Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations

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Introduction

Most scholars of contentious politics agree that, in contemporary and historical contexts, women's participation has been important for understanding the emergence, conduct and resolution of conflict across societies and over time. Scholarly attention to women's participation in violent dissent and rebellion, however, has lagged far behind its popular recognition. While contemporary news coverage, historical accounts, and a small body of empirical political science suggest wide variation in the roles and activities of women in militarized movements around the world, we still lack a deep understanding about the causes of this variation. As a result, it is difficult to know whether the growing number of anecdotes about women in leadership, rank-and-file and support positions within violent political organizations reflect exceptional cases or broader patterns. We also lack detailed information about whether women's participation in political violence influences, or is influenced by, the violent political organizations in which they participate. We tackle this latter question directly, and ask: **What explains the form and frequency of women's participation across violent political organizations (VPOs)?**[2] As such, we offer new theoretical and empirical insights into the ways in which the industrial organization of violent rebellion impacts patterns of gender-based participation.

While the existing literature on women's participation in political violence is quite small, it nonetheless includes such seminal works as Kampwirth's (2002) cross-conflict study of women in 20th-century Latin American insurgencies, Bloom's (2007) individual-level research on contemporary

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[2] We define a violent political organization (VPO) as any named group of two persons or more that uses violence as its primary means of bargaining over the structure or distribution of scarce public goods, policy interests, or decision-making authority with their primary enemy, be it the state or another VPO.

female suicide bombers, and a variety of comparative historical studies whose focus has ranged from individual women soldiers in the Phillipine Huk Rebellion (Lanzona 2009) to the all-female combat battalions of Dahomey, an historical West African kingdom corresponding to the southern part of present-day Benin (Alpern 2011). From these studies and others, the field has gained extensive knowledge about the varied forms of women's participation in violent groups. It has been difficult to determine either the uniqueness of these findings or their generalizability to broader patterns of women in conflict, however, given that much of the extant literature has focused on single-case histories, small-N qualitative studies and first-person narratives emphasizing specific organizations, conflicts, and/or women.

In response to this difficulty, we introduce new data on women's participation in 166 violent political organizations active in 19 African countries from 1950 to 2011. The original dataset that we analyze includes detail on the presence and activities of women across organizations, as well as information on the degree to which individual group agendas, ideologies and aims reflect gender awareness. Although we focus on a single region, our cross-national, cross-conflict, and cross-organizational research design provides important leverage for contextualizing the single or small-N case-oriented results of previous work.[3] It also allows us to compare patterns of women's participation across VPOs in a variety of background conditions and examine the generalizability of existing explanations for gender diversity in violent politics. Methodologically, we use both

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[3] This empirical approach is similar to Lahai's (2010) descriptive examination of variation in women's participation across 15 contemporary African conflicts. We diverge considerably on theoretical terms however, as Lahai heavily emphasizes frames of masculinity as a key determinant of both conflict and gendered participation in conflict.

quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate our claims about the organizational basis of women's VPO participation.

The limited body of research in this area also tends to focus overwhelmingly on 'supply-side' dynamics, or identifying some set of characteristics that might condition women uniquely towards violence. In contrast to this approach, we focus on the meso-foundations of women's participation and take a closer look at 'demand-side' dynamics, or the ways in which different organizational preferences and behaviors work to facilitate or impede women's presence in VPOs.[4] Women's voluntary participation in violent politics is tied invariably to the availability of opportunities; in order for women to have a presence in an organization, its leadership must provide space for those interested in participating. Extant scholarship on women's conflict participation, however, tends to overlook the importance of organizational preferences in determining the demography of these groups, instead focusing on supply-side dynamics and motivating conditions. Our work refocuses attention on variation in organizations themselves as a central explanation for women's varying participation across VPOs.

Our statistical results show that indicators of group demand for women participants correlates positively and strongly with women's participation. They suggest further that associations between the presence and roles of women in VPOs and supply-side variables are likely more assumed than real. Specifically, we find that group size, recruitment platforms and tactics – all of

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[4] Two recent and notable contributions that also examine the interplay between individual-level supply factors and organization-level demand for certain combat participants are Jocelyn Viterna's (2013) research on women's recruitment by the FMLN in El Salvador and Beber and Blattman's (2013) examination of the logic of child soldiering.

which affect organizational 'demand' for women – are more closely related to women's participation in violent political groups than women's aggregate willingness to serve or society-level respect for women's political rights – all common 'supply' indicators. We use a representative case illustration comparing the ELF and EPLF in Ethiopia to further examine these dynamics, leveraging the benefits of deep description and qualitative data for speaking to questions of causality and change over time.

We begin with three assumptions about how and why VPO leadership and potential participants approach decision-making. First, though it is not necessary for both parties to share the same ultimate goals (i.e., the leader's motivation for recruiting women may not reflect women's motivations for participating), they do similarly choose purposefully among action alternatives and make choices so as to maximize benefits while minimizing costs. Second, each organization's ability to succeed depends on its ability to attract and retain (or readily replace) members who are willing and able to engage in violence (Gates 2002). Finally, in order to be successful organization leaders must be able to persuade potential members to overcome collective action problems while also frustrating any opponents' ability to do the same (Lichbach 1995, 22-26).

'Supply' Dynamics and Gender Diversity in Violent Political Organizations

Scholars commonly cite revenge, representation and social role fulfillment as three key benefits that women seek from VPO participation. Bloom (2005) notes that personal tragedies such as the loss of a husband, brother, or father to political violence and/or a desire to punish the state for diminished educational and financial opportunities often motivate women to seek revenge against the government. According to Miranda Alison (2009), a young Tamil woman once highlighted this reason precisely as her rationale for joining the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), stating, "I want to do something. Staying at home and getting widowed at some stage or

waiting to be sexually abused by Sinhalese Soldiers is no life" (137). Participation in VPOs can often offer women both a vehicle through which they may avenge their losses and a means for protecting their security, given women's distinction as particularly valuable targets of state violence and repression during civil conflict (Mason 1992; Kaufman and Williams 2010; Gardam and Charlesworth 2000).[5]

Radical violent organizations can be a valuable substitute for traditional representation for individuals interested in supporting goals and expressing preferences that have been marginalized or overlooked by existing political structures (Molyneux 1985; Cunningham 2003). As issues of gender equality, women's liberation and economic rights are often excluded from mainstream political discourse, they tend to feature prominently among many revolutionary (and counter-revolutionary) women's policy preferences (Abeseykera 2007). For instance, in the Spanish Basque region "[I]t was ETA which insisted that there should be a women's organization set up because they saw that women did have special problems, not inside the movement, but in society" (MacDonald 1991, 19). In another example, the tenacity of many Sri Lankan and Northern Irish women toward the issue of representation in their national resistance movements was a foremost reason for their inclusion in the LTTE and IRA, respectively (Alison 2009: 125-6, 143). Adele Balasingham, a former high-ranking LTTE member, has noted that participation in the Tamil Tigers offered an invaluable "springboard from which women can organize, identify and articulate grievances and fight against

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[5] Based on evidence from Srebrenica, Carpenter (2006) argues that although women are less likely to be executed during conflict, they tend to be more vulnerable to sexual violence.

the modes of oppression and exploitation perpetrated on them" (Balansingham 1983, 6).[6]

Relatedly, some women find they are better able to fulfill or challenge cultural prescriptions about the role of women in society and politics through involvement in violent politics. On one hand, service to or within the organization can be seen as an extension of the woman's 'natural' role as a source of comfort and support to men (DeGroot 2000; Wood 2008). On the other hand, others have been found to participate for social and political empowerment and as a means to challenge societal injustices and legal inequities (Bhadra et al. 2007).[7]

While these benefits are certainly real, they do not seem to differ significantly from benefits that might accrue to any potential participant, whether male or female. In fact, the above conclusions as to why women have participated in the aforementioned violent insurgent organizations mirror almost directly conclusions from gender-neutral research into why individuals join insurgencies. Desires for revenge for or protection from state repression are not uniquely female, particularly given that both men and women have been victims and perpetrators of violence in conflict (Carpenter 2006; Cohen 2013). Real and perceived economic, social, and political grievances (Gurr 1970; Atran 2003), security concerns (Eck 2010), and congruence of one's personal preferences with organizational goals (Weinstein 2005) have all been found to influence individual participation in political violence. Based on this observation, it appears that supply-side explanations *alone* are likely insufficient for explaining variation in how, when and why women participate in these

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[6] According to Alison (2009, 139), a common refrain as stated by an anonymous female LTTE cadre has been that 'through our struggle for liberation we are fighting for the women's liberation also (sic)…[W]e will free the girls in this country, not only within the movement, outside also.'

[7] Alison (2009) argues, that in very traditional societies women may be utilized in support roles early on so as not to contradict cultural values in society.

groups.

Organizational Demand for Women Participants

That there are few 'uniquely female' factors motivating women to take up violence suggests that, at the micro-level, the conditions under which women engage in violent political behavior may not differ substantially from those that encourage men's behavior. At the meso-level, however, there is considerable variation across VPOs in terms of how and why they might provide the organizational space for women's participation. Especially as they compete with other organizations for new members, prestige and public support, VPOs can be distinguished by their relative willingness to lower the costs of participation for women volunteers as well as by their approaches to strategic positioning among rival organizations. VPOs can also vary in their sensitivity to the comparative advantages that women participants can provide, particularly with respect to productivity and tactical efficiency.

One of the most obvious advantages of openness towards women's participation is that organizations can draw from a larger pool of potential members by not limiting consideration to men only. Membership is a critical material resource for all violent political groups, helping to determine the range of activities that can be included in their repertoires (Crenshaw 2001), the intensity and frequency of their attacks (Siqueira 2005) and the resultant likelihood of success against their opponents (Cunningham et al. 2009). For example, openness to women participants by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia "was essential as part of the overall human capital required to successfully launch a fight against the might of the Derg" (Veale 2003, 17). The ability to encourage female membership provides even more value when men are unavailable to join

the pool of potential participants (Taylor 2000; Abeysekera 2007; Alison 2009).[8]

Despite the benefits from casting a wide net for potential participants, managing a gender-diverse membership can be costly. One particularly pressing concern is the risk of internal conflict over how best to incorporate women's interests into group goals and platforms. Some leaders may prefer to avoid the inclusion of subgroups that advocate for polarizing or fringe preferences given that they can significantly jeopardize group cohesiveness, as well as public support (Olson 1965, Haines 1984).[9] For example, in the early days of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in present-day Namibia, "the gender-equality question was on the agenda beginning in 1970 but was considered subordinate to the objective of independence. To focus equally on gender equality and independence was seen as increasing the risk of losing the internal unity of SWAPO"

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[8] Some VPOs desire women participants to encourage men combatants' use of aggression as a reflection of their 'maleness.' For example, the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia's outreach to women as support personnel is largely viewed as an extension of Colombian *machismo* and a reflection of widespread gendered beliefs about the appropriate division of labor in society (Schmidt 2007)

[9] This dynamic has been observed among both violent and non-violent social movement organizations. For instance, disagreements over appropriate goals and tactics contributed to the decline and demise of various U.S. Black insurgency organizations in the 1970's, including the Black Panther Party and the Weather Underground (McAdam 1982; Jacobs 1997). In another example, Banaszak (1996) shows the U.S. American Equal Rights Association (AERA) split because of an inability to decide whether their primary focus should be the rights of women or Blacks.

(Olsson 2007, 172).[10] Such concerns may steer some organization leaders away from encouraging women's participation. As they can hardly afford to lose valuable supporters, the costs of internal discord resulting from conflict over strategic goals is likely to be greater for smaller groups. Therefore, our first hypothesis reflects an expectation that organizations with larger numbers will find gender-diversity to be less risky and therefore will be more likely to have women participants.

H1: As a VPO grows larger, it is more likely to include women participants.

From an operational perspective, women's ability to trade on gender stereotypes can convert them into an important type of specialized labor, which presents significant tactical opportunities for VPO leaders. Common stereotypes of women as more pacific, more caring and less physically dangerous than men have often afforded them greater access to human and material targets; women's ability and willingness to take on both combat and support roles often contributes greatly to organizational efficiency. For example, women's ability to distract government forces as decoys during important operations (Klouzal 2008), to transport money, weapons and other materiel across borders and/or to jailed (male) members (Lanzona 2009), and to act as trustworthy liasons between insurgents and locals in pass-through areas (DeGroot 2000) has proven valuable to many organizations. Bloom (2005, 2007) has shown that terrorist organizations often strategically deploy women as suicide bombers in areas where gender stereotypes prevent them from being suspected of subversive activity or intimately searched even under suspicion. Former Palestine Liberation Organization member Leila Khalid has also noted that "[O]n some missions girls are better than men. We believe that women are more coldblooded than men. A girl can go for sabotage missions

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[10] This is not unlike prior justifications for women's exclusion from state militaries, which held that women would disrupt bonding processes (Feld 1973, 564) and thus negatively impact combat effectiveness (Woodward and Winter 2004, 286; Dunivin 1994).

(sic) hijacking is one – or plant mines because women are not nervous" (Taylor 2000, 302).

We expect further that organizations specializing in terror attacks are more likely to benefit from these advantages, as terrorist operations are among those most reliant on the 'element of surprise:' **H2: VPOs that rely on terrorist tactics are more likely to involve women than organizations that do not use terrorism.**

Although tactical preferences can explain why some VPOs may want to incorporate women, they do not give much insight into the mechanisms through which group leaders actually encourage women to solve collective action problems and participate. With the agenda points that VPOs include in their political platforms, however, dissident leaders can signal to women specifically that "*with* their help they *can* win" (Lichbach 1995, 23, emphasis in original). Just as terror organizations have included women in order to better compete against each other for tactical supremacy (Cunningham 2003), other VPOs have used gender-inclusive messaging to attract female members away from competitors. Whether each group's stance on 'women's issues' is strategic or genuine, the rhetoric is often meant to signal a welcoming environment to interested women. This in turn gives the organization potentially strong recruitment and retention advantages over their rivals. For instance, in its 1984 Political Program, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) insisted that women's participation in their movement was critical to its success and committed to "not discriminate based on gender in the administration of our organization and…actively seek out and recruit women to take their rightful place in our struggle for national self determination" (ONLF 1984).[11] Though this strategy pits the risk of losing unsympathetic followers against the benefits of

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[11] The Mexican Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) laid out a series of ten platform points in its 1993 Revolutionary Laws that detailed women's right to decide whether and how to

increasing membership, organizations that promote gender-inclusiveness are likely to pay fewer costs in terms of time and effort toward socializing new members to women participants or marketing radical departures from their original platforms.[12] Thus our third expectation: **H3: VPOs with agendas that support gender equality are more likely to include women than organizations with gender-neutral agendas.**

Finally, the number of rivals with which a given VPO competes may also have implications for cross-organizational variation in women's participation. On one hand, groups' desire to avoid losing dissatisfied members to rivals may be especially pronounced in highly competitive environments. This can discourage leaders from making political space for women participants in their organizations, opting instead to keep its membership less controversial by keeping it less gender-diverse. On the other hand, particularly in an environment with many other groups, the benefits from a large fighting force may drive organizations to be more inclusive in order to swell their ranks. Thus our fourth hypothesis is non-directional yet highlights our expectation that the competitiveness of a VPOs environment matters for determining women's participation: **H4: The**

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participate in the revolutionary struggle, and the group's rejection of and intention to punish violence and discrimination against all women, but especially Zapatista women (EZLN 1993).

[12] Although women's participation in VPOs can increase the likelihood that their interests will be included into broader efforts at transforming the social and/or political status quo, incorporating women's concerns can be costly and some organizations will actively avoid it. For example, low levels of women's participation in insurgencies throughout Latin America have been attributed in part to a lack of organizational attention to recruiting women and championing their causes (Reif 1986, Gonzalez-Perez 2006).

likelihood of women's participation in a given VPO is related to the number of other violent organizations operating in its politically-relevant environment.

Research Design

This study is the first to use a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine women's participation across a broad cross-section of violent groups in Africa. To our knowledge, this has not yet been accomplished for any world region. To test whether variation in women's participation across VPOs is related systematically to variation in organization-level characteristics, we collected an original cross-sectional dataset on the presence of women, women's roles and key organizational characteristics of 166 groups in conflict in Africa from 1950 to 2011. Our choice of Africa as the region of analysis has theoretical and empirical value; Very little qualitative research and no quantitative research concentrates on women's involvement in violent politics in Africa even as the region continues to garner increasing interest from scholars of conflict.

Our unit of analysis is the violent political organization (VPO), a category that includes actors that others have been characterized as rebels, terrorists, paramilitaries and/or self-defense groups. [13] The unifying characteristic among the groups in our sample is their use of organized political violence. We do not consider the gender profiles of spontaneous mobs, violent groups not primarily motivated by politics, or political groups that do not prioritize the use of violence for bargaining purposes.[14],

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[13] A full list of the VPO's in our sample is provided in the online appendix, along with a table of summary statistics and additional detail on variable measurement.

[14] For example, we exclude groups like the South African taxi associations and prison gangs (28's), which operate more like criminal gangs than groups organized for political violence.

We used purposive stratified sampling to select nineteen countries from the continent. Table 1 shows the dimensions on which the countries in our sample vary. Our data include groups from each major African sub-region as well as groups from countries with majority Islamic populations (e.g., Algeria and Dijibouti) and those with large Christian populations (e.g., Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola).[15] The sample is stratified also to include countries with large numbers of conflicts and VPOs, like Ethiopia, and those with few groups and conflicts, like Gambia. Though it would be ideal to study women's participation in the population of VPOs or a random sample drawn from the complete global population, resource constraints hampered such a research design. However by using purposive stratified sampling, we were able to collect more detailed data on our sample of VPOs, in light of these constraints.

[Table 1 here]

Our data reflect all VPOs that were active in each of the selected countries during the period of interest. The groups were culled from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project Actor Dataset (UCDP 2012), the Global Terrorism Database (START 2012), along with academic and journalistic accounts of violent conflict. We include splinter groups as long as they behave as independent actors. For example, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM) is organized into many "katibat" (brigades). Although some would code the AQIM katibat as distinct actors, we include only one observation for AQIM since the katibat largely lack independent strategic commands. In contrast, we include ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K, two distinct groups that emerged from a split in the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), along with the original organization. Further information about our coding rules and variable measurement is available in the online appendix.

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[15] We follow United Nations convention on identifying African sub-regions. Religion data come from the World Religion Dataset (Maoz and Henderson 2013).

Dependent Variables

We code two dependent variables indicating women's VPO participation.[16] The first, *women participants*, is a binary indicator coded one when there is evidence that women took on any active role in an organization.[17] Only participation occurring within the context of a group is considered; women who acted alone or in unorganized groups are not reflected in these data, although they certainly do contribute to broader patterns of violence. The second variable, *women in combat roles*, indicates women's involvement in the direct use of violence. Specifically, it reflects evidence that women participated in direct combat as well as remote combat activities like detonating bombs.

We coded these variables largely from secondary sources including historical accounts of individual organizations and conflicts, memoirs, accounts of DDR processes, human rights reports and accounts given by well-known organizations like Amnesty International and the Advocates for Human Rights, VPO statements and manifestos, and thousands of news articles obtained through LexisNexis. In some cases, there was a wealth of detailed information on women's participation, such as estimates of the number of women in a group, descriptions of their activities, and narratives about why they became involved. In other cases, we could only assess that women participated

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[16] We do not distinguish between women and girls in these data for two reasons. First, many of our data sources do not explicitly distinguish between women and girls when describing 'female participation.' Second, while there may be significant differences in the effect of having women or girls in a group, such a discussion is rooted less in the politics of gendered participation than in the politics of age-based participation (i.e., adult versus child soldiering).

[17] We consider active involvement to be willful engagement in the activities, administration or maintenance of the organization.

because a woman was arrested in connection with a violent event or confessed to having participated in a group after being caught and tortured.[18]

Organizational Demand Variables

Our main independent variables represent indicators of organizational demand for women participants laid out in our argument. In order to test the effect of group size, we collected information on the number of active members in each VPO.[19] Figure 1 shows the distribution of organization sizes using median estimates. Groups in the sample operated with as few as ten members while other organizations were reported to have as many as two million members. Accurately assessing a non-state actor's size is made difficult by the fact that there are often substantial discrepancies between estimates and a group's actual size. Estimates likely vary by source, given that most VPOs have incentives to overstate their strength while their opponents have incentives to understate the size of the threats they face. To minimize the potential for bias related

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[18] A woman confessing under duress is not a clear indication of women's involvement in an organization but as it is difficult to gather this type of information, we consider these sources. As a robustness check, we exclude groups for which we found fewer than three distinct sources indicating women participants and our results remain. This and other robustness checks are included in the online appendix.

[19] We do not include numbers of non-participating supporters (e.g. members of related front organizations or non-violent auxiliary groups) in this estimate.

to measurement error, we use a dichotomous measure of this variable in our models.[20] *Small* is a binary variable indicating groups with median sizes between 2 and 999 members. This cut-off value reflects organizations with group sizes that fall in the lowest 25th percentile of our data.

[Figure 1 Here]

To test our second hypothesis, we code a binary variable, *Terrorist,* indicating whether a given VPO is listed as a perpetrator of terrorism in the GTD, or there exists other evidence of terrorism as a dominant tactic. Ninety-four organizations in the sample are coded as having conducted terrorist attacks. Of these organizations, 77 were involved in reciprocated conflicts with the state. Fifty of the terrorist organizations sought overthrow of the existing government while 32 acted for some form of self-determination.[21]

Our third hypothesis stipulates that groups with gender-inclusive ideologies will be more likely to include women. We code a group as having a *Positive gender ideology* if it declares publicly that women are integral to their movement or their struggle aims to liberate women. The Congolese National Liberation Front (FLNC), for instance, is listed as having a positive gender ideology because one of its stated aims was "to realize equality between man and woman" (FLNC 1977,14). The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Ethiopia is also coded as having a positive gender ideology as it announced in its political platform numerous goals regarding women's equality, including to "ensure the political, economic and cultural equality of women with men," make certain that women

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[20] Dichotomizing the size variable also helps address high collinearity between organization size and other variables, including those measuring terrorism and secessionism.

[21] Ten organizations are coded as both attempting to overthrow the state and challenge its sovereignty over territory.

have access to maternity leave, guarantee women's rights to organize themselves in order to protect their rights and to remove laws that are deemed to be discriminatory against women.[22]

Our final hypothesis examines the effect of inter-group competition on women's participation. *Competition* counts the number of other violent organizations operating in a state that can be considered to have the same enemy as the group in question. For a paramilitary group, for instance, the number of other paramilitary or self-defense organizations in the country would be coded as competitors. Alternatively, when groups are coded as rebel or terrorist groups, we count the number of other organizations that consider the state their primary enemy.[23] We measure this for the year marking the midpoint of each group's existence.

Control Variables

We also include a number of group-level characteristics that may affect the relationship between our main explanatory variables and groups' inclusion of women. First, though our arguments focus on groups' willingness and ability to encourage women's participation, forced recruitment and involuntary conscription are clear options for leaders to pursue new members and increase productivity (Eck 2014). Anecdotal evidence suggests that VPOs using forced recruitment strategies can be rather indiscriminate in their coercion and are perhaps more likely to include an array of diverse members, including women and children. For example, the Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (FPLC /UPC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo launched a massive

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[22] "Political Programme Of The Oromo Liberation Front." BBC Summary of World Broadcasts. July 18, 1988.

[23] An alternate measure examining all other violent groups in the state regardless of their enemy was tested. As the results did not vary, we display only results using the more precise measure.

conscription campaign to fill the ranks of its military. This operation sought to include "whoever was available" including women, men, children and sometimes even previously demobilized individuals (Grover 2010, 486). Forced recruitment might impact women's participation in VPOs for at least two reasons. First, groups recruiting by force can replace disgruntled members easily with new recruits. Second, as individuals forced to participate may be less invested in the politics of the group, leadership may enjoy fewer tests of their decision-making, especially as it relates to the inclusion of new members. Given this, we expect groups that recruit through force to include women both in support roles and in combat roles. To account for these dynamics, we code a variable *Forced recruitment* that indicates whether an organization has used coercive recruitment techniques.

Since broad political agendas may influence the mobilization potential of VPOs, we code whether the group's main aims were for self-determination or independence (*Secessionist*) and separately, whether they sought control of the state. Buhaug (2006) suggests weaker groups will be more likely to pursue limited aims of separation rather than aim for control of the entire state. As separatists are less likely to attract popular support, they may be more apt to include women to help them achieve their goals. Alternatively, as these groups tend to be smaller, they may be reluctant to include participants that may threaten cohesion.

We also record whether groups are motivated by fundamentalist Islamic ideals or the development of theocracies based on Sharia law (*Fundamentalist*). In some cases, radical Islamist groups like the GIA in Algeria act to reinforce women's exclusion from public life. Alternatively, Gonzalez-Perez (2011) argues that many Islamist VPOs have engaged in a strategic reinterpretation of Islamic law to justify women's participation in suicide bombings. In both cases however, a fundamentalist Islamic orientation appears to influence group's willingness to include women participants. To examine whether the primary target of a group has any effect on whether women

are likely to participate in an organization, we additionally code whether a group is a paramilitary or self-defense group.

Finally, we use a series of variables to capture supply-side dynamics in order to evaluate the relative explanatory power of our organizational demand variables. We operationalize the supply of potential women participants to VPOs as a function of women's social and political status in their respective societies. One could argue that if society generally accepts the notion that it is appropriate for women to participate in violence, non-state actors may adopt similar positions on the issue.[24] To capture attitudes about the general social acceptability of women's participation in conflict, we include a binary indicator of whether women are present in the state military in the group's midyear.

In line with extant arguments suggesting women's willingness to participate in violent organizations is influenced by their desires for greater political rights and opportunities, we also include a pair of variables measuring whether women are afforded political rights by the state. We use the Cingranelli and Richards (2013) *Women's Political Rights* variable to measure whether de facto and de jure gender equality exist in each country. This variable is coded "0" if women's rights are restricted by law, "1" if gender equality in politics is guaranteed by law but not in practice, "2" if political equality is guaranteed by law but participation is not equal in practice, and "3" if political equality is both guaranteed by law and practiced. We also employ an indicator of whether each state in question ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Presumably, states that ratify CEDAW are more likely to strive to ensure that women have equal rights than states failing to ratify. *CEDAW Ratification* is

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[24] Given that many VPOs exist to challenge the prevailing order, status-quo social norms may not be relevant for VPO preferences and behavior.

coded "1" if the state ratified the treaty by the groups midyear and zero otherwise. As the treaty only went into force in 1981, we code missing values for all countries before this year.

We further relate the potential supply of women's participation to levels of state-sponsored violence. We utilize CIRI's *Physical Integrity Rights* Index to indicate levels of state repression, given that high repression may not only motivate individual women to participate in conflict but also encourage groups to be more inclusive in their outreach. This variable ranges from 0-8, with "0" corresponding to no respect for individual physical integrity rights and "8" corresponding to full respect.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows that women have been quite active in the VPOs in our sample. Women participated in some capacity in about 45 percent of the groups.[25] The data show further that women participated in more than half of the terrorist organizations in our sample, three quarters of the organizations with gendered platforms and around a quarter of small organizations.

[Table 2 here]

Women also participated more often in VPOs seeking to overthrow the government than in groups seeking self-determination. Of the organizations involved in civil conflict with the state, 15 were involved in large-scale civil wars.[26] Thirteen of these rebel organizations (87%) included women

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[25] Descriptive statistics presented for *Women's Participants* use only 161 observations because in five cases it was unclear whether women were included in VPOs. Similarly, in only 154 cases were we certain that women served in combat roles.

[26] Large-scale civil war is coded when the VPO is part of a dyad where conflict reached 1000 battle-related deaths as coded by UCDP (Harbom et al. 2008).

members. Women were observed less often among the radical Islamist and self-defense and paramilitary groups.

Women less often participate in the actual commission of violence, although significant variation in the percentage of groups with women combatants exists. More than half of organizations with positive gender ideologies include women in combat roles. Thirty-six percent of the terrorist groups involved women in violent activities while only 13% of small groups used women combatants. Thirty percent of the groups seeking to overthrow the state, 33% of self-defense/paramilitary groups, 26% of self-determination groups and only 11% of radical Islamist organizations included women combatants. Women also engaged in combat in more than half of the organizations involved in intense civil wars. These statistics appear to support our theoretical expectations.

One advantage of using data on organizations active in a variety of time periods is that we can observe that women's participation has been a stable characteristic of violent political organizations in Africa. Figure 2 displays the distribution of groups with women participants over the time period under consideration.[27] Figure 2a shows the number of groups operating by decade; Figures 2b and 2c show the number and percentage of VPOs including women participants and combatants, respectively.[28] Figure 2 shows that the 1970's saw the highest percentage of organizations with women combatants, followed by the 1950's/1960's. This is unsurprising, since many of Africa's nationalist and independence movements, like those in Algeria, Morocco, Eritrea,

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[27] The 2000's include 2010 and 2011.

[28] Organizations can appear in multiple decades in this figure. The average age of an organization in the sample is 11.3 years old while, the median organization lasts just 8 years.

and Angola took place during these years.[29] By the 1980's and 1990's almost half of the VPOs in our sample had women participants and almost one-third integrated women as combatants. The percentage of VPO's including women rises slightly to 52% during the period 2000-2011, although interestingly the proportion of VPOs with women combatants was also at its lowest during that time.

[Figure 2 here]

Figure 3 shows the distribution of VPOs by geographic sub-region. Women's combat engagement varies dramatically across Africa's sub-regions though there is not much regional variation in generalized participation. Middle Africa saw a higher percentage of organizations with women participants while Southern Africa had the smallest percentage of organizations with women members. The difference between these regions is just 7 percentage points. Despite a large pool of VPOs with women participants, Middle Africa had the smallest proportion of VPOs utilizing women in combat roles, followed by North Africa. West and East Africa have the highest percentages of VPOs including women in combat roles, both around 38%.

[Figure 3 here]

Statistical Results

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[29] Similar trends have been found in Latin America where increasing numbers of women began joining VPOs in the 1970's as a result of changes in social and economic conditions that led to an upsurge in the number of female-headed households. As women became more involved in the workforce and public life, they connected with networks that eventually led to their mobilization in violent organizations (Viterna 2006).

Since our dependent variables are binary, we use logistic regression models to evaluate our hypotheses in a multivariate setting.[30] Each table of regression analyses includes four sets of results. In the first column of each table we report our base model results, which include only independent variables highlighted in our hypotheses. The second column shows the effects of the full set of our explanatory variables. The third column shows how our theoretical variables perform when we control only supply-related characteristics, and the fourth includes controls for any additional group-level covariates.[31]

[Table 3 about here]

The results in Table 3 highlight the effect of group-level characteristics on women's overall participation in violent organizations and offer strong support for three of our four hypotheses. In accordance with H1, small organizations are significantly less likely to include women than larger groups. Consistent with H2, the results show that organizations using terrorism appear to be more likely to include women than those that do not employ terrorism. As expected (H3), VPOs espousing positive gender ideologies are more likely to have women members than organizations that do not explicitly state their support for women's participation, rights or concerns. We find no effect for inter-group competition, contrary to our fourth hypothesis. The statistically significant and positive effect of forced recruitment on the likelihood of women's participation corroborates our expectation that VPOs recruiting through conscription are more likely to have women among their ranks than those relying exclusively on volunteers. Secessionist aims have a negative and statistically significant effect on women's participation.

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[30] All statistical tests were conducted using Stata12.

[31] We do this to alleviate concerns regarding inefficiency of our statistical tests.

None of the state-level variables reflecting supply-side explanations emerge as significant predictors of the presence of women participants in these organizations. Neither respect for citizens' physical integrity rights, women's participation in the state military, the level of women's political rights, nor the state's ratification of CEDAW have statistically significant relationships to women's participation in our sample. The lack of a clear relationship between these supply-related indicators may suggest that models of women's participation relying on these explanations alone may be underspecified. The significant relationships between our demand-related indicators and the likelihood of women's participation suggest strongly that explanatory factors at the organization level should be taken more seriously in future research.

[Figure 4 about here]

We look to the first differences, or changes in the probability of women's participation as our covariates go from their lowest to highest values, to shed light on the substantive impact of these statistical relationships.[32] These are displayed in Figure 4. Positive gender ideologies have the largest substantive effect as VPOs without positive gender ideologies have a 0.53 probability of including women while those with gendered ideologies have a probability of 0.94, denoting a substantial 78% change. By comparison, the probability that a group has women participants increases by 63% when it specializes in terrorist tactics and by 64% when it adopts forced recruitment strategies. A group contracting from a membership of at least 1000 individuals to a smaller size yields a first difference of -0.22, corresponding to a 43% change in probability. Inter-group competition exerts the smallest impact. Specifically, the probability of female membership

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[32] First differences in Figure 4 and 5 are calculated from Models 2 and 6, respectively, using CLARIFY (Tomz et al 2003). Percentage changes are calculated by dividing the first difference by the baseline probability and multiplying the quotient by 100.

decreases by 0.03 when a VPO moves from an environment of minimum to maximum competition, though this first difference is statistically insignificant.

[Table 4 about here]

In Table 4, we examine whether our hypotheses extend to the special case of women's participation, engagement in combat roles. These results demonstrate that a tactical specialty in terrorism consistently predicts women's participation in combat roles. Small VPOs are less likely to include women combatants in three quarters of the models while VPOs with positive gender ideologies are more likely to deploy women for combat in half of the models. Again, the number of rival organizations bears no significant relationship to the probability that a VPO will include women in combat positions. Together, the depressant effect of small VPO size and the lack of statistical significance for inter-group competition suggests that the form and likelihood of women's participation in VPOs may not generally follow a 'logic of desperation', despite the fact that organizations utilizing coercive recruitment strategies are more likely to include women combatants.

Women appear less likely to participate in combat in organizations characterized as Islamic fundamentalist or secessionist, though these results appear sensitive to model specification. We find that neither the degree to which a state guarantees women's political rights domestically, nor women's participation in the state military organization influences women's combat participation. A state's ratification of CEDAW, however, does bear a positive influence on women's combat participation in one model.

[Figure 5 about here]

Figure 5 graphically displays the substantive effect of each covariate on the probability that women perpetrate violent acts. Positive gender ideology is the largest determinant of women's participation in combat roles, as it was for women's general participation. When groups adopt positive gender ideologies, the probability of women participating in combat increases by 129%. The

probability of woman combatants increases by 126% when an organization adopts a tactical specialty in terrorism compared to the 118% increase in probability associated with a change from voluntary to forceful recruitment. The probability of women combatants decreases by 57% when a VPO is reduced to a small size.

While our statistical analyses establish broad patterns across cases, we also take a qualitative look at these relationships to explore more deeply the causal relationship between women's participation and VPO characteristics. A case illustration of women's participation in the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) from 1961-1991 is ideal for this purpose. The existence of multiple VPOs operating in the same territory, within the same time period, and with the same immediate enemy allows us to hold constant state-level, supply-related conditions, including the level of repression, women's political and social rights and the nature of the organizations' shared enemy. It also presents the advantage of allowing variation on group-level, demand-related characteristics. Furthermore, these groups are representative of the VPOs in our data on almost all dimensions.[33] With the following illustration, we demonstrate that institutional differences between the organizations largely explain the significant variation in female participation across these groups. We also show that while supply-side explanations clearly account for women's inclinations toward joining both organizations, they did not determine their opportunities to do so.

Illustrative Case: Eritrea (1961- 1991)

The ELF and EPLF figured prominently in Eritrea's thirty-year war of independence with Ethiopia. In 1961, The ELF was formed by a group of exiles as an Islamist movement seeking to

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[33] A comparison of these organizations to the median case in the dataset is available in the online appendix.

liberate Eritrean Muslims from domination by majority-Christian Ethiopia (Iyob 1995; Woldemikael 1993). The organization's failure to advance an inclusive nationalist agenda led to an early membership drawn exclusively from the majority-Muslim rural lowlands. After experiencing a substantial loss of manpower in the 1960's due to capture, desertion and internal disputes, the ELF made an earnest attempt to diversify its recruitment by accepting a small number of Christians (Pool 2001; Iyob 1995). In the late 1960's, accusations of civilian abuse, including allegations of rape, led factions within the group to initiate a reform process aimed at restoring both internal and external support (Iyob 1995). These attempts were met with violent reprisals against reformists, forcing some to flee to neighboring Sudan while others formed splinter groups in 1970. Three distinct groups emerged to form the EPLF, the organization that would go on to win the war of independence against Ethiopia in 1991.[34]

Though Eritrea was split evenly between conservative Muslim and Christian communities, Selassie notes that even at the outset of the war, "the entire society practice[d] traditional values that suppress women" (1992, 67). Universally, women had no voice at home or in public (Hale 2001, 155) and tended to be uneducated and were generally excluded from political engagement. Further, restrictions on women's ownership of land or property left them with no independent productive capacity (Silkin 1983; Leisure 1999). Cowan (1983, 147) observed that women's statuses in Eritrean society were so low that the birth of a boy warranted a slaughtered sheep while silence was the best response for a girl. In total, the disenfranchisement of women in Eritrean society was underscored in the adage, "Where is the gain if one marries a woman to give birth to a woman?" (NUEW 1980,

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[34] Victory was achieved when the EPLF and its allies in the EPRDF defeated the Ethiopian regime. After protracted war between the two organizations, the ELF was expelled from Eritrea in 1981 (Iyob 1995).

12). Given their positions in society, it is unsurprising that many Eritrean women were inclined to participate in a movement that might offer them transcendent opportunities or that men would resist it.

Women's Participation in Eritrean VPOs

The ELF and EPLF were active concomitantly in Eritrea, yet differed considerably in their openness to women participants. The EPLF included women in all aspects of the organization throughout much of its existence, while only a marginal number of women became involved in the ELF, primarily in support roles and beginning much later in its history.

In line with its conservative Islamic perspective on women's participation in public activities, the group's membership was entirely male in its early years. Women who did aid the struggle were not recognized as full-fledged members or even affiliates of the group (Mason 2007, 114). [35] Even without recognition, women volunteered because they believed that participating in the revolution would help them earn greater social rights (GUEW n.d.). By the late 1960's, the ELF began to allow women's participation in small numbers (Bereketeab 2009, 209), with women participants supporting the organization as nurses and cooks; others provided shelter or aided the front by fundraising, distributing information and protesting. While some women engaged in smuggling weapons, transmitting messages and reporting enemy movements, very few engaged in open combat or leadership roles.

Because of its limited capabilities, the organization predominantly engaged in sporadic assaults against police and military targets (Pool 1980, 40). Given this, its premium on participants

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[35] That women still participated in the movement without being extended opportunities by an organization demonstrates that they have agency in deciding whether to participate in violence even if they are restricted from participating in VPOs.

who could carry out such surreptitious missions was high, and it opened up important opportunities for women to become engaged. For example, in one instance where a woman was intercepted while transmitting ELF documents, she was interrogated but released with a simple warning not to associate with "bandits." Mason (2007) points out that a man in that position would likely have been imprisoned or tortured. Women were able to go undetected because, as one Eritrean put it, "[N]o one ever thought a woman would be hiding a gun" (Israel et al. 2002, 207).

In 1971, the year following its fracture, the ELF held a national congress during which members discussed the growing calls from women participants that their roles in the struggle be formally recognized. From almost the start of their inclusion, prominent women had been demanding reform regarding women's rights and freedoms (Mason 2001). In addition, the new EPLF splinter group announced its intention to incorporate women's issues into their agenda and allow their full participation in 1970 (Fekadu 2008), having previously criticized the ELF for failing to articulate any policies regarding women (Krosh 2005,8). In an attempt to assuage growing internal dissent and address these critiques, the ELF agreed to facilitate women's participation in the struggle in 1971 (NUEW 1999; Mason 2001) and initiated its first women combatants in 1973. Importantly, the EPLF also formally moved to utilize women in combat in 1973 (Connell 1993, 66; Bereketeab 2009).

ELF women that participated in combat roles often paid particularly steep penalties: unaccompanied and unveiled women on the front lines were assumed to be sexually available and often subjected to predatory behavior by their male comrades, including rape and other sexual assaults (Mason 2001, 7). Despite women's growing participation in the group, a majority of ELF members never really believed that women should be direct participants in the violent movement

(Mason 2001, 3; Cowan 1983, 148).[36] The group's more conservative leaders were generally "anxious to end Ethiopian rule but not to see Eritrean society changed" (Connell 2001, 346) and its original leadership and main support base in Barka significantly resisted increases in women's involvement (Connell and Killion 2001, 547).

Despite internal discord over the politics of women's participation, the ELF continued to augment its official position toward women and draw in more women participants. In 1974, the organization created the Eritrean Women's General Union (GUEW) in response to increasing demands from women members (GUEW n.d.). In 1975, the group inserted language into their political program defending women's place in a liberated Eritrea (Mason 2001). These changes appear to have been mainly on the surface however, as the group retained many of the modes of women's oppression including child betrothal, polygamy, and female circumcision (Mason 2001).

The EPLF split from the ELF over core strategic goals: Rather than focusing solely on the creation of a sovereign Eritrean state, the Marxism-inspired EPLF was interested in fomenting a revolution that drastically altered society (Bernal 2000, 2001). The EPLF considered women's participation and emancipation to be vital elements of this goal , as women's liberation and national

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[36] Some women in the ELF were equally opposed to women's participation in violent roles. As practicing non-violence is an Islamic edict, "la 'unf," some women suggested non-violence was more in line with Islam than violent activities (Mason 2007). Wilson (1991), on the other hand, suggests that the Islamic orientation of the ELF prevented women from participating even when they wanted to.

liberation were inextricable (Zerai 1994). Even the organization's slogan "No Liberation Without Women's Participation" underscored this perspective (Bernal 2001, 145).[37]

In its very first political program written in 1971, before any women were included, the EPLF declared that the Front did not discriminate based on gender and that it was dedicated to eradicating all forms of political and economic oppression (Weldehaimanot and Taylor 2011, 582). The emphasis placed on gender only increased with time. By 1977, for example, among eight other points devoted to women's issues the EPLF's political program stated that they aimed to develop "[A] broad program to free women from domestic confinement, develop their participation in social production and raise their political culture and technical levels" (NUEW 1980, 19; Wilson 1991, 161).

In 1973, the EPLF received three women attempting to join and provided them with military training. Shortly thereafter, the organization began to openly recruit women (Bernal 2001). It is estimated that up to 40% of the EPLF's membership and 30-35% of those occupying combat roles were women (Pateman 1990; Mason 2007). Women were appointed to serve on the group's central committee (Burgess 1989), and were often trained as mechanics, electricians, engineers and barefoot doctors, areas generally considered men's domains (Silkin 1983; Hale 2001; NUEW 1980).[38]

After emerging victorious from their war with the ELF and making major gains in their war against the Ethiopian military in 1975, the EPLF saw a flood of women's participation (Cowan 1983;

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[37] EPLF also held a pragmatic view of women's participation acknowledging there was no winning without women's physical support (Burgess 1989).

[38] Some scholars suggest the EPLF did not actually address gender discrimination. Instead, they treated women in the EPLF like men rather than challenging notions of discrimination against women's traditional roles in society (Bernal 2001; Mason 2001).

Bernal 2000). Muslim and Christian women, peasant and nomad women and women from rural and urban areas all joined the EPLF (Cowan 1983; Bernal 2000). Girls participated, sometimes recruiting their mothers. While women joined to assist the EPLF in liberating their country, they also did so to escape rape and sexual torture at the hands of Ethiopian troops (Cowan 1983), repressive arranged marriages, and other terrifying circumstances (Wilson 1991; Bernal 2000). Like women attracted to the ELF, women that joined the EPLF viewed their participation as a way to liberate themselves from society's oppressive strictures (Bernal 2001; Hale 2001), believing in the group slogan "Equality through Equal Participation" and the group's goal of elevating women's place in society (Bernal 2000, 71; Zerai 1994, WS-66). Notably, "Farewell kitchen, I have broken your shackles" became a popular maxim among EPLF's female participants (Bernal 2000, 70). Additionally, women joined to benefit from the programs offered to the organization's combatants, particularly those in education and health (Burgess 1989).

In the EPLF, women served as intermediaries between the armed front and the population and were instrumental in socializing and recruiting other women for the struggle (Silkin 1983). Civilian women in EPLF-controlled areas were also taught to read and encouraged to participate in civic engagement. They soon began to hold posts in People's Assemblies established by the EPLF, a feat impossible before the occupation.[39] The organization also redistributed assets to those previously unentitled to own property, especially women, and made major revisions to the marriage contract ensuring women more equitable unions and divorces (Silkin 1983; Cowan 1983; Leisure 1999). These advances were highly important in motivating women to join, as participation offered opportunities to remove the barriers that forced them into subordinate positions in society.

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[39] Although the organization made significant strides in gender equality during the war, much of that progress was reversed after the war.

The EPLF was instrumental in the establishment of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), founded in 1979 to manage women's demands and facilitate their mobilization and organization(NUEW 1980, 2). Incorporating women into the organization, however, was not without its critics. Selassie (1992) argues the first women fighters in the EPLF were not entirely welcomed by their male comrades, as men feared including women meant giving up their privileges and prospects for advancement within the organization. Isolated incidents of sexual harassment were even reported (Israel et al. 2002). Though the EPLF was generally able to use the organization's egalitarian principles to silence those critical of women's participation within the group, criticism from outside continued. Zerai (1994, WS-65) maintains that priests threatened to ex-communicate families that allowed women to take part in EPLF activities and other individuals went so far as to plan the assassinations of propaganda-unit members that came to talk to girls.

Despite such challenges, the EPLF remained committed to women's participation and advancement during the struggle for independence. The same cannot be said of the ELF. Given that the groups operated concurrently in the same conservative society for two decades, it is unlikely that state- or society-level factors adequately explain the trajectory of women's participation across the two organizations. Differences in women's participation across organizations cannot be explained solely by individual-level motivations, either, given that women throughout Eritrea faced similar conditions and female members from both organizations expressed similar reasons for participating.. Key variation at the organization level , however, is much more instructive. The guerrilla tactics and covert activities used heavily by the ELF played a role in motivating the group to include women for targeted activities, both formally and informally. The organization's religious conservatism , however, contributed to leaders' apprehension in incorporating women fully. In contrast, the EPLF's egalitarianism and commitment to equal rights for women, allowed it to both attract and include women in large numbers. The influence of inter-group competition on patterns of women's

participation is evident also in this case. External pressure from the EPLF on the ELF's 'woman problem' played a large part in driving the ELF to incorporate women increasingly. While early in the resistance some non-Muslim women aided the ELF because they wanted to be involved yet had no other options,, the EPLF's founding presented women with a credible alternative to the ELF. It is reasonable to infer that had the ELF not taken the subsequent actions on increasing women's access to the organization, actual and potential members would have been siphoned off by this new opportunity for women to participate. Along with women's greater expected benefits given the EPLF's platform, this may have had large and quite detrimental effects on the ELF's organizational viability.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our study highlights the utility of focusing on channels through which women participate in conflict rather than the background conditions that produce violence and influence individual's willingness to participate in it. This is in stark contrast to most previous scholarship on the topic, which prioritizes individual- and state-level explanations for women's participation in political violence without considering whether there are systematic factors that explain variation in groups' receptivity to it. The empirical analyses clearly demonstrate the salience of group-level variables – particularly group size, positive gender ideology and the use of terrorist tactics – in explaining women's participation in VPOs. The empirical findings suggest also that forced recruitment and secessionist aims emerge as strong predictors of women's overall participation: violent organizations that use coercive enlistment are much more likely to have women participants than groups that rely on volunteers, as are those that mobilize for withdrawal from the state. Interestingly, fundamentalist Islamic ideology does not bear a consistent relationship to either women's overall or combat participation.

State-level factors, including those measuring whether women have equal rights in society and whether the state engages in widespread repression, do not appear to be related to women's VPO participation. At first look, it seems that researchers and practitioners alike ought to use caution when relying solely on supply-side dynamics, or factors pushing individual women toward participation in violent politics, to explain cross-organizational variation in women's participation or the roles they occupy, although they may explain the rate at which they join. Since our supply-side factors are measured only at the state-level, however, we cannot rule out the potential impact that indicators measured at the individual-level may have on women's decisions to join VPOs.[40]

Consistent with the statistical analyses, the case illustration demonstrates clearly that positive gender ideologies and tactical specialties in terrorism facilitate and encourage groups to extend group membership to women. While in the statistical models, inter-group competition does not seem to influence the likelihood that a given group will include women, it does emerge as a meaningful explanatory factor in the case narrative. The illustrations, along with the statistical work, also suggest that our opening assumptions about group rationality were both useful and appropriate for understanding women's VPO participation. If the organizations in our sample had failed to behave rationally, we would have observed a far less robust performance from the variables representing the costs and benefits that can accrue to VPOs when women participate. The case illustration further draws out the ways in which these groups use weighted assessments of their strategic environment and recruitment needs to craft their outreach to women as potential group participants. Overall, our data suggests that violent groups and their potential recruits do tend to act in ways that will maximize benefits while minimizing costs, much as a rational actor would.

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[40] While our measures capture only some of the possible state-level factors that might compel women to participate in VPOs, we believe our models reflect the most salient ones.

Although it is clear that women do take part in violent political activities, academic studies have given short shrift to questions regarding the frequency of women's engagement in violent politics as well as those of how and why women's involvement might vary across organizations. The lack of inquiry into these questions is troubling particularly given the theoretical and practical implications of understanding why women might be compelled to participate in violent politics. For instance, scholars studying the micro-foundations of political violence highlight the importance of material, non-material and/or coercive incentives for leaders who need to successfully mobilize and recruit members (e.g., Gates 2002; Weinstein 2005). However, most models have overlooked the potential for gender-based variation in individuals' receptiveness to these inducements. By overlooking gender as an important dimension on which differential recruitment strategies may emerge, scholars are at risk of drawing inappropriate conclusions about how VPOs allocate scarce resources for growth and realize their mobilization potential.

From a policy perspective, insufficient attention to the range of women's experiences in and with armed conflict may actually discourage their reintegration into post-conflict societies and support additional destabilizing pressures.[41] Given recent arguments that highlight the importance of post-conflict justice institutions in stemming conflict recurrence (e.g., Gates et al. 2007), insufficient attention to how and when women participate in conflict can also damage the potential effectiveness of conflict resolution, post-conflict reconciliation and restorative justice efforts by meaningfully yet arbitrarily excluding some offenders from prosecution while also preventing some victims from receiving justice. For instance, while women's participation in disarmament, demobilization and

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[41] Some women are forced to turn to illegal means of providing for themselves such as looting or prostitution thus, abandoning one illegal activity only to take up another. "Liberia: A Flawed Process Discriminates Against Women And Girls." Amnesty International Report. 31 March 2008

reintegration/rehabilitation (DDR) initiatives is often invoked as critical for their success (Coleman 2004; European Parliament 2006; United Nations 2012), such policies are often developed in a way that reinforces "the ideal of the female war victim" (MacKenzie 2009, abstract) rather than with recognition of the (true) range of women's roles in and experiences during violent conflict. This perspective is reinforced by anecdotal accounts, such as reporting by non-profit advocacy groups in Sudan that despite women's extensive participation in the SPLM/A, women often face more stringent eligibility requirements for ex-combatant DDR benefits than men. As a result, women are often turned away when attempting to turn in weapons as part of these processes because of assumptions that they were merely civilians seeking to gain benefits advertised for ex-combatants.[42] The results from this project may provide support for those who advocate for systematic accounting of women's participation in order to demonstrate that women have been involved actively in a number of violent organizations.

By first examining how women's participation varies across VPOs, this study lays a clear foundation for future work focused on its implications. Whether women exert pacifying or provocative effects on VPO behavior remains an open empirical question that should be explored in future research, particularly in dialogue with the recent research on women's participation in rape and other forms of gendered violence (e.g., Cohen 2013). Also, scholars have noted that ideological

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[42] Basini (2013) finds that DDR administrators' failures to address the unique psychological and social needs of demobilized women associated with fighting forces in Liberia not only greatly reduced women's access to peace and security initiatives but also effectively increased opportunities for men to enjoy the benefits of demobilization disproportionately. Relatedly, rhetoric that assigns war victimhood to women and children exclusively both allows women and children combatants to be absolved of culpability and denies men the right to be protected (Carpenter 2005).

commitments, identity labels, fictive kinship and non-material incentives can be important tools of mobilization, recruitment and control for group leaders, as they often reinforce collectively-oriented thinking and encourage followers to accept present costs for the promise of future benefits (Gates 2002; Atran 2003; Weinstein 2005). Based on our research, gender-based targeting also appears as a potentially fruitful strategy through which conflict entrepreneurs can frame problems and encourage collective action. Looking ahead, future research might combine insights on the politics of credible signaling with the dynamics of targeted recruitment to ask whether women more effective at gender-based recruitment than men. Finally, although we did not collect time-varying data due to resource constraints, such data would be of great benefit so that others might examine more nuanced hypotheses about the development of women's recruitment processes, diffusion and learning across organizations and time.

Without assessments of what drives women to participate in politics through violence, we are left with an incomplete picture of what encourages women to realize their political agency writ large. Much political science research has been dedicated to problematizing gender-based differences in conventional political processes, such as representation through voting (Studlar, et al. 1998; Inglehart and Norris 2000) or running for public office (Fox and Lawless 2004), security-building through state military service and leadership (Carreiras 2006; Caprioli and Boyer 2001), or non-violent advocacy through protest and demonstration (Baldez 2002; Paxton, et al. 2006).[43] However, these works tend not to consider these forms of participation relative to the behaviors that we

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[43] The effects of women's participation on mainstream political organization have also received copious attention, leading scholars to ask such questions as, When do women exert special influence on policy outcomes (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004)?; and How does the inclusion of women legislators impact on democratization and regime stability (Inglehart, et al. 2003)?

explore here.

While we do not attend to the related question of whether women use VPO participation as a substitute or a compliment to non-violent or mainstream political activity in this paper, we find it important to stress that participation in violence is often used as a means for individuals to seek representation or communicate political preferences. This is particularly relevant for individuals who, like many women, may feel marginalized, disenfranchised or otherwise excluded from conventional political life. With this in mind, we consider our research to be a useful tool for contextualizing not only extant and future studies of women in conflict but scholarship on women's political participation writ large.

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Table 1: Attributes of Countries Included in this Stratified Purposive Sample

Country	Percent Christian Adherents	Percent Islamic Adherents	Sub-Region	No. Civil Conflicts
Algeria	0.86	98.55	North	1
Angola	93.27	1.09	Middle	2
Cote d'Ivoire	34.32	40.58	West	1
Djibouti	1.74	96.93	East	1
Dem. Rep. of Congo	95.01	1.47	Middle	4
Eritrea	47.88	50.15	East	1
Ethiopia	59.88	33.9	East	8
Gambia	4.35	88.68	West	1
Liberia	40.53	16.04	West	1
Mali	3.24	87.14	West	2
Morocco	1	98.84	North	2
Mozambique	52.45	17.47	East	1
Niger	0.35	95.41	West	3
Senegal	5.38	90.76	West	1
Sierra Leone	13.26	64.64	West	1
South Africa	82	1.72	South	2
South Sudan	.	.	East	1
Sudan	10.65	70	North	3
Uganda	84.44	11.72	East	1
Data Source:	Maoz & Henderson 2013	Maoz & Henderson 2013	United Nations	UCDP/PRIO ACD Version 4-2013

Table 2: Frequency of Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations			
	Number of Groups	Number of VPOs Including Women Participants	Percentage of VPOs Including Women Participants
Women Participants			
All Groups	161	73	45
Small	73	11	26
Terrorist	90	50	56
Positive Gender Ideology	21	16	76
Self-Defense/Paramilitary	41	18	44
Overthrow of Government	87	45	52
Secessionist/Self-Determination	50	18	36
Fundamentalist	21	8	38
Women Combatants	Number of Groups	Number of VPOs Including Women Combatants	Percentage of VPOs Including Women Combatants
All Groups	154	45	29
Small	40	5	13
Terrorist	85	31	36
Positive Gender Ideology	19	10	53
Self-Defense/Paramilitary	39	13	33
Overthrow of Government	81	25	31
Secessionist/Self-Determination	50	13	26
Fundamentalist	18	2	11

Table 3: Determinants of Women's Participation in Any Role in Violent Political Organizations				
	Model 1 Base Models	Model 2 Full Model	Model 3 Equality Controls	Model 4 Group Level Controls
Main Explanatory Variables				
Terrorist	1.1930	0.9100	0.6449	1.3069
	0.40	0.50	0.29	0.41
	0.00	0.07	0.03	0.00
Small	-1.5323	-1.0107	-1.5822	-1.5299
	0.43	0.57	0.60	0.43
	0.00	0.08	0.01	0.00
Gender Ideology	1.1836	3.1468	3.0656	1.1759
	0.54	1.04	0.87	0.62
	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.06
Competition	-0.06251	-0.006130	-0.003358	-0.04980
	0.05	0.10	0.07	0.05
	0.20	0.95	0.96	0.33
Control Variables				
Self-Defense/Paramilitary		-0.3569		0.06064
		1.05		0.54
		0.73		0.91
Fundamentalist		0.4094		-0.4210
		0.84		0.64
		0.63		0.51
Secessionist		-0.8273		-0.7815
		0.40		0.44
		0.04		0.08
Women in State Military		0.6443	-0.3314	
		0.66	0.37	
		0.33	0.37	
Women's Political		0.05436	0.5715	

Rights				
		0.65	0.67	
		0.93	0.40	
Physical Integrity Rights		-0.1760		
		0.21		
		0.41		
Forced Recruitment		2.0403		
		0.54		
		0.00		
CEDAW Ratification		-0.1675	-0.2395	
		0.56	0.40	
		0.77	0.55	
Constant	-0.1885	-1.0000	-0.8927	-0.03989
	0.50	2.20	1.49	0.45
Observations	145	100	103	145

Coefficients, robust standard errors clustered on country and p-values are presented in the first, second and third rows, respectively.

Table 4: Determinants of Women's Participation in Combat Roles in Violent Political Organizations				
	Model 5 Base Models	Model 6 Full Model	Model 7 Equality Controls	Model 8 Group Level Controls
Main Explanatory Variables				
Terrorist	0.9672	1.3061	1.0904	1.1363
	0.51	0.54	0.51	0.48
	0.06	0.02	0.03	0.02
Small	-1.5827	-1.2785	-1.6290	-1.5189
	0.50	0.81	0.84	0.52
	0.00	0.11	0.05	0.00
Gender Ideology	0.6647	3.3136	2.7845	0.8435
	0.56	0.94	0.78	0.56
	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.13
Competition	-0.05142	-0.009887	-0.04945	-0.04815
	0.06	0.10	0.13	0.06
	0.40	0.92	0.69	0.45
Control Variables				
Self-Defense/Paramilitary		0.8250		0.5078
		0.65		0.35
		0.20		0.15
Fundamentalist		-0.6418		-1.2726
		0.98		0.72
		0.51		0.08
Secessionist		-0.9822		-0.3841
		0.47		0.52
		0.04		0.46
Women in State Military		0.6661	-0.1511	
		0.73	0.59	
		0.36	0.80	

Women's Political Rights		-0.6932	-0.06757	
		0.83	0.80	
		0.40	0.93	
Physical Integrity Rights		-0.06001	-0.2170	
		0.22	0.23	
		0.79	0.35	
Forced Recruitment		1.7665		
		0.78		
		0.02		
CEDAW Ratification		0.9626	0.5828	
		0.57	0.65	
		0.09	0.37	
Constant	-0.8465	-1.9932	-1.0184	-0.9019
	0.70	2.10	2.09	0.65
Observations	137	94	97	137

Coefficients, robust standard errors clustered on country and p-values are presented in the first, second and third rows, respectively.

Figure 1: Distribution of VPOs by Size
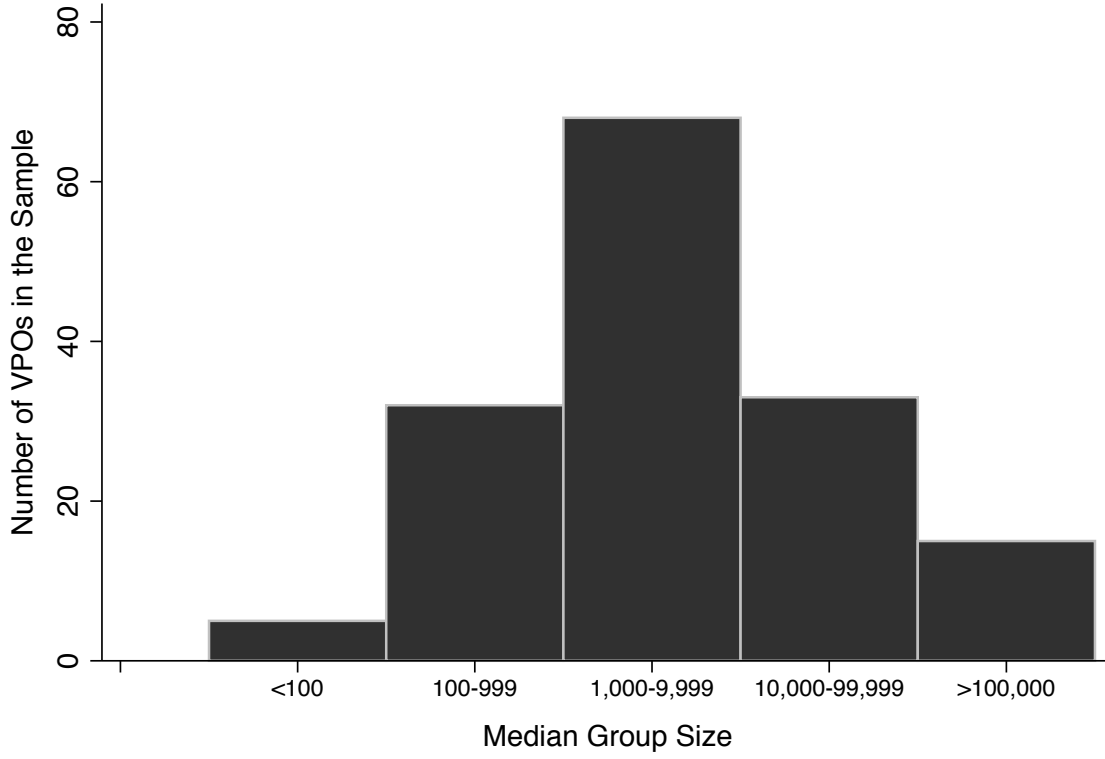
Figure 2: Distribution of VPOs by Decade

A

Num. Groups in Sample
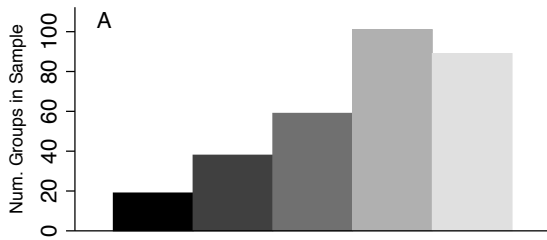
Figure displays number of groups included in the sample by decade

B

Num. Groups w/ Women Participants

66.7% 61.1% 49.12% 49.0% 52.3%
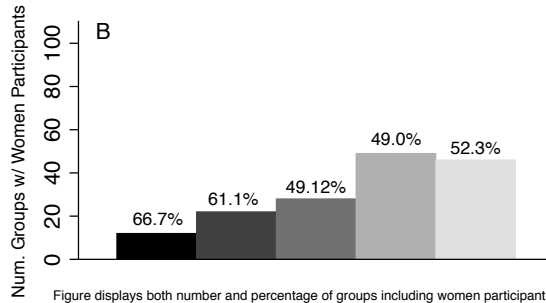
Figure displays both number and percentage of groups including women participants by decade

C

Num. Groups w/ Women Combatants

38.9% 42.9% 32.1% 34.4% 30.9%
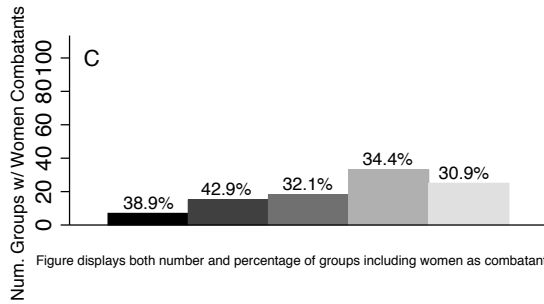
Figure displays both number and percentage of groups including women as combatants by decade

■ 1950's & 1960's	■ 1970's
■ 1980's	■ 1990's
■ 2000's	
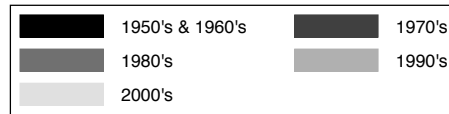
Figure 3: Distribution of VPOs by Geographic Region

A

Num. Groups in Sample
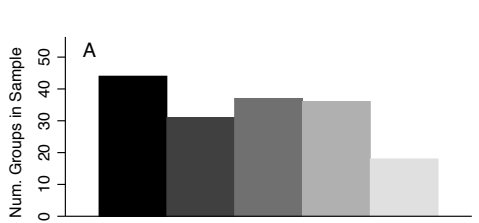
Figure displays the number of groups included in the sample by geographic region

B

Num. Groups w/ Women Participants

46.5% 48.4% 43.2% 45.5% 41.2%
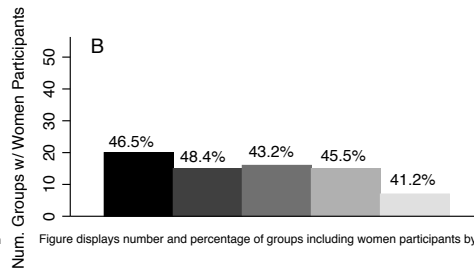
Figure displays number and percentage of groups including women participants by geographic

C

Num. Groups w/ Women Combatants

21.1% 17.2% 37.8% 38.2% 31.3%
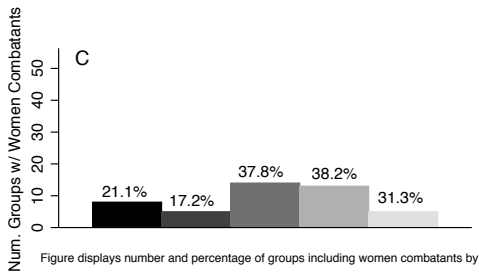
Figure displays number and percentage of groups including women combatants by geographic region

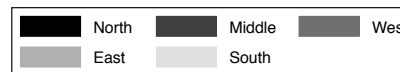|		
■ North	■ Middle	■ West
■ East	■ South	

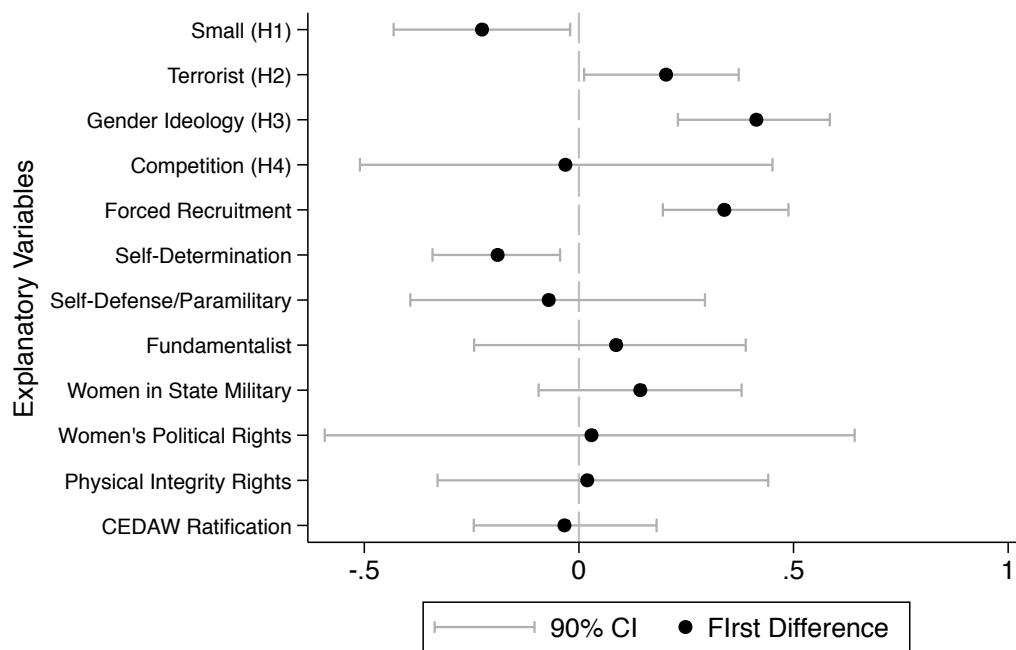Figure 4: Change in Probability of Women's Participation in Any Role

Figure 5: Change in Probability of Women's Participation as Combatants