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OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN PEACEKEEPING: GENDER MYTHS AND REALITIES

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GENDER MYTHS AND REALITIES**

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OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN PEACEKEEPING: GENDER MYTHS AND REALITIES

INTRODUCTION

Suffering disproportionately in post-conflict settings, women have been vaulted to the forefront of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping.¹ Recognizing the profound and differential impact of UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs) on women, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was adopted in 2000.² Considered a landmark resolution, it promoted women's equal participation in UN peace and security efforts and integration of gendered perspectives.³ Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the UN has boldly claimed that women enhance the operational effectiveness of UNPKOs, establishing quotas to increase women's representation in UN missions.⁴ Despite this appeal, employment of female military personnel in UN-mandated peacekeeping missions has remained low. Irrespective of UN targeted increases of 16% women for military observers and 5.25% for military contingents in 2019, the UN fell short of this

¹ Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams, and Stuart Griffon, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010): 15; Kemal Erzurum and Berna Eren, "Women in Peacebuilding: A Criticism of Gendered Solutions in Post Conflict Situations," *Journal of Applied Security Research* 9 no. 2 (April 2014): 242. For the purpose of this paper, peacekeeping is defined as the employment of military, police, and civilian personnel to establish the foundation of sustainable peace which may include, but is not limited to, peace enforcement and peacebuilding. Due to the scope of this paper, the focus will be on military peacekeepers, while references to police in UNPKOs may be included as comparative research in this area is abundant.

² United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN, 2000), 1; Judith Hicks Stiehm, "Women, Peacekeepers, and Peacemaking: Gender Balance and Mainstreaming," *International Peacekeeping* 8, no. 2 (2001): 47; Olivera Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter? Towards Combatting Male Sexual Violence in Peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 2 (2010): 188. Gender balancing and mainstreaming were initially discussed at the Beijing Conference of 1995. Launched in 2000, the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan formalized gender mainstreaming in UNPKOs.

³ *Ibid.*; Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women for a Better Peace?," *International Journal* 74, no. 3 (2019): 405; Kerry F. Crawford, James H. Lebovic, and Julia M. McDonald, "Explaining the Variation in Gender Composition of Personnel Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations," *Armed Forces and Society* 41, no. 2 (2015): 259.

⁴ Bellamy, Williams, and Griffon, *Understanding Peacekeeping...*, 372.

objective attaining 14.5% and 4.4% respectively, heightening demands on member states.⁵

UN deliberation on the reallocation of Canadian positions for the UN Mission in South Sudan in 2018, triggered criticism of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) by national media for their failure to consistently deploy enough women to satisfy UN targets.⁶ Given the substantial challenges faced by the CAF and Western militaries in recruiting women, rationalization of the requirement for female peacekeepers, both in numbers and anticipated employment is necessary. As female CAF members comprise only 15.6% of personnel, despite a national target of 25% by 2025, the UN demand is onerous.⁷ The resource pool strain is particularly challenging for highly sought after combat arms trades, where women are most acutely underrepresented at less than 3%.⁸ Rationalization not only necessitates an examination of specific qualifications, skills, attributes, and experience levels required for UNPKOs but raises fundamental questions concerning the desired effect. Absent empirical research, the UN has arguably overstated the impact of female peacekeepers on operational effectiveness to achieve a political agenda.⁹ By embracing instrumentalist and essentialist arguments, the UN has

⁵ United Nations, *Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations* (New York: UN, 2018), 3, accessed 20 March 2020. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p>. The Declaration of Shared Commitment on UN Peacekeeping Operations formally establishes targets agreed to by UN member states.

⁶ Murray Brewster, "Canada Nearly Lost 2018 UN Mission Because It Didn't Have Enough Women in Uniform," *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, 19 February 2020.; Marc Montgomery, "Lack of Women Soldiers Nearly Cost Canada a UN Peacekeeping Mission," *Radio Canada*, 19 February 2020.

⁷ Government of Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2017), 12; Statistics Canada, *Statistics of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2019), 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ A political organization, the UN reflects the political will and diplomatic strength of members states. Thus, the political agenda as articulated in UN rhetoric should be considered a manifestation of negotiations between states and not as the malevolent intent of the UN as an intergovernmental organization.

inadvertently perpetuated barriers that grossly disadvantage female military peacekeepers, thwarting substantive gender equality, contrary to the underlying intent of UNSCR 1325.

Methodology

This paper commences by analyzing the genesis of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions in the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Next, it examines the UN official position that women increase the effectiveness of UNPKOs, with particular emphasis on the inherent contradictions posed by essentialist and instrumentalist perspectives. Analysis of evidence from UNPKOs will then elucidate the incoherence between UN-endorsed rhetoric and the reality of UNPKOs, as experienced by female peacekeepers, specifically focusing on barriers that inhibit female peacekeepers' contributions. Finally, this paper provides recommendations to strengthen the UN strategy to achieve gender mainstreaming in UNPKOs as a preliminary step to gender equality.¹⁰

Definitions: Gender Balancing and Mainstreaming

Often misunderstood, the terms gender balancing and gender mainstreaming necessitate explanation. Gender balancing refers to increasing female representation in order to facilitate and promote organizational change.¹¹ Gender mainstreaming, however,

¹⁰ United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality* (New York: UN, 2001). Gender equality refers to the underlying norms, customs, values, and practices of an institution, which in theory and practice, treat all genders and sexes equitably, without privilege. Substantive gender equality surpasses procedural gender equality by eliminating barriers (e.g. glass ceilings) that subordinate and disadvantage one gender.

¹¹ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Gender Resourcing Package for Peacekeeping Operations* (New York: UN, 2004), 3; Robert Egnell, "Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness: Implementing UNSCR 1325 and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security," *PRISM* 6, no.1 (2017): 83. Gender balancing is also referred to as female ratio balancing.

refers to the process of institutionalizing the evaluation of actions, programs, policies, or legislation based on gender.¹² While women are conflated with gender in UN discourse, gender mainstreaming is intended to evaluate differential impacts on both sexes.¹³

GENESIS OF UNSCR 1325: CONVALESCING LEGITIMACY

Examination of the historical context surrounding the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions suggest that women's inclusion in UNPKOs emerged, not solely from a genuine desire for equality, but rather, in part, to thwart a legitimacy crisis originating from international condemnation due to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of locals by peacekeepers.¹⁴ Publicized allegations of SEA in UN missions emerged from Cambodia in 1993, followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), East Timor, and Sierra Leone.¹⁵ The concurrent emergence of UNSCR 1325 as international condemnation mounted over institutional inaction on endemic SEA in UNPKOs was not coincidental.¹⁶ Rather, UNSCR 1325 was, in part, adopted as a

¹² Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...", 411.

¹³ United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy...*, 6; Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peacebuilding* (New York: UNIFEM, 2000), 64. True gender mainstreaming requires regular monitoring, reporting, evaluation of progress and obstacles to support operational accountability. It also requires resources to implement measures. The UN continues to underachieve in this respect.

¹⁴ Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...", 188.

¹⁵ Sabrina Karim, and Kyle Beardsley, "Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions: The Role of Female Peacekeepers and Gender Equality in Contributing Countries," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 1 (2016): 101; Crawford, Lebovic, and McDonald, "Explaining the Variation in Gender Composition...", 259. Despite persistent and widespread SEA, it wasn't until 2006 that the UN began collecting data on SEA.

¹⁶ Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...", 189. Sarah Smith, "Accountability and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peace Operations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (2017): 409. Olivera Simić notes that the UN was forced to action in 2000 after the release of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Save the Children reports which documented peacekeeper SEA in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. Sarah Smith argues that several reports outlining the requirement for strengthened enforcement of SEA, including the UN internal report, the Zeid Report from the DRC mission in 2004 and an internal report in 2013, were largely ignored or recommendations contradicted. The institutional inaction on SEA for previous decades reflects militarized patriarchal notions of security that marginalize gendered forms of insecurity, such as SEA, and undermine the security of

response to SEA.¹⁷ As 95% of UN missions include a civilian protection mandate, SEA perpetrated against the population UNPKOs are mandated to safeguard is devastating to UN legitimacy.¹⁸ Promoting gender equality and women's inclusion through UNSCR 1325, diverted criticism of UNPKO SEA by reinforcing UN commitment to human rights.

Subsequent UN discourse reflects a shift in rhetoric from women's equality to SEA, revealing of female peacekeepers' inclusion in UNPKOs as a response to a SEA induced legitimacy crisis.¹⁹ Initially, this shift is manifested through the 2003 zero-tolerance policy on peacekeeper SEA.²⁰ A year later, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) released the Gender Resourcing Package, promoted as "concrete guidance to isolate gender issues and mainstream gender [in UNPKOs]."²¹ Yet this document fails both to articulate concrete means of gender mainstreaming and to allocate resources towards this effort.²² It does, however, refer extensively to SEA, stating,

Allegations and incidents of peacekeeper involvement in sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of host populations, including trafficking in women and girls, have proven extremely damaging to missions,

particular groups. UNSCR 1325 placed further pressure on nations to increase the representation of females in UNPKOs while expanding their roles.

¹⁷ Carol Harrington, *Politicization of Sexual Violence: From Abolitionism to Peacekeeping* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 145.; Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...", 191; Crawford, Lebovic, and McDonald, "Explaining the Variation in Gender Composition...", 276.

¹⁸ Bellamy, Williams, and Griffon, *Understanding Peacekeeping...*, 3.; United Nations, "United Nations Peacekeeping: Working for Peace and Security Worldwide," accessed 17 April 2020, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/infographics>; Sarah Smith, "Accountability and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peace Operations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (2017): 409.

¹⁹ Sarah Smith, "Accountability and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peace Operations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 4 (2017): 409.

²⁰ Bellamy, Williams, and Griffon, *Understanding Peacekeeping...*, 372.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Gender Resourcing Package...*, 164. This includes financial and personnel resources as gender advisors are mentioned but without a firm commitment. The onus of providing gender focused training and nominating female personnel to senior positions is placed on troop contributing countries.

undermining rule of law mandates and resulting in negative media portrayals of the UN.²³

Further, ensuing UNSCRs exhibit a restricted focus on SEA.²⁴ Released in 2008, UNSCR 1820 condemns the “use of sexual violence as a strategy in conflict,” implicitly acknowledging women as victims.²⁵ A series of successive resolutions, including UNSCRs 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2272, and 2436 further concentrate on sexual violence, a narrow gender issue in conflict, while stating that they are “mutually reinforcing” of UNSCR 1325.²⁶ UNSCR 2272 (2016) was devoted exclusively to preventing SEA, reinforcing the threat to UN legitimacy, stating, “sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers undermines the implementation of peacekeeping mandates, as well as the credibility of UN peacekeeping.”²⁷ The persistent singular emphasis on SEA in these resolutions detracts from the overarching goal of gender equality thereby neglecting larger gender disparities in economic, political, and social realms.²⁸

²³ *Ibid*, 165.

²⁴ Simić, “Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...”, 188; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2272* (New York: UN, 2016), 3.

²⁵ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820* (New York: UN, 2008), 2.

²⁶ *Ibid*. Anne-Kathrin Kreft, “The Gender Mainstreaming Gap: Security Council Resolution 1325 and UN Peacekeeping Mandates.” *International Peacekeeping* 24, no. 1 (2017): 139; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2272* (New York: UN, 2016), 3. Released in 2015, UNSCR 2242 reflects a more comprehensive approach towards gender but is followed by UNSCR 2272 the following year which again focuses exclusively on SEA.

²⁷ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2272* (New York: UN, 2016), 3; Smith, “Accountability and Sexual Exploitation...”, 410. It should be noted that SEA again garnered public attention in 2015 when an internal report was leaked. In addition, a UN aid worker, Andres Kompass was suspended after disclosing SEA perpetrated against children in the Central African Republic by French peacekeepers to French authorities. After being exonerated, Kompass resigned due to “systemic impunity” for abuse of authority for peacekeepers accused of SEA. UNSCR2272 was also triggered by a UN Secretary General Report suggesting that SEA increased in 2015.

²⁸ Kreft, “The Gender Mainstreaming Gap...”, 139; Erzurun, and Eren, “Women in Peacebuilding...”, 235. Though beyond the scope of this paper, UNSCR 1325 has also failed to guarantee the involvement of local women in peace processes. In 2010, only 16% of peace agreements addressed women’s rights and needs. Further, female representation in peace talks has remained ‘woefully’ small and women continue to be excluded from decision making.

²⁸ Olsson, and Gizelis, “Advancing Gender and Peacekeeping Research...”, 524.

Typecasting women and children as primarily victims, these resolutions reinforce traditional gender norms, undermining substantive equality. Practically, this means that strengthening women's agency has become secondary to the protection of women, which recasts them as victims.²⁹

Further, UNSCR 1325 has been applied selectively, denoting the lack of sustained commitment to gender equality as an end in itself. As the most visual manifestation of inequality, higher levels of sexual violence directly correlate with the probability of inclusion of gender mainstreaming in a UNPKO mandate.³⁰ For instance, both UN Interim Security Force for Abyei in Sudan (2011) and UN Supervision Mission in Syria (2012) lacked gender mandates, despite abundant rhetoric regarding incorporation of gender perspectives in UNPKOs.³¹ Furthermore, an independent study of UNSCR 1325 found that irrespective of the resolution, of 33 benchmarks adopted by 5 UNPKOs, none referred to gender-specific issues or gender equality. Only 5 of 105 indicators associated with the benchmarks referred to gender issues, with the majority constrained to sexual violence.³² Thus, while overall gender-sensitivity in UN mandates increased post-UNSCR 1325, the application was selective and the impact minimal as few missions included gender in a meaningful way.³³ The inconsistent implementation of UN

²⁹ Erzurun, and Eren, "Women in Peacebuilding...", 243. Peacekeeping implies male dominance with males stereotyped as the active "doers" and females characterized as passive victims.

³⁰ Kreft, "The Gender Mainstreaming Gap...", 148. SEA is but one indicator of gender inequality and other indicators such as political participation are vital to gender equality.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

³² United Nations Women, *Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN, 2015), 24; Catherine Powell, "How Women Could Save the World, If Only We Would Let Them: From Gender Essentialism to Inclusive Security," *Yale J.L. & Feminism* 271 (2017): 56. From 1990-2010, only 7% of peace agreements involving the UN referenced women reinforcing a lack of commitment to substantive gender equality, despite UN discourse.

³³ Kreft, "The Gender Mainstreaming Gap...", 146.

resolutions is exacerbated by the ambiguity of the text, and the avoidance of explicit acknowledgment of institutional accountability.³⁴ While it must be acknowledged that the UN is a political institution and, as such, UNSCRs represent the result of political and diplomatic negotiations among member states, the net effect remains that women's inclusion is partially based on an expectation that they will alleviate underlying gender inequality, as a means of salvaging damaged reputations and bolstering legitimacy.³⁵ While the larger importance of incorporating female peacekeepers in UNPKOs is not negated, a gap between rhetoric and reality is exposed. As Karen Barnes writes,

A rhetorical commitment to gender mainstreaming often disguises the reality that due to a lack of political will, organizational accountability, and competing or contradictory discourses, rather than being mainstreamed, gender issues become lost along the way and what results is tokenistic gestures that contradict the essence of what mainstreaming seeks to achieve.³⁶

Diverting responsibility for SEA to women while embracing the precise gendered stereotypes that hinder their equal participation, is extremely unfair and impedes operational effectiveness by failing to leverage the broadest talent pool.³⁷ If levels of SEA in UNPKOs are not reduced, women may be blamed for an issue they did not create.³⁸ Thus, while, superficially, UNSCR 1325 promotes the empowerment of women, its adoption, in part, to combat SEA and the sustained emphasis on SEA in supporting resolutions, ultimately thrusts women into an exposed position in an attempt to alleviate culpability to the organization.

³⁴ Smith, "Accountability and Sexual Exploitation...", 407.

³⁵ Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...", 406.

³⁶ York Centre for International and Security Studies, *Reform or More of the Same? Gender Mainstreaming and the Changing Nature of UN Peace Operations* (Toronto: York University: 2006), 2.

³⁷ Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...", 407.

³⁸ Karim, and Beardsley, "Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse...", 100.

DISPUTED CLAIMS: ASSUMPTIONS, CONTRADICTIONS, AND EVIDENCE

The UN claim that women increase the effectiveness of UNPKOs is founded on four central premises: first, female peacekeepers reduce conflict and confrontation, second, they offer a greater sense of security to women and children, third, they are more approachable and have better access to women, thereby enhancing support, and finally, they act as role models to “women and girls in male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and participation in peace processes.”³⁹ Female peacekeepers are touted as promoting and fostering “kinder, gentler, less abusive, and more efficient missions.”⁴⁰ In 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that increasing the representation of women was,

Not just a question of numbers – but also of our effectiveness in fulfilling our mandates...the presence of more women in troop contingents is credited with higher reporting of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as lower incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse.⁴¹

Guterres further cites unspecified evidence of more credible protection responses and superior access to local populations.⁴² UNSCR 1888 reinforces this assertion, suggesting,

Women and children affected by armed conflict may feel more secure working with and reporting abuse to women in peacekeeping missions... the presence of women peacekeepers may encourage local women to participate in the national armed and security forces, thereby helping to

³⁹ United Nations, “United Nations Peacekeeping: A Growing Force,” accessed 20 March 2020, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/infographics>.

⁴⁰ Egnell, “Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness...,” 78; Biskupski-Mujanovic, “Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...,” 405; Powell, “How Women Could Save the World...,” 286. Peacekeepers must also lay the groundwork for post-conflict society and shape its structures.

⁴¹ António Guterres (speech, United Nations Security Council on Women in Peacekeeping, New York, 11 April 2019), accessed 12 April 2020, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2019-04-11/remarks-security-council-women-peacekeeping>.

⁴² *Ibid.*; United Nations Women, “Women in Peacekeeping: The Power to Empower,” accessed 17 April 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAuFQj9xBYc>. UNMIL (Liberia) is championed as a “success story” of female peacekeepers, yet, in UNMIL, as will be explored later in this paper, evidence of the claims made was either mixed or directly contradicted the statement.

build a security sector that is accessible and responsive to all, especially women.⁴³

The UN official position that women increase the operational effectiveness of UNPKOs is disputed owing to inherent contradictions of essentialist and instrumentalist views.

Gender Essentialism

Initially, the UN position is disputed as it assumes that women are innately peaceful and that their mere presence will mitigate gender inequality and SEA in UNPKOs.⁴⁴ For instance, in 2010, UN Women suggests,

Gender balance in peacekeeping can help the UN to ‘lead by example’ in relation to *women’s empowerment* as both security providers and beneficiaries. Women may have a comparative operational advantage in *sexual based violence prevention*, having greater proximity to groups at risk.⁴⁵

By exaggerating female ‘innate’ characteristics, casting them as gentle, conciliatory nurturers, the UN embraces essentialist views of women, suggesting that women mollify aggression and hyper-masculinity.⁴⁶ In 2000, DPKO stated that “women’s presence makes male peacekeepers more reflective and responsible...often with the effect of

⁴³ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1960* (New York: UN, 2016), 6. UNSCR 1960 released in 2010 reinforces this claim.

⁴⁴ Olivera Simić, *Moving Beyond the Numbers: Integrating Women into Peacekeeping Operations*, Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (Oslo, Norway: 2013), 3; Ghittoni, Lehouck, Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*..., 16. The UN defines sexual exploitation as attempted or actual abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes including sexually exploitation for financial, social, or political benefits. As Olivera Simić notes other underlying assumptions pertain to mitigating the sex economy that emerges as a result of peacekeeping missions (e.g. the prevalence of brothels, children fathered by peacekeepers, and HIV/AIDs).

⁴⁵ United Nations Women, *Addressing Conflict Related Sexual Violence: An Analytical Inventory of Peacekeeping Practice* (New York: UN, 2010), 14. Accessed 27 April 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/04DAnAnalyticalInventoryofPeacekeepingPracti.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Biskupski-Mujanovic, “Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women ...”, 411; Heineken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...”, 231; Simić, “Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...”, 190. It should be noted that recently, there have been some improvements as to how women are depicted in UNSCR discourse, however, fundamentally the rhetoric continues to focus on deeply ingrained affirmative essentialist arguments.

reducing conflict and confrontation.”⁴⁷ The UN thus reinforces, rather than challenges, traditional, socially constructed gender roles, and expectations based on traditional conceptions of gender difference to promote women’s inclusion.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, this difference has historically formed the basis of women’s exclusion from the security domain.⁴⁹

Additionally, essentialist views reduce women to victims, depriving them of agency, and inhibiting their full participation in UNPKOs.⁵⁰ Associating female peacekeepers with women and children confines them to the ‘private sphere’ thereby denying them opportunities to facilitate meaningful change. As Nadine Puechguirbal states,

There is an obvious lack of political will and commitment within the UN hierarchy, which, permeated as it is with highly masculinized attitudes, exhibits a persistent resistance to change and power-sharing. Indeed, by projecting a definition of women as vulnerable victims and consistently associating their status with children, the UN system resists a redefinition of tasks and responsibilities that recognizes the experiences of and competencies of women. Consequently, a masculine norm of reference dominates decision-making...legitimized by a process of institutionalization.⁵¹

⁴⁷ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations* (New York: UN, 2000), 4. Accessed 25 April 2020. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/departement-of-peace-operations>.

⁴⁸ Gerard J. DeGroot, “A Few Good Women: Gender Stereotypes, the Military, and Peacekeeping,” *International Peacekeeping* 8, no. 2 (2001): 3; Simić, “Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...,” 189; Biskupski-Mujanovic, “Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...,” 412; Heinecken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...,” 232. These gendered norms, roles and expectations shape experiences of socially constructed masculinity and femininity. Women’s differential experience is based on their unique experiences and perceptions, which are socially constructed. Women’s exclusion is their denial of access to combat arms trades based on physiological inferiority and a presumed “negative impact on combat effectiveness.”

⁴⁹ Yoram Epstein, Ran Yanovich, and Daniel Moran, “Physiological Employment Standards IV: Integration of Women in Combat Units and Physiological and Medical Considerations,” *Applied Physiology* 111, no. 1 (2013): 2673. Women’s exclusion is their denial of access to combat arms trades based on physiological inferiority and a presumed “negative impact on combat effectiveness,” despite evidence to the contrary.

⁵⁰ Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report...*, 4. Essentialist arguments infer that what women do is irrelevant; the difference is realized through who they are.

⁵¹ Nadine Puechguirbal, “Discourses on Gender Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 2 (2010): 182.

This quote alludes to the fact that the inclusion of women within UNPKOs only to confine them to traditional gender-based roles will not lead to gender equality. Conversely, it reinforces women's inferiority by bolstering stereotypes. The inherent contradiction of gender essentialist depictions of female peacekeepers is clear: if women are placid, nurturing, pacifists, they cannot be reasonably expected to safeguard those considered most vulnerable. Moreover, these notions are irreconcilable with historical events, as evident during the UN mission in Rwanda where women committed and led acts of genocide at a rate unprecedented in history.⁵² Women's increased participation in militaries, rebel groups, and extremist organizations further suggests that women are not inherently victims requiring protection.⁵³ While scholar Gerard DeGroot suggests that essentialist arguments, favourably representing women, may assist women in achieving gender equality, the pervasiveness of gender inequality within UNPKOs nearly 20 years after UNSCR 1325 underscores the fallacy of this assertion.⁵⁴ On the contrary, gender essentialism has reinforced gender dichotomies resulting in systemic barriers, including a gendered protection norm that constrains women's participation in UNPKOs, a concept explored later in this paper. Implying gender essentialism is a strategic means of achieving gender equality without an appreciation of the experiences, and obstacles faced by female peacekeepers detracts from more tenacious concerns of institutional culture to women's detriment. Further, while the 'femininity' of female peacekeepers is

⁵² Adam Jones, "Genocide in Africa's Great Lakes Region," in *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2017): 493; Julie L. Arostegui, "Gender and the Security Sector: Towards a More Secure Future," *The Quarterly Journal* (Summer 2015): 7. Even if a biological component was established among sexes, biology is not destiny.

⁵³ Puechguirbal, "Discourses on Gender Patriarchy...", 177.

⁵⁴ DeGroot, "A Few Good Women...", 35.

championed, these women occupy masculine occupations, and thus the simplistic strategy of deploying them to promote gender equality ignores the complexity and precariousness of their position in UNPKOs.⁵⁵

Instrumentalism

Furthermore, the reliance on instrumentalism for women's inclusion, focused exclusively on women's capacity to increase military effectiveness, as 'tools' to improve operations, rather than based on perceptions of equality, incongruously disadvantages female peacekeepers by reinforcing the militarized-masculine culture that defines UNPKOs.⁵⁶ Consequently, structural issues remain unaddressed, the overall impact of applying gender perspectives is limited, and the transformative potential of gender perspectives is disregarded.⁵⁷ As a manifestation of this culture, issues such as SEA cannot be eliminated until the institution itself is transformed.⁵⁸ Thus, the underlying aim of gender equality in UNSCR 1325 is displaced by a more palatable goal of increasing the success of operations.⁵⁹ Noting the limitations of female ratio-balancing, Robert Egnell warns against considering women a "silver bullet," stating,

⁵⁵ Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...", 418.

⁵⁶ Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report...*, 1; Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...", 194; Sahana Dharmapuri, "Just Add Women and Stir?," *Parameters*, 2011, 58. An instrumentalist approach suggests that increasing the number of women will increase the probability of mission success, inclusion is not an ends in itself. The traditional argument that combat training is essential for peacekeepers due to the roles required of peacekeepers is challenged by Robert Egnell, who argues that demilitarization of multidimensional PKOs is necessary and suggests that military personnel do not make the best peacekeepers.

⁵⁷ Egnell, "Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness...", 86.

⁵⁸ Olsson, and Gizelis, "Advancing Gender and Peacekeeping Research...", 523; Stephen Moncrief, "Military Socialization, Disciplinary culture, and Sexual Violence in UN Peacekeeping Operations," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (2017): 723. This is not to suggest that militarized masculinity is strictly to blame for the emergence of SEA. Other factors positively related to the emergence of SEA include the size of the mission, with larger missions constituting a greater risk, host state poverty, and lower per capita Gross Domestic Product. As economic vulnerability increases, the likelihood of SEA also increases. The economic status of the host nation is also linked with a lack of credible and visible judicial and policing mechanisms.

⁵⁹ Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report...*, 4.

[The impact] will not be revolutionary, without first changing the mindset of commanders and planners...the impact is therefore likely to be limited until gender mainstreaming of a gender perspective on operations is achieved, and even at that time, it is only one of many components that determine the effectiveness of an operation.⁶⁰

Instrumentalist arguments further permit selective application of gender perspectives and ‘tokenism.’⁶¹ Despite their inferior gender status in a masculine institution, women are burdened by unreasonable expectations that they will resolve deep-rooted issues the very institution has proved incapable rectifying, absent any involvement of men.⁶² Indeed the onus is placed entirely on women, galvanizing resentment due to advocacy of comparative gender advantages, and exposing women to risk of exclusion should contradictory evidence emerge.

Evidentiary Limitations

Compounding the multifarious contradictions posed by essentialist and instrumentalist arguments is a dearth of concrete empirical evidence to substantiate the UN official position.⁶³ Lacking comprehensive evidence, limited anecdotes are overgeneralized across all UNPKOs. This approach is fundamentally flawed as time, space, and distinct cultural considerations across UNPKOs are ignored. Women’s contribution is context-specific, mediated by race, language, culture, religion, and ethnic

⁶⁰ Egnell, “Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness...”, 79.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Martha Ghittoni, Léa Lehouck, and Callum Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF): Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations: Baseline Study* (Switzerland: DCAF, 2018), 16; Louise Olsson and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, “Advancing Gender and Peacekeeping Research,” *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 4 (2014): 524.; Biskupski-Mujanovic, “Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...”, 405. Such is not to suggest that women do not increase the effectiveness of UNPKOs but rather to reinforce that empirical research to support this assertion does not yet exist. Gender and peacekeeping research has been limited due to the underdevelopment of theory, lack and data, and exclusion from mainstream research. Future research should focus on this area to provide concrete evidence.

differences, which have a profound impact on attitudes.⁶⁴ If gender is secondary to these barriers, the effect of gender, or adding females to UNPKOs, is limited. For instance, in the DRC, cultural considerations prevented community outreach efforts entirely.⁶⁵ Ultimately, the lack of empirical evidence and overgeneralization of limited anecdotes casts doubt on the validity of the claim, placing female peacekeepers in an extremely jeopardized position.

THE FRACTURE BETWEEN RHETORIC AND REALITY

Comparison of the UN rhetoric concerning female peacekeepers' contribution to operational effectiveness in UNPKOs and reality, as experienced by female peacekeepers and perceived by local populations, exposes substantial fractures, denoting the exaggeration of females' impact in UNPKOs.

Increased Protection of Women and Children

The assertion that female ratio-balancing in UNPKOs will provide greater protection to women and children by decreasing SEA relies on conceptions of male opportunism and militarism.⁶⁶ First, since men have comprised all perpetrators of

⁶⁴ Kathleen Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report: Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Agents of Change or Stranded Symbols?* (Norway: NOREF, 2011), 6; Kathleen Jennings, "Conditional Protection? Sex, Gender, and Discourse in UN Peacekeeping," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2019), 42; Lindy Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution to Peacekeeping?," *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 19, no. 1 (2015): 233. In Darfur and Sudan, interaction with the local population was nearly impossible and locals feared speaking to peacekeepers due to retaliation. In many cases, translators are required, the vast majority of whom are men, and thus trust and power relations continue to impact the willingness of the population to engage with peacekeepers, contrary to UN suggestions of effectiveness. As Kathleen Jennings suggests, gender does not transcend "economic, cultural, linguistic and possibly religious, racial, and ethnic lines that influence attitudes." Jennings also establishes a correlation between protection in UNPKOs and peacekeeper perceptions about local women in her later research, suggesting protection is based on perceptions among peacekeepers of whether protection is deserved by locals.

⁶⁵ Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report: Women's Participation...*, 6; Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 233.

⁶⁶ Sabrina Karim, and K. Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace, and Security in Post-Conflict States* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2017), 95.

reported SEA to date, decreasing the number of males in UNPKOs will reduce SEA. Second, militarism and deeply embedded power imbalances in UNPKOs can be disrupted by female ratio-balancing, a deeply inconsistent instrumentalist view exposed earlier.⁶⁷ In reality, expansion of female peacekeepers' role to "civilize" their male counterparts and promote, "better-behaved, less corrupt and less-abusive PKOs" strains the time women have to perform routine duties, exposing them to prospective reprisals.⁶⁸ Moreover, as scholar, Kathleen Jennings suggests, women in token positions assimilate to the hyper-masculine environment of UNPKOs, compromising women's ability to provide gendered perspectives and to effect changes to challenge power imbalances; a particularly salient point considering women's perilous position in UNPKOs owing to perceptions that they disrupt cohesion and diminish the privilege of military positions.⁶⁹ Within Canada, a country considered relatively progressive on gender issues, the 2015 Marie Deschamps report, that documented an astoundingly high prevalence of sexual assault within the CAF, is indicative of female military members' inability to curb sexual assault within domestic forces.⁷⁰ Consequently, expecting female peacekeepers to prevent SEA in

⁶⁷ Sabrina Karim, and K. Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace, and Security in Post-Conflict States* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2017), 95.

⁶⁸ Kathleen Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report...*, 3; Ghittoni, Lehouck, Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)...*, 16; Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 227.

⁶⁹ Jennings, *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report...*, 6. ⁶⁹ Simić, "Does the Presence of Women Really Matter...", 194; Andrea Lane, "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces" in *Canadian Defence Policy in Theory and Practice* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 354; Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...", 406; Andrea Goldstein, "Why Are You Trying to Destroy the Last Good Thing Men Have? Understanding Resistance to Women in Combat Jobs," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20, no. 3 (Spring 2018): 396. Power differentials and inequality between peacekeepers are further compounded by factors of intersectionality such as gender and race. The intersection of these factors results in differentials among women themselves and not all identify gender as their primary source of oppression. There is currently no evidence that women disrupt unit cohesion provided that they are well trained and competent.

⁷⁰ Marie Deschamps, *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2015), 3.; World Economic Forum, *Insight Report: Global Gender Gap Report 2020* (Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2019), 8. Canada is ranked 19 overall for gender parity with a score of 0.772 (1.00 equates to parity and 0.00 to imparity).

foreign, multinational missions is unreasonable. The extraordinary pressure placed on female peacekeepers' to overcome gender biases and unequivocally prove their commitment as team players, partially explains evidence discovered by Jennings that women in UNPKOs are primarily loyal to their country, opting to protect national colleagues over a presumed bond of 'sisterhood' with local women.⁷¹

Practically, the reduction of SEA can only transpire when females are physically present. Often restricted to gender-specific roles, and excluded from after-hours' activities, female peacekeepers' opportunities to prevent SEA are limited. Further, absent formal training, capacity, and in some cases, the mandate to respond to SEA, a recent study noted that many female peacekeepers self-reported ignorance of SEA response procedures.⁷² Erroneously suggesting that all men pose a threat disregards the prospect of female perpetrators and gender biases that may prevent the reporting of female perpetrated SEA. It further, "overlooks the potential for both men and women to value egalitarianism."⁷³ By injudiciously diverting the prevention of SEA to women, the permissive institutional and cultural context of UNPKOs that prioritizes militarized, patriarchal forms of security remains intact.⁷⁴ Further, empirical evidence that impunity, inadequate accountability, and insufficient enforcement mechanisms contribute to SEA in UNPKOs is neglected.⁷⁵ The UN response of repatriation only compounds perceptions of

⁷¹ Kathleen Jennings, *FAFO Report: Protecting Whom? Approaches to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations* (Norway: Allkopi AS, 2008), 11; Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 96.

⁷² Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...., 525. In Sudan, most female peacekeepers suggested that their ability to assist victims was constrained to referring them to medics, psychologists, or NGOs. As Louise Olsson notes without training, gender rebalancing is counterproductive and reinforces gender stereotypes.

⁷³ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 96.

⁷⁴ Smith, "Accountability and Sexual Exploitation...., 407.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

injustice as the circumstances at mission sites and structural inequalities remain unchanged.⁷⁶ Thus, simply adding women to UNPKOs is insufficient to enhance the protection of women and children; masculine structures and the institutional culture of UNPKOs must be challenged.

Further, negligible change in local populations' perceptions of their protection in UNPKOs and female peacekeepers' self-assessments of their effectiveness suggests that the correlation between female peacekeepers and enhanced protection of women and children has been overstated. In August 2019, UN performance reporting reflected a score of 3.33 for perceptions of protection of women and children amongst locals surveyed, where 3 represents no change and 5 represents progress.⁷⁷ Similarly, a study from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) observes that while overall perceptions of the security offered by the UN mission were improved by 16% when respondents interacted exclusively with female peacekeepers, this perception was not shared by female respondents.⁷⁸ No female respondents who had contact with female peacekeepers felt that females were more effective than male peacekeepers. Further, local women were skeptical of female peacekeepers' ability to protect them from SEA; only 4% stated that female peacekeepers could safeguard them.⁷⁹ In a recent study of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), South African female peacekeepers refuted the claim that women are better poised to address female security concerns, contending that local women prefer to engage with men, as the “symbol of protection, on

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 406.

⁷⁷ United Nations, *Action for Peacekeeping Initiative (A4P): Key Performance Achievements* (New York: UN, 2018), accessed 20 March 2020, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-forpeacekeeping-a4p>.

⁷⁸ Karim, and Beardsley, “Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse...”, 110.

⁷⁹ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 150.

security issues.”⁸⁰ Further, in studying UNMIL, Sabrina Karim found that while women’s increased participation in UNPKOs decreased SEA, the relationship was not consistently statistically significant.⁸¹ Increasing the proportion of women from 0% to 5% in military contingents reduced allegations of SEA by 50% in some instances, however, the finding was inconsistent across variables. Rather, peacekeepers originating from nations with strong records of gender equality emerged as the strongest predictor of reduced levels of SEA.⁸² Despite being the largest contributor of military female peacekeepers across all UN missions, averaging 15%, South Africa has consistently had the most allegations of SEA.⁸³ This suggests that, despite an increased proportion of female peacekeepers in South African contingents, the culture of the contingent was unchanged.⁸⁴ After South Africa, the top female troop-contributing countries (TCC) in 2016 were Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Uruguay, some of which are among the worst-rated nations for gender parity.⁸⁵ In 2015, 99 allegations of SEA, of which, 46 were against military, police, or government personnel assigned to UNPKOs represented an increase of SEA from previous years, despite the increased presence of female peacekeepers, with no evidence

⁸⁰ Heinecken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...”, 237.

⁸¹ Karim, and Beardsley, “Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse...”, 111.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Uganda presents a similar pattern.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 110; Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 69; World Economic Forum, *Insight Report: Global Gender Gap Report 2020* (Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2019), 8; Biskupski-Mujanovic, “Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...”, 412. Gender parity rankings are South Africa: 17, Nigeria: 128, Ghana: 107, Ethiopia: 82, and Uruguay: 37. Some scholars question the unique circumstances of women from Third World countries as peacekeepers and recipients as many of the contributors face insecurity within their home nations. India, another significant contributor of female peacekeepers, presents a unique case due to the paradox of their own security situation as India was found to be among the most dangerous countries in the world for women. The self-proclaimed success of women from India in UNMIL Female Formed Police Unit, led to India being considered ‘progressive in gender thinking,’ and an increased number of women deploying on peacekeeping missions. Yet India does not allow women in combat units and regulates them to ‘safer peacekeeping.’ In this way the WPS agenda ignores cultural and racial hierarchies as well as global power dynamics.

of increased reporting.⁸⁶ While limited, this evidence reinforces that institutions that embrace accountability through robust disciplinary measures and uphold gender equality produce more effective peacekeepers, regardless of sex.⁸⁷ Thus strategies based strictly on quotas to increase female representation in UNPKOs to mitigate SEA and increase protection are suspect, as there are more significant contributing factors.⁸⁸

Reduction of Conflict

Suggestions that female peacekeepers reduce conflict, with lower levels of tension at checkpoints and less use of force were inconclusive and context-specific, indicative of the UN overstatement of female effectiveness.⁸⁹ In some instances, a reduction in conflict was not because women were less adversarial but rather due to perceptions of women as less threatening than men.⁹⁰ As one female stated, “you must walk like a man, talk like a man... behave like a soldier, not a woman and must always be aggressive.”⁹¹ This statement reiterates that within a masculine environment, women are expected to conform to the dominant culture. Female peacekeepers face a double or triple bind as they navigate between being perceived as provocative for defying gender norms and

⁸⁶ Office of Internal Oversight Services, *Activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on Peace Operations for the Period of 1 January to 31 December 2015* (New York: UN, 2016), accessed 10 April 2020 <https://oios.un.org/reports-governing-bodies>.; Smith, “Accountability and Sexual Exploitation...”, 410. It should be noted that underreporting is extremely common for SEA; Heinecken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...”, 236. The term ‘allegations’ is misleading as a single allegation can include several perpetrators or systematic SEA against a particular victim by a sole individual over a lengthy period of time. There is currently no evidence to reflect an increase in reporting of SEA despite claims in UNSCR 1888 that the increased presence of female peacekeepers will increase reporting due to feelings of security.

⁸⁷ Ghittoni, Lehouck, Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*..., 16.

⁸⁸ Karim, and Beardsley, “Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse...”, 111.

⁸⁹ Heinecken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...”, 232.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; Arostegui, “Gender and the Security Sector...”, 17. While there is some limited evidence of women being less likely to use excessive force such may also be attributable to local reactions to women as less threatening. For instance, British units using Female Engagement Teams, were less frequently ambushed by locals and were less likely to have stones thrown at them while on patrols in Chad and in the Congo.

⁹¹ Heinecken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...”, 232.

conforming to their environment, reinforcing the limitations of female ratio-balancing.⁹² Women are further depicted as increasing intelligence gathering and bolstering the perceived legitimacy of UNPKOs due to their ability to access populations denied to male counterparts for cultural reasons.⁹³ An oft-cited example cited is the success of Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in Afghanistan. It must be considered, however, that FETs represented a new capability, never previously fulfilled by men. Thus, any resultant increase in effectiveness cannot, therefore, be solely attributed to females, but also to the additional collection capability.⁹⁴

Encourage Participation as Role Models

The assertion that female peacekeepers act as role models is also inconclusive as a recent study of UNMIL by scholars Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley found that contact with female peacekeepers harmed female respondents' perception of whether women should join the military or police. Of respondents who stated they would consider joining either institution, only 3% reported being inspired by female peacekeepers.⁹⁵ As Lindy Heinecken suggests, the ability to influence gender norms is also extremely dependant on the host nation and whether women are both visible and accessible.⁹⁶ Embracing gender equality may pose a threat to local women and thus "peacekeepers must have a solid grasp of gender dynamics of host nations and how their actions can either protect or undermine local women's insecurity and vulnerability."⁹⁷ Overall, the reality of UNPKOs as experienced and perceived by both female peacekeepers and local populations exposes

⁹² Biskupski-Mujanovic, "Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women...", 405.

⁹³ Egnell, "Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness...", 77.

⁹⁴ Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 240.

⁹⁵ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 151; Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 232.

⁹⁶ Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 240.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 239.

profound inconsistencies as compared to the UN position, illustrative of the exaggerated role of women. While inconclusive evidence supports the premise that female military peacekeepers reduce SEA, women are unable to alter the culture of contingents and UNPKOs, largely conforming to the dominant masculine culture. Rather, respect for gender equality emerges as the crux to successful UNPKOs.

OBSTACLES IMPEDING PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Further, reliance on essentialist views and instrumentalist claims to promote women's inclusion in UNPKOs has resulted in unintentional, yet debilitating, barriers to female military peacekeepers' participation; degrading any proposed enhancement to operational effectiveness. These barriers include discrimination and gendered protection norms, sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, and violence (SEAHV), and exclusion from decision making.

Discrimination and Gendered Protection Norms

Among the most debilitating obstacles faced by female peacekeepers is discrimination. In addition to overt sexism, discrimination is often based on a protection norm derived from perceptions that females must be 'safeguarded' from victimization.⁹⁸ In effect, protection norms undermine the credibility and effectiveness of female peacekeepers by preventing them from performing the very functions claimed to be instrumental to UNPKOs.⁹⁹ The inherent contradiction of female peacekeepers as both rescuers and requiring rescue is also exposed as protection norms remained strong, even among countries with better records of gender equality.¹⁰⁰ To improve outreach with

⁹⁸ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 144.

⁹⁹ Karim, and Beardsley..., 95.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

local civilians, women require access to the local population and the flexibility to leave compounds, however, this is often not the case.¹⁰¹ In UNMIL, rigid movement restrictions were established for military women including confinement to base, denial of access to a vehicle, and requirements to travel with men.¹⁰² Indeed, women are often perceived as liabilities.¹⁰³ Despite a desire to interact with the local community, some women were only permitted to leave their military compound twice in six months during a contingent outreach program.¹⁰⁴ This evidence is reinforced by surveys among the local population in UNMIL as only 4% had interaction with female peacekeepers while 23% had interaction with males.¹⁰⁵ The sheer abundance of rules and regulations, inadequate facilities for women, sexual harassment, unequal treatment, and missing friends and family were among cited impediments to women's participation in UNPKOs.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, female peacekeepers are often confined to safe places and spaces. In a 2016 study, Karim and Beardsley found that female peacekeepers were sent to conflicts deemed low risk, rather than to regions where gender inequality and sexual violence necessitated greater emphasis on gender perspectives.¹⁰⁷ Thus while MONUSCO and the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti had the highest SEA rates, women were least likely to be sent to these locations.¹⁰⁸ Further, an independent report found that 'the male-

¹⁰¹ Ghittoni, Lehouck, Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*..., 16

¹⁰² Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*..., 144.

¹⁰³ Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 246.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 245; Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*..., 144. Some women from a South African contingent in DRC were also told to conceal their identity to avoid the contingent from being vulnerable to attack due to the rebel's disdain for females and to protect themselves from SEA.

¹⁰⁵ Karim, and Beardsley, "Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse...", 102. This statistic includes police, who operated in a more permissive environment than females from military contingents.

¹⁰⁶ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*..., 144. These restraints were particularly pronounced for contingents from countries with lower esteem for gender equality.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 77. Higher risk conflicts were determined by fatalities, severity of conflict, lower Gross Domestic Product. The most significant factor, however, was widespread sexual violence.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 98; Crawford, Lebovic, and McDonald, "Explaining the Variation in Gender

dominated UN Secretariat maintains inherent biases against appointing women to “serious missions.”¹⁰⁹ Women are confined to the peripheries of conflict, in gendered or administrative roles, which for many are in direct opposition to their initial reasons for joining the military. As Egnell suggests,

Indeed, few women have joined the military to become advocates of women’s rights or gender equality. Instead, just as their male colleagues, they have signed up because they believe in the cause of defending a nation.¹¹⁰

By constraining women’s participation in UNPKOs to specific gender-related functions or as experts (e.g. Gender Advisors), women are isolated, stereotypes entrenched, and masculine power structures reinforced.¹¹¹ This isolation exacerbates inequalities by entrenching stereotypes and reinforcing masculine structures that subordinate women. While subjected to tremendous performance pressure, female peacekeepers, particularly those in combat arms trades, must adopt masculine values to be perceived as “good soldiers.”¹¹² As Andrea Goldstein notes, “biases against women in combat are deep-seated, culturally ingrained, and likely to cause inertia and obstacles for women serving that will be detrimental to career progression and mission effectiveness.”¹¹³ She suggests that women’s reception into a sphere reserved for the ‘pinnacle of masculinity and power

Composition..., 259. The missions in which women contributed above 10% were two of the smaller missions, with one of them, UNMIN (Nepal) as the smallest at 518 personnel. In contrast UNMIL (Liberia) and MONUSCO (DRC) were the largest missions and had over 97% males. As Karim and Beardsley suggest, “If there is greater potential for female peacekeepers to have maximum impact where there has been widespread sexual violence – for reasons related to operational effectiveness or the fact that sexual violence is a symptom of deep problems related to gender power imbalances – then it is especially noteworthy that female peacekeepers are much less likely to deploy to such missions.”

¹⁰⁹ Camille Conaway, and Joslynn Shoemaker, *Women in International Security Report: Women in United Nations Peace Operations: Increasing the Leadership Opportunities* (n.p.: 2008), 60.

¹¹⁰ Egnell, “Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness...”, 84.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*; Ghittoni, Lehouck, Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*..., 18.

¹¹² Heinecken, “Are Women ‘Really’ Making a Unique Contribution...”, 227.

¹¹³ Goldstein, “Why Are You Trying to Destroy...”, 387.

undermines men's perceived ability to prove their masculinity.'¹¹⁴ As a result of this perception, women in combat units are confined to roles as technical experts or blatantly employed as women on FETs or Cultural Support Teams (CSTs) to engage with the local population.¹¹⁵ Not only do these roles entail an intense emotional burden for women, but despite being combat operators, women's positions in FETs and CSTs are often devalued, garnering neither formal recognition nor defined career paths (e.g. Afghanistan).¹¹⁶ In some cases, women's promotion prospects were unaffected by deployments, and opportunities for promotion were missed while women were deployed.¹¹⁷ An independent study found that even UN-endorsed Gender Advisors possessed negligible authority, insufficient resources, and occupied the lowest level of the UNPKO hierarchy.¹¹⁸ Thus, the very women that the UN and militaries aspire to recruit, retain, and support are unfairly exploited; forced into undervalued roles to rectify a legitimacy problem they did not create.¹¹⁹

SEAHV

SEAHV against female peacekeepers comprises another obstacle for females in UNPKOs, adversely impacting female peacekeepers' performance and security while revealing structural gender-based power differentials that perpetuate inequality.¹²⁰ In

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* The proving of masculinity through military service is closely linked to identity constructs.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 387. Andrea Goldstein's research was based on the United States, United Kingdom and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 394. Female Engagement Teams transitioned to Cultural Support Teams in 2011. Statistics for career progression and formal recognition were from 2014.

¹¹⁷ Ghittoni, Lehouck, Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*..., 38. Cultural context is relevant and experiences varying considerably among nations.

¹¹⁸ Rehn, and Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment*..., 66.

¹¹⁹ As a direct consequence of the UN assertion that women increase effectiveness, the limited number of military female peacekeepers will be subject to frequent deployments in UNPKOs, exacerbating detrimental impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing as well as exposing women to a greater risk of desensitization to conflict and violence.

¹²⁰ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*..., 145; Karim, and Beardsley, "Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse...", 106.; Simić, *Moving Beyond the Numbers*..., 196.

UNMIL, 17% of female peacekeepers reported sexual harassment as the most significant impediment to their roles as peacekeepers.¹²¹ The highest-ranking military female on the mission, a Major, also reported sex-based discrimination, citing disregard for her authority, disobedience of her commands, and instances of public condemnation by men.¹²² In UNMIL, gender stereotypes impeded women's ability to interact with the host nation population as some Liberian males devalued them, refusing to acknowledge them as counterparts. Such rendered women's performance of routine functions exceedingly difficult and reveals the irrationality of the UN expectation that despite systemic barriers, female peacekeepers' contributions to UNPKOs can exceed those of males.¹²³ While proponents of critical mass arguments suggest that insufficient numbers of females have been attained to realize benefits, the finding that esteem for gender equality is a better predictor of peacekeeper effectiveness repudiates this claim. Additionally, despite exclusively female police units in UNMIL, results of gender balancing were mixed, indicative of the inadequacy of critical mass arguments. Furthermore, gender balancing results in the larger institution remaining "blind" to gender concerns as women are confined to positions as experts.¹²⁴ It further assumes that women are by nature gender-

¹²¹ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 145.

¹²² Heinecken, "Are Women 'Really' Making a Unique Contribution...", 245. In the DRC, one of the female officers interviewed reported that nearly all the Congolese men that greeted her, tickled the inside of her palm, an invitation to have sex, despite the fact that she was their superior. Moreover, another officer told her that he will respect her rank alone, not her, because she is a woman.

¹²³ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 95; Ghittoni, Lehouck, and Watson, *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)...*, 38. DCAF identified 14 barriers that prevent women's (peacekeepers and local females) full participation in UNPKOs. DCAF has embarked on a large scale research project to assess prominent obstacles, identify the level of impact, and propose programmatic and policy solutions to this long-standing issue.

¹²⁴ Egnell, "Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness...", 80.

aware, while in reality, a gender-aware male may prove more effective than a gender-unaware female.¹²⁵

Exclusion from Decision Making

Furthermore, women's exclusion from decision making and leadership roles within UNPKOs is another obstacle that diminishes female peacekeepers' ability to enhance operational effectiveness.¹²⁶ Despite explicit commitment to "50-50 representation...in all professional posts, particularly in decision making and senior positions," women remain underrepresented in upper management and strategic policy development, with less than 2% as Heads and Deputy Heads of Missions in UNPKOs.¹²⁷ An independent assessment determined that the low presence of women in leadership positions in UNPKOs was not due to a dearth of qualified women but rather due to discrimination and reliance on an "old boys network" to fill unadvertised positions.¹²⁸ Drawing on evidence from industry, Sabrina Nielsen and Morten Huse note that women must be employed in areas of strategic importance to maximize effectiveness.¹²⁹ While women were not found to perform operational control tasks better or worse than men,

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Erzurun, and Eren, "Women in Peacebuilding...", 237.

¹²⁷ United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy...*, 12. The 2% figure is from 2006. Overall, within the UN, the representation of women in decision making has improved with the UN Gender Parity Strategy with the UN overall average at 28% as of 2015. However, women remain vastly underrepresented in the peace and security domain, specifically at the highest levels of UNPKOs where the greatest gap exists as they must "shatter the highest and hardest glass ceiling." The vast majority of women in professional level positions are employed in administrative professions with limited decision making ability.

¹²⁸ Rehn, and Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment...*, 25.

¹²⁹ Sabrina Nielsen, and Morten Huse, "The Contribution of Women on Boards of Directors: Going Beyond the Surface." *Corporate Governance: An International Review* 18, no. 2 (2010): 138. Nielsen and Huse note that strategic control functions are complex, necessitating creativity and diverse perspectives and rely on hierarchical multiple regression analysis for their study. They found that women were more likely to implement board development activities (e.g. work instructions, evaluations, development activities), which increased board effectiveness. Board processes were also improved with higher ratios of female board members.

women provided specific advantages to decision making concerning strategic tasks.¹³⁰ Thus women are proven to have the greatest impact in positions that they are least likely to occupy. The majority of women serving in UNPKOs are employed in low-level field positions, where efforts to mainstream gender are limited to advocacy functions; potentially entailing personal expense.¹³¹ Abundant barriers encountered by female peacekeepers demonstrate the unintentional, yet detrimental impacts of instrumentalist and essentialist arguments for female peacekeepers inclusion in UNPKOs. These barriers preclude substantial effects on operational effectiveness and allude to the inadequacy of female-ratio balancing to promote substantive gender equality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The volatile and ambiguous environment characteristic of multidimensional UNPKOs demands critical thinking and diverse perspectives. To leverage the broadest talent pool, gender roles must be dismantled. Rather than inclusion of women based on stereotypical binary differences, the UN must reframe the narrative for women's inclusion in UNPKOs, to surpass political agendas, and instead focus on a meritocratic, equal-opportunity approach. Established correlations between norms of gender equality and reduced levels of violence in UNPKOs, validating that esteem for gender equality is paramount to suitability for UNPKOs, regardless of sex, provides a policy lever for selection, promotion, and training.¹³² Focusing on suitability for selection and promotion will aid in eliminating perceptions of preferential treatment of women among males while dispelling myths that continue to hinder women's progress within the security domain.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Simić, *Moving Beyond the Numbers...*, 3. Due to their lack of positional power and status, advocacy by female peacekeepers may lead to damaged career prospects or being ostracized.

¹³² Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 75.

Moreover, the integration of female and male leaders with strong regard for gender equality within the upper echelons of the UN will assist in dismantling the masculine culture of UNPKOs, which subordinates and disadvantages women.¹³³ Noting variations among TCCs esteem for gender equality, the UN must accept responsibility for a robust training program rather than relying on ad hoc delivery by TCCs. Emulating Sweden's "Genderforce," which established a partnership among numerous sectors to incorporate gender perspectives into security training, strategy, and operations, investment in a holistic strategy to foster gender equality is necessary.¹³⁴ Gender equality strategies with focused action plans and clear metrics will assist in sustaining momentum towards eliminating bias and fostering cultural change in UNPKOs. Only through transformational change will barriers which either prevent women's participation or limit their effectiveness in UNPKOs be eradicated. As a preliminary step towards equality, gender mainstreaming must be adhered to in its true form; women should not comprise the sole focus of a gendered perspective as it enables bias to permeate UNPKOs to the detriment of gender equality.

Further, rather than dominating the WPS agenda, SEA should fall under the protection of civilians as an issue necessitating attention in its own right. SEA is but one of several measures of women's inequality, and thus other indicators of security sector reform in societal, economic, institutional, and political dimensions necessitate concerted attention.¹³⁵ SEA continues to undermine the legitimacy of the UN despite numerous

¹³³ Further research on the ability of women in senior positions to alter institutional culture should be considered.

¹³⁴ Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 96; Arostegui, "Gender and the Security Sector...", 22.

¹³⁵ Arostegui, "Gender and the Security Sector...", 22.

resolutions condemning its prevalence.¹³⁶ Rather than additional female peacekeepers, the UN requires an organic accountability mechanism with professionalized investigative capabilities and consistent procedures for SEA management.¹³⁷ This is reinforced by the Global Study on the Implementation of 1325 which recommends not only preventative measures but enhanced institutional accountability through hybrid courts, shared jurisdiction between TCCs and host nations, and international tribunals.¹³⁸ Countries that value gender equality are more likely to hold their personnel accountable. Consequently, force composition and selection practices must account for this reality, with the added benefit of encouraging national strategies to promote gender equality and alleviating resource strain on TCCs. UNPKOs are shaped by norms and socialization processes, which either enable or prevent SEA. Accordingly, a holistic approach to dismantling gender power imbalances is necessary.¹³⁹

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the impact of female peacekeepers on operational effectiveness has been overstated, in part, to salvage the marred reputation of the UN and as a perceived means of reducing gender inequalities, particularly SEA, in UNPKOs. By embracing deeply flawed instrumentalist and essentialist arguments, the UN has unintentionally perpetuated barriers that grossly disadvantage female military peacekeepers and undermine substantive gender equality, contrary to the premise of UNSCR 1325. While

¹³⁶ United Nations Women, *Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study...*, 24.

¹³⁷ While the UN has preliminary investigation teams for SEA, absent formal training in criminal investigations, they often lack sufficient capabilities. Similarly, if preliminary reports are passed to the mission team for further investigation, they lack investigative capacities and thus evidence is often below the threshold required by troop contributing nations to initiate criminal proceedings.

¹³⁸ United Nations Women, *Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study...*, 24.

¹³⁹ Moncrief, "Military Socialization, Disciplinary Culture, and Sexual Violence...", 715; Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 96.

gender mainstreaming and equality were portrayed as critical to UNSCR 1325, the operationalization of the resolution focused exclusively on increasing the representation of women, gender balancing, leaving gendered militarized institutions that disadvantage women unscathed.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, UNPKOs have continued to harbor gender inequalities which, manifested through institutional barriers, have degraded female peacekeepers' meaningful participation in, and contribution to, UNPKOs. Profound inconsistencies between UN rhetoric and the reality as experienced by female peacekeepers and perceived by local populations, reinforce the inherent contradictions of instrumentalist and essentialist arguments and expose the fallacy of female-ratio balancing to foster substantive gender equality. In a zero-sum game where masculinity is predicated on the submission of femininity, adding females to UNPKOs to function in roles aligned with traditional stereotypes is insufficient to advance gender equality. Evidence that esteem for gender equality is the core of effective-peacekeeping presents an opportunity for a revised narrative, one that values both genders equally and pushes the limits of what UNPKOs can achieve concerning gender equality. After 20 years of notional change in UNPKOs, a renewed focus on gender equality, as an end in itself, is required. The dominant militarized masculine culture must be dismantled and replaced with a culture of respect. Finally, myths that continue to hinder women's progress within the security domain must be systematically dispelled.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN, 2000), 2; United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy...*, 6; Karim, and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping...*, 97; Susan Harris Rimmer, "Barriers to Operationalizing the "Women, Peace, and Security Doctrine of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 2 (2016): 50.

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