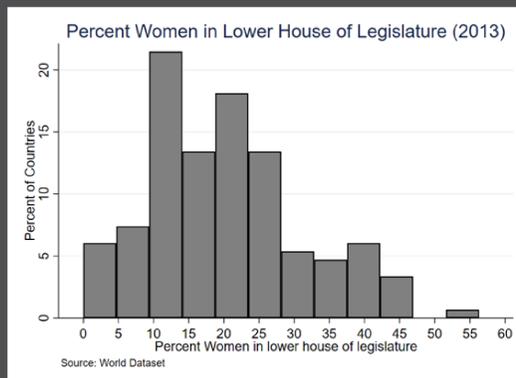
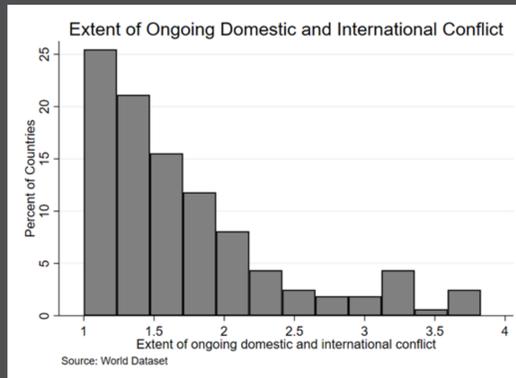


WAGING PEACE:

FEMALE LEGISLATORS AND A STATE'S PROPENSITY FOR WAR

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Description of Data



Results and Analysis

Figure 1

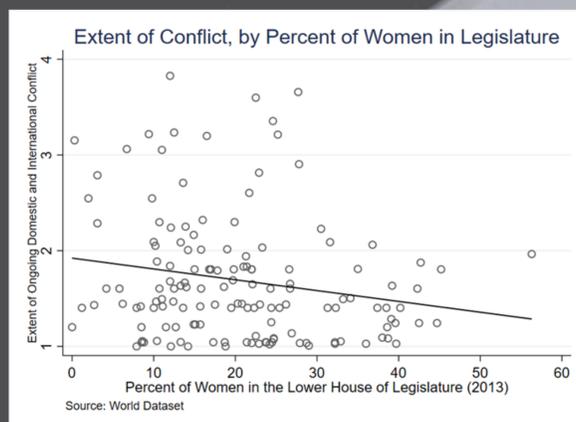


Figure 1 illustrates the uncontrolled relationship between percentage of women in the lower house and extent of conflict. There exists a statistically significant negative correlation between the two variables; that is, as the number of female legislators increases, the extent of conflict decreases.

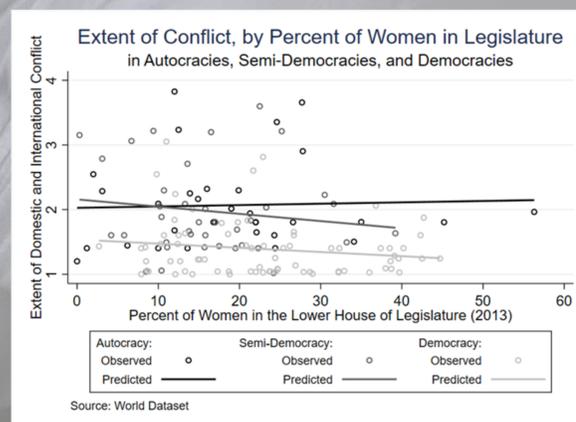
In the controlled comparison (Figure 2), autocracies and semi-democracies automatically have higher levels of state conflict. For both democracies and semi-democracies, however, the level of conflict decreases as the percent of women in the lower house increases. On the other hand, higher numbers of female legislators increase the likelihood of conflict in autocracies. The absence of a pacific feminine influence is likely an indication of the legislature's impotency in autocratic systems. It may also be a result of Qatar, the anomalous value on the far right of the figure.

What is the effect of women in the legislature on the extent of conflict in a state?

Increasing conflict in the international system prompts policymakers and researchers alike to investigate unconventional methods of creating and maintaining peace. For decades, feminist theorists have argued that women exert a pacifying influence at all levels of society; by extension, their engagement in government would temper the aggressive tendencies of states. It stands to reason that the presence of female legislators in a state's political system decreases its likelihood of conflict.

Using the World Dataset from Philip Pollock III and Barry James, I employ linear regression to analyze the inverse relationship between the percentage of women in the lower house of the legislature and the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict.

Figure 2



Conclusions and Implications

Findings:

- High percentages of women in the lower house of the legislature are associated with a lesser extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict in an uncontrolled comparison.
- Support for my hypothesis disappears after controlling for regime type, percentage of a state's population living below the national poverty line, and year of women's suffrage.
- The interdependent nature of democracy and gender equality creates an interactive effect that undermines the effect of female legislators on the extent of conflict.

Why might the evidence not support the hypothesis?

- The legislature is increasingly less involved in a state's decision to go to war.
- The lower house of the legislature is less involved in foreign policymaking compared to the upper house. Responsibilities such as treaty ratification often fall to either the executive or the upper house in a bicameral system
- Female legislators may not affect a state's propensity for conflict because their participation in government is contingent upon their ability to perform masculinity. In order to gain entry to the upper echelons of political decision-making, women must conform to the norms of said system. Governments reward aggressive, masculine solutions; as a result, female legislators shed the pacifism that characterizes the traditional role of women in favor of more masculine policy orientations.

Though I failed to find support for my hypothesis, my research calls into question the traditional understanding of the effect of gender equality on conflict, especially as it interacts with democracy. Policymakers and researchers should emphasize and support initiatives that empower women so that we might transform the social ethos surrounding conflict and create a more tranquil, egalitarian, and prosperous society that wages peace instead of war.

Research Components

Given the research question, my hypothesis was as follows:

- In a comparison of democracies, those with a higher percentage of women in the lower house of the legislature will have less ongoing domestic and international conflict than those with a lower percentage of women in the lower house.

I used an aggregate measure of domestic and international conflict and a measurement of percentage of female legislators to measure the relationship. I also controlled for each state's level of democracy, poverty rate, and year of women's suffrage to isolate the feminine effect.