EDITOR’S NOTE

This issue was born out of an observation: we noticed a distinct gender imbalance in authorship—not only in The Forum but in academic journals everywhere—and so we set out to consciously work to correct that imbalance for The Forum. The volume that you are about to read is the first Fletcher Forum of World Affairs with all-female authorship.

This issue is meant to highlight women; women who have risen to important roles in the international community, and who can serve as role models and offer their analysis or advice for future policy agendas—and women as a subject matter in relation to various challenges around the globe. We chose the theme of this volume to be intentionally expansive. We challenged ourselves to explore questions like: “What are influential women of the world doing with their careers and social capital?” and “What needs to be done to better support women?” “What are the distinct challenges that women face around the globe face today?” We hope that the articles compiled here help the reader to think more about these questions. The subject of women, as we discovered, connects the reader to a variety of contexts—security, militarism, leadership, conflict, industry, livelihoods—as broad as the mission of The Fletcher Forum’s scope of articles.

Some of our authors have explicitly focused on women as subjects of their analysis, in an acknowledgment that women are often ‘invisibilized’ within International Relations; yet others have performed a broader gender analysis of relevant dynamics—and still other authors within these pages are women who did not explicitly address the issue of women or gender within their writing. The last category is significant, as the burden of narrative responsibility about women or gender should not exclusively fall on women authors—rather, it is a conversation that concerns all of us, and a discussion we hope to facilitate through this issue.

We, the editors, came of age in a time where female examples of how and to where our own careers might climb, from domestic foreign policy experts Madeline Albright and Condoleezza Rice, to international role models like Wangari Maathai and Sima Samar, were inspirational, and certainly more professionally advanced than the role models which inspired our mothers. When my own mother completed law school she found gender discrimination
rampant in law firms, limiting her ability to develop a career. In 1972 she, along with fellow students, filed sex discrimination claims against several large law firms, successfully fighting for firms to adopt equal hiring opportunities, paving the way for her own career and the careers of countless female lawyers after her. Today we find ourselves in a different world, forever indebted to the women of the past who fought for gender equality. But still, glass ceilings exist, discrimination happens, crimes endure.

Back when we conceived the theme of this issue, we did not anticipate how difficult it might be to actualize it. This was not due to a dearth of women experts or women writers; rather, it was itself a symptom of gendered gaps that affect sectors from academia to journalism. We encountered women who could not write for us without compensation because they were working mothers, highlighting the gendered disparities that underpin compensation, authorship, and voice on the Internet, or in print. We also spoke with women who did not feel that they could divert attention away from their careers to pen an article. We can speculate on the myriad reasons why it was disappointingly challenging to produce an all-female authored issue, but you, the reader, should also consider this conundrum. Progress has been made over time in highlighting and fostering female authors, but this exercise showed us that much more progress needs to be made if we are truly going to say that we have women’s voices meaningfully represented—especially in the field of international affairs.

Alongside the great effort I described behind crafting this issue, I must pause to acknowledge my team. The editors of The Forum worked tirelessly to ensure that this issue would be a memorable one in our journal’s history, and one which would stand out on your bookshelves. I am also grateful to The Fletcher School’s administration for their encouragement on this issue; in particular, James Stavridis, Deborah Nutter, and Alan Henrikson, who have all provided incredible support to me, and to The Forum, and helped to develop this unique volume.

We hope that the pages within will help to raise crucial discussions on the role of women around the world. As this issue considers and questions a variety of ways in which we can work towards equal opportunities for women, we hope that you too will question the paradigms and conventions around you. Question why women still earn less, learn less, and have fewer opportunities in the world of work than men. Understand why women are a crucial component to global food security and why women’s issues are hard security issues. Appreciate the value of the female voices within these pages. I have yet to see another international relations journal entirely authored by women. I hope we have started a trend.

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