

## Conference 1

### **Gender, War and Culture: From Colonial Conquest, Standing Armies and Revolutionary Wars to the Wars of Nations and Empires (1650s-1910s)**

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#### **Comment on**

#### **PANEL III: GENDERING THE HISTORY OF EARLY MODERN AND REVOLUTINARY WARFARE**

##### **Gender, Slavery and Sovereign Statecraft in the Age of Revolutionary Wars**

Elizabeth Colwill, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Department of American Studies

##### **5. Society, Mass Warfare and Gender During the European Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars**

Alan Forrest, University of York, Department of History

##### **6. Citizenship, Mass Mobilization and Masculinity in a Transatlantic Perspective, 1770s-1850s**

Stefan Dudink, Radboud University Nijmegen, Institute for Gender Studies

##### **7. Army Women and Female Soldiers: History, Perception and Memory in a Transatlantic Comparison, 1770-1900**

Thomas Cardoza, Arizona State University, Barrett, The Honors College

#### **briefly:**

- address broad issues arising from the period and area covered by this section of the Oxford Handbook
- suggest some more specific points arising from the individual papers

#### **Western Model**

- all four contributors approach (from different perspectives) what might be called the 'western model' of warfare that was evolving in Europe and the Americas
- together, they form the later end of the first chronological part of the book

- i.e. they cover what is commonly called the 'revolutionary era' c.1770-1850s, and thus the transition from early (or pre-) modernity to modernity. Four perspectives has the benefit of richer discussion, and reinforces connections across space for this section of the timespan

#### *The importance of terms*

- some greater clarity is required for the terms used in the handbook, perhaps through the general introduction. 'War' is an obvious case, especially given the assumed 'hierarchy' of terminology: war, revolt, insurgency. All suggest different levels of intensity and scope, different forms of combat, and differing legitimacy for action. Within this, 'Western' forms of warfare require attention

#### *Defining the Western Model*

- the western model is defined both by contemporary attitudes and practice, as well as by later scholarly analysis. My use of it here is analytical - I do not want to suggest that it was anything more than an analytical 'ideal type':
- the western model is reciprocal - i.e. it is defined through the interaction of belligerents (Alan Forrest). Failure of one side to recognise this and to adhere to the 'rules' often has a destabilising impact on the other side's behaviour and on the actual conduct of operations
- the western model defines war as a instrument of [sovereign] state
- military (and naval) operations as an extension of state policy (NB this is the era of Clausewitz!)
- operations conducted by 'regular' forces, defined as those controlled by the state
- these employed a concentration of force intended to achieve a politically-meaningful decision - literally, to make history on the battlefield
- thus, the battlefield was also identifiable (war was spatially distinct from peace) - and at this point, battlefields were still relatively small (due largely to the technical capacity and limitations of weaponry)

#### *Gender implications*

- this western model had important implications for the question of gender and for military-civil relations - i.e. our primary topics
- it suggested a sharp division between military and civil which broadly overlapped with a parallel distinction between public and private
- the issue here is the significance of legitimacy - not simply 'official' sanction, but also sanction from those who matter to the actors involved, as well as from the audience they want to reach and who matter as observers. This has implications for both gender, and the social distribution of power (including in slave/indigenous societies)

## **The Revolutionary Era**

#### *Impact*

- all authors draw attention to liberating aspects of revolution, as well as the darker side - a positive feature of their contributions which highlights how the Western Model underwent significant changes during the revolutionary era
- the various revolutions redefined the social balance of power - i.e. the control of the state (and the state is at the heart of the Western Model)
- states which survived (e.g. not Poland) emerged stronger in the sense that their control of violence had been enhanced
- state-individual relations were thus also redefined
  - i) new socio-legal arrangements (some of which are discussed by Alan Forrest and Stefan Dudink)
  - ii) esp. new strategies to legitimate greater resource mobilisation - explored at some length by Stefan Dudink through the example of universal male conscription

### *Diverging implications*

- some of the implications/consequences were totalising - a push towards what some historians (like David Bell) have characterised as ‘total war’
- the scale of war undoubtedly increased - as demonstrated by Alan Forrest’s paper
- but, I would sound a note of caution not to exaggerate change in the level of impact on society
  - i) as an early modernist looking ahead into this period, much of what is recorded about the material, economic, demographic and social impact of war is not that remarkable - Europe had witnessed much of this already. We should not see the history of warfare as a ‘progress of destruction’, becoming ever more potent thanks to new weaponry, social organisation and industrialisation
  - ii) we need to remember that Europe (and parts of the Americas) were experiencing rapid and sustained population and economic growth - i.e. growing capacity to sustain war on a larger scale. Moreover, local-central coordination improved allowing more systematic direction, while industrialisation allowed for the substitution of human labour through machines. This also had gender implications, since the relative ability of some economies to substitute female for male labour had permitted higher levels of male military mobilisation in the past (e.g. 17<sup>th</sup> century Sweden). The inability of pre-modern economies to replace labour power made conflicts in this era often quite devastating, even if casualties were lower. Finally, many pre-modern conflicts already involved very high attrition rates e.g. 10% or more adult males in Denmark and Spain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century
  - iii) question of proportion is thus significant, hence I would question whether the American Civil War really saw a peak in female participation, since 400+ cross-dressing soldiers is a small proportion of the million+ mobilised (possibly the proportion is actually smaller than in earlier conflicts)
  - iv) thus, we should look perhaps more to the *nature* rather than the *level* of impact - the specificity of impact and experience (as already suggested by Elisabeth Colwill)
- one aspect where we can detect a trend towards totality is how wars were legitimated: as Alan Forrest notes, war was now waged in the name of absolutes, not marginal advantages
- however, in other respects, the Revolutionary era appears less totalising
- especially - how it reinforced the western model with its ideal of separate spheres for war and peace
- it may have been the age of the citizen-in-arms, but a citizen was only a soldier when ‘in arms’
- moreover, this era saw:
  - i) the disarmament of the population, and the disbandment or curtailment of paramilitaries, private forces, bandits, etc
  - ii) curbs on (and by 1856 formal abolition of) extra-territorial violence (privateering, mercenary service etc)
  - iii) the development of a (largely unarmed, or only lightly armed) police force to represent the state against internal threats to order. i.e. regular forces were turned outwards to face ‘national’ enemies
  - iv) the use of regular forces within state jurisdiction was increasingly regarded as an aspect of ‘colonial’ rule; e.g. wars against indigenous peoples in the USA and Mexico during the later nineteenth century = operations on ‘unpacified’ parts of national territory.

### **Specific Contributions**

#### *Other Ways of War*

- Elisabeth Colwill thus provides a valuable contribution to the volume as a whole by reminding us of the more extensive parameters and chronology of wars and violence in this era - beyond wars as defined by the Western Model

- this also highlights a key aspect characterising the entire era: that revolutions entailed competing claims to sovereignty and that these had gender implications - how far all men, and women might share in sovereignty

#### *Gender and the Regular Military*

- the other contributions illustrate the gender implications of 'nationalising' regular armed forces
- (since we have been asked to point out possible overlaps) there is a possible overlap between the papers by Elizabeth Colwill and Stefan Dudink - issue of race affecting how masculinity was redefined through conscription (coverage of the French Caribbean/Haitian slave revolt). This is an issue also if the chapters are to 'stand alone'
- Thomas Cardoza's paper compliments the other three by investigating the role of women more directly:
  - i) his discussion of female soldiers draws similar conclusions to my own for the pre-1770 period
  - ii) he indicates how changes after 1770 could be unexpected - e.g. how autocracies could find it easier to accommodate the idea of female warriors
  - iii) plus, his discussion of memory adds a useful dimension to the overall volume

a possible gap emerges (however):

- the exclusion of women auxiliaries and unofficial camp followers was not universal across the nineteenth century
- women remained important elements in Mexican and most South American armies into the early twentieth century: as auxiliaries (rabanos), but also as soldaderas (especially in the Mexican Revolution 1910-20)
- It is not clear where they will be covered in the volume. From the abstract, Amy Greenberg's paper on the wars of nation building appears to focus on issues other than actual female participation
- I think it is important to consider the Latin American experience: the extent to which these forces continued 'pre-modern' practices whilst self-consciously embracing modernity (weaponry, technology, army as nation-builder etc)

#### *Age*

- finally, I would like to draw attention to the issue of age and how it is related to masculinity as defined through warfare
- this arises from Stefan Dudink's paper, as well as Alan Forrest's concluding comments about the question of masculinity for those who did not fight in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. This seems particularly important for the period after 1815 with the distinction in most armies between lower class conscripts and upper class national guards. National Guards thus emerge not merely as an expression of liberalism, but also a space for male middle class martial identity
- this raises, I think, the more general issue for the nineteenth century of those who had fought or performed military service, but could no longer do so as they got older. Interesting things might be said here about the stadial conception of the human lifespan in relation to active and former soldiers
- it highlights how changes in warfare (esp. the expectation that soldiers should be young men in their early twenties) could shape particular definitions of masculinity
- this seems a shift from early modernity where 'old experienced blades' (Robert Monro) were preferred and many soldiers served for life