

# FLETCHER SECURITY REVIEW

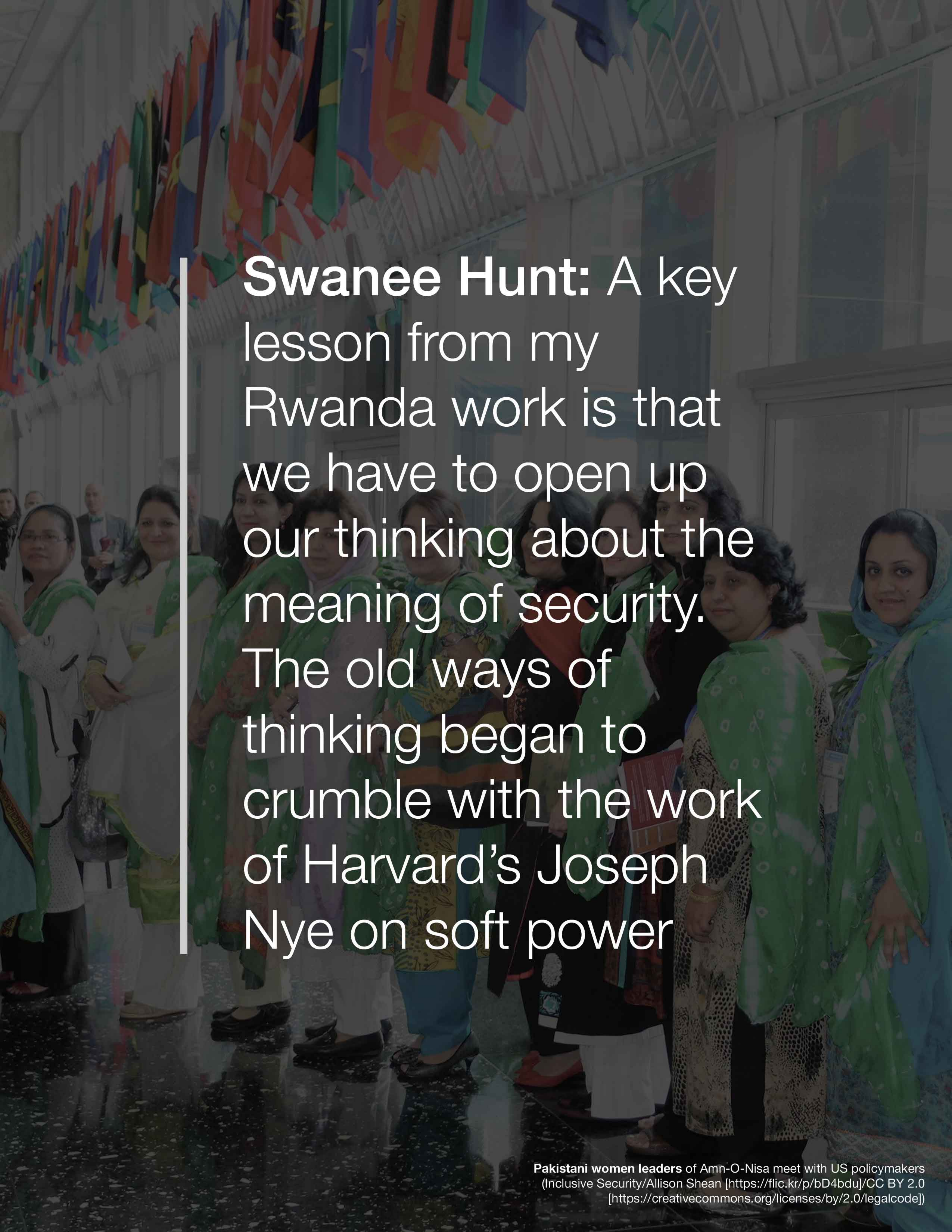
Summer 2017 | Vol. 4 No. 1



## What We Can Learn from Inclusive Security: A Conversation with Ambassador Swanee Hunt

Interviewed by Eli Stiefel





**Swanee Hunt:** A key lesson from my Rwanda work is that we have to open up our thinking about the meaning of security. The old ways of thinking began to crumble with the work of Harvard's Joseph Nye on soft power



# What We Can Learn from Inclusive Security

## A Conversation with Ambassador Swanee Hunt

---

Interviewed by Eli Stiefel

**Fletcher Security Review:** Ambassador Hunt, it is no understatement that you have had many adventures in your life and career. You worked as a civic leader in Denver, Colorado championing causes such as homeless and mental health. You served as the US Ambassador to Austria from 1993–1997, where you were a strong voice for early intervention to protect the people and avert genocide in neighboring Yugoslavia. You founded Harvard University’s Women and Public Policy Program and through work at Harvard bringing together women leaders from around the globe created Women Waging Peace, which became what we know today as Inclusive Security. Through Inclusive Security, as well as through other initiatives, you have continued to push for positive and concrete changes in the daily lives of people around the globe. You have brought together people of drastically diverse backgrounds with a cohesive message to reflect on our commonalities and through this reflection find a way to move forward together through compromise and inclusion. Your message and the experiences you have to back it up are more valuable than ever. For those thinking of working in government, security, and international affairs today, what lesson have you learned that they might find most helpful?

**Swanee Hunt:** I’m thrilled to share ideas with the Tufts–Fletcher School community. Many of the students in my class at Harvard Kennedy School come from Fletcher — and they’re uniformly bright and grounded in real-world experience. So I offer these observations knowing that the audience is sophisticated and professional.

In my course on women, peace, and security, and in my years working in the field along with our Inclusive Security nonprofit in Washington, I’ve always emphasized lessons that I learned the hard way as an ambassador confronting the Balkans Wars in the 1990s. I wrote two books on the implications of the failures in those years (*Worlds Apart* and *This Was Not Our War*). My latest book, *Rwandan Women Rising*, will be published in May 2017, and it also distills learning from experiences in

Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. I hope this analysis is also relevant for pondering the problems that bedeviled our Iraq invasion, and the fallout in the Middle East since then.

At bottom is the gulf between distant policymakers and the people on the scene, between policymakers and everyday citizens. Their worlds are separated by a dangerous conceptual void.

How to bridge that gulf? I have learned the following lessons:

- 1. Test truisms.** One example is the truism that you should never negotiate with vile dictators. In fact, President Obama led a painstaking negotiation with Iran, drawing in many allies, and reached an agreement that should keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons for a generation — all without firing a shot. Truisms are often biased and unreliable.
- 2. Question stereotypes.** The most dangerous thing about stereotypes is that they exaggerate differences, even in the face of clear similarities. They can degenerate into prejudice that diminishes others. During the Vietnam War, for example, we resorted to demeaning talk about “gooks.”
- 3. Find out-of-power allies.** Get into the field and get to know those whose ideas aren’t being tapped. Real inclusive security needs all stakeholders to be fully involved in peace processes and rebuilding. My experience over three decades has emphasized the importance of women, who are usually not the primary peace promoters.
- 4. Appreciate domestic dynamics.** You’ve got to get beyond the Cabinet and the obvious power brokers to understand what’s influencing people’s feelings and thinking. Maybe there’s a drought or high inflation. NGOs are often the best source of information on these dynamics.
- 5. Find fault.** Don’t be afraid to decide who’s



right and who's wrong. Neutrality and fairness are not interchangeable. In Bosnia, fairness meant acknowledging overwhelming guilt on one side. Too many diplomats in the Balkans didn't want to assign guilt.

**6. Embrace responsibility.** As we enter an uncertain era with the Trump Administration, it's especially important to remember the responsibility that needs to accompany power. And that means responsibility for not taking action as well as for acting. The U.S. government and others bore responsibility for the non-intervention in Rwanda in 1994. And certainly, the lesson from Bosnia is we must not shirk our responsibility.

You asked for one lesson, and I gave you six! I'll try to be more terse with the rest of my answers.

**FSR:** You were born in Dallas into a society that had very different expectations for you and the person you would become than most readers would be familiar with today. Can you tell us about the environment you grew up in and when you realized you were going to dedicate your life to issues of inclusion?

**SH:** My father worked in the oil business as a "wildcatter." That means he would go out to locate oil basins by drilling experimental wells in the ground. This required a high tolerance of risk since he was drilling in areas that had no proven resources. My father didn't believe in organized philanthropy, but from him, my three siblings and I inherited this attitude of breaking new ground. For us, the issue is not whether an action is doable, but whether it needs to be done.

My father was an ardent anti-Communist and extremely conservative. I was a Goldwater Girl in 1964, as was my friend Hillary Clinton! I married young and moved to Germany and later to Denver, caught up in a decade of immense change. And I steadily changed too as I grew involved in social issues in Denver, including mental health reform and homelessness. I became almost the polar opposite of my father politically, but I absorbed his wildcatter risk-taking.

**FSR:** Inclusion is not often an issue mentioned in the national discussion about security in the United States. Though many have begun to take note of this important issue in the security field, thanks to your work and the work of others. Where are policy makers still not getting it? Is there one area in particular that must be better understood and communicated to the general public?

**SH:** Policymakers have actually begun to get it. I'm encouraged by the global progress toward inclusiveness, at least at the policy level if not yet in practice. Hillary Clinton was an essential ally when she was Secretary of State. She had been an early advocate of inclusion as First Lady. When I was U.S. Ambassador to Austria, she came to Vienna for the first gathering of what became the Vital Voices organization, which works to make sure women are heard as stakeholders and actors, not just victims. Hillary later championed the US government's adoption in 2011 of our National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This is the blueprint for ensuring that women and others are included as decision-makers.

The United States is among 65 or so countries that have adopted these national strategies for inclusivity. This has all happened since 2000, when the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, stating that women have to be at the table.

If there's one aspect that policymakers often still don't get, it's that we're not talking about women's issues here, and we're not talking about being fair. We are talking about effectiveness and impact. We know that if you exclude 50 percent of the population, you're ignoring a lot of brainpower and insight.

**FSR:** Given recent reductions in the U.S. aid budget, are you concerned that certain difficult and long term issues, such as the mental health problems that result from traumatic situations like earthquakes or conflict, will be lost in the shuffle? These lingering issues are often what impede development and reduce security. Where do you see the greatest threats emerging as the United States threatens to pull back from engagement with the world on these issues?

**SH:** Let me circle back to my first answer, and point to the challenge of responsibility that the United States has as the world's only superpower. I am very worried that we will withdraw from global engagement at a time of immense suffering. We ignore the global refugee crisis resulting from the crises in the Middle East and Africa at our own peril. But apart from the security risks that such isolation would cause, we also have a moral and ethical duty to contribute to stability and security in their broadest sense, which is a product of a society's well-being.

**FSR:** Based on your work with women leaders around the world, what particular strategies could be most useful in the U.S. context in regard to keeping the spotlight on issues of inclusivity and advancing women in positions of power?

**SH:** A first step would be for the Trump Administration to



reaffirm its commitment to the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security and its detailed blueprint for increasing inclusion at home and abroad. This requires not just words, but also funding to support this work. And of course, the new administration should start demonstrating its commitment to these principles at home. A good start would be to ensure significant representation of women in bodies such as the National Security Council staff, and to appoint more women to senior government positions from the cabinet on down.

**FSR:** Through your work in places such as Rwanda, you have shown that including women in government has contributed to more durable peace and more successful negotiation processes. Given that our society is very different, what lessons might we in the United States still draw from these outcomes?

**SH:** The Rwandan example is powerful for the United States. It's still astonishing to me that 64 percent of the seats in Rwanda's Parliament are held by women. The number is only 20 percent in the U.S. Congress! We rank about 100th in the world in the percentage of women in our national legislature. This is a pathetic showing. Research by our foundation's Political Parity program has developed much evidence of the obstacles blocking American women's political advancement. What Rwandan women did after the genocide offers some critical pointers: they systematically set out to capture seats in every level of governance, from the most local authorities on up. And it paid off, not only in the number of seats but also in the nature of Rwandan leadership. Women are demonstrably less corrupt in power and more sensitive to development needs, particularly education and health. The strength of women's leadership is undoubtedly one of the factors that have made Rwanda a role model for effective development in Africa.

**FSR:** Looking back at the many difficult topics we have talked about, and given the degree of polarization in the United States today, championing or even discussing these issues is incredibly difficult. Before we end our conversation, I would like to ask you about the strategies you have learned to bridge such divides. How can community and government leaders bring their constituents together to tackle these issues that affect the daily security of us all?

**SH:** A key lesson from my Rwanda work is that we have to open up our thinking about the meaning of security. The old ways of thinking began to crumble with the work of Harvard's Joseph Nye on soft power. Hillary Clinton took that further with her concept of *smart* power. We can't afford to keep envisioning our security as a matter of high walls and fighter jets and drones. The relatively new notion of human security includes food, healthcare, shelter, and also emotional ties. Going further, a new paradigm of security is going to require a new nomenclature. And that starts with recognizing that the goal is not just to end conflict, but to build peace. That means not just getting fighters to put down their arms, but to extend their arms.

And we know that building lasting peace has to involve universities, business leaders, media outlets, victims' organizations, and youth groups. The more the better. This is why we created an NGO called Inclusive Security, which has worked in 40 conflict areas. We've built a network of more than 2,000 women leaders from around the world who are active partners in their countries on behalf of the emerging doctrine of inclusive security. We are trading ideas, training policymakers in this thinking, and we are causing governments to think differently.

**FSR:** Thank you for taking the time to speak to us.

## Ambassador Swanee Hunt

Swanee Hunt is an activist, philanthropist, academic, author, and internationalist. She is the Eleanor Roosevelt Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School. She was the Founding Director of the school's Women and Public Policy Program and is currently core faculty at the Center for Public Leadership and senior advisor to the Working Group on Modern Day Slavery at the Carr Center for Human Rights. She has taught The Choreography of Social Movements at Harvard College and lectured at Harvard's business, law, divinity, and education graduate schools. Hunt also chairs the Washington-based non-profit Inclusive Security, conducting research, training, and advocacy to integrate women into peace processes. Her work in this area began when, as the US Ambassador to Austria from 1993 to 1997, she hosted negotiations and international symposia focused on stabilizing the neighboring Balkan states and advancing women's leadership in Eastern Europe. Her fourth book, *Rwandan Women Rising* will be released in May 2017 (Duke U. Press).