

Recommendations on Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness

Approaching the gender perspective in different fields, particularly in the military, requires a special reflection by including specific gender values, which differ substantially from one society or culture to another. Gender consideration in the military becomes an imperative not only in terms of promoting gender equality, but also from an organisational and operational perspective by creating more diversified and versatile armed forces capable of handling the demanding challenges of ever-changing operational environments.

Deciphering military effectiveness from the gender perspective

In the military field, the gender perspective has multiple implications, some with negative connotations, which are often associated with discrimination, prejudice or stereotyping, and others positive in the form of supporting and valuing diversity within the military forces. In this regard, gender perspective as the respect for “the rights and dignity of women and men, be they civilian or military [...] in the performance of their duties”² must be strongly taken into account in the military forces and at the level of military effectiveness,³ the last being understood as the degree of fulfilment of tasks and missions by military personnel (maximising the ratio between results and objectives). Although the military effectiveness has the same meaning, regardless of the operational environment and type of operation, the gender variable brings completely new aspects because it must be analysed from the perspective of the ratio of female–male personnel. Also, to understand the generic picture of the influence of the gender perspective on the military effectiveness, Table 1 highlights some of the main benefits of operationalising gender equality for military purposes, as well as

¹ “Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy.

² BUMBUC et al. 2023: 119.

³ IEEE 2012: 11–18; OECD 2011: 3; EGNELL 2016: 73.

some potential negative effects which could appear in the situation in which it is practiced improperly, in a diametrically opposite manner.

Table 1: Operationalising gender equality – benefits and potential negative effects on military effectiveness

Benefits	Methods	Potential negative effects
Exploiting the diversity of the armed forces	A diversified military force can better cover the volume of tasks and missions during peacetime and wartime.	The emergence of non-compliant attitudes (discrimination, marginalisation, etc.) that can damage the unit cohesion and implicitly the fulfilment of tasks and missions.
Increasing fighting power prior to the military operations	The complementarity of the female and/or male personnel ensures the appropriate development of physical component within the fighting power.	The difficulty of operationalising military structures as a result of the existence of physical and mental limitations at the level of both genders (male, female).
Increasing combat power and operational effectiveness during military operations	The complementarity of female and/or male personnel ensures the appropriate application of combat functions, as well as of leadership and information.	Potential limitations for the creation of lethal or non-lethal effects, respectively the achievement of the desired end state.
Improving education of the military personnel	Having personnel with a multidirectional education can contribute to the promotion of a collaborative and participatory attitude for solving problems within the military force, but also those that arise during the relationship with other operational audiences.	The appearance of conceptual dissensions at the level of military personnel, respectively, the difficult relationship of different mentalities during tasks and missions.

Source: Compiled by the authors

Moreover, broadening the context, it can be concluded that the comprehensive approach to military effectiveness from the gender perspective also implies its addressability in relation to other operational audiences such as the beneficiaries (indigenous population, local authorities) or other participants (local or regional

security forces, etc). Consequently, during the international missions, as a rule, the presence of female personnel is beneficial both in the relationship with the local administration bodies and with the indigenous population. Also, this is also valid at the level of the cooperation with local forces, if female personnel are represented within them. On the other hand, there are some discrepancies in the situation of missions conducted in areas of operations belonging to different cultures, such as Muslim ones, where, for example, during key leader engagement (KLE) missions, the use of female personnel is not recommended.

Addressing the gender perspective in hybrid warfare

From the perspective of hybrid warfare, the addressability of the gender perspective is much more demanding and challenging because the context of its analysis is much broader. Therefore, the analyses should be carried out at all manifestation levels, starting with strategic, continuing with operational and ending with tactical. Consequently, at the strategic level of the hybrid war, the gender approach requires reflections on the power instruments such as military, political, economic, social, informational (MPECI) in terms of their correlating mechanisms and specific strategies used to generate offensive (hybrid threats, hybrid attacks) and defensive behaviours (countering offensive forms). Instead, the operational level of hybrid warfare approaches the gender perspective in the context of joint and interdepartmental actions necessary for ensuring a timely response, different from the tactical one where gender aspects are analysed within blended tactics of mixing regular and irregular structures. On the other hand, addressing gender perspective in the study of hybrid warfare is essential for a comprehensive understanding of its impact on different groups within society. As it has been noted, hybrid warfare involves a combination of conventional and unconventional tactics, often blurring the lines between war and peace. Some ways to incorporate the gender perspective in the analysis of hybrid warfare are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2: Methods to incorporate gender perspective in hybrid warfare analysis

Methods	Descriptors
Gendered impact assessment	how hybrid warfare influence both men and women in a different manner; distinct vulnerabilities and risks each gender faces during conflict situations impact of hybrid warfare on traditional gender roles, as the dynamics of the conflict can stimulate existing gender norms
Conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)	prevalence and patterns of sexual and gender-based violence during hybrid warfare; often used as a weapon of war, and its impact can vary by gender how hybrid warfare influences power dynamics and exacerbates gender-based violence, including forced marriage, human trafficking and other forms of exploitation
Displacement and refugees	gender aspects in displacement and refugee situations resulting from hybrid war; women or men can face different challenges in seeking refuge and rebuilding their lives how hybrid warfare contributes to the creation of internally displaced populations and refugees, affecting gender dynamics within displaced communities
Participation and recruitment	roles and experiences of women and men in the military, paramilitary and civilian militias during hybrid warfare recruitment strategies, motivations and the impact of conflict on the gendered division of labour both within and outside traditional military structures
Media and propaganda	how gender stereotypes and norms are reinforced or challenged through media narratives and propaganda during hybrid warfare portrayal of men and women in conflict-related media, as well as the potential use of gender-based messages to influence public opinion and recruit individuals
Humanitarian responses	gender sensitivity of humanitarian responses to hybrid warfare; relief efforts address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different gender groups role of local women's organisations and their contributions to resilience and recovery in conflict-affected areas
Policy and advocacy	advocate for policies that integrate a gender perspective into strategies to address hybrid warfare importance of recognising and addressing gender-specific challenges in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction

Source: Compiled by the authors

Addressing hybrid warfare from the gender perspective, researchers and policymakers can develop more nuanced and effective strategies to mitigate the impact of conflict on diverse populations. This approach contributes to an exhaustive understanding of the ever-changing physiognomy and dynamics of hybrid warfare. It is obvious that the comprehensive understanding of hybrid war requires multiple analyses from various perspectives, one of which is that of gender. Moreover, the gender perspective has significant implications both for conventional and non-conventional – asymmetric conflicts, which subsequently generates significant changes at the strategic, operational and tactical military effectiveness.

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