

PUTTING WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE

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Should the promotion of women's equality be a policy priority to help ensure peace? Women's⁶ equality does, in fact, promote state security. Policies focusing on the promotion of women's equality, therefore, go far beyond issues of social justice to fundamental issues of national security and the defense of state interests abroad. Thus we call for preemptive policy in support of women's equality in order to decrease the likelihood of both intra- and interstate conflict. In other words, we seek to eliminate an important and often overlooked source of conflict that fuels violence.

We make no claim that women's equality is the most important predictor of conflict because it certainly is not. The causes of conflict are numerous and often relatively static. For example, contiguity, the number of neighbors a state has is a consistent and significant predictor of conflict; however, a "static condition [contiguity] cannot, by itself be the cause of a nonstatic outcome [international conflict]" (Gochman, 1998, p. 3). Not only is it difficult to predict and, therefore, prevent conflict based on such causes of conflict, but such causes are also not responsive to policy. Policy will not reduce the number of neighbors that a state has. Women's equality, however, is amenable to policy change and is a consistent predictor of both international violence and internal conflict.

Furthermore, the fate of women has been tied to that of the state. Over the last two decades or so, our understanding of various fields within the social sciences has profited by greater attention to women. We now know, for example, that women's equality promotes economic development. Indeed, Boserup (1970) demonstrated that omission of gender aspects of development led to project failure. Since that pioneering work, we have seen fruitful waves of successive research in the paradigms of Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD) (Chen, 1992; Chowdery & Nair, 2002; Jacobson, 1992; Rathgeber, 1990; Sen, 1989;). Similarly, scholars have demonstrated strong cross-national linkages between gender variables and variables such as national economic performance (King, 2001).

As a result of this research, regional and global development planners now routinely address the role of women in development. For example, the UN Millennium Goals include the goal of empowering women and occasioned "Women Watch 2000" (later renamed The World's Women), an effort to more closely monitor the status of women on a cross-national basis to formulate non-traditional indicators of development (United Nations Statistics Division, 2006). More recently, the Arab Development Reports of 2002 and 2005 identified the generally low status of women in Arab societies to be one of the four major variables

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6. We use the terms woman and gender interchangeably because in practice female is identified with woman. We recognize, however, that the two terms are distinct as gender is predicated on social construction, and woman, on biology.

retarding growth and advancement therein. The major studies in this field have in common the ability to show statistically significant links between the status of women and variables (in this case, economic development) defined at the state level.

Beyond issues of development, women's equality increases a state's political stability and economic growth. For example, countries with exaggerated gender inequality—defined as highly abnormal sex ratios in favor of males—experience higher societal instability and diminished prospects for both peace and democracy (Hudson & Den Boer, 2004). Although women's equality is by no means guaranteed by democracy (Caprioli, 2004), less democratic regimes are more likely to be based on gender inequality. These regimes thrive “on gendered foundations, relying particularly on the construction of masculinity and femininity which assigns particular ‘traditional’ roles to women” (Waylen, 1996, p. 114).

The link between women's equality and state wealth/income (GDP) is particularly interesting because state wealth has consistently proved statistically significant in predicting war (see Maoz & Russett, 1993), and adverse economic conditions serve as a catalyst for war (Morgan & Bickers, 1989; Morgan & Campbell, 1991; Russett, 1990; Smith 1996). Thus, in this case, the inclusion of women as equal members of society should reduce conflict indirectly as state wealth increases. One comparative study between Botswana and Ghana showed that even when controlling for differences in income levels, investment rates, economic “openness,” and population and labor force growth, as much as 1.3 to 1.6 percentage points of the 5.3 percentage point difference in annual growth could be attributed to gender inequalities in education (Dollar & Gatti, 1999).

Thus, the fate of a state's development, economic growth, and political stability rests, in part, on how a state treats its women. Herein, we highlight, based on information from the WomanStats database, some of the worst offending states with regard to women's equality after first briefly examining the link between women's equality and state security. Before turning our attention to these endeavors, however, it is important to clarify an issue. We argue that more equal societies are less prone to use violence based on societal norms of equality and tolerance (see Caprioli, 2005) rather than making an argument based on nature—that, for example, women are more peaceful.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND STATE SECURITY

The empirical literature concerning national security, stability, and foreign policy behavior remains more nascent than that on development. Nevertheless, it is natural to ask, if the security and status of women significantly affect a state's economic situation, do they also significantly affect a state's internal and external security situation? Does the differing security and status of women among states affect their interaction?

Such provocative questions are only now beginning to be raised, and, interestingly, a major catalyst has been the events and sequelae of September 11th. For example, the Bush Administration suggested that the abysmal condition of women under the Taliban regime provided both a partial explanation for the growth of terrorism there, as well as a partial rationale for the invasion of Afghanistan (2001). Some have even proposed a direct link between terrorism and the treatment of women, suggesting that young men being brought up in isolation from women due to certain gender status beliefs, such as existed in Afghanistan under the Taliban, perpetuated an environment of extremism (Rashid, 2001). Laura Bush expressed in public the belief that, “the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women . . . The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists” (2001). The first post-invasion photos of Afghan girls going to school and Afghan women unveiling their faces were interpreted as tangible evidence that conditions were improving in that benighted land.

Since then, world attention has begun to more seriously inquire about the relationship between political

violence and the status of women. These questions were first raised in regards to Islam. States such as France have reacted with uncharacteristic fervor in banning the Muslim headscarf from the heads of schoolgirls, seeing in the hijab some connection to possible ethnic strife. The fracturing of Nigeria appears at first glance to be based on religion, but women's status could be the more fundamental issue. As Jan Jindy Pettman has put it, "women are the boundary of the nation," and what maintains or changes the status of women may alter the situation of the state (1996).

Observers are beginning to wonder whether the rationalization of terrorism does not bear a significant parallel to the rationalization of violence against, and oppression of, women. Jean Bethke Elshtain, for example, asserts with reference to the differences between Western culture and radical Islamic culture that, "we underestimate the centrality of the gender question at our peril . . . [G]ender practices are not a sidebar to the war against terrorism as a cultural struggle, but a central issue" (2003, pp. 38, 40). In a recent empirical analysis of Moslem societies, Steven M. Fish debunks the notion that Islamic societies as a rule are disproportionately involved in conflict or disproportionately suffer from authoritarian rule (2002). Rather, Fish uncovers two indicators that better explain the striking variance of these variables in the Islamic world: the sex ratio and the literacy gap between males and females. Fish finds that models incorporating these two variables are significantly correlated to authoritarianism in Islamic countries, meaning that Islamic countries that actively oppress females are also the most prone to national dysfunctionality. He hypothesizes that the oppression of the female—one of the earliest social acts observed by all in the society—provides the template for other types of oppression, including authoritarianism.

Thus gender inequality is a barrier to peace and a harbinger of violence for both intra- and interstate conflict. In March 2006, Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated,

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.

The linkage between women's security and national security is clearly beginning to enter the public imagination.

The body of literature addressing the issue of women and security is growing, as academics and politicians alike turn their attention to gender relations as a linchpin of peace prior to (Caprioli 2000, 2003, 2004; Caprioli & Boyer 2001; Caprioli & Trumbore 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Regan & Paskeviciute, 2003) and after conflict (see Meintjes, Pillay & Tursher 2001; Mertus 2000), in addition to the need to include women in peace negotiations as codified in UN Resolution 1325 (Hunt & Poser, 2001). This literature explores the influence of domestic inequality on state international behavior. In short, state domestic culture in both its behavior and underlying values helps predict state international behavior during interstate disputes and crises. As with international conflict, the literature on intrastate conflict emphasizes the role of domestic culture in predicting intrastate conflict (Ayres, 2000; Caprioli, 2005; Ellingsen, 2000; Fox, 2001; Gurr, 1994; Henderson, 1997; Mazrui, 1990; Melander, 2005; Saideman, 1997).

Values (culture, social norms, etc.) are particularly important in predicting state bellicosity. Values identify desirable behaviors and alternatives and limit possibilities (Feather, 1996). In other words, cultural norms impose rules that govern social behavior, separating legitimate from illegitimate behavior. Feather (2004) argues that power values, as manifested in women's inequality, are concerned with dominance, social power,

and authority. His work finds a positive correlation between power values and hostile sexism, particularly among males. Furthermore, Bardi and Schwartz (2003) note that those who value power exhibit dominating behavior. Values, therefore, are crucial indicators of peace and violence. Indeed, peace and conflict resolution are based on worldviews of nonviolence—a relationship that goes beyond ideology to structures that reinforce these shared beliefs (Bonta, 1996). A sustainable peace, therefore, is predicated on fostering fundamental societal changes that include gender equality (Hunt & Posa, 2001).

Empirical studies by Mary Caprioli and co-authors linking measures of domestic gender inequality to state-level variables concerning conflict and security reveal important and statistically significant relationships. Caprioli and Boyer show that states exhibiting high levels of gender equality also exhibit lower levels of violence in international crises and disputes (2001, p. 511). Aggregate data involving such cases over a fifty-year period shows statistically significant relationships between the level of violence in crisis, the percentage of women in parliament, and the percentage of female leaders in crisis. Caprioli extends this analysis to militarized interstate disputes and finds a similar relationship (2003). States with the best gender equality displayed lower levels of aggression in these disputes and were less likely to use force first (see also Marshall & Ramsey, 1999).

Virtually the same pattern was found with respect to intrastate incidents of conflict (Caprioli, 2005; Melander, 2005). Caprioli suggests, “[S]cholars need to analyze the effects of inequality [of women] on the state—specifically state behavior internationally . . . [D]omestic norms of violence inherent in structural inequality transfer to the international arena just as domestic norms of peaceful conflict resolution do” (p. 265). Caprioli and Trumbore find 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 (2006a), to be the aggressors during international disputes (2003a), and to rely on force when involved in an international dispute (2003b). Sobek, Abouharb, and Ingram (2006) confirm Caprioli and Trumbore’s findings that domestic norms centered on equality and the respect for human rights reduce international conflict. In sum, the promotion of gender equality goes far beyond the issue of social justice. It is a necessary condition for international peace.

The link between inequality and violence, and more specifically between gendered inequality and violence leads UNESCO (1995) to conclude that inequality between men and women is an impediment to sustainable peace. In other words, achieving peace necessitates “overcoming social relations of domination and subordination” (Tickner, 1992, p. 128). Gendered structural hierarchies, which are maintained by norms of violence and oppression, should result in higher levels of inter- and intrastate violence by both inuring people to violence and providing them with a framework for justifying violence.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

As argued above, women’s equality is a harbinger of peace. Yet a policy and academic focus on women with its concomitant need for data is late in coming. As scholars and politicians start to recognize the importance of gender equality to political and economic stability as well as peace, indices on gender equality have become more important. Due to a lack of data, most scholars have relied on one or more single indicators to measure women’s status.

The October 2006 report to the United Nations General Assembly on violence against women noted that knowledge base problems are one of the most important issues for policy and strategy development that must be solved in order for such violence to be properly addressed (UN VAW, October 2006, www.un.org). More specifically, the report highlights the lack, unreliability, and inconsistency of existing country data. We rely on the WomanStats database (see Caprioli et. al., 2007 for a full description), which makes great strides

in addressing the problems identified by the United Nations. WomanStats provides data for issues ranging from violence against women to healthcare, social, legal, economic, physical security, and many other topics. WomanStats includes approximately 245 variables for each of 172 countries (those countries with populations greater than 200,000) and their attendant subnational divisions for a total of almost 41,040 individual data points. These data points have been coded into variable clusters of which we use the physical security cluster. In acknowledging the frequent discrepancy between rhetoric, law, and practice, WomanStats includes data on three aspects of each cluster variable—law, practice/custom, and data.

WOMEN'S PHYSICAL SECURITY

In keeping with the link between norms of inequality and violence presented above, we will discuss the *Women's Physical Security Cluster*. As theory linking women's equality and state behavior is often based on violence against women, a variable capturing violence against women seems particularly apropos. The WomanStats physical security cluster includes the following variables (WomanStats, 2007):

Domestic Violence

- Law 1—Are there laws against domestic violence?
- Practice 1—Are laws against domestic violence enforced?
- Practice 2—Are there taboos against reporting domestic violence?
- Data 1—How prevalent is domestic violence?

Rape

- Law 1—Are there laws against rape? Statutory rape and age of consent?
- Practice 1—Are laws against rape enforced?
- Practice 2—Are there taboos against reporting rape?
- Data 1—How prevalent is rape?

Rape Concerning Mothers

- Law 2—Are there laws against marital rape?
- Practice 1—Are laws against marital rape enforced?
- Data 1—How prevalent is marital rape?

Murder

- Data 1—What is the percentage of women 15-44 murdered?
- LRW Practice 3 - Practice of Honor Killings. Can a woman be killed or otherwise punished if she is raped—even if she is obviously innocent?

These indicators of violence against women are combined into a single measure, *Women's Physical Security*, coded as follows:

0—There are laws against domestic violence, rape, and marital rape; these laws are enforced; there are no taboos or norms against reporting these crimes, which are rare. There are no honor killings.

1—There are laws against domestic violence, rape, and marital rape; these laws are generally enforced; there are taboos or norms against reporting these crimes (or ignorance that these are reportable crimes), which crimes are not common. Honor killings do not occur.

2—There are laws against domestic violence, rape, and marital rape; these laws are sporadically enforced; there are taboos or norms against reporting these crimes (or ignorance that these are reportable crimes), which

are common. Honor killings do not occur.

3—There are laws against domestic violence, rape, but not necessarily marital rape; these laws are rarely enforced; there are taboos or norms against reporting these crimes (or ignorance that these are reportable crimes), which affect a majority of women. Honor killings may occur among certain segments of society but is not generally accepted.

4—There are no or weak laws against domestic violence, rape, and marital rape, and these laws are not generally enforced. Honor killings may occur and are either ignored or generally accepted. (Examples of weak laws—Four male witnesses are needed to prove rape, and rape is only defined as sex with girls under 12—all other sex is by definition consensual, etc.)

Fifty-nine, or 34.5 %, of all states (see Table 1 below) earn the worst score of 4—a score that highlights the state of violence, discrimination, and inequality for women around the world.

TABLE 1
States with the Highest Level of Violence Against Women
Based on WomanStats Physical Security Cluster, circa 2000

Afghanistan	Congo, DR	Kuwait	Solomon Islands
Algeria	East Timor	Lebanon	Somalia
Bahrain	Egypt	Libya	Sudan
Bangladesh	Eritrea	Macedonia	Swaziland
Botswana	Ethiopia	Mexico	Syria
Brazil	Gambia	Morocco	Tajikistan
Burkina Faso	Georgia	Mozambique	Tanzania
Burma/Myanmar	Ghana	Nepal	Turkey
Burundi	Guinea Bissau	Nigeria	Turkmenistan
Cambodia	India	Oman	Uganda
Cameroon	Indonesia	Pakistan	United Arab Emirates
Central African Republic	Iran	Peru	Uzbekistan
Chad	Iraq	Qatar	Yemen
Congo	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Zimbabwe
Cote d'Ivoire	Kenya	Sierra Leone	

* Brunei and North Korea are not coded due to missing data.

The variation in this list is noteworthy. First, there are both poor and rich states in this list; for example, Central African Republic and Kuwait. There are relatively powerful states, such as Brazil and India, and quite powerless states, such as East Timor and the Solomon Islands. There are Islamic states and states with very few Muslims, such as Cambodia. There are both American allies and American enemies on this list. There are former Soviet states, and states that were pro-West during the Cold War. There are states in collapse and states with a fairly stable governmental system. There are dictatorships and democracies. In short, if we believe that there is a certain formula that decreases violence against women, for example, “democracy,” or “stability,” we would be sorely mistaken. Violence against women cuts across all of our preconceived notions concerning

the conditions that bring stability to the world system. In practical terms, we cannot assume that a panacea exists—a single policy that will work for all women across all states or one that will bring international stability. It also means that unless we build in women from the very foundation of our preferred formula, we cannot infer that women will benefit from that formula or that the state will benefit in the manner that we would hope.

BRAZIL AND THE PAKISTAN: Exemplars of States Violating Women's Security

Brazil and Pakistan were chosen randomly to illustrate the reality within which these women find themselves in those states with the highest level of violence against women. All the information provided below is taken from the WomanStats database.

Brazil—A convicted rapist can legally escape punishment by marrying his victim or if the victim marries a third person and does not request or require an investigation or criminal proceedings. On the surface, it would appear reasonable for women to report rape for both rape and spousal rape are crimes punishable by eight to ten years imprisonment. In reality, however, there would be little reason for the rape victim to pursue criminal proceedings because men who kill, sexually assault, or commit other crimes against women are unlikely to be brought to trial. This lack of judicial follow-through is coupled with an increase in the number of reports of sexual crimes and violence against women perpetrated by police officers.

Shelters and task forces within police departments were created to assist women and facilitate investigation of sexual violence against women. Unfortunately, there is a lack of trained staff and governmental support. Both of these factors serve to undermine this mission. It is estimated that, in Brazil, every four minutes a woman is attacked in her own home by someone with whom she is emotionally involved.

Both rape and domestic violence victims may be forced to become defendants. There is a pervasive belief that for such crimes the victim has to prove that she is not guilty and that she did not contribute to the commission of the offense. Indeed, the Penal Code contains provisions that require the victim to be an “honest” woman in order to prosecute.

Brazilian women must carefully consider the existence of honor killings before reporting rape. Men can justify killing their partner based on self-defense of honor. Thus a woman can be killed if her partner, even without any reasonable proof, thinks she is having an adulterous affair. Furthermore, there is no specific distinction between consensual adultery and rape. As with murderers, men who commit acts of domestic violence are often set free if the man claims his actions were in self-defense of honor. And even more telling is the lack of a specific national law to prevent, punish, and eradicate domestic violence, most of which remains unreported—especially when family is involved. In general, punishment regarding domestic violence is lenient with a notable absence of specific laws to address it.

Pakistan—Marital rape is not criminalized and rape is not sufficient ground for divorce. As with Brazil, prosecutions for rape are rare with some activists claiming that Pakistan's laws make the prosecution of rape virtually impossible. Rape and gang rape are pervasive problems and are attributed to a combination of tribalism, retrogressive cultural values, and a corrupt criminal justice system. Indeed, there are reports in which women who have been raped are held on crimes of adultery while the perpetrator goes free. The costs for reporting rape are high because police are sometimes implicated in the crime, female testimony is not equal to that of a man's, and honor killings continue to occur. Especially after a woman is raped, honor killings occur and yet the government does little to prosecute the crime.

There are no specific laws pertaining to domestic violence. As is the case in most other countries, domestic affairs are considered a private matter and domestic violence is usually not reported. Even when it is reported, it is often not considered seriously by authorities. Pakistani law is wholly inadequate in protecting

women victims of domestic violence and in penalizing batterers. Indeed, domestic violence is not explicitly prohibited by a specific, targeted, and distinct set of laws.

These brief illustrative examples of violence against women in Brazil and Pakistan should horrify, though such is not our intent. This lack of security for women is reflected in state behavior internationally. It is precisely these characteristics of states—how they treat their women—that make them more likely to act aggressively in the international arena (a theory briefly discussed above and further elaborated in Caprioli et. al., 2007). Clearly, some of these issues can be targeted by policy. For example, foreign aid can be tied to laws benefiting women such as requiring a full-fledged, fully-funded campaign aimed at ending honor crimes and eradicating the “self-defense of honor” for men.

EXAMINING STATE BEHAVIOR INTERNATIONALLY *Based on the WomanStats Women’s Physical Security Cluster*

To help illustrate the international behavior of those states characterized by violence against women, we provide some information on the international conflict behavior of these states. As social change is slow and incremental with general political-cultural orientations (Eckstein 1988, p. 798), we can confidently assess from 1990 to 2001 the international conflict behavior of states using the WomanStats Physical Security Cluster for 2000.

In the following examination regarding the international conflict behavior of those states with the highest levels of violence against women, both the Militarized Interstate Dispute and the First Use of Violent Force databases are used. The MID data set (Ghosn & Palmer, 2003) provides data on state involvement in interstate conflicts and state behavior during conflict. We use the MID hostility level variable, which is coded as follows: (1) no militarized action, (2) threat to use force, (3) display of force, (4) use of force, and (5) war.

With MID, we can track the number of interstate conflicts and the number of violent interstate conflicts:

Conflict Involvement—This variable indicates the number of interstate dispute onsets that a state had for that year. In other words, the variable captures the number of new, rather than ongoing interstate conflicts in which a state became involved for that year.

Violent Conflict Involvement—This variable identifies the number of violent interstate dispute onsets in which a state was involved for that year. Interstate conflict occurs along a continuum as demonstrated by the MID hostility level variable discussed above. States become involved in interstate conflict for a variety of reasons—not all of which result in violence. A violent MID is one that scores either a 4 (the use of force) or 5 (war) on the hostility scale.

The *First Use of Violent Force* (FUVF) data (Caprioli & Trumbore, 2006b, p. 742) allows us to assess more directly the violent behavior of states and isolates the first use of violent force from the dynamics involved with the reciprocal use of violence (Wilkenfeld, 1991). The first use of violent force is undeniably an act of aggression that escalates the level of conflict.

First Use of Violent Force—This variable is coded as the first state to use military violence in violent interstate disputes. First use of violent force (Caprioli & Trumbore, 2006b, p. 743) captures that first punch thrown—an unmistakable measure of violence and aggression.

Of those states⁷ characterized by high levels of violence against women, only Algeria, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mexico, Nepal, and Somalia avoided international conflict from 1990-2001. During that time, there were 144 states involved in 949 militarized interstate disputes. A quick snapshot reveals that those 58 states with the highest level of violence against women were involved in a total of 334 militarized interstate

disputes during the same time period.

The interstate conflicts in which states characterized by violence against women are involved are more likely to be violent than those of other states. When states with high levels of violence against women are engaged in international conflict, that conflict is violent 65.9% of the time. The corresponding for all other states is 50.8%. Similarly, 3 % of interstate conflicts in which states characterized by violence against women are involved escalate to war, with the corresponding figure 2.6 % for all other states. Additionally, 22.8 % of violent interstate conflicts in which states characterized by violence against women use force first with the corresponding figure 18.7 % for all other states.

Thus those states characterized by violence against women evidence violent behavior during conflict though they seem no more likely to be involved in conflict. In other words, states characterized by high levels of violence against women are also more likely to be involved in international conflicts with high levels of violence. Specifically, violence against women explains nearly 15 %⁸ of the likelihood that a state will become involved in violent militarized interstate disputes.

IMPLICATIONS

One of the implications of our research, though it is at the exploratory stage, is that it is time for U.S. policymakers to rethink what we mean by our preferred solution to the problems of states and the international system. As scholars have demonstrated, issues of women's equality go far beyond issues of social justice and are integrally linked to the health of the state. U.S. policymakers are quick to recommend democracy as both a cure for state and regional instability and as a policy to ensure American interests abroad. But as evidenced by the list of states with the highest levels of violence against women, democracy is not in itself capable of promoting women's equality. And without equality for women, the political and economic stability of the state is compromised, as are U.S. interests.

If democracy is to be the answer, we must redefine what we mean by democracy to include, as part of its definition, guaranteed basic rights for women, on a par with rights for men. And states must be active in providing special protections for women against violence and in ensuring equality for women, including women's participation in the national assembly. Procedural democracy itself, without elevating the situation of women, will not produce stable, peaceful societies. Promoting the cause of basic rights, security, and voice for women is no fringe, boutique issue. To the contrary, it is central to what we hope to accomplish by the promotion of democracy. In sum, if we hope to ensure stability, protect U.S. interests abroad, and minimize international conflict, then women's equality cannot be relegated to second place. ♦

7. East Timor did not become a state until September 2002 and as such, could not be involved in any international conflicts from 1990-2001.

8. Pearson coefficient (2-tailed) .144, $p < .000$

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