



Spring 2017

# Women and Peace: Female Political Empowerment & the Prevention of Civil Violence

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# Women and Peace: Female Political Empowerment & the Prevention of Civil Violence

## **Abstract**

Today conflict mainly occurs within nations (as opposed to between nations), and the importance of women in creating and maintaining peace (which can be most simply defined as the absence of violence) through informal and formal leadership roles has also become known, offering much for the possibility of the reduction of violence within nations. Testing this relationship through a Poisson regression for the hypothesis that countries that have higher political empowerment for women will have less civil violence in their nations than countries with a lower level of political empowerment for women, this study is able to reject the null hypothesis (that no such relationship exists) by finding that the political empowerment of women has a statistically significant impact in the reduction of civil violence. In testing three additional intervening variables (democracy, GDP per capita, and primary education), it is determined that the political empowerment of women has the greatest impact on the reduction of civil violence, implying that, in the future, more effort should be placed on empowering women as a means for establishing peace.

## **Keywords**

Women in government, women and peace, women political empowerment

## **Disciplines**

Comparative Politics | Peace and Conflict Studies | Political Theory | Women's Studies

## **Comments**

Written as a Senior Honors Capstone in Globalization Studies.

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Women and Peace:  
*Female Political Empowerment & the  
Prevention of Civil Violence*

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May 11, 2017

*In fulfillment of the Globalization Studies senior capstone requirement*

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## I. ABSTRACT

Today conflict mainly occurs within nations (as opposed to between nations), and the importance of women in creating and maintaining peace (which can be most simply defined as the absence of violence) through informal and formal leadership roles has also become known, offering much for the possibility of the reduction of violence within nations. Testing this relationship through a Poisson regression for the hypothesis that *countries that have higher political empowerment for women will have less civil violence in their nations than countries with a lower level of political empowerment for women*, this study is able to reject the null hypothesis (that no such relationship exists) by finding that the political empowerment of women *has* a statistically significant impact in the reduction of civil violence. In testing three additional intervening variables (democracy, GDP per capita, and primary education), it is determined that the political empowerment of women has the greatest impact on the reduction of civil violence, implying that, in the future, more effort should be placed on empowering women as a means for establishing peace.

## II. INTRODUCTION

In the years since the end of the Second World War, the world has developed rapidly, with nations and people becoming incredibly interconnected. While nations have become more connected, conflicts in the world are no longer defined by conflict *between* states - they are, rather, defined by conflicts *within* states (Jesse & Williams 2010). These intra-state conflicts, in combination with the increased interconnectivity of the world, raise the question of how the

broader international community can help to prevent conflict, even in nations that are not directly their own.

At the same time as these processes (whereby conflict has become centered intrastate, but the international community has gained the broader ability to act) have occurred, the global systemic repression of women has been recognized and subsequently targeted throughout the world. In the last century alone, women have not only gained the ability to vote but nations and people have also begun to recognize the broader role women can play in politics directly. Additionally, after egregious acts in their countries (such as in Germany and Rwanda), women have played incredibly important informal roles in rebuilding and peacebuilding, creating peace where there otherwise was none.

Combining these two historical trends, this paper seeks to determine whether an increase in women's political empowerment leads to less civil violence in a nation. As women have been effective formal leaders (when they are able to be elected) and effective peace builders, it would make an innate amount of sense that more empowered women would lead to more peace. Building off of that logic, this paper tests the hypothesis that:

- Countries that have higher political empowerment for women will have less civil violence in their nations than countries with a lower level of political empowerment for women.

The findings of this research disprove the null for this hypothesis (which would state that there is no relationship between nations' political empowerment of women and the civil violence within the nation). This hypothesis was tested through a Poisson regression and a regression analysis controlling for: democracy, GDP per capita, and primary schooling. Well below the requisite .05 levels, the P-values in the results of these regressions confirmed that the model

itself was statistically significant *and* that a statistically significant relationship exists between women political empowerment and civil violence within a nation. Additionally important to note is that this relationship is revealed to be even more statistically significant than the relationship between democracy, education, and GDP, all of which have been focal points of the international community in violence prevention efforts throughout the world). Moving forward, this research, therefore, suggests that an increased focus be placed on the political empowerment of women to prevent conflict and stop violence.

### **III. WHO (SHOULD) RUN THE WORLD? REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE**

In the past century, world political interactions have changed greatly. After the Second World War, attempts at improving global interconnectivity (especially in terms of the prevention of and the response to crises) were made through the development and implementation of the Bretton Wood Institutions and the League of Nations. Established with the intention of bringing countries together economically and politically, these international organizations have greatly served to increase the connections between nations and individuals throughout the entire world. While international organizations have continued to develop since their founding, influencing the international system as they do, the decades following the end of the Cold War have brought about even more changes in international relations - on top of a continued increase in economic, political, and cultural globalization (that has certainly been encouraged by the continued development of international organizations) and global interconnectivity in general, there has, significantly, been a *reduction* in inter-state conflict (conflict between states), accompanied by a

simultaneous *increase* in intrastate conflict (conflict *within* states) (Jesse & Williams 2010).<sup>1</sup> This means that, while the wars of the past were *directly* an international concern because of the involvement of more than one state, wars of today, while still an international concern, have more of an indirect connection - while the international community *could* certainly play a role in prevention, intervention, and peace-building during an intrastate war, as the war will generally not directly affect them, it is much more difficult to make states to act, because this element of innate self interest does not exist.

At the same time as these transformations in international relations and conflict have occurred, there has also been a change in the perception of, expectations of, and roles of women, through a slow global awareness of the omnipresent, persisting gender inequality throughout the world. In the past century, women all over the world have begun to gain the right to buy/sell/own property, as well as the right to vote (as was previously denied to them). Additionally, the lack of government representation representative of the general population has started to be recognized as problematic in the past two decades. With this recognition, especially in terms of gender inequality, change has started to occur: between 1997 and 2007, the percentage of women making up the lower parliaments<sup>2</sup> of governments throughout the world has doubled [see Table 1] (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2017).<sup>3</sup> That being said, however, today women still only account for an average of 23.4% of representation in lower houses of parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1997-2017). While this under-representation is innately problematic in terms of gender

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<sup>1</sup> In 2008, for example, 20 of the 21 major armed conflicts were found to be *internal* (intrastate) conflicts (Jesse & Williams 2010).

<sup>2</sup> In comparing the composition of different governments throughout the world, lower (or single) houses of nations' parliaments are used, because they are comparable bodies; while the other parts of governments vary incredibly depending on the different types of political systems.

<sup>3</sup> In 1997, when the Inter-Parliamentary Union first began to track the number of women making up governments throughout the world, only 12% of representatives in lower houses were women; today 23.4% of representatives are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1997-2017).



equity, additional research has found benefits in having women in *government*, of which the world at large is not taking enough advantage. Additionally, despite this lack of *formal* representation in governments, in the past century, women have made incredible contributions to the world in terms of preventing the recurrence and onset of violent conflict through informal leadership roles.

***i. Women in Formal Leadership: Benefits to Women in Government***

Accompanying the rise of women in government in the past decades, has been a rise in discourse questioning whether or not having female representatives in government *really* is any different than having male representatives in government and, if so, how it is different. Research about countries (such as Rwanda) that have been successful in leading the world in the representation of women in government has revealed that differences in governance styles of women and men *do* exist. Important for this research, many of the ways in which women differ from men as legislators offer particularly important benefits to consider when determining how to prevent or mitigate conflict within a nation.

Civil violence can, many times, stem from citizen disagreement or discontent with government, which exists especially when there are omnipresent feelings of inadequate or entirely lacking representation. Having more women in government, importantly, works against this, as women are seen as being more responsive to constituency concerns for multiple reasons. To begin with, female representatives have been found to have an increased capability to compromise, while also tending to represent their constituents' broader interests better than male representatives do (Jones 2004). On top of being able to better represent their general constituents, women are also able to better represent the specific interests of other women. As women in government have experienced (and therefore have a first-hand understanding of) many

of the same problems that other women in the country have faced, they are better able to understand and therefore effectively represent and legislate for the interests and needs of other women (Jones 2004).<sup>4</sup> Translated into action, this feeling of providing effective assistance can be seen in that having more women in government does actually increase the *ease* at which women's issues can be raised in governing, as well as increase the actual *number* of times these issues have been raised (Devlin 2008).

Looking at civil violence from a different perspective, known corruption in a national government erodes citizens' trust of their government, which could additionally increase civil violence within the nation. Significantly having the potential to work against this, a systematic comparison of nations with and without high levels of women in government by Dollar (2001) found that a *negative* relationship exists between the number of female representatives in a nation's parliament and the level of corruption within the nation. This relationship offers much for the difference that women can make if they hold formal representation within government and can be explained, at least partially, by the fact that "women will be less likely to sacrifice the common good for personal (material) gain" (Dollar 2001, 424). In countries where corruption could lead to citizen distrust, discontent, and subsequent civilian violence, having more women in government to work against corruption and prevent it from occurring could additionally lead to less civilian violence.

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<sup>4</sup> "In Rwanda specifically, women representatives have been viewed as increased the legislature's "responsiveness to women's concerns" (Burnett 2011, 304). Significantly, when asked, women in the community shared that they felt that female representatives were much more capable of understanding their perspectives and providing the assistance they could. (Burnett 2011)

## ***ii. Women in Informal Leadership: Responding to Violence***

The roles played by women who do have formal positions as government representatives is obviously important to consider and, especially considering the benefits that come from having more women in government, is very important to work towards. However, the very obvious reality is that, while the number is growing, the women who are in these *formal* roles of political representation are still few and far between. In serving in *informal* leadership roles, however, women have done much to encourage grassroots peace-building efforts in post-conflict situations in various countries worldwide. Women's response to violence in informal leadership roles can be seen exemplified in particular in two different ways: 1. Rebuilding and 2. Peacebuilding, and the importance of both have been noted by international organizations.

### **a. Women in Informal Leadership: Responding to Violence through Rebuilding**

Despite the recent transition in conflict trends to from interstate conflict to intrastate conflict, the importance of the role of women in rebuilding after violence in their nation occurs can be seen both historically and recently. Regardless of whether a conflict is intrastate or interstate, often it is women who are tasked with physically rebuilding their countries after conflict ends, because the men of their nations have either been killed in the conflict or are in prison. After the Second World War, for example, the role of women as "Trümmerfrauen" ("rubble women") has become (an admittedly generalized and problematic) symbol of women within Germany. Trümmerfrauen were women who, in the months following the end of the war, worked to physically clean up the city of Berlin, clearing out the rubble filling the entire city that had been caused by the bombing of the city throughout the war and attempting to make the city

into a livable city again and not a warzone<sup>5</sup> (Heineman 1996). Without these women's work to physically rebuild Germany, Germany could not have recovered physically from the Holocaust and the Second World War. While Trümmerfrauen in Germany are a very well known example of the role women play in working to rebuild infrastructure after conflict, it is certainly not the only country where women have played such a large and important role in rebuilding<sup>6</sup>.

### **b. Women in Informal Leadership: Responding to Violence through Peacebuilding**

On top of this important role of physically rebuilding and reconstructing their societies post-conflict, women are often also a vital part of taking the first steps towards peacebuilding within their nations, most often through informal leadership roles. Rwanda, in the months following the end of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide Against the Tutsis, is often cited as one of the best examples of the role women can play in initiating peace within a country. After the end of genocide, as a nation, Rwanda was physically and socially in shambles. As most of the men in the nation were either imprisoned (as they were Hutus who had killed their Tutsi neighbors) or killed (for being either Tutsis or being Hutus who sympathized with Tutsis within the nation), it was the women of Rwanda who first had to face the women of the other group and work to bring their country together. Fortunately for their nation, Rwandan women recognized that their country could either continue to be divided between Hutu and Tutsi, *or* Hutu and Tutsi women from each side could come together, learn how to live with and help one another, and then teach these lessons to their husbands (in the case of the Hutu men who came home from prison) and their children. Women did this through the creation of grassroots organizations that allowed the

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<sup>5</sup> While there are many problems with the fact that the Trümmerfrauen have become a symbol of every single German woman after the war (as that was certainly not the case), the work that these women did to help the city begin to move past the war and therefore begin to recover can certainly not be forgotten, as it was an incredibly vital step for the country.

<sup>6</sup> In Sri Lanka, for example, women also played a major role in the physical rebuilding of their country (see Arulampalam 2005).

wives of the convicted and the wives of the killed to work together like a community, helping to not only physically rebuild (like the Trümmerfrauen in Germany) but also socially rebuild their communities.

### **c. Recognizing Women's Informal Leadership in Responding to Violence**

While women have done great work within their nations in informal leadership roles in both rebuilding and peacebuilding, they are often forgotten by the formal peacebuilding process. Peacebuilding efforts, especially in the years since the United Nations has become a prominent force in international relations, have consisted of generally, the United Nations setting up some sort of trial within the country that has emerged from conflict and working to make sure that the leaders on each side of the conflict are brought together in negotiations, often run by another country, to resolve the issues that caused conflict in the first place. Despite the role women play in informal peacebuilding as important leaders within grassroots peace processes (which the United Nations and other organizations have recognized as being incredibly important), United Nations peacemaking processes have systematically ignored having women involved with the process (Porter 2008; Chinkin 2006).

To rectify this, the United Nations Security Council passed "Resolution 1325" in 2000 to make a conscious effort to include more women in their peacemaking processes<sup>7</sup> (OSAGI 2000). Kuehnast (2011) sees the lack of representation of women in formal peacebuilding processes as not only a moral issue, but also an efficiency issue, whereby the world is missing out on utilizing

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<sup>7</sup> "The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security" (OSAGI 2000).

every possible resource available to end conflict<sup>8</sup>. Resolution 1325 has certainly been a step in the right direction<sup>9</sup>, as no problem can be changed without the recognition that it is a problem, and a UN resolution especially has a large resonance because of what it contributes to international law, with Resolution 1325 having been translated into law by 25 countries a decade after its creation (Kuehnast 2011). Despite this, however, as Ellerby (2013) recognizes, over a decade after its creation, Resolution 1325 remains “remains a ‘confused and confusing’ tool for scholars and practitioners in assessing women’s inclusion in peacebuilding,” demonstrating the divide that continues to exist between law and actual implementation (435).

While the vital role that women have played in informal leadership roles after conflicts in rebuilding and peacebuilding is undeniable, the positions filled by women in formal roles in peacebuilding are still incredibly scarce. The United Nations attempted to rectify this with the creation of Resolution 1325 in 2000, but, almost two decades after its creation, its effects have been scarce due to a lack of implementation. Nevertheless, the role of women as leaders (informally or formally) offers a great deal in the establishment of peace within a nation.

### *iii. Women and the Prevention of Violence*

Not only have women been able to demonstrate how they can play an important (informal and formal) role in the reaction to violence, they have also been able to demonstrate how they can help to prevent violence before it breaks out. One specific example of women in the prevention of violence can be seen the country of Burundi at the beginning of the 21st Century. Burundi at the time (and, honestly, still today) was characterized by many of the same factors

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<sup>8</sup> “This is not just a moral issue or a question of equality; it is an efficiency issue. At this rate, we lose half of the world’s potential by not including women in all aspects of global problem solving” (Kuehnast 2011, 19).

<sup>9</sup> “For the world to move forward on security issues in an effective manner, women will need to play a great role in the process” (Kuehnast 2011, 17).

that had led to genocide within with Rwanda, as Burundian society had also been problematized by colonial racial divisions of “Hutu” and “Tutsi,” conflict; however, violence (while it certainly did/does occur) did not escalate into the same level of genocide as in Rwanda. Of particular note is one region where the women of Musaga and Busoro were able to stop violence (which had been plaguing the area for months) for a day by organizing an exchange of humanitarian aid as a gesture of solidarity (Idriss 2000). As with women’s roles in informal peacebuilding, the United Nations has recognized the role that women can play in conflict prevention, such as in this example of Burundi. They have implemented this realization in the creation of a UN Development program: “Women in Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Recovery” that, recognizing the enormous role women have played in informally working for violence prevention, “supports women’s political participation, empowerment and representation, including in national and local governments, conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes” (“Women in Conflict” 2017).

#### ***iv. Women in Government and the Prediction of Violence***

With the importance of women in both formal and informal leadership as well as their role in preventing violence being clear throughout previous research, in terms of looking at women’s empowerment and the reduction of civil violence, Caprioli (2015) has done incredibly exciting research that looks at how measures of gender inequality within a nation can help to predict intrastate violence (when controlling for economic factors). Her significant conclusions on this stem from the fact that, like Collier and Hoeffler (2004) conclude, systemic discrimination can lead to ethnic conflict, meaning that there is a need for nations around the world to address social, economic, and political gender equality. Countries that fail to do this,

she holds, can be a predictive sign of future violence, because they are therefore creating conditions in which violence is more than likely to occur.

Building off of Caprioli's work especially, this research seeks to discover whether more female political empowerment contributes to lower civil violence within a nation.

#### **IV. FEMALE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND PEACE**

##### ***i. Hypothesis***

Building off of the literature surrounding the difference women have made through formal and informal leadership roles in creating peace in their nations, this paper seeks to answer the question of whether increased female empowerment in politics in a nation lowers the occurrences of civil violence within the nation through testing the hypothesis that:

- Countries that have higher political empowerment for women will have less civil violence in their nations than countries with a lower level of political empowerment for women.

##### ***ii. Explanation***

This hypothesis is based off of the logic from existing literature (as described in the previous section) that describes the connection women have to creating and maintaining peace. There is previous research that suggests that when women are in formal leadership roles in government, they are more likely to further compromise between multiple sides and to better represent their constituent's interests (Jones 2004). Additionally, women have been able to establish and maintain peace through informal and grassroots leadership roles (despite being forgotten by formal peace processes). When there is increased political empowerment for women, therefore, it makes sense that there would be fewer cases of civil violence, because



women will be able to act as they have in informal roles on a much larger scale. This research is especially important considering the interconnectivity of our world today, because it can serve to show whether an increased international attempt to empower women will serve to reduce violence throughout the world.

Both the terms “women political empowerment” and “civil violence” are used very intentionally within this research. Civil violence, in particular is chosen to be studied as a measure of violence within a state, because it embodies all of the larger conflicts occurring within a nation. While genocide (as described in the examples that utilize Germany and Rwanda demonstrate) is by far the most egregious act of violence that governments can commit against their citizens, but defining a nation as having committed genocide is very much seen as a political decision,<sup>10</sup> because doing so then requires the international community to take action, which they are very, very reluctant to do. “Civil violence,” therefore, encompasses *all* violence within a state, including both government-led and citizen-led violence (meaning that while genocide is included within the measure, it is not, by any means, the only thing that is considered).

Women political empowerment, on the other hand, is used to describe the independent variable in this paper. While women’s physical political representation is tempting to use, it is also incredibly important to include other means that take account of the ability of women in political decision-making processes, which does not necessarily occur simply through their increased presence in government.

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<sup>10</sup> While the Rwandan genocide was occurring, for example, President Bill Clinton’s Press Secretary refused to say that a genocide was happening, instead simply recognizing that “Acts of Genocide” were occurring.”

*ii. Rival Explanations*

All of that being said, for the sake of fairness, there has also been some questions to the actual benefits of having women in government. This has come, in particular, due to concerns that, when elected, female representatives can act very similarly to male representatives. Using the example of Rwanda again, despite the fact that Rwandan women feel like they have more of a voice in the government and that their concerns will be represented with the increased number of women in government, this has not translated into policy outputs catering towards women in the country (Devlin 2008). Burnett, however, responds to the minimal legislative gains for women in Rwanda, citing the fact that although their legislative branch is very much dominated by women, it is the executive branch (which is headed by a male president and dominated by men) that creates and drives most legislation (Burnett 2011); therefore suggesting a larger systemic problem. Members of parliament (where women dominate) “rarely generate or even shape legislation” (Burnett 2011, 13). Although this is problematic in the immediate future especially, in a previous work, Burnett states her confidence that this increased representation in government will lead to a future where women have “meaningful participation in a genuine democracy because of a transformation in political subjectivity.” (2008, 361).

Additionally, in the many studies previously done to determine how to implement peace, it has been hypothesized that having democracy within a nation,<sup>11</sup> increasing GDP per capita within a nation<sup>12</sup>, and increasing primary education within a nation<sup>13</sup> will lead to lower instances of violence. Recognizing these findings, this research controls for all three variables.

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<sup>11</sup> See Gleditsch 1992.

<sup>12</sup> See Collier and Hoeffler 2002.

<sup>13</sup> See Read 1949.

## **V. RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA, AND METHODS**

Nations are unit of analysis for this study. The Quality of Government (QoG) 2017 basic time series dataset, compiled by the QoG Institute annually, contains a variety of topics codified by 75 different data sources and provides the quantitative basis for this analysis.

The dependent variable for this study is the occurrence of civil violence within a nation. Within the QoG data set, this is measured by Monty Marshall and the Center for Systemic Peace, with the magnitude score for instances of civil violence within a nation each year coded from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest magnitude score and 10 being the highest magnitude score. This data covers the years 1946-2015. This data was chosen specifically to measure the level of violence within a nation, because this measure of civil violence quantifies the violence and unrest among the entire population of people within each nation.

The independent variable for this study is the level of political empowerment among women within a nation. Within the QoG data set, this is measured by Pamela Paxton (et. all) and the Varieties of Democracy (VDem) Project in their "Women's Political Empowerment Index" variable on an interval scale. Each nation's annual score of women's political empowerment comes from an average of VDem's women's civil liberties index, women's civil society participation index, and women's political participation index, with a higher score representing higher women political empowerment within a nation. This data covers the years 1946-2015. This data was chosen specifically to measure women's empowerment within a nation, because it is able to not only take into account the physical political representation of women in each nation, but also women's fundamental civil liberties and the open discussion of political issues/participation in civil society organizations in a nation (Paxton 2016).

Additional independent variables are controlled for to ensure that the most complete relationship between civil violence and the political empowerment of women is seen. Carles Boix, Michael Miller, and Sebastian Rosato's index of democracy contains data from 1946-2010. Coded as a dichotomous variable, states that have "political leaders chosen through free and fair elections and satisfy a threshold value of suffrage," (thereby fulfilling "both contestation and participation in a nation") are coded as being democratic (Boix 2013). Nations that are democratic in a given year are codified with a 1, while nations that are *not* democratic in a given year are codified with a 0.

Additionally, the annual education level of each nation is controlled for with Barro and Lee's measure of adults with primary schooling in a nation. This variable contains data from 1950-2010 and is coded annually by the total percentage of females and males over 25 with primary schooling in each nation.

Finally, the national GDP per capita was controlled for through the use of data from Bolt and the Maddison Project. This data accumulates nation's GDP per capita with the additional control for inflation by measuring all GDP in 1990 International Geary-Khamis (a hypothetical currency that "has the same purchasing power that the U.S. dollar had in the United States at a given point in time") (Bolt 2014). This variable contains data from 1946-2010 and is coded annually as a continuous variable in each nation.

In order to disprove the null hypothesis (that states that no relationship exists between civil violence and the political empowerment of women, a Poisson regression analysis was run for a total of 1,125 observations (N= 1,125). As both civil violence and political empowerment of women are measured as count data (non-negative numbers that are not rankings) in the QoG dataset, a Poisson regression analysis was the most appropriate test of the relationship between

all of the variables being measured. This analysis serves to show how, if it all, statistically significant women's political empowerment is on civil violence.

## **VI. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### *i. Data Analysis*

The completed Poisson regression determines that both the statistical model itself and the relationship between women's political empowerment (the independent variable) and civil violence (the dependent variable) are statistically significant and the null hypothesis can be rejected [see Table 2]. The statistical significance of the model itself can be seen in the Prob>chi2 value of 0.0000. The Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> value reveals that the variables tested account for 7.44% of the level of civil violence (the dependent variable). Additionally, there were a total of 1,125 occurrences studied in this model (N=1,125).

All four of the variables (the independent variable and the three intervening variables) being tested in the model had a statistically significant relationship with civil violence. This can be seen in p-values of: less than .001 for the variable for democracy (meaning that there is less than a 0.1% chance that the null hypothesis could be true); less than .01 for the variable for women political empowerment (meaning that there is less than a 1% chance that the null hypothesis could be true); and less than .05 for the variable for GDP per capita and primary education (meaning that there is less than a 5% chance that the null hypothesis could be true), all of which are below the 5.0% cutoff for statistical significance.

Importantly, the coefficient scores of each of the independent variables reveal how much a one-unit increase in each contributes to a rise in civil violence. For every one-unit increase in

Women Political Empowerment, therefore, a 2.0560 *decrease* in civil violence is predicted, if all other variables are held constant.

In sum, this model accounts for 7.44% of the changes to the magnitude of civil violence and is proven to be statistically significant. In it, there is shown to be a statistically significant relationship between women's political empowerment, democracy, GDP, and primary education.

### ***ii. Implications of Results***

These results have important implications for anyone who wants to find preemptive solutions to reduce civil violence throughout the world. While many have previously studied the effects of democracy<sup>14</sup>, GDP per capita<sup>15</sup>, and education<sup>16</sup> on the reduction of civil violence, there has been little research surrounding the importance of women's political empowerment in reducing civil violence. While it is important to note that all of these independent variables have statistically significant relationships with civil violence, it is especially important to note (as the coefficients in [Table 2] demonstrate) that women's political empowerment actually has the strongest relationship with civil violence than do the other three variables (especially GDP per capita and primary education).

In this same vein, it is incredibly interesting to note the effect shown to be had by democracy on civil violence. Despite the literature that speaks to "democratic peace's" role in decreasing inter-state violence (as in, democracies very rarely go to war with one another),<sup>17</sup> there is evidently no such relationship with democracy and civil violence, which makes sense, because the transition to democracy within any country is known to be tumultuous. For every

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<sup>14</sup> See Gleditsch 1992.

<sup>15</sup> See Collier and Hoeffler 2002.

<sup>16</sup> See Read 1949.

<sup>17</sup> Again, see Gleditsch 1992.

one-unit increase in Democracy (meaning, when a country *is* a democracy), a 1.6198 *increase* in Civil Violence is predicted (if all other variables are held constant).

The effort of international relations in many Western nations throughout the world has been focused on instilling democracy in nations throughout the world in order to promote peace, therefore, might actually be put to better use in working to empower women politically in their nations. Additionally, while international efforts to promote peace through economic measures seeking to increase the GDP per capita in a nation or through increasing primary education are certainly important, these results imply that, moving forward, investing more in women's political empowerment will do much more to decrease civil violence than any of these variables.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

As the nature of conflict has shifted to include more intrastate conflict that interstate conflict, the importance of women in furthering peace through leadership roles has also started to be recognized. Seeking to understand if a deeper relationship exists between women's political empowerment and fewer instances of civil violence, this study was based off of the hypothesis that:

- Countries that have higher political empowerment for women will have less civil violence in their nations than countries with a lower level of political empowerment for women.

Through the completion of a Poisson regression, the null of the hypothesis (which stated that political empowerment for women has no relationship with civil violence in a nation) was rejected. Additionally, the relationship between the political empowerment of women and a reduction in civil violence was found to be stronger than the relationship of democracy, GDP per

capita, and primary education, all three of which have been hypothesized to have a strong relationship with the reduction of violence. This research sought to build on existing literature surrounding the importance of women in government, women's roles in informal leadership in responding to violence (through rebuilding, peacebuilding, as well as the international community's recognition of these achievements), women preventing violence, and the numbers of women in government predicting violence by delving deeper into the specific relationship between the political empowerment of women and the reduction of civil violence.

Moving forward, further research should seek to look more at specific cases where the increase of women's political empowerment has led to the decrease of civil violence within a nation. While it is important to have an overview of this relationship (which this paper demonstrates does, in fact, exist), in order for other nations to replicate the implementation of the increase in women's political empowerment in the future, it would be useful to have a specific case model to build off of.

While seemingly obvious, peace within every nation (especially with the increase of interstate conflict that is occurring) in the world, works for the benefit of every nation in the world. Some of the largest issues nations face throughout the world are those in connection with the violent actions of other nations that could be mitigated by internal peace. The current "refugee crisis,"<sup>18</sup> for example, would not be occurring if people were not faced with persecution within their own nations. With globalization, individual nations and individuals themselves have more of the ability to make an impact for the good of people throughout the entire world than ever before. Nations can directly help out other nations/people through international

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<sup>18</sup> Today, there are more displaced people in the world than ever before, with "1 in every 122" people in the world being "a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum"(UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2015).



aid/development funding and programs; individuals can volunteer with or donate to non-governmental organizations working for issue they are passionate about; and the impact of everyone can be amplified through collective action, such as that of the United Nations. In the interest of establishing and/or maintaining peace, much funding and force has been put behind to implementing democracy, increasing GDP, and establishing primary education within nations on the brink of conflict. While it is impossible to say that any of these efforts are meaningless (although the problems with actually successfully implementing democracy certainly can, and should, be debated), more funding and energy needs to also be put into female political empowerment throughout the world. Not only is empowering women innately the morally right thing to do as, (as Hillary Clinton once said best) “human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights” (1995), it also offers much in terms of creating a peaceful world system that would be to the benefit of all humans and nations alike.

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## IX. TABLES

Table 1: World Average of Women in National Parliaments

Year	Women in lower houses (%)
1997	11.7
2007	16.9
2017	23.4

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 1997-2017

Table 2: Effects of Women Political Empowerment on Civil Violence (1950-2010)

Variable	Model 1
Women Political Empowerment (index average)	-2.0560** (0.7309)
Democracy (0- not democratic; 1-democratic)	1.6198*** (0.2908)
GDP per Capita (in 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars)	-0.0001* (0.0000)
Primary Education in 25+ population (% total)	-0.0118* (0.0056)
N	1,125
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0744
Prob>chi2	0.0000

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001