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INCLUSIVE SECURITY: PLAYING THE WINNING TEAM

— Paz Magat

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Resolution on Women Peace and Security acknowledging the critical role that women play in matters of conflict. More recently, the UN renewed the resolution for 2017-2022. In 2017, the Women Peace and Security Act passed by the United States Congress reaffirmed this sentiment with new policies and mechanisms for accountability. Canada, a global leader in this field, also launched its National Action Plan for the UN resolution's implementation, and has declared intentions to name an Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security.

It has been almost two decades since the UN's initial resolution. One has to ask: Have we moved from resolutions and policies to true progress? Let's agree that the resolutions do mark serious progress, but there is still much more to do. How might we up our game?

Take any professional sports team that is underperforming. Ownership "cleans house" by replacing its personnel, changing its front office leadership and locker room culture, reinvesting in its fan base, and reallocating resources. In matters of security, it should be no different – the slog of years of conflicts in multiple areas around the world tells us it is time to bring the role of women and other marginalized groups to the forefront. Evidence has already proven that their involvement in preventing, mitigating, and resolving conflict tends to yield better results for peace.

Assembling inclusive teams requires creative strategies to involve the personnel (militaries), the front office (government), the locker room culture (beliefs on women's roles), its fan base (civil

society), and its resources (investing in scalable success). Focus on so many components at once may be a daunting task, but this may be the new game plan for success.

Much focus is placed on the larger role women can play in positions of leadership, in peacekeeping, in combat, and many others. What is it about leadership structures that mean women remain underrepresented? To appropriate another sports metaphor, that of Xs and Os, perhaps we are not studying the playbook for the roles played by Xs and Ys. Until a critical mass of women in positions of leadership can play a part in the decision-making to promote inclusivity at all levels of society affected in conflict, we have to find the male champions with the courage to effect these changes.

But the challenge of properly integrating women in the security sphere goes well beyond the military itself. What about conflict zones when troops have withdrawn? Consider the following illustration.

The small town of Rundu sits on the Namibian-Angolan border. I spent some time there working with a local organization that was trying to address the rise in violence by teenage boys, especially towards their female counterparts. With limited funding, we started a program for 300 teens across the province that put girls in positions of leadership. The lunchtime dynamics were the biggest tell – by day 3, boys were sitting with girls for the first time, asking how they were "so capable". They wanted the girls on their teams and in their study groups, because they could see that made them more competitive. By day 5, mothers started lingering, asking what we had done to their children – the

girls finding a voice, the boys showing them more respect. By day 7, fathers approached us asking what they could do differently as parents for these magically empowered daughters and enlightened sons. The mayor and local police started asking the same questions. Funders wanted to give more. While it is but one small sample, the program showed that even a small change in power dynamics could have multiplier effects on violence across an entire region.

Systems thinking tells us that in order for changes in attitude and behavior to take place in an impactful and sustainable fashion, many components of an issue have to be addressed. Attempting to fix only one component of the problems we face is a patchwork solution. Therefore, playing the winning team will require an investment in the long game and the myriad players and structures that contribute to a culture of change.

Engaging with civil society is the most practical and often the most attainable strategy. Can approaches to protecting civilians extend beyond countering violence? Women in particular can – and often already do – play the roles of mediator, peacemaker, moral nurturer, entrepreneur, and family manager, to name but a few. By investing in women at the local level, in coordination with various stakeholders, their empowerment can be as substantial a boost to the prospects of peace as mitigating classic threats. After all, those at the

top may sign cease-fire agreements and peace accords, but it is those at the local level who will have to find a way to sustain them.

The inaugural year of the Halifax Peace With Women Fellowship concludes at the 2018 Forum in Halifax, Nova Scotia. For three weeks, the program explored international security from traditional and non-traditional perspectives, while asking how all genders factor into various facets of security challenges. The Peace With Women Fellowship strives to promote a culture of thinking that encourages participants to consider both the operational effectiveness of their corps and how their strategies can integrate the very civilians they are mandated to protect. Through this new program, Halifax International Security Forum is following through on its mission to advance a modern vision of security – one that includes a winning team of players that will in turn affect the standards and expectations for inclusivity.

Winning teams can result in dynasties. Let us strive to build teams whose legacies integrate all the players on the field, thus improving the prospects for a more peaceful world.

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