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- GENDER IN POWER
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Gender in Power

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BEYOND THE RHETORIC ON GENDER AND PEACEKEEPING: VICTIMS OF WAR, FREEDOM FIGHTERS, AND WONDER WOMEN IN BLUE HELMETS?

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More females are necessary in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. However, increasing the number of female officers in the field and in senior positions is not sufficient for more effective peace operations. Beyond the image of protected females versus male perpetrators, this article aims to identify what is missing in the debate by deciphering the other side of the monotonous rhetoric on gender, peace, and security. It contributes to the literature by, first, recognizing that women are not only victims of war, but freedom fighters as well as actors of peace. Gender studies should present a picture less based on overstating the victimization of women or on simplistic battle of the sexes that end up reinforcing the gap instead of empowering. It is necessary to distinguish the female roles in peace building from peacemaking and peacekeeping. Second, it analyses the idea of women in blue helmets: a portrait and a reality behind gender, the United Nations, and peacekeeping operations. Finally, it defends that capacity building and empowerment of women should be prioritized over political statistical figures. Consequently, it offers 10 recommendations in line with the principles of equity, equality, and balance for more effective peacekeeping.

The presidential election in the United States, the candidature of the United Nations Secretary- General, and the nomination of UN ambassador for empowering girls and women have recently saturated the international arena and the media with inflated gender discourse. But just getting females in power is not the magic cure for all. It is time to take distance from an overly naive viewpoint that women are intrinsically more inclined to peace and love while men are innately prone to war and violence. The

literature on gender and peacebuilding is crowded by a victimization of women and girls based on the princess syndrome that tends to reduce gender and war issues to the “heroic mothers of peace” fallacy. Without a shade of doubt, men and women are indeed affected in different ways before, during, and after war, as well as directly and indirectly. Feminism theory should not be applied to war making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding indistinctively and without identifying its main lacunas.

Is increasing the number of females in peacekeeping as well as in senior positions a solution for a more effective peace operation? The United Nations (UN) Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has dedicated over two decades of efforts to adopt more serious measures to advance gender balance in all peace operations on the ground and at all levels. However, the results are still a fiasco. Despite having targeted to increase the number of women police officers to 20% by 2014, the most recent gender-based statistical data by peacekeeping missions led by the UN show that in 2016 females represent only 4% of military liaison experts, troops, individual police, and former police units combined.¹ What is wrong with gender, war, and peacekeeping and what really matters?

Should females be locked in stereotypes as victims of war, heroines of peace, or wonder women? This article critically analyses the idea of women in blue helmets: a portrait and a reality behind gender, the UN, and peacekeeping operations (PKOs). In order to move from the monotonous literature paralysis of victimization and under-representation or exclusion from senior roles, two elements must be included. First, as per the parable of Tares², it is necessary to separate the wheat from the weeds for a more comprehensive analysis on gender concepts that is less based on the victimization of women or on a simplistic battle of sexes. Gender is not synonymous with women's issues. Second, a substantive contribution to the literature on women and war should distinguish the analyses from peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. It concludes that the nexus among women, war, and peace is not a rhetorical fable. Gender

inclusiveness is present in war making as well as peacebuilding, with elements of both soft and hard politics. However, it is time to stop victimizing women as well as symbolizing them as unrealistic and sexualized cartoon heroines. WWP should be taken seriously: Women, war, and peace is a cross-cutting triangulation. Beyond the gender principles of balance, equity, and equality, competence and commitment to conflict resolution are



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post-conflict reconstruction***

fundamental and should be prioritized towards building an effective positive peace by any female or male peacekeeper. Capacity building and empowerment are more important than just insignificant or political artificial statistical figures.

Repetitive Misconception's Narrative: Gender Is Not Women Issue

Gender mainstreaming is a crucial practice in the fields of conflict resolution, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction. Nonetheless, how practitioners and advocates implement gender discourse is probably more likely to avoid gender equity rather than ensuring it. Some scholars see gender mainstreaming as a combination of liberal feminism, difference feminism, and post-structural feminism.³ The limiting identity of

¹ A Fact Sheet of Peacekeeping, UN-DPKO, 2016 [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/about/dpko/ access: 5 December 2016]. And A New Partnership Agenda. Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping, UN-DPKO, 2009.

² Bible, Matthew 13:24-30.

³ C. Cohn, H. Kinsella, & S. Gibbings, Women, Peace and Security, Resolution 1325, "International Feminist Journal of Politics", 2004, Vol. 6, pp. 130-140.

women as a 'natural peacemaker' denies them pro-active roles in the overall peace process. It seems obvious that participation comes with responsibility and accountability. In other words, for women and girls to be fully involved in securing peace in the aftermath of conflict, they must be considered as actors and not merely victims. Based on democratic principle of equality and equity, then both sides must be accountable to avoid falling into a double-edge narrative.

Back to the conceptual basics, gender is about male and female social roles. The literature tends to use gender lens as synonymous of women. That misconception leads to the provoking policy wave of proposing to draft a "man, peace and security agenda", instead of precisely reinforcing the gender mainstreaming idea that men and women should work together, acknowledging their different needs and approaches as well as its complementarity. Although empirically based on conventional logic, men are the perpetrators of violence while women are victims, this assumption entrenches a paradigm that marginalizes women in the peace process as well as in post-conflict reconstruction. Paradoxically, that goes directly against the whole narrative of inclusion and empowerment. Indeed, women and girls are survivors, widows, and those responsible for recovery, either by body counting the deceased, helping at the nurseries, or seeking food for the orphans. However, the war effort and a social change they shaped during the conflict are dismissed. Women were notably excluded from peace settlement negotiations in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Kosovo. Excluding women from peace negotiations is rationalized by stereotyping women as passive victims who have suffered in warfare but did

not actively participate in the conflict. In other words, if war was created by men, they are the ones who should create a solution for peace. Thus, recovery programmes or gender mainstreaming fail for having a biased axis, either by not including women as perpetrators or by excluding men as also victims of a humanitarian tragedy and political, economic, and social collapse.

In a nutshell, to transform the dominant structures of power that give rise to war, conflict, insecurity, and injustice, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 allows to "re-gender gender" through inclusiveness in the processes of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and peacemaking. However, it misses the need for "re-sexing gender" by including women due to their different approach and not by encouraging them to act like men, as well as the need for "re-racing gender" by avoiding considering white race females as more efficient than other skin colours or as the victims or perpetrators.⁴

Freedom Fighters and Conflict: Women Are Not Just Victims of War

There is a strong moral dimension in gender literature that epitomizes women as victims of war. The changing nature of war since the late 1980s has had a particular negative impact on defining who are most at risk. This is particularly palpable regarding "new wars" such as civil wars and terrorist attacks as opposed to traditional wars with inter-state actors in the battlefield.⁵ Independently of the place, time, and leit motifs of the conflict such as ideology, religion, or ethnicity, stories and suffering are alike. In the war zones of Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, Liberia,

⁴ N. Pratt, Reconceptualizing Gender, Reinscribing Racial-Sexual Boundaries in International Security: The Case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security', "International Studies Quarterly", 2013, Vol. 57, pp. 772-783.

⁵ M. Kaldor, New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era, London School of Economics, 2012 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/45883>.

Occupied Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, or Somalia, thousands of women lived generalized violence as a “comfort woman”, such as abduction, rape camps, and forced impregnation and mutilated uterus by AK47s.⁶ In the battlefield, violence against women’s bodies means war resources from all sides of the conflict. In times of “refugee crisis” with an unprecedented number of 65 million refugees and displaced worldwide, 80% are women and children.⁷ In the field of international development, decades of women’s positive evidence of impact on socioeconomic outcomes have altered the way governments, donors, and aid organizations implement their agendas. The literature has thoroughly investigated if and how women are affected by conflict.

Either called as a gendercide or a femicide, there is no question that rape is a weapon of war. The problem of sexual violence is persistent, global, and must be stopped. Indeed, women are victims three times in war-related contexts: first, at the offense; second, after the crime with no access to justice or health and psychological assistance; third, by segregation from the community and shame to the family’s dignity after the conflict. Mostly in an environment of collapsed state, poverty, and violence, there are scarce, difficult, or costly means to seek justice. Convictions of individuals at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

include 40% of sexual violence charges. UN reports estimate that in the 1994 Rwanda genocide 250,000 to 450,000 women were raped and that 5,000 women were raped in a single offensive by the rebels’ forces in Congo Brazzaville in 1998.⁸ For them, the war meant the loss of all and everything through the invasion of their bodies, annexation of their being, and amputation of their dignity. It is worthwhile to mention that worldwide, much of the violence was perpetrated by those who are supposed to protect them, such as fathers, brothers, uncles, as well as UN peacekeepers as in Mali, Sudan, and Central African Republic.⁹ As addressed by resolutions 1325 and 1820, a vast majority of women and girls are often strategic targets in armed conflict and are exposed to a high risk of sexual and gender-based violence, which can continue in the aftermath of conflict. However, men and boys suffer too and are frequently subjected to rape as during the conflict in Congo, Uganda, and Afghanistan.¹⁰ Little is said about the existence of male sexual victimization, whether by rape as a weapon of war in situations of detainment or interrogation, being forced to observe, or coerced to participate in acts of sexual violence, particularly as child soldiers.

Conversely, women are not only victims of war. They are also actors in the both sides of conflict as well as agents of peace. The literature focuses on identifying how women

⁶ S.N. Anderlini, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*, Lynne Rienner Publishers: Colorado 2007.

See also: A. Jones (ed.), *War Is Not Over When It’s Over: Women Speak Out from the Ruins of War*, IRC: 2010.

See also Gender, War and Peacebuilding. USIP United States Institute of Peace 2012, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/NPECSG12_0.pdf.

See also H. Addou, *Violence against Women in situations of war and conflict: Lessons from the Great Lakes Region of Africa*, “Conference on Violence Against Women, Organized by the Forum for Women and Development (FOK-US)”, 2006.

⁷ *Figures at a Glance*, UNHCR 2016. Also *Global Humanitarian Overview 2016*, UNOCHA 2016.

⁸ Rehn, E. & Sirleaf, E. J. 2002. *Women, war, peace: the independent experts’ assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women’s role in peace building*, New York, UNIFEM.

⁹ *New Allegations of Sexual Abuse Emerge against UN peacekeepers in Central African Republic*. “UN News Center”, 4 February 2016.

¹⁰ E. Rauhala, *Rape as a Weapon of War: Men Suffer, Too*, “Time”, 2011, August 3. <http://world.time.com/2011/08/03/rape-as-a-weapon-of-war-men-suffer-too/>

help to build peace.¹¹ On the one hand, soft politics prevails as women's conflict resolution strategy.¹² There is indeed a vast data identifying quantitatively and qualitatively how women help to build peace, mainly based on dialogue, community reconciliations, post conflict recovery, health and education development projects, and empowerment through job creation. Historically they have also been a part of the conflict, as those sewing uniforms or cooking. On the other hand, hard politics comes into place in making women inclusive in war issues. Recent terrorism studies show that women are a pillar in recruitment and intelligence information network for the Islamic State (ISIS). It is easier for women to navigate past security barriers as well as to penetrate communities. Most of the recruitment is made through friends and relatives, and less via groups at mosques or Islamic schools. Symmetrically, Kurdish feminist army are making gains side by side with Iraqi pro-government forces to fight back ISIS. Since 2012, the army side of the political Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has attracted an estimated 15,000 women to join two offshoots – the Women's Defence Unit (YPJ) or the People's Defence Forces (YPG).¹³

In Nigeria, women take up arms on both sides of the conflict. In the Boko Haram structure, while men can dominate in leadership, training, and kidnapping roles, women may outnumber them in other senior roles such as planning logistics, planting mines and bombs, and fighting as soldiers, while both sexes carried out domestic tasks. Although is true that many girls have been kidnapped

and forced to be suicide bombers, others have joined voluntarily. On the counter-insurgency side, hundreds of women joined as volunteers the vigilante militia members such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to help security forces, particularly to frisk females at checkpoints, gather information, and identify suspects, as well as to fight directly Boko Haram. Others work in non-governmental organizations and women's associations or care privately for war victims. In some cases, the war has opened opportunities for women's activism, illustrated by the establishment of several new women-led NGOs in Maiduguri and the Nigerian involvement in the Bring Back Our Girls international campaign.¹⁴

The very fact of being female is proven to give several tactical advantages. First, women suicide terrorists capitalize and thrive on the "element of surprise" which makes the operation more "effective". Second, beyond the number of casualties, symbolically, the death of female bombers is more likely to evoke national and international attention as well as media reaction.¹⁵ In Ukraine, females fought for their right to fight in the Ukrainian army. Their roles are in the frontline, as snipers, commanders of artillery mortar units, or operators of heavy military hardware. Based on the same principle that gender should not be a determinant of professional opportunities, they are no longer restricted to supporting roles, such as nurses, engineers, and administrative assistants. For Ukrainians, joining the Right Sector or volunteer groups was the easiest way to go to war and "to defend the country".¹⁶ In Colombia, the

¹¹ Meintjes, S., Pillay, A., & Turshen, M. 'There Is No Aftermath for Women'. *The Aftermath, Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*. London: Zed Books, 2001. See also: Bloom, M. & Matfess, H. 2016. *Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror*: PRISM, 6, 121 See also: Jennings, K. *Women's participation in UN peacekeeping operations: agents of change or stranded symbols?* NOREF report, 2011.

¹² Anderlini, S. N. *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters.*, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

¹³ Angels, Ö. S. 'On the frontlines with the Kurdish female fighters beating back ISIS'. HUCK, *The Defiance Issue*, 2016.

¹⁴ Nigeria: *Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency Africa Report*. International Crisis Group, 2016.

¹⁵ Idem Bloom, M. & Matfess, H. 2016.

¹⁶ Sharkov, D. *Inside the world of Ukraine's warriors*. Newsweek. 11 February 16 ed, 2016.

important role played by militant women who joined the FARC's at all structural levels is well known, including female soldiers or 'bush wives'. However, although many women might have played a crucial role in the negotiation background, none were represented with a formal signature role of the recent failed peace agreement.¹⁷ Furthermore, most of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes have been largely criticized for not including female soldiers or 'bush wives'.¹⁸

Thus, the triangular relation of peace, women, and war must not be reduced to a misrepresentation of the role that females play in conflict prevention, conflict management, as well as conflict resolution and recovery. For an accurate debate, another intersecting triangular relation must be acknowledged: war-women-freedom fighters.

Peacekeeping: A Portrait and a Reality of Women in Blue Helmets

What is missing in the narrative of increasing the number of females as UN peacekeepers? As self-explanatory, peacekeeping is related to activities on the ground to "keep the peace whenever is a peace to be kept".¹⁹ How can we move beyond the numbers on integrating women into peace operations?²⁰ In this regard, the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations were catalytic agents. Besides the rhetoric that victimizes women and the need to

increase their participation, not all is a lost cause in Women and Peacekeeping sphere. On the positive side, many suggestions for improvements on the issues related to women, war, and peace are on the table. First of all, the UN must mirror its own purposes in order to rescue its inflated image as if one political international organization alone could solve the world's problem. Specifically related to women and peacekeeping, since 2011, the UN field missions headed by women oscillated between 15% and 25%, including in such missions as Sudan and Timor-Leste. Besides a significant improvement in considering the 1325 resolution in UN missions such as in Liberia – UNMIL, Sierra Leone – UNIOSIL, and Kosovo – UNMIK, there is still a lot of room for accomplishment.²¹ Some UN Missions have a gender affairs department and there is an increase in UN women police officers.

Moreover, legal aspects show evidence that gender is present in substantive international legal acts. Article 26 of the United Nations Charter²² suggests that 5% of national military expenditures should be directed to education, health, and employment. The UN Security Council resolution 1325 on, peace and security (2000) is paramount on the need to reaffirm the increase women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. Seven additional resolutions on women, peace, and security helped to reinforce political commitment from the member states: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and lately 2242 (2015). A platform of eight resolutions

¹⁷ Colombia, G. O. & Farc, Acuerdo Final para la terminacion del conflicto y la construccion de una paz estable y duradera. Peace agreement. Colombia, 2016. <http://www.acuerdodopaz.gov.co/acuerdos/acuerdo-final>

¹⁸ SIP. Gender, War & Peacebuilding. USIP United States Institute of Peace, 35. 2012.

See also: Zuckerman, E. M. G. The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: An Analytical Framework for Policymakers. In: SWEETMAN, C. (ed.) Gender, Peacebuilding and Reconstruction. Oxford: Oxfam, 2005.

¹⁹ Fortna, V. P. Does peacekeeping work? Shaping belligerents' choices after civil war, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008.

²⁰ Simic, O. Moving beyond the numbers: integrating women into peacekeeping operations. Norwegian Peace building Resource Center, Noref- Policy brief, 2013.

²¹ UN WOMEN 2016 www.unwomen.org

²² UN. 1945. Charter of the United Nations [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>

should represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries. Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the optional protocol are ratified by 185 states as the “women’s bill of rights”. In the same vein, this cornerstone of all the UN Women programmes needs to move from theory to practice. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA-1995) and Windhoek (2000) need to accelerate their implementation. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), Geneva Conventions (1949) and Additional Protocols (1977) of



the rationale narrative is wrong because it mixes up three different elements of gender: stereotyping, balance, and equality

the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Rome Statute (1998) are also to be listed by the gender experts.²³

What is the bottleneck impeding progress in conflict, women, and peacekeeping? The dominant argument is an instrumentalist and “affirmative gender essentialism”: Deployment of more female officers in peace missions is seen as a key to success and of gender mainstreaming.²⁴ The truth is that more female officers are welcomed and should be promoted to join peacekeeping operations lead by the United Nations. However, the focus of the organization and its member states on increasing statistical figures is not sufficient for more qualitatively efficient operations.

The reason is that the rationale narrative is wrong because it mixes up three different elements of gender: stereotyping, balance, and equality. The first is related to the belief in “feminine qualities” as being more peaceful than men are. The second is that an equal representation of men and women would complement each other’s qualities and reduce male aggressiveness among colleagues and of those they are supposed to protect. Third, that gender equality implies that women and men have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Therefore, women should be included in senior positions as well. Although all the elements of stereotyping, balance, and equality might be true and are pillars of gender issues, mixing them up is an erroneous amalgamation that leads to a number of problems in peacemaking, peacekeeping, as well as peace building.

First, it reinforces gender stereotypes of women as protected and men as protectors. Instead, the efforts should be on advancing the aim of power sharing and the right and duty to exercise their capacity and strength on an equal basis with men. In peace studies, peacekeeper is related to the international intervener, seen as “saviours”, and the peacekeeper is referred to the local community in danger.²⁵ By reinforcing gender stereotypes in war and peace and the strong victimization of women, it shifts the image of the peacekeeper as associated with women and maintains male image as the peacekeeper. Although the organization might genuinely believe in gender inclusiveness in security issues, the driving force for its efforts is not based on moral good intentions but on true “realist” strategy of institutional existential survival. It is not about the human rights or feminists’ rights claim. Nor can it be simplified to the “value-added”, as women can

²³ Pereira Watts, I. WWP: Women, War and Peace. E-International Relations. 2016.

²⁴ IDEM. Jennings, K. 2011.

²⁵ IDEM. Fortna, V. P. 2008

bring something different that man cannot, such as greater awareness and sensitivity. The reality is that the current UN agenda in gender and peacekeeping has primarily come as a response to the UN's damaged image and reputation following a number of reports of peacekeepers' involvement in acts of sexual abuse.²⁶ Consequently, that puts on women peacekeepers to be deployed a heavy weight to carry, as wonder women: to solve the conflict by being gentle and nice with the victims or perpetrators; to take on the responsibility for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse; to protect local women; and to rescue the organizations' image. Diverting responsibility to women does not address the problem of sexual violence. The contributing countries must take responsibility, exercise accountability, and prosecute acts of sexual violence committed by their respective troops.²⁷

Second, and not-so-often mentioned, there are additional moral aspects that underline the efforts of UN DPKO to increase the number of women as peacekeepers. It is expected that a progress in their involvement will result in a decline in the number of brothels around peacekeeping compounds, as well as a reduction in the number of "UN babies" abandoned by male peacekeepers once their mission comes to an end. Moreover, HIV is intrinsically related to women, war, and peace. Besides the sexual transmission, the virus is also transmitted through blood transfer in poor sanitary war and poverty conditions. In Burundi (2002), 80% of hospital patients with HIV were women, not including those who died before because they could not manage to get medical treatment.²⁸ Consequently, there is an underlying

assumption that it will decrease sexual exploitation by male peacekeepers and local female population devastated by poverty, lack of education or economic resources, as well as decrease the number of HIV/AIDS cases directly or indirectly linked to PKOs.

Third, and very important, efforts have concentrated on gender balance. It is believed that once balance is achieved, it will automatically translate into gender equity and that is mainly a "gender mainstreaming" policy. However, "adding and stirring" does

 ***that puts on women peacekeepers to be deployed a heavy weight to carry, as wonder women: to solve the conflict by being gentle and nice with the victims or perpetrators; to take on the responsibility for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse; to protect local women; and to rescue the organizations' image***

not translate into homogenous gender power structures.²⁹ Gender continues to be seen as a women's issue and the idea of gender balance has become a synonym for gender mainstreaming. Consequently, efforts to recruit more women peacekeepers have become a part of the strategy to "mainstream" a gender perspective in PKOs. Therefore, changes seem to be mostly numerical and cosmetic rather than substantive.³⁰

Fourth, to be a peacekeeper is not having a superman or wonder woman altruistic

²⁶ IDEM. UN News Centre 2016.

²⁷ IDEM. Semic, 2013

²⁸ IDEM. Rehn, E. & Sirleaf, E. J. 2002

²⁹ IDEM. Jennings, 2011

³⁰ Gender Statistics by Mission. 07 September, 2016 ed. New York: UN DPKO. 2016. See also: IDEM. SIMIC, 2013.

syndrome. Peacekeeping is ossified by the “holy trinity” principles of consensus-impartiality-neutrality.³¹ That means that professionalism is crucial and that personal leit motivs and peacekeeping must not be underestimated. Peacekeeping is an expensive challenge and subject to a budget of US\$ 8.7 billion.³² As per the UN-Brahimi and HIPPO³³ reports, there is a strong call for increasing robustness in UN Peacekeeping Operations. The ideological motivations to fight and die for strangers³⁴ do not come in vain. To convince member states to increase troops’ contribution, particularly from western armed forces who are often said to be well-trained and well-equipped for military operations, it requires a professional package of incentives. Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India are the countries that most contribute with troops.³⁵ As for any professionals, police and military female officers might not be only interested in a heroic mission of making a better and peaceful world. If existent, this motivation comes second. Based on the principle of equity and equality, equivalent benefits must be guaranteed in relation to the responsibility required, and that means career advancement and financial benefits equal to those of male experts. Further than that, other interests are common to all female and male law and order security officers, such as aspiration to work and live in an international environment to learn and share experiences.

Fifth, the creation of all-female units in peacekeeping operations is not a rosy cosmetic policy remedy. Many missions have all-female units such as the Bangladeshi forces in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Rwandan unit in South Sudan (UNMISS). On one side, the Indian female contingent in blue helmets is believed to have inspired Liberian women, building in them the spirit of professionalism and encouraging them to join operations to protect the nation, resulting in 17% of the security services according to the President of Liberia and Noble Peace Laureate, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.³⁶ On the other side, this “special units” trend has been criticized as it leads to segregation from rather than integration with male peacekeepers, precisely the opposite to the gender mainstreaming envisaged by UNSCR 1325. Additionally, it might have some effect on other “normal” mixed-gender contingents. Consequently, although the initiative has proliferated among best practices, it might also be counter-efficient towards the implementation of the broader mandate of keeping the peace and stability.

Last but not least, as affirmed by Anthony Banbury,³⁷ former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for field support, “I love the UN, but it is failing” due to a heavy political and over-bureaucratic inertia. Recruitment must be made impartially

³¹ Bellamy, A. J., Williams, P. D. & Griffin, S. *Understanding Peacekeeping*. 2010.

³² IDEM. UN-DPKO, 2016

³³ UN-Brahimi 2010. Brahimi report- Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects. UN General Assembly Security Council Fifty-fifth session A/55/305-S/2000/809

See also: HIPPO-United Nations Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people-HIPPO. In: Nations, U. (ed.) A/70/95-S/2015/446. New York: United Nations, 2015.

³⁴ Badescu, C. G. *Authorizing Humanitarian Intervention: Hard Choices in Saving Strangers*. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, 40, 51-78, 2007.

³⁵ -DPKO. 2016. A fact sheet of Peacekeeping. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/about/dpko/> [accessed 5.12.2016]

³⁶ Lesley J. Pruitt, *The Women in Blue Helmets Gender, Policing, and the UN's First All-Female Peacekeeping Unit*, California-USA, University of California Press, 2016.

³⁷ Banbury, A. *I Love the U.N., but It Is Failing*. *New York Times*. 2016.

and based on capacity strictly to the responsibilities to be performed. It should not be enforced based on old-fashioned political quotas that mostly contribute to the victimization of women. Notably, it leads to the de-legitimation of very capable and experienced professionals who want to develop their job based on skills and field know-how, but are often accused and undermined by the wrong assumption that their selection was privileged by quotas or by simply wearing short skirts. Additionally, two important factors contribute to the fact that 96% of peacekeepers are male: for various reasons, including legal and cultural, police and military forces are predominantly made up by males in the domestic conjuncture of the member states. National security institutions of the main troops-contributing countries are not “gendered” themselves. Moreover, those professionals are also family breadwinners. Conflict zones are no-family base. Therefore, it is more difficult for female police or military officers to leave their children behind to fight and protect foreigners far away from home. This also created inequality among female offices themselves. Females have to fight legal and cultural barriers to be part of the arduous and sometimes not-so-transparent selective process without as much experience as males. Moreover, single women or those without kids would be privileged for moral, logistical, and operational reasons, as well as financial to save on the insurance policy in case of death.

10 Policy Recommendations: Re-Gendering Women for More Effective UN PKOS

Peacekeeping is a serious task with its own challenges. Besides the efforts of increasing women blue helmets, 96% are male. Therefore, it is difficult to draw any

substantive conclusion on gender and peacekeeping operations. The mere female presence is insufficient to alter patriarchal and hierarchical heavy ethos of the organization and the predominant macho culture of the majority of the member states. The magic gap between the narrative and practice needs to be tackled, and the erroneous conceptual assumptions need to be rethought or – re-gendered. Increasing the number of female peacekeepers is important. Nevertheless, it will only translate into gender equality if it is backed up with political commitment and concrete policies that will turn an agenda of gender balance into the meaningful participation of women in policymaking.

To progress in the women, war, and peace arena, resources are needed in eight areas: leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, peace and security, humanitarian action, governance and national planning, sustainable development, and HIV and AIDS. For that, actions in five axes are important: intergovernmental support, intergovernmental coordination, particularly among the UN member states, programme and technical assistance, as well as persistent research and data collection for better policymaking.³⁸ There is not an easy remedy beyond the incorporation of women into senior and decision-making peacekeeping posts. However, 10 key recommendations can be formulated to make the inclusion of women in peacekeeping more effective and efficient:

- To improve the selection, preparation, and accountability of senior mission leaders, through merit-based selection processes. Women should not be deployed because of stereotypical

³⁸ IDEM. Pereira Watts , I. 2016.

assumptions about their “feminine qualities” but because of their commitment to gender issues.

- To foster political commitment at all levels – local, national, and international – ensuring gender mainstreaming, and not only focusing on women’s victimization in order to have more females in law enforcement and security forces (gendering national security).
- To increase and improve training, capacity building, and empowerment for female blue helmets.
- To improve coordination and incorporation of a gender perspective in all early warning, relief, and recovery efforts operated among different donors, international agencies, and NGOs.
- In parallel to peacekeeping operations, to increase participation and empowerment of women and girls in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.
- To reinforce the principle of “do no harm”. Zero-tolerance policy to enforce the law and remove impunity from accountability at all levels of PKOs must be reinforced. Troop-contributing countries must be accountable and responsible for their peacekeepers for sexual crimes committed while deployed to “keep the peace”.
- To operationalize the Secretary-General’s Human Rights Up Front agenda.
- To improve safety, security, and crisis management systems, as well as medical and hygienic standards, including toilets, as well as fatalities compensations platform.
- To promote interaction and collaborative approach among all-female units with mixed-gender units and other civilian peacekeeping milieus.

- To invest in research and data collection to examine the ways in which women and men peacekeepers contribute to the operational effectiveness of PKOs.

Conclusions

There is not only one side of the conflict. Contrary to the common belief, women are both victims of and participants in armed conflict. They are also players in the post-conflict phase, acting as agents of change. The political, moral, sociological, and legal dimensions of feminist viewpoints are genuine in women, war, and security issues. Moreover, no country can pretend to be on route to democracy and participative governance without half of its population. However, it turns into a monotonous symphony that frustrates most of the affected women themselves either as victims or agents of change such as leaders, influencers, and decision takers. Gender balance is necessary to achieve women’s quantitative, but not sufficient towards qualitative, representation. By critically analysing the portrait and the reality behind the idea of women in blue helmets, the rhetoric on the victimization of women in gender and war should be taken with precautions.

Gender equality in peacekeeping is not a cure-all demagogy. WWP should be taken seriously: Women, war, and peace is not about a gender battle that tries to enhance the female “status” as superior to the opposite sex. It is a cross-cutting triangulation that is fundamental to any discussion on democracy, conflict management, natural disasters as well as security, development, social justice, and good governance policies. In times of “global civil wars”, it is about inserting multi-gender-specific policies and perspectives in decision making, at the local, national, and international level. It is time to take distance from over-simplistic viewpoints where females are locked in stereotypes

as victims of war or heroines of peace or super women. Balance, equity, and equality are consolidated principles in gender issues. But competence and commitment to conflict resolution are also fundamental and should be prioritized towards building an effective positive peace. In war and peace dialectic, recognizing their role as freedom fighters or as peacemakers, capacity building and empowerment are more important than just insignificant or political artificial statistical figures.

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