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### Powerful Women Birth Powerful Nations

In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was introduced by the United Nations. This treaty defines gender discrimination and introduces strategies to eliminate it. Women's rights activist Mahnaz Afkhami acknowledges “the connection between women's human rights, gender equality, socioeconomic development and peace is increasingly apparent”. When women have personal rights, they tend to seek out education and join the workforce. In turn, their dedication to an unrestrained future creates a thriving economy and an intertwined, successful society.

Since CEDAW, many countries have taken action to immediately prevent gender inequality in both the workplace and in society. India has worked to eliminate discrimination against women and outlawed sexual harassment among the working class. In Turkey, women can keep their maiden name and personally manage their earned wages. The Israeli government is allocating funds for breast cancer screenings. Also, Guatemala, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom have improved maternity leave and child care for working women. Former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon noted in the UN itself, “the number of women in senior posts has increased by 40 percent”.

Nations that grant reproductive rights and pass non-discrimination legislation tend to follow a pattern. These countries not only have low unemployment rates, but are wealthy, and their citizenry are highly educated and healthy. According to The Guardian’s “Women’s Rights Country by Country” study, women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have the most citizenship, property, and abortion rights compared to women worldwide. And according to the United Nations’ 2013 data, these countries have more reproductive rights, significantly fewer children, and shrinking maternal mortality rates. It is no coincidence that several of these countries, such as the United Kingdom, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, and Denmark, have had female heads of state. Therefore, anti-

discrimination laws and women's control over their bodies are key factors in a nation's prosperity.

According to Maureen E. Halton, a World Politics professor at Mount Holyoke College, gender equality inspires women to pursue a higher education. In 1947, 30% of U.S. undergraduates were women. Today, that percentage is over 58%. Professor Halton accredits this increase in women pursuing higher education to the Equal Rights Amendment, a higher average age of marriage, and the introduction of Women's Studies in education.

With access to birth control and birthing fewer children, women can further their studies and contribute to a more skilled workforce. A smarter and larger working class means a country can prosper economically and improve society for future generations. Women's rights and education tie to "guns or butter", the concept that a country must decide to increase their military or support their consumers. If a nation focuses on enlightening the working class, there must be a lower drive on military dominance. Therefore, advocating for women to pursue higher education and acknowledging women's unalienable rights can establish peace in a thriving nation. As Akhemi confirms, when nations enforce women's rights such as reproduction, equal pay, and an opportunity for higher education, a country's economy and society prosper.

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