One Step Forward, One Step Back: The Micro-level Impacts of Conflict and Aid on Women's Rights

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

Abstract

While conflict is often harmful to women's rights, recent scholarship proposes that conflict can create opportunities for women. International actors may play a key role in shaping post-conflict institutions to favor women's rights. However, these factors may have different impacts on men and women's attitudes. While women exposed to both conflict and international influence may hold more gender equitable views, men are less likely to be positively impacted. Using Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data in Uganda, this analysis compares the influence of conflict and international aid at the micro-level on approval of domestic violence. The results demonstrate that while exposure to conflict in the absence of international actors increases women's approval of wife beating, exposure to both conflict and international actors decreases the likelihood that women will justify wife beating. Men do not alter their attitudes. This manuscript clarifies the pathway through which conflict and international actors promote gender equality.

The end of Uganda's civil war in 1986 ushered in a wave of women's rights reforms. Women became more politically engaged, joined parliament in unprecedented numbers, advocated for women's rights laws, and successfully campaigned for a gender quota in local and national political offices. Many scholars point to Uganda as an example of the positive impact that conflict can have on women's political participation (Tripp 2015). Further, international actors may play a key role in shaping institutions to favor women's rights (Bush 2011, Huber and Karim 2018). However, while exposure to conflict and international influence may alter gender norms and behavior among some individuals, the impact may vary greatly depending on the degree of exposure and individual characteristics.

Conflict can powerfully disrupt and redefine gender norms and expectations in a society. However, scholars on gender and conflict often sharply disagree on the exact way in which conflict changes these norms. The so-called "opportunity structures" framework argues that conflict can promote more equal gender relations and prompt women's mobilization around gender equality. Thus, this literature expects that conflict — specifically women's increased political and economic participation that occurs during war — promotes gender equality (Ahikire, Madanda and Ampaire 2012, Berry 2015, Carpenter 2005, Hoduck 2016, Huber and Karim 2018, Karim 2016, Thomas and Adams 2010, Tripp 2015, Wood 2008). In contrast, other scholars argue that conflict reinforces traditional gender roles and promotes hypermasculinity (Enloe 1989, 2000, Goldstein 2003). During conflict, traditional masculine values are often praised and encouraged as necessary for success, resulting in a highly militarized and hypermasculine society that denigrates women's rights and gender equality. Thus, alternative literature suggests that conflict should decrease support for women's rights.

Generally, these two contradictory sets of literature focus on the aggregate affects of conflict on all members of society. However, conflict may heterogeneously impact women and men who play different roles in conflict, experience different types of security threats and vulnerability, and rely on different support networks. Men, as potential recruits and most at risk of directly participating in the fighting, are likely to be more exposed to hypermasculine and militant attitudes. While women may also be exposed to the trend towards traditional

gender norms, this may be offset in conflict areas where women in local communities must actively mobilize and participate in political decisionnmaking, economic activities, and social organizing to counter the threat of conflict and the disruption in daily life. Additionally, the impact of conflict may be mediated by the presence of international actors who strategically use the disruption of conflict to support and cultivate new progressive attitudes. As a result, conflict exposure may heterogeneously impact men and women, encouraging men to become less gender equitable and women to be more supportive of women's rights.

However, conflict alone may not be enough to improve attitudes towards gender rights even among women. Importantly, after conflict, pressure to re-establish the pre-war status quo with respect to gender relations increases. As society begins to return to "normal" after conflict and families are reunited, men who fled, joined the fighting, or participated in peace movements often seek to re-establish the previous power hierarchy, including gender norms. Thus, after conflict, women's rights face challenges and a pressure to return to pre-war levels or may decrease to reflect the increased militarization and hypermasculinity cultivated during the war. International actors can mitigate the backsliding on women's rights after conflict. For example, international actors may intentionally or unintentionally increase women's rights for two reasons. First, an increasing number of international actors prioritize women's rights and gender equality after conflict. However, these actors often focus almost entirely on women and lack comprehensive programming to address gender norms and behaviors among men. Second, as discussed above, conflict primes many women to question traditional gender norms and desire increased rights. International actors tend to focus on promoting development, creating conflict resolution programs and cultivating liberal, progressive values, all of which favor women's rights. Thus, even when an international actor does not specifically target women's rights, it may provide an opening for women to build upon and cultivate the ideals of gender equality that they began to develop during the war.

Therefore, conflict may impact men and women differently depending both on their level of exposure to conflict that alters and primes changing gender norms and their interaction with international intervention that promote progressive values that can provide an opening for

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women to express their new values more freely. As a result, women exposed to both conflict and international influence may hold relatively more equitable values than women exposed to either factor alone or to neither. Additionally, men exposed to both conflict and international influence are unlikely to significantly alter their views on gender equality as a result of the dual impact of increased hypermasculinity during conflict and the absence of targeted international programming for male gender norms. This manuscript explores sub-national and individual variation in women's rights after conflict by examining how micro-level exposure to conflict and to international actors heterogeneously impact men and women.

Using Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data, a nationally representative sample of men and women in Uganda, this analysis compares the influence of conflict and international aid at the micro-level on individuals' acceptance of wife beating as an acceptable form of punishment. Uganda presents an intriguing case to examine the subnational effects of conflict on women's rights given the in-country variation regarding conflict exposure, gender equality, and international aid distributions. Further, although gender relations at the macro-level may influence a state's propensity to conflict which raises endogeneity concerns in cross-national studies, at the micro-level in Uganda, gender relations in one neighborhood are unlikely to influence its exposure to political violence. Instead, micro-level exposure to conflict is more likely to be driven by the strategic calculations of the warring parties, decreasing concerns for endogeneity. The results demonstrate that dual exposure to both conflict and international actors increases the likelihood that women condemn wife beating compared to women only exposed to one or neither of these factors who become more willing to justify wife beating. Men, on the other hand, do not significantly alter their attitudes towards wife beating in response to conflict and international actor exposure.

Thus, the results demonstrate that conflict's positive impact on women's rights may be conditional upon the presence of international actors. Further, it deepens the analysis by considering how conflict heterogeneously impacts men and women. Thus, this may explain why women's rights do not always improve after conflict. If only women become more gender equitable after conflict, but men do not, it is unlikely that sustainable, national changes will occur

as men tend to control power and policymaking. Instead, women may begin to individually engage in increased political, economic, and social activity rather than attempt to change legal frameworks regarding women's rights. Moreover, international influence in conflict-affected societies may be a key factor in improving gender equality in post-conflict states.

Heterogenous Impacts of Conflict on Men and Women

Civil war can be a highly destructive force that harms livelihoods, destroys families, topples leaders, and upends communities. However, from that disruption can come new opportunities to reorder society and increase the rights of marginalized groups. Women's suffrage after World War I, constitutional amendments to recognize women's equal rights after the Ugandan Bush War, unprecedented female legislative representation after the Rwandan genocide, and the election of the first African female president after the Liberian civil war demonstrate that conflict can, at times, provide a unique opportunity for women to gain increased power, rights, and influence. Webster, Chen and Beardsley (2019) find that women's political empowerment increases in the short- and medium-term after conflict due to changes in gendered power relations during conflict.

However, conflict can also be detrimental to women's rights. Although men are far more likely to die as a direct result of conflict, women disproportionately suffer from the indirect negative effects of conflict. For example, within the past thirty years, civilian casualties, many of whom are women or children, have increased dramatically, reaching a peak of almost 90% of casualties in wars during the 1990s (UNICEF). Additionally, children and women make up an estimated 80% of displaced populations (UNICEF). Moreover, women and girls are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence during conflicts (McKay 1998). Further, women often face indirect harms from weapons during conflict. Additionally, crumbling or inaccessible infrastructure during conflict may have especially harmful effects for women (McKay 1998). Although women normally have a longer life expectancy than men, conflict decreases this gender gap, indicating that conflict directly or indirectly leads to more female deaths or younger female

deaths compared to men (Plümper and Neumayer 2006). Thus, many scholars and practitioners have concluded that conflict disproportionately harms women more than men.

As one of the most universally marginalized groups, women are both especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of conflict and also able to mobilize during and after conflict to increase their position in society. How does conflict affect women's economic, political, and social rights? What effect does conflict have on men's attitudes towards gender equality? Why does conflict have disparate effects on women's rights in different contexts?

Two strains of literature explore the impacts of conflict on gender roles, the more traditional "militarized masculinity" scholarship and the relatively newer "opportunity structures" theory. However, these theories often do not distinguish between the expected effect of conflict on men and women and how their experiences after conflict may differ. This section will first explore the expected effect of conflict on women and on men developed by the militarized masculinity and opportunity structures theories and proposes that these two literatures predict different outcomes for women and men after war. However, the presence of international actors and influence may predict which theory applies at the micro-level in conflict contexts.

Conflict and "Militarized Masculinitiy"

Conflict has long been viewed as a man's domain and masculinity is often intricately tied martial characteristics (Enloe 1989, Goldstein 2003). The social, economic, and physical costs of conflict often create cultures of so-called "militarized masculinity" in which ideal male attributes become hypermasculine, violent, and militant (Enloe 2000, Whitworth 2004).

States and societies in conflict often rely on and reinforce traditional gender roles and cultivate hypermasculinity to sustain the war effort (Goldstein 2003). During conflict, traditionally male values, such as courage, physical strength, and aggression, are typically encouraged in men as these are considered to be necessary traits of a good soldier.[1] In military groups, training,

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[1] It should be noted that contemporary scholars debate whether these are in fact necessary traits for a soldier given the changing nature of warfare (Masters 2005).

drills, and cohesion building activities often are highly masculinized, and at times include sexual violence (Cohen 2013, Cohen and Nordås 2014). Further, media campaigns, government policy, and cultural norms tend to shift to favor traditional gender norms during and after conflict (Enloe 1989, Goldstein 2003, Zurbriggen 2010). Thus, in a militarized culture, men are more likely to hold more traditional gendered ideologies.

As a result, men may feel threatened by post-conflict changes in gender roles. Historically, after conflict women have been forced out of public roles that they entered during the fighting to return to traditionally feminine roles(Schweitzer 1980). Further, disruptions to gender roles during conflict may increase women's insecurity if they lead to backlash. For example, Kelly et al. (2018) find that domestic violence often increases after conflict due to men's resistance to changing gender roles, among other reasons. Additionally, Lindsey (2018) argues that conflict reinforces the patriarchal norm of protective masculinity which can cause the community to turn a blind eye to domestic violence as a lesser evil than punishing a man that could later act as a community protector in case of future conflict. Similarly, Lazarev (2018) demonstrates that the Chechen government undermined efforts to sustain female empowerment that occurred during the war in order to gain the support of more traditional male voters. Thus, as a result of their experiences during conflict, a reliance on traditional gender norms, and post-conflict pressure to re-establish power hierarchies, after conflict men are less likely to hold favorable attitudes towards gender equality than men not exposed to conflict.

The "militarized masculinity" literature expects conflict to have similar effects on women by supporting traditional gender norms. Just as the militarized masculinity culture encourages men to support martial behavior to create good fighters, it also often defines women's "proper" role within traditional conceptions of femininity. For example, during conflict, women are often depicted in gendered tropes as the "concerned, but proud mother," the "doting and devoted wife," and the "brave yet caring nurse," all roles in which the woman's primary purpose is to support men's war effort (Enloe 2000, Goldstein 2003). Additionally, even when women participate more directly in the conflict, either in supportive roles like the famous "Rosie the Riveter" icon of World War II or as combatants, they are often presented and discussed in

distinctly feminine ways compared to their male colleagues (Enloe 2000, Sjoberg 2007, Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). Moreover, Hadzic and Tavits (2019) find that political violence decreases women's desire to become politically engaged as a result of an association of politics with aggression. Thus, the "militarized masculinity" theory of gender and conflict also expects that women exposed to conflict will hold less favorable attitudes towards gender equality than women not exposed to conflict.

Conflict and "Opportunity Structures for Women"

In contrast, other scholars argue that the conflict can create opportunities for women's empowerment by altering gender roles and shifting public and government attitudes. There are four main ways that conflict may increase gender equality. First, conflict may challenge traditional gender roles to promote women's participation in the public sphere (Tripp 2015, Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). The mobilization of women into military and economic roles during war demonstrates women's agency in and contribution to economic, political, and security roles (Carpenter 2005, Sjoberg 2007, 2018). For example, women in Northern Uganda increased their economic activity during war to fill the role of missing men (Ahikire, Madanda and Ampaire 2012). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, many women entered an informal, shadow economy, some of which included selling supplies, food, and necessities to combatants or combat-stricken communities (Hoduck 2016). Additionally, women may increase their political participation during and after conflict, such as women's unmatched representation in the legislature of Rwanda or the election of the first African female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, in Liberia after their respective conflicts. For example, Berry (2015) argues that the genocide and civil war in Rwanda created political mobilization opportunities for women that legitimized them as political actors. Further, women may mobilize politically as part of a peace movement (Tripp 2015).

Second, although conflict may challenge gender roles in some aspects of life, it also creates an environment that is particularly insecure for women as they may be displaced from their homes, disconnected from their communities, and economically and physically vulnerable (Co-

hen and Nordås 2014, Ghobarah, Huth and Russett 2003, Karim 2017, Karim and Beardsley 2016, Li and Wen 2005, Murray et al. 2002, Nordås and Rustad 2013). For example, after conflict, women often experience higher rates of domestic and sexual violence, higher risk pregnancies, and decreased access to health care (Ghobarah, Huth and Russett 2003, Kelly et al. 2018, Li and Wen 2005, Murray et al. 2002). As a result, the government may feel obligated to address women's unique insecurity through women's rights reforms. While women's heightened security needs alone may not be sufficient to cause gender reform (as they may be symptomatic of entrenched patriarchy), it may act as a rallying point around which advocates organize.

Third, the government may adopt women's rights reforms after conflict to improve its legitimacy since gender equality is commonly linked with modernity and transparency (Bush 2011, Karim 2016, McLeod 2011). Relatedly, and fourthly, during and after conflict, new actors, especially international actors, may gain access to and influence over state policymaking. Conflict is very draining on resources as a state must siphon funds into its fighting capacity and to reconstruction as the country implements DDR, repairs infrastructure, and resumes regular social service provision (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). As a result, conflict and post-conflict states may be highly dependent on and sensitive the demands of international donors and actors, who, as discussed below, often promote women's rights.

Thus, individual women's experiences, roles, and increased decision-making power during conflict may make them more favorable towards gender equality than women not exposed to conflict. However, the "opportunity structures" literature does not often focus on the impact of conflict on men's attitudes towards gender equality. As outlined above, there are four causal mechanisms that may lead conflict to improve women's women's rights. First and foremost, these theories argue that women's increased experiences with leadership, economic participation, political mobilization and activism, and household control challenge traditional gender norms. Largely, these theories also often assume that men undergo a similar change in their gendered beliefs. If a conflict does fundamentally reorder a society's gender relations, it is possible that men in general may also increase their support of gender equality.

However, men may not update their beliefs regarding gender roles in the same way as

women during and after conflict. In particular, the opportunity structures literature often relies on an implicit or explicit assumption that men are absent during conflict. For example, in Uganda and Sierra Leone, women increased their economic participation specifically because men were no longer able to work in these jobs due to the conflict (Ahikire, Madanda and Ampaire 2012, Hoduck 2016). Similarly, Schweitzer (1980) traces how women's mobilization into war-related industries during WWII was quickly reversed after the war ended as men that had previously been deployed displaced female workers. Therefore, if women obtain leadership and public roles during conflict because men are absent, it is not clear why men should update their beliefs about women's rights if they did not personally witness it. Instead, historically, men have returned from the conflict or from refuge abroad and expected a return to the gendered status quo. Gender norms are incredibly resilient and although conflict may temporarily disrupt traditional gender roles, men – who hold greater power under traditional gender roles – are likely to want to return to those traditional roles (Lazarev 2018). This tension is further exacerbated in conflicts embedded in militarized masculinity where men may expressly decrease their support of gender equality.

Second, these theories assume that increased attention to women's vulnerability during conflict will increase support for gender equality. However, once again, a tension arises between men's presumed absence during conflict and the likelihood that they would be aware of and concerned with women's insecurity during conflict. Further, given that men are commonly the perpetrators of these crimes against women, including increased levels of intimate partner violence and sexual violence, this mechanism could have the opposite effect by normalizing violence against women among men (Kelly et al. 2018).

The third mechanism of the opportunity structures theory – concern for legitimacy – is more pertinent to the government rather than individual men. While individual men may be concerned about their legitimacy in the community, unless there is a community norm that links the legitimacy of individual men with support for gender equality, this is unlikely to be a primary concern for men. This is once again further complicated by the possible dual, contrasting pressure of militarized masculinity during conflict which would link male legitimacy

with traditional gender norms rather than with gender equality.

Thus, there is a disconnect between the basic assumptions of the opportunity structures theory and their expectation for men. In general, these theories largely assume that men should adopt similar pro-gender equality attitudes as women after conflict. However, a closer look at the assumptions built into the causal mechanisms of this theory highlight that men are unlikely to be directly exposed to women's increased agency and leadership during conflict and therefore, they are unlikely to significantly update their beliefs regarding gender equality unless a massive, society-wide shift in gender norms has occurred, which is exceedingly rare. Additionally, the opportunity structures theory often implicitly recognizes that militarized masculinity continues to occur during conflict. Therefore, in addition to the positive signals on women's rights, men are also exposed to negative signals supporting traditional gender norms.

Thus, while the opportunity structures literature often assumes that men should improve their support for gender equality, the causal mechanisms underlying these theories are more likely to affect women and instead, men may not be as directly affected. Additionally, men are exposed to the counteracting influence of militarized masculinity. Therefore, a more realistic expectation is that either men may be slightly more supportive of gender equality if there is a large realignment of gender norms or are not affected at all.

The Mediating Impact of International Actors

While both the militarized masculinity and opportunity structures theories acknowledge that international actors may play a role in contributing to or mediating the effects of conflict on gender equality, they also often understate the influence of these actors as secondary to either the cultural and societal pressures of gender norms or to domestic actors (Tripp 2015). Additionally, previous studies suffer from aggregation bias as they examine the impact of conflict on society overall and do not examine how conflict may affect men and women differently, often implicitly assuming homogeneous effects among men and women. However, international actors may play a key role in offsetting the costs of women's empowerment efforts and thus, when there

is political will within the community, international actors may provide the required resources necessary to transform that will into tangible improvements in women's rights.

However, with regards to individual beliefs and behaviors, international actors may have different impacts on men's and women's attitudes towards gender equality. First, some international actors and programs target women's rights specifically, offering a range of resources such as micro-financing, job training and professionalization, health programs, domestic violence awareness, and other programs promoting women's empowerment. For example, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2013) found that aid programs that prioritized gender equality and female participation in Afghanistan increased women's social, political, and economic participation and mobility. Further, by promoting more general development and democratization, international aid programs may indirectly support gender equality as gender equality has been correlated with development.

However, while exposure to international influence may improve women's attitudes towards gender equality, men may be less affected. For example, many international programs do not directly seek to change men's attitudes towards gender equality. For example, when women's empowerment programs only target women and do not simultaneously target men, domestic violence increases as men perceive household power as a zero sum game (Schuler et al. 2018). Similarly, the influx of international aid and attention to sexual violence against women in conflict led male victims of sexual violence to abandoned by the international community (Autesserre 2012, Baaz and Stern 2008). Thus, men may be relatively less exposed to international programs that directly promote gender equality. At worst, this may lead men to react negatively and violently towards ideals of gender equality if they perceive it as a threat to their own power status within the community and at best, men may experience some spillover effects of treated women, but the effect will likely be smaller in magnitude.

Thus, while women exposed to conflict may experience slight increases in their attitudes towards women's rights due to their increased participation in traditionally male roles, this may be tempered by the dual impact of conflict on emphasizing militarized masculinity and traditional gender roles. However, women exposed to both conflict and the commonly pro-women's

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rights influence of international influence may be able to more permanently translate their new roles into internalized gender equitable views and behavior.

Hypothesis 1a: *Women exposed to conflict, but not international influence should not hold significantly more gender equitable views than women not exposed to conflict.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Women exposed to conflict and international influence should hold more gender equitable views than women not exposed to conflict.*

In contrast, men exposed only to conflict may become less favorable towards women's rights due to the pressures of militarized masculinity. This effect may be partially resisted by the presence of international actors. For example, Falb et al. (2014) found that international aid programs that specifically targeted men for gender equality programming in Côte D'Ivoire altered the male participants' behavior, resulting in slight increases in gender equality. However, this type of intervention is rare and the lack of programming targeted at men's gendered views combined with men's perceptions of zero sum gains from international programming may cause men's attitudes towards women's rights to at worst worsen and at best stay unchanged.

Hypothesis 2a: *Men exposed to conflict, but not international influence should hold less gender equitable views than men not exposed to conflict.*

Hypothesis 2b: *Men exposed to conflict and international influence should not hold significantly altered gender equitable views than men not exposed to conflict.*

The expectations of the "Miltiarized Masculinity," "Opportunity Structures," and the theory proposed here for men's and women's attitudes towards women's rights are summarized in Table 1. The "Militarized Masculinity" theory expects that exposure to conflict should decrease both men's and women's support of gender equality, although we may expect men's support of gender equality to decrease relatively more given that they are the primary recipients of the anti-gender equality cultural messaging at the heart of militarized masculinity. The

Table 1: Theoretical Expectations

	Militarized Masculinity	Opportunity Structures	Support of Gender Equality	
			Without International Influence	**With International Influence**
Men	↓	—	↓	—-
Women	↓	↑	—	↑

"Opportunity Structures" theory in contrast argues that support for gender equitable attitudes should increase among women exposed to conflict. While this theory does not often directly discuss how conflict exposure would affect men, men are unlikely to significantly alter their views given that the motivation behind the opportunity structures theory is that it is due to men's absence that women gain increased power during conflict and thus, men would not be exposed to women's agency during conflict. The final two columns demonstrate how considering the mediating effect of international actors alters the expectations of how conflict impacts support for gender equality. Without international intervention, men who are exposed to conflict should hold relatively less favorable attitudes compared to men not exposed to conflict because they are more likely to be affected by militarized masculinity. Women exposed to conflict and not influence, on the other hand, are unlikely to significantly alter their beliefs. In contrast, when international influence is present, women exposed to conflict may be more likely to hold more permanently increased attitudes in support of gender equality because international actors are able to offset the negative effects of conflict and provide women with the necessary support to resist militarized masculinity or a reversion back to the status quo after conflict.

Gender and International Actors in Uganda's Civil Wars

Since its independence in 1971, Uganda experienced more than 14 insurgencies, ranging from relatively small-scale conflicts to full civil war (Lindemann 2011). However, out of that civil war came unprecedented advances in women's rights (Tripp 2015). The end of Uganda's Bush War ushered in a wave of political, social, and economic changes that fundamentally improved women's rights and political participation in Ugandan politics. Importantly, Uganda's conflicts

represent important gendered dimensions, including sexual violence committed by warring parties, rebel forces that promoted women's rights, and women's political mobilization into peace movements (Tripp 2015). Additionally, Uganda's conflicts, especially later conflicts with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) during the 2000s, gained large amounts of international attention at a time when the Women, Peace, and Security agenda was beginning to gain traction and international actors began to prioritize women's rights. However, women's empowerment in Uganda has not been consistent, varying both over time and sub-nationally, and is far from complete. For example, domestic violence remains common as almost 50% of women experience domestic violence and more than 20% experience sexual violence. Moreover, beliefs regarding when wife beating is justified varies sub-nationally between 26% of women in Kigezi to 72% in Bukedi. Thus, Uganda represents a particularly useful case to test the theory as it includes both violent conflict with gendered components and large amounts of international intervention that both varied in their geographic coverage within country.

One of the most important wars in Uganda's history was the Ugandan Bush War between the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and the National Resistance Army (NRA) from 1981 to 1986. The Ugandan Bush War had several important gendered dimensions. First, women fighters played a relatively important role in the NRA. While the number of female fighters was relatively small, they had a disproportionately large impact on the movement (Tripp 2015). Women held command positions and the NRA included a dedicated women's wing. Similarly, many former female NRA fighters later joined the newly formed Museveni government (Tripp 2015). Moreover, the NRA held relatively favorable views towards women's rights, creating village women's councils and political gender quotas (Kasfir 2005).

Tripp (2015) traces how the gendered dynamics of the Bush War increased political participation by women in post-war Uganda and led to the formalization of the women's rights legal framework. First, she argues that the war had profound repercussions on gender relations and identities. Women's participation in traditionally male roles during conflict as well as their own victimization in the conflict led them to perceive themselves as more capable and independent. Second, women's movements and organizations experienced a resurgence after the

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conflict. Further, women actively participated in several peace movements.

While the Bush War ended officially in 1986, splinter wars and insurgencies continue until today. The most prominent of these is the insurgency in Northern Uganda waged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA abducted both women and men to serve within their ranks in highly gendered roles – women and girls served as wives, servants, child care attendants, cooks, and porters while men served as soldiers. Women were also forced into sexual slavery (Annan et al. 2009, Baines 2014). Abducted women were given as "wives" to higher level officers, while lower-level male LRA members were not allowed to marry or engage in sexual relations with the women (Annan et al. 2011). Women in these forced marriages experienced high levels of sexual and physical violence (Annan et al. 2009). Around 16% of women in the LRA reported participating in a combat role (Annan et al. 2009).

The LRA had several other gendered practices, such as protocols surrounding widows and death penalties for adultery (Baines 2014). It is important to note that the level of sexual violence committed by the LRA against non-abducted civilian women was surprisingly low given the levels of non-sexual civilian victimization. For much of its existence, the LRA strictly forbade rape of civilian women or newly abducted women.[2] Annan et al. (2009) and Baines (2014) argue that the LRA leadership used strict control over gendered and sexual relationships to create social cohesion and maintain control over their soldiers. However, as the command structure began to deteriorate in the late 2000s, LRA soldiers began to engage in more widespread rape.

Moreover, Uganda received large amounts of attention from the international community in the wake of its civil conflicts. By 2003, the UN stated that the crisis in northern Uganda had grown to be "one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world."[3] In response, several UN agencies and other international actors committed to increase their presence in northern Uganda. The LRA insurgency's use of violence against and abduction of civilians resulted in

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[2]It is important to note that sex within these forced marriages still constituted rape.

[3]As quoted in this UN press release from the head of the UN Humanitarian Affairs Office Jan Egeland. https://www.un.org/press/en/2003/afr750.doc.htm

international condemnation, which culminated in 2005 when the ICC put out an arrest warrant for several high-ranking LRA commanders.[4] Further as the LRA began to launch attacks into the surrounding countries, more countries supported military maneuvers against the LRA.

Uganda's conflicts coincided with changes in international norms regarding women's rights. Beginning with the 1985 UN Conference on Women and continuing with the 1995 Beijing Conference and the 2000 adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, the international community increasingly supported women's rights in post-conflict countries. For example, several donors specifically pledged aid to women's rights movements in Uganda to help them continue their efforts.[5] Uganda continues to receive over 2 billion dollars in aid each year from intergovernmental organizations and individual states.[6] However, it is important to note that many of these international programs were complementing initiatives already begun by local women's rights movements in Uganda (Tripp 2015).

Thus, Uganda presents an ideal case to study the impact of conflict and international influence on women's rights sub-nationally. Uganda not only experienced multiple conflicts that varied greatly in degree across the country, but these conflicts demonstrated deeply gendered characteristics. Moreover, Uganda received large amounts of international intervention, including aid targeted specifically at women's rights projects. Finally, Uganda has a local women's rights movement that is further supported by the international community.

Research Design

Sub-national data was primarily gathered from the Demographic Health Survey (DHS), a public health survey conducted on a nationally representative sample of the population.[7] Uganda held

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[4]See the ICC's warrant against Kony here https://www.icc-cpi.int/uganda/kony

[5]As recorded in the AidData Uganda Dataset.

[6]As recorded in the AidData Uganda Dataset.

[7]Although the DHS is sponsored by USAID, it is implemented by the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics. While there is still a possibility of social desireability bias, this local implementation

waves of DHS surveys in 2000, 2006, 2011, and 2016. In total, over 53,000 women and men participated in the DHS survey. Women represent over 41,000 of the respondents. The DHS survey stratifies survey locations by region and by rural or urban areas. Survey clusters represent small geographical locations: neighborhoods in cities and villages in rural areas. Within these clusters, households are randomly chosen to be surveyed and within those households random men and women were selected to participate. The sample was limited to individuals who were not visitors to the household and who had lived within the village for at least five years.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable, *Justification of Wife Beating*, is a dichotomous variable recording if the respondent believed that a husband was justified in beating his wife if she burned food, goes out without her husband's permission, argues with her husband, or neglects her children. 54% of male and female respondents believe wife beating is justified under at least one of these conditions. Importantly, this variable records attitudes towards when wife beating is justified, not whether the respondent has experienced wife beating. Alternative dependent variables, including financial decisionmaking power, media consumption, and domestic violence exposure are included as robustness checks.[8] Although there is always a concern for social desireability bias when discussing domestic violence, admitted approval of wife beating reaches as high as 72% in some districts according to the DHS, indicating that to some extent, respondents are willing to disclose their support of wife beating on the survey.

Two primary independent variables are examined. *Total Violence* is a count of the number of violent events that occurred within 20 kilometers of a DHS cluster, the distance an average

decreases the likelihood that respondents are catering their answers to the United States.

[8]It is important to note that Justification of Wife Beating might be considered an indication of women's security rather than women's rights. However, the robustness of these results to other measures of women's rights and empowerment indicate that the results are consistent with other manifestations of women's empowerment.
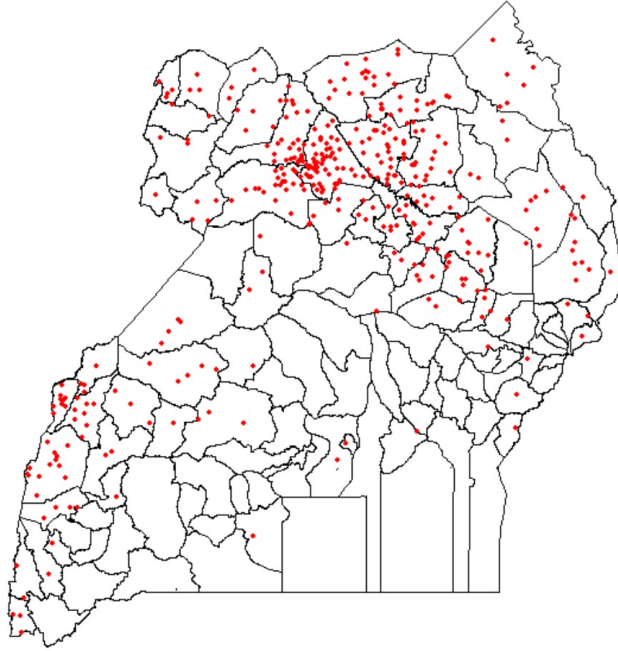
Figure 1: Violent Event Locations, 1989-2016

person can walk within one day. The primary measure of *Total Violence* used in the analysis only counts violence which occurred *in the past five years* as more recent violence is likely to have a stronger impact on one's behavior than violence in the distant past.[9] Alternative measures include a count of deaths and a count of civilian deaths only, both of which are robust. To further account for concerns of endogeneity, violent events that occurred in the same year of the survey are not included in the count. A

As can be seen in Figure 1, violent events occurred throughout the country, but violence was more common in the North and the West. Violent events are relatively rare. Between 1989 to 2016, each cluster experienced an average of about 2 events and within the five years before each survey wave, clusters experience an average of 0.7 events. When violence did occur, it ranged between 1 or 2 events (about 44% of clusters that experienced violence had two or less events) to 104 events. Given the large skew in the data, *Total Events* is log transformed.

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[9]The results are somewhat sensitive to the yearly range of violent event and aid exposure. While the signs remain consistent, *Justification of Wife Beating* falls below significance for violent events beyond 6 years.

In this study, international influence will primarily be measured as the presence of international aid at the local level. While other forms of international intervention, such as peacekeeping efforts, also likely influence gender equality after conflict, data on international aid at the micro-level is more consistent than data on other forms of international intervention. Giving aid is one of the primary ways in which international actors can encourage women's rights and and leverage material incentives more generally in a post-conflict society.

Thus, the second independent variable, *International Aid*, is the amount of IGO and bilateral aid received within 20 kilometers of a DHS cluster in the past five years, but not including the year of the survey, as recorded by the AidData Project.[10] While some of these projects focus specifically on women's rights, such as the Anti-Trafficking of Women and Children "Safe Return" aid project in Karamoja district pledged by Norway in 2011 and 2012, the Mainstreaming Women's Rights in Health and Community Responses to Violence Against Women in Kapchwora and Bukwo Districts committed by the European Union, or Austria's "Securing Women's Socioeconomic and Political Rights in Post-conflict Northern Uganda" aid project, the majority are devoted to more general causes, such as education, health, and government support. In the aid project-year sample in Uganda for this time range, 100 projects specifically had words related to women, gender, girls, or sexual and reproductive health in their name and 194 projects were categorized in issue areas that are often considered to be "women's issues," including health, education, and poverty. Unfortunately, it is not possible to distinguish whether there was further gender programming in these aid projects beyond their name and main categorization. For example, a project on government capacity building or budget support could have a gender component that would not be obvious from its name or main categorization. However, even aid projects not specifically devoted to women's rights may indirectly improve women's rights. This may occur through exposure to Western liberalism and ideas regarding women's rights, improved living standards, or international actors encouraging communities that receive aid to improve women's rights. Thus, all types of aid are included in

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[10]Not included are aid donated by NGOs, churches, or individuals.

this analysis, even if they are not explicitly focused on women's rights.[11]

Although aid is often committed to large areas, this analysis only records international aid within a cluster if the aid project's primary disbursement location was within 20 kilometers. This is to account for the fact that many aid projects focus the majority of their funds in one location, often the largest city, town, or village in the area, due to logistical difficulties in reaching isolated communities. On average, a cluster received about 8 million dollars in aid over the time period, but aid received between 1989 and 2016 ranges between $0 direct disbursements in the cluster's radius to more than one billion U.S. dollars. Generally, cities receive more aid and the Northern region also received large amounts of aid in the wake of the destruction caused by the LRA. *Total Aid* is log transformed.

One of the primary concerns in analyses of the impact of conflict on women's rights is the endogenous relationship between conflict and gender equality. Multiple cross-national studies demonstrate that less gender equitable countries are more likely to engage in both inter- and intra-state conflict.[12] Examining micro-level patterns of violence and women's rights helps overcome this problem. While Uganda's relatively low level of gender equality on average may have made the country more susceptible to conflict, at the localized level, exposure to direct fighting close to an individual's home is not directly correlated with local gender equality. Instead, fighting location is driven primarily by strategic and logistic concerns.

As can be seen in Table 2, there is no correlation between a location's level of gender equality, as measured by the percentage of girls married under the age of 17, and whether individuals in that location were surveyed, experienced previous conflict, or had previously received aid. While consistent data on women's rights at the local level across Uganda is

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[11]Further, because of the difficulties establishing which aid projects did include gendered components, it cannot be tested whether gendered aid has a different effect compared with non-gendered aid. Future studies should disentangle the possible heterogeneous effects of gendered and non-gendered aid.

[12]See Caprioli (2003, 2005), Caprioli and Boyer (2001), Hudson et al. (2013), Hudson and Leidl (2015*a,b*), Melander (2005)

difficult to obtain, gender inequality is a major driver of child marriage and child marriage has been shown to increase domestic violence, high-risk pregnancies, and poor education (Raj 2010). Child marriage prevalence at the sub-county level does not influence whether the DHS survey was issued in that sub-county, decreasing concerns of a biased sample.[13]

Importantly, child marriage prevalence is also not correlated at the sub-county level with the prevalence of conflict in the sub-county or with the amount of international aid disbursed (Table 2, Models 2 and 3). This decreases concerns of endogeneity or that sub-counties with higher levels of gender equality may be less likely to experience conflict or aid. As described above, at the local level, conflict occurrence and aid disbursements are likely driven primarily by logistic and strategic factors, rather than the social and behavioral connection between gender equality and aggressive behavior that can at the country-level increase propensity to conflict. It is important to note that there is a correlation between the occurrence of violent events in a sub-county and the amount of international aid disbursed in that area.[14] This is in line with the theory that international actors often specifically seek to improve women's rights after conflict. This pre-existing correlation between the two main independent variables constrains this analysis' ability to make causal claims. However, given the lack of a correlation between the dual "treatments" of conflict and aid and the main dependent variable of gender equality, these results still illuminate important dynamics of the impact of these two correlated phenomena on gender dynamics at the local level.

Control Variables

Several controls account for individual and household characteristics that may influence individual attitudes towards women's equality, exposure to conflict, and aid. Controls come from the DHS survey. First, a respondents' age may influence both attitudes towards women's rights

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[13]The data is gathered from 2014 when there were 1,382 sub-counties in Uganda. These are relatively small units. More than 81% have a population of less than 50,000 people.

[14]These results are consistent when examined at the cluster-level.

Table 2: Survey Balance and Treatment

	Dependent variable:		
	Sub-county Surveyed	Number of Conflict Event	International Aid
	(1)	(2)	(3)
International Aid (logged)	0.003	0.02***	
	(0.01)	(0.01)	
Number of Conflict Events (logged)	0.01		0.35***
	(0.04)		(0.11)
% Child Marriage	0.12	−0.03	−0.20
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.24)
Percent Literate	−0.29**	−0.08	0.14
	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.37)
Employment	0.001	0.0002	−0.01
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.004)
Percent with Electricity	0.25	1.46***	0.83
	(0.19)	(0.13)	(0.53)
Population	0.00003***	−0.000009*	0.00004***
	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)
Population Sex Ratio	−0.003	−0.0004	−0.001
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.005)
Region Fixed Effects	X	X	X
Constant	1.03***	−0.09	0.38
	(0.20)	(0.15)	(0.56)
Observations	1,091	1,091	1,091
R^2	0.07	0.16	0.05
Adjusted R^2	0.06	0.15	0.04
Residual Std. Error	0.45 (df = 1079)	0.34 (df = 1080)	1.29 (df = 1080)
F Statistic	7.58*** (df = 11; 1079)	19.86*** (df = 10; 1080)	5.58*** (df = 10; 1080)

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

and the reaction to violence. In particular, younger people tend to have more favorable views towards women's rights and may react to violence and threat differently than older individuals. Therefore, *Age* records the respondent's age.

Similarly, there is often a noticeable urban-rural divide regarding women's rights as individuals living in cities tend to hold more egalitarian views that those living in rural areas. Moreover, people living in cities are more likely to be exposed to international aid given the prevalence of aid distributions in cities due to the greater ease of aid project implementation in cities. Moreover, people living in cities may be more likely to be the targets of violence. Thus, *Rural* is a dichotomous variable recording whether the individual lives in a rural area. 43% of respondents live in a rural area, measured by distance to the closest neighbor.

Next, a respondents' level of education is also likely to influence their prior beliefs regarding gender equality and their reaction to aid and conflict exposure. Generally, higher levels of education are associated with more favorable attitudes towards gender equality. Moreover, educated individuals may be more amenable to updating their beliefs after exposure to international aid due to the correlation between development, education, and support for liberal values. *Education Level* records the highest level of school a respondent completed as no education (0), primary (1), secondary (2), and more than secondary (3). 13% of the sample had no education, 58% completed primary school, 22% completed secondary school, and 7% had post-secondary education.

Moreover, beliefs regarding gender relations are often highly intertwined with religious beliefs, especially among conservative religions, such as Catholicism and Islam which tend to support more traditional gender relations. Uganda is a majority Christian country, about 40% of citizens are Catholic, 31% are Anglican, and 13% are Muslim.[15] *Catholic* records whether a respondent was Catholic or if they were a member of another religion.

Further, married individuals are likely to have more conservative attitudes towards gender relations compared to single people and married women are often more likely to follow the

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[15]Other robustness checks include dummies for Christian or Muslim.

beliefs of their husband which usually aligns with other social cleavages, such as race, religion, and partisanship compared to other women's movements (Baldez 2003). Moreover, given traditional stereotypes that men should protect women during conflict, married women and men may respond differently to perceived threats after exposure to violence to align with norms of protective masculinity (Lindsey 2018). Finally, exposure to international aid, especially aid that encourages gender equality, may create tension within married couples (Kelly et al. 2018). *Married* is a dichotomous indicator of whether the respondent was legally married or had lived with the same partner for multiple years. 62% of respondents are married.

Wealth also influences individual beliefs on gender equality with wealthier individuals often holding more progressive and liberal views on gender equality. Moreover, wealthier individuals may be more able to access the benefits of international aid programs and may enjoy higher levels of security. Unfortunately, the DHS survey did not ask about respondent's wealth or income until 2014. Thus, as a proxy for wealth, a dummy variable for whether the respondent's home had electricity is included. Only 20% of respondents had electricity. Unfortunately, this question was not asked of male respondents and thus is not included in the male models. However, models with other proxies for wealth are robust.

Finally, to account for geographic and time patterns within Uganda that influence both whether violence occurs in clusters and whether the cluster received financial aid and changing attitudes towards women's rights over time, fixed effects are included for both region and survey wave. It should be noted that a control for ethnic group, primarily the Acholi group, was not included as the "Northern" region fixed effect largely proxies for this control. 99% of Northern Uganda's residents belong to the Acholi ethnic group.

Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression is used. All models are stratified by region and urban/rural, include survey weights, and cluster standard errors by cluster-year and household.

Results

The results support the theory that women exposed *both* to conflict and international aid hold more gender equitable attitudes than women exposed to conflict alone. Men do not significantly alter their attitudes when exposed to both conflict and aid.

Model 1 in Table 3 presents the regression results for women's response that wife beating is justified and Model 2 presents the regression results for men's responses. With women, the number of conflict events has a positive (but not significant) influence on the likelihood that a woman reports that wife beating is justified. *International Aid* in non-conflict areas does not appear to have any impact on attitudes and behaviors towards women's rights. Importantly, in areas that experienced both conflict *and* received international aid, women are significantly less likely to justify wife beating compared to women in conflict areas without aid.

In areas with no international aid, conflict increases the likelihood that a woman reports wife beating is justified from 61% to 92%, as can be seen in Figure 2. However, in areas with large amounts of international aid, conflict slightly decreases approval of wife beating, decreasing the likelihood of approval from 56% to 43%.[16] In other words, women exposed to the most conflict have significantly different attitudes toward wife beating conditional upon the presence of international actors. Women living in conflict areas not exposed to international aid are almost 90% more likely to believe wife beating is justified than women in conflict areas with international aid projects. This supports the theory that international influence may be a necessary condition for conflict to have any positive impact on women's rights.

Overall, these results demonstrate that conflict is harmful to women's rights, increasing the acceptance of wife beating among women. However, this negative effect can be ameliorated by international aid. These results illustrate a new dimension to the "opportunity structures" theory. In addition to international actor presence possibly being a necessary condition to offset the negative impacts of militarized masculinity, the results indicate that even in the presence

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[16]It is important to note that while the slope of the line for women exposed to international aid and conflict negative, the confidence intervals are large.

of these actors, women barely *improve* their attitudes towards gender equality. Instead, they are largely offsetting the negative effects of conflict or slightly improving their attitudes.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results: Conflict, Aid, and the Justification of Wife Beating

	Dependent variable:	
	Women	Men
	(1)	(2)
Number of Conflict Events	0.200	−0.59**
	(0.147)	(0.23)
International Aid	−0.001	0.001
	(0.003)	(0.01)
Age	−0.021***	−0.02***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Rural	0.216***	0.34***
	(0.058)	(0.09)
Education Level	−0.364***	−0.48***
	(0.024)	(0.04)
Catholic	0.079**	0.09
	(0.035)	(0.06)
Married	0.021	−0.25***
	(0.034)	(0.07)
Electricity	−0.406***	
	(0.051)	
Conflict Events:International Aid	−0.020**	0.004
	(0.009)	(0.02)
Constant	1.751***	1.18***
	(0.138)	(0.21)
Region Controls	X	X
Survey Wave Controls	X	X
Observations	31,810	9,312
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

When we examine the conditional impacts of conflict exposure and international aid on men's attitudes towards women, we see that conflict and aid do not jointly significantly alter men's attitudes or behavior. Men in areas exposed to conflict and aid do not have significantly different attitudes or behavior regarding wife-beating and media consumption, as can be seen in Figure 3. Although there is a slight positive increase in the likelihood that both men exposed to aid and men not exposed to aid report that wife beating is justified, raising it from slightly

Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities: Conflict, Aid, and Women's Justification of Wife Beating
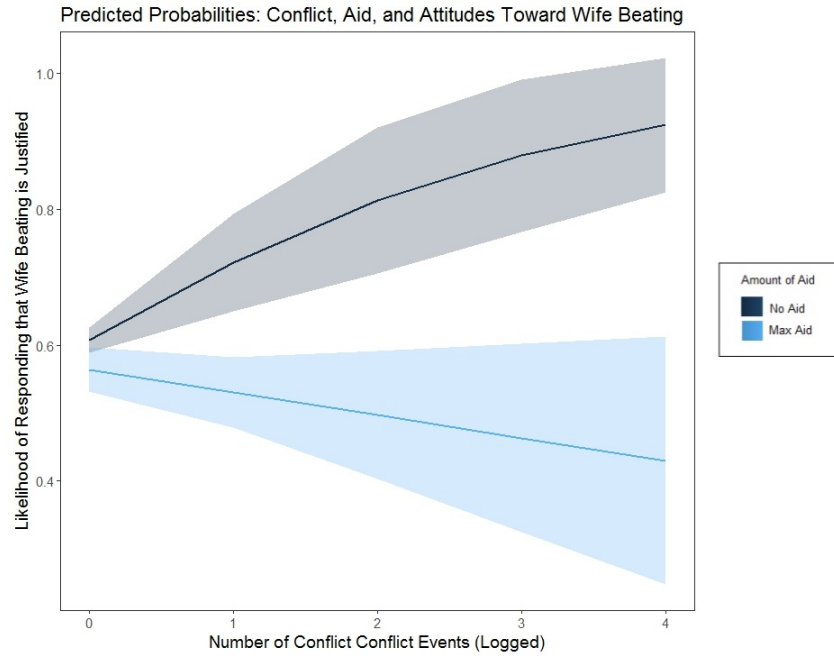
below a 50% probability to a slightly more than 50% probability among men not exposed to aid and from a 43% probability to a 47% probability among men not exposed to conflict, the change is not statistically significant.

Generally, these findings demonstrate that while conflict overall can have a negative influence on women's attitudes and behaviors on gender equality, international aid can mitigate this negative influence. Men, on the other hand, do not appear to significantly alter their behavior or attitudes on wife beating or their amount of media consumption in conflict-exposed clusters that received international aid.

The results are robust to several alternative operationalizations of the dependent variable and specifications of the model. The results are consistent when other operationalizations of the dependent variable are used, such as the count of number of circumstances under which wife beating is justified and each circumstance of wife beating considered individually,[17] Addi-

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[17]It should be noted that when wife beating in response to women going out without permission, refusing sex, or arguing are considered individually, the model falls just below significance, but retains its negative sign.
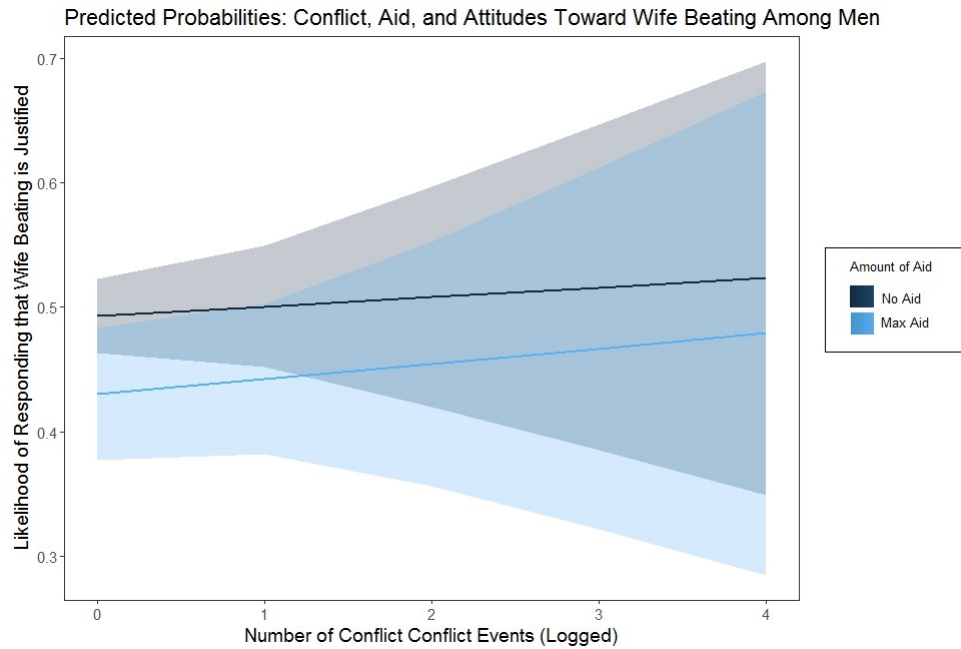
Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities: Conflict, Aid, and Men's Attitudes and Behavior

tionally, a similar pattern – where international aid ameliorates the harmful impact of conflict on women's rights among women, and not men, exposed to conflict – appears with other dependent variables, including women's joint financial control over household decisionmaking and women's media consumption, a proxy for political knowledge.

Additionally, the results remain consistent when alternative definitions of conflict exposure are used, including a count of the number of overall deaths, a count of the number of civilian deaths, and extending the radius to 50 kilometers. Moreover, the results are robust to the inclusion of controls for population density of the cluster, proximity to the border, urbanization, development, and wealth.

These results help explain the empirical and theoretical tensions between the "militarized masculinity" literature and the "opportunity structures" literature. First, the findings underscore that conflict negatively impacts women's rights, supporting the "militarized masculinity" findings. In other words, exposure to conflict alone increased the likelihood that women reported that wife beating was justified. However, as suggested by the "opportunity structures" literature, the interactive effect between conflict exposure and international aid demonstrates that under some circumstances, women's rights can be promoted to some extent in post-conflict

areas. However, even with international aid exposure, women exposed to conflict only slightly change their beliefs towards wife beating. Thus, these results suggest that while the opportunity structures theory may be correct to challenge the prevailing logic that conflict is always harmful to gender equality, the positive effects of conflict on gender equality should not be overstated. Further, the results highlight that conflict may amplify the influence of international actors. While international aid did not significantly influence women's rights in clusters that were not exposed to violent events, there was a positive impact on women's rights in conflict areas. Thus, conflict may prime a society to be more responsive to international pressure for women's rights.

Conclusion

This analysis builds upon the findings of previous work on the intersection between conflict and women's rights by examining how sub-national variation in individual exposure to violent events and international aid affects women's rights. Additionally, it is one of the first works within the quantitative "opportunity structures" literature to consider how conflict's impact on men and women differs and how this may partially explain the tensions between the opportunity structure and militarized masculinity literatures. By examining how micro-level exposure to violent events and international aid projects influences individual attitudes surrounding women's rights, such as when wife beating is justified, this analysis clarifies how international actors gain greater influence in areas affected by conflict.

The results demonstrate that conflict led to a significant decrease in gender equitable values among women in Uganda. However, international aid can mitigate the negative influence of conflict on women to improve gender equitable values held by women. Further, the results demonstrate that men do not experience parallel changes in women' rights attitudes. The different impacts of conflict and aid on men and women may explain why conflict does not translate into the adoption of women's rights laws or long-term improvements in women's rights, despite improving women's political engagement in the short- and medium-term after

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conflict (Webster, Chen and Beardsley 2019). If men, who often hold political power, do not alter their views on gender equality after conflict in response to international presence, even if women do become more equitable, it is unlikely that men will choose to altruistically adopt women's rights laws.

While not examined here, future analyses may examine how conflict has other heterogeneous impacts based on demographic characteristics. For example, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2013) found that age, wealth, and ethnicity may impact the effects of aid on women's rights. In particular, women who are already privileged may be most likely to find conflict to be empowering compared to marginalized women. Additionally, future studies should explore other manifestations of international influence in post-conflict societies and should probe whether aid programs specifically targeting gender equality have a unique impact. Further, future work should examine whether social attitudes towards other types of violence or rights similarly change after conflict. Finally, while this studies examines the joint impact of conflict and aid on women's rights attitudes, future studies should more clearly delineate the causal effect of aid versus conflict.

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