

Women: A Common

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Common Sense Medicine is not just about health care and medicine. There are other elements in our culture that are also in need of common sense. Violence is one of them.

Despite our news and the feelings they prompt violence is decreasing in the US. Violent acts of a criminal nature, however, are being replaced by a lower number of mass shootings driven by cultural hostilities, both religious and racial.

The driver for both these appears to us to be the fault of the state. Over the last few centuries the state in developed nations has gained monopoly rights on violence. With this transition the state has also accepted the duty to use violence fairly and justly. As the prisons and Black Lives Matter investigations show that has not been the case.

In our foreign relations we see similar evidence of partiality, mostly in the near east where terrorist organizations and religious zealotry thrive—and there is a connection. Israel was the first country in the modern era to establish a religious state. And they did it in the middle of the Arab world by displacing some Arabs. It is entirely natural to respond to this in a defensive manner by pulling together and focusing on the differences that make our side unique. We have seen the Arab world move in this direction since—there is a connection.

As we point out in *The Boids and the Bees* it is possible to nudge others into choices that are healthier, but this is harder to do if they are in the defensive or fearful frame of mind that Daniel Kahneman talks about in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*. When fear dominates our mindset what may well be life-saving decisions need to be made rapidly, so they bypass the thoughtful cognitive parts of our brains where strategy is thought out and planned. When states work on this basis, as Israel seems to do, you get to the point described by Moshe Yaalon, their defense minister who recently resigned in protest over the increasingly conservative and radical government, who said, “Our tactical decisions are not in our strategic interest.” Strategic thinking is slow thinking; it requires more than just seeing a threat and responding with a big stick. The big stick is just another threat to the other side. What is needed is a softer approach.

In looking at the difference between the genders it has been argued that men tend to build hierarchical silos while women tend to build networks. It has also been argued by people like Melvin Konnor in *The Tangled Wing*, that seeking a more peaceful world will elude us until we find a way to incorporate more soft female values in our societies.

This does not mean putting more women in men’s roles. They do well in these roles, but they easily lose sight of the networking as they shift to a hierarchical power structure. We argue, also in *The Boids and the Bees*, for an Iroquois Amendment which would incorporate into our Constitution an element from the Iroquois League that our founding fathers failed to see: a quorum of grandmothers had impeachment power over the chiefs. We can think of no better way to incorporate women’s soft power into a political system.

It would also help, if it could be done without all of the defensive training, to have some ethnically appropriate grannies in our police forces. Grandmother’s scoldings are often more appropriate than handcuffs or worse. Our police forces are all too similar to the guards in Philip Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment where they

rapidly learned to use their power in oppressive ways. Zimbardo himself was blind to this abuse of power, but his fiancée was not and it ended the experiment. We could likely accomplish the same in our police forces with similar wise women.