

## Presidential and Prime Ministerial Women in the Americas: A List with Interpretations

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*The Americas and Latin America in particular are sharply in advance of the global norm when it comes to the incidence of female presidential and prime ministerial leadership. One reason is the relatively high and increasing incidence of democracy on the two continents. Another is that the Americas are more progressive than other parts of the world. The relatively peaceful state of the region over the last half century is an additional factor, for women favor peace and force works to their disadvantage. The theory that dynastic advantages account for the prominence of female leadership in the Americas is erroneous. United States has lacked female leadership because of a countervailing male culture that blocks women's aspirations, and because the nation has been on a near-permanent war footing. In an appendix, the arguments are supported by a table listing the world's "Women Prime Ministers and Presidents 1960-2010."*

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In February 2010, the *Guardian's* Latin American correspondent reported on Laura Chinchilla's election as president of Costa Rica. This was a "political milestone for women in Latin America," a region that had a "reputation as a bastion of machismo and patriarchy." In support of the latter characterization, the journalist cited a poll indicating that 36 percent of the inhabitants of the region believed the woman's place is in the home.<sup>1</sup>

However, the truth is that the Americas and Latin America in particular are sharply in advance of the global norm when it comes to female presidential and prime ministerial leadership. The list appearing as an appendix to this article quantifies the first half-century of female democratic leadership across the world. It indicates that, of some eighty-four women who were prime ministers or presidents of democratic countries between 1960 and 2010, twenty-one served in the Americas. That is 25 percent of the total, although the Americas have only 13.6 percent of the world population. If one subtracts the United States, which has so far failed to produce a female president, the net population of the Americas amounts to just 9.2 percent of the world population.

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<sup>1</sup> Rory Carroll, "Landslide Victory for Costa Rica's First Female President," *Guardian*, 9 February 2010.

But it is unnecessary to massage the figures to conclude that Latin American women have – at the political leadership level – achieved a level of success that invites scrutiny.<sup>2</sup>

This level of success is even more striking considering that women in the region were relative latecomers to the franchise. The non-American nations listed as having produced female leaders include New Zealand, which established women's franchise in 1893, and Britain, Canada and Germany, all 1918. Brazil enfranchised women in 1932, but the other Latin American countries on the list withheld unrestricted female franchise until the 1940s or later. When changing attitudes came, they came in a rush.<sup>3</sup>

The list opens up opportunities for the methodological specialist. There has been erudite discussion, in relation to other fields, of the methodologies now available for drawing conclusions from a list, which might be defined as “an entity with characteristics presented with systematic regularity.”<sup>4</sup> Future cliometric historians may well wish to elaborate on the statistical properties and challenges of the list presented here. The list is by the same token an invitation to full-scale prosopographic research, leading to detailed analysis of each woman's background, political outlook, and activities. The object of this article is more modest. It is to raise some initial interpretive issues.

The first of these matters is why did Latin American countries take the lead in female political leadership when it did? Next, what is the significance of the prominence of women in senior political offices in the Americas? Finally, why did the United States lag behind its Latin American counterparts and its Anglo-French neighbour to the north, Canada, where Kim Campbell became prime minister in 1993?

One reason for the prominence of women leaders in the Americas is the relatively high and increasing incidence of democracy on the two continents. Trends suggest that the spread of democracy has assisted the rise of women worldwide. Whereas women did reign and rule in the

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<sup>2</sup> The bases of calculation are: population of the Americas (2008) 940,308,000; world (2010) 6,872,195,424; United States (2010) 310,232,863. United Nations Statistics Division, [http://www.xist.org/earth/pop\\_continent.aspx](http://www.xist.org/earth/pop_continent.aspx); U.S. Census Bureau, <http://sasweb.ssd.census.gov/cgi-bin/broker>, (accessed 19 February 2013).

<sup>3</sup> In 1917, Canada became the first nation in the western hemisphere to give women the vote. The United States followed suit in 1920. See Inter-Parliamentary Union, “A World Chronology of the Recognition of Women's Rights to Vote and Stand for Election,” <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>, (accessed 16 October 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Morris, “Document to Database and Spreadsheet,” in *Research Methods for History*, eds. Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), with footnotes that guide the reader through the literature of the field.

pre-democratic era, it was a rarity. The spread of democracy to Europe's former colonies triggered a new phase in the history of women, beginning with the election in 1960 of Sirimavo Bandaranaike as prime minister of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) which marks the start of the appended list.

Here, there may be an objection that China skews the picture. With a population of 1.3 billion, China accounts for the overwhelming majority of people not currently living under democratic regimes. Subtract the Chinese from the calculation, and the Americas' share of the global population rises to 16.4 percent. This makes the 25 percent of female national leadership they have supplied less spectacular than when you take the 13.6 percent of world population figure. However, the Americas' lead remains impressive, confirming the need for further investigation.<sup>5</sup>

Another objection might be that it is not democracy but republicanism that matters. Certainly, the absence of monarchy with male primogeniture rules is important in itself and for the wider gender culture that it promotes. The particular type of republicanism may also be a factor. There are variations in the formula. In Bolivia there is no prime minister, though a minister of the presidency performs some premier-style functions; in Peru, the prime minister is a presidential appointee; presidentialism is written into the political cultures of all post-colonial American nations. Regardless of the refinements, republicanism per se may be less important than democracy in the promotion of women into political life, as it can sometimes degenerate into dictatorship based on force.

Nations in the western hemisphere have in the past, of course, experienced both monarchy and dictatorships. Indeed not all the Latin American women listed rose to leadership by democratic means – there is doubt about Argentina's Isabel Perón and about the three Haitian leaders Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, Claudette Werleigh and Michèle Pierre-Louis. Explaining or "explaining away" every exception may be over-defensive, but it is a temptation. For example, is it relevant that the Argentineans, more than any other South American nation, wiped out the indigenous population and insisted on a European identity?<sup>6</sup> If this means we can shift Argentina back to Europe for statistical purposes, it strengthens the case for saying that democracy was the promoter of women's rise in the Americas.

Democratization promotes women's success for readily understandable reasons. As noted above, in traditional male dominated societies, monarchies operated with rare exceptions on the principle of male primogeniture. Barring an absence of male heirs, this cut you out if you were a woman. In

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<sup>5</sup> China's 2010 population given as 1,330,141,295 according to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau <http://sasweb.ssd.census.gov/cgi-bin/broker>, (accessed 19 February 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 8.

post-monarchical but pre-democratic societies such as communist or fascist dictatorships, the elites used force to win and maintain power. We shall revisit the subject of force in a moment, but here it can be noted that women rarely had access, for example through army high commands, to such physical force as was necessary to control a dictatorship. Only in democracies have women regularly stood a chance of obtaining high office on their own merit.

Yet the Americas' relatively high incidence of democracy, while undoubtedly important, is not the whole explanation for the prominence of their women in positions of national leadership. A further explanation might plausibly rest on the notion that the Americas are in a wider sense more progressive than other parts of the world. The assumption here is that if you are progressive in one respect, that opens your mind to other kinds of progress, too. The social and political conditions that sufficiently negated racial prejudice to result in the election of the Amerindian Evo Morales (Bolivia, 2005) and African American Barack Obama (USA, 2008) may be part of a larger progressive landscape that has allowed the repeated election of women to high office.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly the complexities are considerable. Not every elected female leader is progressive. Violeta Chamorro won the Nicaraguan presidency in 1990 and, though her family had opposed her country's former right-wing dictatorship, she campaigned as an anti-left candidate. There is also huge variety between the customs and cultures of nations ranging from Greenland and Canada in the north to Chile and Argentina in the south. Furthermore, opinions differ over how to define progressivism. Some self-styled progressives have been religiously conservative or even bigoted, and others have been anti-left. For the purpose of this article, though, progressivism embraces the liberation theology and left-wing tendencies that have been prominent in the Americas south of the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo del Norte).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> There is also an earlier example in the election of the Zapotec Benito Juarez to the presidency of Mexico in 1858.

<sup>8</sup> Progressivism is rooted in the nineteenth-century idea that the world was becoming a better place. Its political usage could be found in more than one country. In Scotland, for example, the Progressives at one point controlled all four major cities. In the New World, the United States made extensive use of the word. There the idea was that the America of 1900 was an improvement on the America of 1800 and the America of 2000 would be better still. So prevalent did this mode of thought become, that politicians began to call themselves "Progressives" with a capital "P", and in the 1912 presidential election an independent Progressive Party polled 27 percent of the votes cast, more than the Republicans (the Democrats, who also claimed to be Progressives, won with 42 percent). The Progressive Party's platform contained a commitment to female franchise, social security, and several other planks with which present-day progressives would be comfortable. However, progressivism is a problematic label from the historian's point of view. The Progressives of the early twentieth-century "Progressive Era" were a mixed bunch. They contained moralists with agendas such as the elimination of "vice" and drunkenness. They were furthermore associated with an assault on civil liberties in World War I and the ensuing Red Scare. The Progressives of the Progressive Era included enlightened citizens within their ranks, but also racists who thought that the USA was more progressive than, say, India or Italy, because it was "Anglo-Saxon". For decades, the belief would persist that the United States was an exemplary "modern" nation that should be a model for the rest of the world, especially "developing" nations. A legacy of the Progressive Era, "nation-building", reforming foreign nations to make them more like the US, is today part of the conservative agenda.

That sort of progressivism has increased the opportunities for women at the higher end of society. Women won high office because American electorates were progressive enough to vote for them, and in key instances the women specifically self-identified as politically progressive. Janet Jagan (Guyana) was a life-long socialist. Cristina de Kirchner (Argentina) may have been the president of a nation stained by Peronism, but she was democratically elected and saw herself as a champion of the poor. Dilma Rousseff (Brazil) was the candidate of the Workers Party and promised to lift twenty million out of poverty. Michele Bachelet (Chile), a socialist and feminist who later headed U.N. Women, suffered imprisonment at the hands of the Pinochet dictatorship that she opposed, and personifies the gender shift of the democratizing era in the Americas. These women *were* progressivism, as well as being consequences of it.<sup>9</sup>

For a final explanation of Latin American women's success, we return to the matter of force. While over the past half-century the Americas have experienced insurgency, repression, drug feuds and other disorders, they have nevertheless been a relatively peaceful region. Elsewhere, I have argued that women prefer peace.<sup>10</sup> While there have been warrior women they have been few, and the disproportionate attention they have received reflects that rarity factor, as well as the preoccupations of a male-dominated historical profession and the media with war.

We can here set aside the argument over whether women are essentially different in a way that inclines them towards a nurturing outlook that leads them to oppose war, or whether they are simply free of the irrationally aggressive culture that conditions the education of young males. Our focus is instead on what caused the unusual degree of success enjoyed by American female political leaders. Our argument is not that women made the Americas peaceful (though they may have contributed to this state of affairs) but that peace in the Americas has helped to elevate its women.

Turning to the significance of women leaders' relative prominence in the Americas, one could sound a note of caution, and question the value of leadership studies. How relevant to our understanding of the past is a list of people who happen to have occupied the pinnacle of power? What difference

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More constructive elements of Progressivism with a capital "P" did survive into the 1920s when politicians like Robert M. La Follette urged enlightened reforms, but by this time the idea of progress had taken a brutal hit. The horrors of World War I discredited the idea that modern Americans and North Europeans were in some way more progressive than, say, the Aztecs of antiquity or the head hunters of Borneo. Today, progressives with their lower-case "p" do not really believe in the reactionary baggage of the idea of progress. They have become synonymous with those of a liberal or left persuasion.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, 16 January, 2006 and 31 October, 2010; *Guardian*, 1 November, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> This is a general theme in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917-1994* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), in which see, especially, Chapter 9, "The Myth of the Iron Lady: An International Comparison," 155-173.

does it make to the life of a housemaid or lawyer if the prime minister or president of the day happens to be a woman? Are there better barometers of the gender-progressive nature of societies, such as wage differentials or the outcome of sexual harassment trials?

It is true that the “bottom-up” approach to history is a good way of understanding how most women lived. Yet it remains important to study the people at the top. They are interesting and illuminating products of their societies. They are also exceptionally influential in regard to both their fellow-citizens and other peoples with whom their nation interacts. Women at the top can and do have approaches that differentiate them from male policy makers. These approaches affect everyone, and sometimes affect women in particular. Nor should one underestimate the psychological impact of top women. Lady Susan Rice, the United States citizen who became the first woman to head a British clearing bank, told the author about the time following a major promotion when she first visited the women’s rest room at her bank’s headquarters. Two very working-class cleaning ladies dropped their mops and buckets and rushed up to embrace her, saying “you’re one of us!”<sup>11</sup>

A point of significance about the prominence of women in the politics of the Americas is that their story departs from the western male narrative. A history of masculine reform is likely to trace its roots to the liberating effects of the Protestant Reformation followed by the Enlightenment with its Anglophonic roots in seventeenth century English Protestant anti-monarchism. These intellectual currents have also affected women. However, the historian of the rise of women to national leadership must also turn his or her attention elsewhere.

As is evident from the clean sweep of the Indian subcontinent, where Sri Lanka was the first nation with an elected woman leader, and where India, Pakistan and Bangladesh together with Sri Lanka itself followed suit several times, Protestant Christianity has not been the standard-bearer for women’s liberation when it comes to national leadership. In the instance of the Americas, a majority of the women leaders (thirteen out of twenty-one) come from a Catholic background. In this particular region at least, there is a case for revisiting any assumptions that may have been made about the relatively unprogressive nature of Roman Catholicism.<sup>12</sup>

Dynastic assumptions also need to be re-examined. The theory that most women who get to the top are there for dynastic reasons such as marriage and widowhood has had a strong grip on the political imagination. The theory is intrinsically flawed, in the sense that it assumes a level playing field in which men reach the top because of their talents. The briefest examination of the social

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<sup>11</sup> A graduate of Wellesley College, Massachusetts, Susan Wunsch Rice became CEO of Lloyds TSB in 2000.

<sup>12</sup> See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “Catholic and Feminist: Can One Be Both?” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 2 (1999): 11-38.

structure of a variety of nations indicates that this is not the case, and the Americas are no exception. For example, in his book on patronage in nineteenth century Brazil, Richard Graham pointed to the prevalence of patriarchy, family loyalty and job fixing. It was an accepted and dominant feature of political culture: “Nepotism did not constitute a shameful practice; there was nothing to hide.” He estimated that women wrote 3 percent of the placement letters securing jobs for family members. That may have been a precursor of more influence to come, but it was a small number.<sup>13</sup>

It helps, and is becoming ever more essential, to be rich, and men control the great majority of economic assets. Contrary to the trumpeted mythology of the self-made man, the likeliest way to acquire wealth and power is through inheritance, and in this sense, men in politics are mostly dynastic creatures. Look no further than the Bush family in the US or the UK prime minister David Cameron for examples. To be rich is an expression of inequality, and one of the perquisites of wealth is the presence of servants to enable the rising politician to concentrate on his career. If he can afford to keep his wife without sending her out to work, she can join the ranks of his servants and he need never cook a meal or clean the house. In a country with extremes of wealth and poverty such as Brazil, the rich man can in this way enjoy a smooth path to power. But there is a codicil here. Once a family is rich enough to afford nannies, the mothers are liberated, too. That has an observable impact on the emergence of women in the professions, and potential consequences for the rise of female politicians, too.

One also needs to consider the conditioning milieu, with future male leaders attending the right private schools, benefitting from the consequent social networking opportunities and joining the right clubs from Buenos Aires to Boston. It is worth mentioning here that in South America some of the formerly ascendant male, governing elites which had been bolstered by such private, privileged, networks are losing ground to newer, more middle class and meritocratic politicians. In this new political landscape, women are afforded additional opportunities to advance in politics; equally, the prominence of female leadership in the Americas is itself a significant indicator of these very social changes.<sup>14</sup>

In an article published in 2006, the *New York Times* South American bureau chief Larry Rohter addressed the dynastic issue. Michele Bachelet had just been elected president of Chile. A single mother with three children, she was the candidate of the left and decisively defeated the conservative billionaire businessman Sebastián Piñera (although in 2010 he would become Bachelet’s successor). Bachelet was the daughter of a middle class mother and of a general who had

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 11, 18-19, 234-35.

<sup>14</sup> This generalization is based on the observations of a diplomat with recent experience in several South American countries whose identity must remain confidential.

opposed the Pinochet dictatorship. For that, General Alberto Bachelet Martinez was tortured to death. His daughter also suffered torture, but fled the country and was educated at Humboldt University in Communist East Berlin. When she returned to Chile, Bachelet had to forge her own career.

Rohter, like the *Guardian's* Rory Carroll (quoted at the start of this article), was sympathetic to Bachelet's victory in Chile, and similarly deployed a popular myth in order to highlight the achievement. For Rohter, Bachelet was "the first woman in the region to win an election without an assist from the coattails of a more famous spouse." He observed that "three widows of prominent political figures" preceded Bachelet: Nicaragua's Violeta Chamorro, Panama's Mireya Moscoso, and Guyana's Janet Jagan, while María Perón had benefited from being the widow of a famous dictator.<sup>15</sup>

Conceding in the case of Perón, let's ask, how important was the dynasticism of these other figures? In similar mode to Rohter, one historian noted that Chamorro "was probably selected more for her late husband's reputation than in her own right."<sup>16</sup> Pedro Chamorro had been a leading critic of the Somoza dictatorship until his assassination in 1978. The Chamorro family had been prominent in Nicaraguan public affairs for decades. But in 1990 Violeta was elected in her own right, twelve years after her husband's death. In the case of Mireya Moscoso, the delay was even longer – her husband had been president of Panama at various periods between 1940 and 1968, but more than thirty years elapsed before her own election to the presidency in 1999.

A lot can change over time, as the case of Violeta Chamorro demonstrates. In the interval between her husband's death and the 1990 election, the Somoza dictatorship fell and was replaced by the left-wing Sandinista regime. The Reagan administration used dirty tricks to support the Contra movement against the Sandinistas, the details of which were eventually uncovered in the Iran-Contra scandal and investigations of 1986-7. These secret interventions by the United States were major events in the history of both the US and Nicaragua, and during the prolonged tensions Chamorro may well have wished that her deceased husband could advise her. But she made her own decisions, and did well. Where Reagan and the CIA failed in their objective of displacing the Sandinistas, Violeta Chamorro succeeded using peaceful, democratic means. Her success set a precedent which the self-made Michele Bachelet would follow.

A similar question can be asked about Janet Jagan's qualifications for office. Her husband Cheddi Jagan had died just a few months before she became prime minister of Guyana in 1997, and this

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<sup>15</sup> Larry Rohter, "What is Missing from this Woman's Victory? Coattails," *New York Times*, 16 January 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Collinson, *Women and Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed, 1990), 165.



infused her candidacy with an emotional advantage, for Cheddi was a legendary figure. He had been first minister and prime minister of British Guiana prior to independence. Because of his left wing views, the CIA and British intelligence, with the secret collaboration of U.S. labor leader George Meany, had contrived to prevent him from becoming the first leader of independent Guyana, but he returned to serve as president between 1992 and 1997.<sup>17</sup>

Janet Jagan, however, was a politician and public figure in her own right. Though her father had threatened to shoot her prospective husband on sight, he could not reasonably blame Cheddi for her radicalization. She was already engaged in activities for the Young Communist League of Chicago when she first met her spouse-to-be at a political meeting. In Guyana Jagan went to prison in 1954 for opposing the colonialist oppression imposed by the British government of Winston Churchill. Stories about her being the brains behind her husband and about her domination of him can be dismissed as Anglo-American male-chauvinist disinformation designed to undermine Guyana's main nationalist leader. For Janet Jagan was a force in her own right and secured election to the Guyanan legislature on many occasions over a long period. She edited national newspapers and even found time to write storybooks for children.<sup>18</sup>

To Rohter's group of four "dynastic" leaders one can add a fifth, Cristina de Kirchner of Argentina – in the appended table italics identify all five. Prior to her campaign for president in 2007, Kirchner already had political office, having served as a senator 1995-2005. However, her husband Nestor Kirchner undoubtedly helped foster her career, and openly pulled the strings during his own tenure as president between 2003-2007. Some commentators saw her as a natural successor: when Nestor died in 2010 the political analyst and historian Rosendo Fraga wrote in an article for *La Nacion* that his widow might now be able to wield power at last.<sup>19</sup>

But what of the other sixteen women in political leadership positions across the Americas, ranging from Kim Campbell (Canada) to Dilma Roussef (Brazil)? Their stories show that the dynastic dimension of female ascent is a relatively insignificant feature of the history of the Americas. Their diverse backgrounds suggest there is no case for saying that women prime ministers and presidents in the Americas took an international lead only because they were exceptionally well connected. On the contrary, the rise of these political women is significant as an indicator of departure from dynasticism and patronage.

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> Rabe, *U.S. Intervention*, 25, 182.

<sup>19</sup> Rosendo Fraga, "Sin Kirchner, Cristina puede asumir el poder," [http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota\\_id=1319039](http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1319039), (accessed 27 October 2010).

A final issue inviting attention is the failure, so far, of the United States to produce a woman president. Even if a woman becomes president in the next few years, the USA will have made slow progress compared with its hemispheric neighbors. Though Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pressed for women's rights worldwide, the United States has trailed behind other American nations in the sphere of female leadership.

A comparative essay of this nature is not the place to focus on the history of one nation, but it is pertinent to make a few observations. First, the United States' laggardness is all the more conspicuous because of the international prominence of its own feminism and feminists – promoted, of course, by the widespread use of the English language. From Margaret Sanger (birth control) to Betty Friedan (equality in the family), both of whom came from a progressive background in the sense of being socialists, U.S. women have issued clarion calls heard around the world on behalf of women's equality in all spheres. How can U.S. women have been so effectively held back in their own country?

Part of the explanation is that there has been a countervailing culture. The obstacles in the way of a woman becoming president include a male-dominated version of both capitalism and anti-capitalism. The U.S. New Left anti-war movement of the 1960s was in its earlier stages notoriously male chauvinist.<sup>20</sup> Janet Jagan had been born Janet Rosenberg in Chicago. Athletic, dynamic, beautiful and intelligent, she had extraordinary talent, enabling her to overcome the obstacles in the way of being elected leader of a foreign land speaking a different tongue. Her success in being elected to lead Guyana was a rare accomplishment and one constitutionally banned in the United States, where the president has to be native born. Despite her talent, it would seem that Janet Jagan stood little chance of becoming president in the land of her birth.<sup>21</sup>

Turning from culture to war, the philosopher Francis Fukayama noted the “contention of many feminists that phenomena like aggression, violence, war, and intense competition for dominance in a status hierarchy are more closely associated with men than women.” He cited opinion polls indicating that in the United States women were less willing to wage war than men. With the USA

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), 127; Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 117, 118, 160. See also Eleanor Clift and Tom Brazaitis, *Madam President: Shattering the Last Glass Ceiling* (New York: Scribner, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Suzanne Wasserman made an award-winning movie, *Thunder in Guyana*, about her cousin Janet Jagan. It briefly brought Jagan to the attention of U.S. citizens who otherwise would scarcely have heard about her. See Baz Dreisinger, “In Radical Matrimony,” *Nation*, 17 February 2005 and Virginia Heffernan, “Television Review: A Radical Journey from Chicago to Guyana,” *New York Times*, 22 February 2005.

engaged in perpetual warfare since 1960, it could be argued that its female citizens were not culturally suited to enter the White House.<sup>22</sup>

Those who would prefer to see the United States pursue a more peaceful policy might well say that a woman in charge is precisely what that nation needs. Their case should not be dismissed lightly. The idea that women who make it to the top have to be extra tough should not be allowed to degenerate into the notion that they also have to be warlike. Iron ladies do sometimes go to war. Yet the statistics of deadly quarrels do not suggest that they visit death on friend and foe to a greater extent than other leaders. The cliché mongers may have defined Margaret Thatcher as the Boadicea of the Falklands/Malvinas war, but measured by combat deaths per citizen per annum she was not a demonstrably violent leader. Fewer British servicemen were killed in Falklands/Malvinas than in the Korean, Kenyan or Malayan conflicts. Even as the *Belgrano* sank with the loss of over 300 Argentinean lives, bloodier conflicts were occurring in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iran/Iraq, and Kampuchea. Self-made women are not necessarily a recipe for national aggression. Perhaps it is out of subliminal perception or belief that women are inherently peaceful that the U.S. electorate has not yet entrusted the nation's security to female hands. It is part of an outlook that regards manly militarism as the key to national security.<sup>23</sup>

As for the relationship between the United States and the rest of the Americas, a mischievous point might be made. It could be argued that by engaging in perpetual warfare outside the hemisphere, the United States has warded off external attack and kept the whole of the Americas safe. At the expense of withholding from its own female citizens the right to lead, the United States' outward-directed militarism has allowed the rest of the Americas to bask in "Pax Americana" (peace imposed by the United States as foreshadowed by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823). It is because of this peace, it could be argued, that women in non-U.S. American nations have had the luxury of making their ascent to highest political office.

Whatever one makes of that hypothesis, it seems reasonable to suggest the following in conclusion. Presidential and prime ministerial women in Latin America have benefited from the progressive

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<sup>22</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 77 (1998), 27, 34. On the evaporation of linear distinctions between war and peace in recent United States history, see Mary L. Dudziak, "Law, War, and the History of Time," *California Law Review* 2010, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1374454#%23](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1374454#%23), (accessed on 19 February 2013) and Mary L. Dudziak, *War-Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also "Permanent War" in Chris Hedges, *Death of the Liberal Class* (New York: Nation Books, 2010), 19-58.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and the Falklands War* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 2, 106. Authorities on the statistics of deadly quarrels measure the intensity of warfare in relation to the size of the populations of the warring countries: Lewis Fry Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Pittsburgh: Boxwood Press, 1960), 133, 167; David Wilkinson, *Deadly Quarrels: Lewis Fry Richardson and the Statistical Study of War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 132-43.

political culture of their region. Their rise to prominence cannot be dismissed as a manifestation of dynasticism. The comparison with the United States suggests that national chauvinism and a culture of permanent war combined to delay the emergence of a female U.S. president.

## Appendix: Women Prime Ministers and Presidents 1960-2010<sup>24</sup>

- The dates are those for the first ascent to national leadership. Several prime ministers went on to serve further terms and/or to become presidents.
- **Bold** entries indicate leaders of American nations.
- *Italicized* entries indicate leaders of American nations whose ascent to power might be seen to have been assisted by dynastic factors.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Ceylon (Sri Lanka)	PM	1960
Indira Gandhi	India	PM	1966
Golda Meir	Israel	PM	1969
<b><i>“Isabel” Perón</i></b>	<b><i>Argentina</i></b>	<b><i>Pres.</i></b>	<b><i>1974</i></b>
Elisabeth Domitien	Central African Republic	PM	1975
Margaret Thatcher	United Kingdom	PM	1979
Maria da Lurdes Pintasilgo	Portugal	PM	1979
<b>Lidia Gueiler Tejada</b>	<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1979</b>
Vigdís Finnbogadóttir	Iceland	Pres.	1980
<b>Eugenia Charles</b>	<b>Dominica, West Indies</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1980</b>
Gro Harlem Brundtland	Norway	PM	1981
Agatha Barbara	Malta	Pres	1982
<b>Maria Liberia-Peters</b>	<b>Netherlands Antilles</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1984</b>
Maria Corazon Aquino	The Philippines	Pres.	1986

<sup>24</sup>The list is of women who achieved high office in democratic, constitutional nations. It excludes the much smaller list of women who have headed undemocratic nations, for example Soong Ching-Ling, who for a few days before her death in 1980 served as honorary president of Communist China, as well as monarchs like Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, who is the titular head of 15 Commonwealth nations. It draws on an earlier version, “Women Prime Ministers and Presidents, 1960-1994,” in Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences*, 156 and is further compiled from newspaper reports and the following web sites [www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00women3.htm](http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00women3.htm), [www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00women5.htm](http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00women5.htm), [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/rulers20th/a/women\\_heads.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/rulers20th/a/women_heads.htm), [http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Female\\_Leaders.htm](http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Female_Leaders.htm) and <http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00women2.htm> (accessed 25 October 2010). See also the membership list of the Council of Women World Leaders, <http://www.cwwl.org/members.html> (accessed 25 October 2010).

Benazir Bhutto	Pakistan	PM	1988
<b><i>Violeta de Chamorro</i></b>	<b><i>Nicaragua</i></b>	<b><i>Pres.</i></b>	<b><i>1990</i></b>
Kazimiera Prunskienė	Lithuania	PM	1990
Mary Robinson	Republic of Ireland	Pres.	1990
Aung San Sun Kyi	Burma (Myanmar)	PM*	1990
<b>Ertha Pascal-Trouillot</b>	<b>Haiti</b>	<b>Interim Pres.</b>	<b>1990</b>
Sabine Bergmann-Pohl	East Germany	Pres.	1990
Begum Khaleda Zia	Bangladesh	PM	1991
Edith Cresson	France	PM	1991
Hanna Suchocka	Poland	PM	1992
<b>Kim Campbell</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1993</b>
Tansu Çiller	Turkey	PM	1993
Sylvie Kinigi	Burundi	PM/Acting Pr	1993
Agathe Uwilingiyimana	Rwanda	PM	1993
<b>Susanne Camelia-Romer</b>	<b>Netherlands Antilles</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1993</b>
Chandrika Kumuratunga	Sri Lanka	PM/Pres.	1994
Reneta Indzhova	Bulgaria	Interim PM	1994
<b>Claudette Werleigh</b>	<b>Haiti</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1995</b>
Sheikh Hasina Wajed	Bangladesh	PM	1996
Biljana Plavsic	Bosnia Herzegovina	Pres.	1996
Ruth Perry	Liberia	Pres.	1996
<b><i>Janet Jagan</i></b>	<b><i>Guyana</i></b>	<b><i>PM/Pres</i></b>	<b><i>1997</i></b>
Jenny Shipley	New Zealand	PM	1997
Mary McAleese	Ireland	Pres	1997
Pamela Gordon	Bermuda	PM	1997
<b>Rosalía Arteaga Serrano</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Pres.</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Jennifer Smith</b>	<b>Bermuda</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>1998</b>

Irena Degutienė	Lithuania	Acting PM	1999
Nyam-Osoriyn Tuyaa	Mongolia	Acting PM	1999
Helen Clark	New Zealand	PM	1999
Vaira Vike-Freiberga	Latvia	Pres	1999
Ruth Dreifuss	Switzerland	Pres.	1999
<b>Mireya Moscoso de Arias</b>	<b>Panama</b>	<b>Pres.</b>	<b>1999</b>
Tarja Kaarina Halonen	Finland	Pres	2000
Maria Gloria Macapagal Arroyo	Philippines	Pres	2001
Mame Madior Boye	Senegal	PM	2001
Megawati Sukarnoputri	Indonesia	Pres.	2001
Chang Sang	South Korea	Acting PM	2002
Maria de Sousa	São Tomé and Príncipe	PM	2002
Natasa Micic	Serbia	Pres.	2002
Anneli Jäätteenmäki	Finland	PM	2003
<b>Beatriz Merino Lucero</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>2003</b>
Luisa Dias Diogo	Mozambique	PM	2004
Radmila Sekerinska	Macedonia	Acting PM	2004
Yuliya Tymoshenko	Ukraine	PM	2005
Maria do Carmo Silveira	São Tomé and Príncipe	PM	2005
Angela Dorothea Merkel	Germany	Chancellor	2005
Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf	Liberia	Pres.	2006
<b>Portia Simpson-Miller</b>	<b>Jamaica</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>2006</b>
Han Myung Sook	South Korea	PM	2006
<b>Michelle Bachelet</b>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>Pres.</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Cristina Fernández de Kirchner</b>	<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Pres.</b>	<b>2007</b>
Micheline Calmy-Rey	Switzerland	Pres.	2007
Dalia Itzik	Israel	Pres.	2007

Pratobha Patil	India	Pres.	2007
Zinaida Greceanii	Moldova	PM	2008
<b>Michèle Pierre-Louis</b>	<b>Haiti</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>2008</b>
Cécile Manorahanta	Madagascar	PM	2009
Jóhanna Sigurdardóttir	Iceland	PM	2009
Jadranka Kosor	Croatia	PM	2009
Rose Francine Rogombé	Gabon	Pres.	2009
Dalia Grybauskaite	Lithuania	Pres.	2009
Roza Otunbayeva	Kyrgyzstan	Pres.	2010
Julia Gillard	Australia	PM	2010
Doris Leuthard	Switzerland	Pres.	2010
<b>Laura Chinchilla Miranda</b>	<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>Pres.</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Kamla Persad-Bissessar</b>	<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>2010</b>
Mari Kiviniemi	Finland	PM	2010
Iveta Radicová	Slovakia	PM	2010
<b>Dilma Rouseff</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Pres.</b>	<b>2010</b>

†María Estela Marnez de Perón

\*Upon her party's victory at the polls, the Burmese military imprisoned Aung San Sun Kyi and prevented her from taking office.