

Trends in the Militaries of Western Advanced Countries

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The term “gender mainstreaming” is used when speaking about the social advancement of women. On the other hand, the discourse on gender mainstreaming in the military is about active integration of female military personnel into crisis response activities, such as security maintenance, peacekeeping operations (PKOs), humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (HA/DR), and protection of civilians (POC).

This article examines what gender mainstreaming is, the process that led from its conceptualization to the establishment of United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), gender mainstreaming by the military, as well as its significance.

What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming first appeared in the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Gender mainstreaming was presented as incorporating gender perspectives at all stages of policies, programs, and projects and in all areas.

In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined gender mainstreaming as follows. “It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” Gender mainstreaming is grounded in these two definitions.

Gender mainstreaming is the concept of women gaining power and becoming active agents, and refers to women’s empowerment in all areas and levels. At the same time, it is a norm that has evolved based on the principle of “respect for human rights” as set forth in the UN Charter, which originated within movements focused on the promotion of women’s rights and empowerment of women centered around ECOSOC.

Adoption of UNSCR 1325 and its evolution

Gender mainstreaming was embodied in UNSCR 1325, adopted by the UN Security Council on October 31, 2000. The underlying drivers included the movements to improve women's rights and status, as well as the increasing importance of POC and changes in UN PKOs (increasing danger in UN PKO missions). While the former had been under consideration primarily by ECOSOC, the latter was a result of a changing post-Cold War security environment.

Changes in the security environment that have occurred since the end of the Cold War have made crisis response part of the military mission.¹ Crisis response, such as providing help, care, and rebuilding support, embodies empathy for others. Accordingly, crisis response duties came to be seen as compatible with the femininity of female military personnel. This perspective, coupled with Western militaries' reluctance toward large-scale deployments to UN PKOs and shift to contributions in specific areas in response to the recently changing nature of PKOs (heightening danger),² imparted significance to UNSCR 1325 as a basis for involving female military personnel in PKOs.

UNSCR 1325 calls on UN member states to take the measures listed in the table below.

The pillars of UNSCR 1325

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urges member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace process, post-conflict peacebuilding, and governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to take into account the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction

Source: http://www.unic.or.jp/files/s_res_1325.pdf. Accessed on July 28, 2023.

In other words, UNSCR 1325 aimed to promote the human rights of women and girls who are prone to get impacts during UN PKOs.

Gender mainstreaming by the military

Through the implementation of UNSCR 1325, Western advanced countries undertook the following to translate gender mainstreaming into concrete activities. First, they aimed to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in UN PKOs. Second, they actively integrated female military personnel into this mission and trained female military personnel who will engage in such duties.

UNSCR 1325 provided a justification for the military, a potential perpetrator of SGBV, to contribute to its elimination by involving female military personnel. Under UNSCR 1325, gender mainstreaming was considered as not only confined to UN PKOs but also operationally effective in crisis response as a whole.

To enable gender mainstreaming's incorporation into not only PKOs but also military crisis response, a theoretical foundation grew out of an optimistic discourse that embraced women's participation in the military: the belief that diverse military duties, including crisis response, have "helping, caring, and rebuilding" as their attributes, and therefore, are suited for women.³

This is echoed by scholars such as Annica Kronsell and Louise Olsson. It differs significantly from the optimists' view in their underlying perception of men and women⁴ and can be considered a third perspective.⁵ The optimists advocate for complete gender equality in the military through gender-free or gender-equal practices, with no distinctions made between men and women—in other words, for the opening of all military positions to women and their deployment in combat. In contrast, the third perspective does not deny gendered division of labor in the military and contends that crisis response activities, such as stabilization operations, PKOs, HA/DR, and POC, require female military personnel precisely due to such differences.

In a joint document named "Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Operations Policy" released in February 2021 by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (currently the Department of Peace Operations) and the Department of Field Support (currently the Department of Operational Support), they acknowledge the differences between women and men (the assumption made by the third perspective). At the same time, they state that the ultimate ideal envisioned by the UN is a gender-equal society where both women and men are recognized as equal members of society, and that efforts will be made to achieve this in peacebuilding processes through UN PKOs.⁶ The third perspective calls for "more women," that is, the strategic involvement of female personnel based on gendered division of labor within the military.

Among the third perspective proponents, Olsson proposes shifting from the acceptable limit discussion about the inevitability of some disadvantages arising from female military personnel's participation in crisis response, to the operational effectiveness discussion about female military personnel being needed in crisis response missions. This discourse forms the theoretical foundation for using UNSCR 1325 as a tool to specialize and actively employ female military personnel in crisis response.

Moreover, in overall crisis response, gender analysis has been incorporated to further enhance operational

effectiveness through gender mainstreaming under UNSCR 1325.⁷ Gender analysis means social analysis that takes account of gender (social and cultural gender differences). Taking note that the needs of the same gender may differ due to social or cultural factors is referred to as applying gender perspectives or gender lens.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) applies gender analysis, recognizing the importance of gender perspectives and considerations in the operational planning process, particularly in the targeting process.⁸ For example, air campaigns that destroy recognized access routes for women to food and water can threaten women's security if they must find alternate paths through unknown terrain.⁹ To avoid such scenarios, the ADF proposes gender analysis to identify the secondary and tertiary impacts of targeting particular areas on their communities.¹⁰ This example shows gender analysis applied in the operational planning process of the military.

Critique of gender mainstreaming in the military

The military's use of UNSCR 1325 as a tool to employ female military personnel has been subject to criticisms. Some argue that the military is arbitrarily using the resolution as a justification to increase its number of female personnel. There are also critiques that UNSCR 1325 is being used to justify foreign interventions under the pretext of protecting vulnerable groups, such as women and girls.¹¹ Additionally, gender mainstreaming in UNSCR 1325 is critiqued over its increasing calls for improving operational effectiveness. They claim that women's active involvement in the military, a potential perpetrator of SGBV, is distorting the resolution's original focus on women's and girls' acquisition of human rights through the elimination of SGBV in conflict areas.¹²

At the root of such critiques is the pessimist view that women's participation in the military, associated with massacre and destruction, will result in the militarization of women, which may extend even to society at large.¹³ While this perspective is prevalent in Japan, the military's implementation of UNSCR 1325 was a consensus of all UN member states, a fact that seems to be deliberately overlooked.

Significance of gender mainstreaming in the military

The gender mainstreaming goal of UNSCR 1325 is to respect the human rights of vulnerable groups, including women and girls, and seek comprehensive security inclusive of women's participation in military forces. Conversely, as military activities increasingly encroach into areas where people live, vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, have been most affected in civilian society, making the security of such vulnerable groups a pressing issue. To address these challenges, the UN has focused on UNSCR 1325 as a tool for strengthening PKOs and called on militaries to implement the resolution. In response, UN member state militaries changed course to implement UNSCR 1325.

However, it should be noted that the military's operational areas now extend beyond uninhabited vast seas and remote wilderness into civilian society, not only in the case of UN PKOs but also in current hybrid warfare. An example is the ongoing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The most affected in this conflict are vulnerable groups, such as women and girls living in communities. It is clear that the concept of human security, or safeguarding the security of vulnerable groups, coexists with and complements the existing concept of national security. The reconsideration of the gender mainstreaming discourse into one for improving operational effectiveness implies that, due to the extension of the military's operational areas into civilian society, human security coexists with and complements existing national security.

Gender mainstreaming in the military has become an irreversible trend. The military's implementation of UNSCR 1325 has become a key component of its doctrines. The militaries that are sensitive and adapting to these developments are the forces of NATO members and Australia. The Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) have implemented UNSCR 1325 in the areas of women's participation and education. Furthermore, a Director for International Cooperation on WPS was assigned at the end of June 2023, aiming to fully integrate WPS into the JSDF. Through exchanges between the JSDF and the militaries of NATO members and Australia, it is expected that there will be mutual learning from each other's best practices.

¹ NATO's joint doctrines define such military activities as "crisis response" (NATO Standardization Office, 1.66 Crisis response, NATO Standard AJP-3 Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations Edition C Version 1, February 2019, p. 1-27; NATO Standardization Office, 2.40 Security, NATO Standard AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine Edition E Version 1, February 2017, p. 2-19).

² This section referred to the following: Hiromi Nagata Fujishige, Yuji Uesugi, Tomoaki Honda, *Japan's Peacekeeping at a Crossroads: Taking a Robust Stance or Remaining Hesitant?*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 11-12. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-88509-0.pdf?pdf=button>. Accessed on July 28, 2023.

³ Regarding women serving in the military as military personnel, Sato Fumika classifies their impact on the military into three perspectives: optimist; pessimist; and a third perspective derived from the optimist view (Sato Fumika, *Josei heishi to iu nanmon* [The Conundrum of Female Troops] (Tokyo: Keio University Press), 2022, pp. 79-81).

⁴ Annica Kronsell, *Gender Sex, and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2012); Louise Olsson and Johan Tejpar, eds., *Operational Effectiveness and UN Resolution 1325-Practices and Lessons from Afghanistan*, Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2009, p. 106. https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/1325_PracticeLessonsAfghanistan_SDRM_May2009_0.pdf. Accessed on July 28, 2023.

⁵ This article examines women's participation in the military using Sato Fumika's three categories. (Sato, *Josei heishi to iu nanmon*, pp. 79-81.)

⁶ "Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Policy," https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/gender-responsive-un-peacekeeping-operations-policy-en_0.pdf. Accessed on July 28, 2023.

⁷ The UN uses the wording "gender analysis" (UN OCHA <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-do-gender-analysis-practical-guidance-un-community>. Accessed on July 27, 2023), Gender analysis based on sex-disaggregated data (UN Women <https://www.unwomen.org/en/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025/statistics-and-data>. Accessed on July 28, 2023). Some scholars refer to "sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis." The wording and what the analysis entails (who is conducting it and for what purpose) vary slightly for each organization and individual. Nevertheless, they are all analyses that essentially take into account the different impacts experienced by men and women. Gender analysis is a method used in various sectors, such as politics, police/military, and industry.

⁸ AFDN 1-18 (Director, General Strategy and Policy, Air Force (hereafter, DGSP-AF)), *Gender in Air Operations*, Air Force Doctrine Note 1-18 (Canberra, Australia: DGSP-AF, 2018); Jody Prescott, *Gender Blindness in US Doctrine*, *Parameters Winter 2020*, Vol. 50, No. 4, November 20, 2020, pp. 27-30.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Motoyama Hisako, "Buryoku funsoka no <josei> to wa dare ka: Josei heiwa anzen hoshō ajenda ni okeru shutai no seisan to shuken kenryoku [Who Are 'Women' under Conflicts? The Production of Subjectivities and Sovereign Power in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda]," *Journal of Gender Studies*, No. 22, 39th Issue, Institute for Gender Studies Ochanomizu University, July 2019, pp. 27-45, <https://www2.igs.ocha.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/02-motoyama.pdf>. Accessed on July 28, 2023; Wada Kenji, "Hoshō no ajenda e no josei heiwa anzen hoshō no saikosei:

Canada no haapaa seiken wo jirei ni [The Reconstitution of Women, Peace and Security as a Conservative Agenda: The Case of the Harper Government in Canada],” *Journal of Gender Studies*, No. 22, 39th Issue, Institute for Gender Studies Ochanomizu University, July 2019, pp. 47-60.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See footnote 3.

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