

Strategic Visions: Volume 22, Number II

Roth, Tanya L. *Her Cold War: Women in the U.S. Military, 1945-1980*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

In *Her Cold War: Women in the U.S. Military, 1945-1980*, Tanya L. Roth argues that, to understand the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, historians should first look at women's military integration as a key moment in the movement toward gender equality. According to Roth, the U.S. military was not a stagnant environment simply affected by the civilian society it served, but rather a place for social change. The military allowed American women to engage with national defense in ways that moved them closer towards equality. As discussions to expand the draft occurred, military leadership recognized an unused and readily apparent force, womanpower. Since women had proven themselves during World War II, and since the U.S. military believed that a strong and expansive military force was key to national security, leaders saw women as a ripe new influx of power that could contribute to the national defense.

The military was forced to reckon with the fact that it was not only a defense organization, but also a social institution. Roth argues that female Cold War military service was racially integrated from the very beginning. Despite this racial integration, military leadership was first and foremost trying to recruit educated, white women. The early style guides gave pages of guidance on how to style hair and makeup for white women but did not provide guidelines to help African American women do the same. Roth argues that in the later 1950s and 1960s African American women did appear in photographs and recruitment posters, but they were typically presented in the background in a tokenistic way. Officials required enlisted women to have at least a high school degree, but they ignored discrimination that Black women faced due to their race.

Part I, "A Shared Responsibility," focuses on the early realities of making women a permanent part of the military. Men and women in military leadership roles publicly advocated for the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (WAISA) but faced challenges from members of Congress

and concerns from civilians. Roth also demonstrates the efforts to identify servicewomen with the domestic American ideal of a civilian woman. The military pushed the narrative in their recruitment materials that, just as the military had made boys into gentlemen for centuries, the military would now be responsible for turning girls into proper ladies. Presenting servicewomen in media was a useful tool for recruitment and a way to help adjust the public to the idea of military women playing gender-appropriate roles in national defense. Image was everything and the military and film studios worked together in the 1950s to ensure that the right image of the American servicewoman was onscreen. In addition to excluding women from combat, women's military training also differed from men's training by including extensive instructions on how to maintain their appearance.

Part II, "The Possibilities and Problems of Wielding Womanpower," tracks how the military dealt with pregnancy, marriage, and homosexual servicewomen. Roth argues that military service provided women the opportunity to take on the responsibilities of citizenship and access new career paths not available in the private sector, but these opportunities were only given to certain women (namely white, educated women). Until the 1960s, the military normally offered women a discharge when they married, while they immediately dismissed women who became pregnant (in or out of wedlock) regardless of whether she wanted to stay or not. Military leadership also believed that a tremendous threat to womanpower was women's sexual misbehavior. Leaders had concerns about women's promiscuity, but the military believed that homosexual women were a far greater threat. The military desperately made efforts to keep lesbian women out of the service, conducting witch hunts that led to many women being questioned about their sexuality and dismissed from the service with little to no recourse.

Part III, "Integration Is Not Enough," focuses on military and civilian attempts to give equal opportunities to servicewomen. Roth highlights the vital role played by the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Service

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(DACOWITS), a committee created in 1951 that included both military and civilian women that advocated for the advancement of servicewomen in the face of frequent resistance from military leadership. Roth looks at the partnership between DACOWITS and the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), which was the first time DACOWITS worked with a civilian group, to show the growing public interest in American women's changing roles both inside and outside of the military. Roth also explores the discussions around the Equal Rights Amendment and how they prompted civilian and military conversations about who should be responsible for national defense and whether Americans were ready to eliminate sex as a qualification. Roth also demonstrates that, even though many barriers for servicewomen were eliminated in the later 1970s such as the end of women's exclusion from service academies, the job of changing the attitudes of a patriarchal military and the people in it continues to the present day.

Readers might wish that Roth had spent more time on the passage of the WASIA and the heated debates that occurred both inside and outside of Congress regarding military gender integration. The specific complaints and concerns made by Congressmen and civilians are fascinating and the ways military leadership responded to them could shed valuable light on why the legislation looked the way it did and how that influenced women who served after the act was passed in 1948. While she consistently references the act in other chapters, more firsthand dialogue would have enriched her work. This is just a small critique in an otherwise valuable book. *Her Cold War* is an important contribution to military history that highlights the vital role women have played in the military and the ways in which military service benefitted women and pushed feminism forward on a larger scale. As Roth effectively shows throughout her book, to understand the way ideas around gender evolved in U.S. society in the twentieth century, one must first analyze the ongoing integration of military women.

Grace Anne Parker
PhD Candidate
Temple University