PART 7

Advising with Gendered Perspectives
Bridging the Gap toward a Gendered Perspective in Security Force Advising
by Lieutenant Colonel Natalie Trogus, USMC*  

Chapter One  
Introduction

I am Major Abdul Rahman Rahmani, an Afghan Army Aviation pilot . . . I served alongside your husband, MAJ Brent Taylor . . . who was shot yesterday by an evil man . . . I remember him saying, “Family is not something. It is everything.” You may or may not be aware of some of our cultural differences, but in Afghanistan, family is not everything, for many of us, family are treated as property. Here, a woman cannot express herself fully, either inside or outside the house. Here, most families treat children unfairly. Let me admit that, before I met Brent, even I did not think that a woman and men should be treated equally. Your husband taught me to love my wife Hamida as an equal and treat my children as treasured gifts, to be a better father, to be a better Husband[d], and to be a better man.¹

For 20 years, Coalition forces have worked side by side with Afghans like Major Rahmani to stabilize and reconstruct Afghanistan.² Achieving fair treatment of men and women in society, at home, and work underpins the practical implementation of UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Afghanistan’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security.³ Gender is a social construct and refers to the roles, rights, and responsibilities attributed to being male or female. Gender also considers ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Social attributes are learned through socialization and differ by culture, thus influencing what behavior is expected and permissible for women and men.⁴ Gendered experiences of conflict manifest differently for men and women, shaping their needs and abilities

* 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.  
² This paper was written and submitted to the Joint WPS Academic Forum’s writing program prior to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2020. It has not been updated to reflect the current situation.  
to resolve armed conflicts.\textsuperscript{5} Gender norms play a significant role in world affairs, from conflict resolution and peace negotiations in Afghanistan, to women and girls being targets of violent extremists in the Islamic State’s terror campaign against Yazidis in Iraq, to women engaging as combatants in Indonesia during the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria’s (ISIS) terrorism campaign.\textsuperscript{6} From both a national security perspective and as a force multiplier, understanding the unique relationships between gender, conflict, and state security are crucial for planning and executing military advising operations. Gendered behaviors also impact military advising operations. Military commanders seeking enhanced solutions to improve post-conflict security, stability, and peace must account for gender perspectives in all aspects of military operations.

Research has shown when women participate in conflict resolution, conflict negotiations, and the peace process, peace agreements are 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.\textsuperscript{7} Women’s participation in peace negotiations increases gender-sensitive peace agreement provisions, better content of peace agreements, and higher implementation rates. However, gender perspectives have often been overlooked by the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) military leadership and advisors in direct support of the Afghan Peace Process. Despite overwhelming evidence, Afghan women continue to be left out of peace negotiations and excluded from meaningful participation in peace-building operations. As the only female negotiator on a 12-member team at a conference in Moscow, Habiba Sarabi expressed her concerns about so few women being included in important decision-making meetings. Through the U.S.-led RSM, the United States participates directly in the Afghan peace process through military support to the Afghan government. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Mark A. Milley, and RSM commander General Austin S. Miller met the Taliban at the negotiating table to discuss the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement.\textsuperscript{8} These meetings are an opportunity for U.S. and RSM leadership to demonstrate support and commitment in implementing gender perspectives supporting Afghan women’s role in the peace process. Advising the Afghan Security Institutions (ASI) and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) requires implementation of gender perspectives through senior leadership advocacy, advisor training, and institutionalization resulting in increased military advising effectiveness in support of reconstruction and peace operations. Senior leaders, such as the chairman of the JCS and the RSM commander, are at the highest levels of command to influence and implement UNSCR 1325. Command authority


influences subordinates’ behavior and education and training of advisors serving in the RSM. Advising the ANDSF requires a well-educated and -trained cadre of advisors to develop and professionalize the ANDSF. Lastly, institutionalization of UNSCR 1325 and gender perspectives must be influenced from RSM senior leadership and operationalized at the advisory level through daily briefs, advisor staff products, and interactions between advisors and advisees.

**Research Question and Design**

The purpose of this thesis is to inform and influence policy makers and military planners on gendered perspectives of military advising during the Resolute Support Mission. How does an advisor’s predeployment training and gendered perspective affect the RSM advising mission in Afghanistan? It is beyond the scope of this thesis to cover the history of the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 WPS. Minimal literature exists on first-hand accounts on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and will explore advisor gender perspectives and the impacts for the U.S. government and its allies seeking solutions to implement UNSCR 1325 in future operations.

Afghanistan is a useful single case study to analyze this problem. This study uses qualitative data of gender advising experience and empirical examples, coupled with existing research on WPS and gender perspectives in the RSM and discusses inherent challenges in the RSM implementing UNSCR 1325. Subnational examples include advisors from the RSM Headquarters, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Gender office, and Train, Advise, and Assist Commands. By borrowing and synthesizing from UNSCR 1325, the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, and DOD’s Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (WPS SFIP), this study recommends opportunities for implementing UNSCR 1325 and gender perspectives in the ASI and ANDSF. By highlighting challenges in implementation of WPS at the advisor level, these first-hand accounts of gender advising perspectives will help policymakers, academics, and professional military educators to refine WPS implementation policy, guidance, and research. This study identifies specific challenges to implementing UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan advising operations and delivers recommendations to future WPS advising efforts conducted by the U.S. government with an end state to institutionalize UNSCR 1325 in U.S. military advisor predeployment training.

**Research Methods**

This study’s initial intent was to focus on RSM advisors’ predeployment advisor training and its influence on the advisory mission’s conduct. Interview questions were structured to solicit answers on predeployment training, the advisors’ responsibilities,
and their general understanding of the RSM. The purpose was to understand an advisor’s professional and educational background, personal experience on advising, and overall advising actions. Interview questions were prewritten and approved by the institutional review board (IRB) and did not contain gender perspectives because of the author’s unfamiliarity with gender perspectives before her own deployment and field research. While serving as a gender advisor, through daily engagements and personal investigation into gender perspectives in military operations, it became evident that gender perspectives were a critical missing element in advisor predeployment training and education. Lack of WPS predeployment training impacts advisors’ implementation of gender perspectives during advising operations.

This research uses a mixed-methods approach to examine predeployment advisor training and the gendered impacts training had on the advisor’s mission. Primary field research draws on the results of 30 semistructured interviews conducted in Kabul from July 2019 to July 2020. Interviews were focused on advisor predeployment training and overall advising requirements. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into RSM’s predeployment advisor training, identify gendered perspective patterns across advising experiences and practices, and identify opportunities for enhanced advisor training before assuming duties as an advisor. Advisor gender perspectives incorporated into interviews include advisor rank, nationality, military Service, rank, military occupational specialty, and gender.

Selection of Interview Participants
Primary interview research was conducted in Afghanistan July 2019–July 2020. Advisor contact was made verbally and via email to seek participants for the interviews. Upon confirmation of participants’ availability, using a questionnaire, the author scheduled follow-up face-to-face interviews to discuss advisor predeployment training, advising roles, responsibilities, and efforts. The selection process considered the availability of advisors willing to participate, given the challenges of different schedules and operational requirements. All 30 advisors provided informed consent and remain anonymous throughout this study. Figures 1–4 outline essential sex and age-disaggregated data (SADD) of participants such as nationality, military Service, rank, and gender. Disaggregated data provides greater insight and evaluation of the differences between men and women, older and younger, and national military Service, as each perspective will be unique to a particular nation. In chapter 4, advisor interview findings are discussed.

As depicted in figure 7.1, seven different nationalities participated in the interviews, demonstrating the diversity of gender cultural perspectives across the RSM. The United States had 19 military and civilian advisors, which was the most significant contribution of advisors (figure 7.2). As depicted in figure 7.3, military

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10 An institutional review board (IRB) was approved for the conduct of in-person interviews on 9 September 2019.
rank and civilian pay grade varied across participants. It is worth noting that under the RSM advising command structure, military servicemembers and civilians were the lead advisors, with the contractors in a supporting role. Of the 30 participants interviewed, 19 were men and 11 were women. Except for two advisors, the remaining 28 participants were ministerial advisors.

Figure 7.1. Nationality

Source: adapted by MCU Press

Figure 7.2. National Military Service

Source: adapted by MCU Press

\[\text{As expressed as GS: general schedule.}\]
Procedures and Limitations
In preparation for the field research, the author drew upon official U.S. government reports including congressional testimonies, Special Inspector General Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan congressional reports, and Afghan South Asia Strategy. Additional resources included military doctrines such as the Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Advising Foreign Security Forces; books, journal articles, and newspapers gathered through library search engines; and open-source reporting. As this is a single case study, this research will be focused on the RSM train, advise, and assist advisory mission in Afghanistan from July 2019 to July 2020.

The RSM operational environment during the author’s field research was politically sensitive. Faced with a contested Afghan presidential election in 2019, tensions mounted during the fall 2019 fighting season and violence levels escalated leading up to U.S. and Taliban peace negotiations. In September 2019, peace talks abruptly ended and regional tensions increased with Iran and Pakistan. In February 2020, the United States and the Taliban signed a simultaneous peace deal and joint declaration. Domestic tensions surrounding post-peace rising violence levels and rhetoric of U.S. troop withdrawal fueled uncertainty. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic

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abruptly suspended face-to-face advisor meetings and impacted the ability to conduct face-to-face advisor interviews for this study. Additionally, per the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement, the pandemic accelerated coalition advisor redeployment. A month after the signing of the peace agreement, violence levels continued to rise with targeted assassinations and attacks perpetrated against women and children, including attacks on the Kabul Maternity Clinic and Kabul University.

The following challenges affected field research in Kabul:

1. The release of the Afghanistan Papers, limiting the ability to meet with several advisors. The Afghanistan Papers revealed the names of previously anonymous interviewees. As a result, interview participants became concerned that their personal information and candid comments would be exposed and feared retribution from senior leadership.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic shut down the RSM advisory mission from March 2020 to July 2020, limiting the ability to meet face to face for interviews that were crucial to capturing advisors’ experiences.

3. The U.S.-Taliban peace deal and joint declaration resulted in an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, resulting in the redeployment of advisors who had agreed to participate in this research.

Interview Questions

To obtain insight of advisors’ predeployment training and the effects of training on the performance of advising, 35 questions were asked. A few questions are included below. For a complete list of interview questions, see appendix B.

1. What was your source of deployment?
2. What are some of your advising responsibilities?
3. What are the limitations of your advising efforts?
4. Did you receive advisory predeployment training prior to deployment?
5. Did you read any publications on advising prior to deployment?
6. Have you read the RSM operation plan?

Interview questions were structured to remain unbiased and open-ended to solicit candid responses. Responses were analyzed for gendered training, gender awareness, and gender perspectives in the conduct of individual advisor actions. Advisor familiarity with the RSM operational plan (OPLAN) during predeployment training would expose advisors to the NATO military strategic objective of implementing UNSCR 1325 into the RSM and requirement to include gender perspectives into all military operations.

Findings

To rectify weak leadership, substandard WPS advocacy and absence of WPS institutionalization I identify four recommendations. The first is to conduct a holistic research study into the challenges of implementing UNSCR 1325 at the advisor level. Personal insight will provide valuable feedback to support future policy generation for future advisor employment. Mandatory gender sensitive pre-deployment training is the second recommendation. In order to effectively implement gender perspectives, advisors need to be aware of the subject area and the gender dynamics of Afghan culture to effectively apply Afghan-sensitive gender perspectives. Third, WPS implementation must be driven from the highest levels within DOD. For WPS to take root in U.S. military missions, the Office of the Secretary of Defense designee who is responsible for DOD WPS implementation must be engaged with U.S. mission commanders. Lastly, a gender-sensitive budget execution plan must be developed in order to effectively apply congressional appropriations for gender initiatives. Establishing a gender budget execution unit will facilitate the direct support of gender programs, reduce likelihood of corruption, and prevent money from being siphoned out of gender programs.

The next five chapters investigate the primary research question of how predeployment training and gendered perspective affect the RSM advising mission in Afghanistan. Chapter 2 provides a background on UNSCR 1325 and discusses gendered aspects of building partner capacity and security cooperation advising efforts, which the coalition has implemented to support Afghanistan’s reconstruction efforts. Chapter 3 provides a background on the U.S. response to UNSCR 1325 and the RSM advisory efforts. Through applying a gender analysis and gender perspective, chapter 4 discusses three key findings identified during research and interviews. Despite strategic guidance, inclusion of gendered perspectives at the advisory levels remains limited due to weak leadership advocacy, substandard WPS advisory training, and the absence of WPS institutionalization directly impacting the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and gender perspectives in the RMS. Chapter 5 summarizes the research and offers recommendations to support Afghanistan’s future reconstruction efforts and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and gender perspectives in support of the Afghan national action plan for implementing UNSCR 1325.