

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gender sidestreaming? Analysing gender mainstreaming in national militaries and international peacekeeping

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(Received 3 April 2020; revised 1 November 2020; accepted 23 November 2020; first published online 22 December 2020)

Abstract

Twenty years after the passing of Resolution 1325, the participation of women as military personnel in peacekeeping operations remains limited. Women currently comprise just under five per cent of military personnel in UN peacekeeping missions, and the UN consistently calls for more. We contend the low numbers of female military personnel in peacekeeping reflects a lack of gender mainstreaming in national militaries globally. This article introduces the problem of *sidestreaming*, the practice, deliberate or unintentional, of sidelining women and relegating them to specialised spaces in international peace and security while attempting gender mainstreaming or increased gender integration. Drawing on empirical evidence from national militaries we show how and where sidestreaming occurs with the result being that women remain clustered in gendered and low-status spaces in national militaries and in specialised spaces in peacekeeping operations. This has a negative effect on retention and recruitment contributing to the low numbers of female peacekeepers in UN peace operations. We conclude that gender mainstreaming in its fullest sense will require military reform that decouples violence and combat skills from masculinity and inclusive research strategies that engage men as well as women.

Keywords: Women Peace and Security; Peacekeeping; Militaries; Resolution 1325; Gender Mainstreaming

Introduction

Twenty years after the passing of Resolution 1325, the participation of women in international peace and security as military personnel remains limited to specialised areas and mainstreaming has not occurred. On 13 October 2015, UNSC Resolution 2242 called on the Secretary-General ‘to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy, within existing resources, to double the numbers of women in military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations over the next five years’.¹ On 28 August 2020, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2538 on women in peacekeeping operations.² Initiated by Indonesia, it contains a set of 12 guidelines on ways member states can promote the increased participation of women in peacekeeping. The specific focus of 2538 was on increasing the number of uniformed personnel in peace operations and the need for member states to ‘support greater participation of women in peacekeeping operations, including through sharing best practices for recruitment, retention, training, and

¹United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) 13 October 2015, available at: {<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2242>} accessed 20 November 2020.

²United Nations Security Council Resolution 2538 (2020) 28 August 2020, available at: {<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2538>} accessed 20 November 2020.

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deployment of uniformed women'.³ We focus here on women's participation as military personnel and not in policing or administrative roles, which is beyond the scope of this article.

We argue that increasing women's participation in peace operations requires an increase in the number of women in national militaries and a change in mindset to improve recruitment and retention. While increasing numbers is important for mainstreaming, an increase in women's meaningful participation in military life requires a shift in how status is awarded to different roles in the military and a change in how women are deployed. Drawing on empirical data, this article highlights the problems inherent in mainstreaming Resolution 1325 across national militaries and peacekeeping operations. We show that women remain under-represented in their national militaries and particularly in high-status combat positions. We contend this affects their promotion chances and this, alongside societal inequalities, influences the retention and recruitment of women in the armed forces. In addition we draw attention to a second feature of women's service as armed personnel, the relegation to specialised spaces in peacekeeping operations. We capture these issues under the term 'sidestreaming' and we discuss how this occurs both in national militaries and peacekeeping operations.

Sidestreaming is a concept we define as the practice, deliberate or unintentional, of sidelining women and relegating them to specialised spaces in international peace and security while attempting gender mainstreaming or increased gender integration. The term captures how the process of mainstreaming can be subverted, fail to challenge hegemonic masculinity, and perpetuate a simplistic and traditional dichotomy of women and men's capabilities as protector and protected or as Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley term it 'warrior-peacemaker'.⁴ In the context of national militaries and peacekeeping, sidestreaming highlights the tension between the overt recognition women obtain for the unique roles they play in military contexts where gender sensitivity is required; and simultaneously, how the low status of non-combat roles obscures women's visibility and the value of their contribution in national militaries. This negatively impacts female recruitment, retention, and promotion leading to low representation in national militaries, and hence contributing to the low numbers of female military personnel in peace operations.

Women currently comprise just under 5 per cent of uniformed military personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.⁵ While the majority of peacekeeping troops currently come from the Global South,⁶ we suggest, that with some notable exceptions such as India and Uruguay,⁷ an explanation for the low numbers of female military personnel in peace operations reflects a lack of gender mainstreaming in national militaries globally which spills over into peacekeeping. Owing to a dearth of accessible data on the numbers of women in national militaries worldwide, in itself a significant research gap, this article shows how sidestreaming occurs in both national militaries and peacekeeping operations. Our research indicates that Global North militaries do not appear to differ greatly from those in the Global South in their commitment to mainstreaming in practice, despite a great deal of rhetorical commitment.⁸

³United Nations Security Council Resolution 2538.

⁴Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace and Security in Post-Conflict States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Gender' (August 2020), available at: {<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>} accessed 1 October 2020.

⁶See United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Summary of International Peacekeeping Forces by Countries', available at: {<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/summary-of-un-peacekeeping-forces-countries>} accessed 1 October 2020.

⁷See, for example, Lesley J. Pruitt, *The Women in Blue Helmets: Gender, Policing and the UN's First All-Female Peacekeeping Unit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); Marsha Henry, 'Peacexploitation?: Interrogating labour hierarchies and global sisterhood among Indian and Uruguayan female peacekeepers', *Globalizations*, 9:1 (2012), pp. 15–33.

⁸See, for example, Laura J. Shepherd and Jacqui True, 'The Women, Peace and Security agenda and Australian leadership in the world: From rhetoric to commitment?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 68:3 (2014), pp. 257–84. In addition, Western rhetorical commitment to WPS can be seen in its dedication to producing National Action Plans on WPS; see 'The NAP Map', available at: {<https://oursecurefuture.org/projects/national-action-plan-mapping>} accessed 1 October 2020. See also the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, available at: {https://www.consilium.europa.eu/register/en/content/out/?amp=ENTRY&i=ADV&DOC_ID=ST-11031-2019-INIT} accessed 1 October 2020 and NATO website for extensive

The contribution of this article is that it provides up-to-date empirical data on women in national militaries worldwide, illustrating how women remain under-represented and under-valued in many areas of military life. We argue that this impacts the numbers of women available to serve as military personnel in UN peacekeeping operations and show how the quality of women's service when peacekeeping is negatively affected by sidestreaming. We concur with Karim and Beardsley that increasing women's contribution to peace operations is important because peacekeeping operations are vehicles for the advancement of gender reforms in the post-conflict environment.⁹

This article is informed by a review of the available literature and data on women's participation and inclusion in national militaries and peacekeeping. Our search terms included: gender, women, female, recruitment, retention, participation, promotion, roles, hierarchy, women in the military, feminisation of the military, *femmes dans l'armée*, military servicewomen, women in combat, combat exclusion, and inclusion in relation to the military and peacekeeping spheres. Data sources included: academic peer reviewed journal articles and books; government statistics and white papers; national ministerial and military reports; think tank papers and newspaper articles going back as far as 1980. The languages used in our sources were English, French, and Spanish. For the numeric data on female participation in national militaries, only data from the past five years (2015–20) was used. To ensure our data has relevance to the current spread of troop contributing countries in peacekeeping, we prioritised data searches on the top twenty Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) in UN peacekeeping. However, owing to severe shortages in available data,¹⁰ both qualitative and quantitative, we draw on NATO figures to obtain a fuller picture of the current status of women in national militaries globally. Of note is that we find the Global North and South do not vary a great deal in terms of women's participation and inclusion. We believe this review provides a useful contribution in that it highlights: (1) the lack of readily available data on women serving in national militaries and their experiences; (2) provides a useful update on the state of the literature on this topic; and (3) draws attention to the problems women encounter when building a military career.

The article proceeds as follows. Section one provides a discussion of the meaning of participation and gender mainstreaming in international peace and security as outlined in key documents: UN Resolution 1325 and the Windhoek Declaration. The next section then provides a brief review of feminist thought on women and combat and a discussion of the hegemonic masculinity inherent in national militaries. The third section provides a review of women's participation in national militaries. It finds that militaries remain a largely masculine environment with female participation hovering at around 11 per cent worldwide.¹¹ In addition women are clustered in lower status occupations that do not involve direct combat, which limits their opportunities for promotion and inhibits retention. We also show how, despite some recognition from national militaries of the need to recruit women, militaries continue to avoid making an explicit connection between women and combat, either excluding them from images of war, or placing them in images that show them in specific roles that perpetuate a 'beautiful souls, noble warrior' orthodoxy.¹² This section concludes that full participation is key to women's retention and promotion, and that greater visibility of women's presence in the military is essential for recruitment. The next section shows how in the field, female military personnel in peacekeeping operations are often directed into specialised spaces restricting their full professional development. It is here that

material on its commitment to the WPS agenda, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm accessed 1 October 2020.

⁹Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

¹⁰Similar to other recent work, we find remarkably little data on women in national militaries outside of NATO. Ellen Haring, 'Gender and military organizations', in Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown (eds), *The Gender and Security Agenda: Strategies for the 21st Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 90–120.

¹¹As Table 1 indicates, this varies greatly.

¹²Jean Bethke Ehlstain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

the tension between the 'special' role of women, and gender equality for female military personnel is very evident. Despite 1325 being a UN initiative, in the military aspect, peace operations are not being used as an opportunity to expand and grow women's experience in combat or mainstream women in line with the resolution. We find that women's visibility is only part of the problem and that a more gender-equitable military structure is required to avoid sidestreaming. In the conclusion we contend that a shift towards human security, cosmopolitan, post-national defence,¹³ and awarding higher status to non-combat roles will foster increased female participation in militaries and challenge the masculine narratives that predominate in the military. The final section proposes an agenda for future research and provides some policy recommendations.

Resolution 1325 and The Windhoek Declaration

The four pillars of Resolution 1325 comprise participation; prevention; protection; and relief and recovery.¹⁴ In this article we refer to the concept of participation that is mentioned in the resolution in relation to peace processes; the promotion of international peace and security; and at the decision-making level both in conflict and peace processes.¹⁵ Specifically the resolution calls for the 'equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security'.¹⁶

In addition to participation, UNSCR 1325 calls for gender mainstreaming across all peacekeeping operations.¹⁷ The Windhoek Declaration also emphasised the need to include women at all levels of UN peacekeeping. Specifically:

In order to ensure the effectiveness of peace support operations, the principles of gender equity and equality must permeate the entire mission, at all levels, thus ensuring the participation of women and men as equal partners and beneficiaries in all aspects of the peace process¹⁸

The declaration provided a comprehensive outline of the steps required to mainstream gender in UN peacekeeping. Of particular relevance here is the section that refers to the recruitment of more women into peacekeeping operations which calls for: (1) the need to increase the number of women in military and police forces who are qualified to serve in peace operations at all levels including the most senior; (2) the need to encourage other potential troop contributing nations to develop longer term strategies that increase the number and rank of female personnel in their respective forces; and (3) that the eligibility requirements for all heads of mission and personnel should be reviewed and modified to facilitate the increased participation of women.¹⁹

From the above, two main points relevant to this article can be derived: in defining mainstreaming, the Windhoek Declaration explicitly states that if more women are to be included

¹³Annica Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Post-National Defence: Militarism and Peacekeeping* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴Nicole George and Laura Shepherd, 'Women, peace and security: Exploring the implementation and integration of UNSCR 1325', *International Political Science Review*, 37:3 (2016), pp. 297–306.

¹⁵United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), 31 October 2000, para. 4, p. 2; para. 7, p. 2; para. 5, p. 1, available at: {<http://unsct.org/en/resolutions/doc/1325>} accessed 20 November 2020.

¹⁶United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, para. 5, p. 1.

¹⁷United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, para. 2, p. 2. It should be noted the concept of mainstreaming was developed by the Economic and Social Council at the UN, available at: {<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming>} accessed 2 October 2020.

¹⁸Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations, United Nations Security Council, A/55/138-S/2000/693 (2000), 14 July 2000, p. 2, available at: {<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/wps-s-2000-693.php>} accessed 20 November 2020.

¹⁹Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action, p. 4. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2538 (2020) reiterates the sentiment of these points.

in international peace and security, we need to increase the numbers of women in national militaries and police forces available to serve in peace operations and that this should occur concurrently with mainstreaming in UN operations. The second key point is that mainstreaming involves infusing gender equality throughout an entire mission,²⁰ and this by default means ensuring women must have meaningful access to all areas of military life. In this article we discuss both national militaries and the military aspect of peacekeeping in the same space because we agree with the declaration that these issues are connected. In other words, if you have low numbers of women in your infantry, you won't have many to send to UN peace operations, in particular at senior levels.²¹ Furthermore, we concur with Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg's contention that the making of war 'is increasingly associated with peace' and therefore view the inclusion of peacekeeping in a discussion of women's experiences of the military relevant as we assess how sidestreaming occurs.²²

Feminist theorising on gender and the military

Until now, the literature on the WPS agenda has acknowledged that gender mainstreaming has not occurred across all pillars of 1325.²³ Laura Sjoberg and Carol Gentry (2015), for example, term mainstreaming in militaries 'malestreaming' for this reason.²⁴ Within the feminist literature there are broadly two positions on women's participation in the military: those that oppose militarism in all its forms and those that choose to engage with it.²⁵ However, Cynthia Cockburn (2012) draws our attention to the nuance in these positions and the limitations of categories such as 'radical', 'socialist', and 'liberal' feminism, reminding us that these varied positions are not mutually exclusive. Drawing on the work of Chela Sandoval and her concept of a 'differential mode of oppositional consciousness', she posits different feminist theories should be applied intelligently and tactically depending on the problem under examination.²⁶ Broadly speaking however, anti-militarist feminists take an emancipatory approach that aims to alter the very nature of national institutions. They take aim at the gendered assumptions of militarism that perpetuate war by making the coercive use of violence seem like a reasonable solution.²⁷ The critique is that attempting to gender mainstream in security institutions means working within a system based on masculine gendered norms. For some feminists then, the study of war and women's role in combat only serves to legitimise the hegemonic masculinity in of the existing patriarchal system. Research in this vein raises the point that while women may not be formal actors in war, they

²⁰Indeed the declaration goes further to specify the importance of dissemination of gender equality principles to the receiving country.

²¹We stress here again that we refer to military personnel and not administrative staff.

²²Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg (eds), *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

²³Jacqui True, 'Explaining the global diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Political Science Review*, 37:3 (2016), pp. 307–23; George and Shepherd, 'The Women, Peace and Security agenda'; Jacqui True, 'Women, Peace and Security in Post-conflict and Peacebuilding Contexts', NOREF Policy Brief (March 2013); Randi Solhjell, 'Countering "malestreaming": Integrating the Gender, Peace and Security agenda in peace operations in Africa', *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs*, Policy Brief No. 22 (2013).

²⁴Laura Sjoberg and Carol Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

²⁵Claire Duncanson and Rachel Woodward, 'Regendering the military: Theorizing women's military participation', *Security Dialogue*, 47:1 (2016), pp. 3–21.

²⁶Cynthia Cockburn 'Gender relations as causal in militarization and war', in Kronsell and Svedberg (eds), *Making Gender, Making War*, p. 24.

²⁷For a good feminist definition of militarism, see Anne Scales, 'Militarism, male dominance and law: Feminist jurisprudence as oxymoron?', *Harvard Women's Law Journal*, 12 (1989), pp. 25–73 (p. 26). Also for reference on militarism, see Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Post-National Defence*; Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1998); Andrew J. Bacevitch, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

suffer disproportionately as a result of war and its spillover effects and this should be prioritised as a research topic.²⁸ Cynthia Enloe contends that the word combat is a loaded term that marginalises almost all incidences of violence that women face on a daily basis except that of armed conflict.²⁹

Anti-militarist approaches contend that militaries are patriarchal institutions that perpetuate violence and as such greater inclusion of women in militaries should not be considered feminist progress. Sybil Oldfield sums up this view stating, ‘Women are not essentially anti-military, but militarism is essentially anti-feminist’.³⁰ Enloe argues that winning the right to fight represents a militarisation of the women’s liberation movement.³¹ Sandra Whitworth argues even peace operations should be considered to be advancing an imperialist agenda that reinforces ideas about the Global South being conflict-prone, uncivilised, and diverting our attention from the roots of conflict that she posits are colonialism and globalisation.³² V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan note that all five members of the United Nations Security Council are also the largest arms dealers in the world.³³ The assumption is that adding more women will not alter the patriarchal nature of the military and that a more revolutionary and emancipatory approach is required.³⁴

Conversely, some feminists, and in particular liberal feminist approaches argue that greater inclusion of women in national militaries, and treating women as equals in the national military will contribute to greater gender equality overall. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe notes: ‘For liberal feminists, the great institutions such as national legislatures, judiciaries and armed forces had to be open to women. The struggle of women to serve at every level in national militaries, including, for many, the “right to fight”, became a preoccupation for some liberal feminists in the Western world.’³⁵ This approach, in line with other types of feminism, rejects notions that women are more peaceable and inherently less violent than men.³⁶ Furthermore, they argue that military service has traditionally been a sign of full citizenship and therefore exclusion signals women’s lower civic status.³⁷

²⁸Jacqui True, ‘The unfulfilled mandate: Gender mainstreaming and UN peace operations’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 10:2 (2009), pp. 41–50; Christin Marsh Ormhaug, Patrick Meier, and Helga Hernes, ‘Armed Conflict Deaths Disaggregated by Gender’, PRIO Paper #23 (Oslo, 2009), available at: {<https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=7207>} accessed 25 October 2020; Thania Paffenholz, Nick Ross, Steven Dixon, Anna-Lena Schluchter, and Jacqui True, *Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations* (Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative and UN Women, 2016); Seema Shekhawat and Bishnu Pathak, ‘Female combatants, peace process and the exclusion’, in Seema Shekhawat (ed.), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration* (London: Routledge, 2015); Sara Meger, ‘The fetishization of sexual violence in international security’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 60:1 (2016), pp. 149–59.

²⁹Cynthia Enloe, ‘Combat and “combat”: A feminist reflection’, *Critical Studies on Security*, 1:2 (2013), pp. 260–3.

³⁰Sybil Oldfield, *Women Against the Iron Fist: Alternatives to Militarism, 1900–1989* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 57.

³¹Cynthia Enloe, *Manoeuvres: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

³²Sandra Whitworth, *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

³³V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium* (4th edn, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014).

³⁴Sahana Dharmapuri, ‘Just add women and stir?’, *Parameters: Journal of the United States Army War College*, 41:4 (2011), pp. 54–70.

³⁵Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, ‘Liberal feminists, militaries and war’, in Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson (eds), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 23.

³⁶Miranda Alison, ‘Women as agents of political violence: Gendering security’, *Security Dialogue*, 35:4 (2004), pp. 447–63; Dara Kay Cohen, ‘Female combatants and the perpetration of violence: Wartime rape in the Sierra Leone civil war’, *World Politics*, 65:3 (2013), pp. 383–415; Laura Sjoberg, *Women as Wartime Rapists: Beyond Sensation and Stereotyping* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

³⁷Aylet Harel-Shalev and Shir Daphna-Tekoah, ‘Gendering conflict analysis: Analysing Israeli female combatants’ experiences’, in Shekhawat (ed.), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace*; Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Post-National Defence*.

Liberal feminist approaches currently dominate practitioner debates. They may take or engage with essentialist approaches to gender,³⁸ and focus on how women are deployed once the barriers to inclusion in all military activities have been removed. Although until now, the Global North does not appear to be more advanced in gender mainstreaming than the Global South,³⁹ and women's experiences of the military in the Global South remain under-represented in feminist literature.⁴⁰ We cannot therefore state with certainty the relevance of the 'the right to fight' to women in the Global South. Research on disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programmes has shown that more often than not, women in many states are already fighting on the front lines and therefore it is recognition, reward, and social acceptance they seek, not the right to do so.⁴¹ Furthermore, as Brenda L. Moore notes, even in the Global North, allowing women to fight on the front lines may be popular among white female officers, but may not suit enlisted women of colour owing to the limited choices they face both within the military and society more broadly as a result of structural inequality.⁴²

Across all feminist perspectives, the military is recognised as being an institution dominated by a culture of hegemonic masculinity (or hypermasculinity) that remains highly resistant to change and perpetuates the norm of heterosexual masculinity in connection with the use of violence.⁴³ Hegemonic masculinity refers to a set of masculine norms and practices that have become dominant and are supported by institutional power that makes them hegemonic and appear as if they are the natural order of things.⁴⁴ Military institutions reinforce and encourage the normalisation of gender subjectivities that assign particular roles to women and men in war and peace. In practice this manifests as 'doing gender', with behaviours, images, and texts all reinforcing an essentialist and simplistic dichotomy of men and women as protectors and protected.⁴⁵ For example, Aaron Belkin notes how feminising the enemy prior to inflicting violence is a regular part of military training and argues it is therefore unrealistic to expect male soldiers to treat women equally in other contexts. He adds that patriarchal entrenchment 'reflects the gendered ways in which the armed forces socialize warriors' and states that as long as no changes are made to basic training procedures, hegemonic masculinity will remain the norm in militaries.⁴⁶

In the peace operations literature specifically, Louise Olson and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis highlight the emergence of a schism between empirical and feminist research: 'Feminist research has raised questions about the understanding and conceptualisation of peace and security, while empirical research systematically explores the gender dimensions of peacekeeping.'⁴⁷ However, recent feminist scholarship in international relations does bridge this gap, adopting a critical

³⁸See, for example, Laura J. Shepherd, *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014). However, feminists in international relations may engage with essentialist positions even if they themselves do not share that viewpoint.

³⁹Henry, 'Peacexploitation'; Carol Mann, 'Women in combat: Identifying global trends', in Shekhawat (ed.), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace*.

⁴⁰With some exceptions, see, for example, Henry, 'Peacexploitation' and Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*; Pruitt, *The Blue Helmets*.

⁴¹Mary Jane Fox, 'Girl soldiers: Human security and gendered insecurity', *Security Dialogue*, 35:4 (2004), pp. 465–79.

⁴²Brenda L. Moore, 'A time to reassess: The intersection of race and class', *Critical Studies on Security*, 1:2 (2013), pp. 246–8.

⁴³Feminist literature is united on this point. For an excellent discussion, see Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*; Kronsell, and Svedberg, *Making Gender, Making War*.

⁴⁴See R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept', *Gender and Society*, 19:6 (2005), pp. 829–59.

⁴⁵Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*, p. 10.

⁴⁶Aaron Belkin, 'Combat exclusion RIP: Will patriarchy's demise follow?', *Critical Studies on Security*, 1:2 (2013), pp. 249–50 (p. 249).

⁴⁷Louise Olsson, and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, 'Advancing gender and peacekeeping research', *International Peacekeeping*, 21:4 (2014), pp. 520–8 (p. 520).

approach to the gendered aspects of military organizations while addressing the issue of gender mainstreaming.⁴⁸

We argue that increasing our empirical understanding of women's roles in security institutions is a valuable endeavour not least because it remains under-researched. As such, we concur with feminists who defend the study of war and who point out that pessimism about the immutability of patriarchy in the military may be uncalled for. Just as radical change may be unlikely, so it is unrealistic to assume that no change can take place given the changes regarding LGBT inclusion that has already taken place in the military.⁴⁹ Kronsell and Svedberg note the need for feminists to study the use of violence to ensure women have the opportunity to contribute to national security debates and ask questions about when the use of violence might be necessary to avoid perpetrating the protector-protected dichotomy.⁵⁰ As Enloe notes, in the US at least, more and more feminists have concluded that the military 'was too potent an institution in American life to be permitted to perpetuate its own masculinized fantasies'.⁵¹ Issues such as: women's agency in combat and experiences of war; women's experiences as peacekeepers; and women's experiences of military institutions remain important foci of research because they can tell us something about how women might shape security institutions in a future situation of greater gender parity and equality.⁵²

Given the above, this article offers an assessment of the current situation of female military personnel. The following sections and remainder of the article draw on empirical research to show how sidestreaming occurs in national militaries and peacekeeping operations. We note again here the lack of available data on this topic that is problematic.

Women's participation in national militaries

Historically, the military has been a traditionally masculine domain that continues to be dominated by masculine culture. 'By joining the military', Emmanuelle Prévot argues, young boys were separated from the 'maternal home, and more largely, from the world of women'.⁵³ This argument is echoed by Liora Sion, who contends that the military in many societies continues to be, 'the bastion of male identity', with military service being a 'rite of passage into manhood', and combat being the ultimate challenge to test military virility.⁵⁴ As such, the construction of military identities has been intricately linked to masculinity and its ideals, creating a normative conception of the ideal soldier who was a man with the characteristics of physical strength, courage, authority, and self-control.⁵⁵ The values and norms of military occupations were imbued with this masculine ideal presenting military service as 'virile jobs destined for physically powerful men', a notion still present today in representations of the military.⁵⁶ It follows that integrating

⁴⁸See, for example, Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014); Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

⁴⁹Claire Duncanson and Rachel Woodward, 'Regendering the military: Theorizing women's military participation', *Security Dialogue*, 47:1 (2016), pp. 3–21.

⁵⁰Kronsell and Svedberg, *Making Gender, Making War*.

⁵¹Enloe, 'Combat and "combat"'.
⁵²Some excellent work on this has already been produced. See, for example, Ayelet Harel-Shalev and Shir Daphna-Tekoah,

Breaking the Binaries: A Gendered Analysis of Women in Combat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*; Pruitt, *The Women in Blue Helmets*; Carol Cohn, *Women and Wars* (London, Polity Press, 2013); Goldstein, *War and Gender*.

⁵³Emmanuelle Prévot, 'Féminisation de l'armée de terre et virilité du métier des armes', *Cahiers du Genre*, 48:1 (2010), pp. 81–101 (p. 84).

⁵⁴Liora Sion, 'Reinterpreting combat masculinity: Dutch peacekeeping in Bosnia and Kosovo', *Sociologie*, 3:1 (2007), pp. 95–110 (pp. 95–6).

⁵⁵Prévot, 'Féminisation de l'armée', p. 86; Haring, 'Gender and military organizations', p. 90.

⁵⁶Bérangère Couillard and Bénédicte Taurine, 'Les femmes et les forces armées', *Assemblée Nationale (France)*, Report No. 1337 (2018), p. 53; Maryvonne Blondine, 'Women in the Armed Forces: Promoting Equality, Putting an End to

women into the military contradicts the military's idea of itself; hence, women are not only seen as accessing a traditionally all-male terrain, but also 'taking men's place' within it.⁵⁷

Despite this, armed forces in many states worldwide now emphasise the need for the full and equal integration of women into the military,⁵⁸ highlighting the benefits and 'added value' of having more women integrate this institution.⁵⁹ When it comes to mainstreaming, the Global North does not appear to be ahead of the Global South: the US didn't allow women in combat roles until 2013,⁶⁰ and the UK only allowed women to fight on the front lines in 2016.⁶¹ Even in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), where 92 per cent of the jobs are open to women, combat roles in elite units remain closed to women.⁶² However, while female participation in some national militaries may now be comprehensive on paper, in practice there remain significant issues. As Megan H. Mackenzie notes, it is not enough to simply add more women and expect that measure will ensure the meaningful participation of women:

While it would seem that removing any gender-based barrier is a positive step, the intense focus on combat exclusion also has the potential to limit debates if they ignore differences among women and place unreasonable expectations that a singular policy reversal could produce such profound results for all women within an institution infamous for resisting change.⁶³

Lifting combat exclusion doesn't mean that these roles become accessible to women. Women can also be excluded from high-status roles in other ways, 'on the grounds of physical requirements, combat effectiveness, or [because of] the health problems associated with submarine service'.⁶⁴

There are several recurrent arguments against women's presence in the armed forces, which Sabine T. Koeszegi et al. describe as 'widely held "cultural" norms and persistent beliefs'.⁶⁵ The most prevalent is that women are physically and psychologically weaker, and thus integrating

Gender-based Violence', Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe', Report No. 14073 (2016), p. 3; Gerard J. de Groot, 'A few good women: Gender stereotypes, the military and peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 8:2 (2001), pp. 23–38 (p. 23).

⁵⁷Prévot, 'Féminisation De L'Armée', p. 85.

⁵⁸NATO, 'Gender Perspectives in NATO Armed Forces', available at: {https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_101372.htm} accessed 10 June 2019; Australian Department of Defence, 'Women in the ADF: A Supplement to the Defence Annual Report', available at: {<http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/17-18/Downloads/WomenInTheADFReport2017-18.pdf>} accessed 25 February 2020; and Ministère de la Défense (Côte d'Ivoire), 'Les femmes engagées dans la Défense Nationale', *Défense*, 2 (January 2017), p. 45, available at: {http://www.defense.gouv.ci/uploads/magazine/Magazine_D%C3%A9fense_N%C2%B03.pdf} accessed 14 September 2020.

⁵⁹Lebanese Army, 'Women in the LAF', available at: {<https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/women-laf>} accessed 22 March 2020.

⁶⁰Megan H. Mackenzie, 'Women in combat: Beyond "can they?" or "should they?": Introduction', *Critical Studies on Security*, 1:2 (2013), pp. 239–42.

⁶¹See UK Department of Defence, available at: {<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ban-on-women-in-ground-close-combat-roles-lifted>} accessed 1 October 2020.

⁶²Israeli Defense Forces, 'IDF Leads the Way in Gender Integration' (22 July 2013), available at: {<https://www.idf.il/en/articles/military-cooperation/idf-leads-the-way-in-gender-integration/>} accessed 10 November 2020; Yair Altman, 'Girls are good enough to make it into IDF commando units', *Israel Hayom* (10 July 2020).

⁶³Mackenzie, 'Women in combat'.

⁶⁴Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, 'Institution to occupation to diversity: Gender in the military today', in Franklin C. Pinch, Allister T. Macintyre, Phyllis Browne, and Alan C. Okros (eds), *Gender and Diversity Issues* (Wing Winnipeg: Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2006), pp. 26–51 (p. 30).

⁶⁵Sabine T. Koeszegi, Eva Zedlacher, and René Hudribusch, 'The war against the female soldier? The effects of masculine culture on workplace aggression', *Armed Forces & Society*, 40:2 (2013), pp. 226–51 (p. 231).

them in combat roles, special ops, or even combat training would decrease the overall quality and effectiveness of combat units.⁶⁶ The presence of women in units is believed to erode the homosociality of units said to be central to their unity and hence operational success.⁶⁷ Masculinity is also used to encourage solidarity among soldiers and on the battlefield,⁶⁸ and feminine physicality, like menstruation and pregnancy is viewed as a weakness that will inhibit combat efficiency.⁶⁹

In some cases, structural barriers exist that limit the possibilities of potential women recruits. This has been reported to be the case in Indonesia, where the Indonesian Army Academy (Akml) stopped recruiting female cadets in 2018, with women being able to enrol to the army only through 'non-commissioned officer candidate schools', negatively affecting their subsequent posting;⁷⁰ and in China, where the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been accused of requiring higher and differentiated standards from women applicants.⁷¹ Other deterrents exist that can impact a woman's decision to join the armed forces. These include, among others: negative and discriminatory societal attitudes on women as soldiers;⁷² perceived issues around career flexibility;⁷³ and concerns around sexual harassment.⁷⁴

Despite these concerns, a percentage of women across the world do participate in their national armed forces and as noted above, national militaries are encouraging them to do so. Based on the available data, Table 1 shows the percentage of active servicewomen within militaries worldwide.

While these figures indicate women's participation in national militaries is low, to understand how women participate and experience the military, it is important to interrogate the roles they occupy. Again we find there is little difference between the Global North and South.

According to NATO reports, 33.1 per cent of servicewomen in member states' armies were employed in non-combat services and supply corps, as technicians, military assistants, planning and management professionals, load masters, and different specialists. Hungary's large female workforce is clustered in the country's Ministry of Defence and subordinate offices

⁶⁶Martin van Creveld, 'The great illusion: Women in the military', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29:2 (2000), pp. 429–42 (p. 442); Dalia Ghanem and Dina Arakji, 'Women in the Arab Armed Forces', Carnegie Middle East Centre (2020).

⁶⁷Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and The Post National Defence*; Anthony King, 'Women in combat', *The RUSI Journal*, 158:1 (2013), pp. 4–11 (p. 6); Koeszegi, Zedlacher, and Hudribusch, 'The war against the female soldier?', p. 229.

⁶⁸King, 'Women in combat', p. 6; Anthony C. King, 'The female soldier', *Parameters*, 43:2 (2013), pp. 13–25.

⁶⁹Koeszegi, Zedlacher, and Hudribusch, 'The war against the female soldier?', p. 231.

⁷⁰Ivany Atina Arbi, 'Long road to gender equality in Indonesian military', *The Jakarta Post* (26 June 2020); Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Military), 'Penerimaan Calon Taruna Akml TA 2020 [Admission of Academic Candidates for Academic Year 2020]', Rekrutmen TNI Angkatan Darat TNI Ad, available at: {<http://ad.rekrutmen-tni.mil.id/berita/persyaratan/taruna-akml>} accessed 2 October 2020.

⁷¹Elsa Kania and Kenneth Allen, 'Holding up half the sky? (Part 2): The evolution of women's roles in the PLA', *The Jamestown Foundation*, 16:16 (2016), available at: {<https://jamestown.org/program/holding-half-sky-part-2-evolution-womens-roles-pla/>} accessed 1 November 2020.

⁷²Ghanem and Arakji, 'Women in the Arab armed forces'; Georgina Holmes, 'Gendering the Rwanda defence force: A critical assessment', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 8:4 (2014), pp. 321–33.

⁷³Mihaela Racovita, 'Women in State Security Provision in Nepal: Meaningful Participation?', *Small Arms Survey* (2018), pp. 1–16 (p. 8); H. D. Arcouette, 'Recruiting Women in the CAF: The Challenges of a 25 Percent Representation', *Canadian Forces College, Report No. 45* (2019).

⁷⁴Adrian D. Van Breda, 'Woman claiming space in the military: The experiences of female South African soldiers', *Journal of Human Ecology*, 53:1 (2016), pp. 20–8 (p. 23); Douglas Yeung, Christina E. Steiner, Chaitra M. Hardison, Lawrence M. Hanser, and Kristy N. Kamarck, 'Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views from the Field', RAND Corporation (2017).

Table 1. Percentage of active servicewomen in national armed forces.⁷⁵

Percentage of active servicewomen in national armed forces per region (%)	
Africa ⁷⁶	
South Africa	24.0
Namibia	23.0
Guinea	6.0
Rwanda	4.6
Senegal	4.0
Ivory Coast	1.8
Asia ⁷⁷	
Taiwan	13.6
Indonesia	10.0
Singapore	8.0
South Korea	6.8
Japan	6.1
China	5.0
Nepal	4.5
Russia	4.3
Afghanistan	1.4
Central America and Caribbean ⁷⁸	
Dominican Republic	22.1
Jamaica	20.0
Trinidad and Tobago	14.0
Panama	8.0

(Continued)

⁷⁵This table represents the available data online that we were able to access as part of our literature review. It is by no means comprehensive. NATO, '2018 Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives' (2018), p. 17, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/07/pdf/200713-2018-Summary-NR-to-NCGP.pdf accessed 5 February 2020.

⁷⁶Haring, 'Gender and military organizations', p. 94; Nina Wilén and Lindy Heinecken, 'Women now make up almost 24 percent of South Africa's military: Why aren't they treated equally?', *The Washington Post* (1 August 2018); Legal Assistance Center, 'Namibia Gender Analysis 2017' (2017), p. 31, available at: https://www.lac.org.na/projects/grap/Pdf/Namibia_Gender_Analysis_2017.pdf accessed 10 September 2020; United Nations Development Programme, 'Strategie Sectorielle Genre des Forces de Défense et de Sécurité' (2016), available at: <http://mptf.undp.org/document/download/17699> accessed 25 September 2020; Ministère de la Défense (Côte d'Ivoire), 'Les femmes', p. 60.

⁷⁷Lo Tien-pin and Jonathan Chin, 'Women comprise 13.6 percent of volunteer force', *Taipei Times* (8 October 8 2017); Arbi, 'Long road to gender equality in Indonesian military'; Thrina Tham, 'Females in the Force', Ministry of Defence Singapore (2019); Emiko Jozuka and Yoko Wakatsuki, 'Answering the Call: The Women on the Front Lines of Japan's Defense', Pulitzer Center (30 November 2018); Racovita, 'Women in State Security', p. 8; Mary Chestnut, 'Women in the Russian Military', CSIS (18 September 2020); Sophia Jones, 'The many dangers of being an Afghan woman in uniform', *The New York Times Magazine* (5 October 2018).

⁷⁸Ministry of Defence (Dominican Republic), 'Fuerzas Armadas tiene 14,500 damas, MIDE reconoce los méritos y la trayectoria de 24 mujeres dedicadas a la carrera militar' (2019), available at: <https://www.mide.gob.do/detail.aspx?id=5680&sl=99> accessed 10 September 2020; Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina (RESDAL), 'Atlas Comparativo de la Defensa en América Latina y Caribe' (2016), p. 207, available at: <https://www.resdal.org/assets/atlas-2016-esp-completo.pdf> accessed 9 September 2020; Jamaica Defence Force, 'JDF Focuses on Recruiting More Women' (2019), available at: <https://www.jdfweb.com/news/jdf-focuses-on-recruiting-more-women/> accessed 15 September 2020.

Table 1. (Continued.)

Percentage of active servicewomen in national armed forces per region (%)	
Europe⁷⁹	
Hungary	19.9
Bulgaria	16.1
Greece	15.7
Latvia	15.4
France	15
Slovenia	14.7
Albania	13
Spain	12.8
Germany	12.1
Lithuania	12.1
Croatia	11.9
Norway	11.6
Slovakia	11.5
Portugal	11.3
The Netherlands	9.8
Belgium	8.2
Romania	7.4
Luxembourg	6.7
Poland	6.4
Italy	5.3
Montenegro	5.1
MENA⁸⁰	
Israel	40.0
Jordan	3.0
Morocco	3.0
North America⁸¹	
United States of America	16.3
Canada	16

(Continued)

⁷⁹NATO, '2018 Summary of the National Reports', p. 17; NATO, '2017 Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives' (2017), p. 16, available at: {https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_09/20190909_190909-2017-Summary-NR-to-NCGP.pdf} accessed 2 February 2020.

⁸⁰Haring, 'Gender and military organizations', p. 94; Dalia Ghanem, 'Women at Arms', Diwan: Middle East Insights from Carnegie (2018); Yoursra Abourabi, 'Retour du service militaire: des femmes aptes et volontaires', *Jeune Afrique* (15 July 2019).

⁸¹Service Women's Action Network, 'Women in the Military: Where They stand' (2019), p. 17, available at: {<https://www.servicewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/SWAN-Where-we-stand-2019-0416revised.pdf>} accessed 2 October 2020; Miguel Ángel Bravo, 'En dos años, se duplica número de mujeres militares', *Publimetro*, available at: {<https://www.publimetro.com.mx/mx/nacional/2019/09/16/en-dos-ano-se-duplica-numero-mujeres-militares.html>} accessed 16 September 2019.

Table 1. (Continued.)

Percentage of active servicewomen in national armed forces per region (%)	
Mexico	11.9
Oceania⁸²	
Australia	17.9
New Zealand	17.5
South America⁸³	
Uruguay	18.9
Argentina	17.2
Chile	14.4
Peru	12.0
Mexico	11.9
Brazil	8.0
Guatemala	7.7
Honduras	4.2
Colombia	3.0
Ecuador	2.9

(58 per cent).⁸⁴ Algerian⁸⁵ and Australian⁸⁶ servicewomen are concentrated in health roles. Within the Chinese People's Liberation Army, women have 'traditionally served primarily in medical, communications, logistics support, academic, and propaganda roles'.⁸⁷

Overall, the norm throughout militaries continues to place servicewomen 'mostly in subordinate or support positions where they remain aides to their male counterparts'.⁸⁸ While policies and legislation may theoretically put women at an equal footing as men, in practice, the full and comprehensive integration of women remains limited.⁸⁹ In fact, in most countries, women are excluded from combat roles and certain specialities that are deemed to carry a high risk of

⁸²Department of Defence (Australia), 'Women in the ADF', p. 1; Ron Mark, 'Defence Minister Salutes Our Military Women on Women's Day' (2019), available at: {<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/defence-minister-salutes-our-military-women-women%E2%80%99s-day>} accessed 3 October 2020.

⁸³Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina (RESDAL), 'Atlas Comparativo de la Defensa', p. 207; José Antonio Gómez, 'No hay barreras para la Mujer en la Defensa Nacional', Ministerio de Defensa Nacional (Chile) (2017), available at: {<https://www.defensa.cl/temas-principales/no-hay-barreras-para-la-mujer-en-la-defensa-nacional/>} accessed 15 September 2020; 'Ministerio de Defensa: el 12% del personal militar de las Fuerzas Armadas es mujer', *Peru21* (12 August 2019); Stela da Rocha de Medeiros Dantas, 'A Presença das Mulheres Nas Forças Armadas Brasileiras: Uma Análise da Sua Inserção e os Desafios Atuais', *Revista de Iniciação Científica em Relações Internacionais*, 6:11 (2018), pp. 1–17; 'Solo 3% son mujeres en las fuerzas militares de Colombia', *TeleSUR* (2 March 2017)

⁸⁴NATO, '2016 Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives' (2016), p. 17, available at: {https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_11/20171122_2016_Summary_of_NRs_to_NCGP.pdf} accessed 20 February 2020.

⁸⁵Ghanem and Arakji, 'Women in the Arab armed forces', p. 8.

⁸⁶Department of Defence (Australia), 'Women in the ADF', p. 39.

⁸⁷Kania and Allen, 'Holding up half the sky?.'

⁸⁸Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck, 'Women in the Men's House: The Road to Equality in the Algerian Military', Carnegie Middle East Center (2015).

⁸⁹Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, 'Institution to occupation to diversity', p. 34.

‘exposure to fire or capture by an enemy’,⁹⁰ as combat is believed to be a male responsibility, with women needing protection.⁹¹

The changing nature of warfare through the increased use of robotic and autonomous systems provides an interesting development as this technology is expected to reduce the physical requirements for ground combat, placing the onus on soldiers’ technical capabilities instead.⁹² This undermines current arguments against women’s physical capabilities and could lead to their greater integration in combat roles.⁹³ As one author notes, warfare in the automation era could create roles ‘where women may possess certain inherent advantages’⁹⁴ and could therefore contribute in a more equal manner. However this view could be said to still reflect ingrained gender roles and essentialist thinking that women are too weak for physical frontline combat. When women do enter these spaces however, the challenge will be to ensure that the space itself is not devalued or sidelined.⁹⁵

Instances of the gendered divisions of labour serve to illustrate the sometimes subtle but persistent sidesteaming of women in the military. Prevailing societal norms and attitudes toward gender roles relegate women to jobs that supposedly suit their gender and their ‘physical and psychological inferiority’.⁹⁶ In Montenegro and Serbia, doctors are said to routinely advise women against joining certain positions due to health concerns, despite no legal restrictions; in addition women perform self-censorship and simply do not apply.⁹⁷ Being barred from certain roles is one of the most significant factors hindering full female integration into armed forces. This corresponds to Emmanuelle Prévot’s concept of vertical segregation and Helena Carreiras’s idea of structural labour divisions,⁹⁸ which occurs when women struggle to progress to the highest ranks of the military⁹⁹ and are concentrated in the ‘lower-grade positions’.¹⁰⁰ Vertical segregation excludes women from leadership roles and from taking part in ‘the decision-making process’,¹⁰¹ limiting their ability to make impactful changes that could benefit other women within the institution, for example, as senior mentors and role models that could help stem retention attrition.¹⁰² In their study of the US air force, Kirsten M. Keller et al. found the majority of women surveyed wanted to be mentored by successful women in order to feel embedded in the organisation as opposed to on the fringes.¹⁰³

⁹⁰Lucy V. Katz, ‘Free a man to fight: The exclusion of women from combat positions in the armed forces’, *Law & Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice*, 10:1 (1992), pp. 1–53 (p. 7).

⁹¹Katz, ‘Free a man to fight’, p. 1; Wilén and Heinecken, ‘Women now make up almost 24 percent of South Africa’s military’; Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’.

⁹²Linell A. Letendre, ‘Women warriors: Why the robotics revolution changes the combat equation’, *Prism*, 6:1 (2016), pp. 90–103 (p. 91).

⁹³Ibid., p. 99.

⁹⁴As quoted in Elsa Kania, ‘Holding up half the sky? (Part 1): The evolution of women’s roles in the PLA’, *The Jamestown Foundation*, 16:15 (2016).

⁹⁵Lea Skewes, Cordelia Fine, and Nick Haslam, ‘Beyond Mars and Venus: The role of gender essentialism in support for gender inequality and backlash’, *PLoS ONE*, 13:7 (2018).

⁹⁶Kania, ‘Holding up half the sky? (Part 1)’; Ghanem and Arakji, ‘Women in the Arab armed forces’, p. 21.

⁹⁷Blondine, ‘Women in the Armed Forces’, p. 9.

⁹⁸Prévot, ‘Féminisation de l’armée’, p. 45; Helena Carreiras, *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁹⁹Katherine Kidder, Kelley Sayler, Nora Bensahel, and David W. Barno, ‘Battlefields and Boardrooms: Women’s Leadership in the Military and the Private Sector’, Centre for New American Security (2015); Couillard and Taurine, ‘Les femmes et les forces armées’, p. 38.

¹⁰⁰Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’.

¹⁰¹Ghanem and Arakji, ‘Women in the Arab armed forces’, p. 8.

¹⁰²Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’.

¹⁰³Kirsten M. Keller, Kimberly Curry Hall, Miriam Matthews, Leslie Adrienne Payne, Lisa Saum-Manning, Douglas Yeung, David Schulker, Stefan Zavislan, and Nelson Lim, ‘Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention in the Air Force’, RAND Corporation (2018), p. 30; Van Breda, ‘Women claiming space in the military’, p. 22.

In 2014 the Report on Gender Equality by the European Parliamentary Assembly found that there are few women in the higher ranks of national militaries, and that women who hold senior ranks are mostly in administrative roles.¹⁰⁴ Career progression in the military is highly inflexible, often requiring officers to obtain career targets following a strict timeline, and any absences, such as maternity leave, carry ‘career penalties’.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, promotions to higher ranks is often tied to having combat experience. By being barred from such roles, and being sidestreamed into administration and support, women are by and large not accessing the positions that later enable them to reach the most senior ranks.¹⁰⁶

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) reports that they have had no women above the level of Brigadier. Women have thus not been able to reach the top ranks in the NZDF, and instead ‘cluster in the lower and mid-ranks’.¹⁰⁷ In each of the French military corps, the percentage of women decreases as the ranks increase, with servicewomen tending to occupy the lowest positions in the hierarchy.¹⁰⁸ In the Uruguayan and Rwandese armed forces, women have only been able to climb to the roles of Major/Lieutenant Commander.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, a noticeable gender gap in rank distribution exists in the Nepalese Army, where despite a large increase in the total number of women in the army in the last ten years, the highest rank where women serve has not changed since 2011.¹¹⁰

It has been suggested that as combat exclusion is increasingly lifted throughout militaries, more women will be able to experience career progression via this route, and obtain greater upward mobility in upcoming years.¹¹¹ This presupposes women will stay in service for many years, as currently, reaching the highest echelons of the military requires around 33 years of service.¹¹² However, persistent differences in retention between men and women remain.¹¹³ Overall, women tend to stay in service less time than men, thereby impacting the feminisation of the military as a whole, particularly in senior ranks.¹¹⁴

Erika L. King et al. find that servicewomen in the US are more likely to view military careers as short term due to their incompatibility with family life.¹¹⁵ This perceived difficulty in balancing military life with family emerges as a critical issue impacting women’s retention, and recruitment, throughout the literature.¹¹⁶ The Rwanda Defence Force Gender Desk found that the work the army does is not always attractive to women, in part because ‘it adds to the triple roles of women [reproductive, productive, and community management]’.¹¹⁷ Indeed, in many societies, women are still seen as mothers above all else, and are expected to perform mostly domestic

¹⁰⁴Blondine, ‘Women in the Armed Forces’, pp. 3, 10.

¹⁰⁵Kidder et al., ‘Battlefields and Boardrooms’, p. 16.

¹⁰⁶Ministry of Defence (New Zealand), ‘Maximising Opportunities for Military Women’ (2014), p. 30, available at: {<https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/1b0daa8fb0/maximising-opportunities-military-women-nzdf.pdf>} accessed 15 February 2020.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁰⁸Women make up 31.6 per cent of cadets; 16.5 per cent of Captains/Ship of the line Lieutenant; and 7.8 per cent of Generals/Admirals; see Couillard and Taurine, ‘Les femmes et les forces armées’, p. 40.

¹⁰⁹Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América Latina (RESDAL), ‘Atlas Comparativo de la Defensa’, p. 207; Holmes, ‘Gendering the Rwanda defence force’, p. 330.

¹¹⁰Racovita, ‘Women in State Security’, p. 9.

¹¹¹Kidder et al., ‘Battlefields and Boardrooms’, p. 13; and Couillard and Taurine, ‘Les femmes et les forces armées’, p. 40.

¹¹²Kidder et al., ‘Battlefields and Boardrooms’, p. 13.

¹¹³Keller et al., ‘Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention’, p. vii.

¹¹⁴Australian Ministry of Defence, ‘Women in the ADF’, p. 34; New Zealand Ministry of Defence, ‘Maximising Opportunities for Military Women’, p. 14; Erika L. King, Diana DiNitto, Christopher Salas-Wright, and David Snowden, ‘Retaining women air force officers: Work, family, career satisfaction, and intentions’, *Armed Forces & Society*, 46:4 (2020), pp. 677–95 (p. 678).

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 678.

¹¹⁶NATO, ‘2018 Summary’, p. 17; Keller et al., ‘Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention’; King et al., ‘Retaining women air force officers’; Ministry of Defence, ‘Maximising Opportunities for Military Women’.

¹¹⁷As quoted in Holmes, ‘Gendering the Rwanda defence force’, p. 329.

roles, which are seen as being incompatible with a rigid military career and frequent deployments.¹¹⁸ Interviewed Algerian servicewomen stated that at a certain point, they would have to ‘make a choice between family life and the military’,¹¹⁹ despite legal protections and flexibility in place. The Keller study with female officers in the US air force found that ‘all focus groups discussed children or wanting to have a family as a key retention factor’, and noted that the frequent deployments and demanding schedules of a military career are a significant difficulty in achieving this.¹²⁰ All these findings point to the structural inequalities in society that still disproportionately award childcare responsibilities to women requiring them to navigate multiple roles in addition to their careers.¹²¹ Interestingly, Mady Wechsler Segal et al. found that the challenges of balancing family roles and military careers can be mitigated by having a ‘female mentor who can relate’ to some of these specific issues, once again emphasising the importance of having women in senior mentoring positions.¹²² Women cadets at West Point were found to be more likely to continue their military training when other women were present in their units, suggesting that the presence of women, not only in senior positions, also encourages retention.¹²³

Another contributory factor to the low numbers of women in national militaries is recruitment strategies. Advertisements for the military often reaffirm the link between masculinity and war by associating men with ‘markers of combat’.¹²⁴ However, women are often not portrayed with these same markers, thereby preventing ‘any association between women and warfare’.¹²⁵ Algerian service women, for instance, are ‘continuously represented in noncombat positions and excluded from the field’ in official advertisements.¹²⁶ In her analysis of US Army advertisements, Holly Speck found that women were not depicted in a wide variety of roles, but rather mostly depicted in ‘traditional gender roles such as civilian spouses’ and in the medical field.¹²⁷ On the contrary, men were much more likely to be portrayed in combat roles, and the male voice was featured much more prominently in advertisements.¹²⁸

The PLA’s media strategy for example, focuses on the beauty of army women, posting videos that ‘highlight their skills in dancing, taking phone calls and wearing make-up’ and captions that point to how good-looking they are.¹²⁹ Hence we see militaries continuing to perpetuate the ‘beautiful souls, noble warrior’ syndrome identified by Ehlstain and others.¹³⁰ Recruitment processes that do not reflect the different roles open to women, or those that do not represent women in leadership roles, fail to convey the image of the military as an attractive career option, and are therefore less appealing to potential female recruits.¹³¹ While choosing whether to enlist or not is

¹¹⁸Racovita, ‘Women in State Security’; Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’; and Keller et al., ‘Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention’, p. 25.

¹¹⁹Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’.

¹²⁰Keller et al., ‘Addressing Barriers to Female Officer Retention’, p. x.

¹²¹Kidder et al., ‘Battlefields and Boardrooms’, p. 15.

¹²²Mady Wechsler Segal, David G. Smith, David R. Segal, and Amy A. Canuso, ‘The role of leadership and peer behaviors in the performance and well-being of women in combat: Historical perspectives, unit integration, and family issues’, *Military Medicine*, 1:28 (2016), pp. 28–39 (p. 36).

¹²³Nick Huntington-Klein and Elaina Rose, ‘A study of West Point shows how women help each other advance’, *Harvard Business Review* (26 November 2018).

¹²⁴Melissa T. Brown, ‘“A woman in the army is still a woman”: Representations of women in US military recruiting advertisements for the All-Volunteer Force’, *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 33:2 (2012), pp. 151–75 (p. 151).

¹²⁵Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’; Holly Speck, ‘Band of brothers (and sisters): Gender framing in U.S. Army’s commercial advertising’, *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal*, 35:2 (2020), pp. 1–16 (p. 2).

¹²⁶Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’.

¹²⁷Speck, ‘Band of brothers’, p. 8.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 13.

¹²⁹Zheping Huang, ‘China’s female soldiers fly fighter jets, but its state media would rather focus on their dancing skills’, *Quartz* (2017), available at: {<https://qz.com/1036701/chinas-female-pla-soldiers-are-flying-fighter-jets-but-its-state-media-would-rather-focus-on-their-dancing-skills/>} accessed September 2020.

¹³⁰Ehlstain, *Women and War*; Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*.

¹³¹Yeung et al., ‘Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military’, p. 8.

based on a host of factors, active service members have noted that being able to talk and answer questions about female-specific issues with female recruiters had been particularly welcomed during their recruitment process.¹³² Douglas Yeung et al. suggest that female recruiters may be key to attracting more women, as they instil more ‘confidence in young female applicants’, act as role models, and can better respond to their needs.¹³³ Targeted policies seem to be effective, as NATO found that when nations have specific policies in place for the recruitment of women, they ‘experienced a significant increase in the female applications’.¹³⁴

This research found current recruitment efforts to increase women’s participation in national militaries are producing uneven results.¹³⁵ Militaries need to actively consider the kind of advertisements they release, as their choice of advertisements disseminates a message about gender roles and women’s place in the military.¹³⁶ Yet, military promotional material has been found to maintain gendered divisions by reproducing stereotypical gender roles and placing women in marginal positions.¹³⁷

This section has argued that women are being sidestreamed in national militaries in both the Global North and South. While our research cannot conclusively demonstrate causality, it does shine a light on practices that appear (from the numbers at least) to have a negative effect on the retention, recruitment, and promotion of women in national armed forces. Basic arguments for the non-participation of women in national militaries remain salient conveyed through formal and informal gendered practices that include the non-visibility of women in combat roles (both practically and in media images), limited promotion of women owing to the high status afforded to direct combat roles that leads to a lack of mentoring, and weak retention due to a combination of societal and military pressures.

In this article we argue that women’s participation in peacekeeping is connected to the low numbers we see in national militaries and for as long as UN peacekeeping is the sum of its militaries, this will remain the case. The following section unpacks how sidestreaming occurs in the field in peacekeeping operations, even under the auspices of UN missions that are designed to promote 1325. Here we find women are pushed into specialised spaces on the basis of their ‘unique’ qualities.

Women in peace operations

Between 1989 and 1993, just 1.7 per cent of military peacekeepers deployed by the UN were female.¹³⁸ In 2001, the share of women in military posts serving in UN missions had increased only to little more than 4 per cent.¹³⁹ Currently the number of female troops serving in peace operations abroad as uniformed military personnel is 3,950, which constitutes 4.8 per cent of all peacekeeping troops.¹⁴⁰

¹³²Ibid., p. 28.

¹³³Ibid., p. 29.

¹³⁴NATO, ‘2016 Summary of the National Reports’, p. 14.

¹³⁵NATO data reveals the highest percentage of women recruits are in Latvia (29.2 per cent) and Bulgaria (27.9 per cent) (NATO summary, 2018). At the other extreme, in 2016 the PLA was reported to have recruited only 124 women from a total of 20,000 recruits from the Hainan Province. See Kania and Allen, *Holding Up Half the Sky?*

¹³⁶Brown, ‘“A woman in the army is still a woman”’, p. 152.

¹³⁷Ghanem-Yazbeck, ‘Women in the Men’s House’.

¹³⁸de Groot, ‘A few good women’.

¹³⁹Kari Karame, ‘Military women in peace operations: Experiences of the Norwegian battalion in UNIFIL 1978–98’, *International Peacekeeping*, 8:2 (2001), pp. 85–96; Donna Bridges and Debbie Horsfall, ‘Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping: Toward a gender balanced force’, *Armed Forces and Society*, 36:1 (2009), pp. 120–30.

¹⁴⁰United Nations Peacekeeping, ‘Gender’ (August 2020), available at: {<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>} accessed on 1 October 2020. Note women are represented in UN peacekeeping in administrative and police forces although in lower numbers than men.

Despite these low numbers, women's participation in peace operations is deemed useful by the UN. In the local security environment women's presence enables security precautions to be applied to both the female and male populations.¹⁴¹ In intelligence gathering initiatives, female peacekeepers' access to both women's networks and male populations provides a holistic view.¹⁴² In peacebuilding tasks, women are essential for accessing the non-elite sectors of the population who may have very different requirements for an equitable peace, which helps to develop a more representative solution.¹⁴³ Women have also been noted for their roles in winning 'hearts and minds' in counterinsurgency operations.¹⁴⁴ Women have been found to be better at diffusing tension at checkpoints,¹⁴⁵ in part because they are seen as less confrontational and more peaceful and cooperative.¹⁴⁶ Research has shown women are more approachable for victims of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) and sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) among the local population;¹⁴⁷ and accordingly provide a force with increased legitimacy.¹⁴⁸ Women can assist with female populations in security sector reform (SSR) and demobilisation disarmament and re-integration programmes (DDR);¹⁴⁹ and it has been suggested that their presence may motivate their male colleagues to behave better when out on patrol,¹⁵⁰ although this idea has been rightly disputed and critiqued not least for placing the responsibility for poor troop behaviour onto women.¹⁵¹

However, these many successes do not indicate gender mainstreaming and in fact may perpetuate an essentialist construction of femininity.¹⁵² Maya Eichler makes the important point that there remains a tension between equality and difference. On the one hand, women may be hailed as equal when they perform as soldiers, albeit in comparison with a set of masculine norms, but in other scenarios their differences are instrumentalised and retained for use in

¹⁴¹Annica Bergman Rosamond and Annika Kronsell, 'Cosmopolitan militaries and dialogic peacekeeping: Danish and Swedish women soldiers in Afghanistan', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20:2 (2018), pp. 172–87; Karame, 'Military women in peace operations'; Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Post-National Defence*.

¹⁴²Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell, 'Cosmopolitan militaries and dialogic peacekeeping'; Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*. Intelligence gathering is considered useful in UN peace operations as well, in particular MINUSMA where a great deal of counterterrorism work is required. See John Karlsrud, 'Towards UN counter-terrorism operations?', *Third World Quarterly*, 28:6 (2017), pp. 1215–31.

¹⁴³Bridges and Horsfall, 'Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping'.

¹⁴⁴Keally McBride and Annick T. R. Wibben, 'The gendering of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 3:2 (2012), pp. 199–215.

¹⁴⁵Karame, 'Military women in peace operations'; Bridges and Horsfall, 'Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping'.

¹⁴⁶De Groot, 'A few good women'; Elizabeth Rhen and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building* (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002); Inger Sjelsbaek, 'Gender Aspects of International Military Interventions: National and International Perspectives', PRIO Papers (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2007).

¹⁴⁷Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*; Cecilia Hull, Mikael Eriksson, Justin McDermott, Fanny Ruden, and Annica Waleij, *Managing Unintended Consequences of Peace Support Operations* (Stockholm: FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2009); Henry F. Carey, "'Women and peace and security": The politics of implementing gender sensitivity norms in peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 8:2 (2001), pp. 49–68.

¹⁴⁸Bridges and Horsfall, 'Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping'; Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Post-National Defense*.

¹⁴⁹Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*; Elisa Tarnaala, *Women in Armed Groups and Fighting Forces: Lessons Learned from Gender-Sensitive DDR Programmes* (Oslo: NOREF, 2016).

¹⁵⁰Sabrina 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*, 53:1 (2016), pp. 100–15; Bridges and Horsfall, 'Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping'.

¹⁵¹Olivera Simic, 'Does the presence of women really matter? Towards combating male sexual violence in peacekeeping operations', *International Peacekeeping*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 188–99.

¹⁵²Nadine Puechguirbal, 'Discourses on gender, patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A textual analysis of UN documents', *International Peacekeeping*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 172–87.

specialised spaces.¹⁵³ Susan Willett describes this situation as being both ‘idealised and undervalued’ at the same time.¹⁵⁴ In her study of Swedish peacekeepers Kronsell argues that this perception of women as a useful resource does not challenge the gendered nature of military institutions themselves. Rather it merely helps retain simplistic essentialist and dichotomous perceptions of men and women’s capabilities. Of note is that research on this topic with female peacekeepers found that they viewed their peacekeeping contribution in the same specialised way as the national military they belonged to, suggesting they have been successfully socialised into their national military cultures.¹⁵⁵

Exclusion and sidestreaming in peace operations

Karim and Beardsley identify three main challenges faced by female military personnel in peacekeeping: ‘the exclusion of and discrimination against female peacekeepers; the relegation of female peacekeepers to safe spaces; and the Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment, and Violence (SEAHV) of female peacekeepers’.¹⁵⁶

The exclusion of women in peacekeeping can come from varied sources: not sending women to peace operations in the first place; keeping them in the base at all times when they’re there; and restricting their movements when out on patrol. In order to meet demand for a fast deployment, national militaries often send Special Forces combat units to peacekeeping operations as they are equipped to deploy at short notice and these Special Forces rarely contain women.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, militaries often recruit peacekeeping troops from their infantry battalions,¹⁵⁸ which means that troop contributing countries simply do not have enough women in these areas to supply a gender balanced force, the argument that we make here.¹⁵⁹ Encouragingly, however, armed forces with a higher proportion of women do tend to send more women to peacekeeping missions.¹⁶⁰

Some national militaries have demonstrated a reluctance to send women to challenging environments,¹⁶¹ or Muslim majority states.¹⁶² Previous research found that female soldiers are less likely to be deployed to missions located in countries with low levels of development and/or that have experienced higher levels of violence, especially sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV).¹⁶³ Currently however, the largest numbers of female military deployments are in UN missions that experience high levels of violence so this may no longer be the case, although as discussed here, sidestreaming may well be occurring on the ground in these missions.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵³Maya Eichler, ‘Women and combat in Canada: Continuing tensions between “difference” and “equality”’, *Critical Studies on Security*, 1:2 (2013), pp. 257–59.

¹⁵⁴Susan Willett, ‘Introduction: Security Council Resolution 1325: Assessing the impact on women, peace and security’, *International Peacekeeping*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 142–58.

¹⁵⁵Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁷Vanessa F. Newby, *Peacekeeping in South Lebanon: Credibility and Local Cooperation* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2018).

¹⁵⁸See UN Peacekeeping where this is specified, available at: {<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/military>} accessed 1 October 2020.

¹⁵⁹Resolution 2538 also stipulates the need for states to have a database of female personnel suitable and willing to be sent to peace operations.

¹⁶⁰Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, p. 27.

¹⁶¹Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

¹⁶²Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell, ‘Cosmopolitan militaries and dialogic peacekeeping’.

¹⁶³Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, ‘Female peacekeepers and gender balancing: Token gestures or informed policy-making?’, *International Interactions*, 39:4 (2013), pp. 461–88; Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*. These authors note that when interviewed about the restrictions battalion commanders were vague about the source of their instructions often attributing them to the UN even when there was no evidence of this.

¹⁶⁴See United Nations Peacekeeping, ‘Gender’, available at: {<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>} accessed 1 October 2020. Specifically the missions are: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central

Once deployed, women experience other forms of exclusion in the form of restrictions on their movement. Kari Karame found in 1992, the new Force Commander at the UNIFIL mission explicitly forbade women to undertake frontline military roles, which meant the Norwegian battalion was forced to withdraw women from these functions. Despite protest from female soldiers across the mission, the policy remained in place for the duration of the Force Commander's tenure. Furthermore, the Norwegian military did not attempt to take the issue up to more senior levels, either in the Norwegian parliament or with DPKO in New York.¹⁶⁵ More recently, research by Karim and Beardsley found evidence that many women in the UNMIL mission were refused permission to leave the base. These orders came from their national battalions, were applied to military personnel and were much stricter for women than for men.¹⁶⁶

Sidestreaming occurs also with the practice of keeping female soldiers in 'safe spaces'. This relegation of women to safe spaces can occur while out on patrol, preventing them from taking on specific roles because of male colleagues' perceptions that they are in need of protection.¹⁶⁷ Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell, in their research on female peacekeepers in Afghanistan, found male troops tried to prevent women soldiers from speaking to men in the villages they patrolled.¹⁶⁸ Heidi Hudson found that women are often directed into civilian-like tasks and that their involvement in military peacekeeping remains almost insignificant.¹⁶⁹ The need to have women on patrol in Afghanistan has meant women are often assigned to female engagement teams or similar tasks which relates to the fact they're women and not professionally trained soldiers.¹⁷⁰ This may be hard to avoid in environments where more traditional values about cultural norms persist.

Sexual exploitation and abuse is a further problem for female peacekeepers, and the extent of it within UN missions is presently unclear. Sexual violence within militaries has been attributed to what several authors term a 'warrior syndrome' that promotes hyper masculinity; but it is hard to know the actual number of victims.¹⁷¹ In the UNMIL mission, 17 per cent of women (at all levels of seniority) listed sexual harassment by their male colleagues as one of their five greatest impediments to completing their duties.¹⁷² The UN now acknowledges this problem, with point 7 of UNSCR 2538 expressing concern and call for strengthened efforts for the UN and member states to 'prevent and address and address sexual harassment within peacekeeping operations'.¹⁷³

Women's experiences of peacekeeping life

There remains a desperate shortage of literature on women's experiences of peacekeeping, and participation in military life. The available data tells us that social isolation and high levels of scrutiny are the biggest challenges, which are the inevitable result of being the minority in an

African Republic (MINUSCA); United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS); United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

¹⁶⁵Karame, 'Military women in peace operations'.

¹⁶⁶Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*. These restrictions tended to be stricter if the women came from a country where there was lower gender equality.

¹⁶⁷Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

¹⁶⁸Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell, 'Cosmopolitan militaries and dialogic peacekeeping'.

¹⁶⁹Heidi Hudson, 'Peacekeeping trends and their gender implications for regional peacekeeping forces in Africa: Progress and challenges', in Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts, and Jane Parpart (eds), *Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

¹⁷⁰Synne Laastad Dyvik, 'Women as "practitioners" and "targets"', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 16:3 (2014), pp. 410–29; Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*.

¹⁷¹Andrew R. Morral, Kristie L. Gore, and Terry L. Schell, *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the US Military: Volume 2* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015).

¹⁷²Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

¹⁷³United Nations Security Council Resolution 2538 (2020), 28 August 2020, point 7, p. 3.

organisation.¹⁷⁴ According to Karame, Norwegian female soldiers described their experience of peacekeeping in South Lebanon as difficult and lonely, particularly during free time when their recreational interests did not coincide with their male counterparts.¹⁷⁵ Coping mechanisms employed by the female soldiers included monthly women-only meetings comprised of female soldiers and officers to discuss the issues they faced. In the UNMIL mission in Liberia, Karim and Beardsley found that women suffered similar feelings of isolation. Some reported pressure to dress less femininely; others tried to become more masculine to break into the all-boy networks.¹⁷⁶

Interviews conducted with female military personnel in 2019 found that women felt scrutinised by their colleagues during peace operations making it harder to blend in.¹⁷⁷ Conversely, in her research on an all-female police contingent, Lesley J. Pruitt found that female peacekeepers did not experience those feelings and felt very comfortable with their femininity.¹⁷⁸ More research is needed on intersectionality in peacekeeping operations, or what Joan Acker terms 'inequality regimes'¹⁷⁹ and the effect this has on female military personnel's ability to perform their tasks. In peacekeeping this pertains as much to patrolling and enforcement as it does integration and mainstreaming.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the practice of what we term sidestreaming in national militaries. We define sidestreaming as the practice, deliberate or unintentional, of sidelining women and relegating them to specialised spaces in international peace and security while attempting gender mainstreaming or increased gender integration. This practice effects the following results: (1) the sidelining of women in the military, which in turn negatively impacts retention, promotion, and recruitment; (2) the limited use of women in peace operations, or relegation to specialised spaces to the detriment of women's career development within the military; and (3) mainstreaming in its fullest sense as originally defined by the Windhoek Declaration and subsequent resolutions has yet to occur.¹⁸⁰ While access to all areas in the military has been opened up by many states, meaningful participation across all roles has not increased to the extent mainstreaming can be said to have occurred. In national militaries this means we still see women functioning in low-status positions and lingering in the lower ranks. In other words it could be said that women are continuing to perform hidden labour even within national institutions. Successful mainstreaming in the military context requires greater *recognition* of women's contributions and an equal opportunity mindset that doesn't automatically glorify combat. In peacekeeping, we find women are instrumentalised by national militaries, retained in specialised spaces in the field and used as an 'organizational resource'.¹⁸¹ We need to ensure that women are not solely being deployed in specialised spaces and furthermore that spaces occupied by women do not become feminised spaces that exacerbate gender divisions in the field and in military service. Despite demonstrating

¹⁷⁴A substantial new report has now just been published on this very topic. See Lotte Vermeij, 'Woman First, Soldier Second: Taboos and Stigmas Facing Military Women in UN Peace Operations', International Peace Institute (October 2020). Also see Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books 1977 [orig. pub. 1993]); Helen Carreiras, 'Gendered organizational dynamics in military contexts', in Duncanson and Woodward (eds), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, pp. 105–20.

¹⁷⁵Karame, 'Military women in peace operations'; Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

¹⁷⁶Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*. This was also confirmed to one of the authors in interviews with female peacekeepers.

¹⁷⁷From interviews in 2019 conducted by one of the authors with female military officers for research on female peacekeepers, unpublished.

¹⁷⁸Pruitt, *The Women in Blue Helmets*.

¹⁷⁹Joan Acker, 'Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organisations', *Gender and Society*, 20:4 (2006), pp. 441–64.

¹⁸⁰Resolution 2242 and 2538 in particular, but all ten WPS resolutions discuss mainstreaming in some capacity.

¹⁸¹Kronsell, *Gender Sex and the Postnational Defense*, p. 44.

a rhetorical commitment to promoting 1325 UN peacekeeping has not been mainstreamed as envisioned by the Windhoek Declaration.

Currently the Canadian Government's ELSIE initiative¹⁸² is conducting large-scale research on women in national police and militaries to assess the impact of recruitment, retention and promotion on women in peacekeeping.¹⁸³ This project and our research indicates that many national militaries recognise that greater integration of women into the armed forces is necessary. As stated in the introduction, we do agree that researching women's experiences of the military is important and necessary. But we also see that the problem-solving approach to female integration taken by militaries, and indeed research on how to do this, is not tackling the larger question of how to alter the military mind-set. We offer two thoughts on this: (1) that gender mainstreaming is not going to be possible without some reform of the military itself using an approach that prioritises human security;¹⁸⁴ and (2) that future research on this topic will need to include men.

In regard to the first point: As states and militaries increasingly need to conceptualise security differently to deal with multiple non-traditional threats,¹⁸⁵ this article supports a vision of post-national cosmopolitan militaries that recognise the value of civilian tasks and the need to decouple violence, military practices, and combat skills from masculinity.¹⁸⁶ In this vision, civilian tasks and functions become more important and ethics of care and cooperation are highly valued.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, while Enloe has acknowledged the contribution of non-military staff to the functioning of national militaries,¹⁸⁸ we argue here that the contribution of female military personnel also requires a status upgrade within militaries. This should help to alleviate the problem of sidestreaming whereby certain issue areas are gendered and undervalued as a result.

The path to reaching this goal is beyond the scope of this paper and requires more systematic research. But on our second point, we contend that to achieve all this, the focus of research cannot only be women. How men fit into this scenario is essential to research and understand in particular how they respond to the hyper-masculine norms perpetuated by the military. As Caroline Criado Perez notes, if we continue to treat women as niche (or minority or subcategory) and men as the default option, gender equality will not result. As such, conducting research on women only in the military context will also serve to perpetuate the gender issues = women's issues mentality that has a real danger of being ignored by those who need to pay the most attention to it.¹⁸⁹

Aside from the issue of how to integrate women more comprehensively into national militaries and peacekeeping, there remains a lack of systematic research on how women experience war and peace as combatants.¹⁹⁰ How do women manage security threats? What strategies and tactics do they draw on during combat? What do they prioritise when securing an area? What do they

¹⁸²This research is being conducted in conjunction with Cornell University and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

¹⁸³The measure developed to assess this is termed 'Barrier Assessment Method'. At the time of writing this methodology has not been released to the general public. As such, it is unclear how emancipatory or committed it is to altering the military as opposed to finding ways to fit women into the existing structure and culture.

¹⁸⁴As suggested by Jacqui True, 'Mainstreaming gender in international institutions', in Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 227–39.

¹⁸⁵Vanessa F. Newby, 'ANZUS cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster response in the Asia-Pacific: Ships in the night?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 74:1 (2020), pp. 72–88.

¹⁸⁶Lorraine Elliott and Graeme Cheeseman (eds), *Forces for Good? Cosmopolitan Militaries in the Twenty-First Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

¹⁸⁷Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*, p. 147.

¹⁸⁸Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (2nd edn, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

¹⁸⁹Caroline Criado Perez, *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019).

¹⁹⁰Cynthia Enloe, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell, 'Cosmopolitan militaries and dialogic peacekeeping'.

prioritise in their contribution to military service, war and peace? Knowledge of all this has implications for future peace operations, in particular the provision of gender sensitive security sector reform (SSR) and demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programs in postconflict states. Understanding how women confront and deal with violence and conflict as agents in security institutions, will be a significant contribution to both academic researchers and policy-makers interested in gender mainstreaming in security institutions and institutional reform.¹⁹¹

Finally we offer some interim policy recommendations. Until now, gender has been dealt with by national militaries from an essentialist perspective. For national militaries to evolve, gender would need to be viewed through a constructivist lens, which as Laura Shepherd notes even ‘at the thin end of the constructivist spectrum’, views gender in part as a learned social behaviour.¹⁹² Viewing gender from this perspective would enable armed forces to recognise that so-called feminine and masculine behaviours can be trained. In turn this might lead to a more gender-balanced military environment.¹⁹³ For meaningful participation to occur, we also suggest reducing or removing the need for lengthy combat experience to reach senior positions. Militaries need to find ways to reduce masculine hierarchies increasing the value of women’s contributions in a way that normalises their presence at all levels and in all roles.

Acknowledgements. We would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback on this article. In addition we thank the Leiden University Chair of United Nations Studies in Peace and Justice for the opportunity to present the first version of this article at a workshop entitled ‘Where Are the Women?’ hosted at Leiden University in December 2019.

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¹⁹¹ A good example of new work that examines women in security institutions is Joana Cook, *A Woman’s Place: US Counter-Terrorism Since 9/11* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁹² Shepherd, *Critical Approaches to Security*, p. 14.

¹⁹³ We are not against a more radical perception of gender from the poststructuralist perception that conceives of gender and socially produced but this also raises questions about gender quotas and transsexual populations which is beyond the scope of this article.