



**Women's Foreign Policy Group  
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***Bonds Across Borders:  
Women, China, and International Relations in the Modern World***

**Peggy Blumenthal:** Hi, I'm Peggy Blumenthal, Executive Vice President of the Institute of International Education (IIE). I'm delighted to welcome you to IIE for the first fall meeting. It's always wonderful to welcome Pat and the Women's Foreign Policy Group members, and IIE staff, and other friends who are turning out, some for the first time, to hear this great speaker, who is an old friend. Pat will introduce the speaker, but I just wanted to say a few words about IIE's connection with this topic. As most of you know, we administer the Fulbright program worldwide, and of course in Hong Kong as well. Some of our staff from Fulbright is here. In Hong Kong we've also managed some very special programs to promote women's leadership and women's connections across borders. We have a Luce Foundation program for women leaders of NGOs, and then a wonderful program at the Lingnan Foundation—and two of our board members are here, one of them my husband and the other the chairwoman—but that works with Hong Kong University and other universities in Hong Kong and South China to try to find young leaders who are going to go on and do great things in the world. We're proud that many of them, by accident, turn out to be women, so many high achieving women, that sometimes we have to make an extra effort to find the talented Hong Kong male students.

We're very much looking forward to the presentation and I urge any of you who happen to be traveling to Hong Kong to give me a call at our office and get to know us and see how we can be helpful to you.

**Patricia Ellis:** Thanks so much, Peggy. We really appreciate your hospitality, it's a pleasure to be here and we've very much appreciated our ongoing collaboration and partnership. It's been great, and we're happy to be here again for our first New York program this fall. We're also excited about today's program; certainly it's a subject near and dear to our hearts, about women's leadership. She's not here, unfortunately, but Julia Chang Bloch, one of the authors of a chapter, is co-founder, with me, of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. So it's very special to be able to do this Authors' Series program.

So, welcome everyone, we have members, guests, friends. We're all so pleased that you could join us, particularly at this very busy time of year. It's crazy for everyone, so we're glad that everyone could come here.

I'm Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. I have one of our board members here, Gillian Sorensen, and we're very pleased to have her here. We have two Consul Generals, the Austrian Consul General and the Consul General of Barbados. We have a friend from the U.S. Mission,

and many other people I won't introduce, but we always have a great group and it's always different, and we're all very much looking forward to Priscilla's talk and to our discussion afterwards. We're known for our in-depth international issues programs, and the Authors' Series has become one of our favorites. Our last program here was over the summer, and we dealt with climate change; we had Alice LeBlanc from AIG. Obviously that is a subject we plan to do a lot more on, so please stand by for that. One other announcement, that we just found out about, will be a program on November 12. The Indian Consul General is going to be speaking about the Indian economy; changes and challenges. We think that a lot of people will be interested in that, so mark that on your calendar, because we are excited and we'll be sending out the information.

It's my great pleasure to introduce Dr. Priscilla Roberts. She's Associate Professor of History at the University of Hong Kong. She's taught there since 1984, and she's the Honorary Director of the University's Center on American Studies. One of the big things that she has worked on in addition to lots of writing is to encourage exchanges and discussions among Americanists in China, in Hong Kong, the United States, and Europe. Dr. Roberts received both her undergraduate and PhD from King's College Cambridge. She is a prolific author; she has written numerous books, and edited a number of books too, on twentieth century diplomatic and international history. I'm just going to read off a couple of the titles because the breadth of this is so interesting. She has one called *The Cold War*, that was in 2000. Then she edited *Sino-American Relations Since 1900. Window on the Forbidden City: The Beijing Diaries of David Bruce*, very interesting. *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World Beyond*. And there is a new book: *Bridging the Sino-American Divide: American Studies with Chinese Characteristics*. In 2003, she was a visiting Fulbright fellow at George Washington University and most recently she's been back there for a six month sabbatical while working on another book, *Biography of a New York Banker: Frank Altschul*.

This book, *Bonds Across Borders: Women, China, and International Relations in the Modern World*, is a compilation of essays by twenty leading scholars and practitioners, and that's what makes it so interesting, because it does combine both. So it's not purely academic, it's not purely with practitioners. And they're from the same countries that I mentioned, China, the U.S., Hong Kong, and the U.K. The whole goal was to bring in both historical and contemporary case studies, and to do a lot of cross-comparison. They look at both official careers of women in diplomacy, and then non-official diplomatic roles, which was the tradition until not all that long ago. On that note, please join me in welcoming Dr. Priscilla Roberts.

**Dr. Priscilla Roberts:** Well, I'm delighted to be here today. I'm very grateful to Pat Ellis, both for that nice introduction and also for the hard work that she, and Kimberly Kahnhauser of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, have put into making this event happen. It's particularly nice for me today that it's taking place at the IIE, because this gives me a chance to catch up both with Peggy Blumenthal, who organized this, and with Doug Murray, who's a very old friend, and also a supporter through the Lingnan Foundation. I'm very grateful indeed for various programs at the University of Hong Kong that have been designed to build up American studies there and also to encourage universities in China, particularly in the past three or four years, Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, to build on some of the work that we have done in Hong Kong to build in building up an American Studies program and see what we can do to help do the same thing at Zhongshan University. Pat mentioned a book called *American Studies with Chinese Characteristics* that has just come out with the same press, and in fact that book does have two chapters on the Lingnan Foundation program. So it's a particular pleasure to have the chance to catch up today with Doug and Peggy.

This book is the product of another of those ventures in trying to bring together Western and Chinese scholars. I have for many years had ties with the American Studies Center and various academics at Fudan University in Shanghai, and when I was visiting some years ago, the head of the Department of International Politics, who is in fact a man, said to me, You know, I've got four women working in my department on some aspects of international politics. I'd like us to do something on women and international relations; nobody's really doing it in China. And it seemed to him that there was some scope to develop this in China. And he said, Well, what could we do? And I said, I suppose we could do a conference or a workshop and we went along to the Ford Foundation who were kind enough to give us a grant, and Fudan University gave some funding as well. Initially we planned this venture for May 2003, and then along came something called the SARS epidemic, and at that time there was exceedingly little travel between China and the West, certainly in the academic field. So we put it off until October, and brought together in Shanghai a mixture of academics and practitioners from within China and outside.

Several colleagues in my department, the History Department, at the University of Hong Kong, although not specialists, necessarily, in women's studies or women's history, were nonetheless doing work which brought in women. Three of them, for example, had female missionaries in the family, so I explained to them that if they wanted a free trip to Shanghai, then they could come and give a paper for us. And most of them accepted the offer. Later, of course, came the unfortunate witching hour which you get in all fairy stories when you have to pay up the promises that you blithely made eighteen months before. So I remember setting off for Shanghai two or three days before the conference, leaving most of my department burning the midnight oil, finishing their papers.

But in the end, we got together a rather good group of people, quite a mix. Obviously quite a few historians, political scientists, social scientists. Also diplomats past and present. Julia Bloch was one of the speakers, the first Asian-American ambassador from the United States, who served in Nepal under the first George Bush. Plus two ladies, one of them from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and a second who was working in the Shanghai foreign policy bureaucracy and had been one of the team that worked with President Nixon in the early 1970s, on the visit that led to the Shanghai Communiqué.

We did have a number of men at the conference; in fact, a quarter of the papers in the book are in fact by men. Interestingly, although a Chinese man had suggested the topic and had been very supportive in setting up the conference, the younger Chinese academics were the ones who seemed to have the greatest problems with the topic. I don't think that any Chinese men gave papers at the conference, and some of them were sitting around saying, well, can you really say anything about women and international relations? Since we spent two days doing so, it would seem that their question didn't need answering. This, to me, seemed quite revealing because a year or two earlier, I'd gone to Guangzhou and lectured there, and I'd learned that in the Guangzhou University Students Union earlier in the week, there had been a debate among the undergraduates on the topic, Should women go back to the kitchen? And the vote among the men had been almost unanimous that they should, because they feel that the women are competing for often scarce jobs and it would be much nicer if they would go back. I guess if not to Kinder, Kirche, and Kuche, then pretty much keep them at home in some kind of ancillary role.

And so it was the younger, rather than the older men who'd grown up in the days when Mao proclaimed that women hold up one half the sky, which the Vice President of Fudan quoted in his speech of welcome, who seemed to find the entire topic of the conference most problematic. When I go back to Fudan, I have to find out how they're getting on with teaching in the area and what we want to do as a follow-up, now that we actually do have the book out.

If you look at the book—and I'm really sorry that my co-editor, of Fudan University, can't be here today to speak about it— you will find it really is a big mixture of papers. We started off with quite a few about the actual field of women and international relations. There are debates going on in IR studies right now about what the role of women is in international relations. One of the papers in this book, by a very young Chinese scholar, suggests that women can bring a different perspective to international relations. She and Rosemary Foote of Oxford, who did an overview of the entire field, both brought up the fact that IR has been a field very much dominated by male concepts and thinking, and that the Hobbesian, Machiavellian, Lockeian, Rousseauian tradition basically thinks of international relations as a zero-sum game. It's very much the realist tradition of foreign policy. They suggested that women, if they become scholars and practitioners of IR, may be bringing in different perspectives. Qiu Fang in particular was arguing that rather than regarding international relations as a zero-sum game, women scholars are more likely to look at it as a game in which boundaries are not necessarily clearly defined, the territories of nations are not necessarily the only units involved, and that one could have a theory and practice of international relations that is based much more on harmony and collaboration, both at the individual and also at the international level.

On the other hand, one Chinese scholar took up the work of Jean Bethke Elshtain to argue that women do not necessarily bring any different perspectives at all to international relations, that women can be at least as aggressive as men, that men very often require a good deal of socialization and indoctrination to make them good soldiers, they're not necessarily all bloodthirsty, testosterone-driven, territorialist, and men are not necessarily any more aggressive or assertive than women are. A lot of this was building on the same ideas that one finds in feminist thinking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the West, when many feminists argued, as did some of the Chinese speakers at this conference, whose chapters were also in this volume, that if women were involved in international relations, they are first of all intrinsically nicer and gentler, either because this is just the way that women are, or because since we are the ones who bear the children and bring them up, we care more about peace and the conditions in the kind of world that we will have for our children. And we are therefore more into peace, social justice, harmony, and the like. These are obviously arguments that have gone on in Western feminism for the past century or more, and that are now resonating in the debates that are going on in China. Obviously, if you want to know more about that, I've got about twenty minutes to speak, so I'd have to recommend you to go and read the book.

Several contributors also pointed out that women almost inexorably have a major interest in international relations because they're disproportionately represented among the victims of international violence, particularly as refugees, and quite often they are disadvantaged in the way that they are treated on the international scene as well. Ambassador Julia Bloch, who unfortunately can't be here today, was at the last talk on this book, and actually reminisced in her piece about how she was working with, I think, USAID, and she was able to make a small difference to some women in refugee camps by ensuring that they themselves, not the men in the family (or non-family), went and picked up their own food and other supplies rather than having to have a male represent them.

We also looked at the roles that women actually play, have played, are playing, and will play in the future in international diplomatic relations. One area that we did look at in some detail was women's formal diplomatic roles. Here as I said, we had three women with very substantial diplomatic experience, reflecting on their own experiences in foreign affairs, their own careers, but also on the treatment of women in the Chinese diplomatic service, the U.S. Foreign Service, as well as the British and some of the other European ones. It was quite striking that in the Chinese diplomatic service, women suffered many of the same disadvantages as in Western diplomatic services, perhaps about thirty years behind, but they too have had to fight for equal treatment with men. Women who are married to

other diplomats have often found this a great disadvantage in their careers in the Chinese diplomatic service; if posted abroad, for a long time they were not allowed to serve as diplomats.

There is included in here a chart of how many Chinese women ambassadors there have been, up to January 2007, so we got it very much up to the minute as I was revising it for publication. As with the U.S. and the British models, women have not tended to get the very big political plums in the diplomatic service; they have tended to get the smaller embassies, whereas the big ones have usually been reserved for men. I think there have now been American female diplomatic appointees to both France and Britain, but I believe both of those were political appointments, as were the first U.S. appointments of female ambassadors, women such as Clare Booth Luce and Shirley Temple Black, and I think William Jennings Bryan's daughter was also a Head of Mission, though not actually an ambassador, before World War II. So it has tended to be the female political appointees who have broken the barriers first in the U.S., rather than the standard career diplomatic service.

Joan Hoff contributed a chapter on Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice. I know that both women are hot topics, and Julia also referred to both women in her own chapter. Joan Hoff tended to be rather dismissive of Madeleine Albright, although I did feel that she was having it in some ways both ways, because she condemned Madeleine Albright both for supporting intervention in Bosnia, which she said was not very effective, and for not being sufficiently forceful in supporting intervention in Rwanda. So I did feel that she was perhaps pushing that a bit, whereas Julia speaks rather highly of Madeleine Albright in terms of what she tried to do for women while she was in the State Department. Hoff feels that Madeleine Albright's record on women was much more a PR act. Both of them suggest that Condoleezza Rice has shown very little interest in promoting the careers of other female diplomats in the State Department. I suppose this raises another question: is it the job, should it be the job, of top women diplomats to push the careers of other women. After all, we complain if we feel that men are favoring men. What should the role of women leaders be?

It's also worth noting that Margaret Thatcher, a woman who made it on her own in a boy's world, once rather famously asked, "What has the women's movement ever done for me?" and rather gloried in the fact that she was tougher than all the men, and nonetheless, in her final years in office, used to insist that short lists for important jobs that were sent to her should include at least one woman. So even the iron ladies sometimes do feel an obligation at the end to give other women some kind of assistance.

Joan Hoff also concluded that although there were flaws in Madeleine Albright's policies, that she presented herself in her memoirs as being perhaps more of a pathbreaker, more of an innovator, more successful than she was, this was no worse than what most men do in their memoirs, and that if she hadn't been a particularly innovative or creative thinker, this was also true of many other Clinton administration, other male, officials. In fact, she thought that Albright functioned in a way that was not very different from her male colleagues, though she did suggest that the men in the inner circles of both the Clinton and the current Bush administration did not take either Albright or Rice very seriously and often excluded them from the real inner circle of power while the male egos battled it out and allowed the women to go on the talk shows and explain their policies. We may well want to take up these views in the discussion afterwards.

One thing that we tried to do in this conference was to show that women's diplomatic roles have not necessarily been simply those of formal diplomacy, that at other levels women have played important parts in diplomacy, at least for the past century or two, maybe longer. One chapter on women, marriage, and international relations pointed to the role that women rulers and women from elite families have played in diplomacy over the years. Usually this was due to the accidents of birth and marriage, and I in

fact, in wrapping up the conference, pointed out that as far back as the sixteenth century you have Elizabeth I of England, Isabella of Castile, and also a couple of Habsburg archduchesses who ruled the Netherlands between them for a span of about fifty years, actually playing very large and significant roles in diplomacy. In part, perhaps, because they often inherited; either they didn't have brothers or they became widows and they decided, we're not going to marry. No more marriage, instead I'll go and run the Netherlands for my father or my brother. But you do have some spectacularly successful women rulers who played a major diplomatic role in that time and made the most of the advantages that you've got.

I have to say, though, that if you look at British history in that period, you have a couple of very spectacular failures. Mary Tudor, the half-sister of Elizabeth I, and Mary, Queen of Scots, who for whatever reason were not able to stand up to the power-hungry men around them who were very keen to manipulate them and who both had extremely sad and tumultuous and difficult lives, and are perhaps the other side of the coin, that it still depended very much on one's own personal qualities; it was not enough to have been born into the purple, you needed to be a tough lady even then to control the men who were very, very keen to take advantage of a supposedly unprotected and vulnerable woman.

Looking at diplomatic wives, as some of the chapters here do, it was interesting to look at such women as Evangeline Bruce, who was of course the diplomatic wife par excellence, the wife of David Bruce, whose diaries I have edited, and compare her with Clare Booth Luce. The same woman, Letitia Baldrige, who won some fame as Jackie Kennedy's social secretary in the White House, worked with both women, and I think in different ways they were both mentors to her. Baldrige, I think, in her fantasies, would have liked to be the beautiful, stylish, adored diplomatic wife Evangeline Bruce, but in fact she modeled herself very much more upon Clare Booth Luce, who took her under her wing in her early years. A woman who, rather than doing Evangeline Bruce's flawless diplomatic entertaining, informed Baldrige when she came in as her social secretary, I expect you to be my wife, I expect to attend my own parties, I want everything to go absolutely perfectly and flawlessly, and I don't want to have anything to do with it until I turn up. And though she wanted to be beautifully and tastefully and expensively dressed, she gave only one stipulation about her clothes; that they must have pockets that would hold everything, because she couldn't be bothered to turn up for fittings and would often send her maid, who was in no way the same size and shape, instead. She was simply not interested in being a fashion plate, even though of course she wanted to be suitably dressed.

This was in some ways the way of the future. But taking up Cynthia Enloe's question, "Where are the women in international relations," we also looked at other areas. We looked at two political wives, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, and her sister Madame Sun Yat-Sen. One of my colleagues did a chapter on that. In fact, during the conference, just after she'd given her paper, she came back and announced that Madame Chiang Kai-shek had just passed away. This woman is a minister's wife, she has very good connections in heaven, which does arrange very good timing for conferences. But Madame Sun Yat-Sen later in life functioned, if you like, as the respectable face of leftism, particularly in the British colony of Hong Kong before World War II, when she was welcome at Government House and helping to arrange aid for China in the ongoing battle against the Japanese.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who spoke fluent English, was very well-connected in the United States in particular, and in many ways served as her non-English speaking husband's intermediary to the United States in particular. It was probably a political marriage of convenience; he wanted to take advantage of her family connections in Chinese politics as well. But it was very much a political partnership.

Women have played important roles as social activists. One colleague of mine looks at the role that a British official's wife in Hong Kong played in taking advantage of the international climate between the wars; the international climate of opinion to have the maidservant system in Hong Kong outlawed by the British government. There's also a chapter by my Chinese co-editor on the role of women in international organizations, particularly since World War II, and by one of my former Chinese students, now back teaching in Guangzhou, on the Women's Peace Party in World War I.

We have several chapters on the role that Western women played as missionaries in China. These are the ones where I got all my colleagues to tell about their mothers and grandmothers and great-aunts by marriage, and the role that they were able to play. Two of them were there basically as missionary wives in somewhat subordinate but nonetheless important roles in their missions, where they liaised particularly with Chinese women in ways the Western men could not. One of them came from a wealthy and well-connected British family, and she had trained to be a physician at the University of Birmingham in the early twentieth century. Her father and her brothers were well-to-do businessmen who I think at times may have felt that most of their profits were going to supporting their daughter and sister's hospital up in Guizhou Province.

So we've got a very wide range of women diplomatic roles. My colleague Staci Ford also spoke about women as journalists during World War II and afterwards, interpreting China to the West, as did some of the missionary women, and we then had suggestions as to what women could do for the future; how they could make themselves more forceful in international relations, and also what they could do on a personal level. Certainly not all of us are going to be Condoleezza Rice or Madeleine Albright or Mrs. Thatcher, but it may be that nonetheless, in our own lives, our professional careers, we can have impact, making women's interests and concerns more visible, and also in making sure that women are given at least a fair chance along with men.

It really is a wide range of questions that I tried to bring out, that the authors tried to bring out in their papers and in the chapters in this book. It gives some sense of what Chinese scholars are thinking about, of what kind of dialogues are going on in China today, and also how these relate to debates that are going on in the West and how the situation in China compares with that of women in the West. I really recommend you read these, not because I edited the book, but because the people involved really did put together an interesting range of papers. It hasn't answered all the questions, but it's tried to ask some of them.

**Patricia Ellis:** Well, thank you. We'll open it up for questions, I just ask people to identify themselves and keep their questions brief. I'm going to start it off with what you just ended up with, which is, if you could talk a little bit about what the women in China are confronting versus what women are confronting in diplomacy in the United States, Europe, and what differences you observe in terms of the next generation. We've talked a lot about the historical perspective, and a lot of your authors are younger, they're raising some of the questions, but I'm wondering about the practice. I just want to say, in Julia Chang Bloch's chapter, she mentioned a study that the Women's Foreign Policy Group had done in 1998, and it looked at women's leadership in international affairs, and we hope to revisit it because we want to look at the next generation and to look at things comparatively with other countries. So I'm wondering if you could speak about this in the context of China.

**Dr. Roberts:** Well, one of the interesting things was that the two Chinese women diplomats who contributed chapters talked a bit about their own careers and the need for Chinese women diplomats to be more self-confident, to be more assertive. They didn't talk about the difficulties, this is something Julia brought up as well, of juggling family and career. But also about the need for women not always

to feel that they should defer to men and take the backseat to men, and in the chapter which covers Chinese women diplomats in some depth and the condition of Chinese diplomats in the Foreign Ministry, it's very clear that in the past twenty years or so, there has been much more of a move to equalize conditions for women, very much the same thing that has happened with Western diplomats, in terms of pensions, in terms of dual careers and families, so that nowadays if a woman diplomat is posted with her husband overseas, she can take a job in the embassy, whereas with the first male Chinese ambassador to the United States, his wife was considered to be at least as well-qualified as himself, and she was in many ways considered to be the real ambassador, but she was not allowed to hold any official diplomatic position. And she, in her memoirs, wrote that she was the first official Chinese diplomatic spouse to go abroad, and she hoped that she would be the last one, that she really was not happy with this situation. And since then the Chinese Foreign Ministry rules and regulations have changed.

So there clearly are quite a number of well-qualified Chinese women going up the career ladder, and making their voices heard within the Chinese Foreign Ministry, just as has happened in the United States, in Britain, and in other European countries; demanding equality of treatment. I myself think that the new generation of young women, particularly those contemplating professional careers, who tend to be the one cherished child in the family, that they too are probably going to make a difference. I'm thinking of academic friends of mine who have just the one daughter, who has gone to Harvard or Princeton. All the family's hopes are focused on this one daughter, and they are going to be encouraged to do just as well as a son would have, because they're their family's pride and joy.

Yes, they were told how your single Chinese child is going to support two aging parents and four grandparents, but it has to be said that all the hopes, and also, I imagine, all the financial support, of those parents and doting grandparents, are also going to be focused on that one precious girl, and they are going to feel that they are just as entitled to a professional career as any man. They're just coming on line now, perhaps in their twenties and early thirties, and I think that they are going to make a big difference because they've more or less escaped all the ravages of the Cultural Revolution. They've never known anything but reasonably good times, and they're going to be very self-confident and very assertive, so I think they're going to make a big difference. At the moment, they'll still only be in fairly entry-level positions in diplomacy, but I think they're going to make a big difference in years to come.

**Question:** I wanted to ask if at the meetings and during the discussions you discussed what seem to be the really thorny and not fully worked out issues, and raised in the Margaret Thatcher example at the end and Condi Rice (just as an aside, she did appoint Jendayi Frazer, a woman Africanist, as the Assistant Secretary for Africa in the State Department), of competition, and not necessarily at the top. When women are rising, and I hate to use a cliché, the "clawing" that takes place. I worked at the WHO and saw this, where there were very few women, with no support for each other. The other side of that, which the Women's Foreign Policy Group has really tried to address over the years, is the mentoring, and why women don't want to mentor women, when men mentor women and men mentor men. I'm just wondering if you got into that, and the comparison across China, and the UK, and Hong Kong, and the U.S. And perhaps in contrast, one country that I've noticed where women in foreign policy have supported each other top to bottom, bottom to top, is Canada. Canada is remarkable. We just met yesterday with Kim Campbell, the former Prime Minister, who's worked with women at all kinds of levels, so Canada might be an interesting country to study in a little more depth. But I'd love to hear more about the conversation on this really fraught topic that we never seem to get a handle on.

**Dr. Roberts:** Well, there certainly was some conversation about that, and in fact Madame Song Yimin referred to one woman who was in the Chinese foreign service from the beginning, and who served as a role model for a number of young women, and I think died rather young. I wonder if some of it is

almost not simply done on a personal level, because in the academic field, I've seen both situations in which women are highly competitive with each other, and regard each other as rivals who should be kicked in the teeth, and also I've seen women who are extremely supportive of other women. Sometimes other women at the same level, sometimes younger women who are coming along.

I wonder if it's not about getting a tradition established; that if you have one or two influential people who start a tradition in which women are supportive of each other and encourage each other, and sometimes just on a practical level, dealing with the office politics, not getting too upset about this, that, or the other, or encouraging them to go out and apply for a promotion, for a position. If you can get that kind of dynamic in place, then I think that perhaps the younger women then tend to pass it on to the next generation. Certainly I have been lucky in my career in that I've benefited from support from both older men and older women as well, and I think that you then tend to pass it on to younger scholars, and encourage them not to get too downhearted if you have a bad break, to be persistent, to keep on trying. Perhaps if I'd had a very bad time, when I was younger, then I would not feel that way. It's also remarkable how just one or two bad apples can completely change the dynamic in an entire group or office or department.

**Patricia Ellis:** I'm wondering if our two diplomats want to jump in here, so go right ahead.

**Ms. Jessica Odle, Consul General of Barbados:** When I saw the title of the book, *Bonds Across Borders*, I was immediately taken; I would not miss this opportunity for anything. And having come, could only smile most of the time through because there are so many similarities, of what you've described in the chapters of the book with the women and China experience, that is mirrored in the Caribbean or West Indies, where I come from. To even posit the thought that, just as the Canadian experience supports women in diplomacy and politics indeed, that is not so in our hemisphere, and there have been some flag-bearers.

I would wish to draw your attention to one of our strongest flag-bearers, from Barbados, the late Dame Nita Barrow, herself a nurse by training and profession, which is an institution of care, but who was the Barbados Representative to the United Nations, and part of the Eminent Persons Group to South Africa in the lead-up to the destruction of the apartheid system. She referred to "alternate methods of diplomacy": you don't always have to be along the norms, and she advised, herself a feminist, I might add. If you want to shake the mountain, don't stand at the top and wave the flag. Work in groups, and that way change comes about. And while in the long term it takes a very long time for that to happen, it's a very effective way of doing it. I wish that more could do that. And that brings me as well to the concept that you shared, that many women who have ascended to high office in different ways feel that it is perhaps beneath them to reach back and bring another forward.

And that is something that I think, we have to remember not to follow that model if we indeed want to look for this parity, if you would. There was talk about 2012, it's nearly here. 2015, 2020. We're far from it, in every area, whether it's politics, I can't speak for academics but maybe in academics it's parity coming sooner. But I am very taken with this book, and would perhaps encourage you as you collaborate with your other academics over in the West Indies, and I use that phrase deliberately, because as a former colony of Great Britain, there would be all kinds of similarities, and that relationship in and of itself, may have a lot to do with the progress, or lack thereof, of the advancement of women in all kinds of areas, so thank you for this, I look forward to great relationships.

**Patricia Ellis:** Before I go to Brigitta, I just want to have one little plug for the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We have started a mentoring program; it existed for a while, but we got it re-started in the last

two years, and we do what we call a Mentoring Fair in both New York and Washington. This is totally different from a job fair- we have tables (and Gillian has been an active participant in this) and we invite our members and colleagues to sit there and we invite students to come and they sit there. They can ask any questions- it's not just how do I get the job, but what do I study, what are the skills, what kind of advice. In fact, this time we experimented with a version of speed dating because we wanted to make sure that people could circulate to go from the diplomatic table to the NGO table to the business table. And not only have the mentors really loved it— it's one evening, an intense three hours of giving back— but so many of the students were so grateful because they were just so bewildered about how to begin, how to make contacts. It's just very, very difficult to get started. The one in New York will be February 25<sup>th</sup>. Last year we had it at Columbia; this year will be NYU. We encourage anybody who cares about this to try to get it on their calendar so they'll be able to come. Thank you.

**Brigitta Blaha, Consul General of Austria:** I would like to come back to this question later, but just on this subject, my last post actually was in Hong Kong, and Hong Kong University has a very good mentoring program, and I was part of that. I of course participated in this evening at Columbia and it's a frustration, I think, for both parties because it's just ten minutes to speak to a person who can of course later get in touch with you, but this Hong Kong program assigns a student to a person for a whole year.

**Patricia Ellis:** We do that too; we had more trouble with the students than we did with the mentors, because the students today do so many things; they do the internships, they do a job, they do their studies, but I think it's a wonderful idea and we can consider doing that again.

**Brigitta Blaha:** I had five over my few years there. With some I'm still in touch. They have both local students and international students, so I had each category. There are not only diplomats in this program; most of them are alumni from Hong Kong University who have moved up the ladder.

I was also interested in this question of whether a female leader has an obligation, so to speak, to make sure that other women are favored, in a way. In our own foreign ministry, we have now the second female foreign minister; the previous one has moved on to the EU and is there at the Commission on Foreign Relations, and her successor is also a woman. We just had an ambassador's conference in Vienna, and we always take a picture of all the participants, and it used to be that the women had to sit in the first row and the men stood behind. Now we have gone beyond the first row and into the second or third row. And we were just also, among us, discussing whether our minister is really favoring women, and the outcome was not one hundred percent. But what she certainly does in international politics, she really wants to get women involved in the political process, the decision-making process, in development cooperation. It's always very important in all the projects to kind of make sure that women are included. Recently she has called for a conference on women and Islam, and has invited the female leaders of the region, and it will be the first time they've met. This is crazy, they live in the same region, they are next to each other all the time, but they don't talk. So it's another network. It was one attempt to see this whole issue from a different angle.

**Gillian Sorensen:** You spoke about establishing tradition, and I wanted to share one very short story. When Madeleine Albright came into the United Nations, the first event that she had, the first social gathering, was a lunch at the U.S. residence for the women ambassadors, and a handful, about three or four, women in the United Nations. There were then about ten women ambassadors out of 189. So we sat at the table, and she looked around, and she said, "Ah, you see, we can fill this table." It was a wonderful discussion. The countries of the ten ambassadors were very diverse, but there is a certain bond as women. What we've come through, what we've experienced. It was a very interesting discussion. And that lunch has become a tradition. With different hosts, different times, but it is now a

fixture in the UN, that the women ambassadors—in the U.S., we might call it a women’s caucus—they do meet on a regular basis and have that connection.

**Patricia Ellis:** It caused a stir, too, among other ambassadors.

**Gillian Sorensen:** It caused a stir. They said, what are you up to? They thought we were plotting something.

**Patricia Ellis:** And just one other related thing. One of the ambassadors who is now an ambassador in Washington, Claudia Fritsche from Liechtenstein, people used to say, how come Madeleine Albright takes a call from the ambassador from Liechtenstein when a lot of other ambassadors couldn’t get through to her, and it related to this initial group that met.

**Gillian Sorensen:** The bond of women was very important. And then, of course, it helped that Kofi Annan himself was a feminist. And as he began to appoint women to senior ranks, very important assignments, very difficult assignments, not just soft ones, but really challenging ones, suddenly there were role models of all types, backgrounds, countries. And it made such a difference to have role models ahead of you, especially for the younger women. And the mentoring that he encouraged was very important. So I support the tradition, if we can get that moving everywhere.

**Brigitta Blaha:** We do have this also among the Consul Generals, that we do have meetings with only the female Consul Generals. Marjorie Tiven, Commissioner of the New York City Commission for the United Nations, Consular Corps and Protocol (UNCCP), has actually, last year, taken this idea up and has invited all of us, during Women’s History Month. So there is something that you can do on this. I don’t know if it really makes a big difference, but it’s another forum.

**Question:** I’d like to ask you: there seem to be two views on how one can have women in positions of influence. One is by actively politically engineering in a government, and the other one seems to be implicit in how do you work from the bottom up, in terms of encouraging women in school to be educated, to work for these positions. You could take the South African example, where I come from, we have policies in government in which women are at least fifty percent of politicians, women in government, women in positions being appointed, have to be women. So if I compete with a man, he doesn’t have a chance. What kind of impact would that have in the long term? By simply appointing women, does one change society?

**Dr. Roberts:** Well, there are people here who’ve got perhaps even more expertise than I do in this kind of field. It’s mentioned in one of the chapters here how some women in the U.S. foreign service have actually refused promotion opportunities because they feel that this makes them so unpopular with their male colleagues. After there was a major lawsuit some years back, there was an effort to promote women in the U.S. foreign service, but there was a big backlash from male colleagues so some women have actually refused promotion because they felt that it was making it almost impossible for them to even work there.

But I think that if women are even seen as simply credible candidates, instead of being somewhere out there. I’m occasionally reminded of some of the debates in Congress at the end of slavery, over the amendments giving black men the vote, and some of the Congressmen coming right out and saying, My god, giving blacks the vote, next thing you know they’ll be giving women the vote. And you do have to change the mindset so that it is not inconceivable, that a woman could be holding some kind of top, or sometimes not-so-top, position.

One of the most irritating things I find as a professional woman- when I came to Hong Kong U. it was a very colonial institution, and before that I'd been at Cambridge in the UK and various places in the United States, but never had I been at a place where my academic credentials—and Hong Kong U. is a very different place now—were considered by some of my colleagues, some of whom were really old mossbogs, secondary to the fact that I was a woman, and a single woman at that. Basically the message was, single women, they're not able to cope in Hong Kong. If you didn't have a man then there must be something wrong with you, and if you managed to be happy without having a man, then there was definitely something really wrong with you. You almost couldn't win.

I mentioned at the other talk how one of my colleagues used to really annoy me—I didn't really fancy him anyway—but not only would he pat my hand and peer down my cleavage, but I actually had some bright ideas. He was then my head of department, and he never paid attention to anything that I said, so I just stopped going into his office, because I just found the whole thing very hard to put up with. But what is actually very, very insulting is when you are seen solely as a woman and a sex object, and not as something that's got a brain, and can even have bright ideas. Getting people to change, getting your male colleagues to change that way of thinking, can be very difficult. You just have to keep on plugging away, quite honestly. Programs that say, yes, we need so many percent of women, basically affirmative action programs, they can take you so far, but what you actually need to be able to do is to break down this kind of skepticism.

The kind that you will get also: my father, as much as I love him, is not always super feminist in his outlook, and I've heard him making rude remarks (he was a former flyer) about female pilots, so his two eldest grandchildren, the boy is extremely un-mechanical and the girl is extremely mechanical. So I said, Well dad, look at it this way. If you were in a plane, would you rather have Matthew or Anna flying it? And he said, Hmm, Anna I suppose, though I'd rather neither of them is trying.

You just have to establish your credibility, because one of the interesting things in Joan Hoff's chapter was suggesting that although Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice were high profile, they were not taken seriously by the top men in either of the administrations, and that, if you're just there as window dressing, it is just as annoying. If everybody goes, Yes yes, pat her little head and pay no attention to what she says, that is what's worse. I don't mind someone trying to get me into bed with him, I can cope with that. It's when he doesn't pay any attention to what I've got to say!

**Question:** My husband was the American ambassador to Belgium in the Clinton administration for five and a half years, and it was known as the “women's embassy,” because every top position was held by a woman. And because of the wonderful collaboration—it just stretched out everywhere, they were really extraordinary—he was bound and determined to help them become ambassadors, and two of them did. And so it really has to do with who you work with and how they feel; my husband and those before that were very instrumental in helping women become part of the trading disc. It's who believes in you, and I think that's very important. It certainly is important to have more men doing that, but I see more men doing it. No offense- I think that men are threatened. And if you are able to help them understand, and not push something in their face, I think that they work with you. That's how I see it.

**Question:** I'm particularly interested in the book, whether it touches upon the media portrayal of successful women diplomats, because I think a lot of the time the general public feels that they're threatened by those successful women because they're portrayed in a certain way. I think unfortunately even women journalists tend to write stories from those perspectives, that make those women seem so different from an average woman, when everyone is facing the same challenges; family, life. Looking at

Hillary Clinton, the question is always posed, whether a woman can be the president. And this shouldn't even be a question. Even now that the Deputy Prime Minister in China is an extremely powerful woman, but the media is always asking the same question as well. So I think it would be really interesting for all of us, especially the younger generation who aspire to be future women leaders, to really think about who's a real role model to us, and that's who we want to be, rather than trying to prove to the world that we can be the women leaders. It's more about what we do, and what we can achieve.

**Patricia Ellis:** I just want to make one comment about what she said. I used to be a journalist for MacNeil/Lehrer, so when Madeleine Albright was appointed to be Secretary of State, I got a call from two male journalists. The first one said, Is a woman up to this? I'm not kidding. The other one said, How is a woman going to deal with all these countries that treat women badly? I was really shocked by these questions, even at that point in time. It was awhile ago, but it does relate to what she's talking about in terms of how things are perceived. And this was already somebody who had had all this experience representing the United States. I had a few things to say, but that's not important right now.

**Dr. Roberts:** Dorothy Sayers brought this up in some of her writing, articles and things. She suggested that if every time you had a male leader, one referred to his clothes, his charm, his good looks, et cetera, et cetera; that if men put themselves in this position it might help them to appreciate that these are not questions that should necessarily be brought up. However, being in the world that we are, if a woman is profiled, how she looks and what she wears, her hair, will almost certainly be described. She is, to some extent, being assessed as, is she a viable woman, a successful woman, not just a successful diplomat, or indeed banker or other prominent position.

Some of it, I think, you really do just have to ignore. There's no point in getting too upset about such details all the time. You can make snarky comments about them, if you like, once you get yourself established, but it may not be worth it, fighting those battles at the beginning. Wait until later. As for journalists, bringing up questions, is a woman to be trusted with the power of life and death, with defense issues and the like, may I mention Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir. Women are caught in a double bind; either they're not tough enough, or they're too tough. All those three women I've just mentioned were notorious, or at least believed to be notorious, for terrorizing their male colleagues. So you're going to be condemned either as being too weak or as being too tough. Just remember what Abe Lincoln said: you can't please all of the people all of the time. Some of it you literally do just have to ignore. Speak out and get on with it, there's no point in worrying too much about all the critics and making a great fuss about it all the time.

**Question:** I just wonder how much we're looking at the countries that are leading, for example, with membership in parliaments, the percentage of women, and you will find in the top ten, I think it's still true, southern Africa and the Scandinavians. The Scandinavians have had women leaders for ages, and Africa has its first woman president. I just had an email from a friend, an academic who's out there and she said, You can't believe this country. Even the UN soldiers guarding the president's office are women. So these are people we need to get behind, but we also need to learn a lot from them. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the president of Liberia, is best known for fighting corruption. She's not best known for being a woman. And she's loved or hated for fighting corruption. So these people are people from whom we can learn more, it seems to me, than from our own countries. That's not a lot of loyalty to my own country, but just looking around the world, as a former UN person.

**Dr. Roberts:** Yes, I think that's almost certainly true.

**Patricia Ellis:** Well, on that note I just want to thank Priscilla so much for this wonderful presentation, thank you for your great questions, and we look forward to seeing you soon.