

THE MILITARY AS A SOCIAL GROUP: PROBLEMS RELATED TO WOMEN'S INCLUSION

*Gender mainstreaming is more than just including women in the process,
it is about allowing them a seat at the table where decisions are made.*

That is why we need women in leadership.

Working toward gender equality helps us all to progress.

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ABSTRACT

The military is a special institution, where women and men did not always have the opportunity to share the same roles and duties. Throughout history, women served in the military in predominately gender-specific auxiliary roles (for example, medical services, administration, and communications), however, over the past four decades, military professional specializations are available for women also.

In this paper, we discuss some details of how femininity, masculinity and gender equality in the military have been debated, managed, and distributed until our days. The purpose of the article is to introduce the approaches of how military units are identifying as social groups – and the peculiarities of the presence of gender issues in that context. It tries to answer questions about the relations of biophysical differences of sexes, gender stereotypes, and social predetermination, in the context of military service and ends with the discussions of the implementation of UNSCR 1325. This paper contains a collection of literature reviews, with some comparative data.

Keywords: Women in the military, gender inequalities, gender stereotypes, literature review.

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY: SETTING THE GROUND

The 20th century brought with it new challenges: unprecedented large-scale hostilities, a new geopolitical system, and ideas about human rights and equality, which contributed to the widespread involvement of women in various social and political spheres. Moreover, feminist waves broke out in different parts of the

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world, prompting states to follow the principles of economic, political and civic equality between men and women.

Even though it is mainly men who play the role of warrior-hunters and soldiers, the presence of women in the military field is not an achievement of current times at all. According to the ancient Greek geographer and historian Strabo (63–23 BC), “warlike women” or the Amazons lived in the Rostov, Pyatigorsk and the Caucasus Region, near the Terek River, from about 700 B.C. to A.D. 500. These women were warriors and hunters, who had good skills in archery, riding and fighting. Their group was closed for men, even for their own sons (Batrakova L.G. & Krasnova G.N., 2013). Thus, from the beginning of human history, there are a lot of historical evidences which state the existence of women warriors.

Security studies, under the influence of feminist currents since the 1970s, have led academic discourses consider the possibility of involvement of women in national security and state defence processes. The security spheres have an advantage over other spheres of governing the country due to the monopolies of the hard force, the possible use of violence etc. In this context, gender-based restrictions artificially excluded and still exclude in some parts of the world women from the high ranking positions in the government. The use of violence and aggression (including military activities) required mostly “masculine” features, which were based on objective physiological differences of sexes. At the same time, it should be especially mentioned that this approach does not exclude or deny the possibility of women engaging in violent, war-like acts. However, these approaches have recently been questioned mainly at the publicist-propaganda level, where it was stated that the physical differences between the sexes are conditioned by the predetermination of social roles (Avetisyan, 2016). In other words, the supporters of this approach believe that the average statistic woman is inferior to the average statistic man in her physical condition (height, weight, muscles, speed etc.) simply because of socially predetermined approaches. A girl during her early childhood age is not allowed to participate in masculine sport routines (strength sports) or games that develop speed and strengthen skills; otherwise, the woman would not concede to the man in the above physiological aspects, so there would be no obstacles for them to engage in military service (See Caldera, Huston, and O’Brien, 1998, Diamond, 2002, Winslow & Dunn, 2002). Supporters of this version believe that boys are exposed to the influence of the social environment from childhood. For example, for girls, it is usually the parents who do not buy them toy guns or rifles, military equipment (aircraft), soldiers etc. Society expects boys to be resilient, to pay no attention to injuries, while crying is a symbol of feminine or “girlish” behaviour, which is shameful and unacceptable (See Jacklin, DiPietro, and Maccoby, 1984).

Due to this “biased” division of social roles, military is associated exclusively with male/masculine manifestations. On this ground, women were unjustly

excluded from military service and being deprived of participation in security decision-making.

However, a number of counter-arguments can be brought to this approach. It is obvious that in primitive communal societies, there was no reason for artificially separating the scope of activities of the sexes for a newly formed human level of consciousness. Consequently, this conditional differentiation of human activity has been accomplished through the objective evaluation of capacities based on empirical experience. In other words, the group realized that in general, women's abilities are more rationally used for housekeeping chores, rather than for hunting. Another major reason is the objective biological features that enable a man to be more effective in professions that require physical strength.

Nevertheless, even in the earliest periods of human history, the involvement of women in military was considered by some authors to be permitted and useful.

Plato's "Republic" is one of the first philosophical works known, where the presence of women in the military is considered as possible. Plato believes that it is physiologically possible to find women who are not inferior, but equal to men, or who can even surpass them. Although "He believes that males are naturally superior and he favours subordination of women in general, but for pragmatic reasons he argues for their inclusion as guardians in his ideal polity. (...) Plato concludes that women deserve equal educational opportunities" (Blythe, 2001, pp. 243–44). He thinks that women can engage, even if infrequently as equals, in all areas of activities, especially: sports (athletics), government, philosophy, music, warfare and medicine. Despite this, he nevertheless states that because of their gender weakness, women should be entrusted with lighter responsibilities. Moreover, the term *weakness* is considered only in its physical sense, while the intellectual weakness of women is not being mentioned and discussed.

Plato considers the possible involvement of women only within the pragmatic priorities of his "ideal state" (Blythe, 2001, pp. 245–47).

Unlike Plato, Aristotle believes that women are mentally inferior to men, as the basis of the relationship between the sexes. The philosopher believes that men should supervise women as the intellect directs the desires of the soul. "This implies that independent women would simply follow momentary impulses" (Blythe, 2001, pp. 255–56).

In this context, Thomas Aquinas points towards Aristotle's ideas about women soldiers. As he mentions in his *In Libros Politicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, "It is futile to argue from an analogy with the beasts that women ought to be treated the same as men, since beasts do not concern themselves with household management" (Hewson, 1975, pp. 246–247). Th. Aquinas's primary idea is that women already have a decent job and their involvement in new fields will not only be unnatural, but will also hinder the proper performance of their key functions.

In the Middle Ages, in the absence of a respective male heir, a woman holds that position; she was endowed with the same rights and powers as a man. Male

vassals naturally complained about their lord's gender, but in either case, they seldom showed reluctance to have a female superior. Moreover, the lord-vassal relations expressed it self through military service; there was a belief that the fight is "the business of men" only. There was no place for a woman in that world, because knighthood was intensively taught to boys from an early age and women could not even dream of engaging in jousting.

Most medieval discourses about women are entirely sexist; support for ideas of women superiority usually came from religious ideals. Even the notably positive illustration of women observed in romantic writings characterized women generally as inspiration for knights and as "incomplete men" (Caviness, 2010).

Within the framework of this topic, we can often meet biological and anthropological discourses which can deviate from the main problem. Sociobiological research outlines similarities between human and animal behaviour, claiming that males show similar models of reaction and activity to the males of other advanced apes such as chimpanzees. Thus, they are worth discussing, as they try to explain the differences in involvement in the military sphere of men and women, respectively.

Turning to the gender discussion, it should be noted that gender is not natural, but it is socially constructed. So concepts such as "femininity" and "masculinity" are constructed socially and culturally (Francis, 2000). This perspective can deny and at the same time support the involvement of women in non-traditional roles and occupations such as the military. So, if women try to enter traditional male fields, they are often faced with social stereotypes and public expectations regarding what constitutes a "normal" woman. Definitely, a "normal" woman does not have strong muscles, does not run as a soldier, does not sleep in caves and of course does not do "man things". Contrary, a "normal" woman must be thin and graceful, emotional, should care for children, cook fast and tasty, and clean the home. Sociocultural stereotypes of what "femininity" and "masculinity" is are shaping the boundaries which women cannot cross without facing consternation and social reproach. Sometimes women need to play down their sexuality while still keeping "femininity." They must keep a balance between femininity and masculinity in which they are feminine and suitable to be perceived as woman (respectively heterosexual), yet masculine enough to be seen as competent to serve (See Herbert, 1998).

Thus, to highlight the patterns of women's involvement in the armed forces, their role and status, and the expansion of institutional frameworks, the military can be studied as a separate social group.

MILITARY UNITS AS SOCIAL GROUPS

The social group is one of the main elements of the social structure of society. Modern societies consist of a variety of social groups: students, workers, professional groups etc. Generally, each individual during their lifetime belongs to

different social groups, shifting from one to the other because of social or civic duty, cultural or intellectual development, in order to satisfy their own material needs, to diversify their leisure time, and so on. The military units are classical types of formal (official) social groups. The members of the military are reciprocally linked to each other; they share certain, common interests, have a sense of unity/belonging, and identify themselves as a group. Group members behave in a more or less similar way: they represent collective behaviour and follow existing group norms, in the form of customs, morales, traditions, laws etc. (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, 1987). They are individual subjects of the law carrying out certain socially necessary functions and perform tasks in established and operating state bodies and organizations in which military service is provided by law (Bystryakov, 2011, pp. 42–45). Speaking about the military characteristics, we should underline that military units are “*bureaucratic in form, with a strict hierarchy, repressive, conservative, sexist, and violent*” (Martin, 1984). Their mission is to serve the interests of the state and at the same time keep the balance between their own special interests.

Thus, the military units constructed from diverse layers of society. The flows of conscription and demobilization make the process of group identity sharing slow and complicated. Because of this, inner and outside conflicts could arise, which become more complex when they also meet with the gender-based issues.

The reasons for the barriers to women’s involvement in the military or other related violence sphere are not as clear as they may seem. Therefore, it is necessary to address the socio-political and historical developments as comprehensively as possible.

From this perspective, the issue of engagement in the armed forces is interesting. Going back to the historical experience, we can categorize two main forms of recruitment in the military: *mandatory and voluntary*. In different periods of human history, forms of recruitment have known different manifestations (warriors-hunters, slaves, aristocracy etc.) which depended on the motivation of recruitment (wars, inter-ethnic conflicts etc.).

Therefore, based on historical experience, the German social historian O. Hinze asserted that the militaries should rule the state unconditionally due to their violent nature. He brings as an example the class of soldiers/warriors or caste in the primitive societies. Despite the fact that this approach has a non-liberal-democratic nature, it has been proven in many historical respects, which emphasizes the historically strong power of men, due mainly to their participation in the military actions (Dolman, 2004, p. 8). As a rule, military operations involve the use of violence that can get out of control and thus begins to be arbitrary. Unacceptable violence in different situations can lead to irreversible consequences starting from the oppression of vulnerable groups of society, to the seizure of power. Moreover, as historical experience shows, women, children and the elderly are more vulnerable in these situations. In this context, the military, along with the violence it ensues begins to be identified with men/masculinity.

Niccolò Machiavelli, in his *Art of War* treatise, analyses the military traditions of the Ancient Rome and the role of the military in political matters. He concludes that the shrewd leader should not allow his vassals to make war their whole job. In such a case, there will be a need to keep the society permanently at war throughout, or there will be a need to pay a military class in peacetime. Otherwise, he can lose his power because of a military revolution. In addition, if we look at the problem in the context of the historical period in which N. Machiavelli lived, the existence of regular armies was a threat to the existence of states, first, because those armies were not in fact regular armies. N. Machiavelli believes that the model of an army of citizens' service was preferable to an army of mercenaries, because patriotism, in any case, can overcome the fear of any threats. Moreover, of course, for them, it is easier to return to their former social roles than the mercenaries (Adekanye, 1985).

The author cites as an example the creation of so-called “Praetorian” guard forces in ancient Rome by the emperor Augustus Tiberius. According to N. Machiavelli, the purpose of creating the mercenary forces was to protect the emperors from the people of the senate, but these, instead, slowly turned military service into their main occupation, so that the forces themselves began to represent a threat to the emperors, “which eventually led to the collapse of the empire” (McWilliams, W.C., *Garrisons and Governments*, 1967, pp. 45–47).

Unlike N. Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, analysing the political situation in England during his time, concludes that an army of patriotic citizens can become a base for various wars because the citizens will start to involve in different active political processes. Hence, in order to keep the majority of the society politically inert, Th. Hobbes prefers to introduce the institution of mercenaries (Dolman, 2004, pp. 32–34).

Here we can see that both Th. Hobbes and N. Machiavelli do not consider the military as a separate social group, with clear standards. According to both authors, mercenaries are professional soldiers only because they do not engage in other activities, except war/conflicts.

At first sight, it may seem that voluntary engagement is more effective in achieving military goals, because it is based on the free will of the person, with the exception of the restricted engagement. However, due to the imperfection of the management system, voluntary military service becomes a means to serve its own or some narrow group interests. Accordingly, the involvement form is a necessary but not a crucial precondition for the definition of the social group of the military or the establishment of a military profession and professionalism. Besides, as the famous American scientist, Samuel Huntington, states, “In the mercenary system, an officer acted as an organizer who recruited a group of people, sold their services, and the army consisted of opponents owned by different officers, fighting with each other, having no common standards, no common military spirit” (Huntington, 1959, pp. 21–22).

Thus, we can assume that the voluntary recruitment of mercenary armies is not yet a basis for military professionalism or the distinction of the military component of society. It is worth mentioning that in the works of both Th. Hobbes and N. Machiavelli, there is almost no connection to the issue of the gender basis of involvement. Meantime, it must be admitted that at least the formal gender differentiation of involvement is important from the point of view of strengthening the most desirable type for the involvement of women in the military. In different historical periods and societies, however, there are some historical proves about the recruitment of women, both on a mandatory and voluntary basis.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the issue of women's involvement can be solved based on political decisions, which can suppress public expectations and gender stereotypes.

WOMEN AND MILITARY TODAY

The global tendencies of ensuring women's socio-economic, political rights, the dynamics of global progress and the changes in wars' nature, were important stimuli to increase the involvement of women in the armed forces in non-traditional positions (See Heikkilä, J. and Laukkanen I., 2020). In October 2000, the UN Security Council officially recognized the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325¹ which states that women should also participate in the building of a secure and stable world. By adopting UNSCR 1325 rules and scope, some countries adopted national action plans (NAP) which detailed every step for realizing UNSCR 1325. The action plans are diverse and nation specific, the differences between them being based on the political, economic situations, geopolitical realities, limited resources etc.

The Resolution has used different justifications, which generally were concentrated on effective peacekeeping activities, rather than on rights-based approaches. The idea is to push women and girls to enter male-dominated institutions and stand for their rights, as well as participate in peace-building processes. Therefore, women bring particular advantages to peacekeeping operations. Their presence can build public confidence in the military.

Thus, with the adoption of UNSCR 1325, significant progress was made in consolidating gender perspectives in peacekeeping actions, particularly in enhancing gender balancing and mainstreaming in an effort of reaching gender equality. Within the above-mentioned UNSCR 1325, it balances gender proportion and activity fields not only in the field of peacekeeping but also nearly all military missions. Yet there is still need for development and improvements.

¹ Subsequent resolutions UNSCR 1820(2008), UNSCR 1888(2009), UNSCR 1889(2009), UNSCR 1960(2010), UNSCR 2016(2013), UNSCR 2122(2013) and UNSCR 2242(2015) which also state that gender should be involved integral part of peacekeeping operations.

Researches over the past three decades have distinguished various barriers to the integration of women in different, non-traditional military positions (combat roles). Thus, the processes of segregation of the social group of servicemen in different historical periods clearly show that along with the development of human history, an attempt is made to clarify, regulate the place and role of women in the military. It is necessary to accept that the issue of women's involvement is essential, and it requires institutional, complex approaches to succeed with their organizational integration process

In conclusion, we may say that women's integration into the service and support-based roles has been "slow but steady". It is difficult to predict if this tendency will grow swiftly or decrease dramatically, but the numbers show steady progress (Gevorgyan, 2020). The *Figure 1* shows the tendencies of military women during the last 19 years (no fresher data from NATO are available at this point). From 1999 (7.1%) 2018, the average has increased by 4.2%, reaching 11.2%. However, this may not be a consistent image of the current situation because political, economic and security changes can affect yearly percentage trends for women in the military.

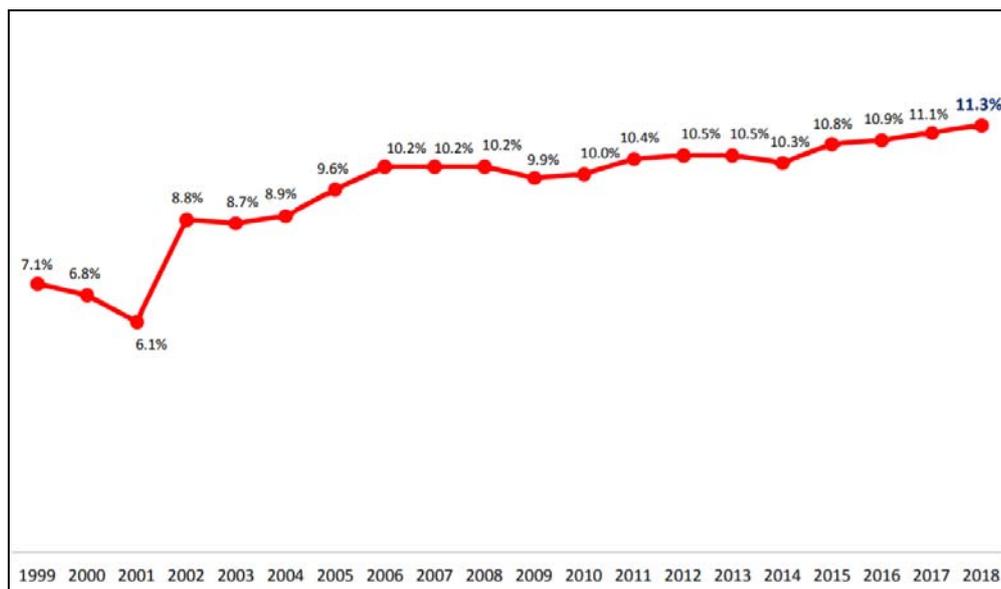


Figure 1 – Percentages of active duty military women in NATO Member Nations from 1999 to 2018. (NATO Summary of the National Reports, 2018)

As we have already seen, women's integration in the military is not a new phenomenon. At present, however, there is an increasing tendency of women integration in limited professional armies often due to the increased role of women

in society. Hence, the positive results of increasing the level of women's involvement in military could be reached only by overcoming pressures of public expectations and breaking the barriers of gender stereotypes.

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