In the latter half of the 20th Century, new analysis emerged on the causes and consequences of war in international relations that focused on the political economy of war. The influence of intersecting political and economic factors on war outbreak and war outcomes is now widely acknowledged (Berdal and Keen 1997; Jean and Rufin 1996; Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004). From this perspective, conflict occurs when the benefits to an actor of entering conflict outweigh the risks, generally understood in material terms, such as security or political or economic outcomes. This literature, however, largely ignores the normative considerations for actors engaging in this rational calculus. My research theorizes gendered social hierarchy as a necessary structure of international relations that underpins conflict, as this gendered hierarchy operates in such a way as to specify the functions of actors, their capabilities, and produces and constitutes processes that shape international relations. In many conflicts, the destabilization of economic or political structures can exacerbate unequal social relations and manifest in gendered violence as a means for gaining power and authority or control over productive and reproductive resources as an alternative to exclusion and marginalization. Thus, it is theorized that gender hierarchy manifested and expressed through global political and economic relations shape the (changing) gendered organizations of conflict as well as the gendered behaviours of states and other actors engaged in political violence.

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