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Gendering the Cult of the Offensive

LAUREN WILCOX

Theorists of the offense-defense balance frequently note that perceptions of technology, as well as military doctrine, play a role in states' perception of offense dominance or the "cult of the offensive." I argue that gender may constitute the missing link in explaining this misperception and suggest three possible areas of investigation. First, the perceptions and uses of technologies are dependent upon gendered ideologies which encouraged disastrous strategies in the First World War. Second, gender is an integral part of nationalism that promotes offensive policies by defining masculinity in terms of heroic service to the nation. Third, gendered discourses of protection use the language of defense to legitimate offensive policies. By analyzing the roots of perceptions of offense dominance, feminist analysis shows how gender discourses and the production of gender identities are not confined to individuals and the private realm but rather are a pervasive fact of social life on an international scale.

GENDERING OFFENSE-DEFENSE THEORY

Offense-defense theory in international security studies asserts that war is more likely when offensive military strategies and technologies are at a relative advantage over defensive strategies and technologies. The offense-defense balance is, in short, "the relative ease of attack and defense."¹ This insight has led scholars to try to calculate and understand the components of the offense-defense balance at different times throughout history in order to

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¹ Stephen Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-Defense Theory," *Journal of Politics* 63 no. 3 (2001): 741–74.

understand and predict the occurrence of war. According to offense-defense theorists, the variables determining the offense-defense balance include geographical, doctrinal, and societal aspects, but the overall state of military technology is generally considered to be the most important factor.²

Although several scholars have noted the difficulty in determining whether offense or defense has the military advantage and what the correct conceptualization of the offense-defense balance is or should be, most analyses of the offense-defense balance presume that the offensive or defensive bias of the system can be rationally known. These same theorists, however, are equally cognizant that the offense-defense balance is frequently misunderstood, and in fact, offensive capabilities are commonly overestimated. Stephen Van Evera, a prominent scholar of offense-defense theory, notes that perceived offensive dominance is widespread, but real offensive dominance is rare. "Offensive dominance is more often imagined than real, however. Thus the more urgent question is: how can illusions of offense dominance be controlled? Answers are elusive because the roots of these illusions are obscure."³

Van Evera argues that illusions of offensive dominance have caused wars and contends that the initiation of the First World War is one example of when these illusions have been most influential. He explains that "during the decades before the First World War a phenomenon which may be called a 'cult of the offensive' swept through Europe."⁴ These "mythical or mystical arguments [about offensive dominance] obscured the technical domination of the defense" in military strategy and security policy making.⁵ As a result, Van Evera reasons, "the belief in easy conquest eventually pervaded public images of international politics" and "the cult of the offensive was a main-spring driving many of the mechanisms which brought about the First World War."⁶

² See, for example, Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," in *Offense, Defense, and War*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 3–65, 167–214; George Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977); Jack Levy, "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 28 no. 2 (June 1984); Charles Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?" in *Offense, Defense, and War*; Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," in *Offense, Defense, and War*, 69–118; Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense and the Causes of War," *International Security* 22 no. 4 (1998); Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations."

³ Van Evera, "Offense, Defense and the Causes of War," 263.

⁴ Van Evera, "Cult of the Offensive," 69.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 73, 77. The existence of a "cult of the offensive" has recently been challenged in the literature on WWI and the offense-defense balance. Kier Lieber, "The New History of World War I and What it Means for International Relations Theory," *International Security* 32 no. 2 (Fall 2007): 155–91. The impact of Lieber's piece for my argument is discussed below.

This article critiques a missing link in offense-defense theory. Though Van Evera effectively presents the argument that misperceived offensive dominance caused the First World War—noting it is therefore important to learn the “roots of these illusions” that cause states to be preoccupied with offense even in times of defense dominance—offense-defense theory does not offer a convincing explanation as to the source of the perception of offensive dominance. I demonstrate that insights from feminist scholarship point to different ways in which gender may be relevant in constituting the roots of these illusions: the overestimation of offense dominance and the resulting propensity toward war. Specifically, I suggest three pathways in which gender may provide the missing link in explaining the cult of the offensive: the gendered perceptions of technology, gendered nationalism, and definitions of citizenship and honor based on the gendered concept of protection.

Perception in Traditional Accounts of the Offense-Defense Balance

Offense-defense theorists argue that the offense-defense balance changes the probability of war by affecting the severity of the security dilemma.⁷ The security dilemma will be more severe if the balance favors the offense, while the destabilizing effects of anarchy can be lessened substantially if the defense is dominant, assuming offense dominance and defense dominance can be distinguished.⁸ While there is much debate about the precise factors that constitute the offense-defense balance, the most frequently cited predictor of the (actual) offense-defense balance is military technology, which is important insofar as it contributes to making offensive or defense strategies easier.⁹ Theories of the offense-defense balance formulate the nature of this balance differently. For example, Sean Lynn-Jones defines the offense-defense balance as a ratio of investments between offensive and defensive technologies that is necessary to win wars.¹⁰ On the other hand, Charles Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann argue that only advances in mobility are essentially offensive, as is bridge-building equipment.¹¹ Certain offense-defense theorists argue some weapons are inherently offensive or defensive; others argue that the overall state of military technology defines the offense-defense balance. Lynn-Jones, for example, maintains that since relative costs of defensive versus offensive strategies determine the offense-defense balance, individual technologies are not as much an issue as the costs of particular weapons systems that may incorporate both offensive and defensive technologies. Regardless of the

⁷ The security dilemma describes a situation in which means taken by one state to increase security render other states more insecure. Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 169.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 46–50.

⁹ Sean Lynn-Jones, “Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics,” *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (1995): 675–77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 664–65.

¹¹ Kaufman and Glaser, “What is the Offense Defense Balance,” 284–85.

precise measurement of the balance, offense-defense theorists share an assumption that at some point, certain technologies or technological systems are objectively pro-defense or pro-offense. The offensive or defense advantages of other technologies depend upon the era but can, according to offense-defense theorists, be objectively determined.

Offense-defense theorists note, however, that how states perceive (often erroneously) the offense-defense balance influences their behavior outside the actual dominance of offense or defense. In particular, the offense-defense literature suggests states tend to overestimate the ease of conquest; that is, states tend to mistakenly believe offense is dominant. Several theorists have attempted to explain this overestimation by asserting that military and political doctrines can override the existence of defensive predominance in military technologies to result in offensive strategies.¹² For example, Robert Jervis notes that some state leaders believe security is only possible through conquest, no matter what the offense-defense balance.¹³ Ted Hopf has argued that “strategic beliefs” are more important than military capabilities in causing instability in war.¹⁴ These beliefs encompass ideas about the intentions of other states and fears of bandwagoning and domino effects. According to Van Evera, prime predictions of the offense-defense theory include the state’s beliefs about offensive opportunities and conquest. Lynn-Jones goes further to specify that perceptions of the offense-defense balance give the theory its explanatory power.¹⁵ As Van Evera notes, “Real offense dominance is rare in modern times, but the perception of offense dominance is fairly widespread. Therefore, if perceived offense dominance causes war it causes lots of war, and offense-defense theory explains much of international history.”¹⁶ There are, however, few if any accounts of the cause or constitution of perceived offensive dominance in offense-defense theory.

The offense-defense literature stipulates that there must be some form of objective offense-defense balance as there can be no misperception of the offense-defense balance without some notion of an objective balance, no matter what quantifiable or unquantifiable variables make up this balance. However, whatever this objective balance may be is outside the scope of this

¹² Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984); Van Evera, “Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War,” 228; Keir A. Leiber, *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics over Technology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

¹³ Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 21–22. In this case, the second and third parts of my argument (that gender constitutes offensive military politics and the “protection racket”) are more relevant in explaining how gender is constitutive of the offense-defense balance.

¹⁴ Ted Hopf, “Polarity, Military Balance, and War,” *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 2 (June 1991): 475–93.

¹⁵ Lynn-Jones, “Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics,” 681.

¹⁶ Van Evera, “Offense, Defense and the Causes of War,” 263.

piece.¹⁷ My concern is with the puzzle that offense-defense theorists have identified as the contradiction between what offense-defense theory tells us about the actual costs and benefits of war and the widespread perceptions of offense dominance. In this article, I focus on the sources of perception of offense dominance and the conditions underpinning the cult of the offensive that encourage aggressive military strategies. Regardless of how the offense-defense balance itself may be properly calculated, the perception of such balance by military planners and political leaders arguably explains more state behavior than the objective offense-defense balance that is difficult to specify. The remainder of this article argues that gender analysis demonstrates how gender is central to understanding—both generally and specifically—perceived offensive dominance, the cult of the offensive.

Feminist Analyses of Offense-Defense Theory

As discussed in the introduction to this special issue, international relations feminists use gender as a category of analysis to examine questions of framing and possibility in global politics. A feminist analysis of offense-defense theory asks what assumptions about gender (and race, class, nationality, and sexuality) make it possible for belligerents to consistently exaggerate offensive capabilities and therefore engage in counterproductive offensive military strategies. Rather than coming up with an alternative causal explanation of why wars occur (or why a specific war has occurred), I theorize the role of gender to the offense-defense balance as one of constitution. If gender is necessary for establishing certain perceptions of offensive or defensive capabilities, then gender is constitutive of the offense-defense balance.

Constitutive theorizing differs from causal theorizing in a number of ways. As explained by Alex Wendt, constitutive theorizing involves asking the “how possible” and “what” questions rather than the “why” of causal theorizing.¹⁸ Constitutive theorizing recognizes that social entities are

¹⁷ An objective offense-defense balance is problematic from a feminist perspective for a number of reasons. First, it assumes there is a context in which going to war is rational, as in certain windows of opportunity. The main problem is in properly discerning the most and least advantageous times. Feminists have challenged the legitimacy of the realist assumptions that underpin this logic. See, for example, Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 27–66; Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Also, feminist epistemologists have critiqued the assumption of an external reality that exists outside the socially embedded processes of language and knowledge production. Thus, one cannot easily separate objective reality from knowledgeable practices of a given time and place. See, for example, V. Spike Peterson, “Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender and International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21 no. 2 (1992): 183–206; Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prüggl, “Feminism and Constructivism: Worlds Apart or Sharing the Middle Ground?” *International Studies Quarterly* 45 (2001): 111–29. However, the implications of these critiques for the offense-defense debate will not be taken up in this article as the goal is to show the relevance of feminist theory to extant work in security studies.

¹⁸ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, 77–91.

constructed and imbued with characteristics derived from external or internal social structures. Thus, to say that X is constitutive of Y is to argue that Y exists “in virtue of” X. Laura Sjoberg, in the introduction to this special edition, quotes Wendt on constitutive theorizing: “What we seek in asking these questions is insight into what it is that instantiates some phenomenon, not why that phenomenon comes about.”¹⁹ This is a different logic than the assumptions of causal theory that X and Y exist independently and that one precedes the other in time. In constitutive theorizing, there is no way to distinguish an independent and dependent variable, and thus the argument is logical rather than based on specific causal mechanism that can be represented in a covering law. Constitutive theorizing strives to account for the effects of social structures in the instantiation of phenomena. In this article, I use constitutive theorizing to argue that gender, as a social structure, is constitutive of offense-defense balance perceptions in terms of perceptions of technology, nationalism and offensive military doctrine, and the “protection racket.”

This type of analysis is subject to counterfactual tests: in a world in which gendered ideologies were different, perceptions of the offense-defense balance would be different. To understand whether gender is constitutive of the offense-defense balance, it is necessary to understand what influence gender would have and how gender would function to be constitutive. Constitutive gender is not a matter of individual characteristics of men or women but rather a structural feature of social and political life.²⁰ V. Spike Peterson defines gender as performing several related functions. “In one sense, gender is a socially imposed and internalized lens through which individuals perceive and respond to the world. In a second sense, the pervasiveness of gendered meanings shapes concepts, practice and institutions in identifiable gendered ways.”²¹ Gender, therefore, constitutes by serving as a lens for individual identity and perception of the world and by shaping meaning and political practice. Thus, to argue that gender is constitutive of the offense-defense balance is to argue that gender as an idea constitutes the meanings that material factors have for actors as well as the identities of the actors themselves.

Another defining feature of gender as a constitutive factor is that it is dynamic: gender does not just constitute identities and meanings once in a readable and constant manner. Instead, gender identities and meanings are constantly reproduced by processes of identity construction in which gender functions as means of encoding power.²² This encoded power not only distinguishes between values associated with masculinity and values

¹⁹ Alexander Wendt, “On Constitution and Causation in International Relations,” *Review of International Studies* 24 no. 1 (1998): 105.

²⁰ V. Spike Peterson and Jacqui True, “‘New Times’ and New Conversations,” in *The “Man” Question in International Relations*, ed. Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 16.

²¹ Peterson, “Transgressing Boundaries,” 194.

²² Locher and Prüggl, “Feminism and Constructivism,” 123–24.

associated with femininity, it creates a hierarchy among masculinities based on a hegemonic vision of masculine virtue. The concept of hegemonic masculinity describes the dominant version of ideal male characteristics defined in relation to subordinate masculinities associated with race, sex, or class. Gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power; other hierarchical relationships such as class, sexuality, or race become “gendered” in that they are justified by the supposedly natural relationships between men and women. Hegemonic masculinity therefore does not have a fixed definition; rather, it is the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given set of gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore historically contingent and contestable.²³

The remainder of this article contends that there are three ways gender constitutes (mis)perceptions of offense-defense balance. First, I argue that the gendered perceptions of the meaning and uses of military technology may constitute perceived offense dominance. Second, I argue that nationalism is a gendered ideology, and thus gender is a necessary component of belligerent perception theories of offensive power and the desirability of offensive strategies. Third, I explain how a discourse feminists have identified as a “protection racket”—in which war is the heroic activity of male soldiers saving the lives of innocent women and at the same time earning full citizenship in polities—constitutes gendered identities that promote conflict-seeking behavior in men and states looking to live up to dominant or hegemonic understandings of masculinity.²⁴

GENDER AND MILITARY TECHNOLOGY

The question of perception of technology is a well-established issue in the offense-defense literature. Jervis notes that the offense-defense balance depends upon whether offensive weapons are distinguishable from defensive weapons. If they are not distinguishable or if the same weapons can be advantageous to both the offense and defense, then the offense-defense balance of military technology cannot mitigate the dangers of war caused by the security dilemma.²⁵ The offensiveness or defensiveness of a particular technology or system of technologies can be considered a “social fact” rather than a “brute fact” given that its classification as offensive or defensive depends upon perception or intersubjective agreement upon its potential

²³ See R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 76; Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 53–56.

²⁴ See, for example, Iris Marion Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,” *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society* 29 no. 2 (2003): 15–35.

²⁵ Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 35.

uses.²⁶ In other words, whether a technology favors the offense or defense depends upon what meanings that technology holds for particular actors in particular contexts. Furthermore, some offense-defense theorists argue that how militaries put technology to use is a better determinant of the offense-defense balance than the mere existence of technologies.²⁷ The process through which individuals estimate or use a weapon system's capabilities is not necessarily rational; in many cases, gender discourse and identities can play a role in assigning certain meanings to different technologies.

Many feminists contend that the quest for technological development is based inherently on masculine or patriarchal values. This argument is based on a view of gender in which the word "gender" does not refer to individual bodies or representations of men and women but rather a dichotomous system of thought that has been reproduced in many ways throughout Western culture. This symbolic structure has arisen from Enlightenment epistemologies that position men alone as rational, legitimate holders and producers of knowledge.²⁸ Scientific ideology can be seen as based on masculine projects of control over nature and built upon the gendered Western dichotomies of mind/body, culture/nature, rationality/emotionality, control/dependence, and objectivity/subjectivity. In each of the identified dichotomies, the first term is privileged over the second and associated with masculinity, while the second is subordinated and associated with femininity. Science and technology are considered inherently masculine as they are associated with the masculine values of domination, control, and objectivity.²⁹ The harder the technology, the more masculine it is. However, from this view, it would be difficult to ascertain why certain technologies have been considered feminine while some have been considered masculine at different points in history. To examine how and in what ways technology has been gendered throughout history would be more useful.

²⁶ As mentioned in note 17, the distinction between social facts and brute facts is contested by many feminists who argue that both social and brute facts are the product of the social construction of reality. However, for the purposes of engaging with offense-defense theory, the implications of this argument will not be addressed.

²⁷ Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations," 746.

²⁸ Feminist work in IR that takes up this critique includes Ann Tickner, "What is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 no. 1 (2005): 1–20; Ann Tickner, "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminist and IR Theorists," *International Studies Quarterly* 41 no. 4 (1997): 619–23; V. Spike Peterson, "Transgressing Boundaries"; Locher and Prügl, "Feminism and Constructivism." See also Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True, eds., *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁹ The feminist literature on the masculine underpinnings of science and technology is quite vast. A few influential works include Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Science and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism and Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).

Studies of scientific and technological practices highlight the ideological work that has gone into building and sustaining technology as a masculine domain and rejecting technologies that are incompatible with masculine ideal-types. Military technology has not always been considered masculine in the same way and at times has not even been considered masculine at all. In fact, many defensive developments in military technology have been seen as emasculating since they lessen the importance of traditional warrior values of personal courage, physical strength, and honor in warfighting.³⁰ Since bravery is a key component of militarized masculinity, it is emphasized in gendered evaluations of military technologies. Those technologies which enhance the strength and bravery of warriors are seen as positively associated with manliness and masculinity. On the other hand, those technologies which make it strategically advantageous for soldiers to lie in wait, to hold back, and to defend are seen as less masculine because, if employed, they would not require soldiers to display the heroism associated with courage, strength, honor, and manhood. In times when military technologies favor a defensive image of soldiering (like in World War I), belligerents tend to downplay the role of technology and overestimate the importance of the spirit and honor of offensive warfighting. Thus, to understand how the perceptions of technologies change, we should look to the discourses of gender that understand technologies as suitable or not to dominant definitions of masculinity.

Innovations in military technology perpetuate these gendered perceptions of the offense-defense balance by entrenching an association with soldiering and manliness. Rachel Weber gives an example of this phenomenon in her study of the design of military cockpits. Weber uses the example of military cockpits to demonstrate that military technologies are not inherently masculine but rather their masculinity has to be constructed. In building cockpits for U.S. military aircraft to the specifications of men's bodies, the Pentagon established a bias against women's bodies in military technologies. The technology of military aircraft has been marked as masculine through engineering specification and design guidelines. This bias has wide-ranging implications for gender equality in the military, not only providing a tangible reason for arresting women's advancement but also as a symbolic marker of a masculine social space.³¹ Gender-based assumptions about whether men or women make better pilots cause the planes to be built in a certain way, thus reinforcing the exclusion of women from certain military roles. The ultimate honor of being a fighter pilot and the maleness of fighter pilots are

³⁰ Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 22, 59, 88.

³¹ Rachel N. Weber, "Manufacturing Gender in Military Cockpit Design," in *The Social Shaping of Technology*, ed. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999), 372–81.

then tied together by the technological developments that favor male bodies and masculine characteristics.

When technological developments fail to favor either male bodies or masculine characteristics (such as when the developments favor the defense), they are likely to be ignored or underestimated by belligerents in conflict. In fact, technologies have fallen in and out of favor on the basis of their perceived relationship with chivalry and honorable soldiering. For example, in the 1899 Hague Peace Conference, delegates were concerned with the unchivalrous nature of the use of airplanes in combat. Belgian delegate Auguste Beernaert, presiding over the commission on arms limitations, proclaimed, "To permit the use of such infernal machines, which seem to fall from the sky, exceeds the limit." He added, "As it is impossible to guard against such proceedings, it resembles perfidy, and everything which resembles that ought to be scrupulously guarded against. Let us be chivalrous even in the manner of carrying on war."³² At this point, the "perfidy" is linked to the asymmetry of such attacks and the difficulty in effective protection against them. The thought of "infernal" bombs being dropped in a perfidious attack positions the tactic of aerial bombardment as feminine and unchivalrous in a discourse of betrayal and treachery. Connecting notions of betrayal and chivalry signal linkages to appropriate masculine behavior, to what is honorable as opposed to what is a base, unmanly type of violence. World War I is a good example of how ideas about gender affect the way in which certain technologies are used.

Because the use of planes to drop projectiles was considered unchivalrous, planes were flown in World War I mostly for reconnaissance, support of ground troops, and more prominently, attacks on enemy planes. Even though combat planes were at the forefront of early nineteenth-century technological advancement, their contribution to the outcome of the war was minimal: the planes were simply the heroic symbols they were made out to be by the press. The pilots had short life expectancies in the war (sometimes less than a week) but came to symbolize the ultimate in masculinity: risk seekers, rugged individuals, "knights of the air," and "lone wolves." The British and French stuck with the single combat model in their air combat against the Germans, though the German method of flying in squadrons was more effective in battle and less risky for inexperienced pilots. From the British perspective, the German method was seen as cowardly and bullying.³³ For the British, the lone-wolf method of combat was popular in promoting the virtuous nature of the war as it best approximated the one-on-one combat of chivalric times, a mode of warfare that differed drastically from a land

³² Auguste Beernaert, quoted in, James Brown Scott, *The Proceedings of the Hague Peace Conference* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 288.

³³ See Linda Robertson, *The Dream of Civilized Warfare: World War I Flying Aces and the American Imagination*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 324–26.

war that generated mass carnage. Even though the German method of using combat planes was more effective, its perception as less manly led to a lengthy delay in its emulation by Entente Powers. In other words, the use of airplanes in World War I was associated not with actual technological advantages but with the ability of the planes to be used in ways that supported the bravery and strength of soldiers without impugning chivalry.

The gendering of technology can also be linked to the cult of the offensive in the First World War. There is a consensus among offense-defense theorists that in 1914, military technologies favored the defense, but all belligerent states, unaware of or determined to ignore the actual offense-defense balance, developed military doctrines that assumed the dominance of offense.³⁴ Gender, class, and racial ideologies combined to create a situation in which defensive technological developments such as the machine gun and barbed wire were underestimated, and the cavalry charge was still considered to be a key strategic tool for winning wars. Military leaders were aware of new developments in technology (barbed wire and machine guns) that the “knightly” cavalry would have to overcome but dealt with those technologies much like they dealt with airplanes—by valuing boldness, bravery, strength, and chivalry over defensive positioning, patience, balancing, and calculation. Though Van Evera does not identify them as such, gendered perceptions of technology are evident even in his descriptions of the cult of the offensive leading up to the First World War. “British and French officers suggested that superior morale on the attacking side could overcome superior defensive firepower, and that this superiority in morale could be achieved simply by assuming the role of attacker, since offense was a morale-building activity. One French officer contended that ‘the offensive doubles the energy of the troops’. . . . In short, mind would prevail over matter; morale would triumph over machine guns.”³⁵

In other words, technologies that required mundane fighting rather than bravery and excitement would be defeated by morale and courage. As a result, military and political leaders in World War I interpreted clearly defensive technologies as offensive. Van Evera recounts Marshall Ferdinand Foch’s understanding that “any improvement in firearms is ultimately bound to add strength to the offensive” and the observation of the French president, Clément Fallières, that the “offensive alone is suited to the temperament of French soldiers.”³⁶ Continental military leaders downplayed the significance

³⁴ For the use of World War I and offense-defense theory, see Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive”; Jack Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,” in *Offense, Defense, and War*, 119–57. For a critique of World War I uses, see Jonathon Shimshoni, “Technology, Military Advantage, and World War I,” in *Offense, Defense, and War*, 195–223. For an argument that the German war planner actually knew that the state of technology would favor the defense and lead to a protracted war, see Lieber, “The New History of World War I.”

³⁵ Van Evera, “Cult of the Offensive,” 71.

³⁶ Marshall Foch and Clément Fallières, quoted in, Van Evera, “Cult of the Offensive,” 72, 71.

of machine guns in Britain's victories in Africa as these battles were not fought against "civilized" foes, and the British themselves downplayed the implications of these victories for the ease of conquest and defense.³⁷ German military dogma was bolstered by a belief that single-mindedness of purpose could overcome technological and logistic limitations.³⁸ In the popular German literature, technology was imagined as contributing to the adventure of war rather than to mass killings and the industrialization of warfare.³⁹ Technologies, then, were interpreted as offensive or defensive not on their material contribution to offensive or defensive combat strategies but instead on their relationship to idealized images of soldiers' masculinity bound up in strength, bravery, and chivalry. Given that values associated with the hegemonic masculinity of heroic combat overwhelmingly favor aggressiveness and offense (bravery, strength, courage, control) and rarely favor military restraint, developments in military technology are overwhelmingly interpreted as offensive, or their defensive value is downplayed as outside traditional associations of soldiering and masculinity. Future research could address the extent to which varying military organizational attitudes toward technology are affected by different hegemonic masculinities across time and space, thus potentially explaining the variance of perceptions of the offensive capabilities of certain technologies.

GENDERED NATIONALISM AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE CULT OF THE OFFENSIVE

In the literature, cult of the offensive entails more than faulty perceptions of the military implications of the balance of technology: it is also based on inappropriately aggressive military strategies. In his 1984 book, Jack Snyder argues that the offensive strategies of the French, German, and Russian militaries in the run-up to the First World War cannot be explained by a rational calculation of interests but rather are the result of doctrines that had more to do with militaries' organizational values than with the technological limitations and the defensive nature of the military balance.⁴⁰ Similarly, Van Evera has argued that the First World War was caused by the glorification of offensive strategies in Europe's militaries, with the lessons of recent prior wars about the defensive advantages to the technology being ignored.⁴¹ While

³⁷ Michael Howard, "Men Against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914," in *Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War*, ed. Steven E. Miller, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Stephen Van Evera (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 8. See also John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 79–111.

³⁸ Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 137–38.

³⁹ Mark Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of World War I* (New York: Berg, 2004), 94–95.

⁴⁰ Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*.

⁴¹ Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive." This point is controversial in the literature as Lieber argues that German war planners planned for an offensive war in spite of knowing that the technology in terms

the German, French, Belgian, British, and Russian armies were all professing offensive strategies, they believed that superior morale would overcome the disadvantages attributed to the machine gun.⁴² As to reasons for this cult of the offensive, Snyder suggests that the duties and training of the military officer force a focus on threats to the state and a view of war as an ever-present possibility, taking the hostilities of others for granted. Taking the hostility of others for granted leads to a bias toward offensive plans such as preventative wars and preemptive strikes. Due to this bias Snyder notes, "Defensive plans and doctrines will be considered only after all conceivable offensive schemes have been decisively discredited."⁴³ From a feminist perspective, arguments about military culture are bound up in connection between nationalism and masculinity. Gender may be said to constitute nationalism in that these ideologies are inextricably tied to gendered discourse. Thus, feminists would argue that gender provides the backdrop that makes the cult of the offensive possible.

Some scholars have argued that men are more likely to make war than women because men are naturally aggressive. Wars break out because men are in positions of political and military power. Francis Fukuyama's 1998 *Foreign Affairs* article is an example of this type of reasoning.⁴⁴ If this logic were true, then men are likely to misinterpret the actual offense-defense balance because their aggressive tendencies inspire them to seek out conflict. The relationship between gender and aggression, however, is more complicated. Claims of natural aggression in men are politically suspect because they imply men cannot behave any way other than aggressively and therefore ignore the many men who do not. Joshua Goldstein finds little evidence that increased levels of testosterone in men fuel wars or that biological factors explain the near-monopoly men have had on warfighting throughout history.⁴⁵

Instead of blaming men's biological composition for state aggressiveness, feminists in international relations identify military training and the installment of martial values in men as sources of aggressive policies.⁴⁶

of machine guns as well as logistics would most likely lead to a lengthy and bloody war. Lieber maintains that despite this the Germans undertook such a war because they felt it was their best chance for regional domination. Regardless, the cult of the offensive argument as well as my explanation of the gendered logic that underpins it would still hold for Britain and France. Furthermore, even if the Germans did not misperceive the defensive strengths of the available military technology, their instigation of a war they knew would have serious costs even if successful could be understood in terms of gendered discourses of the offense or gendered ideologies of nationalism. Lieber, "The New History of World War I," 177–83.

⁴² Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive," 72.

⁴³ Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive," 130.

⁴⁴ Francis Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (1998): 24–40.

⁴⁵ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 143–58.

⁴⁶ See Francine D'Amico and Laurie Weinstein, *Gender Camouflage: Women and the US Military* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 5; Jean Bethke Elstain, *Women and War* (1987; repr.,

Cynthia Enloe draws attention to myriad strategies associating nationalism and masculinity. From promises of a fast-track to “first-class citizenship” for racial minorities to presumptions of cultural superiority for groups already privileged, military recruiters have used these strategies around the world and through time to encourage men to enlist.⁴⁷ In the case of the First World War, a “crisis of masculinity” in Britain was incited by much of the working classes’ physical ineligibility for military service, resulting in widespread government intervention to produce a nation of men more suited for the rigors of war; Britain deemed this necessary to maintain its colonial empire and place in the world.⁴⁸ Anxieties over the ability of men to defend the nation prompted attempts to reshape gender relations throughout society to encourage the reinvigoration of traditional gender roles. This evidence indicates that rather than being inherently masculine, the military serves as an important site for the creation and maintenance of gender identities in society. As Enloe points out, “If maleness, masculinity, and militarism *were* inevitably bound together, militaries would always have all the soldiers they believed they required.”⁴⁹ As “a socially imposed and internalized lens through which individuals perceive and respond to the world,” gender, as an identity, can do a better job explaining the underestimation of the costs of war than theories of men’s innate aggression.⁵⁰

Gender identity (gender as a way of being in and interpreting the world) can help explain the romanticizing of offensive warfare. Understanding the military as an institution that imbues men with the values of warrior masculinity can help explain the disproportionate prevalence of offensive doctrines given the objective offense-defense balance. Barry Posen describes the attractiveness of offensive doctrines to militaries as resulting from the military’s drive to increase autonomy and self-image.⁵¹ Snyder explains the offensive bias in the German military establishment as partly due to interests in promoting war as a “beneficial social institution.”⁵² Likewise, David Englander argues that the offensive spirit in the British military leading up to World War I expressed the military’s position as the vanguard of a virile, manly nation.⁵³ Feminists argue that military socialization not only shapes men’s

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Hooper, *Manly States*; 81–82; Goldstein, *War and Gender*, chap. 5.

⁴⁷ Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 237.

⁴⁸ Johanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁴⁹ Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 245.

⁵⁰ Peterson, “Transgressing Boundaries,” 194.

⁵¹ Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁵² Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 123. See also Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of World War I*, 97.

⁵³ David Englander, “Discipline and Morale in the British Army,” in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 126.

bodies in terms of desired levels of fitness, it also serves as an important rite of passage in making men out of boys. The cultural and institutional training of the military takes the masculine virtues of stoicism, detachment, aggression, strength, and resolve and works to implant them into the individual characteristics of men. Training men for war, even outside the institutional setting of the military, has taken place through sports, adventure stories, and movies.⁵⁴ Goldstein finds that, as war is a possibility if not a frequent activity in virtually all societies, societies must train men to be men—that is, to inculcate men with martial values that they would not otherwise have.⁵⁵ Men must be trained to kill, to perform under the immense stress and gruesome horror of battlefield conditions, and to endure psychological trauma by suppressing their emotions. This training begins at an early age and is supported by women in many ways.⁵⁶ The possibility of war creates a perceived necessity to instill certain characteristics in men, which form the basis for certain types of masculine gender identity.

In very few places in history is this pattern as clear as in the time leading up to the First World War. Early in the twentieth century, state leaders held the pervasive belief that war was a normal policy option rather than an extraordinary measure and that war was even desirable as a cure for society's ills, including a growing "emasculatation" of society.⁵⁷ War was also thought to be a crucial test of the strength and virility of ethnic or racial groups. In short, war was considered to have positive effects for shoring up masculine identity and masculine values in society. German officials and intellectuals in particular believed that war was necessary for Germany to fulfill its destiny of superiority over the inferior peoples of Europe.⁵⁸

Conceptions of gender that are concerned with symbolic structure of gender, rather than the appropriate roles of men and women, assert that offense has been gendered masculine, while defense has been gendered feminine. This is due to the association of offensive with activity, aggression, strength, and boldness (concepts considered masculine in Western culture) and the association of defensive with passivity, weakness, and victimhood (all considered feminine). Offensive strategies are preferred because of the association with positive, masculine attributes, while defensive strategies are considered weak and unmanly. Carol Cohn describes the importance of "the

⁵⁴ Hooper, *Manly States*, 80–87. See also Michael C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁵⁵ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, chap. 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Holger H. Herwig, "Germany," in *The Origins of World War I*, ed. Richard Hamilton and Holger Herwig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 150–87; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1867–1918* (London: Arnold, 1995), 158–59. This belief was not limited to Germany but was common in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth and early nineteenth century. See also Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Herwig, "Germany," 168; Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1876–1918*, 205–16.

wimp factor” in her experiences working with defense intellectuals in the 1980s.⁵⁹ When certain strategic actions, such as withdrawal from territory, are interpreted as wimpy, no matter how rational, they are delegitimized. Playing a simulated war game with a group of defense intellectuals, Cohn’s team lost by withdrawing troops from some areas and refusing to retaliate from a nuclear strike, even though the team’s homeland and its civilian population had remained safe. Such actions become unthinkable in the discourse of international security even though they may be strategically beneficial and consistent with other value systems. In this way, aggression and offense in the international arena are legitimized through gendered discourses. Gender as a discourse defines the boundaries of acceptable options and serves as a “preemptive deterrent” to certain strategic options.⁶⁰ Gender thus constitutes the offense/defense binary by assigning more value to the offensive posture than the defensive posture. This is one way in which feminists would attempt to explain why decision makers have the propensity to overestimate the strategic advantages of the offensive. There is a heavy gender deterrent against the passive, weak, defensive position, even if, as military balance theorists allow, the defense usually has the objective advantage in war, and disasters like the First World War can occur if the balance is misinterpreted.

The militarization that is linked to offensive policies is closely connected to nationalism. The literature on offense-defense balance indicates that nationalism can affect the balance by making people more willing to fight.⁶¹ Nationalism is also a source of militarism and offensive strategies as it usually entails elites and military planners perceiving conquest as easy because of the superiority of their own soldiers. Van Evera lists nationalism as a mechanism through which the cult of the offensive can be developed, but he does not explore how it is possible for nationalistic sentiment to be shaped in the direction of favoring the offensive. Offense-defense theorists note that belligerents tend to attribute a more coherent, grand, and evil scheme to their enemies than is often the case, to believe that their adversaries are more unified than is the case, and to assume that an opponents’ policy inconsistency is a result of duplicity or treachery rather than confusion.⁶² Offense-defense theorists do not, however, provide a way for scholars to understand these consistent misperceptions as a matter of the gendered practices of identity and nationalism. Feminist analyses would argue that nationalism and militarism are constituted by gender discourses in the process of “othering”

⁵⁹ Carol Cohn, “War, Wimps and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War,” in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 227–46; Carol Cohn, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 no. 4 (1987): 687–718.

⁶⁰ Cohn, “War, Wimps and Women,” 232.

⁶¹ See, for example, Glaser and Kaufmann, “What is the Offense-Defense Balance,” 288–89.

⁶² Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 319–21, 323–26, 338–42.

as well as in the promotion of a national identity and chauvinism through ideologies about gender roles.

The process of dehumanizing or feminizing enemies is one way to understand this misperception. David Campbell, for example, argues that state identity is secured by discourses about the threats others pose. “For the state, identity can be understood as the outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistant elements to a secure identity on the ‘inside’ are linked through a discourse of ‘danger’ with threats identified and located on the ‘outside.’”⁶³ These outside threats are constructed in terms historically associated with the feminine, such as irrational, dirty, chaotic, and evil. As others are constructed as inferior through a feminizing discourse, their abilities are underestimated, while somewhat paradoxically, and the threat they pose is overestimated. For example, the United States and Britain underestimated Japan’s military capabilities during World War II because of beliefs in the inferiority of the Japanese. The Japanese were considered subhuman and illogical, and their military capabilities were downgraded prior to the outbreak of war.⁶⁴ U.S. and U.K. military officials ignored evidence of Japanese military successes and capabilities based on the assumption that the Japanese simply could not make such achievements.⁶⁵ Thus, the belief that wars will be quick and easy—because “our men” are superior in strength, resolve, and technological capability—has its roots in a process of othering in which one’s own identity is buttressed by the distancing from and disparagement of a different national or racial group. The feminization of enemies is a reflection of masculinized nationalism: states tell stories about their valorized masculinity in relation to their opponents’ devalued femininity, or subordinate masculinity.

The subordinate masculinity that encouraged Britain, France, and the United States into WWI was Germany’s barbarism. The discourse of barbarism, which was applied to the Germans in the two world wars and to the Japanese in World War II, has had a double meaning in the West: barbarism is considered the opposite of civilization, and it can be a good thing or a bad thing. Barbarism is good when it involves a rejection of the feminized civilization that begets commerce, industry, and domesticity for the more strenuous pursuits of hunting and war. However, it is considered negative, a lower form of masculinity, when it refers to racial, national, or social others. This subordinate masculinity is associated with uncontrolled aggression, a hyper-masculinity that is to be feared and tamed. In British discourse, Germans were huns who stood for despotism and militarism as opposed to the British who stood for individualism and civilized values and accomplishments. This

⁶³ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 68.

⁶⁴ See John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 94–97.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 99–117.

construction also entailed a fear that the Germans were a more vital people who might succeed in overtaking the British Empire, which led some to call for British men to emulate what was seen as a more “virile race.”⁶⁶

This sort of national myth-making in increasing the likelihood of war plays a prominent role in Van Evera’s results of perceived offensive dominance. Van Evera, however, does not theorize the results of this myth-making. He denies the centrality of myth-making to the concept of nationalism. “Myth is not an essential ingredient of nationalism: nationalism can also rest on a group solidarity based on truth, and the effects of nationalism are largely governed by the degree of truthfulness of the beliefs that a given nationalism adopts; as truthfulness diminishes, the risks posed by the nationalism increase.”⁶⁷ Here, Van Evera mistakenly equates myth-making with falsity. It is these myths that create the nation through the hope of a common future and, despite the relatively recent invention of nationalism, the figuration of the nation with a common, distant origin.⁶⁸ Arguably, these myths about national greatness may be constitutive of aggressive wars. As such, myths play a crucial role in the othering and dehumanization of the enemy along gendered lines such that the extreme violence of war becomes fathomable and war becomes viable policy option. Feminist scholars have examined these myths and their causes and consequences in terms of gendered ideologies and found them to be influential in remaking gender roles.

Rather than seeing the relationship between nationalism and the entrenchment of certain gender identities as a matter of coincidence, feminists have theorized the ways in which national identity is produced through the use of gender discourses. Nationalism, which was at a highpoint in the buildup to the First World War, is a set of discourses about who “we” are and who belongs in the political community. As such, it reproduces the inside/outside logic of the state system, in which those inside the state or nation are superior to those outside. Nationalism therefore depends upon “national chauvinism” such that members of other nations as well as racial, sexual, or ideological others inside the nation are constructed in terms of femininity or subordinate masculinity. These others are weak and inferior, or they are hypermasculine—beast-like in brutality and sexuality. Feminists have argued that the boundaries between the self and the other are in part produced by discourses of gender and sexuality.⁶⁹

Feminists have demonstrated that the nationalist discourses that constitute the identity of the nation are predicated upon discourses of gender that reproduce traditional gender roles. Feminists argue that nationalists need

⁶⁶ George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 8; Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain*, 239.

⁶⁷ Stephen Van Evera, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War,” *International Security* 18 no.4 (1994): 27, note 42.

⁶⁸ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*. (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 43.

⁶⁹ Joane Nagel, “Ethnicity and Sexuality,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 107–33.

gendered ideologies to gain support for their cause.⁷⁰ For example, Anne McClintock writes, “All too often in male nationalism, *gender* difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of *national* difference and power between *men*.”⁷¹ In the discourse of nationalism, all the nation’s men are brothers. As one WWI recruiting agent proclaimed, “There were no rich and no poor now, no Protestants and Catholics, no Conservatives and Liberals; we were all Britishers!”⁷² The “imagined community” of the nation depends upon the homosocial relations of men to protect the nation (construed as a woman’s body) against foreign incursion.⁷³ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ideals of masculinity were very much linked to nationalism, militarism, and imperialism by upholding courage, duty, and patriotism as the ultimate masculine values, in which resistance to militarism was coded as cowardly or feminine.⁷⁴ Symbolic gender imagery serves not only to construct the boundaries of national identities but reproduces gender identity as well. Propaganda and recruitment campaigns frequently held up the volunteer soldier as the only acceptable man—those who did not volunteer were seen as weak, effete, and cowardly.⁷⁵ The war also dampened the feminist movement in Britain as many feminists and non-feminists supported traditional gender roles for men and women despite large numbers of women working outside the home during the war.⁷⁶ As an example of how nationalist passions frequently prevail over attempts to reform traditional gender roles, the feminist magazine *The Suffragette* changed its name to *Britannia* to symbolize patriotic unity and its support of the war effort despite its critiques of the political and legal order.⁷⁷

As gender is a relational concept, hegemonic definitions of masculinity necessarily entail hegemonic definitions of femininity. Nira Yuval-Davis

⁷⁰ For further examples of the ways in which feminists have questioned nationalism and for greater detail about the differences between anti-colonial, post-colonial, settler-state and other types of nationalisms, see Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 45–63; Jill Vickers, “Feminists and Nationalism,” in *Gender, Race and Nation: Global Perspectives*, ed. Jill Vickers and Vanaja Dhruvarajan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 2002.

⁷¹ Anne McClintock, “Family Feuds, Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” *Feminist Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 62.

⁷² Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, 5.

⁷³ V. Spike Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexual,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1 no. 1 (1999): 48–49. See also Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

⁷⁴ Joane Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 no. 2 (March 1998): 242–69. This logic is also aptly demonstrated in the case of the Spanish-American War in Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*.

⁷⁵ Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, 32–36; Ilana R. Bet-El, “Men and Soldiers: British Conscripts, Concepts of Masculinity, and the Great War,” in *Borderlines: Gender and Identities in War and Peace, 1870–1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998), 73–94.

⁷⁶ Susan Kingsley Kent, “The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism,” *The Journal of British Studies* 27 no. 3 (1988): 232–53.

⁷⁷ Elshtain, *Women and War*, 111–12.

categorizes several ways in which women function in nationalist ideologies, symbolically or in their actions.⁷⁸ Women are constructed as a nation's biological reproducers as well as the cultural reproducers. After all, "group reproduction—both biological and social—is fundamental to nationalist practice, process, and politics."⁷⁹ Under nationalist regimes, women are often expected to bear and raise young men who will fight on behalf of the nation. The nation is therefore dependent upon women in traditional roles as mothers and caretakers to reproduce itself. Because of their stereotyped role as social reproducers of the nation, women are considered the markers of the differences between ethnic or cultural groups. The entire nation may be symbolized by a woman who must be fought and died for. Indeed, nationalist discourses often present the nation as a woman, a guardian, and symbol of the nation's values, such as Germania, Britannia, France's Marianne, or the cult of Queen Louise of Prussia. These symbolic women are Madonna-like in their image as chaste mothers of the nation.⁸⁰ Rape, then, becomes a metaphor for national humiliation—as in the Rape of Belgium or the Rape of Kuwait—as well as a tactic of war used to symbolically prove the superiority of one's national group.

Not only do nationalist projects construct gender identities that prescribe different spheres for men and women, but this production of gender identities has been a necessary condition of nationalism as women have figured symbolically as the nation's markers who must be protected by the men who run the state (or are trying to create one). Nationalism is naturalized, or legitimated, through gender discourses that naturalize the domination of one group over another through the disparagement of the feminine and the constitution of separate and unequal spheres for men and women. Gender is constitutive of nationalism, which is factor in the promotion of offensive military doctrines and the cult of the offensive. Thus, in order to understand how nationalism works to promote offensive policies, we should look to how nationalism is produced through discourses of gender that promote martial values as constitutive of ideal-type masculinity. Furthermore, nationalism, in terms of the assertion of the superiority of one nation's men over another's, often legitimates war by means of a protection racket, in which offensive wars are fought in order to defend women and children from potential or actual threats. This protection racket extends the logic of nationalism to allow for offensive policies to be legitimated as defensive.

⁷⁸ Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*; Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Women-Nation-State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

⁷⁹ Peterson, "Sexing Political Identities," 39.

⁸⁰ George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 90–100.

PROTECTION AS OFFENSIVE MILITARY DOCTRINE

Rather than a unified, aggressive, and warlike nature that gender essentialists like Fukuyama imagine, the hegemonic masculinity of the First World War called upon men to be courageous protectors of those less strong and capable. This is a chivalrous version of masculinity that has more frequently accompanied offensive warfare than a dominating, conquering bloodlust (although the former may resemble the latter from certain vantage points). These gendered constructions of identity can make offensive military strategies appear to be defensive, enabling wars to take place. Often, the gendered ideologies that constitute nationalism contribute to forming offensive doctrines. Chivalric masculinity is not solely about men but rather gendered relations of power. In particular, the just war narrative involves “good guys” or “just warriors” who fight against “bad guys” for just and valorous reasons.⁸¹ In order to produce the chivalric masculinity of the just warrior, a “beautiful soul” and a malevolent other are needed.⁸² As Iris Marion Young explains, “The gallantly masculine man faces the world’s difficulties and dangers in order to shield women from harm. . . . Good men can only appear in their goodness if we assume that lurking outside the warm familial walls are aggressors, the ‘bad’ men, who wish to attack them.”⁸³ Not only does this protection racket legitimate war, it may be said to legitimate the state’s constitution as the provider of security against outside threats as well. The protection racket is a promising pathway to explain the cult of the offensive.

Feminist scholarship in IR has described the various ways in which this ideal of chivalric masculinity has formed the basis of the national security state as well the principles behind just war theory. For example, Jean Bethke Elshtain defines “just warriors” and “beautiful souls” as gender identities that legitimate war. Masculine just warriors are only reluctantly violent, but violent nonetheless, as they wage war on behalf of the pure and feminine beautiful souls who are “too good for this world yet absolutely necessary to it.”⁸⁴ While seemingly benign, such chivalric discourses require helpless, feminized victims, not full and equal citizens capable of defending themselves. In the just war narrative, women are both the reason for fighting and those who must be excluded from fighting. Women, as beautiful souls, are naïve about the world of politics and war. The just warrior fights to protect her safety, innocence, and way of life. At the same time, the protector and the protected cannot be equal to one other. “The male protector confronts evil aggressors in the name of the right and the good, while those under

⁸¹ Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 35.

⁸² Elshtain, *Women and War*, 3–13

⁸³ Iris Marion Young, “Feminist Reactions to the Contemporary Security Regime,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 224.

⁸⁴ Elshtain, *Women and War*, 140.

his protection submit to his order and serve as handmaids to his efforts.”⁸⁵ Thus, discourses of protection reproduce gendered relations of power and subordination. Without this discourse of protection, many of the offensive military doctrines that resulted in war would not have been possible. This discourse enables men to take violent action with the narrative that makes their actions seem moral, even commendable. Even so, specifics of time and place shape the specific structures this form of hegemonic masculinity takes.

It is likely that prevailing gendered constructions of identity in the form of chivalric myths in the upper classes contributed to offensive strategies and the cult of the offensive in the British military during World War I. Tropes of “defending civilization” or “civilized values” as a reason for mounting offensive military campaigns have a long history. The resonance of such discourses—for example, World War I as a crusade to defend civilization against the barbarity of the Germans—is based in gendered discourses in which medieval knights saved damsels or Madonnas from cruel beasts.⁸⁶ Chivalric tales were immensely popular during this era, and these tropes had broad appeal. The romantic fantasy of war was such that the enemy was not so much another military, but the corrupt, feminized, and commercialized world. War would provide an escape for young men, a chance to gain honor, as well as a purge and a regeneration of society.⁸⁷ That war would cure societies of the weakness, decadence, and emasculation of peace was a prevailing cultural assumption among the upper-class members of the political elite across Europe. This hope of rejuvenation through war was linked to social Darwinism and the threat of racial degeneration.⁸⁸ Alarmed at the lack of physical fitness of urban volunteers for the Boer war, Britain began a campaign that encouraged hunting and other sports to increase the physical fitness and virility of British youth. This task was seen as essential to maintaining the British imperial holdings and racial dominance. The Scouting Movement, begun by Lord Baden-Powell and emphasizing outdoor expeditions, action over reflection, and the development of skills for war, was linked to concerns over military fitness and colonial expansion.⁸⁹ In Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* and in many popular adventure books of the time, boys and young men were encouraged to conduct themselves in accordance with the chivalrous values of bravery, sacrifice, honor, and

⁸⁵ Young, “Feminist Reactions,” 230.

⁸⁶ See Robertson, *The Dream of Civilized Warfare*, 115–54; Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 288–90.

⁸⁷ Adams, *The Great Adventure*; Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 275–76; Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism*, 281–84.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Adams, *The Great Adventure*; Herwig, “Germany,” 150–88; Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640–1990* (London: Routledge, 1999), 236–42; Pat Thane, “The British Imperial State and the Construction of National Identities,” in *Borderlines*, 30–31.

⁸⁹ Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 75–77; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 48–51.

loyalty to nation and religion.⁹⁰ For its part, the German Social Democrat Party justified its support of the war, despite its past pacifistic stance, by a fear of Tsarist Russia and Russian atrocities if Germany were defeated. An SPD press release declared, “We are sure that our comrades in uniform of all sorts and condition will abstain from all unnecessary cruelty, but we cannot have this trust in the motley hordes of the Tsar, and we will not have our women and children sacrificed to the bestiality of the Cossacks.”⁹¹

At first glance, this image of the just warrior as defender of civilization seems to favor the defensive (and would therefore not contribute to the cult of the offensive), but a closer look shows that the discourse of the protection racket is actually offensive in three distinct ways. First, the discourse leads states to value offense in order to be the best possible protectors since offense is associated with increased chance at victory and a perception of an active approach to protection. Second, it allows states aspiring to the idealized or hegemonic masculinity for their militaries to identify those in need of protection outside their borders and to start aggressive wars to protect those in need.⁹² Third, inasmuch as protection is a performance rather than an actual service, the appearance of boldness and bravery in actions taken on behalf of this chivalrous ideal brings attention to the protecting which is being done. In these ways, the protection racket can be associated with the increased likelihood of pursuing offensive military strategies.

The chivalric codes in vogue at the turn of the century identified the vulnerable female body as the main cause for war. The enemy was cast as an inhuman, sexual predator. Propagandists described attacks on Belgium towns in late summer, 1914, as the “Rape of Belgium.” A famous World War I propaganda poster illustrated this melding of nationality and gender: a large brown gorilla-like creature with a bloodied bat labeled “kulter” grasps a half-naked white woman who appears to have fainted. “Destroy this mad brute: Enlist,” the poster demands. The Bryce Report as well as other propagandistic accounts enumerated German crimes, focusing particularly on sensational stories of brutal treatment of civilians, especially women and children.⁹³ Sexualized violence against both men and women were widely reported, justifying war in the name of chivalrous values which held that worthy men would act nobly to stop such atrocities.⁹⁴ Posters in Britain encouraging men

⁹⁰ Bet-El, “Men and Soldiers,” 78–79; Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain*, 237–39.

⁹¹ Mark Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of the First World War* (New York: Berg, 2004), 54.

⁹² For example, the legitimization of the U.S. war in Afghanistan to protect Afghan women from Afghan men.

⁹³ The Bryce Report was an attempt to verify accounts of German atrocities in Belgium in 1914. It was published in 1915 as the result of an official investigation commissioned by the British government and led by James Bryce. The report is considered to be a prime example of wartime propaganda due to its exaggeration of actual atrocities as well as lurid and sensationalistic accounts of the atrocities.

⁹⁴ Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the U.S. Was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914–1918*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996); Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2002), 16–19; Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain*, 273–77.

to volunteer evoked women and children as defenseless targets of war and drew upon chivalric discourses of honor and protection, declaring, “Your rights of citizenship give you the privilege of joining your fellows in defence of your Honour and your Homes,” and “There Are Three Types of Men: Those who hear the call and Obey, Those who Delay, and—The Others.”⁹⁵ “The Others” here is meant to refer to the enemy who is not a just warrior and does not share the same chivalric values. Barbaric men do not observe the laws of war and attack civilians; thus, adhering to the distinction between civilians and combatants produces the just warrior, while attacking civilians constitutes the barbarian.⁹⁶ In fearing Russian barbarism, formerly pacifist Germans could thus support an ostensibly offensive war by their commitment to national defense.⁹⁷ Discourses of chivalrous masculinity served not only make offensive approaches to international politics in the First World War possible but also to constitute a set of gendered power relations that posited white men as protectors of the nation against racialized others who threaten the purity of naïve and defenseless women.

Examples of the protection racket’s influence on perceived offensive dominance, a cult of the offensive, are common in present-day politics as well. This chivalric narrative has been resurrected in the post-Cold War era, and gendered identities have not only legitimated but also promoted wars. The various humanitarian wars of the 1990s are read as narrative in which NATO and other actors reinvent themselves as masculine, heroic, rescuers of weak and passive victims.⁹⁸ Abouali Farmanfarmanian describes how the reports of Iraqi army troops raping women in Kuwait were used to construct Iraq as a barbaric enemy such that war was not only thinkable, but necessary.⁹⁹ Post-Cold War American masculinity was “tough and tender,” capable of awesome military prowess but also compassion and empathy.¹⁰⁰ Ten years later, feminists decried using the plight of women in Afghanistan as justification for a massive U.S.-led military campaign against the ruling Taliban.¹⁰¹ Feminists used Gayatri Spivak’s phrase “white men saving brown

⁹⁵ Bet-El, “Men and Soldiers,” 82.

⁹⁶ Helen Kinsella, “Securing the Civilian: Sex and Gender in the Laws of War,” in *Power in Global Governance*, ed. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 264.

⁹⁷ Nicholas Stargardt, *The German Idea of Militarism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 127–49.

⁹⁸ Anne Orford, “Muscular Humanitarianism: Reading the Narratives of the New Interventionism,” *European Journal of International Law* 10 no. 4 (1999): 679–711.

⁹⁹ Abouali Farmanfarmanian, “Did You Measure Up? The Role of Race and Sexuality in the Gulf War,” in *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. Gearóid Ó Tuathail (London: Routledge, 1998), 286–93.

¹⁰⁰ Steve Niva, “Tough and Tender: New World Order Masculinity and the Gulf War,” in *The “Man” Question in International Relations*, ed. Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 109–28.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Laura Shepherd, “Veiled References: Constructions of Gender in the Bush Administration Discourse on the Attacks on Afghanistan Post- 9/11,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8 no. 1 (March 2006): 19–41.

women from brown men”—originally meant to describe the British abolition of suttee in India—to describe the racial and gendered discourse used to legitimate the war in Afghanistan.¹⁰² It is difficult to imagine such wars taking place without the production of gender identities that legitimated and drove these conflicts.

The war in Afghanistan may be considered a retaliation or defensive operation in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, but military action did not solely target the training bases of al-Qaeda. The mission of liberating Afghan women was used to garner public support for the invasion and served also to silence feminist protests against the war.¹⁰³ Two and a half years later, this same discourse of liberation was used to fuel support to overthrow Saddam Hussein, who was represented in racialized terms as an inhuman despot after the evidence against weapons of mass destruction turned out to be fabricated or exaggerated. This narrative of rescuing the Iraqi people (“damsels in distress”) from the clutches of an evil man may help to explain why the United States and its allies came to believe, with little evidence, that the invading forces would be greeted as liberators. These rescue narratives demonstrate that the protection racket encourages offensive military policies even when it is couched in the language of defense and protection. The protection racket is a gender discourse that produces the gender identities of just warriors and beautiful souls. It is also the backdrop that allows for offensive military policies to be viewed as defensive, thereby gaining traction and legitimating war by enabling offensive wars to take place under the mantle of protection. Discourse of protection can therefore contribute to understanding the occurrence of offensive policies in the light of an ostensible defensive dominance.

GENDER, SECURITY AND PERCEPTIONS OF OFFENSE-DEFENSE BALANCE

One conclusion of the offense-defense literature is that states perceive themselves to be much more insecure than they really are, as few great powers have ever been wiped out. Van Evera writes, “The prime threat to the security of modern great powers is . . . themselves. Their greatest menace lies in their own tendency to exaggerate the dangers they face, and to respond with counterproductive belligerence.”¹⁰⁴ States have been more or less

¹⁰² Miriam Cooke, “Saving Brown Women,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 no. 1 (2002): 468–70.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Zillah Eisenstein, “Feminisms in the Aftermath of September 11,” *Social Text* 20, no. 3. (Fall 2002): 79–99; Hilary Charlesworth and Christine Chinkin, “Sex, Gender and September 11,” *The American Journal of International Law* 96, no. 3 (July 2002): 600–05; Jan Jindy Pettman, “Feminist International Relations After 9/11,” *Brown Journal of International Affairs* 10 no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2004): 85–96; Young, “Feminist Reactions.”

¹⁰⁴ Van Evera, *Causes of War*, 192.

secure, but their feelings of insecurity have led to great insecurity for people worldwide. Millions of people were killed in wars in the twentieth century alone, to say nothing of those who were injured, lost loved ones, or had their lives disrupted by war.

Van Evera goes on to write, "The causes of this syndrome pose a large question of students of international relations." Feminists have much to offer in regard to this question. Focusing on how gender discourses and gender identities provide a necessary condition under which many factors of the offense-defense balance can thrive, feminists can offer a way to think about many of the issues related to the causes of war that have been neglected by most scholars of security studies. For scholars interested in the offense-defense balance as a way of explaining why wars occur, feminist analysis can contribute to both defensive realists who consider wars to begin because of offense-defense balance perceptions and scholars who support the offensive realist position that states start wars regardless of their calculations of the offense-defense balance. Thus, despite the recent debate between Kier Lieber and Jack Snyder about whether or not a cult of the offensive was the key factor in Germany's offensive war plans, feminist analysis of nationalism and the protection racket can potentially provide insights into the underlying conditions that make preventative or preemptive wars possible in terms of anxieties over gender and racial identities and gendered discourses of military strength and the benefits of war.¹⁰⁵ Feminists maintain that offensive wars are based on similar concerns over gender relations and the nation, making offensive wars appear to be legitimately defensive. As Snyder argues, "The belief in the feasibility and necessity of offensive strategy entices both fearful and greedy aggressors to attack [and] erases the distinction between security and expansion."¹⁰⁶ The gendered constitution of the cult of the offensive can apply to states acting out of fear or expansion. The feminist analyses of the role gender plays in constituting the perception of technology, the gendered ideologies of nationalism, and the gendered defensive logic of the protection racket provide a theoretical rationale for explaining the erasure of the distinction between security and expansion that further research may support. A feminist analysis would understand gendered ideologies and identities to be at the root of both strategies, with particular historical manifestations leading to variation in the specific forms that militarism takes.

Far from being only concerned with the status of women, feminists use the concept of gender to analyze the workings of power through gendered discourses and identities. Feminists have demonstrated that gender matters in the ways in which technologies are perceived and used as well as in

¹⁰⁵ Lieber, "The New History of World War I"; Jack Snyder and Kier Lieber, "Defensive Realism and the "New" History of World War I," *International Security* (Summer 2008): 174–94.

¹⁰⁶ Snyder, "Defensive Realism," 177.

formulating offensive military strategies. Gendered perceptions of technology, gendered discourses of nationalism, and the protection racket are three related ways in which offensive wars may be legitimated and thus enabled. Further empirical studies would be useful to increase understanding of the specific ways in which gender discourses and gender identities contribute to, or contradict, other explanations for the causes of war. By explaining the impact gender has on issues related to the perception of offense-defense balance, feminist analysis shows how gender discourses and the production of gender identities are not confined to individuals and the private realm but rather are a pervasive fact of social life on an international scale. International relations theorists concerned with determining the causes of war would do well to consider the ways in which gender can shape the conditions under which wars occur.