I have a split personality these days. On Mondays and Wednesdays, I give speeches on work and family -- and the changes America needs to make to enable more professional women to get to the top. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I teach a course on the politics of public policy and give speeches about a wide range of foreign-policy issues. My audiences for the work-and-family talks are often interested in foreign policy as well, but for most people in my foreign-policy audiences, that "work/family stuff" is a completely separate arena, a sideline at best. Sure, individual women and men will often tell me privately that they appreciated the essay I wrote for the Atlantic this summer on why I gave up my high-profile State Department job to return to Princeton University and my two teenage sons, but they see no real connection with the foreign-policy world.

They're wrong. The connection is there, and it's a very important one: If more women could juggle work and family successfully enough to allow them to remain on high-powered foreign-policy career tracks, more women would be available for top foreign-policy jobs. And that would change the world far more than you think, from giving peace talks a better chance to making us better able to mobilize international coalitions to reordering what issues governments even choose to work on.

My decision to talk in such specific gender terms is still deeply uncomfortable for many. Foreign policy is a very male world. The women who have made it are a small and close club, all committed to advancing the careers of younger women and worried that even engaging in this conversation could make it harder to break those glass ceilings. Some argue that as long as some women can juggle high-powered careers and kids at the same time, others should just follow their example and get on with the work. Others argue that my analysis shouldn't be so globalized because it is based on my own unique situation, suggesting that I should have moved my family to Washington.

Perhaps. But the larger issue is not about me. It's about the numbers. Even with Hillary Clinton as the third woman secretary of state in the last dozen years, the line of top female foreign-policy professionals in Barack Obama's administration is one woman thick. I can think of only a handful of qualified women who were not tapped for senior foreign-policy jobs under Obama (some of whom chose not to enter government for kid-related reasons). Some men, of course, opt off the Washington fast track for family reasons too; the pace of top jobs is exhausting, if exhilarating, for everyone involved. But for every man who leaves, another man is waiting in the wings. For every woman who steps down to spend more time with her family (for real!), the next president is going to have to look very hard and perhaps even order in "binders full of women" if he wants to keep his administration from being a boys' club.

But so what? Does it matter if the president has an all-testosterone team shaping America's place in the world? I'm sure it does, and in ways that hinder the country's ability to address the
complex new challenges of our 21st-century planet. More than a decade after 19 men armed merely with box cutters and their own radical convictions struck at the heart of the most awesome military power in world history, we are only now beginning to focus on societies as well as on states as part of the core foreign-policy agenda. The world of states is still the world of high politics, hard power, realpolitik, and, largely, men. The world of societies is still too often the world of low politics, soft power, human rights, democracy, and development, and, largely, women.

Let me be clear. I am not saying that women are not perfectly capable of realpolitik chess-game strategizing about how to best adversaries and counter potential threats in the world of state power. And some men, of course, do focus on a wide range of social, economic, and humanitarian issues. But many women are more likely than many men to see the world from the bottom up and connect the dots, for example, between America's living up to its word by preventing mass killing on a horrific scale in supporting the Libyan opposition against a murderous regime and beginning to change perceptions of the United States among young people not only in Libya but across the Middle East. And women add sheer diversity to the mix of issues we should rate as important; I well remember the horror of a male colleague at the idea that we would be working on food security, one of Clinton's priorities.

Biological and sociological explanations abound for these differences; time and neuroscience will tell. In the meantime, the president and the country would be better served if both perspectives were equally represented in any decision-making process. Judging from Foreign Policy's list of the top 50 foreign-policy Democrats, we have a problem. Below cabinet level, it is men who surround the president as foreign-policy advisors. Only one woman from inside the White House is even listed.

Formal position and actual influence are not the same thing, of course. Still, a bigger pool of eligible women would help. The core problem is that precisely when men in their early thirties are taking positions as National Security Council directors, speechwriters, or special assistants -- jobs that prepare them for more senior positions -- women are having children and stepping out, not up. Addressing that problem requires systemwide change. Ambitious parents need more flexibility in how, where, and when they work, including the ability to work less or even not at all for a period. Equally important, they will need employers -- starting with the president -- who don't view this kind of zigzag career path as a lack of commitment or professionalism, but instead value both their experience as parents and their determination to live up to the full range of their responsibilities.

From medicine to education, many young women are now choosing a career based in part on how family-friendly it is. Foreign policy does not rate highly on this score; by definition, it involves endless amounts of travel and a work schedule at the mercy of world events. That cannot be changed. But a lot of other things can be. If we want to see and solve the full range of national and global problems, rather than a selective and sometimes distorted set of them, it's time to make family and foreign policy work together.