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TO MAKE A CHOICE YOU SHOULD KNOW THE OPTION PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE FEMALE COMPONENT IN NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE

Abstract

The paper addresses the importance of the role of women in Intelligence and National Security with the specific purpose to highlight the quality of female contribution in all different domains.

The world is changing and in this change, Intelligence risks being left behind as never before. An epic evolution and change are underway that will upset ways of being and ways of thinking. All this not suddenly and all this without realizing it if not after the fact. The world is changing, women “are gain the upper hand” taking over also numerically and it is not realized that a change must happen in the field of Intelligence with a space left to women, not because they are women but because of their abilities. In all domains, from strategic to an operational one. Blindness to change that many Agencies are having. And those who are making changes often do so because they are obliged by the rules but not by evaluating the concrete capability of individuals. Two factors risk being explosive if no action is taken. The paper highlights the physiological and psychological contribution of the female component in the National Security and Intelligence work, and why diversity is scientifically important to successfully conduct operational and strategic tasks. It also describes the existing lack of models, how to enlarge the interest of young girls to join the Intelligence Community, and a look into the near future regarding the training and the recruitment processes with specific regards to women.

Keyword: *Women, Intelligence, Clandestine Operations, Negotiation, Psych Evolving*

1. Introduction

Starting to address and discuss the topic of Gender and National Security it is important to analyze the different reasons why the number of women it is currently not so high in National Security and related job such as military, law enforcement, Intelligence Community.

This issue is a key point in the global thematic Agenda of the main international organization such as NATO and the United Nations since 2000 with the well-known Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) policy, as well as for the OSCE Gender Perspective Doctrine.

Under this perspective and following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in the year 2000, NATO recognizes the disproportionate impact that conflict has on women and girls, the vital roles women play in peace and security, and the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in all that the Alliance does. NATO's approach to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda is framed around the principles of integration, inclusiveness, and integrity¹. Even if the above mention effort is in place for 20 years and several Nations and Institutions have adopted gender policy implementing the rate or modifying national regulations and norms there are still obstacles in reaching a concrete balance.

According to the European Security and Intelligence: Gender and National Security webinar organized by the Institute for National and International Security in Serbia in February 2021 *the role of separating individuals by gender has become particularly irrelevant in modern warfare, especially in special operations or hybrid warfare, gender no longer plays an important role in both theory and practice when it comes to security activities.*

Following this concrete statement, it is possible to say that the overall goal is partially achieved at least in the Western Countries (i.e. United States of America, United Kingdom, Italy) where the top decision-making positions related to National Security or Intelligence currently see highly qualified women in the top-level seats. For example, taking into account the last evolutions, it is possible to mention Mrs. Avril Danica Haines that serves as Director of National Intelligence in the 2021 President Biden administration as the first woman to serve in this role. The other recently step forward in the Intelligence environment has been made by Italy in May 2021 when it appointed Mrs. Elisabetta Bellone as Director of the Department of Information

¹ NATO official web site https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm

Security that is the Italian leading Intelligence department to govern and supervise the other two agencies, one dedicated to external affairs (AISE in Italian acronym) and one dedicated to internal affairs (AISI in Italian acronym). For the first time, Italy has a woman that leads the Intelligence Community.

The described recent cases shine a light on what should be an ordinary event and not on what today has represented an extraordinary achievement in the challenge to reach the gender balance. The word “gender” does not exist anymore, it has no meaning anymore. It is often used because it gives the equality and non-discrimination appearance, but essentially emphasizes the issue and it works only to fill up obsolete argumentations shielded on restricted and one-sided visions. Because, indeed, the world is to consider the individual in its concreteness and completeness, in its entirety, without considering the gender to which it belongs. Respect for people must be primary beyond gender, sex, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.

This way to see the world-person allows employing individuals belonging to any gender, dismantling the biases of who still thinks with the “gender bias”. Just think, for instance, how the female figure is wrongly considered inferior in some States and some religions, or how, even in many occidental States, women are not considered able to perform all tasks that are typically associated strictly with masculine capabilities. Thus, opportunities, activities duties, and tasks are limited only because of women. These limits of vision, however, are in favor of the so-called “weaker sex”: just think that in the recent terrorist attacks, the success rate of male individuals to fulfill their terrorist action as initially planned is less than 40%; if, on the other hand, the terrorist act was accomplished by women, the success rate exceeded 70% (RAN, 2017). This fact proves how an error in the assessment of the subject, affected by gender biases, can endanger National Security.

The woman must not be considered as a man, the woman is not a man. She is a person with her characteristics and peculiarities and She does not need to emulate the man to distinguish herself in something, to emerge. Everybody knows women peculiarities: the greater resistance to pain (high pain threshold), how they are able, compared to men, to simultaneously activate various areas of the brain and place them in continuous communication with each other (men do it to a

lesser degree), and other characteristics that bring new perspectives, new observations, and analysis points, and also new operational approaches.

The cultural heritage, mentality, and some points of view conceive women as not equal to men. These components have led to many discussions and issues, sometimes in an impetuous and unfriendly way, on how to reach this equality. But this main topic should have no way of existing in a world where man and woman are conceived as individuals first, beyond gender. They have to be conceived as capable subjects, whose personal characteristics are useful for Intelligence purposes. Then, even if some equilibria have been achieved it is still necessary to explore and discuss how to strengthen and enlarge the role of women in the National Security and Intelligence Community.

2. Lack of models

Speaking about National Security and Intelligence means to consider and comprehend several Governmental and Political structures, their logic, and also their history. But in this chaos what generally emerges is a lack of models. The lack of models in the Intelligence Community, especially in the European one, because too often its models or approaches are based on the Anglo-Saxon one. What is clear is that there is no awareness that Intelligence is a full-fledged job, that offers development and career opportunities, also and especially to women. Hollywoodian iconography has always highlighted male figures in its production, relegating the female character as a supporting figure. In the reality, even the historic one, the woman is not a supporting figure, but a co-protagonist of the main character: in the analysis and operational fields and clandestine operations.

However, a policy linked to education is needed that allows girls to learn about this job opportunity. People choose according to what they know. This happens because the brain functions according to two base principles, those of Economy and Logicity (Zappelli, 2013; Serrai, 2018). Experiences and influences, from the world that surrounds the individual, shape him/her beliefs and contribute to his/her vision of the world that S/He will tend to keep unvaried

over time. This can reduce the opportunities with which the girl can be in touch, and consider as an achievable work path. Life and work paths among which young people have the opportunity to choose to build their future are limited to the more or less limited context in which young people live and learn to become adults. The more the environment, the role models, the examples that surround people are heterogeneous, the more the range of opportunities to take into account and to grab will be wide opened. Very often, indeed, one becomes aware of Intelligence opportunity jobs late in the life path. It is essential that educational, communicative, and also strategic activities have to be put in place to bring this job up. This is not a job for everyone, of course, and not an easy job, and this is one characteristic that must lead to the assessment first, and then to the selection of candidates: identify what is the motivation to perform what is a profession and not only a job; a profession that demands dedication, time and capabilities: cognitive and behavioral ones. The elimination of biases, and as many limits as possible -to carry out an important and delicate profession like being part of the Intelligence Community- will be part of the training of the future agent. These biases, indeed, due to society and cultural education (the society that is sometimes affected by specific and not flexible gender roles) are often more rooted in women. But, even in this case, thanks to the female gender capabilities and stubbornness, it is possible to overcome these limitations in a short time, shorter than males (Bellomo, 2014).

In creating or strengthening policies regarding future personnel in National Security and Intelligence it is important to know that this kind of job is not very well known by the population. Too often people have an unclear understanding of this job segment. Even more young students (high schools or colleges) do not know what National Security and Intelligence are and how to apply for these job opportunities. In some Nations, on structured or casual bases, it is possible to find conferences or speeches delivered by Armed Forces – Agencies in favor of school audience to present how they work, how they protect the Nation, etc. but it is not so common speaking about National Security and Intelligence. In Europe, as above mentioned, sometimes the opportunity of a real Intelligence career is discovered too late or is not understood. The young students, especially girls, have to desire “to become someone” in the National Security to start to consider the option and study for it. Recalling the title of the paper, to make a choice you should know the option. For that reason, is very important to communicate and share that there is this

kind of job. When speaking about university career before and job career later, the opportunity to jump into the Intelligence Community and to follow the path shall be known. It matters regarding the degree program a young student should attend but it is also related to the mindset, the culture, and the mentality regarding Intelligence, Intelligence work, how National Security is related to the political nor decision-making level, and perhaps also Intelligence failure in the past. This means -of course- also espionage activities, undercover actions, decision-making support that often appear so attractive for boys and less attractive for girls. A model or a strategy has to be conceived to explain to the girls that this is a job also for them and they can have all the characteristics to succeed in it. It is crucial to go inside the young community, among the teens, among the female scholars or students speaking about these important topics, women in National Security and global or Governmental Institutions and not only in the social environment. If people do not know the opportunity they cannot touch and grasps it. As traditionally has been done, Government could count on movies or TV series to help and spread the message, because it is well known that the young population is very familiar with TV series or channels on the Internet (especially during and after the period of Covid-19 pandemic when they have become even more familiar with streaming television). But the fiction shall be mostly adhered to real-life highlighting difficulties, sacrifices, and how motivation and personal skills are a great ingredient even before the competencies, that can be acquired later through specific studies and training. The fact that operations require diligent work around the clock and the unpredictable hours that come with the job (Bonesteel, 2017) shall be underlined. Still, a low rate of young students and girls -that are familiar with the Intelligence Community issues- they are because parent, family member or grandfather are or was employed in the Intelligence Community. This is a small part, a segment but the other large segment of young girls and ladies have to be reached explaining that there is also the opportunity to assist the work of the Intelligence Community becoming scholar, academic expert, scientist. One condition is still transversal: the moral obligation to maintain their female aspect referring not to the physical aspect, to the body aspect, but to the mental status of being a young female at the beginning and then a very expert practitioner. In simple words, maintaining diversity over time become able to use their skills to conceive, analyze, conduct, and lead Intelligence operations globally.

Therefore, Intelligence is built relying not only on the Anglo-Saxon model but which combines the characteristics of multiple Intelligence, multiple figures, and ways of thinking. An Intelligence evolution: a transformation towards new horizons which has to be implemented immediately and that can give immediate results. The solution is not a polarized model that goes to the “Anglo-Saxon *versus* European” paradigm, but a model that has to consider the different cultures and the ways to perceive and respond to national or international threats. And for these reasons the development and the implementations should be based on different models, different schemes to embedded and gather more female contributions. Even in light of a simple statistic: in the world, there are, and will always be, more women than men. Therefore, the evolution of society in any field, from political, to economic, to the scientific field, will increasingly see more women engaged in key roles. Intelligence can not consider this data and its implications. Taking into account the World Population Prospects 2015 of the United Nations – DESA (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) and analyzing the short-term evolution, it is important to know that in Europe and the Countries located in the East area of the world there are more women than men (sex-ratio rate).

Countries like Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Estonia, Ukraine have a higher number of women. In Iceland, Norway, and Luxembourg it was observed, to a minimal extent, the highest presence of men. Italy is one of the European countries where the rate between males and females, always to the advantage for females, is the most limited. The figure is 94.6 men every 100 women. This figure is close to that of Serbia. Generally, the male has a higher mortality rate than the female: the man is a higher number of suicides, He is frailer to sickness, He uses and abuses alcohol and drugs more than the woman. Vodka consumption among young people in Russia is one of the leading causes of early death.

In the USA the statistical data is confirmed, even if the rate deviation is very low.

There is a major number of men than women in the United Arab Emirates, India, and China. In Qatar, there are 265 men every 100 women, and in the United Arab Emirates, there are 274 men every 100 women.

China and India modify the world statistics due to eugenetics policy (or childhood femicide): in China, there are 106 men every 100 women; in India 107 men every 100 women. Recently, however, also China - according to the 2020 statements of the Chinese Communist Party (Xinhua, 2021)- has loosened the above-mentioned policies allowing families to have more children and for this reason, there may also be more daughters, increasing the gap between the number of men and women, in favor of the latter.

Societal biases can challenge progress towards creating a balanced-equitable work environment in the Intelligence sector. Having an institutional culture that promotes gender equality, diversity and inclusion requires also a commitment by leaders and senior management of the Intelligence services and aiming to ensure balanced leadership at all levels (DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, 2019). The world is changing and anyone who is not realizing it risks being “out of the game”. For the Intelligence of today and tomorrow more space for the Intelligence and female contribution is needed.

3. Diversity and differences as a resource

The selection of women must not take place by mere gender, but by the skills of every single subject. Legislation and guidelines of some States, in an attempt to guarantee the presence of female figures within workplaces, oblige the various governmental Organizations to have a balanced presence between men and women. This method has depleted of resources the various sectors because it was started from a wrong fundamental: the female figure is important but as long as She possesses, like all other figures, competencies, and skills, and is, therefore, able to give a concrete contribution to the type of activity that the group has to carry on. It is worthless, sometimes harmful, having unqualified subjects that cover a certain position and a certain role only for his/her gender, concerning the legal requirements some States are subjected to.

These dynamics, indeed, can be not only deleterious and counter-productive, but they also could trigger a psychological mechanism in the woman that could discourage her to be competitive, to prepare adequately herself to highlight her abilities (i.e. “I am the best for the job, that is why I am in”) and conduct her to consider her presence like a due deed (i.e. “I am a woman, so I am entitled to this position, this job”). These dynamics only deprive the quality of the work. This

quality, instead, could be reached and increased by granting the right spaces to the female vision in a debate between the parties, where decisions are taken using different points of view that can be found with different brains and different expertise. In the Intelligence field, more than in other life areas, like private and work areas, it is essential not to have bias. The “gender” issue in particular, has raised the bias matter in the sociological area of interest. Bias are extremely harmful and deleterious for the National and International Security, at all levels, in every field it is required to intervene.

The basic concept is that, both in Intelligence and in counter-Intelligence, all the capabilities of each individual who compose the group, even the Organization, must be used. The presence of an even single weak component -a subject with biases and whose observation and processing logic could have dangerous blind spots- puts even the most important Organization at risk. Across-the-board thoughts widely used in the last 30 years concerning gender and all the behaviours that have to be actualized in order to respect gender have been useful in the past, even a recent one. But, in the area in which we are debating, in which we are operating, it is now necessary to take a leap forward and not run the risk of getting stuck in ideas that do not find a feasibility but on the contrary become source of slowing down, instability and often ineffective conclusion of the operation in the practical life of solving problem and saving human lives.

Diversity means different contribution, different perspective and in a multifaceted environment as National Security and Intelligence is, considering all the nuances is crucial. The importance of female contribution in the Intelligence operational field, or analysis or strategic issues is not related to the question “who is the better in doing the work or the performance?” but to the possibility to count on scientific proofs or findings that highlight that it is possible to count on different brain paths or different brain capabilities. So far the right answer is that the right practitioner should be found to perform the requested task or for the right counter-action referring to counter-Intelligence or counter-terrorism for instance.

The Physiological, psychological and neuro-scientific contribution related to the different capabilities of the brain shall be used as scientific leverage when speaking or briefing also decision-makers or who leads a top position in the Government or in Institutional and International entities. It means that -at the strategic level, but also on the operational and tactical

level- the female contribution can add diverse and additional perspective to the unit or to the team. It is important to know that female brain is different, in a functional and not in a morphological way, it is not better or worse but different. The female component, the female unit is able to perceive different details, or perceive the same environment or threat with a different point of view or with a different approach.

Studies highlighted that in the female brain there is a high level of communications between the left hemisphere and the right hemisphere of the brain. In the male brain, on the contrary, there are more communications within the same hemisphere and less communications between the left and the right hemisphere of the brain (Ingalhalikar et al., 2014). This less lateralization of female brain has consequences, for instance, also on the brain functions, which are responsible for the face coding process that is connected to the identity, structure, familiarity and emotional face content processing (Proverbio, Riva, Martin and Zani, 2010).

Therefore, there are functional differences in various activity centres in the brain while performing physical or cognitive tasks or undergoing emotional experiences (PNAS, 2016).

For that reason, is important also to consider that to implement the quality of Intelligence analysis or the quality of Intelligence outcomes. What seem like philosophical concepts, are actually widely scientifically proven except that -as has often happened in the recent years- Intelligence and science have not always get agreed. There are rules in communication, there is a transmitter and a recipient. Between these two elements exist a series of factors, which allow to pursue what is in our task. It is the message that counts, how this message is transmitted and a series of signs and codes that fit into the message (Bellomo, 2006). The language is verbal, visual, mimic, gestural and auditory (Birdwhistell, 1952; Ekman, 1992; Borg, 2009). In light of these points it is clear that there are subjects that, regardless, have greater communicative skills. All know, since we were children, that we mainly had female figures to transmit, to communicate, to teach us. The human being is what S/He learns. So, the most important thing of the human being life is the beginning. Within these statement there is nothing linked to maternal warmth, but -and it is clear with studies made over time related to the language as a means of communication, to the factors of communication, to the variety of languages, functions, registers and sectorial languages- the tone of the female voice intended as *Hertz* frequencies is recognized more clearly from the human brain (Barbaro and Salinetti, 2010).

The woman's way of communication, her register, is understood in the norm as less negative and the comprehension can be reached more easily. The recipient does not put mental blocks. The woman gestures, her mimic -even towards of another woman- achieves this goal. Therefore, without going into scientific explanations, it has been revealed that characteristics that are not in the male nature can be exploited -with an appropriate training- to achieve results in various areas of the National Security, by using just what science make at our disposal. The female figure as not the one who use her charm, but a woman who adopts science, innovation, intelligence in favour of the population. Because of this, using the woman in more delicate operations, as undercover for instance could be very useful and productive in terms of operation's success. As seen, at the scientific level, the presence of one, or more, female figure, can facilitate and support some dynamics by taking advantage of relational and communicative skills. Those, combined with the characteristic of possessing vocal frequencies that "penetrate" more other subject defensive barriers (man or woman), could facilitate the infiltration where needed. It should also be considered an almost greater woman's capability to recognise and discern her own emotions, as well as others (it is called Emotional Intelligence - EI). She is able to decline these emotions not only on a verbal communicative level, but also on a mimic and gestural one and She is able to, for instance, use a larger "catalogue" of facial expressions and then to disentangle herself better even when there is a sudden change in the early planned direction. Emotional Intelligence (EI) has a lot of characteristics that are largely different from IQ ones, such as: creativity, drive, persistence, motivation, rapport, and empathy. So there is a different part of the brain that manages all these "emotional" skills which are distinguished from the academic IQ skills (verbal, math and spatial). The self-awareness of EI is important at the same level of just owing it, because it leads the individual to have feelings or emotions about his/her thoughts (awareness, precisely) in order to make the good decision. Goleman itself underlines that the so-called "gut decision" is, in most cases, the right decision, also for leaders in the work field (Goleman, 2006). The woman has -when properly trained- another valid means to detect advantageous situations, to plot the right connections as well as to recognise potentially risky situations or subjects.

In order to encourage this step and to make the undercover operation even more credible and agile, it would be advantageous to be able to use local subject. These subjects know more deeply the local dynamics, the behavioural characteristics, the "dialectal" nuances, as well as, not less

important, behavioural and mind-set stereotypes that can be taken in advantage for the good success of the operation.

Therefore, for these scientific reasons, and not cultural ones, nothing forbids to the female unit to yearn for more complex roles and assignments. Just think of the woman not only as an infiltrate (as seen above) but also as negotiator and hostage negotiator, in the crisis management, or as a subject engaged to gather information on the field (Humint). Only her capabilities will be what could bring her, with the proper education and training, to perform the task, even a leading one, for which She is scientifically capable. It is easy to understand that diversity is important for all aspects of the Intelligence work. This relies on the development of skills and capacities among Intelligence professionals so that gender dimension are included as part of Intelligence service regular practice (DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, 2019).

Considering all the scientific findings applied to the security environment, it is surely possible to state that women are an indispensable part of the operational, decision-making process and the management of National Security at large. Undoubtedly, is not a matter to balance the number of the employees, to balance the percentage but it is important to stress the power of the quality of having a extended and diverse contribution, of having different brains working together to cover all the National Security and Intelligence aspects. Some of the advantages that women can have can be seen as a reverse benefit. While men tend to identify things from point A to point B and move on, women tend to have a psychological desire to create context for a situations, which can be better in the long run (Martin, 2015).

The broader vision of things and the ability to plan in a long-term perspective must be largely used to realise strategic foresight activities. The situation designs that a woman can build are wider than a man can do, and this in light of also the most recent neuro-scientific outcomes which prove a synchronization of several areas of the female brain (Guevara, Perez and Rosenblum, 2017) and therefore able to evaluate a greater number of possibilities in which a situation can evolve and, subsequently, a greater number of variables that can be planned. Integrate the different point of views is a basic pillar developing the ability to understand and respect all contributions.

It is not a matter of who will sit in that chair or unit but what kind of quality can share or add this kind of female point of view, female contribution, or female dispute sometime. Everybody know that when speaking about discussion, critical thinking, creative thinking, how to be able to think ‘out of the box’ (topics that are very common in Intelligence analysis) it is necessary to be very careful in not missing any kind of opportunity. Considering also the importance of gather new mind-set or new cultural ways of thinking or new interdisciplinary contributions. With the overall aim to grasp what is good and great from each other and then create the path for a future innovation and future success with a very strong balanced approach.

4. A step forward to the training and the recruitment process

Considering all the scientific contributions outlined before, a different way to recruit and also train the female component should be considered in order to overcome biases that women can have regarding others but also regarding them selves.

This aim can be achieved applying the root scientific features to the work on the field – considering its operational characteristics- but since the beginning also to the educational and training segments using the *Psych Evolving* method. So that learning and subsequent implementation will be made effective, long-lasting and without necessitating long timing in order to have personnel ready and competent to be deployed in line with the contingency.

The *Psych Evolving method*, realized by École Universitaire Internationale specifically for Intelligence practitioners, provides objective data on the increase of performance in all areas that pertain National Security using new education and training techniques.

It is a method where the psychological component is connected to new approaches, while the neurophysiology component is connected to scientific research: it is a method that has been developed over recent years at École Universitaire Internationale. Training, indeed, that allows to increasing the human being capabilities and performance (Magris et al, 2020). It is suitable to

prepare the employed workforce and the next practitioner generation to be able to perform high-quality Intelligence activities in the various domains (Magris et al, 2020). For that reason, is important to brief the top-level leaders, but also the people that already work in the field that a lot of researches is needed, a lot of new contribution is need in order to implement models that already exists and to develop new models.

Now, it is very important to be ready to build new models, new ways of thinking and then to revitalize the importance of an integrated vision and integrated approach.

5. Conclusion

The woman must bring an added quality, not just be there for statistical purposes. Those who insist to see the woman as a fragile subject do so basically to hide her/his own interests.

There is a global delay in the employment of women in the National Security and Intelligence, at all levels, precisely in light of the evolutionary data that tell us what is going to happen in the next years. A particular emphasis must be given to the female figure in the operational role (i.e. clandestine operations) and in the strategic planning and operations management.

The profession is an art, an artisan art where every detail, that makes every operation unique, is taken care of. Intelligence is not a statistic; it is a sign that can design in a different way the life of people. It is essential to run for cover, to give space to capable women, to find ways to let girls know that this profession exists, and to structure an appropriate education and training for practitioner.

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