

# TREADING WATER: WOMEN, FEMINISM AND THE MILITARY<sup>1</sup>

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## Summary

*This paper consists of five parts. Part I argues that, contrary to common perceptions, the attempt of modern feminism to put relations between men and women on a new and equal basis is not going anywhere. Part II extends the argument to the military and war, suggesting that women have only made limited inroads into "the last bastion"<sup>2</sup> of male superiority and that what inroads they did make have often been more illusory than real. Part III argues that, even to the very limited extent women have succeeded in penetrating the military, the process has peaked and may now start going into reverse. Part IV suggests that, both in civilian life and in the military, what achievements feminism can show have been bought at such heavy cost as to be counterproductive. Finally, part V sums up the argument by suggesting that, both in civilian life and in the military, feminism's quest for liberation has been both a myth and a cul de sac. And the faster women realize it, the better both for them and for men.*

**Keywords:** armed forces, women in the military, feminism

To begin at the beginning, the attempt to upset the pecking order and create a world in which women would be able to meet men on equal terms has not led anywhere. In today's society, as in all known societies, the higher one climbs on the ladder of power, riches and fame the smaller the number of women one encounters; this is even more true of developing countries, the great majority, than it is of developed ones. In the eyes of feminists, this situation is the direct result of the "discrimination" and "oppression" that women have always suffered and still continue

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Ms. Elaine Donnelly, of the Center for Military Readiness, for reviewing and correcting an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> M. D. Feld, "Arms and the Woman", *Armed Forces and Society*, 4, 4, August 1978, pp. 557-58.

to suffer at the hands of men. Suppose for a moment that they have right on their side. In that case, then all this proves is that “patriarchy” is as powerful and as pervasive as it has ever been.

Thus, in late 1999 only about five percent of the world’s heads of state (ten out of 180 or so) were women, a figure actually smaller than in sixteenth century Europe. As of the early 1990s women formed only 1-11 percent of “senior” bureaucrats in six countries surveyed (India, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland and the U.S).<sup>3</sup> In 1996 only four out of Fortune 1,000 companies were headed by women (up from two in 1978), and in the same year women only held slightly more than 1 percent of the top five jobs in these corporations (sixty out of five thousand). In 2001, out of the hundred American CEOs with the highest pay packages, only two were women (the highest ranking, Fiorina Carli of Hewlet-Packard, was 26th on the list). As of November 2002, out of the presidents of Fortune 500 companies 6, or 1.2 percent, were women.<sup>4</sup>

The situation in prestigious occupations such as engineering, law, medicine and academia is broadly similar; strange as it sounds, male faculty members outperform their female colleagues even in women’s own institutes of higher education.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most remarkable of all, even occupations where women form the great majority, such as teaching, nursing, social work, low level administration, communication, and the like, tend to be dominated by men who fill the better paid positions, lay down the rules, and run the trade unions in question. A good example is provided by my own country where perhaps 95 percent of those who study education are female; yet the leader of the education students’ union is male.<sup>6</sup> This phenomenon has not escaped the notice of social scientists, some of whom speak of “the glass escalator”.<sup>7</sup>

Since most of the higher positions continue to be occupied by men, women’s wages and salaries continue to lag behind.<sup>8</sup> Since women’s wages and salaries continue to lag behind, most of them still depend on a man for a living, whether directly—each woman, her own lover or husband—or indirectly by way of social security, most of which benefits women while being paid for by the taxes of men.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jane H. Bayes, “Women and Public Administration”, *Women and Politics*, 11, 4, 1991, pp. 111-31.

<sup>4</sup> R. Gomez, “Women Slowly Moving Up”, Yahoo! News, 19.11.2002.

<sup>5</sup> All data, except for medicine, taken from V. Valian, *Why So Slow?* Cambridge, MA., MIT Press, 2000, pp. 191-223. For medicine, see R. Pringle, *Sex and Medicine: Gender, Power and Authority in the Medical Profession*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Israel TV, 19.5.2002.

<sup>7</sup> Christine L. Williams, “The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the ‘Female’ Professions”, *Social Problems*, 39, 1992, pp. 253-67.

<sup>8</sup> B. Friedan, *Life so Far*, New York, N.Y, Simon & Schuster, 2000, p. 376, puts the difference at 100 to 74.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in Sweden men pay 61.5 percent of all taxes, women 38.5 percent; women, however, receive twice as many benefits as do men. *Women, Men and Incomes: Gender Equality and Economic Independence. Report to the Committee on the Distribution of Economic Power and Economic Resources between Women and Men*. Stockholm, Ministry of Labor, 1997, pp. 11, 12.

Today as ever, about two thirds of working women are concentrated in a small number of huge female enclaves where there are hardly any men;<sup>10</sup> and where, as a result, competition is less intense, prestige low, and economic rewards relatively modest. Today as ever, the dirtier, harder, and more dangerous any field the more it is dominated by men and indeed it has been claimed that the only field where there are *no* women is garbage-collection.<sup>11</sup> Finally, though women have penetrated many traditional male professions such as law, accounting, pharmacy, book editing, and the like, this has not translated into an overall improvement of their position at work. To the contrary, the more women entered any profession the more horizontally stratified those professions became, with most women located at the bottom whereas men occupied the top.<sup>12</sup> Women, in other words, have turned themselves into the foot soldiers of the professions in question, in which position, of course, they take their orders from men.

To anyone who is prepared to look beyond the shrill shrieks of "discrimination" and "oppression", the reasons why men tend to occupy most of the leading positions society has to offer are anything but mysterious. First, even in our own enlightened age, it is women and not men who become pregnant, have children, and are primarily responsible for raising them during their early years. As a result, their careers are interrupted far more often, and to a greater extent, than those of men;<sup>13</sup> another result is that, except in the United States, they tend to work part-time much more often than men. Second, based on the results of millions upon millions of SAT scores, there is some reason to think that men, although no more intelligent than women on the average, are at a considerable advantage when it comes to the highest levels of all.<sup>14</sup> Third, the healthy female body only contains five to ten percent as much testosterone as does the male one, which fact apparently makes women less assertive, less aggressive, and less competitive on the average.<sup>15</sup> Fourth, the physical differences between men and women remain as they have always been. To cite two facts only, in overall bodily strength the difference is as 10 to 7, in

<sup>10</sup> For American figures see A. P. Baridon and D. R. Eyler, *Working Together: the New Rules and Realities for Managing Men and Women at Work*, New York, N.Y., McGraw-Hill, p. 42 figure 1-14; for European ones, I. Bakker, "Women's Employment in Comparative Perspective", in J. Jenson and others, eds., *Feminization of the Labor Force: Paradoxes and Promises*, New York, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> See on this S. Headlee and M. Elfin, *The Cost of Being Female*, New York, N.Y., Praeger, 196, pp. 18-9.

<sup>12</sup> For a thorough investigation of this phenomenon see B. F. Reskin and P. A. Roos, *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations*, Philadelphia, Pa., Temple University Press, 1997, particularly pp. 122-25, 133-41, 157-63, 175-81, 193-202.

<sup>13</sup> See on this D. J. Treiman, "The Work Histories of Women and Men", in A. S. Rossi, ed., *Gender and the Life Course*, New York, N.Y., Aldine, 1985, pp. 213-31.

<sup>14</sup> See, by way of a summary of a vast literature, Public Education Network, "Gender, Race, and Student Achievement", Washington D.C., Public Education Network, 1997, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> The most important work on this subject remains Steven Goldberg, *Why Men Rule: A Theory of Patriarchy*, Chicago, IL., Open Court, 2nd ed., 1996.

upper body strength alone as 10 to 5.5;<sup>16</sup> the aerobic capacity of a man of fifty equals that of a woman of twenty. It is true that, in modern societies, not many people are engaged in strenuous physical labor (also that, of those who *do* engage in such labor, few rise to leading positions). On the other hand, even in modern societies, there is hardly any field where outstanding success does not require more than average physical stamina to cope with long working hours, travel, and, above all, the kind of friction that arises from dealing with people. This is true of politics as it is of business, science, and the arts. The fact that most people reach leading positions while they are in their fifties, i.e. just when menopause causes women's physical energy to drop sharply, only widens the gap.

Depending on economics, culture, the strength of the feminist movement, and many other factors the importance of these factors may vary somewhat from one country to the next. They explain why, even in the most developed countries where the influence of feminism is strongest and where public opinion has been prepared to make the greatest concessions to it, in terms of holding public positions today's women are almost as far from true equality as they have always been. Many of the differences between men and women, including the fact that, as with all mammals, it is the latter who are primarily responsible for child-raising, are biologically-rooted. Hence, unless women cease to be women and men, men, they are likely to persist in any kind of foreseeable future.

Until not so long ago, people were inclined to see the military as an institution *sui generis* whose study was best left to the experts. The "new military history" that has arisen since 1975 or so has changed this fact; as the present conference proves, there is now a strong tendency to see the military as one social institution among many and study its relationship with civilian society in detail. This background makes it probable that the failure of feminism to achieve its aims in civilian life should be reflected in the military too. This is all the more so because, of all human organizations, the military are perhaps the ones that put the greatest premium on physical strength and aggression. And the closer to the firing line one gets, the more true this is.

On the surface, women's "gains" have been impressive.<sup>17</sup> Focusing on the U.S. Armed Forces as the ones that tend to serve as a model for the rest, gone are the days when women were only permitted to form two percent of all personnel and when no woman was allowed to carry any rank higher than that of colonel. Since the late 1960s, when it all began, several hundred MOS, or Military Occupation Specialties, have been opened to women; to the point that, as of today, out of approximately 1,401,000 slots 1,180,000, or 84 percent, are open to personnel of both sexes.<sup>18</sup> The opening of additional MOS to women was accompanied by the

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<sup>16</sup> For a short summary of the difference as researched by the U.S. military see Martin van Creveld, *Men, Women and War*, London, Cassell, 2001, pp. 152-53.

<sup>17</sup> For a brief account, see van Creveld, *Men, Women and War*, pp. 196-200.

<sup>18</sup> General Accounting Office, Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, *Gender Issues: Information on*

abolition of various forms of discrimination that had been left over from the time when the military had been all male and social ideas about the respective roles of the sexes in society entirely different. On paper, if not always in reality, this has meant equal access to training (as in the military academies of the three Services), equal pay, equal prospects for promotion, and an equal right to command units made up of men and women.

Some of the above reforms were carried out under the pressure of public opinion and political action. Some were granted by the services more or less voluntarily, particularly at times when they were short of manpower as in 1968-72;<sup>19</sup> whereas others still met with resistance and had to be ordered by the courts. Like any innovators, the women who pioneered them and fought for them often had a difficult time getting their way and, having persisted, deserve all respect. On the other hand, the achievements in question should not be exaggerated. In the armed forces as in civilian life, the great majority of women are found in desk bound jobs such as administration, communication, and medical work; other fields where they abound are intelligence and services of every sort. By contrast, male occupations such as maintenance, repair, technical and engineering work heavy transport, and so on have remained almost immune to female penetration. A good example of the way things work is provided by the U.S Navy; out of 7110 U.S Navy female officers, fully 5828 (70 percent) are either in fleet support or in restricted line/staff duty whereas only 252, or 3 percent, are engineers.<sup>20</sup> No doubt because they realize how unpleasant many male occupations are, few women choose to enter those occupations in the first place. Of the few who do, most tend to leave them after a comparatively short time.<sup>21</sup> To this extent, what has happened is not so much a change in

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*DOD's Assignment Policy and Direct Ground Combat Definition*, Washington D.C., GAO, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> On the role that Vietnam-induced shortages of manpower in the decision to expand women's role in the military see J. Holm, *Women in the Military; An Unfinished Revolution*, Novato, CA, Presido, 1992, chapter 15; W. Breuer, *War and American Women*, Westport, CT., Praeger, 1997, p. 79; H. Rogan., *Mixed Company, Women in the Modern Army*, Boston, MA., Beacon Press, 1982, p. 16; J. Ebbert and M. B. Hall, *Crossed Currents; Navy Women from World War II to Tailhook*, London, Brassey's, 1993, pp. 160-61, 168, 222-23; Jean J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the Era*, Chicago, Mi., University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 72; and B. Mitchell, *Women in the Military; Flirting with Disaster*, Washington D.C., Regnery, pp. 24-5.

<sup>20</sup> U.S Navy, "Women in the Navy", 11.1.2002, [www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/people/women/winfactl.html](http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/people/women/winfactl.html), table 5.

<sup>21</sup> See, for the US, J. H. Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*, New York, N.Y., Pergamon, 1989, p. 1, Rogan, *Mixed Company*, pp. 125-26; S. Wood and others, "Migration of Women to and from Nontraditional Military Occupations", General Research Corp., Final Report Prepared for Commander, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Va., 15.7.1979, pp. 33-5. For the situation in Canada see C. D. Lamerson, "Integration of Women in the Canadian Forces", in J. Hurni, *Frauen in Streitkraeften*, Brugg, Elfingerhoff, 1992, pp. 219, 225; also Gutman, *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, pp. 268-71. For Australia, see P. Wood, "The Airwoman of the 1990s", *United Service*, 45, 1, July 1991; for Norway, F. Seidler, *Frauen zu der Waffen?*, Frankfurt/Main, Bernhard & Graefe, 1998, p. 334; for Sweden, *ibid*, pp. 369-70.

traditional patterns as a re-assertion of them. In and out of the military, most women hold clean, safe indoor jobs that require little physical effort. In and out of the military, men tend to monopolize outdoor ones that involve physical effort, dirt, and of course danger of every sort.

The most important field that has remained closed to women is, of course, direct ground combat. To a large extent, this is because they are simply not suited for it. In one Canadian experiment, out of a hundred and three women who entered a standard infantry-training course only one graduated; later she turned out to be a former construction worker.<sup>22</sup> Other attempts to train women to male standards have also failed, the only result being a very large number of injuries.<sup>23</sup> This, incidentally, was already true of the pre-independence Israeli paramilitary organization, PALMACH. Having grown up in a socialist society that emphasized equality between the sexes as part of its revolutionary program, PALMACH women were a highly motivated lot. They insisted on their right to enter mixed-sex units, with the result that many of them were injured and the system had to be changed. These and similar experiments all point in the same direction. Not only are women weaker overall, but their delicate bone-structure makes them vulnerable to shocks.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, to have women in direct ground combat would be a liability; to permit them to participate in it, a crime.

The catch is that, in practically all armed forces, the ground combat arms, being less capital intensive than their counterparts at sea and in the air, continue to account for most members of combat units. Since it is from among the members of the combat arms that senior commanders are mainly selected, women face considerably greater difficulty in obtaining promotion. This fact in turn helps explain why women who succeed in making their way to the top are rare; as of October 2002, only 4 percent of American generals and admirals were female.<sup>25</sup> To the extent that they do make it to the top, they tend to do so either by way of various non-combat services or as highly visible tokens as spokespersons and the like. In my own country, the only woman who ever took part in a general staff meeting was the chief of staff's secretary; the situation in other countries is not too different. The outcome has been similar to the one that prevails in the civilian workplace. Instead of emancipating themselves and achieving equality, the vast majority of women have joined

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<sup>22</sup> *Southam News*, Ottawa, 27.10.1997. *The woman's name was Heather Erxleben.*

<sup>23</sup> US Army Research Institute for Environmental Medicine, *Incidence of Risk Factors for Injury and Illness among Male and Female Army Basic Trainees*, 1988; L. B. de Fleur, D. Gilman, and W. Marshal, "Sex Integration at the US Air Force Academy: Changing Roles for Women", *Armed Forces and Society*, August 1978, p. 615. One report claims that Army women, being made to stay fit and pass physical tests, suffer from an unusually high number of eating disorders; T. D. Laudner and others, "Abnormal Eating Behaviors in Military Women", *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 3, 9, September 1999, pp. 1265-71.

<sup>24</sup> According to D. Morris, *Manwatching; a Field Guide to Human Behavior*, New York, N.Y., Abrams, 1977, pp. 230-32.

<sup>25</sup> K. T. Rhem, "Meyers: Women in Uniform Overcame Extra Obstacles", *American Forces Press Service*, 21.20.2002.

the vast majority of men, becoming foot soldiers who take their marching orders from other men. Other women serve as fig leaves, suggesting equality where, in point of fact, there is none.

To make things worse still, the entry of women into the military was followed almost immediately by the incipient privatization of parts of the latter from about 1980 on.<sup>26</sup> Needless to say, in all countries the last components to be privatized are the combat arms which, in the case of all three services, contain the smallest number of women. Needless to say, too, in all countries the first ones to undergo the process are precisely the services in which military women cluster such as peacetime medical work, catering, administration, and certain aspects of communication.<sup>27</sup> To the extent that this is true women's attempt to enter the forces, far from leading towards some kind of female liberation, simply means that they have put themselves back into the traditional position of camp followers. It was not a position that commanded great respect or income three centuries ago, and it is not a position that commands great respect or income today.

The proof of a pudding is in the eating. Late in 2001 Julie Wheelwright, author of *Amazons and Military Maids; Women Who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness*, wrote that the test as to whether women were making headway in the military would be the War in Afghanistan which was then getting under way.<sup>28</sup> A year later much more is known about that war, and the results are perfectly clear. First, recall that for a war to take place there must be two sides – where there is only one side that fights, the outcome is not a war but a massacre. There are no women among the Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters (though I would not be surprised if there were some in support, as was also the case during the Soviet invasion of the same country). This means I won half my argument before I even started.

Next, look at the American forces that participated in the war. Women form almost fifteen percent of U.S. navy personnel, but aboard each of the four aircraft carriers that participated in the campaign they only formed about ten percent of the crew. Of those ten percent a few worked above deck, but most did “traditional” female work in administration, communication, medical services, food preparation, etc.. Of the roughly 1,200 pilots aboard the aircraft carriers just one was female (at one point there was a plan to make a film about her, but nothing seems to have come of it). In Afghanistan itself there were a few American female administrative personnel and nurses on the ground. However, when the troops there went hunting for Taliban and Al Qaeda the women stayed behind at Camp Rhino, and with very good reason. The fighting in Afghanistan is brutal, and those who are wounded or taken prisoner can expect no quarter. Much of it takes place on foot, in extremely rugged terrain, and at an altitude of 10,000 feet; places where, women, owing to their more delicate physique and smaller lungs, are at an even

<sup>26</sup> See on this M. Wechsler-Segal, “Women in the Armed Forces”, in R. H. Howes and M. R. Stevenson, eds., *Women and the Use of Military Force*, Boulder, Co., Rienner, 1993, p 92.

<sup>27</sup> The U.S Army has just announced further privatization in these fields; *Herald International Tribune*, 4.11.2002.

<sup>28</sup> *Guardian*, 3.11.01, p. 9.

greater disadvantage than usual. *Pace* the feminists, what the War in Afghanistan, the most recent one we have, really proves is that where the bullets fly there are no women and where there are women the bullets do not fly. I rest my case.

Not only has women's penetration of the military been limited, but there is some reason to think that the process has peaked and may, indeed, have reversed itself. The first sign came from Britain where the Secretary of Defense, Geoffrey Hoon, commissioned a study of the question of women in combat. Originally scheduled to be published in October 2001, the Report was delayed—partly, I am told,<sup>29</sup> because of the publication of my own book on the subject. When it finally appeared in May 2002 it announced the decision to retain traditional policies and keep women away from ground combat.<sup>30</sup> Put in other words, the last barrier that confronted the full integration of women into the military has come under attack. This time, though, it has held.

On the other side of the Atlantic, too, 9-11 and its sequel seem to have convinced many people that war is too serious a business to serve as an experiment in political correctness. One indication of this was the decision to exclude women from a new type of observation *cum* combat units known as RSTAs (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Target Acquisition Squadrons).<sup>31</sup> Interestingly enough, the initiative came from the Center for Military Readiness, a conservative think tank based in Livonia, Michigan, whose head is Ms. Elaine Donnelly. It was Ms. Donnelly who pointed out to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, that opening the new unit to women would be against the regulations, thus catching the feminists in the Pentagon red-handed. Two years earlier, incidentally, a popular website, News.Max.com, had put Ms. Donnelly on its list as one of "America's Most Heroic for 2000".

Pointing in the same direction, in March 2002 a Federal Court—with a female judge, incidentally—handed down a 70-page decision.<sup>32</sup> Its gist was that there is no evidence of discrimination against women in the military; and, therefore, that the system whereby they consider gender when deciding on promotions discriminates against male service personnel and is unconstitutional. Assuming the ruling is not overturned, the policy that, over the last fifteen years or so, has favored women over men with similar qualifications will have to end. The impact on the personnel-system, and therefore on the ranks female officers reach and the power they wield, could be far reaching.

While these steps were being taken, Secretary Rumsfeld was cutting back on the powers of the most important body whose task is to look after female service personnel, i.e. DACOWITS (Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Military). The founder of DACOWITS was General George Marshal who was serving as President Truman's Secretary of Defense. This was 1951 and the Korean War was on;

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Fox in London *Sunday Telegraph*, 5.9.01.

<sup>30</sup> D. Galland, "A Woman's Place is Not in Combat", *Defense Watch*, 29.5.2002.

<sup>31</sup> *Washington Times*, 30.5.2002.

<sup>32</sup> N. Tucker, "Federal Judge halts Army Policy on Promotion", *Washington Post*, 4.3.2002.



Marshal's objective was to have a Congress-appointed body of 30-40 prominent women who would help him attract women to the military. In the event, DACOWITS failed in that mission and the number of women in the military actually dropped. Later it changed its original purpose and turned itself into a watchdog for the rights of women in the military.

During the next two decades DACOWITS made few headlines. The advent of the "second wave" of feminism caused it to spring to life, however, and throughout the 1970s and 1980s its power grew until it grew into a holy terror. Committee members used the funds at their disposal to fly all over the country, visit bases unannounced (protocol required them to be treated like three star generals), interview female soldiers, and prepare complaints about anything they did not like. Those reports led to countless media articles and to the opening of hundreds if not thousands of proceedings against male soldiers. Often they were accused of "sexual harassment", an offense that ranged from an accidental touch to looking at a female comrade in arms "for too long" or "in the wrong way"; in other cases the "harassment" consisted of *not* looking at her for long enough, or in the right way. Those found guilty had their careers terminated as well as suffering other penalties; those found not guilty also had their careers terminated. For example, President Bill, Clinton, the same who dallied with intern Monica Lewinsky, on one occasion refused to promote a Navy Captain who had been tried for, and acquitted of, sexual harassment.<sup>33</sup>

Just one day before the events of 9-11 took place, DACOWITS was holding a meeting to discuss the important question of helping female soldiers breast-feed their children.<sup>34</sup> One does not know whether to laugh or to cry; as a result, even today some Americans—both male and female—are demanding that it be shut down. This has not yet happened, but things are beginning to move. For the first time since 1951, DACOWITS' wings have been clipped. First, the Committee's composition was altered so as to include persons (of both sexes) who are familiar with the military rather than merely a group of female lawyers. Second, its budget was cut by 20 percent, and its research facilities were taken away. Third and most important, Committee members lost the right to choose the bases they visit and when they visit them. Which means that, in the future, they will only see what the Pentagon wants them to see.

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, the Israeli Air Force—now one of the most powerful in the world—announced a policy-change that will significantly reduce the already very small number of female pilots it has. The opening of IAF pilot-school to women dates back to 1995-96 when an immigrant from South Africa, Alice Miller, asked to be permitted to take the relevant tests and, after her request was rejected, got her way by appealing to the High Court. Since then the IAF has taken on several female pilot trainees; although, so far, only two have completed their training and only one has been taken into a combat squadron. The decision to extend pilot training from two years to three and the period of obligatory service that follows it

<sup>33</sup> *Washington Times*, 25.11.1998.

<sup>34</sup> C. Yossel, "Which is it, Women, Combat or Breast Feeding?"

from six to nine, means that a woman who enters the course will be thirty years old before she can finally doff her flying helmet and start a family. Under such circumstances the number of female candidates, which until now has been so small that the IAF had to beg for volunteers to step forward, may be expected to decline almost to the vanishing point.

Of course it is true that a single swallow does not summer make. However, it is equally true that the above five developments may well have a wider significance. In particular, the United States is an undisputed world leader. Experience, not least that which concerns women in the military, shows that social experiments originating in that country will spread to the rest of the world; and, often enough, sooner rather than later. With DACOWITS having its teeth pulled, the partial retrenchment that has taken place at the Pentagon since the Bush Administration took office may turn out to be the harbinger of other changes to follow. We shall have to wait and see.

Up to this point I have argued that women who join the military, like women who take up a civilian career, are in many ways replicating the patterns that have always defined the relations between men and women and that progress towards equality has been limited at best. Now the time has come to put forward another line of argument: namely that, in the effort to build a world where women may lead happier less constrained lives, their entry into the military is not just unsuccessful but counter-productive.

As of the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the dominant feminism is of the kind first promulgated by Betty Friedan and popularly known as “liberal” or “equity” feminism. As her first book<sup>35</sup> makes very clear, and as she herself told me in an interview,<sup>36</sup> its chief goal was to enable women to achieve economic equality with men by getting them out of the home and into the workforce. Concerning the extent to which this objective has, or has not, been achieved something has already been said in this article. Meanwhile, all but forgotten is the fact that Ms. Friedan’s brand of feminism is just one among many; and, originally at any rate, not necessarily the most important one.

Having been jump-started by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the blossoming of “transformative”—in the sense that they aimed at bringing about fundamental change in the relationship between men and women—feminist ideologies took place in the 1970s. Among them was radical feminism, a movement which insisted that men were incorrigibly bad and called on women to leave them—by resorting to violence, if necessary—and set up separate communities of their own. Then there was eco-feminism, which centered on the belief that the rape of the environment was a particular male trait and that women were especially suited to safeguard the planet. Finally there was Marxist feminism, an attempt to combine women’s liberation with the abolition of private enterprise, property, and capitalism. Whatever their differences all three movements, and many others besides, had

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<sup>35</sup> *The Feminine Mystique*, New York, N.Y., Bantam, 1963.

<sup>36</sup> Washington D.C., 10.5.2002.

this in common that they aimed not just at helping women to make as much money as men but at building a less competitive, more equitable, and more caring world. One which, the pioneers hoped, would lead to a better living environment for both women and men.<sup>37</sup>

Whether these objectives were realistic and/or worth pursuing is not at issue here. What is at issue is the fact that, thirty years later, such has been the failure of these movements to achieve their objectives that few people can even remember they ever existed. Following the capitalist revival that took place in the 1980s and culminated with the collapse of the USSR, Marx's very name has been turned into a swearword. Any attempt to use him in order to help justify a political movement is equal to prompt and certain suicide; the recent crushing defeat of the German PDS, which not long ago used to advertise itself as "left-wing and female", confirms this trend. The ecology movement is alive and well, but by now it has simply turned itself into one out of many contenders for the pork barrel and has little to do either with women or with feminist values. Finally, as a look at any of the ten most successful woman's magazines will show, radical feminism's attempt to make women come together and form communities separate from, and presumably better than, those of men never got off the ground. Instead of forming Lesbian couples, about ninety percent of women continue to enter heterosexual marriages at some point in their lives and many of them do so not once but several times. Instead of founding communities where they could live in happy sisterhood, single mothers have become the poorest segment of the population. Whether for sexual or social or economic reasons, most of the women in question are desperately looking for men, almost any men. Failing to find them, they have become dependent on the male-run state for handouts that are often both scanty and humiliating; a system that one investigator has christened "bureaugamy".<sup>38</sup>

What these forms of feminism have failed to do "equity feminism" never even attempted. It did not develop any unique feminine values. On the contrary; its whole purpose has been to do away with the "female eunuch"—to recall the title of a famous book by Germaine Greer—and prove that women are as capable of playing on the "ballfield" as men.<sup>39</sup> To gain the kind of equality that Friedan and her followers in the National Organization for Women (NOW) wanted women had to work like men, have a career like men, and, above all, make money like men. Entering a world made mainly by and for men, in order to achieve these objectives women had to behave like men; turning them, as one female author put it, into "prisoners of men's dreams".<sup>40</sup> As if all this were not bad enough, women found themselves laboring under the famous double burden that results from the desperate, and often all but impossible, attempt to manage both a family and a successful

<sup>37</sup> For these and other parts of the movement see R. Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, London, Routledge, 1989.

<sup>38</sup> L. Tiger, *The Decline of Males*, New York, N.Y., St. Martin's, 1999, pp. 159-70, 172-76, 196.

<sup>39</sup> B. Friedan, *The Second Stage*, New York, N.Y., Summit, 1981, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> S. Gordon, *Prisoners of Men's Dreams*, Boston, MA., Little Brown, 1991.

career. This burden, or perhaps it was the unwillingness to assume it, has caused a very large percentage of career women to remain single and childless;<sup>41</sup> indeed one could argue that the greatest beneficiaries of women's liberation have been fertility clinics on the one hand and adoption-agencies on the other.

Since the military has always been the manliest organization of all, it would be very surprising if the same did not apply to female soldiers. Indeed it might be argued, as some feminists do,<sup>42</sup> that military service far from advancing the goals of feminism betrays them; as used to be said during the Vietnam War, in order to save the village it was necessary to burn it first. Instead of trying to build sisterhood, women have entered the one organization which, by its very nature, all but excludes gentleness and compassion. Instead of working towards a less bellicose, more peaceful world in which they and their children might live and prosper, military women have made themselves into peons in men's quarrels. Instead of obtaining freedom, they have insisted on joining the one organization that gives its members less freedom of all. Instead of developing their individuality, they have put on uniform. Instead of wearing women's clothes, they now serve in the one organization that is most determined to limit displays of femininity (in terms of hairdoes, clothing, jewelry etc.) and have donned trousers, combat boots, and steel helmets. Like men, they spend their basic training crawling through the mud and trying to scale obstacles (although, since their upper bodies are so much weaker, they are not very good at it and often need to be helped by men). Like men, they carry rifles (although, unlike men, they are not allowed to fire them in combat). As if to carry the situation *ad absurdum*, female members of the Marine Corps refuse to be called Women-Marines. They demand to be called Marines instead; had Freud been searching for proof that penis envy really exists, he would have had to look no further. To see all this as a form of emancipation is a bad joke. To see it as a form of *female* emancipation, as one that is even worse.

To sum up, thirty something years after the so-called "second wave" of feminism" got under way women's quest for liberation has either fallen far short of its original goals or twisted those goals to such an extent as to turn itself into a travesty. As the figures show clearly enough, and as some feminists freely admit, feminism's success in giving women a greater share in the world's economic rewards and decision-making powers has been extremely limited. As some feminists also admit, to the extent that it has succeeded it has often turned women into second rate men.<sup>43</sup> To the point where they are forced to give up precisely that aspect of life that marks

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<sup>41</sup> See C.C. Harrington and S. K. Boardman, *Paths to Success: Beating the Odds in American Society* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 169-70; and S. A. Hewlett, *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*, New York, N.Y., Miramax, 2002, pp. 86-2002.

<sup>42</sup> For example, B. As, "A Materialistic View of Men's and Women's Attitudes towards War", *Women's Studies Forum*, 5,3/4 1982, pp. 355-64.

<sup>43</sup> G. Greer, *The Whole Woman*, New York, N.Y. Anchor Books, 1999, p. 311.

them as women, i.e. children; and to the point where, being childless, they seem to be waging war on their own genes.

As might be expected from an organization whose *raison d'être* is the most masculine pursuit of all, all this is even more true in the military than it is in civilian life. Whatever else, civilian women are not required to abandon their children—in case they are single mothers, and in case of a national emergency—in order to get themselves killed on the other side of the world. This is what happened to the first American woman to die in the Gulf War, a divorced mother of two, Staff Sergeant Tatiana Khaghani Dees. Posted to guard a pier at Dahrein two hundred miles behind the front, she saw a suspect; backing off she fell into the water, was pulled down by her equipment, and drowned.<sup>44</sup> See on her Mitchell, *Women in the Military*, p. 211.

As her case shows only too clearly, the attempt to treat female soldiers as if they were male will lead to results that are as ludicrous as they are tragic. And the sooner women realize it, the better both for them and men.

## KOPRCANJE U VODI: ŽENE, FEMINIZAM I ORUŽANE SNAGE

Martin van Creveld

Sažetak:

*Rad se sastoji iz pet dijelova. U prvom se dijelu dokazuje da, suprotno ustaljenim predodžbama, pokušaj modernog feminizma da odnose između muškaraca i žena postavi na nove temelje jednakosti ne vodi nikamo. Drugi dio ovaj argument proširuje na oružane snage i rat, pokazujući da su žene ostvarile samo ograničeni ulazak u "posljednji bastion" muške nadmoćnosti te da je taj ulazak u više slučajeva iluzoran nego stvaran. U trećem se dijelu tvrdi da je proces – usprkos vrlo ograničenim razmjerima ženske penetracije u oružane snage – dosegao vrhunac i da bi sada mogao početi ići u obratnom smjeru. Četvrti dio zagovara tezu da je za sva postignuća feminizma plaćena tako visoka cijena da je cijela stvar kontraproduktivna. Konačni, peti dio zaključuje raspravu tvrdnjom da je feministička borba za oslobođenje, kako u civilnom tako i u vojnom životu, bila i mit i slijepa ulica. Što to žene brže shvate, to će biti bolje i za njih i za muškarce.*

*Ključne riječi:* oružane snage, žene u vojnoj službi, feminizam

<sup>44</sup> See on her Mitchell, *Women in the Military*, p. 211.

