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The Veil of Kevlar: an Analysis of the Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan

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THESIS

THE VEIL OF KEVLAR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE ENGAGEMENT TEAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

by

Stephanie K. Erwin

March 2012

Thesis Advisor:	James Russell
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THE VEIL OF KEVLAR:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE ENGAGEMENT TEAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Recent developments in the population engagement strategies associated with Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan have led to the emergence of the Female Engagement Teams. These teams seek to provide insight and intelligence while engendering American and ISAF efforts in the region, by utilizing female service members to actively engage and interact with the population. This thesis endeavors to answer the question of how the Female Engagement Teams evolved around combat exclusion and whether, given the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, they can serve to facilitate the missions of counterinsurgency and population engagement? This paper will serve as the beginning of the academic analysis of this concept and policy for potential use in future determinations by civilian and military leadership. Understanding of both the tribal networks wielded by women and their capacities to influence their world while still recognizing the given constraints and realities of gender seclusion are a necessity to truly exploit the human and cultural terrain in Afghanistan. The FETs despite the restrictions of combat exclusion seem the preeminent means by which to tap into this fountain of possibility.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASF	Afghan Security Forces
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CST	Cultural Support Teams
DACOWITS	Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
DoD	Department of Defense
FET	Female Engagement Teams
FHET	Female Human Intelligence Exploitation Teams
FST	Female Search Teams
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IO	Information Operations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
U.S.	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USA	United States Army
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
WAAC	Women's Auxiliary Army Corps
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WASP	Women's Air Force Service Pilots
WAVES	Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service
WWII	World War II

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. THE QUESTION

Recent developments in the population engagement strategies associated with Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan have led to the emergence of the Female Engagement Teams. These Teams seek to provide insight and intelligence while engendering American and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts in the region, by utilizing female marines and soldiers to actively engage and interact with the population. Cultural norms and religious dictates have traditionally prevented male troops from reaching the female portion and even certain segments of the male portion of the Afghan constituency. Such interactions are thought to serve the greater population engagement strategy as well as aid in intelligence gathering and counterinsurgency efforts. Due to the relatively recent evolution of this program little academic research has been done on the exact nature of this program and whether or not it has seen the level of success hoped, with regards to population engagement and counterinsurgency. *This thesis endeavors to answer the question of how the Female Engagement Teams evolved around combat exclusion and given the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan can they serve to facilitate the missions of counterinsurgency and population engagement?*

This paper will serve as the beginning of the academic analysis of this concept and policy for potential use in future determinations by civilian and military leadership on various issues. Certainly this concept plays a significant role in determining future policy implications for the United States (U.S.) and ISAF in Afghanistan. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has left many traditional military strategists at a loss. Recent prominence of various counterinsurgency strategies have emerged, entailing new and unique policies on population engagement. The Female Engagement Teams reflect just one of such policies. This program demonstrates a greater policy of population engagement and therefore indicates the successful utilization of these concepts for future military and diplomatic operations. Their success or failure at affecting U.S. and ISAF

images among the population as well as providing vital intelligence and contacts to counterinsurgency efforts will greatly determine whether these paths continue to be followed or if military efforts are turned.

Furthermore, any success of these types of programs has implications on the American combat exclusion laws and future uses of women in the military. The recent addition of women to submarines in the U.S. Navy (USN) and the additions of more available assignments in the fields of intelligence and logistics, in addition to disputes over hostile fire taken by these Female Engagement Teams, has once again brought this debate to the forefront of domestic politics for both civilian and military leadership. Future scholarship on the subject will continue to grow as the policy becomes more entrenched and further after-action analyses and studies are released.

The use of the Female Engagement Teams in the Afghan conflict carries with it a host of difficult issues. The very nature of these teams comes in direct contrast to the American combat exclusion laws as well as seeming to contradict traditional U.S. foreign policy and tactics on counterinsurgency and population engagement requirements. The evolution of these teams demonstrates that they and the greater population engagement strategy reflect an evolving understanding of the nature of modern warfare and diplomacy. American political and military acknowledgement of regional norms regarding gender and religion are enabling outreach to a greater percentage of the indigenous populations. The use of Female Engagement Teams to reach the female populace of Afghanistan is just one such instance though debate over their validity and success remains.

Much deliberation has been done over the very legality of such a program. Legal justifications have been utilized and commander's guidance on definitions has been necessary in order to ensure compliance with the combat exclusion law. Yet debate remains over whether these teams fly in the face of the law's intent.

The very concept of population engagement is in and of itself a highly contested issue. Whether these tactics and strategies truly aid in military operations and

counterinsurgency is debated among scholars and operators alike.[1] Recently the concept has begun to gain significant traction and policies such as the Female Engagement Teams are reflecting a growing consensus that population engagement and counterinsurgent intelligence gathering are essential for modern warfare and diplomacy.[2] Female Engagement Teams reflect a growing understanding on behalf of civilian and military leadership of the imperatives for population engagement and the necessities of cultural norms and religious dictates particularly those regarding the interactions of women. Expectations for research are that this program has been successful both in providing vital intelligence and contacts for counterinsurgency as well as in its primary mission of building a more positive U.S. and joint image and developing lasting relationships among the entire indigenous populace by showing American and ISAF respect for regional norms on gender and religion. Ironically, such considerations of gender relations have continued to highlight such issues within the U.S. military itself.

Female Engagement Teams are a relatively recent phenomenon and as such little direct academic research has been conducted on them, their evolution, and their results. Much of the prevailing knowledge on the subject comes from non-analytical reports or,

1 See Kevin Carson. "Just in Case You Weren't Sure: Counterinsurgency Isn't 'Progressive'"; John R. Dyke. "Unconventional Counter-Insurgency in Afghanistan;" David Kilcullen. The Accidental Guerilla; David Kilcullen. Counterinsurgency; David Kilcullen. "In Company with Insurgency;" David Kilcullen. "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency;" James Forest. Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century; Harald Havoll. COIN Revisited: Lessons of the Classical Literature on Counterinsurgency and its Applicability to the Afghan Hybrid Insurgency; Thomas H. Henriksen. Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency, And the Indirect Approach; Seth G. Jones. Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan; Laura Loftus, Colonel. "Influencing the Forgotten Half of the Population in Counterinsurgency Operations;" Austin Long. Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence: The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960–1970 and 2003–2006; Austin Long. On "Other War": Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research; John Mackinlay and Alison Al-Baddawy. Rethinking Counterinsurgency. RAND Counterinsurgency Study; Zahid Nawaz Mann. "The Nature of Insurgency in Afghanistan and the Regional Power Politics;" Sasha Mehra. "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency: The Importance of Afghan Women in U.S. Counterinsurgency Operations; Samuel Musa, John Morgan, and Matt Keegan. Policing and COIN Operations: Lessons Learned, Strategies, and Future Directions; Christopher Paul. Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2011 Relative to the Insurgencies of the Past 30 Years; Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill. Victory has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies; Jeremy L Pfeifer. "Training and Organization for COIN Conflicts: A Historic Perspective with Contemporary Applications;" Thomas Ricks. "Women in COIN (II): How to do it Right;" Nicholas J. Schlosser and James M. Caiella, eds. Counterinsurgency Leadership in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond; Jonathan Stevenson. Counter-Terrorism: Containment and Beyond; U.S. Army. Field Manual (FM) 3–24: Counterinsurgency; U.S Army. Tactics in Counterinsurgency. Field Manual. 3–24.2.

2 Ibid.

on occasion, after action analysis. Oftentimes the most current research exists only in the classified realm. Still, the use of women in military operations is itself not uncommon throughout history and the evolution and integration of Female Engagement Teams appears to be premised upon prevailing knowledge and understanding.[3] Moreover, many of the concepts that comprise and contribute to this phenomenon have themselves seen significant advances in the depth of knowledge over time, particularly in recent years. These concepts include women in combat, counterinsurgency, and particularly for the purposes of this paper, population engagement.

Female combatants and their debates in American rhetoric are certainly not a recent trend.[4] Yet for most this has been primarily in supporting roles and only on rare occasion in the line of fire. During the twentieth century, the nature of American warfare

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3 Kristal L.M. Alfonso, Lieutenant Colonel USAF. "Femme Fatal: An Examination of the Role of Women in Combat and the Policy Implications for Future American Military Operations;"; Andi Allen, Gina Ladenheim, and Katie Stout. "Training Female Engagement Teams: Framework, Content Development, and Lessons Learned;" Paula Broadwell. "Women at War;" Elisabeth Bumiller. "Creating Bonds and Breaking Barriers: Female U.S. Marines Try to Redefine Military Role by Aiding Afghan Women;" Elisabeth Bumiller. "Dodging U.S. Limits on Women in Combat; Many Female Marines in Afghanistan have had no Option but Firing Back;" Elisabeth Bumiller. "Letting Women Reach Women in Afghan War;" Karen O. Dunivin, Lieutenant Colonel USAF. "Military Culture: A Paradigm Shift?" Kristen W. Culler. "The Decision to Allow Military Women into Combat Positions: A Study in Policy and Politics;" Krystyna Cloutier. "Marching Toward War: Reconnoitering the use of all Female Platoons;" Fox News. "Female Marines Wear Headscarves Over Body Armor in Afghanistan;" Darlene M. Iskra, CDR, USN (ret), PhD. Women in the United States Armed Forces: A Guide to the Issues; Military Leadership Diversity Commission. Women in Combat: Legislation and Policy, Perceptions, And the Current Operational Environment;   Brian Mitchell. Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster; Karen Parrish. "DoD Opens More Jobs, Assignments to Military Women;" Matt Pottinger, 1stLt and Johannah Shaffer 2ndLt. "Afghanistan Female Engagement Team After-Action and Way Forward; Michele M. Putko and Douglas V. Johnson II, eds. Women in Combat Compendium; Rosemarie Skaine. Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat;, Sara L. Ziegler and Gregory G. Gunderson. Moving Beyond G.I. Jane: Women and the U.S. Military.

4 See Michele M. Putko and Douglas V. Johnson II, eds. Women in Combat Compendium: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008; Karen O. Dunivin, Lieutenant Colonel USAF. "Military Culture: A Paradigm Shift?" The Maxwell Papers 10, (February, 1997); Kristal L.M. Alfonso, Lieutenant Colonel USAF. "Femme Fatal: An Examination of the Role of Women in Combat and the Policy Implications for Future American Military Operations." Air University: Air Force Research Institute, 2009; Farangis Najibullah. Afghan Women Joining Armed Forces in Greater Numbers, Challenging Convention. Anonymous 2010; Paula Broadwell. "Women at War." The International Herald Tribune, October 21, 2009, sec. Edie; Krystyna Cloutier. "Marching Toward War: Reconnoitering the use of all Female Platoons." Connecticut Law Review (2008); David Galula. Pacification in Algeria: 1956–1958 RAND Corporation, 2006; Susan Pinker. "Team Work, Gender and the Power of Bonding." The Globe and Mail (Canada), May 23, 2011, sec. Report on Business: Managing; Business Brain; Elisabeth Bumiller. "Dodging U.S. Limits on Women in Combat; Many Female Marines in Afghanistan have had no Option but Firing Back." The International Herald Tribune, October 4, 2010, sec. News; The Secretary of Defense. "Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule."

and the inclusion of women in the services began to evolve albeit women remain restricted from hostile action and combat positions. This prohibition on women in combat was generally referred to as Combat Exclusion.[5] The Global War on Terror would force both military and civilian leadership to reconsider this highly contested and emotionally charged issue. The nature of the conflict in the region dictated that nearly every military operator was deemed at risk. Since Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, unconventional warfare with blurry frontlines has grown and social changes have begun to generate greater paradigm shifts in the combat exclusion policies and military culture.[6] Subsequently, more and more women are finding themselves in combat support positions and even at times in direct combat themselves.[7] In 2010, the Department of the Navy opened officer positions onboard U.S. submarines for women. In 2012 the services would petition Congress to open even more previously restricted intelligence and combat support positions to women. Furthermore, a call was sent out for interested women in the ground forces wishing to join the newly formed Female Engagement Teams. Yet the debates continue to resonate over American acceptance of women in combat, the best interests of the U.S. forces, and the integral rights of female service members.

As with female combatants, the concept of counterinsurgency has been rife with debate. Counterinsurgencies have been fought throughout history by various means and the accepted means to wage them have continued to evolve and change from Algerian resistance to French colonialism to the various insurgent groups of Afghanistan. A commonly acknowledged understanding of insurgencies is that they are targeted political violence against the authority of the state or occupation aimed at greater political goals.[8] Insurgencies rely on popular support and often lack the funding and resources of their enemies, typically conventional forces.

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5 Michele M. Putko and Douglas V. Johnson II, eds. Women in Combat Compendium: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008, 22.

6 Karen O. Dunivin, Lieutenant Colonel USAF. "Military Culture: A Paradigm Shift?" The Maxwell Papers 10, (February, 1997), 23.

7 Today more than 80 percent of military positions are open to women. Ibid, 4.

8 Heather S. Gregg, Dr. "Employment Handbook for Fighting Counterinsurgencies: A Toolkit for how to Build Rapport, Create Jobs, and Work Towards a Viable State." Technical Report, From 2003 to 2008, Naval Postgraduate School for Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), 2009, 14.

Counterinsurgency therefore reflects the political, economic, social, and military actions taken by the state or occupier in order to combat this violence. Modern philosophies on counterinsurgency focus on networks and relationships. Yet there are varying methods prescribed by which to attain the goals ascribed in counterinsurgency.[9] Current military doctrine maintains that in order to prevail at counterinsurgencies one must win the support of the people.[10] This is reflected in the common adage of winning the hearts and minds. This focus on networks and relationships has reiterated the need for continued population engagement. Increasingly research has come to recognize the imperative to tap the gender-centric networks of women in order to capitalize on potential counterinsurgency capacities of this half of the population.[11] A growing consensus has emerged recognizing the potential for women to contribute to counterinsurgency efforts in all its facets; intelligence gathering, security, governance, and development.

This recognition of the potential contributions of women is also highly reflective of the growing resonance of the concept of population engagement as an imperative of both information dissemination and stability operations.[12] Population engagement as a means for stability operations, foreign relations, and information operations recognizes the essential part popular support plays in maintaining stability in governance and security. Women have traditionally played less of a recognized role in this theory due to their relatively less obvious influential roles in rural and tribal societies such as Afghanistan. Nonetheless, growing consensus has emerged dictating that women play a far more crucial and vital role in determining support for engagement strategies than previously thought. Subsequently, effective engagement strategies must include a focus

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9 See Gregg; U.S. Army. Field Manual (FM) 3–24; Mehra; Carson; Forest; Kilcullen.

10 Sasha Mehra. "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency: The Importance of Afghan Women in U.S. Counterinsurgency Operations." Master's, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2010, 1.

11 See Ricks; Loftus; Andy Macak, Captain. "Female Engagement Teams in Counterinsurgency: Building A More Progressive Counterinsurgency Strategy."

12 See Adam Pain and Paula Kantor. "Understanding and Addressing Context in Rural Afghanistan: How Villages Differ and Why;" Thomas Barfield. Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History.

on indigenous women.[13] Such strategies must include a recognition and respect for regional and local norms regarding gender and religion in order to be effective.

The conflict in Afghanistan has brought all of the facets of traditional Afghan society and culture, into the limelight. Imperatives for counterinsurgency and population engagement have forced military operators to coordinate with Afghan females, however cultural norms religious constraints mandate that for true effectiveness female military operators must be the ones to reach out rather than their male counterparts. Certainly this need comes up against the currently still restrictive American combat exclusion policies. Out of this debate has emerged the Female Engagement Teams. Resolutions such as this are still highly contested by both civilian and military leadership as to their necessity and effectiveness. In October of 2010, the first of the Female Engagement Teams returned from Afghanistan. Continued after-action analysis and academic research will help to shed light on this sensitive issue.

B.   METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of understanding the Female Engagement Teams, their contributions and implications, a qualitatively analytical case study focusing on the teams and their relationships to combat exclusion, counterinsurgency, and population engagement will follow. It is important to establish descriptive inference on how this practice evolved, its very nature, and whether or not it reflects the dictates of the aforementioned military strategies, as well as ascertain future policy implications. Hereafter, Chapter II will introduce the evolution, mission, and issues associated with the teams. In Chapter III, the evolution, arguments and governing directives for combat exclusion are outlined and annotated as to their relation to the realities on the ground in Afghanistan. Henceforth, Chapter IV will analyze the teams' relations to counterinsurgency operations. Furthermore Chapter V will address their participation and

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13 See Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo. "Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan without Afghan Women;" When Half the Country is Off Limits. PBS. Directed by Caitlin Thompson; Gary W. O'brien, Clerk of the Senate. "Training in Afghanistan: Include Women;" Valerie Norville. "The Role of Women in Global Security;" Lila Abu-Lughod. "Do Muslim Women really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others;" Headquarters International Security Assistance Force. Engaging the Female Populace; Carol J. Riphenburg. "Post-Taliban Afghanistan: Changed Outlook for Women?"; Condoleeza Rice. Independent Women's Forum 2006.

potential contributions to population engagement strategies. Included within each analysis pertaining to the Female Engagement Teams and their successes and failures are responses derived from after action reports and a survey of associated members and leadership personnel. Since little qualitative or quantitative data as yet exists, such firsthand accounts and responses provide the greatest insights into the actualities of the teams and their relations to combat exclusion, counterinsurgency, and population engagement. Finally, Chapter VI will present final analysis, potential opportunities for garnering further research and study and potential implications for policy.

II. NAVIGATING THE HUMAN AND CULTURAL TERRAIN

A. REACHING OUT

The human terrain represents one of the most vital assets and gravest challenges in conducting military operations in Afghanistan. As an asset it offers operators and strategists the opportunity to both extract and disseminate information pertinent to kinetic operations. However, this asset requires vigilance and understanding in order to be properly utilized. Thus "without careful study of the human terrain in Afghanistan, and a corresponding shift in tactics, international forces risk"[14] missing out on an immense resource. In response to the growing awareness of the fundamental importance of this sphere of influence, American and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces have begun to develop units aimed at counterinsurgency, human intelligence (HUMINT) gathering and population engagement. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are among the most prevalent and successful of such evolutions. These teams combine kinetic and non-kinetic applications and aims. PRTs were devised in Afghanistan in 2002 as a means to facilitate interaction between friendly forces and local populations.[15] They have since expanded to include other ISAF nations. Currently, there are 27 such teams operating in Afghanistan.[16]

B. WHAT ABOUT THE WOMEN?

Despite much initial success, the PRTs and other human terrain teams found it difficult to fully engage the local populations. The constraints on these units and other such solely male comprised teams were found to be predominantly an issue of gender. Cultural and religious sensitivities in both Iraq and Afghanistan made operating exclusively with male service members less than optimally effective. Male operatives

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14 Thomas H. Johnson. "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan." China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly 5, no. 2 (2001), 24.

15 Center for Army Lessons Learned. PRT Playbook: Tactics Techniques, and Procedures. CALL Handbook. No. 07–34 ed. http://call.army.mil: 2007, 2.

16 Topics: International Security Assistance Force. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)." NATO OTAN, accessed Jan 28, 2012, http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/prt/, 1.

could neither interact with nor engage the female component of the population and at times found less than desired success in dealing with the Iraqi and Afghan men. In light of these obstacles, leadership sought opportunities to engage the female population with the utilization of female service members.

### 1.	Lioness

In 2003, with the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, American operatives found that interactions with Iraqi women were difficult given the cultural and religious segregation of the genders. In response, an ad hoc division of Army and Marine women from varying occupational specialties began to operate with their male counterparts beyond the traditional scope of American females deployed in country. This unit of women would later become identified by the moniker of the Lioness program. They would serve predominantly as facilitators to search and seizure operations and security checkpoints. Even so, given the nature of the war and the blurriness of defining a front line, these women began to consistently experience hostile fire and combat. Yet the benefits of the operations they conducted were paramount and leaders sought to bring these fruitful endeavors to the war in Afghanistan where cultural and religious norms and customs are even more staunchly conservative.

### 2.	CSTs, FETs, FSTs, and FHETs

Cultural Support Teams (CSTs), Female Engagement Teams (FETs), Female Search Teams (FSTs) and Female HUMINT Exploitation Teams (FHETs) are the evolution of the Lioness concept in reflection of the female component of the Afghan population. CSTs serve to enable special operations forces engagement of a host nation's female and adolescent populace. FETs seek to build population confidence in the American and ISAF operation in Afghanistan through persistent engagement and positive reinforcement. FSTs are a military response to an immediate security mission requirement that demonstrates cultural sensitivity. They conduct search and seizure operations on women and women's spaces. Lastly, FHETs are specifically geared at

intelligence collection and information operations as well as atmospheric analysis.[17] All of these units serve the overarching mission of providing support to combat units for Afghan female engagement and interaction in order to support ground operations, access the Afghan population, gauge atmospherics, and gather human intelligence.[18] This form of population engagement is by no means an attempt "to alter the Afghan culture. Rather, it is an operational response to respond to the current conservative response to the Afghan segregation of males and females."[19] The emphasis for the female human terrain is engagement and information gathering, not cultural transformation.

These units are comprised of service women of varying operational specialties from each of the American and ISAF services, although predominantly Marines and Soldiers. While these units are by no means identical in mission, training, composition, or capacity; their overall existence is reflective of similar requirements and challenges facing ISAF forces in Afghanistan and associated issues with American forces in the U.S. military services. Due to their recent evolution and ongoing experimentation, after-action reports and statistical information on all of these units is miniscule if in existence at all. Subsequently, for the purposes of the following analyses hereafter they will fall under the all-encompassing term of female engagement teams.

a. Evolution

In early 2009, Combat Logistics Battalion 3 (CLB-3) responded to a request from Third Battalion, Eighth Marines Regiment (3/8) for an ad hoc unit of female service members in order to comply with a specific cordon-and-knock operation in Farah province.[20] The female service members served to meet with the village women and facilitate search and seizure operations. Subsequently, the first Female Engagement Team

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17 HQ ISAF/CJ2. Engaging the Female Populace, Public Law, HTS TCE/10, 10.

18 Special Operations Task Force 81. Female Engagement Team (FET), 5.

19 HQISAF, 49.

20 Captain Andy Macak. "Female Engagement Teams in Counterinsurgency: Building A More Progressive Counterinsurgency Strategy." Research Paper, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010, 11.

was born.[21]   Originally the concept was envisioned as an Afghan complement to the Lioness program with a more prominent participation in information operations and population engagement. By the end of 2009, the teams were such a success that all ISAF forces were ordered to generate similar units.[22]

b.   *After Action and Applications*

While there exists little literature and no quantitative research has been conducted regarding the gains or losses of such units, they have qualitatively demonstrated two primary gains. After action reports from the units have found upon review that they provide significant benefits in the areas of intelligence gathering and information dissemination.[23] These particular benefits represent significant opportunities for gains and their endeavors serve two particularly pertinent missions in Afghanistan; counterinsurgency (COIN) and population engagement. The FETs have served in a variety of capacities in support of these missions including intelligence collection, search, seizures and cordon-and-knock operations, key leader engagements, civil affairs programs, enhancing information operations and dissemination for psychological operations (PSYOPS). The FETs endeavor to increase access and influence upon the Afghan population, particularly the female component, enhance female contributions to Afghan society, and reduce negative influences and access from insurgent movements by creating meaningful relationships within the community.[24]

c.   *The Mission*

Surveyed members of the FETs each gave quite varied interpretations of the exact FET mission. Some felt it pertained primarily to supporting the battle space commander in whatever capacity deemed appropriate and necessary for overall mission

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21 Andi Allen, Gina Ladenheim, and Katie Stout. "Training Female Engagement Teams: Framework, Content Development, and Lessons Learned." Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation, and Education Conference (I/ITSEC) (2010), 1.

22 Mehra, "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency," 25.

23 Macak, "Female Engagement Teams," 11.

24 SOTF 81, 7.

completion. Others felt it served to facilitate interactions between ISAF forces and the Afghan female populace. Still others attributed it to integration with and support of male infantry battalions conducting counterinsurgency operations. Yet all seemed to feel that this mission was executed by engaging the local population (both male and female) through a variety of support elements and operations. All of the surveyed contributors felt that the FETs served a vital mission in Afghanistan and were met with overall positive responses; both Afghan and ISAF. They felt that the contributions to tactical intelligence, atmospherics, census data, rapport with community leaders, outreach and training demonstrated a commitment to the locals and a vital capability to both ISAF ground units and mission commanders.

d.   The Problems

Unfortunately such an unprecedented and untested concept has its drawbacks. These units are predominantly ad hoc in nature, drawing upon women from various specialties that do not necessarily pertain to population engagement or intelligence collection. Due to the relative newness of the concept, they are often more experimental than experiential, based upon flexibility and commander interpretations of mission and doctrine rather than lessons learned and established protocol.

In their early evolutions, they lacked proper training in both cultural awareness and forward combat operations. Their training requirements, techniques, and procedures are still in development and are constantly in flux as units return with more knowledge and experience. In the early stages, FET members continued to serve in their original designated positions in addition to their FET contributions. As such this limited their ability to focus on training and readiness regarding their specific FET operations.[25] This early lack of training extended to the upper leadership as well. The FET mission is often misunderstood, underestimated, and underutilized by military leadership. Certain commands and regions have subsequently found it difficult to reap the full rewards of having such units.

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25 Mehra, "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency," 38.

The pool of potential female operators is limited given the strict requirements to be in such a hostile area. Unfortunately, this is severely limiting since until now female service members have not been pressed to comply with such standards in the field and lack adequate leadership, training, and experience with regards to combat operations. Perhaps the most pervasive hindrance to the FETs that highlights this inadequacy is that of combat exclusion. Efforts and considerations regarding the usage of women in potentially hostile combat situations is a hotbed of debate and has required extreme measures to ensure compliance or at the very least circumvention of given exclusion directives. This has at times come at the detriment of the FET mission forcing interactions between members and the populations to be relegated to the short-term and transitory, thereby inhibiting their ability to effectively develop meaningful relationships in order to maximize deliverable benefits.

III. FROM COMBAT EXCLUSION TO AFGHANISTAN

A. INTRODUCTION

The utilization of female American and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) service members in Afghanistan as a component of forward operating counter-insurgency and population engagement units, also known as Female Engagement Teams (as well as female service members operating under the Lioness program in Iraq), once again brought to light the highly contestable issue of combat exclusion in the American armed forces. The Female Engagement Teams have highlighted the murky waters that define the restrictions and guide the operational employment of American female military personnel. Debates would emerge over whether these teams were in violation of current policies, protocol and legislation. Once again the American military and civilian leadership would be forced to address the very concept of combat and the female participation therein.

B. HISTORY OF WOMEN IN COMBAT

1. Women in World Historical Combat

The existence of women in combat and armed conflict is by no means a recent occurrence. Throughout history, women have been involved to some degree or another in nearly every violent conflict worldwide both as aggressors and as victims. Whether serving as camp followers[26] in the traditional positions of victualers, cooks, laundresses, nursemaids, prostitutes, or serving as actual combatants themselves, women have been active participants.

When one thinks of a female combatant, oft images are conjured of masculine Amazons existing in a mythical time and place. Yet there have been women in combat all over the world throughout history. While their numbers may not be abundant, their stories tend to resound the world over. Documented cases of women serving in actual

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26 Camp followers were a vital part of armies' support systems, freeing men to fight while women took care of the many logistical requirements of large military units.

combat are scarce, yet the stories of a few are widespread and renown. One of the first and foremost is that of Matilda of Tuscany, known as the sharp strategic commander of her armed forces during numerous engagements throughout the Investiture Controversy of 1080. Certainly, the historical female combatant, whom most would recognize, is that of Jeanne d'Arc or Joan of Arc, The Maid of Orleans, who led numerous campaigns from the battlefront as a combatant for the French during the Hundred Years War. Images abound of her astride a horse, bearing a knights armor and wielding a sword and standard. She is often seen as the epitome of femininity yet strength. In the modern age, documented female combatants became evermore prominent and openly utilized by nation-state governments. For instance Florence Nightingale received the British Order of Merit for her combat experiences during the Crimean War from 1854 to 1856. During World War II, the Russian army utilized female bomber pilots including Nadya Popova in its campaigns.

Although, they later rescinded their policies regarding women in combat, the Israeli armed forces utilized an all-female combat unit, Palmach, during their war for independence. To date, Israeli women are still required to participate in mandatory uniform service although they are no longer eligible for combat oriented positions.

2. History of Women in American Combat

American women have also seen a consistent participation in armed conflict since the nation's inception, whether overtly or covertly. During the revolutionary war women were often pressed into service out of necessity. From the tales of Molly Pitcher, who cast aside her water pitcher to man a mortar position, to Margaret Corbin, Deborah Samson, and Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley who were each granted pensions from Congress or continental legislatures for war services rendered whether openly serving as women or disguised as men. Elizabeth Newcume served under the guise of a male during the Mexican War and was later recognized by Congress for her service. During the civil war, women were seen to have served on both sides. Rose O'Neal Greenhow was found to be a Confederate informant, and Sarah Emma Edmunds also known as Franklin Thompson served as a Union Army volunteer. Furthermore, the first woman to receive

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the Medal of Honor was contract surgeon Dr. Mary E. Walker during the Civil War. Annie G. Fox was the first to be awarded the Purple Heart, for her services while serving at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Aside from these and other anomalies, American women had, prior to World War II, served predominantly in medical, administrative or support capacities. In 1901 the USA established the Army Nurse Corps and in 1908 the USN followed suit with the Navy Nurse Corps. However, "despite their integration and successes in limited capacities, women were never officially militarized until the 20th century."[27] Particularly, since WWII the militarization of women and the ever-evolving status of American women in combat has been a hotbed of debate and legislation with constant analysis and revision.

- 1942 - Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)[28]
- 1943 - Women's Army Corps (WAC) and Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP)[29]
- 1948 - Women's Armed Services Integration Act[30]
  - Selected Service Act of 1948[31]
- 1951 - Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)[32]
- 1956 - Combat Exclusion Law codified under Title 10, U.S. Code

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27 Kristen W. Culler. "The Decision to Allow Military Women into Combat Positions: A Study in Policy and Politics." Masters, Naval Postgraduate School, 2000, 12.

28 Women are granted formal military recognition and are trained as clerks, mechanics, administrators, and cooks.

29 Women are fully accepted into the Army Air Force (aside from combat and flight training). Women serve as civil service pilots via the WASP.

30 Served to ensure the ready mobilization of women in the event of a national emergency or shortage of volunteers. Combat exclusion legislation is a component. Limits enlisted women to two percent of strength and officers to ten percent of enlisted strength and pay grade to O-5.

31 PL 759–80th Congress Chapter 625–2D Session Statute 2655 states that it is the mandate of the United States Congress to provide for the common defense by increasing the strength of the armed forces of the United States, including the reserve components thereof, and for other purposes.

32 Remains in existence as an advisory committee to the Secretary of Defense on all matters regarding female military service personnel.

- 1964 - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act[33]
- 1967 - Public Law 90-130[34]
- 1972 - Equal Rights Amendment
- 1973 - All Volunteer Force[35]
    - *Frontiero v. Richardson*[36]
- 1974 - Department of Defense policies[37]
- 1975 - Stratton Amendment[38]
- 1977 - Combat Exclusion Policy[39]
- 1978 - Public Law 95-485[40]
- 1979 - President Carter proposes repeal of combat exclusion restrictions
- 1981 - *Rostker v. Goldberg*[41]
- 1988 - Risk Rule[42]
- 1991 - Amendment No. 948[43]
    - Amendment No. 949[44]
    - Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 102-190)[45]

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33 Regulates employment discrimination. No determination as to applicability to the military.

34 Removes percentage and grade limitations for women in military.

35 Draft ends. Army and Navy open flight training to women.

36 Dependents of women granted equal benefits.

37 Pregnancy no longer cause for involuntary separation. Women permitted to enlist at 18 (previously 21).

38 Defense Authorization Bill permits women to enter service academies.

39 Secretary of the Army issues exclusion policy regarding assignment of women to combat arms.

40 Repeals WAC and integrates Army. Navy assigns women to sea duty aboard non-combatant ships.

41 Congress upholds male-only draft via combat exclusion as justification.

42 DoD Task Force on women in the Military established in response to Congressional requests stating that Noncombat units should be open to women unless there exists a high risk of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture.

43 Senators Roth and Kenney call for repeal of combat exclusion laws.

44 Senators Glenn, McCain, Nunn, and Warner call for temporary repeal of aviation combat exclusion laws.

45 Congress repeals aviation combat exclusion laws and revises Title 10 U.S. Code, Section 6015.

- 1992 - Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces[46]

    - Army issues revised policy on the assignment of women[47]

- 1993 - Public Law 103–160[48]

    - Secretary of Defense Aspin issues Memorandum on Policy on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces

    - Risk Rule revised[49]

- 1994 - Secretary of Defense Aspin issues Memorandum on Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule

- 2003 - Team Lioness[50]

- 2010 - Female Engagement Teams[51]

    - Submarine exclusion amended[52]

3.   Current Governing Legislation, Policies, and Instructions

The current legislation and policies governing American women in combat is a compilation of ambiguities and convoluted interpretations of wording. More often than not, "women's role in the military and combat has been determined by a combination of law, policy, and practice."[53] Congressional legislature is only mandated by the 1995 requirement that Department of Defense (DoD) officials notify Congress within thirty days of any intentions to modify existing assignment or collocation policies regarding

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46 Presents final report recommending aviation and ground combat jobs remain closed to women but recommend the opening of combat ships.

47 See Army regulation 600–13.

48 After Congress repeals laws prohibiting women on combat ships, Secretary of Defense Aspin directs the military to open both combat ships and aircraft to women.

49 Secretary of Defense Aspin replaces the Risk rule with a definition of ground combat as that which bars women from units that engage the enemy with weapons on the ground while exposed to hostile fire and that involve substantial probability of direct physical contact with hostile forces.

50 Army and Marine female service-members are assigned to forward deployed military and police search units operating in Iraq.

51 Female Marines begin forward operations in Afghanistan for population engagement and counter-insurgency.

52 Secretary of the Navy announces the integration of female officers onboard certain submarine commands.

53 Rosemarie Skaine. Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999, 89.

women in ground combat units. The combat exclusion policies exist primarily within the DoD itself. The DoD's current policy (incorporated under Secretary of Defense Les Aspin in 1994 upon the rescinding of the Risk Rule) states: "Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground."[54] Furthermore, the Department of Defense defines direct ground combat as that which includes "engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile forces' personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect."[55]

The individual services each have established their own assignment policies regarding women. These policies are ever evolving and vary by method of determination across the board.[56] For the USA, it is a coding system based upon occupational specialty, unit mission, and routine collocation,[57] whereas for the USN it is a determination by the Secretary of the Navy based upon inputs regarding costs of appropriate berthing, feasibility of privacy arrangements, unit requirement to collocate with direct ground combat units, units conducting long term reconnaissance operations, special operations forces missions, and/or physical requirements associated with a particular assignment which would exclude the majority of female sailors.[58]

As of 1998 nearly 15 percent of all armed forces positions are closed or restricted to women either because they are occupations whose primary mission includes direct

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54 The Secretary of Defense. "Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule.,"1.

55 Ibid, 1.

56 See Army Regulation 600–13, Marine Corps Order P1300.8R, Naval Operations Instruction 1300.17B, and Air Force Instruction 36–2110.

57 Secretary of the Army. "Army Policy for the Assignment of Female Soldiers." Headquarters Department of the Army, Washington, DC. Regulation 600–13, 2.

58 Chief of Naval Operations. "Assignment of Women in the Navy" Department of the Navy: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, DC. OPNAV 1300.17B, 2.

ground combat, they collocated with such units, operate on ships where costs prohibit living arrangement integration or they are special operations or reconnaissance units.[59]

This translates to approximately 29 percent of USA positions, 25 percent of USMC, nine percent of USN (although this number has reduced with the final openings of remaining combat aviation units and certain submarine and mine countermeasure vessels), and less than one percent for the USAF.[60]

The term combat is an ambiguous term in its application. "When it comes to women in the military, the all-purpose word is combat--it means whatever the services choose it to mean."[61] Unfortunately, these service specific policies require more specific considerations concerning implementation and are not necessarily particularly reflective of the greater Department of Defense policy. One such example is that of the Department of the Army, whose policy which actually predates the DoD's, utilizes differing wording, stating that women are prohibited from assignment to units whose routine mission is direct combat in contrast to the Department of Defense's primary mission verbiage. Furthermore, the USA definition of the concept of direct combat is not necessarily comparable, stating that direct combat incorporates the requirement for a substantial risk of capture as well as the aspect of repelling an assault.[62] Perhaps the most compelling issue with the current policies is the utilization of highly ambiguous and debatable vocabulary. Words such as enemy, battlefront, forward, and direct combat are by no means definitive contextually nor are they standardized across the services.

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59 United States General Accounting Office: National Security and International Affairs Division. Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate: Gender Issues: Information on DoD's Assignment Policy and Direct Ground Combat Definition, 1998, 16.

60 USGAO, 16.

61 Holm, Jeanne., Major General USAF (Ret.). Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution. Revised Edition ed. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982, 398.

62 Military Leadership Diversity Commission. Branching and Assignments. Arlington, VA: Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2011, 2.

C. THE DEBATE

Both advocates and opponents have fueled the debate regarding combat exclusion throughout the duration of American female militarization.

1. Proponents

Proponents of combat exclusion herald numerous justifications as discussed below. Conversely, the most dominantly utilized argument is simply that further research is required regarding this subject before arbitrary change in military policy pertaining to female integration is adopted.

a. Social Norms

Societal norms regarding gender relations particularly pertaining to armed conflict are by no means an American construct. Across the globe, most societies regard warfare as a domain of men. This is largely due to beliefs regarding the sanctity of womanhood and maternity. Women are defined largely by their capacity as bringers of life rather than death.[63] Further justifications draw upon moral and religious texts and scriptures, citing that it is the imperative of civilized societies to protect women from the horrors of war. Oftentimes, the dominant rationalization incorporates the utilization of rape as a tool of war. These rationales are by no means diminished within American society. Military and civilian leaders have maintained that the American public is simply not willing to accept female service members returning home in body bags.

b. Service Readiness

A mainstay of the exclusion debate includes that of the effects the integration of women would have upon overall service readiness. Numerous variables comprise the compound of service readiness and the potential for negative effects on these facets by the inclusion of women. First of these facets is the sheer costs of integrating some units. Naval vessels, which already share limited berthing and bath

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63 Culler, "The Decision to Allow Military Women," 25.

facilities, would require major retrofitting. Combat units would be ever concerned with the available facilities and opportunities for privacy for service members. The incorporation of women into these units presents a high demand economically as well as logistically. Women's menstruation and hygiene requirements are vastly different from men's.

By far the most espoused arguments are those regarding sexual relations or fraternization, and pregnancy as diminishing contributions of the repeal of combat exclusion upon readiness. The basis for such arguments being that "sex is inevitable in mixed-gender units--that is what happens whenever men and women get together."[64] Fraternization in the case of sexual relations can be detrimental to service readiness and member assignment capabilities. Pregnancy too has the unquestionable capacity to affect readiness should it be unplanned or poorly timed in a deployable unit. This is due primarily to the simple fact that "women are non-deployable while pregnant."[65] Certainly, the removal of a pregnant female from a unit without replacement, thereby causing an undermanned situation, would diminish the overall readiness of that unit.

Another component of the readiness debate is that regarding the current conscription exemption for women from the selected service registry also known as the draft. "If the ban were lifted, there would be no legal right for women to avoid the draft were it ever reinstituted."[66] Current combat exclusions were the justification in *Rostker v. Goldberg* (1981). The Supreme Court found that since women are excluded from combat and the sole purpose of a draft would be to raise troops for combat, it was within reason to solely require men to register for selected service.[67]

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64 Sara L. Ziegler and Gregory G. Gunderson. *Moving Beyond G.I. Jane: Women and the U.S. Military*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005, 51.

65 Adam N. Wojack. "Women can be Integrated into Ground Combat Units." In *Women in the Military*, edited by James Haley, 27. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2004, 29.

66 Culler, "The Decision to Allow Military Women," 29.

67 Several men sued the selective service system on the basis of sex discrimination.

c.   *Military Effectiveness*

Military effectiveness and its subcomponents are often utilized as justification for the continuation of established exclusion policies. "Military effectiveness is dependent on several variables"[68] including unit cohesion, combat effectiveness and overall individual performance In a 1994 Department of Defense briefing regarding newly opened opportunities for women in the armed forces, the DoD maintained that the integration of women in ground combat units would not benefit the effectiveness of those units.[69]

The most commonly espoused component of military effectiveness that proponents use for combat exclusion is unit cohesion. Most proponents claim that the integration of women in combat and particularly ground combat units can and would cause a detrimental degradation in the development and sustainment of the cohesion and solidarity of a combat unit. "Interference with the intangible quality of male bonding could damage a unit's cohesion and readiness..."[70] This is in part due to the believed introduction of the far more lenient and amiable environment women engender, in stark contrast to the harsh realities of combat. The presence of women is believed to hinder the ability of men to adequately bond over high standards and competition.[71] While the introduction of women may not hinder esprit de corps (which reflects a sense of binding to the larger group) or morale (which reflects an individual's personal feelings), a unit's cohesiveness is reflective of the feelings that tie individuals to each other within a particular or given group.[72] Cohesion can be detrimentally affected by cross-gender relations, specifically those involving sexuality, favoritism, or double-standards; regardless of whether these instances are in actuality or simply perceived.

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68 Darlene M. Iskra, CDR, USN (ret), PhD. *Women in the United States Armed Forces: A Guide to the Issues* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 24.

69 USGAO, 6.

70 Culler, "The Decision to Allow Military Women," 28.

71 Brian Mitchell. *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 1998, 175.

72 Anna Simons. "Women Will Reduce the Effectiveness of Ground Combat Units." In Women in the Military, edited by James Haley, 39. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2004, 44.

d. *Gender Limitations*

The common argument that "women are weaker than men"[73] for the continuation of current combat exclusion is that of the inherent biological, psychological and sociological dissimilarities between the male and female of the human species and how those pertain to combat performance and capability. Physically, the average woman is well below the standards of the average male.[74] Currently, the services incorporate gender-normative dual standard physical fitness tests in obvious consideration of the lower physical capabilities of the average female. The biological differences created by the increased levels of testosterone and its inherent tough and aggressive tendencies are more in accordance with the demands of combat. Proponents often cite the psychological trauma of combat and the inability of the average women to cope with such stressors and their increased susceptibility to post-traumatic stress disorders as a result of combat or sexual trauma. Women are often less capable of coping successfully with these stressors in a timely manner or setting them aside as the situation dictates. Concerns include that "women... are not impressed with physical prowess, do not relish competition, are not intrigued by danger, do not need to prove their manhood, and see little reason to hide their weaknesses, psychological or physical."[75]

e. *Perceptions*

A less common yet still prevalent argument regards the perception of the American armed forces, both domestically and globally. Traditionally, the military has been viewed as a bastion of the masculine elite. The concern therein is that with the continued inclusion and growing numbers of women under arms, the traditional domestic perception of the American military as one of a highly regarded institution will diminish. Subsequently, the services will no longer be capable of recruiting the numbers of high

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73 Ziegler et al., *Moving Beyond G.I. Jane*, 54.

74 Women are on average shorter, contain lower percentages of total muscle mass, contain higher percentages of total body fat, have lighter frames and less bone density, and contain smaller vital organs as in heart or lungs necessary for severe aerobic activity.

75 Brian Mitchell. "Women Lack the Physical Strength to be Soldiers." In *Women in the Military*, edited by James Haley, 12: Greenhaven Press, 2004, 170.

quality, motivated personnel required. Furthermore the inclusion of women in combat units would likely be used as fodder for anti-American rhetoric amongst American enemies.[76] This can be detrimental twofold. First, foreign societies might seek to demonstrate that the United States suffers from an entrenched vulnerability, for while else would they send a woman to do a man's job, in this case fight a "man's war."[77] Moreover enemies would endeavor to motivate individual troops, none of whom would be willing to suffer the humiliation of defeat at the hands of a woman. Perhaps most concerning though, is the trepidation that the inclusion of women could potentially cause rifts with allies whose society still maintains a more traditional perspective of femininity and the appropriate roles for each gender. Certainly, female service members have experienced difficulties in conducting joint operations around the globe due to the perspectives of their non-American counterparts.[78]

2.   **Opponents**

Opponents of existing combat exclusions also cite many of the same justifications for their opposition. Predominantly, the appeal is for an opening of opportunities where the Secretary of Defense is granted the authority to determine how and when the services begin to open combat units to women based on actual capabilities of service members, logistics, economics, and training rather than blanket exclusion.

a.   *Social Norms*

Like their proponent counterparts, opponents of combat exclusion recognize the influence of societal restraints associated with such change and the dynamics of gender relations. Yet they maintain that the continuous strides of women in civil society should correspondingly be reflected within the military assignment policies.

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76 Judith Hicks Stiehm, ed. *It's our Military, Too!: Women and the U.S. Military*. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 169.

77 Culler, "The Decision to Allow Military Women," 30.

78 See Martha E. McSally. "Women in Combat: Is the Current Policy Obsolete."

"Women's roles in our society and culture also have changed over time."[79] Long gone are the days of a woman's place being in the home and a man's duty to protect the women of his society. "A cherished position in one era is discarded for another."[80] Public opinion and societal norms are a fluid and ever-evolving entity. While some religious and ethical beliefs regarding the division of duties for the genders may remain, mainstream America has come to relegate this as an anomaly. While women may or may not choose to do so, the overwhelming majority of Americans believe in the right of each individual to pursue goals based solely on an individual's capability, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, creed, or religion. This is in stark contrast to the blatant discrimination entailed in combat exclusion. Furthermore, the advancements in modern technology and weaponry have so altered the battlefield landscape that the likelihood of mass combat casualties the likes of World War II are highly unlikely. Arguably, past concerns of American acceptance of mass numbers of women returning home in body bags are irrelevant in this day and age.

Proponents citing social norms often utilize the rape factor as justification for the exclusion of women from combat. Opponents are quick to point out that the concept of rape is by no means a female specific threat; it is a human issue. Male combatants and prisoners of war are just as capable of being subjected to this horrific act and are just as likely to suffer the detrimental psychological and emotional trauma resulting from such violations. Female guards, as in the case of Abu Ghraib, are also capable of sexual mistreatment of prisoners. Opponents maintain that such gender stereotyping arguments detract from the true reality that the horrors of war, both for combatants and noncombatants, are applicable to both genders.

b.   *Service Readiness*

Opponents also recognize the imperatives for optimum service readiness. Yet, they argue that the exclusion of women from combat is in fact detrimental to this

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79 Lorry M. Fenner and Marie E. deYoung. *Women in Combat: Civic Duty Or Military Liability*. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 30.

80 Skaine, "Properly Trained Servicewomen," 131.

issue rather than beneficial. "A gender-neutral policy will allow the most capable force to be assembled."[81] Should women be excluded completely from the military services, it is likely that none would be able to achieve their enlistment requirements. Following Vietnam and the incorporation of the All Volunteer Force, recruitment and retention have been difficult and the utilization of women has eased many of the strains caused by the unavailability of willing men. Since women are required due to these constraints to be a part of the military than it seems sensible to utilize them in the best capacity given their individual capabilities. This would likely enhance both service readiness as well as efficiency. This argument is certainly demonstrated by the recent inclusion of women into the Navy's submarine community. Women account for more than fifty percent of the United States' academia's technical degrees. "It is more important now to have the superior technical skill, intelligence, and training..."[82] In order to attract the most qualified personnel for such positions, the Navy has opened the doors for qualified technical expertise women into this previously excluded community.

Unfortunately, issues with fraternization and pregnancy are legitimate concerns of proponents. Opponents maintain that with the incorporation of proper leadership and discipline, such concerns will be few and far between. Modern technology has made the means of reproduction and pregnancy controllable by women. In fact, "the Presidential Commission found that, on the average, women are available only one hour a month less than men because of maternity leave."[83] More importantly, the benefits to readiness, which the incorporation of women entails, far outweigh any possible detriment these issues might cause.

Regrettably, "While many rights and responsibilities of citizenship such as voting, serving on a jury, or working and paying taxes are burdens of all citizens, the right to fight remains unresolved."[84] With regards to the selected service or draft

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81 McSally, "Women in Combat," 1030.

82 Rosemarie Skaine. "Properly Trained Servicewomen can Overcome Physical Shortcomings." In *Women in the Military*, edited by James Haley, 19. (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2004), 20.

83 Skaine, "Properly Trained Servicewomen," 162.

84 Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*, 53.

component of the readiness argument, according to the Selected Service Act of 1948 Section 1(c), "the Congress further declares that in a free society the obligations and privileges of serving in the armed forces and the reserve components thereof should be shared generally, in accordance with a system of selection which is fair and just..."[85] This statement reflects the ideals that with the rights and privileges of an American citizenship comes certain responsibilities and obligations. It is not until Section 3 regarding registration where the delineation between the genders is annotated.[86] Still, in *Rostker v. Goldberg,* the Supreme Court upheld the mandate that only males were required to register for the draft. Nevertheless, their decision against equal protection was predicated upon the reasoning that since women were excluded from combat the United States would not benefit from including them in the selected service registration.[87] This debate brought about the subsequent argument that while women were being denied their individual rights by denial from selected service, men were also being forced to shoulder undue and disproportionate responsibilities in order to take up the slack.

c.   *Military Effectiveness*

It is certainly feasible that the military should utilize the best man for the job even if it is a woman. Consequently, "military effectiveness requires that we pick the best qualified person for the job regardless of gender."[88] Opponents argue that any diminished or lowering of standards in order to accommodate women in certain positions are a result of poor leadership and should not be utilized as fodder for a complete exclusion of all women from certain assignments.

As a result of the induction of the all-volunteer force, ."..our more forward-thinking political and military leaders began to realize that morale and cohesion,

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85 Gilman G. Udell, Superintendent. Selected Service Act as Amended. Document Room House of Representatives. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971, 68.

86 Section three states that except as otherwise noted, it shall be the duty of every male citizen of the United States and all other males residing within the United States who is between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six shall register for selected service. Subsequent sections also reference males specifically. See Service Act as Amended.

87 McSally, "Women in Combat," 1049.

88 McSally, "Women in Combat," 1030.

and therefore effectiveness, suffered under discriminatory rules and regulations."[89] Opponents of exclusion contend that what is best for the military as a whole, with regards to unit cohesion and combat effectiveness, is the ability of personnel to fill any position at any time if individually capable. Cohesion or bonding must be divided between that of social and that of task oriented. While gender divided groups may be prevalent among social cohesion, task cohesion is predicated on the notion that members simply share commitment to a collaborative effort or cause regardless of gender.[90] By this logic, the inclusion of women would have no bearing on the capacity of units to bond; rather the emphasis must lie on proper leadership in order to emphasize task cohesion over social cohesion.

> To date, there has been little evidence that the integration of women into previously closed units or occupations has had a negative impact on important mission-related performance factors, such as unit cohesion... In a study by DACOWITS in 2009, a majority of service members who were part of the study's focus groups said that women serving in combat roles, such as 'on convoys, as drivers, or otherwise traveling between camps-- and participating in female search teams, including the Lioness program' in Iraq and Afghanistan did not have a negative impact on unit morale.[91]

d.   *Gender Abilities*

Opponents of exclusion are often confronted with the reality that the biological capacities of the genders are different. Yet while they recognize that the overwhelming majority of women would be incapable of performing combat oriented tasks, this is not to say that there are not many women who would thrive and perform these tasks well, if not better than some of their male counterparts. The arbitrary exclusion of women also fails to reflect the ability of women to overcome initial biological depravations. This argument maintains that despite the fact that the majority of women would be incapable of participating in combat units, the complete exclusion of women forces units to accept weaker men rather than stronger female peers. In fact many

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89 Fenner, *Women in Combat*, 40.

90 McSally, "Women in Combat," 1035.

91 MLDC, 29.

women are currently fully qualified for positions but unable to be assigned due to the exclusion policy. ."... There is not much direct evidence to support claims that all women lack the physical ability to perform in combat roles... Likewise, research does not indicate that women are necessarily less able than men to deal with the emotional ramifications of combat."[92]   Opponents maintain that the majority of so-called biological and psychological attributes that distinguish men from women are in reality a reflection of the social construct of gender. The gendering of traits, attributes, and duties is not necessarily a biological or psychological characteristic but rather a result of societal pressures and beliefs on what is appropriate behavior for men and what is appropriate for women. Such behaviors can be overcome with adequate training.

e.   Equal Opportunity

Finally, equal opportunity is perhaps the core argument used against combat exclusion. The notions of citizenship and civic responsibility weigh heavily here. Opponents often hearken back to the suffragette movement. Is the ability to serve in the armed forces an inalienable right, an obligation, or a privilege? Opponents argue that the concept of exclusion from service, based on gender, limits women's inherent rights to citizenship and participation. Specifically, that "either all are citizens with all rights and obligations, or they are not citizens at all."[93] Opponents utilize the promotional hindrances such policies inevitably entail. Equal rights and equal opportunity go hand in hand, and the limits upon female service members' rights prevent them from having the same career opportunities of their male counterparts. According to the Equal Rights Amendment passed in 1972, "states, 'equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged... on account of sex.'"[94]

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92 Ibid, 30.

93 Simons, "Women Will Reduce," 28.

94 Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces*m 60.

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D.   IN THE LINE OF FIRE

1.   The Realities of Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror

The United States' incursions into Iraq and Afghanistan (for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom respectively) have once again brought to light the combat exclusion debate. In fact, "some 20,000 of the 205, 000 service members currently serving in Afghanistan are women."[95] The reality of the battlefield is no longer a vertical linear warfront where combatant troops are easily identifiable and entrenched across well-delineated front lines, as came to be known in the twentieth century. The very nature of a counterinsurgency is its fuzziness. Not only is the battlefield not easily distinguishable neither are the enemies. Such a hazy environment of asymmetric warfare and horizontal front lines has left American leadership, both military and political, in a dilemma. How do American troops meet the needs of such warfare while still reflecting the dictates of combat exclusion?

Oftentimes, throughout the war, the services have found themselves in keeping with the letter of the law but perhaps not necessarily the spirit. "Given the difficulty of predicting and isolating 'direct combat' in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), there are claims that the Department of Defense (DoD) is currently violating the Combat Exclusion Policy..."[96] The utilization of terms in combat exclusion policies, such as well forward and exposure to hostile fire, have made such determinations difficult since most of the operating area in Afghanistan lacks a clearly defined forward operating area.[97] This lacking has enabled the reality that nearly all units in Afghanistan are vulnerable to attack and hostile fire regardless of combat unit delineations.

Further complicating the issue, are the aforementioned faults with the current Department of Defense and service specific policies. These policies focus more on the assignment of women rather than the utilization of them. Women have found themselves

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95 Karen Parrish. "DoD Opens More Jobs, Assignments to Military Women." American Forces Press Service, Feb 9, 2012, 2.

96 Putko, 27.

97 USGAO, 7.

increasingly involved in ground combat altercations since the Department of Defense policies are merely reflective of restrictions on the assignment of women and not necessarily on the capabilities nor on the circumstantial requirements of women in the field. Female service members have received Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, Air Medals, and Commendations medals for combat experiences and services rendered. Although women remain unassigned to formal combat units in accordance with prevailing policies, more and more they have become engaged in combat related activities and engagements in Afghanistan. This obvious disconnect between the realities of Afghanistan and current policies has made the operational environment a minefield for military leadership looking to navigate combat exclusion. As a result of these ambiguities between October 2001 and February 2010, at least 20 female service members have died and 50 wounded in action in Operation Enduring Freedom.[98]

2.   Female Engagement Teams

In July of 2010, Female Engagement Team members were summarily recalled to secure operating bases to await an official review of their compliance with the combat exclusion directives. After three weeks of debate, military leadership clarified that they could not participate in hunt and kill foot patrols and were not allowed more than temporary stays at combat bases. Later, Major General Richard Mills would clarify a temporary stay as 45 days. It seems apparent that in order "to fulfill the letter but hardly the spirit of the guidelines, the female marines now travel from their combat outposts every six weeks for an overnight stay at a big base like Camp Leatherneck, then head back out the next morning."[99] For the Female Engagement Teams, combat exclusion has been a murky policy whose restrictions are increasingly difficult to apply and yet still garner the successful completion of the mission at hand. Fifty percent of surveyed responses stated that they felt, given the Title 10 U.S.C. definition, the Female

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98 Anne Leland and Mari-Jana "M-J" Oboroceanu. American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010, 14.

99 Elisabeth Bumiller. "Dodging U.S. Limits on Women in Combat; Many Female Marines in Afghanistan have had no Option but Firing Back." The International Herald Tribune, October 4, 2010, sec. NEWS, 3.

Engagement Teams were inherently in violation of this policy. The most common argument is the distinction between the letter and the spirit of the law. In fact many seemed to relish in the opportunity to blur the lines between those deemed appropriate positions for women and those withheld due to combat operations. The question is twofold. First, whether a support unit remains identifiable as such when they leave the forward operating base and enter into infantry operations maneuvers or whether they are now identifiable as combat units. Secondly, whether a unit which engages in direct support of combat operations, but whose primary mission is not such, in fact is by default a combat unit.

Female Engagement Teams by their very nature do appear to violate the letter of the combat exclusion restrictions but are a vital asset to operations in Afghanistan. Commanders have sought to go around the restrictions by high revolution movements of female units. They set timelines and regulate intervals by which women must return to bases before returning to the field in order to keep with the restrictions on prolonged collocation with units whose primary mission is direct ground combat but by no means does this appear to be in keeping with the spirit of the policy. The gains from having them in the field appear to be worth the risk.

3.   The Future of Combat Exclusion

In February 2012, the Department of Defense issued a policy change request to Congress in keeping with the 1995 Congressional directive for notification of Department of Defense intent to open positions to women. This policy change reflected a recommendation by the Military Leadership Diversity Commission of March 2011, to open more combat support positions to women in order to enhance diversity within the Department of Defense.[100] The request stands to open upwards of 10,000 positions to female service members.[101] It serves to lift the ban on women serving in units that simply

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100 Lisa Daniel. "Panel Recommends Ways to Improve Military Diversity." American Forces Press Service, March 8, 2011, 1.

101 Parrish, "DoD Opens More Jobs," 1.

operate in close proximity to combat units and enables an "exception to policy,"[102] which permits the services to open specific positions at the lower ranks in combat support positions including intelligence, communications, and logistics.

Certainly, the successes seen by females serving in both Afghanistan and Iraq have facilitated such a change in policy. The Female Engagement Teams particularly represent the potential strategic and operational opportunities that are being stifled by current combat exclusion criterion and "through their courage, sacrifice, patriotism and great skill, women have proven their ability to serve in an expanding number of roles on and off the battlefield"[103] The continued success of such units in both Afghanistan and similar future engagements will likely enable this trend to continue and the inevitable dismantling of combat exclusion. Nonetheless, time will tell both which debate rings true and whether the integration of women into combat units can be done smoothly.

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102 Ibid, 2.

103 Ibid, 1.

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IV.   WOMEN AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

A.   WOMEN MATTER

It is important when discussing the Female Engagement Teams to understand their symbiotic relationship to counterinsurgency operations and strategies. Strong counterinsurgent movements must negotiate the human terrain and tap into the wellspring of female networks and relationships. These networks extend differently than their male counterparts but are by no means less integral to the movement. Women offer the capacity to reach into the home and extract information often beyond the reach of traditional kinetic operations.

B.   INSURGENCY VERSUS COUNTERINSURGENCY

Insurgents utilize the ungoverned spaces of society and tacit acceptance by the local populace to garner support both psychological and temporal.[104] By definition, ."..an insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control."[105] Certainly this is what the International Security Assistance Forces are encountering in Afghanistan. As a result, the reemergence of counterinsurgency as a dominant military doctrine has occurred. Counterinsurgency or COIN is an all-encompassing term used to portray the entirety of the actions taken to overcome insurgent movements.[106] Both constructs have appeared throughout history and continue to evolve within the given environment. One fact, however, remains constant; the insurgent movement's requisite for local populace support and/or acceptance. This populace incorporates both genders and as such any effective COIN strategy must address both sides.

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104 John Mackinlay and Alison Al-Baddawy. Rethinking Counterinsurgency. RAND Counterinsurgency Study. Volume 5 ed. Arlington, VA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2008, 6.

105 Kilcullen, 1.

106 Ibid, 1.

C.   AMERICAN COUNTERINSURGENCY

American relations with insurgent movements have been varied and the utilization of a COIN doctrine has never been more prominent as with the War on Terror in Afghanistan. The particular Indirect Approach focuses on "the use of indigenous troops, the goodwill of the people, societal reconstruction, and the host government's legitimacy, policies, and conduct."[107] Unfortunately, despite doctrinal recognition that emphasis must lie on population security and intelligence, too often military tactics and strategies fail to reflect this focus.[108] There are a few basic tenets that bind the basic dynamics of insurgent warfare. Firstly, the counterinsurgent unlike his insurgent counterpart is bound by truth and damaged by overt shows of force. Furthermore, anonymity is detrimental to the counterinsurgent yet beneficial to the insurgent.[109] Therefore, the informational and intelligence networks that both groups must tap into are vital and even more so to the counterinsurgent operation. Certainly, the imperative within a counterinsurgency must recognize and lie within the human terrain. Subsequently, "the population is regarded not just as a means to an end, but as the end itself."[110]

Human intelligence (HUMINT), intelligence gathering, and information operations are a vital facet of any successful counterinsurgency. Static or embedded forces develop human intelligence gathering capabilities and can gain unprecedented knowledge regarding the local population and the insurgency. Such intelligence usually provides the majority of valid and actionable data for tactical military operations. This data is often derived from local civil-military relations and operations.[111] Yet, American COIN operations in Afghanistan too often neglect well over fifty percent of the

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107 Thomas H. Henriksen. "Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency, And the Indirect Approach. Joint Special Operations Report." 10–3 ed. Hurlburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2010, 1.

108 Austin Long. Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence: The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960–1970 and 2003–2006. RAND Counterinsurgency Study. Paper 6 ed. Arlington, VA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2008, 27.

109 Arleigh William Dean. "Fighting Networks: The Defining Challenge of Irregular Warfare." Master's, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011, 79.

110 Harald Havoll. COIN Revisited: Lessons of the Classical Literature on Counterinsurgency and its Applicability to the Afghan Hybrid Insurgency: Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 15.

111 Seth G. Jones. Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. RAND Counterinsurgency Study. Vol. 4. Arlington, VA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2008, 99.

population when attempting to garner such intelligence; women. American COIN strategy should reflect both genders and the culture within which they operate in order to fully capitalize on the human terrain. Such strategies must reflect both genders and the cultural and religious society in which they function.

D.   NETWORKS

1.   Insurgent Networks

An apt COIN in Afghanistan necessitates the understanding and utilization of the societal and tribal networks within which the insurgent movements maneuver and "appreciating societal and operational distinctions will aid in the application of the Indirect Approach."[112] Insurgent networks operate upon the predication that their source of power is derived from the local population within which they operate. Particularly, "Afghan culture is primarily a system of interlocking and overlapping networks, based on ties of kinship, religion, tribe, ethnicity, locality, patronage and common interests."[113] This is certainly true for the main insurgent movements within Afghanistan; the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, Haqqani network, foreign fighters, Pashtun tribes of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and criminal networks This base of power is derived from below the detection threshold of counterinsurgent efforts.[114] Therefore, "networks conduct operational activity to influence popular perceptions, which requires a close synchronization with information strategy."[115]

Nearly half of the insurgent and counterinsurgent base population in Afghanistan is female. U.S. military doctrine specifically points out that women are incredibly influential in the formation and sustainment of the social networks that the insurgents use to garner both physical support and tacit approval.[116] Understanding how to tap into these

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112 Henriksen, "Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency," 15.

113 HQISAF, 19.

114 Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 8.

115 Dean, 76.

116 U.S. Army. Tactics in Counterinsurgency. Field Manual. 3–24.2 ed. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009, 262.

networks is vital to any successful COIN strategy. This includes those networks both wielded and influenced by the female population.

2. Female Networks

While most insurgent fighters are in fact men, women can be greatly influential through their own networks.[117] Women are oft considered a secondary subject in counterinsurgency strategies despite the reality that they make up half the population. In spite of this, any successful attempt at such incentives will require consideration of this portion of the population and its participation within. Organized insurgent and terrorist organizations globally have seen varying levels of female participation. In particular, women have served in diverse levels of active and supportive positions. Traditionally these roles have been overlooked by researchers and identified as those simply filled by wives, sisters and mothers. Subordination, secrecy, and the subversive nature of these organizations have contributed to this neglect. Yet despite this omission, women have played vital and ever changing roles within the organizations' structures. In particular, they serve as the most prevalent link between these organizations, society and the state. Whether it be on the sidelines as mothers or as active support participants themselves, completely ignoring their existence is unwise given the intricacy of their relations to the traditional patriarchal leadership. Any successful counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy from the state must reflect a consideration for this half of the population and the integral part it plays in the continuance, evolution, activities, and strength of terrorist and insurgent organizations.

E. FEMALE PARTICIPATION

1. Gender and Violence

We should start with one simple fact: most insurgents are male. This does not however imply that an insurgency is somehow a masculine entity. In fact many studies refute the gender normative based arguments suggesting that female and male criminals

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117 Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 40.

differ strictly in quantity rather than quality and that social determinants such as disaffection and poverty play the largest determinant role.[118] Surely, "gender per se does not seem to have determined the differences in attitudes to the exercises of violence: which were the product of individual character and experience."[119] Furthermore, the historical constraints placed on women are a reasonable cause leading to this division of numbers. The recent rise in female violence within insurgent movements is likely a direct reflection of "the process of emancipation, assimilating the female model into the male, would automatically bring a rise in female criminality and thus an increase by women of aggressive and violent behavior."[120] Subsequently, the growing global liberation of women and their emergence from more traditional roles in society and family dictate that as these social restrictions on their activity are removed, so their participation in criminal activities will rise.

Historically female marginalization is most often defined in opposition to a male dominated system of power.[121]

> If women are less into crime and are relatively less successful at it, this is less a result of single-mindedness in the rational pursuit of crime than because they lack access to organizations and social contacts that would enable them to pursue criminal enterprise more safely and profitably.[122]

Traditionally, those already in power, i.e. men, define women's roles. Women's roles are traditionally defined by those already in power, i.e. men. Subsequently, the evolution of female violence and its recent rise is oft met with disdain and seen as unnatural and exceptional and therefore arbitrarily ignored by counterinsurgents and "..precisely by assuming this point of view... deviant women are required, almost as a

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118 Alessandra Dino. *The Accidental Guerilla*: Female Roles in Criminal Organizations" in Studies of Organized Crime 5: Women and the Mafia: Female Roles in Organized Crime. Springer, 2007, 70.

119 Jamieson, Alison. "Mafiosi and Terrorists: Italian Women in Violent Organizations" in SAIS Review 20.2. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, 4.

120 Dino, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 71.

121 Ibid, 72.

122 Pamela Davies. "Women, Crime and an Informal Economy: Female Offending and Crime for Gain" in The British Criminology Conferences: Selected Proceedings 2 edited by Mike Brogden. Belfast: Queens University, 1997, 4.

complement, to have an exceptional nature, with all that term's many different shades, shifting from the mythical dimension to the pathological."[123] States and their polities have notoriously continued to buy into this misconceived viewpoint and rarely address, if at all, the female components of their organized criminal elements rather relegating them to sidelines as unique examples of derangement or hyper-masculinity. Women's capacities within insurgent movements as tacit acceptors, arbiters of radicalization, and support systems emphasize the contradictory nature of this point. Women linked to violence or criminal activities need not necessarily be deranged or lacking in some essential feminine characteristic. Rather female participation in insurgency activity can be a direct reflection of feminine attributes and traditional roles.

2.   Family Versus *Family*

As with other elements of states with a long-standing tradition of patriarchy, the concepts of family and society are integral to Afghan insurgent organizations. Like most organized criminal societies based upon agrarian rural communities, the insurgency emerged professing the ideals of honor and duty. Affiliates are drawn from existing member's relations and from all classes and social orders and "one of the things the research reveals is the central place of the family, both the external family, interpersonal dynamics, and the internal family, the psychic family field that all members share in it historicity, which is inside each individual and structures his or her identity."[124] The external family or traditional immediate family unit informs every individual; a traditional Afghan culture has solidified its imperative in daily life. Individual lives are determined by familial relations rather than individual freedom of choice, thereby strengthening the family unit. For women, these relationships define them both as mothers and as protectors. Fathers are the arbiters of violence and discipline whereas mothers represent safety and comfort. This position wields them immense influence, albeit likely indirectly, in much of the organizations activities as their children grow into

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123 Dino, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 70.

124 Franco Di Maria and Girolamo Lo Verso. "Women in Mafia Organizations" in Studies of Organized Crime 5: Women and the Mafia: Female Roles in Organized Crime. Springer, 2007, 88.

their own positions within the organization. Husbands confide in wives, children come to mother for advice, and sisters link kin throughout.

Concomitantly, in the organized structures of the Afghan insurgent subculture, the term family extends beyond immediate and extended blood relations. This psychic or internalized sense of family and the family unit coincide with the organizations family resulting in a fundamentalist-type psychic identity. The Afghan is born into a family that is fundamental to his world (i.e., uncles are of fundamental importance). A child is identified by the family as a future warrior, if male, or wife of a warrior, if female. As a family these units become intricately interwoven and can even surpass the allegiances felt towards the biological and affective family. Similar to the family unit, insurgency organizational structures have their own representations as a Family. Ritualized linkages such as marriage, tradition and fraternity unite the Family. The Family is the all-protective mother where one must turn towards. For insurgents absolute respect and subordination is due to the organization, similarly to that which they garner their biological parents. The violent males are the individual actors within the organization enacting its violence and discipline. This depiction only serves to reinforce the influence women may wield within the organization at least over her immediate and extended blood relations. These two notions of family and Family can at times come into direct competition for an individual's loyalty and "…in societies where kinship remained the primary basis of solidary relations, fraternal association was effective because it used quasi-kin relations to extend bonds of loyalty and obligation beyond the family, to incorporate people into kin networks, or to create new relations having some of the force of kinship."[125] The use of kinship ties to strengthen the bonds within the insurgency can at times pit the two against one another. In the case of the insurgency, the Family must at times supersede the family. Women are drawn into the insurgency or Family and remain loyal for the very same reasons as their male counterparts and efforts to counter such loyalties must address both genders.

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125 Letizia Paoli. Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 76.

3.   Traditional Female Roles

Certainly women hold far less overt power, yet that isn't the entire story. Accordingly, "we should ask whom is manipulating whom."[126] Much of their influence occurs in spheres of dominion divergent from their male counterparts. The current literature overlooks the many capacities by which women interact with organized insurgency structures and hierarchy and relegates much of their activity either in terms of its relation to male roles (i.e. mothers, wives, daughters, lovers etc.) or in other various supporting roles. In reality they provide integral components and serve a vast array of functions within the insurgent support system[127] and "it is shortsighted, therefore, to assume that because the Afghan woman has a repressed status in the public sphere, she is therefore irrelevant in the private sphere."[128] Among the many possible female contributions, the main functions performed by Afghan women are as follows:

- Women strengthen ties between families through specific matrimonial strategies.
- The female role is central in educational and socializing processes.
- The important relationship with the sacred, religion, and the Islamic faith is prevalently left to female management.
- The role of women is strategic in communication processes.
- Women are also the vehicles for maintaining a respectable image of the insurgent movement. (i.e. the *Pashtunwali* concept of *nang* or chivalry where a man's honor or *izzat* is determined by his ability to protect *namus* or the honor of his women)
- Women generally contribute to giving the insurgency a normal face and, in virtue of this presume normality, help to foster general approval of the movement.

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126 Dino, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 79.

127 Mehra, "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency17.

128 Ibid, 19.

- They also become symbolic instruments and victims in '*badal*' (cross-vendettas or revenge).
- They are useful in counteracting control by the police and judicial authorities.[129]

For the first point, the strengthening of ties through intermarriage and matrimonial strategies, this has traditionally been the utmost participatory function served by women. The solidification of alliances via marriage is older than any insurgency. They serve as a strategic function of allying clans, consolidating power, and mending relations. Both male and female future insurgents must obtain permission before marrying from the family and even at times the Family in order to ensure their unions serve the greater good of the tribe or insurgency.

With regards to the female roles of education and socialization; these are perhaps the principal roles and contributions of Afghan women. As first a wife and then a mother, it is her duty to reinforce the ideals of the insurgency within her immediate relatives and eventually to raise her children in keeping with the insurgency's principles, thereby ensuring that the two worlds become indistinguishable. "The fact that 44.6% of the Afghan population is under the age of 14 underscores the need to engage the women who are the caregivers and thus the primary influencers of the next generation in their youth..."[130] and since integration and indoctrination of outside potential affiliates is difficult due to the familial based nature of the network, it is imperative that new generations be raised within the organization's structure. Women serve to inculcate a set of values that later become normality. Women may not hold much official power within these organizations; however they wield significant domestic authority over their households and their children's futures. Consequently, "when women support COIN efforts, families support COIN efforts."[131]

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129 Dino, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 75.

130 HQISAF, 19.

131 Macak, "Female Engagement Teams," 5.

The Islamic faith represents a crucial area of intersection between the insurgency and the society within which it operates. Since women are seen as the carriers of the divine and sacred, they are well positioned to act as intermediaries between the organization and the community. This presence of a non-threatening feminine image in society permits the community to feel less threatened and thereby more accepting of the insurgency and its activities. Professions of faith and community reinforce these feelings, put a positive face on the insurgency and maintain its respectable image and tacit acceptance by the populace.

Female components of the organizations serve vital functions as communicators. They are often at the center of the daily village gossip. Through frequent intermarriage, women promote communication, solidarity and cooperation among the various factions of the insurgency. The common conception is that the men of Afghan society have honor whereas the women are the honor. Women are typically considered to be uncontaminated. Therefore, attacks on women can represent a significant blow to the insurgency's esteem as in the cases of *badal* (revenge). This can transcend to attempts at infiltration by police or state apparatuses via women as an attack on their honor.

For many insurgent organizations female active participation beyond traditional support mechanisms is relatively low. Despite the occasional cases where insurgent women have sought to transform from intimate support systems to leading protagonists, the fact remains that the majority of women operate in a hierarchical system dominated by patriarchal authoritarianism and male exclusivity. In traditional societies, "gender roles remain rigidly circumscribed."[132] This is most certainly the case in Afghanistan where women are highly constrained by political agendas, cultural norms and traditions, and religious interpretations.

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132 Jamieson, 5.

F.   COIN

1.   Women and COIN

At its core, COIN initiatives seek to facilitate crucial information engagement at the base local and tribal levels with an emphasis in face-to-face personal relations and exchanges. The population is the insurgency's center of gravity and any successful COIN strategy must reflect this. For much of Afghanistan's history, the state has remained relatively weak and unable to fully penetrate these societies, while popular culture and society has held tight to age-old traditions and an emphasis on family and community. Continued and widespread poverty and unemployment in country have enabled continued growth and infiltration of the insurgency in nearly every polity of the state. Since women participate in the enterprise syndicate they are well positioned as a communicatory intermediary. Thus, by operating nearby and in coordination with the indigenous population, counterinsurgents can gain the credibility necessary to garner information. Yet women are often left out of any significant COIN operations.

The absence of women from much of strategic and tactical COIN thinking is likely a result of various misinformed assumptions. Women wield little to no influence in Afghan culture and society. They must be weak, subjugated and forced to hide behind walls and blue *burqus*. As previously stated, these arguments lack validity and are predicated on an entirely Westernized perception of female empowerment and influence. "It is important to stress that women carry power in all cultures and society, but not always in the same way."[133] Thus, "it is critical... to try and understand the types of influence women have in society and how this influence could be leveraged in a COIN environment"[134] As wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters, women can provide a crucial capacity to influence their male counterparts.

As central components of tribal and village life, women serve as a valuable source of information for COIN operatives. Yet leadership has oft expressed concerns that such

[133] Gregg, "Employment Handbook for Fighting Counterinsurgencies," 21.

[134] Ibid, 21.

a portion a population that is extremely difficult to access represents little benefit given the cost and effort to reach them. Then again, so long as consideration is given to the tribal and religious constraints of the Afghan society, COIN operatives can certainly maneuver around such restrictions. Women "are also a key population whose trust must be earned and respected in order to help win the community's support against insurgents."[135] While access may be difficult and if mishandled could result in long lasting acrimony and hostility, the benefits are both real and substantial with regards to intelligence gathering and bottom-up counterinsurgency operations.

2.   Female Engagement Teams and COIN

Strong COIN strategies recognize the importance of the female component of the population and utilize focused measures to reach them. "Operationally, most successful counter-insurgent forces are light infantry or special operations type forces..."[136] and one such special operation force is that of the Female Engagement Teams, which represent a unique and relatively unprecedented attempt to tap into the female portion of the population. These teams derive from the understanding that given their own networks and influences "women are ideal conduits to communicate IO messages" and "women are ideal intelligence sources."[137] Female unit members are gathering vital human and operational intelligence from women who see all within their village and community. Therefore, "women are at the center of village life and valuable sources of intelligence for counterinsurgents."[138] A bottom-up approach to garnering such information requires the capacity to enable women to communicate with counterinsurgents. The FETs reflect one of the sole capacities to facilitate such interaction. These teams are deemed nonthreatening to both the society, culture, and tribal norms that even at times, male Afghans find it more amenable to communicate information to female counterinsurgents

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135 Mehra, "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency," 11.

136 Dean, 125.

137 Macak, "Female Engagement Teams," 4.

138 Mehra, "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency8.

than to their male peers and in fact "female Marines elicit more information from male Afghans than their male counterparts."[139]

The Female Engagement Teams represent a unique opportunity to act as force multiplier in Afghanistan, gaining the biggest bang for the buck as it were. They have been utilized in nearly every stage of the counterinsurgency cycle to ensure maximum operational effectiveness; including the clear, hold, and build phases.[140] They are best utilized as a component of the traditional oil spot approach to counterinsurgency where they can build lasting and fruitful relationships.[141] Survey responses highlighted instances where Female Engagement Teams were able to conduct searches of females and support large scale infantry operations that lead to the discovery of several Taliban operatives including caches of money and drugs as well as gain vital intelligence from the wives of key Taliban leaders in a given operating area. These and other instances not only enabled the COIN operatives to gain key atmospherics and information, it allowed them on more than one occasion to gain ground on the enemy.

G.   CONCLUSION

It is imperative to recognize that in a policy of people-centric COIN, "ignoring half the population means missing significant opportunities to gain intelligence and build trust within Afghan communities."[142] By solely addressing only half of the population, International Security Assistance Forces fail to understand the most appropriate means by which to direct their lines of activities and operations. The state and American counterinsurgency strategists are beginning to recognize the vital importance women play within insurgent movements and their sustainability. The future of the insurgency can at times be dependent upon the continuation of affiliates indoctrinated at birth from their mother's either passionate, avid, and devoted support of the Family or simple tacit

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139 U.S. Marine Corps I Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD). "I MEF (FWD) Female Engagement Team Deployment After-Action Report," 7.

140 Ibid, 1.

141 Matt Pottinger, 1stLt and Johannah Shaffer 2ndLt. "Afghanistan Female Engagement Team After-Action and Way Forward."4.

142 Mehra, "Equal Opportunity Counterinsurgency," 11.

acceptance. Women have traditionally and continue to play an integral role in the continuation and indoctrination of the insurgent elements of Afghanistan. Their integral position is predicated on relationships; relationships within the family, within the Family, within factions, within the community, and within the state.

Dense kinship relationships flourish among men of honor and their families. This notion of honor and family extends to the women of these organizations as well. The level of female participation varies from tacit acceptance to intimate support mechanisms, both integral to the insurgency's survival. Regardless of the level of their participation, their roles as mothers and sisters are reflections of the very essence of the Family. In point, for a state to initiate a successful counterinsurgency campaign it must recognize the fundamentally essential role women play within the organization and "the family dimension cannot be ignored."[143] Such considerations will lead to positive relations with the family unit thereby gaining ground with the local village or tribal units and eventually widespread national success. Counterinsurgency policies should reflect the particulars of each component organization and its populations, both male and female. Furthermore, "one thing is certain: the female role is powerful, integrated, and organized, closely connected to the typology and characteristics of the organization in which she operates."[144] For many women who turn to the state for help or operate with counterinsurgent forces, they can inevitably experience shunning, threats, or retaliation. The state and society must address this for any future attempts at counterinsurgency policies. Nor will a catch-all approach to the insurgency suffice. The variations across the spectrum from the Taliban to Hezb-i-Islami, not to mention those within the organizations themselves' factions must be taken into consideration given their unique organizational structures and the varying levels and degrees of female support systems. Certainly though it is imperative in all cases for the state and its judicial polities to address the female community of these organizations in order to truly gain ground against this insurgent element. The Female Engagement Teams represent the most viable means by which to do so and are vital to continued COIN efforts.

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143 Di Maria, "Women in Mafia Organizations," 98.

144 Dino, *The Accidental Guerilla*, 77.

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V. GETTING AN IN WITH THE WOMEN

> Engagement is the key to disseminating commander's messages, information collection (passive and active), influencing the population, understanding tribal dynamics, collecting atmospherics, deescalating/softening the public's perception of offensive operations, and understanding the needs of the population.[145]

A. CULTURAL REALITY

It is imperative in order to truly engage the population of Afghanistan to recognize the unique tribal culture of the region and its impediments on top-down change and population engagement, particularly those which are pertinent to the female populace. Tribal or local cultural norms as well as religious determinations and interpretations can often supersede all other pulls on the individual including sense of self, the nuclear or extended family, or state allegiance. At times they can even contradict established global religious edicts or at the very least become amalgamated to an uneducated populous. Culture is the established and utterly complex whole which identifies a society and its members, comprised of knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws and customs. Particularly pertinent in Afghanistan is the notion that "in the realm of the power of ideas, the two most significant are conceptions of group identity... and the cultural framework of Islam."[146] Kinship or group identity is the utmost imperative superseding any personal interests in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, many "Afghans claim that international forces lack respect for culture and traditions."[147] Interactions between male International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operatives and native Afghans substantiate this claim, particularly those involving Afghan women.

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145 USMC 1MEF, 1.

146 Thomas Barfield. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 31.

147 HQISAF, 20.

1.   Tribalism

Tribal identity is perhaps the most pervasive component of any Afghan identity. Forces seeking to counter such loyalties can find it difficult to penetrate these deeply entrenched and tight familial structures in order to negotiate or influence them. Tribal cultures identify based upon familial ties and commitments. In order to supersede these loyalties, states must truly understand them, engage the population, and operate within the given constructs.

a.   Pashtunwali

Perhaps the most pervasive and demonstrative example of such cultural constraints in Afghanistan is that of Pashtunwali. Pashtunwali is the code by which the major ethnic group of Afghanistan, the Pashtuns, adheres. Since the dominant component of the Taliban insurgency is comprised of Pashtuns, their social code and order is of particular importance when pursuing a population engagement strategy for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) units in Afghanistan. "Afghans, and especially Pashtuns, have historically been fiercely independent and highly xenophobic" and as such, any population engagement strategy must reflect this aspect of Afghan culture. [148]

Within Afghanistan, ethnic groups abound. All are predominantly defined as tribal. The tribes themselves represent a formation of ethnicity derived from lineage relating to a common ancestor, traditionally patrilineal and "the Pashtuns are the best example of this, with their ability to link scores of lineages comprising millions of people into a single genealogy backward through time to their founding ancestor."[149] Since the mid-eighteenth century, Pashtuns, tracing their origin to Qais, have represented the largest and most dominant ethnic group in the area; comprising approximately 40 percent

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148 Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy," 124.

149 Barfield, *Afghanistanm* 22.

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of the total population.[150]   They are an "acephalous, egalitarian, kinship-organized society, segmented into tribes successively subdividing into clan, section, subsection, and family."[151] On the other hand, more importantly than lineage, Pashtuns are inherently defined by their adherence and complicity to Pashtunwali.

Pashtunwali (the way of the Pashtuns) is a set of codes and norms that are founded upon the principles of honor (*izzat*) and chivalry (*nang*). Within the many tenets of *Pashtunwali* are the three which determine honor; gold (*zar*), women (*zan*), and land (*zamin*). Of these, women are the personification of such honor and their personal honor holds strong reflection over the honor of the tribe as a whole. *Namus* are the requirements to maintain this honor of the Pashtun society's women and are thus an essential component for the division of the genders (*purdah)*.[152] A woman's honor is determined by her and her kin's adherence to cultural norms (as in *Pashtunwali*) and prevailing Islamic interpretations of modesty and *purdah*.

B.   DIVISION OF GENDERS

1.   Feminine Modesty

A web of political and cultural pressures and symbolism surround the concept of seclusion.[153] Unfortunately, this is likely to remain the case until global society can differentiate the custom of gender division and its many fabrications as a cultural phenomenon and not a representation solely of Islam or of Afghanistan. Until entities on both sides cease to use Islamic and cultural interpretations of female modesty as justification for and opposition against female oppression, female honor will continue to remain a political debate hot issue rather than the individual religious and cultural choice it is at its true core. Likely this will remain the case until Western media and popular

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150 Since there are no official census records, numbers are derived from an average of previously documented works.

151 Niloufer Qasim Mahdi. "Pukhtunwali: Ostracism and Honor among the Pathan Hill Tribes." Ethology and Sociobiology 7, (1986): 148.

152 Palwasha Kakar. "Tribal Law of Pashtunwali and Women's Legislative Authority," 4.

153 Bodman, 65.

culture begin to recognize the variations of Islam and culture and cease to reflect and promote an insidiously hostile view of Afghan culture where women who are secluded and veiled are inherently oppressed thereby by negating conservative and Taliban ammunition and support. Only by understanding the cultural and religious dictates of Afghan culture and society, can American and international forces fully penetrate and engage the population in order to promote its agenda. Female interactions with such forces represent the greatest potential for both success and failure.

Presently, many Western observers associate *purdah* and the wearing of a veil or some form of head covering by Muslim women as a reflection of a backward conservative patriarchal interpretation of Islam and "in the West *harem, veil, polygamy* envoke Islam and are synonymous with female weakness and oppression."[154] In fact, it has at times become the quintessential representation of Islam, exceeding at times even the Crescent to observers. Too often the defining images of Afghan society are women hidden away in homes or blue *burqus*. Whenever many Westerners see a woman in a head covering (particularly those that do more than simply cover the hair) or harshly and blatantly separated from their male counterparts, racial, religious and ethnic stereotypes abound and can be detrimental to a population engagement strategy. Women all over the globe regardless of religion, culture, or ethnicity have demonstrated some variation on the veil and feminine modesty, particularly those that abound within the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean areas. This phenomenon is by no means strictly an Islamic construct or practice. In fact it far outdates the evolution of Islam and its monotheist counterparts though they are certainly the most attributed for its evolution and proliferation.

The reasons for the division of genders and outwardly demonstrated feminine modesty extend beyond the simplicities of religious edicts towards cultural norms. Motivations are diverse and varied. Too often feminist arguments claim that secluded women are simply at the mercy of their patriarchal societies and have little say in their destiny let alone their attire. Yet such arguments fail to reflect the vast variety of

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154 Fadwa El Guindi. "Veiling in Perspective" in Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999, 10.

motivations women have for veiling. Unfortunately, Western feminists oftentimes "misunderstand the use of the veil and devalue local cultures by insisting that their own road to emancipation is the only one."[155] Nor does the "single convenient Western term veil, which is indiscriminate, monolithic, and ambiguous"[156] aptly describe the vast array of methods by which the genders are segregated.

2.   Historical Context

The concept of modesty is by no means an Islamic construct. It in fact predates Islam and reflects both other monotheist religions as well as pre-Islamic cultures occupying the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East prior to Muhammad. Feminine modesty is oft "presented as having originated millennia ago and spread across the Persian, Mesopotamian, Hellenic, and Byzantine civilizations, from Achaemenid rule, to Greek, Parthian, and Sassanian in successive invasions, presumably having been borrowed between ruling dynasties throughout the region, eventually to become ordinary social practices."[157] Ancient Mesopotamian cultures demonstrated an increasing level of restrictions placed upon women including seclusion and standards of attire. At this time a woman's veil was used to distinguish between classes and those veiled were regarded as protected and associated with the wealthy elites.[158] Well into the Byzantine era, societies would utilize varying interpretations of the seclusion of women, be it cloistering or veiling and "barring some general disaster women were always supposed to be veiled, the veil or its absence marking the distinction between the honest woman and the prostitute."[159] Separation of the sexes, and emphasis on female modesty and the minimal freedoms of women extended to pre-Christian Greek Hellenistic societies as well. These interpretations were regionally and culturally specific and crossed all swaths of religions particularly the misogynistic monotheist Zoroastrian, Judaic, and Christian ones which

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155 Ron Geaves, *Aspects of Islam* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 232.

156 El Guindi, 7.

157 El Guindi, 3.

158 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 14.

159 Ahmed, 26.

often denounced women on the basis of Original Sin. Medieval Jewish Egyptians in the eleventh century also likely supported and practiced some version of veiling.[160] During the Roman Christian heyday, the "shamefulness of sex was focused most intensely on the shamefulness of the female body, which had to be totally concealed."[161] Women and particularly the female form across all religions and cultures of the region were seen as the embodiment of the temptation of man and as such were required to be covered in order to demonstrate modesty and ensure respect and decorum within the entirety of society.[162]

As evidenced, "Islam did not introduce veiling."[163] Within this framework of the Middle East, Islam would emerge in Afghanistan. In keeping with the Judeo-Christian framework, Muhammad would bring the structures of Islam and its resounding effects upon female life into the region. Following his emigration to Madina and his marriage to Zeinab bint Jahsh, Muhammad began to limit the exposure and movements of his wives. As veiling was already commonly practiced amongst the upper classes, Muhammad did not introduce this concept. At the time, only Muhammad's wives would be required to take the veil and subsequently the phrase "she took the veil" would come to signify that a woman had married Muhammad himself.[164] At his passing, the tradition of the veil was not considered a common or prescribed adherence of the faith. Likely its growth and spread resulted from the exalted status of his wives and its previously established reflections on feminine respectability and status. Yet certainly the practice of veiling and seclusion, or some version similar in form or function, existed in all of these historic cultures and religions of the region long before the rise of Islam.[165]

At the onset of major European colonialism in Afghanistan, the status of women in Europe was in a constant state of debate and flux. Women's suffrage and feminist

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160 El Guindi, 13.

161 Ahmed, 35.

162 Anne-Marie Delcambre, "Islam and Women" in *Inside Islam*. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee University Press, 2005), 32.

163 El Guindi, 11.

164 Ahmed, 55.

165 El Guindi, 12.

movements were on the upswing. Yet despite their diminished status at home, Europeans saw veiled Islamic women as the very epitome of patriarchy and backwardness. It was the imperative of any enlightened society to unveil its women and many would do so forcibly in keeping with European standards and expectations. In 1899 Qassim Amin published works calling for changes in the customs of women and their costumes, in particular the abolishment of the veil as integral to achieving the necessary social change for development of the Middle East. Naturally this beginning of the colonial Arab and South Asian feminist movement was met with anger, resentment and resistance throughout the region.[166] By the nineteenth century and the height of European colonialism, *purdah* would become the center of discourse and narrative on progress and modernity within Islam and the region and "the custom of veiling and the position of women in Muslim societies became, in their rhetoric, the proof of the inferiority of Islam and the justification of their efforts to undermine Muslim religion and society."[167]

It is within this framework that modern discourses and discussions on female status have emerged in Afghanistan. To date, the female seclusion and religious garb are often seen as a reflection of the otherness and therefore backwardness of Afghan cultures. Many espouse the ideals that only with the removal of such religious and cultural norms can a culture elevate the status of women beyond oppression.[168] Arguments often fail to address the more likely reasoning for the oppression of women in Afghan society; patriarchal and societal interpretations and political manipulations. Radical conservatives, as evidenced by the Taliban's proselytizing and religious edicts, often capitalize on these attacks by using the oppression of women and the veil along with extreme interpretations of Islam as a statement for anti-colonialism and cultural norms.

> The history, and the struggles over culture and between classes, continues to live even today in the debates on the veil and on women. To a considerable extent, overtly or covertly, inadvertently or otherwise, discussions of women in Islam in academies and outside them, and in Muslim countries and outside them, continue either to reinscribe the

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166 Ahmed, 145.

167 Ibid, 237.

168 Ibid, 165.

Western narrative of Islam as oppressor and the West as liberator...or conversely, to reinscribe the contentions of the Arabic narrative of resistance as to the essentialness of preserving Muslim customs, particularly with regard to women, as a sign of resistance to imperialism, whether colonial or postcolonial.[169]

This narrative has fueled the religious and culturally dominated rhetoric of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

3.   Islamic Directives

Regardless of its origins; be they philosophical, social, moral, economic, or psychological; the concept of seclusion certainly exists within Islamic text and as such must be considered within any population engagement strategy.[170] There are two predominant mentions of modesty and veiling within the Quran. Firstly, in the Surah 33 (Al- Ahzab regarding The Clans, The Coalition, The Combined Forces), verse 59 and again in Surah 24 (Al-Noor regarding The Light) verse 31.[171] The former states "O Prophet, tell your wives, your daughters, and the wives of the faithful to cover themselves with their great veils, a sure way that they be recognized and that they avoid any offense."[172] The latter deals with the rules of conduct and cites as follows.

> Say to the believing women to lower their gaze and to guard their modesty, not to show their beauty, except for what is apparent, and to draw their veil over their bosoms. They should not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their sisters' sons, or their women, or the female slaves whom their right hand possess, or to their males slaves incapable of the sexual act, or to boys who are as yet ignorant of intimacy with women. And they should not stamp their feet on the ground, so as not to reveal their hidden ornaments... [173]

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169 Ibid, 167.

170 Lamia Rustum Shehadeh. *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam.* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 108.

171 See www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/.

172 Delcambre, 31.

173 Ibid, 31.

Unlike its Judeo-Christian predecessors, Islam is considered the direct revelation from God to Muhammad via Gabriel. Subsequently, it must first and foremost be taken in its exact text.[174] This dogmatic mandate for literal translation makes the issue of the division of the genders a hotbed one since despite its mention there is no exact definition of the veil, seclusion or feminine modesty within the Quran itself. Such ambiguities leave the subjects open to vast cultural interpretation and therefore debate and misunderstanding.

Thus, without a clear text regarding the subject, tradition and custom have played an integral role in the custom of veiling and female seclusion in Afghanistan and arguers for seclusion "cite Prophetic traditions (hadith) from which many of the legal stipulations and practices are derived."[175] Within the Sunni traditions (the predominant faith of Afghanistan), veiling and modesty is mentioned in the Sunna or religious customs of Muhammad during an interaction between Muhammad and his wife Aisha's sister Asma, where he turns away from her exclaiming that she is too thinly dressed and that one should not be able to see anything of a woman's body besides her face and hands.[176] This has become the cornerstone of the major interpretations and is the most vastly utilized variation of garb globally. Still throughout Islam one can see a wide variety of applications of seclusion. Overtime the various schools of Islamic Sharia Law would evolve often heavily influenced by the local customs and particularly inculcated with this scope for the perspectives on the provisions regarding women; hence the more extreme *burqu* and segregation practices found in Afghan society.[177] Still, the Quran dictates specifically that men and women shall be granted equal status in society.

4.   Why Separate?

The directives for modesty and veiling do plainly exist, however still much is left to cultural interpretation. At its core the basic meaning abounds, that of the separation of

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174 Herbert L. Bodman and Nayereh Tohidi. Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity within Unity. edited. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, 5.

175 John L. Esposito. *Islam: The Straight Path*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 120.

176 Delcambre, 32.

177 Bodman, *Women in Muslim Societies*, 10.

the sexes and the reflection of female wholesomeness, propriety, and modesty. "The Quran advocates modesty and moral decorum and cautions against provocative behavior, especially in the context of interaction and encounter between the opposite sexes... This is the basic message but the text does not specify exactly how modesty is achieved."[178] Subsequently, the word veil does little to reflect the vast swath of terms used to refer to the articles of attire and seclusion fails to address the many methods of dividing the genders used to meet these standards; which often vary by region, dialect and era. "Some half a billion women in the world are Muslim"[179] and their culturally influenced interpretations on the Quranic dictates for the division of the genders are just as numerous. "It perhaps goes without saying that Afghanistan is a Muslim country, mostly Sunni (85 percent) with a minority (15 percent) of Shias and Ismailis"[180] and as such, the veil and female seclusion are prominent components of Afghan society. When the Taliban came to power, they played upon the existing conservative interpretations and practices of gender seclusion and segregation. Nevertheless, by no means did they generate and enforce a completely alien way of life to the average Afghan.

The original intent of *purdah* in Afghanistan has traditionally been the protection, honor, and distinction of women.[181] Traditional interpretations of the desire to segregate were as follows. Advocates of both genders reflected these trends.

> The philosophical trend describes it as a form of spiritual and religious exercise; the social stream sees it as a form of protection of women against insecurity and social injustice; the economic current attributes it to patriarchy and its concomitant subordination and exploitation of women's economic potential; the moralists trace it to man's egocentricity and jealousy; and, finally, the psychological school ascribes it to women's monthly menstruation, during which they feel inferior and discarded.[182]

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178 Mohammad Hashim Kamali. *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 276.

179 Bodman, *Women in Muslim Societies*, 1.

180 Barfield, *Afghanistan,* 40.

181 Esposito, 122.

182 Shehadeh, 109.

Whether or not Afghan women may choose to ascribe to a particular rationale or whether it is forced upon her by society is varied throughout the state and its history. Tradition and compulsion certainly exist in some regions where local culture is staunchly conservative. Certainly, though, not all Afghan women are forced to comply against their will.[183] Unfortunately, the negative highly visible cases tend to supersede alternatives and are used as ammunition and fodder to equate the concept of *purdah* with female oppression and by association, Islam with patriarchy. Culturally relativistic approaches to female modesty and the division of genders, recognizing them as a cultural norm rather than an oppressive edict, are growing albeit slowly. Furthermore, recognition is growing that "the segregation of genders does not necessarily result in the total disempowerment of women" and as such any astute counterinsurgency and population engagement strategy must address this cornerstone of society.[184]

The veil or separation of the genders is a long-standing cultural and religious tradition within Afghanistan. While the convention is certainly not an Islamic construct, Afghan interpretations of Islam seem to have adopted, codified and institutionalized it to the greatest extent. Subsequently, it has become a prominent reflection to other religious and cultural traditions of Afghan women and is often perceived to represent what is felt to be the worst attributes of Afghan society, patriarchy and the subjugation of women; regardless of whether this accurately reflects the custom or its practitioners.

C.   POPULATION ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

1.   Female Engagement Teams

Keeping in mind the aforementioned strong cultural and religious realities facing ISAF forces in Afghanistan, allied forces have sought out various measures to reach the women of this society. Such strategies as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Human Terrain Teams, and Female Engagement Teams are aimed at reaching the maximum population capacity to garner support both for the international forces as well as the

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183 Geaves, *Aspects of Islam*, 232.

184 Kakar, "Tribal Law of Pashtunwali," 11.

Afghan regime by providing basic quality of life necessities, establishing security at the lower levels of government, and enhancing a more positive perception of American presence and influence. "It takes a whole-of-society approach to transform harmful attitudes and behaviors in a lasting way"[185] and by operating within the given constraints rather than against them, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Human Terrain Teams have been met with certain successes in engaging the local community and providing greatly needed developmental and aid capacities. Despite this, in order to truly engage the female populace, the Female Engagement Teams evolved to reflect the particular nature of the realities regarding cultural and religious constraints on female interactions.

As a representation of evolving American population engagement efforts, the Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan have sought to bring about significant population engagement both with women but also with men. Often viewed as a nonthreatening third gender, engagement team members have been extended courtesy and respect from both genders and granted, previously unattainable by male service members, levels of access to each.[186] While there may be strong cultural sensitivities regarding gender relations, female service members have oft been able to bridge the gap. They are often seen as more amenable, welcoming, and accommodating persons. Many team members have often heard the Afghan adage that "your men come here to fight, but we know the women are here to help."[187] This has enabled an unforeseen benefit to these teams allowing them to engage the male population in more ways than their male counterparts.[188] Surveyed responses indicated that this was also a reflection of the more population engagement specific training afforded female operatives who unlike their infantry counterparts were trained in this area of expertise rather than first and foremost as combat operators and secondarily, as hindsight dictated, as population engagers.

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185 USG Strategy. "USG Civilian Strategy for Assistance to Women in Afghanistan (2010–2013)," 2.

186 Paula Broadwell. "Women at War." *The International Herald Tribune*, October 21, 2009, sec. EDIT, 1.

187 Pottinger et al., "Half-Hearted," 4.

188 Macak, "Female Engagement Teams," 12.

2. Analysis

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing international forces in Afghanistan is that regardless of their true intent, Afghan history dictates that they will always be seen as an occupier. Their mere presence can detract from any perceived legitimacy. It is a "battle for perceptions."[189] This perception is difficult to counter and only with successful population engagement can it be done. The goal is always to gain legitimacy by winning over the hearts and minds of the local populace.[190] Then again, in order to truly engage the Afghan population, cultural and religious understanding must take precedence in all facets of interaction. The Female Engagement Teams represent a unique opportunity to do just that without appearing as an occupier sent to force its culture upon Afghan society. "It takes a certain amount of savvy to wield the culture as a weapon..."[191] though this is not to say that one can change the cultural situation but rather there exists a potential to exploit these norms to the advantage of ISAF forces.

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189 When Half the Country is Off Limits. PBS. Directed by Caitlin Thompson. 2011, 1.

190 Sean R. Pirone. "Security Force Assistance: Strategic, Advisory, and Partner Nation Considerations." Master's, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010, 36.

191 Pottinger et al., "Half-Hearted," 8.

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VI. FINAL THOUGHTS

A. ANALYSIS

It is imperative when discussing the Female Engagement Teams (FET) to keep in mind that every Marine is a rifleman, regardless of gender. Female Marines are by no means diplomats solely because of their gender any more than their male compatriots. Subsequently, any utilization of them within these teams requires the continuation of a vigilant and highly selective assignment system where members are determined based upon cultural, military, and psychological capabilities and training rather than ad hoc requirements.

It is equally of import to integrate a highly specified, well-known and defined FET mission within the auspices of the counterinsurgency and population engagement/information operations missions in order to best capitalize on their potential contributions. Along with the individual team members, leadership must be educated as to the teams overall mission and protocol for application. Leadership must recognize the uniqueness of particular regions and communities of Afghanistan and apply the teams in an advantageous manner reflective of the given environment. Lessons learned need to be pervasive, well documented and supplied to all team members and leadership thereof.

B. THE GAPS

Due to their relative newness as a concept and ad hoc nature in an already ongoing war, little analysis has been conducted regarding the efficacy and operational capabilities of such teams. These gaps extend to both the qualitative and quantitative realms. After action reports regarding many of the teams often still remain on the Secret classification given the ongoing nature of the conflict. Once such time as said information is more readily available to academic and military scrutiny, more analytical determinations can be made regarding their true operational effectiveness. Surveyed members and leaders felt that there needed to be significantly greater detailed analysis of

the teams' usage and efficiency in given operations so that a more specific mission and tactical applications set could be identified.

C.   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1.   COIN and Population Engagement

With regards to current counterinsurgency and population engagement strategies, such strategies require precise determinations as to the tactical efficacy and usage of Female Engagement Teams. Their contributions to such strategies need to reflect both the needs of the policies and the tactical capacities of the units given the cultural and religious constraints as well as the restrictions of current combat exclusion policies. Once the gaps in both quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to their efficacy and contributions to such strategies is minimized than such determinations can be made. Until such time, any policy determinations regarding the teams are simply ad hoc guesstimates.

2.   Combat Exclusion

For combat exclusion, the Female Engagement Teams have continued to highlight the disparities of such policies. The lack of a formal battlefield and the very nature of the ongoing conflict make application of regulations difficult and often to the detriment of the mission at hand. Long gone are the days of trench warfare.

a.   Possible Policies

Several possible alternatives the DoD could initiate in order to resolve the current defunct policy directives. (Pro's and con's)

(1)   Leave It As Is. Leadership has been forced to find ways to circumvent the spirit while still maintaining the letter of the law. Such inadvertent charades are by no means a proper way to conduct a military.

(2)   Continue Current Trend of Change. Iterations of combat exclusion have continued to evolve and nearly always towards the opening of greater

opportunities and positions for women. Women's successes in the fields of ship driving, aviation, and combat support positions have continued to press leadership to offer further opportunities for advancement.

(3)   Abolish Exclusion Entirely. While the realities of warfare are by no means restricted to the male gender, such hasty abolishment would be exceedingly difficult for the American military to enact quickly. Such action would fail to allocate proper time for training and transition. Certainly new assignment policies regarding physical requirements for certain positions would need time to be established as well as regulations regarding hygiene, pregnancy, and other female specific issues. These considerations require time for analysis, determination, and application.

(4)   Remove Women From the Equation. Given the nature of the American All Volunteer Force, it would be nigh on impossible to refill all the various support and active positions which female soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines hold in this day and age. In fact, women now wield more than half of the technical degrees required for competitive positions and eliminating half the competition pool would be a detriment to the services.

b.   Recommendation

Recent amendments in the policy reflect today's actualities and are sure to continue to reflect the realities on the ground regarding the assignment of women and their relation to combat and as such the current trend of change is likely the best option. The recent addition of women to certain submarine units and the opening of greater numbers of intelligence and logistics positions reflect a shifting towards the diminishment of combat exclusion. This should continue but with great understanding of the time needed for adequate training, analysis, and application before policy determinations are made.

3.   Gender Relations

With regards to the assignment of operators and gender relations in Afghanistan and other such environments, tactical efficiency and improvement of relationships with

host nation personnel is the objective. Success from the Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan with population engagement and counterinsurgency have served as an impetus to establish more formalized protocol for engagement between all genders of ISAF forces, ASF (Afghan Security Forces) personnel, and civilians as well as future iterations of such interactions.   As the DoD continues to rely on partnerships and coalitions for military operations within the country and greater Middle East and South Asian region, a standing policy for gender specific interaction is essential to establish a foundation for behavior appropriate for all levels of interaction as well as minimize the effects of logistical consequences due to lack of proper foresight wasting precious resources. The policy should be crafted in a way to minimize the internal bureaucratic process to maximize efficacy of the policy.

Currently no DoD or ISAF policy exists with regards to gender relations in the working environment between said forces and Afghan women. Current established protocol is varied and dependent on command experience and knowledge of the region. This has the potential to lead to significant cultural conflicts. There have been numerous instances where cultural differences have interfered with operational capabilities to both the detriment of mission and personnel. To date, no command policy regarding female-male interactions is initiated until after an incident has occurred. Once this happens, the unit commander establishes a protocol for their command term to avoid further altercations. Lessons learned are often lost due to the high rate of Commanding Officer turnover in smaller units and the same lessons are learned repetitively due to lack of formalized policy.

a.   *Possible Policies*

Several possible alternatives the DoD could initiate in order to resolve the current lack of policy directive. (Pro's and con's)

(1)   Do Nothing. Retention of the status quo and continuance of permitting unit commanders to establish protocol in response to previous situations fails to reflect the aforementioned issues. These concerns have serious potential detriments to command operability, personnel safety, and foreign relations. Only a few of the many

current DoD policies and instructions make a distinction between the genders in order to maximize operational readiness albeit this is usually a reflection of combat exclusion and assignment policies.

(2)   Slight Formalization. Amending the current protocol by formalizing it slightly would establish DoD policy instructing unit level commanders to address any potential conflicts, given their particular missions and level of interactions with Afghans.

(3)   Detailed Formalization. The establishment of a specified and formalized policy for regional commander's to address each and every potential interaction within their area of responsibility would likely represent a serious overreach in policy. It would be nigh impossible for one instruction to cover every potential interaction by every DoD actor in their given regional command. Such an instruction would tie the hands of any unit level commander to react to new and ever evolving relations with Afghan society.

(4)   Extensive Training. The option of requiring extensive cultural training for all personnel operating in the region would certainly aim to mitigate negative cases. Unfortunately, this would limit the flexibility of deployable units and personnel and hinder operational capabilities. Some form of cultural training for DoD personnel permanently deployed in a given region would be viable. On the other hand, for short term or rapid deployments this would be difficult and a hindrance. Prior to deployments, informal training is usually presented to the unit and/or command on the culture, society, and geopolitical status. Conversely, such training does not tailor to gender interactions but rather focuses on cultural issues during operational engagements.

(5)   Restrict Interactions. Any resolution of potential conflicts by simply no longer deploying females to Afghan facilities or potential operating units, or conversely prohibiting male operators from interacting with female Afghans, fails to reflect that every military unit has the potential to deploy at any given time. This form of resolution is simply unobtainable and unrealistic.

(6)　　Penalization. The enactment of severe penalties for misdeeds regarding DoD male interactions with host nation females and civilians would be difficult to enforce over the given dictates of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice.

b.　Recommendation

The most viable recommendation is that of a slight formalization to establish a DoD policy directed towards unit level Commanding Officers instructing commanders during their associated commanding officer training to address any potential conflicts or situations given their particular unit. This policy would ensure any lessons learned from previous Commanding Officers are passed down to oncoming commanders. It would enable better foresight by senior officers to address these potential issues rather than forcing the boots on the ground to make decisions, which could reflect on the DoD and ISAF poorly. This increased preparedness would enhance operational capabilities whilst still being cognizant of cultural sensitivities. This policy could result in varying protocols established by different commanders, and would significantly allow for variance in particular units and regions and their levels of interaction.

D.　CONCLUSION

The cultural and religious minefield of Afghanistan is by no means impermeable. Proper counterinsurgency and population engagement reflective of these issues offer the best means to penetrate the society for both intelligence gathering and information dissemination. The Female Engagement Teams highlight this coordination of both respect for cultural norms and adequate military operations. Understanding of both the tribal networks wielded by women and their capacities to influence their world while still recognizing the given constraints and realities of gender seclusion are a necessity to truly exploit the human and cultural terrain in Afghanistan. The FETs despite the restrictions of combat exclusion seem the preeminent means by which to tap into this fountain of possibility.

APPENDIX. SURVEY QUESTIONS

A.   DEMOGRAPHICS (DATA NOT FOR ANALYSIS, STRICTLY TO ENSURE A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE)

1. What is your gender : M/F
2. Please choose the service/category which best describes you:
   > Civilian
   > Navy
   > Marine
   > Air Force
   > Army

B.   MISSION AWARENESS/ASSESSMENT

3. To your knowledge what was the mission of the Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan?
4. How did the teams seek to execute this mission?
5. Based upon the given mission accomplishment criteria, were they successful? : Y/N
6. Why/Why Not?
7. What were the Afghan responses to the teams?
8. Overall positive or negative?
   > Positive
   > Negative

C.   POLICY AWARENESS/ASSESSMENT

9. To your knowledge what are the American counter-insurgency objectives?
10. To your knowledge what are the objectives of population engagement strategies?
11. Are gender normative tactics (gender specific efforts) in keeping with these objectives? : Y/N
12. Why/Why Not?
13. Do the FETs, as a gender normative tactic, serve these objectives? : Y/N
14. Why/Why Not?
15. Do current FET directives enable the accomplishment of these greater strategy objectives?: Y/N
16. Why/Why Not?
17. What examples can you give of instances where the FETs served a vital component of either counter-insurgency or population engagement?
18. What examples can you give of instances where the FETs were counterproductive to either counter-insurgency or population engagement?

19. To what extent are you knowledgeable of the combat exclusion laws for U.S. female military personnel?

<div align="center">

Very good understanding
Good understanding
Vague understanding
No knowledge of current restrictions

</div>

20. Given the definition (cite Title 10 U.S.C.) and based on your experience/knowledge, are the FETs in violation of this policy?
21. Why/Why Not?
22. Do you have any additional information which you feel would be beneficial to a greater academic understanding of the Female Engagement Teams and their efforts in Afghanistan?

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