

Women and the New Global Order

A CONVERSATION WITH
ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER



Anne-Marie Slaughter has helped shape global policy at the highest levels of government and academia—as director of policy planning in Hillary Clinton’s State Department, as dean of Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and today as president of the New America Foundation. She also has some provocative ideas on the role of men and women in shaping the nature of the contemporary world. *World Policy Journal* editor David A. Andelman and managing editor Yaffa Fredrick talked with Dr. Slaughter about the nature of global governance and, on a more personal level, whether women, or for that matter men, can have it all.

WORLD POLICY JOURNAL: We'd like to begin with examining the idea of global governance and ask you to describe for us the role women might play in the new global order?

ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER: I think if there were really equal representation of men and women in all the dimensions of global order—if you think about international institutions, or peace negotiations, or the different networks and institutions that make up the global order—if you had equal representation of women, you would absolutely have more peace in the world. There is a lot of evidence that including women in peace negotiations increases the likelihood of success. So I think you would have a better shot at ending a lot of the world's conflicts. More broadly, I think you would have an agenda that focused not simply on traditional national security issues, but on development issues, on education, on poverty, health, and children—what I think of as the fundamentals of society.

WPJ: How do women change the agenda? What is the role of femininity in shifting the focus?

SLAUGHTER: It's hard to know how much is feminine and how much is just non-masculine in the sense that it is diversity. If you imagine a world populated largely by women, it is quite likely that a man coming in would also make a difference. The arrival of women would help you get out of group think, get around ego locks that can happen not just among men, but if you do the thought experiment, also a world full of women. What's evident is that often in peace delegations where you have two groups of

men at war with each other, they are very locked into relative power, relative prestige. Often adding women broadens the agenda and allows for some face saving. There are cases where women have been able essentially to change the norms of the discussion. Some of that is feminine; some of that just seems different from the prevailing norms. But there is a good deal of evidence that including women does make a difference.

WPJ: Can you think of any peace negotiations in which women played a critical role?

SLAUGHTER: In the Northern Ireland negotiations, women made a huge difference. Northern Ireland was where you had a lot of women and mothers involved, and it changed the dynamic quite a bit. There are various African conflicts as well. Secretary Clinton always told one about a local conflict where negotiations weren't going anywhere, and when a woman joined the negotiations she pointed out that the river the two sides had been arguing over had dried up some time ago. There are also cases of different kinds of conflicts, like the anti-mafia movement in Italy—where the women started the *basta* [enough] movement. Women have had the biggest impact where they have essentially just said, there is a deadlock here and it is a deadlock over relative power, relative prestige, relative ego, but there are bigger issues at stake.

WPJ: In Rwanda, President Kagame told me that he is proud that over 50 percent of the national legislature is comprised of women.

SLAUGHTER: I would not want a world of all women any more than I would want a world of all men.

WPJ: You said in your last book that we have to completely rethink how we view the political world. Do we also need to rethink the role that men and women could and should play? Do they play a different role in peace negotiations when they are in the same room?

SLAUGHTER: I think that may be too broad. I really do think this is a question of diversity more than it is of gender. As it happens, genders have been socialized very differently so that men and women do see things differently. That's not necessarily biological, and it's certainly not in the world I'm in. I know women who have been socialized like men. And now you see men being socialized more like women were traditionally socialized. I wouldn't say men are going to be more like this way or women are going to be more like that way. As long as we have differences, you are going to have people who see the world differently and are going to be able to bring different things to the table. I don't think I would say that women are automatically going to be more collaborative and men are automatically going to be more competitive. I don't think that's true. I think that's a function of socialization.

WPJ: Is it the nurturing aspects of women that they bring to the table, or is it less anthropological, perhaps biological?

SLAUGHTER: A lot depends on your life experience. Many men are deeply nurturing, but we see that in different ways. They are coaches or teachers or mentors. The word mentor is a male interaction, not female. What is true in many societies today is that women are quite likely to be thinking more about the fundamentals

of society and less about who owns which piece of territory. Women are more concerned with how people are going to be fed and how we are going to rebuild this society. I don't know if that's because the women are necessarily more nurturing or if they have responsibility for children. So they are thinking less about who gets what in this situation in which you are free to fight, but rather how are we going to distribute resources so that families get taken care of.

WPJ: Let's get back to the biological issue. One of our writers in Germany cites research showing that there are in fact biological differences in the brains of women and men that can help explain some of these different approaches to goals and negotiating strategies. It is possible that the brains of men and women are biologically different?

SLAUGHTER: They are. There's no question. There are certain absolute biological differences between men and women. At least some of the time men are more physically active, and that seems to be connected to the way they can process things. I'm sure in the next century we will find lots of differences. I'm equally sure that lots of those differences are plastic. That is, they are determined by different life experiences. What we are discovering is that the brain is constantly changing. It is not a fixed thing, developed during this period in early childhood and early adolescence.

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It's very shaped by life experience. They are discovering, at least in animals, that when males are exposed to their young, at least right at the outset, they experience many of the same changes as females. We don't know what it would look like if men were raising children in the same fashion as women. We might see many of the same neurological shifts that we see in women.

WPJ: So basically if women played a role

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equal to men, we might be seeing a convergence, and there would be less impact by having women in negotiating issues?

SLAUGHTER: Could be. Also could be that you start seeing more men playing roles women traditionally have. You want the diversity and range of people who have different life experiences, who see different sides of an issue,

to break an impasse. If you think about the classic negotiating scenario, you want to think about lots of different alternatives to expand the win-set. To do that, you need people who see the issue differently.

WPJ: In Latin America, a host of women leaders are coming along now. They often mention quotas that are being implemented in a number of Latin American countries, effectively mandating the numbers of women who must stand for political office. Do you think that is a positive step toward achieving gender equality in government?

SLAUGHTER: It is a positive development for those societies where it is possible. It is most unlikely that we would see that in the United States, largely because of the way our culture reacts to quotas. But I think you need a critical mass of women to make a real difference. One way to get there is to jump-start the system. When I look at the societies that have quotas, I think you wouldn't want that long term because it can be artificial. But in terms of jump-starting the system and getting a critical mass of women, I think that can be very helpful.

WPJ: Taking this down to a more personal level, you've argued that closing the gender gap comes at quite a cost to women's family lives. Can you explain what personal costs women face?

SLAUGHTER: We must recognize the need and the desire of parents—women more keenly, though it is also true for men—that caregiving is a full time job, especially being the lead caregiver, being available for emergencies, the works, and that is inconsistent with high powered jobs. There are some numbers of women who have managed to do it by being at the right place at the right time. But if you just look at the numbers, it's very clear that you see a man and a woman start out on a career with equal education and ability, but they have children and somebody has to slow down. You don't have to just look at the number of women; look at the numbers of men who are CEOs who have a full time spouse at home. If that is right, you need a flow of family work to support market work. Then either we acknowledge this preferably for both men and women, and say we need to be much more flexible about

career paths to allow people to take care of their children and their parents, or we need to make it possible for men to support women in those high powered roles. Without that, we are not going to change the numbers. As long as you can engineer a balance, it works. But often one party gets the job, and the other has to change the way he or she works.

WPJ: You were head of policy planning at the State Department. How did that work in terms of people asking—do you have to stay home with the kids? Did they treat you the same way in a high-powered situation like that as they would have treated your male predecessor?

SLAUGHTER: People treated me the same. In my own family there was never any question if one of us was going to take a high-powered job like that, there was going to be a parent that was gone. I didn't experience any difference of treatment while on the job. There were things I couldn't do because I had to be home with my kids in Princeton, like be on deck for crisis situations over the weekend. But overall I was treated exactly the same way. But after two years, it's hard to know. I know men who drop down also or step back from those jobs because it was just too hard on their families.

WPJ: What did you bring to that job that your predecessor or successor did not?

SLAUGHTER: I think Secretary Clinton believed very strongly that development had to be as important as diplomacy as a pillar of foreign policy. I do think that is in part gendered. Again, the focus on development is a focus on families, food, health, education, and the infrastructure and ba-

sic fundamentals of what humans need to flourish. That's the way she would put it. And I think that focus has been more gendered. It's not accidental that when you look at a room full of people who do national security, there are going to be 80 to 90 percent men and 10 to 20 percent women, and if you look at a room full of people who do development it is going to be reversed. There may be many reasons for that, and I don't think it is biological. I think it is the kinds of issues you have been socialized to focus on. But because Secretary Clinton did make clear that that was something she wanted, and I strongly believed in her, I would say that I, working with her, unlike the person before me or after me, did as much as I possibly could to institutionalize development as a core pillar of foreign policy.

WPJ: Getting back to the 80-20 distinction, were those self choices or were they effectively imposed on them by the perception of the role that the man or woman should play?

SLAUGHTER: Those are almost impossible to disentangle. It is much harder for a woman to make it in national security because it is perceived that men do national security. And it is perceived that development is for nurturing, caring people, so you have more women. I know plenty of women who are great at national security and plenty of men who are great at development.

WPJ: While we are talking about gender stereotypes, are these western perceptions? You spent some time in Shanghai. Is there a difference between the way the West and the East approach family and business gender roles, or is what you are talking about more universal?

SLAUGHTER: There are gender stereotypes in every country, but they might be different ones. For instance, in China it is much more traditional for women to handle the money, as it is in many Asian societies. So I think it makes it easier for women to be in banking and finance. But that is also tied to the woman's role at home—the woman at home is in charge of the household finances. On the other hand, if you look at the Politburo, there is one woman and she is not very powerful. The overall stereotypes that ultimately disadvantage women are pretty universal. Obviously there are societies that have been traditionally matriarchal, but there are not many. The idea that there are certain things men and women may be relatively better at may be culturally related.

WPJ: You were at Davos this year where one of the big discussions was about how gender equality falls into larger conversations about inequality. Are there particular regions of the world where gender inequality is being felt most acutely? Are there more problematic areas of gender inequality that we should be focusing on?

SLAUGHTER: I still think overall that women are much less likely to be educated than men. Without that, you really can't go anywhere. Their health is worse, their nutrition is worse, there are still many societies where women are property or second class citizens. So if you look globally, you need to be focusing on the very basic rights of women to be treated as equal human beings—the very fundamental rights of women versus men. Those gaps are globally more important than the number of women in leadership positions. But in societies where we have taken care of those basics, then I think changing power struc-

tures is very important. So in many developing countries you may need to change the power structures before you change the fundamentals.

WPJ: Do you think the revised development goals should include gender equality?

SLAUGHTER: There are many people working on it, but we are talking about half the human population. In some places, people are going too far in talking about dollars invested in women, whether it is more than men. And we see a lot of cultures where men have no future either. We can't just focus on the women. You can't ignore the other half. In terms of the UN Millennium Development Goals, though, the idea of the equality of all human beings has to acknowledge the systematic discrimination against half the members of our society.

WPJ: Is it your sense that we are getting closer? Or are we as bad as ever?

SLAUGHTER: We have made unbelievable progress. I tell my students who can't imagine the world I grew up in back in Virginia in the 1960s. I didn't know a single woman doctor or a single woman judge or senator. The idea of a female president was so unthinkable. We've made unbelievable strides. I'm 55, so in the course of my lifetime the world my children are growing up in looks radically different. Globally, in terms of the number of women going to school and who have opportunities, we've made enormous progress.

WPJ: Is it not too easy to devolve into woe is me for the woman? Are there not plenty of places where you could say men are equally discriminated against?

SLAUGHTER: I still think overall women are more discriminated against than men in many ways, if the goal is to have an equal range of life choices. That said, men have fewer choices than women in many developed countries because women can choose to have a career or be a caregiver, whereas men cannot choose to be a caregiver. They are valued by how much mon-

ey they can earn. We need to widen what we value men for. We are not going to get women to equal positions of leadership unless we expand the range of choices for men. If you want women to be in all those CEO spots, then you've got to understand that men have a woman at home who is making it possible for them. Women similarly would need a man at home. ●

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