

# Getting to the bottom of the military

But just how diverse and inclusive were the Aztecs?

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Oswald Spengler's account in his *The Decline of the West* of the death of the Aztec empire is disturbing in the extreme. You will recall the story: A great civilisation, which in 1519 had reached its maximum extent and influence, and was far more highly developed than the Graeco-Roman civilisation at a similar stage, was wiped out three years later by a Spanish army consisting of a handful of men and a few cannon and handguns. Yes, the Spanish were helped by a local outbreak of smallpox, and they received assistance from some rebellious locals; yet the suddenness and completeness with which this 'handful of bandits' was able to annihilate an established civilisation must give pause for thought.

Spengler's thesis is that all great cultures are born, flower and die, and that the West is in its last phase now. Town is sucked dry to feed the city, wisdom is supplanted by hypersensitivity and the 'rootless thought' of the city dweller, and the vigorous 'becoming' culture subsides into a moribund state of torpor and fragility. Douglas Murray's acclaimed book *The Strange Death of Europe* (2017) may be read as an extended footnote to Spengler, who predicted the European Union as both an expression and cause of the decline (the term he used was *Untergang*, 'undergoing', like a ship slowly sinking beneath the waves). Murray's closing words are deeply plangent: 'Prisoners of the past and of the present, for Europeans there seem finally to be no decent answers to the future. Which is how the fatal blow will finally land.'

Perhaps the Tenochtitlan (the capital city and religious centre of the Aztec civilisation) sex discrimination commissioner had found that sexual harassment was endemic in the military, and had set about systematically destroying its culture of male heroism and sacrifice. Or the Aztec king may have attempted to legislate gender differences out of existence, so that women could

be admitted en masse into the military. Entry standards would have had surreptitiously to be lowered, of course, but it was thought unlikely that the army would ever again be required to fight. Perhaps too many good officers had been dismissed for expressing reservations about the Aztec LGBTIQ agenda; or the payouts of millions upon millions of cacao beans for sex-swap surgery and in damages to victims of sexual assault had left the military unable to invest in the human and material resources they needed.

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In respect of the last point, there are anecdotal stories of male soldiers on the front line in Afghanistan masturbating up to twelve times a day. Sex and death are inextricably linked. You don't need too powerful an imagination (a faculty spectacularly lacking in the agitators for gender equality in the military) to appreciate the stress that must be felt knowing that you could be blown to pieces or left horribly maimed for life at any point. Not only that, but a surprising number of female military in Iraq seem to have fallen pregnant (one suspects deliberately) and been sent home. And who of us could honestly say they would do otherwise? The reality of the battlefield (and both Australia and the UK have approved the posting of female soldiers to the front line) is far different from what the gender cheer squads are leading young girls to believe. How many deaths and maimings and sexual assaults of women are the activists prepared to accept as the price for making their symbolic point?

This is the kind of realistic thinking for which the late and much missed Alistair Cooke was renowned, and for which he was impugned by the gender warriors. No doubt many a feminist will be affronted by the previous paragraph. Just so are judges (male and female) routinely attacked for suggesting that young girls who dress provocatively and drink themselves silly may be leaving themselves vulnerable to sexual assault. Rape is rape, after all. No excuses. There is no attempt here to excuse, however, any more than in the case of a lion attacking a wildebeest. It is simply pointing out a reality of nature.

We come here again to the question of town versus late-phase city, of blood and speech and wisdom versus thought and words and sensitivity. Spengler tellingly observed that the city represents the victory over nature. Urbanisation has indeed removed much of the risk around food supply, shelter, health and so on. Human nature is not so tractable, however. One suspects that the critics of Cooke and the judges are driven by fear and denial of nature against which the city has left itself vulnerable. The impulse that a young male feels to kill or be killed in defence of his country comes from a far deeper place than is appreciable by the rootless thought of the *fellaheen* (Spengler's term for the dwellers in the late-phase city), and the words that pour forth in profusion at any writers' festival you might care to name.

Perceptive commentator observed of the former British Prime Minister David Cameron that he lacked 'bottom,' in a non-Kardashian sense. Like the Turnbulls, Cameron is a *fellaheen* type, as are his successor Theresa May and the boy wonder of Canada. By the end of Cameron's five-year term in 2015, military spending in the UK had been cut by 8 per cent in real terms, and a private legal firm had been allowed to run amok in its hounding, often by illegal means, of military for historical alleged crimes, sometimes ten years or more after the event, with its all too predictable effect on recruitment (the *Express* reported a 31 per cent drop in numbers in the eight months to Jan 25 2017).

Another neophyte, but with 'bottom' and an old head on his shoulders besides, is the 31-year-old Sebastian Kurz, elected Austrian leader in October on a conservative (though not far right) platform. Perhaps the Aztecs could have used a Kurz in the years leading up to the cataclysm. Europe and the West certainly desperately need him now.