PROJECT MUSE®

Gender after Genocide: How Violence Shapes Long-Term Political Representation

Nikhar Gaikwad, Erin Lin, Noah Zucker

World Politics, Volume 75, Number 3, July 2023, pp. 439-481 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2023.a900710*

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/900710

[Wed Jan 17 13:20:57 2024] Access provided at 17 Jan 2024 18:20 GMT from Columbia University Libraries

GENDER AFTER GENOCIDE
How Violence Shapes Long-Term Political Representation

By NIKHAR GAIKWAD[a], ERIN LIN[b*], and NOAH ZUCKER[c]

[a] Department of Political Science, Columbia University, New York, New York
[b] Department of Political Science, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
[c] Niehaus Center for Globalization & Governance, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
* Corresponding author. Email: lin.2657@osu.edu

ABSTRACT

What are the legacies of violence on women's political representation? This article examines the long-term effects of a watershed conflict of the twentieth century: the Khmer Rouge genocide, during which 50–70 percent of Cambodia's working-age men were killed. Using original data on mass killings and economic and political conditions in Cambodian communes, the authors find that genocide exposure is positively associated with women's economic advancement and current-day indicators of women's representation in local-level elected office. The authors conduct in-depth, ethnographic interviews with genocide survivors to explore the mechanisms by which violence spurred women into elected office. A crucial finding emerges: In areas that suffered the genocide's worst killings, widows obtained economic autonomy, providing a template for the economic advancement of women in traditional households with surviving men. The shift in norms regarding the sexual division of labor and its transmission through intracommunal and intergenerational pathways allowed women to adopt larger public roles over time in communities more exposed to genocide violence.

A growing body of literature has found that war produces large-scale social transformations that profoundly shape how women interact with the state and think about politics.[1] The violent breakdown of social order in wartime can displace women and fuel male aggression against them, leading some to withdraw from political activity and others to mobilize into activist groups.[2] Other women fill the public roles vacated by husbands and fathers when they go off to fight, introducing these women to experiences of empowerment.[3] The political legacy of this second group of women is the focus of this article. Although war can create political and economic opportunities for women during the course of conflict, whether these opportunities persist well beyond the

[1] E.g., Hadzic and Tavits 2019; Shair-Rosenfield and Wood 2017; Cohen 2016.
[2] Bateson 2012.
[3] Tripp 2015.

World Politics 75, no. 3 (July 2023) 439–481
Copyright © 2023 Trustees of Princeton University

end of the conflict that produced them is unclear. How long, in what form, and through what mechanisms do these effects persist?

Political economists have noted that the military deployment and disproportionate death of men can alter female attitudes and behavior. World War II, for instance, created an epochal change in the American labor force. The experience of wartime work changed female preferences; in states with greater mobilization of men during the war, women continued to work in greater numbers through the 1950s and 1960s.[4] Similarly, case studies of civil wars in Liberia, Uganda, and Angola reveal that when women replaced men as primary breadwinners in the family, they learned how to mobilize and organize, eventually rising to positions of power in companies, religious institutions, and parent-teacher associations.[5] However, such effects are sometimes short lived. In the United States, the majority of women drawn into the labor force by World War II had left it by 1947.[6] Once the Bosnian War was over, voters did not seem favorable to female political candidates when male options were provided.[7] As Aili Tripp notes, "it is unclear how long this period of gender-related reform in post-conflict countries will continue."[8] Where, when, and how violence leads to lasting female empowerment remain important open questions.

Much of the existing research focuses on the immediate changes in women's attitudes about their opportunities: how a woman's own preferences, skills, and expectations are transformed when she takes on a job historically seen as appropriate for men only. We know less about the extent to which wartime female empowerment changes the attitudes and behaviors of other community members—the men and women who remain in traditional domestic structures, whose social expectations define appropriate female behavior in the political domain.[9]

In this article, we present a new theoretical perspective, tied to one consequential way in which war can impact patriarchal cultural norms. We argue that high wartime male death tolls can foreshadow long-term changes in norms regarding the gendered division of labor in households.[10] When a large number of widowed women spend less time on housework and more time on external economic activities, women in male-headed households emulate and surviving men accept their

[4] Acemoglu, Autor, and Lyle 2004.
[5] Tripp 2015.
[6] Goldin 1991.
[7] Hadzic and Tavits 2021.
[8] Tripp 2015, 256.
[9] Hadzic and Tavits 2019.
[10] Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006.

behaviors. The culture in turn views it as permissible for contemporary and subsequent generations of women to take on larger economic roles. Out of contexts of widespread death and trauma can emerge new incentives and opportunities for women to run for political office. War consequently changes community-wide expectations for female behavior, not only for the women who lose husbands or fathers to violence, but also for those in households with surviving men.

Measuring and assessing cultural shifts caused by conflict poses a significant empirical challenge: without identifying variation in the factors that open opportunity structures for women, concluding whether patterns of women's political behavior are caused by wartime female economic empowerment is difficult. We investigate the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, in which an estimated 50–70 percent of the country's working-age men were killed.[11] Between 1975 and 1979, the Khmer Rouge ran a totalitarian government that intended to eliminate traces of decadent capitalism and transform the country into a utopian nation that was in then-leader Pol Pot's words, "collectivist, uncorrupt, equal, and prosperous." But its radical agrarian reforms and strict communist work camps ravaged the country, resulting in the starvation and execution of 1.7 million people in a population of fewer than ten million. Such extensive loss of male life allows us to confidently identify the factors that open up opportunities for women.

Our contention is that areas that suffered the most killings during the genocide should have registered the largest uptick in female economic empowerment, both in households affected by male deaths and in the broader community, thereby enhancing women's political representation in the long term. We test this argument with a multimethod research design, making use of historical ethnographic accounts, personal in-depth interviews with genocide survivors, and an original data set of georeferenced mass graves.[12] Specifically, we draw on fieldwork and historical reporting to illustrate the transformation of pregenocide patriarchal domestic structures, demonstrating how women now living near former Khmer Rouge killing sites are less constrained by traditional social expectations than women elsewhere in the country. Then, we use large-*n*, within-country variation in local female representation to determine whether the patterns that we observe are generalizable across the universe of local governments in Cambodia. Using original data on local-level killings during the Khmer Rouge genocide, we study

[11] Jacobs 2020.
[12] Mahoney 2010; Straus 2007.

how wartime violence impacts long-term trends in women's economic autonomy both in widowed households and in traditional dual-parent households, affecting in turn women's decisions to run for and win elected office.

We find that communities exposed to more violence during the genocide feature significantly narrower gender gaps in local politics today. Women in these communities are substantially more likely to seek and win election to local political office than those in communities that escaped the worst of the Khmer Rouge violence. Unlike scholarly accounts that highlight the importance of institutional design and international actors, we uncover evidence that these behaviors are transmitted through mechanisms of community socialization. Women in the communities that bore the brunt of genocidal violence enjoy today higher rates of economic autonomy than women elsewhere. They are better educated and likelier to serve in outward-facing economic roles, including as heads of household and business managers. Importantly, these improvements in women's economic station are apparent across both female- and male-headed households, illustrating the broad cultural transformation that emerged out of the initial genocidal demographic shock.

Our results build on previous studies of historical legacies, which demonstrate how cultural values can be transmitted through family socialization.[13] By contrast, this article suggests that the effects of a family experience, such as the death of a patriarch, are not confined to the household and can in fact have spillover effects onto other community members. We show that communal networks can sustain shared legacies, especially in developing countries in which houses are relatively small and the majority of time is spent out of the house socializing with others.

Scholarship on female politicians in the developing world underlines how institutional design, through negotiated settlements and quotas, improves women's representation.[14] By illustrating how political violence can create opportunities for women to exercise power in the absence of men, this article shows that a relatively short but intensely destructive period can spur both women's economic empowerment and their ability to join and lead representative political institutions over time.[15] Furthermore, Cambodia is an important empirical setting for documenting the legacy of communist repression because it is

[13] Balcells 2012; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017.
[14] Shair-Rosenfield and Wood 2017; Bush 2011.
[15] Bateson 2012.

increasingly difficult to study mass killing in other historically Maoist-Leninist countries.[16] Insights about the Khmer Rouge could shed light on the potential legacies of state violence during China's Communist Revolution or in the Soviet Gulags—instances where empirical studies are frustrated by lack of data.

Conflict, Culture, and the Persistence of Gendered Political Change

Does violence impact long-term trends in women's political representation? Scholars have identified two principal drivers of the gender gap in running for and winning office: institutional changes and socioeconomic resources.[17] Conflict is thought to modify each of these factors in the short term. But do these effects persist? And if so, by what mechanisms?

Institutional accounts, emphasizing the new rules and regimes that are established in conflict-ending peace agreements, are the more common explanation for changes in female representation. Scholars have argued that democratization and constitutional reforms, including the adoption of proportional representation systems and gender quotas in parties and legislatures, improve women's likelihood of securing elected office.[18] The scholarship on postconflict Africa supports these theoretical predictions. Tripp documents how political opportunities for females grew in postwar Uganda and Liberia, two cases in which UN peacekeepers and international donors stayed on to help build electoral institutions.[19] Indeed, research links the end of civil war to the introduction of inclusive institutions, which can serve to alter the gendered composition of the government.[20] The ways that states are built in the years immediately after war shape their political developmental pathways.

[16] China and Russia, in particular, have exhumed such grim events from the historical record. The Chinese Communist Party, especially under Xi Jinping, has lionized its past. By forcing historians to write praise of the leadership, the party has played down the strife of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's Great Leap Forward; Buckley 2021. Vladimir Putin has taken steps to erase the history of Gulag atrocities, sending prosecutors to liquidate the archives of Memorial International, the organization dedicated to the remembrance of those who perished in the brutal forced labor camps; Hopkins 2021.

[17] Piscopo 2019; Bernhard, Shames, and Teele 2020. We bracket the role of psychological factors, such as ambition, in shaping individual-level incentives to seek office to theorize aggregate-level variation but return to this explanation in our empirics; Lawless and Fox 2010.

[18] E.g., Paxton, Hughes, and Painter 2010; Bush 2011.

[19] Tripp 2015.

[20] Webster, Chen, and Beardsley 2019; Hughes and Tripp 2015.

Nevertheless, scholars question whether institutional changes in the wake of war generate long-term legacies for women's representation.[21] Gender-based institutional reforms implemented following conflict may be withdrawn once international actors depart (for example, after the United States withdrew from Afghanistan). Postwar regimes begin to look outward for aid and international legitimacy, which incentivizes them to democratize, hold popular elections, and incorporate combatants into their new party system,[22] but newly established democratic institutions tend to backslide once aid disappears.[23] Additionally, while institutional changes imposed at the national level are well-equipped to explain cross-national variation in women's representation, they are less suited to analyze why only certain regions within countries close the gender gap in political representation. And they struggle to explain why coalitions of voters and party gatekeepers choose women over men when both genders have opportunities to run for elected office.[24]

A second set of theories focuses on resource-based explanations. Kay Schlozman, Nancy Burns, and Sidney Verba attribute the gender gap in political participation to differences in women's and men's income and wealth.[25] By recalibrating economic milieus, war may create new avenues for women to seek political office. How so? First, war alters sex ratios in societies in which men are overrepresented among wartime casualties, in turn opening up economic opportunities for women.[26] As men die in conflict, women often take on larger economic roles, such as employment, management of household finances, and control over intrahousehold economic decision-making, compared to prewar periods.[27] Second, regardless of male deaths, wartime exigencies can materially augment women's status by prompting women to assume magnified economic roles. These roles may include undertaking new jobs (for example, nurses to care for the wounded) or filling roles occupied by men in preconflict times, such as leadership positions in household businesses.[28] Women benefit from these roles—in the form of

[21] Hadzic and Tavits 2021.
[22] Matanock 2017.
[23] Meyerrose 2020.
[24] Arriola and Johnson 2014.
[25] Schlozman, Burns, and Verba 1994. See also Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006.
[26] Hughes 2009.
[27] Tripp 2015. For example, Tripp finds that "some of the most palpable changes for women in Liberia were evident at the local level during the war. Women who lost their husbands in the war were forced into running their households and finding food for their children"; Tripp 2015, 84. Even when women take on low-paying jobs, as is often the case in low-income conflict zones, they gain enhanced economic autonomy and decision-making within the household. During Angola's war, women "became the main breadwinners in the family"; Tripp 2015, 119; see also Berry 2017.
[28] See Jähner's discussion of postwar Germany; during World War II, women operated trams and construction vehicles, and proved that cities did not need men to function; Jähner 2022.

employment, education, wealth ownership, and inheritance—once conflict ends. Economic and occupational opportunities that result from war may give women crucial leadership experience, increasing in turn the supply of women candidates running for office.[29] This new economic autonomy can provide women with resources that incentivize and facilitate running for office.

Critically, prior accounts of conflict and the gender gap predict that greater economic autonomy produces short-term increases in women's political representation. But does such representation persist over time? Melanie Hughes and Tripp find little evidence that changes in sex ratios following war impact women's legislative representation.[30] Conflict also does not appear to skew sex ratios over the long term; Donald Davis and David Weinstein show that postwar baby booms rebalance sex ratios within one to two decades.[31] Kaitlyn Webster, Chong Chen, and Kyle Beardsley similarly find that "in the short and medium term, war shakes up established social and political orders and creates an opportunity for gains in women's empowerment," but they indicate that it is unclear if these gains persist beyond ten to fifteen years.[32] Opportunities created by postwar gender imbalances have an expiration date. Similarly, occupational advancement and attendant economic gains spurred by conflict may not translate into long-term improvements. In Britain, for example, patriarchal forces inhibited the economic advances that women had achieved after World War II, pushing them back into the private domain and family life once wartime exigencies ended.[33] This scholarship does not make clear whether and why the opportunities created amid wartime disruption persist in the long term.[34]

[29] Hadzic and Tavits 2021. Of course, conflict can also dampen opportunities for women to run for political office. Cohen finds that the breakdown in social order can trigger sexual violence against women; Cohen 2016. Koos theorizes that wartime rape stigmatizes victims and leads to long-term feelings of powerlessness and self-blame through a "decay" mechanism; Koos 2018, 198–201.

[30] Hughes and Tripp 2015.

[31] Davis and Weinstein 2002.

[32] Webster, Chen, and Beardsley 2019, 256.

[33] Summerfield 1989.

[34] Additionally, while seminal scholarship has brought attention to the relationship between war and gender relations, such research faces particular limitations in establishing causal relationships due to concerns related to aggregation bias in country-level quantitative studies and lack of representativeness and, in some instances, selection on the dependent variable in qualitative case studies. Newer studies make a case for employing microlevel analyses to better understand causal relations. For instance, Koos investigates the long-term effects of sexual violence on prosocial behavior in Sierra Leone; Koos 2018. González and Traunmüller examine the consequences of sexual assault on political engagement in Sri Lanka; González and Traunmüller 2020. Lindsey probes how community-level violence shapes gender norms in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Lindsey 2022. And Koos and Traunmüller study the effects of sexual violence on community engagement and political attitudes; Koos and Traunmüller 2021.

Theorizing Long-Term Effects: Disruption of Patriarchy and Community Norm Shift

Our argument focuses on the conditions that lead violence to upend traditional norms of patriarchy over the long run. The starting point of our theoretical analysis is the observation that women's relative resource-based disadvantages in politics[35] are a product of patriarchal norms that prohibit women from accumulating wealth and asserting intrahousehold bargaining rights.[36] These norms may take the form of formal codes that assign inheritance and wealth control rights to men or informal rules that specify gender-based child-rearing, caregiving, and household responsibilities, which preclude women from income-generating employment.[37] Women who specialize occupationally in homecare, child-rearing, or low-status jobs—especially those who do not have dependent support—are constrained in their ability to seek political office and invest resources and time in political service.

This system represents an equilibrium, we argue. Men benefit economically, socially, and politically from patriarchy's architecture and have few incentives to dismantle it. Women believe that efforts to advance their economic standing, such as by seeking education or starting businesses, will be met with resistance or prove futile, and hence eschew such costly investments. Both women and men anticipate sanctions, which may be orchestrated by members of both genders, if they transgress community norms. The political consequence of this status quo is that men retain positions of authority at home and in government while women remain excluded from the public domain.

Wars can disrupt this equilibrium. Economic theories of cultural evolution predict that when communities experience a period of uncertainty and instability, they are likely to adopt new cultural values and spend less time maintaining tradition.[38] Cultural beliefs evolve to reflect the new relative payoffs for each gender, coming from shocks such as innovations in agricultural technology or natural disasters.[39] Within this framework, we hypothesize that in societies facing abnormally high death rates among male soldiers and civilians, cultural norms about gender equality shift. We predict these new norms will develop primarily in regions that have experienced mass male killings, when it becomes necessary for widows to assume larger economic roles

[35] Schlozman, Burns, and Verba 1994.
[36] Brulé and Gaikwad 2021.
[37] Robinson and Gottlieb 2021.
[38] Boyd and Richerson 1985; Feldman, Aoki, and Kumm 1996.
[39] Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn 2013; Giuliano and Nunn 2021.

than they had previously, and less so in regions farther away. Because of the benefits of economic independence for women and the benefits of reduced responsibilities for men, norms of gender equality spread to neighboring households, even those in which men survive. The relative benefits to each gender from transformations in the sexual division of labor within households explain why these norms persist even after the community recovers from the immediate aftermath of violence and why women retain a foothold in politics for the long term.

Several reasons exist that explain these reformed cultural beliefs about female empowerment and why they are relatively beneficial to both men and women. First, these new norms expand women's options, making them aware of untried alternatives, such as single motherhood as a substitute to marriage.[40] Cultural beliefs also affect the utility that women derive from economic activities. Women may become more interested in investing in their daughters' education if they now engage in activities that require literacy and mathematical skills. Once widows break patriarchal norms prohibiting women from acquiring additional wealth and taking on more prominent economic and political roles, other women, who witness widows working outside the household and engaging in politics, may revise their own preferences accordingly.

Second, socialization theories underscore how individuals adopt the behavior of role models outside the household through mechanisms of imitation and learning.[41] Women in male-headed households look to widowed neighbors, learning about the levels of autonomy they could possibly achieve, and accordingly bargain for a commensurate level of independence. As more women assert themselves in domestic and communal life, other women are increasingly free to demand greater autonomy.[42] We therefore predict the following behavioral response: When female-headed households emerge in a large number in communities experiencing high rates of male death, women in male-headed households observe and emulate the growing economic roles of widowed women. Empirically, we expect the household division of labor to shift across the community, as more women engage in economic activities in the public sphere.

Third, men themselves may enjoy being relieved of major economic responsibilities, such as traveling for work and being the primary earner, allowing them to engage in leisure activities, such as socializing and even drinking. For instance, the shift from male breadwinner to dual-income

[40] See Jacobs 2020.
[41] Bisin and Verdier 2001.
[42] Granovetter 1978.

households created more "available time" for the American husband.[43] We expect that the proliferation of female-headed households will lessen the economic, normative, and psychological costs to men of having more autonomous women in their households. Such costs should only decline further upon observing women assert themselves in other male-headed households. In turn, men may become more willing to accede to women's demands for independence, a greater share of household resources, and a larger political voice.

When male-headed households adopt the practices of female-headed households, women tend to take on larger economic roles, including those related to employment, education, and business ownership.[44] Such a shift represents an intracommunal channel by which conflict—and the ensuing death of a large number of men—disrupts cultural norms regarding women's economic roles in society. When male-headed households imitate female-headed households by adopting equitable practices regarding female education, occupation, and economic autonomy, women in subsequent cohorts also advance economically. Further, younger men and women both look to the generation of conflict survivors, observing and learning from their reformed attitudes and habits, providing an intergenerational channel through which war empowers women.

The transformation in both men's and women's incentives represents a key step by which the patriarchal equilibrium is punctured and relatively equal gender norms take root. Individuals neither reap payoffs from enforcing gender-inegalitarian practices, nor face sanctions from elevating women to outward-facing roles. In turn, future generations of women are freer to pursue economic autonomy and political voice, which they do, even if it increases their workload, because it provides them freedom from the domicile. By contrast, in cases in which most patriarchs survive or many soldiers return from war, subsequent cohorts of men may reassert their past privileges.[45]

Our central argument, then, is that conflict impacts the long-term representation of women in politics by shifting gendered roles both within households affected by wartime deaths and in surrounding communities. In localities that experience higher levels of violence, women take on larger economic and public roles. When a large number of

[43] Presser 1994.

[44] See Robinson and Gottlieb's discussion of how matrilineal norms spread through Malawi; Robinson and Gottlieb 2021.

[45] In such cases, patriarchy reinserts itself into a society. For example, in Jähner's account, a German World War II veteran complained that his wife "learned to say 'I' when I was away," illustrating how returning men reclaim their status once conflict ends; Jähner 2022, 117.

widows spend less time on housework and more time on external economic activities, their behaviors are emulated by women and accepted by surviving men in neighboring male-headed households. This disruption of conventional gender-based economic roles transforms cultural norms in the community: women have more resources to participate in politics and greater material stakes in political outcomes, spurring women to pursue positions of political authority.

Case Setting and Multimethods Empirical Approach

Cambodia provides an ideal setting in which to examine the factors that affect local gender gaps because it exhibits tremendous variation in female representation. Historically, Cambodian women have faced challenging patriarchal norms en route to political office. Early ethnographies of Cambodian villages reveal that the men's role as heads of their households was undisputed; "the husband is technically the supreme authority who is owed deference, respect, and obedience by his family."[46] Social rules, manifested in the *Chbap Srey* (Rules for Women), an influential piece of Khmer literature traditionally passed on through elders, dictate that women are expected not to take controversial political positions or act publicly and independently from their spouses.[47] Despite these norms, women are nonetheless being elected to local positions of power in growing numbers. As of 2012, 18 percent of commune councilors, the lowest form of legislative office, were female, yet their geographic distribution is highly uneven. Why are women elected to local office in some villages and not in others?

We contend that the Cambodian genocide produced enduring changes in patterns of female political representation. Pol Pot created one of modern history's most brutal and radical regimes. His attempts to purify Khmer society turned the nation upside down: his troops pulled families apart; closed schools and markets; required everyone (even children) to work; and killed teachers, doctors, monks, bureaucrats, and many others with skills or education that threatened the classless regime.[48] As many as two million people were killed over the course of the calamitous agrarian revolution, which the US Congress

[46] Ebihara 2018, 53.

[47] Ledgerwood 1996.

[48] This raises the vital question of whether Khmer Rouge social policies shaped gender relations, independent of cultural transformations stemming from male deaths. Women may have become more emancipated during the genocide—potentially through communist reeducation and female-only labor groups—in places in which the Khmer Rouge was more violent and killed more men. Our empirical research design therefore adjudicates between the extent of social restructuring during the Khmer Rouge and women's economic empowerment in the wake of mass killings.

described as "one of the clearest examples of genocide in recent history."[49] Pol Pot's regime was intent on weeding out its enemies—namely, anti-Communists, educated professionals, and ethnic minorities. Men were more frequently targeted because of their views than were women, especially during the anti-Communist purges of 1977 and 1978.[50] Since men were more likely than women to be educated and occupy positions in the government, schools, industry, military, and police, they were also more frequently the victims of political executions, particularly in the early months of the Khmer Rouge regime.[51] A survey of female survivors showed that 61.4 percent of respondents' spouses either had been killed or disappeared between 1975 and 1979.[52]

In 1979, after Pol Pot led a series of incursions into Vietnam, the Vietnamese government, a former ally of the Khmer Rouge, invaded and occupied Cambodia. With most of the country under Vietnamese control, genocide survivors returned to their villages from Khmer Rouge work brigades. They discovered that four years of mass killings had condemned a generation of men. The proportion of rural households headed by women was thought to be as high as 30–35 percent, reaching 50 percent in some villages.[53] Even today, Cambodia's sex ratio is skewed for the oldest cohort of citizens (age fifty-five and older), which has fewer than sixty-five males for every one hundred females.[54] Prime Minister Hun Sen has held office since 1985 when he was appointed by the National Assembly and retained his position through the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1993; nevertheless, his party's victory in 2013 was relatively narrow and local elections remain competitive.[55]

Relying on the women left behind, reconstruction resulted in a transformation of the once highly patriarchal society. For example, before the genocide, anthropologists argued that a widow had "considerable incentive to remarry," because she "[found] herself in need of male labor power to work the fields."[56] Interviews with Khmer Rouge survivors reveal no such incentive. Nor is such incentive found among the 106 victims who responded to a 2014 survey that was part of the international

[49] *Foreign Relations Authorization Act* 1987, 1405.

[50] Mysliwiec 1988, 58.

[51] Chandler 1991.

[52] de Langis et al. 2014, 50.

[53] Desbarats 1995, 126.

[54] Central Intelligence Agency 2017.

[55] Prime Minister Hun Sen responded with a range of national policies that consolidated his grip on power, dissolving the main opposition party and shutting down radio stations and independent newspapers.

[56] Ebihara 2018, 203; for additional information about pregenocide patriarchy, see Appendix A in the supplementary material.

tribunal investigation into Khmer Rouge crimes; in that survey, 72.2 percent of widows reported that they had not remarried because they preferred being single, even though it meant raising children on their own.[57] One respondent indicated that being a single parent provides more domestic and economic freedom: "For me, having a husband has no benefit. . . . I earn and decide everything by myself and this is way easier for me."[58] Another respondent actively rejects proposals: "Other men requested to marry me but I did not agree. I decided myself and I was determined not to be married again."[59]

This breaking from pregenocide norms was not limited to matters of marriage. In an account of one village victimized by the Khmer Rouge, Eve Zucker describes how most locals had "little knowledge of the traditional practices that were not only practiced in the neighboring commune, but also [those that] used to be practiced in [the village] itself before the Khmer Rouge revolution."[60] Interviews with commune councilors suggest that the genocide's demographic shift foreshadows widows' entrance into political life.[61] A female chief in Kandal explains why her introduction to politics followed the Khmer Rouge: "After Pol Pot, most of the men had died. Many widow women survived. . . . I volunteer to be the leader of a small group [dedicated to farming]."[62] When asked why she got involved in politics, a female chief in Phnom Penh said, "I think it was just that I had to find jobs in order to sustain my living."[63] These were not isolated instances. A sixty-seven-year-old male commune chief in Takeo said that, "In general, as I have been working in this field, women who work with me are mostly widows."[64]

The historical record lends plausibility to the claim that the genocide created openings for women to enter into politics. But what were the mechanisms by which female preferences were given voice in the public domain, such that proximity to violence prompted more women to seek and win election to local office? And did this change lead to a long-term shift in female political engagement? The empirical analysis proceeds in two parts. We first use participant observation and original,

[57] de Langis et al. 2014, 60.

[58] de Langis et al. 2014, 96.

[59] de Langis et al. 2014, 91. By comparison, Ebihara found that traditional norms typically encouraged widows to remarry and that new spouses replaced the deceased mate "with relative ease"; Ebihara 2018, 203.

[60] Zucker 2013, 7.

[62] See Interview Archive from Cambodia Development Research Institute (CDRI)' s 2020–2021 project on Local Leadership in Cambodia.

[62] CDRI Interview, Kandal, March 3, 2021.

[63] CDRI Interview, Phnom Penh, November 16, 2020.

[64] CDRI Interview, Takeo, January 17, 2021.

in-depth ethnographic interviews with genocide survivors and local politicians to describe how exposure to genocide varies across villages and is connected to the number of women winning local office today. We carefully assess the sequencing of variables, demonstrating that a postgenocide wave of female economic empowerment preceded female election to local office.[65] Second, we examine whether these in-depth cases represent larger trends in Cambodian politics. We collect data from historical and contemporary sources to estimate exposure to mass violence and female representation in present-day commune councils. Responding to Scott Straus's call for "explicit theory testing" in genocide studies, these estimates are also used to test the hypothesized theoretical mechanisms, as we ascertain whether increased female representation emerged from the economic enfranchisement of women in the wake of the genocide and endured due to the concurrent remaking of gender norms.[66]

Qualitative Research Design and Findings

We conducted a qualitative investigation in two rural, borderland regions, which the Khmer Rouge named the Northeast and Northwest Zones.[67] In summer 2018, a team of three American researchers and two Cambodian translators conducted fifty face-to-face, semistructured interviews; the interviews lasted between one and three hours. Professional Cambodian deminers from an international humanitarian organization informed us of the location of the main Khmer Rouge military camp in each zone. We interviewed residents of the villages within walking distance of the camp and then drove to the more distant villages in the zone to establish a counterfactual. The sample is a convenience sample, a selection strategy chosen because of the relatively small size of key populations of interest—genocide survivors, village chiefs, commune councilors, for example. We also interviewed men and women outside these groups to glean broader perceptions of local politics, household responsibilities, and gender norms. Having female deminers introduce us to other women who normally do not speak for the household provided the opportunity to study actors at a permanent disadvantage, such as those lacking education or freedom to leave the domicile. Appendix

[65] Mahoney 2010.

[66] Straus 2007, 449.

[67] Their agrarian economies are broadly representative of a country in which 80 percent of residents are farmers. Most residents are subsistence farmers, although some households run small roadside shops and restaurants or provide transport or other labor.

B in the supplementary material provides a detailed discussion of ethical considerations; Appendix C provides supplementary interview evidence.

Since our objective is to provide a thick description of a cultural schema and explain its emergence, we focus primarily on collecting high-quality, in-depth information rather than developing a representative sample with short, less-detailed interviews. We asked respondents about a variety of socioeconomic topics—such as farming methods, experiences with local leaders, marriage status, domestic household responsibilities—and collected oral histories of the civil war. Of these, twenty-five were oral histories with former Khmer Rouge perpetrators or survivors, who could describe life before and after the genocide.

Political Empowerment in Conflict Zones: Three Female Chiefs, Three Backgrounds

As we describe above, anthropological studies show that social expectations of female behavior are often so freighted with misogyny that it may be surprising that women are elected politically at all.[68] However, in our qualitative research, we repeatedly encountered villages and communes in which women had been chosen over men for positions of power.[69] For example, Len Solida has been the chief for Samlout Village in the Northwest Zone since the first election more than twelve years ago.[70] She is highly critical of men in her village—they would rather "clink their glasses [drinking] while the women have to work very hard"—and she also considers herself a loyal member of the Cambodia People's Party, led by Prime Minister Hun Sen.[71] Chorn Chea, a commune councilor for the provincial capital in the Northeast Zone, represents the opposition party and was recently promoted to district advisor.[72] Her father was a commander for the royal army; her family was even given a rubber plantation by Norodom Sihanouk, the former

[68] Ledgerwood 1996; Frieson 2001.

[69] Commune councils consist of five to fifteen elected councilors, depending on the population of the commune. Commune councils were started in 2002, and elections are held every five years. The inaugural commune elections required each village to elect a chief, but the length of the chief's term and the timing of subsequent elections vary across villages. Both councilors and chiefs are considered local government authorities, tasked with maintaining order and promoting development. They are expected to travel throughout their constituency, resolving interpersonal conflicts, distributing information from the central government, and connecting with nongovernment organizations. Village chief and commune council signatures are often required for bank loans and land titles. Village chiefs typically grant permission to outsiders (including ourselves) to stay and speak with residents. Commune councils receive roughly 8,000 USD per year in government funding to spend on public goods provision, infrastructure improvements, and development activities.

[70] We use pseudonyms for names and locations to protect the identities of our respondents.

[71] Interview 47.

[72] Interview 8.

King of Cambodia and head of state. Sok Reaksa, the chief in Village Five, has yet a different background.[73] She was born in this Northeastern village, but comes from a poor family and has spent the past three decades traveling around the province to find work, doing odd jobs (farming, factory work, transport). She does not consider herself very political. The profiles of these three women in power suggest that female office-holders run the gamut in their qualifications, backgrounds, resources, party affiliations, and political interests. Given their differences, might a unifying reason explain why these women all ran for office and won elections?

We find that the local political landscape is shaped by the inheritance and legacy of the state-led mass killings during the Khmer Rouge. The demographic shift created by the disproportionate killing of men entirely reordered household economies in affected localities. With reconstruction left up to the surviving adult women, traditional gender hierarchies succumbed to an economy in collapse. Proximity to Khmer Rouge violence best foreshadows a long-term change in gender norms. Indeed, these female politicians—Solida, Chea, and Reaksa—are similar in two distinct ways: they all live near former Khmer Rouge bases, where the genocide was particularly violent, and they all (including those who are married) consider themselves the heads of their household. Solida has held jobs that have out-ranked and out-paid her husband's, whom she married in the late 1990s, giving her autonomy in household decision-making. Chea has lived as a single woman for the past twenty years, separated from the husband whom she was forced to marry during the Khmer Rouge. Reaksa was a single mother after the genocide, but has since remarried. Where genocide depleted the stock of adult men, marital separation and female independence have become socially acceptable and common, providing women a conduit to political power.[74]

Traditional Norms Persist in Less Violent Areas

To analyze how violence spurred women to political office, we first study communes that were relatively untouched by the genocide. In areas where Khmer Rouge violence was less intense, two trends are apparent:

[73] Interview 7.

[74] The majority of Cambodian households comprise extended family (e.g., married children, grandparents, nieces, and nephews), and domestic chores and childcare are often delegated to other adults while the parents find work; Ebihara 2018, 50–51, 185–200. This system suggests social expectations about the gendered division of labor more than primary caretaker responsibilities (which can be shared with other adults) bind women to the household.

women have less economic autonomy and patriarchal norms persist. We find that these trends stifle women's ability to take on positions of political leadership because local politics are believed to be beyond the scope of women's interest and responsibilities. For example, Deth Arun was born in Lom's Village in the Northeast Zone and has lived there his entire life.[75] He has been the chief for the past ten years. His village remained relatively intact during the Khmer Rouge because it was hidden in the mountains and difficult to access from the Khmer Rouge's regional base. Villagers were able to live in their own houses for the first half of the genocide. While Khmer Rouge soldiers eventually relocated the residents to a remote worksite in 1977, that camp experienced remarkably less violence than did others. Arun observes that "all of them [the former residents] came back" at the end of the genocide, including a significant adult male population. By 2008, 94 percent of the households were run by men according to the village census, and Lom's Village appears to have retained many of the traditional gender structures within the household that existed prior to the genocide. "Women take care of the children and look after the house," Arun explains, while "men go out to claim farmland, closely surveying it to make sure it is safe." He says that men have to leave for work to "feed their wives and children." He is adamant that "all men have to do this"—a statement manifesting a milieu in which economic roles remain highly gendered.

In these male-headed household towns, women remain in charge of raising children, cooking, and chores. Leng Sola, a married woman who lives in nearby Banteay Village, describes her work as "staying at home and taking care of her child."[76] She mostly "steams rice and looks after her baby," and if it is growing season, she will go out and plant cassava root. Her husband leaves the village often to find work in construction, building houses and pouring concrete. He is the one who represents the household at village meetings; she has never attended one. Her husband also knows the village chief and speaks to him about crops and job opportunities. "I've never met the village chief because I never leave the house," she notes.

For women living in places where traditional gender roles persist, interaction with the outside world is mostly social. Mul Veata lives in Village One in the Northeast Zone, a settlement far from Khmer Rouge mass graves. She says that she does not know the names of any commune councilors. "I've been living here for a long time, but I just

[75] Interview 24.
[76] Interview 9.

stay at home. I don't go to the village center or the road."[77] This ability to leave the farm, she explains, defines who runs the family. "Here, men are heads of the family because they are the ones who are responsible for going outside to earn money," she states. She and her husband follow the traditional division of labor: "My husband doesn't really work on the farm. Only I go into the fields—usually every day."

Reach Sambot, a male farmer from a Northwest village with mostly male-headed households, does not see this household division of labor as particularly unfair or limiting to women. He says, "Yes, they [husbands and wives] are equals. Wives sell goods while their husbands go into the jungle. Husbands will also drink, but they are responsible, and the man is the head of the family."[78] He believes that the household depends equally on the husband and wife, so this represents a form of gender equality. But his final declaration, "the man is the head of the family," underscores the irony of his claim: even though men and women are equally responsible for contributing to the domestic economy, the man is still in charge of decision-making and represents the family outside of the house.

When household power remains with men, the hierarchy at home reproduces itself in the village government, where women serve as deputies to men, if at all. In Chrey Village in the former Northwest Zone, Grandfather Tichuan has served as village chief for almost thirty continuous years, running a village more than fifty miles away from the former Khmer Rouge base. "Mostly men" head the households, according to one farming couple.[79] "Yes, the political party empowers women to join parties," the husband says. His wife chimes in: "The party gives chances to women." Yet while one or two women work for the commune council, they serve in "lower positions," not as chiefs but as administrative clerks. Although no formal restrictions exist against women running, the husband reports, "there are supposed to be more men than women; that's how the political parties want it." He thinks the parties end up "picking more men than women" to run for political office. Rather than attributing the gender inequity to a persistence of patriarchal norms, the farmer believes that political parties—which hold a large amount of power to provide public goods, take away land, and redistribute resources—are primarily responsible for appointing men versus women in positions of power.

[77] Interview 26.
[78] Interview 40.
[79] Interview 43.

Women's Economic Empowerment Leads to Political Empowerment in Conflict Zones

In areas in which many men died in the genocide, by contrast, we observe two patterns: First, women in affected households took on positions of economic autonomy. Second, patriarchal norms were disrupted, making it permissible for women to become more politically engaged, attend town hall meetings, run for office, and serve as village chief or commune councilor.

Respondents in these areas describe the transformative experience of genocide. We turn to Reaksa's oral history to trace how conflict spurred her into office. Reaksa observed a complete social restructuring when she returned to her village. She remembers that when she was a child the village was made up of two large families housed along a stretch of dirt road. Her wedding took place in 1972, a day before her village was overtaken by conflict between the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian state military. Upon their victory, the Khmer Rouge moved all citizens in her commune to the nearby base they called Camp Mo-Buy. Women were separated from men and placed into their own mobile unit. They would leave their tents each day to harvest rice, dig canals, or build dams, and then return at night. Reaksa's mobile unit remained in operation for all four years of the genocide; the women who composed it are unaware of what happened to the men.

Reaksa's experience illustrates that in places in which large proportions of the population died as a result of the genocide, the Khmer Rouge collaterally created space for women to assume leadership roles in their households. In the wake of the genocide, household leadership impelled women to find jobs, run nonagricultural businesses, move their family, and make independent decisions about whether and when to remarry. By 1980, shortly after the end of the genocide, Reaksa returned to Village Five, where "very few men [from the original two families] made it back." She found no work there, so she moved to the provincial capital, where she found odds-and-ends jobs. At the same time, she was a single mother, taking care of two children. After four to seven years (she says she lost track) working in the capital, she again returned to Village Five when she found work as a hired laborer on a farm. She remarried and has seven children across both marriages, yet continued (and still does) to consider herself the head of her household. She also realized that she loved to learn new trades and skills—including reading, writing, filling out forms, and managing land—and so she decided to run for chiefdom.

We find that as widows assumed economic autonomy in conflict zones, women in conventional family structures also began taking on larger economic roles and more control over household decision-making.[80] A constituent in Solida's village estimates that women serve as heads of household for about half of the families in her village. She emphasizes that these are not only households of widows but also married households. When describing how a family decides who is head of household, she provides an earning metric: "In some families, the woman earns the most, so she is the head. In other families, the man earns more, so then he's the head of the household."[81]

In another nearby village, a female farmer reports that women frequently serve as heads of household because "the wife works harder than the husband," who she says typically spends his time drinking and sleeping. "The women in this district work so hard they're exhausted," while men contribute relatively little.[82] Reaksa, the chief for Village Five, says that substantively, even though "there isn't much of a difference" between male and female heads of household, she defines the head of the family as the one in the best position to make decisions, who is not necessarily the man. For her, a woman runs the family "if the husband doesn't know much. Then the woman will be the leader, and she'll tell him what to do." In these villages, women assumed greater independence and authority in the wake of the genocide—something that was tolerated by the men who remained present. In fact, we find that the surviving men seem to benefit when their wives emulate the economic practices adopted by widows in female-headed households; men, relieved of the breadwinner role, enjoy more leisure activities like walking around the neighborhood and socializing, *da laing* in Khmer.[83] This diffusion of women's economic authority resonates with the intracommunal mechanism by which conflict is theorized to affect gender roles not only in households facing male deaths but in the community at large.

Another woman in Reaksa's constituency describes how the legacy of women's empowerment in Village Five has been transmitted through intergenerational channels.[84] When she was young in the early 1970s

[80] In line with Bernhard, Shames, and Teele, female villagers note a tradeoff between economic activity and political participation; Bernhard, Shames, and Teele 2020. Solida reported that being village chief "is hard work. [. . .] No free time. I hardly can find time to take care of my own business"; Interview 47. Reaksa remarked, "I don't have any [other job], I work for the government and it's very busy. I don't have any farmland"; Interview 7.

[81] Interview 38.

[82] Interview 39.

[83] Interviews 39, 47.

[84] Interview 16.

(before the genocide), her parents would send her to school and she would skip class to play, because she did not see the point in educating herself. Even if she did learn to read, she explained, she would still end up working on a farm all day as a housewife. But now it is different, she says; her daughters can get jobs outside of the house even if they are married—something that is less true in communities less affected by the genocide. Reaksa herself describes education as a key motivation in seeking local office.[85] These accounts indicate that even in households led by men and households with husbands present, the economic exigencies of the genocide affected the utility that women derive from educational activities, and thereby altered systematically women's place in the family and broader community.

This process of women acquiring greater economic independence chipped away at the patriarchal norms limiting women's entry into local politics. While women were rarely visible before the war, we find that they now shape the political landscape in their male-depleted villages, akin to the earlier examples of Chea, Solida, and Reaksa. In Solida's village (only three miles away from an old Khmer Rouge camp), we ask her constituents if women commonly take positions of power. A wife speaks for her household, telling us that the chief of the neighboring village, Odong, is also a woman.[86] So is the commune chief, she says. Although she knows that it is unusual to have so many women in leadership roles, she points to a shift in social norms: "Now, we think that a woman could do the same work that any man does."

To explicate how female economic autonomy translates into political leadership with widespread community support, we draw on Solida's experience. Solida was elected chief of her genocide-ravaged village in 2006; the previous chief was a man, appointed by the commune government. He had "little support" in the village, so the commune council asked the residents who they would like as chief and asked those people to be candidates. She recalls the ballot had ten candidates: six women and four men (including the incumbent village chief). All candidates were affiliated with the ruling party. When they tallied the votes, Solida had the most supporters, followed by another woman, who became Solida's deputy. Like the old village chief, Solida is knowledgeable about security issues and is well-connected to nongovernmental organizations; she knows landmine locations and the best ways to keep villagers safe. But she finds that women are more reliable and "better at focusing" than men, so it is unsurprising to her that women in her commune run

[85] Interview 7.
[86] Interview 38.

for and win political office.[87] For every hundred men in her village, she estimates that "only six participate" in community meetings.

Solida's account underscores how women have risen to political office in the presence of male competition and with the backing of broad coalitions of voters. Why do women run for and then win local elections in Cambodia? Interviewees emphasize that women act differently than men once in office.[88] Respondents in villages with male chiefs reported that meetings were devoted to three main topics: dispensing agricultural advice on which crops to grow; reminding villagers to pen their livestock; and informing constituents about nongovernmental organizations' offers of loans, equipment, or education.[89] One chief was obsessed with landmine clearance to the point that he spent most of his time either removing mines by hand or traveling to various government offices to submit proposals for professional removal.[90]

Female politicians help their constituents in other ways, Solida says. Her political party (the Cambodia People's Party) benefits from having more female representatives: "When women are invited to join the party, the women are eager to understand more about social issues." Chea, who belongs to the opposition party, observes a similar trend. Her female constituents contact her about personal family and marriage issues, asking for her advice on what to do if a husband drinks too much or on how to get a divorce.[91] In other words, women in traditional domestic structures are learning from their politically and economically empowered female representatives. These women are also becoming more vocal in her village, she says. "Now women speak more. In the past, they couldn't even if they wanted to. Now, women understand more, and they ask more questions. Sometimes, more than men." Why? The reasoning, to her, is simple. "Most women like having a woman on the commune council because we can talk more honestly. We can talk to each other, woman to woman."

These interviews lend prima facie credibility to the contention that the postgenocide economic empowerment of women and the associated cultural shift enabled women to remain active participants in local politics decades after the genocide's end. Khmer Rouge violence was

[87] Our female respondents experience a complicated political reality in which their empowerment is occasionally greeted with mockery; for instance, certain older men in Solida's village are prone to tease her at meetings, suggesting male discomfort with female empowerment; Appendix C.

[88] Shair-Rosenfield and Wood similarly find that female politicians in postconflict settings tend to privilege social spending over military spending; Shair-Rosenfield and Wood 2017.

[89] Interviews 29, 33.

[90] Interview 50.

[91] Interview 8.

quite localized and therefore varied widely across villages. Residents of villages that experienced less violence continue to hold patriarchal beliefs and resist female political participation. Where Khmer Rouge killings were intense, we observe an intracommunal and intergenerational erosion of these traditional norms, triggered by women's assumption of new economic roles in the genocide's aftermath.

Quantitative Research Design and Findings

How generalizable are the experiences documented above? We now search for legacies of the genocide across the entirety of Cambodia to ascertain whether widespread variation in female representation is due to violence and the ensuing community-wide economic empowerment of women. We assemble our data using sources collected by the Cambodian and international co-prosecutors as evidence in the United Nations–backed tribunal prosecuting the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. The anonymized evidence, archived in the Cambodian Genocide Program Database at Yale University, includes a 1995–2003 national survey of genocidal violence. The main feature of the survey asked village leaders to identify the location of mass graves, which served as a proxy for genocide intensity in the tribunal. We mapped the 309 Khmer Rouge mass graves onto village hamlets over the full territory of the country. Anthropological research indicates that victims were typically executed at gravesites in close walking proximity to their residences.[92] Consequently, we drew a circle with a five-kilometer radius around each village, and used this procedure to create a variable that counts the number of gravesites within close walking distance of each village.[93] In tests conducted at the commune level—one administrative level above the village—we take an unweighted mean of this measure across all constituent villages. The spatial distribution of gravesites is illustrated in Figure 1.

We use the gravesite measure to predict two sets of outcomes. First, we evaluate whether genocide exposure is in fact associated with more women seeking and holding political office today. We do so by analyzing the gender composition of commune councils and party lists for commune councils, the prominent tiers of local governance. Second, to

[92] Bennett 2015, 54–57, 66–73, 147, 185–189. In line with this anthropological evidence, Appendix D shows that gravesites are associated with depressed populations of elder men in nearby communities, indicating that graves likely hold victims who once resided nearby.

[93] Appendix E presents tests using alternative bandwidths; corroborating our argument, we obtain qualitatively stronger results when focusing on gravesites more proximate to given communities.

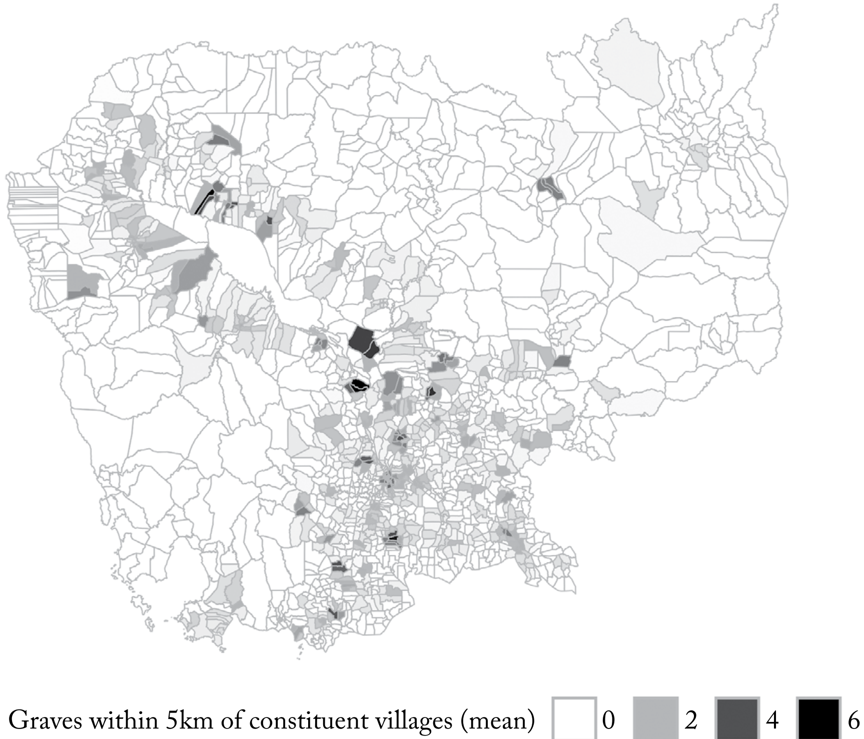

Figure 1
Mean Number of Khmer Rouge Gravesites within 5km of Villages in a Given Commune

test the mechanisms in our theoretical argument, we probe whether the connection between genocide exposure and female political representation is sustained by the community-wide economic shifts theorized above to occur in the wake of conflict. We do so by using unique household-level data on gender roles and economic life.

Our ability to identify the effect of local-level genocide violence hinges on the assumption that the skewed gender ratios emerging from the genocide are plausibly exogenous to prior gender norms of villages. Ethnographic accounts suggest that genocide violence felt relatively haphazard, according to survivors, and depended more on exhaustion and food availability than prewar beliefs.[94] As we note above, when Pol Pot sought to eradicate his enemies, he instructed his troops to target

[94] Ebihara 2018.

based on occupation, affiliation with the prior regime, and race, but did not distinguish between genders. Yet demographic analysis finds that adult men were 2.5 to 3 times more likely to die than adult women,[95] due to the fact that men were more likely to hold political positions in the previous regime, putting them at higher risk of execution.[96] Furthermore, interviews indicate that men tended to be assigned more strenuous tasks, such as moving heavy equipment and removing landmines, increasing their likelihood of starvation and death.[97] Thus, the skewed gender ratios in the immediate wake of genocide were an unintentional byproduct of the Khmer Rouge's repression strategy.

Although genocidal violence appears unrelated to pregenocide gender norms, other factors such as proximity to industrialized and urbanized areas possibly influenced the intensity of Khmer Rouge violence. We are accordingly careful to control for distance to Phnom Penh, distance to the nearest provincial capital, and distance to the nearest colonial-era highway. If postgenocide reconstruction and industrialization reshaped gender norms, independent of the genocide, such changes were also likely to be more extensive closer to major roads and urban centers, such as Phnom Penh and the surrounding lowlands. For this reason, we also control for villages' and communes' topographical elevation and latitude, since the remote areas in the mountainous north were less accessible than the lowlands. Appendix F provides details on the sources and calculations of these pretreatment measures.

In all estimates, we add fixed effects for the seven Khmer Rouge administrative zones, which allow us to examine microlevel variation within zones and ensure that we are not simply capturing regional differences. By including zone fixed effects, we adjust for the possible confounding influence of unobserved differences in zone commanders' implementation of Pol Pot's policies or regional variation in regime ideology (see also Appendix A).

To further disentangle the effect of mass killings from the Khmer Rouge's (uneven) efforts to remake society—for example, through gender-segregated workplaces and reeducation programs—we leverage subnational variation in communist ideology. We estimate a border discontinuity model, drawing from Donald Grasse, in which we compare communes that were virtually indistinguishable with respect to pregenocide cultural, political, and economic characteristics at the

[95] de Walque 2005.
[96] Mysliwiec 1988.
[97] Interviews 47, 49.

border between the West and Southwest administrative zones.[98] While Pol Pot issued orders from the capital, Phnom Penh, the implementation of his mandates varied significantly across zones.[99] Consequently, much of the Khmer Rouge's social project was determined at this level. The Southwest Zone was commanded by Ta Mok, a longtime participant in the Communist movement who diligently carried out Pol Pot's directives, including mass forced marriages and the division of men and women in the workplace.[100] The West Zone, on the other hand, was led by Chou Chet, who was widely regarded as a less zealous ideologue than Ta Mok and who was ultimately executed amid fears of disloyalty to the party.[101] As a result, implementation of Khmer Rouge directives in the West Zone, and consequently the strength of Communist ideology and social programming, was substantially different in this zone than in the Southwest Zone.[102]

If Communist reform has an independent effect on gender roles, we expect to observe variation in our outcomes at the regional level and a discrete difference at the West-Southwest border. Conversely, the association between gravesites and modern-day political outcomes should be consistent across these two zones if violence independently shaped women's political representation. An advantage of this microlevel geographic analysis is that it allows us to collect historical, geospatial data from declassified topographic maps developed by the US Army Map Service (1962–1967) for the purpose of military land navigation. We were able to find the maps along the West-Southwest border, which is roughly 200 kilometers long, to identify the locations of pre–Khmer Rouge secondary schools and local government offices within 10 kilometers of the zone boundary (see Appendix F). These data allow us to address an additional threat to inference: whether richer, more educated, and bureaucratically more centralized locations both held more liberal views of women that predated the Khmer Rouge and were more desirable targets of the Khmer Rouge, who sought to destroy traces of Western modernization.

All models are estimated via ordinary least squares unless otherwise stated; robust standard errors are clustered at the village level in

[98] Grasse 2023.

[99] The central government found it difficult to coordinate policy between zones because the secretaries were effectively governing their former combat theaters and controlled the soldiers in charge of enforcing state policy. Not only did zone commanders hold a great deal of de facto authority, but their ideologies also ranged from moderate communists to repressive extremists; Grasse 2023, 5–7.

[100] Vickery 1984, 68; Ea 2005, 126.

[101] Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia 2012.

[102] Additional detail on differences between the West and Southwest zones and this border discontinuity model is available in Appendix G.

household-level tests. Descriptive statistics are available in Appendix H; details on the regression model specifications are available in Appendix I.

Genocide Exposure and Women in Political Office

We expect women to achieve greater political representation in communities that experienced intense violence under the Khmer Rouge. To test this contention, we use new data on the genders of candidates for and elected members of individual commune councils, which represent each of the 1,621 communes in the country as of 2008. To gather data on party lists of candidates for commune council, we analyzed press releases published by Cambodia's National Election Committee, covering candidates standing for election in 2012. At least one candidate was identified for 1,283 councils. We collected data on the gender composition of 1,578 commune councils through the Commune Council Database of the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development, covering all councilors with terms beginning in 2007 and 2012. In total, our data include gender information on 88,613 party candidates and 22,103 sitting councilors. Our measures of female political representation are the shares of party list candidates and sitting councilors who are women.

Table 1 shows that genocide exposure predicts significantly higher rates of female representation on both electoral party lists and commune councils. In models with the full covariate sets, an increase of one gravesite in close proximity to an average village corresponds to approximately a one percentage point increase in the share of candidates who are women and a 1.2 percentage point increase in the share of elected councilors who are women. We find similar results when we weight each gravesite by size; that is, number of reported burials and deaths (see Appendix J).

These results are substantively significant. The average party list is roughly 26 percent female; one additional gravesite would then be expected to produce a 4 percent increase in female representation on these lists. The average commune council, on the other hand, is about 16 percent female; one additional gravesite would correspond to a 7 percent increase in female representation on these councils. Placed in context, these improvements in women's representation are commensurate with those resulting from the initial implementation of gender quotas in middle-income countries, such as Brazil, Indonesia, and Kenya.[103]

[103] Hughes et al. 2017.

TABLE 1
OLS REGRESSIONS OF COMMUNE-LEVEL POLITICAL OUTCOMES ON MEASURE OF GENOCIDE EXPOSURE[a]

	Percent Women, Party List		*Percent Women, Council*	
Gravesites (≤5km)	0.016***	0.011**	0.014***	0.012***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Mean elevation		0.000*		0.000**
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Latitude		0.011		–0.009
		(0.008)		(0.007)
Dist. to Phnom Penh		–0.000⁺		(0.000)
		0.000		(0.000)
Dist. to provincial capital		–0.000***		–0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Median dist. to road		0.000		0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Constant	0.243***	0.149	0.139***	0.278***
	(0.007)	(0.097)	(0.008)	(0.082)
Observations	1281	1281	1566	1566

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, ⁺$p < 0.1$

[a] All models include Khmer Rouge zone fixed effects and robust standard errors; the latter is reported in parentheses. Dist. = Distance.

Women in genocide-exposed communes seek and win political office, both to similar extents, more than women exposed to less genocide violence. Whereas seeking office is often conceived of as a personal strategic choice,[104] winning office typically requires the consent of a broader set of actors, including the electorate and local political gatekeepers.[105] Hence, the tendency of women to enter into office at higher rates in genocide-exposed communes suggests a broader shift in gender attitudes in those communities—the societal arbiters of political power as well as broad coalitions of voters became accepting of women in positions of political authority.

As discussed previously, Khmer Rouge ideology—not violence—possibly produced these observed improvements in female political engagement. To evaluate this claim, we leverage a geographic border discontinuity, comparing communes within 10 kilometers from the border between the West and Southwest Khmer Rouge zones, which represented opposite ends of Khmer Rouge radicalism and ideological

[104] E.g., Lawless and Fox 2010.

[105] The main results are also robust to including party fixed effects (Appendix K), bolstering our confidence that the effects of genocide are consistent across political ideology and party strength.

orientation. Our expectation is that on both sides of the border, proximate gravesites should be associated with higher levels of female representation on party lists and commune councils. Such a result would indicate that violence has effects independent of those of ideology.

Table 2 reveals that gravesites are associated with increased female political representation on both sides of the West-Southwest border. We found no statistically significant differences between the coefficients for gravesites in each zone. These results are robust to the inclusion of our standard pretreatment controls. Upon introducing the declassified geospatial data of the seventy-five secondary schools and forty-four government offices within 10 kilometers of the inter-zone border, we find that no relationship exists between these markers of pregenocide liberal values and contemporary female participation. These tests help to dispel two threats to inference in our primary tests. First, our finding that the relationship between gravesites and women's political engagement

Table 2
Border Discontinuity Tests: OLS Regressions of Commune-Level Political Outcomes on Measure of Genocide Exposure[a]

	Percent Women, Party List		*Percent Women, Council*	
Gravesites × Southwest Zone	0.027**	0.030+	0.035***	0.029**
	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Gravesites × West Zone	0.040***	0.039*	0.035***	0.029**
	(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Mean elevation		0.004		−0.000
		(0.004)		(0.000)
Latitude		−0.028		−0.213
		(0.400)		(0.134)
Dist. to Phnom Penh		−0.000		−0.000*
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Dist. to provincial capital		0.000		0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Median dist. to road		−0.000		0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Major (secondary) school present		0.055		0.018
		(0.033)		(0.022)
Government office present		−0.017		0.016
		(0.064)		(0.024)
Observations	75	75	139	139

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, +p < 0.1

[a] All models include robust standard errors, which are reported in parentheses. Observations limited to communes with centroids at most 10km from the West-Southwest border (p-value for Southwest graves in column 2 is 0.058).

was consistent in the West and Southwest zones allays concerns that Khmer Rouge ideology, not violence, produced the observed results. Second, these results indicate that the relationship between mass graves and political outcomes is not an artifact of the Khmer Rouge targeting liberal and gender-egalitarian communities.

Testing Mechanisms: Women's Economic Empowerment within and across Households

We theorize that political effects persisted even as sex ratios recovered because of a cultural shift in victimized communities in favor of women's economic empowerment. Empirically, we first assess whether genocide exposure predicts contemporary levels of socioeconomic autonomy for women. We do so by using two primary measures: the proportion of heads of household—the individuals charged with making economic decisions on the household's behalf—who are women and local literacy rates among women at least fifteen years of age. We draw on the 2008 Cambodian Population Census for data on these variables.

As Table 3 shows, genocide exposure is correlated with significantly higher densities of female-headed households and higher rates of female literacy. The addition of one gravesite proximate to a typical village—the equivalent of about a one standard deviation increase in this measure—is associated with roughly a one percentage point increase in the density of female-headed households in a given commune and, in the model with the full covariate set, a two percentage point increase in the rate of female literacy. These results are qualitatively meaningful. In the typical commune in Cambodia, about 25 percent of households are headed by women and 66 percent of women are literate; the addition of one gravesite would be expected to increase these rates by about 4 percent and 3 percent, respectively. We find similar results when, like above, we estimate a geographic discontinuity model to separate the effects of violence from ideology and account for potential endogeneity to pregenocide cultural attitudes (see Appendix L).

These results suggest that differential exposure to the genocide across Cambodia produced divergent levels of female economic empowerment, as some women came to assume roles and responsibilities once reserved for men. Initially, women may have assumed these roles out of necessity, such as when women were widowed during the genocide. However, our theoretical contention is that over time the genocide prompted a broader shift in cultural attitudes that permitted women to take on authoritative roles within both their families and local communities, regardless of whether they directly experienced the loss of a male relative.

Table 3
OLS Regressions of Socioeconomic Outcomes on Measure of Genocide Exposure (5km Bandwidth) at the Commune Level[a]

	Percent Female-Headed Household		*Percent Female Literacy*	
Gravesites (≤5km)	1.303***	0.942***	4.508***	2.244***
	(0.188)	(0.198)	(0.361)	(0.314)
Mean elevation		−0.008**		−0.024***
		(0.003)		(0.006)
Latitude		−1.654**		−2.567**
		(0.508)		(0.826)
Dist. to Phnom Penh		−0.000		−0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Dist. to provincial capital		−0.000***		−0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Median dist. to road		0.000		−0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Constant	26.241***	49.385***	63.168***	112.543***
	(0.702)	(6.154)	(1.164)	(10.286)
Observations	1609	1609	1609	1609

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{+}p < 0.1$

[a] Khmer Rouge zone fixed effects and robust standard errors included; the latter is reported in parentheses.

To test this mechanism of cultural diffusion, we leverage individual-level data on socioeconomic independence and the distribution of familial responsibilities from the 2009 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), which we aggregate up to the household level. We first evaluate how genocide exposure reshaped gender roles within female-headed households, where women occupy positions of authority. We then assess whether the changes in gender roles within female-headed households are reflected in male-headed households elsewhere in exposed communities, which would indicate a diffusion of gender-egalitarian attitudes across households regardless of their demographic composition.

We measure within-household economic empowerment using two metrics: the distribution of responsibilities for managing businesses and the number of completed years of schooling. Both metrics capture improvements in women's economic independence and their assumption of outward-facing economic roles, which we argue should have emerged out of the genocide and preceded the entry of women into local political

life. We regress these outcomes on the gravesite measure using household-level sampling weights included within the CSES database. Table 4 reports the results.

In households led by women, we find that genocide exposure produced significantly higher levels of female economic autonomy. The addition of one gravesite in close proximity to a given village is associated with a two to four percentage point increase in the likelihood of women within female-headed households managing a business, as well as a substantial increase in female educational attainment. The effect of the genocide is not exclusively captured by family demographics—across female-headed households, those most exposed to the genocide exhibit the highest levels of female socioeconomic autonomy.

Even more strikingly, we find relationships of similar magnitudes in male-headed households in genocide-exposed villages: a one to two percentage point increase in the likelihood of female business management and significant increases in schooling for women. That genocide exposure prompted a shift in gender roles within both female- and male-headed households is notable and corroborates our claim of an interhousehold cultural shift.

Finally, we examine whether the genocide reshaped patterns of household spending. We focus specifically on education spending, which scholars regard as a priority for women.[106] An analysis of education spending is also useful because it allows us to assess how households allocate resources specifically to girls, and accordingly enables us to estimate the ability of women to bargain for a greater share of finite household resources. For this test, we again draw on household-level data from the 2009 CSES and distinguish between female- and male-headed households. We anticipate that male-headed households more exposed to the genocide should spend more on education, including for girls.[107]

Table 5 offers further support for the theorized causal mechanism. Across both female- and male-headed households, proximity to graves is associated with significantly higher shares of spending on education. On average, the addition of one gravesite within five kilometers of a given village is associated with a 1.7 percentage point increase in the

[106] Carruthers and Wanamaker 2015; Khan 2021.

[107] Conversely, plausible reasons exist for why spending on girls' education in female-led families is not qualitatively impacted by violence. Even in patriarchal settings, households run by women generally spend more on girls' education compared to households run by men; Alderman and King 1998. This finding implies that the disruption of patriarchy is most acutely felt in male-headed households, so far as girls' education is concerned.

Table 4
Regressions of Household-Level Measures of Female Economic Empowerment on Measure of Genocide Exposure, by Male-Headed Households (MHH) and Female-Headed Households (FHH)[a]

	Women as Business Managers				*Years of Schooling for Women*			
	FHH		*MHH*		*FHH*		*MHH*	
Gravesites (≤5km)	0.037***	0.024*	0.024***	0.015**	0.430***	0.289***	0.466***	0.307***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.048)	(0.046)
Mean elevation		–0.000		–0.000		–0.000		–0.001
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Latitude		–0.032		–0.016		0.172		0.054
		(0.031)		(0.018)		(0.224)		(0.135)
Dist. to Phnom Penh		–0.000		–0.000		–0.000⁺		–0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Dist. to provincial capital		–0.000**		–0.000*		–0.000***		–0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Median dist. to road		–0.000		–0.000**		0.000		–0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Observations	2456	2456	8926	8926	1819	1819	6974	6974

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, ⁺$p < 0.1$

[a] Years of schooling for women are measured for women at least fifteen years of age. Robust standard errors clustered at the village level and reported in parentheses. Household-level weights from the CSES database included. Khmer Rouge fixed effects included.

share of spending for education, an increase apparent across both female- and male-headed households.

Notably, a significant increase occurs in the percentage of total spending allocated specifically to the education of women and girls—one driven by male-headed households. We find an equivalent result when analyzing education spending on each woman or girl in the household: an increase concentrated in male-headed households. One additional gravesite proximate to a given household is associated with approximately 38,000 additional Cambodian riel spent on the education of each woman and girl. In male-headed households specifically, the increase is roughly 44,000 riel. One interpretation of these findings is that where violence disrupts patriarchy, violence's most perceptible effects on girls' advancement are to be found in the most traditional corners of society (that is, male-headed households).

We conduct a series of supplemental analyses to assess whether these economic and cultural transformations triggered and sustained the higher rates of female political representation described above (see Appendices M, N, and O). First, we estimate a set of interaction models that indicate that the observed relationship between genocide exposure and female political representation is strongest in the communities in which women are most economically autonomous. Second, we perform causal mediation analyses to evaluate how much the effects of the genocide on female political representation are channeled through these economic and cultural mechanisms. We find that our primary indicators of female socioeconomic empowerment—the prevalence of female-headed households and rates of female literacy—explain substantial portions of the effect of genocide exposure on women's political participation today. Importantly, we find that skewed sex ratios—both overall and in older cohorts—are not a significant mediator of the genocide's effects, underscoring the importance of the theorized economic and cultural mechanisms independent of demographic effects. Third, we estimate instrumental variable regressions that treat the siting of gravesites within Khmer Rouge zones as a quasi-exogenous determinant of female socioeconomic empowerment and, in turn, female political representation; results are in line with expectations. Finally, we reestimate our models including a fixed effects term for provincial boundaries imposed by the French colonial government as an alternative means of accounting for unobserved spatial heterogeneity; results are consistent.

The ethnographic interviews that we discussed above point to how the genocide transformed gender attitudes across affected communities, both in widows' households and nearby homes. The quantitative

TABLE 5
REGRESSIONS OF HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL EDUCATION SPENDING ON MEASURE OF GENOCIDE EXPOSURE, BY MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS (MHH) AND FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS (FHH)[a]

	Percent Spending on Education			*Percent Spending on Female Education*			*Education Spending per Woman/Girl*		
	All	*FHH*	*MHH*	*All*	*FHH*	*MHH*	*All*	*FHH*	*MHH*
Gravesites (≤5km)	0.017***	0.012**	0.019***	0.003**	−0.001	0.004***	37.961***	12.355	43.729***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(8.265)	(12.539)	(8.872)
Mean elevation	0.000	0.000	0.000	−0.000	0.000	−0.000+	0.072	0.163	0.067
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.127)	(0.199)	(0.118)
Latitude	0.006	−0.002	0.009	0.000	−0.001	0.001	30.311	−2.127	39.302+
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(19.522)	(35.547)	(20.371)
Dist. to Phnom Penh	−0.000***	−0.000	−0.000***	−0.000	0.000	−0.000+	−0.001***	−0.001*	−0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Dist. to provincial capital	−0.000***	−0.000***	−0.000***	−0.000***	−0.000**	−0.000***	−0.002***	−0.003***	−0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Median dist. to road	0.000	0.000	0.000	−0.000	−0.000	−0.000	0.003	−0.003	0.004
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Observations	11382	2456	8926	11268	2456	8812	4561	781	3780

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, +$p < 0.1$

[a] Education spending per woman/girl is reported in thousands of Cambodian riel. Robust standard errors clustered at the village level and reported in parentheses. Household-level weights from the CSES database included. Khmer Rouge fixed effects included. Education spending per woman/girl is measured as the total amount of education spending on women divided by the total number of women/girls receiving any education spending in a given household.

evidence presented here corroborates this finding systematically. Regardless of whether men had primary decision-making authority in their families, women were able to assume greater economic power and independence as gender norms were transformed in the most genocide-exposed villages. Women took on more decision-making responsibilities within the household, adopted more outward-facing economic roles, received better educations, and enjoyed greater investments of household resources than women in communities less exposed to genocide violence. That these trends are apparent across both female- and male-headed households indicates that the effect of the genocide went beyond the initial shock to sex ratios; the traumatic upheavals wrought by the genocide triggered a reckoning with the once-deeply entrenched patriarchal culture, prompting women to obtain positions of political power even as male populations recovered.

Conclusion

Does war shape how women interact with the state and engage in politics in the long run? By focusing on transformations in gender norms, the research reported in this article establishes a new, persistent consequence of political violence. Interviews with Khmer Rouge survivors reveal that the local disruption of a deeply patriarchal culture was an unintended consequence of the genocide. Upon assuming more economic power, women began to see themselves as active participants in local communities and increasingly asserted themselves in political affairs—moves that were emulated by other community members. Rather than experiencing a revival of pregenocide gender relations after the killings ended and the country's male population rebounded, the communities most exposed to the genocide developed gender equitable norms. Decades after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, women remain more economically autonomous in genocide-exposed regions, and such communities feature significantly more women seeking and securing political office. Extensive quantitative evidence corroborates these ethnographic narratives.

A central premise of this article—that postconflict communities develop new expectations of female behavior once the men and women in traditional gender structures accept and take advantage of changing norms—is striking within the context of the political economy literature on war and gender. Perhaps the most prevalent set of explanations points to the policies of postwar institutions, such as legislative

quotas or democratic elections, that augment female representation.[108] A burgeoning literature points to wartime female independence and its lingering effects on women's preferences.[109] What these accounts miss however is an appreciation of the role of the remaining community members: how the incentives and behaviors of men and women in traditional domestic structures are disrupted by violence. We find that independent of reformed institutions, patterns of emulation that erode patriarchal norms can sustain women's long-term place in local politics. One theoretical contribution of this research then is that it documents the composite effects of political violence on social relations through intracommunal and intergenerational channels over time. The presence of adult men (and the disproportionate amount of space they occupy in public spheres) is not the only limiting factor in equal representation: even if many men are removed from society, the beliefs that the remaining women and men have also must change.

This pathway by which the behavior of widows, untied from custom and deference, transforms cultural expectations resonates with theories of community socialization that highlight how local norms beyond the family can shape individual attitudes.[110] These studies of community socialization have made impressive inroads in exploring whether community structure matters in the long run. We identify the causal mechanisms that account for why these effects occur. The number of women pressed into outward-facing roles reflected the country's postwar demographic reality. Large swathes of men disappeared from society—from political patriarchs and Buddhist monks to the soldiers from the Cambodian Army and Khmer Rouge. Importantly, too, twenty years of civil war followed the end of the genocide. These long periods of political uncertainty and economic insecurity forced female survivors to develop their own means of persistence—or else face impoverishment while clinging to traditional expectations. The sheer intensity of violence inflicted against men ranging from young soldiers to family patriarchs, paired with severe economic scarcities, may help us to better understand why certain wars have led to new gender norms while others have not. When casualties are contained to particular cohorts of men (for example, young or unmarried conscripts) or when most servicemen return from war, incumbent patriarchs may inhibit female economic political advancement in the wake of violence.

[108] Shair-Rosenfield and Wood 2017; Tripp 2015; Paxton, Hughes, and Painter 2010.
[109] Acemoglu, Autor, and Lyle 2004; Hadzic and Tavits 2021.
[110] Charnysh and Peisakhin 2022.

An unexpected consequence of the Cambodian genocide was that it brought women together to resist the reassertion of male authority. Our findings are not meant to romanticize the lives of female genocide survivors. As our ethnographic evidence indicates, widows faced multiplex challenges while navigating new breadwinner responsibilities. In the context of a highly impoverished society, economic autonomy translated into leadership opportunities for some but into low-paying jobs for others. Female heads of household often face a double burden in building careers while managing chores at home. Their paths to power push against the tendency to categorize their experience as pure hardship or simple victory. Taken together, our qualitative and quantitative examinations of Cambodia illustrate how many women in the country have adapted to extraordinary circumstances—successfully shifting gender norms in a community still making sense of political trauma.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article can be found at http://muse.jhu.edu/resolve/191.

Data

Replication files for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/KQGW3M.

References

Acemoglu, Daron, David H. Autor, and David Lyle. 2004. "Women, War, and Wages: The Effect of Female Labor Supply on the Wage Structure at Midcentury." *Journal of Political Economy* 112, no. 3: 497–551. At https://doi.org/10.1086/383100.

Alderman, Harold, and Elizabeth M. King. 1998. "Gender Differences in Parental Investment in Education." *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 9, no. 4: 453–68. At https://doi.org/10.1016/S0954-349X(98)00040-X.

Alesina, Alberto, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn. 2013. "On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128, no. 2: 469–530. At https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjt005.

Arriola, Leonardo R., and Martha C. Johnson. 2014. "Ethnic Politics and Women's Empowerment in Africa: Ministerial Appointments to Executive Cabinets." *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 2: 495–510. At https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12075.

Balcells, Laia. 2012. "The Consequences of Victimization on Political Identities: Evidence from Spain." *Politics & Society* 40, no. 3: 311–47. At https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329211424721.

Bateson, Regina. 2012. "Crime Victimization and Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 3: 570–87. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000299.

Bennett, Caroline. 2015. "To Live amongst the Dead: An Ethnographic Exploration of Mass Graves in Cambodia." Ph.D. thesis, University of Kent.

Bernhard, Rachel, Shauna Shames, and Dawn Langan Teele. 2020. "To Emerge? Breadwinning, Motherhood, and Women's Decisions to Run for Office." *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 2: 379–94. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000970.

Berry, Marie E. 2017. "Barriers to Women's Progress after Atrocity: Evidence from Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Gender and Society* 31, no. 6: 850–53. At https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217737060.

Bisin, Alberto, and Thierry Verdier. 2001. "The Economics of Cultural Transmission and the Dynamics of Preferences." *Journal of Economic Theory* 97, no. 2: 298–319. At https://doi.org/10.1006/jeth.2000.2678.

Boyd, Robert, and Peter Richerson. 1985. *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

Brulé, Rachel, and Nikhar Gaikwad. 2021. "Culture, Capital, and the Political Economy Gender Gap: Evidence from Meghalaya's Matrilineal Tribes." *Journal of Politics* 83, no. 3: 834–50. At https://doi.org/10.1086/711176.

Buckley, Chris. 2021. "China's History is Revised, to the Glory of Xi Jinping." *New York Times*, November 16. At https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/world/asia/china-history-xi-jinping.html, accessed April 3, 2023.

Bush, Sarah Sunn. 2011. "International Politics and the Spread of Quotas for Women in Legislatures." *International Organization* 65, no. 1: 103–37. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818310000287.

Carruthers, Celeste K., and Marianne H. Wanamaker. 2015. "Municipal Housekeeping: The Impact of Women's Suffrage on Public Education." *Journal of Human Resources* 50, no. 4: 837–72. At https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.50.4.837.

Central Intelligence Agency. 2017. *The World Factbook.* Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency.

Chandler, David. 1991. *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Charnysh, Volha, and Leonid Peisakhin. 2022. "The Role of Communities in the Transmission of Political Values: Evidence from Forced Population Transfers." *British Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1: 238–58. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000447.

Cohen, Dara. 2016. *Rape during Civil War*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Davis, Donald R., and David E. Weinstein. 2002. "Bones, Bombs, and Break Points: The Geography of Economic Activity." *American Economic Review* 92, no. 5: 1269–289. At https://doi.org/10.1257/000282802762024502.

de Langis, Theresa, Judith Strasser, Thida Kim, and Sopheap Taing. 2014. "*Like Ghost Changes Body*": *A Study on the Impact of Forced Marriage under the Khmer Rouge Regime*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Transcultural Psychological Organization. At https://kh.boell.org/sites/default/files/forced_marriage_study_report_tpo_october_2014.pdf.

Desbarats, Jacqueline. 1995. *Prolific Survivors: Population Change in Cambodia, 1975–1993*. Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona State University Program for Southeast Asian Monograph.

de Walque, Damien. 2005. "Selective Mortality during the Khmer Rouge Period in Cambodia." *Population and Development Review* 31, no. 2: 351–68. At https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2005.00069.x.

Ea, Meng-Try. 2005. *The Chain of Terror: The Khmer Rouge Southwest Zone Security System*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Ebihara, May Mayko. 2018. *Svay: A Khmer Village in Cambodia*, ed. Andrew Mertha. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. 2012. "History of the Traitorous Activities of Chou Chet alias Sy, former Secretary of the West Zone." Document 00013660. ECCC Digital Archives. At https://www.eccc.gov.kh, accessed January 5, 2022.

Feldman, Marcus W., Kenichi Aoki, and Jochen Kumm. 1996. "Individual versus Social Learning: Evolutionary Analysis in a Fluctuating Environment." *Anthropological Science* 104, no. 3: 209–31. At https://doi.org/10.1537/ase.104.209.

Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989. 1987. Public Law 100-204. *U.S. Statutes at Large* 101: 1331–433.

Frieson, Kate. 2001. "In the Shadows: Women, Power and Politics in Cambodia." Occasional Paper No. 26. Victoria, BC, Canada: Center for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, University of Victoria.

Gaikwad, Nikhar, Erin Lin, and Noah Zucker. 2023. "Replication Data for: Gender after Genocide: How Violence Shapes Long-Term Political Representation." Harvard Dataverse, V1. At https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/KQGW3M.

Giuliano, Paola, and Nathan Nunn. 2021. "Understanding Cultural Persistence and Change." *Review of Economic Studies* 88, no. 4: 1541–581. At https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdaa074.

Goldin, Claudia D. 1991. "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment." *American Economic Review* 81, no. 4: 741–56. At https://www.jstor.org/stable/2006640.

González, Belén, and Richard Traunmüller. 2020. "The Political Consequences of Wartime Sexual Violence: Evidence from a List Experiment." Working Paper. At https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3529148.

Granovetter, Mark. 1978. "Threshold Models of Collective Behavior." *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 6: 1420–443. At https://doi.org/10.1086/226707.

Grasse, Donald. 2023. "State Terror and Long-Run Development: The Persistence of the Khmer Rouge." *American Political Science Review*. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000382.

Hadzic, Dino, and Margit Tavits. 2019. "The Gendered Effects of Violence on Political Engagement." *Journal of Politics* 81, no. 2: 676–80. At https://doi.org/10.1086/701764.

Hadzic, Dino, and Margit Tavits. 2021. "Wartime Violence and Post-War Women's Representation." *British Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 3: 1024–039. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123419000619.

Hopkins, Valerie. 2021. "Trying to Blur Memories of the Gulag, Russia Targets a Rights Group." *New York Times*, November 22. At https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/22/world/europe/russia-memorial-prosecution.html, accessed April 3, 2023.

Hughes, Melanie M. 2009. "Armed Conflict, International Linkages, and Women's Parliamentary Representation in Developing Nations." *Social Problems* 56, no. 1: 174–204. At https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2009.56.1.174.

Hughes, Melanie M., and Aili Mari Tripp. 2015. "Civil War and Trajectories of Change in Women's Political Representation in Africa, 1985–2010." *Social Forces* 93, no. 4: 1513–540. At https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov003.

Hughes, Melanie M., Pamela Paxton, Amanda Clayton, and Pär Zetterberg. 2017. "Quota Adoption and Reform over Time (QAROT), 1947–2015." Data set. ICPSR. At https://doi.org/10.3886/E100918V1.

Iversen, Torben, and Frances Rosenbluth. 2006. "The Political Economy of Gender: Explaining Cross-National Variation in the Gender Division of Labor and the Gender Voting Gap." *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 1: 1–19. At https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00166.x.

Jacobs, Rachel P. 2020. "Married by the Revolution: Forced Marriage as a Strategy of Control in Khmer Rouge Cambodia." *Journal of Genocide Research* 24, no. 3: 357–79. At https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2020.1856499.

Jähner, Harald. 2022. *Aftermath: Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich, 1945–1955*. New York, N.Y.: Knopf.

Khan, Sarah. 2021. "Count Me Out: Women's Unexpressed Preferences in Pakistan." Manuscript, Yale University.

Koos, Carlo. 2018. "Decay or Resilience? The Long-Term Social Consequences of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone." *World Politics* 70, no. 2 (April): 194–238. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887117000351.

Koos, Carlo, and Richard Traunmüller. 2021. "The Social and Political Consequences of Wartime Sexual Violence: New Evidence from List Experiments in Three Conflict-Affected Populations." Working Paper. At https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3796815.

Lawless, Jennifer L., and Richard L. Fox. 2010. *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office.* New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.

Ledgerwood, Judy L. 1996. "Politics and Gender: Negotiating Conceptions of the Ideal Woman in Present Day Cambodia." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 37, no. 2: 139–52. At https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.372003.

Lindsey, Summer. 2022. "Conflict, Protection, and Punishment: Repercussions of Violence in Eastern DR Congo." *American Journal of Political Science* 66, no. 1: 187–204. At https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12637.

Lupu, Noam, and Leonid Peisakhin. 2017. "The Legacy of Political Violence across Generations." *American Journal of Political Science* 61, no. 4: 836–51. At https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12327.

Mahoney, James. 2010. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (January): 120–47. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109990220.

Matanock, Aila M. 2017. *Electing Peace: From Civil Conflict to Political Participation*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.

Meyerrose, Anna M. 2020. "The Unintended Consequences of Democracy Promotion: International Organizations and Democratic Backsliding." *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 10–11: 1547–1581. At https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019897689.

Mysliwiec, Eva. 1988. *Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea*. Oxford, UK: Oxfam.

Paxton, Pamela, Melanie M. Hughes, and Matthew A. Painter II. 2010. "Growth in Women's Political Representation: A Longitudinal Exploration of Democracy, Electoral System and Gender Quotas." *European Journal of Political Research* 49, no. 1: 25–52. At https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01886.x.

Piscopo, Jennifer M. 2019. "The Limits of Leaning In: Ambition, Recruitment, and Candidate Training in Comparative Perspective." *Politics, Groups, and*

Identities 7, no. 4: 817–28. At https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1532917.

Presser, Harriet B. 1994. "Employment Schedules among Dual-Earner Spouses and the Division of Household Labor by Gender." *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 3: 348–64. At https://doi.org/10.2307/2095938.

Robinson, Amanda Lea, and Jessica Gottlieb. 2021. "How to Close the Gender Gap in Political Participation: Lessons from Matrilineal Societies in Africa." *British Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1: 68–92. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000650.

Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Nancy Burns, and Sidney Verba. 1994. "Gender and the Pathways to Participation: The Role of Resources." *Journal of Politics* 56, no. 4: 963–90. At https://doi.org/10.2307/2132069.

Shair-Rosenfield, Sarah, and Reed M. Wood. 2017. "Governing Well after War: How Improving Female Representation Prolongs Post-Conflict Peace." *Journal of Politics* 79, no. 3: 995–1009. At https://doi.org/10.1086/691056.

Straus, Scott. 2007. "Second-Generation Comparative Research on Genocide." *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (April): 476–501. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S004387100002089X.

Summerfield, Penny. 1989. *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict*. London, UK: Routledge.

Tripp, Aili Mari. 2015. *Women and Power in Postconflict Africa*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.

Vickery, Michael. 1984. *Cambodia: 1975–1982*. Boston, Mass.: South End Press.

Webster, Kaitlyn, Chong Chen, and Kyle Beardsley. 2019. "Conflict, Peace, and the Evolution of Women's Empowerment." *International Organization* 73, no. 2: 255–89. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818319000055.

Zucker, Eve Monique. 2013. *Forest of Struggle: Moralities of Remembrance in Upland Cambodia*. Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press.

Authors

Nikhar Gaikwad is an assistant professor of political science at Columbia University. He specializes in international and comparative political economy, with a focus on the politics of trade, migration, and climate policy-making. He can be reached at nikhar.gaikwad@columbia.edu.

Erin Lin is an assistant professor of political science at Ohio State University. Her research examines the legacies of war on human and economic development, with a regional focus on Cambodia. She can be reached at lin.2657@osu.edu.

Noah Zucker is a postdoctoral fellow at the Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance at Princeton University. In fall 2023, he will be an assistant professor in the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He specializes in international and comparative political economy with a focus on identity and global climate politics. He can be reached at noah.zucker@columbia.edu.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Kay Achar, Volha Charnysh, Alexandra Cirone, Rachel Jacobs, Adeline Lo, Tsering Wangyal Shawa, and participants at the 2020 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, the 2021 Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, the Ohio State University Comparative Politics Workshop, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Comparative Politics Workshop, and the University of Chicago Historical Political Economy Workshop for helpful comments. Genna Brizendine, Ricardo Graiff Garcia, Aura Gonzalez, Chase Harpole, Caroline Kelly, Michael Murawski, Kit Wislocki, and Yujin Zhang provided excellent research assistance.

Key Words

gender, politics, genocide, historical legacies, patriarchy, cultural change, Cambodia