

Fukuyama's Follies

So What if Women Ruled the World?

Men Hate War Too

BARBARA EHRENREICH

Francis Fukuyama marshals the familiar evidence suggesting that males, in our species and others, are more prone to violence than females ("Women and the Evolution of World Politics," September/October 1998). Despite the current academic bias against "essentialist" or genetic explanations of behavior, this evidence shows that males are indeed more likely to fight, murder, loot, pillage, and, of course, rape than females. The question remains, however, whether this apparently innate male predilection has much to do with the subjects that concern Fukuyama—war, international relations, and politics.

If Fukuyama had read just a bit further in the anthropology of war, even in the works of some scholars he cites approvingly, he would have discovered that there is little basis for locating the wellspring of war in aggressive male instincts—or in any instincts, for that matter. Wars are not barroom brawls writ large, but, as social theorist Robin Fox puts it, "complicated, orchestrated, highly organized" collective

undertakings that cannot be explained by any individual impulse. No plausible instinct would impel a man to leave his home, cut his hair short, and drill for hours under the hot sun. As anthropologists Clifton B. Kroeber and Bernard L. Fontana have pointed out, "It is a large step from what may be biologically innate leanings toward individual aggression to ritualized, socially sanctioned, institutionalized group warfare." Or as a 1989 conference on the anthropology of war concluded, "The hypothesis of a killer instinct is . . . not so much irrelevant as wrong."

In fact, the male appetite for battle has always been far less voracious than either biologically inclined theorists of war or army commanders might like. In traditional societies, warriors often had to be taunted, intoxicated, or ritually "transformed" into animal form before battle. Throughout Western history, individual men have gone to near-suicidal lengths to avoid participating in wars—cutting off limbs or fingers or risking execution by deserting. Prior to the advent of the nationalist armies of the nineteenth century, desertion rates in European armies were so high that, according

to historian Geoffrey Parker, "at certain times, almost an entire army would vanish into thin air." So unreliable was the rank and file of the famed eighteenth-century Prussian army that military manuals forbade camping near wooded areas. Even in the supposedly highly motivated armies of the twentieth-century democracies, few men can bring themselves to shoot directly at individual enemies—a fact, as Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman writes in *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, that has posed a persistent challenge to the Pentagon.

MALE RITES

Fortunately, we need not resort to instinctual male aggressiveness to explain the male near-monopoly on warfare. One reason is clearly biological, resting on men's advantage in upper body strength—an undeniable plus when the weapons of war are heavy swords, spears, pikes, maces, or clubs. Another explanation is cultural, or at least as purely cultural as one can be: In many, if not most, human societies, male initiation rites feature acts of violence committed by or on the initiates, and one of the most common of these rites has been participation in battle. Through "bleeding his spear" a boy proved his manhood (or through ordering the bombing of some smaller nation, in the case of recent American presidents). For an activity to be a male initiatory rite, it cannot, of course, be open to women and girls. Hence the widespread taboos on female handling of weapons and, in many cases, the tools of peaceable male-dominated crafts.

But there is no reason to think that such initiatory activities derive from instinctual male proclivities. In some cultural settings, the young male's initiation to the adult

world may be entirely bloodless, featuring the receipt of a diploma or admission into a guild. In others it may be violent in ways not related to war, involving circumcision, homosexual rape, or nose-bleeding induced with sharp sticks—activities few would claim are instinctually driven. In fact, the very purpose of male initiation rites is to distinguish biological maleness, which undoubtedly includes a healthy desire for self-preservation, from cultural manhood, which requires a certain amount of self-discipline and even self-sacrifice for the group (as does cultural womanhood).

WOMEN WARRIORS

Nor can it be assumed that the male monopoly on warfare has been as eternal and universal as Fukuyama imagines. Gravesites recently excavated in Russia contain the remains of women warriors from the second millennium B.C.—female skeletons buried with weapons and bearing wounds inflicted by similar weapons. The victims of the Neolithic massacre at Jebel Sahaba, mentioned by Fukuyama, included both women and men, and there is no evidence that the perpetrators were exclusively male. Moving back into the Paleolithic Age, when hunting was probably the principal form of human violence, growing archaeological evidence suggests that it was a communal enterprise in which women and children joined men in driving herds over cliffs or into nets or culs-de-sac. Thus, Fukuyama overstates the case when he says that "men [unlike women] have clearly evolved as cooperative hunters and fighters." The male-centered hunting strategy that figured so prominently in the writings of sociobiologists in the 1960s and 1970s—in which a small band of men stalks an



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Don't call me honey: Chilean soldiers on parade, Santiago, 1997

individual animal—may be a rather recent innovation, necessitated by declining game populations in the Mesolithic Age.

Myths of ancient civilizations also throw doubt on Fukuyama's assertions. Some of the earliest deities worshipped by humans were female, but they were hardly the nurturing earth mothers imagined by many scholars. The archaic goddesses unearthed from Mediterranean and Mesopotamian ruins or recalled in Mesoamerican mythology were huntresses and avid consumers of blood sacrifices, often accompanied or represented by predators such as lions and leopards. Only later were these terrifying deities "tamed" through marriage to patriarchal male gods and reassigned to agricultural duties. Although the characteristics

of the archaic goddesses tell us nothing about the roles of actual women, they do suggest a time when the association of manhood with violence and femininity with gentleness was not as self-evident as it has seemed in the modern age.

MACHO MAN

Whatever our genetic and prehistoric cultural legacies, women in the past two centuries have more than adequately demonstrated a capacity for collective violence. They have played a leading role in nonmilitary violence such as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bread riots and revolutionary uprisings, in which they were often reputed to be "foremost in violence and ferocity." In World War II, the Soviet military deployed



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I said, don't call me honey: Iranian soldiers on parade, Tehran, 1997

them as fighter pilots and in ground combat. Since then, women have served as terrorists and guerrilla fighters in wars of national liberation. More to the point, women have proved themselves no less susceptible than men to the passions of militaristic nationalism: witness feminist leader Sylvia Pankhurst, who set aside the struggle for suffrage to mobilize English support for World War I by, for example, publicly shaming men into enlisting. Fukuyama concedes that, among heads of government, Margaret Thatcher is an exception to his gender dichotomy but ignores the many exceptions on the male side of the ledger—such as the antimilitaristic, social-democratic Olaf Palme and Willy Brandt. Nor does he mention the gender

of the greatest pacifist leaders of the twentieth century, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mohandas K. Gandhi.

But perhaps Fukuyama would concede all of the above, for in the end he has little use for his own dubious claims about the inherent aggressiveness of men and niceness of women. Up until the last three pages of his essay, one might assume that he was gearing up to demand solely masculine leadership, if not participation, in the arenas of politics and war. But no. Women in the military? His only objection has to do with sex as an activity rather than a category, which leads him to the mild suggestion that men and women should be segregated into separate combat units. As for political leadership, he worries a little that the female, and hence

over-kindly, heads of state who arise in the northern democracies will be a poor match for the macho young males whom he expects to dominate the south. But even here he quickly backtracks, admitting, "Masculine policies will be still be required, though not necessarily masculine leaders."

If, as Fukuyama concludes, either sex can be "masculine" in both admirable and execrable ways, what is the point of his essay, with its lengthy excursion into the supposedly murderous habits of cave-men and chimps? Perhaps Fukuyama is right about one thing: Whatever the innate psychological differences between the sexes, a certain male propensity for chest-thumping persists, and can be found among desk-dwelling American scholars as well as alpha apes.

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Father Knows Best

KATHA POLLITT

In his 1989 essay "The End of History?" Fukuyama argued that liberal capitalist democracy was the final stage of political organization toward which the whole world was tending. Today, it seems clear that history will continue to occur, fueled by familiar energies—nationalism, religious mania, the will to power of powerful men, drastic inequalities between and within nations, economic cycles of boom and bust. Undaunted, Fukuyama is back with another idea. He prophesies that the increasing political power of women in wealthy Western countries will incline

those countries against war because evolution has made violence, aggression, and status competition hardwired components of male, but not female, nature. As with chimpanzees, so with humans: From rival male chimps tearing each other to pieces it is but a step to the famously violent Yanomamö of the Amazon, and before we know it we are on familiar twentieth-century killing grounds—the Holocaust, Rwanda, Bosnia.

But Fukuyama warns that this female peacefulness poses dangers to the West. Other parts of the world where female infanticide and sex-selective abortion result in heavily male populations will become more pugnacious. Are Western women up to the challenge of a testosterone-saturated Asia? And what about women in the army? If men are genetically destined to bond only with other men and to compete perpetually for females, will coed army units degenerate into Peyton Place in camouflage?

In arguing for his story of things to come, Fukuyama strays all over the ideological map. He draws on "evolutionary psychologists" to portray men as the main source of human violence, but he ignores those theorists' other claim that male dominance and female acceptance thereof are permanent features of human nature. He mocks radical feminists for dreaming that men can be socialized to be more humane, but he simultaneously imagines that these same unreformable men will simply let women steer the ship of state into tranquil waters. He projects into the future current practices that fit his vision, without acknowledging the possibility that those practices may change. Is it so obvious that Asians will still be aborting female fetuses in 20 years after a generation

of pampered sons has been unable to find wives? Are we so sure that Europe and Japan, faced with rapidly aging populations, will just grow gray in a corner? Perhaps these wrinkled nations will become more immigration-friendly, like the United States. Indeed, France, Italy, and Spain are already experiencing enormous pressure as illegal immigration from eastern Europe and Africa increases. The new German government has just loosened citizenship requirements, suggesting that xenophobia is not the only response to demographic change.

EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY IS BUNK

So what is wrong with Fukuyama's argument? Just about everything. First, he argues that science has discovered the genetic roots of human behavior. This is quite untrue; "evolutionary psychology" is just a theory. It is certainly not the case that "hardly a week goes by without the discovery of a gene linked to a disease, condition, or behavior," although it is indeed true that hardly a week goes by without someone claiming to have discovered such a gene. No one would dispute that diseases can have genetic components, but behaviors? The much-publicized "alcoholism gene" turned out not to exist, which should make Fukuyama cautious about such sweeping statements. In fact, no single gene has ever been discovered that by itself determines a human social behavior; it is a long way from cystic fibrosis to marital infidelity. And it has not even begun to be demonstrated that a complex piece of human behavior like violence or competition could boil down to X or Y chromosomes.

Evolutionary psychologists' theories are popular with the media, which love

stories that suggest feminists are barking up the wrong tree and that gender equality is a doomed project. But Fukuyama is wrong to suggest that evolutionary psychology has won the day in science. Fukuyama tends to name the people he agrees with while referring only vaguely and condescendingly to opponents ("radical feminists," "many feminists," "postmodernists"). But Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Lewontin, Steven Rose, and many other scientists make formidable arguments, grounded not in ideology but in biology, against genetic determinism. It is not encouraging that Fukuyama seems unfamiliar with their work.

He argues that men are more violent than women. Someday he may provide actual evidence that this is a biological rather than social tendency. But even if women are innately less violent, they are plenty violent enough to call into question Fukuyama's claim that more female political power would mean more peace. Women commit infanticide, abuse and kill children, mutilate the genitals of little girls, and cruelly tyrannize daughters, daughters-in-law, servants, and slaves. They have also been known to encourage and defend male violence—egging on personal, family, or gang vendettas, blaming the victims of rape and wife-beating, and so on. Historically, cultures organized around war and displays of cruelty have had women's full cooperation: Spartan and Roman women were famed for their "manly" valor. Did Viking women stand on Scandinavian beaches begging their husbands not to pillage France? Did premodern European women shun public executions and witch burnings? As these examples suggest, even defining violence raises questions: The same act

can be regarded as wrong, psychopathic, glorious, or routine, depending on its social context.

When it comes to organized state violence—war, executions, slavery, concentration camps, and so on—women's pacifism is a distinctly modern phenomenon. So how can it be genetic? You might as well say that today's women explorers, world travelers, athletes, and foreign correspondents prove that women have belatedly acquired that supposedly male gene for "adventurousness." (Fukuyama has clearly never tried to get a middle-class American man to see a foreign movie or try a new cuisine.) As for his claim that group-status competition is a male characteristic—didn't Fukuyama go to high school? Girls and women do not beat each other up as much, but they certainly do compete for status—through clothes, money, boyfriends, popularity, sexuality, cliques, and sororities. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is a form of female competition; so is getting your child into a fancy private school; so is being a groupie or marrying a famous man. Fukuyama concedes that for his supposedly sex-linked traits, each gender falls along a bell curve and that these curves mostly overlap. This contradicts his argument that men are violent and competitive and women are not. If most men and most women fall in the middle range, it is hard to see how gender difference can carry the burden Fukuyama assigns it.

WHY THE DRAFT?

Fukuyama's essay's second flaw is arguing that individual qualities determine state behavior. For him, war is personal violence multiplied by the number of participants. But this is the wrong model. World War II

was not fought because a lot of hotheaded young men got together and decided to invade Poland. Nor did the Holocaust take place because groups of young men were competing for status over who could murder the most Jews. War and its atrocities are organized politically, from the top, by leaders who are—yes—usually men. But they are generally old men who are not necessarily personally violent. In modern times they rarely fight—Lyndon B. Johnson never personally threw prisoners of war out of helicopters. It is young men who fight, but how willingly? If war is so appealing to male genes, why has every major modern war required a draft? Why does today's army recruit by touting its vocational fringe benefits?

VOTERS DON'T MAKE FOREIGN POLICY

Fukuyama argues that war and foreign policy are determined by voters, who will be disproportionately female and therefore antiwar. True, women are more likely than men to oppose war—though the difference is hardly as large as a genetic explanation suggests it should be—but wars are not decided at the ballot box. If they were, the United States would not have entered World War I. After all, the mostly male electorate chose Woodrow Wilson, whose slogan was "He kept us out of war." In 1964, voters picked Johnson ("I seek no wider war") over the saber-rattling Barry Goldwater. Nor have subsequent military actions in Panama, Somalia, the Persian Gulf, and Sudan or secret adventures such as supporting the Contras been the subjects of popular votes.

Political power is not merely or even primarily a matter of ballots or public opinion. Most Americans favor handgun

control, but the National Rifle Association spends millions to make sure it never happens. In the case of war, what matters is not what the voters want but campaign contributions from defense manufacturers and others, the short-term public relations needs of presidents, or the nation's geopolitical interests as interpreted by a Henry Kissinger or a McGeorge Bundy (or a Jeane Kirkpatrick or a Madeleine Albright). Once the powers that be have decided, public opinion can always be manipulated to fall into line. Before the Gulf War, Americans were split over whether to send troops. Antiwar voices were prominently featured in the news. Once the troops were dispatched, however, the media cut off debate and soon it was yellow ribbons all around.

American women have had the vote for nearly 80 years. So far, they have not even won paid maternity leave or affordable daycare, things taken for granted in other industrialized countries. In light of these failures, the assertion that women will be transforming American foreign policy anytime soon, against the will of those now in control, strikes me as a fantasy second only to the notion that genetics will bring it about. It is more likely that as women become more enmeshed in politics and business, with all their compromises and rewards, whatever modest inclination they may now possess toward nonviolent conflict resolution will be swamped by other factors: vanity, greed, fear, perceptions of national interest, lust for cheap oil.

Fukuyama's article is so confused and contradictory, so lacking in real evidence and logic, that one wonders what it is really all about. Despite his professed sympathy for women's claims to fuller

citizenship, he suggests no means by which to move them along. He does not, for example, urge political parties to put forward gender-balanced lists of candidates, as happens in some European countries. Indeed, the only concrete proposal Fukuyama makes is to restrict women's citizenship by limiting their military role. Women make up only 12 percent of Congress and hold only three governorships, the first two female Supreme Court justices are still on the bench, but Fukuyama is worried that the girls are about to seize power and turn the United States into an international wimp.

Forget feminism, genetics, or evolution. What we have here is basically a convoluted variation on two old conservative themes: When it comes to the military, too much is not enough, and when it comes to foreign policy, father—not mother—knows best.

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Perilous Positions

R. BRIAN FERGUSON

In his desire to prove that world conflicts have a basis in biology, Fukuyama makes a number of outright errors.

First, chimpanzees do not "routinely" murder their peers. The famous incident at Gombe that Fukuyama refers to occurred only after major human-induced changes, most important of which was the researchers' artificial provisioning of

bananas. Other reported instances of "chimp wars" also took place in stressful situations. Primatologist Margaret Power offers a contrasting view: "Virtually everywhere that they were studied by naturalistic methods, undisturbed wild chimpanzees live peacefully in nonaggressive, nonhierarchical groups." Fukuyama fails to note that the lesser-known bonobos are as closely related to humans as chimpanzees and display no tendencies to collective violence.

A debate rages within the anthropology of war about the relationship between the high rates of violence observed in tribal societies and the behavior of our distant ancestors. Fukuyama takes one side. On the other, copious evidence documents dramatically increasing violence after Western contact. Disruptive factors—new weapons, trade rivalries, demand for slaves, and forced migrations—transformed and intensified indigenous warfare. This higher-level carnage has been incorporated into our theories and images of "primitive war." War leaves many recoverable archaeological signs, and global findings are straightforward and consistent: Evidence of war is rare until long after a shift to agriculture and the development of hierarchical social systems. War emerges late in human history because it is difficult to organize without authority. Fukuyama's conclusion that "the line [of collective violence] from chimp to modern man is continuous" is a breathtaking leap over a mountain of contrary evidence.

On the connection between violence, gender, and age, Fukuyama's position is again perilous. A 1993 review of aggression literature concludes, "In laboratory studies of human aggression, where the use of physical aggression is controlled and the

possibility of escalation of violence is eliminated, there is little difference in the frequency of aggression in males and females." The evolutionary psychology Fukuyama follows claims that most violence is done by young men. The study cited to support this human universal is based on contemporary homicide statistics, primarily from Detroit. Crime patterns in modern industrial cities tell us no more about our distant past than do statistics on automobile fatalities. Ethnographic data on war in tribal societies provides an entirely different picture. War leadership and killing are usually tasks of middle-aged (by local standards) family men, while young men go along as apprentices.

Men make war. There are important exceptions, but they are rare. Yet women are often among the most vocal advocates of war, making a gendered disposition to peace hard to support empirically. Why not more women warriors? Because war is work, and all tribal societies have pronounced, gender-specific divisions of labor. Women get tasks compatible with pregnancy and child-rearing; men get those that put a premium on strength and endurance. Tribal men also get the job of long-distance trade, but no one claims men have a gene for shopping.

Fukuyama asserts that having viewed "international relations through the lens of sex and biology . . . it is very difficult to watch Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia, Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, or militias from Liberia and Sierra Leone to Georgia and Afghanistan . . . and not think of the chimps at Gombe." This is ridiculous and misleading. Recent world conflicts have occurred in an intricate political field complicated by the intersection of local structures and global forces. Fukuyama

replaces this understanding with a crude discussion of chimp behavior, aggressive young men, and biological tendencies.

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Prehistory Returns

LIONEL TIGER

A remarkably valuable feature of Fukuyama's essay is that he admits he was wrong—not by acknowledging that the earlier approaches to macropolitics with which he made his reputation were incorrect but by emphasizing the bizarre distinction made between natural and social sciences. This has let social scientists believe they can conduct research quarantined from neurophysiology, paleoanthropology, genetics, endocrinology, and the comparative study of animal behavior. It is now overwhelmingly clear that, however complex, humans are subject to the same rules as other species and thus that human studies should not work in isolation. It was recently revealed that only 50 genes distinguish us from chimpanzees—with whom we otherwise share some 100,000.

Fukuyama has moved from the “end of history” to the beginning of prehistory, a study that will soon be required for contemporary political history. He understands that much of feminist theory entails profound disruptions in how human beings have always balanced production, reproduction, and civil society. Fukuyama's appropriation of prehistory lets him recognize that the overwhelming mass of traditional

political analysis—even when described as “human behavior”—has been about the behavior of males.

Feminism has produced two contradictory assertions: first, that men and women are the same and that any important behavioral differences result from discrimination, sexism, and patriarchy; second, that women are different and morally better than men. The first assertion is employed most often by lawyers, who conclude that there should be as many women in any job, sport, club, party, or cabinet as there are in the relevant population. The second assertion is made by Carol Gilligan, whose *In a Different Voice* proposes that girls pursue moral behavior and social harmony better than boys because, well, because they are girls. The fact that sexual differentiation in negotiating strategies also emerges in other primates does not affect the feminine sentimentality that propelled Gilligan's work to prominence. Other writers, including feminists such as Katha Pollitt and Christina Hoff Sommers, criticized the Gilligan approach. Nevertheless, it stimulated efforts to restrict male behavior, stigmatize males as generally brash and insensitive, and claim that girls suffer from low self-esteem because they conform to male wishes. That women generally do better than men in the educational system and now compose 55 percent of the college population does nothing to discourage such zealous misinterpretation.

Fukuyama acknowledges the genetic male propensity to competition and violence. In our 1971 *The Imperial Animal*, Robin Fox and I proposed that the central question of any social system is “What do we do with the young males?” The question remains central today, especially in economies unable to generate jobs

for them. Fukuyama suggests that the introduction of more women into the controlling systems of society, especially in politics, will give a pacific tone to national and international action. For this view, he cites some opinion-poll data about the support for military adventure, examines the behavior of the few female leaders involved in military decision-making, and could have noted the preference of many females in contemporary militaries for "operations other than warfare."

But though Fukuyama's forecast that political change will accompany changes in the sexual composition of leadership is plausible, the picture remains conjectural. There is no empirical evidence of large-scale, long-term social structures that have been created and maintained exclusively or even largely by females. The overworked myth of matriarchy notwithstanding, we do not have good examples of groups of women engaged over generations in creating and sustaining public organizations such as armies, religions, police forces, or even international businesses. It remains an open question if there is a female equivalent to the omnipresent male bonding that encourages the alloy of assertion and self-sacrifice at the heart of a community's central power structure. The political gender gaps emerging in liberal democracies certainly suggest the beginnings of such edifices.

It is possible, even if unlikely, that one response to greater female influence will be greater male belligerence and even violence against them. At the same time that the Taliban restricts women from kindergarten, radical activists restrict women from abortion in the United States. In the contemporary world, there is nowhere for women and children to

go. We receive daily bulletins about the bewilderingly lethal intransigence of male leaders committed to some program of desperate importance to them. The struggle for social control may be one that women choose not to take up.

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States Make War

JANE S. JAQUETTE

Fukuyama gives insufficient weight to the dynamics of the nation-state system in explaining both war and peace. Wars start not in biology—instinctual male aggression—but in realpolitik—a state's need to defend itself from outside threats. War does not come naturally to humans. Men must be trained to fight and kill others, and all people must be taught patriotism. States go to great lengths to demonize their enemies.

State power explains the brutality of internal ethnic conflicts such as those in Bosnia and Rwanda. Fukuyama mistakenly cites these examples to hammer home his equation of humans with murderous chimps. But control of the state involves high stakes, with winners deciding how laws are made, taxes applied, and access provided to economic and educational opportunities. Unsurprisingly, competition is fierce when the incentives are so large.

Fukuyama suggests that women are more pacifistic than men. Several decades of research shows that women do differ from men regarding war. Women are markedly less interested in

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and knowledgeable about it. Women prefer lower military expenditures in times of peace and negotiations instead of force. But this does not mean that women are unaggressive; they can sometimes be more aggressive than men. When women are allowed to carry arms, they are often fierce fighters, as was true of many Central and South American guerrillas. Once war commences, there is little evidence that women withhold support from the male-dominated state. Today many women receive military training and press to go into combat—not to satisfy their hardwired desire to kill but to succeed in military careers that require proving oneself on the battlefield.

If women are more inclined to negotiation, what difference does it make? The cliché Fukuyama cites is that more women leaders would mean more peace. But female leaders face the same pressures as men. For every Mary Robinson or Gro Harlem Brundtland who has made peacemaking a focus of her leadership (and who probably represents a small European state that can afford to promote peace because it relies on the protection of larger powers), there is an Indira Gandhi or Margaret Thatcher leading a major power that uses force to achieve its foreign policy and domestic goals.

But these women may have been forced into male posturing because there are so few female leaders. If there were a critical mass of women leaders or if nation-state sovereignty gave way to international law, the argument goes, international relations would include less interstate competition and more global cooperation. This

would spotlight social issues and organizations in which women already play important roles. As women's traditional concerns become top priority issues, women's say in foreign policy debates will rise.

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