

ARMED CONFLICT, INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES, AND WOMEN'S
PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION DEVELOPING NATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Politics is arguably the arena in which gender inequality remains most pronounced. Yet in recent decades, women in some countries and regions of the world have made significant gains in their legislative presence at the national level. But for women living outside of the industrialized West, we know little about the processes that facilitate their entry into politics. Through separate analyses of 36 high-income, 86 middle-income, and 63 low-income countries, I demonstrate that past models of women's political representation fail to explain variation across low-income samples. Using multiple methods, I also explore two sets of factors that may be more salient predictors of women's parliamentary representation in low-income nations: civil war and international linkages. Although historically women have been unable to consolidate gains made during wartime into post-conflict political representation, I find that certain types of civil conflict during the 1980s and 1990s positively affect women's representation in low-income nations. Longer, larger-scale wars that contest the political system or serve to alter the composition of the government have the best prospects for creating opportunities for women to gain parliamentary seats. Further, brief case studies of women, war, and social change in Rwanda, Mozambique, Uganda, and Tajikistan suggest that structural and cultural mechanisms may work in conjunction with political openings to produce post-conflict gains in women's political presence. Both women's lack of political representation and the tragic effects of civil war remain enduring challenges faced by the developing world, but at the intersection of these two problems, there is hope for women seeking political access.