

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

---

## BOOK REVIEW: MEN, WOMEN AND WAR

By Donald Collins

*"Sex and War: How Biology Explains Warfare and Terrorism and Offers a Path to a Safer World," by Malcolm Potts and Thomas Hayden (Benbella Books, Dallas).*

You may not be surprised to be told that it is primarily male humans who bring us war. But perhaps you are unaware or unmindful of the driving force behind male tendencies to make war since the dawn of human history -- the sex drive.

As Malcolm Potts and Thomas Hayden remind us in "Sex and War," for much of human history the most successful and dominant males went to war, took the spoils and -- exhibiting classic Darwinian behavior -- raped and impregnated women, thereby benefitting future generations with their genes. You know, Genghis Khan, etc.

Potts explains how crowding and the loss of food supplies leads to wars that are often entered into with enthusiasm by young males who, motivated by patriotism or seeking escape from unemployment or boredom, bond with their mates in tight groups and find excitement or even joy in battle.

The power of group loyalty and, yes, the reported joy of killing put male behavior into sharp focus vs. that of females.

A benign manifestation of aggressive male behavior or team aggression can be observed at NFL games, both on the field and in the stands. A more dangerous manifestation can be observed among terrorists, who are clearly imbued -- and motivated -- by stories of heroic group male behavior.

Potts -- British-born, Cambridge-educated and now Bixby Professor at UC Berkeley -- is an obstetrician and research biologist who has always understood the urgency of dealing with our now overpopulated planet. And as I read this highly readable must read, it became obvious to me that the recent attacks by Israelis in Gaza, now temporarily stopped while Hamas rearms, are partially the result of Palestinian control of women who get little family planning and typically have six children.

As "Sex and War" points out, "Arab society is sexually chaste and few young men have sexual outlets prior to marriage but lack the financial independence to marry. Given the large pool of young men, the lack of opportunities, the sexual frustration and the inevitable resentment toward a dominant out group, it is hard to imagine a more perfectly conceived breeding ground for team aggression, in this case taking the form of terrorism."

Solution? First understand the problem; then take the actions suggested.

The authors point to one logical way of cutting terrorism and the risk of wars and heading down "a path to a safer world." What is that? By aggressively lowering birth rates through planned parenting, birth control and, yes, abortion.

The deep biological nature of human evolution will not be altered easily.

The world remains dominated by male leaders who all too often feel so bloody good about solutions that seem to require bloodletting. One could point to our Iraq invasion and countless prior sorties into battle that could have been avoided by less testosterone-dominated negotiations.

Perhaps as the number of nations armed with nuclear weapons grows, as it surely will, major powers may be more globally fixated on planetary survival by means proposed by the authors. But then again, perhaps not. And of course people who purport to bring us absolute security have in history often lead us to absolute tyranny.

In 1999, Potts co-authored "Ever Since Adam and Eve: The Evolution of Human Sexuality." In my review for Amazon.com, I wrote that "the main evolutionary drive for humans and mammals generally has been and is SEX, for the key to our existence is the need to produce the BEST next generation."

Now, in a dangerous age where planetary destruction looms in multiple forms both nuclear and environmental, we had better very soon find a new modus vivendi, one that will provide a workable form of making love, not war. It's called "women's empowerment" worldwide and it includes readily available, safe and economical birth-control options.

*LDonald Collins, a former Greensburger, is a freelance writer living in Washington.*