

**International Journal of Arts and Humanities
(IJAH)**

Bahir Dar-Ethiopia

Vol. 4(3), S/No 15, September, 2015:42-54

ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v4i3.4>

Women Historiography: A Tool for Global Peace

Dike, Evelyn Obiageli

Department of History and International Studies

Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe

Anambra State, Nigeria

E-mail: honobydike@yahoo.com

Abstract

Women have been more commonly known by their peaceful nature. This quality is indispensable in all peace pursuits and engagements. The importance of history in the propagation of this is undisputable. It will serve as an encourager of the attributes and styles which women have been known for. In this era of women liberation and gender streamlining, it is very urgent that the sterling qualities of women be safeguarded jealously. This can only come about through good historical education. Women possess salient qualities of patience, dialogue and cooperation; all constituting inalienable tools for peace. The neglect and lack of appreciation of these qualities in this increasingly self-seeking globe is a short cut to an abandonment of these qualities. This paper reveals how the above qualities aided the victory of the Biafran side of the war, where economic blockade as a war tool would have decimated the entire aspiring Republic. While women did not mainly handle the nozzles of guns or tanks, their activities culminated in the preservation and safeguarding of lives. This role cannot be underestimated in all factual accounts of the journey to peace after the monster of

engagement in war; after all, where is the victory of an army general who loses his entire troops in the battle ground?

Key Words: Peace; Patience; Dialogue; Cooperation

The hand that cuddles more likely will preserve even in adverse circumstances.

Introduction

The pursuit of peace is becoming predominant in the face of sporadic and rabidly conflicting global environment. As much as this is true, the pre-disposing factors that wedge war against peace are common too. The quest for fundamental rights engages confrontationally the modesty of patience and dialogue and stares questioningly at peace, making the much desired peace far-fetched. Einstein A (1879) opines that 'Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order-in short, of government'. In his scientific but passionate zeal for peace, he pointed that 'knife is useful, but it can also kill.' To Jenkins (2014) 'Peace is more than the absence of war.....{and} the death and suffering of war does not end when the last bullet whizzes'. There is dire need to determine, understand and pursue what constitutes peace even as this ideal occupies the minds of humans.

Peace is an occurrence of harmony characterized by the lack of violence, conflict behaviours and the freedom from fear of violence. Commonly understood as the absence of hostility and retribution, peace also suggests sincere attempts at reconciliation, the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationships, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality, and a working political order that serves the true interests of all. (en.m.wikiquote.org)

Above captures what constitutes peace as much as provides the platform for what constitutes reparation of injured relationship in order to re-establish peace. This recognition is apt because of the fact of human errors and failings which is undeniable. Denial of peace is an indication of inevitability of war, in whatever way. War is a condition of total breakdown of avenues for peace. It is a period of uncertainty and sustained discomfort and loss characterized by a determination for victory from both sides, *ceteris paribus*. This ambition makes war a culmination of all violence, laden with unpredictability. It is a disaster on various aspects of human effort and comfort. To this, the French philosopher, Morgenthau D (1978: 392) stated that 'A war in the midst of different trading nations is a fire disadvantageous to all. It is a process which threatens the fortune of a great merchant and makes his debtors turn pale'. In the same vein, Kant stressed that 'the commercial spirit cannot co-exist with war (Maximilian Company, 1917:157). There is need therefore for peace to reign in the interest of both humans and their activities.

The disturbance of economic enterprise though important (as the nexus of human existence) may seem quite small in the face of bloodletting and catastrophe which war conveys. War is a sticky conflict, carried out by force of arms, as between nations or between parties within a nation; warfare, as by land, sea, or air (dictionary.reference.com). War can be defined as the totality of violence and aggression in which no safety is reserved for human or material existence. In this sense, war makes a toy of human life and his/her efforts while it lasts. Its aftermath is perennially as dangerous as it is disengaging in positive outcomes for quite some time. While the bangs of munitions may cease to occur, the effect of war continues in all aspects of the lives devastated by it. Skirmishes of war and even a reoccurrence of war after the end of war are factual consequences of war. These aspects are often downplayed.

Several wars have been fought on varying scales in the globe. They range from civil or internal to global. Global involvement in wars is seen as the most damaging. The Second World War (WWII) described as blitzkrieg or the lightning war entailed the use of armor, air power and mobile infantry in a pincers movement (used) to encircle the enemy (Ziemke, 2009)'. The all-round pronged attack implied in this reference is explicit of the targeted damage of war. Destruction characterizes wars, irrespective of the scale; intra or inter-state or global. Wars result when the indispensable human tools of patience, dialogue and cooperation fail. It is pertinent that answers to lasting peace should be found in these humane qualities widely acclaimed as the preserved qualities of women; sometimes seen or construed as a pointer to women's weakness or lack of bravery.

Indicators of Absence of Peace/Threats to Peace

The pre-disposing factors to war are found in several human misconceptions, neglects and abuses. These will be treated under the following subheadings: Poverty, Corruption, Illiteracy, Bad Governance, Environmental Changes, Food Crises, Religious Intolerance, and Extreme Nationalism/Ethnic Sentiments.

Poverty is a major factor that lends hand to societal unrest. Galvanized poverty is a fertile ground for sticky and stubborn security problems which range from outright aggression and violence to terrorism and all forms of insurgency. The hunger-stricken is vulnerable to the invitation by terrorists. Life's meaning could be lost in the face of a life of hopelessness caused by extreme poverty.

Corruption is a seed which germination leads to complete loss of values. It is worse when corruption suggests succinctly governmental endorsement evident in tolerance and condoning of crime, ineptitude of the judiciary exposed through partiality and creation of 'sacred cows' of some humans heightened by shameless show of impunity in public accountability and morals. At this level, governmental corruption

becomes systemic and remains potent justification for indulgence in all brutish involvement and creation of insecurity.

Indoctrination thrives on illiteracy as much as promotes blind followership. Lack of understanding and sheepish followership is a brainchild of illiteracy. Illiteracy is therefore a lethal weapon of insecurity.

Bad governance robs the people of the essence of life. An unfeeling government is selfish, greedy and dead in conscience with attendant aspiration of perpetuity of power as its ambition. It is sticky and sees quest for logical explanation as an affront and confronts it with crude display of distaste. It not only intimidates the alert public but makes it fall with smug resignation if the end of impunity is not in sight. It is in this sense that the immoral axiom emanates 'if you can't beat them, join them'.

Inordinate and uncontrollable changes in the environment can pre-dispose humans to insecurity. Some environmental changes are natural while others are provoked or evoked by the excesses of humans. Whether natural or otherwise, the truth remains that environmental changes can trigger movements of high frequency. Such movements done hurriedly can be a precursor of insecurity. It is rampant to hear of refugees and displaced persons. This condition is averse to good security environment.

The effort at conquering hunger remains a pipe dream especially in countries of Africa and their Third World counterparts. Bad governance and looting of public treasury wage war against the global dream of defeating hunger. To attend to their bellies, rationality can be compromised. This in itself is insecurity.

Religious bigotry is a feature of insecurity. More than the nozzle of the gun, this could be a threat of volcanic capacity. Wabah (2013: 296) emphasized the hazards of religious intolerance. He barred open the irony of the difference between religious teaching and its practice. Religious intolerance breeds on lack of charity, lopsided and selfish interpretation of adherence to a belief accentuated by volatility-triggered-indoctrination. All attempts at morality and rationality are eroded on the bedrock of religious extremism. Fanatics are as volatile as an accidentally stepped-on landmine. The insecurity this engenders is incalculable.

Allied to inordinate pursuit and self-seeking strides is extreme nationalism. It is rabid, intolerant, irrational and defiant to sensibility and common logic. It thrives on actualizing what it myopically believes in and represents, and in this aspect, defies public interest, thereby promoting insecurity. It is parochial and queries all attempts at logical questions. It is blind, retrogressive and challenges efforts at peaceful co-existence of humans.

Above points and perhaps more (as the evolving world continues to grow in interchange and influences) antagonize the search after peace. Conflicts invariably result and depending on many other factors and the spate of the conflict, attain varying

scales of unrest and human carnage. The world that is laden with the above factors enumerated is a world that is in constant insecurity and should be working in various available ways to address the problem. It is in one of these many ways that it is imminent that women's sterling qualities be studied, taught, admired and upheld for what they stand for. This will build humans with readiness to seek and pursue peace and discourage wanton involvement with the irrational because of the apparent success it conveys. If objectively conveyed, the study should elicit outcomes that impressively supersede untoward behaviors. History should address this truth and it is in this aspect that history education is sine qua non to peace pursuit and conflict resolution.

Women possess naturally qualities that are pertinent for attainment of peace. These qualities are treated hereunder as Patience, Cooperation, Dialogue and Moral Strength. There is need to identify, accept, appreciate, build and educate these qualities for sustenance and eventual dissemination.

Patience according to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia is the state of endurance under difficult circumstances which can mean persevering in the face of delay or provocation without acting on negative annoyance/anger or exhibiting forbearance when under strain, especially when faced with longer-term difficulties'.

While patience subsists as a virtue women exhibit generously, it is also instructive that avoidance of conditions that overstretch patience be taken seriously. In their scholarly investigation of how the Structural Adjustment Programme affected women in sub-Saharan Africa, it was noted that Nigeria's plans to modernize agriculture which women pre-dominated in rural areas was not beneficial to the women who were disenfranchised because of 'poor implementation of special extension projects (which) meant that women did not benefit'(United Nations 1994; VIII). Women's calculable focus rests outstandingly in the welfare of the entire family she feels responsible to. Whatever economic programme that disenfranchises women robs the entire humankind of vital measure that would have addressed to a large extent the myriads of problems which offer invitation to insecurity and lack of peace. The example above is but a pointer to the numerous economically elevating agenda which would have affected positively a large representation of humans.

In this sense, the statement of Aung Sang Suu Kyi (1991) 'just laws which uphold human rights are the necessary foundation of peace' stands relevant while appreciating still the wisdom of Bernard Baruch's opinion that 'peace is never long preserved by weight of metal or by an armament race'. (en.m.wikiquote.org)

Women's economic growth invariably affects more number of people positively as women exhibited in the Afia Attack in the Nigeria Civil War. More

women than men were these ‘merchants of war’ (Dike, 2015) who took monumental risks to resolve the stringency of the economic blockade of the civil war against Biafra. Evidence is clear on how these women spent their risk-laden wealth. They fed their families, large as they were because the men were either at the war front or in hiding away from conscription into the Biafran army. The number of people under the care of the women was better imagined. In modest terms, the number included men and youth (strong and able bodied who avoided conscription), aged men and women, incapacitated and children. Women’s freedom of movement exposed them to heavy responsibilities which most of them bore with equanimity. It is evident that the few men who joined in the risky trade of Afia Attack pacified themselves with title-taking (Dike O.’s interview with Obi John Nweke).

The name of the risky business etymologically was drawn from both Igbo and English. Afia in Igbo means market/ commerce, while Attack in the Biafra civil war time English meant to launch a war against. The implication of the name shows the readiness with which the merchants were ready to take the risks to assuage the intention of the economic blockade in order to save lives. It is not a surprise that these women delved into the ‘enemy’ occupied territories to obtain that which were relevant for the sustenance of life. The risks were mixed with abuses as the interview revealed. The women’s suffering was multifaceted. They were discriminated against by the few men who ventured into the trade who preferred a male dominated company because of the subjection the women faced in the hands of soldiers who took advantage of their femininity. They were exposed to the harsh conditions of the terrain of the trade and paid the material price which the soldiers extracted from the men. These notwithstanding, they felt constrained to work to keep, strive to preserve and labour to sacrifice, that in the long run, the war tale would be told by humans and not ghosts.

Being sensitive to the patient quality of women is an awareness that whatever ill that is meted out on women affects the generality of the human population. While patience as a quality should be appreciated, studied and implemented in pursuit of peace, care must be given to the pre-disposer of bad blood. Patience as a quality of peace pursuit should be imbibed by all humans to avert the monster which lack of patience enshrines; and at the same time to be sensitive to conditions which might overstretch the enduring capacity of patience.

Undermining, marginalizing or short-changing women breeds retrogression and works against upholding the sterling qualities of women which are necessary for a secured human environment. In this era of gender mainstreaming, many women are beginning to perceive such concepts as ‘patience’ which is a noble attribute as one to be jettisoned in the pursuit of gender parity. This is a result of the continued non-recognition and improper placement of that sterling attribute which appreciation will

not just be an encouragement for perseverance on the part of women but relevant study for all humans.

Dialogue is important in peace preserving, conflict prevention and good co-existence. Dialogue according to Dictionary.com is ‘an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, especially a political or religious issue with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement (Dictionary.com) Dialogue is important in peace pursuit. Again, women have great propensity to dialogue. Women’s patient quality moves them greatly as good platforms for constructive dialogue. They are capable of continuous and tenacious engagement in what they believe in until it is realized. Such women groups as the Catholic Women Organization within the Catholic Church and Women’s Guild in the Anglican Communion to mention a few have maintained well organized rancour-free regimes based on this great attribute ‘dialogue’. One distinguishing feature is their ability to commit long hours in deliberation, sometimes in excruciatingly difficult conditions and in great sacrifice of what they could offer (in cash or human material) to ensure that progress and success is achieved (Adigwe and Okoye, 1980)

Cooperation is an important tool to achievement of peace. Dictionary.com defines cooperation as ‘an act or instance of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit; joint action. The benefit of cooperation starts right from the family. Women ordinarily work towards this goal routinely as they work in cohesion towards the intricate parts of the family in chores, purpose and progress. In doing this, self is eschewed as they practically commit relentlessly their being into harnessing the family to success. On the average, every woman works assiduously towards the family’s survival, continuity and excellence. Even in critical situations, women virtually sacrifice their lives to ensure the functioning of their families. The Afia Attack cited above explains this commitment where the fruits of the self-sacrifice of women were channelled for the war survival of every segment of the family. This attribute of cooperation is extended to any organized group women belong to. The yearly August meeting which is a feature of women’s strive towards communal progress is as non-discriminatory, non-partisan and non-self-seeking in purpose as it fosters development. It has as a result continued to replicate itself in the spirit of working towards a common good regardless of one’s place of origin. Today, at various levels (stations, wards, parishes, dioceses and so on) within the Catholic Church for instance, self-help efforts in form of bazaar sales, donations and launchings are embarked upon for the purpose of overall development for humans. Women are attuned to respect to leadership and would most of the time make their petitions in ways that are both innocuous as well as solution oriented. These attributes exist among women but have for a long time suffered non-recognition and appreciation. In recent times within the global community and constant quest for human rights and freedom, the threat to these peace-achieving qualities suffers the danger of extinction as they remain unfavourably interpreted.

Words as cultural bias, gender stereotyping, male chauvinism re-echo more in the quest for proper placement of the sterling qualities women have been exhibiting in a long time. The danger of oblivion stares monstrosly on these qualities which are rich in women's historiography if they continue to be downgraded, unappreciated and jettisoned or replaced.

Danger of Non-recognition, Downplaying or Obsolescence of Women's Qualities

Patience is characteristic of the woman especially of the African extraction but is increasingly being condemned as weakness with every demand on individual rights. It is becoming a norm to eschew patience and be combat ready right from the family to the outer community.

It is truism that much loss of value has taken place in the nascent world. Nudity for instance which was one of the tenets the civilizing cultures of the Western world wished and addressed when they encountered the African culture has become obsolete in the present day 'breaking the internet' of the models of today. To make money and fame under an extremely liberalized world, stark nudity of women has replaced the decorative cultural nakedness of the past which the so called civilizing influence of the West supplanted in Africa early on. What a nose-dive of moral for the same Africans who should export morals to the presently morally inept Western world what they exported to us; to join in this open and shameless world of total absence of moral etiquette! The moral strength of the woman, especially of African descent is under a terrible attack and has speedily produced a highly insecure environment for the women and girls.

Nudity of women in the present day display of excessive indulgence is a brutal projector of insecurity. Rape, high degree immorality, sexual violence, inordinate passion for riches and money, child trafficking and pornography, and many other vices of insecurity are tacitly related and a product of backward movement of civilization. In the typical African culture, cultural nudity is interlaced with preparedness for puberty. This was a moral restraint and thrived in high moral display and monitoring of conduct, but for the indecent corruption of attracted eyes of foreigners who were alien to that culture. Under the tag of liberalism and respect for fundamental human rights, today's nudity which is aggressively inviting, crude, filled with wanton force of over-indulgence of culprits robbing even the averagely modest of serenity of mind, holds sway and is highly tolerated under the pain of fundamental human rights. What an aberration in a society that values sanity of mind! A United Nations statistical report from data covering 65 countries showed that 250, 000 cases of rape or attempted rape were recorded annually by the police. (Unodc.org.2005). It is remarkable that unreported cases of rape abound due to social stigma which are prevalent in most societies (Harter, 2011) "Libya rape victims 'face honour killings'"

Interrelationship of Women's Lack of Knowledge of History and Incidence of Insecurity

Women stand in great disadvantage as far as insecurity is concerned. They are defenseless, vulnerable and over-laden with responsibility in war times when spouses leave for the war front. As much as women join the military today, majority of soldiers are still men. In cases of violent attacks from hoodlums such as rape incidents, women have remained predominantly victims. When insecurity triggers migration or homelessness, women as care givers stand in much larger pain to harness the good of all they hold in responsibility. Despite these facts, 'violence against women prevails the world over. Women are often underrated, rebuked and looked down upon'. (Osakinle et al 2007).

The need for history education for women and all humans is therefore unequivocal for the check on insecurity which the world seeks to forestall. Gender mainstreaming which is being advocated with its attendant affirmative action will continuously usher in increased female presence in governance. It is good historical knowledge that will equip women with the successes and failures of past leaders as guide to dos and don'ts in a progressive government. The importance of women leading successfully cannot be overemphasized. The unemployment, hunger, anger, intolerance, banditry, rape, unrest, conflict and general insecurity affect women as mothers, wives, and all round care givers. It can never be obliterated that women attend humanely to issues of existence better. Whatever that is done by way of imitation or in competition with the men is a result of untaught histories of sterling qualities of women which should be sustained. Women's noble qualities should be taught historically as to imprint on the minds of all humans. This is a potent way of seeking peace and sustaining peace without which no progress will be made.

Historically, the lessons of sheepish imitation has never fared any good. On the point of nobility history teaches moral lessons. These lessons build and do not destroy. They steer people towards general and ultimate good which derives from the obvious fact that what one gives is what one possesses. Today, on the contrary, history is downplayed, seen as unimportant, ancient and antiquated. Unfortunately that much, the lesson history bestows is down played.

Women as Peace Makers and their Importance in Conflict Resolution

In peace and war times, women have maintained a tempo that sustains peace, *ceteris paribus*. This fact underscores the importance of developing women historiography as a course of study that will uphold and sustain these qualities. When properly taught and learnt, the short cut to aggression, violence, misunderstanding, inordinate riches/fame and indulgence in crime will be eschewed.

The role of Biafran women during the Nigerian civil war stands tall as a case in this paper. The war which was an offshoot of the corruption that bedeviled young Nigerian state drove young and ambitious officers of the Nigerian army to rise up in arms against the government in a coup. The three-year long, gruesome war was fought hard against the secessionist Biafra which was as ill equipped militarily as it was ill prepared for a long and protracted war. The application of the barrage of the guns and the economic blockade were both lethal weapons unleashed on the aspiring young nation. Even before the war began, Gowon blockaded the coast and enacted economic sanctions against the Eastern region' (Falola, 2008: 175). Adding credence to this truth, Achebe (2012: 199), a Biafran international ambassador recounts that the economic blockade caused the scarcity of 'every imaginable necessity, from food and clean water to blankets and medicines'. Nigeria sustained the economic blockade with serious propaganda against the ailing pictures of the cut-off Biafra that had hit international headlines. 'These economic, tactical and arguably genocidal policies inflicted starvation and general suffering on Biafrans (and)...resulted in the widespread deaths of civilians...' (Rebecca Wolff)

The United Nations Charter forbade interference in the sovereign nations as sovereignty must be mutually respected. Constrained by this fact and others such as the preparedness of the Soviet Union to do a good arms business with Nigeria, Biafra suffered excruciatingly. To heighten the seriousness of this war was the inadequate numerical strength of soldiers who fought the war. Conscription was therefore rife and this impeded the movement and freedom of men. Young boys of early teenage ages were also conscripted and drafted into the war. Under this immense constraint and hardship, Biafran women's ingenuity propelled them to a novel and innovative marketing called 'Afia Attack' as mentioned earlier.

More than the nozzle of the gun, these women veered beyond the enemy lines, transacted and came back with goods especially the so called 'essential commodities' which in the main provided nutritional sustenance as well as alleviated the sufferings of the people. The rigours and nitty gritty of this risky business Afia Attack (as the name implied) was better imagined than experienced. The survivalist instinct and responsibility propelled the women to unimaginable extent. They took monumental risks, were brutalized, abused, and exposed to all kinds of hardships. Many able-bodied men in hiding for the period of the war, in addition to the aged and children were and remained under the care of their wives, mothers or sisters until the end of the war.

Biafra survived the war on the salt which the women battled to obtain, and traded in during the intense period of the economic blockade. The bold sojourn of the women into the captured enemy territory through creeks and crevices to obtain what was in need portrayed an undeniable attribute of the women's marked doggedness to ensure survival of the war. Beneath the surface of trade transactions, there is no doubt

that interactions existed between these ‘merchants of war’ who were predominantly women on both sides of the war. To say there was conviviality and good interaction at such points would amount to not saying enough.

The Afia Attack was characterized by trepidation of the heart and a high degree uncertainty of the success of each trip. There were surprises, apprehensions and punishments which sometimes led to fatality, advertently or inadvertently. Yet the risks were taken. Whatever war interruptions that characterized such commercial meetings were occasions of fervent wish for an end of the war and a reign of peace. Such wishes constituted soft diplomatic feelers which directly or indirectly caught the concerns of critical powers in the war and led to its eventual end. Wherever war documentation on Nigeria civil war is done without cognizance to this intricate but undisputed aspect will amount to under-documentation. In anticipation of the end of the war, the women exhibited the bold acceptance which confirmed the reality of the truth. The refugees led by optimistic women (they were freer to move) started their journey back home when the war was declared ended. These truths provide good platform for peace pursuit and peace enhancement.

As a test case of what women had done and could do in very critical war times, it is historically important that women become seriously engaged in peace pursuits, conflict resolution strides and education that will equip them and all with effective intelligence network with which to wade through critical times such as insurgency. These are necessary because women are trapped more in areas of insecurity and are mainly vulnerable especially in their stride to ensure that all in their responsibility are safe.

Recommendations

Women’s sterling endowments should be recognized, taught, and learnt to ensure its sustenance. This recognition is an assurance that those endowments will not be lost in this rapidly globalized world where ineptitude has increasingly overcome obvious positive behaviour in the name of fundamental human rights.

Women’s historiography should be developed to become a course of study for all, where nobility is taught and learned and not dispelled as a preserve of women.

History education should be a guide to women’s acceptance or refusal of globalized norms which stand in contraindication of what has been or what has been deposed. Sheepish acceptance of status quo ante simply because of belief that some nations are more developed should be eschewed. History education will enable women to rise above the inferiority complex that co-joins with unmitigated imitation.

Women should be taught the basic skills which will enable them to defend themselves in case of an attack.

A good history education will equip the women in good art of governance which aberration to a large extent is a pre-disposing factor to insecurity in Nigeria. This will ensure that as many women come up the ladder of decision-making platform, that much will the society be better in security and general wellbeing.

The place of women in diplomatic nuances as far as peace seeking is concerned can never be over-estimated. Women should be engaged in peace pursuit processes and encouraged to use their God-given gifts to obtain peace in a highly volatile world.

Abuse of women is abhorrent and should capture the guilt of conscience and shame of all in authority to protect women who capitalize on that duty to inflict harm on them. Lack of good conscience towards duty is an exposure of the vulnerability against the protection and safety which the security agents have. No sane dog bites the bone around its neck.

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying the fact that women are constantly in the severest constraint in any given security threat. Their nature is not favourable to this volatility, given their peaceful mien. Women also are a critical number of any nation's population. Added to this number are children which women take care of, enlarging the number of persons in very critical positions at any given point of insecurity. Women's worth can be measured in their commitment at any given insecurity challenge. In whatsoever way insecurity is identified, women are affected either directly or by extension. Her exposure to the necessities that will make her less a victim and increase her chances of actualizing the best for herself and the people she stands to protect, defend or assist, is a sine qua non to her continued survival to wage this important war. Recognition of her salient position through good historiography, involvement in peace pursuit programmes, and education in good intelligence network and self defense strategies, are necessary for her continued work which is altruistic. A woman's negligence of her sterling endowments is laden with cross carpeting vices of gross insecurity. At no time should she choose this above that which she possesses, that sustains humanity. This is the summation of socio-economic and political development par excellence.

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