Women and Power in Postconflict Africa

The book explains an unexpected consequence of the decrease in conflict in Africa after the 1990s. Analysis of cross-national data and in-depth comparisons of case studies of Uganda, Liberia, and Angola show that postconflict countries have significantly higher rates of women's political representation in legislatures and government compared with countries that have not undergone major conflict. They have also passed more legislative reforms and made more constitutional changes relating to women's rights. The study explains how and why these patterns emerged, tying these outcomes to the conjuncture of the rise of women's movements, changes in international women's rights norms, and, most importantly, to gender disruptions that occur during war. This book will help scholars, students, women's rights activists, international donors, policy makers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and others better understand some of the circumstances that are most conducive to women's rights reform today.

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Women and Power in Postconflict Africa

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Advance Praise for *Women and Power in Postconflict Africa*

"In this book Aili Mari Tripp yet again sets the standard for excellence in comparative feminist scholarship. Through rigorous research, she carefully unpacks and explains why some countries emerging from conflict are able to transform the gender order while others are not. Her careful analysis captures the causal mechanisms that together produce change – gender disruptions, women's movements activism and international norms. As is usual with her pioneering work, her skillful illumination of gender change processes in Africa will provide the template for other scholars seeking to explain the conditions under which transformation is possible in other regions of the world. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in Africa, in post-conflict transitions, and in gender transformation."

Louise Chappell,
University of New South Wales

To three remarkable men:
My father, Lloyd Swantz; my husband, Warren Tripp;
and my son, Lloyd Tripp

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Map of Africa

FIGURE 0.1   Credit: Eva Swantz

Acronyms

AAD	Acção Angolana para o Desenvolvimento
ADRA	Action for Rural Development and the Environment (Angola)/Acção para o Desenvolvimento Rural e Ambiente
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFELL	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COEIPA	Comité Inter-Eclesiastico para a Paz em Angola
CPA	comprehensive peace agreement
CSOs	civil society organizations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Cooperation (UK)
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMBs	electoral management bodies
FAA	Armed Forces of Angola/Forças Armadas de Angola
FAS	Femmes Africa Solidarité
FESA	Eduardo dos Santos Foundation/Fundação Eduardo dos Santos
FIDA	Women Lawyer's Association

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FIND	Foundation for International Dignity (Liberia)
FLEC	Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda
FNLA	National Liberation Front of Angola/Frente Nacional de Libertaçao de Angola
FONGA	Forum of the Angolan Non-Governmental Organizations
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front/Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross national product
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICD	Inter-Congolese Dialogue
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
IDP	internally displaced person
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IGNU	Interim Government of National Unity (Liberia)
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered
LIMA	Independent League for Angolan Women/Comité Nacional da Liga da Mulher Angolana
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda)
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LWI	Liberian Women's Initiative
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women Peace Network
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MPD	Development Workshop run by Women Peace and Development/Movimento Angolano Mulheres Paz e Desenvolvimento
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola/ Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
NAWOU	National Association of Women's Organisations in Uganda
NEC	National Electoral Commission (Liberia)
NCW	National Council of Women (Uganda)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation
NOVIB	Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party (Liberia)
NRA	National Resistance Army (Uganda)
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity

Acronyms xvii

ODA	overseas development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMA	Organization of the Women of Angola/Organização da Mulher de Angola
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
RCD	Rally for Congolese Democracy/Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance/Resistência Nacional Moçambicana
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCA	Angolan Civic Association/Sociedade Civil Angolana
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
UCW	Uganda Council of Women
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Kromah faction
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Johnson faction
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola/ National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Forces
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
WACC	Women and Children Affairs Coordination Unit (Liberia)
WDC	Ward Development Committees (Sierra Leone)
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network (Liberia)
WONGOSOL	Women Nongovernmental Organizations' Secretariat of Liberia
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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Preface

When I went to Uganda in 1992 to carry out research, I was interested in why Uganda, which had just come out of years of major conflict, had so many women in top government positions and why the country had the highest rates of representation of women in parliament in Africa at the time. What I did not know then – and could not have known – was that this was the beginning of a pattern that became especially evident after 2000: that postconflict countries had higher rates of female representation in politics, and that they were making more women's rights reforms in their constitutions and legislation compared with non-postconflict countries. In my 2000 book, *Women and Politics in Uganda,* I attributed the changes to shifts in gender relations during the war, but primarily to the emergence of autonomous women's organizations, supported by international donors. Subsequently, fifteen other countries have emerged from major conflict, exhibiting similar patterns.

This book shows how the trends I noticed in Uganda in the early 1990s are now evident in other parts of Africa. It asks two main questions: What accounts for this somewhat curious by-product of war that has resulted in higher political leadership rates for women and more constitutional and legislative changes regarding women's rights in postconflict countries? This book also asks: How were postconflict countries able, in a relatively short span of time, to advance women's status in key areas and in some of the most challenging areas for women? They not only accomplished what the Nordic countries had done over the course of 100 years in increasing legislative representation, but, in some cases, exceeded their rates almost overnight. Moreover, the changes were not simply in the area of politics, they extended into multiple arenas.

What happened in Uganda and in many other postconflict states was a major shift in social and gender relations and in the gender regime, to borrow a concept developed by Raewyn Connell. The changes have been far from linear and are, in fact, quite uneven and messy. To activists in these countries, the

changes have been all too slow and halting, but even the impatience with the slowness in the pace of change is an indication of the way in which expectations have been transformed. In nondemocratic countries, the changes are compromised by a lack of political rights and civil liberties. Taking a step back and looking at the big picture, however, these shifts represent a gender regime change in political institutions. This book focuses on transformations in the political arena, but to fully appreciate the magnitude of the changes, one has to look at the various dimensions of gender regime change, which include increased political power, but also involve women taking on new leadership roles in business, civil society, academia, religious institutions, and other institutions in which women had previously not been visible. Often attitudes toward women and women's leadership changed throughout society. In some countries the changes were more extensive than others, where sometimes one saw change only along a few dimensions.

I argue in this book that these patterns can be accounted for by (1) disruptions in gender relations that are unique to countries experiencing conflict. However, this explanation is insufficient because not all wars result in changes in women's status. Timing is critical. These shifts also occurred at a time when domestic and international norms were changing regarding women's rights. Thus, they took place in the context of (2) a rise in domestic women's mobilization, which was facilitated by an opening of political space, even if limited, and (3) changes in international gender norms along with pressures and encouragements primarily from United Nations agencies as well as other multilateral and bilateral donors. Although other countries may have experienced similar reforms, the postconflict trajectory sped up these developments.

It is an understatement to say that there is still a long way to go until equality is fully realized. Nevertheless, there has been too little attention paid to the accomplishments and too little credit given to the African women and men who brought about these changes. Too much of the credit has been given to donors and to other external actors, as well as to government leaders, who have their own agendas in all this. It is essential, however, to look at how these developments were tied to conjunctures of events that occurred at multiple levels.

Many scholars who focus on constitutional or legislative change, or the introduction of electoral quotas, look more narrowly at institutional change and what makes these institutions work for women. This study looks at what institutional change tells us about society and politics more broadly. In particular, I am interested in institutional change in periods of transition and the opportunity structures that facilitate or limit change.

The study also highlights the importance of looking at regional dynamics in the adoption of quotas and women's political representation. Although cross-national global studies are important in highlighting overall trends, there are regional specificities, such as a decline of many conflicts during the same time period in Africa, that would not describe contemporary Nordic or European dynamics, for example. By the same token, the fact that there are fewer new

conflicts emerging and less reversal back into conflict in Africa is also positively influencing these trends because they require a certain amount of stability.

It goes without saying that the claims about the link between the decline of conflict and women's rights and representation are not in any way a normative prescription for or glorification of civil conflict and all its horrors, but rather an analysis of the opportunities that such ruptures may have presented to women's rights advocates.

The study builds on a cross-national quantitative and longitudinal study using latent growth curve analysis, which I carried out with Melanie Hughes (Hughes and Tripp 2015), that explains the factors influencing female representation in Africa. We found postconflict impacts to be highly significant and independent of other factors such as the introduction of quotas and proportional representation electoral systems when examined longitudinally. These postconflict patterns of women's new political leadership are particularly visible in countries that have had conflicts long in duration or high in intensity (high rates of death).

However, all of this requires explanation. Even the adoption of quotas by itself does not explain why governments introduced quotas in the first place any more than the decline of conflict explains why women were able to take advantage of this moment in certain countries to advance themselves. This book attempts to explain the causal mechanisms and opportunity structures that influenced gender regime change.

Part I provides an overview of the main arguments in the manuscript. Chapter 1 introduces the project and sets the stage by discussing the decline of conflict in Africa after the 1990s. It looks at several alternative arguments that potentially challenge the claims made in this book. It engages the literature on backlash to show that it is largely inapplicable to postconflict countries after the 1990s in Africa. It examines similar trends in earlier periods in history, namely the period after World War I, when women gained suffrage in many parts of the world. The chapter outlines the main arguments in the manuscript, including reasons for the distinct trajectory adopted by postconflict countries in bringing about changes in the gender regime in political institutions. This is followed by an explanation of the opportunity structures the women's movements were able to take advantage of to assert their interests, specifically peace negotiations and constitutional reform processes. At the heart of these changes is a transformation in elite configurations as older elites and coalitions are dislodged by new political institutions, making way for new leaders like women.

Chapter 2 outlines the causal mechanisms or explanations of how civil conflict influences women's rights policy adoption and some of the alternative arguments. The chapter then elaborates on the broad argument of the book, linking the rapid changes in postconflict women's rights reforms to the three aforementioned factors (disruptions in gender relations, domestic women's mobilization, and changes in international norms).

Part II of the book involves case studies of Uganda, Liberia, and Angola. Uganda, which is examined in Chapter 3, was the first country in Africa where postconflict influences on women's status described in this book became evident. They became apparent with the takeover of Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) in 1986 after a five-year guerrilla war. The chapter details the three key factors described in Chapter 1 that help explain why postconflict countries have been more ready to promote women's rights and representation. The international factors became more salient after 1995, which was long after Uganda had already adopted women's rights in policy making, thus highlighting the importance of domestic actors, even if international considerations were beginning to become relevant.

Liberia, which is the subject of Chapter 4, is one of the more recent countries to emerge from conflict in Africa. The chapter discusses the evolution of the women's peace movement, which grew after the outbreak of conflict in 1989 and continued until the end of the second war in 2003. The peace movement was transformed into postconflict women's mobilization for political power and women's rights. As in the Uganda case study, the chapter systematically elaborates on all three factors and shows how they were present in the Liberian case.

The case of Angola (Chapter 5) is contrasted with the Ugandan, Liberian, and other African postconflict cases to show how the *absence* of key causal mechanisms made it less likely that Angola would adopt woman-friendly policies, in particular, the absence of an independent women's movement and the withdrawal of most donors after the war, especially those funding civil society. Also, the lack of democratization as a structural precondition, and the lack of a peace process in ending the war all served to limit the extent to which gender policy change could occur in Angola. The same political elites remained in power during and after the war as did the ruling party, similarly constraining gender regime change. The country's leaders did increase female political representation through the adoption of quotas, and they introduced a few woman-friendly policies, but not on the same scale or at the same pace found in other postconflict countries. Angola thus shares many of the same characteristics as other postconflict countries that did not see much significant change (e.g., Chad and Eritrea).

Part III of the book looks at the opportunity structures more closely, in particular peace agreements and constitutional reforms. Chapter 6 on peace agreements explains the importance of how the war ends, demonstrating that conflicts that ended with a comprehensive peace agreement provided significant opportunities for women activists to assert their demands for representation and set goals for a postconflict political order. They were not always able to gain a voice in the peace negotiations, but where they were successful, peace negotiations provided an important opportunity structure, influencing later constitutional and legislative outcomes and processes.

Chapter 7 looks at the stark difference between constitutions in countries coming out of conflict and countries that had not experienced major conflict,

but which also reformed their constitutions at the same time. The differences are especially pronounced in the areas of customary law, discrimination, citizenship of children, labor rights, positive measures, violence against women, and the adoption of quotas. The chapter goes into depth regarding the constitution-making process in Uganda and how the women's movement influenced its strong gender-related outcomes.

Part IV looks at outcomes for gender regime change in political institutions. Chapter 8 focuses on women's legislative representation as well as women's leadership roles in the executive and in local government. It engages the literature on representation to show why postconflict influences are among the most important factors explaining female legislative representation in Africa. It also explores the role of women's mobilization in bringing about electoral reforms more generally. Chapter 9 provides an overview of the differences between countries that came out of major conflict and those that did not in adopting legislative reforms, particularly in the areas of violence against women, land and property rights, customary law, and quota adoption.

Chapter 10, the final chapter in Part V, takes the main findings of the book to show how new and unexplored issues emerge from this study and what implications they have for future research.

Throughout this book, I attempt to demonstrate the importance of women to the processes of peace, not in some idealistic way, but rather from a social science perspective. I was quickly disabused of any romantic notions of peacemaking while carrying out fieldwork. The deeper I delved into the stories of people's lives, the more I learned that peace is not always made by Mother Teresa-like characters, although I encountered a large number of unsung heroines and heroes. I also discovered women in the peace movements who had helped start and fuel wars, who supported warlords, who had sabotaged fellow activists, who sought the limelight, and who fought internal demons, in addition to their political foes.

I learned that war is not only gruesome on the battlefield. It is ugly because it distorts the lives of individuals, families, and communities in unimaginable ways and makes people do things that they would never have contemplated doing under normal circumstances. It forces people to make distasteful choices one would not wish on anyone, choices that are often incomprehensible to someone who has not experienced war firsthand. It would be easy to whitewash these realities, but they are part of the story. This book takes a hard look at some of these ambiguities of peacemaking.

Having said that, it astounds me that the very people in civil society and in women's movements who are best equipped to contribute to peace and who have been courageously fighting for it in their communities end up systematically excluded from peace talks. Meanwhile, war criminals and warlords sit around the negotiating table to divide up the spoils of war, that is, government positions and the trappings of power. It is not just a question of fairness and equity that women be included in positions of power, although that argument

certainly can be made. It is so clear from the studies in this book that it is at the crux of ending war and of rebuilding society. Studies have shown that where civil society actors are included in talks, peace is less likely to fail (Nilsson 2012). Having interviewed hundreds of women leaders in Liberia, Uganda, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Kenya, I can say with absolute certainty that there is no shortage of women of high caliber who are more than capable of engaging in peace talks and in leading their countries. The argument that there is a dearth of women leaders never was a credible argument and needs to be retired once and for all.

Women peace activists are largely left out of journalistic accounts of war, and similarly they are absent from academic studies. Galtung (1993, xi) noted that "not only do the media have this perverse fascination with war and violence; they also neglect the peace forces at work. As the media work, they amplify the sound of guns rather than muting them." The same could be said of scholarship, even feminist scholarship, which focuses on war, conflict, and fighters rather than on peacemakers. This study, therefore, seeks to amplify the voices of women pursuing peace and power to show how these pursuits became connected after the 1990s in African civil wars.