

## EGALITARISM AND THE CHANGE OF WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE NATIONAL ARMIES

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**Abstract:** The feminist trend has influenced the way in which it is discussed and applied the principle of the equality among the genders. Nations are not at the same level in terms of diversity, integration or personnel policies and the egalitarian policies are slowly promoted into traditional societies. The international support policy of the role egalitarianism is arguing it through the fact that we are all created the same way and not all the men are strong nor all the women are weak. The policy is supporting the necessity of unique standards in a way that the selection to be fair for both genders. The leadership and communication roles with the civilian population, especially with the women from traditional societies are encouraging assuming those roles, they are generating progress into negotiation and are serving as examples for other women.

The aim of this article is to offer a detailed socio-cultural perspective over the women participation within the national military forces. The economic changes, the way in which the legislation and the national cultures are determining changes in the women's role, had generated effects in their attitude towards they are treated by the society. The financial independence has offered them trust in the choice possibilities and the wish to extend their roles in different national armies.

Until recently it was well spread the bias that the „War” is exclusively men's domain. The presence of women in different wars is not new, from the Russian women fighting battalions (mentioned in the First World War documents), to the light cavalry units, the first aid, medical care, signal or logistic units and office activities. Traditionally, women's role in the society was very clear defined and that is reproduction, sensibility and the care for the family. This seems to be in antagonism with the integration and the trust of the group and is creating the idea that introducing women in the fighting groups is attracting a group cohesion breaking. The evolution of the way the social role of the women is perceived from the victims of the conflicts, the persons that are taking care of the disabled persons towards equal members of the society that are participating into all the aspects of the social life, is politically supported at the international level. This is the new „egalitarianism model” promoted and supported internationally at the political and the financial levels. The feminist trend has influenced the way in which it is discussed and applied the principle of the equality among the genders.

The reservation into women's admittance into close combat and within the Special Forces is routed in traditional societies in which the social, religious, and cultural factors are restricting women's rights and offer them special roles. Those factors are put into serious doubt by the developed societies. For example, a study of the Canadian Institute for Military Leadership related to the operational efficiency of the mixed combat groups has demonstrated that the gender diversity is not affecting the operational efficiency [1].

Since 1961, female officers have organized conferences and meetings whose topics were aiming to discuss the women's rights and status in NATO armies, the working conditions, the possibilities to advance into the carrier, etc. In 1976, NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives was recognized by NATO Military Committee [2].

The problem of women's integration into the defence sector is on UN Agenda and it has been endorsed through a UN Security Council Resolution No 1325. A study about global implementation of this resolution has shown the progress into positive women's integration effort into defence and security sectors and also the positive effect of this implication [3]. In June 2017 have been adopted eight UN Security Council Resolutions number 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242. These are recognizing the existence of differences in between the genders and the repercussions of those particularities in the armed conflicts and they are proposing female protective measures and their role into the armed conflicts [5].

NATO member countries have developed national policies related and in accordance with the international ones that ensure women's support from the National Armies and are guaranteeing equal rights with men, but are still existing problems in accepting in some systems the policy of the equality in between the genders. National Action Plan is representing the legal engagement of the states related to the implementation of the UNSCR1325. One of the immediate effects of the implementation of the Plan at the national level were as follows: the increase of the women admitted into the Armed Forces, studies concerning the needs for infrastructure generated by this admittance, the introduction of common training courses in sensitive aspects generated by the women's presence into the Armed Forces, the adoption of new personnel policies and specific behavior codes, the revision of the military educational curricula of the educational facilities, etc.

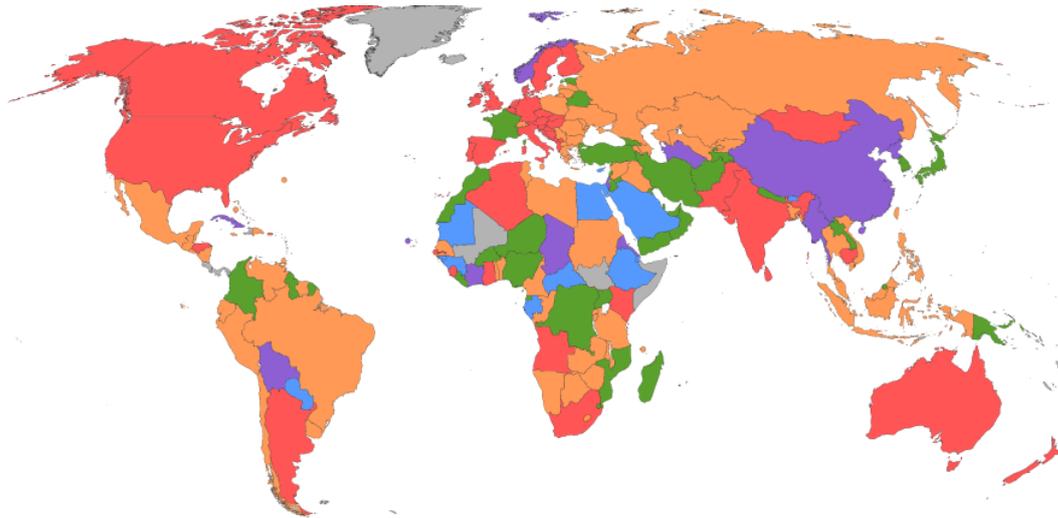
In 1995 Segal has launched a theoretical model in which he had identified three components (military, social structure and the culture), that have a direct link with the modifications of the women's role into the Society and into the Army. *"Women are integrated and have a high level of participation into the states being in deficit of labour force (because of the decrease in demographic and economic factors) and where the State policies are supporting the social equality and the cultural value [5]."*

In 2002, Iskra et al. are extending Segal's model adding factors such as domestic policy and the institutional ones. They are supporting the idea that the states that are governed by civilian leaders, having a liberal political leadership, that are promoting egalitarian policies and they are supporting non-violent political changes, are creating the conditions for the equal participation of women in the Army.

The active participation of women in all economic branches mainly technical ones, on which is added the support for International Movement for Equal Rights are generating a strong movement for the equal participation of women in all military roles. It is not wrong to assume that the active presence of women into civilian technical branches has generated the opportunity that those to function very well even into those reserved previously only for men.

There are significant differences in the way to approach the women's role in the World Armies promoted by the feminist liberalism in contrast with the radical one. As a result of the experience accumulated in the theatre of operations from Afghanistan I can say that the wish of the majority of the female military belonging to NATO armies is not to be seen as equal in all physical capacity and abilities as the men, but to be able to have equal opportunities to apply for the same positions, an observation that supports the liberalist model of the equality among the genders.

The following image is the representation of the women participation in the Army all over the World.



**Agenda:** **Blue:** Women are not admitted into the National Army. **Brown:** Women are admitted into the Army; **Green:** Women are accepted into the Army but are not treated equally; **Red:** Women are accepted into the Army and are treated equally; **Pink:** Mandatory military service; **Grey:** Uncertain data [6].

Eight states have mandatory military service for women: Sweeden, China, North Korea, Norway, Israel, Ciad and Cape Green [7]. In the same time with the change of the international policies related to the mandatory military service, it appeared the issue of insufficient volunteers, opening the opportunity for women to apply for certain branches that were restricted before. In 2013 the majority of NATO countries were offering equal opportunities for joining the Army both women and men, in comparison with the year 2000, when only six NATO states were offering the same.

There is not the same level of national politics related to the women's presence in the Army or in combat units. Some politics are excluding them for different reasons, starting from the physical differences in comparison with the men and continuing with those referring to providing a special environment, private for them. The active aspects of the argue at the international level on the subject of the equality of genders inside the Army are as follows "is it timely the acceptance of the women in combat role, body to body? Are they prepared physically and are having the natural psychological capacities to be equal members of the close combat fighting units?"

In 2014, close combat was described as "an intense activity, visceral, unavoidable, where violent death, wounds, terrible noise, the blood and a high level of emotions are common aspects [8]. This description is raising question marks if close combat is representing an environment in which women can properly function, without affecting the efficiency of the team to wich they are belonging to.

Most of the researches related to women's presence in specific military branches that were used previously by men, were done in USA and United Kingdom. Ther have been observed and monitorized females functioning in mixed groups, joining them as volunteer for this research programme, with or without previous military experience. The initial concern of the observers group was related to the negative effects over the physical and psychological health of the subjects, both on short and long terms, on which were added possible effects resulting from the intermingle of women with men that are generated over the operational efficiency.

Some specific positions are involving movement on long distances with heavy mandatory equipment, women having a light muscular and bone structure, a smaller hearth the men and a muscular mass reduced with 30% and a wide pelvic scheleton [9].

The research carried out in between 2002 and 2010in United Kingdom analyzed the effects over women's presence over the mixed groups cohesion and operational efficiency. The results of this research had generated the decision not to accept women in the fighting units that involve close combat. It is a decision that is revised evry eight years.

Inside US Marine Corps it was carried out a nine months research which has been finalized in a study which has more then a thousand pages. It reflects the way in which the inclusion of women into marine fighting groups is affecting their efficiency. Some results of this study are reffering to: the number of women that had suffered injuries, especially muscular and bones ones, is twice higher the those of men, the way in which women are handling the weapons is not precise, they are having a reduced capability to evacuate the injured persons, the movement of units are slowed down, the equipment used have to be adjusted for women to fit the anatomy of their body in order to be able to use properly the weapons and to move on long distances, the effort resistance is reduced, etc.

Anoyher research over the opportunity of the acceptance of women in different roles was done during the training courses for US Rangers. The volunteer participation in finding women's skills for this type of trining was a tremnduos failure. From 30 women selected from the volunteer group only three have reached the final stages of the course without completing it. The last two that get to the final stage were offered the chance to graduate the course. It has to be mentioned thatboth finalists of the course are former professional sport women, with a large military experience.

Women's presence in the theatre of operations from Iraq and Afghanistan had accelerated the political discussions to support equal participation of them in all the combat roles. In the same time there was a high accumulation of data that are not in this support framework. A significant example related to the negative aspects of women functioning in mainly men's roles is that of CaptainKatie Petronio, US Army. Despite an excellent physical condition, of a long time spent on active duty and a veteran of the Iraq and Afghan wars, after ending the missions, Petronio admitted that the excessive loss in weight and irreversible health problems gained are reasons to declare that women are suffering accelerated physical disturbancesin comparison with men and the inclusion of women in combat role will represent a huge increase of medical costs of the nations [9].

The results of the military studies are supporting the fact that military females can bring an added operational value from different perspectivesin the decision process, different communication and analysis skills in specific communication styles with the local population from the traditional societies [10], but the recent researches are showing that for for specific roles women do not fulfill minimum physical and psychological standards.

Seventeen countries had adopted the decision to allow women to take part into combat role: snipers, Special Forces, etc. Rhese are Belgium (2010), Canada (1989), Denmark (1988), Eritreea (2013), Finland (1994), France (1985), Germany (2001), Israel (2004), Lithuania (2000), Estonia (2013), Nederland (1979), New Zeeland (2001), North Koreaa (1950s), Norway (1985), Poland (2004), Romania (2002) and Sweeden (1989).

In 2000 it was adopted an amendum for equal chances in military service that is guaranteeing equal opportunities for women that are proving physical, psychological ans personality qualities to apply for such positions.

There were established mixed platoons within the infantry and artillery units and some of the women got to be pilots even the percentage of them into the professional army are reduced. After 2011, the majority of the participating armies to the multinational coalition decided to give up the restrictions for the women's appointment into combat roles. As a consequence of this decision there was an increase of the attention in the personal policies. There was also clearly stipulated that on long term this decision can have a negative impact over the tactical capability of the groups if the standards for physical tests are not accomplished, but the reality was different. In 2013 when they gave up gradually the restrictions for women participating into combat roles and in December 2015, US Secretary of Defence, Ash Carter, announced that all the roles that previously were reserved for men will be opened also for women [12].

The results in women's testing that wanted to fulfil such roles in the UK Ministry of Defence, in 2014 showed that only 4,5 % are accomplishing the recruitment standards for such positions [9].

Women's inclusion into combatant troops determined a possible risk that generated a careful attention of the politicians and human resources managers. The sexual harassment issues that is brought on the agenda now and the punish related to this are now clearly defined in the moment when women decided to accept the combat role.

In Afghanistan, civilian and military women from the coalition have proved that they have an important role and the gender is representing a cultural advantage increasing the efficiency of the capabilities. The advantage of using women in relation to the civilian population made that the definition of "responsibilities related to work within the theatre of operations" for women to be modified. They proved that they can adapt also to the training programmes that were previously and traditionally designed for men. It is true that those programme in order to be efficient they must have a longer period of time than the one allocated for men's physical training [14]. In Afghanistan theatre of operations women participating in combat missions have to accomplish both specific tasks and those related to the security of the group. Military females and civilians from the Coalition Forces had operated in high risk zones in mixed teams. Functioning inside FET (Female Engagement Team) meant a great benefit for the coalition, determining the relationship in between those and the Afghan women. These are representing nearly half of the population, very useful sources of information, increasing the strategic and tactical operational capacity. In different armies (for example Canadian Army) was registered at the beginning a reduction into the cohesion of the mixed units but, with a pro-active leadership, the transition has represented a success [15].

Armies are traditionally conservative entities that are responding rapidly to such changes. How small combat units can be affected by women's admittance inside them? This question is drawing our attention to this: how the trust is working, related to the cohesion and the sexuality inside the multinational coalition, especially in small units like Special Forces. The indicator "*Hiper-masculinity*" has a central role in military sub-culture because is related to the cohesion and motivation. Physical test are the first barrier in the selection process and for women's integration into combat units. The impossibility to maintain this effort level is perceived by the other members of the group as being poverty, a dilution of the capabilities. A British study concerning this element inside different armies, a research done in 2010, has established that in countries where this option exists only approximately 1% of women can apply for positions in combat units after they accomplished the physical test.

Studies related to women's integration in different armies concluded that it was a possibility that this integration to have a negative impact over the cohesion of the groups. In the year 2010, starting with the revision of the policy concerning women's appointment into British combat units, there was a recommendation to stop this because there was "*a potential risk associated with the maintaining of the cohesion into the mixed tactical groups engaged into intense close combat*"[13]. The risks are coming from different directions: disruptive relations, competition of men to get the attention of the women, and "*flirtul*" to which the women are keen to resort into an environment predominantly with men. All those elements are determining a reduction of the cohesion [18]. Despite all of these, the reality had proven that well thought personnel policies can bring a harmonization of the contribution of the genders to the operational process.

It has been observed an increase of the female number within the multinational contingents. In the „Resolute Support Mission HQs”, there is a separation of genders in terms of accommodation facilities because the participating nations can interpret in an offensive way the equal treatment of men and women, but in KAIA multinational base, mixed accommodation did not create problems from the behavioral or moral points of view.

Into the Coalition where we have contingents from traditional societies such as Afghanistan and Pakistan it is difficult for those to accept orders from female military, being an offense and an attack to their status. Also the military that are accepting orders from females are losing their respect in front of their soldiers. The same discrimination is happening in social activities carried out by traditional countries where females are never invited. This sum of consequences is generating frustration among women coming from democratic societies and they hardly understand this social injustice that can generate diplomatic conflicts or aggressive direct reactions.

When into a united group it is introduced a potential sexual partner, female or male, this can generate malfunctions into the social dynamics of the group. A person that is "*different*" he or she changes "*the rules of the game*". Hiper masculinity is associated with the fighting efficiency and the cohesion of a group. As long as the performance achieved by the group is higher, the higher the reputation and the respect are. Women introduction into combat teams together with the introduction of the legal provisions concerning sexual harassment can bring different interpretation of the men's behavior as being misogynist. In relation to the men is up side down interpreting this as an attempt to bring female features to the group generating frustration hate and disappointment with respect to females belonging to the group.

As a result of what I presented, the logical conclusion is that the simplest hope for the small combat units is not to have the sexual relations inside those teams and belonging to different gender group or sexual orientation one to be considered „asexual”.

Another aspect generated by women's presence into military bases is the high level of attention they are getting. If the sex can be agreed there are two additional aspects, first because men are jealous and consider that is "unfair" in connection with the others and secondly that women are always "privileged". Group leaders have to show determination and rightness in order that their actions not to be interpreted by the other members of the group as representing protection or condescending behaviour. Generals Petraeus and Sinclair are the most recent examples for risking their carrier in return for some relations considered by the American personnel policies as being nonprincipled.

The International Organization pre-occupation related to the Afghan female rights was materialized in programs to incorporate a certain number of women into the Afghan Army and Police.

But even it has been allocated more that five thousand of posts for women into the structures of the Army and of the Police and they had finished the specific training, the posts allocated for women are still continuing to be occupied by men. There have been created scholarships for studies especially for women, special places for basic military training in different locations inside or outside Afghanistan. It is taken into consideration also the cultural factor, the traditions, the role and the acceptance of the family members in all those stages. The Afghan female that graduated ANAOA (Afghan Officers National Defence Academy) are involved into the female recruiting process that graduated high schools or universities, in accordance with the ethnic representation and the tribes from where they are coming from. Because of the traditional society and of the religious extremism, the option to be part of the Armed or Security Forces is exposing the female to major problems; they can be even being killed because of the “shameful position” in which they can be during this period. This is why the use of the uniform and of the weapon is not allowed outside the normal duty.

The determination of the Public Opinion in the effort to support the equal rights for the female military in connection to the military men has been proved again when Corporal Jacinta Baker died in Afghanistan. New Zealand Prime-minister has publicly declared that his country will not accelerate the withdrawal of its troops and will not initiate a re-evaluation process of the women’s presence into the combat missions [19].

The general trend is that women to be admitted into combat related role that in the Past were related to men. This change brought multiple benefits into the Theatre of Operations from Afghanistan especially in terms of increasing the efficiency of the capabilities. The question is the on long term the public opinion and the arms counterparts will accept the loss of the female military in combat with the same emotional implication as for a man or comrade.

## CONCLUSION

The historical evolution has proven that women can fulfill diverse roles including the leading and the fighting ones. The recent experience from the theatre of operations from Iraq and Afghanistan has shown that women are very good planners, analysts and fighters, with precious communication skills, in those traditional environments. There not yet many examples to confirm or deny the way in which the efficiency of the fighting groups has been affected by the women’s presence into the theatre of operations or in close combat, because there have not been carried out research related to this aspects.

Nations are not at the same level in terms of diversity, integration or personnel policies. It is important that those personnel policies to show that “lessons learnt of the developed armies”, concerning the gender equality are transmitted to those less developed armies.

Assigning equal roles for the women in connection to the men into the combatant forces is a very sensitive aspect for some states. Now a growing number of women are occupying positions within the World’s Armies wishing to benefit from the economic and labour opportunities offered by the Army. Even there do still exist in many traditional the social division of labour and roles, the equal access to education followed by economic independence, have generated freedom of choice and participation. The egalitarian policies are slowly promoted into traditional societies, existing some signs of change.

The socio-cultural evolution is generating changes in the perception way of different aspects related to the social role changing. We are seeing more female leaders, managers, commanders, but we are also seeing men in “household” role. Unfortunately military environment is a conservative one and the significant roles are still reserved for the men.

The weak representation of the women into the decision process is reflecting over the personal policies.

The international support policy of the role egalitarianism is arguing the support through the fact that we are all created the same way and not all the men are strong nor all the women are weak. The main point of this policy is supporting the necessity of unque standards in a way that the selection to be fair for both genders.

The differences related to women's role into the Armed Forces still exist and probably will never ever be leveled because societies and the armies are evolving individually being in present far away one from another and the stagnation process of some of them is hardly possible to happen. There are general rules regarding women's role and the rights in the modern armies, but the national differences will be always there, especially manifesting their influence inside the coalitions. The leadership and communication roles with the civilian population, especially with the women from traditional societies are encouraging asumming those roles, are generating progress into the negotiation and are serving as examples for other women.

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