Chapter 4
A Kotter Approach for Geographic Combatant Commands
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The prevention of conflict, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of peace and security worldwide cannot be achieved without the full and equal participation of women.

~Ambassador, Melanne Verveer

Taking steps to address gender inequality, the UN Security Council in October 2000 passed a resolution calling on nations to mainstream gender perspectives—how persons are treated according to their gender—within global peace and security operations. In response, the United States mandated that its key agencies incorporate gender perspectives. These included DOD and its geographic combatant commands (GCCs), which are arguably DOD’s face to the world. For various historical and social reasons, GCCs do not yet reflect the United States’s current gender composition. Instead, they are heavily male, despite an enduring value of equality. To close any real or perceived say-do gap between U.S. domestic equality rhetoric and the gender equality it encourages abroad, GCCs should—and now must—model gender perspective principles. This chapter employs John Kotter’s Leading Change framework to suggest approaches for incorporating a gender perspective at the GCC level and to analyze how GCCs might apply elements of Kotter’s theory to incorporate gender perspective into their organizational cultures.

Background
UNSCR 1325 identified an urgent need to mainstream gender perspectives into global peace and security operations. Gender perspective is broadly defined as the treatment of a man or woman in society and how that treatment sculpts a person’s intrinsic needs, which include their interests, financial means, and security.

In 2011, to support gender perspective in the United States, President Barack H. Obama signed Executive Order 13,595, mandating the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. This order noted that “promoting wom-

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* The views expressed in this chapter are solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Marine Corps University, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army, U.S. Army War College, the U.S. Air Force, or the U.S. government.


182Doug K. Serota, email message to author, 26 February 2021.

183 UNSCR 1325.

184 JKO WPS training courses.
women’s participation in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as in post-conflict relief and recovery, advances peace, national security, economic and social development, and international cooperation.”


In 2017, Congress further mandated that key departments and agencies such as the DOD implement strategies for improving women’s meaningful participation in peace and security processes. In June 2019, in addition to the 2017 Act and Congress’s mandate, the U.S. government published the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security. Finally, in response to the above governmental mandates, DOD then published its own WPS SFIP in June 2020. DOD’s plan committed it to “support the intent of the . . . [Act] through attention to the composition of its personnel and the development of its policies, plans, doctrine, training, education, operations, and exercises.”

Authorization and funding for changes came with the passage of H.R. 6395, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of January 2021. The NDAA mandated broadly that the secretary of defense lead the DOD to implement three objectives, with an end date of 30 September 2025.

First, it must implement the 2020 SFIP. Second, it must establish policies and programs which support the SFIP’s objectives. Third, it must ensure that sufficient personnel are trained to advance the SFIP’s objectives.

Broadly speaking, these mandates mean three things, as stated in the earlier government guidance cited above. First, that DOD will allow for women’s “meaningful participation across . . . the Joint Force”; second, that the DOD will support the meaningful participation of women in partner nations in defense and security sectors; and third, that partner nations’ defense and security sectors would protect females’ safety, security, and human rights.

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The first of these mandates pertains to the Joint Force and is therefore internal. It will affect the DOD’s GCCs, that is, its boots-on-the-ground forces, which are overwhelmingly male-gendered (though slightly more than half the U.S. population is female). 194

More than most forces, GCCs project, and therefore reflect, not only the U.S. military’s unbalanced gender composition but also its gender perspective—through daily action abroad, before an external audience. What the GCCs’ global observers see are U.S. forces led and managed by males, even as America censures some nations for gender inequality in their institutions. 195 To avoid a real or perceived “say-do” gap, U.S. GCCs should model gender perspective principles.

Assumptions
Recent U.S. government mandates and plans to leverage WPS principles imply these are not yet institutionalized across its departments and agencies. This research project assumes GCCs have therefore not fully incorporated gender perspective. 196 It further assumes that doing so will involve organizational culture changes. These may involve intrinsic needs, such as personal interests and security, but not financial security, as gender does not affect U.S. military members’ salaries. Gender-related promotion potential affecting earnings within a GCC context lies outside the scope of this research. How different missions may affect different GCCs’ cultures and gender mixes may be a topic for further research; however, for the purposes of this chapter, the authors assume only that some or all U.S. GCCs have not yet fully implemented gender perspective.

Other assumptions relate to problems GCCs may face as they incorporate gender perspective. First, DOD’s five-year implementation timeline may be too aggressive. 197 This assumption rests on the example of GCCs’ implementation of the multidomain operations concept, launched in April 2015. 198 As of 2021, the multidomain operations concept is still a work in progress, six years on. One may assume that implementing gender perspective as another high-priority form of integration may take no less time.

To incorporate a gender perspective in a given GCC, a second assumption will be that DOD implementation orders and an NDAA authorization for the SFIP implementation alone cannot lead to change. Rather, the authors assume change is possible only with leadership by executive agents at the operational echelon. However, none has thus far been assigned to oversee GCC-level gender perspective implementation. This leads to a third assumption, that a lack of specificity in the SFIP as to who should lead

such efforts at the GCC level will mean that GCC commanders will become their organizations’ executive agents, advised by combatant command-level gender advisors.

DOD Directive 5101.1 defines a DOD executive agent as: “The head of a DoD Component to whom the Secretary of Defense or Deputy Secretary of Defense has assigned specific responsibilities, functions, and authorities to provide defined levels of support for operational missions, or administrative or other designated activities that involve two or more of the DoD Components.” Without joint-level executive agents, the third challenge in GCCs’ gender perspective implementation may be a lack of direction and focus.

Finally, to succeed at incorporating gender perspective, this research assumes that it is best to follow an orderly change process, such as Kotter’s eight-step framework.

Discussion
The WPS SFIP outlines three defense objectives, but only the first is within the scope of this research. Objective 1 is that the DOD should exemplify a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force. According to Ambassador Melanne Verveer, executive director for the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, in her foreword to Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military: An International Comparison, “The promise and potential of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 remains unfulfilled in the field of military operations, which remains a largely male-dominated arena that continues to be held back—in both effectiveness and equal opportunity—by cultural, bureaucratic, and resource barriers.”

If DOD is going to implement a gender perspective per the SFIP, it must first look inward. This does not mean forgetting allied, partnered, or adversarial states in a given area of responsibility. Instead, it means improving internal U.S. institutions and organizations first, such as GCCs, to then be able to support external entities more effectively while modeling gender perspective principles abroad. Looking inwardly for DOD translates to GCCs’ examining whether and how they can implement the SFIP’s gender perspective guidance. Research indicates the benefits may outweigh the costs.

Robert Egnell and Mayesha Alam offer, in their book Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military: An International Comparison, that adding gender perspective can transform the traditional military paradigm by looking at all aspects of

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201 Verveer, foreword to Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military, vii.
a conflict through varied gender perspectives. To males and females may sometimes look at situations differently, which can expand the aperture of insight, which can therefore improve the overall understanding of a mission, for example.

To implement the WPS SFIP and exploit the advantages that different gender perspectives can offer, this research recommends GCCs follow the eight-step framework for organizational culture change found in John Kotter’s book Leading Change. It further describes eight errors leaders must avoid in the process. This chapter uses Kotter’s steps to guide tailored, embedded suggestions that GCC leaders might follow to incorporate gender perspective within their organizations. It also discusses errors Kotter recommends such leaders avoid.

Kotter defines culture as the “norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people.” Because this research assumes change was ordered to address a lack of gender perspective throughout the DOD, GCC leaders must therefore oversee efforts to incorporate it. Here, it should be noted that Kotter distinguishes between leading and managing change as different processes, and that “management is a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly.” He notes that its most important elements “include planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem solving.” He defines leadership, however, as “a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances.” Additionally, “leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles.”

Understanding the differences between management and leadership is critical, according to Kotter. He asserts that change can be attributed to leadership in 70 to 90 percent of the time and to management only 10 to 30 percent of the time. Therefore, it is important to keep the differences between leadership and management in mind when implementing an organizational culture change toward gender perspective inside the GCCs. Change still requires management, but more importantly, it must start with leadership at all levels to support gender perspective and the benefits it provides the force in a complex environment.

Applying Kotter’s eight-stage process for leading successful change, the eight steps are:

1. establishing a sense of urgency
2. creating the guiding coalition
3. developing a vision and strategy
4. communicating the change vision

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206 Kotter, Leading Change, 28.
207 Kotter, Leading Change, 28.
208 Kotter, Leading Change, 28.
His theory asserts that to successfully incorporate an organizational culture change, such as a gender perspective, requires moving sequentially through all eight steps. He notes that missing a step almost always creates problems. Each step is addressed below, as it applies in GCCs.

**Step 1: Establish a Sense of Urgency**

According to Kotter, the first stage for leading an organizational culture change is establishing a sense of urgency. DOD has already established one for incorporating gender perspective by publishing its WPS SFIP. A powerful affirmation of and aid to dialogue is incorporating the cause—in this case, gender perspective—into doctrine, as DOD has done with the SFIP. Such documentation communicates validity for gender perspective’s importance to GCCs’ servicemen and women alike. As Kotter notes, changing doctrine is not a quick solution but an early, essential step toward change. However, just putting the words gender perspective onto paper is not enough; leaders must communicate its intent.

In the GCC context, leaders at all levels must explain why gender perspective is essential and how team members can support the mission to incorporate it. The new mandate should trigger dialogue first among senior leaders, not only at the enterprise level but also at the GCC level, about how to resource any changes. U.S. Army War College research professor Dr. Leonard Wong’s research states that one must establish events or programs dedicated to an issue to get people talking about that topic. A conference or other discussion forum or working group could involve defining WPS goals and how best to incorporate them into the force.

However, according to Kotter, an early error in leading a change such as gender perspective’s incorporation would be for leaders to allow too much complacency within the organization’s status quo or to not establish a sense of urgency that change is needed before deciding to implement the new concept. In other words, simply educating people that gender perspective is essential will not bring change. Leaders
must be intentional about incorporating it throughout their subordinate teams and must empower others to help lead a change with what Kotter calls a “guiding coalition.”

**Step 2: Create a Guiding Coalition**

Once a sense of urgency is established, Kotter recommends creating a guiding coalition. Similar to how an executive agent is needed at the enterprise level, a coalition at the GCC level is also a key aspect of carrying out a culture change. Wong postulates that to change an organization’s culture, one must first establish why such change deserves everyone’s attention and respect in the organization.

A possible attention-getting tool could be a written gender perspective primer, developed for and distributed to organizational leaders to educate them about gender perspective and how to communicate the concept to their organizations. Such a document would highlight the challenges and benefits of incorporating a gender perspective. For example, a primer or other materials could note that a gender perspective’s benefits are consistent with lines of effort in the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS), which aspires for DOD to strengthen alliances and attract new partners (that is, modeling gender perspective may enhance DOD’s soft power with certain allies and partners, particularly in Europe, who enforce gender equality) and to reform the department for greater performance. According to Ambassador Verveer’s foreword in Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military, “the prevention of conflict, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of peace and security worldwide cannot be achieved without the full and equal participation of women.”

The WPS SFIP is also consistent with the NDS’s lines of effort, which articulate the benefits of a more diverse fighting force, an improved commitment to human rights and women’s empowerment, and effective strategies to abate risks. To demonstrate the relatively low numbers of women in GCCs, leaders may have to focus their organizations’ attention on evidence. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, females comprise 50.8 percent of the U.S. population. However, the proportion of women volunteering for service in the U.S. military hovers at around 18.8 percent. Thus, female percentages within the DOD do not yet reflect American society. Within GCCs, the average percentage of women is even smaller: only 12

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219 Wong, “Changing the Army’s Culture of Cultural Change.”
221 Verveer, foreword to *Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military*, vii.
223 Serota email message.
224 “Quick Facts, United States,” U.S. Census Bureau.
percent.\textsuperscript{226} Therefore, getting GCC leaders to attend to or respect the need for a change toward a greater gender perspective within their organizations could prove challenging, particularly among many other competing initiatives and priorities.

To meet such a challenge, a change coalition must have the proven leadership and experience to drive reform.\textsuperscript{227} Putting together such a coalition of people to champion a change effort begins with leaders who know which characteristics to look for in any coalition they form to enhance the prospect of achieving the desired outcomes. To create a coalition that supports the sought-after gender perspective inclusion within a GCC, the proponent must not simply rely on senior individuals to help champion change but must also employ those whom Kotter says have “a commitment to improved performance” and who can act as avid proponents.\textsuperscript{228} Kotter identifies four key characteristics that the right affiliates should have: position power, expertise, credibility, and leadership.\textsuperscript{229} A description of each follows.

- **Position power.** This refers to the stature of coalition members. Ideal coalition members will not only welcome a gender perspective but will also have enough power or influence within the GCC to impede cynics from blocking progress.\textsuperscript{230}

- **Expertise.** Coalition members should have knowledge or experience germane to the change effort.\textsuperscript{231} Gender advisors may offer initial expertise; however, commanders, staff officers, and senior enlisted members can all train for the requisite knowledge to lead change.

- **Credibility.** Research shows that successful coalition members should have positive reputations within their organizations to gain trust, respect, and others’ buy-in for a new idea, which encourages subordinates or other colleagues to take them seriously.\textsuperscript{232}

- **Leadership.** GCC commanders’ primary staffs could be ideal initial coalition members, followed by others who are qualified to advocate for gender perspective at their levels. Having both empathy and emotional intelligence could enhance all guiding coalition members’ ability to gain others’ trust and respect. According to Dr. Jean Decety of the University of Chicago, “Empathy consists of both affective and cognitive components and . . . the capacity to adopt the perspective of the other [as] a

\textsuperscript{226} Serota, email message.
\textsuperscript{227} Kotter, *Leading Change*, 57.
\textsuperscript{228} Kotter, *Leading Change*, 6.
\textsuperscript{230} Kotter, *Leading Change*, 6, 59.
\textsuperscript{231} Kotter, *Leading Change*, 6, 59.
\textsuperscript{232} Kotter, *Leading Change*, 6, 59.
University of New Hampshire professor John D. Mayer and Yale University professor Peter Salovey add that “emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions.”

Kotter’s caution for this step involves failing to create a sufficiently powerful, qualified guiding coalition. Some coalitions take decades to get established for action. For example, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom has worked toward improving women’s rights for almost 100 years. However, in 2000 it finally established the PeaceWomen Programme to guarantee that women’s rights and participation are acknowledged internationally.

Step 3: Developing a Vision and a Strategy
Kotter notes that “vision plays a key role in producing useful change by helping to direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people.” It describes what an organization aspires to be, which helps drive change. The 2021 NDAA states that DOD must implement the WPS SFIP by 30 September 2025. According to Kotter, having a vision statement should aid in meeting that established timeline. Additionally, a vision statement can promote change by providing direction and focus on a common goal, which then lends itself to strategy development. Not having a vision or a strategy are reasons why change efforts can fail.

The Army Vision, Army leadership’s concept for the Army of 2028, is a two-page document that states the Army must have a “clear and coherent vision” to accomplish its mission. This is no less applicable for incorporating a gender perspective into a GCC environment. A vision statement on what success will look like for a GCC is required before any strategy to achieve change can begin.

A possible error within this step is “underestimating the power of vision,” according to Kotter. An organization can build a strong coalition for change; however, a

233 Kotter, Leading Change, 6, 59; and Jean Decety, “Perspective Taking as the Royal Avenue to Empathy,” in Other Minds: How Humans Bridge the Divide Between Self and Others, ed. Bertram F. Malle and Sara D. Hodges (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 143–45.
236 Kotter, Leading Change, 7–8.
poorly written or insufficient vision can lead the coalition in the wrong direction. As Kotter notes, without a vision, a change effort can be overcome by incoherent or even unrelated tasks that do not lead to the desired outcome. In other words, without a vision, gender perspective is a verbal ambition that perhaps no one will implement.

**Step 4: Communicating the Change Vision**

Once goals and a vision are established, Kotter recommends “communicating the change vision.” He notes there are seven effective elements to communicating a vision effectively: 1) simplicity, 2) analogy, 3) multiple forums, 4) repetition, 5) leading by example, 6) explaining inconsistencies, and 7) establishing two-way communication. A discussion of each element’s application in a GCC follows.

To start, a simple vision must be clear enough for every hearer or reader to understand it. One such clear example is a statement by the NATO secretary general’s special representative for WPS, Clare Hutchinson, that NATO’s “vision of security must be anchored to the inclusion of women, the adoption of a gender perspective in all activities, and in upholding the highest standards of behavior.”

The second element is providing an analogy that paints a picture for listeners, viewers, or readers. For example, a leader might describe a failure to employ women as force multipliers downrange as a choice to “row a boat with only one oar and go in circles” rather than to make progress. Memorable metaphors and other analogies spring to mind when heard or seen often as reminders of the need to use all resources available, just as in the Second World War, when images of Rosie the Riveter flexing her muscles communicated women’s capabilities to keep U.S. industry humming.

The third element is using multiple forums to get out the word (that is, the vision statement) to the GCCs’ members. For example, top-level meetings, recreational events, or even unit formations can give leaders and others a platform to model some aspect of gender perspective. For example, an article in *Military Times* described an example of gender perspective exhibited by a male soldier toward Captain Kristen Griest, one of the Army’s first female infantry officers and one of the first women to complete Army Ranger School, before women were accepted into the infantry. Once policy changed to allow her to command a company within the 505th Infantry Regiment, 3d Brigade Combat Team, she expected resistance to her arrival. However, a

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former Captain’s Course colleague of hers greeted her enthusiastically and respectfully in front of their formation instead. He looked past her gender and welcomed her as a member of one team.

The fourth element is repetition for retention to keep standards as readily in mind as, for example, the five-paragraph operations order outline, which all officers memorize.248 Likewise, a vision statement must be repeated until ingrained. Kotter warns that “undercommunicating the vision” happens “by a factor of 10 (or 100 or even 1,000),” which can hinder stakeholders’ momentum for change.249 People will follow the vision of a leader they believe in if that leader convincingly communicates the benefits of a change early and often in various ways. Nevertheless, regardless of how unhappy servicemembers may be, they will not sacrifice the comfort of the known unless they accept the change being communicated.250 Therefore, consistent communication about gender perspective’s benefits will be a critical component in gaining support for it.

Conversely, Kotter notes three patterns of ineffective communication that leaders encourage when servicemembers are comfortable with present circumstances. The first pattern is when leaders state a strong vision but do not sell it to their subordinates.251 In effect, such leaders abandon communicating the vision’s importance and are later surprised at not getting results. To avoid this error with gender perspective and to spark real change, GCC leaders should develop “marketing plans” for disseminating their vision on gender perspective in their mission set. Army Regulation 601-208 states that a marketing plan “identifies relevant prospect and influencer audiences, directing the appropriate brand communication to that audience within the appropriate media at the appropriate time.”252

A second pattern of ineffective communication is when leaders are the only figures articulating the vision while subordinates remain indifferent.253 Leaders need proponents throughout their GCCs who support and amplify the vision. A third ineffective communication pattern to avoid is permitting leaders to communicate nonsupport for an enacted initiative.254 For example, having an influential person stand in the back of the room with arms crossed or making negative comments during a town hall, for example, can derail what ordinarily might have been an opportunity for neutral or positive dialogue. Change leaders must identify such negative stakeholders early on to stymie their effects.

The fifth element for collectively communicating a vision is to lead by example as

249 Kotter, Leading Change, 9.
251 Kotter, Leading Change, 9–10.
253 Kotter, Leading Change, 9.
254 Kotter, Leading Change, 9.
a consistent proponent of the vision. This amounts to the leadership maxim “never ask someone to do something that you yourself are not willing to do.” Being a consistent proponent means always moving in the direction of the vision by advocating for gender perspective and how it can improve one’s organization for the better.

The sixth element is explaining inconsistencies that may undermine the credibility of communication. For example, the U.S. Army is very consistent in its communication of Army values, which include respect, honor, and integrity; however, 3,219 reports of sexual assaults allegedly committed by soldiers were filed by fellow servicemembers in 2019 alone. Despite espousing Army values with consistency, such assaults undermine Army values’ credibility.

Finally, two-way communication must be established between coalition members and the soldiers they hope to influence. GCC leaders must address both positive and negative feedback about changing to a gender perspective. Such communication must allow the lowest member of the organization ownership and a voice, and must allow ideas to emanate from any level.

**Step 5: Empowering a Broad Base of People to Take Action**

Kotter’s fifth step is to empower a variety of team members for action. The best way to do this is to discover and remove barriers to change. For example, in the article about Captain Griest cited earlier, an assumption may be that other male soldiers wanted to welcome her but may have feared how their comrades might react. If just one respected person takes the initiative to model a behavior, as her former classmate did, such behavior can empower others to follow suit.

Kotter offers the following options for doing so once the leadership communicates “a sensible vision.” First, all structures that are set up to further the vision must be compatible with it. Second, soldiers must have access to, and time granted for, any training they may need. Third, information and personnel systems must align with the vision. Finally, leaders and their coalition members must confront supervisors who undercut needed changes. All the options above can guide GCC leaders in implementing gender perspective within their organizations.

“Permitting obstacles to block the new vision” is an error Kotter warns of, asserting that “new initiatives fail far too often when employees, even though they embrace

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a new vision, feel disempowered by huge obstacles in their paths.” Such obstacles do not necessarily need to be real. As shown in the formation example above, Griest’s expectation of how she would be received was a perception, not a reality. Kotter states that sometimes the obstacle may only be conceptual. The challenge is in convincing people that no external barriers exist, as Griest’s colleague did with his simple, respectful action.261

Asking soldiers for their input is another simple way to not only identify real or perceived barriers but also to garner stakeholder support for gender perspective-related change or to do what Kotter calls “empowering people to effect change.”262 For example, the Army’s 18th Airborne Corps attempted to eliminate sexual assault in its ranks by asking soldiers to submit ideas on how to succeed. Seven of the ideas selected from 41 total submissions are now being implemented.263

To get such buy-in and feedback, GCC leaders can schedule town hall meetings with their organizations’ members at all levels to explain the benefits and the importance of gender perspective to their operations. For example, during Lieutenant General Darryl A. Williams’s first town hall meeting as the superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he stated that everyone at the school should “treat each other with dignity and respect” and that “at the end of the day, it is about treating people the way you want to be treated.”264 Moreover, MIT lecturer Douglas A. Ready posits that leaders commit to both a communication and a listening campaign so that everyone is aware and understands how to contribute to the organizational mission.265

Beyond these tools, research shows that leaders can exploit approaches to change by showcasing examples of how gender perspective improved other organizations’ outcomes. For example, Swedish Armed Forces deploying to Afghanistan designated selected personnel as gender focal points (GFPs) within each platoon or staff section prior to arrival. GFP duties included dealing with gender issues in operations. These individuals were instrumental to gender advisors by providing reports that helped with developing gender-issue training. This ultimately improved the Swedish Armed Forces’ mission success.266 GCC commanders could emulate GFP methods to incorporate gender perspective-related initiatives into U.S. operations.

Gender perspective exemplars need not be women. Research shows that gender

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261 Kotter, Leading Change, 10.
262 Kotter, Leading Change, 115–19.
263 Caitlin M. Kenney, “Seven Soldiers to Present Their Ideas on Improving the Army’s Program Targeting Sexual Assault,” Stars and Stripes, 18 February 2021.
266 Robert Egnell, “Sweden’s Implementation of a Gender Perspective: Cutting Edge but Momentum Lost,” in Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military, 49.
perspective-informed and supportive men can be just as effective at incorporating changes that lead to a gender perspective-infused organizational culture as women with similar skills. Lieutenant Colonel Scott Stephens, for example, became a leading voice opposing sexual harassment and assault. He and other soldiers wrote *Athena Thriving*, an educational resource for leaders to better understand the gender-based issues women in the Army face. GCC commanders can encourage or designate such motivated team members to champion gender perspective within the organization to help educate others via train-the-trainer instruction.

**Step 6: Generating Short-term Wins**

Step 6 in Kotter’s process for leading successful change is “generating short-term wins.” Assigning professional, fulltime gender advisors and WPS analysts to GCCs is a short-term win. Such experts can focus not only on implementation but also on educating leaders and soldiers on why gender perspective is important and where opportunities for its implementation exist.

Ignoring short-term wins is a mistake, according to Kotter. If the intended solution to a problem will take a considerable amount of time, leaders must score incremental initiatives quickly to support longer-term goals. When change fails, Kotter posits no systematic effort to guarantee unambiguous wins occurred within the first 6 to 18 months of attempted implementation. Leaders cannot expect to see positive results in the long-term if they do not first show them in the short-term.

**Step 7: Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change**

In Kotter’s seventh step, “consolidating gains and producing even more change,” the established gender perspective coalition would build on its credibility from earlier stages to encourage others within the GCC to join their effort. At this point in the process, change should begin to take shape as more servicemembers see a gender perspective’s benefits to the organization.

However, “declaring victory too soon” is a mistake, notes Kotter. Leaders must accept that real culture change can and does take a long time. He warns that new approaches are delicate and are easily undone, unless or until they get rooted in the organizational culture. Day-to-day requirements for GCCs are vast and can potentially overshadow any drive for change that may take years to achieve. Leaders must therefore focus on long-term, lasting change.

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268 Haley Britzky, “This Army Lieutenant Colonel Has Built a Playbook to Kill the ‘Cancer’ of Sexual Assault in the Ranks,” *Task & Purpose*, 1 March 2021.
Step 8: Institutionalizing New Approaches in the Culture

Kotter describes his final step as “anchoring new approaches in the culture.” This may be the most difficult one of all. In his book Who Says Elephants Can’t Dance? Inside IBM’s Historic Turnaround, Louis V. Gerstner Jr. observed that “changing the . . . behavior of . . . thousands of people is very . . . hard. . . . Business schools don’t teach you how to do it, and you can’t mandate . . . or engineer it.” Changes to norms and values often come at the end of a change process.

Final errors happen when organizations desert change before it gets ingrained. To avoid this, GCC leaders must show their forces how a shift in culture improved their organization, rather than expecting soldiers to discern this alone. Leaders need to articulate a gender perspective’s positive outcomes and recognize helpful behaviors and attitudes that show that the organization embodied positive change. As GCC commanders depart, it is also critical that outgoing leaders inform incoming ones of the hard-won changes their team implemented.

John Kotter’s Leading Change model can offer GCCs a structured and disciplined framework for incorporating a gender perspective into their organizations’ cultures. As in all large organizations with longstanding traditional methods of operating, change is challenging and therefore requires a disciplined approach, such as that offered by Kotter’s eight-step change process. Before their organizational cultures can change permanently to ones that incorporate gender perspective, GCCs need to establish or use a clear vision and strategy, create an internal coalition, use clear and persistent communication, empower subordinate agents for change, and achieve visible short-term wins and gains. In the GCC context, as in others, errors along the path to change must also be avoided, such as poor leadership, unclear objectives, inconsistent communications, or a lack of will or progress.

U.S. GCC leaders and their teams are among the best the DOD can offer and are capable of meeting worldwide challenges. Incorporating the organizational culture change that gender perspective requires is an internal challenge that GCCs are well prepared to overcome. Doing so is not only mandated, but it is also welcome as an opportunity to operate better from a diversity standpoint and to close a longstanding “say-do” gap between U.S. rhetoric about gender equality and how America’s most visible global military ambassadors actually look and operate abroad.

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274 Kotter, Leading Change, 131.