

Marie E. Berry. *War, Women, and Power: From Violence to Mobilization in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2018. \$99.99 (hardcover), \$34.99 (paper).

Aliza Luft
University of California, Los Angeles

After President Trump's inauguration, the Women's March on Washington and its sister rallies across the country made history as the nation's largest single-day protest. Since then, more women have filed to run for office than ever before, and they have won an unprecedented number of primaries. Women in the United States are shattering so many political records that news outlets have labeled 2018 "Year of the Woman."

And yet, women's rights are under assault: the Violence Against Women Act is about to expire, antiabortion judge Brett Kavanaugh gained a seat on the Supreme Court, and the president, with many denigrating actions towards women, was caught on tape bragging about sexual assault. Female candidates report constant harassment and abuse. Why, despite these threats to their lives and livelihoods, are women mobilizing in record numbers?

Enter Marie Berry's remarkable book, *War, Women, and Power: From Violence to Mobilization in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Sure, it is about women's political participation in countries quite different from the United States, but I couldn't help but draw parallels and lessons from Berry's stunning analysis.

War, Women, and Power examines how mass conflict leads to profound social change, increasing women's political agency after war. The link between war and women's activism is not new: social scientists have noted that since the 1980s, post-war countries have experienced a rise in women's political representation. Yet Berry's book uniquely considers how war precipitates political engagement from the perspectives of women themselves. This is no small feat.

According to Berry, war produces demographic, economic, and cultural shifts that increase women's activism in informal politics. Further conditions, such as the introduction of a gender-sensitive regime, can then catalyze activism from the informal arena to the formal political one. These gains can simultaneously trigger a backlash. Via domestic political settlements that undermine women's unity, the occasionally problematic priorities of international humanitarian actors, and the revitalization of patriarchy, women who try to

institutionalize political leadership constantly risk being pushed back into the domestic sphere. It therefore remains to be seen just how much of an opening war can generate for lasting change.

To explain how war created opportunities for women but also setbacks, Berry interviewed 152 women in Rwanda and 109 in Bosnia and complements this fieldwork with more than 200 organizational reports from community groups and international organizations. She brings her experience running human rights education programs in Rwanda and Bosnia to bear on the analysis. In countries recovering from war, it is difficult for citizens to open up and let a foreigner into their world. But Berry's knowledge and expertise, combined with repeat visits to each country (three in Rwanda and five in Bosnia), enabled her to build trusting relationships. The result is a thoughtful book replete with intimate details about women's personal suffering and political reconstruction in the aftermath of violence.

For example, Berry quotes a Rwandan woman, Noémie, whose husband was killed in the 1994 genocide. After the violence, Noémie worked in a widows' organization for three years while having "to do everything . . . the same for [her] kids as when their dad was around." Noémie describes how she used to think "politics was just a bunch of lies," but after her colleagues encouraged her, she was appointed head of her sector, ran for mayor and won, and finally was elected into parliament (p. 82-83). Her story exemplifies a transition many Rwandan women have made since the genocide; today, Rwanda leads the world in female parliamentary representation. But Berry goes beyond statistics to give women voice about how it feels to take on these new roles.

As a result, *War, Women, and Power* reveals such transitions are not always easy—a fact often elided in discussions of the positive consequences of women's postwar activism. For example, Jacqueline, also widowed, states, "Even just survival at home is also another hassle. . . . My agreement with my husband was him taking care of me and my kid. . . . This is not what we agreed on" (p. 71). Intention led some into politics, but many, like Jacqueline, were pushed because they lacked alternatives. Thus, even when activism instills new confidence, it can feel hard to be responsible for repairing a broken society.

This brings me to another significant finding by Berry: women often merged their status as nurturing wives and mothers with political participation. They drew on cultural repertoires as peaceful actors to justify their public presence, especially in comparison to men, whom they blame

for wars. For example, *Screm do Mira* (“Through Heart to Peace”) began in a refugee camp as a hair salon and sewing group for women to make money for their children’s schooling and healthcare. When their hometown was incorporated into Republika Srpska, few wanted to return because of the violence that happened there and because former Serbian army leaders still dominated local government. But return they did, largely because *Screm do Mira* provided a framework to rebuild their lives, sidestepping government ire by labeling itself a humanitarian women’s group and working for refugee return, transitional justice, and rights for the displaced.

It would be easy to continue highlighting important insights from this book, from how women bridged ethnonational divides by emphasizing their identities as women against war, to their success securing INGO funding despite facing economic disadvantages prior to and during each conflict. I have not discussed how Rwanda’s quasiauthoritarian regime versus Bosnia’s rotating tripartite presidency has shaped women’s mobilization in each country, but suffice it to say that, as someone who has worked in Rwanda, Berry’s chapter on historical roots of mass violence in Rwanda and its contemporary consequences is one of the most precise accounts of the country’s past and present I’ve read in recent years. I trust experts on the former Yugoslavia will feel similarly about the parallel chapter on Bosnia.

Finally, lest I fail to mention the important discussion of the backlash women face for their political activism, allow me to state clearly that this problem is not unique to women in post-war contexts. If our current political situation is any indication, *War, Women, and Power* will prove insightful for a range of questions beyond Rwanda and Bosnia concerning women’s activism and the violence that manifests in their lives when they challenge the status quo. It is a landmark book set to shape the conversation on gender, conflict, and mobilization for decades to come.

Holly J. McCammon and Lee Ann Banaszak, eds. *100 Years of the Nineteenth Amendment: An Appraisal of Women’s Political Activism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2018. \$99.00 (hardcover), \$34.95 (paper).

Elisabeth S. Clemens
University of Chicago

The United States was founded on unprecedented political inclusion combined with multiple categorical exclusions. While “all men were created

equal,” full political rights were restricted to mostly white, adult, often property-owning men. This combination set in motion sustained demands for formal and substantive political equality that fueled major social movements: abolition, civil rights, and woman suffrage, to name only a few. Precisely because the categorical exclusions were so fortified in law and practice, so fiercely defended, one might expect that success at gaining political rights would be followed by major transformations in policy, politics, and law. Certainly, this was the expectation of many of those women who fought for the right to vote from the first women’s rights convention in 1848 to the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. Yet the impact of this successful case of popular constitutionalism has proven surprisingly elusive. Just what difference did the right to vote make for American women and for American politics?

In *100 Years of the Nineteenth Amendment: An Appraisal of Women’s Political Activism*, co-editors Holly J. McCammon and Lee Ann Banaszak have assembled a distinguished set of contributors to address to these questions. The volume has an impressively multidisciplinary range with many chapters linked to larger research projects. Consequently, the collection not only advances a debate about the character and consequences of women’s political participation, it also functions as a survey of current scholarship that introduces key concepts along with diverse methods and sources of evidence.

To address the question of what difference women’s enfranchisement did (and didn’t) make, several chapters focus specifically on voting and other forms of participation. Although the sight of women entering voting booths in the 1920s was no doubt a dramatic change for many, because ballots were secret, it was not obvious what difference their unprecedented participation made. Using statistical techniques to leverage a rare exception in Illinois, where the gender of voters was recorded, J. Kevin Corder and Christina Wolbrecht contend that the participation of these new voters actually reinforced the existing party system, suppressing the percentage of the vote that the 1924 insurgent progressive candidacy of Robert La Follette would have received in the absence of the Constitutional amendment. Contrary to the expectation that movement success will produce political transformation, this large expansion of the electorate moderated electoral change. This sense of woman suffrage as a nonevent was not unusual. As the immediate successors of the suffrage organizations gave way to more issue-oriented interest groups, women’s representatives testified before Congress on a shrinking number of