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Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo Shares About Women, Leadership And Advancing Foreign Policy



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Ambassador Rosemary A. DiCarlo (ret.) – Photo by Demetriad Studios

According to the organization [U.N. Women](#), a global champion for gender equality, “there is established and growing evidence that [women’s leadership in political decision-making processes improves them](#).” Their research reveals that:

“...women [demonstrate political leadership](#) by working across party lines through parliamentary women’s caucuses – even in the most politically combative environments – and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination

of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reform.”

To learn more about how women’s participation in top political leadership roles is making a critical and positive difference in our world, I was honored and thrilled to connect with [Ambassador Rosemary A. DiCarlo](#) (ret.). DiCarlo is President and Chief Executive Officer of the [National Committee for American Foreign Policy](#) and a Senior Fellow at the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs at Yale University. She previously served as U.S. Deputy Representative to the United Nations from 2010 to 2014.

The National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP) is a policy organization dedicated to the resolution of conflicts that threaten U.S. interests. The NCAFP identifies, articulates, and helps advance American foreign policy interests from a nonpartisan perspective, particularly through Track I 1/2 and Track II diplomacy and programs that inform and engage the public.

Here’s what Ambassador DiCarlo shares:

Kathy Caprino: Being a woman in a high-level foreign policy role – would you please share what particular challenges you feel women face that men wouldn’t, in this role and work?

Rosemary DiCarlo: With three female secretaries of state and two female national security advisors in our history, Americans are not surprised today to see women leading negotiations on Iran’s nuclear program or disarmament with Russia. This was not true when I entered the U.S. Foreign Service in 1984. There were few women ambassadors and heads of departments. In fact, it was not until 1974 that a married woman could serve as a U.S. diplomat. How times have changed.

Such progress has not been global, nonetheless, and societies with few women in high-level positions sometimes hesitate to negotiate peace and security with women. So we have to work harder to build trust and demonstrate our competence.

Work-life issues are challenging in any field. While men have taken on more parenting and household responsibilities, women are still the



lead on these matters. Working in foreign affairs necessitates travel. When I was covering the Balkans for the State Department, I made 20 trips to Europe in one year alone. Balancing this schedule with family concerns was indeed a challenge.

Caprino: What do you think have been the key factors to your high-level success in this field?

DiCarlo: I loved what I was doing. During my 30-year Foreign Service career, I felt that I was making a difference. I served at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in the late 1980s, a time when the Soviet Union was opening up to the West, and in the mid-1990s, after the breakup of the Soviet Union. My colleagues were committed to improving relations between our country and our former adversary. We launched exchange programs from high-school students to parliamentarians to entrepreneurs to build lasting ties among our citizens. We implemented technical assistance programs to support legal and economic reforms. In the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict, I worked with European colleagues to negotiate Kosovo's status, which brought that war-torn and isolated population closer to membership in the Euro-Atlantic community. And as Deputy Representative to the United Nations, I helped establish peacekeeping missions in Africa, eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program and establish mechanisms to combat terrorism.

I tell students and young professionals they are more likely to succeed if they follow their passion and skills. I was good at languages, loved learning about foreign cultures and wanted to do something that touched the lives of others. This translated into working in the international area, where I found purpose and meaning, while loving my work.

I could not have done this without a supportive family that encouraged me and rejoiced in my successes, and mentors that told me when I was doing something right or wrong.

Caprino: Do you think that being a female impacts your views on foreign policy? If so, how?

DiCarlo: Women are not necessarily more peaceful than men, but they sometimes look at foreign policy from a different perspective.

Women more often factor in considerations of women around the world when developing and implementing policy. For example, men and women experience conflict differently. Once the conflict is over, women often find themselves without husbands or sons and without employment or training to support themselves and their families, as was the case after the Rwandan genocide in 1994. And conflict-related sexual violence, all too common in war, produces unwanted pregnancies, isolation and trauma that takes years to overcome.

Former Secretaries of State Condoleeza Rice and Hillary Clinton took the lead in developing mechanisms to deal with the impact of conflict on women. The United Nations now includes women at the peace table to address their concerns. Moreover, Secretary Rice took on the controversial issue of conflict-related sexual violence and was instrumental in the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1820 that stresses that acts of sexual violence could constitute war crimes and called for prosecution of these crimes and an end to impunity. Secretary Clinton continued on this course and successfully advocated for the establishment of a Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to deal with all aspects of this issue.

I have no doubt that men could have played similar roles. The point is, so far, they have not.

Caprino: What are America's key foreign policy concerns right now, and how are you leading the way to address these, through your work at the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP)?

DiCarlo: The NCAFP works on a number of foreign policy challenges, but let me describe the three most important:

- 1) Countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly in regard to North Korea
- 2) Working with China and others to ensure that China's rise is compatible with our national interest
- 3) Improving our deteriorating relationship with Russia

We fulfill our mission primarily through Track II dialogues that bring together former U.S. and foreign officials and policy experts to discuss and help resolve issues often intractable in formal diplomatic dialogues.

North Korea recently carried out its fifth nuclear weapons test and has tested ballistic missiles. Experts predict the country may soon have a nuclear weapon capable of reaching the United States. Our allies in the Asia-Pacific region are even more vulnerable to this threat. Given the difficulties of direct talks, the NCAFP has taken a leadership role in conducting Track II dialogues, particularly with neighbors Japan, South Korea and China. We are one of the few organizations working with influential former U.S. and foreign official to provide up-to-date assessments on North Korean activity and decision making.

U.S.-China ties – characterized by both cooperation and competition – remain at the top of our agenda. The United States must be careful not to let China interpret certain policy decisions as efforts to contain Chinese growth or regional leadership, but it must be made clear that America does not plan to disengage in the region now or in the future. Understanding the nuanced relationship, the NCAFP regularly holds Track II meetings with Chinese experts and former officials to increase transparency and promote strategic dialogue on strategic interests, including North Korea.

Tensions between the United States and Russia are the highest since the end of the Cold War. Russian intervention is problematic in regions where the United States is invested in being a partner for peace and stability, notably, Syria and Ukraine. The liberal world order that both Russia and the West adhered to after the Cold War is fraying. Understanding the need to clearly define rules of the road for the future, the NCAFP launched a new initiative involving Russia to manage our differences and determine possible areas for cooperation. Our Track II U.S.-Russia-Japan trilateral dialogue, for example, explored areas for economic and security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Caprino: Finally, how do you feel that the current political situation has affected our country?

DiCarlo: It has been a long and divisive road to the 2016 presidential election. Americans underestimate the damage this campaign has done to our reputation as the world's leading democracy. The challenge not only for the next president but for all of us is to come together to address the multiple domestic problems we face and demonstrate once again the promise and vitality of America. This is the best way to lead. People around the world expect this of us.

Caprino: What do you hope your legacy will be, in dedicating your life to the advancement of foreign policy and the resolution of conflict so that peace will be possible for all?

DiCarlo: For me, it has always been more about the work at hand, the imminent challenges facing the United States not about leaving a legacy. As a career Foreign Service Officer, and an ambassador under Presidents Bush and Obama, I served only with the best interest of the United States in mind. I suppose if I had to define my legacy, this would be it – to be someone who devoted her life to this great country's purpose in the world, trying to make the world a little bit safer and better connected wherever I could. If I have inspired a single other to adopt this worldview and work within this framework, I will consider it a success.

For more information, visit <https://www.ncafp.org/>.

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