Bank Aid does not reach significance in this model, it is positive, in expectation with the theory.

Overall, these exploratory models provide initial evidence that international actors do have some success at promoting women’s rights, especially in post-conflict states, but their effect may be limited at changing individual behavior rather than convincing governments to adopt formal women’s rights laws or policies. This provides support for the Conflict Hypothesis, indicating that post-conflict states with international actors present are significantly more likely to improve women’s political rights compared to both non-conflict states and post-conflict states without international actors present.

Generally, all results shown here are robust to alternative model specifications.<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>35</sup>All robustness checks can be found in the Online Appendix.

adoption model results remain consistent when Cox Proportional Hazard Models are used, with the inclusion of year fixed effects, and the use of time polynomials.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the results are robust when the country's aid dependence and donor equality is included,<sup>37</sup> the state's colonial history, culturally proximate neighborhood effects, controls regarding the nature of the conflict, the state's respect for physical integrity rights, government ideology, the number of UN staff deployed in the country,<sup>38</sup> and alternative measures of gender equality.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Women's rights have been increasingly connected to conflict as scholars and international actors have recognized that women and gender equality play an important role in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. As a result, international third party actors seek to encourage states to adopt women's rights reforms through material incentives. Conflict and post-conflict states have greater sensitivity to material incentives and greater will power to adopt these reforms as a result of the conflict, amplifying the impact of these incentives.

This manuscript demonstrates while that conflict and post-conflict states are not necessarily more likely to adopt various women's rights reforms in response to increased pressure from international actors, women's political empowerment increases in post-conflict countries relatively more than in non-conflict countries. This may indicate that international third party actors are not capable of or willing to pressure other governments for women's rights reform, but that active participation of international actors in aid programming, civil society organizations, and trade relationships may lead to the diffusion of norms and behaviors that improve

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<sup>36</sup>It should be noted that the results for the law adoption models with the Cox Proportional Hazard models are slightly more significant than with the Logistic Regression models. However, as explained above, due to the time dependency between the independent variables and the adoption of gender reform laws, Cox Proportional Hazard Models may induce bias into the results.

<sup>37</sup>Aid dependency falls just below significance with women's legislative representation (Model 7), but retains its sign.

<sup>38</sup>The results for women's Political Empowerment and the Gender Power Index change slightly with UN Staff, but this may be because UN Staff is likely to be highly correlated with other the independent variables of interest.

<sup>39</sup>While some of the results of individual independent variables for some dependent variables may change slightly with the various robustness checks, the overall trend remains consistent.

women's rights informally.

This analysis contributes to the growing number of studies that examine the impact of conflict on women's rights (Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). Importantly, its findings that international actors increase the likelihood that women's rights improve after conflict provides one plausible theoretical and empirical reason for contradictory outcomes for women after conflict. While conflict can at times increase women's empowerment, this is more likely when international actors are present who can ensure that short-term openings for women's increased political engagement during conflict are translated into tangible gains for women's rights after conflict.

Future research should clarify the causal process through which international actors promote women's rights after conflict. In particular, domestic context and characteristics of the conflict may moderate the impact of international actors, such as women's inclusion in peace negotiations. Moreover, domestic actors play a key role in improving women's rights and therefore, future work should more directly explore the role of local women's rights movements and how these movements interact with international actors. Finally, not all international actors may be equally likely to prioritize gender reform or to pressure states to adopt gender policies. Therefore, future work should examine which international actors have made commitments to women's rights and power relations among different international actors.

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# Appendix

## Gender Reform Dataset Variable Definitions and Sources

**Gender Machinery:** This variable indicates whether there exists within the government a body responsible for promoting women’s rights within the countries and gender mainstreaming government policy. This can include offices and departments housed within a larger ministry (such as the Ministry of Health or Labor) or a special committee attached to the executive. An alternative coding of this variable only includes high-level offices and when there is a specialized gender ministry, rather than gender falling under the scope of another ministry. Sources include the UN National Mechanisms document (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/documents/National-Mechanisms-Web.pdf>).

**Legislative Gender Quota:** This dichotomous variable indicates that country has adopted a gender quota as part of its constitution or secondary law. This variable only includes mandated legislative quotas or reserved seats and excludes party quotas. This variable comes from Hughes, Paxton, Clayton, and Zetterberg (2017) and was updated from 2015 to 2016.

**Intimate Partner Violence:** This variable indicates whether the state has adopted a law against intimate partner violence and domestic violence. The definition used to identify an adequate law against intimate partner violence comes from the UN as a law which “includes a range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by a current or former intimate partner, without her consent” (UN General Assembly 2006, 37). The data refer to instances where domestic, family or intimate partner violence is specifically criminalized or where provisions for protection orders are in place (UN Women 2012). Primary sources include the UN Women Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women (2012) and Violence Against Women Dataset (2013), the Social Institutions and Gender Index, and Stop Violence Against Women. The UN Violence Against Women Dataset was used as the primary source and if contradictory information was found from other sources, this was specifically noted within the data.

**Marital Rape:** This variable indicates whether there is a law that specifically criminalized marital rape. Marital rape, also called spousal rape, is non-consensual sex where the perpetrator is the victim’s spouse. Although general rape laws (except where exemption of a spouse is explicitly stated) do not preclude a spouse from being prosecuted, the data refer to instances where the law explicitly criminalizes marital rape, without qualifications, for example by providing that sexual assault provisions apply irrespective of the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and complainant; or stating that no marriage or other relationship shall constitute a defence to a charge of sexual assault under the legislation (UN DESA-DAW 2009a, 26). In other instances, a marital (or equivalent) relationship may be explicitly cited in the law as an aggravating factor. Explicit criminalization of marital rape is recommended as best practice by, among others, the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2009c). To be coded as one, the state had to have a law that explicitly criminalizes marital rape or specified that spouses aren’t exempt from general laws against rape (in other words, having a general law on rape without an explicit statement that the law applies to spouses or a court decision that ensures this, does not count as successful adoption). Primary sources include the UN handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women.

**Sexual Harassment:** This variable is defined as any law that prohibits sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as “Unwelcome sexually determined behaviour, in both horizontal

and vertical relationships, including in employment (including the informal employment sector), education, receipt of goods and services, sporting activities, and property transactions” (UN DESA-DAW 2009a, 28). The law may be specific to the economic sector or general. The country must have in place laws that prohibit sexual harassment under civil or criminal law. Primary sources include the UN handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women, the Social Institutions and Gender Index, and Stop Violence Against Women.

**Year of Adoption: Gender Ministry**

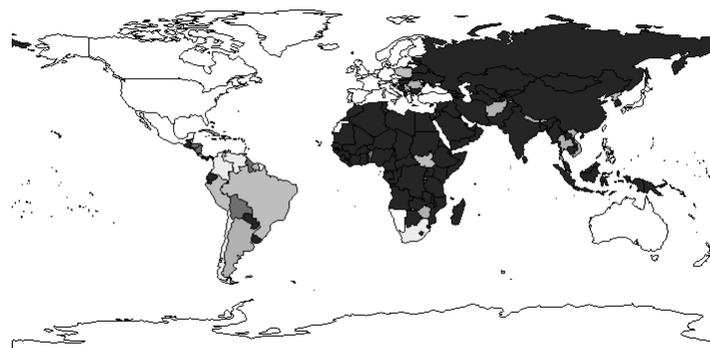
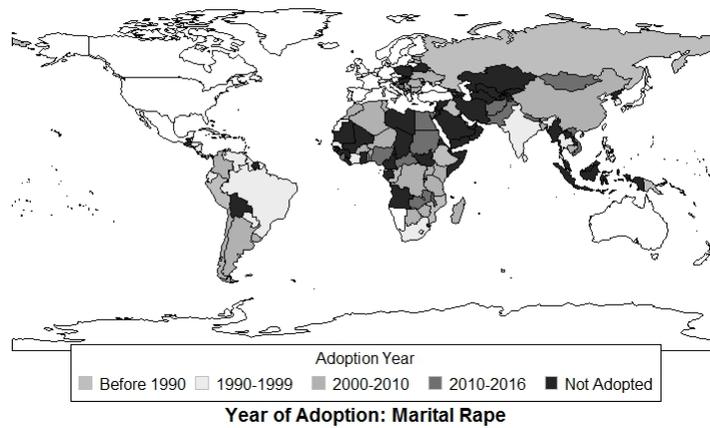
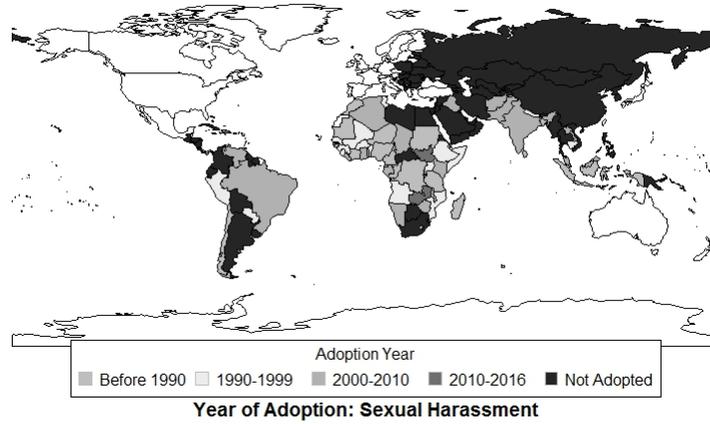


Figure 3: Map: Global Fertility Rates, 1988–2015

Table 5: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Intimate Partner Violence Law	5,660	0.237	0.425	0	1
Sexual Harassment Law	5,542	0.217	0.412	0	1
Marital Rape Law	5,691	0.097	0.296	0	1
Gender Ministry	5,589	0.232	0.422	0	1
Gender Machinery	5,610	0.518	0.500	0	1
Legislative Gender Quota	5,843	0.158	0.365	0	1
Conflict Status	5,825	0.420	0.684	0	2
Security Council Neighbors	5,662	0.681	0.466	0	1
Export Context	5,846	3.707	0.789	1.923	5.393
IGO Context	5,669	3.760	0.516	2.048	5.067
WINGOs	5,329	25.104	20.961	0	114
% Female Legislature	5,024	10.629	9.202	0.000	63.800
Freedom House	5,464	4.547	1.734	1.000	7.000
GDP per Capita	5,230	7.043	1.357	3.948	11.391
Fertility	5,839	4.410	1.938	1.085	8.713

## Full Set of Adoption Models Tables

Table 6: Discrete Event History Model: Sexual Harassment

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(4)	(5)	(6)
Sexual Harassment Laws			
Active Conflict	0.50 (0.35)	-5.07 (4.10)	
Post Conflict	-0.53 (0.43)	8.98 (7.76)	9.20 (7.59)
World Bank Aid	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.003 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Export Context	-1.91*** (0.45)	-2.03*** (0.49)	-1.97*** (0.45)
IGO Context	-0.33 (0.44)	-0.36 (0.52)	-0.10 (0.45)
WINGOs	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Legislature Percent	0.03* (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Freedom House	-0.25** (0.10)	-0.23** (0.10)	-0.24** (0.10)
GDP Per Capita	-0.05 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.16)	-0.09 (0.16)
Fertility	-0.13 (0.14)	-0.21 (0.15)	-0.13 (0.14)
Muslim Majority	-0.38 (0.36)	-0.50 (0.39)	-0.41 (0.37)
Years to Adopt	-0.01 (0.19)	0.03 (0.20)	0.03 (0.20)
Years to Adopt <sup>2</sup>	0.003 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)
Years to Adopt <sup>3</sup>	-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0001)
Active Conflict:World Bank Aid		-0.04 (0.04)	
Active Conflict:Export Context		0.68 (0.85)	
Active Conflict:IGO Context		0.41 (0.78)	
Active Conflict:WINGOs		0.04** (0.02)	
Active Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.08* (0.05)	
Post Conflict:World Bank Aid		-0.02 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.07)
Post Conflict:Export Context		-1.24 (1.84)	-1.25 (1.83)
Post Conflict:IGO Context		-2.29* (1.32)	-2.28* (1.28)
Post Conflict:WINGOs		0.04 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Post Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)
Constant	4.69* (2.53)	5.51** (2.79)	4.19* (2.51)
Observations	2,988	2,988	2,988
Log Likelihood	-295.95	-288.96	-293.88
Akaike Inf. Crit.	621.90	627.92	625.77

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 7: Discrete Event History Model: Marital Rape

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Marital Rape Laws		
Active Conflict	1.05* (0.57)	-3.60 (5.62)	-3.09 (6.37)
Post Conflict	0.36 (0.65)	-5.06 (6.89)	0.03 (0.03)
World Bank Aid	0.03 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.20 (0.58)
Export Context	0.49 (0.55)	0.07 (0.67)	-0.22 (0.69)
IGO Context	-0.41 (0.68)	-0.63 (0.82)	-0.01 (0.01)
WINGOs	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Legislature Percent	0.05** (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.14)
Freedom House	-0.15 (0.14)	-0.11 (0.15)	0.05 (0.24)
GDP Per Capita	0.10 (0.24)	0.15 (0.24)	-0.45** (0.21)
Fertility	-0.51** (0.21)	-0.51** (0.22)	-2.24** (1.07)
Muslim Majority	-2.29** (1.08)	-2.34** (1.10)	-0.16 (0.26)
Years to Adopt	-0.18 (0.25)	-0.17 (0.26)	0.01 (0.01)
Years to Adopt <sup>2</sup>	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
Years to Adopt <sup>3</sup>	-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.05 (0.06)
Active Conflict:World Bank Aid		0.63 (0.92)	0.65 (1.33)
Active Conflict:Export Context		0.01 (0.02)	0.03 (0.06)
Active Conflict:IGO Context		-0.09 (0.08)	1.34 (1.29)
Active Conflict:WINGOs		1.50 (1.34)	-0.25 (1.63)
Active Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.23 (1.70)	0.001 (0.05)
Post Conflict:World Bank Aid		0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.06)
Post Conflict:Export Context		0.04 (0.06)	-3.66 (3.86)
Post Conflict:IGO Context		-2.49 (4.39)	
Post Conflict:WINGOs			
Post Conflict:Legislature Percent			
Constant	-4.06 (3.82)		
Observations	3,564	3,564	3,564
Log Likelihood	-147.37	-145.36	-147.78
Akaike Inf. Crit.	324.75	340.73	333.56

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 8: Discrete Event History Model: Gender Ministry

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(10)	(11)	(12)
		Gender Ministry	
Active Conflict	0.50 (0.39)	3.29 (4.17)	
Post Conflict	-0.004 (0.58)	1.08 (9.02)	-0.27 (9.02)
World Bank Aid	0.01 (0.02)	-0.005 (0.03)	0.003 (0.02)
Export Context	0.46 (0.61)	0.45 (0.68)	0.38 (0.64)
IGO Context	-1.07** (0.50)	-0.67 (0.57)	-0.90* (0.51)
WINGOs	0.01 (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Legislature Percent	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
Freedom House	0.11 (0.12)	0.11 (0.12)	0.14 (0.12)
GDP Per Capita	-0.37 (0.23)	-0.39* (0.23)	-0.39* (0.23)
Fertility	0.20 (0.18)	0.17 (0.18)	0.21 (0.18)
Muslim Majority	0.42 (0.45)	0.30 (0.47)	0.34 (0.46)
Years to Adopt	-0.17 (0.23)	-0.20 (0.23)	-0.15 (0.23)
Years to Adopt <sup>2</sup>	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Years to Adopt <sup>3</sup>	-0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0001)
Active Conflict:World Bank Aid		0.03 (0.05)	
Active Conflict:Export Context		-0.12 (0.88)	
Active Conflict:IGO Context		-0.74 (1.04)	
Active Conflict:WINGOs		-0.02 (0.02)	
Active Conflict:Legislature Percent		0.03 (0.07)	
Post Conflict:World Bank Aid		0.35 (0.53)	0.35 (0.54)
Post Conflict:Export Context		1.38 (1.36)	1.41 (1.34)
Post Conflict:IGO Context		-2.55 (1.66)	-2.28 (1.64)
Post Conflict:WINGOs		-0.17* (0.10)	-0.16 (0.10)
Post Conflict:Legislature Percent		-0.04 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.10)
Constant	-2.18 (3.60)	-2.95 (3.90)	-2.55 (3.70)
Observations	2,763	2,763	2,763
Log Likelihood	-192.90	-187.61	-189.45
Akaike Inf. Crit.	415.79	425.21	416.91

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01