# The Heart of the Matter

## The Security of Women, The Security of States

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Civilian refugees, the majority of whom are women and children, arrive at the village of Putumatalan in Puthukkudiyirippu, northern Sri Lanka, 22 April 2009 after fleeing an area still controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the "No Fire Zone." Thousands more refugees surged out of Sri Lanka's war zone while soldiers and Tamil Tiger rebels fought the apparent endgame of Asia's longest-running war despite calls to protect those still trapped. (Photo by Stringer, Reuters)

What are the roots of conflict and insecurity for states? Some scholars argue that civilizational differences, defined by ethnicity, language, and religion, are the primary underlying catalysts for conflict and insecurity.[1] Others have spoken of the importance of differentiating between democratic and nondemocratic regime types in explaining conflict in the modern international system.[2] Still others assert that poverty, exacerbated by resource scarcity in a context of unequal access, is at the heart of conflict and insecurity at both micro and macro levels of analysis.[3]

In this article, we argue that there is another more fundamental, and perhaps more powerful, explanatory factor than those conventionally suggested that must be considered when examining issues of state security and conflict: the treatment of females within society. We have come to that conclusion through exhaustive research, both qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Unfortunately, the supporting statistical analyses and descriptions of methodology are too expansive and perhaps a little esoteric to be presented here for this relatively short article,

and so we present here the major key findings of our conclusions. For those who have interest in seeing a concise treatment of the data analyses in significantly more detail with accompanying graphic outlays, these can be found in our book, *Sex and World Peace*.

At first glance, our argument seems hardly intuitive. How could the treatment of women possibly be linked to matters of high politics such as war and national security? For some, the two realms seem not to inhabit the same conceptual space. For others, the linkage between treatment of women and security is obvious. For example, in 2006, Secretary–General of the United Nations Kofi Annan opined, "The world is starting to grasp that there is no policy more effective in promoting development, health, and education than the empowerment of women and girls. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended."[4]

In this article, we wish to examine Annan's assertion focusing on the question, Is there a significant linkage between the security of women and the security of states?

When a coauthor of this article raised that question in a departmental research meeting, the answer was swift and certain: "No." The prevailing opinion was that violence wrought by the great military conflicts of the twentieth century was proof that security scholars would do best by focusing on larger issues such as democracy and democratization, poverty and wealth, ideology and national identity. Along a scale of "blood spilt and lives lost" as the proper location of concern for security studies, colleagues queried, "why would one ever choose to look at women?"[5]

Taken aback by such professed certainty that we were on the wrong course, it took some time for us to articulate an answer. On examining the issue of what "the security of the state" really means, how would one account for the death toll among Indian women as a result of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion from 1980 to the present if not in the category of such a death toll being a genuine "security issue?" The number of females deaths involved is almost forty times the death toll from all of India's wars since and including its bloody struggle for independence. This fact alone would suggest broad adverse security implications for the stability and economic well-being of the state.

Consequently, we reasoned, it would be instructive to consider the scale upon which women die from sex-selective causes inquiring into the implications such had for state security. Using overall sex ratios as a crude marker for a host of causes of death by virtue of being female, we found ourselves contemplating the results shown in the figure (page 21) in comparison with the great slaughters of the twentieth century.[6]

Moreover, because the death tolls for the wars and conflicts listed above include deaths of women as both civilians and combatants, we thought it not to be an exaggeration to suggest that the majority of "blood spilt and lives lost" over the last century has been, in the first place, mainly those of females.

Unfortunately, when thinking of war and peace and national security, many people confine their vision to a picture of a uniformed soldier—male—lying dead on the field of battle, gendering these important issues male. In contrast, perhaps a fresh vision, such as that offered in the figure, should turn the thoughts of those deeply thinking about national and global security to the girl baby drowned in a nearby stream, or to the charred body of a young bride assassinated in a "kitchen fire" of her in-laws' making. To pose the question more conceptually, might there be more to inquire about than simply the effect of war on women—*might the security of women in fact affect the security of states?*

Extensive research has shown that there is a strong rationale for asserting a relationship between the security of women and the security of states.[7] Sexual difference serves as a critical model for the societal treatment of difference between and among individuals and collectivities. A long tradition in social psychology has found three basic differences that individuals notice immediately when they encounter a new person almost from infancy: age, sex, and race.[8] Although there is some preliminary evidence that recognition of racial differences can be "erased" when such differences are crossed with coalitional status, no one has shown a similar disabling of sex recognition.[9] Indeed, the psychologist Alice Eagly asserts, "Gender stereotypes trump race stereotypes in every social science test."[10] In this way, sex,

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**Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, PhD,** is an emeritus professor of psychology and was the last director of the Women's Research Institute at Brigham Young University. Previously, she served twenty-five years as a professor and department chair in the graduate school of Fordham University at Lincoln Center in New York City. Her research publications and papers in human motivation and emotion earned her the Fellow status in both the American Psychological Association in 1984 and the Association for Psychological Science in 1987. Her publications address intergenerational domestic violence, the impact of witnessing violence, and the design of techniques to increase peacefulness. She has also published a global anthology of poetry by women, revealing their experiences with violence and their resilient visions of peace.

**Mary Caprioli, PhD,** is an associate professor of political science and director of international studies program at the University of Minnesota Duluth. She has researched the role of gendered structural inequality on political conflict and violence. Caprioli pioneered a new line of scholarly inquiry between the security of women and the national and international behavior of states and confirmed the link using quantitative methodology. Her research focuses broadly on conflict and security studies, including inter- and intrastate violence, and specifically on assessing the role of gendered structural inequality in predicting violence.

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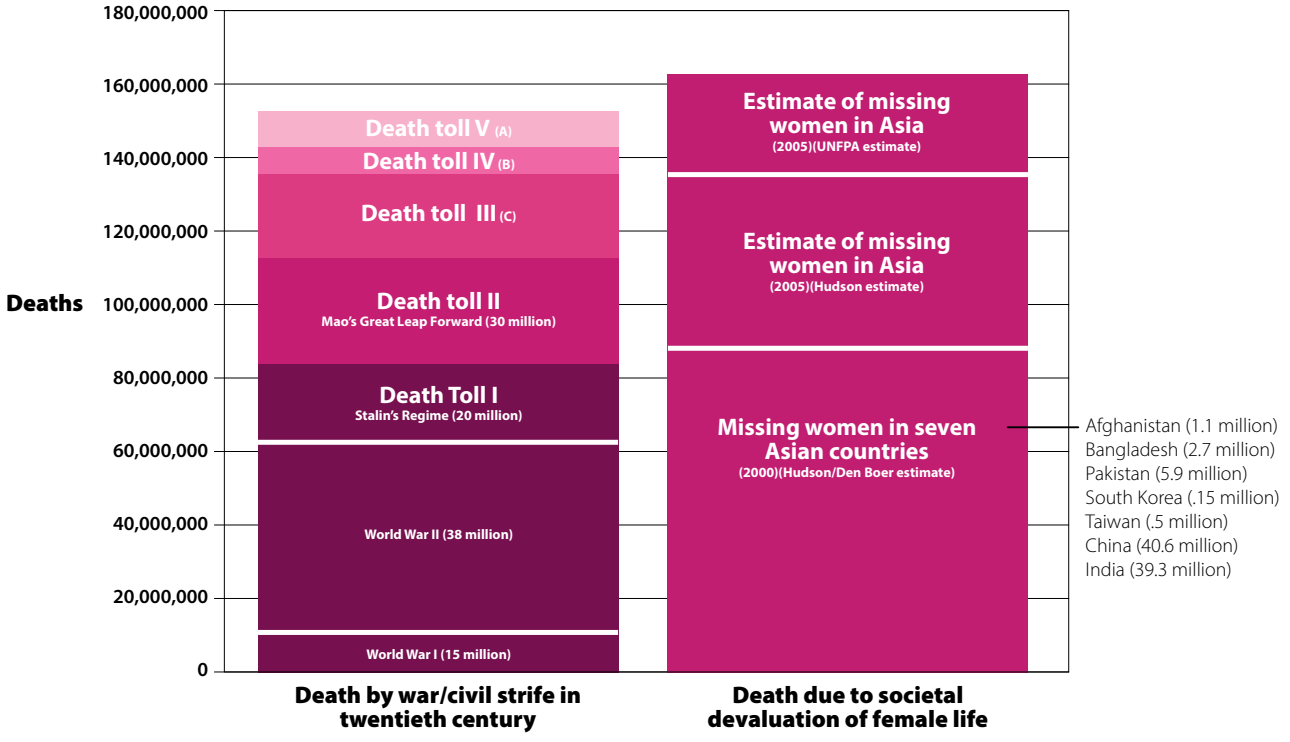



**(A)**
**Death Toll V**

Brazil (1.1 million)
Russo-Japanese War (13 million)
Balkans (.14 million)
German East Africa (.18 million)
Libya (.13 million)
Grecco-Turkish War (.25 million)
Spanish Civil War (.47 million)
Abyssinia (.4 million)
Russo-Finish (.15 million)
Greek Civil War (.16 million)
Tito (.2 million)
First Indochina War (.4 million)
Colombia (.2 million)
Indian partition (.5 million)
Romania (.15 million)
Burma/Myanmar (.13 million)
Algeria (.7 million)
Guatemala (.2 million)
Indonesia (.4 million)
Uganda (.6 million)
Angola (.6 million)
East Timor (.2 million)
Lebanon (.15 million)
Iraq (.7 million)
Liberia (.15 million)
Bosnia (.18 million)
Somalia (.4 million)
Israel/Arab (.07 million)
Angola (.08 million)
Sierra Leone (.08 million)

**(B)**
**Death Toll IV**

Tibet (.6 million)
Mexican Revolution (1 million)
Ethiopia (1.4 million)
Nigeria (1 million)
Mozambique (1 million)
Sudan (1.9 million)

**(C)**
**Death Toll III**

Pre-PRC 20th century China (4 million)
Congo, 20th century (3.8 million)
Vietnam (3.5 million)
Korea (2.8 million)
Afghanistan (1.8 million)
Khmer Rouge, Cambodia (1.65 million)
Estimated Armenian genocide (1.5 million)
Russian Civil War (1.4 million)
Rwanda/Burundi (1.35 million)
Bangladesh (1.25 million)
Iran/Iraq War (1 million)

(Adapted from a graphic in *Sex and World Peace*)

**Figure. Comparison of Conflict Deaths in the Twentieth Century and Deaths Resulting from Devaluation of Female Life at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century**

like age, becomes a basic category of identification and a profound marker of difference.[11]

Sex and age categorizations play variant roles in society. Everyone will someday move into another age group; in general, with exceptions, this kind of change does not occur with regard to sex groupings. Sex difference is arguably the primary formative fixed difference experienced in human society,[12] and sexual reproduction is the strongest evolutionary driver of human social arrangements.[13]

Concurring with these insights from psychological and evolutionary research, French philosopher Sylviane Agacinski reflects, "It is always the difference of the sexes that serves as a model for all other differences, and the male/female hierarchy that is taken as a metaphor for all inter-ethnic hierarchies."[14] Consequently, societally based differences in status beliefs about the sexes, reflected in practices, customs, and law, may well have important political consequences, including consequences for nation-state security policy and for conflict and cooperation within and between nation-states.

Utilizing the theoretical framework that we call the "women and peace thesis," linking how women are

treated with how their nation-states behave, we first surveyed the existing empirical literature linking the situation of women to the situation of states, and then conducted an initial empirical investigation of the framework's propositions using diverse existing data bases that had compiled a wide variety of statistical information related to the situation of women and the situation and behavior of states. Our findings, detailed in *Sex and World Peace*, showed strong, significant relationships in the direction predicted.[15]

## Literature Review of Existing Empirical Findings: Women and the State

There is a substantial literature linking the treatment of women to important state-level variables. Scholarly attention to the link between women and the state arguably began in the field of development. As early as 1970, Ester Boserup argued that omission of gender aspects of development led to project failure. Since her pioneering work, we have seen waves of successive research concerning the role of women in economic development and quality of life.[16] The empirical literature in this field has contributed to the establishment of strong cross-national linkages between gender variables and economic variables, including GDP per capita, global competitiveness ranking, and economic growth rates.[17] State-level health variables, especially child survival/mortality and malnutrition, are also significantly correlated to female status and education.[18]

Such previous research helps us understand the significant negative correlation between indices of corruption and indices of women's social and economic rights.[19] This implies that expansion of women's rights thus offer an added economic benefit: decreases in political corruption due to greater equity of female empowerment in society overall appear to support an increase in investment and growth. In other words, increasing gender equity promotes economic growth.[20]

The linkages between the situation and status of women, on the one hand, and economic and health variables on the other have paved the way for research on political variables also. Of special note is that initial research in this area suggests that the priorities and perspectives of a government appear to change as women become more visible and audible within its ranks. Previous research studies show that the more women there are in government, the greater the attention given to social welfare, legal protection, and transparency in government and business.[21] For example, in one survey, 80 percent of respondents said that women's participation restores trust in government.[22]

All in all, then, many in the world are beginning to recognize that the status of women often substantially influences important political aspects of the states in which they live. This recognition, in turn, has already led in many cases to innovative policy initiatives to capitalize on these insights.[23]

Despite the impressive array of empirical findings, when one turns to questions of women and national security defined in a more traditional sense, there are theoretical reasons for believing that the security and behavior of a state are linked to the situation and security of its women. This suggests specific lines of research inquiry: Does the evidence support this proposition? And, if so, what is the form of that linkage?

There are two primary strands of inquiry that have brought this linkage into sharper focus: academic theory and policy exposition. A strong foundation in the rich theoretical literature of feminist security studies emphasizes the relationship between women's status and international relations.[24] In addition to academic endeavors, noteworthy is the formal articulation of the need to include women in peace negotiations as codified in the 2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the 2008 recognition in UN Security Council Resolution 1820 of the need to punish those who commit rape in conflict, a broader intergovernmental organization (IGO)/non-governmental organization (NGO) advocacy program called Women, Peace, and Security, which has resulted in stronger gender mainstreaming in areas such as UN peacekeeping operations, and a new Gender Architecture (GEAR) for the United Nations, which resulted in the creation of UN Women in July 2010.[25]

Using in-depth ethnographic case studies, processtracing, and poststructuralist discourse analysis, researchers have penned many fine empirical works in feminist security studies.[26] Below we survey more quantitative work.

In a recent empirical analysis of Muslim societies, M. Steven Fish finds that predominantly Muslim nations do not disproportionately suffer from political violence, but they do disproportionately suffer from authoritarian rule.[27] He explores why Islam


*Burying Babies in China*, illustration in *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering* (London: Wesleyan Mission House, March 1865), 40. Female infanticide is a major cause of concern in several nations such as China and India. It has been argued that the "low status" in which women are viewed in patriarchal societies creates a bias against females. (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

appears to disfavor democracy, and after controlling for many variables, including economic development, economic growth, ethnic fractionalism, and others, he finds that indicators related to the subordination of women, including literacy rate gap and sex ratio, account for a substantial proportion of the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism. He hypothesizes that the oppression of females—one of the earliest social acts observed by all in the society—provides the template for other types of oppression, including authoritarianism, in Islamic nation-states. Treatment of women, then, may affect societal propensity to adopt a particular governance system, such as authoritarianism or democracy.

Another primary question of interest is how the treatment of women at the domestic level has an impact on state behavior internationally. This question is important to show the linkage between gender and security because it shows those with decision-making power that the treatment of women has far-reaching practical consequences well beyond that of the abstract objective of obtaining social justice. A body of conventional empirical work spearheaded by Mary Caprioli links measures of domestic gender inequality to state-level variables concerning conflict and security, with statistically significant results. The clear implication is that the international system may be more or less secure depending upon the situation of women within its units.

Caprioli uses three measures of gender equality—political equality (percentage of women in parliament and number of years of suffrage), economic equality (percentage of women in the labor force), and social equality (fertility rate)—to show that states with higher levels of social, economic, and political gender equality are less likely to rely on military force to settle international disputes.[28] In other words, Caprioli found that higher levels of gender equality make a state less likely to threaten, display, or use force, or go to war once involved in an interstate dispute. Therefore, Caprioli argues, foreign policy aimed at

Rebecca is training at a vocational center in South Sudan on 3 August 2011 to become the first female mason in her community. The center, supported by Oxfam—an international confederation of charitable organizations focused on human rights and the alleviation of global poverty—is helping women branch out into careers that were not previously open to them such as masons, mechanics, and electricians. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

creating peace should focus on improving the status of women as a means to that end.

Elsewhere, Caprioli and Mark Boyer examined the impact of gender equality on a state's behavior during international crises, which is a situation in which there is a high probability of violence. They wanted to explore whether gender equality has an impact on state behavior when violence is highly likely. Their research revealed that states exhibiting high levels of gender equality measured by the percentage of women in parliament also exhibit lower levels of violence in international crises and disputes.[29] Examining aggregate data over a fifty-year period (1954–1994), they found a statistically significant relationship between level of violence in crisis and the percentage of female leaders in positions of authority.

In general, they discovered that states with higher levels of political gender equality are less likely to have minor clashes, serious clashes, or war in the high-stakes environment of international crisis. The research by Caprioli and Boyer also finds that gender equality has an effect on a state's foreign policy behavior in terms of decreasing violence during international crises.

Such data collection and analysis strongly suggest that gender equality matters when states are involved in interstate disputes and when they are involved in international crises. Caprioli extends this literature and finds a similar relationship associated with state escalation of violence. States with the highest levels of gender equality display statistically significant lower levels of aggression in interstate disputes by being less likely to use force first.[30] So states with higher levels of gender equality are less likely to throw the first punch, and even when attacked they are less likely to escalate the use of violence.

Virtually the same pattern was found with respect to intrastate incidents of conflict.[31] Caprioli

also studied the impact of gender equality on domestic conflict. She found that states with higher levels of gender equality are less likely to experience domestic conflict. M. Steven Fish has commented, "[T]he repressiveness and unquestioned dominance … of the male in relations between men and women replicate themselves in broader society, creating a culture of domination, intolerance, and dependency in social and political life."[32] This suggests that while it is surely not the only important factor, the promotion of better treatment for women would help ensure greater social justice and peace, and would help prevent domestic conflict within a nation.

In an attempt to examine domestic human rights abuses as a whole, Caprioli and Peter Trumbore created a measure capturing gender inequality, ethnic inequality, and political repression. They found that states characterized by norms of gender and ethnic inequality as well as human rights abuses are more likely to become involved in militarized interstate disputes, and in violent interstate disputes, to be the aggressors during international disputes, and to rely on force when involved in an international dispute.[33]

David Sobek and his coauthors confirm Caprioli and Trumbore's findings that domestic norms centered on equality and respect for human rights reduce international conflict.[34] Elsewhere, lessons from gaming scenarios also appear to demonstrate that norms of inequality and violence at the domestic level, including between the sexes, may help "replicate" violence at the international level.[35]

In sum, this body of empirical work demonstrates that the promotion of gender equality goes far beyond the sometimes abstract issue of promoting social justice for its own sake and has important practical consequences for international security.

Furthermore, it strongly suggests that, in fact, international security cannot be attained without gender equality. The status of women, it seems, is a main societal taproot of international security.

Indeed, perhaps Samuel Huntington's reflections on the clash of civilizations between nations would be better viewed as a clash between gender civilizations, with treatment of women being an important marker of civilizational divide.[36]

In support of such a conceptual revision, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, though not researching nation-state behavior per se, examined psychological attitudes toward women across "civilizations" defined more traditionally in terms of religion or ethnicity. They found that contrary to popular impression, beliefs about democracy and other political values are not very different between, say, Islamic and Christian cultures. Beliefs about gender equality, however, differ markedly, which they take to be evidence that conceptualization of culture, or the nation-state, or civilization must be redefined to include a gender component. Furthermore, they find strong associations between psychological attitudes about women and indicators such as the percentage of women elected to the national legistature.[37]

## Country-Specific Data on Women, or the Lack Thereof

As scholars and politicians have begun to recognize the importance of the relationship of the status of women to political and economic stability as well as to peace, indices on gender equality have likewise assumed greater importance. Despite the many differing cultural conceptions of women and women's lives, certain underlying aspects of their lives can be universally assessed to determine the security and status of a woman in her society, and that status may, justifiably, be compared cross-nationally. According to Martha Nussbaum, observable variables such as highly abnormal sex ratios in favor of males, or restrictions that deny girls the legal right or the access to education, can be applied cross-nationally to determine gender status beliefs as they directly relate to the status of women and national security.[38] We apply the same logic to create cross-national scales capturing various aspects of women's security as a prelude to investigating hypotheses derived from the "women-and-peace thesis."

## Formulating Effective Research Methodology to Test Our Hypothesis

To create scales for comparative analysis, one needs reliable data to analyze. Fortunately, several useful compilations of statistical information concerning women using different indices have already been compiled, which we used to conduct statistical comparison and analysis. Among these are the UN's Woman's Indicators and Statistics Database (WISTAT; approximately seventy-six statistics), GenderStats (twenty-one

statistics), and the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Project (thirty-three statistics).

Beyond single statistical measures, some laudatory attempts have also been made to create multivariable indices of women's status. Two of these indices, developed in 1995, are the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Gender Development Index (GDI). The new GII (Gender Inequality Index), replaces both GDI and GEM, but still shares some of its predecessor's problems. In addition to GEM and GDI, the CIRI Human Rights Dataset has also developed three indices of women's rights.[39]

The Gender Gap Index (GGI) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) is the most ambitious project to date in efforts to more fully capture the situation of women. The WEF has developed eight scales. The coding for four of the scales is obscure (paternal versus maternal authority, polygamy, female genital mutilation, and the existence of laws punishing violence against women). The coding for the other four scales, however—economic participation and opportunity (five statistics), educational attainment (four statistics), political empowerment (three statistics), and health and survival (two statistics)—contains the usual half dozen statistics, as cited above, plus variants; for example, educational attainment looks at gaps not only in female-to-male literacy but also in enrollment figures at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. All of the scales evidence a persistent reliance on easily quantified information, to the exclusion of qualitative information that could provide a more nuanced view of the situation of women. The United Nations Economic Commission of Africa's AGDI (African Gender and Development Index) comes much closer to our ideal of multifactorial, qualitative-plus-quantitative measures used as the foundation for a richer scaling of the cross-national status of women, but it was scaled for only twelve sub-Saharan African nations.[40]

Researchers seeking to study the impact of gender inequality on state security and behavior are thus faced with a serious challenge. There are approximately six to ten variables concerning women that are easily quantified and that form the basis for most analysis of the situation of women in the world today. But in order to advance a research agenda that might definitively link the security of women to the security of states, it became clear to us that scholars must develop more robust capabilities to expand beyond the confines of the most easily obtainable information, and incorporate not only statistics but also more detailed qualitative information.

We recognized that the empirical research agenda we wished to advance, then, required creation of the means by which it could effectively be pursued. To address this need, we created the WomanStats Database, which began compiling data on more than 320 variables concerning the security and situation of women for 175 states, and currently contains more than 220,000 data points.[41] Additional data points are added every day.

Realizing that discrepancies often exist among rhetoric, law, and practice, we sought data on three aspects of each phenomenon in which we were interested—law, practice/custom, and statistical information. This approach now allows researchers to access useful and reliable data regardless of their preferred method of inquiry, whether quantitative or qualitative. Quantitatively oriented researchers can find statistics on the prevalence of particular practices as readily as qualitatively oriented researchers can locate narrative information on the experiences and lives of women. We are thus able to provide a richer data source for researchers who are dissatisfied with relatively superficial indicators, and to empower researchers to create their own indices.

For example, when examining the phenomenon of domestic violence, we collect data not only on the incidence of domestic violence and laws concerning domestic violence but also on custom and practice concerning domestic violence. For example, is domestic violence generally reported? Why or why not? What is the level of societal support for victims of domestic violence, such as the existence of shelters and hotlines? How is fault decided in legal cases concerning domestic violence? What is the range of punishment for this offense? Is violence sometimes sanctioned by the culture, such as in cases of "disobedience" by a wife or daughter? Are there regional, religious, or ethnic differences in the incidence of domestic violence within the society? Are there other barriers to the enforcement of the law, such as low arrest and/or conviction rates? In the WomanStats Database, there are seven variables on domestic violence alone; eleven on rape; fifteen on marriage practice, and so on.[42]

## Results

Methodology that compared and contrasted the analyses of several different data bases provided striking evidence to support our hypothesis. A brief summary of our findings is noted below.[43]

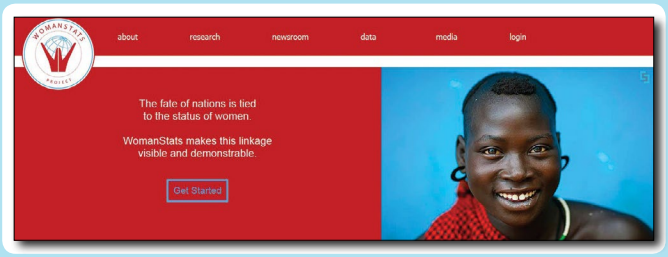
**The Physical Security of Women.** The first cluster of hypotheses inquired as to whether there was a statistically significant relationship between our measures of the physical security of women (PSOW) and three dependent variables: GPI (the Global Peace Index), SOCIC (States of Concern Index), and RN (Relations with Neighbors Index). The observable relationships for this first cluster of hypotheses are highly statistically significant. We found that the physical security of women, whether that is measured including or excluding the enactment of son preference through female infanticide and sex-selective abortion, is strongly associated with the peacefulness of the state, the degree to which the state is of concern to the international community, and the quality of relations between the state and its neighbors.

**Inequity in Family Law and Polygyny.** The second cluster of hypotheses inquired into the relationship among family law, the security of women, and the security of the state operationalized as above (GPI, SOCIC, RN). Family law and the practices dealing with matters such as marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance, and other intimate family issues, might well act as markers describing to what extent a society has been able to mitigate the evolutionary male dominance hierarchy.[44]

Whereas inequitable family law favoring males was for the most part universal until the twentieth century, we see now in the twenty-first century a real spectrum of family law systems. Systems range from almost completely equitable, de jure if not de facto, to being virtually intact from a millennium ago.

Additionally, we placed special focus on studying the effects of polygyny (multiple wives) in this analysis. Though preliminary, results from our research appear to provide strong evidence that polygyny has a very adverse impact on the security of the state.

This conclusion is also widely supported by previous research. Anthropologists have noted the inherent instability and violence of societies where polygyny is prevalent. As Robert Wright puts it, "Extreme polygyny often goes hand in hand with extreme political hierarchy, and reaches its zenith under the most despotic regimes."[45] Laura Betzig, in an intriguing




## WomanStats Database

The WomanStats Database is a nation-by-nation database on women that is used for academic research as well as to inform policy formation (the latter includes its use by both the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and various agencies of the United Nations). The database provides a platform from which many different types of research questions concerning women can be addressed. The project's principal research contributors shape their research agendas according to their disciplinary backgrounds and research interests.

The core researcher contributors and coders primarily explore the relationship between the situation and security of women, and the dynamics among security, stability, and behavior of the state. They address such questions as:

- Are states with greater levels of violence against women less peaceful, of greater concern to the international community, and on worse terms with neighboring states?
- Is the degree to which a state is discrepant in its enforcement of laws protecting women related to the degree to which the state is noncompliant with international norms, treaties, and obligations?
- Is the degree of inequity in family law related to the stability of the state?
- Are states with prevalent polygyny also states with higher levels of violence against women?
- Is the Islamic world monolithic in its treatment of women, or are there notable differences in the treatment of women, as measured by various indices?
- Is there a relationship between the degree to which a society is structured on patrilineality and its health, wealth, governance, demographic, and conflict status?

The WomanStats Project data bank has been used as a primary source for a wide variety of published empirical research work linking the security of women to the security of states. Such published research has appeared in *International Security*, the *American Political Science Review*, the *Journal of Peace Research*, *Political Psychology*, and *Politics and Gender*.

For access to the database, or for more information, the website can be accessed at: http://www.womanstats.org/.

empirical study of 186 societies, found the correlation between polygyny and despotism to be statistically significant.[46] Anthropologists have also found significant correlation between polygyny and the amount of warfare in which societies engage.[47] Boone even suggests that polygynous societies are more likely to engage in expansionist warfare as a means of distracting low-status males who may be left without mates.[48]

**Discrepancy between State Law and Societal Practice Concerning Women.** Our analysis appeared to support the hypothesis that if a state is indifferent about enforcing laws that protect the women in its society, it is also less likely to be compliant with international norms to which it has committed. We can examine this question by examining the association between the discrepancy between state law and societal practice concerning women variable on the one hand, and the SOCIC scale on the other. A comparison of quantitative data in this area shows that the results are statistically very strong and quite significant. This supports the observation that if a state does not care about its women, it also tends not to care about the international commitments it has made.[49]


Evidence suggests that the greater role women have in governance, the more stable and peaceful a society is likely to be. Moreover, peace operations require greater cooperation and synergy between uniformed and nonuniformed personnel, many of whom can be expected to be women, in the aftermath of instability involving violence. (Photo courtesy of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes [ACCORD])

## Research Conclusions

Our research findings indicate conventional empirical warrant for hypotheses linking the security of women and the security of states. There is a strong and statistically significant relationship between the physical security of women and three measures capturing the relative peacefulness of states. Furthermore, in comparative testing with other conventional explanatory factors assumed to be related to such measures of state security—factors including level of democracy, level of wealth, and prevalence of Islamic civilization—the physical security of women explains more of the variance in the same three measures of state security in both bivariate and multivariate analysis. In addition, we can show that other practices indicating a low level of security for women, whether that be prevalent polygyny, inequitable family law and practice favoring men, or a high level of discrepancy between state law and societal practice concerning women, are also associated with lower levels of state peacefulness in a strong and significant manner.

This is not to say that gender equality is the only important factor to consider or to address. But what would be possible to say is that inattention to gender inequality is not likely to produce sustainable results in

peace or security. In her TEDWomen speech in 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, "The United States has made empowering women and girls a cornerstone of our foreign policy because women's equality is not just a moral issue, it's not just a humanitarian issue, it is not just a fairness issue. It is a security issue, it is a prosperity issue, and it is a peace issue … . [I]t's in the vital interests of the United States of America." On the basis of our own and others' research findings, we would agree with this assessment.[50] We hasten to add that much more in the way of empirical analysis must be undertaken before these results can be considered authoritative; nevertheless, even in preliminary form, these are challenging and provocative results.

## What Is Security?

The results described above lead us to ask anew, what constitutes security? And how is security to be obtained?

We assert that the evidence strongly suggests that any account of security that does not include consideration of violence against women as a key metric is an impoverished account of security. We find a strong and significant relationship between the physical security of women and the peacefulness of states. We also assert that when evolutionary forces predisposing to violent patriarchy are not checked through the use of cultural selection and social learning to ameliorate sexual inequality, dysfunctional templates of violence and control diffuse throughout society and are manifested in state security and behavior.

Combining our present results with those of previous research efforts, not only do we fail to falsify that theoretical assertion by using conventional aggregate statistical hypothesis-testing methodologies, but we find greater empirical warrant for that assertion than for several well-established alternative hypotheses.[51]

Based on our findings, we can now envision new research questions for security studies, which are possible to raise only if the linkage between the security of women and the security of states is taken seriously. For example, terrorism is a topic that may profit from a gender analysis: Does polygamy lead to marriage market dislocations, which also heighten the allure of the terrorism among young adult males with no hope of eventually marrying?[52] Does the subjected status of women feed into the development of terrorist groups offering a promise of greater equality to women, such as we see in Sri Lanka and Nepal?

Similarly, security demographics is a nascent subfield that, we argue, must incorporate gender lenses: for example, is enactment of son preference through female infanticide and sex-selective abortion a predisposing factor for state instability and bellicosity?[53]

And what would Huntington's map look like if we re-drew it along the lines of differences in the security of women instead of relatively abstracts notions of supposed blocs having common cultural affinity? Would we see a new type or definition of "civilization" by looking at that map, and would it give us greater leverage on questions of identity, conflict and security than Huntington's original map? For example, are alliance patterns better understood as associated with membership in the same "gender civilization"? Is the recently noted ability of populations to increase their happiness set point over time linked to the improving security of women in those nations?[54] And, what ramifications will that have for state behavior? In the subfield of foreign policy analysis, are there identifiable differences in processes and outcomes of foreign policy decision making in nations with higher levels of gender equality? Does the average psychological profile and foreign policy orientation of national leaders differ between countries with higher versus lower levels of security for women?

## What Are States For?

If security is the aim of the state, our results suggest that to both understand and promote national and international security, the situation and treatment of women cannot be overlooked. States that have improved the status of women are, as a rule, demonstrably healthier, wealthier, less corrupt, more democratic, more secure, and more powerful on the world stage in the early twenty-first century. It is almost as if fortune smiles most broadly on those states where women are most secure. We do not believe this is a coincidence.

We therefore assert that questions regarding the influence of gender equality on state security will not subside in importance, but rather will grow in importance over time as the global population expands and competition for resources increases. We see in the current international system the rise to great power status of states in which the security of women is severely compromised. We cannot

help but think of the rise of India and China, where almost a hundred million women are missing from the population as a result of sex-selective abortion, high suicide rates among young women, and other symptoms of a profound lack of security for women. We take this to mean that the true clash of civilizations in the future may not, in fact, be along the lines envisioned by Huntington but along the fault lines between civilizations that treat women as equal members of the human species and civilizations that cannot or will not do so. Furthermore, we expect to see much more prevalent conflict between and within nations of that second group.

## From Theory to Action

Though the mores regarding the treatment of women are written deeply in the culture of each society, they are amenable to change. Women have recently received the rights to vote and stand for office in countries where they have not had those rights before; UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, and others have changed peacekeeping and conflict resolution practices on the ground; stricter enforcement of laws against sex-selective abortion is making a dent in abnormal birth sex ratios in some countries. There is no reason to shrug helplessly if we identify the insecurity of women as an important factor in state insecurity and conflict. To the contrary, the recognition that the security of women affects the security of states offers policymakers an inestimably valuable policy agenda in the quest for greater peace and stability in the international system overall.

In the view of Potts and Hayden, "[O]ne way to reduce the risk of violence is to empower women and maximize their role in society. This is perhaps the most profound insight to come from taking an evolutionary perspective on war: empowering women reduces the risk of violent conflict. Far from being what some regard as merely a politically correct notion of feminist philosophy, women's role in reducing the risk of war is borne out by rigorous study and historical experience … [C]ontemporary Western nations have a great opportunity to make the world more secure and reduce terrorism by doing everything they can to empower women who live in countries where they currently enjoy few choices and wield little or no political power … Overseas, the US preaches democracy and free markets, but is slow to challenge the traditional restraints so cruelly heaped on women in many developing countries—restraints that keep women from participating as equals in political and economic life."[55]

## The "So What" for the Military

Turning to practical relevance of the above findings to the U.S. military, we conclude by offering the observation that in a world where the senior military leadership is currently exhorting armed forces personnel to prepare for "complex operations," an appreciation for the ofttimes overlooked or unrecognized dynamic of sexual inequality in operational areas should be an indispensable point of consideration in the future.

First, in almost any future contingency that we can envision in which the United States will be involved, the U.S. military will likely be the prime conduit of national humanitarian values used to instill stability in the rebuild phase of operations. We assert that vigorous steps to promote women's equality among populations as a part of such stability operations should henceforth be permanently recognized as a key component for establishing viable stability in both war torn nations as well as those that are often categorized as developing nations. Consequently, we strongly recommend the need to incorporate into military doctrine and training a formal requirement to promote women's empowerment in appropriate ways among populations as a prime objective when engaged in such operations as well as during peacetime training engagements with foreign militaries of countries that suffer from the effects of extreme inequality between men and women.

Second, our military's understanding of the environment in which they operate is incomplete without gender lenses. Seeing how brideprice and polygyny create conditions under which rebel groups can much more easily recruit is to see more of what is happening—and that has strategic and operational implications. Seeing that mothers often are the first to know when their sons are being radicalized, know where not to let their children play because of danger from hidden ordnance, and also preserve key evidence of the massacre of their loved ones, is to understand that what is happening with women is integrally related to military objectives. Seeing that one's own female soldiers are often perceived as a "third gender" in patrilineal clan cultures, and can defuse honor-based conflict that would otherwise occur in male-male encounters,

has tactical significance. Seeing that one cannot stabilize a community until women feel safe enough to weave that community's life through their daily chores assuring food, water, and fuel for families is to develop deeper insight into stability operations. Being gender-aware means being smarter in a military sense.

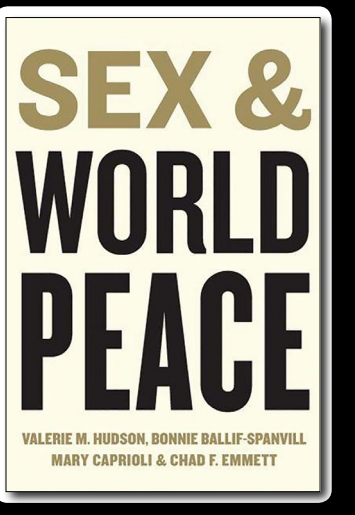
However, as implied in the first point above, it is vital that women's empowerment should not just be seen as a means to more successful military operations—which it is—but must also be seen as an end, as one of the very benchmarks of military success. The women of Iraq would assert that in setting back the cause of women through its military intervention, the U.S. set back its own military objectives in that land, paving the way for even more egregious threat and instability. It is time for greater embrace of realism in military thinking—a realism that acknowledges the very real linkage between the security of women and the security of their nations.

Much blood and treasure have been spent on the export of democracy or free-market capitalism in the pursuit of less conflictual international relations, with less success than hoped for. Research strongly suggests the export of norms of greater gender equality will prove a more promising and effective strategy.[56] Such norms of gender equality would include not only demands for high levels of physical security for women, but also strong promotion of equity under the law (especially family law), as well as parity in the councils of national decision making. ■

*Large portions of this article and the figure are reproduced from chapter 4 of the book* Sex and World Peace *by permission of* International Security *from Valerie M. Hudson, Mary Caprioli, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Rose McDermott, and Chad F. Emmett, "The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States,"* International Security *33, no. 3 (2008/2009): 7–45. The authors would like to note they have updated their findings and continued with their research, currently under the U.S. Army Research Laboratory and the U.S. Army Research Office through the Department of Defense Minerva Research Initiative under grant number W911NF-14-1-0532.*

## Military Review

# WE RECOMMEND




## Sex & World Peace

**Columbia University Press, 2012**

Valerie M. Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F. Emmett

This multidisciplinary book examines the issue of unequal gender treatment as a factor having decisive influence on world security and, by extension, the operational environment. It incorporates perspectives from scholars in political science, cultural geography, and psychology. Of particular note, it provides a detailed micro-analysis of the play of gender issues in Islamic nations.

The underlying thesis of the book is that the treatment of women is an often unperceived, but key, component of international affairs and a "red flag" that can be correlated to the relative stability of societies as it relates to conditions conducive to violence. The authors argue that degrees of gender inequality in society can be correlated to the degree of proclivity for violence, human exploitation, and societal instability overall. They argue further that such norms of violence have an impact proportionally on everything from population growth to economics and regime type.

The authors break from Harvard scholar Samuel Huntington (who asserted that future conflicts could be predicted based on cultural and religious divides) and assert from research offered that the battle lines of future conflict are better forecast by comparative analysis of gender inequality that cuts across cultural and religious divides (e.g., the more states are fraught with gender inequality, the more likely such will default to violence as a means of solving both domestic issues and international crises). The authors go on to assert that security studies now and in the future, to be reliable, must account for issues related to gender equality to fully address and make more complete and understandable the dynamics of state and systems of international security at all levels.

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