

# Labored Legacies: The Post-Conflict Representation of Women in Rebel Parties

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## Abstract

Rebel groups that transition into political parties are influenced by their conflict legacies in a myriad of ways. In particular, rebel parties adhere to practices that shaped their identity and garnered wartime support. I argue that the wartime inclusion of women in rebel groups is one such wartime behavior that will carry over to the post-war environment. Women not only frequently hold important roles in rebel groups during conflict, but women who also experience significant increases to their political representation after conflict. In this paper, I ask how women's wartime roles in rebel groups influence their post-conflict representation in the political parties borne out of these respective rebel groups. Using a novel dataset on women's representation in a global sample of rebel parties from 1970-2020, I find that former rebel parties that included female combatants are more likely to elect a higher proportion of women after war, particularly when women's presence serves to create similar benefits that women offer during war. The results show that when women's wartime combat participation cultivated greater civilian aid and external support during war, rebel parties are more likely to elect women after war. These findings offer nuance to understandings of how wartime legacies influence rebel parties, as well as how women's wartime contributions effect their political standing after conflict.<sup>1</sup>

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# 1 Introduction

Women's participation in conflict defies traditional gender expectations that deem war to be the business of men. After war, however, there is extreme variation in if and how women continue challenging these gender norms. Following civil conflict in Sierra Leone, former female combatants returned to their communities to find that "primordial ties to their pre-war cultural past" had strengthened, leaving a society that not only expected them to return to their former gender roles, but even "collectively grimaced at women's empowerment in the aftermath of conflict," (Lahai 2015, 144-145). In this case, despite the challenges that female combatants posed to gender norms during war, women as a group experienced little change between pre- and post-war periods. In contrast, in Uganda, women's roles in the resistance struggle turned into "an effective strategy for their empowerment," (Byanyima 1992, 129). In the years following the war, President Museveni, the former rebel leader, frequently cited women's contributions during war as a motivator for their political inclusion after war (Tamale 1999; Tripp 2000, 2015). Why women are able to build on the wartime contributions of former rebel women in some cases, but not others, is unclear. When can women's participation in war evolve from being an exception to gender norms to a more permanent revision to women's political status?

Many scholars have debated the transformative effects of war on gender relations. Some note that while women's experiences during war can be individually empowering, it does not necessarily lead to sustained change after war (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2002; Pankhurst 2003, 2012). Rather, women are often faced with a patriarchal backlash after war that fosters a "re-traditionalization" of gender roles (Moran 2010). In these cases, women's wartime contributions are viewed as a necessary measure under the constraints of war, but offer little long-term change. On the other hand, many scholars aptly point to positive changes for women writ large after war. On average, women's political representation is significantly higher in post-conflict states (Hughes 2009; Viterna, Fallon and Beckfield 2008)

and women see an expansion of their political, social, and economic rights (Tripp 2015). Scholars have offered a number of explanations for these improvements, including evolving gender norms, international pressures, institutional changes, and the influence of women's movements (Hughes 2009; Hughes and Tripp 2015; Tripp 2015). From this perspective, women's wartime contributions are seen as one of the many challenges to gender norms that influence sustained change.

In this paper, I aim to understand when women's wartime participation leads to long-term change among gender roles. In particular, I look to the election of women after war. Similar to violence, politics is a patriarchal tradition (Ni Aolain and Rooney 2007). Women's engagement in each demands a challenge to traditional gendered expectations and an acceptance of this defiance by relevant voices of power (Gilmartin 2015). A continuation of women's inclusion in these non-traditional roles in the post-conflict period would suggest that women's roles during wartime were not merely an exception—but instead that they were the harbinger of women gaining equal footing in the political world.

I examine the effect of women's combat participation in rebel groups during war on women's representation in former rebel parties after war. The literature on rebel groups that transition into political parties suggests that wartime characteristics frequently predict behavior after conflict (Ishiyama and Widmeier 2020; Manning 2007; Zaks 2017). Yet, the influence of gender dynamics, such as women's participation, has received little attention. Further, patterns of women's political representation in former rebel parties are not well understood. I propose that the divergence in outcomes of women's post-war political status are the result of strategies used by former rebel actors. Through this lens, women's inclusion is a strategy that former rebel parties adapt to the post-war environment in order to continue cultivating benefits. I present an argument that rebel parties will continue to foster women's engagement after war, particularly when it serves a political end. I look to the ways in which women contribute to rebel groups during war to understand if and how groups opt to

include women after war. While I expect that women's empowerment created through their engagement in war could foster a direct increase in women's representation after war, I argue that much of these gains can be explained through their specific wartime contributions. In particular, I expect that groups that utilized women to bolster their support by communicating their ideological commitment and fostering domestic and international legitimacy will elect significantly more women after conflict, as they will strategize to use women's presence to capture similar benefits after war. Women's inclusion in rebel parties in the post-war environment, thus, is an adaption of rebels' wartime strategies.

To test these theories, I created a novel dataset on women's political representation in rebel parties from 1970-2020. I find that rebel groups that generally include women in combat roles are more likely to elect a higher percentage of women after the war. However, I also find that these effects are conditioned on a number of factors. First, when women's combat participation is associated with greater civilian support, their participation is related to higher levels of women's representation. Second, in cases in which women's combat integration results in boosts to the organization's international support, groups will also elect a higher proportion of women after war.

These findings suggest that women's wartime participation can evolve into sustained political gains for women, but only when it serves to also create political gains for their party as well. This echoes arguments by Berry (2018*a*) and Valdini (2019) that women's political inclusion is often appropriated by political actors for their own benefit. These findings also demonstrate the pertinence of looking beyond aggregate trends of women's political representation after war. Previous explanations for women's gains in electoral politics after conflict have focused on individual or macro-level changes that drive gains in women's political access. This, ironically, overlooks the role of political parties in promoting women's political representation, despite the fact that political parties serve as important gatekeepers to politics (Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Thus, this paper

offers an understanding of long-term effects of women’s conflict participation, as well as of how specific political parties prioritize women’s inclusion in the post-conflict environment. Finally, the paper sheds light on the role of gender in former rebel party politics and demonstrates that rebel parties use gender to their advantage in similar ways to which rebel groups manipulate gender during war.

## **2 Rebel Party Politics and Conflict Legacies**

Political parties serve as brokers for women interested in entering politics. In order to enter what is traditionally viewed as men’s domain, women must align themselves with these gatekeepers (Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Scholars have emphasized the individual and aggregate factors that drive increases in women’s political representation after conflict (e.g. Hughes 2009, Hughes and Tripp 2015, Tripp 2015), but have underemphasized the role of parties in facilitating these developments. After conflict, political parties face unique demands in that they must work to rebuild society and (re)gain the trust of the public. These demands are particularly severe for parties who engaged in conflict as a rebel force (Manning 2007). Regardless of these challenges, former rebel parties are important political actors in post-conflict environments, as their buy-in to an institutionalized political system is a key driver of stability and security (Manning 2007; Matanock 2016). Additionally, their post-conflict engagement is frequent. Approximately half of all rebel groups transition into political parties (Matanock 2017, 2018). Further, these parties participate in and win elections consistently (Manning and Smith 2019).

The party development of rebel parties is also unique in that they heavily draw on their conflict legacies to build their party. The post-conflict behavior of rebel parties is highly influenced by their conflict-period characteristics (Zaks 2017). Most pertinently, scholars have found that the post-conflict identity and public engagement of rebel parties are driven by their conflict legacies. This consistency is the result of the relationship between

the newly formed party and their wartime supporters. Like all parties, rebel parties have varying groups of constituents that they must appease (Ishiyama and Batta 2011; Ishiyama and Widmeier 2013). However, unlike other parties, their wartime supporters make up a significant proportion of these constituents (de Zeeuw 2008*a*). Even as rebel parties adopt their organization to fit the demands shouldered by political parties, including structural and attitudinal changes, they will adhere to particular wartime policies and practices to continue appeasing the expectations of their wartime supporters (de Zeeuw 2008*b*; van de Goor and de Zeeuw 2008).

The greatest consistencies between war and post-war behavior of rebel parties can be seen in how they frame their identity and engage with supporters. In order to maintain the support of wartime constituents, rebel parties will preserve some level of consistency to political stances and goals that they held during war. Acosta (2014) argues that the initial transformation into a political party is only sensible to rebels if it fits within the goals and image that the group created during war. Though former rebels are now expected to use peaceful and democratic means of creating change, their purpose in mainstream politics is to achieve similar ends that had been delineated during conflict (Söderberg Kovacs 2008; Wittig 2016). Scholars have found that rebel parties will opt to continue operating along wartime cleavages after conflict (Ishiyama 2019). In some cases, such as the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF) in Sierra Leone, this strategy is used to mobilize marginalized communities of former combatants and to ensure that they access the spoils promised in negotiations (Söderberg Kovacs 2019). Examining former rebel parties in Sri Lanka and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sindre (2019) finds that while wartime cleavages weaken with time, rebel parties still frequently invoke images of themselves as “defenders” of their group and its interests. Only in instances of weakening political support do rebel parties opt to make significant changes to their identity and image (Ishiyama and Marshall 2017).

The wartime governance of rebel groups also has relevant influences on their post-

conflict engagement with the public (Allison 2010; Huang 2016; Ishiyama and Widmeier 2020). The ways in which rebels interact with civilian supporters during war affects how they maintain relationships after war, as well as their level of electoral success. Groups that successfully mobilize civilians during war continue to do so in similar ways after the war (Ishiyama and Widmeier 2020; Zaks 2017). For example, Berti (2016) finds that within Hamas and Hezbollah, social and political practices that promoted engagement with civilian supporters were highly consistent between conflict and post-conflict periods, especially in cases in which the group relied on grassroots mobilization. Huang (2016) demonstrates that rebel groups that relied on civilian aid during war are more likely to support democracy after conflict, as they already relied on proto-governance structures during conflict. Similarly, Zaks (2017) argues that the mass mobilization structures that were implemented by the FMLN in El Salvador during the guerrilla war enabled the group to mobilize supporters after war, enabling them to successfully transition into a political party and maintain widespread support after the war. As long as these strategies continue cultivating support and thus success for the group, rebel parties will continue to interact with supporters in similar ways between war and post-war periods (Ishiyama and Widmeier 2020).

While the literature has demonstrated the many ways in which conflict legacies influence post-conflict behavior, it has not grappled with how gendered strategies may persist into post-conflict environments. This is in spite of the fact that the factors driving rebel party behavior after war are also highly related to the recruitment of women for rebel groups during war. Still, scholars have offered little attention to how women's inclusion in wartime may be related to their political inclusion after conflict, as well as the role of rebel parties in fostering this. In the next section, I build an argument that the conflict legacies of former rebel parties will create unique incentives that facilitate increases to women's political representation.

### 3 Why Rebel Parties Elect Women

Though rebel groups may abandon particular conflict-period tactics, such as the use of violence, much of the identity and engagement of these organizations remains intact as they transition into formal political parties. I posit that like other legacies that persist into the post-conflict period, rebel parties will continue to ensure women's inclusion after conflict, given that they did so during conflict. Further, I argue that women's political inclusion after conflict will be driven by similar forces that influence their integration during conflict. I expect this effect to be driven by two primary forces. First, I expect that women's participation in war will directly effect their election after war due to empowerment through changing perceptions about gender roles. Second, I expect that women's representation to these parties after war will also reflect continued strategic efforts of the organization to capture the legitimizing benefits of women's presence. These strategies will reflect some of the factors that drove rebels to recruit women to their wartime efforts in the first place, except now the goal will be to win seats instead of to win wars.

Women's recruitment into fighting forces is driven by a number of factors. Supply-side explanations of women's recruitment highlight factors such as revenge and security that drive women's decision to join (Cohen 2013*b*; Lahai 2010), as well as a desire to improve their political and economic status (Thomas and Bond 2015). I expect that women's inclusion in rebel parties after war will similarly be driven by a desire to improve their individual status, as well as a desire to fight for the political change that they sought to create through war. Moreover, women's participation within rebellion may serve to empower other women to pursue non-traditional political roles and increase acceptance of women in these roles by relevant gatekeepers. Through their participation, women find themselves, often for the first time, having similar influence as men. On the battlefield, many former female combatants note that they felt a sense of equality. In South Africa, a former female combatant for the armed wing of the ANC, the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), noted that "In the army, people

respect each other. It's only in the army that I've seen equality practiced ... Because of that—because of what we've been doing on the ground—we've been recognized as equals" (Cock 1992, 163).<sup>2</sup> The empowerment of female combatants and the recognition of women as equals may broadly demonstrate to women that they also can and should take on such roles in politics.

In addition to the individual empowerment of women, women's participation in rebellion serves to alter perceptions about gender roles among other rebels and the general public, potentially decreasing the gatekeeping by male rebel party leaders and increasing the odds that the public will vote for women candidates (Bop 2001). For example, in Uganda, Boyd (1989) notes how women's participation in the NRA during conflict broke many gendered barriers in the minds of male soldiers, which would later influence strategies by President Museveni to integrate women into politics. Further, the framing of women as the "fighter and liberators" of the country deemed their political integration both during and after war as necessary for the advancement of the state (Bop 2001). This leads to my first hypothesis:

**HYPOTHESIS 1:** Rebel parties that had women combatants will elect a higher percentage of women after war than other rebel parties.

While the supply-side explanations of women's integration highlight the role of women's agency in these developments, demand-side explanations demonstrate the ways in which women's integration during war is a reflection of strategic efforts to succeed. These explanations consider the benefits that women create for groups, such as increased capacity and legitimacy (Loken 2018; Manekin and Wood 2020; Thomas and Bond 2015; Wood 2019). I expect that when beneficial, rebel parties will seek to continue these gendered strategies.

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<sup>2</sup>However, the experience of women in rebel groups varies significantly. Many women experience forced recruitment and sexual violence within these organizations (Cohen 2013*a,b*). Even in the MK, where women describe feelings of equality, they were still subject to sexual harassment and assault during their tenure (Cock 1992).

While women’s inclusion offers many strategic benefits to rebel groups, not all of these benefits can be explicitly extended to the post-conflict period. For example, recruiting women often allows rebel groups to commit more lethal attacks (Thomas 2020). In other cases, rebels opt to recruit women because their inclusion bolsters perceptions of legitimacy, increasing their level of support. The implications of women’s participation in each of these cases offers relevant advantages during wartime, but only the latter are relevant after war as the group no longer needs boosts to their fighting capacity or lethality. In the following sections, I consider three mechanisms that influence women’s integration and offer the possibility of cultivating benefits during and after war: ideology, civilian support, and international support.

### **3.1 *Women’s Inclusion and Ideology***

Ideology plays a key role in determining when and where women are found in rebellion. Wood and Thomas (2017) find that rebel groups with leftist ideologies are more likely to employ women on the frontline of combat. These groups, which draw on Marxist theories, emphasize the ability of revolution and class struggle to liberate oppressed people and tend to call for the overthrow of existing social hierarchies, including gendered hierarchies.<sup>3</sup>

Groups that have leftist ideologies often rely on their integration of these marginalized populations to demonstrate their commitment to their ideals. For example, in Nepal, the CPN(M) explicitly tied their inclusion of women to their goal of destroying gendered hierarchies. This framing of their movement not only served to boost the recruitment of women to the armed group, but it also enabled them to expand support from other groups who also supported this outcome (Yadav 2020). Similarly, in Colombia, Herrera and Porch (2008) argue that the choice of FARC-EP to recruit women into their movement was strategically tied to their pivot towards waging a “people’s war.” The group believed that in order for

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas and Bond (2015) similarly find that groups that include a specific gender positive ideology are more likely to have women participants.

civilians to truly believe that they represented “the people,” their group needed to reflect the diversity of the people. By recruiting women during their transition into an “army of the people,” FARC was able to “legitimize its revolutionary vision” and “further its strategic aims” (Herrera and Porch 2008, 621).

After war, the incentives for former rebels to continue embodying their wartime ideals do not lessen. Instead, former wartime supporters expect rebel parties to act upon the promises that were made to them during wartime (Sindre 2016*a*; Söderberg Kovacs 2008). When these promises explicitly called for the inclusion of the marginalized after war, supporters will expect to see these outcomes. (Yadav 2017) notes that following the war in Nepal, the CPN(M) did in fact elect members of parliament that reflected these promises. In the first election following the comprehensive agreement in 2008, the party filled about a third of its seats with women, many of whom were from marginalized castes (Yadav 2017). In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF frequently connected the role of women during rebellion to their commitment to women’s post-conflict political integration. At the 1980 Copenhagen Conference for the Decade of Women, Robert Mugabe, then prime minister of Zimbabwe and leader of the liberation struggle, stated “we learned through the liberation struggle that success and power are possible when men and women are united as equals” (Lyons 2004, 41). Mugabe later directly connected women’s political liberation and the party’s ideological goals, saying

If women are not drawn into the public service, into militia, into political life, women are not torn off their stupefying house and kitchen environment, it will be impossible to build even democracy let alone socialism. (Goredema and Chigora 2011, 28)

In cases in which rebel groups included women participations and held an ideology that dictated the inclusion of the marginalized in social and political structures, I expect that women will continue to be integrated into the party after conflict. This leads to my second hypotheses:

**HYPOTHESIS 2:** Rebel parties that had women combatants will elect a higher percentage of women after war than other rebel parties, given they had a leftist ideology during war.

### **3.2 *Women’s Inclusion and Domestic Support***

During civil war, rebel groups frequently rely on the support of civilians for critical resources, such as food, shelter, and even intelligence (Kalyvas 2006). The resources and support offered by civilians ultimately can have an influential impact on conflict outcomes (Hultman and Hultman 2007; Wood 2014). Further, how civilians perceive rebels matters as well, as the more favorable the public is towards rebels, the greater threat the group will appear to pose towards the government (Findley and Young 2007). Given the crucial impacts that civilians have on conflict dynamics, rebels have incentives to foster positive civilian relationships, as long as these relationships do not come at a cost. Scholars have demonstrated that one cheap method for rebel groups to foster positive community relationships and perceptions of legitimacy is through women’s membership. Women’s engagement in rebel groups can soften perceptions of the group, making their causes seem more worthy of support (Manekin and Wood 2020). Their inclusion legitimizes the group’s goals, with the public deeming rebel groups, along their goals and tactics, as more just and defensible when women are members (Manekin and Wood 2020).

To garner these benefits of legitimacy, female fighters are often placed in outward roles and used in propaganda to humanize their movement and its goals to relevant audiences (Loken 2018; Manekin and Wood 2020; Sanín and Carranza Franco 2017; Wood 2019). Women members are often used in community engagement, in an attempt to confer a feminine and friendly identity and improve their popular support (Loken 2018; Sanín and Carranza Franco 2017; Wood 2019). In Colombia, FARC-EP relied heavily on women to manage community relations. Women were responsible for managing community disputes and for ensuring that women and children had their needs met (Herrera and Porch 2008). Similarly, Viterna (2014)

argues that women FMLN combatants in El Salvador were strategically used during wartime to “tug at the heart strings of civilians,” which ultimately made civilians more likely to share their food and resources with the guerrillas (199).

As rebel groups transition political parties, they are faced with the dilemma of building support (Manning 2007). I expect that women’s integration is one aspect of “wartime bureaucracy” that is salient in both conflict and post-conflict periods. Rebel groups that experience these boosts to their domestic level of support via women’s integration into fighting forces will likely continue trying to capture these benefits when they have transitioned into a political party after war. In these cases, they will instead rely on female politicians to bolster their level of support. While the exact signal that women members send in war and post-war periods changes, the feminizing mechanism remains. During conflict, women’s presence is used by rebel groups to signal a more just movement that is worthy of support by civilians. After conflict, I expect that women’s inclusion in the party may be used to signal that the party is more committed to institutional norms and peace. Women in politics, similar to women in war, are interpreted differently than men by the public. Generally, women are perceived as being more trustworthy, empathetic, and honest (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Dolan 2010; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Women are also thought to be less corrupt and more transparent, ultimately increasing trust in their overall commitment to democratic principles (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Valdini 2013). Finally, women in politics are frequently assumed to be more dedicated to upholding peace (Berry 2018*b*). These stereotypes create a similar legitimizing function among women party members as to what women offer rebel groups during war. This leads to my hypothesis:

**HYPOTHESIS 3:** Rebel parties that had women combatants will elect a higher percentage of women after war than other rebel parties, given they relied on civilian support during war.

### **3.3 *Women's Inclusion and International Support***

During civil war, rebel groups also frequently rely on the support of international actors. Rebel groups often receive financial and material support from foreign actors that support the goals of these violent organizations. This crucial support can also influence rebel groups' likelihood of victory by altering their capabilities (Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011). Yet, to attract foreign sponsors, rebel groups may need to adhere to particular standards of legitimacy. Previous literature has shown that women's integration into rebel membership is one strategy through which rebel groups capture foreign support (Loken 2018; Manekin and Wood 2020). In particular, female fighters are used in propaganda and in outward facing roles that enable groups to cultivate positive perceptions of legitimacy at the international level. By electing women into national office, rebel parties stand to benefit from similar boosts in perceptions of legitimacy from international actors.

During war, rebels frequently emphasize the participation of women, often beyond their actual level of participation, to capture positive perceptions. Women are frequently used in rebel propaganda to emphasize their support of and contributions to the movement (Loken 2018). The FARC-EP, for example, would frequently create photo-ops with female fighters that would be widely disseminated with the group's propaganda (Herrera and Porch 2008; Sanín and Carranza Franco 2017). Similarly, in the armed branch of South Africa's Africa National Conference, the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the woman militant became a popular propaganda tool for the group, despite the fact that few women actually served in combat (Cock 1992). In Zimbabwe, ZANU propaganda showed women holding a rocket grenade, trading information, and cleaning weapons (Lyons 2004, 162). They also, however, frequently showed women rebels completing feminine tasks, like taking care of the sick, to soften perceptions of the militant movement (Lyons 2004). The effectiveness of these strategies was described by a former female fighter in Kashmir, who argued

Without women's participation how could our movement receive sympathy from national and international quarters? I remember guiding women how to organize the protest movements, how to confront and provoke the security forces, and how to behave when the media was around. Women played their part quite well.... (Shekhawat 2015, 102)

Groups that have experienced the benefits of the strategic placement of women in well-publicized positions during conflict are likely to envision the continued benefits they could receive through these strategies after conflict. In El Salvador, former FMLN women continued to serve in similar political positions, even after conflict (Viterna 2013). As they did during conflict, many former female fighters were placed in positions for the party that had an outward focus to ensure that the international community was met with a feminized version of the party. This included liaison positions between the command and other domestic and international actors, including civil society leaders and international organizations like the United Nations and the International Red Cross (Viterna 2013, 188). By electing women to parliament after conflict, rebel parties stand to similarly improve perceptions of the group, softening their wartime legacies through feminine stereotypes. Scholars have argued that former rebel leaders, such as Yoweri Museveni in Uganda and Paul Kagame in Rwanda, have often used women's political representation as a strategy to build support after war among international audiences (Berry 2015, 2018*a*; Goetz and Hassim 2005). In Uganda, Museveni has been frequently accused of using increases in women's representation to capture more support among domestic and international actors (Goetz 2009; Muriaas and Wang 2012). In Rwanda, scholars argue that Kagame has strategically used gains in women's representation to capture greater amounts of foreign aid (Berry 2015; Mann and Berry 2016).

In instances in which women's inclusion fostered gains in international support, I expect that rebel parties will continue to cultivate these benefits after war by ensuring that a greater number of women are elected to the party. This leads to my hypotheses that:

**HYPOTHESIS 4:** Rebel parties that had women combatants will elect a higher percentage of women after war than other rebel parties, given they relied on international support during war.

## 4 Research Design

This paper argues that former rebel parties will elect a higher percentage of women when they integrated women into their fighting forces during war. I suggest that this relationship is conditioned on factors that drive women’s recruitment into rebel groups, including ideology, civilian support, and external support. To test these argument, I introduce a novel party-level dataset on women’s political representation in a global sample of 104 rebel parties. The sample extends from 1970 to 2020 and includes all rebel parties that successfully gained at least one seat in the legislature following civil conflict. To identify the sample, I relied on the Civil War Successor Dataset from (Daly 2019). On average, the rebel parties in the sample successfully gained seats in three national elections, though some groups successfully participated in up to nine national elections. Approximately 42 percent of the rebel parties in the sample only participated in one election during the time frame. One limitation of these data is that it only includes the percent of women elected and cannot account for number or percent of women who ran as candidates. While data on elected members of parliament (MP) are typically publicly available and at times even included in easily accessible election reports, data on candidacy is often much more difficult to find. However, it is common within the literature on women’s political representation for studies to focus primarily on the percent of women elected, rather than the number of candidates (Hughes 2011; Hughes and Paxton 2008; Paxton, Hughes and Painter 2010; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Rosen 2013).

#### 4.1 *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable is the percent of seats won by women in each party. This variable is calculated by dividing the number of women who were elected by the party by the total number of representatives elected to the party in a given year. This variable comes from a novel dataset on women's party-level representation in rebel parties, in which I coded the number of seats that women received in rebel parties from 1970-2020. To code this variable, I relied on a variety of sources, included parliamentary websites, the Inter-parliamentary Union, election reports, academic scholarship, and news reports.

#### 4.2 *Independent Variables*

The primary explanatory variable, *Female Combatants*, is used to test Hypothesis 1, which suggests that rebel groups with female combatants will elect a higher percentage of women after war, and Hypotheses 2-4, which suggest that rebel groups with female combatants will elect a higher percentage of women after war when they had a leftist ideology, civilian support, and external support, respectively. *Female Combatants* is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a given rebel party included women as combatants during war. This variable comes from the Women in Armed Rebellion Dataset (WARD) (Wood and Thomas 2017). This variable captures groups that included women in roles such as frontline combat, suicide bombers or assassins, and other auxiliaries or members of any defense forces. I opt to use this operationalization of women's participation over other measures that describe women's general membership in rebel groups in order to better capture the employment of women in roles that are traditionally held by men and place women in positions that set them as equal to men. In groups where women are members, but not combatants, it may be more likely that they are fulfilling roles that are gendered. In contrast, the theory presented focuses on how and why women employed in non-traditional gender roles during conflict lead to their continued inclusion in non-traditional roles after conflict.

The other explanatory variables are *Leftist Ideology*, *Civilian Support* and *International Support*. *Leftist Ideology* is a dichotomous variable, indicating whether or not a group held a leftist ideology during war. This variable comes from the FORGE dataset (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020). *Civilian Support* is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not rebel groups consistently relied on civilian aid during war. This aid includes both financial and material resources, such as rebel taxes, food, weapons, and materials. This variable comes from Huang (2016). To operationalize *International Support*, I rely on a measure of external support to rebel groups from the Non-State Actor Dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009). This is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a rebel group received support, material or financial, by the government of another state.<sup>4</sup>

As control variables, I include a number of measures relevant to the election of women, as well as to conflict dynamics that influence the election of rebel parties. First, I control for the level of electoral democracy in country. I rely on data from the Varieties of Democracy dataset, which operationalizes the level of democracy as ranging from 0 to 1. Generally, democracy has been tied to higher levels of women’s political representation (Phillips 1995; King and Mason 2001; Bush 2011). On the other hand, scholars have more recently demonstrated that autocracy is also tied to higher levels of women’s political representation (Donno and Kreft 2019). A variable indicating whether or not a country has implemented gender quotas is also included. This variable comes from Clayton et al. (2019). Generally, the implementation of gender quotas is associated with significantly higher levels of women’s political representation (Hughes and Paxton 2008; Paxton, Kunovich and Hughes 2007). A control variable for GDP per capita (logged) is included from the Maddison Project Database

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<sup>4</sup>There are a considerable number of observations missing within the dataset for *Leftist Ideology* and *Civilian Aid*. However, the missing data should not introduce significant bias into the model in this case. Arel-Bundock and Pelc (2018) demonstrates that in cases in which missingness is a function of the regressors, and not the dependent variable, then bias introduced from list-wise deletion is not a concern. In this case, the missing data is a greater reflection of the visibility of groups during war, and should be unrelated to their election of women after war.

(2018). GDP per capita is used to operationalize the level of development, which is frequently related to higher levels of women’s political representation (Viterna, Fallon and Beckfield 2008). Control variables for female labor force participation and fertility levels are also included. These variables come from the World Bank. Women’s labor force participation is relevant, as it relates to how many women may have relevant career experience that would later lend towards electoral politics. Likewise, fertility levels are expected to reflect the degree to which women are relegated to the home. Each of these variables have similarly been found to have a relevant effect on the recruitment of women into rebel groups (Thomas and Wood 2018).

### **4.3 *The Model***

To understand the relationship between women’s inclusion in rebel groups and women’s representation in rebel parties after war, I utilize a tobit maximum likelihood estimator that is left-censored at zero. A tobit model is appropriate given that approximately a third of the sample is made up of observations in which a given political party elected zero women. Tobit models are useful in overcoming issues that arise when a sizable proportion of observations are clustered at one end of the distribution of possible observable values (Wooldridge 2010, 2012). In some cases, especially among smaller political parties, no women compete for seats in a given party. Thus, treating these cases as equivalent to women running and not winning (i.e. specifying a linear model) would lead to bias. Tobit models overcome this issue of bias by accounting for the fact that a disproportionate size of observations are clustered at the lower-bound of observable values (Wooldridge 2012). The unit of analysis is party-year. The standard errors in all models are clustered by country.

## **5 Results**

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>					
	% Women's Seats by Party					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Female Combatants	0.269*** (0.055)	0.207*** (0.054)	0.226*** (0.063)	0.240* (0.098)	0.163* (0.080)	0.210 (0.120)
Democracy		-0.217 (0.127)	-0.239 (0.132)	-0.220 (0.125)	-0.225 (0.129)	-0.242 (0.132)
log(GDP per Capita)		0.015 (0.022)	0.016 (0.024)	0.020 (0.026)	0.019 (0.023)	0.023 (0.026)
Gender Quotas		0.173*** (0.039)	0.178*** (0.042)	0.175*** (0.042)	0.177*** (0.040)	0.181*** (0.044)
Fem. Labor Force Part.		0.003** (0.001)	0.003* (0.001)	0.003* (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.003* (0.001)
Fertility Levels		-0.0430* (0.018)	-0.044* (0.018)	-0.040 (0.023)	-0.041* (0.018)	-0.040 (0.022)
Leftist Ideology		0.064 (0.061)	0.134 (0.083)	0.068 (0.065)	0.071 (0.062)	
Civilian Support		0.219*** (0.052)	0.224*** (0.051)	0.249** (0.088)	0.223*** (0.049)	0.246** (0.091)
External Support		0.209*** (0.048)	0.216*** (0.049)	0.209*** (0.048)	0.176** (0.064)	0.188** (0.067)
Female Combatants*			-0.083 (0.077)			-0.064 (0.082)
Leftist Ideology				-0.039 (0.112)		-0.026 (0.115)
Female Combatants*					0.064 (0.098)	0.049 (0.099)
Civilian Support						
Female Combatants*						
External Support						
Constant	-0.065 (0.058)	-0.402 (0.260)	-0.434 (0.300)	-0.482 (0.372)	-0.447 (0.265)	-0.515 (0.375)
Sigma	0.050*** (0.010)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)
No. Obs.	211	138	138	138	138	138
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.340	1.905	1.923	1.908	1.916	1.929
Log Likelihood	-53.38	26.88	27.41	26.97	27.21	27.60

Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses

Note: \*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

Table 1 presents the results of the regression analyses. Model 1 presents the bivariate regression analysis, while Models 2-6 present the multiple regression analyses. In Model 2, the effect of women’s participation in combat is positive and significant. This offers support for Hypothesis 1, which suggests that rebel groups that have female combatants during war will be more likely to elect women to their party after war. Figure 1 shows the marginal effect of women’s inclusion as combatants during wartime. I estimate that rebel parties that do not have women will fill approximately 8 percent of seats with women after war. In contrast, I estimate that groups with women will fill about 23 percent of their seats with women, an increase of 187.5 percent.

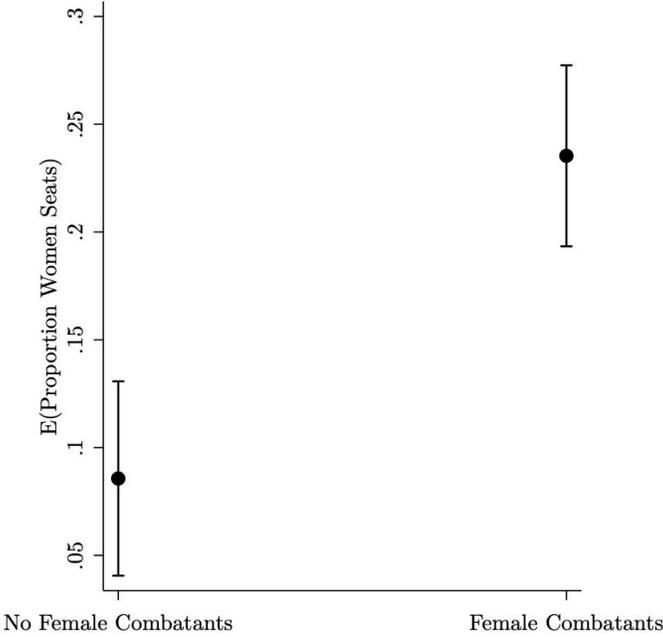


Figure 1: Marginal Effect of Female Combatants

Models 3-6 in Table 1 present the multiple regression analyses with the interactive relationships of interest. To interpret these interaction terms, I plot the marginal effects of each. Hypothesis 2 posits that rebel groups that included female combatants will be more likely to elect more women after transitioning into a political party, given that they have a leftist ideology. Figure 2 shows the estimated difference in the proportion of women

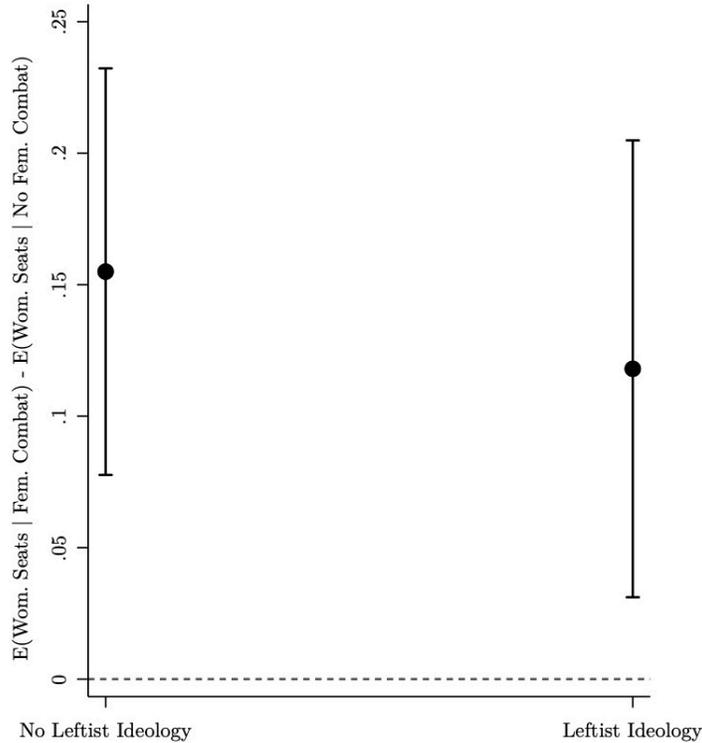


Figure 2: First Differences for Female Combatants and Ideology

held seats when rebels include female combatants during war and when they do not include female combatants. Interestingly, when groups do not have a leftist ideology, the difference in the proportion of seats held by groups with and without female combatant is greater than it is for groups with leftist ideologies. This does not offer support for Hypothesis 2. Further, it suggests that leftist groups are not delivering on promises of egalitarianism. Though this is not what was theorized, the finding echos discussions by Henderson and Jeydel (2013) on leftist groups failing to prioritize issues of gender equality following war. Moreover, interestingly, the finding also suggests that non-egalitarian groups offer further opportunity for women in politics when they included women during war, reinforcing the idea that women’s integration into these organizations is more of a reflection of strategy than it is of principle.

Hypothesis 3 suggests that rebel groups that included female combatants will be more likely to elect more women after transitioning into a political party, given that they rely on

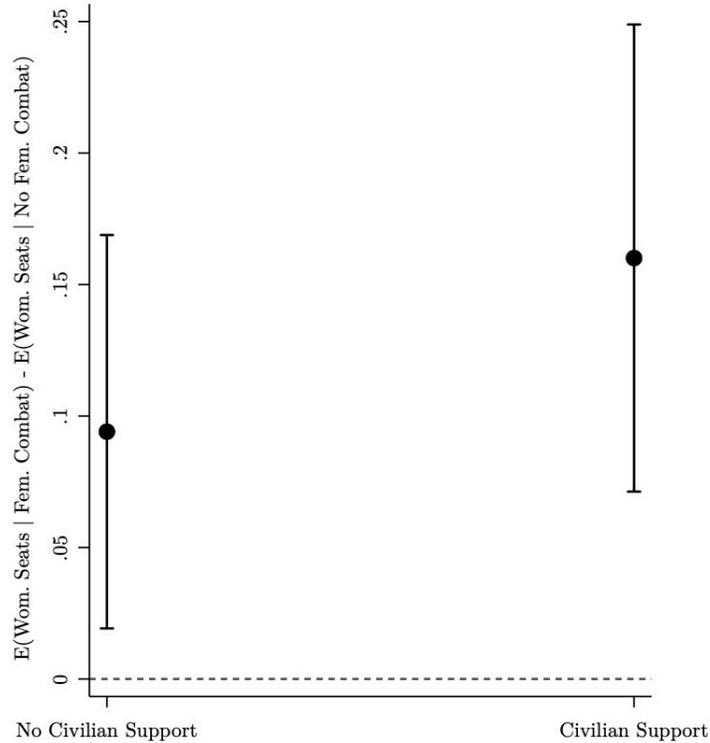


Figure 3: First Differences for Female Combatants and Civilian Support

civilian support, Figure 3 shows the estimated difference in the proportion of women held seats when rebels include female combatants during war and when they do not include female combatants for groups that did not use civilian support and those that did use civilian support. For groups without any civilian support, those with female combatants are estimated to fill about 9 percentage points more seats than groups without female combatants. In contrast, among groups that rely on civilian aid, those that include female combatants fill about 25 percent of their seats with women compared to groups without female combatants, who fill about 7 percent of their seats with women. Overall, this demonstrates support for Hypothesis 3, though the relationship between civilian support and female combat integration appears to be more additive than interactive.

Hypothesis 4 posits that rebel groups that include female combatants will be more likely to elect women after transitioning into a political party, given they also rely on external support. The results suggest that there is a positive and significant relationship between

these factors. Figure 4 shows the estimated difference in the proportion of women held seats when rebels include female combatants during war and when they do not include female combatants for groups that did not use external support and those that did use external support. Comparing instances of no external support and external support, there is a significant difference between the effect of women’s inclusion only when groups relied on external support, demonstrating an interactive effect. I estimate that groups that rely on external support but did not have women combatants will fill about 28 percent of their seats with women, compared to filling just 10 percent of their seats with women when they did not include women combatants during war. When external support is not used, the difference in women’s integration is not significant. These findings lend support to Hypothesis 4.

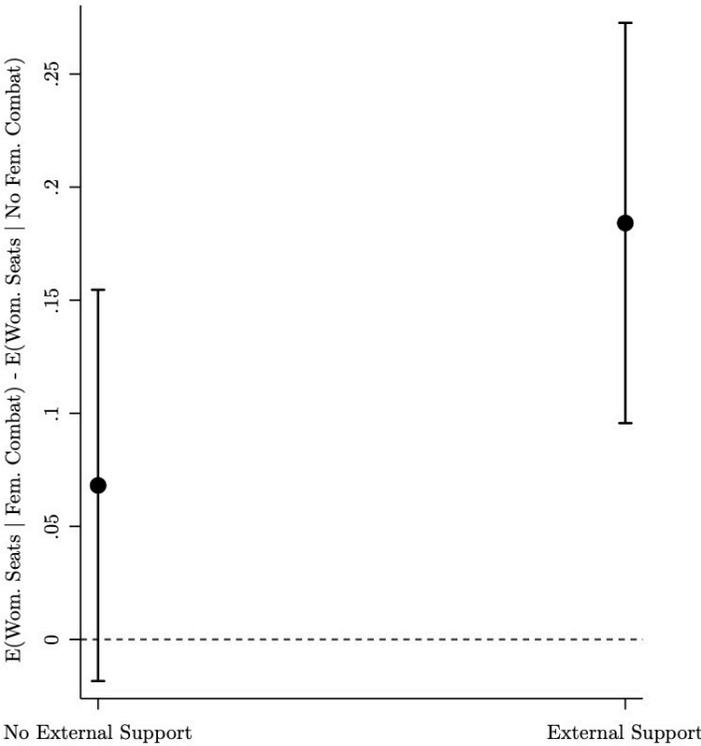


Figure 4: First Differences of Female Combatants and External Support

As for controls, the level of democracy is negative but insignificant. Though unexpected, the negative effect is not necessarily surprising. Scholars have argued that autocratic governments may use women’s political representation as a political tool to garner more le-

gitimacy (Berry 2015, 2018*a*; Donno and Kreft 2019). In this paper, I have similarly argued that rebel parties will opt to elect women when it is politically useful. As such, the incentives for these parties to include women may also be greater in the light of lower levels of democracy, as the need to benefit from the signal of legitimacy offered by women is even greater. GDP per capita has a positive but insignificant effect. Gender quotas and female labor force participation have a positive and significant effect. The level of fertility has a negative effect, as expected, though insignificant.

### **5.1 *Robustness Checks***

I conduct a number of robustness checks. First, I use a number of alternative explanatory variables. I rely on alternative measures of GDP per capita and democracy. I use World Bank data to operationalize GDP per capita and find that the results remain consistent. I include a variable from Polity2 to operationalize the level of democracy and again find consistent effects. I test for the effect of the proportion of women holding combatants roles during war, as it is reasonable to expect that higher levels of women’s integration may lead to greater gains after war. This variable comes from the Women in Armed Conflict (WARD) dataset (Wood and Thomas 2017). Model 3 in Table 3 of the Appendix demonstrates that a greater proportion of women in combat roles creates positive and significant effects on women’s political representation. Second, I also use an alternative model specification. Table 4 in the Appendix uses a linear probability model to test the relationships under analysis. Model 4 includes year fixed-effects, while Model 5 includes cubic splines for time. The results remain consistent across all specifications.

### **5.2 *Alternative Explanations***

I consider a few alternative explanations that could drive women’s political representation in rebel parties. Previous theories on women’s political representation after war have

examined changing gender roles, institutional changes, international pressure, and women’s civil society movements (Hughes and Tripp 2015; Hughes and Paxton 2008; Tripp 2015). Models 6-10 in the Appendix account for these factors. To operationalize changing gender norms, the model includes women’s labor force participation and fertility levels (World Bank). As gender norms change, more women will likely enter the work force, raising their participation level, and would likely begin having fewer children, decreasing the fertility levels. Women’s labor force participation has a positive and significant effect, while fertility has a negative but insignificant effect. To account for institutional changes, the model includes gender quotas (Hughes et al. 2019). This has a positive and significant effect. I include the net Official Development Aid (logged) received by a country in a given year to operationalize international influences (World Bank). This variable is positive, but insignificant. Finally, I include a variable from V-Dem to account for the level of women’s participation in civil society movements and find that this has a positive but insignificant effect. In summary, while gender quotas and changes to gender roles (as operationalized through women’s labor force participation) may explain some of the variation observed, much of it is due to wartime factors, including women’s combat participation and wartime bureaucracies. These findings suggest the importance of carefully examining the effect of wartime characteristics of rebel groups, as well as the need to look below aggregate-level explanations.

## 6 Conclusion

Rebel groups that transition into political parties are affected by their conflict legacies in a myriad of ways. It influences the policies they prioritize (Acosta 2014), the candidates that they recruit (Ishiyama and Marshall 2015; Sindre 2016a), how they interact with their constituency (Manning 2007), and their commitment is to democracy and rule of law (Huang 2016). In this paper, I show that the conflict legacies of rebel groups also influence their post-conflict election of women. I argue that rebel groups that had female combatants during

conflict will be more likely to elect women after conflict, particularly when they can draw on similar benefits of women's participation after war. I expect that in instances in which groups relied on women's participation to communicate their ideological commitment and bolster their level of support, via civilian aid and external support, they will be more likely to elect women after war because there are opportunities for women to continue creating similar boosts in their level of support. In essence, rebel groups who experienced the benefits of women's labor during war will be more likely to continue seeking the fruits of this labor after conflict. Women's integration into these organizations is a political strategy that allows actors to cultivate greater legitimacy—a strategy that is useful both during and after war.

I find that while women's combat participation alone does lead to increases in the percentage of women elected to the party after war, the degree of these gains also depends on how women served in rebel groups during war. I find that groups that relied on civilian and international aid during war and included female combatants are more likely to elect a higher proportion of women to their party after war. Though the party's goals may have changed between war to post-war periods, these groups may still seek to benefit from the boost to domestic and international legitimacy that they experience from women's inclusion. Further, there it is possible that continued support from these actors is predicated on women's continued integration. The results do not reflect the theorized interactive relationship between leftist ideology and women's combat roles. In fact, I find that women's inclusion offers greater gains in the number of seats that women fill in parties with non-leftist ideologies than for those with leftist ideologies. This not only indicates a failure of leftist groups to act upon promises of egalitarianism, but it is demonstrates that non-egalitarianism are using these gendered strategies at great levels, suggesting that women's integration is more about political benefits than ideological ideals. Finally, I compare these explanations to previous theories on women's representation after war, and find that wartime factors offer stronger links to women's party-level representation.

These findings have significant implications for understandings of former rebel party politics, as well as for the political representation of women after conflict. Gender has been relatively understudied in the field of rebel party politics, to my knowledge. Thus, this study offers a new understanding of how former rebel parties engage with women after conflict and how this is related to their wartime policies. The results suggest that the labor of women during war has long-term positive effects on the integration of women into politics. Women's roles in rebel groups can serve as an opportunity for political engagement in contexts where such political access is rare for women. These results suggest that the impacts of their labor is not limited to the conflict period, but rather that it does in fact continue to create opportunity for women after conflict.

This study cannot speak to which women these post-conflict political opportunities are awarded to. In future research, such patterns should be considered. Scholars have demonstrated that rebel groups frequently turn to their former combatants to recruit party members after war (Sindre 2016*a,b*). Given the high levels of women's inclusion in these rebel parties after war, it is conceivable that they may turn to the same women that they relied on during war. Relatedly, this paper does not consider candidate recruitment. The scope of the theory is limited to the incentives for rebel parties to ensure that women make into their seats. This does not include how they select individual women, nor how women fare in elections. Given the unique conflict legacies of rebel parties, it is likely that candidate recruitment is highly conditioned on the wartime experiences of women in the country generally and within their rebel organization. This nuanced issue ought to be fully considered within future work. Finally, this paper speaks to the representation of women after war. Though scholars have shown that women's political representation increases significantly after conflict, the influence of political parties in this trend has not been considered, to my knowledge. This paper demonstrates that parties that have histories of women's inclusion may be the ones who prioritize it after conflict as well.

## 7 Appendix

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Proportion of Women's Seats	261	0.17	0.17	0	0	0.32	0.57
Female Combatants	254	0.57	0.49	0	0	1	1
Level of Democracy	302	0.42	0.19	0.07	0.26	0.55	0.88
Gender Quotas	301	0.29	0.46	0	0	1	1
log(GDP per Capita)	285	8.20	1.01	6.24	7.35	8.95	10.53
Fem. Labor Force Part.	279	53.82	20.03	8.54	37.19	69.78	87.39
Fertility Level	286	4.01	1.71	1.27	2.46	5.45	7.46
Leftist Ideology	297	0.19	0.39	0	0	0	1
Civilian Support	233	0.75	0.43	0	1	1	1
External Support	264	0.74	0.44	0	0	1	1

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
	% Women's Seats by Party		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Female Combatants	0.218*** (0.061)	0.225*** (0.056)	
Proportion of Female Combatants			0.083*** (0.024)
Polity2	-0.005 (0.006)		
Democracy (V-Dem)		-0.152 (0.153)	-0.079 (0.108)
log(GDP per Capita)	0.012 (0.040)		0.022 (0.024)
log(GDP per Capita) (WB)		0.026 (0.018)	
Gender Quotas	0.169*** (0.034)	0.166*** (0.037)	0.196*** (0.038)
Female Labor Force Participation	0.002 (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)
Fertility Levels	-0.055* (0.024)	-0.036* (0.015)	-0.037* (0.018)
Leftist Ideology	0.060 (0.062)	0.085 (0.061)	-0.001 (0.076)
External Support	0.202*** (0.046)	0.227*** (0.054)	0.215*** (0.051)
Civilian Support	0.199*** (0.053)	0.213*** (0.054)	0.192*** (0.054)
Constant	-0.078 (0.517)	-0.542** (0.303)	-0.496* (0.233)
Sigma	0.0184*** (0.004)	0.0214*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.004)
N. Obs	130	134	138
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	2.266	1.776	1.866
Log Likelihood	33.09	24.74	25.72

Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses

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

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	
	% Women's Seats by Party	
	(4)	(5)
Female Combatants	0.152*** (0.0366)	0.203*** (0.0535)
Level of Democracy	-0.279** (0.0940)	-0.215 (0.121)
log(GDP per Capita)	0.00753 (0.0195)	0.0124 (0.0255)
Gender Quotas	0.118** (0.0355)	0.166*** (0.0477)
Female Labor Force Participation	0.000997 (0.00106)	0.00258* (0.00113)
Fertility Levels	-0.0286 (0.0151)	-0.0427* (0.0171)
Leftist Ideology	0.0629 (0.0356)	0.0647 (0.0601)
Civilian Support	0.0985* (0.0472)	0.215*** (0.0548)
External Support	0.103** (0.0289)	0.211*** (0.0486)
Constant	0.123 (0.232)	-0.384 (0.296)
Year FEs	Y	N
Year Splines	N	Y
Sigma		0.0208*** (0.00459)
N. Obs.	138	138
R <sup>2</sup>	0.623	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		1.911
Log Likelihood	117.1	27.08

Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses

Year Splines and Year Fixed Effects Omitted

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

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>				
	% Women's Seats by Party				
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Female Combatants	0.184*** (0.054)	0.196* (0.076)	0.238 (0.127)	0.121 (0.070)	0.177 (0.153)
Level of Democracy	-0.246 (0.142)	-0.248 (0.142)	-0.229 (0.149)	-0.251 (0.142)	-0.226 (0.146)
log(GDP per Capita)	0.045 (0.036)	0.044 (0.036)	0.054 (0.044)	0.054 (0.037)	0.070 (0.042)
Gender Quotas	0.162*** (0.044)	0.164*** (0.046)	0.162*** (0.044)	0.166*** (0.044)	0.166*** (0.045)
Fem. Labor Force Part.	0.003* (0.001)	0.003* (0.001)	0.003* (0.002)	0.004* (0.001)	0.004* (0.002)
Fertility Levels	-0.033 (0.019)	-0.035 (0.020)	-0.028 (0.026)	-0.030 (0.019)	-0.022 (0.025)
Leftist Ideology	0.059 (0.065)	0.087 (0.11)	0.062 (0.067)	0.069 (0.063)	0.057 (0.113)
Civilian Support	0.214*** (0.055)	0.217*** (0.054)	0.253* (0.102)	0.218*** (0.053)	0.268* (0.108)
External Support	0.209*** (0.048)	0.211*** (0.049)	0.205*** (0.049)	0.161* (0.069)	0.146* (0.072)
log(ODA)	0.008 (0.017)	0.006 (0.019)	0.007 (0.018)	0.013 (0.016)	0.012 (0.018)
Women's Civil Society Part.	0.031 (0.027)	0.027 (0.033)	0.025 (0.030)	0.030 (0.028)	0.024 (0.036)
Female Combatants*		-0.035 (0.107)			0.022 (0.116)
Leftist Ideology					
Female Combatants*			-0.058 (0.139)		-0.079 (0.136)
Civilian Support					
Female Combatants*				0.088 (0.092)	0.103 (0.010)
External Support					
Constant	-0.862 (0.637)	-0.815 (0.646)	-0.968 (0.713)	-1.046 (0.610)	-1.253 (0.670)
Sigma	0.020*** (0.005)	0.020*** (0.005)	0.0120*** (0.005)	0.0120*** (0.005)	0.020*** (0.005)
N. Obs.	130	130	130	130	130
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	2.024	2.027	2.029	2.046	2.054
Log Likelihood	28.50	28.57	28.63	29.10	29.33

Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses

Note: \*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

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