

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

**Strategizing Gender in Military Practices:
The US Armed Forces in the Global War on Terror**

By

Amani T. Kandil

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs

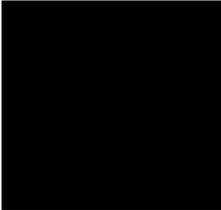
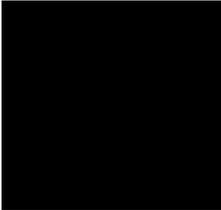
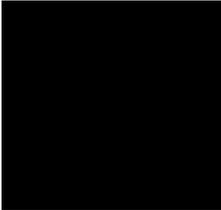
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Dedication

To my mother and father, I pray that I live long enough to repay you for everything that you are.

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This thesis would not have been possible if not for the guidance and commitment of a number of individuals.

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Strategizing Gender in Military Practices: The US Armed Forces in the Global War on Terror

Amani T. Kandil

Abstract

The terrorist attacks that took place on the 11th of September 2001 rapidly ushered in a Global War on Terror that was announced by President George W. Bush and his administration. This study examines the participation of women in the US Armed Forces within the scope of this war, in order to analyze how Islamic Culture, as a factor specific to Afghanistan and Iraq, contributed to the increased utilization of women within the military. This piece starts with a general overview on the Global War on Terror, and continues to examine the main theories of International Relations and the validations they give for the causes of war. It continues to provide an outline on the status of women within the US Armed Forces. From thereon, the participation of women in the Global War on Terror is studied, along with culturally relevant practices, such as torture and radical interrogation, that were utilized by the US Army in Iraq and Afghanistan. The thesis concludes that women were used as part of a new strategy of warfare that includes gender and culture as potent weapons, alongside traditional warfare.

Keywords: War on Terror, Gender, Military, Transnational Feminism, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, Torture, War Practices, Iraq, Afghanistan

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background.....	3
1.3 Overview of the Global War on Terrorism.....	7
1.4 Research Purpose and Question.....	9
1.5 Methodology.....	11
1.5.1 Research Design and Planning.....	11
1.5.2 Transnational Feminist Research.....	12
1.5.3 Quantitative Research Approach.....	14
1.5.4 Qualitative Research Approach.....	15
1.6 Mapping out the Thesis.....	16
Chapter Two: Theory and Context.....	18
2.1 Theoretical Debates	18
2.2 International Relations Theories and War	19
2.3 Feminist International Relations Theories, Security, and War.....	22
2.4 Globalization, Terrorism, and War.....	25
2.5 Literature Review.....	28
2.6 Special Times Call for Special Measures	30
2.7 The Islamic Cultural Realities of Afghanistan and Iraq.....	33
2.8 Torture in Afghanistan and Iraq.....	37
2.9 How Segregation Served Integration.....	39
Chapter Three: US Military Women and the GWOT	42
3.1 Women in the US Armed Forces.....	42
3.2 A Brief History of Women in the US Armed Forces.....	43
3.3 Beyond the 1970s.....	47
3.4 Women as a Weapon of Torture in US Interrogation Facilities	51
3.4.1 Who is Responsible?.....	54
3.5 What does the GWOT Tell us about Gender as a War Strategy?.....	56
Chapter Four: Conclusion	59
4.1 Conclusion	59
4.2 Limitations	61
4.3 Final Thoughts	63
Bibliography	66

List of Tables

Table 1: Religious, Cultural, and Social Sentiments in Afghanistan and Iraq	6
Table 2: A Timeline of Women in the US Armed Forces	46

List of Charts

Chart 1: Timeline of Female Personnel in the US Armed Forces (in Thousands).....	45
Chart 2: Female Personnel at the US DOD (in Thousands).....	49
Chart 3: Female Personnel at the US DOD (% of Total).....	49
Chart 4: Breakdown of DOD Personnel by Division During 2002-2004.....	50
Chart 5: Global War on Terror Military Operations: Female Casualties.....	50
Chart 6: Wartime Veterans Across US Military Conflicts.....	63

List of Abbreviations

DACWS	Defense Advisory Commission on Women in the Services
DOD	Department of Defense
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
IR	International Relations
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
TRADOC	Army Training and Doctrine Command Center
US	United States of America
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
WAF	Women in the Air Force
WAVES	Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service
WOT	War on Terror
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The only time I saw Iraqi men entirely intimidated by the American-British forces was in Basra, when a cluster of men gaped, awestruck, around an example of the most astoundingly modern weapon in the Western arsenal. Her name was Claire, and she had a machine gun in her arms and a flower in her helmet. "I'm a bit of a novelty here," she said, laughing. The Iraqis flinched.

A Woman's Place, By Nicholas D. Kristof

Women. Women, according to the World Bank's estimates, make up 49.5% of the total world populace. But where are they? Where are women, and why do they continue to be overshadowed by their male counterparts in a world that persists in being male-controlled and archaic? Where are women and why do they remain discriminated against in fields where their education, insights, and experiences matter? Where are women and their voices when it comes to fields of study that can be greatly altered and redefined by content which take into account that males and females are two sides of the same coin? Where are women in the fight for a well balanced and just universal village, one which will never be achieved unless and until we shed patriarchal views and don all the different facets of gender?

Women are absent, and it is this absence that will forever give the upper hand to patriarchy.

The social construction of our world as a whole is clear to see, as the power dynamics and gender stereotyping of what is required of the male and the female come to center stage. Feminists realize that women come up short in the analysis of what is perceived as power and how it is utilized and applied by individuals. Historically, interactions among humans have been greatly influenced by power, a character that is mostly attributed to men, who are viewed as the guardians of women, the weaker sex that

is always in need of protection. In some cases, even when women hold powerful posts, and aim to utilize their authority to enhance the lives of other women, they remain somehow restricted in the real use of their influence, and sometimes it would still require a man to give credibility to the notions they have.

Perhaps one of the fields where this is glaringly obvious is that of International Relations (IR), and by extension security studies and ensuing security related careers in arenas such as the military. In fact, Blanchard states that “national security discourses are typically part of the elite world of masculine high politics” (Blanchard 2003, 1289). This field, along with its many sub categories, is in essence one that produces and theorizes the undercurrents that lead our political world, but it is not until recently that feminist voices have been added to the equation.

Feminists agree that many of the main actors in IR, be it policymakers, politicians or academicians, continue to be in majority men, who are a product of patriarchy and the power dynamics that it creates, and which ultimately continues to sideline women, their views, and roles. For Youngs, the interests of women end up either incorporated within those of their male counterparts in a somewhat shallow way that does no good to females, or addressed by females within the field, who nonetheless function within an arena that holds male patriarchal morals and characteristics (Youngs, *Feminist International Relations in the Age of the War on Terror: Ideologies, religions and conflict* 2006, 8).

Concurrently, it is only logical to expect that with power playing such a huge role in IR dynamics, with war being such a significant aspect in the field of IR, and with the military as the face of war, it is imperative to examine how women fit into the equation. This is particularly important when scholars such as Blanchard highlight the fact that when men run for office, a particular attention is given to their previous military careers and

achievements, a qualification that puts women at a disadvantage as they continue to be underrepresented in such fields, which is a classic “catch-22” situation (Blanchard 2003, 1292).

1.2 Background

In the United States (US), women have been members of the military efforts for as far back as the Revolutionary War in 1775, where they served as nurses, water bearers, cooks, and laundresses. Albeit, women at the time had to disguise themselves as men to fight alongside their male counterparts. With time and the evolution of society, due to efforts of civil movements that include human rights and women rights activists, the US government commenced in acknowledging that women, as half of the nation, are integral to various institutes, among which is the US Armed Forces.

However, it was not until January 2013 that Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that by 2016, women would be fully incorporated into all US Armed Forces divisions and units, with no exceptions. This was further solidified on the 3rd of December 2015 when the Pentagon announced, through Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, that all combat positions, with no exceptions, will be accessible by American women. This announcement, which was considered a historical turning point for women in the military, was one that overrode the 1994 restrictions from combat roles.

At the time, scholars examining the subject of women in the military maintained that in this field, the units they were permitted to participate in were still not ones in which they were fully integrated. Issues of acceptance from fellow soldiers, as well as high-ranking officials who found it difficult to accept women taking on leadership roles within the forces or fighting in combat alongside their male equivalents always rose.

Research has also given evidence that the last major wars fought by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) have shown that women were actively involved in the armed forces even within combat zones, which they were until recently restricted from, in agreement with military law.

Those restrictions were brought to the center of the debate on the participation of women in armed forces in November 2012, due to a high profile lawsuit that was filed against the US Department of Defense (DOD) by four US military women. The basis of this lawsuit was that women faced inequality and constraints when trying to do their jobs as military personnel. The argument was that in the GWOT and modern warfare, there was a blurred line that in no way marked where the separation border is between frontline combat positions and rear-line ones, and so women are being constitutionally denied access from combat roles when the experience on the ground saw them facing the same realities that combat duty soldiers are up against, so that they were even losing their lives and limbs alongside the males without getting the recognition they deserved.

All four plaintiffs had done tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. Major Mary Jennings Hegar is a combat helicopter pilot who served three tours over two deployments in Afghanistan. In 2009, her aircraft was shot down while on a rescue mission, and she was injured. She still managed to return fire and complete the mission. Hegar was bestowed with the Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor, which are two of the highest decorations that a pilot could be awarded, but despite that she could not apply to combat leadership positions because of the exclusion policy (American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Northern California 2012).

Sergeant Jennifer Hunt served in both Afghanistan and Iraq. During her Iraq deployment in 2007, her Humvee vehicle was hit by an explosive device and she suffered

injuries to her face, arms and back. Hunt was awarded a Purple Heart, but maintains that the exclusion policy was the reason she was not allowed to properly train alongside her male counterparts and thus put her and her whole team at a disadvantage. The exclusion also prevented her from being able to get a promotion, since she was not able to apply to combat leadership schools which were closed to women (American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Northern California 2012).

Captain Alexandra Zoe Bedell was deployed to Afghanistan twice and so was First Lieutenant Colleen Farrell, and they both faced danger at one time or another within the units they worked with as female engagement teams, and they both believed that they were discriminated against due to the combat exclusion policy (American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Northern California 2012).

With such stories and many similar examples brought to light it becomes interesting to look at the position of women within the US Armed Forces across history, and how their participation had evolved to reach the level and scope of the involvement seen in the Afghanistan and the Iraq Wars. This is particularly significant when considering a crucial factor and a shared denominator between Afghanistan and Iraq, which is Islamic Culture.

Islamic Culture, naturally comprises practices and beliefs that are developed and centered around Islam as a religion, and that have roots in the Koran and the Prophetic Sunnah. Muslims worldwide rely on the aforementioned theological writings and sources, thus adopting religious practices and daily rituals that harmonize, unite, and consolidate them into what is viewed as one Ummah or community that transcends national identity. Both Afghanistan and Iraq are states that belong to this Ummah, with an estimated 99% and 97% of the population respectively being Muslims of the Sunni or Shia sects

according to the US Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2017).

Both countries also share a lot of similarities when it comes to the views of the population on issues related to Islam and the social and cultural life of Muslims. A survey of Muslims around the globe, conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2012 uncovered the below parallels between the populations of both states.

Table 1: Religious, Cultural, and Social Sentiments in Afghanistan and Iraq

	Afghanistan	Iraq
Sharia is the revealed word of God	73%	69%
Favor making Sharia the law of the land	99%	91%
Agree that religious judges should decide on family or property disputes	78%	76%
Favor corporal punishments for crimes such as theft	81%	56%
Favor stoning people who commit adultery	84%	57%
Religion is very important in life	92%	82%
Conflict between ethnic/tribal/nationality groups is a problem	88%	84%
Dislike Western music, movies, and television	71%	58%
Western music, movies, and television hurt morality	66%	75%
It is often justified to end the life of a woman if she brings dishonor to her family	37%	44%
There is no natural conflict between being a devout religious person and living in a modern society	56%	60%
A wife must always obey her husband	66%	53%
Sons should have a greater right to parents' inheritance	65%	75%
Divorce is morally wrong	31%	26%
Drinking alcohol is morally wrong	72%	86%
Committing suicide is morally wrong	69%	78%
Having an abortion is morally acceptable	55%	57%
Very concerned about extremist religious groups in the country	31%	31%

Source: The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics, and Society Survey (Pew Research Center 2012)

1.3 Overview of the Global War on Terrorism

On Tuesday, the 11th of September 2001, 19 militants linked to the Islamic radical group Al-Qaeda usurped four planes and executed suicide attacks against marks in the US. The World Trade Center in New York City, and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. were hit, resulting in the death of over 3,000 individuals, 343 firefighters and paramedics, 23 law enforcement officers, and 37 Port Authority officers as per data from the US Department of State (US Department of State 2009).

The GWOT, or War on Terror (WOT), as used by US President George W. Bush in 2001, represents the military operations that commenced after the September 11 attacks on the US. According to Gordon, Bush and his allies in the US emphasized the importance of armed forces and pushing an agenda of democracy in the Middle East (Gordon 2007, 53). Youngs nonetheless, maintains that the war in a nutshell is one where the “enemy is a loose network of shifting mobile cells of individuals and groupings (the terrorists) who cannot be regarded as an external threat as such in traditional state-centered IR fashion” (Youngs, *Feminist International Relations in the Age of the War on Terror: Ideologies, religions and conflict* 2006, 4).

Since 2001 however, the terms GWOT/WOT, have been widely used by US administrations, the media, and academics when discussing the global military, political, and legal struggle against both terrorism, its organizations and its supporting regimes, although the primary usage remains linked to Islamic terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda.

The two main outcomes of the September 11 attacks, were ushered in under the banner of the GWOT and were the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, more widely known as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

OEF began on the 7th of October 2001 and was launched by the US, along with its allies, against Afghanistan in an attempt to overthrow and annihilate the Taliban network (History.com, President Bush announces military action in Afghanistan 2009). The forces were able to dismantle the Taliban from power in a period of two months, but Osama Bin Laden continued to evade justice. The war effort persisted, as insurgencies popped up in Pakistan, and the search for Bin Laden continued until his capture and death in 2011. It was not until June 2011, under the Obama administration that military withdrawal from Afghanistan was kick started.

Although the war began as a fight against Taliban and Al-Qaeda, as the organization that executed 9/11, it soon transformed into a more ruthless initiative on the 9th of March 2003, when the US, again with its allies, invaded Iraq in what it termed OIF, with the agenda of toppling the Sunni Baathist government, capturing its leader Saddam Hussein, and finding as well as destroying all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. The regime was ousted within three weeks, combat operations were halted on the 1st of May, and Hussein was captured in October 2005 to be executed on the 30th of December 2006, after a trial for his crimes against humanity and an appeal that was unsuccessful (History.com, War in Iraq begins 2009). However, this war remains according to Gordon one in which the US played into the hands of Bin Laden and the likes of him and inspired dislike toward the US as it led a misguided war in a country that had no weapons of mass destruction (Gordon 2007, 57).

Both wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, of which Iraq was named as a member of an 'Axis of Evil,' that also included Iran and North Korea, by Bush had tremendous ramifications on the states involved, as well as their objects. Within those ramifications are ones related to women as members of the US Armed Forces, which even though assisted by allies such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia, remained the main instigators and contributors to the GWOT. This focus on women within the armed forces comes as a result of the increase in their participation in combat and active duty in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

1.4 Research Purpose and Question

While taking the above into consideration, this study examines the realities of Islamic Culture within the context of the GWOT, in order to bring it to the forefront as a factor that may have had an impact on the greater participation of women in the US Armed Forces. The main line of thought argues that through understanding the Islamic nature of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US was able to develop unconventional war strategies that were enhanced by women's involvement in the armed forces. To achieve this goal, the paper assesses the nature of the functions and tasks performed by military women and their participation.

The purpose is to examine US military practices within Islamic states in order to understand why such wars had an effect on the increased participation of women as combatants and fighters in wars, even when state policies entailed otherwise. With the findings I evaluate how culture, in this case, an Islamic one, could influence war strategies in relation to women's military participation.

This study answers the following research question:

How did Islamic Culture, as a factor specific to the Global War on Terror, serve as an opportunity for the increased participation of women in the US Armed Forces?

With this question I would be able to observe whether the increased participation of women in the armed forces is a sign of the US government taking a stand for the empowerment and inclusion of women within this field, or comes due to a war strategy decision that concentrates on the needs of the forces in times of war and conflict, specifically needs that are related to the cultural practices relevant to an Islamic society.

This research and thesis, and subsequently the findings that are relevant to it would be of certain worth on various levels. Through arguing and demonstrating that the participation of women in the US Armed Forces has been directly affected by the cultural and religious realities of Afghanistan and Iraq, this study would bring in additional knowledge on women to the field of IR and war. On a different level, this piece would provide support that may be utilized to draw a link between the participation of women in the armed forces and the foreign policy practices of the US during times of war, with the implication that women in the military are sometimes used as a war strategy to infiltrate and breach closed communities such as the Muslim ones predominant in Afghanistan and Iraq.

On a macro level, this thesis, as an independent form of research and analysis, contributes to the topic of women in the military, which is a field that is described by Segal, as one that is “descriptive in nature”, with “most of the research done by people who work for the military or by civilian social scientists working on military-supported contracts” and governed by military policy makers over the questions to be explored and the methods of research to be used (Segal 1978, 105).

1.5 Methodology

With the background explained, and the research purpose and question identified, it becomes imperative to highlight the research methods that the thesis relies on to provide evidence in support of the rationalizations for both the hypothesis and the research question.

To that end, the methodology below defines and clarifies the research methods used in this scholarly piece. As previously mentioned, this study tackles the subject of the participation of women in the US Armed Forces in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, in an attempt to demonstrate that military women were used as a means to fight an underhanded war, in which they featured as a strategic weapon to humiliate and torture the Muslim Other.

In order to deliver evidence and support the above hypothesis, it is imperative to clearly state the research tools and methods used to build the methodology. The goal is to plainly outline and draw a concise picture of how the researcher plans to divide the work and arrive at the results that the study aims to convey.

1.5.1 Research Design and Planning

This study is a basic mixed methods research which combines exploratory and descriptive goals. In studies that utilize basic research, the main intent is to investigate the reasons why a particular issue or phenomenon took place.

While the scope of the study is not concerned with resolving a particular problem within the GWOT, it brings to the field awareness about a specific topic, which is the way military women were utilized within the GWOT, and provides a logical understanding and explanation of various practices related to this matter. Through in-depth research, the

study sets the ground for the possibility of further applied research, and subsequently the possibility for the creation of knowledge and theoretical work in the field of IR, specifically when it comes to military practices and the strategic use of the female soldier.

Within the bounds of this paper, a longitudinal approach with multiple time points is used to study the participation of women in the history of the US military both in front line positions and in active combat. In-depth examination and empirical research of the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq is conducted within the timeframe starting in 2000 and ending in 2010.

To ensure accuracy in research results, military personnel in the US Armed Forces, which include the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy, are identified as the population.

Furthermore, and in order to provide a well rounded understanding of the topic at hand, the research utilizes a mixed approach method or triangulation design that collects both quantitative data and qualitative information.

1.5.2 Transnational Feminist Research

Transnational Feminism is a branch of feminist theory that inspects matters of interest to women through a global lens. Where many consider terms such as imperialism and colonialism to be historical, transnational feminists believe that when deliberating on topics of sexism, racism, ethnicity, and culture, it is only within the context of the aforementioned terms that we do so. Here, the divide is explained very simply, with a world that is comprised of Western women and non-Western women, the “others”, the Third World women, who are often thought of as oppressed and in need of saving.

While Western feminists are busy drawing on the many ways in which women globally are similar, transnational feminists form a broader outlook on women's issues, one that allows them to pinpoint the inequalities that women from different parts of the world face, and the different ways that global events can impact various groups. To transnational feminists, issues are only backed after a close study of the global outcome they may have on people. And it is due to this that transnational feminist do not support the military, or military violence. In fact, transnational Iraqi feminist Nadjie Al-Ali, provides a clear example of this in her article, *A Feminist Perspective on the Iraq War*, in which she mentions that a group of imperialist feminists had been fully supportive of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as they saw in them a chance for the liberation of Muslim women, while members of a second group that opposed the wars, one that included her, was "sidelined and unfairly discredited as Saddam lovers" (Al-Ali 2011, 8).

Other scholars in the field as well draw on the transnational aspect of the GWOT, among them Blake who cites Judith Butler when she touches on various practices within the scope of the wars saying that there is an "underlying contemporary political current and a crucial link to historical exercises of domination linked to the history of conquest and colonization", where there are clear instances of demarking the West and the Other (Blake 2009, 59).

The GWOT can only be described as a transnational exercise of power, where the US reached out beyond its borders and invaded states, waging an exceptional war that it considered to be legitimate. When you add to the equation the gendered practices that the US Armed Forces used within the context of the war, whether when utilizing its military women due to the cultural realities of Afghanistan and Iraq, or when sexualizing

interrogation techniques, it becomes interesting to tackle this thesis within the framework of a Transnational Feminist Theory.

Through a transnational feminist lens, the GWOT will be studied in a way that sees the US as an empire that continued to spread its power, showcasing what could be considered imperial and colonial practices of degradation, dehumanization and torture, while examining the position of military women both as forces that aid the expansions and as perpetrators of female on male violence against the Other. Here, the focus becomes on examining the interaction of gender and power between males and females, where otherwise established norms, that consider males to be stronger than females, are challenged by other variables such as ethnicity, culture, and religion.

1.5.3 Quantitative Research Approach

The quantitative approach is used when collecting, analyzing and interpreting secondary data, from various statistical agencies in the US. The primary purposes for using quantitative analysis was to be able to measure the contribution of women in the GWOT in a quantifiable way.

After the secondary analysis of existing data sets, the numerical results and statistics were compiled and presented in a number of easy to read templates. Bar, pie and line charts were designed to show the differences in recruitment patterns across gender during times of peace and war, specifically looking at the variances that arose in numbers related to the recruitments for Afghanistan and Iraq.

Through this, the research was able to pinpoint specific patterns that were relevant to the hypothesis which states that women in the US Armed Forces are sometimes used

as part of a war strategy that aims at infiltrating societies with barriers to entry as is the case in states with an Islamic nature and culture.

1.5.4 Qualitative Research Approach

In the qualitative approach, the research was focused on data communicated in the form of text, away from the numerical data that was provided in the quantitative approach. The part was focused on enumerating available knowledge and mainly included:

- Descriptions available on the GWOT,
- Accounts of various incidents that build on the use of military women,
- Opinions on the sexual politics of the GWOT.

This category of information that was collected and examined, all within a particular social, cultural, and historical context, is integral to the study of the women that are the central focus of this work. A sizeable chunk of the study was carried out by relying heavily on the work of various scholars in the field through studying diverse journal articles and books, visiting numerous well respected credible news sources, and collecting documents and reports from a number of Non-Governmental Institutes. The aim was to collect the background information needed in order to fully comprehend the context within which the topic of women in the US army is situated, while also building an understanding of the theoretical work available on the issue. The objective here was to understand the perspectives of scholars, policy makers and feminists on what the implications of the participation of women in the wars is, and to outline it within a gendered war strategy frame.

In fact, in order to shape the study at hand, it was imperative to delve into previous works conducted by a multitude of scholars on the topics of the GWOT, the participation

of women in the US Armed Forces, and the Islamic culture of Afghanistan and Iraq. It was through those studies that a well rounded understanding of the topics, which provides a building block for the whole study was enumerated in Chapter Two. Without the previous research in the field, it would not have been possible to provide a proper foundation upon which the current study was to be built. A full understanding of the work available in the field, allowed for the collection of the relevant evidence that permitted for the support of the hypothesis that the thesis aims to demonstrate. It is through providing fresh understanding of previous material at some points, and tracking the knowledge available in the field at others, that the research was able to develop a new argument that contributes to the field of gender and the military.

1.6 Mapping out the Thesis

This study is divided into four chapters; the introductory chapter, followed by the literature review, the case study, and finally concluding with findings and recommendations.

In Chapter One the author offers the general foundation of the study by delivering an overview onto the selected topic, along with an understanding of its relevance and underlying importance. This part reveals the selected research methodology that is used to examine the topic of the participation of women in the US Armed Forces during the GWOT, presenting the methods and approaches applied to gather and examine the data. It outlines the discussion used in order to provide valid, well studied results to the laid out research question. The chapter also clearly states the research purpose and lays out the research question clearly and concisely, along with its significance, and ends with a map of the rest of the chapters and their contents to set the tone for what is to be expected from the whole study.

Building on the information laid out in the introductory chapter, Chapter Two examines the theoretical foundations relevant to this work and provides the literature review. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part tackles the theoretical framework upon which the study is built, and thus examines four main subjects, which are IA theories, the concept of war, Feminist International Theories, and Globalization, as it is the knowledge of those views that provides the reader with a general understanding of the conceptual and theoretical building blocks that the thesis is developed on. This is followed by a second part which is a literature review that aims to present what knowledge has been delivered on the topic of women in the US military by various scholars. The review demonstrates the theories and approaches that preceding academics have used as a framework for their research. The chapter as a whole entity places the subject within its historical context, delivers the evaluation of preceding studies, and validates the selection of the topic.

With the previous chapters validating, and then digging into what research is available on the chosen topic, the stage is set to delve into the case study in Chapter Three. Here, we start by providing the reader with a historical background on the role of women in the US Armed Forces. The chapter also provides an ample view of the qualitative and quantitative data found, and continues to examine and analyze the data on women's participation and role in Afghanistan and Iraq to illustrate results.

Chapter Four wraps up the whole thesis. It starts with a summary of the complete study, along with the findings. This includes a short recapitulation of the research problem, the fundamental premises according to which the literature review was presented, the methodology, and the results. This serves to refocus the reader on the topic of the study before providing a conclusion as to how the whole work contributes to the field of IR.

Chapter Two: Theory and Context

“Fareek, did you know that I’m having my period? She placed her hands in her pants and came back around wiping what he believed was menstrual blood on his face. How do you like this, she asked, holding open the palm of her hand to show him her blood. What do you think your brothers will think of you in the morning when they see an American woman’s menstrual blood on your face? By the way, we’ve shut off the water to your cell for tonight.”

Testimony by Sergeant Eric Saar, Sexual and Religious Abuse of Detainees, 2007

2.1 Theoretical Debates

As stated and explained in the introductory chapter, the general focus of this study is centered around three main pillars which are the participation of American women in the US Armed Forces, the cultural and religious realities of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the GWOT. The main variable here is the participation of women which needs to be examined within the context of the GWOT, while clearly focusing on the aspect of Islamic Culture that is pertinent to Afghanistan and Iraq. Through doing so, the study aims to usher in Islamic Culture as a factor that has contributed to the boost in women’s participation, and continues to examine particular war strategies where the utilization of women is clear.

While all three of the main pillars stated above are independently vast areas of study on their own, within the context of this work, they do however fall under the umbrella of a larger more all encompassing discipline which is that of IR. When research broaches on topics such as that of war, it is imperative to lay the proper foundation that provides the reader with the needed knowledge that is available from the main theories of IR. Similarly, when the study also addresses the participation of women, it becomes fundamental to discuss the views of Feminism on IR and War. The same goes for understanding the views available on war from proponents of globalization.

The following part, titled Theoretical Debates, delivers a look at what knowledge is available on the topic of women and war within the field of IR. This part which could be considered the foundation of the research, albeit brief, serves as the building block that outlines the study within its theoretical frame.

The main focus will be on setting the grounds for a better understanding of the overall niche within which the entire study fits. To do so, it will touch on the topic of war in theories of IR and then feminist theories. Building on that, and due to the nature of the GWOT as a global phenomenon in a continuously globalized world, a part will be dedicated to comprehending both the themes of war and terrorism through the lens of globalization.

2.2 International Relations Theories and War

Traditionally, war – which is an ever-present phenomenon in IR – is defined as a condition of armed clash among two or more countries, or two or more groups within a country. Because this paper is centered on the topic of war, it is essential to look at the core theoretical approaches that are used in the study of IR, to understand and build a perspective on the subject.

Realism, the most dominant of theories in IR, along with its subdivisions, is based on the three most important principles of statism, survival, and self-help. For realists, these characteristics, along with an international system which is mainly viewed as anarchic – with the absence of a dominant authority –, make up the causes of war, which is considered to be natural for states as they try to maximize their security and power. For realists, war is a means to further increase power and is thus defined as a political tool, as it is only through such power that states can shield themselves and endure. Many realists according

to Sumida follow the conception of war as a political entity from Clausewitz, who maintained that war is a controlled and rational act, and a continuation of political activity by other means (Sumida 2001, 337).

In "Man, the State and War", Kenneth Waltz defines three causes of war which are the flawed human nature, the internal organization of the state which is always inclined towards fighting wars to ensure survival and prevent destruction, and finally the clash of interests among nation states which is the outcome of the anarchic international system (Waltz 2001). Waltz's views summarize those of realist theorists who see the state as always seeking war with other nations as a way to ensure a united internal front that works as one unit to face any external threat.

On the other hand, Constructivism offers a more thought out interpretation of war, through understanding and explaining IR as a social construction, and consequently exploring and assessing numerous basics that include but are not limited to ethnicity, culture, law, and economy, all of which influence war alongside survival. By doing this, constructivists delineate the historical and geographical variances that exist between states and societies, while emphasizing the role of non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations and multinational companies who may have different interests than those of the states they in which were originally established. Constructivists agree that states must focus on surviving, but the road to continuous survival is not necessarily paved in war and conflict since states might act differently as the result of their distinct identities. This is best explained through the words of Alexander Wendt which say that "Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. Anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992, 395).

Liberals, on the other hand, believe that the standard state of affairs is that of peace, where harmony and cooperation are natural among people. Similar to realism, liberalism sees states as having a character akin to that of the human nature. However, this human nature is viewed from a positive angle where states focus on endorsing peace on the international level rather than trying to fight wars, and that leads to peace. War here takes place due to the presence of undemocratic and un-liberal states. Other liberal views see war as an outcome of what is looked at as the issue of imperialism, or the aggression of groups. Burchill maintains that war could be in most cases prevented, however, states would go to war for self-defense or in some cases as intervention in cases of human rights violations (Burchill 2009, 62). In a nutshell, states are not blind sighted by survival and consequently prosperity in an anarchical system but are rather pushed forward by the economic and ideological interests of the people who set the tone for what needs to be achieved in the international arena by the government.

Marxism perhaps provides the strongest argument on the causes of war. Marxists maintain that conflict, which is the driving force of revolutions, comes from the social struggles of the classes rather than from a political struggle, and is the product of capitalism and its system. Lenin drew a connection between war and class struggle, making it clear that wars cannot be abolished as long as conflicts remain between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. Linklater maintains that this same idea can be understood when it comes to states, where developed states, which are looked at as Capitalist states, can easily manipulate and exploit underdeveloped ones or those which are on the periphery or the semi-periphery, through what can be called imperialist wars (Linklater 2009, 117).

Here, we see that each of the above-mentioned theories of IR explains the causes of war from a different perspective. However, what remains common among all theories is the belief that war is an integral part of the international system and is not something that will disappear at any given time.

2.3 Feminist International Relations Theories, Security, and War

An assessment of the role of feminist theory in the field of IR is gorged with intricacies; not only because the subject of feminism is one that serves as an umbrella for many theoretical frameworks within it, but more so due to the fact that the topic of feminism itself is sidelined within the study of IR. Feminist IR scholars and theorists have a common goal that focuses on revealing and eliminating the gender-biases rooted in IR theories, and rebuilding a gender-neutral IR arena.

In the onset, feminists overlooked IR as a prospective field of studies, focusing on internal policies, legislation, and socialization. It was not until the 1980s that change occurred, with scholars in the field noticing that the study of IR, regardless of the theoretical framework, excluded women and focused on notions of control and authority within an agenda that highlights power, and is gender biased. While gender was absent from the theories themselves, women remained an important part of the equation as feminist theorists became more and more aware that with power play in the international arena came outcomes such as war, famine, displacement and sexual violence, all of which dealt a heavy hand on women. To simplify it, in the game of IR, males are the principal agents and representatives of conflict and reconciliation, while females are the ones who agonize the most, and are absent from peace negotiations and resolutions. The field is, in a nutshell, gender blind. In fact, Youngs maintains that,

“Feminist IR has acknowledged malestream IR theory as one of the discourses that help perpetuate a distorted partial world view that reflects the disproportionate power of control and influence that men hold, rather than the full social reality of the lives of women, children, and men” (Youngs, *Feminist International Relations: A Contradiction in Terms? Or: Why Women and Gender Are Essential to Understanding the World 'We' Live in* 2004, 76).

With feminism’s twofold aim of advocating women and their rights, while also highlighting how they are underprivileged vis-à-vis men, theorists in the field point fingers at the patriarchal system along with its societal structures and practices which serve men as the dominant sex. From this point, the feminist intent is to theorize the status of women by examining factors such as the social, cultural, and political. In order to subsequently reach a point where inequality is explained as an outcome of patriarchy, and the differential treatment afforded to women that comes with it, rather than innate biological attributes and traits. It is within those premises that feminist IR debates on topics such as power, sovereignty, and autonomy arise, pinpointing war and military services which is a subject ripe with masculinity, gender discrimination, and preconceived identities. From here, feminists view IR through a gendered perspective that would inspire equality among the sexes and raise awareness as to the functions that males and females hold in governing within the international arena and the public sphere.

Security is fundamental to the study of IR. The security of a state or lack of it is among the main indicators as to whether the need to proclaim power on the international arena is crucial. After all, power is the building block upon which realism and liberalism among other theories of IR are centered. A state is mainly perceived as a power hogging entity, that is in a continuous struggle to cement its influence and authority to eliminate all hints of insecurity and to ensure peace and safety among its civilians. On this note, feminists pinpoint the importance of distinguishing between anarchy and security within

the state, as this state focused evaluation undermines the concept of security that is present on the three different levels, which are the local, the national, and the global. It is only by looking at security on those different levels that women's security will stop being marginalized and will come to the forefront.

Here it becomes clear that the feminist understanding of security differs from the conventional IR one as it brings women to the forefront, along with the abolition of violence. Tickner sees that with the security of the state taking precedence over the security of "man" rather than the individual, the female gender will continue to take the role of the protected. She continues to say that the individual, state, and international system are defined in a purely masculine way, citing the heroics of war and exclusion from military combating as a few of many ways in which the female gender, which makes up half of society, is excluded from participation (Tickner 1992, 28-29).

In this form of thought, the issue of security is comprehended from the bottom toward the top, from the particular to the general, commencing from the individual to the community, to the state and then consequently ending with the international system. Feminist theorists in this scenario hold the state agents accountable as the primary contributors to security, and it is mainly in warring states that criticism arises, due to the fact that said agents become engrossed with state safekeeping and inattentive of citizen wellbeing of which the most affected by war are vulnerable groups which include women and children. On the other hand, even when peace is achieved, the power and security dilemma remains, as states continue to fund significant military endeavors on the expense of the social and internal, which once again takes away from the paths of women. Here, Steihm says that such armies just by existing will also eventually lead to war (Stiehm 2010, 19).

Hand in hand with the topics of security and power in IR comes that of war. It is imperative for states to train and construct the strongest and most unfailing and trustworthy of armies. After all, it is this investment in particular that will keep a state protected and capable of waging wars. Through history, wars have been continuously portrayed as masculine endeavors that require nothing short of the strongest, bravest, and most adept individuals. This frame of mind that is constantly represented in the study of politics, IR, and military affairs is unceasingly hammered into the brains of military personnel and produces a patriarchal mindset that is geared toward looking at women as the other that needs to be safeguarded and protected in times of war. Wars end up having a masculine face with the brave soldier playing the role of the protector that needs to keep the mother, daughter, and wife sheltered and safe. On this point, Youngs mentions the work of scholar Cynthia Enloe who dedicated her efforts to studying gender structures that are an outcome of security and war and that end up categorizing “dominant forms of the masculine (warrior) subject as protector, conqueror, exploiter of the feminine/feminized object/other” (Youngs, *Feminist International Relations: A Contradiction in Terms? Or: Why Women and Gender Are Essential to Understanding the World 'We' Live in* 2004, 78).

Building on our discussion within the framework of this paper, it is also imperative that we visit the concept of war within the lens of globalization and its opponents.

2.4 Globalization, Terrorism, and War

Globalization is one of the most controversial issues in our current time. Academicians and scholars alike find themselves debating the concept of globalization in an attempt to categorize it as either a negative or a positive phenomenon. While some

look at it as a tool that has contributed to the spread of capitalism to more regions in the world and thus caused more imbalance among countries, others look at it as a force that has if anything ushered in advancement, innovation, prosperity, liberty, and increased economic prospects while allowing the world to become more culturally diverse and interconnected.

The events of September 11 that took place in the US, along with the GWOT that followed have led to even more discussions on the negativities that characterize globalization. Here scholars particularly mention the adverse effects that the easy flow of technology, information and people can have. What comes to mind here is Osama bin Laden announcing that his attacks are a fight against the economic and cultural characteristics of the West and a call for divine justice against westerners.

The happenings of 9/11 show that technological advancements in the sharing of information and communications, which are mostly looked at as an outcome of globalization, have a conflictual nature as they can be used negatively as weapons of terrorism. In fact, Kiras proclaims that although it is hard to describe the relationship between globalization and terrorism or suggest that terrorism is an outcome of globalization, it can be said that technology which is closely related to globalization is one of the chief reasons for the spread of terrorism (Kiras 2014, 392).

On that Kellner maintains that,

“Some saw terrorism as an expression of the dark side of globalization, while I would conceive it as part of the objective ambiguity of globalization that simultaneously creates friends and enemies, wealth and poverty, and growing divisions between the "haves" and "have-nots." Yet the downturn of the global economy, intensification of local and global political conflicts, repression of human rights and civil liberties, and general increase in fear and anxiety have certainly undermined the naive optimism of globaphiles who perceived globalization as a purely positive instrument of progress and well-being” (Kellner 2002, 291).

Following on that, when potent technologies started to be used as weaponry for destruction, as was the case in the 9/11 attacks, a new form of warfare emerged, one that is linked to globalization. Globalization here, along with technological advancements related to it have led to repression in the aftermath of 9/11. This became evident with the security measures that were taken by the US to diminish the flow of information through suppression, policies, and supervision. Similarly, the GWOT that was put into action against Islamic Fundamentalism started to be seen as a cultural war against the religion of Islam. And with this, the GWOT was translated into a war between a globalized western force and a peripheral Islamic society that became hostile toward the globalized West. This is in line with what Barkawi says about wars in a globalized era which are defined as wars that are "...shaped by the societies which wage them, and how societies are shaped by the wars they wage. The character of war is shaped by its larger social context, and in turn, war reacts back on its social context" (Barkawi 2004, 162).

This war, however, taking a global form has cemented the idea that in an era of Globalization, war now has a changing character. Sheehan talks about wars that are no longer fought between states but rather between states and groups; as is the case with the war that the US undertook against Al Qaeda and any other state that might in one way or another threaten its well-being (Sheehan 2014). This is evident in both the cases of the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars, where the US invaded the former in search of Al Qaeda militants, which is a war against a group, and the later in search of weapons of mass destruction, which is a war to break down any superior technological weaponry advancements that might be found in Iraq.

Another important issue that both Sheehan (2014) and Kiras (2014) point out is the strong relationship that seems to have become present between identity and war, with

women becoming an essential part of war whether within militant groups as suicide bombers or combatants and within armies as frontline military personnel, a point that seems to be relevant to the rise in the participation of women in the GWOT.

2.5 Literature Review

In one of her older articles, Nancy Goldman's opening statement read as follows: "As an institution that manages violence, the military is a male-dominated organization which excludes women from direct combat roles and from significant assignments in administration" (Goldman 1973, 108).

Military work as an occupation and a career has been for a very long time and almost all over the world a predominantly male field. Provided that throughout history women have served within the field, the issue has always been that they were never provided equal opportunities, neither were they thought of as equals to their male counterparts. In the US particularly, women were only officially accepted within specific roles in the armed forces in the 20th century. According to Crowley and Sandhoff when facing questions about women and their service in the armed forces, "these questions are not whether women can actually serve in combat but whether our cultural imaginings of women should serve in combat (Crowley and Sandhoff 2017, 222).

Worldwide, with the US being no exception, women and their roles within armed forces increase and magnify at times when countries find themselves in a state of war. Similarly, the roles decrease and contract at times of peace when the need for more personnel and the motto of "freeing a man to fight" is not applicable. Even when the culture of a country is one that does not permit for the utilization of women within the military, the necessities and the enormities of war are usually ones that take precedence

over what is acceptable and what is not, and so women find themselves taking on bigger roles when the need arises. In relation to the above argument, Shadrock cites that during WWII war directors in the navy, coast guard and marines, did not fight for a permanent place for military women, but rather considered that women were just a war time need and that their auxiliaries should be dismantled at the end of conflicts (Shadrock 2006, 15).

In the case of the US, women were first commissioned in large numbers in WWI within special auxiliaries that were dismantled after the war. The same happened in WWII. This time however, they took on traditionally female roles as nurses and cooks, and more masculine ones serving in positions such as parachute riggers and aircraft mechanics. Again, with the end of the war, limitations were implemented on their participation.

This lasted until military conscription came to an end and the all-volunteer military was announced, where it became clear that the forces were strained and will be forced to depend on women who proved to be qualified enough to join the US Armed Forces.

The lure that held women captive and enticed them to join the armed forces became an analytical dilemma that recruiters needed to solve, with the necessity of hitting enlistment targets becoming a top priority. As an outcome, women were no longer faced with the “free a man to fight” litany as they used to be, but were now acknowledged as the solution to the problem and phenomena which saw men leaning toward being civilians rather than military men.

With the years to come, more and more women joined the forces and many regulations on gender barriers to entry were abolished. However, the exclusion from combat posts remained the last standing barrier until 2013. Nevertheless, this ban did not

stand in the way of decision makers who skirted policies and still deployed women within combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq when the “highly gender-segregated” nature of both countries was realized (Crowley and Sandhoff 2017, 221).

So it is clear to see that even though the military has always been defined as a gendered institution, there has always been a place for women somewhere within it. This presence with its increases, decreases, and all its other fluctuations, is dependent on the culture, values, and state of peace and war that the US, and any other country for that matter, faces. Interest in military women has increased with the perception of their significance to the upholding and continuance of the armed forces as a force to be reckoned with.

In the below pages, the study cites various points and arguments that scholars in the field have provided to explain the rise in the participation of women in the GWOT, some of which are the changing nature of war, the sociocultural realities of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the religious norms of both countries.

2.6 Special Times Call for Special Measures

On a congressional level, women had been “banned” from the combat fields even though they have been undergoing combat training since 2003, as per scholars such as Mackenzie. According to her, by January 2013 more than 280,000 women had served in Afghanistan and Iraq, with hundreds receiving Combat Action Badges. She examines the specialized roles for women in combat that the US had formed under the name of Female Engagement Teams (FETs), showing that 78 percent of the US Military women who died in Iraq; were categorized as having died “hostile” deaths, due to enemy attacks, which is

evidence that women are putting their lives at risk in war (MacKenzie, On “Women in Battle” 2013, 129).

In fact, the case of women’s participation in the Iraq war according to Major Shadrock is (Shadrock 2006, 55),

“... An interesting case of events overriding policy and regulation...women are providing the required support in lieu of a male performing that support role even though women are not officially allowed to be assigned to company level combat arms units. Commanders on the ground are skirting the issue by attaching women to combat arms units out of necessity.”

This point is important to note as it shows that when times of crises occur, men become more open to the idea of a woman working alongside them in a combat zone, where a man would usually be the support, it was now okay for women to provide it. Now, those male soldiers had to rely on a female “comrade” to cover their backs and provide protection. This is relevant when we consider that the primary focus in army trainings according to Hoppen is camaraderie, where one soldier always protects another soldier’s back (Hoppen 2006, 14).

King, in *The Female Soldier*, further backs Shadrock’s claim by clearly stating that in both Afghanistan and Iraq the formal status on women in combat was skirted by using the word “attached” for women on the frontline, rather than “assigned” (King 2013, 17). Here it becomes clear to see that women were not allowed anywhere near combat zones according to regulations but rules were broken due to combat necessities within the Iraq war. In fact, not only were the rules broken, but they were also allowed in by using a flippant and simple terminological and linguistic trick.

Another factor that played a role in the increase in the number of women during the GWOT was the fact that a majority of the US population was against those wars, and with the increased unpopularity came the issues of a major decrease in US residents

joining the army. In fact, building on this unpopularity of the wars, Tétreault writes that the US government paid great attention to the way that war correspondence was handled by the media. She mentions that access by journalists was being controlled and regulated, with information being disseminated in Qatar, or through journalists attaching themselves to units, or by journalists taking the risk of travelling to the war zone on their own which not many would do (Tétreault 2006, 36).

Alongside that came the problem of dropping out, where a large number of personnel also left the military. Mian talks about a military body that is strained, with the US Army falling 40 percent short of its recruitment target, and the number of dropouts since the beginning of the Iraq war reaching 5,500 soldiers, a huge increase when compared to 1,509 that deserted in 1995 (Mian 2005, 3235-3236). This point is relevant to show that the US started employing women in large numbers within its units in parallel with what Britain had done in the 1970s. Both Britain and the US have an all volunteer military force. However, Goldman maintains that back in the 1970s Britain had expanded the concentration of women within the military forces to meet its personnel requirements (Goldman 1973, 108).

As a matter of fact, this was not the first time that the US had looked beyond its regulations, or played around with its policies in order to gain certain objectives, specifically in the field of the military and more particularity when it came to women. For example, in the early days of the creation of the WAAC, African American women were choosing not to join due to various factors such as discrimination, segregation and tough admission standards. Rutherford mentions that because of this decrease in applications for enlistment and in order to meet the 10 percent quota for black women, the recruiting office

decided to lower admission standards in hopes of reaching their targets (Rutherford 2009, 17).

2.7 The Islamic Cultural Realities of Afghanistan and Iraq

The cultural realities of Afghanistan and Iraq played a key role in increasing the number of US military women participating in both wars. Women were brought into combat zones because it is not culturally and religiously acceptable for men to come into contact with women in both countries. The US Army women were needed to conduct body searches on enemy women when necessary, and patrol units were not feasible unless women were integrated within them, which was also an attempt to diminish hostility and to bridge cultural gaps between Iraqis and the US Army. In fact, various reports talk about thirty-nine women marine officers that were sent to Pashtun in Afghanistan to engage the trust of Afghani women by visiting them in their houses to gather intelligence, a move that could not be achieved by marine men who were culturally bound from accessing the women. Similarly, in Haditha Iraq, women were utilized to simplify the work of soldiers. Marine Corporals Carrie Blaise and Priscilla Kispetik were two of many attachés who talk about their experiences of being assigned to “patrols on house-clearing missions; as women they were able to interact with other women and facilitate unforced entries at various points” and as time would have, go into combat, where Blaise had to fire her first shots ever and kill an Iraqi man during a firefight between her unit and a group of insurgents (King 2013, 19).

On this, Shadrock says that the wars have affected women’s roles by providing an opportunity like no other conflict in American military history to contribute in what has been referred to as a “360 degrees” war (Shadrock 2006, 60). Here, Shadrock means that

these wars have allowed women to prove that they are capable of performing similarly to men, hence they have acted as a turning point for their status within the military.

The notion of culture took on new aspects within the strategy that was employed by the US in its WOT. When the US invaded Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively, the cultural realities of both countries were not taken into consideration. The military personnel that were deployed to both states were not given the proper training that would allow them to cope with Islamic based cultures that were so far from the Western counterpart that the soldiers originated from. However, by 2006, roughly during the middle stages of the war, cultural training was officially included within the basic training of troops.

The shift toward cultural training came as a result of the US military forces realizing that in order to be able to attain the short term goals of the wars that were set for Afghanistan and Iraq, which were to take away power from the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in the former and to dismantle the Saddam Hussein regime in the later, traditional military force would not do. Especially since the US went into the war without proper military planning in terms of long term goal setting. Another factor that came into the picture, especially in the case of Iraq, where the army was dismantled and Saddam Hussein released criminals from prisons, was the major destruction that was wrought by the invasions which contributed to even higher levels of hostility from the people of both states.

Time showed that the knowledge of the language, religion and cultural realities of both Afghanistan and Iraq has become better over the years. However, the military did not systematically consider deploying military personnel according to their capabilities in using the language and practicing the cultural understanding they garnered. What they did

do, is recognize that women in the military would be a huge asset in both countries and to that end, the military capitalized on the use of women within the army.

Subsequently, the active participation of military women came to the forefront of public debate, especially at times where women soldiers started attaining coverage when they were taken as hostages, or when the first wave of women soldiers lost limbs during the war. It became clear that women were now a central part of this GWOT. One of the main debates that came to the forefront, was whether the wars were actually enhancing the participation of women in an equal opportunity military force and thus a means for women empowerment away from previous unequal and biased gender norms, or whether this active participation is in a way an exploitation of women in a war where it had become clear that women were crucial due to the cultural and religious realities of the invaded states.

A point worth noting here is that the US congress denied entry of women soldiers to combat positions but scholars highlight the dangers faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. Major Shadrock says that “All of Iraq and Afghanistan is considered a combat zone. The threat is irregular and asymmetric. No longer are just the combat arms troops heavily targeted, logistics troops considered soft targets are frequently engaged by insurgents” (Shadrock 2006, 59).

Women soldiers became central to the war, once the cultural differences were understood and congress decrees were overruled at least informally, because it was realized that female soldiers were an essential capability for the US Armed Forces. Military tasks that could have been performed by males in any other part of the world were sensitive issues that would cause unwanted violence in Afghanistan and Iraq. Search parties and patrols could not function without the presence of at least one female soldier

that could perform otherwise menial tasks that facilitated movements, such as searching Iraqi women which could not be touched by foreign men without causing sensitivities that could potentially lead to bigger issues or clashes between Iraqi or Afghani men, and the US army. On a different note, while these tasks appeared menial, they also exposed the female troops to a higher level of risk than their male counterparts as they brought them into full contact, in some cases, with women insurgents that were smuggling weapons under their clothes.

While all the above shows that women were used as a means to respect the cultural realities of the countries that were at the center of the GWOT, a darker more negative aspect of the participation of women also emerged. Here according to Davis the “weaponization of culture” became an essential factor of military operations where intelligence started being employed to pressure others and to assault their weak spots, a shift that is described by Major General John Custer, the commander of the Army’s Intelligence Center for Excellence as a “tectonic change in military operations” (Davis 2010, 8).

In this, it becomes apparent that culture has actually been added as an additional weapon in what could be seen as the arsenal of war tactics. In fact, centers such as the Culture Center within the US Army Training and Doctrine Command Center (TRADOC), and the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning were established in 2005 in order to provide deployed personnel in both Afghanistan and Iraq with proper cultural understanding. In the forefront of such organizations was TRADOC which provided troops with Smart Cards to simplify interaction with the populations of said countries. According to Davis, the Cultural Smart Cards “provide basic information

that US servicemen and women who know nothing about the Middle East would find useful, such as the five pillars of Islam, clothing, and gestures” (Davis 2010, 9-10).

2.8 Torture in Afghanistan and Iraq

The negative aspect of the cultural education that was perceived to have been provided to servicemen came with the use of women as a weapon to humiliate Afghani and Iraqi men. Perhaps the most glaring example of this is the Abu Ghraib prison, although that does not in any way disregard the atrocities of Guantanamo Bay, which is considered one of the most notorious prisons in the world, and the atrocities that prisoners were subjected to. These included vicious, deliberate, and unjustifiable criminal abuses which included dousing naked prisoners with cold water; beating them, threatening them with rape; and leashing them to name a few, all of which are actions that are humiliating and considered against Islamic law.

Concurrently, other alarming intelligence materialized from diverse sources concerning the US Army conducting cross-examinations of male Muslim captives while using sexual exploitation and gender stereotyping and Islamic taboos as part of an effort to disgrace and demean them. In those cases, women U.S. military personnel were intentionally used. With various reports showing that certain female army members testified to being ordered to degrade prisoners by using sexually humiliating terms in Arabic, forcing prisoners into cross-sex contact, touching prisoners with clothes drenched in menstrual blood, and dressing them in women’s underwear. These are glaring examples of how the cultural realities and the Islamic faith were used as a weapon through woman soldiers.

In fact, when it came to the issue of prison torture, in Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay or any of the other camps that doubled as prisons or interrogation sites, debates on the topic of women in the armed forces were at the forefront of scholarly and policy writings. According to Oliver, the emergence of photographs that proved the deep involvement of women in the torturous and humiliating acts of Abu Ghraib for example, was in itself a point that “rekindled debated over both whether women should be in the military and gender equality” (Oliver 2008, 2). For some scholars, feminism rose as a culprit that could be blamed for what the women had done, and for others this was just an outcome of a marginalized male-military in which women conduct atrocious acts either to respect and obey orders of higher ranking personnel, or to blend in with the rest of the community.

It became clear here, that while some scholars focused and talked about the opportunities that Islamic Culture provided in helping women further their position within the army, other scholars were clearly pointing out the way that this same culture was used against the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. For many, a glaring example of Islamic culture being used as a weapon against the people remained the Abu Ghraib prison and the atrocities that were undertaken within its premises. Davis specifically points out the "cultural relevance" of explicit means of torture and degradation that were performed on Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib (Davis 2010, 11). Over and over, various news outlets and scholarly works revisited the fact that out of 7 army personnel that were put on trial for the Abu Ghraib violations 3 were women, and continued to shed a spotlight on Colonel Janis Karpimski, the commanding General of the prison.

One point however, was agreed upon, and that was the role of gender in this whole mayhem. Regardless of where opinions stood, there was no escaping the role of women that was brought in due to the visibility of Private First Class Lynndie England, Specialist Sabrina Harman, and Specialist Megan Ambuhl, in the photographs that emerged. Some of the most disseminated pictures from the recorded atrocities of Abu Ghraib detainee suffering and humiliation involved England and Harman posing as dominatrix and brutalizing undressed men. Oliver maintains that journalists thought that women were utilized as “lethal weapons” to humiliate and degrade men in a “fundamentalist Muslim culture”, where the abuse went beyond sexual and bodily harm to reach a pinnacle where religious and cultural beliefs were breached (Oliver 2008, 3).

Building on that, reporter Maureen Dowd of the New York Times, emphasizes the relevance of gender in the practices of the Bush Administration during the GWOT in her article *Torture Chicks Gone Wild*. She draws particular attention to the different speeches of President Bush, in which he asserts his respect of Islam and reassures the people that the US is not fighting a religious war, and then continues to put a spotlight on the “toxic combination of sex and religion” that was used in Guantánamo Bay, where the interrogation techniques with Muslim males are conducted after hours by women who touch, and parade around in bras and thongs, and who are mistaken to be prostitutes by the detainees (Dowd 2005).

2.9 How Segregation Served Integration

So that now, away from the politics of the WOT, feminists and scholars alike noticed a phenomenon which saw women in the US army coming to the forefront as active and crucial members in this war. In fact, Archer maintains that the wars being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq have changed the way the US military interacts with the enemy in

that women have become what she calls the “tip of the spear” (Archer 2013, 360). This has a lot of significance, since it shows that women have become quite crucial to the army, in performing many duties, especially that before 2001 women rarely engaged in combat. While they remain under the label of an attaché, women in Iraq and Afghanistan have performed duties that start with nursing to go on and encompass duties that include but are not limited to patrolling streets, handling explosives and driving military vehicles in dangerous area which are considered combat zones.

While some might look at this increase in the participation of women in the US Army as a step forward towards an all gender inclusive national army which promotes gender equality, others consider aspects that are specific to the WOT in Afghanistan and Iraq with Oliver calling this a “myth of gender equality” (Oliver 2008, 1). Those maintain that this increase in participation could be due to a number of other factors. For those, these factors all fall under a common denominator, which is Islam; and consequently the Islamic culture relevant to both nations.

For Mackenzie, the combat exclusion policy is greatly undermined by the tasks that women in Afghanistan and Iraq are undertaking. She particularly cites, the Lioness teams that were installed alongside male combat units in Iraq since 2003, with the duty of searching for weapons and explosives, and the “female engagement teams” who “conducted over 70 short-term search-and-engagement missions in Afghanistan” in 2009 (MacKenzie, *Let Women Fight: Ending the U.S. Military's Female Combat Ban* 2012, 34). While those teams were officially, in line with the combat ban, not allowed to contribute to “foot patrol”, they still were in a high risk environment and were receiving salaries similar to those of combat units that were known as “hostile fire” or “imminent

danger" pay, which is in itself a move that in a way acknowledges that they were facing risks (MacKenzie, *Let Women Fight: Ending the U.S. Military's Female Combat Ban* 2012, 34).

Finally, it is such issues that show interrelatedness between the cultural nature of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the increase in the participation of women in the US Armed Forces that are the driving force of this study. While understanding the factors that contributed to the increase in the number of women in the army is helpful, it is a deeper look into policies and attitudes that this study attempts.

Chapter Three: US Military Women and the GWOT

3.1 Women in the US Armed Forces

“We were pretty much told that they were nobodies, that they were just enemy combatants. I think that giving them the distinction of soldier would have changed our attitudes toward them. A lot was based on racism, really. We called them Hajis, and that psychology was really important.”

The Road to Abu Ghraib, Human Rights Watch, 2004

Feminist academics and theorists have constantly reasoned that conventional thought on the way that politics should be conducted falls within a gendered perspective where women find themselves excluded, not allowed to voice their opinions or let alone even participate.

The character of a fighter is noticeably one that disturbs conventional views and notions of what a woman is perceived to be. The “womanly” role of a female is not one that accepts for her to run around in a warrior like persona that sees her wielding guns and rifles, fighting, and killing alongside men in combat zones. In fact, according to Sjoberg, the very presence of a woman on a battlefield is in itself an issue that contradicts with the just warrior image that a male usually has in his mind as he fights for his country in order to protect women and children from that which is evil (Sjoberg 2010, 55).

Indeed, according to King, “in modern western culture, men have been conceived as cognitively superior...while women have been represented as emotional, sensitive, and caring” (King 2013, 20). While such views continue to persist in modern times, beyond the understanding of many scholars and academics, ancient and modern history cite many women who were heroic, courageous, and notorious for their tremendous feats on the battlefield. One only needs to revisit one’s memory to recall the achievements of Amazon women, Jeanne d’Arc, Aisha Prophet Muhammad’s wife, Saxon women, and Viking

women, all of whom at one-point commanded or participated in great wars and in combat positions.

Why would women in a country as modern and as powerful as the US face obstacles of entry and integration within the lines of its armed forces, when women have proven throughout history that their strengths and contributions in all aspects of life, even in battle, is a hefty one that can not be dismissed? In fact, why would gender integration altogether in the armed forces in the US face so many impediments and not come as an inescapable result of the onward march of women's rights, gender equality, and feminism?

Most importantly and relevant to this work, why would women be relegated to a point where they are used as one would use a gun or a bomb, to fight what is perceived as the enemy, and to hit the other where it hurts the most, going beyond traditional warfare and situating women at a crossroad where they become just a means that is used to meet an end.

3.2 A Brief History of Women in the US Armed Forces

During World War One (WWI), a small number of women participated in the Armed Forces as secondary support, performing menial jobs such as volunteering in aiding the wounded in hospitals or transferring supplies. Women in the US were primarily found within the armed forces in the capacity of nurses. This practice went as far back as 1854 under the leadership of Florence Nightingale, when it was requested of her to assemble a unit of civilian women who could cater to the needs of the wounded in the Crimean War. In 1902, during the Spanish-American War, the Army Nurse Corps was established, followed by its counterpart the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. It was not until WWI ended that military ranks were officially bestowed on nurses.

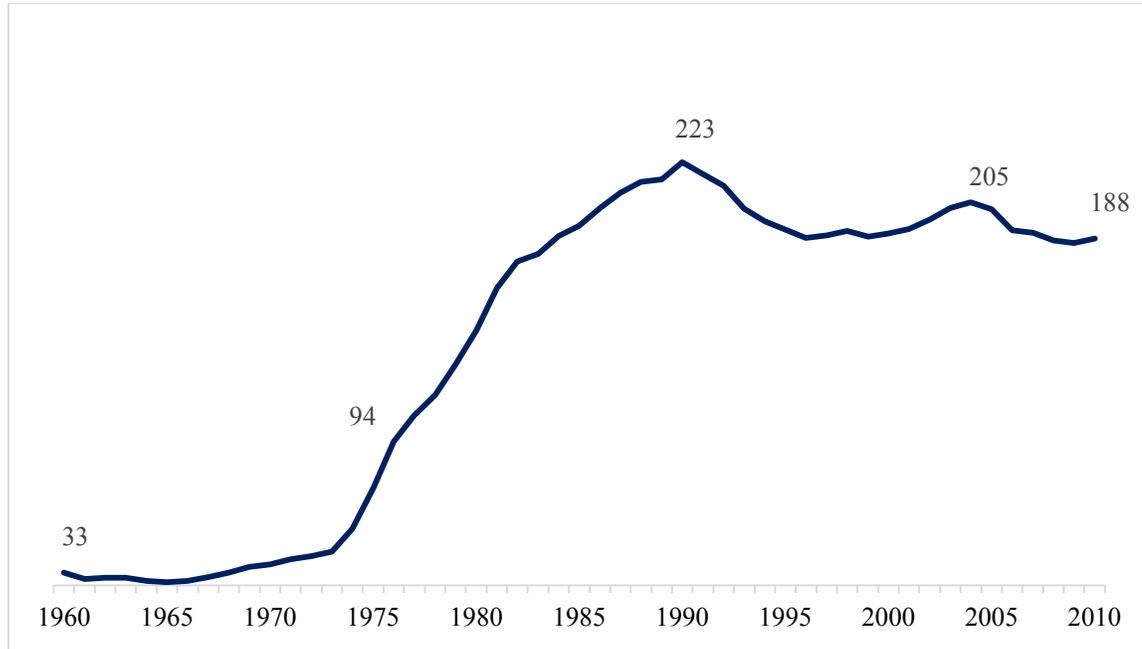
With the advent of World War Two (WWII), army nurses were institutionalized, and a distinction was made between them and other women auxiliary units that had started to materialize. It was not until 1942, during WWII, that Congress passed a law for the establishment of a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), a bill that did not go through until after the attacks of Pearl Harbor and just in order to fill any gaps that may rise during the war. A year later in 1943, the WAAC became the Women's Army Corps (WAC), a move also viewed by many as a short term introduction of women to the armed forces due to war needs. It was at this time that units such as WAAC, which was later revamped as WAC, and Women in the Air Force (WAF), were established and viewed as an essential need of the US Armed Forces as it faced war. The essential need here is clearly highlighted in the way the Navy named its auxiliary forces as WAVES, which stands for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.

Those developments were followed by a Defense Advisory Commission on Women in the Services (DACWS) that was appointed in 1951 with the aim of offering guidance and commendations on issues and procedures linked to the conscription, retention, and integration of women in the armed forces.

Even with such moves taken by the US governments, scholars such as Goldman foresaw that it would be unlikely for women to be trained in combative positions citing that there was “a slight institutional need for that” (Goldman 1973, 111), a point that is important to raise as it clearly highlights the fact that women are only brought to the forefront when a need arose. In her article titled Women in the Military, Segal further solidifies Goldman's argument by mentioning that even though during WWII women proved their competencies in almost all occupations, including ones as airplane mechanics, parachute riggers, gunnery instructors, air traffic controllers, and naval air

navigators, this was only due to the pressures of wartime, and that the end of the war saw a rapid reappearance of previous limitations on the positions that women could fill (Segal 1978, 103).

Chart 1: Timeline of Female Personnel in the US Armed Forces (in Thousands)



Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States (United States Census Bureau 2012)*

After the end of the Korean War in the 1950s, the role of women in the armed forces was being questioned, as the need for women was no longer a vital one. This however was reconsidered once the talks about a switch to an all volunteer force was put into consideration in the 1960s. It was at this point that the necessity of women became an inescapable fact that could not be ignored. According to Shadrock, women appeared to be more willing than men to handle duties of a more clerical nature and to find value in them at times of peace. It was those women who were willing to enlist in the volunteer forces that helped the all-volunteer forces to survive (Shadrock 2006, 31).

Table 2: A Timeline of Women in the US Armed Forces

Year	Period	Achievement
1775–1783	Revolutionary War	Women follow their husbands to war, serving in camps as laundresses, cooks, and nurses, with permission from commanding officers. Some become spies, such as “Agent 355”.
1782–1783		Deborah Sampson serves 17 months in the army masquerading as a man. Her sex is revealed when injured and she is honorably dismissed.
1812	War of 1812	Mary Marshall and Mary Allen, serve as nurses for several months aboard the USS United States at the request of Commodore Stephen Decatur.
1846–1848	Mexican War	Elizabeth Newcom enrolls in the Missouri Volunteer Infantry as Bill Newcom and treks 600 miles to winter campground in Colorado. She is exposed and dismissed.
1861–1865	Civil War	Women serve in hospitals as well as nurses and cooks in both Union and Confederate battleground. Dr. Mary Walker becomes the only woman to accept the Medal of Honor.
1898	Spanish-American War	1,500 women serve as nurses in Army hospitals. Some disguise themselves as men to join the forces.
1901		Congress founds Army Nurse Corps.
1908		Congress creates Navy Nurse Corps.
1917–1918	World War I	33,000 women act as nurses and support staff officially in the military and more than 400 nurses die in the line of duty.
1941–1945	World War II	400,000 women serve at home and abroad as mechanics, ambulance drivers, pilots, administrators, nurses, and in other non-combat roles. 88 women are held as prisoners of war.
1948		Congress passes the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act granting women permanent status in the military subject to military authority and regulations and entitled to veteran’s benefits.
1950–1953	Korean War	50,000 women serve at home and abroad. 500 Army nurses serve in combat zones and many Navy nurses serve on hospital ships.
1962–1972	Vietnam War	7,000+ women serve as volunteer nurses in all divisions of the military.
1976		The first women are enrolled in the service academies to be trained in military science.
1978		Women in the Navy and Marines are permitted to serve on non-combat ships as technicians, nurses, and officers.
1991–1992	Persian Gulf War	41,000+ women are deployed to the combat zone. 2 are imprisoned.
1991		Congress authorizes women to fly in combat missions.
1993		Congress authorizes women to serve on combat ships.
1998		For the first time, women fighter pilots fly combat missions off aircraft carrier in Operation Desert Fox, Iraq.
2000		Captain Kathleen McGrath becomes the first woman to command a U.S. Navy warship. The vessel is assigned to the Persian Gulf.

Source: *Time Line: Women in the U.S. Military (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation 2008)*

3.3 Beyond the 1970s

In 1973, the US military put an end to military conscription and the US army became an all-volunteer entity. In 1976, the first group of women were admitted to the Service Academy and with that the active participation of women within the forces went beyond that of nursing the wounded, to stop short of participation within combat zones. In fact, by 1979, the US rose as the number one country worldwide in the utilization of women in the armed forces not only in the total number of women serving but also in the percentage of women as a proportion of the total force (Shadrock 2006, 34).

It was during the 1980s that this new all-volunteer force, that was now also gender inclusive, tested in Grenada and Panama. In 1983, President Reagan ordered US Armed Forces to invade Grenada in Operation Urgent Fury, to counter the takeover of the Caribbean Island by leftists. More than 200 female personnel joined the invasion as part of the military. While they did not actively participate in ground combat, they still covered major duties working aboard ships within coast guard patrol units, flying as pilots within the air force, and serving as engineers. This was however, the first instance where the combat exclusion policies were challenging to maintain, especially under the environment of modern warfare and technological advances where women in the Air Force for example were trained in launching nuclear warheads but were at the same time not permitted to operate in air-to-air combat (History and Collections n.d.).

In 1989, women had a second chance to demonstrate their capabilities through Operation Just Cause in Panama. Here as well Shadrock mentions the shift in the nature of army procedures with the distortion of boundaries that clearly separated between what could be considered combat and what was combat support, with 770 women performing

support roles within this combat setting (Shadrock 2006, 46-47). This was the largest deployment of army troops since the Vietnam War, and here women found themselves skirting gun and rifle shots and firing back as they operated in a multitude of combat support positions, worked as helicopter pilots, commanded assault teams, and served “under heavy enemy fire in the air and on the ground” (History and Collections n.d.).

Soon after that, the conflict in the Persian Gulf began, and in the early months of 1991, Operation Desert Storm was announced by President George Bush. According to Nordheimer, it was during this war that the US population was able to witness firsthand, through televised broadcasts, the increased duties that women were partaking in, regardless of the combat exclusion policies that were in place and restricted women from combat roles (Nordheimer 1991). Over 40,000 women served in the Persian Gulf region during Operation Desert Storm, 13 were killed and 2 were taken as prisoners of war, and once again military women served alongside men across the spectrum of military duties with no clearly delineated frontlines and found themselves often caught in the line of fire (History and Collections n.d.).

A little over a decade later, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on the 11th of September 2001 (9/11), set the stage for the announcement of the GWOT by George W. Bush and his administration. According to data collected from official sources, female military personnel participation in the WOT was significant to the war. As is clear in Chart 2, operations OEF and OIF in 2001 and 2003 respectively, saw a peak in the number of women that enlisted in the military. The significance of this is further highlighted by Chart 3 which demonstrates that the increase in participation that is clear in 2003 was also at its highest as a percentage of the total number of personnel in the

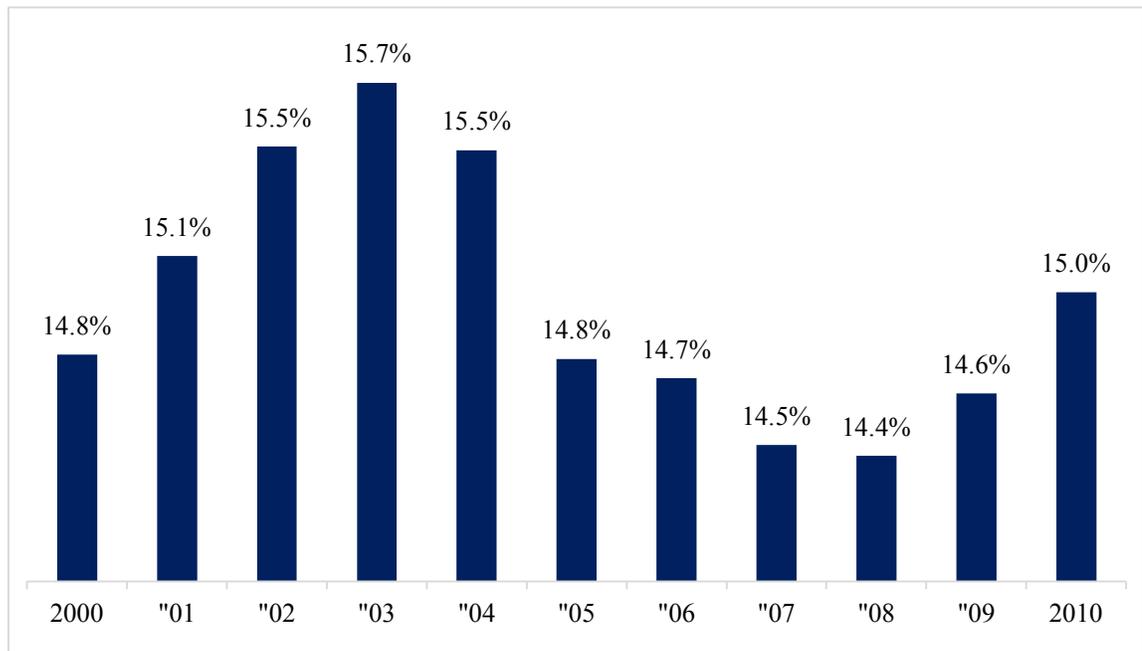
DOD. So not only did women personnel increase in number, but the women's forces also increased in proportion as a percentage of the whole armed forces.

Chart 2: Female Personnel at the US DOD (in Thousands)



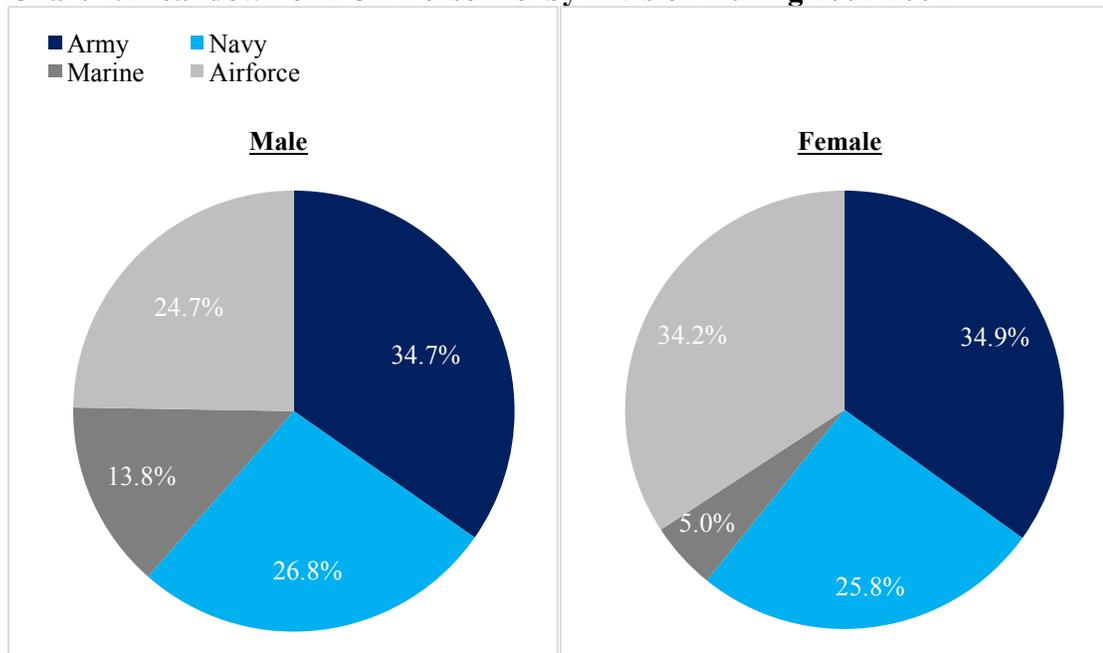
Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States (United States Census Bureau 2012)

Chart 3: Female Personnel at the US DOD (% of Total)



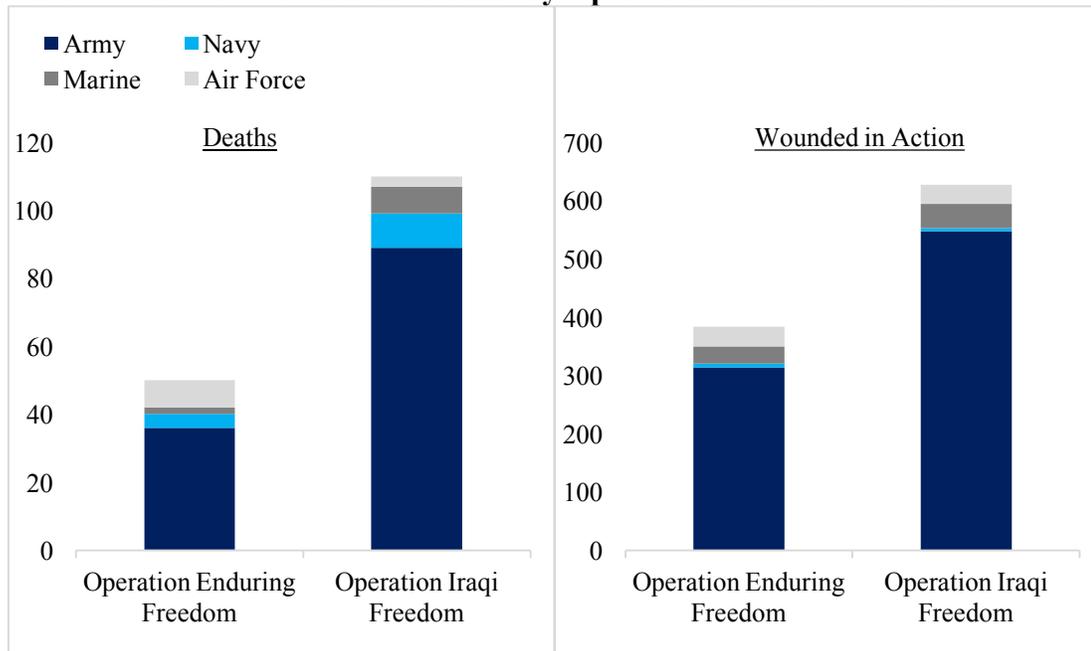
Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States (United States Census Bureau 2012)

Chart 4: Breakdown of DOD Personnel by Division During 2002-2004



Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States (United States Census Bureau 2012)*

Chart 5: Global War on Terror Military Operations: Female Casualties



Source: *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics (DeBruyne 2017)*

3.4 Women as a Weapon of Torture in US Interrogation Facilities

During the GWOT, a clear demarcation of what was considered to be combat zones was not possible, and military women found themselves participating within all aspects of the war alongside their male counterparts. What set this conflict aside however, was the new roles that women partook in and which were untraditional and banked on an understanding of the uniqueness of Afghanistan and Iraq when it came to the social, cultural, and religious realities of both countries. It is here in particular that women were utilized as a war tactic which strategized gender as a new age Western weapon of war that abused and tortured the other.

For many, there was a historical trail and linkage between the way torture was executed at Abu Ghraib and at other camps where the US has been militarily involved, such as in Vietnam and the Philippines to name some. The assaults in Iraq however, which included hooding, hanging, sleep deprivation, the use of dogs, and many sexually motivated onslaughts and techniques, were ones that came straight from practices that were heavily used and relied on in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay. In fact, Danchev mentions a key person in the torture circle that was created, which is General Geoffrey Miller of Guantanamo Bay, who was sent in September 2003, by Donald Rumsfeld to “Gitmo-ize” the US prisons in Iraq (Danchev 2006, 270). As the officer in charge of the cross-examination of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Miller utilized dogs to arouse distress and panic in captives even beyond periods of questioning, and insisted on constantly humiliating and torturing prisoners. With his arrival at Abu Ghraib, so did his prison culture which was clearly stated to Military Intelligence members when he said, “You have to treat the prisoners like dogs...if they believe they're different than dogs, you have lost control” (Danchev 2006, 270).

Throw into the above combination of degradation and fear, the additional element of using a camera, and you have a potent mix of torture and humiliation, along with a very clear message that is being conveyed to the detainees. One showing them that not only will you be disgraced and dishonored, the shame you amass will also be dispersed, reaching not only people in the country who are from your same ethnic, religious, and cultural cloth, but going beyond that to be reproduced throughout the world. In fact, Tétreault sees that the “pornography of Abu Ghraib constitutes a field report on the production and reproduction of US global dominance” (Tétreault 2006, 35).

Zurbriggen builds on the above and says that countless acts of torture and cross-examination utilized at Abu Ghraib may have been devised explicitly with the “religious beliefs and prohibitions of the Muslim prisoners in mind” (Zurbriggen 2008, 306).

In this state of affairs that came to be viewed as the norm of how the Americans chose to conduct themselves in Afghanistan and Iraq, US military women became central to the image that was chosen to be conveyed. According to Oliver, gender had a role in the abuse, so that “women become the means to compound not only sexual and physical abuse but also abuse of religious and cultural beliefs” (Oliver 2008, 3).

Women who torture the men, became symbolic of the US as a colonizing state that aims to conquer what could be viewed as an Orientalist opponent, by showing them that not only is the US superior over those states, but that even its women who torture and abuse the men, are superior over the Oriental male in his patriarchal environment. Oliver summarizes the whole debacle in one brief sentence when she says, “Menstrual blood has become a top-secret interrogation technique. As bizarre as this seems, it should be no surprise, since within patriarchal cultures of all varieties menstrual blood represents the abject and unclean” (Oliver 2008, 4), and that was exactly what the aim of the US was.

And so, the topic of female military personnel as weapons becomes even more explicit in intelligence reports on Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Where the women and their sexuality are regarded as a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the US Armed Forces, perhaps the most potent of all weapons used in the GWOT. A weapon that is considered to be lecherous and tainted by Islamic culture. A weapon that is strategically used to humiliate, torture and degrade Muslim men into providing intel on supposed terrorists and perpetrators of September 11 attacks.

The women become a centerpiece of US power and exploitation while the male prison guards and interrogators who perpetrated the culture of torture and abuse are forgotten, sidelined because they do not serve the same way that the women do, as an “the iconic representation of transgressive women”, a subtle “embodiment of a new hierarchy of power, in which women were automatically placed in superior position to men who in other circumstances would have been the expected superiors” (Khalili 2011, 1482).

In the chambers of horrors that were the prisons of the GWOT, sexual politics was the name of the game. Men are feminized, their manhood is abused, their bodies are controlled, they are forced into sexual acts unwillingly, they are made to wear women’s underwear, they are sodomized, they are beaten, and they are manipulated. All these actions are conducted by women who according to Tétreault assault their spirituality, taint them and thus they are unable to pray, pulling them into a living of sin and contamination, and evoking religious dread in them (Tétreault 2006, 41), and women who according to Khalili, are the “white interrogator in the service of some nationalist understanding of 'national security' and who are “part of the peculiar gendering of counterinsurgency practices” (Khalili 2011, 1483).

3.4.1 Who is Responsible?

When discussing the issue of torture within the frame of the GWOT, many different opinions and opposing views came into the central debate concerning the actions that were being perpetrated against detainees in the various facilities which were managed by US Armed Forces in Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Historically, the US has a long list of documented cases of detainee abuse in all the wars that it has participated in. The difference in the GWOT was that the abuse and torture was embraced by the Bush Administration, and in most cases it was compared to various torture techniques that detainees could have faced if they were to have been held captive by Saddam Hussein on one hand, or terrorist jihadists on the other. Here torture in as much as it was a breach of the Geneva Conventions, along with other human rights agreements, was still marketed as a lesser evil in comparison to what may have been done to war prisoners and terrorist suspects by Iraqis or Al-Qaeda members.

According to Hooks and Mosher, the implementation of violence by the US was on the foundation of productivity and results and not human rights conventions (Hooks and Mosher 2005, 1628). The value of information and intel ranked way above any conventions, treaties, or policies.

When the abuse at Abu Ghraib was uncovered, a series of investigation commissions were ordered by the US Government. Those were the Fay Jones Commission, the Schlesinger Commission, and the Taguba Commission. The Taguba report maintained that while the abuse was in violation of detainee engagement instructions and the Geneva Conventions, it was neither unique nor accomplished in the absence of governmental approval, further mentioning that understaffing, indistinct authority networks, and inadequate training all contributed to a setting where violations

were a possibility (Howard and Prividera 2010, 306). Concurrently, both the Fay Jones and the Schlesinger reports downplayed the seriousness of the issue at hand going further to implicate low ranking members of the military, and exonerating high ranking personnel from any implications in the abuse. According to the reports, poor training of military personnel was to be blamed for the debacle at hand.

For Hooks and Mosher, blaming the low rank members of the armed forces lacks credibility, in particular when evidence is available and clearly shows officials from the military and Pentagon discussing “Arabs' vulnerability to sexual humiliation prior to the invasion of Iraq” (Hooks and Mosher 2005, 1633). In addition, the exploitation of the female military personnel and the fact that they were put at the center of the whole issue was also considered to be engineered and controlled by male military leaders (Howard and Prividera 2010, 298).

Similarly, the American non-governmental organization, Human Rights First, published a report in February 2016, in which it talked about the interrogation techniques that were used on prisoners in the aftermath of 9/11. According to the organization, some of the many techniques that were applied in detention centers came straight from the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program, which was conducted between 2002 and 2009, with the full approval of and authorization from officials in the Bush Administration's White House and the Department of Justice (Human Rights First 2016). Of those techniques, the most relevant to this study are:

- **Nudity:** Which focuses on cultural and religious taboos in sexual humiliation. Particularly by leaving detainees naked while being interrogated, by forcing them to lay on top of each other naked and to masturbate while being tied down like dogs and

by using military women to perform lewd provocative actions as part of the interrogation.

- **Threats:** Prisoners were threatened with additional bodily abuse, death threats, or sexual exploitation of their kin.

An example of the above, is the case of Mohammed Al-Qahtani who was thought to be the 20th hijacker in 9/11, and who was held at Guantanamo Bay. According to Woodward, military reports show that:

“He was threatened with a military working dog, forced to wear a woman's bra, and was told that his mother and sister were whores. With a leash tied to his chains, he was led around the room and forced to perform a series of dog tricks" (Woodward 2009).

In 2008, Susan Crawford a retired judge and a Pentagon inspector clearly stated that the practices against Al-Qahtani can be classified as torture and continued to say that the “harsh techniques used against him were approved by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld” going on to weigh in, “a lot of this happened on his watch" (Woodward 2009).

3.5 What does the GWOT Tell us about Gender as a War Strategy?

With the beginning of the wars, it did not take too long for the armed forces to realize that they were fighting half-blind in both Afghanistan and Iraq. In both societies, and due to the religious and cultural realities, only female military personnel would be able to approach and establish contact with women in both communities. In fact, it was those local women that could provide intel about the men in their families, tribes, and localities.

According to Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, when discussing the topic of women and war, he clearly states that in Afghanistan and Iraq, women “have given us a competitive advantage”, citing that when Iraqi women were being used by insurgents to destabilize security, it was only through Marine women that the threats could be

countered, and it was only through their engagement with local women that the US Armed Forces could “see things through the eyes” of the locals and “gain valuable insight that would not have been gained otherwise” (Mullen 2010).

However, when it comes to the women, who were much needed in both wars, it is imperative to draw attention to the treatment that was afforded to them by male members of the different units they served with. Here, perhaps it is best to start by mentioning former service and intelligence specialist, linguist Kayla Williams who is highly critical of the US military and who claims that the armed forces do not give women the status they deserve within the forces, even though they utilize them and send them off to combat but still classify them as one of three things; a bitch, a ho, or a dyke (King 2013, 23).

With such practices still existing, it is easy to note that these women that were so greatly needed were still not fully accepted by their male counterparts. Moreover, such issues greatly clash with the strong reliance on women that was viewed in the GWOT. One could almost say that with the newness of the war, in that it dealt with insurgents and groups, where a clear demarcation of traditional warfare is not available, and the war is in a way “played by ear”, the US Armed Forces were able to find a quick fix to their dilemmas by dreaming up a new weapon of warfare, which came in the shape of women that could be utilized as a means to achieve an end result. Once the weak points of the Other was pinpointed, and understood, it became easy to realize that military women are an asset, and through them a certain victory could be established.

As a matter of fact, an example of how they were utilized lies in the debacles of Abu Ghraib, in which women were involved but were not the sole perpetrators of torturous acts. The fact remained that when the whole issue came out into the open and photographic evidence was leaked, a woman became the focal point of popular outrage. Tétreault says

that in the GWOT prison system, it was Private Lynndie England that took the brunt of the issue and became the “logo of the scandal”, while General Janis Karpinski was the “official scapegoat” (Tétreault 2006, 41).

Furthermore, when it came to laying blame, England took the brunt of the whole incident by being at the center of media attention. She was convicted of one count of conspiracy, four counts of maltreating detainees, and one count of committing an indecent act, as well as sentenced to 3 years of confinement and dishonorably discharged, while others were investigated and only reprimanded. In addition to that, the very military that she was serving, along with her male peers, also objectified her by “using her for her female body...England was a prop, strategically placed to maximize the degradation of the inmates. In the process of oppressing others, England was simultaneously objectified” (Howard and Prividera 2010, 297). Add in to the equation the fact that neither England, nor other members were provided with adequate preparation, guidance, and training in properly dealing with detainees and you have a clear vision of where the blame is to be laid.

Building on that, Oliver states that the women in Afghanistan and Iraq were needed not only as “offensive weapons of war” but also as “defensive weapons of war that can protect men. Even bloodthirsty fighters will be befuddled by women’s presence” (Oliver 2008, 12). So all in all, it was a win win situation to greatly rely on women in the GWOT. They were perceived as a strange novelty by the occupied, they were used to break a cultural barrier that stood between male military members and local females, and finally they were made to perform sexually inclined torturous acts that humiliated the Other, objectified them and degraded both parties. Within the whole time, the US was able to strategize gender and make it a normal military practice.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

“I know what the law says, and I know what it requires. But I’d be hard pressed to say that any woman who serves in Afghanistan today or who’s served in Iraq over the last few years did so without facing the same risks to live and limb that their male counterparts faced.”

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the US. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010

4.1 Conclusion

There are a multitude of explanations for why females have been barred from partaking in combat positions during wars. One of the most used reasoning is based on gender and femininity, which is the fear of military women being taken as prisoners of war and subsequently getting abused, tortured, and raped. Another cited reason is that of physical attributes and the perception that men are stronger and more capable of enduring the hardships of war than women are. Yet another reason given, is that the military is a masculine field and thus it would be hard for women to fully and properly integrate within the units without facing internal conflicts and at times even bullying and violence. While at a certain time the above may have been true, times have changed and with them technological advancements of machinery and equipment have substituted for the physical strength and stamina that was once needed for many specialties within the armed forces.

This new era of warfare that is characterized by advanced technologies is also one that is coupled with a change in the face of the military in a way that has seen it adopting a more feminine one as times pass. In the US in particular, the use of women across history has been propelled by the need for personnel within the armed forces out of a necessity. According to Shadrock the state of affairs was still the same during the GWOT,

“The army is currently fighting a war in Afghanistan and Iraq and has worldwide commitments in no less than one hundred and twenty nations is a glimmering indicator of the pressures on the force. The current conditions and strategic environment are ripe for

continued change and expansion of women's roles; there is a great need for volunteers to serve the nation" (Shadrock 2006, 17).

The need that Shadrock mentions is one that was faced during times of war and conflicts in the US, and that was further intensified with the cancellation of military conscription or the drafting system in the US in 1973. The creation of an all-volunteer force however, paved the way for new and more varied career prospects for women within the armed forces. Women were now considered regular personnel within the army and were awarded the same standing as military men. Moreover, a need for their contributions was pertinent as the number of "male enlistees was falling short of the goals set by the military", and "those who were attempting to enlist were coming increasingly from what the military considers low quality personnel", so that the military turned toward women and began to accept volunteers who were more adept (Segal 1978, 103).

Although the above reasoning from Segal dated back to 1978, the same realities stood true in the GWOT, so that where male military personnel with the right qualifications were not found, it was an easy choice to turn to the females that were enlisting and willing to take on deployment jobs and fight for their country. Many of those women found themselves engaging with the "enemy" and facing grave danger in what was considered the combat zone that is Afghanistan and Iraq.

This engagement in the GWOT was similar to any other war conflict in the fact that policies needed to be bent and leniency was key in order to meet military needs, and women were essential to fill out various positions. What stood out here in particular, was that military women also served as a weapon of war that goes beyond traditional warfare, and technological warfare, and fights the enemy or the "other" with an arsenal of cultural and religious weapons that the US armed itself with and used women to implement.

And in the aftershock of the GWOT, with over ten years of engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the distorted lines between combat and noncombat roles, women's status in the US Armed Forces once again experienced progress within the field. This time, the combat ban had been abolished, and with that came an automatic acknowledgement of what they are capable of.

Now, in 2017, the US Armed Forces encompasses men and women who are afforded equal footing in an equal opportunity setting that allows members of the military to break barriers in an area and on a platform that allows for success to take place based on an individual's abilities, expertise, and education, regardless of gender. Women have pushed through many impediments, and achieved a place for them in the military that ultimately lead to the opening of combat zones to them, so that they now perform to their fullest capabilities and capacities while knowing that credit will be given wherever and whenever credit is due. Now women are visible and accepting accolades when they deserve them.

4.2 Limitations

Although this thesis was carefully researched and prepared in order to reach an answer to the research question and hypothesis, the scope of the content was still restricted and with shortcomings due to some unavoidable factors and limitations.

First of all, although the number of literature on the history of women and their participation within the US Military is ample, there seems to be a very limited amount of literature that specifically examines and compares between times of war and peace. Similarly, it was challenging to locate ample scholarly research that gave an insight into the status of Army women on active duty in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Regarding the usage of secondary data, already compiled by and readily available from other sources, limitations due to the lack of familiarity with the data collection methods as well as the methodologies used arose. Moreover, access to full datasets from governmental sources, such as the Defense Manpower Data Center which is the main data hub that serves under the Office of the Secretary of Defense, was hindered and inaccessible, and thus greatly impacted the initial thesis plan which included a full data section that would detail the positions and experiences of US military women through numbers and infographics. To substitute for this, data from inaccessible sources were at some points compiled from previous scholarly articles, which could potentially include data errors that the researcher may not be aware of.

On a different note, the paper is grounded within a feminist research methodology. This field of research aims to seek change and diminish inequality among the sexes through producing scholastic work that brings to the forefront the voices and experiences of women. In this approach, the usage of a quantitative method might work as a drawback due to the incompatibility between the method and feminism - in terms of suppressing the voice of women and the usage of data that is produced in a patriarchal society, to name a few issues - that is continuously pointed out by feminist researchers. When focusing on limitations that are specific to Transnational Feminism as the particular methodology used in this piece, it is imperative to highlight that by concentrating on the cultural and religious aspects of the war within the frame of East and West, the paper touches on but does not fully delve into and examine other factors relevant to the participation of women within the armed forces, as well as those related to the timing of the war and what repercussions it may have had on the level of participation of women.

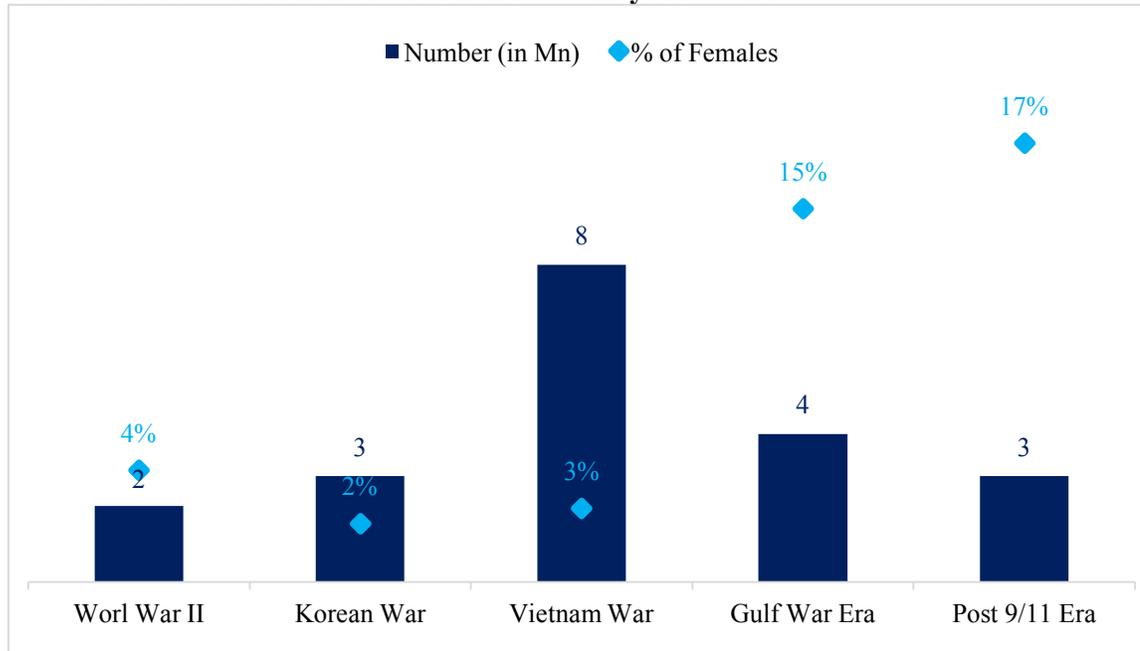
4.3 Final Thoughts

Women are fundamental and vital for the armed forces of our day. Without them it would not be feasible or possible to have the numbers necessary to fulfill the needs of the forces. Women have delivered a worthy personnel base that has aided the all volunteer armed forces of the US in maintaining their volume and hierarchy.

Ancient history carries evidence that communities and societies have in many cases turned to women fighters when war needs required them to. More particularly, the modern history of the US, has proven to many who do not believe that women can be successful in this field that any military feat or war cannot be waged successfully if women were to be excluded. It is such beliefs that have led the US to recently open all combat positions to military women, so that they are not excluded from any sectors within the US Armed Forces today. Exclusion policies have now been abolished, but the underhanded exploitation of those same women needs to come to a halt as well.

Women were heavily relied on in Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, Chart 6 highlights the reality that of the most recent military activities that the US has engaged in, the Post 9/11 Era saw the highest percentage of female veterans. Through various research and data, it is clear to see that the need for the expertise and assistance of military women was genuine, nonetheless their utilization was less than indisputable and of a different motivation. A motivation that saw them as nothing but a means through which the US as a Western force, could humiliate, degrade, and torture the Muslim Other.

Chart 6: Wartime Veterans Across US Military Conflicts



Source: Memorial Day: Honoring America's Wartime Veterans (United States Census Bureau 2013)

In her article, *Military Women: Who they are, what they do, and why it matters*, Lory Manning cites some of the reasons that drive the decisions of women to join the military. According to her, they join for the same purposes that men do, “for the education, the benefits, the job training, the chance to travel, and because military service is a family tradition” (Manning 2004, 7). No where in her article does she state the need to torture, abuse, infiltrate communities, or sit for tea with foreign women to later on provide intel to a commanding officer or general. When women join the military, and find themselves performing menial jobs with the catch of being caught in enemy lines, being captured, losing limbs, or even lives, the reality becomes the antithesis of feminism, gender equality, and equal opportunity. It is this exact side of the coin that this work aims to highlight.

Women deserve a place in the military. In the US in particular and across various occasions of war, they have proven that they are made of sterner stuff. They have quietly

infiltrated the male only turf of the military with astounding accomplishments that would rank them as high as their male counterparts. Therefore, it is imperative to present and showcase the underhandedness of their utilization in the GWOT, in order to rectify their position and provide them with an equal footing when it comes to the many new positions that will be rightfully theirs now that the ban on combat has been lifted.

Within the transnational feminist framework of this paper, the author believes that when US military women are to be celebrated, it should not be a celebration of their role as the secret weapon of war that was used by the West to fight the Other, and deal them low blows that undermine religious beliefs, cultural values, and what is conceived as a patriarchal hierarchy. In this gendered atmosphere, the infamous photograph, from Abu Ghraib, of several naked detainees piled up above each other, with a female smiling soldier bending over them, and a male towering over her also smiling, is symbolism enough. The hierarchy of affairs is clear, the Other women, are at the bottom, followed by the Other men, whom the Colonial women of the West will lord over, and who will be protected by the alpha of the pack. The Colonial, imperial, all mighty Western male.

Within this frame of thought the delineation serves as a depiction of the status quo of what is clearly depicted as the West and the East, with the white Western character and civilization, that is positioned against and considered to be above the Eastern other. Where a thread of positive characteristics such as cultured, sensible, advanced, and developed are used in the rhetoric of the United States to describe itself, in comparison with Afghanistan and Iraq who represent the uncultured, insensible, un-advanced, and underdeveloped East, which will always come second to the superior West and who will always be in need of Western intervention.

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