

**When the “Added Value” becomes the “Added Burden”:
Undermining Gender Equality
by
Instrumentalizing Female Peacekeepers’ Participation**

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Twenty years since the adoption of UNSC 1325 there is an almost unanimous call for an increased number of uniformed women in peace operations from policy makers and multilateral organizations. This continuous push for the inclusion of more women is often justified by arguments about an increased operational effectiveness related to women’s ‘added value’: both implicitly and explicitly advocating for greater gender equality. Yet, in this article, I contend that using instrumentalist arguments to increase the number of female peacekeepers may on the contrary undermine gender equality, as there is a risk of producing self-fulfilling prophecies whereby female peacekeepers try to live up to the high expectations by fitting into gender-stereotypes and/or by working harder than their male colleagues. The ‘added value’ becomes an ‘added burden’ which male peacekeepers do not have to carry. I draw on extensive interview material from military staff in South Africa, Burundi, Belgium and Niger; interviews and informal discussions with female peacekeepers and participation in several policy and research workshops on female participation in peacekeeping to illustrate my argument.

Key words: Female peacekeepers; instrumentalization; expectations; self-fulfilling prophecy

Introduction

As the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security approaches, efforts to increase female participation in peace operations are multiplying. Numerous UN reports, policy documents and research reports emphasise the 'added value' that female peacekeepers can bring, explaining just how much more effective and efficient peace operations will be if the number of female military peacekeepers increases beyond the meagre 4% that they constitute today.¹ These efforts are thus well in line with the objectives of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1325, which advocates for the increased participation of women in peace and security matters.² The arguments about women's 'added value' as peacekeepers are also mostly promoted by organisations that have binding obligations and responsibilities to foreground women's rights, which means that we can assume that they are made with the hope that this will increase gender equality.

In this article, however, I am arguing that there is a risk of contributing to gender inequality and a backlash against women's participation in peace operations if female peacekeepers' participation continues to be instrumentalised. As such, the aim of this article is to critically analyse the discussion about female peacekeepers' 'added value' and increase our understanding of how, contrary to its intended purposes, it works against gender equality. I do this by demonstrating that the discussion about female peacekeepers' 'added value' is both unrealistic and unfair. Firstly, it is unrealistic because the expectations generated by the 'added value' discussion are based on research conducted on only 4% of all peacekeepers, making it difficult to generalise from the findings. The arguments therefore need to be contextualised and nuanced in order not to put unrealistic expectations on female peacekeepers.

Secondly, it is unfair as the 'added value' risks becoming an 'added burden' which only is carried by the female peacekeepers, not their male homologues, who so far have escaped demands about any 'added value'. This, in spite of the fact that they constitute the large majority of military peacekeepers. Previous research has shown that many female peacekeepers try to live up to these expectations by fitting into gender-related expectations and/or by working harder than their male colleagues,³ thereby producing self-fulfilling prophecies. Not only does this risk reinforcing gender-stereotypes, it is also not conducive to gender equality and may result in a pushback against female participation all together if the expectations are not met. I therefore suggest we turn the tables and focus on making the working environment, in which female military peacekeepers are to be integrated, attractive workplaces for both sexes and all genders. This includes addressing both relatively easy practical and infrastructural aspects,

¹ UN Security Council (UNSC) 8508th Meeting (2019) 'Deployment of Female Personnel Boosts Effectiveness, Says Secretary-General, as Security Council Holds Open Debate on Women in Peacekeeping', 11 April 2019, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13773.doc.htm>, accessed 12 March 2020.

² UNSC Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325, 31 October 2000.

³ See, Henry, M, 'Peaceexploitation? Interrogating Labor Hierarchies and Global Sisterhood among Indian and Uruguayan Female Peacekeepers', *Globalizations* 9: 1, 2012, pp.15-33; Pruitt, L.J., *The women in blue helmets. Gender, Policing and the UN's first all-female peacekeeping unit* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); Wilén, N and Heinecken, L, 'Regendering the South African Army: Inclusion, Reversal and Displacement', *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 25:6, 2018, pp.670-686.

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such as providing uniforms and body armours in the right sizes, to more challenging parts like fostering a more inclusive and open atmosphere which values and strives towards gender equality.

The article is theoretically anchored in feminist theory with the underlying aim of understanding gendered relations of power. This entails pointing out the complexities of gender as both a social and a relational construction.⁴ Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and expectations related to the biological sex that affect both men and women. As such, it is a dynamic and malleable concept. Women refers to individuals who have the biological female sex, usually distinguished by the reproductive capability.⁵ The focus of the paper is both on gender (roles, stereotypes, hierarchy, power) and on women’s experiences.

This theoretical positioning means that I both draw from and contribute to research on the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda,⁶ gender, women and peacekeeping⁷ and to the literature on gender and the military more broadly.⁸ The article’s contribution also lies in how it draws on empirical research of a broad range of individual experiences to develop an overarching theoretical understanding of the problem identified. As such, it reviews gaps in our knowledge and opens up a debate on how to transform gender-biased institutions without reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Material for this article comes from primary sources, such as interviews, focus groups, informal discussions, participation in workshops and short-term ethnographic research. The latter refers

⁴ Maruska, J.H., ‘Feminist Ontologies, Epistemologies, Methodologies, and Methods in International Relations’, in Denmark, R.A., Marlin-Bennett, R (eds) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁵ Karim, S., Beardsley, K., *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women and Security in Post-Conflict States*, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2017) p.28; the sample of interviewees only identified themselves along a binary definition of sex, and as such made references to gender as social. This is also why I am using this formulation.

⁶ Duncanson, C. ‘Beyond liberal vs liberating: women’s economic empowerment in the United Nation’s Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 21:1, 2019, pp.111-130; Olsson, L., Gizelis, T-I, ‘An Introduction to UNSCR 1325’, *International Interactions*, 39:4, pp.425-434; Kirby, P., Shepherd, L.J., ‘The futures of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs*, 92:2, 2016, pp.373-392.

⁷ Heinecken, L., ‘Are Women “Really” Making a Unique Contribution to Peacekeeping? The Rhetoric and the Reality’, *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 19:4, 2015, pp. 227-248; Higate, P., Henry, M., ‘Engendering (In)Security in Peace Support Operations’, *Security Dialogue*, 35:4, pp. 481-498; Jennings, K. M. ‘Women’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations: agents of change or stranded symbols?’ *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) Report*, 2011; Karim, S., Beardsley, K., ‘Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing: Token Gestures or Informed Policymaking?’, *International Interactions*, 39: 4, 2013, pp. 461-488; Karim, S., Beardsley, K., ‘Ladies Last: Peacekeeping and Gendered Protection’ in Gizelis, T., Olsson, L. (eds.) *Gender, Peace and Security. Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, (Routledge: Oxon, New York, 2015), pp. 62-97; Simic, O., ‘Does the Presence of Women really matter? Towards combating Male sexual violence in Peacekeeping Operations’, *International Peacekeeping* 17:2, 2010, pp.188-199.

⁸ Kronsell, A., *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping*, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2012); MacKenzie, M., *Beyond the Band of Brothers. The US Military and the Myth that Women can’t Fight* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Mathers, J.G. (2013) ‘Women and State Military Forces’, in Cohn, C., *Women and Wars*, (Polity Press: Cambridge, Maiden, 2013), pp.124-146; Wilén and Heinecken, ‘Regendering the South African Army’; Wechsler Segal, M., ‘Women’s Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present and Future’, *Gender & Society*, 9:6, 1995, pp. 758-762; Woodward, R., Duncanson, C., ‘An Introduction to Gender and the Military’, in Woodward, R., Duncanson, C, (eds.) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, New York, 2017).

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to field work where I have been embedded with Belgian military units at three different occasions in Burundi and Niger. During my last two fieldtrips I have been living with 10 and 15 men from the Special Forces (SF) and the paratroopers (similar to rangers) units as the only civilian and woman. During the fieldtrips I have observed the military performing their tasks and participated in formal and informal meetings. I have also observed and participated in leisurely activities such as playing games and doing sports. During these trips I have conducted more than 30 in-depth interviews with Belgian militaries, as well as over 35 interviews with militaries from other nations, with a large majority of the latter coming from Niger and Burundi. While the main objective of the interviews and informal discussions during these trips was not the role of female peacekeepers per se, I did address gender relations, gender roles and women in the military during the conversations, and it is the information gathered from these exchanges that underpin the current analysis.

I have also conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with 50 individuals from a South African Infantry battalion in 2015 together with a colleague.⁹ In these interviews, gender relations and the topic of female peacekeepers’ perceived ‘added value’ was addressed as one of four themes. In addition to this interview material I have had a number of informal discussions with military colleagues, both male and female over the past decade about the topic at hand. I have also participated in various workshops on Women, Peace and Security and more specifically on women in peacekeeping, which have gathered academics, peacekeepers and policy makers. I draw on their presentations, informal discussions, subsequent email exchanges and telephone interviews as well. Finally, I have transcribed two radio programs: the first one entailed a discussion about how it was to be a woman in the security sector and included a group interview with three women from the Burundian security sector. The second radio program is an interview with the first, and, so far only, woman who has been part of the Swedish Special Forces, about her experiences. Given that some of the material comes from informal discussions and confidential email conversations I have opted to only add interview information such as function, gender, and date for those quotes that come from formal interviews.

The article is structured as follows: first, I revisit the debate about female peacekeepers’ ‘added value’, demonstrating the need to nuance and contextualize the arguments by both building on existing research and highlighting its absence in certain areas. In a second part I draw on individual experiences and examine how the ‘added value’ is transformed into an ‘added burden’ and ultimately may reinforce gender stereotypes and gender inequality. In an attempt to avoid this, in the final section, I critically analyze how to make the working environment, the military in general, and peace operations in particular, more attractive workplaces for all sexes and genders by recruiting representative leaders.

I. Female Peacekeepers ‘Added Value’

The discussion about increasing the number of female peacekeepers has been going on for more than two decades, seeing a strong discursive push with the adoption of UN Resolution 1325 in 2000, but relatively little real progress since then. The resolution launched the debate about women, peace and security, pointing amongst others at the need to increase women’s participation in all related areas. Figures for women in peace negotiations, as mediators and as

⁹ Author article

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signatories have been abysmally low, and despite increased attention since 2000, they have remain low.¹⁰ Similarly, although the actual number of women in the military category has almost doubled between 2006 – 2011,¹¹ the proportion of military female peacekeepers have only increased marginally to approximately 4% in 2020. This increase is mainly due to the fact that many larger UN peacekeeping missions with high proportions of male peacekeepers have ended during the last year, thereby proportionally increasing the number of female peacekeepers.¹²

The question of increasing the number of female peacekeepers has risen to the top of the agenda in recent years when multiple scandals of peacekeepers’ sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) have tarnished the UN’s reputation.¹³ This has coincided with a demand from member states, in particular the US, to make peace operations more effective.¹⁴ Especially in the last few years, since the US has made clear that it is no longer is willing to finance UN peace operations to the same extent as before, the focus on peacekeeping performance has come to the fore of the debates, resulting in a new Security Council resolution: 2436, in September 2018. It is thus against this background of a UN that seeks to improve its performance and clean its reputation that the renewed push to increase the number of female peacekeepers should be seen. Or, as Kronsell has portrayed it: ‘the peacekeeping femininity can heal and remedy the “bad” masculinity of sexual misconduct’.¹⁵

The focus on female peacekeepers in this situation is linked to a host of arguments, drawn from research and reports about women’s added value as peacekeepers: Women are supposedly better at defusing tensions because of their more conciliatory attitudes.¹⁶ They are understood as better at ensuring assistance to victims of sexual violence because they are women, and thus both can better identify with female victims and make the victims feel more at ease.¹⁷ Female peacekeepers are less likely to be perpetrators of sexual exploitation.¹⁸ In addition, women may

¹⁰ Krause, J., Krause, W., & P. Bränfors, ‘Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace’, *International Interactions*, 44: 6, 2018, pp. 985-1016.

¹¹ Olsson, L., & Möller, F., ‘Data on Women’s Participation in UN, EU and OSCE Field Missions: Trends, Possibilities and Problems’, *International Interactions*, 39: 4, 2013, p.591.

¹² Karim, S., Huber, L. ‘Leave No Woman Behind: Preliminary Results from the Elsie Initiative Barrier: Assessment for United Nations Peacekeeping’, paper presented at Folke Bernadotte Academy Workshop on Women, Peace and Security, New York, January 2020, p.5.

¹³ Cold-Ravnkilde, S.M., Mandrup, T., ‘When peacekeepers do damage. Sexual Exploitation and abuse in the Democratic Republic of Congo’, *Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)*, Policy Brief, January 2017. Lee, S., Bartels, S., ‘“They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand to Drop a Baby in You”: A Study of Peacekeeper-fathered Children in Haiti’, *International Peacekeeping*, December 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2019.1698297>; Steff, K., ‘UN says some of its peacekeepers were paying 13-year-olds for sex’, *Washington Post*, 11 January 2016, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/un-says-some-of-its-peacekeepers-were-paying-13-year-olds-for-sex/2016/01/11/504e48a8-b493-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612_story.html, accessed 15 January 2020.

¹⁴ Lederer, E.M. ‘US seeks tougher UN action against peacekeepers’ failures’, *Washington Post*, 12 September 2018.

¹⁵ Kronsell, *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense*, p.90.

¹⁶ Carreiras, H. ‘Gendered culture in peacekeeping operations’, *International Peacekeeping* 17:4, 2010, pp. 471-485.

¹⁷ Puechguirbal, N., ‘Gender Training for Peacekeepers: Lessons from the DRC’, *International Peacekeeping*, 10:4, pp.113-128.

¹⁸ Olsson, L & Tryggestad, T.L., ‘Introduction’, *International Peacekeeping*, 8:2, 2001, pp.1–8.

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serve as deterrents for male peacekeepers to commit sexual violence. Or as De Groot has stated: ‘men behave better when in the presence of women from their own culture’.¹⁹

More practically, female peacekeepers can search women at checkpoints in societies where gender segregation is prevalent, and women are prohibited from interacting with men.²⁰ Women are supposedly better at establishing relations with local women’s group and thereby increase the situational understanding as well as collect intelligence from the local community.²¹ A female soldier from South Africa, underscored women’s capacity to gather information:

‘A woman can talk to a man and can soften his heart. For example, one lady Lieutenant was able to speak to the rebels, she was a female, but the male could not soften his heart and the rebel leader was convinced and it led to a cease fire. The women are very good at getting information from foreign country people, you disguise yourself as if you want a relationship, but you are just gaining information. Sometimes one’s femininity helps, it does, really seriously’.²²

Another female UN peacekeeper explained how she was invited to participate in local women’s groups and thereby access information that otherwise would have been unavailable for her male colleagues. She also decided to employ female translators to be able to communicate with the local women, thereby improving communication possibilities.²³

Female peacekeepers can also serve as female role models for the local community, both challenging gender stereotypes about women as victims and men as protectors, and providing an incentive for local women to get involved in the security forces.²⁴ In Pruitt’s research about the all-female formed police unit (FFPU) deployed to the peace operation in Liberia she shows how the FFPU’s presence correlated with an increase in the percentage of women in Liberia’s national police force.²⁵ This does not confirm, but supports claims that female peacekeepers can inspire local women to join security forces and thereby indirectly contribute to gender equality.²⁶ Female peacekeepers interviewed in Liberia also believed themselves that their presence helped to inspire and encourage local women.²⁷ In an informal discussion, a UN female peacekeeper explained that she had done public speeches almost every week during the time she was in the peacekeeping mission to universities and other organisations, to serve as a female role model in a military leadership position. She also made a deliberate effort to lobby

¹⁹ DeGroot, G.J. ‘A few good women: Gender stereotypes, the military and peacekeeping’, *International Peacekeeping*, 8:2, 2001, p. 37

²⁰ UN Secretary General Statement: ‘More Women in Peacekeeping Improves Protection Responses, Secretary-General Tells Security Council, Highlighting Successes, Challenges of Gender Equality Strategy’, SG/SM/19542-SC/13774-PKO/778, 11 April 2019.

²¹ Dill-Russell, E., ‘The Argument for Equality vs Effectiveness: Why are the Women here?’, *NZ Army Journal* (4th Edition), February, 2018, p. 66; Karim, S., & Beardsley, K., ‘Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing: Token Gestures or Informed Policymaking?’, *International Interactions*, 2013, vol. 39: 4, p.472; UN 2015, 67

²² Interview with South African Female Soldier, Cape Town, May 2015.

²³ Interview with anonymous female peacekeeper, January 2020.

²⁴ UN Secretary General Statement, 2019.

²⁵ Pruitt, *The women in blue helmets*.

²⁶ Kronsell, *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense*.

²⁷ Karim, S., ‘Reevaluating Peacekeeping Effectiveness: Does Gender Neutrality Inhibit Progress?’ *International Interactions*, 43:5, 2017, p. 833

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the troop contributing states to increase their proportion of female peacekeepers in the mission, which resulted in a significant increase, from 4% to 8%.²⁸

The Need for Nuance and Context

These are convincing arguments about why it is important to include women in peace operations. Yet, many researchers have also pointed to the need to contextualise and nuance these arguments to better reflect reality and avoid reinforcing gender-stereotypes. Jennings has for example pointed out that often, locals only see the uniform and do not reflect on the gender.²⁹ In interviews with South African peacekeepers it became clear that context mattered for when female peacekeepers actually could interact with the local population. While in the DRC, the women soldiers saw that they could more easily establish relationships with the local females than their male colleagues - in Sudan - they had limited access to the local community.³⁰ Due to an assumption that female peacekeepers attracted rebel attacks, the female soldiers were relegated to the base camp, thus impeding interaction with locals, or as a male officer explained:

‘In Sudan we have to put them in the back seat, we rather keep them less visible. We try not to take them to “red areas”’.³¹

This statement exemplifies research that shows how female peacekeepers are disproportionately deployed to safe spaces and safe tasks, meaning assignments to countries or territories that have minimal danger associated with them.³² On the other hand, another female officer said that her uniform gave her status and protected her from gender-stereotypical behavior, letting her interact with male population in strongly patriarchal societies, like Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.³³ These discrepancies underline the importance of understanding research findings in the right context and culture.

There is no doubt that women peacekeepers do commit less SEA than their male counterparts.³⁴ Related to this, research has shown that increasing the proportion of women from 0% to 5% in military components would reduce the expected SEA allegations by more than half.³⁵ There is nevertheless a long, and arguably morally dubious, jump from this fact to assuming that women peacekeepers should be capable of working as deterrents for their male colleagues to commit SEA. Not only are women in uniform in a minority and are therefore unlikely to be capable of changing the behaviour of the majority,³⁶ from a purely ethical perspective it is also problematic

²⁸ Interview with anonymous female peacekeeper, January 2020.

²⁹ Jennings, ‘Women’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations’, p. 6

³⁰ Heineken, L., ‘Are Women “Really” Making a Unique Contribution to Peacekeeping?’, p. 233.

³¹ Interview with Male Lieutenant, 26 May, Cape Town.

³² Karim & Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, p.37.

³³ Phone interview with female officer, January 2020.

³⁴ Olsson & Tryggstad, ‘Introduction’.

³⁵ Karim, S., Beardsley, K., ‘Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions: The Role of Female Peacekeepers and Gender Equality in Contributing Countries’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 53:1, 2016, p.109

³⁶ see for example: Connell, R.W., Messerschmidt, J.W., ‘Hegemonic Masculinity. Rethinking the Concept’, *Gender & Society*, 19:6, 2005, pp.829-859; Sasson-Levy, O., ‘The Military in a Globalized Environment:

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to expect women to 'tell on' their male colleagues,³⁷ especially so, as women in uniform are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment than women in other occupations.³⁸ Asking women to work as deterrents for their male counterparts is therefore not only ethically wrong, it also implies putting the women themselves at risk.

There is an intuitive belief that for a female victim of SEA it is easier to talk to another female, as, for the large majority of cases, the perpetrator is a male. There is nevertheless little research which actually supports this belief.³⁹ It is methodologically difficult to verify this claim, not only because there is little research into victims' experiences but also because female peacekeepers still only make up a very small proportion of peacekeeping missions. In addition to this, research has shown that female peacekeepers often are not allocated to the missions where there are high rates of gender-based violence, making the number of cases even smaller.⁴⁰ In some contexts, there is evidence of female victims of SEA preferring to talk to other females rather than men,⁴¹ yet it is difficult to generalise this, given the limited number of studies conducted. Other research has also shown that there is need for specific training for this to be true.⁴²

In discussions with female peacekeepers, the results are contradictory. In a focus group with South African female peacekeepers for example, a woman stated that: 'You need women that can deal with the problems that the other (local) women are facing'.⁴³ Yet, she did not refer to any case of sexual violence. Heinecken also notes that in spite of the extremely high levels of rape in both the DRC and Sudan where the South African female peacekeepers were deployed, not a single one mentioned having to deal with a case of sexual violence.⁴⁴ In a newer study, Karim et al. did not find any evidence that women would be more sensitive than men to SGBV issues.⁴⁵ Yet, in many informal discussions, female peacekeepers maintain that local women more easily open up about sexual harassment to other females, making this again a context related matter. What seems to be certain however, is that both male and female peacekeepers need adequate education to address SEA victims in a correct matter.

There is considerable research which has shown that women are seen as better at defusing tensions and calming hostile and violent situations.⁴⁶ Women are also known to be better at

Perpetuating an "Extremely Gendered" Organization', in Jeanes, E.L., Knights, D., & P. Yancey Martin, (eds.) *Handbook of Gender, Work & Organization* (Wiley: West Sussex, 2011).

³⁷ Karim & Beardsley, 'Explaining Sexual Exploitation'; Kronsell, *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense*; Simic, 'Does the Presence of Women really matter?'

³⁸ Pruitt, *The women in blue helmets*; Wilén, N., 'Achieving a gendered transformation of the post-conflict military through security sector reform: unpacking the private-public dynamics', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 22: 1, 2019, pp. 86-105.

³⁹ Jennings, 'Women's participation in UN peacekeeping operations'.

⁴⁰ Karim & Beardsley, 'Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing', p. 484.

⁴¹ Puechguirbal, N., 'Gender Training for Peacekeepers', p.126; Mobekk, E., 'Gender, Women and Security Sector Reform', *International Peacekeeping*, 17:2, 2010, p. 286.

⁴² Pruitt, *The women in blue helmets*; Holmes

⁴³ Focus group, Cape Town May 2015.

⁴⁴ Heinecken, L., 'Are Women "Really" Making a Unique Contribution to Peacekeeping?', p. 236.

⁴⁵ Karim, S., Gilligan, M.J., Blair, R., & K. Beardsley, 'International Gender Balancing Reforms in Postconflict Countries: Lab-in-the-Field Evidence from the Liberian National Police', *International Studies Quarterly*, 62, 2018, pp.618-631.

⁴⁶ Pruitt, *The women in blue helmets*; Valasek, K., 'Security Sector Reform and Gender', in Bastick, M., Valasek, K., *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*, (Geneva: DCAF, 2008), p. 8.

controlling aggression.⁴⁷ These are clearly important capacities for both the ‘warrior soldier’, but more importantly for the ‘soldier diplomat’, or the peacekeeper. Yet, there is no clear explanation to why this is the case. Do women use less weapons because they are better at communication skills? Or is it linked to notions of women as more peaceful and therefore less intimidating? Regardless of the explanation, one cannot ensure that all women will behave in accordance with the feminine role ascribed to them, making it risky to select peacekeepers based only on their gender.⁴⁸

More research is also needed to confirm the argument that female peacekeepers can serve as role models for local women. There are indeed examples of how female peacekeepers appear to have incentivised local women to join security forces, such as the case of the all-female formed policy unit in Liberia. Yet, this is not likely to be the case in all societies, at all times. In addition, encouraging local women to take on traditionally masculine positions in a highly patriarchal society may result in risky situations for the women themselves, thus reinforcing their vulnerability rather than empowering them.⁴⁹ Furthermore, given that the majority of perpetrators of violence in conflict-ridden societies that host peace operations are men, it might be more appropriate to discuss the importance of both male and female peacekeepers serving as positive role models rather than just focusing on the women. This would be beneficial both for the host state and for the peace operation itself, while removing expectations and burden from female peacekeepers.⁵⁰

To sum up the debate about female peacekeepers’ ‘added value’, first, there is a need to acknowledge that this is a one-sided debate which only focuses on women and does not question male peacekeepers’ performance. It is, essentially a strongly biased debate from the start which clearly is not conducive to gender equality in general, and in peace operations in particular. Secondly, while there is some evidence supporting instrumentalist arguments about women’s added value, this needs to be nuanced and understood as context specific. In some contexts, in certain situations, the fact of being a woman can have an added value for the operation, yet the same could be said for male peacekeepers: in some contexts, in some functions, being a male might bring an added value. In short, both male and female peacekeepers bring an ‘added value’ to peace operations. Thirdly, instrumentalist arguments for increasing the number of female peacekeepers which builds on understandings of women’s ‘inherent feminine characteristics’, can undermine women’s integration into infantry units where these characteristics are not valued. At the same time, it adds unrealistic and unfair expectations on a small minority of women in a heavily gendered environment, where different types of masculinities are valued higher than femininities in general.

II. When ‘Added Value’ becomes ‘Added Burden’: Producing Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

⁴⁷ Loughlin, C., Arnold, K.A., ‘Seeking the best: leadership lessons from the military’, *Human Resource Management*, 46:1, 2007, p. 149.

⁴⁸ Olsson, L., ‘Mainstreaming gender in multidimensional peacekeeping: a field perspective’, *International Peacekeeping*, 7: 3, 2000, pp.10, 12.

⁴⁹ Gordon, E, et al. “Security Sector Reform and the Paradoxical Tension between Local Ownership and Gender Equality”, *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 4:1, 2015, p. 6; Wilén, N. ‘Security Sector Reform, Gender and Local Narratives in Burundi’, *Conflict, Security and Development*, 14:3, 2014, pp. 331-354.

⁵⁰ Wilén, N., ‘What’s the Added Value of Male Peacekeepers? Or why we should stop instrumentalizing female peacekeepers’, *Egmont Institute Africa Policy Brief*, n° 29, February 2020.

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There is a clear attraction of using instrumentalist arguments in the debate about the need for more female peacekeepers. As one UN policy officer put it:

‘We need to start with the efficiency argument to be able to augment the number of women, because no member state would do it just because of a principle of gender equity or diversity’.⁵¹

It is clearly easier to sell in the argument when you can point to improving the performance of peace operations and mention concrete examples of exactly how women add that extra value. Yet, there are several risks with this, two of which I discuss below.

Firstly, there is an obvious risk of using instrumentalist arguments that are not supported by evidence-based research. While the short-term effect may be beneficial for increasing the number of female peacekeepers, there is a risk of a backlash against women in the long term if the expected added value is not demonstrated in the peace operations. Similarly, even if there is research that supports certain instrumentalist arguments in specific contexts, using them without accounting for nuances can also provoke a normative backlash. As seen in the previous sections, some of the arguments are only valid in certain contexts and often require specific training. There is a risk, as Olsson and Gizelis have argued elsewhere, of overstretching the generalization of findings if one deliberately selects cases on the margin.⁵²

Secondly, the more expectations we put on women to add something extra - to increase the operational effectiveness - the more burden we are putting on women that are already in very delicate positions as clear minorities in a very masculine and male dominated environment. It is thus important to avoid putting gender-stereotypical expectations on female (and male) peacekeepers, not only because research has shown that women are trying to live up to these expectations by doing more than their male counterparts in order to prove that they do, in fact, add something extra, but also because these expectations are not put on male peacekeepers and are therefore undermining gender equality.

In Pruitt’s study of Indian female peacekeepers, she shows how expectations that the female officers would have ‘natural’ abilities to better handle gender-based crimes resulted in the FFPU commander’s initiative to ask for special training on the issue. The FFPU officers ‘were left with the responsibility to seek training for themselves and the rest of the contingent’,⁵³ thus fulfilling the gender-based expectations by asking for specific training. In addition, to live up to expectations of serving as role models for local women, many of the female peacekeepers volunteered during their free time to visit orphanages, schools and different organisations to talk about their work, give lectures or help the local communities in other ways. It should be emphasised here, that this ‘double shift’ was not done by their male colleagues.

Here it should be noted that male peacekeepers are also likely to be influenced by gender stereotypical expectations of how they should behave: there are few, or at least no explicit expectations on male soldiers to visit orphanages or schools, as this does not fit with the masculinities that often are higher valued in a military environment, such as ‘warrior

⁵¹ Informal discussion with Female Peacekeeper, November 2019.

⁵² Olsson, L., Gizelis, T-I, ‘Advancing Gender and Peacekeeping Research’, *International Peacekeeping*, 21:4, 2014, p.524.

⁵³ Pruitt, *The women in blue helmets*.

masculinity’ or a ‘militarized masculinity’.⁵⁴ Hence, a male peacekeeper who goes against engrained gender stereotypes, may also face pressure from other colleagues to remain within the boundaries of accepted masculinities in the military context.

In a discussion with a female UN peacekeeper, she explained that she gathered her staff every week to have briefings about prostitution, emergency sex and survival sex to avoid SEA scandals and make sure that the staff was correctly informed. This was done on her own personal initiative, in an effort to combat peacekeepers’ SEA and was positively received by both male and female peacekeepers. She also reached out to the local community by giving public speeches at various organisations about being a female military, trying to show a good example and live up to the expectations of being a role model. Yet, these speeches were done on her free time, meaning that, she also, did a ‘second shift’. When I pointed out this, she commented:

‘Well, it is true that my male predecessors had a lot of time to play golf in their free time, but I couldn’t miss the opportunity I had as the first woman to make an impact’.⁵⁵

This will, to make a difference, and to show the ‘added value’ seem to be a recurrent aspect with female peacekeepers and reflects the fact that the pressure to add something extra does not only come from external sources, but also from female peacekeepers themselves. Research on Rwandan peacekeepers has shown that while the female peacekeepers were supposed to perform ‘added value’ tasks, such as talking to SGBV victims, they did not get adequate training to do so, as it was expected that they already possessed these capacities as feminine ‘natural caretakers’⁵⁶. The lack of suitable pre-deployment training led some women to organise nightly tutorials in their tent after classes to ensure that they could live up to the expectations, thereby starting their ‘second shift’ even before deployment.⁵⁷ In addition, Rwandan female peacekeepers were also expected to engage with women from the local population, displaying care and empathy while listening to local women’s concerns and teaching them about their human rights. Rwandan women were also required to perform as the bearer of traditional Rwandan culture by for example wearing traditional dresses during cultural exchanges, something their male colleagues only occasionally were requested to do: thus again exemplifying how women should live up to gendered expectations.⁵⁸

In a female focus group in South Sudan, the women echoed the overall understanding of women choosing to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their competency, again exemplifying the internal pressure to perform. Yet, the hard work is not only due to pressure to prove an ‘added value’, but also to avoid being judged because of the gender:

If a woman falls short at her job, it is attributed to the fact that she is a woman, and not seen as an individual failure. Once the organizations

⁵⁴ Karim & Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, ch.3.

⁵⁵ Interview with anonymous female peacekeeper, January 2020.

⁵⁶ Holmes, G. ‘Situating Agency, Embodied Practices and Norm Implementation in Peacekeeping Training’, *International Peacekeeping*, 26:1, 2019, pp. 55-84.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Holmes, G, ‘Enhancing Operational Effectiveness? Pre-deployment training for tactical-level Rwandan military peacekeepers’, in Brown, D, Murray, D., Riemann, M., Rossi, N., & M.A. Smith, *War Amongst the People: Critical Assessments*, (Havant: Howgate Publishing, 2019).

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started advocating for hiring female candidates, the question of qualification and competence came into play. However, men are rarely held to the same high standards: if they underperform at work, it’s not blamed on the entire gender.⁵⁹

Through statements like the one above, it also become clear that there exist both external and internal pressure to perform the ‘added value’, which reinforce each other – given the small proportion of women in military occupations. They may thus both *want* to prove their perceived ‘added value’ due to a belief that they can make a difference as women, but they also feel *pressured* to do so, in order to allow for not only themselves, but also other women to be accepted in similar positions.

A UN female force commander explained that as she was the first female in that position, the UN tried to keep it secret at the start, but:

‘As they knew it would leak, they ended up doing a press conference with me and the UN Secretary General, so of course that also builds up expectations...when I arrived in Cyprus, there were up to 50 journalists and television stations that wanted to speak with me, but we agreed to wait for a month.’⁶⁰

The media showed an understanding of the importance for the new force commander to say ‘the right things’, to build trust with all parties.

Through these empirical examples of individual and collective experiences it becomes clear that the discussion about ‘added value’ often translates into ‘added burden’. The fact that over 75% of troop contributions come from Africa and Asia, with African states contributing 48,7%,⁶¹ this ‘added burden’ falls disproportionately on female peacekeepers from the Global South countries. While some of these states, such as Rwanda, have made efforts to increase gender equality through gender balancing in state institutions, on average, states from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia rank considerably lower on global gender equality indexes,⁶² implying that these women are likely to carry an even heavier burden than others, because they break entrenched gender roles in patriarchal environments. As Henry has argued however, “their embodiment as women and the cachet this may hold in terms of their international reputation can be seen as resources for themselves and the UN”,⁶³ making it hard to address this ‘double burden’. In an interview with a female peacekeeper, she reflected this dilemma by stating that some countries from the Global South increase the proportion of women to please the UN, yet once they are in the actual mission, they are heavily discriminated against by their male colleagues.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Focus group with Female Peacekeepers, Malakal Field Office, South Sudan, 18 November 2019.

⁶⁰ Interview with former UN female force commander, January 2020.

⁶¹ Providing for Peacekeeping, ‘Breakdown of Peacekeepers Contributed by Region as of December 2016’, available at: <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/December2016Contributions.png>.

⁶² UNDP, Human Development Reports, ‘Gender Inequality Index’, 2020, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>.

⁶³ Henry, ‘Peaceexploitation’, p.16.

⁶⁴ Interview with Female Peacekeeper, November 2019.

How do we then get around this minefield of gender dilemmas and avoid instrumentalizing women's performances in the military? How can we merge normative agendas of increasing women's participation as soldiers and peacekeepers without pushing them to live up to unrealistic demands and contradictory gender stereotypes? In the next and concluding section, I try to turn the tables and show how a focus on making the military environment a more inclusive workplace could make both the military in general, and peace operations in particular more effective, while simultaneously facilitating recruitment of women.

III. Turning the tables: Focusing on the Environment

In order to make peacekeeping operations more representative of diversity and consequently more effective, it is important to transform the working environment. This means making the military environment in general more open to diversity, more inclusive and less gendered. Yet, today, the military remains to a large extent a 'man's world': that is, an environment which, for the most part, is constructed by and for men, with very little space for women. Men are, in other words, the 'default' setting in most uniformed professions. If the number of female peacekeepers is to increase, it is the working environment in which they are to be integrated that needs to be the focus. However, a transformation of the environment to make it more open and inclusive is not only to the benefit of female soldiers, but also to the organisation as a whole. Research has long proven that diversity in any organisation is an asset. While all-male teams make better decisions 58% of the time in comparison to individual decision-makers, the figure is 73% for gender diverse teams.⁶⁵ This final section will firstly draw on interview findings to revisit ways in which female soldiers experience exclusion and thereafter focus on the importance of recruiting representative leaders who value inclusivity and diversity to transform the working environment.

Diversity is not only about including women; it is also about making room for other types of masculinities than the dominant form of masculinity in the military. The dominant form has often been termed 'hegemonic masculinity' and refers to a model of 'admired masculine conduct', which is hegemonic because of the way it is institutionalised and normalised.⁶⁶ The traditionally hegemonic masculinity, common in the military, is associated with heterosexuality, physical resilience, bravery, toughness and aggression, yet cultural expectations of appropriate military masculine behaviour and operational demands are already shifting away from these traits, towards communication and flexibility.⁶⁷ Working to provide a wider range of different accepted masculinities which are not always defined in dichotomy

⁶⁵ Larson, E., 'New Research: Diversity + Inclusion= Better Decision Making at Work', *Forbes*, 21 September 2017, available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/eriklarson/2017/09/21/new-research-diversity-inclusion-better-decision-making-at-work/#5d125ff4cbfa>

⁶⁶ Kronsell, *Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense*.

⁶⁷ Woodward, R., Duncanson, C., 'An Introduction to Gender and the Military', in Woodward, R., Duncanson, C., (eds.) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p.4; Ortega, L., 'Looking beyond violent militarized masculinities: Guerrilla regimes in Latin America', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 14: 4, pp. 489-507.

with femininities, or as subordinate to the older dominant 'hegemonic masculinity' goes therefore beyond the notion of accommodating women in the military.

Yet, as the focus for this article is female peacekeepers, I will return to how women soldiers experience being the exception to the 'default norm' in the masculine environment. The examples, drawn from the interviews and discussions, range from practical and material aspects to practices of exclusion and unfairness based on gender stereotypes and/or prejudices. In between the two categories are examples which draw from both, such as the example of when the female peacekeeper asked for a gynecologist as part of the medical team in the mission and was answered that it was not a family duty mission.⁶⁸ There are numerous examples that fall into the practical category, perhaps most importantly the fact that many militaries still do not have body armor in sizes that fit a large proportion of women. A 2017 report from the Swedish armed forces showed for example, that approximately 40% of the women did not have body protection or uniforms in the right size.⁶⁹ In my interviews with Burundian female soldiers I also learned that there were no army boots in small sizes, which not only made running difficult, it also enhanced the difference in performance between male and female soldiers as the women clearly ran slower with too large boots.⁷⁰ This is not isolated to the case of Burundi, but is a recurrent problem for many different militaries. Many of the women interviewed in South Africa, South Sudan and Burundi also emphasised the need for separate infrastructure for men and women, including sleeping arrangements, showers and toilets, yet these aspects were also mentioned as lacking in the Swedish military.⁷¹ There is no valid justification for why these types of material and infrastructural omissions remain a problem in militaries today, when there is enough research to show their importance. Addressing these issues should thus be fairly straightforward while making the working environment considerably more inclusive.

Different types of initiation rites to improve group cohesion have often emphasised differences from the out-group and relied on denigration or hazing of those not fitting the generic norm standard because of their gender, race, sexual orientation or ethnicity. In many security institutions, these hazing rituals are reinforcing women's exclusion as they often are based on ideas of 'masculine' behaviour or aspects. Karim and Huber mention the examples of men having to sleep with a certain number of women, or dress up as women, as hazing rituals which clearly reinforce gendered hierarchies to the detriment of female integration.⁷² In interviews with Burundian female soldiers, they explained that part of the hazing ritual was to shave their heads, which would stigmatise women both within and outside of the military because of gendered appearance expectations. Female candidates were also particularly stigmatised by certain leaders: 'they said that it was a curse to see a woman in the army'.⁷³ It should be noted

⁶⁸ Informal discussion with Female Peacekeeper, November 2019.

⁶⁹ Schröder, K. 'Career barriers for young women in the Swedish Armed Forces', *Swedish Defence Research Agency*, Report n°: FOI-R-4541-SE, December 2017.

⁷⁰ Author article.

⁷¹ Schröder, 'Career barriers for young women' p.28.

⁷² Karim & Huber, 'Leave No Woman Behind', p.12.

⁷³ Radio Program about Women in the security sector in Burundi, 14 January 2011; Interview with Burundian female officer, Ngozy, 7 March 2013.

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that these examples were drawn from the very start of women’s admission to the military in Burundi and that many militaries are now prohibiting these kinds of hazing rituals.

The exclusionary practices and the need to assimilate with a particular type of masculine behaviour are however rarely limited to the initiation rites. In an interview with a female officer, she explains:

‘In the beginning it was really hard, it took me 15 years, I would say, before I kind of could make or to be sure of my own leadership philosophy. Before that, I had to, you know, adopt the men’s way...because if you did something different, they wouldn’t think that you would be a good officer, so they wouldn’t push you forward’.⁷⁴

Yet, even in cases where female soldiers and officers assimilate completely to both the physical and the social standards, they risk facing exclusionary practices. In the radio interview with Special Forces operator Petra Malm, she explains that although she had passed the qualification course to enter the Special Forces together with her male colleagues, she was put behind a desk in an office position rather than in the field because of entrenched gender stereotypes:

‘So, I don’t get a place in a group, I get the educational unit... You have done exactly the same thing as all the others, but still it is not really enough... then there was a colleague of mine who said, “For fuck’s sake, this is just shit; this is just because you sit down when you pee”...Here they didn’t want a woman among the boys because there had never been a woman there before.’⁷⁵

In the case of Petra Malm, it was her closest boss who was her first ‘enemy’, while ‘98 % of the people were fantastic’. Yet, research shows that support from leaders decreases as women’s ranking increase, because of prejudices of women prioritizing children rather than the career, but also because they become competitors for the same positions.⁷⁶ The importance of leaders who appreciate diversity and promote inclusion rather than exclusion is thus a necessary step to change the environment.

Recruiting Representative Leaders

There is a whole discipline devoted to military leadership and the aim is not to review that literature here, rather to single out some characteristics that are desirable in new military leaders and give empirical examples of leaders’ best practices which have had a positive impact in

⁷⁴ Interview with Female Officer, January 2020.

⁷⁵ Radio Program: “Kodnamn: Pam – Elitsoldatens hemliga liv”, P1 Documentary, Sweden, 13 October 2019.

⁷⁶ Schröder, ‘Career barriers for young women’, p. 67.

terms of inclusivity and diversity. Leadership was, and continues to be, a mainstay of the military. As a deeply hierarchical organisation, it relies on leaders to accomplish its primary missions.⁷⁷ Leaders' inherent characteristics, their behaviour, decisions and actions therefore have a strong influence on the organisation as a whole. US cadets at the military academy West Point used to recite the refrain that: 'the commander is responsible for everything the unit does or fails to do',⁷⁸ giving an indication of the amount of responsibility that falls on a military leader.

The context in which the military is operating is changing rapidly, with new tasks and new security threats, making military operations increasingly complex, often including elements of humanitarian relief, diplomacy and peacekeeping. A heterogenous workforce will give a competitive advantage in such settings.⁷⁹ Guiding the military institution through such a transformation requires a representative leadership that can connect, communicate and create confidence. Future leaders will therefore require a distinctly different skill set than those of the past to remain relevant in a changing environment. While more traditional core competencies, such as integrity, courage, loyalty, intellect and professionalism still are essential, higher value is placed on critical thinking, emotional intelligence and a greater understanding of other cultures. In short: the soldier warrior needs to be combined with the soldier as a diplomat and a scholar.⁸⁰

Women soldiers face several barriers to enter into leadership positions in the military, making high female officers rare among the ranks, which in turn result in few female role models.⁸¹ There are several reasons for this, including a generally biased attitude against women, but also the previous exclusion of women from combat positions, which have made it difficult for women to go back and 'pick up' experience later, thereby making career progression difficult. This is especially the case as women are often accorded less respect and support than male counterparts in the combat arms.⁸² Research has also shown that the military face a disproportionate number of sexual assaults against female members,⁸³ making negative experiences, such as harassment, a significant barrier to women's progress within the military, and also reason for the high attrition rates of women.

⁷⁷ Wong, L., Bliese, P., McGurk, D., 'Military leadership: A context specific review', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14, 2003, pp. 657-692.

⁷⁸ US Army, 'Field Manual 22-100, Army leadership' (Washington, DC: US. Government, 1990), cited in Wong et al. 'Military leadership'.

⁷⁹ Korabik, K., 'Sub-group Issues in Military Leadership', *Leadership Review*, 1:2, 2008.

⁸⁰ Loughlin & Arnold, 'Seeking the best', p.149.

⁸¹ Abbe, A., 'The Balancing Act for Female Officers', *War Room*, 5 March 2020, available at: <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/balancing-act/>

⁸² Loughlin & Arnold, 'Seeking the best', p.149.

⁸³ Carreiras, H., 'Gendered Organizational Dynamics in Military Contexts', in C. Duncanson & R. Woodward (eds.) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.105-122; Estrada, A.X., & Berggren, A.W., 'Sexual Harassment and its impact for Women Officers and Cadets in the Swedish Armed Forces', *Military Psychology*, 21, 2009, pp.162-185; Murdoch, M., Nichel, K.L., 'Women Veteran's Experiences with Domestic Violence and with Sexual Harassment while in the Military', *Archives of Family Medicine*, 4:5, 1995, pp.411-418.

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To combat sexual harassment, research has shown that clear and consistent antiharassment message from organizational leaders is essential, just as educational training and regular self-assessments and proactive efforts.⁸⁴ It is crucial that male leaders also are vocal about this message, to show that this is not a ‘female problem’, but one that concerns the whole organisation and all its members. As Abbe notes: ‘Meaningful progress will occur only when male leaders engage in deliberate and sustained efforts to change the culture and when the proportion of women increases more substantially’.⁸⁵

The speech delivered by the Australian Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, following an announcement about an internet sex ring in the army, is one such best practice, where the memorable lines: ‘The standard you walk past, is the standard you accept’, resonated strongly both within and outside the military world. In a different context, but equally constituting a best practice, the Swedish Commander in Chief participated personally in the yearly Pride Parade in the Defence’s carriage in 2018, showing a strong visible commitment to norms of inclusion and diversity.⁸⁶ While these examples may seem as simple anecdotes, they still transmit strong messages about how leaders influence organisational culture and set standards for others to follow. They also show that leaders who show empathy, inspire and encourage excellence are vital for the transformation of the military culture to a more inclusive and diverse environment.

Conclusion

The debate about women’s added value as peacekeeper started as a means to increase female participation in peace operations and thereby meet one of the objectives of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. There can be no doubt that this remains an initiative which initially aimed to increase gender equality by giving more room to women in domains which they traditionally have been excluded from. While this article has critically analysed the most dominant discourse on how to increase the number of female peacekeepers, it is not critical of the objective itself. As have been demonstrated throughout the analysis, there is a need for both male and female peacekeepers, not only to visibly represent two different genders in security check points in gender segregated societies, but also to remain a relevant institution in a rapidly changing environment where complexity, diversity and communication are core characteristics.

Yet, in this article I have argued that instrumentalizing female peacekeepers’ participation is the wrong way to achieve the objective of increasing their participation. I have pointed to the fact that it is both unrealistic, as research remains limited and unfair, since the added burden often leads to self-fulfilling prophecies which entail more work for a small minority of women

⁸⁴ Buchanan, N.T., Settles, I.H., Hall, A.T., & R.C. O’Connor, ‘A Review of Organizational Strategies for Reducing Sexual Harassment: Insights from the U.S. Military’, *Journal of Social Issues*, 70: 4, 2014, pp.687-702.

⁸⁵ Abbe, A., ‘The Balancing Act for Female Officers’, *War Room*, 5 March 2020, available at: <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/balancing-act/>

⁸⁶ Sveriges Television Nyheter, ‘Här rockar överbefälhavare Micael Bydén loss till Elvis’, 4 August 2018, available at: <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/har-rockar-overbefalhavare-micael-byden-loss-till-elvis>, accessed 12 March 2020.

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in a masculine organisation. This ultimately leads to greater gender inequality and risks backfiring against women’s participation all together, if peace operations’ efficiency does not improve in the same pace as women’s number increase. In addition, recruiting women to perform tasks based on gender stereotypes not only risks reinforcing these stereotypes, but also to narrow down the spectrum of tasks that women can do in peace operations, leaving the ‘warrior tasks’ to the male peacekeepers and ‘diplomacy tasks’ to the females. Such a division is not only based on shaky evidence but also misses the point of peacekeepers serving as role models that can break gender stereotypes that are detrimental to gender equality.

As a means to avoid this instrumentalization, while still working towards the objective, I have suggested that the tables should be turned to focus on making the working environment attractive for both genders. If the military culture is transformed, resulting in a more inclusive environment for all sexes and genders, there is a higher chance that more women will seek positions in the military, resulting – over time – in more female peacekeepers who are not constrained to perform gender specific roles. This transformation must be driven from the inside and supported by outsiders. As such, it is no quick-fix solution to the immediate problem of making peace operations more gender balanced and gender equal. The attraction of using instrumentalist arguments is tangible, but if we build female recruitment to the military on gender stereotypes, it will take even longer time to undo discriminating structures and narrow spaces for both men and women.

I have pointed to the need to improve the availability of material, equipment and infrastructure to accommodate all genders, but also to importance of recruiting the right leaders that can lead the way of transforming the military to becoming an inclusive and diverse institution. There is an urgent need for both male and female leaders that are capable of setting the right standard for the organizational culture, safeguarding the principles of professionalism and integrity while encouraging and appreciating diversity. They need to be creative, communicative and compassionate, and they need to be able to inspire and motivate staff to work towards this cultural transformation.