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Gender Optimization, the Adapted Culture

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Gender Optimization, the Adapted Culture

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GENDER OPTIMIZATION, THE ADAPTED CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

A western developing country called Jamaica, with a Defence Force establishment of under 15,000 service members, led by its former Chief of Defence Staff, Lt Gen Rocky Meade; took the decision to include gender optimization into the DNA of the Jamaica Defence Force and promulgated a policy which was added to its doctrine to educate all, and mandated leaders, to discuss it periodically, whilst at the same time, change the culture of the Force. This step ensured that women played an increasingly important role in the Force. The present CDS and currently the only female CDS in the world, Rear Admiral Antonette Wemyss - GORMAN, benefitted from equal opportunity and broke the imaginary glass ceiling of old. The glass ceiling is one of the most popular metaphors used to describe inequalities between men and women in the workplace. “The image suggests that although it may now be the case that women are able to get through the front door of managerial hierarchies, at some point they hit an invisible barrier that blocks any further upward movement. It applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women.”¹

In the JDF Gender Optimization was achieved through directives that reflected a shift from traditional exclusion to an open policy of total inclusion. Like many of JDF’s military partners, JDF adopted the UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security, dated 31 October 2000 and used it in formulating the Jamaica Defence Force, Gender Optimization Policy on the 22 January 2020.² This was several years after the Canadian Armed Force (CAF) Promulgation in

¹ Karima Merchant. How Men And Women Differ: Gender Differences, in Communication Styles, Influence Tactics, and Leadership Styles. J. Baxter, & E Wright, (2000). https://joanmcewan.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2019/08/Show-UP_First-3-Chapters-.pdf. The glass ceiling hypothesis. Gender & Society, 14(2), 275–294 <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124300014002004>

² Jamaica Defence Force Gender Optimization Policy 22 January 2020.

2016; which is one (1) of Jamaica's main military partners, and they are regarded as a leader of military gender integration.³ The JDF, recognizes that gender optimization must be a fundamental part of a comprehensive approach to military development in order to increase the operational and administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the Force.⁴

Thesis

This paper will demonstrate that the JDF implemented its gender optimization policy and engaged in deployments locally, regionally and through partnerships. The JDF learned from the CAF operations in Afghanistan, Operation "ATHENA", and stands to benefit from being gender optimized with safeguards and policies available to protect all stakeholders, more so the JDF.

The paper defines and explores gender optimization, examines the policy position adapted as the JDF moves away from the male-dominated cultures involved with employment and deployment, and argues that the increased participation and representation of women are necessary at all levels of decision making. The essay also outlines some issues related to communication, looks at the Canadian way and demonstrates deployments locally and internationally.

Gender Optimization

The definition of certain words which simplifies the term Gender Optimization are explained to assist any reader in grasping the concept and increase understanding; words or terms such as Gender, Gender Roles, Gender Advisor, Gender Field Advisor and Gender Focal Point.

³ <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>, 09-Jun-2017. <https://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law-oxio/e77>

⁴ Jamaica Defence Force Gender Optimization Policy 22 January 2020.

Gender refers to socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men.⁵ The concept of gender refers to the attributes associated with being male and female and is learned through socialization. It determines a person and value in a given a context and does not exclusively refer to women.⁶

These roles and expectations are learned, changeable over time, and varied within and between cultures. Gender analysis has increasingly revealed how women's subordination is socially constructed, and therefore able to change, as opposed to being biologically predetermined and, therefore static.⁷ The socially constructed roles ascribed to men, women, boys, and girls, as opposed to biological and physical characteristics, vary with socio-economic, political and cultural contexts, and are affected by other factors, including age, race, class and ethnicity.⁸

Gender Roles are learned and are changeable;⁹ Gender Roles refers to the deliberate process of ensuring consideration of gender perspective and the ideal mix of both genders in all respects of the functioning of the military.¹⁰ There were initially resistance by many service members across the Force, as the male community complained of young inexperienced females moving up the ranks and getting opportunities, which reduced the male dominance. Gender optimization is vital to improve the operational effectiveness and long-term success of the

⁵ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/gender_equality_toolkit-trousse_outils_egalite_genres.aspx?lang=eng. 14-Dec-2020

⁶ Jamaica Defence Force Gender Optimization Policy 22 January 2020. https://wideplus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Gender-Analysis-Framework_-COVID19_V2_3APR2020.pdf.

⁷ <https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/policy-politique>.

⁸ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/conduct/cds-directive-unscr-1325.html>

⁹ CDS Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions into CAF Planning and Operations.

¹⁰ Jamaica Defence Force Gender Optimization Policy 22 January 2020.

Force.¹¹ Note carefully, that it does not necessarily entail a numerical balance in the gender composition of the force and it does not focus solely on women's rights.¹²

Gender Advisors (GENAD) are military or civilian personnel who operate at the strategic and operational levels and are a resource to the Commander who is responsible for the overall integration of gender perspectives into planning, execution and evaluation. The GENAD monitors, coordinates with, and supports Gender Field Advisors and Gender Focal Points.¹³

Gender Field Advisors (GFA) are military or civilian personnel deployed at the operational/tactical level to conduct gender analysis in the area of operations and to ensure that the Commander's intent and execution of tasks will be in line with the UN resolutions, NATO Bi-SC Directive 40-1 and the Government of the Force's direction.¹⁴ Gender Focal Points (GFP) are military or civilian personnel appointed within the branches at a headquarters level, and within units on a tactical level, to integrate gender perspectives within plans, tasks and evaluations of their branches and units.¹⁵

Policy position

Policies, programmes and projects are designed to address the differences in experiences and situations between and among women and men.¹⁶ Let me hasten to add that, achieving

¹¹ *Ibid*, 2

¹² Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, *Directive on the integration of UNSCR 1325 in CAF Operation, Planning, and Policy*, 29 January 2016. Robert Egnell, Petter Hojem, Hannes Berts. "Gender, Military Effectiveness, and Organizational Change", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2014.

¹³ Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, *Directive on the integration of UNSCR 1325 in CAF Operation, Planning, and Policy*, 29 January 2016. A - 2/2 <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/conduct/cds-directive-unscr-1325.html>.

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, *Directive on the integration of UNSCR 1325 in CAF Operation, Planning, and Policy*, 29 January 2016.

¹⁶ <http://docweb.pwv.gov.za/docs/policy/genequapol.html>. 20-Oct-2003.

gender equality or optimization does not mean that women become the same as men. Equality means that one's rights or opportunities do not depend on being male or female.¹⁷ The JDF embraces and actively promotes gender optimization as an institutional value. The policy outlines that optimization and inclusion reflect veneration for unique talents, perspectives and experiences of service members, thereby enabling each individual to fully contribute to the execution of the Force's mission, while achieving their full potential on the basis of merit.¹⁸ Force Headquarters appoints a Force GENAD, who will be the primary advisor to the CDS. The GFPs support the GENAD within the various Brigades.¹⁹

This policy was crafted to ensure all directives and activities were stated as being informed by a conscious and deliberate effort to achieve gender optimization. This would be no easy task as the ratio of, male to female, was less than nine (9) to one (1). Equal opportunity would be seen as a bias for females regardless of a policy. The policy clearly articulated that unless otherwise determined as optimal, at least 25% of each gender must be represented in administrative and operational taskings.²⁰ It stated that, to achieve optimal targets, there would be no compromise of competencies, fitness requirements; qualifications and standards. The policy also made provision for cases where to achieve optimal targets, a compromise would be needed, Headquarters of the JDF would be the only authority and must be given sufficient time before any activity or event to allow the outcome to be influenced. It stated that no unjustified use of gender, determines how persons are trained, employed, commanded or promoted, except where there is a necessity to ensure gender optimization.²¹ Brigade Commanders are responsible

¹⁷<https://www.ceso-saco.com/app/uploads/2018/05/MERIT-Gender-Strategy-FINAL-Nov2016-3.pdf>, 24-Jun-2019. <https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng>.

¹⁸ JDF Policy, *Gender Optimization Policy* 27 Jan 2020.

¹⁹ Ibid 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

for submitting quarterly reports to HQ JDF, on the gender analysis of the training and operations conducted within the Formation.²²

Resultant communication issues

The word communication is used by all leaders; in dialogue, it seems to be the answer to all issues that go wrong, and failure is blamed on the lack of communication. After 34 years in the military, I am convinced, communication is the most difficult of things to achieve in organizations like the military. I have been fortunate to sit at all levels (at the table that is) from Lance Corporal to sitting with a couple of CDSs. When strategic decisions are made, and passed through the chain of command, it seldom gets to the last service member and or gets to any point accurately, with the correct message.

The very same issue was experienced when the JDF introduced the Gender Optimization policy. The policy was discussed at several tiers of leadership; was mandated to be socialized with service members before promulgation, but when the policy became effective, the male community was in total disagreement, disappointed and felt cheated as opportunities went by them to junior service members who were females, due to the policy's mandate.

Repeatedly, male service members complained amongst their peers and seniors that would listen, about the unfair advantages given to female service members, since the implementation of Gender Optimization. Incidentally, courses are usually prerequisites for development and promotion. Based on the dictates of the policy, all JDF training courses, conferences, seminars, and workshops hosted by the JDF and or its partner militaries must comprise no less than 25% of

²² Ibid.

each gender. There was special guidance to specialist groups and a variation down to 15% if justified but only with the Headquarters permission as earlier stated.

This policy did not initially translate as intended. The Force was just transforming from a Brigade size to a Division, and there were increased opportunities for courses and promotions. Ironically, several female service members were fortunate to meet the requirements for opportunities and were selected for courses over senior male service members due to the need to be optimized. For example, if there were four (4) service members selected and no female was in the nominations and or the course did not have at least 25% of a particular gender, the course would be discontinued until the issue was resolved, which meant that possibly the youngest female was brought in to join the course to meet the criteria.

The position, over time, was understood or accepted, but became a further challenge when those same females were promoted over their male counterparts, and this was compounded when it was believed, that the females were not being tasked or given more challenging jobs. Unfortunately, females in the infantry doing internal security operations, were not seen doing weekend duties and foot patrols as opposed to mobile patrols, which are seen as less challenging and strenuous.

The issue was never gender optimization, but possibly actual biases when males were in charge of the duty roster. The result was that the females that were promoted, were not doing the work that came with the rank, position or responsibility. These matters were addressed through welfare meetings, muster parades and small group meetings, held at the section and other levels. Over time it got to a stage where courses ran without females, because there were no more females and or no qualified females available. The complaints were logged, but no changes were

effected to the policy, as the successes of the CAF policy were enough evidence, even though from another country or military, where the culture has its variation.

The Canadian example

The Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, in the year 2016 on the 29 January, promulgated the CDS directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions into CAF Planning and Operation.²³ This directive reflected the Force's understanding of the government's commitment and simplified the intent to ensure every service member could read, understand, and be socialized amongst all its members. The resolution reaffirmed the critical role of women, in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stressed the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.²⁴

The Canadian Armed Forces must reflect the diversity of the country they defend. The CAF needs a military that looks like Canada. In particular, they were committed to attracting, recruiting and retaining more women in the Canadian Armed Forces across all ranks and promoting women into senior leadership positions. The Canadian Armed Forces was committed to gender equality and providing a work environment where women were welcomed, supported and respected.²⁵ Integrate Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was implemented in all defence

²³Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, Directive on the integration of UNSCR 1325 in CAF Operation, Planning, and Policy, 29 January 2016. Johnstone Rachael, Momani Bessma. "Gender Mainstreaming in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence: Lessons on the Implementation of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)", Armed Forces & Society, 2020.

²⁴UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security Dated 31 Oct 2000.

²⁵Strong, Secure and Engaged, Canadian Defence Policy.23. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canada-defence-policy/well-supported-diverse-resilient-people-families.html?cv=1>.

activities across the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence, from the design and implementation of programmes and services that support their personnel equipment procurement and operational planning.²⁶

Given the depth and breadth of defence activities, their policies, programmes, services and initiatives have had profound impacts on diverse groups of people, taking into account gender and other identity factors. Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was thus a valuable analytical tool that helped attain better results for Canadians by ensuring the activities were more responsive to the specific needs and circumstances of diverse groups of people. The CAF's application of GBA+ to the Defence Policy Review process helped [them] deliver on the Government of Canada's commitment to gender equality, inclusion and evidence-based policy development.²⁷

The Defence team also recognized that conflict, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises affect people differently. Accordingly, the Defence team integrated GBA+ into the planning and execution of operations as a means to both improve operational effectiveness and meet the needs of those who are disproportionately affected by conflict and crisis. This included the establishment of military gender advisor positions that advises on gender in operational planning and doctrine and modelling the value of diversity, inclusion and gender equality when working with other nations.²⁸

Any plans for infrastructure, equipment and specialized training needed to facilitate and promote gender optimization. Gender Optimization must be considered in all operational

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷ *Strong, Secure and Engaged, Canadian Defence Policy*. 104.

²⁸ *ibid.* 24

planning and taskings within the Force. This includes inter alia operations in all domains, internal security operations, ceremonial duties and youth engagement activities.²⁹ There is a need to focus on and reference a deliberate consideration of the gender perspective and the ideal mix of both genders in all aspects of the functioning of the Force. Gender Optimization is vital to improve operational effectiveness and the long-term success of the Force. It does not focus solely on women's rights.³⁰

Gender perspective focuses on gender-based differences and recognizes that security and defence events, including armed conflict and humanitarian disasters, affect men and women differently. It is used as a tool, to positively impact operational and administrative environments. This policy is against sexual and gender-based violence, which refers to violence that maybe conflict related, that is directed against a person based on their gender. These include acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, if used as a weapon of war it maybe considered a war crime or a crime against humanity.

Deployments Locally and Overseas

Similarly the JDF policy is against sexual and gender-based violence and have also implemented a Sexual Harassment and Prevention Policy which support the Gender Optimization Policy. The JDF performs ten roles for its people; among them are internal security operations for the restoration and maintenance of law and order and humanitarian and disaster relief operations, which are deployed with gender optimization. Through partnership, the JDF has had several deployments locally, regionally and internationally and have witnessed the efficiencies of other militaries, being gender optimized prior to the policy implementation. JDF

²⁹ JDF Policy, Gender Optimization Policy 27 Jan 2020.

³⁰ JDF Policy, Gender Optimization Policy 27 Jan 2020.

has since demonstrated professionalism in optimization. The learning took place several years before the policy was promulgated.

Lt Carl CLARKE and Eldon MORGAN, now Lt Cols and Commanding Officers (COs) in the JDF were deployed in Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2009 after being attached, based on an exchange between the JDF, and the Canadian Forces. Operation ATHENA was the Canadian Forces' contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in Afghanistan.³¹ The operation's main objective was to improve Afghanistan's security and governance. Operation ATHENA in Kandahar constituted the longest combat mission in the history of Canadian Forces.³² They were attached to 2 Combat Engineer Regiment, 2 Canadian Mechanized Battle Group, CAF.

The Cols spoke of their many interactions with both the male and female service members, and they were led by both genders; at that time, it was an uncommon thing to see in the JDF in those days. Lt Col MORGAN recounted that “the first two (2) months of the tour on a Combat Outpost; a Combat Engineer female Corporal. The expectations of her were no less than that of a male, and she performed accordingly. As for the environment, her presence made an impact mainly with the children, as they were always happy to see her on patrol. It took the adults a while, but they eventually warmed up to her, because women being educated and in a profession, was an unusual thing in Afghanistan at the time.

Though this account was pre -the Global Affairs Canada's Policy on Gender Equality, it provided an experience for the JDF through that attachment. With the implementation of gender optimization, all the deployments in the local theatre have seen the JDF's increasing female

³¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/athena.html>.1

³² *ibid*

population deployed for all missions of the Force where the numbers allow. The Force currently has three (3) female COs and two (2) A/COs, from 15 CO positions in the regular Force.

The Local deployments required the inclusion of female soldiers on (the frontline) internal security special operations to search female civilians; when given the powers of a constable and where there are no policewomen present. This need has presented itself as a joint operations force multiplier, as the number of females in the Police Force are also limited, but increasing. It must be noted, that the last occupation to be closed to women, that of a submariner, was opened to both sexes in 2001, and women participated fully and meaningfully in all aspects of domestic and international missions. The CAF has developed and implemented policies of equal opportunity. It is making considerable effort to attract greater numbers of qualified women and to identify and address potential barriers to members of Defence Force.³³

Every effort is made from the strategic level to allow for 25% of a gender, rule to occur for all deployments, and the variations to that, must be justified and sanctioned by the headquarters.

Regionally, the JDF has deployed its Disaster Assistance Relief Team (DART), which is always gender optimized and has enjoyed success in the recent Humanitarian and Disaster Relief missions conducted. The Force is now in the business of talent management, and it does not matter the gender; it is about the talent, simply task, the best person for the job. Addressing Gender Equality [and optimization] requires that woman's views, interests, and needs to shape

³³ Government of Canada, *A new Canadian approach to defence: Anticipate. Adapt. Act.*

the development agenda as much as men's, and that the development agenda supports progress towards more equal relations between women and men.³⁴

Conclusion

The paper defined and explored gender optimization, examined the policy position adapted as the JDF moved away from the male-dominated cultures involved with employment and deployment, and argued that the increased participation and representation of women are necessary at all levels of decision making. The paper also outlined some issues related to communication, looked at the Canadian way and demonstrates deployments locally and internationally.

What makes this Optimization or integration more efficient is that this will also serve to align policies, processes and procedures with those of NATO, and ensure that the moral and ethical obligations to protect the population at risk during armed conflict or humanitarian disasters are addressed.³⁵ It must be accepted that achieving gender equality or optimization requires the recognition that every policy, programme and project affects women and men differently. Women and men have different perspectives, needs, interests, roles and resources- and those differences may be reinforced by class, race, caste, ethnicity, or age.³⁶

³⁴ Government of Canada. *Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects*. <https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng>.

³⁵ Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, *Directive on the integration of UNSCR 1325 in CAF Operation, Planning, and Policy*, 29 January 2016, 10/40.

³⁶ Government of Canada. *Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects*, 2022.

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<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/conduct/cds-directive-unscr-1325.html>.

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