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SOLDIER WOMAN WOMAN IN THE ARMS OF THE MARS

Keywords: violence, gender, soldier woman, military service.

ABSTRACT: A term „violence”, despite transformations of the meanings, has always been connected with relations between genders, and as such, what it means in a given society to be a woman and a man and which economic, social and psychological relations have been assigned to these categories. At least since the 18th century, unequal share of the power between men and women has been justified with, among others, a different share of “passion” and different potential of violence. A real power ready to use violence should be focused on the men side while a tasks of women should be neutralizing men’s readiness to use violence, achieved by subjecting themselves to men. For thousands of years military battles have been almost exclusively a man’s privilege. Even 100 years ago, women did not have a right to vote even in western countries with the longest democratic traditions. Today, giving a woman the highest office in a state is not unusual. So can we talk about a fall of the patriarchy and replacing men by women even in such man fields as war and military battles?

A term „violence”, despite transformations of the meanings, has always been connected with relations between genders, and as such, what it means in a given society to be a woman and a man and which economic, social and psychological relations have been assigned to these categories. At least since the 18th century, unequal share of the power between men and women has been justified with, among others, a different share of “passion” and different potential of violence¹. A real power ready to use violence should be focused on the men side while a tasks of women should be neutralizing

¹ Z. Melonik, *Kryzys męskości w kulturze współczesnej*, Poznań 2002, p. 137.

men's readiness to use violence, achieved by subjecting themselves to men. According to such a theoretical approach of for example Hobbes and Freud, controlling the violence, which always is potential, is a condition of keeping the political order and so protects men's supremacy².

Undoubtedly wars have broken out because of women. In so called primitive societies kidnapping a woman is a common *casus belli*. Despite the fact that a half of the human kind are women, most of them are calm and not aggressive by nature. It happens that women, like Lady Macbeth, incite to violence. Mothers can get over a son's death and even kill a coward. There happen inspired women leaders who take the crowds and inspire to greater sacrifices than many men. But war is the only field which women, with some exceptions, have always stayed out of. Women expect protection from a danger from men and they can punish severely those who cannot fulfill the task. They follow the armies, nurse the wounded, replace men when they go to a war but they do not fight. To limitations of the war lets add one more thing, the war is a man's business³. Limitations like not fighting women has become a standard of the war studies, a soldier even if committing war bestiality seemed differently when acting against women and children than against men. Knight fights and soldier's code presumes saving women. It has been taught for centuries while training soldiers. The term "soldier woman" is a kind of provocation, sounding even offensively for a woman. The Americans say a warrior.

For thousands of years military battles have been almost exclusively a man's privilege. Even 100 years ago, women did not have a right to vote even in western countries with the longest democratic traditions. Today, giving a woman the highest office in a state is not unusual. So can we talk about a fall of the patriarchy and replacing men by women even in such man fields as war and military battles?

According to Arnold Ludwig, the American psychiatrist, it is too soon for that. For 15 years, Ludwig has conducted studies on a nature of leadership analyzing personal data of 1941 leaders who in the 20th century were

² T. Hobbes, *Lewiatan czyli materia, forma i władza państwa kościelnego i świeckiego*, translation C. Znamierowski, Warszawa 2005, p. 18.

³ P. Bourdieu, *Męska dominacja*, Warszawa 2004, p.46.

on a position of the highest executive in 199 countries of the world and 1914 of them were men and barely 27 of them were women. Within the exclusive group of women-leaders, nearly half of them owed their positions to relations with the Great Leader. All of them had a reputation of a man in a skirt – they have not owed their successful political career to their women's charm and gentleness.

When in the 1970s the West was taken by the second wave of the feminism, a motto of fighters (of both genders) for equal rights for women and their equal with men access to all professions was that women differ from men only anatomically. All differences in their behavior, character and social roles are just an effect of upbringing. For some time, the opinion has been promoted so hardly that those who have dared not to agree had problems with spreading their opinions. One of those daredevils was the Head of the Faculty of Sociology of the New York City College Steven Goldberg. In his book he proves that men because of a bigger amount of testosterone are more aggressive, ambitious and keen on fighting for a high position is a hierarchy of a pack⁴. This is why they are present everywhere where aggression is desired. Goldberg was right about many things presenting that a politically correct upbringing would not change a thing. We are different. There are no two identical people even among uniovular twins, in every society there is a range of characteristics like height, weight, intelligence or natural curiosity. The differences have biological explanation and depend on genetic conditions. The differences have a substantial meaning. Men are more extreme and testosterone mobilizes them to fight for female and a high social position which even strengthens the effect of the extremes. Women are less keen on risky behaviors and fight for a position in a social hierarchy. And they have never had to do this. Most of the Nobel Prize winners (or state leaders) are men but men are also 90% of people locked in prisons and most of the homeless people. That is why it cannot be surprising that men's and women's way of a social life has always been different. In solving conflicts women more often than men avoid forcible solutions. Women more often engage in a close friendship and social relations with few faithful allies, they have strongly developed

⁴ S. Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, New York 1973.

empathy. Men are different. There easily appear bigger, not so tightly connected groups, where there is a hierarchy of status and a constant fight for a position of the alpha. Men are naturally designed to compete between each other for a position in the social hierarchy. However, the society and its culture decide mostly what form this competition has. Thus, war, fights and acts with a use of weapons and their derivatives are fields, where there prevail laws of the jungle and where men do particularly well. However, it seems that we are really sure of those observations. But present times and the future bring a lot of uncertainties. What size of equal rights is there if there is any? Will actions connected with fight stay dominated by men? Some people are prone to say that men make it highly brutal⁵. A famous American researcher of politics, professor of Harvard University Joseph Nye for a few years now has been promoting a conception of using the so called soft power⁶. It would seem that he had grounds to promote such solutions. Nye was the head of National Intelligence Council and he also worked in State and Defense Department. However, ridiculousness of his theories are visible for example in a lack of answer for another question. If the war dominated by man-soldiers, man-politicians is brutal then would a feminine form of it be still a war? If the world was evolving in a direction that Nye presents, a man way of solving problems would lose a lot of its attractiveness and efficiency. Using the soft power requires mutual understanding and empathy – features that are women's target. Even saying that women may naturally have a different approach to life than men would have been not so long ago offensive for radical feminists who would deny existence of substantial biological differences between representatives of both genders. Radical feminism propagating identity of natural characters creates as a consequence a man-woman. Women for who this radicalism is understandable have to behave exactly like men.

Undoubtedly a woman in a uniform of a soldier still causes a lot of controversies and extreme feelings.

Spanish women have been serving in the army since 1992, Finn women since 1995 and in 1999 in Poland women were allowed to study in military

⁵ B. Ehrenreich, *Rytuały krwi*, Warszawa 2001, p. 32.

⁶ J.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York 2005, p. 24.

colleges⁷. Women also serve in, among others, the armies of Israel, the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Hungary and Czech Republic. A woman in the army still causes a lot of controversies and objections and for example, despite complaints directed to the Court of Justice of the European Union, constitution of Germany still forbids women to serve with the deadly weapons in their hands. (Chart No. 1)

Chart No. 1. Rules of military service of women in chosen countries of the world

Military Service	Countries, members of NATO	Countries of the world
Common, obligatory		Libya, China, Israel
Common and obligatory for men, optional for women.	Belgium, Netherlands, Estonia, Czech Republic, Denmark. Spain, Greece, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, Italy, Hungary	Sweden, Finland, Switzerland
Optionam both for men and women	Canada, the USA, Luxembourg, Great Britain Kanada,	
Not allowed with weapons in hands	Germany	

Most of the discussions in the USA and countries of the Western Europe concern a direct participation of women in fight and accomplishing dangerous battle tasks. And it is the most important element of a military service as no matter a man or a woman who is unable to fight loses his/her authority as a soldier. The argument against fulfilling by women some duties resulting from their military service are differences in a physical efficiency of men and women. The solution of the problem may be introducing equal rules of checking qualifications required in a specific function or position, for all candidates regardless of their gender. Emancipation of women had led to creating a negative image, that means more and more women participate in acts of violence and commit more

⁷ A. Skrabacz, *Kobiety w obronie narodowej Polski u progu XXI wieku*, Warszawa 2001, p. 97.

and more crimes. More and more often they take part in stealing, burglary, banditry and commit murders. It has also happened in previous centuries, however now, it is getting stronger and stronger. Women participate in suicidal attacks and terrorist attacks which is particularly visible in Chechen and Palestin⁸. Explanations of terrorists after failed attacks are really interesting – when asked “why”, they indicated also a possibility of entering to men’s world by actions very far from what is understood as femininity. An example of a young Dutch woman, Tanja Nijmeijer, is an excellent example of a native attitude towards war. But of course naiveness should not be associated with women.

Commentators of events in a prison in Iraq – Abu Gharib, emphasize that women directly participated in torturing prisoners⁹. Cruelty of a war in actions of women in a public opinion is worse than cruelty of men as women are expected to calm the way of life. Do we want a woman in a uniform for example in a role of a commander of a platoon to be feminine or the other way – less feminine and more masculine? Certainly we expect them to be professionally prepared. It is important that the assessment of their skills was not interrupted by a stereotyped perception in plus as well as in minus.

War, fight are those fields of life which have always caused a lot of troubles for societies. The member countries are called to increase participation of women in missions and peace negotiations by the United Nations Security Council in a resolution of 2000 No. 1352¹⁰. The followers of the resolution emphasize strong features of women which can be used in a service in contingents of the army. Undoubtedly there belong: ability to make contacts easily – helpful in cooperation with locals, ability to ease conflicts thanks to a less confrontational way of conducting negotiations and causing less aggression. It is also taken into account that women are more sensitive to local religious, cultural and traditional problems and

⁸ H. Köchler, *Terrorism and the Quest for a Just World Order. Political and Philosophical Society & Foundation for Social Justice*, Quezon City (Manila) 2002, pp. 30–33.

⁹ L. C. James, P. G. Zimbardo, *Fixing Hell: An Army Psychologist Confronts Abu Ghraib*, Washington 2008, pp. 120–122.

¹⁰ J. Simonides, *ONZ – bilans i perspektywy*, Warszawa 2006, p. 17.

their role in conversations with local women from places where there are military conflicts is emphasized¹¹.

There are also those who oppose to women's participation in missions and peacekeeping operations. Except of really prosaic arguments like a lack of proper social conditions that means no separate bathrooms, toilets or places to sleep which complicates organization of a contingent and rises costs, the opponents stress out that for example among Muslims women are not treated as an equal partner for conversations.

At this point it needs to be analyzed how women's professional military service is perceived in contemporary societies like for example Poland. Professional military service of women in Poland is a phenomenon development of which has been influenced by many elements. One of them were civilization and social transformations which are happening in contemporary world like emancipation of women and development of feminist movements. An increased interest of women in the army results also from a growth in their professional activity and better education. Presence of women in the army is also a consequence of a system transformation in Poland which began at the end of the 1980s and now guarantees every citizen, regardless of a gender, equality in law. Poland joining NATO and as a consequence a need for adjusting structures of the Polish army to requirements of NATO also influenced the increase of women's number in the Polish armed forces.

Recruitment of women to the armed forces of the Republic of Poland began at the end of 1988. Within a military health care, there was a recruitment among graduates of civil schools who have graduated faculties like: medicine, pharmacy and psychology. The recruitment was carried in a specific mode: women only had to take a short military course after which they became officers and were hired dependently on needs of the army.

The situation changed in 1999 when for the first time women's presence in the army was taken into account in military educational system. The year was a beginning of a new stage of a staff policy concerning women

¹¹ M. van Creveld, *Zmienne oblicza wojny. Od Marny do Iraku*, Poznań 2008, pp. 318–329.

who could apply for military colleges, academies and officers' schools as candidates for professional soldiers. Also offer of professional positions for women was widened. It also caused an increased interest of women in a possibility of learning in military schools.

Chart No. 2. Opinion of the questioned on allowing women to professional military service

	XII 1999	I 2007
I definitely approve	37	32
I rather approve	37	36
I rather do not approve	13	13
I definitely do not approve	7	11
Hard to say	6	8

According to researches carried out by the Center for Public Opinion Research in Poland, women's professional service in the army is approved by 68% of the questioned and 32% of them definitely approves allowing women to the service in the army. 24% of the questioned are of different opinion and they think that allowing women to military service should not happen (Chart No. 2). A support for women serving in the army depends on supporter of which organizational system of the armed forces the questioned is. 63% of the questioned who are in favor of the army dependent on the common recruitment accepts a professional service of women, however 12 % more supporters of such a solution we may find among people who support a vision of a completely professional army.

Acceptance of a military service of women depends also considerably on age and education. Definitely more often the unlimited military service is supported by people with a higher degree who are under 35. A completely different attitude, that means a belief that there should not be women in the army is presented by people over 55 who are less educated.

There are also different opinions on a matter on what conditions and within which corps women should serve in the army. The most considerable number cause as many as 39% of responders in 1999 as well as in 2007 think that women should only serve in a medical and quartermaster

corpses. The option that their professional development should not be limited was supported in 1999 by 29% of the questioned and in 2007 the number was reduced to 25%. In comparison to 1999, in 2007 the number of those who believe that women should serve with all weapons and in all services (but with a reservation that they will be on posts that in case of war will not be in danger of a direct fight or battle contact with the enemy) was 4 percent smaller.

A new pragmatic bill opens better perspectives to women who are interested in a military service¹². It gives them a chance to be called up for corpses of professional privates¹³. A law is just a law, what about life? Which factors can be a real obstacle in realization of the law? It should be assumed that those will be stereotypes on genders and roles assigned to men and women. Is a soldier's profession appropriate for a woman? In a public opinion it is. But life brings many surprises. If a soldier – woman is not given men's requirements, there appears an accusation of a men's circle of discrimination of men. How should women's functioning in the army look like? For some people the answer is simple – the same way as men's does. There is equality of rights. But does a woman in a uniform stop being a woman? Of course there are people who do not see any difference. Are there no differences? Differences are visible for women in uniforms. They think that they are treated more carefully, accomplishing their tasks is exacted more precisely and they are more carefully watched than men. Researches show that a scheme of a gender influences our perception of a person and causes that a person's particular behavior is understood differently in dependance on whether a person is a man or a woman.

We can imagine easily a man as a soldier but it is not so obvious if a woman should function in this role in the same way. In the USA, requirements in the service are equal for both genders. Some women find themselves in such a role perfectly but there are also women who taking the

¹² Rozporządzenie Ministra Obrony Narodowej z dnia 19 grudnia 1996 roku w sprawie służby wojskowej żołnierzy zawodowych, Dz. U. 1997, Nr 7, poz. 38., por. Ustawa o zmianie ustawy o powszechnym obowiązku obrony Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej oraz o zmianie ustawy o służbie zastępczej z 29 lipca 2005 roku, Dz. U. 2005, Nr 180, poz. 1496.

¹³ S. Jarmoszko, *Wojsko Polskie pierwszej dekady transformacji*, Toruń 2003, p. 65.

role start to act like men and cry in the pillow as they feel deprived of a substantial part of their identity as women. There is not a one truth about women in the army. The subject that comes nearly automatically to the foreground is of course a possibility of accusations of sexual harassment. It is exposed nearly every time while talking about women in the army. It is rather a man thing to be active and show initiative in seduction. Also in a military circle unintentionally we are entangled in a thinking scheme concerning customs. Sexuality of women itself does not threaten anyone as well as sexuality of men, lesbians and gays. If somebody feels threatened it may be because the one does not know his/her own boundaries. But it is not sexuality of the other gender to be blamed for it but personality of a person who is afraid.

In the West European culture, formal organizations like military, fire department and the police have always been connected with men and have been men's own field. The situation is caused by a generally accepted and functioning patriarchal model of the society. However in time, the model has slowly been transformed and has evolved like the whole changing world. Women have slowly started to require an access to many fields of life closed till then for them. They won a right to vote, a possibility to develop professional activity also in professions considered as typically men's ones. Many laws that now guarantee equal rights in access to all fields of a private and a public life to both genders, have been transformed and regulated.

All formal and legal obstacles stopping women from equality of rights have been liquidated. However, a problem appears in another sphere that means "in a sphere of thinking and perception of some regularities that rule the social world. Men as well as women have to – but very often do not want to – accept that the age of the patriarchy has been gone"¹⁴. Women "have been learning the military and the military has been gaining experience how to make a soldier out of a woman. Slowly, step by step, eliminating everything that has been defective"¹⁵. A picture of a woman serving in the army is now a casual thing, it does not rise any sensation.

¹⁴ After: A. Dębska, *Kobieta w mundurze, czyli nowa jakość w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa*, Toruń 2004, p. 47.

¹⁵ After: R. Przeciszowski, *Piękniejsza część brygady*, „Polska Zbrojna” 2006, No. 11, pp. 20–21.

However, it does not change a fact that a development of a professional military service of women still has many opponents, not only in Poland but also in the entire world. All differences between men and women are of a cultural character. If there is anything roots of which are in the nature, it has been hidden so deeply and far far behind the culture that we cannot be sure of its character. Here we need to ask one more question. Why we use exactly such and not different patterns that define a “real man” and a “real woman”. For example, we really like saying that a real man is a man who is ready to fight if somebody else challenges him. Somebody who in such a situation would try to gain supremacy. And people, independently on gender, like domination over others. So looking for an answer to what extent a soldier woman meets requirements dictated by men in uniforms, we need to be patient. A long-lasting process of changing a mentality is awaiting.

Has the so called women issue been finally solved in western modern societies also by making women soldiers? If we believe words of the followers of feminism, another bastion of men’s domination has been won. Opponents of feminism claim hard that the problem does not exist and matters like an equal professional status of men and women is a fake creation of those who want to draw attention of activists.

Both sides of the conflict, sooner or later, will meet in their thinking an important problem: should a state and to what extent, interfere in a woman’s situation – in their family and professional life? Is it possible to compromise between the individual’s freedom of shaping her/his own fate and requirements of equality? A state and state institutions should – in the name of saving equality of men and women – have a possibility to interfere in matters that cannot be solved without interference. However, it needs to have its limits: executing one’s rights must have boundaries of responsibility¹⁶. Resignation does not mean a lack of looking for a golden mean in social relations which cannot be dominated neither by men nor women radicalism.

However, it cannot be forgotten that some analysis of the armed forces focus only on men conditioning. In such cases it is usually emphasized

¹⁶ J. Baszkiewicz, *Władza*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1999, p. 23.

how men get through the military service, men – the main heroes of most of war stories: participants in battles, prisoners of war, commanders, strategists, pilots of fighters, the marines, traitors etc. Women participate less directly in battles and thus it is assumed that the influence of war on them is indirect. To a little degree variety of efforts of women, essential for the military, is emphasized. It needs to be stressed out that thousands of women were soldiers' wives, their cooks, providers, washerwomen and nurses. Sometimes they had all these roles. Not mentioning situations when they have been called prostitutes and even used that way, all those women from a civil circle of the military have had to do things without which no bigger military formation could exist¹⁷.

The fact that for women and men in the military and armed conflicts, there are roles of respectively – victims and warriors – has serious consequences for situations of both groups. Even though men and women are able to similarly fulfill the active roles in wars and military conflicts as those bringing violence and participants of a peacekeeping process, the social perception of roles of men and women in the armed forces and prejudices shape and limit considerably real playing of roles in positive as well as negative dimension.

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¹⁷ J. Steans, *Gender and International Relations: Issues, Debates and Future Directions*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 25–42, compare S. Whitworth, *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, Boulder 2004, p. 27.

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