sciendo
Land Forces Academy Review
Vol. XXVIII, No. 2(110), 2023

KEY CONCEPTS IN GENDER ANALYSIS – A MILITARY GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a conceptual analysis of the main terms used in the analysis of the gender perspective. Given the various approaches to the gender perspective, a clarification of the meanings of the terms is needed, especially since they have lately been defined in terms of military acceptance as well. This content is part of the Military Gender Studies (MGS) Project, whose aim is to develop a model of gender perspective in the military, which will be taught in the European Military Institutions through an Army Handbook.

KEYWORDS: gender analysis, gender equality, gender stereotype, gender mainstreaming, gender perspective

1. Introduction

Whether we are talking about stereotypes, biases or discrimination, gender issues are part of all aspects of life. It is clear that there is growing pressure in military organizations and in military operations to consider in a new gender perspective. The goal is to ensure that the rights of men women, be they civilian or military, are respected in the performance of their duties (Egnell, Hojem & Berts, 2014).

Starting from this reality, initially, the point of view of the organization The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) includes the necessity to integrate gender issues in all discussions of the military community. Thus, the United Nations has comprehensively regulated the issue of gender perspective, by adopting the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on October 31, 2020. This resolution emphasizes the role of women in activities related to the

DOI: 10.2478/raft-2023-0013
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prevention and management of armed conflicts, but also in the process of peace building (Romania National Strategy and National Action Plan regarding the implementation of The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 2000). In the same way, authors Ferbach and Reeves (2018) emphasize the purpose of resolution in accentuating women's voices in debates and initiatives that address post-conflict security and reconstruction issues (Ferbach & Reeves, 2018).

Subsequently and in a similar manner, NATO has implemented this resolution adjusting it to its own needs. As a result, NATO partner countries have adopted action plans at the national level by implementing strategies of the UNSCR 1325 recommendations.

In this context, the Military Gender Studies (MGS) Project aims to create an MGS Army Handbook that will be the basis for teaching gender perspective in European military institutions as promoted by the above-mentioned bodies. A necessary step in this direction is the conceptual clarification of the main terms (as they are conceptualized by the European Union and NATO) used in the operationalization of gender integration in the military environment and whose significance must be known by the military community that will have to implement the premises of the 1325 Resolution.

2. Key Concepts in Gender Analysis

In the following section, we will present the most important terms in gender conceptualization.

First of all, is important to see what a *gender analysis* means. Is *"the organized data collection and examination of information about gender differences in order to identify and understand inequalities"* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 2017, p. 5).

Focused on exploring the differences between men and women in terms of access and control of resources, gender analysis also comparatively discusses the constraints men and women experience. All evaluations and situational assessments should incorporate a gender analysis, in order to diminish or even eradicate the perpetuation of gender inequalities and injustices. Against this backdrop, gender analysis is the springboard for gender mainstreaming. An example of applied gender analysis in area of operation could refers to how power relations in some groups are believed to provide women's and men's equal access to support in areas where the armed forces are engaged in humanitarian assistance. Other examples would include *"understanding how customary conflict-resolution mechanisms affect women and men in a different way and how their socio-professional status may be influenced as a result of war"* (NATO, 2017, p. 6).

From a military point of view, a gender analysis of a patrol route can identify potential security threats, as Hammarb and Berg (2015, p. 15.) exemplify: *"a male soldier walking into the female bazaar could have cause a security situation that would have been a potential risk to both local national women in the bazaar as well to their own troops. Providing gender balanced patrol units could, be a way to minimize threats in such situations"*.

Another important concept is *gender equality,* which is the term of choice in all important international agreements. It is preferred when referring to equal rights and chances, life prospects, and the empowerment of men/boys and women/ girls. Gender equality is recognized today as a fundamental human right and a common value of the European Union. Gender equality is achieved if no discrimination related to a persons' gender occurs. It is *"the equal distribution of opportunities and resources, and equal access to services regardless of gender"* (European Commission, 2011). Under the

umbrella of *gender equality,* the diversity of gender is acknowledged, allowing everybody equal opportunities of advancement in all walks of life and at all levels (economic, social, cultural, and social). The reality is that gender equality is not the concern only of women, because it concerns both men and women. The equal rights principle represents the possibility to influence and participate in the decision-making processes in all areas in society and to have power and authority. This represents the hurt of democracy, which ensures the legitimacy and freedom of institutions in every country. This principle involves guaranteeing human rights for all, regardless of gender and is an essential aspect of military operations in planning, execution, and evaluation.

The discussion on gender mainstreaming also requires an explanation of the concept of *gender stereotype*. Gender stereotypes are a set of social or cultural prescriptions of gender roles which have the effect of assigning characteristics to a person according to their gender. Stereotypical beliefs associated with gender are not only descriptive, but also prescriptive, defining what a certain gender is like and also what it should be like. In their 2011 study, Kauchak & Eggen (as cited in Igbo, 2015) state that gender stereotypes simplify people's features and have a negative impact on individuals by limiting, for example, the development of their academic and professional potential. In the same way, Igbo, J.N., Onu, V.C., & Obiyo, N.O. (2015) agree that stereotypical gender behaviors limit the development of people's cognitive, motor, emotional, and behavioral skills. The content of the stereotypes varies across cultures and over time. Although stereotypes suggest many differences between men and women, they most often have no basis in actual behavior.

Analyzing gender stereotypes, Rosentahal and Overstreet (2016) have come to the conclusion that they can be both explicitly and implicitly learned by people through mechanisms of social-political influences, including limited to friends and family, neighbors, teachers, peer groups, public policies, mass-media. All this actors have been studied in terms of the role that they play in promoting stereotypes and sometimes in creating them (Rosentahal & Overstreet, 2016).

3. Key Concepts from a Military Point of View

Gender mainstreaming is a broad strategy aimed to promote gender equality, which aims to reorganize and restructure social policies and programs through specialized institutions considering the needs of both men and women.

Gender mainstreaming was first introduced when the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) underwent a restructuring process. In this context, it was decided that, as far as access to social, material, political, and informational resources, and leadership positions are concerned, gender mainstreaming should be adopted in the development policies of the participating countries. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty of the European Union declares gender mainstreaming as a central pillar of the EU, and therefore calls on Member States (and countries wishing to join the EU) to integrate gender into the policies developed in their countries.

The theorizing of the concept is at an elementary phase, an aspect also noticed in the documents of the Council of Europe (1998). They specify that there is no unanimous approval about a definition of gender mainstreaming. Most of the conceptualizations are about how to use gender equality perspective in practice (Council of Europe, 1998). Booth & Bennett (2002) state the same, namely that it is a vague concept, with insufficient scientific literature, which determines different ways of implementation even

opposites of gender equality policies in Europe. They also analyze the European Commission's experience in developing gender equality policies and demonstrate that the conceptualization of the gender mainstreaming strategy lies in the interdependence between three ways on approaching equality gender related: the first is the equal treatment perspective of women, the second is the women's perspective (this implies more rights and power of women in all fields) and the most recently, a gender perspective (Booth, & Bennett, 2002).

Basically, these perspectives theorize the first three waves of the feminist movement, namely (1) the equal treatment perspective that starts from the idea that women should be guaranteed equal rights in the public sphere with men, (2) the perspective of women who support actions that identify them (women) as a vulnerable group of society, who, as a result, seek special treatment and specialized assistance to manage the experience of discrimination, and (3) the gender perspective, which promotes actions aimed at reorganizing society through a correct distribution of responsibilities from a gender perspective. In fact, it recognizes the differences between men and women. In essence, gender mainstreaming strategies recommended by the UE value diversity. The Council of Europe (1998) agreed on the definition, that the gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, development, and evaluation of policy processes by the actors normally involved in policy-making. Such that a gender equality perspective to be incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages (Council of Europe, 1998).

From NATO's point of view, gender mainstreaming is a *"strategy used to achieve gender equality by considering the implications for both genders in all areas and at all levels, in order to assure that the concerns and experiences of both, women and men, are taken into account"* (Office of NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, 2019, p. 18).

There are three principles of gender mainstreaming and implementation in military organizations. The first one is the equal rights principle, recruitment and retention and operational capability, which considers that in the actions of planning, execution and evaluation of military operations, the rights of women and men alike are to be guaranteed. The second principle, recruitment and retention, refers to the ability of the military organizations to expand their recruitment base and to create the optimal conditions for anyone, whether male or female, so as they are able to develop professionally and access all positions in the organizational hierarchy. Adherence to this principle will show responsibility – at both national and international level – and will strengthen the armed forces internally and externally. With regard to the third principle, the operational capacity of the armed forces will certainly increase provided that the recruitment base is expanded and those with the necessary skills will be selected, regardless of their gender. The ultimate goal of integrating the three principles into the armed forces is to increase capability, including through the promotion of gender equality.

Last but not least, we want to emphasize the term *gender perspective*. This perspective takes into account gender differences when analyzing any social and/or political phenomenon/process. The gender perspective is a reconceptualization of the idea of gender equality, because it focuses on gender, not women, and recognizes the relevance of men in the debate on gender equality (Booth & Bennett, 2002).

According to the European Union Economic (1997) gender perspective is *"a strategy for understanding the power relations between men/boys and women/girls,*

but especially to highlight who has access to and controls resources and who fully participates in decision-making in a society" (Office of NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, 2019, p. 18).

In the same line, The Committee on Women in the NATO Forces (CWINF) (2007, p. 37) agrees that gender perspective refers to *"examining each issue from the perspective of women and men to identify the differences in their priorities and needs, their abilities and/or potential to promote peace and reconstruction"*.

4. Conclusion

In society, men and women do not have the same needs roles, interests and access to resources, so they don't participates equally in processes of decision-making. The values attributed to *men's work* and *women's work* is not always the same; these differences vary from organization to organizations, from one culture. In this context, is important to have a unitary gender perspective to integrated this "*gender differences*" in.

In order to analyze the gender perspective promoted by NATO, it is necessary to clarify the meanings of the terms around which gender mainstreaming strategies were built. The aims is to combine gender mainstreaming in all policies and European Community programs at the same time (complementary) to promotion specific actions in favor of women.

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