



Positive Change Agents for Peace

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Whether it's ending conflict, managing a transition, or rebuilding a country, the world cannot afford to continue ignoring half the population. Not only can we do better; we have to do better, and now we have a path forward as to how we will do better.¹

-Hillary Clinton, United States Secretary of State

Has your daughter ever expressed she'd like to grow up to be Mia Hamm or another member of the US Women's National soccer team? It is doubtful without Title IX, which turned 40 this year and changed the academic and athletic playing field for women, that neither you nor your daughter would have heard of these talented soccer players. Title IX, Affirmative Action, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the Civil Rights Act are all examples of topics, issues, concerns that were and are still controversial; yet, regardless of the methodology used to write history, the need for change was paramount. I believe sometimes a "pro-active policy" should change minds first, simply because hearts don't.

A program with a "pro-active policy" methodology in the international arena today is Women, Peace, and Security. As national security professionals, we must be aware of this program and its implications to our national security mission. If our call as military officers is to *prevent war, but prepare for the next*, then we must understand the positive impact women can have in peace and security discussions. This program addresses gender issues such as violence toward women or women as combatants during a conflict, but foremost to the program is "the importance of bringing gender

perspectives to the center of . . . conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building, peace keeping, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.”² The long and skinny of the issue is this: women are an untapped resource to bring peace and security to the world. This charge was undertaken by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and signed in October 2000 by over 30 nations. The resolution’s pro-active nature intends to change policy for the better by encouraging nations to empower women in areas of government, security, humanitarian and human rights organizations, and militaries across the globe.

The United States, as obligated by UNSCR 1325, developed, and is currently implementing, a National Action Plan with a goal “to empower half the world’s population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity.”³ The National Action Plan is an interagency effort among six US Departments, the Center for Disease Control, the US Mission to the UN, and the US Trade Representative. Non-governmental organizations help to develop and implement the National Action Plan by providing critical expertise, advocacy, and engagement opportunities.⁴ To jumpstart the community in sharing ideas about plan implementation, the U.S. Naval War College (NWC) hosted an inaugural conference of national security professionals from State, Defense, NGOs, and academia.

Dr. Mary Raum, Professor of National Security Affairs at the NWC and brainchild of the inaugural conference, received praise by all involved for bringing attention to such an important topic. Three former Ambassadors with personal experience directing programs in various countries concerning women in peace and security issues attended the conference. The keynote speakers included Carla Koppell, Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment at the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Ambassador Steven McGann, currently Vice Chancellor of the College of International Security Affairs at the National Defense University. The panels included two NWC alumni and current professors, U.S. Army Colonel Robert Cassidy and U.S. Navy Captain John Houfek. Former Female Engagement Team (FET) and Cultural Support Team (CST) members attended as well. Each of these national security professionals presented successful and failed attempts to tap into the female population to bring stability. The stature of audience and panel members alone suggests this program demands attention, emphasis, and resources. Military officers might be comfortable with FET and CST operations and examples in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet the program is much larger than the U.S. Department of Defense. Make no mistake, this initiative draws from worldwide empirical evidence that “integrating women and gender considerations into *peace-building processes* helps promote democratic governance and long-term stability.”⁵ The following excerpt from the U.S. National Action Plan presents more than a few examples:

- In Northern Ireland . . . women negotiators secured commitments in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement to involve young people and victims of violence in reconciliation; to accelerate the release and reintegration of political prisoners; and to ensure an integrated education system and integrated housing.
- In the 1990s, Guatemalan women involved in negotiations to end a 36-year civil war secured important protections for labor and indigenous rights as well as guarantees of a balance in civilian and military power. They also enshrined commitments to women’s equal rights and participation in the peace accords.
- In post-apartheid South Africa, more than 70 organizations united under the Women’s National Coalition to outline fundamental rights for women in the “Women’s Charter for

Effective Equality.” The charter directly resulted in a constitution that not only protects women’s equal rights, but also contains many important rights that apply to all members of society: the right to education, the freedoms of religion and expression, and the right to security of person.

- In 2003, Liberian women acting largely outside of formal negotiations brought their demands into the streets and reinforced mediators’ efforts to secure a peace that would end that country’s devastating civil war.

If the evidence exists that women are positive change agents for peace, why then would anyone argue against empowering women to do so and in the quickest manner? Why is a “*pro-active policy*” needed? I listened intently as a conference speaker passionately debunked myths she personally experienced in Afghanistan. These myths included such thinking as “security precedes everything and we’ll get to the women later.” Or, “if we engaged women in the populace, we might disrespect the host nation’s culture.” Or lastly, “there aren’t any women around for us to engage.”⁶ Each of these myths stymied mission progress. Colonel Cassidy provided personal success stories of FETs and remarked, “Female Engagement Teams are reaching out to a large portion of the population in Afghanistan, bringing their wants and needs to the table and connecting them to their government . . . This is a great concept that will require proper emphasis and sourcing for future success.”⁷ These FETs built relationships with community women *and* men, many who later shared information on IED locations and enemy supporters.

The successful FETs grew out of our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet the concept did not come naturally. These types of programs and outreach during reconstruction efforts must become second-nature to us. More importantly, we are missing opportunities to engage women prior to conflict, which may help the peace to last longer. Secretary Clinton stated it best in her announcement speech of the U.S. National Action Plan in December 2011:

Now, why is all this happening, all these countries, the United Nations, NATO, and certainly us? Well, the reason is because we are convinced. We have enough anecdotal evidence and research that demonstrates women in peacekeeping is both the right thing to do and the smart thing, as well. It’s right, because, after all, women are affected disproportionately by conflict; they deserve to participate in the decisions that shape their own lives. And it’s the smart thing because we have seen again and again that women participating in these processes builds more durable peace.⁸

What should a military officer do with this information? Educate yourself and your subordinates on existing programs and initiatives. Learn more about how women can enhance your mission, both from the perspective of women in your Service, and the men and women you engage in peace or reconstruction efforts. We must incorporate this thinking into our planning efforts for Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief and Operations and Concept Plans. Ambassador C. Steven McGann, a long-time advocate of women’s security issues, believes military officers should “understand these issues will not go away.” Incorporating women early into planning processes will only help to ensure success of our operations.⁹ Further, he stressed that as characteristics of warfare change, military officers should keep an intellectual flexibility to grow and adapt programs—just as the Female Engagement Team concept adapted from operations in Afghanistan.

If we desire more peace and less conflict, as national security professionals we must arm ourselves with proven methods to achieve more peace. Adaptation in our planning and doctrine will come from knowledge of successful programs like Female Engagement Teams; yet, more difficult is the desire to make this thought process second-nature to us. “*Pro-active policies*” such as Title IX are keys to this type of change. Nineteen years after Title IX’s 1972 passage, the US Women’s National team won its first World Cup title. It is now nearly expected that the women’s team will compete well in every international tournament. Will we say the same about Women, Peace and Security 19 years from now?

¹ Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Secretary Clinton’s Remarks on Women, Peace, and Security,” U.S. Department of State, December 19, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/12/179173.htm>.

² United Nations, “Women, Security and Peace,” 2002, (United Nations Publications), www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/eWPS.pdf.

³ United States Government, “United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security,” December 2011, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2011), 1. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/email-files/US National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/email-files/US_National_Action_Plan_on_Women_Peace_and_Security.pdf).

⁴ “NAP is historic because it is the first legal and policy framework that recognizes women’s inclusion as a central aspect of U.S. conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts and the first to require specific agency actions and coordinated interagency approaches to fulfilling gender equality goals.” <http://csis.org/publication/us-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security>

⁵ United States Government, “United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security,” December 2011, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2011), 5.

⁶ Angelic Young, e-mail message to author, April 6, 2012.

⁷ Sullivan, Teresa, “Military, Civilian Experts Discuss National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security,” U.S. Naval War College Public Affairs, 2 April 2012, http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=66218, accessed 3 April 2012.

⁸ Clinton, “Secretary Clinton’s Remarks on Women, Peace, and Security.”

⁹ Ambassador C. Steven McGann, interview by author, March 29, 2012.