Women, Peace, and Security in Professional Military Education

Published by Marine Corps University Press

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PART 4

Professional Military Education
The Strategic Centrality of Women, Peace, and Security
A Call to Mainstream in Professional Military Education
by Lieutenant Colonel Casey M. Grider, USAF*

Codified in October 2000, UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) has since become the banner beneath which marginalization of women and girls and gender-based harm, especially in international conflict, face indictment from a growing global community demanding equal participation, protection, and relief for this long-persecuted half of its population. As we approach the 20-year anniversary of this historic declaration, the United States sits atop a mountain of policy, legislation, strategy, and plans. Like its namesakes, however, aspects of U.S. WPS activity have been marginalized and seldom see the same level of programmatic urgency as other, more traditional, central elements of national security and defense strategy.

Culturally institutionalized rights for women, meaningful participation in domestic and world affairs, and protection during and after armed conflict are foundational to achieving international peace and security. The United States must begin to demonstrably pursue its whole WPS strategy through deliberate implementation. The U.S. Air Force Air War College (AWC) is uniquely positioned to be a DOD pathfinder and must lead by migrating WPS philosophy from elective status into core AWC curricula on leadership, strategy, security, and warfighting. This chapter discusses the centrality of WPS to the successful pursuit of global security and surveys U.S. guidance and activity that over the past 20 years has, in many respects, broken barriers and blazed a trail for the world. It then turns a critical eye toward challenging WPS elements that have failed to gain traction and continue to await meaningful action. AWC is the best place to invigorate this critical institutional shift, and this chapter offers three practical examples of current courses where WPS can integrate as foundational strategic thought without disrupting or overburdening existing curricula. Finally, this chapter considers some common sources of hesitancy and even aversion to both WPS writ large and to mainstreaming implementation and offers counterpoints.

Building meaningful and sustainable international peace and security cannot succeed apart from considering the perspectives, needs, and welfare of entire populations, including their inherent gender, ethnic, social, and economic makeup. Extensive research highlights the especially critical importance of gender in this endeavor.

*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.

Considering the global economy and the impact of gender gaps, the McKinsey Global Institute mapped 15 gender equality indicators for 95 countries generating 97 percent of global GDP. They found that 40 of the 95 have extremely high or high levels of inequality in half or more of those indicators. If countries in 10 global regions could match the progress toward gender parity of their region’s leader, global GDP would rise by as much as $12 trillion over 10 years.\(^2\) Further, if the world were to reach the point where women contribute equally, its GDP would grow by as much as $28 trillion, equivalent to the 26 percent the United States and China generate together.\(^3\) When the peace is shattered, however, these disparities move well beyond economics. Noting the disproportionate impact of violence during conflict, former U.S. Africa Command commander, retired Army general Carter Ham, noted, “In Africa’s contemporary conflicts, more than 90 percent of all casualties are women and children, who also are more likely to be targets of sexual and gender-based violence.”\(^4\) Former U.S. Department of State assistant secretary of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, Rick Barton, said of conflict resolution, “Failing to include women in peace and security efforts results in a shaky, unstable, and partial peace that leaves in place a society’s root causes of violence.”\(^5\) In his core mission to break cycles of violence and mitigate crisis, and he saw firsthand how stability is interwoven with the status of women and girls. Of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011, 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses, and 9 percent of negotiators were women.\(^6\) During roughly the same period, however, where women were included at the table, peace agreements proved 20 percent more likely to last at least two years, and 35 percent more likely to last for 15 years.\(^7\) Today’s world is, therefore, forfeiting $28 trillion of its economic potential, losing significant portions of warzone female populations (and devastating future populations), and employing the perspective and skills of fewer than 10 percent of the demographic who have demonstrated the ability to influence a more lasting peace and security. Strategy simply cannot deliver desired end states when it fails to acknowledge or account for half the human terrain across the operational environment.

Ex nihilo nihil fit: Out of nothing, nothing comes. Women battled for empowerment long before UNSCR 1325. Just five years earlier, 17,000 participants from 189 coun-

\(^3\) Woetzel et al., *The Power of Parity*, vii.
tries and 30,000 activists produced the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, which formed a progressive and comprehensive blueprint “determined to advance the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity.”

In the years since, the world has seen significant gains in legal protection (274 legal and regulatory reforms in 131 countries), parity in education, and maternal mortality (down 38 percent), but far more work is yet to be done. Novel to UNSCR 1325 is its focus on armed conflict. It specifically addresses military-related activities of peacekeeping; peace agreements; protection for women and girls from gender-based violence; gender-based war crimes and amnesty provisions; refugee camps and settlements; and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration that considers female combatants.

Resonating with this imperative, the United States has both exemplified and championed WPS. Two well-publicized examples involve combat. In 1991, the Senate voted to overturn a 43-year-old law barring women from flying warplanes in combat. Soon after, then-lieutenant Jeannie Flynn (later, Leavitt) became the Air Force’s first female fighter pilot, flying the McDonnell-Douglas F-15E Strike Eagle. Nineteen years later, she became the first woman to command an Air Force combat fighter wing.

In 2013, the DOD removed one of the last remaining barriers to women serving in the military by opening more than 14,000 positions previously restricted to men because they involved “direct combat on the ground.” The 17th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullin, captured the era’s success perfectly: “Each time we open new doors in women’s professional lives . . . we end up wondering why it took us so long.”

In addition to walking the walk and evolving to better promote women’s meaningful participation, the United States has extensively codified its WPS commitment. Signed in 2011, President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13,595 directed the institution of both a NAP and Executive Agency Implementation Plans. The United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS NAP) soon followed, laying out five interagency principles to guide WPS institutionalization, strengthen what existed, include women, and direct department and agency coordi-

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8 *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action: Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome* (New York: UN Women, 1995; repr., 2015), 2.


10 UN Security Council, Resolution 1325, 2–3.


12 Associated Press, “First Female Fighter Pilot Becomes First Female Wing Commander,” 31 May 2012.


nation and accountability. The then-president was calling upon his branch to adopt, collaborate, and follow through. In 2015, the National Security Strategy (NSS) deliberately stressed the need to protect women and girls in six passages, and called for increased women’s participation across areas of conflict mediation, peace building, activism, economics, and politics. Congress raised its voice in 2017, passing the Women, Peace, and Security Act, which codified in law U.S. support for WPS and directed a unified national strategy. Congress also went a step further, directing the DOD to train in areas of “conflict prevention, peace processes, mitigation, resolution, and security initiatives that specifically address the importance of meaningful participation by women.” Today, the DOD boasts the fresh 2020 Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (WPS SFIP), backed by a 2017 update to the NSS and a 2016 update to the WPS NAP that continue the drumbeat message that rights, meaningful participation, and protection are foundational to achieving international peace and security. To that end, the WPS SFIP establishes three objectives. First, the DOD must exemplify a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation. Then, it must inspire partners to promote women’s meaningful participation in defense. Finally, it must inspire partners to ensure women and girls are protected, especially during conflict and crisis.

Broadly speaking, the United States’ WPS guiding language tends to land in three categories: women’s inclusion, women’s protection, and wisdom. While the first two are self-evident, wisdom involves the difficult business of achieving gender awareness, integrating principles into existing frameworks, conducting informed strategic planning and execution, and possessing the cultural sensitivity to do it all with international partners. These are the challenging WPS elements that struggle to gain traction or see tangible results. Among the WPS SFIP’s objectives, the latter two fit neatly into the inclusion and protection categories and face outward toward partner nations. Remaining on the table is a call to wisdom.

It takes wisdom to learn from missteps, faithfully uncover root causes and contributing factors, and internalize lessons as an organization. On 23 March 2003, Iraqi forces attacked a convoy and took prisoners of war, including Private Jessica Lynch of the U.S. Army’s 507th Maintenance Company. She was held for a week and suffered sexual assault. Inaccurate public portrayal and media attention quickly sent the narrative spiraling and harmed DOD’s image. A year later, on 28 April 2004, photographs of female U.S. soldiers humiliating Abu Ghraib prison detainees sur-

faced, igniting a call to arms for recruiting insurgents to fight American forces in Iraq. Former president George W. Bush would later call it “the biggest mistake” made by the United States in Iraq. To make matters worse internally, Army Reserve brigadier general Janis Karpinski would also emerge as an example of poor leadership and refusal to establish and enforce standards.\textsuperscript{21} It also takes wisdom to correctly identify the main priorities. Retired colonel Sheila Scanlon, Afghanistan’s first appointed gender advisor, saw firsthand the difficulty of applying the NAP in the field. She operated without guidance and noted, “Between 2012–14, I never knew there was a NAP and that it had been signed in 2013. Nobody ever talked about it or mentioned it.”\textsuperscript{22} In an ad hoc position with no directive, action plan, policy, or strategic guidance, she was severely limited in making WPS relevant. General David H. Petraeus would note that policy and directives focused on enabling Afghan forces to secure their country, and he had limited resources to do so. Though the notion of women and their status was clearly important, it was not the core objective.\textsuperscript{23} One can argue that any objective of any substance will inevitably fall prey to conflicting priorities unless it is considered indispensable to the core mission.

The DOD, therefore, requires wisdom to discern where WPS impacts strategy. The DOD’s WPS SFIP calls for the development of doctrine, training, and education that reflects WPS principles. Specifically, it seeks increased awareness and an ability to integrate into missions.\textsuperscript{24} U.S. Air Force AWC sequesters DOD’s rising strategic leaders for one year to reflect on the past, analyze themselves, and form ideas about how they, as future strategy makers and strategic leaders, will steward the department through the next decade. As they navigate AWC’s comprehensive curricula, WPS thought applies throughout. AWC students also learn side-by-side with international partner students, offering a prime opportunity to prioritize the NAP and WPS SFIP’s objectives of being the exemplar, inspiring promotion of women’s meaningful participation, and inspiring the protection of women and girls.

\textbf{Recommendations and Conclusions}

To begin blazing a deliberate academic trail, core AWC courses are already primed to incorporate WPS concepts. In the Foundations of Strategy course, Instructional Period 6427 focuses on the Iraq War. A third desired learning outcome (DLO) might be: “Analyze the impact of women’s contributions in Iraq from 2003–06.” One added question for study and discussion might be: “In what ways were Servicewomen’s involvement in Iraq beneficial, controversial, or damaging? Consider the strategic impact of Team Lioness, Private Jessica Lynch, and the events of Abu Ghraib.” These

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Cook, A Woman’s Place, 160–61.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Cook, A Woman’s Place, 197.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Cook, A Woman’s Place, 181–82.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan, 16.
\end{itemize}
could be supported by one 15-page reading from Dr. Joana Cook’s book *A Woman’s Place: U.S. Counterterrorism Since 9/11*.  

Next, in the Strategic Leadership and the Profession of Arms course, Instructional Period 6204 addresses the concepts of vision and leading change. A third DLO might be: “Analyze the impact of WPS on the DOD’s vision and how progress for women in the United States ranks and influences relationships with international partners.” One added question for study and discussion might be: “How might a senior leader approach gender concerns in an organization and cast a vision that maximizes the potential mission impact of all unit members?” These could be supported by a six-page reading from retired admiral William McRaven in *Women on the Frontlines of Peace and Security*, along with the DOD WPS SFIP for policy context. Finally, the AU Commandant’s Lecture Series could deliberately feature a woman who has shown successful strategic military leadership, showcasing some of her thoughts in the WPS arena. Some potential examples might include retired Air Force general Lori Robinson, a former U.S. Northern Command commander; Air Force major general Jeannie Leavitt, Headquarters Air Education and Training Command’s current director of operations and communications; or retired Army general Ann Dunwoody, the first female four-star general.

Leading change is difficult, but this is not headline news at AWC. In a fine-tuned machine designed to optimally balance all that can be squeezed into one academic year, capacity to incorporate another subject claiming to be foundational is limited. While this presents a real curriculum development challenge, the question should not be whether to shoehorn in additional material. If the faculty is open to comparing WPS to other core concepts, its relevance to half of the world’s population and fundamental influence on strategic outcomes will make it a competitive candidate. This area of study is also enormous in its own right. It would be foolhardy to believe all the material could simply migrate to the middle. That, however, should not be the goal. A simple focus of raising awareness and applying thought where it is strategically relevant would suffice. The WPS elective course for deeper study should not cease to exist but rather grow in enrollment.

Twenty years after UNSCR 1325 breathed life into WPS principles, the United States has accomplished much, but has much still to accomplish. It will always be of central importance to consider equal rights, meaningful participation, and equal protection in all aspects of both domestic and international affairs. The United States’ WPS activity has not yet risen to its rightful place in our collective consciousness, but the opportunities to push that direction are clear and practical. AWC has a unique

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opportunity to push WPS philosophy into core strategic thought and lead the United States toward full actualization of its own espoused national identity and strategy.

This chapter has argued for the centrality of these concepts. A survey of developing thought and guidance showed where we have been and where we should be headed. It focused on the particular difficulty of developing WPS-informed wisdom and how that might take root in Air University. Finally, it attempted to scratch the surface of resistance inherent to any endeavor to push organizational change, and it offered counterpoints to reinforce the truth that implementation is both practical and essential.