Chapter Three
Advising in Wartime
A Foreign Policy Tool

Taliban and Afghan Women

In the early 1990s, more than 1,800 girls dressed in skirts and high heels attended Balkh University in Mazar, which was one of the only operational universities in the country. Throughout the twenty-first century, Afghan women’s rights had become the basis of political and social reform. The Afghan civil war forced a generation of Afghan males across the Afghan-Pakistan border to grow up in refugee camps in Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province studying in Madrassas. Taught by mullahs, students were taught the basics of Islamic law and memorized the Koran and the prophet Muhammad’s sayings. Having no collective memory of their homeland, these Afghan orphans of the war grew up without women and gathered under the all-male brotherhood. Without the company of women, the subjugation of women became the mission of the true believer and a fundamental marker of Taliban governance.

As a fanatical band of religious students, the Taliban swept aside the warring factions and put an end to the civil war. Although peace took root, this was a temporary measure leading up to the Taliban’s implementation of a draconian regime that banned nearly all social activities, caged women, and took away women’s access to education and employment. The closing of girls’ schools and banning of women from working outside the home drew women to conduct activities underground and in the shadows of Taliban rule. It is under this context that the social strata of Afghanistan was reformed and led to the conditions for al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations to take root in Afghanistan. Yet at the same time, it was under these conditions that Afghan women persisted and became resilient for future peace efforts. Under the Taliban, women were regularly stoned to death for trying to flee Afghanistan with non-blood relatives, thus bringing dishonor to their families. The Taliban’s declared aims were to restore peace, disarm the population, enforce Sharia law, and defend the integrity and Islamic character of Afghanistan. These aims were at the expense of humane treatment and upholding of Afghan women’s rights, and instead subjected women to gross violations of their rights. The Taliban immediately implemented the strictest interpretation of Sharia law ever seen in the Muslim world. Implementation of gender perspectives supports Afghan reconstruction and security efforts by supporting the ANDSF through building partner capacity with an understanding of the gendered root causes of instability and the effects of Taliban rule on the Afghan population.

63 Rashid, Taliban, 57.
64 Rashid, Taliban, 32.
65 Gopal, No Good Men Among the Living, 7.
66 Rashid, Taliban, 29.
67 Rashid, Taliban, 5.
68 Rashid, Taliban, 22.
U.S. Response to UNSCR 1325

In response to the UNSCR 1325, the United States adopted its first WPS national action plan (NAP) in 2011. In 2016, the WPS NAP was revised and updated. The WPS NAP served as an initial framework for the United States to outline detailed steps to fulfill the resolution’s obligations. The United States took a further step and signed into law the Women Peace and Security Act in October 2017. This law recognizes the critical role women play in promoting more inclusive and democratic societies, essential to countries and regions’ long-term stability.

The act called for a U.S. government-wide strategy and further tasked the DOD with developing a specific implementation plan. In July 2019, the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security was released and superseded the WPS NAP of 2016. The strategy emphasizes women’s meaningful participation in conflict prevention, conflict mediation, conflict resolution, and counterterrorism. The strategy has three strategic objectives that must be achieved, including 1) meaningful participation of women; 2) women and girls are safer, better protected, and have equal access to resources and programs; and 3) institutionalization and capacity of WPS efforts. The strategy’s four lines of effort outline actions the U.S. government will take in fulfilling the strategy. In June 2020, as required by law, DOD released the WPS SFIP. The WPS SFIP has three long-term defense objectives:

1. Defense Objective 1. The Department of Defense exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force.

2. Defense Objective 2. Women in partner nations meaningfully participate and serve at all ranks and in all occupations in defense and security sectors.

3. Defense Objective 3. Partner nation defense and security sectors ensure women and girls are safe and secure and that their human rights are protected, especially during conflict and crisis.

As outlined in the Our Secure Future annotated bibliography, much research has discussed the disproportionate effect military conflict has on women and children, highlighting the importance of the WPS agenda in U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. A simple and transparent measure capturing women’s autonomy and empowerment toward the goals of women’s inclusion, justice, and security, the Georgetown

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Institute for Women, Peace, and Security’s WPS index measures 167 countries in these three areas. Afghanistan ranked 166th with an index of 0.373, with Yemen ranking just below it at 167 with a 0.351 index score. All the scales of quantifiable evidence demonstrating the impact of gender inequality and state security reveals a statistically significant relationship with the physical insecurity of Afghan women. Attacks against women and girls was common under Taliban rule.

The Taliban believe that women should be neither seen nor heard because they drive men away from the proscribed Islamic path and spread sexual temptation across Afghanistan. As one example, while Shamisa Husseini was walking with her sister to go to school, two men approached her and asked if she was going to school. They pulled Shamisa’s burqa from her head and sprayed her face with acid. Frequent attacks such as this instilled fear in Afghan families who, in attempts to protect their daughters, refused to let them leave the house and go to school. Understanding the content in the WPS index can influence policymakers and military planners to effectively apply programs and resources in the areas outlined to facilitate reconstruction efforts and the necessity of applying a gender analysis and perspective to all military operations.

**Resolute Support Mission Afghanistan**

Despite personnel and resource constraints, the operational tempo of conventional forces has steadily increased over the past decade. Conventional forces assigned advisor missions, who are educated, trained, and equipped to serve as advisors, are needed to support international security cooperation in a multitude of complex environments ranging from combat operations to reconstruction to peace-building efforts. Effective execution of advising requires a well-educated and -trained and experienced advisor capable of applying gender perspectives in their advisory duties. This topic is essential as the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* affirms allies’ and partners’ roles to safeguard the free and open international order whose partnerships remain the backbone of global security. The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 and subsequent U.S. government WPS directives call for greater participation of women in peace negotiations and peace building while also encouraging greater gender perspectives in military operations. Through a greater understanding, one may identify the challenges and opportunities for better advisor training and the affects training has on advisor outcomes. Finally, accounting for gendered perspectives in the partner nations, these measures will strengthen the effects of advising.

In December 2001, during the Bonn Conference, it was decided to create a

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76 “Wings of National and International Relations, Part One: Effecting Positive Change through Top-Down Approaches,” in *Sex and World Peace*, 139.
77 Rashid, *Taliban*, 2.
NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul in September 2003. ISAF took the lead for combat-led operations in September 2003 and initiated the command responsibility and obligation to implement UNSCR 1325 into Afghanistan’s NATO military operations. From 2003 to the end of 2014, ISAF was focused on U.S. combat-led operations through the ANDSF training. Throughout the ISAF mission’s 11 years, it evolved into training and assisting the ASIs and ANDSF. UNSCR 1325 also grew as the UN Security Council adopted subsequent resolutions that highlighted and addressed sexual gender-based violence and called on member states to adopt NAPs and incorporate gender perspectives into military operations. Gendered perspectives at this time were concentrated on the tactical approach, incorporating women into military patrols to serve as searchers and intelligence gatherers.

The ongoing training and advisory effort helped build security capacity and professionalization in the ANDSF, and on 1 January 2015 the ANDSF took the lead for defense and security operations. At the same time, ISAF transitioned to the RSM. In keeping with its commitment to incorporating gender perspectives into NATO mission operations, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 became an RSM NATO military strategic objective. In 2015, Afghanistan adopted its first NAP for implementing UNSCR 1325. To counter the disproportionate effect conflict has on women and girls, implementing gender perspectives in support of the Afghan NAP during military operations must be applied.

As the NATO mission evolved, advising under ISAF evolved from unit-based warfighting functions to the RSM—a noncombat mission focused on functional-based security force assistance train, advise, assist (TAA) mission conducted at the corps and ministerial levels. Functional-based security force assistance is aligned to eight essential functions in which execution of the functions, systems, and processes will help professionalize and yield an affordable, sustainable, and effective ANDSF. Advising remains an essential aspect of the RSM and serves as an entry point for gender perspective implementation.

The United States has two complementary missions in Afghanistan: 1) RSM, conducting functional-based security force assistance; and 2) the U.S.-led counterterrorism mission, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, against al-Qaeda and the Islamic

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84 Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 7.
State-Khorasan (ISIS-K) and other terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan. As there is no military solution in Afghanistan, the end state has been political reconciliation with the Taliban and ensuring that Afghanistan is not a safe haven for terrorists to conduct attacks on the U.S. homeland. For the past 19 years, the American way of war has militarily overmatched the Taliban and terrorist organizations. As present-day conditions demonstrate, the U.S. military might not have been enough. Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the inclusion of gender perspectives in RSM operations and U.S.-led peace talks remains elusive. The reconstruction of an inclusive and sustainable approach in Afghanistan relies on Afghan women’s meaningful participation in all sectors of society, including civil, defense, and security sectors. There has been much discussion and increased focus on the importance of understanding gender, conflict, war, and intersectionality in these areas. Intersectional feminist theory is one such approach, which has the potential to facilitate understanding of the Afghan operational environment and gender considerations. Advisors understanding how different social identities such as race, ethnicity, and religion can impact an Afghan’s experience of their gender serves as the gateway toward more meaningful engagements. Advisors’ knowledge in gender perspective and how they engage with their Afghan counterparts will have a more profound and holistic view of the advising operational environment and increased advisor operational effectiveness.

RSM functional-based security force assistance conducts TAA at the strategic level encompassing the Afghan Security Institutions, including the MOD and MOI with assistance to the National Security Council and Ministry of Finance. Advising at the strategic level is referred to as defense institution building or ministerial advising. At the operational and tactical levels of advising, TAA is conducted at the ANDSF corps and police headquarters, including the Afghan National Army, Afghan Air Force, Afghan National Police, and Afghan Special Security Forces. It is considered security force assistance. The main effort of the RSM is the individual advisor, whose role is critical to the success of the entire mission. Combat advising at the corps level and below is fundamentally different than advising occurring at the ministerial level. Combat advising focuses on manning, training, and equipping the ANDSF to build partner security capacity. Advising at the ministerial level focuses on developing strategy, policy, systems, and processes to build institutional, governmental capacity. An example of combat advising at the corps level and below includes training in individual and collective skills, equipment maintenance and readiness, and combat operational planning to defeat terrorist networks and protect the force. Advising at the ministerial level includes advising ministers on strategic level objectives that are forward-focused on developing the ministry and force in future years.

Conclusion
The implementation of UNSCR 1325 in RSM is crucial to military operations. In researching the absence of Afghan women in suicide missions in Afghanistan, Matthew P. Dearing found the enduring presence of a strict culture restricts female participation from society and insurgent organizations. The Taliban’s strict policies for the interaction of men and women essentially erased Afghan women from partaking in any role in Afghan society, subjugated and confined them to household duties. Limiting female participation has resulted in a generation of Afghans and 50 percent of the population who have been denied basic rights such as education, health, and social skills. It is under this Afghan world view which reconstruction advisory efforts and peace operations are executed by the military application of power. It is therefore necessary to implement gender perspectives in all military operations.