Women and Power in Postconflict Africa
Aili Mari Tripp. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 320 pages

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The number of conflicts in Africa has declined significantly in recent decades with the end of internal conflicts that had ravaged many countries. Since 1986, "sixteen countries have ended major civil wars" (p. 3). Have postconflict countries taken a distinct path to advance women's rights? In *Women and Power in Postconflict Africa*, Tripp argues that postconflict countries in Africa have made more progress in women's rights than non-postconflict countries. Specifically, they have had significantly higher levels of women's political representation and made more legislative and constitutional reforms related to women's rights, compared with non-postconflict countries. The improvement of women's status in politics and legislation has spilled over to other areas (e.g., business, civil society, academia, and religious institutions), changing social norms concerning women. Though there are other factors influencing women's formal status, the end of conflict has trumped all other factors in postconflict countries.

However, the progress has not been automatic; certain conditions had to exist for such progress to happen. Tripp identifies wartime gender role disruptions, an autonomous domestic women's movement, and changes in international gender norms as necessary sequential conditions, which she refers to as "causal mechanisms" (p. 33). Due to social disruptions and absence of men, women played new roles during conflict at their homes and communities. This gender role change has had cascading effects. It has been followed by women's mobilization during or after conflict to press for women's inclusion in peace negotiations and agreements, constitution making, and politics. Women translated their new roles during conflict to women's mobilization, which was followed by women's representation in the key political arenas and legislative reforms. The end of major conflicts in Africa approximately coincided with the wind of liberalization and democratization that has blown across the continent since 1990. Women utilized the newly formed political openings to press for their rights. In addition, the United

Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the new donor strategy toward gender equality after the end of the Cold War helped to create new international norms in favor of women's rights. To elaborate the role of each causal mechanism, Tripp uses Uganda, Liberia, and Angola as case studies.

Of course, not all conflicts have brought forth positive changes in women's rights. According to Tripp, only high-intensity and prolonged internal conflicts that caused widespread social disruptions and therefore necessitated significant institutional and legal transformations have resulted in an improvement in women's formal status. In addition, conflicts that ended with negotiations offered women more opportunities to insert their demands. She also found that the positive effects of the end of conflict on women's rights are the only post-1990 phenomenon whose continuity is uncertain.

The book consists of 10 chapters, divided into four parts. Part I includes hypotheses, research design, and a thorough discussion on the causal mechanisms of change in women's rights. Part II compares three case studies (Uganda, Liberia, and Angola). While all three causal mechanisms (gender role disruptions, women's movements, and spread of gender norms by international actors) are evident in Uganda and Liberia, the women's movement and international normative pressure for women's rights are weak in Angola. As a result, Angola has been less successful than the other two in advancing women's rights. Part III discusses how women inserted their rights into peace agreements and the constitution-making process, which became a cornerstone that brought forth constitutional, legislative, and electoral reforms for women. Part IV contrasts gendered outcomes in postconflict countries with those in non-postconflict countries. It demonstrates that postconflict countries achieved higher female political representation and more legislative reforms for women (e.g., quota law adoption, legislation against gender-based violence, family law, and land law) than countries that did not experience major conflict. Tripp ends the book with numerous questions for further research on this subject.

This book builds on the quantitative study, "Civil War and Trajectories of Change in Women's Political Representation in Africa, 1985-2010," by Melanie Hughes and Tripp in *Social Forces* (2015). Though the book's scope is broader, the two studies employ the same causal mechanisms to tie the end of conflict to advancing women's rights in postconflict countries. Tripp

draws on rich data collected from interviews in Uganda, Liberia, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kenya, as well as newspaper articles, the extant literature, and reports of governments and non-governmental organizations. To support her main arguments, Tripp presents impressive documentations of female activists, politicians, and organizations, particularly in Uganda, Liberia, and Angola. Though well researched and clearly written, this book is not immune from deficiencies. As Tripp states, some conflicts had multiple ends (p. 30). Of 16 postconflict countries, how many countries experienced multiple ends to the same conflicts? What is the total number of conflicts during the temporal domain of this study, 1990-2014? Which countries have met all three aforementioned causal mechanisms, like Uganda and Liberia, and which ones have only partly met them, like Angola? Including a table consisting of conflicts, durations, and presence or absence of each causal mechanism per conflict would put these questions to rest. Changes in women's rights in postconflict countries have been uneven (p. 4). While the book clearly demonstrates the different trends in women's rights in postconflict and non-postconflict countries in percentage terms, it lacks clarity in addressing the variation across the postconflict countries. Have all other countries like Uganda and Liberia been more successful in turning the end of conflict to advancing women's rights than countries like Angola? These flaws aside, this book is an excellent addition to the extant literature on women and conflicts, which has paid scant attention to the impact of the end of major conflicts on women's rights.

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