

The Case for Inclusive Security

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Since leaving the embassy in Vienna in 1997, where I spent substantial time working to find peace in the neighboring Balkans, I have advocated for the inclusion of women in peace processes around the world. In my work as founder of the Initiative for Inclusive Security (a program of my family foundation: Hunt Alternatives Fund) and founding director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, I travel to conflict zones, meeting with women of courage and commitment who are working to end wars and rebuild their countries. I have seen firsthand how women are key forces behind sustainable security, organizing reconciliation efforts, shaping constitutions, reintegrating combatants, leading transitional justice, and combating the sexual trafficking that is a tragic consequence of the chaos of war.

Whether they want to be or not, women today are involved in war. In the post-Cold War world, civilians—overwhelmingly women and children—constitute up to 90 percent of the casualties in conflicts worldwide. That compares with just five percent in World War I and 48 percent in World War II. Historically women have been portrayed as passive victims with little regard given to their actual and potential roles in promoting peace and fostering security. While it is true that women must overcome enormous hardships, dwelling on their victimhood conveys a sense of women's powerlessness and weakness.

This is not to deny that violence against women is a pervasive weapon of war. Atrocities are familiar to many of the 500 women making up our Women Waging Peace Network, from Cambodia to Congo to Colombia. Still, women resolve to stay focused on ending violence and promoting prosperity. They prevent the eruption of hostilities, mediate among warring factions, and repair shattered societies. Whether at local, national or international levels, excluding these women from the peace table is patently unwise.

Creating sustainable peace is achieved best by a diverse, citizen-driven approach. Of the many sectors of society currently excluded from peace processes, none is larger—or more critical to success—than women. The concept of “inclusive security” implies that a country's stability will be achieved only when all citizens are represented in crafting the peace. That means that not only strongmen, but also local community leaders, minority representatives, and particularly women must have a seat at the decision-making table.

This idea is not new to history, but it has been missing from dominant doctrines of recent times: a “balance of power” among armed states, or a global order lined up behind opposing superpowers. In contrast, most modern conflicts are internal, not external, involving groups, tribes, and religions. They are often the result of failed states, where

government has ceased to function as a protector of citizens, and combatants employ increasingly brutal tactics to tear at the fabric of society. At the conclusion, a few leaders typically divvy up governance positions, resources and territories.

Inclusive security proposes a new paradigm, in which women play a significant role. Lessons from their work can be—and should be—applied widely to other groups that have typically been marginalized. But women, in particular, bring their expertise of family and community building into the political sphere with enormous effectiveness.

Since 1999, the Initiative for Inclusive Security has connected more than 500 women experts with more than 5,000 policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts. Women, because they are generally not key military or political actors, are often overlooked and underestimated. They engage in large-scale peace building while addressing the basic survival needs of their families.

That's why in February 2007 the Initiative for Inclusive Security joined forces with high level civilian and military personnel from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to offer a weeklong workshop for 13 Afghan women leaders, including seven members of the national assembly. Since 2002, Afghan women have taken part in reconciliation efforts following 30 years of ruin. The future of the country depends on recognizing the critical role women play in building democracy. Despite progress over the last five years, Afghan women continue to face significant obstacles to their full participation in reconstruction. Escalating violence, especially in the south, threatens to undermine advances. The workshop's goal was to reverse this trend by strengthening the women's relationship with NATO.

They have a model in Rwanda, where the ascension of female leaders has powered a gradual but steady recovery from genocide. In 1994, the challenges were staggering: ten percent of the population of eight million slaughtered, more than 100,000 accused genocidaires with only 50 trained lawyers to represent them. In 2000, I asked President Paul Kagame if he had seen a difference in how men and women reacted to the genocide: 'The men shut down. The women cried then rolled up their sleeves and got to work.' They buried the dead, adopting out 500,000 displaced orphans, and rebuilding—transforming rubble into renewal.

At the end of February, I was in Rwanda celebrating with women who have overcome unimaginable challenges and today constitute almost 49 percent of Rwanda's lower chamber of parliament. We were celebrating how 13 years after the genocide, Rwanda is at the forefront of a worldwide trend to ensure fair representation of women in political decision making. We need to replicate this success on a global scale.

Several hundred delegates came to Kigali on the tenth anniversary of the formation of the Rwandan Forum of Women Parliamentarians. Like other members of the Women Waging Peace network, Rwandan women have worked across ethnic and party divides to introduce and pass bills allowing women to inherit property, a major influence on women's poverty. And they have introduced legislation to confront gender based violence.

Women also have played a key role in the justice system, filling three of seven seats on the supreme court, including the chief justice chair. They testified at the war crimes tribunal in Arusha and have led the world-renowned “gacaca,” community-based trials for alleged perpetrators of the genocide. Now women are securing the future of their country, with robust efforts to educate girls, continue their leadership of the Commission of Unity and Reconciliation, and bring along a new generation of women leaders.

I’ve been meeting with Rwandan women parliamentarians off and on for seven years, offering ideas while chronicling the development of their influence—the result of bottom-up pressure matched by top-down policy. Following the genocide, the first Minister for Gender, Aloisea Inyumba, created a ladder of women-only councils to identify social needs at local, regional, and national levels. Then when President Kagame insisted on women holding at least 30 percent of positions in any government structure, the women were ready. Parliament’s set-aside seats were filled from their councils. In addition, Rwandan women had become accustomed to running against each other for the council seats. With fresh confidence, many more entered the field against the men, vying for the remaining 70 percent of the seats. The strategy worked. Their numbers soared.

Does fair representation of women in politics matter? Judith Kanakuze, Chair of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, explains that women in large numbers bring issues to the table that are different from those raised by men. Rural women sit next to sophisticated professionals, transcending ethnic identities but also reaching out to men to collaborate on their agenda.

Not all women parliamentarians are good, but that’s of course also true of men. One woman was recently forced by her women colleagues to resign when she admitted that 13 years earlier she had turned over a 14 year-old girl to genocidal soldiers, who gang-raped her.

Nevertheless, women’s emphasis on community and reconciliation is the norm. And with a female face, the image of Rwanda has changed. Politics is no longer a man’s arena. Young women at the National University in Butare told me that with parliament resembling the entire population, they have role models for their own achievement. Strong representation of women also changes the minds of men who have claimed that women aren’t competent for policy making. Now, in a throw-back to the powerful queen mother in traditional culture, Rwandan men regularly consult women before making important decisions.

Based on Rwanda’s experience, international policymakers in fragile nations should focus support on emerging women. That means training current leaders and educating ones in the pipeline.

Africa has been marred by scandalously poor leadership, and donor countries are anxiously looking for success stories. At the gathering in Kigali, the punch was delivered by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first elected woman president in Africa. She challenged the crowd not to limit their aspirations to parliament: “I’m lonely!” she laughed.

President Johnson-Sirleaf was at the Rwanda conference with five Liberian women parliamentary leaders. The task of rebuilding Liberia after 14 years of devastating civil war will be impossible if women are not included. Liberian women, including the president, have been part of our Women Waging Peace Network since its creation in 1999. In 2006, I led two consultations in Monrovia to convene diverse groups of leaders. The women formulated an agenda to enhance their leadership in stabilizing Liberia. Then this past February, Inclusive Security brought a coalition of Liberian women from civil society and government to Washington where they delivered their agenda on ways women can lead reconstruction to the Liberia Partners Forum (the World Bank, US government, Liberia Private Sector Investment Forum, and other donors).

Liberia's president knows she must attack corruption at all levels, rebuild confidence in the investment community (she inherited \$3.2 billion in debt), reintegrate tens of thousands of ex-combatants and refugees, rebuild the country's infrastructure, and address the country's 80 percent unemployment and almost non-existent education system. Already there are signs of progress: Sanctions on timber have been lifted. Government revenues are up more than 40 percent. Foreign aid is streaming in, along with a trickle of foreign investment, and the US forgave \$391 million in debt in February. "We are willing and ready to make the hard decisions, to adopt the right policies, to put in the right systems, if you are willing to be with us and support us, politically, analytically and financially," President Sirleaf-Johnson said in her speech to Washington policymakers.

Johnson-Sirleaf's approach is blending female qualities with self-responsibility. "As a mother, I understand what is needed," she asserts. "As a grandmother, I'm thinking about our future." She is changing the way Liberians, and the rest of us, view women and power. The president has appointed women ministers of finance, defense, sports and youth, commerce, and justice, as well as the chief of police and president of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Her new approach to leadership is contagious: Last April, shortly after "Ma Ellen's" election, I flew to a remote village on the border of Sierra Leone. As the assembled townspeople cheered, an elderly woman declared, "If you look today where the big house is, a woman is sitting there. And if she is there, we can be leaders here! Men—listen up—we no longer walk behind you. We're side by side!"