Women, Peace, and Security in Professional Military Education

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The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is a global framework and policy tool that guides national actions addressing gender inequalities and the drivers and impact of conflict on women and girls. The principles enshrined in the WPS agenda call for the prevention of conflict and for all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations; for meaningful participation of women in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels; for the protection of women and girls from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and protection of their rights in conflict situations; and for ensuring the participation of women and meeting their specific needs in relief and recovery situations. Moreover, the WPS agenda seems to be emerging as a mechanism in the pursuit of inclusive policies and in addressing drivers of conflict and insecurity, for example, masculinity as a socially constructed norm associated with power, control, and violence. The importance of these lines of effort in fostering structural and institutional change cannot be understated.

Integrating these WPS principles across the defense enterprise is aimed at ensuring human security for all while improving operational effectiveness. How the implementation of WPS principles across the Joint Force will, in time, influence our paradigm of peace and security and our approaches to conflict prevention and resolution depends on the groundswell of strategic leaders promoting change and their education and training. This monograph shows how the strategic leaders of tomorrow embrace the WPS agenda today.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff report Developing Today’s Joint Officers for Tomorrow’s Ways of War calls for knowledge and skills of warfighting Joint leaders, senior staff officers, and strategists who can “discern the military dimensions of a challenge affecting national interest, frame the issue at the policy level, and recommend viable military options within the overarching frameworks of globally integrated operations.”

The critical thinking and depth of knowledge of students on the intersectional and holistic nature of WPS issues in the current operational environment were evident in all papers submitted to the WPS writing competition coordinated by the Joint WPS Academic Forum. Papers were submitted by students at U.S. Air Force Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, National Defense University, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Army War College, and Marine Corps University; they were judged by select members of the Joint WPS Academic Forum. The topics addressed ranged from country case studies; analysis and recommendations to improve the integration of WPS into the PME/Joint PME curriculum and predeployment training across Services toward more effective decisionmaking, strategy development, and mission execution, based on lessons learned during deployment; equality and equity in the military as related to personnel readiness, physical fitness, and integration of women in combat arms occupations; the need for a culture of change based on John

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Kotter’s Leading Change model and the role of leadership in combatting sexual and gender-based violence in the military; and discussion of perceived doctrinal gaps such as a putative gender in Army operations doctrinal publication and guidance. The award went to the paper by Major Sarah Salvo, of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, “The Effect of Hegemonic Masculinities on the Endemic of Sexual Misconduct in the U.S. Army,” which provides critical and nuanced insights on the aspects of organizational culture that undermine trust and contribute to sexual abuses.

With reference to the PME outcome envisioned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, all students demonstrated critical and creative thinking skills and effective communication skills to operationalize WPS and support the development and implementation of WPS strategies and complex operations. Continuing to leverage and integrate WPS in the PME/Joint PME curricula and the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) spectrum has the potential to significantly strengthen the human capital and the elements of national power in great power competition, crisis, and conflict in order to achieve the objectives of national security.

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