

## **“Assessing the Truths and Myths of Women in War and Peace”**

**By Cheryl Benard**

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“Whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to Men, Emancipating all Nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over Wives. But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken...”

Abigail Adams

It is quite true that there are no limits to masculine egotism in ordinary life. In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women.

Leon Trotsky

I have often wondered why it is that a family which would make a great protest if the government took away their automobile or even their dog, says nothing when the government takes away their sons.

Mildred Scott Olmsted

My assignment today is to provide an analytic overview of the debate on gender and conflict as a background to our discussion of women and peace-building. What are the main schools of thought, what are the issues, what is the state of knowledge on this issue in the discipline of peace studies, where are we going, and what are the perspectives? This is an abbreviated version of a larger paper, and the topic is vast, so I will have to ask your forbearance if I leave a lot of important things out.

As I was reading for my report, I was reminded of Virginia Woolf's *A Room Of One's Own*.<sup>1</sup> In that book, she describes her experience of plowing through a mountain of books on gender – it wasn't called that then - and coming away primarily with the impression that the authors, though they were philosophers and professors and respected experts and purported to convey only dispassionate scientific fact, were in actuality writing from emotion. They weren't primarily trying to discover the truth, they wanted to prove a point, a defensive point that was just beginning to become

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contentious. These were the 1920's, most authors and almost all academics were men. The scientific fact they were trying to defend was the inferiority of women and the validity of their exclusion from politics and society. A few women were responding, and Woolf reports that she could well understand it if, in the face of these diatribes, these women found their own work contaminated with an answering swell of anger.

As our century draws to a close, we have a more mixed group of scientists and experts. The questions have changed, too. But the high level of emotion remains wherever gender enters the discussion.

This is a debate saturated in ideology, rife with speculation, replete with transparent agendas; one in which the available facts, the data, can readily be bent to various conclusions. To understand the very complex and often confusing contemporary debate over women, men, politics, conflict and peace, I think we have first to keep in mind that whatever else it may be about in its concrete instances, it is always also about the fundamental power imbalance between men and women, and it is always also a debate between those who want to change it, and those who want to maintain it.

I would like to cover three areas today: first I will review the current state of the debate on violence and gender, then I will examine the issue of women and peace in specific, and finally I will try to identify some perspectives that will hopefully transition us into our task.

### **I. Men, Women and Violence**

The discussion on violence and gender has been simmering in academia for some decades, spilling over into CNN whenever there is an occasion, such as Littleton. School

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<sup>1</sup> -- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, HBJ Books, New York 1989 (1929)

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shootings are almost invariably perpetrated by boys. Serial killers are invariably men. These are the kinds of things we know, but beyond them, contention begins.

However, we can identify a set of propositions, reflected in academic writing, in empirical studies and in the public debate. I would ask you to review them on sheet A.

*[Note: To Obtain a copy of the complete paper with illustrations and attachments please contact the USIP Research and Studies Program at 202-457-1700]*

### A. Propositions concerning male-female socio-political differences

- The behavior, the mentality and the value system of women is fundamentally different from, and ethically and socially superior to, that of men. Men are inclined to be more violent, women are more peaceful; men are more hierarchical, dominance-seeking, risk-taking, women are more egalitarian, risk-averse, security-minded and nurturing.
- *This difference is reinforced by society, but fundamentally it is rooted in biology or*
- *The difference may have a biological component, but that is of much less significance than the societal, educational, situational factors*
- Sex roles and gender-specific behavior are created by education and socialization and by life circumstances. That gender is malleable has become evident in this century. Women are increasingly performing roles that, only a few decades ago, were considered absolutely beyond their capability. Conversely, when men are more involved in child-rearing, they demonstrably become more nurturing and empathetic.
- *These transformations can effect a complete change and you can achieve an androgynous society in which individual personality differences are more significant than collective differences on the basis of gender or*
- *These transformations can effect significant changes, but a significant substratum of differences will always remain, with men always being more militant and women always being more emotional and domestic or*
- *These transformations can also take an opposite direction, with women becoming just as violent and risk-prone as men*
- If women had more of a voice in society, things would be different
- *Things would then be better for women or*
- *Things would be better for everyone*

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- *There would be less conflict and war, or*
- *There might be just as much conflict and war, but over different issues and with different goals, or*
- *Politics would remain basically the same, but at least women would be players.*

Much of the literature is devoted to expositions of these fundamental divides. Is the better-ness of women a function of their being women, or a function of their being oppressed? If they stopped being oppressed, would they also stop being the kinder, gentler gender? Don't they play a supportive role even now in wars and violence? If women ran the international system, would there be fewer wars, or “would women merely wage wars for different reasons than men do,”<sup>2</sup> as some of the “gender gap” evidence does seem to suggest. When women enter establishment institutions, do the women become more like the institution, or does the institution become more like women?<sup>3</sup> All of these sentences fall into place, and become more interesting, when we look at them in conjunction with the conclusions that are drawn. We can see how they are linked to a political agenda. In illustration, I have prepared a chart, your Sheet B:

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To get a feel for the contemporary debate, let's take a very brief look at Francis Fukuyama's recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, entitled “What If Women Ran The World”<sup>4</sup>. Fukuyama's argument in short:

Chimpanzees are the closest genetic relatives of humans. Among chimpanzees, the males are inherently murderous and violent, while the females form emotional attachments and behave sociably. Among humans, too, and with few exceptions, wars

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<sup>2</sup> -- Birgit Brock-Utne, *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education*, Pergamon Press, N.Y. 1989, p.11

<sup>3</sup> -- on the dangers of participation/assimilation, see for example Marilyn French, *Beyond Power, On Women, Men and Morals*, Abacus Press, London 1986.

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are male enterprises, violence is a male pursuit, while women are nurturing. The universality of this pattern shows that socialization and culture are secondary – the real roots of male violent behavior are biological. They can be modified somewhat but not really changed. Bringing more women into the political world has the potential to change both the process and the agenda of international politics for the better. This could happen in the modern industrial democracies, who may then, under this benign influence, form a “zone of peace.” **However**, many other parts of the world will continue to be dominated by destructive, violent males, and a peaceful, civilized, democratic, “feminized” society could have a hard time dealing with them. Therefore it’s probably best if men remain in charge everywhere. Just to be on the safe side, even in the more civilized democratic world, we’d also better let men have the leading positions in industry, government, academia and elsewhere, so they’ll have constructive outlets for their aggressive nature and not start fighting and disrupting.

I have to say that I admire this piece. It illustrates a male skill that fascinates me: their ability to turn nearly anything around so that it works to their advantage. Amazingly, even the fact that you act like a chimpanzee can be turned into a reason why you should run the world.

It should not surprise us to find some retaliatory content in liberal and feminist writings. This writing is not uniform. A minority position argues that women are just as violent as men but have lacked the opportunity to take part in martial enterprises and are not given equal credit even where they did. Most feminist writers on this subject, however, argue that women are more peace-minded and socially responsible. In sketching their vision of femininity, they draw most heavily on Mother Teresa, with just enough Lorena Bobbitt thrown in to keep the men on their toes. Here, in illustration, is one of the preeminent authors on the subject of women and peace, Birgit Brock-Utne of

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<sup>4</sup> -- Francis Fukuyama, What if Women Ran the World, Foreign Affairs, Sept.Oct. 1998

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the University of Oslo, associate at the Institute of Peace Research in Oslo, and consultant to UNESCO, the European Council and the International Peace Research Association. She writes,

“(Experts) point not only to androgen levels in males but also to the structure and function of the brain and the work of the Y chromosome to explain the greater aggressiveness in males. If we assume that males really are born with greater dispositions for violence, if we think their biological makeup predisposes them for aggressiveness, what should be the consequences of such insight?”

One obvious answer, she proposes,

“would be to counteract these predispositions either through clinical surgery or medication...”<sup>5</sup>

Are women better? Can men change? We’re not going to answer those questions today. I propose that even if it should turn out not to be true that education and socialization can significantly shape human behavior, we should nevertheless here conspire to operate on the premise that they can, because we are then likely to have a much more productive day.

### **II. War and Peace, and Women**

Under this heading, I believe the following three points are the most important:

1. The way that war and peace affect women is in important respects different from the way they affect men.
2. These differences are usually not taken into account either in peace settlements, in post-war reconstruction, in relief work, or even in the governance of civil peacetime societies.
3. Although women are associated with peace, in fact, the relationship between women and peace is not one of straightforward benefits.

1. War and peace affect women differently.

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<sup>5</sup> -- Birgit Brock-Utne, *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education*, Pergamon Press, N.Y. 1989, p. 127. Her other suggestions are sex selection before conception to reduce the number of male children born, placing mostly women in leading public positions, and socializing and educating boys differently.

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It is tempting but difficult to assign a qualitative value to these differences. War is different for women, but is it worse? Could it possibly be better? Does it depend on the kind of war? What would such a judgment mean, anyway?

In most wars, more men than women die. Women may starve, freeze, lose children, lose husbands, lose their homes, be raped, and generally suffer a decrease in the quality of their lives and their family's lives for a long time and maybe forever, but relative to men, and as evident in the skewed demographics of many postwar societies, fewer of them are killed.<sup>6</sup>

However, even where more men die, it seems too simple to say that war is worse for men. Usually, more men were more involved in the decision to go to war, or felt more involved, and it is often a male agenda that the war is meant to advance.

Certainly, women can be very nationalistic and very fanatical, but in terms of their specific history and culture, women's affiliation with their clan, their state, their nation is often more tenuous than men's.

One reason is their lesser involvement in the public realm. Another important reason is exogamy. Since the earliest days of human history, women have become accustomed to marrying into a totally new and strange group, acquiring instant membership, and transferring at least part of their loyalties in the process. As the thousands of war brides who accompany the end of most major conflicts attest, women see no problem with marrying into the group that has just finished killing numerous members of their own group, nor does the other side usually have too much of a problem with accepting them as trustworthy new members in good standing, and as potential mothers of their next generation. This clearly shows that women are widely

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<sup>6</sup> -- I have explored this issue further in "Rape as Terror, The Case of Bosnia," *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, 6, Spring 1994 and in "Le Viol et les Violences Sexuelles en Proces pour la premiere fois," *Bulletin, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*, 1998

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considered to be in some ways external to their group. Ironically, this does not interfere with their ability to be considered perfect symbols for their group, personifications of the nation and an inspiration to the fighting men.

Women conventionally have played a set of specific roles during wars, post-war reconstruction and the establishment of peace. This is not a uniform set, it contains multiple roles. Women can be camp-followers, soldiers, spies, they can “man” the homefront, fight in the underground, hide members of persecuted minorities in their basements, fraternize with the enemy, provide a nice happy home for husbands who just happen to be running death camps, etc.

Women are generally less able to directly influence the course of political events on the grand scale. But neither are most men in a position to do so. If we visualize the typical women’s political activity as a 3x5 card, then the average man’s could be described as a 4x6. What men have and women don’t is the illusion of control, the illusion of power. The comparative powerlessness of women, and male power over women, enhances this illusion and is therefore a useful tool in keeping men reconciled to their leaders.

### **2. Peace settlements, post-war reconstruction and relief work exclude or discriminate against women.**

There are areas related to political conflicts and the post-conflict period where the effect on women is clearly distinct, and more severe, than that on men. I will choose the example of humanitarian relief.

Relief work and humanitarian assistance frequently fail to meet the needs of women, and often they blatantly discriminate against women. On first sight, this is counter-intuitive. Humanitarian relief work is geared to civilians; women and children are the quintessential civilians, so you would expect the programs to be designed very much with them in mind. As most major organizations by now acknowledge, the opposite is very frequently the case.

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The UNHCR publication Refugee Women lists examples from our decade, “planning errors” and “oversights” so consistent in their negative impact on women that it is hard to imagine them being coincidental. How to distribute the food and to whom, how to set up the camp facilities, how to offer services in such a way that everybody can avail themselves of them, these are quite basic logistical matters. That women will not rush up and broadcast the fact that they were raped to a male official in a public setting, but will seek help from a female health care professional in a more discreet environment, that an all-male camp committee will spend money on a men’s café but not on a cement floor for the laundry facility, so that women don’t have to stand ankle deep in mosquito-infested mud while washing the family’s clothes, these are not radical insights, but things that anyone with a few years of field experience ought to know. That makes reports such as this one, from the year 1991, difficult to digest.

“In 1991, as desperate people scrambled through mountains of ice and mud to flee Northern Iraq, John Telford was posted to the area as a UNHCR emergency officer. When a few refugees took over food distribution, after days of utter confusion, we thought we’d achieved a lot, Telford recalls. Later, however, UNHCR staff realized that food was not going to families headed by women. Only then did they notice that all the distributors they had appointed were men. The result: malnutrition, exploitation, suffering.

Telford remembers the shock he felt. ‘Had that group of women stood out in some way – visually or physically, because of their ethnic background, or a religious difference, or whatever, we would have made sure they got food,’ Telford recalls. ‘But because they were women, it didn’t even occur to us. It didn’t even occur to me, I have to admit, to my shame.’”

This seems disingenuous. “Women who are heads of families” may not visually stand out, but women in general are usually pretty easy for most people to identify, yet this has not led most NGO’s to make sure they get their share. Why not? Wairimu Karago from the UNHCR protection division asserts, “We have a beautiful policy on women. We have guidelines, we have everything. But we’re only as good as the implementation.”<sup>7</sup>

So why is the implementation faltering?

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<sup>7</sup> -- “Refugees, Feminine Plural,” in *Refugee Women*, Issue 100, UNHCR. See also *Progress Report on the Implementation of UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women*, UNHCR, EC/SCP/74, July 1992

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The disadvantages women experience can belong to one of three categories: they can be part of a deliberate mechanism enforcing and maintaining women's inferior social status; they can be an unconscious, automatized part of structural violence against women; or they can be a more or less accidental byproduct of the fact that decision-makers are not aware of and don't consider women's needs and interests.

Let us examine this by taking a concrete case. During the 1980's, numerous international aid organizations were involved in relief work for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. It quickly became evident that food supplies, medical aid, and education benefits were reaching the male refugees in a vastly disproportionate way. Was this because the NGO's had gotten together and formulated it as their policy that they were going to conspire with the most backward elements in Afghan tradition to discriminate against Afghan women? No. On the other hand, did they actively strategize how, given cultural and other constraints, they could better help the women? No again. The dominant thinking was: We will run into too much opposition from the refugees if we go against their rules concerning the treatment and place of women. Besides, we're not here to foist our own ideas on these people, we're here to help them, and if this is how they want things to be, it's none of our business.

OK, so let's look at the assumption. Did “they” want it this way? That brings us right to the heart of our topic today: whom you mean when you conceptualize a “they.” On several visits during the 1980's to evaluate the work of German and Austrian aid committees, we were able to speak to Afghan women in the camps by visiting them in their tents and in the lone and embattled Afghan women's hospital in Peshawar. A common pattern was that of young women – young girls, really, who had been married off too young, become pregnant much too early, and suffered up to a dozen serial miscarriages over a short time span. Doctors working with these women were very frustrated by the fact that their advice, their sometimes urgent medical advice, often fell

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on the indifferent ears of the men in charge of these women, usually their husbands, who did not deem a woman's life worthy of any special effort, who saw reproductive health problems as part of a woman's destiny. The hospital was home to women who had long been discharged, but were not being picked up by their families because they had given birth to daughters and were supposed to repent this wrongdoing. Other women were in mental anguish because their young sons, some as young as 6 or 7, had been taken away from them to fight in the jihad, and they had been unable to prevent it. All of these women were articulate and vocal in their despair over the life they were forced to lead and the treatment they were obliged to endure. I can assure you that this group of “they's,” had anyone troubled to poll them, was not voting for the status quo.

Some aid groups did try to help the women. A special commendation here should go to the Australians, who discovered a creative way to circumvent female malnutrition by deploying an unpopular staple in their food arsenal, the Australian protein biscuit. Its dense consistency and bad flavor made it unpopular, but the Australians reasoned that this could be an advantage, because the men would not like it and would allow it to be distributed to women as an inferior food item, some weird foreign kind of bread. And the benefits extended further when some organizations discovered that the biscuit could be pulverized, mixed with boiled water and given as baby food. I will not forget the NGO meeting during which a representative of Save The Children, in her delight and happiness to have found this out and to now have a means of better feeding the children, explained the correct technique to her colleagues. After this meeting, there was much agitation in NGO ranks, with numerous irate men complaining that Save The Children had their nerve, and they had not come all the way to Peshawar to mash biscuits.

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### **3. Although women are associated with peace, the relationship between women and peace is not uniformly positive.**

For women, there are no easy correlations. Is a refined society with a high level of culture and civilization better for women? Not necessarily; classical Athens was a nightmare for women, and while philosophy and the arts flourished, for Greek women these were the Dark Ages, one of the absolute low points in their Western civilization. The status of women was far higher, the level of girls' education much greater, in the warrior society of Sparta.<sup>8</sup>

We can identify a few basic problems in the relationship between women and peace.

First, peace doesn't necessarily mean the same thing for women as it means for men.<sup>9</sup> When peace is defined purely as an absence of war, women can still be experiencing extremely high levels of violence, both physical and structural, domestic and societal. Even when India is not fighting Pakistan, women are being killed in dowry deaths and eradicated through selective abortion; whether or not China is attacking Taiwan, female infanticide there is killing girls. Peace as often defined, can entirely fail to take the situation of women into account; since they are half the population, that makes it not much of a peace.

Nairobi put down an official marker here with its Forward Looking Strategies, which note that

“The questions of women and peace and the meaning of peace for women cannot be separated from the broader question of relationships between women and men in all spheres of life and in the family...Violence against women exists in various forms in everyday life of all societies...Such violence is a major obstacle to the achievement of peace...”

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<sup>8</sup> -- see for example Eva Keuls, *Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, U. of California Press, Berkeley 1985

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Secondly, peace does not automatically benefit a given nation's women in the same way that it benefits men, and may in some cases worsen important aspects of their situation. War can be an opportunity for women. War means that men are absent, and in many ways, the absence of men can have significant benefits for women.<sup>10</sup>

Women's status both at home and in broader society is often elevated when they become the de facto head of the household, when they are obliged and allowed to take on public responsibilities. The absence of men opens up many opportunities for work, leadership and advancement. These are often lost from one moment to the next as soon as the men return. This can be accompanied by an era of cultural repression, as women who had gained in stature, self-confidence and expectations are forced back to their former “place”. The end of a “cold” war is no different. German reunification has been a social and economic catastrophe for East German women, as a more patriarchal Western society extended its domination over a more egalitarian socialist realm. Across much of Eastern Europe, women's representation in parliaments is way down compared to Cold War years. With subsidized childcare and other social services falling apart and women burdened with the resultant care-taking work, with Western companies preferentially hiring men, political lists preferentially ranking men, women are forced out. Like the word peace, the term democratization too needs to be defined more carefully if it is to be accurate.

### **Perspectives**

A quotation:

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<sup>9</sup> -- this is also true for ethnic minorities and for children

<sup>10</sup> -- as in other cases, we have to here distinguish the subjective level from the collective level. Individual women are not glad that their own men are away, or dead, but women as a group may have increased opportunities as a result.

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“Because male thinking dominates society, we lack the necessary endurance for negotiations and too easily resort to force of arms. It is therefore necessary to include women proportionately to their share in the population in matters of international security.”

Who said this? Eleanor Smeal? Gloria Steinem? No, this quote is from Austrian minister Caspar Einem, from his just published book on the future of the state.<sup>11</sup>

But how can such a transformation be brought about?

There are two major schools of thought. The first is widely referred to as the “add women and stir approach” and calls for straightforward numerical inclusion of women on the grounds that you must have access to the existing power base before you can change it. The second is the “change the recipe” approach. It believes that just adding the women isn’t sufficient, because the women will be absorbed by the system and become just like the men. Instead, you have to redefine what is meant by politics and identify alternative areas and means. I don’t see these two approaches as mutually exclusive, in fact I think they are tightly interlinked. Proportionate participation of women in decision-making, and feminization or a better cultural balance between what we consider male and female principles, are necessary prerequisites of each other and of a different kind of world.

In my concluding section, I will discuss the greater involvement of women in three areas: in conflict prevention, in peace negotiations, and in the post-conflict period. Since this conference is under the auspices of the U.S. Institute of Peace, I will also point out that this inclusion of women is in the best interest of U.S. foreign policy.

### **1. Prevention**

Much of women’s present and past political activism and societal contribution tends to fall under the heading of reform, repair and reconstruction. The discussion concerning women’s roles in war and peace also tends to focus largely on the issue of

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how war affects women and on the role they can play after the termination of wars and conflicts. One issue that should receive greater prominence is women’s potential role in preventing wars and avoiding rifts, social inequities and mismanagement. Assuming women are more peace oriented, more risk-aware, better at communication, women’s increased participation in politics and in decision making should have a salutary effect and should be given more weight.

Presently, women are particularly engaged in corrections after the fact. The role of ethical voice and cleanup crew is estimable, but it is not new; it fixes and improves things, but doesn’t change them. It’s inspiring to see Antigone stand up to Creon, but if we really want to improve the world we have to vote Creon out and have Antigone and Haemon run things instead.

### 2. Peace Negotiations

When a conflict has occurred and agreements to end it are being made, very little attention is generally paid to the implications for women of the resulting peace. The best way to safeguard women’s interests is to include women in the negotiations as participants with official status.

Abigail Adams’ famous appeal to “remember the ladies” during the drafting of the Constitution got her nothing but a condescending reply from her husband.<sup>12</sup> History amply illustrates that men do not “remember” the ladies. Whoever wants her interests

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<sup>11</sup> -- Caspar Einem, *Ein neuer Staat befreiter Buerger, Politik fuer eine veraenderte Gesellschaft*, Molden, Vienna 1999.

<sup>12</sup> -- L.H. Butterfield (ed.), *The Book of Abigail and John, Selected Letters of the Adams Family 1762-1784*, Harvard U. Press, Mass. 1975. Abigail wrote: “In the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all men would be Tyrants if they could.” He replied, “As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government everywhere. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient – that schools and Colledges were grown turbulent – that Indians slighted their Guardians and

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remembered needs to be sitting at the negotiating table or, if she is under house arrest in Kabul and unable to act herself, she needs to have her friends demonstrating and writing letters to Congress and creating disturbances on her behalf.

I am here referring, of course, to the Taliban, whose first order of business, even before embarking on its mass murder of the Hazara ethnic minority, was to take away as many of the internationally agreed upon human rights of women as possible. Without a women’s movement to put and keep this issue on the agenda, the drug factor and Ben Laden would have been the only obstacles preventing the community of nations, including the signatories to all the nice conventions and declarations on women’s human rights, from welcoming the Taliban into their fold.

### **3. the post-conflict period**

In negotiations for peace, an issue that needs to be focused on is the role of women in the post-agreement phase. One area where the importance of this is obvious is in regard to post-conflict reconstruction and economic development. Correctly assessing women’s contribution, identifying networks of resource distribution that don’t exclude women, and dealing with women directly as economic and social actors instead of assuming that you can deal only with the men and let them redistribute to their women as they see fit, making sure that you don’t through poor planning make things worse for women than they were before, these are some of the considerations that must inform external assistance.

The desire to be just is not the only motivation for this. Besides being more peaceful, there is mounting evidence that women bring other qualities to public life as well. A recently completed, cross-cultural study demonstrated, for example, that they

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Negroes grew insolent to their Masters...Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems.” op.cit. p. 121-123.

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are less given to corruption. “Similarly, the researchers correlated levels of government corruption with the proportion of women in the national legislature and the number of women in the work force. Societies with more women in the labor force and parliament had lower levels of corruption.

### **Conclusion**

The final word on most questions raised in this debate is definitely not in, but in my personal judgment, the historical, anthropological and sociological evidence rather strongly suggests that women, by and large, are predisposed to be more mindful of dangerous consequences, less fascinated by violence, more interested in security, more disturbed by disharmony and more aware of the needs of people around them. On the basis of the literature, and my own work on early childhood, school-age and adolescent behavior and socialization, I think that social influences and education are by far the dominant factor in gender-specific behavior.<sup>13</sup> However, other factors not yet being equal, I think women currently have a significantly different perspective from that of men, and one that could play a transforming role in politics.

In purely speculative terms, our last two American centuries may have been better if Abigail Adams, rather than her husband John, had helped write the Constitution and been this country’s second president. Here, from the days of the American revolution, are her thoughts on slavery:

“I wish most sincerely there was not a slave in the province. It always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me – to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have.”

Abigail had a genuine and prescient vision of democracy; her husband, by contrast, had not just independence but also the privileges of his class, his gender and

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his race in mind when, in his reply to her, he described Indians, Blacks and women as potentially mutinous population groups who needed to be held in check.

I think that women as participating actors, and women’s issues as political issues, need to be more equitably included in the political process a. because that is fair, and b. because hopefully society and the political process will then become less skewed towards just one set of behavior, structures and solutions.

Feminization makes for a better civil society and a greater chance for peace. For US foreign policy, this means that if we want to spread the zone of peace, prevent terrorism, reduce international levels of violence and enhance development, women’s empowerment should be an explicit goal. My personal hope for today is that we will be able to identify some practical mechanisms for advancing such a goal.

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<sup>13</sup> -- see for example Cheryl Benard, Edit Schlaffer, Muetter Machen Maenner, *Wie Soehne erwachsen werden*, Heyne, Munich 1994; Cheryl Benard, Edit Schlaffer, *Let’s Kill Barbie*, Heyne, Munich 1997; *Handbuch der Adoleszenzbegleitung*, Stadt Wien, Vienna 1998.

## **“Assessing the Truths and Myths of Women in War and Peace”**

**September 14, 1999.**

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The specific role of women in the different components of peacebuilding. This section examines different dimensions of gender equality and peace and also provides a short history of the growing consideration of the meaning and role of gender and gender relations in peacebuilding processes. Gender as an analytical tool, an approach and a goal.Â United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. On October 31, 2000, the UN Security Council held a special session on the issue of peace and security from a women's perspective.Â But it also encourages states to consider women's inclusion in post-conflict reforms such as disarmament, security, and judicial, constitutional and electoral processes. The U.S. Institute of Peace hosted a one-day conference, "Perspectives on Grassroots Peacebuilding: The Roles of Women in War and Peace", on September 14, 1999. The one-day conference, which gathered together scholars and members of the U.S. government and non-governmental organizations, focused on how gender influences all aspects of a violent conflict. Highlights of the conference included keynote addresses from Boltzmann Institute Research Director Cheryl Benard and U.S. Representative to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Nancy Rubin . Presentations at the conference included several panel The preponderant role of the United States in initiating and commanding UN actions in Korea in 1950 and the Persian Gulf in 1990â€"91 prompted debate over whether the requirements and spirit of collective security could ever be achieved apart from the interests of the most powerful countries and without U.S. control.Â In order to assess the UNâ€™s expanded role in ensuring international peace and security through dispute settlement, peacekeeping, peace building, and enforcement action, a comprehensive review of UN Peace Operations was undertaken. The resulting Brahimi Report (formally the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations), issued in 2000, outlined the need for strengthening the UNâ€™s capacity to undertake a wide variety of missions.