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What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been

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I never imagined I'd become a political scientist. As a child, my passion was for paleontology, and I pored over my books on fossils and dinosaurs until the pages were tattered all along the edges. Today, while I do have an impressive rock and mineral collection and I know where my loupe and rock pick are, I never became a paleontologist. As an undergraduate major in geology in the late 1970s, I discovered that jobs in that field were created with men and men's lives in mind. I refused to accept either/or choices when my male peers would have only both/and choices. At the same time, General Education requirements forced me to take classes in anthropology and international relations, and I discovered that people and the societies they build were much more interesting than rocks, which were typically only dynamic if one lived far longer than the average human being. With nations and peoples, on the other hand, a lively soap opera of change fixed the gaze. It was almost impossible to look away once one understood the players, their interests, and their histories. From that detour when I was a young college student came an unexpected journey as a social science researcher.

I. A Dash of Serendipity

Looking back, it has become clear to me that my choice of graduate program was fateful in determining the direction of my research, and equally clear that there was providence involved in that choice. I took a year off after getting my BA at Brigham Young University (BYU) in 1978 to explore my options, for I was but 19 when I graduated. I lived alone in a tiny apartment attached to a house used as a business during the day, and worked three jobs. I was a waitress, and learned from that how to multi-task and be quick at everything I did. I also worked as a press clipper. Before digital media, newspapers were only hard copy, and a press-clipping agency would find clippings on keywords that clients were interested in. I read fast, and so was given the California weeklies, which are all but gone now; the job trained me to read even faster than ever. Both of these skills would prove indispensable when I became a working mother. I also worked in the US Army Reserves as a wheeled vehicle and power generator mechanic (E-5), and both the Army and truck mechanics would also have an out-sized impact on my research, though I did not know it at the time.

One of my undergrad IR professors, Richard Smith Beal (a student of Charles McClelland, who created the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS) events dataset), convinced me I should go on for a doctorate.[1] My heart was set on Johns Hopkins, in particular, SAIS, but Beal suggested I apply to a school where events data was still being pursued. So I applied to Ohio State University as well, home of the Comparative Research on the Events of Nations (CREON) Project. I think in the end I applied to OSU, JHU in Baltimore, and JHU SAIS. I also competed for the Rhodes Scholarship.

This is where the serendipitous winnowing of the various paths took place. I made it through two round of Rhodes competition, but was not referred to the national level. One possible path closed. SAIS offered a half fellowship (the most

[1] See his obituary at https://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/04/obituaries/richard-smith-beal-dies-at-38.html.

they offered at the time), JHU in Baltimore and OSU both offered a full fellowship. I absolutely needed a full fellowship, for I had no family financial support, so the path to SAIS closed. I decided that if I went to JHU Baltimore, that would perhaps still enable me to take classes from SAIS professors, so I decided to make a campus visit. It was not a good visit: the chair of the department met with me, but then got a phone call and proceeded to spend the next 20 minutes yelling obscenities into the receiver. I met with the doctoral students, who were a very discouraged bunch, and who advised me that my plan to take classes at SAIS would not work, given the proclivities of the Baltimore faculty at that time. I realized suddenly that I was being shunted by the universe onto the final remaining path. I actually called the Department of Political Science of OSU from the basement cafeteria at JHU that very day. The graduate admission advisor patched me through to Charles (Chuck) Hermann, who thankfully happened to be in his office and available, and we talked about events data for over half an hour. He was encouraging. Though I had never seriously thought about going there, my path was set: Ohio State.

I had one more adventure before getting there: moving cross-country. I had to drive east from Utah in my 1969 Mustang during a February, alone, with $200 cash to my name, tackling white-outs over the Rockies in Colorado, having to chip out with a screwdriver my radiator which was encased in ice in Kansas, and cursing a fried fuse taking my headlights from me in a night of sleet while going 70 mph on an interstate in Ohio. It was an absolute miracle I made it. I think that trip gave me the last piece of what I needed to move forward: the sense that I could rely on myself for grit and I could rely on heaven for miracles when things got tough.

I loved OSU, and greatly enjoyed working on the CREON Project with Chuck and Peg Hermann. The CREON research assistants had an office in the basement of an old Victorian style house near campus. Mushrooms grew from the carpet from time to time, but I was happy there. This was the day when there were still punch cards, and we had a punch machine there in the basement. I learned to program in FORTRAN, and after you punched up your program on cards, you had to take the box of cards—making sure they stayed in the right order—to the computer center to have them read. Our data was stored on big magnetic tapes. I remember when we got first generation IBM PCs at the Mershon Center: how excited we all were! In grad school, I was like a kid in a candy store, and took classes all across campus, from systems engineering to Russian to welding. But the heart of my studies was our weekly CREON meeting, where we would all hash out theoretical and empirical forward movement on the project in lively discussion. Chuck and Peg were excellent mentors; there were many get-togethers at their home, and they found travel money for us assistants to present at conferences. I have tried to emulate their examples in everything I have done on my own projects later in life. It was a rich and vibrant intellectual life, and I was happy as a clam.

II. Three Lacks

At this point in the narrative, I'd like to shift from chronology to a more thematic treatment to further explain the directions in which I was led in my research. In a sense, I was drawn in certain directions because of a perceived lack or omission in the material I was taught while in graduate school. I felt a lack of agency, a lack of women, and a lack of appropriate methodological tools in my chosen field of International Relations.

A. Foreign Policy Analysis

When I was studying International Relations (IR) at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, most courses on the paradigms shaping the field omitted human agency as a variable of interest. Realism, neo-realism, liberalism, geopolitics, and so forth, all took the nation-state as the fundamental unit of analysis. In doing so, explanatory variables were also of the human-less sort, such as national interest, balance of power, power capabilities distribution, and geography. Outcomes, too, tended to be defined at the most macro of levels, such as end states of war and peace. Large impersonal forces were blamed for large impersonal outcomes in the world system.

I found myself rebelling intellectually against this human-less construction of the world, and I think in large measure this rebellion stemmed from my belief that this world was created to be a showcase for human agency. There is ample room,

then, for creativity and learning, change and innovation. No soul is completely locked into its circumstances, unable to exercise any agency. Large impersonal forces actually boil down to small, very personal forces, not unlike how very small parts in a truck engine determine whether and how it runs. Seeing agency also allows one to see accountability, for these concepts go hand in hand.

More expansively, I rebelled against the impersonality of IR theory by researching in and advocating for the IR subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). FPA takes as its unit of analysis not the nation-state, but individuals acting singly and in groups in the realm of foreign policy. It examines the personalities and cognitions of leaders, of the small groups in which the most important decisions are made, in the organizational process and bureaucratic politics of the executive branch, in the domestic political contestation among the branches of government and the broader polity, in the cultural background of those making decisions, and so forth. FPA is a radical vote for agency in a world of structural explanations. In addition to writing many pieces on various levels of analysis in FPA, I also penned a popular textbook for the subfield.[2]

B. Women and Nations

During my undergraduate and graduate training in International Relations, there was also virtually no mention of women at all, except perhaps for one or two famous women such as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The idea that women were literally half the world's population, and had both important and unique experiences of war and peace and leadership, was completely absent. There was no curiosity whatsoever; my professors painted a truly "womanless world" for their students, and were content to do so. It goes without saying that all of my professors were male, and that we students found nothing amiss or odd about any of this.

However, my non-academic experiences were changing my perspective. Though male scholars in my field of study thought of their insights as objective, I was beginning to discover they were actually infected by a deeply gendered mode of thinking. Our security doctrines were utterly male in conception and logic.

I had already seen some of this while in the Army Reserves; after moving to Ohio I wound up in the 11th Special Forces because they were the only unit in need of a truck mechanic. I remember a Christmas party for 2nd Battalion, to which all the battalion's A teams were invited—teams whose members looked on those at their headquarters as being less manly. They brought their challenge of manhood: after the toasts, they brought out a raw, dead baby pig and dared the ranking officer to eat a hunk of it. If he could not, then he was not really "SF." I will never forget the look on that man's face as he realized not only that he had to eat it but also that he had to eat it with gusto in order to keep his manhood and his leadership. Doing something he fully understood was stupid, gratuitous, and possibly harmful was simply the price of being a man, and he squared his shoulders to the task. I remember also "jump school" at Fort Benning, Georgia, where troops learn to parachute. The black hats, or drill instructors, basically left the few women alone and tried to ignore us. But they placed bets on which men they could get to discharge on request (DOR) (i.e., quit). I remember one black hat putting his boot in the back of "his" target and pushing down as the man did push-ups so that his face was repeatedly smashed into the dirt. But what pricked my mind was what he said as he did this: "Hey, Priscilla, you ready to DOR? Hey, Jennifer, had enough?" Cowardly weaklings were women. When a man did DOR, there was a ritual: They assembled us in the dark at 5 A.M., played "The Ballad of the Green Berets" on the speaker ("Put silver wings on my son's chest . . . "), and paraded the quitters in front of us. On command from the black hats we were to yell insults at them, and they were then led away.

So I knew firsthand about the hypermasculinity of the military, and knew it was really "off" in some way I could not yet fully articulate. The ways in which my SF unit thought about security seemed rather to feed insecurity; a fragility and a brittleness it seemed only someone who was not male could sense. I'll never forget one critical turning point in my career. I was at an American Political Science Association (APSA) conference in D.C. around the time the Cold War was ending. It

[2] Valerie M Hudson and Benjamin S. Day, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*, 3rd ed. (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019). The third edition was co-authored with Day.

was a panel on NATO strategy, and a male audience member wanted one of the (all male) panelists to explain NATO's "follow-on-forces strategy." The young man who rose to answer answered blithely, "Oh, that simply means a series of swift, penetrating thrusts to the enemy's rear," whereupon I burst out laughing, could not stop, and had to leave the room.[3] I was over for good the pretense that men held any natural advantage in understanding security issues.

Indeed, I began to suspect that there were sources of insecurity that men would not easily see because of their socialization in the masculine world of security studies. As a prime example, it was clear (at least to me) that one main wellspring of insecurity was the oppression of women by men. My first foray into researching the linkage between what was going on with women and what was going on with national and international security came in the 1990's when I was teaching a graduate methodology course as director of graduate studies in the David. M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at BYU. We were reading a book that mentioned, in an off-hand way, the work of historian Elizabeth Perry, who had noted a relationship between female infanticide and the rise of rebel groups in historical China.[4] That is, the worse the sex ratio within a given area of China, the more likely that area was to spawn rebel movements due to the sense of grievance experienced by the men who would never be able to form families because the girls who should have grown up to become their wives had been killed at birth. Knowing of the dreadfully skewed sex ratios of modern China under the one-child policy of the time, I began to wonder how secure even a modern nation could be if it culled 15% of girls from the birth population. I sincerely doubted whether such treatment of females could have salutary effects on a nation's security.

That hunch turned out to be correct. My co-author Andrea Den Boer and I spent years investigating the effects of profoundly skewed sex ratios on national and regional security outcomes, resulting in the award-winning book, *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population.*[5] Since then, other scholars have corroborated and extended our findings. Through this research, we demonstrated that the "womanless world" of my Security Studies professors was an inaccurate depiction incapable of analyzing—or even articulating--important security trends.

From that initial effort came a broad research programme developed under The WomanStats Project.[6] Our aim was to bring rigorous empirical evidence to bear on the proposition that when you subordinate, exploit, and harm women, you experience worse nation-state level outcomes. In addition to creating an immense online database of information concerning women in 176 nations, we also conducted cutting-edge research on how the character of male/female relations within a society affected many different dimensions of national security, stability, and resilience. Most recently, this work was funded by the Minerva Initiative of the US Department of Defense, resulting in the tome *The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide.*[7] This book represents the culmination of my decades of research devoted to investigating the linkage between the security of women and the security of nation-states.

C. A Quantized World

[3] Hudson, "But Now Can See: One Academic's Journey to Feminist Security Studies," *Politics and Gender* 7:4 (Winter 2012): 586-590.

[4] Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebel and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

[5] Valerie M. and Andrea M. Den Boer, *Bare Branches: Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004)

[6] The WomanStats Project, http://womanstats.org

[7] Hudson, Donna Lee Bowen, Perpetua Lynne Nielsen, *The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

Another lack I keenly felt was the absence of an appropriate methodology to tackle agential phenomena. While fully conversant with the application of methods to data of a continuous nature (think numbers) to produce knowledge, I have increasingly felt that the most important building blocks of all that we see around us are not continuous, but quantized.

As a result, the types of methods we use to understand the world around us are simply not sufficient to embrace such a quantized world. If the world is much more discretized than we have heretofore acknowledged, then the discrete transformation of rule-based patterns would yield a more powerful tool for explanation, understanding, and even forecasting. Interestingly, human beings' most advanced cognitive capability is that of pattern recognition. In a way I do not yet fully understand, my work as a truck mechanic in the Army Reserves influenced my work on non-continuous methodology. In mechanics, when the "system," such as a truck, is not working, that actually means particular parts are not working, for the system is a shorthand for all the discrete elements that comprise it. Building on this foundation, my systems engineering minor concentration in graduate school allowed me to exploit methodologies such as rule-based production systems and other algorithmic, AI-style approaches, in understanding inter-nation interactions.

While I have tentatively explored these methodological approaches with co-authors Phil Schrodt and Ray Whitmer, I feel I have only scratched the surface of something both obscure and immense.[8] Phil, Ray, and I created an online pattern recognition tool for discrete sequence rule analysis in events data, called (after Wolfram's work), "A New Kind of Social Science," which was funded by the NSF.[9] My interest in this area has spanned my career from my very first edited volume, *Artificial Intelligence and International Politics*, published in 1991, to my latest co-edited book project, a handbook on AI governance.[10] It will be interesting to see what comes of this late career deviation in the end.

Conclusion

And there will be an end, for I am now in my 60's. Mortality focuses the mind wonderfully. When I was an undergraduate at BYU, I taped on my wall a Latin invocation, from Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, who uttered these words in his dying breath in 1601: "Ne frustra vixiesse videar." Translated, it means, "Let me not seem to have lived in vain." I suppose I was drawn to that saying in my youth as a measure I could use at the end of my life to gauge my feelings about my time here on earth. I am glad I was given the chance to help pave paths of inquiry that would restore some of what had been lacking in the field of International Relations when I encountered it in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Though the most important part of my life's work revolves around my husband and eight children, I am deeply grateful to my Creator for granting me professional work which satisfies not only my mind, but also, in a very real way, my soul.

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[8] Hudson, Valerie M., Philip A. Schrodt, Ray D. Whitmer, "Discrete Sequence Rule Models as a Social Science Methodology: An Exploratory Analysis of Foreign Policy Rule Enactment within Palestinian-Israeli Event Data," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4:2 (2008): 105-126.

[9] A New Kind of Social Science, http://nkss.org.

[10] Hudson, editor and contributor, *Artificial Intelligence and International Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).