To what extent does sexual violence influence the likelihood of conflict management in civil wars? Despite a growing body of research that explores actors’ motives for engaging in certain types of violence, such as civilian victimization and wartime rape, the literature presents little insight on the effects these forms of violence have on attempts to peacefully resolve the dispute. This paper addresses these questions by extending feminist IR theory to civil wars and applying a gender lens to the power to hurt argument and rationalist conflict bargaining theories. Specifically, I argue that when rebel-led sexual violence are public knowledge it increase the likelihood of conflict management because the state perceives it as a threat to his masculinity, a particular hurtful victimization that he is eager to end. I systematically test this argument on all civil war conflict years from 1990 to 2009 using the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) dataset as well as the Civil War Mediation (CWM) dataset. In the analysis I control for the influence of international pressure on conflict management efforts. The results provide robust support for my principal argument that reports of rebel-led sexual violence emasculate the government thereby increasing the likelihood of mediated talks. This presents an important refinement of traditional rationalist conflict bargaining theories and opens new avenues for both research and practice of civil war management, particularly in connection with sexual violence.

keywords: civil war, conflict management, mediation, sexual violence, masculinity, victimization
Introduction
In August 2010 a local militia in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) perpetrated mass rapes in Luvungi. In the span of three days the group called Mai Mai Sheka reportedly gang raped 387 civilians. It was reported that soldiers were ordered to rape rather than loot and beat civilians to draw international attention and gain access to the negotiating table (Autessere, 2012: 217). The calculations seemingly paid off as the Congolese government was pressured into negotiations. However, these negotiations did not settle the conflict and violence continued to plague the country in the following years. Some suggest that other insurgent groups have employed similar tactics of using sexual violence to attract international attention to pressure governments into accepting mediation (Autessere, 2012). These events and suggestions call for a systematic investigation of the relationship between sexual violence and conflict management. Accordingly, this article explores the questions to what extent does sexual violence influence conflict management?

Sexual violence in conflict is now widely recognized as a threat to international security. It has been described as a weapon of war, often associated with attempts of ethnic cleansing and genocide (Alison, 2007; Goldstein, 2001; Leiby, 2009; Plümper and Neumayer, 2006), and an increasing number of studies explore sexual violence in armed conflict, its causes, and its variation (Wood, 2006, 2009; Cohen 2013a, 2013b, 2016; Cohen and Nordås 2014; Nordás and Rustad 2013; Karim and Beardsley, 2016). The unprecedented increase in public and scholarly attention has not gone unnoticed by conflict parties. As the example of the DRC shows, belligerents in civil war are acutely aware of how they can use sexual violence to influence the conflict. The existing literature has been preoccupied with explaining the variation of sexual violence in armed conflict through perpetrators’ intentions. What has been left unexplored is the effects of sexual violence on conflict management.

This study puts perpetrators’ motivations aside to focus on analyzing the effects of reports of sexual violence on conflict management.

In bringing together disparate literatures on sexual violence, gender, and conflict management I argue that the emasculation of the state through reports of rebel-led sexual violence increases the likelihood of mediation. The onset of mediation processes bestows legitimacy onto non-state actors. Thus a state is likely to resist the inclusion of an intermediary until the associated costs are outweighed by the expected costs of continued fighting. Insurgents, however, hoping to overcome the inherent power asymmetry of civil war will usually welcome third party involvement. I contend that when rebel-led sexual violence is public knowledge it is perceived by the incumbent government as a particularly hurtful victimization that threatens his masculinity by exposing his lack of territorial control and inability to protect his citizens. Applying a gender lens thus constitutes a crucial refinement of traditional rationalist bargaining theories. In signalling the state’s inability to protect his subjects sexual violence presents a cost of conflict that outweighs the costs associated

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with accepting mediation. Mediation accordingly should be more likely when there are reports of rebels perpetrating sexual violence. On the other hand, the asymmetric relationship between belligerents in civil war essentially grants the state a veto player function and denies rebels the possibility of initiating a mediation process. This means that even if there are reports of state-led sexual violence and if rebels call for mediation in response to it, the decision to enter into mediation will rest with the government. Thus I expect that if there are reports of an incumbent perpetrating sexual violence it will not affect the likelihood of mediation.

To empirically test this argument I rely on logistic regression models to examine 118 intrastate conflicts drawn from the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Termination dataset (Kreutz, 2010). The dataset includes 746 conflict years between 1990 and 2009, of these 219 feature a mediation event. Mediation data are drawn from an updated version of the Civil War Mediation dataset (DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011). An updated version of the dataset Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) is used to capture sexual violence perpetrated by the two opposing sides (Cohen and Nordås, 2014). The data encapsulate seven forms of sexual violence ranging from rape and sexual slavery to forced sterilization and sexual torture. The analysis indicates that conflict years in which rebels are reported to perpetrate sexual violence are more likely to see the onset of mediation, while reports of sexual violence by the incumbent have no significant influence. The level of international pressure on the government does not seem to play a significant role.

**Conflict Management - Mediation Onset**

*Why do conflict parties start to talk*

Peace talks entail costs and benefits for all parties. Potential costs shared by all disputants are signalling weakness and concerns of alienating key external and/or internal constituents (Kaplow, 2016). This applies to both inter- and intrastate conflicts.

A key difference between inter- and intrastate conflicts, however, is the concern of bestowing legitimacy upon non-state actors. In civil conflicts this entails an asymmetry in disputants’ motivation to engage in a dialogue. In interstate disputes this is of no concern as both states are legitimate actors. Thus opening a dialogue with the opposing side in interstate conflict does not entail significant costs in terms of legitimacy. In civil wars, however, the government is the de facto sole legitimate power supposedly with a monopoly of force. This inherent asymmetry between disputants is a defining feature of civil conflicts (Zartman, 1995). As a result the legitimacy costs of engaging in a dialogue fall solely on the government. Opening a dialogue recognizes insurgents and grants them legitimacy, thus they stand to gain significant benefits by participating in an official peace process. These potential benefits for rebels represent potential costs for the government as it no longer will be the sole legitimate actor. This hurts the government’s legitimacy and subsequently its bargaining position.
When an intrastate conflict erupts the government should have the upper hand in terms of military resources, military allies, and economic resources (Gent, 2011). Based on this structural advantage, incumbents are likely to reject insurgent claims and pursue a military rather than a diplomatic solution. This presumed structural advantage has the potential to become a disadvantage for the government as opening talks with insurgents can be interpreted by them and others as an admission that the government has lost control over its territory and lacks either the resolve or the capabilities, or both, to win the conflict militarily (Kaplow, 2016; Melin and Svensson, 2009). In effect it signals weakness. This can hurt the government’s reputation with key domestic constituents and international partners as well as weaken its bargaining position versus the insurgents. Consequently, the government will only open peace talks if the potential benefits of resolving the conflict outweigh the associated costs of the process (Melin and Svensson, 2009).

Insurgents on the other hand have a strong motivation to engage in any peace talks with incumbents (Greig and Regan, 2008; Melin and Svensson, 2009). Rebel groups are less likely to possess the political legitimacy that an incumbent enjoys. Peace talks can assist them in overcoming this asymmetry by elevating rebel groups’ status. Participating in negotiations bestows political legitimacy upon them, which is difficult to obtain on the battlefield alone. Opening peace talks also constitutes a significant concession in favour of the rebels, as it brings them closer to their political demands and a cessation of costly hostilities.

Besides political legitimacy, rebels are also at a structural disadvantage when it comes to economic resources and military capabilities. Comparing rebel groups’ strength to the governments’ capabilities shows that in 204 intrastate conflicts only approximately 13% of rebel groups are stronger than the government or at least match the government’s capabilities (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan, 2013). This capability asymmetry is also reflected in the fact that only 9.4% of conflict episodes end with a rebel victory (Kreutz, 2010). These figures demonstrate the extent to which rebels are at a military disadvantage. As a consequence insurgents generally have a much stronger incentive to engage in peace talks than the government. On the flip side this also means, that if rebels are stronger and have access to resources mediation can become less likely (Clayton 2013, 2016).

Engaging in talks with the government can potentially present a cost to insurgents as it might alienate foreign donors and more importantly it might cause splits within the group that might weaken the group. Rebel groups frequently draw on diaspora groups for funding (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004) and accepting talks with the government might alienate these financial supporters. Internal splits within the group could be driven by economic interests when factions of the rebel group do not want to give up the benefits of the war economy or by ideological hardliners that perceive talks as a betrayal of the group’s cause (Weinstein, 2005). This kind of external and internal pressure might prevent rebel groups from engaging in a peace process. Empirically, however, there is no evidence to support this. In fact, external support for rebels increases the
likelihood of talks and domestic hardliners seem to have no effect (Kaplow, 2016). The immense asymmetry in terms of legitimacy and military capability means that rebels are able to frame the decision to engage in talks with the government as a success. Put differently, insurgents are not bound by audience costs the same way the government is because rebels can claim that their actions have forced the government to the table. Hence rebels in general will welcome the opening of talks as for them the benefits greatly outweigh the costs.

**Why do civil war parties use mediation?**

Mediation is a form of conflict management that grants an intermediary control over some feature(s) of the peace process. It is a voluntary form of conflict management and only occurs if both disputants agree to the assistance of a third party. Mediation highlights the benefits and costs of bilateral dialogue. Rebels receive a significant boost in domestic and international legitimacy through the introduction of a third party, while generally experiencing little to no costs. For the government on the other hand, it illustrates both its inability to control its territory and its inability to withstand rebel pressure (Melin and Svensson, 2009). As a consequence groups can interpret acceptance of mediation as a signal that hard bargaining or continued fighting might lead to further concessions, resulting in increased support for rebels or even encouraging new challengers (Toft, 2003; Walter, 2006a). Admission of an intermediary into the peace process implies a loss of decisional autonomy for both conflict parties. However, for the incumbent who stands to lose its exclusive grip on political, economic, and/or territorial control, this presents a far more substantial cost than for the challenger. In this sense mediation increases the chances that peace talks will result in a flawed agreement for the state. Therefore these costs present strong disincentives for the state to engage in mediation.

Nonetheless mediation also offers benefits to governments. Foremost it presents a way out of violent conflict (Zartman, 1995). Numerous studies show that mediation is an effective tool for this (Bercovitch and Gartner, 2006; Beardsley et al., 2006; Beardsley, 2011). Of course the majority of states intend to defeat rebels. However, as defeating insurgents becomes less likely, mediation frequently presents the most effective way of ending the fighting. Yet, this might not be the state's genuine intention. The government might accept a mediation offer because of more devious intentions (Richmond, 1998; Beardsley 2010). As conflict parties weigh the expected costs of fighting against the expected benefits of winning, the likelihood of mediation increases as a conflict becomes costlier (Clayton and Gleditsch, 2014). Accordingly, studies show that when governments face a serious threat they are more likely to participate in mediations (Clayton, 2013, 2016; Clayton and Gleditsch, 2014). Put differently, mediation is more likely when the desire to end violent conflict outweighs the costs of mediation. In civil wars the onset of mediation thus depends on the government's desire for peace balanced against the costs of admitting a third party. For rebels on
the other hand the benefits of mediation almost always outweigh the costs. As a result the state essentially is the veto power in deciding over the onset of mediation.

**Sexual Violence and Power to Hurt**

*Power to Hurt is Power to Bargain*

Civil war constitutes an extreme, violent interaction between the state and an insurgent group. In order to understand conflict dynamics it is crucial to capture and analyze these dyadic interactions (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan, 2009). Studies of dyadic interactions in conflict and violence’s effects on conflict frequently draw on the notion of *power to hurt* as *power to bargain* (Hultman, 2007; Wood, 2010; Wood, Kathman, and Gent, 2012; Wood and Kathman, 2013; Thomas, 2014). This argument posits that the costs one disputant can impose on the other can be understood as leverage in the bargaining process. Although conflict parties are primarily concerned with their chances of winning, their behaviour in conflict is not solely determined by it. The costs of fighting are influential as well. The *power to hurt* argument thus postulates that rebels do not necessarily need to win militarily in order to achieve their objectives, it can be enough to impose high enough costs to force the incumbent to accept an intermediary. The underpinning idea is that the rebels change the state’s cost/benefit analysis of continuing the armed conflict. In applying a gender lens I take it one step further. I argue that not even do rebels not need to win, it is enough to publicly expose the state’s inability to protect his citizens from sexual violence by the rebels. The inherent asymmetry between belligerents in civil war with the incumbent as the de-facto legitimate power entails that the *power to hurt* is a uni-directional mechanism. Put differently, rebels can employ hurtful tactics to force concessions (i.e. mediation) from the state, but the state cannot do the same to rebels.

Recent research corroborates the *power to hurt* argument by illustrating that relatively stronger rebels presenting a serious challenge to the government are more likely to force it to engage in mediations (Clayton, 2013, 2016; Clayton and Gleditsch, 2014). Yet, studies also show that even weak rebel groups can force the government to the negotiating table by targeting civilians and employing terrorist tactics (Thomas, 2014; Wood and Kathman; 2013). This is successful because targeting civilians improves insurgents’ bargaining position by signalling to the incumbent information about resolve and future conflict costs (Wood and Kathman, 2013: 686). Yet, not all governments are equally cost sensitive. The extent to which a conflict party is susceptible to hurtful tactics is influenced by a government’s level of accountability (Thomas, 2014). In other words, the more democratic a state is, the more likely the targeting of civilians will lead to talks. What has not been addressed, is the question to what extent the type of violence influences the chances of talks and settlement. Put differently, one might ask how hurtful is sexual violence to the state?
Power to Hurt through a Gender Lens

What is often lost in the discussion of the power to hurt argument, its neutral language, and strategic description is the reality of war as a process of reciprocal injuring with the objective to out-injure the other to the point of exhaustion (Scarry, 1985; Clausewitz, 1984). It neglects the bodily experiences of people in war, particularly women who are persistently marginalised by the strategic lingo despite their central role in strategic planning (Sylvester, 2013: 81). This becomes even more pertinent considering that even military strategists concede that completely defeating an enemy is an unrealistic goal and that war’s immediate objective is ‘simply to cause general damage’ (Clausewitz, 1984: 93). Thus extending feminist international relations theory to civil conflicts offers a unique insight on how and why reports of rebels targeting civilians and particularly women is perceived as hurtful to the state. In fact the gendered nature of sexual violence requires feminist IR theory, which is also crucial in illuminating the apparent contradiction of the state perceiving reports of rebel-led civilian victimization through sexual violence as hurtful while engaging in it himself.

Applying a gender lens to intrastate conflict draws on well established feminist IR theory that argues that states are gendered (Peterson, 1992; Tickner, 1992, 2001; Sjoberg, 2013). Feminists highlight the gendered construct of states illustrating that states take on, apply, and propagate masculine behavior and characteristics in defending themselves, their citizens, territory, and identity (Sjoberg, 2013). Part of this gendered state construction is the separation of combatants and civilians along gendered lines (Sjoberg, 2013: 198). The gendered division of roles and gendered stereotypes of men as soldiers and fighters posit them as just warriors that ought to protect supposedly innocent civilians, i.e. women who are beautiful souls (Elshtain, 1987). In line with this states frequently (consciously or not) perceive women as both biological and cultural reproducers rendering women their center of gravity (Peterson, 1999). Accordingly ‘civilian victimization can be read as a proxy for “women,” not as women per se but in their roles as the (gendered feminine) symbolic center’ (Sjoberg, 2013: 201, emphasis in the original). Targeting civilians in conflict to hurt the other side as encapsulated by the power to hurt argument thus is a gendered tactic.

At the same time, however, this does not imply that all victims of civilian victimization have to be female or that the perpetrating agents intend to kill only women (Sjoberg, 2013: 202). Equally, or even more important than the victim and the victim’s sex, is the actor who fails to protect the victim. In other words, the intentional targeting of civilians (read women) is primarily employed to symbolically hurt the presumed protector. A gendered understanding of the power to hurt argument thus posits that victimizing civilians targets the masculinity of one’s opponent. As Laura Sjoberg puts it, ‘intentional civilian victimization is, consciously or not, an attack on the masculinity (and therefore will to fight) of the enemy, carried out by the destruction of the
feminine’ (2013: 202). This also implies that it is particularly hurtful when the state’s failure to protect his citizens becomes public knowledge.

**Effects of Sexual Violence - Sexual Violence as Power to Hurt**

Sexual violence has often been described as strategic, i.e. a weapon/ tactic of war. For example, in 2012 former foreign secretary of the UK William Hague claimed that “more often than not [rape] is carried out not by invading armies but by one group against another: deliberately to destroy, degrade, humiliate and scar political opponents or entire ethnic and religious groups” (quoted in Cohen 2016: 20). However, the strategic argument does not withstand scrutiny. Firstly, sexual violence is not a cheap method of warfare because its perpetration takes time and sexually transmitted diseases make it far more costly than commonly assumed (Cohen 2016). Secondly, although sexual violence may have the effect of displacing communities or weakening the opposition, this does not entail that these are the intended outcomes of an explicit strategy. Thirdly, there is simply very little evidence of commanders ordering their troops to commit sexual violence (Cohen 2016). Hence, this study does not make any assumptions about the underlying motivation or intent of the perpetrating side and solely focuses on the effects of sexual violence. Unlike previous studies that either equate intent and effect or infer intent from effect, I set aside the perpetrator’s motivation and focus solely on the effect of reported sexual violence. I argue that reports of rebel-led sexual violence affect conflict dynamics regardless of the primary motivation of the perpetrator because the state perceives them as hurtful.

Victimization through sexual violence has multiple direct and indirect effects. On an individual level, it is the most intimate violation imaginable. It is an extreme act, which survivors often perceive as an attempt by the fighting men to prove their strength, superiority, and dominance (Haer, Hecker, and Maedl 2015). Physiologically, if victims are not killed, it has grave health consequences (Plümper and Neumayer 2006). Psychologically, survivors often lack support in dealing with feelings of shame and guilt as they are ostracized in the aftermath (Turner 2013).

On a group level, sexual violence can have the effect of ‘ethnic cleansing, terrorization, and humiliation’ (Plümper and Neumayer 2006: 735, Benard 1995). The traumatizing effect of sexual violence is not limited to the individual victim but extends to the family and the entire community (Mukwege and Ensler, 2009). It can and often is perceived as an attack on the community and its core. This is in line with civilian victimization as a gendered tactic as it builds on the gendered conception of states and the gendered distinction between combatants and civilians that renders women the fundamental center of gravity (Sjoberg, 2013). Sexual violence takes a particular role in embodying intentional civilian victimization as a gendered tactic. Unlike the killing of civilians, which can be both intentional and unintentional, sexual violence is always committed intentionally.

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2 Besides the recent case of the DRC well known exceptions include Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan, and historical cases such as the mass rape of Germans during the Soviet occupation (Cohen 2016).
it cannot happen by accident (Mitchell, 2004: 50; Anderson 2010: 247). Sexual violence establishes both the literal and symbolic domination and subordination of the other in disarming and feminizing both the direct victim and symbolically the community.

When sexual violence becomes public knowledge this sends a powerful signal. It exposes the targeted side’s lack of territorial control and inability to protect civilians. Although governments (read elites) might not care about their people being victimized, they do care about having control, their reputation, and projecting strength (Walter, 2006b). This connects to the fundamental self-concept of states that ‘[lay] claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory’ (Weber 1919: 33). A feminist lens highlights that power, strength, and control are inherently tied to the masculinity of the state, as masculinity is what defends the nation (Sjoberg, 2013: 199). This applies to all states and therefore implies that all states are concerned about their (perceived) masculinity. Constituents frequently select for masculine leadership because they want and expect protection, strength, and power and they challenge leaders if they fail to meet these expectations (Sjoberg, 2013: 162). As a result reports of sexual violence are deeply problematic for the state as they emasculate him. It is the fact that the state’s failure to protect is public knowledge that undermines his masculinity more than the failure itself. The reports of rebel-led sexual violence expose the state as weak and challenge his legitimacy as protector in demonstrating his ‘incapacity to fulfill the fundamental masculine function of protection’ (Sjoberg, 2013: 239).

The conflict in the Côte d’Ivoire that erupted in 2002 is an example of this process. On September 19 2002, the rebellion led by the Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d’Ivoire (MPCI) assaulted three major cities Bouaké, Korhogo, and the capital Abidjan. While the government quashed the rebellion in Abidjan the same day, the rebels successfully captured Bouaké and Korhogo. In the course of this MPCI fighters perpetrated rapes as well as abducted women into sexual slavery (Amnesty International, 2007). After the Defence Minister initially ruled out negotiations, the Prime Minister N’Guessan offered talks on September 21 pledging to protect his citizens: “Ivory Coast has not forgotten them, Ivory Coast has not abandoned them” (Agence France Presse, 2002a). On October 14, President Gbagbo condemned rape in the rebel-held territory calling for the international community to send observer missions to the rebel zones and offering full cooperation and the opening of a dialogue (Agence France Presse, 2002b). The talks mediated by the Foreign ministers from the ECOWAS contact group (Economic Community of West African States), which comprised Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Nigeria and Togo, officially began on October 17 in Lomé, Togo (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 2002).

The case of the Côte d’Ivoire demonstrates how sexual violence has the potential to hurt the incumbent in two ways, i) literally, through directly victimizing citizens, and ii) symbolically, I acknowledge that it may matter which civilians are targeted. Sexual violence against ethnic minority civilians may not matter to the state (if he is himself not of the same ethnicity). That is, his masculinity is not necessarily undermined by public knowledge of a failure to protect those civilians. I contend, however, that the state’s masculinity is bound to his ability to maintain his territorial integrity, his protective role, and sole control over the means of violence. Empirically, the data also do not permit such a fine-grained analysis.
when reports of sexual violence hurt the incumbent’s masculinity in demonstrating his lack of control and inability to protect his citizens. Although the state might wish to retaliate in order to restore his status as the sole legitimate power, i.e. his masculinity, the ongoing conflict in itself illustrates that the state at this point in time has been unable to win militarily and a quick cessation of hostilities is preferred. In this context, reports of sexual violence are particularly hurtful because they signal direct and indirect costs of continued fighting. As a quick military victory is unlikely mediation presents the state with a way out of the hurtful conflict (Zartman, 1995). Therefore, I expect that when reports of rebel-led sexual violence are public knowledge this results in a higher chance of mediation.

**Hypothesis 1**: Mediation is more likely when there are reports of rebel-led sexual violence.

Although states and rebels are equally likely to perceive it as hurtful when it is known that their constituents are victimized by the other side, the asymmetry between the two sides leads to different effects on conflict management. Part of the state’s unacknowledged understanding of himself as masculine is the belief that he is the sole legitimate power. This not only entails the implicit belief that he needs to fulfil a protective function, but importantly also the belief that he has a monopoly of force and only he is entitled to use violence. Sexual violence by the state thus ought to be seen in the context of social and structural power relations (Meger, 2016). This also means that sexual violence by the state himself is in accordance with the state’s understanding of existing power relations and in fact expresses them. Violence is the mean specific to the state and its use is contingent on the state’s approval (Weber 1919: 33). In other words, part of the state’s masculinity is a sense of entitlement to do as he pleases, to rape, loot, and pillage. Therefore I do not expect that reports of sexual violence by the state increases the likelihood of mediation. Furthermore the asymmetry between belligerents grants the government the power of a veto player regarding mediation. As a result rebels might call for mediation when the government perpetrates sexual violence against civilians that expect protection from rebels, but they do not have the political legitimacy and/or authority to actually initiate a mediation process.

**Hypothesis 2**: When there are reports of state-led sexual violence it does not affect the likelihood of mediation.

**Research Design**

**Data**
To test these hypotheses I draw on the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Termination dataset (Kreutz 2010), the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) dataset (Cohen and Nordås, 2014), and the Civil War Mediation (CWM) dataset (DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011). The SVAC
dataset contains data on all conflicts from 1989 to 2009. Sexual violence can take any of seven distinct forms (rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization/abortion, sexual mutilation, and sexual torture) and is coded for every actor in a conflict year. Each observation has three prevalence scores based on the three sources, State Department reports (SD), Amnesty International reports (AI), and Human Rights Watch reports (HRW). For my analysis I aggregate these three prevalence scores to one score that takes on the value of 1 if there was any sexual violence reported for any of the three sources (prevalence scores 1, 2, and 3) and 0 if there was none. Combining these three measures allows me to establish that sexual violence by either side is in fact public knowledge, while setting aside the potential uncertainty regarding the reported prevalence of sexual violence. Put differently, the binary variable indicates not if the either side failed to protect its constituents, but if the failure to protect was public knowledge.

For mediation I adopt the definition proposed by the CWM as ‘a process of conflict management where disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, or state, or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law’ (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille 1991: 8). Originally the unit of analysis of the CWM is conflict episode.

To combine these datasets with their different units of analysis I manipulate both datasets. For the CWM dataset, I split each conflict episode into conflict years and coded the missing years (2005-2009). To make the SVAC data compatible with the CWM conflict years, I aggregate the SVAC data to conflict side per year meaning that the incumbent government, pro-government militias, and supporting states comprise side A, the incumbent, and that the rebel group(s) and supporting states comprise side B, the rebels.

After matching the datasets the unit of analysis is conflict year. To be included as an observation a year must meet the UCDP/PRIO criteria of at least 25 battle-related deaths. I limit the analysis to the post-Cold War period from 1990 to 2009 which includes 746 observations. Besides compatibility, a further benefit of using conflict years rather than conflict episodes is that it enables me to account for the variation in sexual violence over the course of a conflict and its effect on the likelihood of mediation onset. Mediation onset, the dependent variable, is binary, therefore I use logistic regression models to estimate the likelihood of a mediation attempt in a conflict year. To account for country level factors and correct for potential heteroscedasticity I use clustered standard errors.

Dependent Variable
The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable that captures if a mediation process started in a conflict year (0 = no mediation 1 = mediation). Adhering to common practice mediation is only coded 1 for the year of the onset and as 0 for subsequent calendar years if the process continues. This prevents counting one process multiple times and the analysis is confined to the onset of
mediation. Of the 746 conflict years included, 219 featured mediation (29.4%). Accordingly I do not include a measurement if the mediation process was concluded. Generally, mediation efficacy is difficult to define relying only on a binary measure of whether a settlement is reached or not (DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011).

Table I - Mediation onset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>70.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>29.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>746</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent Variable**

The independent variable is a binary measure of whether each conflict side was reported to have perpetrated sexual violence, rebel SV and state SV (0 - no sexual violence reported, 1 - there were at least isolated reports of sexual violence). Data are available for 715 out of the 746 conflict years. As Table II shows there is a pronounced asymmetry between the use of sexual violence by the incumbent side and the rebel side. The incumbent side is reported to use at least some sexual violence in 318 (44.5%) out of 715 conflict years. The rebel side on the other hand is reported to use sexual violence in less than 20% of all included conflict years, 132 out of 715. These numbers align with the figures from the disaggregated SVAC dataset that show that 42% of state actors reportedly used sexual violence at some point in the period between 1989 and 2009, while the number of rebels and militias are 24% and 17% respectively (Cohen and Nordås, 2014: 425).

Table II - Reports of Sexual Violence by Incumbents and Rebels (percentage in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incumbents</th>
<th>Rebels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebels</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>362 (50.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35 (4.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>397 (55.52)</strong></td>
<td><strong>318 (44.48)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Controls**

Sexual violence in conflict now frequently attracts international attention. States and advocacy groups alarmed by sexual violence in a civil conflict might bring to bear their normative and material influence to force the government into mediated talks. Foreign aid often comes with strings attached. As a result recipients of foreign aid are more likely to be sensitive to the demands
of their donors (Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell, 2015). Particularly democratic donor countries might attempt to hold receiving countries accountable for human rights abuses, while autocratic regimes are less likely to care about human rights abuses (Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell, 2015). In other words the onset of mediation might not be driven by the government's own desire to end the conflict (and thereby sexual violence), but by the extent of the government's sensitivity to democratic donors. As reports of sexual violence are the crucial factor for donor states rather than the identity of the perpetrator, this implies that substantial foreign aid from democratic donors should prompt mediation if there are reports of sexual violence perpetrated by either side of the conflict and not just by the rebels. Hence I control for the sensitivity to foreign democratic aid by conducting an interaction analysis. To assess this I use the Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell’s measure for democratic aid dependency (2015). They quantify it using ‘the natural log of the sum total of aid received as a proportion of the recipient’s gross domestic product (GDP)’ (Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell, 2015: 858).

I also control for numerous factors that have been shown to influence the onset of mediation. Conflict duration presents one way of conceptualising costs of fighting and has been linked to the onset of mediation (Filson and Werner, 2007; Greig, 2001). Accordingly, I include duration measured in years to account for the effect that the conflict’s longevity might have on the likelihood of mediation. Besides conflict duration, studies show that conflict intensity is a crucial element in shaping conflict parties’ choice of accepting mediation (Melin and Svensson, 2009). Hence, I include the UCDP measure for intensity, which either takes the value of 0 for conflict years resulting in 25-999 battle-related deaths, or 1 for a conflict years with at least 1,000 casualties.

Parallel conflicts can influence the likelihood of mediation both positively and negatively. Multiple conflicts demand the state to divide its attention and resources, which should improve the rebels’ relative position and increase the likelihood of mediation. Or, multiple conflicts might enlarge the recognition costs connected to accepting mediation which should reduce the likelihood of mediation. To account for both options I include a binary variable that indicates whether there are parallel conflicts in a country conflict year (0 = no parallel conflict; 1 = parallel conflicts).

Research shows that the extent to which the conflict goals are divisible, i.e. the dispute concerns territory (potentially divisible), or governance, ideology, or religion (all three less amicable to division), also influences the likelihood of mediation (Svensson and Harding, 2011). Hence my models include a recoded version of the variable incompatibility already existing in the ACT dataset to assess the conflict incompatibility (0 = government; 1 = territory).

Civil conflicts that draw in neighboring countries threaten to destabilize regional security and present a particular concern to the international community. As a result this kind of internationalization of conflict frequently leads to attempts to contain or manage the conflict through mediated talks. Accordingly I use a dichotomously recoded version of the ACT variable
In a similar vein, if there is a conflict in a neighboring country the international community might place greater emphasis on conflict management to stop a further destabilization of the region. That is why I include Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell’s (2015) dichotomous variable (0 = no conflict in neighboring countries; 1 = conflict in at least one neighboring country) to account for the effect of a conflict in a neighboring country on the likelihood of mediation.

Multiple studies show that when governments face strong rebels that are able to challenge core government interests mediation becomes more likely (Clayton, 2013, 2016; Clayton and Gleditsch, 2014). To control for this I use a measure of relative rebel strength from the Non-State Actor Database (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan, 2013). This indicator is a three-point ordinal measure that estimates a rebel group’s strength in relation to the government (0 weaker than the government, 1 at parity with the government, 2 stronger than the government).

To account for the possibility that mediation onset is forced through civilian victimization via lethal force rather than sexual violence I include a control for non-combatant deaths. With rebel osv and state osv respectively I measure the impact of one-sided violence against civilians on the likelihood of mediation. Specifically I employ the natural logarithm of number of civilians deaths using data from the UCDP One-sided Violence dataset 1.4-2016 (Eck and Hultman, 2007).

As democracies tend to be more peaceful than other forms of government (Maoz and Russett, 1993) I use the Polity IV data to include a democracy score (from 0 = highly autocratic to 20 = highly democratic) to control for the possibility that the level of democracy in a state influences the chances of mediation.

Lastly, I include the Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell’s natural log of the distance between the conflict country and the nearest democratic country. Like them I assume that greater distance impedes monitoring (Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell, 2015: 858). Before a donor country can exert pressure on the recipient it must be able to monitor human rights abuses. Put differently, a conflict might literally be out of a country’s sphere of influence. Hence, I use the distance to the closest democracy to account for its effect on the likelihood of mediation. The variable is coded 0 if the conflict country itself is a democracy.

Results

The results of my logistic regression models are reported in Table III (parameters shown are logistic regression coefficients). For rebel strength, as it is an ordinal variable, the table shows the coefficients for each prevalence score in comparison to the omitted reference category (weaker than the government).

The first model tests the effect of sexual violence by both actors on the onset of mediation controlling for conflict related characteristics. The results confirm both Hypothesis 1 that public
knowledge of rebel-led sexual violence has a significant influence on the likelihood of mediation and Hypothesis 2 that public knowledge of state-led sexual violence does not influence the likelihood of mediation. The coefficient for rebel-led sexual violence is significant at the \( p < 0.001 \) level. Put differently, all other things being equal, when the rebel side is reported to perpetrate sexual violence it significantly increases the likelihood of mediation compared to when there are no reports of rebels perpetrating sexual violence. As the binary measure in effect functions as a low estimate of how well known sexual violence by either side is, it strengthens the argument that any public knowledge of the state’s failure to protect his citizens undermines his masculinity and thereby increases the chances of mediation.

Models 2 and 3 include the variables to control for the possibility that it is sensitivity to international pressure that leads to mediation. In Model 2 I include the controls for level of democracy, foreign aid, and the distance to the closest democracy. Rebel-led sexual violence continues to be significant \( (p < 0.01) \), while none of the newly introduced control variables have a significant influence on the likelihood of conflict management. Neither foreign aid from democratic nor from autocratic donors as a proportion of the overall GDP has a significant influence on the likelihood of mediation. To further test if sensitivity to foreign aid from democratic donors conditions the likelihood of mediation when either belligerent is reported to perpetrate sexual violence I conduct an interaction analysis in Model 3. The results for the interaction term are also insignificant. Thus it seems that sensitivity to international pressure does not affect the likelihood of mediation. I run the analysis with different specifications interacting democratic aid with rebel SV as well as using different measures for foreign democratic aid (see Appendix A for exact models and logistic regression tables). The results remain insignificant. Rebel-led sexual violence, however, remains significant further bolstering my principal argument that it is the public knowledge of a state’s failure to protect his citizens from sexual violence by rebels that makes mediation more likely.

Amongst the control variables only duration and relative rebel strength have a significant impact on the chances of mediation. While duration is insignificant in Model 1, it does become a significant predictor of mediation onset in Models 2 and 3, when taking the level of democracy and foreign aid into account. In line with my theoretical expectations and previous studies rebel strength is a significant predictor for mediation onset. When rebels are at parity with the government mediation is more likely compared to when rebels are weaker than the government. When the rebel side is stronger than the government it does not increase the likelihood of mediation supporting the notion that stronger rebels do not necessarily need to accept mediation offers (Clayton, 2013, 2016). Other conflict characteristics such as intensity, parallel conflicts, internationalized civil wars, conflict in a neighboring country, or one-sided violence by either side do not affect the onset of mediation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(1) mediation</th>
<th>(2) mediation</th>
<th>(3) mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebel SV</td>
<td>0.957***</td>
<td>0.809**</td>
<td>0.584*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.436,1.478]</td>
<td>[0.251,1.367]</td>
<td>[0.00617,1.162]</td>
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<td>State SV</td>
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<td>-0.224</td>
<td>-0.760</td>
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<td>[-0.697,0.352]</td>
<td>[-0.779,0.331]</td>
<td>[-1.857,0.337]</td>
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<td>Duration</td>
<td>0.0218</td>
<td>0.0448*</td>
<td>0.0448*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>[-0.0153,0.0589]</td>
<td>[0.00523,0.0844]</td>
<td>[0.00497,0.0847]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>-0.00763</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>-0.0945</td>
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<td>[-0.713,0.697]</td>
<td>[-0.785,0.577]</td>
<td>[-0.779,0.590]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parallel Conflict</td>
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<td>-0.509</td>
<td>-0.461</td>
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<tr>
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<td>[-1.687,0.405]</td>
<td>[-1.489,0.472]</td>
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<td>0.344</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>0.360</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.438,1.127]</td>
<td>[-0.344,1.169]</td>
<td>[-0.379,1.098]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Conflict</td>
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<td>0.919</td>
<td>0.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.320,1.515]</td>
<td>[-0.123,1.961]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbor Civil War</td>
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<td>-0.351</td>
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<td>[-1.134,0.184]</td>
<td>[-0.987,0.258]</td>
<td>[-0.979,0.278]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Rebel Strength</td>
<td>1.310*</td>
<td>1.357***</td>
<td>1.368*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.246,2.373]</td>
<td>[0.326,2.389]</td>
<td>[0.321,2.416]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rebel Strength</td>
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<td>1.214</td>
<td>1.178</td>
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<td>[-0.0247,2.453]</td>
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<td>Rebel OSV</td>
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<td>[-0.146,0.0683]</td>
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<td>State OSV</td>
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<td>0.0305</td>
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<td>[-0.0931,0.154]</td>
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<td>Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.0449,0.0955]</td>
<td>[-0.0425,0.0999]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Aid</td>
<td>0.0261</td>
<td>0.00168</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.105,0.157]</td>
<td>[-0.114,0.117]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic Aid</td>
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<td>-0.0673</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.159,0.0133]</td>
<td>[-0.153,0.0187]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
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<td>0.151</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.236,0.495]</td>
<td>[-0.227,0.528]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV in Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction SV in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict &amp; Democratic</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.094**</td>
<td>-3.085</td>
<td>-3.207*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-1.819,-0.368]</td>
<td>[-6.178,0.00849]</td>
<td>[-6.373,-0.0407]</td>
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<td>Wald chi-squared</td>
<td>30.93(12)</td>
<td>34.82(16)</td>
<td>38.47(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob &gt; chi2</td>
<td>0.0020</td>
<td>0.0042</td>
<td>0.0034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>-355.2</td>
<td>-313.47</td>
<td>-312.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

95% confidence intervals in brackets

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001
Logistic regression coefficients in their raw form are difficult to interpret. The only substantial information they provide is the direction and significance of the relationship, which in line with my argument is positive and significant, i.e. reports of sexual violence by rebels increase the likelihood of mediation. To provide further insight I present quantities of interest in the form of first differences as substantive effects based on Model 2 (Figure I). The first difference plot shows the change in the predicted probability for the outcome (mediation) as the predictors move from minimum to maximum, while holding all else equal. As Rebel SV is a dichotomous variable this means it shows the change in the predicted likelihood between no reports of rebels perpetrating sexual violence and reports of rebels perpetrating sexual violence. The likelihood of mediation increases by 18 percent when rebels are reported to perpetrate sexual violence. The plot also shows that relative rebel strength is the only other predictor that significantly affects a change in the predicted probability of mediation (21 percent increase when changing from rebels that are weaker than the government to rebels that are stronger than the government). In other words, the results strongly support the argument that public knowledge of the state’s inability to protect his citizens from sexual violence by rebels increases the likelihood of mediation as the state seeks a way out of the hurtful conflict.
Robustness Checks

To further ensure the robustness of my findings, I run variations of the principal models with different specifications and controls (see Appendix A for all logistic regression models and tables). The introduction of control variables could insert a bias (Clarke, 2005), therefore my first robustness check is a model limited to the independent variables (Rebel SV and State SV). This presents the same pattern as the principal models, positive and significant coefficient for reports of rebel-led sexual violence ($p < 0.001$) and an insignificant coefficient for reports of state-led sexual violence.

The descriptive analysis shows that there are reports of rebel-led sexual violence in less than 20 percent of all conflict years under investigation. This carries the potential that a small number of conflicts in which rebels are reported to perpetrate sexual violence might bias the results. To protect against this I run Model 2 after excluding the five conflicts with the highest
number of years that featured reports of sexual violence (both in absolute and relative terms).\textsuperscript{4} While the coefficients expectedly change, the main results remain robust even when excluding conflicts that feature the most conflict years in which rebel-led sexual violence is reported.

In order to control for the possibility that reports of sexual violence actually capture an underlying dynamic of rebel group fragmentation and a lack of control by the leadership I run a model including a variable for command strength taken from the Non-State Actor Database (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan, 2013). The result remain essentially unchanged, rebel-led sexual violence, rebel strength, and duration continue to be significant predictors of mediation onset. Interestingly, under these conditions it appears that foreign aid from autocratic regimes decreases the likelihood of mediation.

Mediation efforts can have endogenous effects, meaning mediation while not succeeding in ending the conflict can prompt new mediation attempts in the following year. To control for this I include a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not there was mediation in the previous year (0 = no mediation in previous year, 1 = mediation in previous year). The results produce the same pattern and continue to support my original findings.

Previous work on civilian victimization shows that democracies are more cost sensitive than other forms of government (Thomas, 2014). Consequently one might expect that reports of rebel-led sexual violence are more influential in bringing democratic governments to the mediation table than other types of governments. I test this using logistic regression models that interact rebel-led SV with the level of democracy. Specifically I run two models, in the first I employ the Polity IV score as a continuous variable and in the second I use a dummy variable indicating if a state is a democracy or not (0 = not a democracy, a Polity IV score of < 6, 1 = a democracy, a Polity IV score \(\geq 6\)). For both models the interaction terms are insignificant suggesting that the level of accountability does not influence if reports of rebel-led sexual violence lead to mediation. This further supports the notion that all states are concerned about their (perceived) masculinity because all states are fundamentally gendered constructions.

Although I do not make an argument about the relationship between increasing prevalence of sexual violence and mediation onset, one might argue that the more prevalent and well known sexual violence is the more hurtful the victimization is and therefore mediation becomes more likely as sexual violence becomes more prevalent. To check this, I aggregate the original three prevalence scores to one score that adopts the highest of the three individual scores. For example, in the conflict in Myanmar in 1992 the three prevalence scores for the government are different (SD = 2, AI = 1, HRW = 0), the aggregated prevalence score then adopts the SD value (2) as it is

\begin{footnote}{The five excluded conflicts exhibiting the highest absolute number of years (ranging from 8 to 15 years) featuring reports of rebel-led sexual violence were: Burundi, Sudan, Uganda, India’s Kashmir conflict, and Sierra Leone. The five excluded conflicts exhibiting the highest relative number of conflict years (ranging from 75% to a 100% of all conflict years) featuring reports of rebel-led sexual violence were: DRC, Sudan, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Bosnia.}

Nagel
the highest of the three scores. A descriptive analysis shows that there are only 13 observations for rebels perpetrating massive sexual violence, hence I merge categories 2 and 3, making it a three-point ordinal measure (0 - no sexual violence reported, 1 - some sexual violence reported, 2 - widespread/massive sexual violence reported). The results of the logistic regression model show that all other things being equal, when rebels are reported to perpetrate some or widespread/massive sexual violence it significantly increases the likelihood of mediation compared to when there are no reports of rebels perpetrating sexual violence. An analysis of first differences as substantive effects shows that a change from no rebel-led sexual violence to some sexual violence increases the likelihood of mediation by 18 percent and a change from some sexual violence to widespread/massive sexual violence increases the likelihood of mediation by 23 percent. This supports the notion that mediation becomes more likely as sexual violence becomes more prevalent. Overall, the consistent results across various models and specifications strengthen confidence in the validity of these findings and the theoretical argument underpinning them.

**Conclusion**

This study contributes to both the expanding body of literature focussing on mediation in civil wars and sexual violence in armed conflict. It provides robust evidence in support of the principal theoretical argument and the hypotheses derived from it. Mediation is more likely when rebels are reported to perpetrate sexual violence because public knowledge of this victimization threatens the state’s masculinity by exposing the government’s lack of control and power. Accordingly, the state seeks to stop the conflict and thereby the sexual violence via mediation. This finding supports preceding work that shows that governments respond to the victimization of their citizens (Thomas 2014; Wood and Kathman, 2013). It also fills an important gap in our understanding of how sexual violence affects the outcome of civil wars (Chu and Braithwaite, 2017) and the role of sexual violence in conflict more generally.

By setting aside perpetrators’ motivations this study avoids conflating outcomes and intentions and presents a compelling case for the powerful effects of sexual violence regardless of the underlying motivation. Although the results might be interpreted as supportive of the ‘sexual violence as a weapon of war’ narrative, the study itself does not make this claim while acknowledging the complexity of motivations and circumstances that lead to sexual violence in armed conflict. Nonetheless there are valid concerns that this study furthers the securitization and fetishization of sexual violence (Meger, 2016). More specifically the results are troubling in showing that sexual violence could be instrumental to rebel groups in forcing the government to accept mediation.

This ties into the policy relevance of these findings in regards to both sexual violence and conflict management. The findings appear to indicate a perverse incentive structure whereby rebels benefit from perpetrating sexual violence. However, a more positive reading of this is that
third-party interventions do take place in response to abuses by rebels. This indicates a general willingness to intervene in the face of severe human rights abuses, particularly when perpetrated by rebels, and it highlights the need to pay more attention to state-led abuses.

Simultaneously, the results do not support the notion that aid from democratic states is influential in initiating conflict management. One plausible explanation is that democratic states are merely paying lip service when it comes to human rights and their aid actually does not come with strings attached. Another plausible explanation is that despite pressure from democratic donors, the aid recipients do not respond to it. In either case it strongly suggests that governments ought to rethink their approach to foreign aid as part of their foreign policy strategy. At the same time it should be mentioned that this might be a result of the limited time period under study. The dominant narrative of sexual violence as a weapon of war really gained international prominence over the past ten years after the UN Security Council passed resolution 1820 in 2008, which explicitly named sexual violence as an instrument of war (UN, 2008). As this study only includes conflicts up to 2009, it cannot account for potential effects of resolution 1820 (or later resolutions pertaining to sexual violence in armed conflict). Hence it will be important for future studies to examine what effect this increased formal international attention has on the prevalence of sexual violence and if there is an unanticipated effect of exacerbating sexual violence by rebels (Autessere, 2012; Meger, 2016).

Identifying the best moment for a diplomatic intervention is frequently crucial to its success (Greig, 2001). If intermediaries attempt to mediate before the conflict is ‘ripe’ it reduces the likelihood of resolution (Zartman, 1985). Reports of rebel-led sexual violence seem to be an important indicator of ‘ripeness’ as conflict management is significantly more likely when rebels are reported to perpetrate sexual violence. Potential intermediaries thus should pay close attention to international reports of sexual violence by rebels and coordinate their mediation offers accordingly to maximize the chances of initiating a process. Although conflict management cannot and should not be equated with conflict resolution, often reaching the table is critical in the process of peacemaking and presents a potential first step towards comprehensive resolution (DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna, 2011).

In light of mediation’s relevance as a diplomatic tool, advancing our understanding of how conflict dynamics shape such processes is crucial. This study provides more evidence of the importance of analyzing the dyadic interactions within conflicts and the value of detailed disaggregated data in furthering this cause. It also highlights the importance of gendered analyses of conflicts and strengthens calls for greater gender sensitivity in mediation efforts (O’Reilly and Ó Súilleabháin, 2013). This study thus encourages scholars and practitioners alike to apply a gender lens in analyzing and managing conflicts. Concrete policy steps might include ensuring the participation of gender advisors and women’s rights advocates in conflict management efforts.
References


