

Reflecting on Mother's Day and War

The original idea of Mother's Day was to promote peace so mothers would not have to suffer the grief that many American moms faced after the slaughter of the Civil War. But some of today's most powerful women, including moms, are war advocates, writes ex-FBI agent Coleen Rowley.

By Coleen Rowley

Recall that Mother's Day was originated by Julia Ward Howe not to fill restaurants or boost the stock of Hallmark cards but as an anti-militarism effort, to further the cause of peace.

In her 1870 Proclamation, Howe, after witnessing the suffering and horrors of the Civil War, laid the foundation for the theory that women as the more "tender" sex and better teachers of charity, mercy and patience, would naturally, if they gained power, put an end to the senselessness of wars.

However 142 years later, we see that the five most powerful women thus far in U.S. history, at a time when the United States has climbed to "military superpower" status in the world, are: Madeleine Albright, Condi Rice, Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice and Samantha Power. All are mothers (except Condi Rice), and all are proving Howe's theory completely wrong with their pronounced attitudes, actions and instigation of wars during the last two decades.

The war-hawkishness (and some would add ruthless cruelty) of the first three female Secretaries of State and the two on Obama's short list to become next Secretary of State (but who are already powerful, as advisors on Obama's National Security Council, his UN Ambassador and chair of his new "humanitarian war" program) would probably make the founder of "Mothers Day for Peace" turn over in her grave.

In fact, defining aspects of these five most powerful women's career stances and orientation towards military power jump out of their Wikipedia bios to vie with Henry Kissinger's cold calculated Machiavellianism. (If you already know their backgrounds, you can skip the following brief highlights.)

Madeleine Albright: Although Albright would probably prefer to be remembered for her grandiose plan and statements about bringing democracy to other countries, her real legacy will probably lie in her unguarded 1996 response as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations made on "60 Minutes" when she defended UN sanctions against Iraq after Lesley Stahl asked her, "We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima.

And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright replied, "we think the price is worth it." Albright later criticized Stahl's segment as "amount[ing] to Iraqi propaganda"; complained it was a loaded question; wrote "I had fallen into a trap and said something I did not mean"; and regretted coming "across as cold-blooded and cruel." But the "60 Minutes" interview won an Emmy.

Albright later took office in 1997 as the first female U.S. Secretary of State and the highest-ranking woman in the history of the U.S. government where she supported the U.S.-NATO bombing campaign in the Balkans. According to Albright's memoirs, she once argued with Colin Powell for the use of military force by asking, "What's the point of you saving this superb military for, Colin, if we can't use it?"

Condoleezza Rice: A much better summary of Condi's life and career can be gained – thanks to the first-hand accounts of people who knew her and through her many well-known, solid biographers in this fascinating (87 minute) documentary, "American Faust: From Condi to Neo Condi" by Sebastian Daggart.

What will people remember most about Condi Rice? If it's not the visual of the impeccably coiffed and tailored business suit sinisterly threatening a "mushroom cloud" which she used to help George Bush "catapult the propaganda" for war on Iraq, it may be the key role she played in ordering torture even before John Yoo attempted to fully "legalize" it.

There is probably some psychological significance in the fact that Condi Rice, the woman who gave up marriage and children to climb the ladder, reportedly used the words: "It's your **baby**, go do it" to convey approval to CIA Director George Tenet in July 2002 from the Bush White House Principals (the group that formulated and authorized torture tactics) to go ahead and conduct water-boarding on certain captured suspects. Condi's "baby" thus became torture.

Hillary Rodham Clinton: Among her consistently pro-war stances, Sen. Hillary Clinton voted to give George Bush the power to launch war on Iraq when she knew that country posed no threat to the U.S. and had no tie to 9/11 or WMD.

As Obama's Secretary of State, Clinton jumped into the formidable task of using the "Arab Spring" to back some U.S.-friendly dictators while supporting protesters against other regimes the U.S. did not like.

She joined Samantha Power and Susan Rice and pulled off an amazing power play. The "three harpies" (as one commentator named them) overcame internal opposition to U.S. military intervention in Libya from three higher positioned men: Defense Secretary Robert Gates, security advisor Thomas Donilon, and counterterrorism

advisor John Brennan, and ended up playing key roles in support of the U.S.-NATO massive bombing of Libya in 2011. Hillary Clinton used U.S. allies as “convening power” to strengthen the Libyan rebels as they eventually overturned the Gaddafi regime.

After Gaddafi was brutally tortured, killed and his body put on display, Hillary laughed in triumph, “We came, we saw, he died.”

Susan Rice: As Wikipedia states, “(In her first year serving as Director for International Organizations and Peacekeeping on Clinton’s National Security Council), at the time of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, Susan Rice reportedly said, ‘If we use the word “genocide” and are seen as doing nothing, what will be the effect on the November [congressional] election?’ ...

“Rice supported the multinational force that invaded Zaire from Rwanda in 1996 and overthrew dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, saying privately that ‘Anything’s better than Mobutu.’ Others criticized the U.S. complicity in the violation of the Congo’s borders as destabilizing and dangerous....

“On December 1, 2008, Rice was nominated by President-elect Obama to be the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, a position which he also upgraded to cabinet level. Rice is the second youngest and first African American woman U.S. Representative to the UN.

“In light of the 2011 Libyan civil war, Ambassador Rice gave a statement following a White House meeting with President Obama and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as the United States increased pressure on the Libyan leader to give up power. Rice made clear that the United States and the international community saw only one choice for Gaddafi and his aides: step down from power or face significant consequences. ...

“On 17 March 2011 Rice voted for United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 which sanctioned a Libyan no-fly zone. ... Rice and Clinton played major roles in getting the Security Council to approve this resolution; Clinton said that same day that establishing a no-fly zone over Libya would require the bombing of air defenses. ...

“On March 29, 2011, Rice said that the Obama administration had not ruled out arming the rebels fighting to oust Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. In an interview on ABC’s ‘Good Morning America’ program, Rice said there was no indication that Gaddafi was prepared to leave power without continued pressure from the International community.

“Referring to reports that members of Gaddafi’s inner circle were reaching out to the West, she said: ‘We will be more persuaded by actions rather than

prospects or feelers. ... The message for Gaddafi and those closest to him is that history is not on their side. Time is not on their side. The pressure is mounting.'

"In January 2012 after the Russian and Chinese veto of a UNSC resolution, Rice strongly condemned both countries for vetoing a resolution calling on (Syria's ruler) Bashar al-Assad to step down. 'They put a stake in the heart of efforts to resolve this conflict peacefully,' Rice said on CNN. 'The tragedy is for the people of Syria. We the United States are standing with the people of Syria. Russia and China are obviously with Assad.' She added that 'Russia and China will, I think, come to regret this action.' 'They have ... by their veto dramatically increased the risk of greater violence, and you've seen manifestations of that.'

"In her words, 'the United States is disgusted that a couple of members of this Council continue to prevent us from fulfilling our sole purpose.'"

Samantha Power: Samantha **Power** is aptly named. As Special Assistant to President Obama running the Office of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights on the President's National Security Council, she is the architect of the concept of "humanitarian war" and of the "Responsibility to Protect (R2P)" which she recently parlayed into being named the new chair of Obama's "Atrocity Prevention Board."

Power got her start as a journalist in the Yugoslav Wars, lamenting that U.S.-NATO bombing did not begin sooner. She became a fan of General Wesley Clark and worked on his subsequent presidential bid.

Afterward she became a "foreign policy fellow" for Sen. Obama and continued to work for his presidential campaign for a time as his senior foreign policy advisor.

Power is a fan of U.S. military intervention and General David Petraeus' counter-insurgency manual. [See Chase Madar's prescient (2009) description in "Samantha Power and the Weaponization of Human Rights":

"Power's faith in the therapeutic possibilities of military force was formed by her experience as a correspondent in the Balkans, whose wars throughout the '90s she seems to view as the alpha and omega of ethnic conflict, indeed of all genocide. For her, NATO's bombing of Belgrade in 1999 was a stunning success that 'likely saved hundreds of thousands of lives' in Kosovo.

"Yet this assertion seems to crumble a little more each year: estimates of the number of Kosovars slain by the province's Serb minority have shrunk from 100,000 to at most 5,000. And it is far from clear whether NATO's air strikes

prevented more killing or intensified the bloodshed.

“Even so, it is the NATO attack on Belgrade – including civilian targets, which Amnesty International has recently, belatedly, deemed a war crime – that informs Power’s belief that the U.S. military possesses nearly unlimited capability to save civilians by means of aerial bombardment, and all we need is the courage to launch the sorties.”

Samantha Power is widely reported to “have Obama’s ear” and be the key figure (who along with Susan Rice and Hillary Clinton) overcame the objections of Defense Secretary Gates and other national security men, persuading Obama to intervene militarily in Libya. For critiques at the time from the far left AND from the far right, see: Tom Hayden’s [“Samantha Power Goes to War”](#) and [“Samantha Power’s Power”](#) by Stanley Kurtz in the National Review.com.

Most Powerful Women Club

Just coincidentally (but it’s a whole ‘nother story), the only time I came close to rubbing elbows with some of these women, was when the three of us Time Magazine “whistleblowers” spoke at the (decadently lavish) “Most Powerful Women Conference” (now called the [Fortune Most Powerful Women Summit](#)).

Just as good ole boys networks always played their role for men gaining and wielding power, it’s definitely a small world for these five most powerful women who all have significant ties to each other, beyond their State Department and foreign policy advisor status.

Condi Rice and Susan Rice only happen to share the same last name but are otherwise not related. But Madeleine Albright’s father, international relations Professor Josef Korbel, was Condi Rice’s academic mentor. Albright is a long-standing close friend of Clinton, endorsed her in her 2008 campaign for U.S. President and now serves as Clinton’s top informal advisor on foreign policy matters.

Albright has also been a longtime mentor and family friend to Susan Rice. Although Susan Rice was not the first choice of Congressional Black Caucus leaders, who considered her a member of “Washington’s assimilationist black elite,” Albright urged Clinton to appoint her as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in 1997.

In 2007, Albright declared in a press conference that she and former Clinton Defense Secretary William Cohen would co-chair a new “Genocide Prevention Task Force” created by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the United States Institute for Peace. Albright’s Task Force was what apparently led to the recent 2012 creation of the “Atrocity

Prevention Board" now chaired by Samantha Power.

Feminizing War Does Work!

To sell it. Feminine faces and talk of noble humanitarian intentions prove useful as they serve to effectively soften and cover up the brutal bloodshed of U.S. wars and indiscriminate aerial and drone bombing that have killed countless civilians.

But this is not "soft power" or use of brains over brawn. The feminist war hawks don't want to talk about the women and children victims of war – or even count them – any more than their male counterparts.

Perhaps due to naiveté or the sentiment expressed in Howe's Peace Proclamation, many progressives and "liberal human rights" groups unfortunately are blindly swallowing, for instance, Power's insidious but seductive "humanitarian war" theory which relies on sleight of hand utilitarianism and the concocting of a happy (but false or unprovable) outcome to divert attention away from unlawful, immoral, brutal means.

The female "humanitarian" warhawks' insistence that NATO bombing of Libya "prevented another Rwandan massacre" works in much the same way as "ticking time bomb" utilitarians like Dick Cheney dupe their own base by claiming to have prevented another terrorist attack through water-boarding.

People generally so want to believe in happy endings that they don't carefully look at the (wrongful) means being used.

In actuality, the U.S.-NATO bombing for regime change killed tens of thousands of Libyans and installed a puppet government that is still reportedly committing human rights abuses. For a comprehensive refutation of "humanitarian military intervention" see "Responsibility to Protect" as Imperial Tool: the Case for a Non-Interventionist Foreign Policy by Jean Bricmont (Feb, 2012) for an expose of how instituting harsh economic sanctions on Syria, said to be for "humanitarian purposes" actually encourage the very violence – if starvation and disease constitute violence – that their proponents claim to oppose.

Senator Jim Webb and Congressman Walter Jones have concerns about the ease of "humanitarian war" and are not so easily charmed or misled. They are to be praised for having introduced legislation to make it impossible for Obama to launch preventive military actions based merely on findings by Samantha Power's Board without congressional approval per the Constitution. Unfortunately, the Obama Administration has previously claimed this power.

When Mothers Need to Prove Their Toughness

Getting back to the issue of Mothers Day for Peace, were Julia Ward Howe's notions (or hopes) about women just over-romantic? Or is there another explanation for why and how liberal expectations could be so off-base vis a vis the reality of the current crop of increasingly powerful feminist war hawks? (Feminist war-hawks who have overcome their male military colleagues' reluctance to wage preventive war?!)

One possible explanation might lie in the kind of "Napoleonic Complex" that tends to force the first women pioneers entering a previously male-dominated profession or area to prove themselves as tough or tougher than the men. A broader expose of the "Hollow Women of the Hegemon" including those on the international scene (i.e. Thatcher, Bhutto, Golda Meir, and Aquino) was written in 2008 by Dr. June Scorza Terpstra.

I can anecdotally verify this pressure from my own experience in joining the FBI when there were few female FBI agents in the ranks.

One part of our new agents training at Quantico in early 1981 required us to box each other. If I remember right, we had to wear real boxing gloves and line up to spar with a classmate. The first round, I was really scared because my opponent was a guy several inches taller than myself who had actual boxing experience; but he didn't try to hit me that hard. The FBI instructor blew a whistle after a few minutes for us to change opponents.

The second round, I got paired against an even bigger guy who had played college football but he also just kind of tapped me. I breathed a sigh of relief when the third and final round came and I finally found myself facing another female who was smaller and shorter than myself. (She was sweating but still quite pretty as she had worked as a stewardess before joining the FBI.)

But I'll never forget what happened when they blew the whistle the third time and that former stewardess just started punching me in the head, non-stop as hard as she could and landing every punch, almost knocking me out.

Theoretically, Julia Ward Howe could still be right about the potential of a new women-inspired/initiated era for peace down the road. The need to prove "toughness" might lead the "weaker gender" to over-compensate for a time, but only until there are equal or greater numbers of women at the highest levels of governmental command. At the present time, sadly enough, I see only more female war-hawks knocking on the gates of power.

But let's not give up hope this Mothers Day 2012! It might be worth the effort to look up their addresses and e-mails and send authentic Mother's Day cards containing Juliet's Peace Proclamation to all the current women in positions of

military power.

Coleen Rowley, a FBI special agent for almost 24 years, was legal counsel to the FBI Field Office in Minneapolis from 1990 to 2003. She wrote a “whistleblower” memo in May 2002 and testified to the Senate Judiciary on some of the FBI’s pre 9-11 failures. She retired at the end of 2004, and now writes and speaks on ethical decision-making and balancing civil liberties with the need for effective investigation.
