

THE FEMININE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

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Executive Summary

For the past century, one focus of study in warfare has been operational art—that level of understanding above tactics which brings doctrine, strategy, and operations to bear in a conflict. And it is safe to say that doctrine, strategy, and operations all favor masculine approaches to conflict. However, cognitive science, linguistic study, organizational science, and anthropology all point to the contrasting but complementary characteristics of the masculine and the feminine. The hypermasculinity of the military, while obviously appropriate, necessary, and indeed critical in tactical situations, has hampered commanders' broad vision of past military actions and stands to hinder a favorable outcome in the current and future conflicts. While military authorities are noting the growing importance of qualities like empathy and intuition in soldiering—qualities inherent in the feminine—the military maintains policies which restrict the presence of women, as the feminine, in both military operations and strategy. Historical and contemporary examples clearly show the value of the feminine in woman-centered cognition, interaction, and strategies—value which could easily translate into more effective ways of approaching Department of Defense (DOD) missions and greater success in military actions. Clearly, military implementation of inherently masculine systemic approaches to war-fighting would be much more likely to meet with success, even in the realm of military operations, if fully complemented by feminine empathetic and communicative skills.

During an episode of the cable TV series *Mad Men*—set in the 1950s—a grandfather and World War I veteran reaches into a box of memorabilia to find a battle souvenir. “This was the helmet of a Prussian soldier; finest soldiers in the world,” he comments to his grandson, who is about seven years old. While talking, the grandfather pokes his finger through a bullet hole in the helmet.

“Did you kill him, grandpa?”

“Probably,” he answers, “we killed a lot of them.”

“War is bad,” says the little boy.

“Maybe,” says grandpa, “but it’ll make a man out of you.”

Few will argue about the admiration Americans share for those who step forward to serve in the armed forces, under oath—those who are willing to step into the fight and train hard to do so skillfully. In addition, few will argue that the same willingness to fight and war-fighting skills are aspects of the construction of American masculine identity: “they’ll make a man out of you.” Yet military operations have always required much more than just technical skill. Whether the battles of a century ago or today’s battles in Iraq and Afghanistan, winning the battle *and* the war requires both the hard science of technical skill and the softer sciences which help us understand motivation, perspective, culture, and determination. Such all-encompassing considerations fall within the realm of military operational art.

In his January 2009 *Joint Forces Quarterly* article, “Systems versus Classical Approach to Warfare,” Prof. Milan Vego of the Naval War College approaches the question of operational art by pointing out that planners and practitioners of warfare “clearly confuse the distinctions between the nature of war and character of war,” where the “nature of war refers to constant, universal, and inherent qualities that ultimately define war throughout the ages, such as violence, chance, luck, friction, and uncertainty,” and where the “character of war refers to those transitory, circumstantial, and adaptive features that account for the different periods of warfare. They are primarily determined by sociopolitical and historical conditions in a certain era as well as technological advances.”¹ This author proposes that as a nation we have long overlooked a fundamental issue that bridges the nature and character of war—a characteristic that is so unflinchingly and unquestioningly taken for granted, we have yet to critically examine its applicability in both the nature of war and the character of war as we now know them. It is this author’s opinion that the self-same masculine institutional identity that brings to the battle the willingness to fight and the combatant fighting skill—the qualities that will “make a man out of you”—has resulted in entrenched thinking that has limited our ability to prevail against a low-tech, insurgent enemy.

The connection among males, masculinity, and the military is as American as the “Star-Spangled Banner”—which is to say, Americans have operated on the assumption that it is women’s feminine role to sew the star-spangled banner and men’s masculine role to defend it. What is remarkable is the fact that this notion persists, despite the well over two million women veterans in the United States. One semantic difficulty here is that males and masculinity, and women and femininity, have been so conflated as to be inextricable. If we are able to consider masculinity and femininity apart from their associations with male and female, we can begin to tease out the qualities which connote the masculine and the feminine, thereby delineating qualities and perspectives which can be considered in a discussion of the character and the nature of war. Both men and women, after all, carry both masculine and feminine traits. What we must ask ourselves is how these traits can be realized and distinguished so as to improve results in the theater of war.

The last two decades have seen quite a boom in the study of masculinity. In his book *Manhood in America*, Michael Kimmel points to the importance men

place upon proving themselves to other men (homosocial enactment). “How has American history been shaped by the efforts to test and prove manhood,” he asks, “the wars we Americans have waged, the frontier we have tamed, the work we have done, the leaders we admire?”²² Despite the fact that masculinity scholars do not necessarily point to the military as the definitively masculine model for American males, the qualities of the military certainly mesh point-by-point with the individual characteristics scholars use to collectively define masculinity: willingness or even a desire to fight, homosocial enactment together with an acculturated sense of power and hierarchy, and subordination of the feminine.³ Most importantly, as Kimmel points out in his 2003 essay, “Whatever the variations by race, class, age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, being a man means ‘not being like women.’ This notion of anti-femininity lies at the heart of contemporary and historical conceptions of manhood, so that masculinity is defined more by what one is not rather than who one is.”⁴ Femininity has been less often and less clearly defined but has consistently been associated with the tasks of the home, with connection, and with community. Even these associations between the masculine and feminine, however, have evolved and continue to evolve as “sociopolitical and historical”⁵ conditions change.

The military clearly relies upon the contemporary notions of masculinity and its requisite “anti-femininity”⁶ in its organizational structure and specifically in the limits placed upon women in the military. As Frels points out in her Army War College analysis of the current DOD policy, “All of the reasons that support the current policy [restricting women’s roles] have one common thread: they are all based on supposition and beliefs rather than facts.”⁷ Such limitations on women occur at the nexus of masculinity as an aspect of both the nature of war and the character of war. Specifically, as an element of the nature of war, masculine notions of contest have ubiquitously driven both military offensives and defenses; as an element of the character of war, societal attitudes toward women in the military are “transitory, circumstantial, and adaptive features that account for the different periods of warfare.”⁸ During World War II, for example, women in countries the world over were incorporated into various missions—combatant and noncombatant—as necessary for that period of warfare, but were expected to return to their feminine domestic sphere upon cessation of hostilities. Even in the space of the last three decades, acceptable roles for women (as the embodiment of the feminine) in the US military have been “determined by sociopolitical and historical conditions . . . as well as technological advances.”⁹ The 1993 removal of some combat restrictions, particularly as regards high-tech aircraft and ships, for example, was a product of both increasing sociopolitical pressure and technological advances which rendered physiological justifications irrelevant.

The Sociopolitical and Historical Condition

In considering the relevance of the masculine and the feminine as elements of today’s American military, it is important to remember that some attitudes

stem from a post–World War II and Cold War anomaly: the view that the United States needed a standing army. Kimmel points out that, as of the turn of the twentieth century, many believed “decades of peace had made American men effeminate and effete; only by being constantly at war could frontier masculinity be retrieved.”¹⁰ That masculinity was retrieved by the end of World War II, and a standing army would provide that state of being constantly at war that would drive, consciously or not, American masculine ideals. As we saw in the 1990s, the United States military fairly floundered in its sole superpower status because it was no longer at war, wasn’t content with the high tempo of peace operations such as peacekeeping and nation building, and didn’t have a named enemy against which it could fight, or at least compare itself, for military or ideological superiority. This is one reason the military incessantly prepares for the last war—it needs to have a yardstick against which to feel superior in firepower; or, since many of the last wars are conflicts we didn’t win, perhaps fighting the last war is a “do over,” in a sense, in order to prove belated superiority. As we have seen in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and as we saw in the war in Vietnam, the nature of war is such that superiority in firepower and technology, which are elements of the character of war, have little to do with prevailing in conflict.

Interestingly, during WWII all of America’s assets, including its workforce of women, were brought to bear. In fact, as many women served in uniform during World War II as there are people—men *and* women—in the entire US Air Force of 2010. And, of course, that total doesn’t include women in the Office of Strategic Services (whose ranks included famed chef Julia Child, who was too tall for the Women’s Army Corps); women working with the Manhattan Project; women building tanks, ships, and aircraft; and thousands if not hundreds of thousands of other women who contributed directly or indirectly to that war effort. In other words, the wartime enterprise was so massive and its mission so overarching that the presence of the feminine as embodied in this gargantuan female workforce, though not without its problems, was largely seen as a grand form of teamwork—women’s and men’s talents complemented one another when applied to a common overarching goal. In addition, since the nation had not formerly known a standing army, all—male and female—assumed that they would fight the good fight and then return to the same jobs, homes, and roles they had before the war. The inherently masculine nature of the military was not in question as “our boys” battled against the Axis powers; and the more feminine talents, as embodied in Rosie the Riveter (who, interestingly, was a symbol of slightly masculinized feminine strength), were considered both necessary for the war effort and transient.

Today, however, women are joining a standing army which is home to a masculine identity that has become deeply embedded, both in the military’s institutional ethos and in the American public’s perception of the institution of the military. Since World War II, women’s presence in the military has been tolerated at best, and gay men—apparently perceived as harboring elements of the feminine—are today completely unwelcome. In his book *From Chivalry to*

Terrorism, Braudy observes, "Like previous efforts in the United States to keep out women, blacks, and, elsewhere, Jews, Gypsies, or other minority groups, the assumption is that [homosexual men] are 'feminine.' Because they lack the virile qualities necessary to engage the enemy, their mere presence will undermine camaraderie, loyalty, and the fighting will of the heterosexuals who stand in the trenches with them."¹¹

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, women's presence as a percentage of the services was limited, and women could not marry or have children and remain in the service. The military's limited tolerance for the presence of the female, as feminine, was especially apparent in the 1970s, when the social progress of that era's women's movement provided a stark contrast to the severe restrictions placed upon the few women in the military. As a case in point, it was during the 1970s that military leadership openly resisted women's presence at the military service academies. Having crossed the threshold of the twenty-first century, the well-documented problems of sexual assault and harassment at the military service academies and in our current theaters of war demonstrate continued resistance to the presence of women as the feminine. Were women perceived as full partners with men in military service, the dictates of all leadership training and even unofficial rules of camaraderie would ensure their safety and inclusion. Yet, as masculinity scholars point out, masculine identity virtually requires subordination of the feminine. Therefore, though the institutional identity of the military should value the more constructive task cohesion required to complete a mission, higher emphasis is placed on a destructive level of social cohesion which, probably unconsciously, places higher priority on maintenance of masculine identity than it does on protection of the mission and all who contribute to it.

Even today women are still forbidden to serve in many military specialties, including most of special operations, battle tanks, and infantry—the most masculine of specialties. Since it is individuals from such combat specialties who are promoted into the highest positions of leadership, such as the leadership of major commands and joint component commands, both women and the more feminine perspectives involving community building, empathy, and cooperation have been carefully filtered from the positions most involved in strategic thinking, operational planning, and force structuring. The heart of this issue is this: women's participation in the military, hence the presence of the feminine, has been limited because of women's polarity from the masculine. What the military has yet to realize is that it has limited its own ability to prevail by filtering out women as a category of persons together with the most useful propensities of the feminine. Specifically, the military has limited its capacity to employ qualities unique to women and the feminine which would be particularly useful in conflicts like those in Iraq and Afghanistan: interpersonal communication skills that could build support in-country and make intelligence and information gathering much more fruitful, empathetic skills that could help the military better understand and act against its opponents and bolster its allies, community building skills which could go far in the effort to help the

communities of Iraq and Afghanistan become self-sufficient, and a capacity for understanding the importance of those subjective and unpredictable aspects of war fighting and conflict that influence operations and can become integral to victory in the long run.

The following anecdote illustrates the latter point. Early into the post-Cold War era a young officer was approached at an officers' club by a man who had overheard her talking with friends. "Did I hear you say you were a missileer?" he asked. "Yes—you heard right." He then told her about nuclear inspection opportunities at what was then the On Site Inspection Agency (OSIA), now the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. "We've found out that women do really well in nuclear arms control work in Russia in ways that men just can't." The difference stemmed from a contrasting set of cultural assumptions about women, as well as women's ability to judge the efficacy and veracity of information they had gathered. Women, the OSIA had discovered, bring unique qualities to the job. This is, by the way, a realization which corporations have discovered via their bottom line, rather than by sociological theory.

To raise a slightly more abstract, but more current, example, in his criticism of Field Manual (FM) 3-0 Gian Gentile notes that "the recently released current version of FM 3-0 states that, for the commander, operational art involves 'knowing when and if simultaneous combinations [of offense, defense, and stability operations] are appropriate and feasible.'"¹² Gentile is openly hostile to doctrine which elevates any consideration above what he sees as the Army's priority: "Fighting and winning the nation's wars." "By placing nationbuilding as its core competency over fighting," he writes, "our Army is beginning to lose its way, and we court strategic peril as a result."

At the heart of Gentile's concern, a concern shared by many others, is the blunting of essential tactical skills, such as infantry, artillery fire, and tank combat—skills that are, without question, essential to a standing army. Men are particularly well suited for both those tactical skills and the hierarchical structure of the military. This assertion is borne out by findings within social, psychological, and linguistic investigations, which have consistently observed male predisposition to contest and hierarchy, as well as the operation of mechanical systems and even systems of thinking such as military strategy. Yet no one has asked a simple question: if men are predisposed to contest and are therefore uniquely suited to military combat and fighting, to what parallel quality are women predisposed and what role can it play in winning the nation's wars? Gentile indulges in the logical fallacy of false dichotomy: tactical skills and nation building skills within an institution as large as the military—or across government and nongovernment agencies—are not, as Gentile implies, mutually exclusive, unless of course your institutional predisposition resents, and therefore resists, their inclusivity. In other words, the masculine prides itself on suitability for tactical skills, has carried the enshrinement of the masculine nature of those tactical-level skills into the operational and strategic spheres, and has therefore limited itself in its ability to perform functions which it now realizes it needs and has written into doctrine "such things as establish local governance,

conduct information operations, build economies and service infrastructure, and provide security, all of which are elements of building a nation.”¹³

Following the American penchant for technology, then, fighting skills are critical and the United States has superior tactical skills and equipment, yet in nine years it has been unable to secure Afghanistan, and Iraq is but limping toward democracy and self-sufficiency. Gentile and others would argue that is because the military has neglected its true function: fighting. Yet others have noted that the technical and technological skills are, in and of themselves, simply insufficient in conflicts such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. In his essay “Clausewitz and World War IV,” retired Maj Gen Robert Scales addresses this directly, pointing out that “victory will be defined more in terms of capturing the psycho-cultural rather than the geographical high ground. Understanding and empathy will be important weapons of war. Soldier conduct will be as important as skill at arms. Culture awareness and the ability to build ties of trust will offer protection to our troops more effectively than body armor.”¹⁴

This author would argue that the military’s self-imposed limitations on the presence of women, as well as its lack of strategic appreciation for the wisdom of the feminine in the countries we invade and occupy, has placed concomitantly self-imposed limitations on its ability to break away from entrenched methods of thinking. Scales, for example, in discussing the contributions of social science to victory in conflict enumerates nine areas in which soldiers must improve their social science skills. One of the critical skills he names is the value of tactical intelligence: “The value of tactical intelligence—knowledge of the enemy’s actions or intentions sufficiently precise and timely to kill him—has been demonstrated in Iraq and Afghanistan. Killing power is of no use unless a soldier on patrol knows who to kill,” he notes. In Afghanistan in particular, fully half the population can pinpoint the enemy with tremendous accuracy, yet they are not valued as allies. In her book *Veiled Threat: The Hidden Power of the Women of Afghanistan*, Sally Armstrong notes that even today little has changed since the rule of the Taliban for the women of Afghanistan who were once quite free to be educated, dress as they liked, work where they liked, and move about as they liked. “They told me they’re still poor, they haven’t seen any of the UN money everyone is talking about, and Al-Qaeda members still roam the streets and scowl at the women when they walk by,” Armstrong notes.¹⁵ Were the United States to provide security and safety for those women and their families, value their contributions, and not write off their inhumane treatment as a cultural norm, security and victory would be close at hand. The military must, as Scales expounds, think and operate in new ways and with new perspectives.

Systems and Empathy

One way to think in new ways and with new perspectives is to change the pool of people to whom you turn while devising your strategies and implementing them. As noted earlier, industry has done this quite well. In industry, diversity is not a compliance issue or a public relations issue; it is a matter of

corporate and fiscal success. The last thing that the most creative of industries want is the kind of homogeneity of training and thought that one finds in the military. It is well proven that this homogeneity has its usefulness in a highly disciplined organization like the military, but the military would be prudent to note that such sameness has its down side as well. One inherent difference of perspectives the military should exploit resides in the difference between male and female thought processes and ways of knowing.

In his book *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain*, Simon Baron-Cohen boils the difference between the two down to this: “The female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems.”¹⁶ For too many years, women’s predisposition for empathy—some men complain women are “too emotional” to be in the stressful situations of war—has been interpreted as weakness. Together with the fact that empathy, or emotion, is a feminine trait, weakness and empathy are, in the masculine military environment, unthinkable. Yet military thinkers like General Scales are pinpointing the value of empathy in current and future conflict, as though we do not already have access to it via the thousands of women on active duty and the hundreds of thousands of women in the countries we have invaded and occupied.

In a military environment populated by males and imbued with masculine identity, naturally the thinking will be as Baron-Cohen stipulates: system oriented. Women’s talk is very relationship oriented, argues Baron-Cohen, and men’s very systems oriented, with an emphasis on topics like technology, traffic and routes, power tools, and computer systems. “Systemizing,” he says, “is the drive to understand a system and to build one. By a system, I do not just mean a machine. . . . Nor do I even just mean things that you can build (like a house, a town, or a legal code). I mean by a system anything which is governed by rules specifying input-operation-output relationships,” to include military strategy.¹⁷ This assertion fits perfectly into Vego’s skepticism of the military penchant for theories and strategies like effects-based operations and systemic operational design, even well-respected analyses postulating that the enemy can be stopped if a strategy attacks the right nodes in a “system of systems.”¹⁸ While some of these systemic treatments of military operations acknowledge the importance of human response, they do not, and cannot, accurately account for the unpredictability of human response.

Greater receptiveness to the properties of the feminine, however, may help with this aspect of conflict. Baron-Cohen notes that women’s empathetic skills are cognitive and affective. As he points out, “the cognitive component entails setting aside your own current perspective, attributing a mental state (sometimes called an ‘attitude’) to the other person, and then inferring the likely content of their mental state, given their experience. The cognitive component also allows you to *predict* the other person’s behavior or mental state” (emphasis in original).¹⁹ The affective component involves the emotional response to the cognitive component—sympathy, for example.

But the presence of women does not equate to the presence of the strengths of the feminine. This is partly due to the fact that systemic (masculine) thinking tends to discount alternative thinking. As Baron-Cohen points out, "If the other person makes a suggestion, boys are more likely to reject it out of hand by saying, 'Rubbish,' or 'No, it's not,' or more rudely, 'That's stupid.' It is as if the more male style is to assume that there is an objective picture of reality, which happens to be *their* version of the truth. The more female approach seems to be to assume from the outset that there might be subjectivity in the world."²⁰ This masculine "objective picture of reality," combined with the reality of military hierarchy, which silences subordinates, severely limits receptiveness to alternative perspectives, especially feminine perspectives, at a time when new thinking is sorely needed.²¹

With this in mind, let's look again, as but one example, at that list of functions in FM 3-0: "establish local governance, conduct information operations, build economies and service infrastructure, and provide security." Interestingly, these functions are named in a manner consistent with Baron-Cohen's assertion that men are "hard-wired for understanding and building systems"—all those elements are, after all, systems. Clearly nation building is a priority for national security, and clearly national security and nation building are both matters of building systems, specifically government, information operations, economic systems, systems of infrastructure, and presumably physical security. However, scratch the surface of each of these systems and you quickly discover the need to understand people's experiences, knowledge base, ideologies, concerns, history, needs, and priorities—all of which require the ability to interact with and accurately "read" the people involved. Those systems have just entered the feminine realm: empathy.

Such fuzzy factors, as some might call them, have been increasingly acknowledged by those who have been able to reflect on their personal experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like Scales, both Niel Smith and John Patch, military members and veterans of military operations in Iraq, acknowledge the importance of more human problems and disparage the lack of preparation their military training gave them for such human understanding—for empathy. Smith, having returned to Germany from Iraq in 2004, bemoans the fact that "a year of operations in Baghdad and three months fighting the first Sadr rebellion made it clear to me that our strategies and methods were inadequate to meet the demands of the environment."²² As he explored the literature of counter-insurgency, specifically the experience of Vietnam, he was dismayed to learn that the Army "failed to realize the fight was for the loyalty of the population, which we had placed secondary to engaging the enemy in battle."²³ In other words, the military possessed a model—a system—for engaging in battle but did not have a model, or system, for engaging the people. Similarly, Patch learned the value of understanding "fundamental regional human problems"²⁴ in the Balkans, not from his military training, but by reading David Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*, which gave Patch an invaluable sense of cultural awareness that could otherwise have come only from engagement with the people of the Balkans,

on the ground in the Balkans—what the Army now euphemistically calls the “human terrain.” “The great gift of *Balkan Ghosts* is its insights into the simple, powerful lesson that it is all about the people: their history, passions (good and bad), collective guilt, rulers, gods, food, drink, festivals, and, of course, their fears. Neither expansive technology nor unlimited funds (or boots on the ground) can trump the basic truism that it is about the people,” writes Patch.²⁵

To what generalization do these realities point? In this author’s studied opinion, military implementation of inherently masculine systemic skills is much more likely to meet with success, even in the realm of military operations, if fully complemented by feminine empathetic and communicative skills. As Robert Gates pointed out in a 2008 speech at National Defense University, “Never neglect the psychological, cultural, political, and human dimensions of warfare, which is inevitably tragic, inefficient, and uncertain. Be skeptical of systems analysis, computer models, game theories, or doctrines that suggest otherwise. Look askance at idealized, triumphalist, or ethnocentric notions of future conflict.” It is the masculine propensity for creating and maintaining the military system, together with a more feminine empathetic analysis and involvement, that can move closer to performing the daunting challenge posed by Secretary of Defense Gates.

So, what is hampering the military’s ability to employ the best of what its own feminine presence has to offer? Quite simply, the Department of Defense is hampering itself. Scales observes that

strategic success will come not from grand sweeping maneuvers but rather from a stacking of local successes, the sum of which will be a shift in the perceptual advantage—the tactical *schwerpunkt*, the point of decision, will be very difficult to see and especially to predict. As seems to be happening in Iraq, for a time the enemy may well own the psycho-cultural high ground and hold it effectively against American technological dominance. Perceptions and trust are built among people, and people live on the ground. Thus, future wars will be decided principally by ground forces, specifically the Army, Marine Corps, Special Forces and the various reserve formations that support them.²⁶

The place where General Scales argues empathic and intuitive skills are most needed is precisely the place where military women are not permitted: in ground infantry and special forces units.

Were women and the strengths of the feminine appreciated and valued, women of the American military and civilian women in the theaters of war would be invaluable resources in both accruing “local successes” and building trust.

Women’s ability to build trust, gain local successes, and even glean intelligence derives from Louann Brizendine’s notion of “emotional congruence.” Brizendine, psychiatrist and author of *The Female Brain*, notes that women are naturally suited to establishing emotional congruence²⁷—the ability to mirror and understand “the hand gestures, body postures, breathing rates, gazes, and facial expressions of other people as a way of intuiting what they are feeling. . . . This is the secret of intuition, the bottom line of a woman’s ability to mind-read.”²⁸ Emotional congruence, however, requires close involvement with oth-

ers over time, both of which are anathema to a masculine and technologically focused military that prefers to exert force for a quick win, rather than invest in face-to-face interaction over time. In addition, while skeptics might be inclined to argue that such a skill does not translate across cultures, as in a wartime environment, Baron-Cohen and his research colleagues found otherwise. In the United States many law enforcement officers for example, male and female, develop such skills over the course of experience. Such skills are not, however, “issued” to infantry soldiers.

Another way to think about these fuzzy problems was put forward by Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment researcher Barry Watts. Watts notes in his report *US Combat Training, Operational Art, and Strategic Competence: Problems and Opportunities* that “tactical problems are ‘tame’ in that they generally have definite solutions in an engineering sense. So-called ‘wicked’ problems are fundamentally social ones. They are ill-structured, open-ended, and not amenable to closed, engineering solutions. Operational and strategic problems appear to lie within the realm of wicked or messy problems.” Comparing Watts’s findings with those of Baron-Cohen, one might come to the conclusion that women, with empathetic thought processes geared to social issues, would offer valuable insights in complement to the “closed, engineering” or, as Baron-Cohen would posit, “systemic” solutions to operational and strategic problems. Watts goes on to point out that “because human brains exhibit only two fundamental cognitive modes—intuition based on pattern recognition, and the deliberate reasoning associated most closely with the cerebral cortex—the logical place to locate a cognitive boundary between the intuitive and reasoned responses in terms of the traditional levels of war—tactics, operational art, strategy—is between tactics and operational art.”²⁹ Perhaps, then, full cognitive understanding of all levels of war would be better served with both masculine and feminine thought processes on the job. This notion is substantiated when, with his model for a cognitive divide between intuition and reasoning on the table, Watts states, “the cognitive skills underlying tactical expertise differ fundamentally from those demanded of operational artists and competent strategists.”³⁰ Again, weeding women and the feminine from the level of strategy and operational art via tactical exclusions is fundamentally limiting the military’s ability to develop well-considered strategy and operational art.

Given the American military’s Western predisposition, it naturally defers to Clausewitzian views of the nature and character of war and operational art. Students of military strategy would do well to also consider the precepts of Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*. Sun Tzu addresses the more masculine logical and systemic requirements of armies and warfare. He also, however, shows respect for what may be regarded as the more feminine, empathetic elements. Consider the applicability of empathy, emotional congruence, and subjectivity to the following:

- “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

- “All warfare is based in deception.”
- “We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted with the designs of our neighbors.”
- “There are not more than five primary colors (blue, yellow, red, white, and black), yet in combination they produce more hues than can ever be seen.”

The more masculine inclination would be to “know the enemy and know yourself,” for example, according to demographics: numbers of troops, pieces of equipment, firepower, and logistical limitations. The more feminine inclination would be to “know the enemy and know yourself” according to will, motivation, and support on the home front. As a non-Western thinker, Sun Tzu saw the importance of empathy and emotional congruence, though by other names, in his principles of war.

Possibility and Precedent

So how might some of these attributes of the feminine play out in less theoretical, more practical ways? The list of tasks derived from FM 3-0, *Information Operations*, for instance, subsumes skills in the field of influence operations, and influence operations are based on communication, facial expression, perception, and interpretation, to name a few characteristics. Economic systems writ large start with micro elements of the system, such as incentives to Afghan farmers to replace poppy crops with something less harmful, and communicating the notion that opiates are “harmful” requires those farmers to experience a level of empathy. Economic systems also thrive on small loans to individual entrepreneurs, and programs involving micro-loans to women have been remarkably successful in India, Africa, and the Middle East. Systems of infrastructure are important, but how do you prioritize which infrastructure project should come first? Logical analyses of population density, existing repairable infrastructure, and availability of new equipment are irrelevant in an area which is still populated by thieves, vandals, and insurgents. How do you know the thieves, vandals, and insurgents are present? I assure you the sorely neglected women of those communities, who are trying desperately to care for their children and the elderly, will know. And they would be more likely to confide it to another woman than to a man who appears much more threatening. One might also discover the existing threats to physical security in the course of the right kind of conversation with the same women.

As many in the military have finally realized, the DOD role in peacekeeping and nation building is a reality that the military must deal with, is trying to deal with, and yet is obviously not comfortable with. However, long marginalized because of the “women in combat” question, women’s feminine inclinations toward cooperative strategies and community focus, properly viewed, may play a large role in the talents needed for nation building and peacekeeping. Consider the following examples.

In 1986, when she finished basic training, the Army sent Eli PaintedCrow, nicknamed “Taco” because of her ability to speak Spanish, to Honduras as an interpreter. The United States was building bases and airstrips in the country to help the Hondurans fight the Sandinistas. “She would mingle with the Hondurans when she could, curious to get to know them and uneasy about whether her government was in the right,” writes Helen Benedict, author of *The Lonely Soldier*. The US military knows by now that operational success is limited if the people among whom we operate are not friendly to our intentions. Or as Sun Tzu put it, “We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted with the designs of our neighbors.” PaintedCrow could see such problems brewing, but the “intelligence” she had gathered was shrugged off.

Benedict also writes about women serving in Iraq. Separately they complained about being told they were going to Iraq to help the Iraqis, to liberate them; yet they had little or no training regarding Iraqi culture or way of life. From a masculine frame of reference, if you’re going over to “help” people, then you’re either (1) going over to kill the bad guys, so how much do you need to know? or (2) already superior and simply have to tell them what to do and how to do it. From the feminine perspective, empathy and understanding are important elements if one intends to “help” someone.

To take a more historical example, such skills employed by Sacagawea rescued the Lewis and Clark expedition from oblivion on a number of occasions. In her book *Ladies of Liberty*, Cokie Roberts notes several entries in William Clark’s journals which pay tribute to Sacagawea’s many skills, including interpersonal ones. Her knowledge of the edible roots, berries, and vegetables across the West saved the group from disease, if not starvation, on a number of occasions. On several more occasions Clark points out that “the wife of Charbonneau our interpreter we find reconciles all the Indians as to our friendly intentions,” and that Sacagawea forged friendships in the various tribes, thereby discovering shortcuts for the journey.³¹ Sacagawea, Roberts writes, served as guide, interpreter, and protector.

In more recent decades, several models of engagement of women and the feminine have rebuilt communities and nations. PBS commentator Maria Hinojosa interviewed female legislators and cabinet ministers regarding the recovery of Rwanda in the wake of the genocidal killings of 1994. Rwandan Pres. Paul Kagame, Hinojosa points out, made a concerted effort to bring women into the political system. Nearly half the members of the lower house of Parliament in that country are women—a greater percentage than anywhere in the world. “Many Rwandans,” notes Hinojosa, “believe that women are better at reconciliation and maintaining peace and are less susceptible to corruption.” While connections between cause and effect can be debated, Rwanda has rebounded quite well from its dark experience at the end of last century. Its economy has recovered partly due to businesses opened by Rwandan women who wanted to help in that nation’s recovery. Actions like those taken by a former government minister who oversaw a program which placed all but 4,000 of the country’s 500,000 orphans in Rwandan homes by encouraging

Rwandan women to take them in have helped the culture recover as well. Were the United States to promote similar large-scale recruitment of women and their strengths in Iraq and Afghanistan, those countries' recoveries would be well under way. The United States and various nongovernmental organizations have employed small-scale programs targeting women, but such token responses are not likely to take root without support on a much larger scale. Skeptics would argue that such is not the job of the US military, but without an assurance of safety and security, particularly where women are prey to the brutal and illiterate members and mullahs of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, some countries—Afghanistan, in particular—are certain to slip back into chaos with the barbaric treatment of women and assured poverty.

Which large-scale programs focused on women have been successful? On a very large scale, the Hunger Project has seen remarkably positive results with a long period of success in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America according to a model which can be duplicated in nation building and peace-keeping environments. The Hunger Project uses proven strategies to bring villages out of poverty and hunger and make them self-sufficient—typically within five years. Core to the Hunger Project's philosophy, though, is empowerment of women and girls in order to achieve lasting change—a philosophy which has also found some success in Afghanistan. Had a similar strategy been implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan from the outset, though on a much grander scale, those countries might have been well on their way to self-sufficiency by this point. The Hunger Project's theory of change relies upon three pillars of thought: (1) mobilize grassroots people for self-reliant action, (2) empower women as key change agents, and (3) forge effective partnerships between people and local government.

The Hunger Project's remarkably successful theory of change is clearly in the domain of the feminine. Interestingly, mobilizing the grassroots population and forging partnerships with local government are also principles which are subsumed in FM 3-0 and the guidance for current military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Would the latter have met with greater success in Iraq and Afghanistan if it had also employed the second element and empowered women as key change agents, both as military participants and community participants? This author believes the answer to that question is clearly in the affirmative. The Hunger Project's model for success further incorporates integrated community development, complete with established indicators and millennium development goals meant to achieve community development—indicators and goals which could be replicated in US action in Afghanistan, in particular. The Hunger Project's success in building communities will seem antithetical to the masculine military aim of "fighting and winning"; however, the reality is that the Hunger Project has had great success doing what the military is being called upon to do—building secure communities—even though the Hunger Project hasn't had to do it in a definitively masculine way.

Summary

The United States' masculine military model has produced the most powerful military in the world with the most well-trained personnel and the world's most powerful and accurate weapons. But unlike its ability to deter Soviet aggression, this Cold War model of strength and preparation has not deterred genocide instigated by tyrant leaders, it has not removed threats from the flow of drugs across borders, nor has it deterred terrorist attacks by ideological despots. We must then ask ourselves what is missing—why can't the highly logical, technological, and democratically ideological US military prevail against tyrants, drug runners, and terrorists? The reason is obviously manyfold, but this author contends that it is because the US military is not using the full measure of its potential. In capitalizing upon the qualities of the masculine to create and perpetuate its appropriately combatant institutional identity, the US military has created a culture which maintains masculine strictures in its thought processes, its force structure, its tactics, and its strategy. Despite the many strengths of the military which have resulted from the masculine mindset, the requisite subordination of the feminine that masculine identity demands has limited the military's own ability to employ all available human wisdom, experience, instinct, and talent. The military has devoted decades of effort to defending its cultural assumptions regarding what women in the military should not be allowed to do. But, if the United States wants to maintain the world's best military, it should not focus on the feminine as weakness—it should instead focus on the possibilities of the feminine as a force multiplier.

Notes

(All notes appear in the shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography.)

1. Vego, "Systems versus Classical Approach to Warfare."
2. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 2.
3. Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism*; Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia"; and Connell, *Masculinities*.
4. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," 58.
5. Vego, "Systems versus Classical Approach to Warfare."
6. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," 58.
7. Frels, "Women Warriors," 27.
8. Vego, "Systems versus Classical Approach to Warfare."
9. Ibid.
10. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 111.
11. Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism*, xiv.
12. Gentile, "Let's Build an Army," 27.
13. FM 3-0, *Operations*, quoted in Gentile, "Let's Build an Army," 27.
14. Scales, "Clausewitz and World War IV."
15. Armstrong, *Veiled Threat*, 198.
16. Baron-Cohen, *Essential Difference*, 1.
17. Ibid., 61.
18. Vego, "Systems versus Classical Approach to Warfare."
19. Baron-Cohen, *Essential Difference*, 26.

20. *Ibid.*, 48.
21. See Samuels and Samuels, "Incorporating the Concept of Privilege into Policy and Practice," this volume.
22. Smith, "Lost Lessons of Counterinsurgency,"
23. *Ibid.*
24. Patch, "Ground Truth," 33.
25. *Ibid.*, 44.
26. Scales, "Clausewitz, and World War IV."
27. Brizendine, *Female Brain*, 121.
28. *Ibid.*, 122.
29. Watts, *US Combat Training*.
30. *Ibid.*, 11.
31. Roberts, *Ladies of Liberty*, 131.

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