

DE GRUYTER

Meaghan Shoemaker

MISSION MARGINALIZED

GENDER BIAS IN NATO OPERATIONS



WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

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Meaghan Shoemaker
Mission Marginalized

Women, Peace and Security

Edited by

Sara E. Davies

Jacqui True

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Miriam Anderson

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Bhavani Fonseka

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Torunn Tryggestad

Stéfanie von Hlatky

Clare Wenham

Katharine Wright

Julia Zulver

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Men Favoured Over Women (Perception)
(Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

Home Responsibilities (Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

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Frontmatter

Abstract

While women's representation in many western military forces is increasing, the composition of troop contributions to NATO operations is not following suit, despite policy commitments acknowledging the importance of diversity in operations. *Mission Marginalized: Gender Bias in NATO Operations* explores the gender operating context of NATO. Determining what factors influence women's military deployments and participation is essential to meet NATO and member states' ongoing commitments to gender equality. Using a mixed-method approach comprised of interview data with NATO elites and Canadian and Danish force generators, and a survey of military members from Canada and Denmark, I assess common explanations for barriers to women's participation in "masculine" occupations. I argue that hidden organizational resistances – organizational biases that manifest as perceptions and processes that hinder women's participation – that comprise military organizational cultures, influence women's deployment on NATO operations. These resistances are taken for granted and considered unchanging elements of military service, and include gendered assumptions held by force generators, the force generation process, and a hands-off approach to committing to more women on operations by NATO and the case countries of Canada and Denmark. In short: it is not simply a lack of women available to deploy. The dynamics at play are much more complex.

Preface

The challenge with research is that it is vulnerable to time. Most timely research offers a snapshot of current events, always at risk of being made irrelevant by a single leadership decision or diplomatic faux pas. During the process of publishing *Mission Marginalized*, the international order turned on its head. The war between Russia and Ukraine continued, and the United States threatened to annex Greenland in the name of economic and state security. Simultaneously, the persistent global effort to roll back gender equality erupted in a new and intensified way in 2025. Democratic backsliding, along with well-coordinated resistance to gender equality internationally in venues like the United Nations, have resulted in gender equality being targeted by political leaders and likeminded community groups. Across many militaries, we are seeing a deliberate reframing or deprioritization of gender equality and Women, Peace and Security commitments. As is often the case, gender equality is the first item on the chopping block when "hard security" threats arise.

While this book and the data within it reflect a moment in time, the conclusions drawn from my research continue to ring true, and align with the broader Women, Peace and Security call to mainstream gender perspectives across all domains of peace and security. The priorities and commitments of Women, Peace, and Security are not stand-alone initiatives to be dropped when "hard security" issues arise; they must be integrated into all issue identification, planning, operations, relief, and recovery efforts. *Mission Marginalized* highlights how gender biases permeate military decision-making, with a reality that has tangible implications on the battlefield. This manuscript also demonstrates how NATO, allies, and partners have individual and collective roles to play to ensure their contributions to operations and policy meet the needs of the day. These

contributions must continue to include a gender lens to ensure operational readiness, and mission effectiveness.

This book was made possible because of family, friends, mentors, and colleagues that were generous with their time, patience, and expertise. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Stéfanie von Hlatky, my PhD supervisor and mentor. I also offer my sincere appreciation to series editors Dr. Jacqui True and Dr. Sara Davies, for their valuable peer review, and for creating a series focused on diverse perspectives in Women, Peace, and Security. I am also appreciative for the expertise of Dr. Alan Okros, Dr. Linna Tam-Seto, Dr. Jeff Rice, Dr. Karen Davis, Dr. Vanessa Brown, Dr. Victoria Tait, Dr. Margaret Little, Dr. Stephanie Martel, Dr. David Haglund, Dr. Allan English, Bjorn Lagerlof, Commodore Matthew Coates, and Ash Schepens.

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my mind to. I am grateful to my husband Liam Rémillard, who provided unwavering support and always met my doubts with steady confidence. I am proud to dedicate this book to my daughter, Abigail, who can be everything she dreams to be.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CI	Confidence Interval
CJSOR	Combined Joint Statement of Requirement
EU	European Union
GENAD	Gender Advisor
IMS	International Military Staff
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCM	Non-Commissioned Member
SFOR	NATO Stabilization Force
STANAG	Standardization Agreement
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

Chapter One Introduction

"This is a brotherhood. There are places for women, but this isn't one of them. They cause drama, especially on deployment" (→ Szayna et al., 2016).

While deployed to Bosnia with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Stabilization Force (SFOR), a Commander responsible for conducting patrols frequently encountered security issues that affected different groups within the community. According to the Commander, the NATO-led SFOR mission and mandate required that displaced persons and refugees should be allowed to return to their homes, but these homes were often occupied during the war by the 'other side.' This was a substantial threat to the Dayton Peace Accord – an agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – to respect the sovereignty of each nation, peaceful dispute resolution, and regional stabilization (→ OSCE, 1995). Disputes would erupt, frustrations would mount and tensions would rise as title owners attempted to reoccupy their homes. These dynamics disproportionately affected women who would return with their families, unable to reoccupy their homes. The Commander had two women in their patrol section, and early on, the Commander noted that they were the ones whom local women found the most approachable. In part, this may have been due to militaries on all sides of the Bosnian conflict being mostly men, and it was well-known and experienced that their operations included atrocities during the Bosnian civil war. So, when information would come to light pertaining to war crimes, illegal activities, issues, or humanitarian concerns, the affected civilian women –

from all sides – sought out the Commander's patrol, because of the women soldiers.

The positive impact of having women on the patrol team could not be ignored from a military standpoint. The Commander's patrol was first to have a complete picture of the area of operations, solid situational awareness and intelligence on current and emerging security conflicts, and many humanitarian crises were avoided because they were able to pre-emptively conduct operations to head off any degradation of the region's peace and security. It was the intelligence garnered from the women on the team that led to a successful NATO raid which uncovered a criminal ring stealing millions of dollars of international aid; it was information reported to the women servicemembers during patrols that resulted in learning about caches of weapons and anti-tank mines; and it was because of the women on patrols that the humanitarian needs assessment was better able to distribute humanitarian aid (Survey 81).

Examples such as the testimony above are common. Indeed, when discussing women's participation in security and defence – particularly in military forces – scholars and military leaders refer to the unique contributions women make to operations due to their access to local populations. There are multiple examples where women have improved the success of specific missions, leading many experts to argue that women are an operational necessity (→ Karim, 2016): women have increased access to certain subsets of local populations who support the identification of early warning signs of violent conflict and extremism, can assist mitigating sexual and gender-based violence, and support overall operational legitimacy with the addition of 'new capabilities' that women represent (→ NATO, 2012; → NATO, 2014a; → NATO, 2017a; → UNDPKO, 2014; → Egnell, 2016; → Steans and Tepe-Velfrage, 2016; → NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, 2017; → Ghittoni et al., 2018, p.

16).¹ If there is hesitation or doubt over these "value-added" examples – such as trustworthiness and accountability – in favour of women's participation in the military, research and examples from the field have also found at a minimum that diversity of perspectives within military operations do not negatively affect unit cohesion, credibility or effectiveness (→ Okros and Scott, 2014; → NCGM, 2015; → Egnell, 2016, p. 79).

But beyond framing women's military participation in terms of their unique contributions, international human rights treaties such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and domestic human rights legislation often prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. The sole focus on the effectiveness that women bring to operations overlooks women's equality as justification in and of itself to problematize gender bias in both domestic and international security and defence institutions, such as NATO. Indeed, increased attention to women in operations has emerged from international commitments like the Beijing Declaration for Action and the United Nations Women, Peace and Security agenda, with international organizations like NATO following suit. However, in the NATO case, commitments to gender equality and Women, Peace and Security often fall short, despite increased attention and policy developments (→ Morais et al., 2022).

In *Mission Marginalized: Gender Bias in NATO Operations*, I explore how NATO and its member states resist change due to organizational cultures maintained through hidden organizational resistances. I define hidden organizational resistances as biases manifesting as perceptions and processes that hinder women's participation – the harder to see, and tougher to address aspects of military culture that perpetuate discrimination. In so doing, this book calls attention to the hidden organizational resistances preventing women's

participation and deployment on military operations. The intent of this framing is two-fold: it addresses an understudied moment in military career advancement for women, and it has policy implications regarding retention and longer-term representation in militaries, since deployments are often required for promotions. I address the impact of hidden resistance on women's career progression in the military and its broader impact on women's representation in this male-dominated space.

During the course of my employment with Canada's Department of National Defence, I had the opportunity to work closely alongside military and civilian colleagues as we advanced human rights across the Canadian Armed Forces. My role primarily centred on the implementation of the Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Plan and a human rights class action settlement for sexual misconduct. The latter exposed me to the downstream and long-term implications of sexism, sex-based discrimination and sexual violence in the military. The former, which is guided by Canada's broader Employment Equity Act, sought to identify and address barriers to participation for equity-deserving groups, including women, visible minorities, 2SLGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities. While we drafted initiatives in response to barriers identified through research, I found there was a deeper, cultural element that was left untouched by initiatives. In order to change the culture and mitigate and prevent barriers, it was the more difficult, taken-for-granted elements of culture that needed to be better defined and understood.

As per the title, this book examines two distinct but related forms of marginalization. First, it challenges the historic marginalization of feminist scholarly work in military and defence studies, and introduces discussions of gender bias in order to challenge traditionally taken-for granted military

processes. Second, the book probes the historic – and in many instances, persistent – marginalization of women's participation in security and defence. This marginalization translates to the under representation of women on NATO operations, stemming from masculine military organizational cultures. But before pressing ahead, a brief overview of the international gender equality landscape, and NATO, is warranted in order to understand the gender operating environment of this book.

SITREP: NATO Foundations and Women, Peace and Security

Formed in 1949 by the twelve signing members of the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO has its roots in "collective defence and the preservation of peace and stability" (→ NATO, 1949, n.p.). Contemporary framing of NATO's purpose focuses on the "guaranteeing of the freedom and security of its members through political and military means" (→ NATO, 2018a). This is achieved through its three essential core tasks of deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. Comprised of 32 member states in 2025, NATO is best described as a family: "it is large, and it is complex" (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018). "Consisting of multiple headquarters, twenty-nine Centres of Excellence, and ultimately a federation of fifty to sixty entities, all of these actors look to NATO for a standard and terms of reference on particular behaviours. With NATO setting the minimum standard, national militaries then adopt these minimums as their new baseline" (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018).

Although NATO member states such as Norway have been actively supporting the integration of women into national armed forces since the 1980s (→ Hunt and Lute, 2016), the 1995

Beijing Declaration for Action brought international attention to women's equality (→ United Nations, 1995). Predating the flagship United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNCSR 1325) by five years, the Beijing Declaration called for "women's empowerment and ... full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power" (→ United Nations, 1995). With its conceptual foundations in the Beijing Declaration, UNCSR 1325 – the flagship resolution which launched the Women, Peace and Security agenda – calls for women's equal participation in peace and security through the four pillars of participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery. The broader Women, Peace and Security agenda incorporates an additional nine resolutions that together address the disproportionate effect of conflict on women and girls, calls for increased participation in peace and security processes, and commitments to decrease sexual and gender-based violence. Although there was progress at the national level with regards to gender equality in security and peace, a collaborative, international shift to women's exclusion from peace and security issues were brought to the fore with the adoption of the UNSCR 1325, which was the result of activist, grassroots lobbying from civil society.

In line with the regular operating machinery of NATO – that is, how member states are responsible for the implementation of NATO guidance – member states have the primary responsibility for ensuring the domestic implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. As two examples, the provision of trained troops and experts on gender issues and better gender balance in NATO forces depend entirely on national decisions. However, member states are "encouraged to make WPS an integral part of their defence and security policies and activities" and the role of "national initiatives, including through the development and

implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) and other strategic national initiatives, are essential for making progress in this regard" (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 13). Read in this context, the ownership of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, be it related to policy expertise or gender-balanced forces, is relegated formally to member states. But as I argue throughout this book, there is an opportunity for increased NATO leadership to set the standard, and nations rely on this leadership.

Amidst a rapidly evolving security landscape emerging from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the importance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda to NATO's core tasks has been reiterated by NATO and its member states (→ Hurley et al. 2024), along with guidance on how to mainstream gender in both its military and civilian branches (→ NATO, 2018c; → Hardt and von Hlatky, 2020). NATO and many of the national militaries that comprise it have formally acknowledged the importance of women's representation in military forces through policy commitments. Taking into account not only the benefits to operational effectiveness (exemplified at the outset of this chapter) but the rights of women to be free from discrimination (→ UNGA, 1948; → UNGA, 1979; → United Nations, 1995; → United Nations, 2015), the 2024 NATO Policy on Women, Peace and Security reflects NATO's international obligation to the Charter of the United Nations common values of human rights. For the first time, the NATO policy recognizes women's rights are being eroded globally, and calls attention to barriers to participation in public and political life, as well as peace and security processes. The policy also shines a new spotlight on areas where NATO has traditionally been uninvolved, such as economic challenges, climate change, and technology (→ NATO, 2024a).

Turning back to gender equality, the alliance's previous strategic messaging notes that "the complementary skills of both male and female personnel are essential for the

effectiveness of NATO operations" (→ NATO, 2019a). Perhaps even more relevant to the NATO context today is the organizational evolution beyond warfighting and the Warsaw Pact. The result has been an expanded role, and a changing requirement for capabilities. Then-NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, for instance, distinguished the "NATO we might not know": one which focuses on human security, cyber and combatting human trafficking (→ NATO, 2018d). Such statements begin to address assumptions about the role of NATO in a changing international landscape and necessitates a modernized and nuanced approach to gender equality.

As with previous iterations, the 2024 NATO Policy on Women, Peace and Security reiterates the necessity of women's full participation if their rights are to be respected (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 10; → NATO, 2024a) and the importance of inclusiveness and women's representation across NATO and in national forces in order to enhance operational effectiveness and success (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 11, → NATO, 2024a). NATO commits itself and its partners to demonstrate the leadership required to "dismantle existing barriers to the full implementation of WPS resolutions and gender equality" (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 13) and, through four strategic objectives, guides its work on Women, Peace and Security: gender-responsible leadership and accountability, participation, prevention, and protection. The 2024 Policy calls attention to the need to build coherence between national and global efforts in order for NATO to achieve its objectives (→ NATO, 2024a). This is particularly relevant, as nations remain the responsible implementers of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, but NATO has an opportunity to set various standards that would guide member and partner states in their efforts.

Guiding NATO's strategic vision of its three core tasks is the NATO Strategic Concept. In simplified terms, the Strategic Concept sets the priorities and vision for NATO's core essential tasks for a roughly ten-year timeframe (→ NATO, 2020a), and save for the North Atlantic Treaty, is one of the primary hierarchical strategic documents for the alliance, guiding "its future political and military development" (→ NATO, 2020a). Most recently published in 2022 amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO's Strategic Concept was adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid (→ NATO, 2022a) and for the first time in the Strategic Concept's drafting, the text explicitly refers to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and its integration across all tasks of the alliance (→ NATO, 2022a, p. 3). However, reference to the agenda stops at this first mention.

The Strategic Concept may be viewed as a letter to the Russian Federation, reiterating NATO's commitment to strengthening its deterrence and defence posture, "ensuring a substantial and persistent presence on land, at sea, and in the air" (→ NATO, 2022a, p. 6), and acknowledging the collective readiness and alignment across allies. There is no surprise that gender (specifically in this case, women) is not integrated into such a strategic document beyond reference to sexual violence and humanitarian challenges (→ NATO, 2022a, p. 4). Military doctrine and strategic documents often exclude such references (→ Hardt and von Hlatky, 2020, p. 136), and NATO's endorsement of gender-sensitive policies and programming at the policy level was not formalized until 2007, with the debut NATO/EAPC Policy for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.² But the foundations for progress are visible – NATO regularly commits to robust military forces; flexibility; sufficient human resources to successfully carry out missions; and the

strengthening of common capabilities, standards and structures that align alliance members.

The importance of UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security agenda to NATO must be underscored. The Women, Peace and Security agenda is critical to the NATO context, particularly due to the range of missions of the organization, and the increased attention to sexual and gender-based violence, the empowerment of women, and increased participation of women in security and defence. With current and previous operations including non-combat, capacity building, training and assistance, security and protection, counter terrorism and support of peacekeeping missions led by other organizations (→ NATO, 2025a), the integration of gender perspectives can and will be implemented in different and context-specific ways.

Certainly, we see the contributions women have made, and continue to make, in security and defence, even against the backdrop of overt and hidden organizational resistances. Despite these contributions, neither NATO nor its member states recognize fully the barriers that may exist, nor commit to efforts to mitigate persistent barriers to women's deployment. In instances where barriers to participation have been identified,³ they are often focused on recruitment or retention, overlooking the gaps that may exist in key professional development milestones such as deployments. The oversight has very real consequences, as demonstrated in the Annual National Reports to the IMS Office of the Gender Advisor, published by the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives – the office responsible for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda at NATO. Over the course of five years, there has been limited progress on increasing women's deployments: in 2017, the average composition of women on NATO operations was 5.6% (→ NATO, 2017b, p. 45), and in 2022, there was 7.03% representation of women on NATO operations (→ NATO, 2022b).

While percentages as a measure of representation have limitations (→ Karim et al., 2020), they can serve as a barometer of women's participation, signalling the ongoing challenges that must be addressed.

Research Puzzle

There have been various NATO policies and statements committing to the integration of gender perspectives and gender balance in operations observed since 2007, so what might explain low deployment figures for women? *What are the barriers to women deploying on NATO operations?* Returning to the testimony at the outset of this book, the Commander's regret was that all members of their military would not witness those patrols, and they would not see the complex nature of NATO operations and the force multiplier – an element that improves the effectiveness or impact of a military – that women provide. The Commander emphasized: "We need more women ... on these patrols, we need more women ... patrol Commanders leading these patrols, we need more women ... soldiers commanding these missions and we need more women ... soldiers on each and every one of these operations ... the speed of the mission's success and the security and safety of all involved, including our own safety and security, greatly benefit from having women at the front" (Survey 82).

In contrast to NATO, which has not stepped out with a formal commitment or goal for women's representation on operations, the United Nations has responded with policy guidance. The United Nations Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018–2028 commits to a goal of 15% women deployed in military United Nations' peacekeeping units and 25% representation for Military Observers (→ UNDPKO, 2017). For police in formed units, the commitment is even higher – 30% representation in Formed

Police Units by 2028 (→ UNDPKO, 2017, p. 5). This commitment has been bolstered by a concrete, funded program: The Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations is "an innovative, multilateral pilot project that is developing and testing a combination of approaches to help overcome barriers and increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in United Nations peace operations, with a focus on police and military roles" (→ Government of Canada, 2025). The Initiative seeks to increase the representation and participation of women in uniform by removing barriers to peacekeeping operations. With fifteen countries completing what is termed the "Barrier Assessment Methodology" between 2021 and 2024, including Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mexico, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Bangladesh, Ghana, Jordan, Norway, Uruguay, Zambia, Canada, and Germany (→ The Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations, 2025), results are painting a clearer picture of barriers to women's military and police participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

A 2022 summary of Barrier Assessment results from four case countries outlines the importance of developing certain skills to improve peacekeeping operation exposure and experience, how attitudes and assumptions inform the actions of peacekeepers, the prevalence of social exclusion and inadequate access to social services and mental health support (→ DCAF, 2022). With Canada's assessment published in 2022, the results identify potential entry points for gender bias in the deployment selection process, including, but not limited to, superiors favouring men over women, or decisions made on subjective criteria such as gender stereotypes related to health (Government of Canada, 2022, p. 18). These findings, notably, are applicable beyond the specific context of the United Nations and can reflect broader cultural challenges in security and

defence institutions. For United Nations missions, women in Canadian Armed Forces deploy at the same rate as men, but women were more likely to report only deploying once (Government of Canada, 2022, p. 18). These results are corroborated by my findings in this book: in the NATO context, for the case studies selected, women were six times less likely than their counterparts to deploy on more than one NATO operation.

With both the scholarly and policy evidence to support the importance of gender diversity in NATO-led operations, consider the account at the beginning of this chapter in contrast to the experiences of individuals while deployed, based on my data collection:

"I have been witness to women being ordered to shave in Bosnia, I have been witness to women being assaulted in operations and training, I have been witness to women being harassed, bullied and rumored about (usually about their sexual preference or sexual innuendos) endlessly, and by senior officers. This still occurs today ... in 2019." (Survey 81)

"Deployment was good overall. I had to work three times as hard to be taken seriously and prove my worth though." (Survey 6)

"I had to put my foot down a few times ... we had a few [sexual assault] cases that the leadership tried to hide. I had to call [capital] to report those situations." (Survey 46)

For NATO, there is no mandate for troop contributing members to increase deployment efforts for women, despite the alliance's public support for the agenda's pillars through its Policy on Women, Peace and Security. For member states, military cultures perpetuate discrimination and harassment for women before they get the chance to deploy, and while deployed. The examples above are overt forms of resistance, but this is only part of the story. My research uncovers underlying attitudes, assumptions

and deference to seemingly objective deployment processes that further implicate deployment propensity.

As noted above, my research has found that women are six times less likely to deploy than men on multiple NATO operations. It is not that women simply are opting out; the answer is more complex. Indeed, there are barriers for women that exist before it is 'wheels up' for a deployment. While deployment composition for women can partially be explained by NATO member states' representation, the weak correlation between representation and deployment rates on NATO-led operations demonstrates that representation in military forces is only half the battle, with eligibility pool and home responsibilities – commonly-assumed barriers for women's deployment by decision makers – not presenting in the results from individuals in my research, nor in the United Nations' context.

In addition to offering a new argument about how military culture impacts patterns of deployment at both the national and international level, *Mission Marginalized* serves a broader function, as the barriers identified are likely to be present for other International Security Organizations that have policy commitments to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This book is also relevant for national armed forces striving to increase the participation of women on international and domestic deployments. While country-specific studies are essential in order to consider local contexts, best practices, and challenges, my findings also provide insight into hidden barriers that persist within organizational cultures within other military operationally-led international organizations, and member states.

The Battle to Deploy More Women: State of the Field and Contribution

Women's military participation is often understood in terms of recruitment and retention, while I conceptualize military participation as also including deployment frequency. While deployment may influence retention rates (combat experience or deployment frequencies tend to influence one's professional progress and rank) these factors are influenced by member states. One such explanation emphasizes that militaries tend to reward (either through promotion or acceptance) a particular kind of soldier: the warrior. There is a valuing of hypermasculinity in personnel – described as "expressions of extreme, exaggerated, or stereotypic masculine attributes and behaviours" (→ Rosen et al., 2003, p. 326) and "practices of strength, toughness, and aggressive heterosexuality" (→ Duncanson, 2009, p. 64) – reflected in policies and programming, which exclude those who do not 'fit the mold' of traditional military values or practice. The warrior ideal, which is based on military organizational culture and values, contributes to gender-based assumptions and biases. In *Mission Marginalized*, I explore how this culture in NATO and its member states impacts the role of women's participation. While NATO defers the representation of women and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda to member states, both NATO and member states have a key role to play in improving women's deployment. It is this bridging of both NATO and member state roles, mapped against individual experiences and perceptions of servicemembers, that provide an opportunity to further develop the theoretical and empirical explanations for why women deploy less often on military operations.

Key contributions regarding women in NATO member states from an alliance perspective are comparative in nature, dating back to 1988 and 1999 (→ Stanley and Segal, 1988; → Carreiras, 1999; → Garcia, 1999, p. 33), and also consider participation in terms of the integration and recruitment of women into national

armed forces. The focus on recruitment and retention of women in national militaries, as previously noted, tends to garner the most attention due to the upstream explanations they provide. For these studies, however, the motivations to deploy focused on 'military strength' in response to nuclear reduction agreements, with factors like labour shortages and gender equality policy positively influencing the number of women in member militaries (→ Stanley and Segal, 1988, p. 560). Such a framing of women's military participation has been critiqued as "using women as a human resource for the protection of the state" while simultaneously overlooking the gendered and exploitative nature of recruiting women (→ Obradovic, 2014, p. 17).

Beyond recruitment and retention, the scope of study for women's military participation has historically focused on United Nations peacekeeping operations. For peacekeeping operations, Karim and Beardsley's work highlights how countries with greater women's labour force participation deploy a greater number of women on military and police peacekeeping missions (→ Karim and Beardsley, 2017). In the NATO context, when countries join NATO has been found to be an indicator of gender mainstreaming policy,⁴ specifically as it relates to recruitment and retention of women (→ Obradovic, 2014). However, gender mainstreaming efforts have had little impact on supporting greater gender diversity or organizational cultural change (→ Wittwer, 2013), exemplified by the representation of women in NATO forces not necessarily translating to more women in operations (→ Olsson et al., 2015).

Gender mainstreaming takes into consideration the integration of diverse perspectives and the impact of policies for diverse groups and can be used to inform approaches that may improve diversity across the military life cycle. For example, career paths for senior military appointments may be reviewed to ensure members do not face barriers based on race or gender

(→ Kvarving and Grimes, 2016, p. 20). But as noted above, there are limitations to gender mainstreaming, particularly if organizations are not committed to the implementation beyond window dressing (→ Shoemaker and von Hlatky, 2020), there is limited expertise, or there is organizational resistance (→ Moser, 2005; → Ylöstalo, 2016). In addition, gender mainstreaming tends to only be employed if an issue is identified as requiring a gender lens, such as increased representation of women in national militaries through recruitment measures: the focus is on women.⁵ But some policies and military processes, such as procurement or force generation (the process used to staff and provide materiel to various military operations), may be harder to garner buy-in for why gender mainstreaming is important, or how it is even possible. The limitations of gender mainstreaming thus become clear when we consider taken-for granted assumptions: if deployment is perceived as an objective process that is void of gender-based considerations, and if processes and criteria for deployment selection are assumed to be gender neutral, the likelihood of such a process being critically appraised is low.

Beyond gender mainstreaming in policy development, there is scarce work that considers causal factors influencing women's participation in NATO operations, though the Elsie Barrier Assessment Methodology led by Karim et. al is the most significant contribution to understanding deployment dynamics to date (→ Karim et al., 2020). And, with the increasing focus on diversity in security studies and International Relations (→ Catic and von Hlatky, 2014), there is a growing interest in understanding barriers to inclusion in military organizations. But beyond assumptions and myths that women may be concerned for their personal safety, have family or home responsibilities, or are not in military occupations that deploy (→ MacKenzie, 2015), there is limited literature regarding barriers for women's

deployment on NATO operations. Unsurprisingly, what is understood about deployment barriers and motivations is based on the experiences of men (→ Hedlund, 2011).

Explanations for women's military integration at the member state level centralize political decisions to promote women's integration, the changing relationship between armed forces and the society they serve, social equality (→ Carreiras, 2006; → Obradovic, 2014), and how security issues are historically exclusionary towards women (→ Cockburn and Enloe, 2012). Other studies tend to focus on factors that may deter women from joining or staying in the military, like sexual violence (→ Deschamps, 2015; → Weitz, 2015). I push further and find that, in the military context, there is an international understanding of what NATO military operations are: the most sought after and prestigious deployment opportunities with the greatest impact. As a result, women are blocked from participating due to gendered assumptions held by force generators - those in charge of generating personnel for operations. Moreover, I find there is limited understanding of the ways in which the force generation process may inadvertently block women's participation and impede their deployments. Empirically, this work contributes, in part, to further understanding why troop contributions to NATO operations struggle to increase the deployment of women. This is particularly relevant in the international context, as a United Nations representative once quipped that "it is easier to get data on the number of nuclear weapons each country has than it is to track and receive sex-disaggregated data" (→ Shoemaker, 2017, p. 18).

Hidden Organizational Resistances

My exploration of barriers to women's deployment on NATO operations resulted in the identification of hidden organizational

resistances within NATO and its member states. While a hypothesis-testing design was leveraged as the primary analysis for this book, inductive results garnered additional insight that led to a comprehensive conceptual framework of hidden organizational resistances. In addition to the perceived tension between operational effectiveness and diversity in military institutions, I uncover hidden barriers to women's deployment on NATO operations, including the pervasiveness of gender-based assumptions, coupled with gender-blind force generation processes, and a chasm of responsibility between NATO and allied nations with regard to the deployment of women on operations (see → Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework – Hidden Organizational Resistances.

Hidden organizational resistances are often the less-overt forms of resistance, and are more difficult to overcome. This book contributes to discussions of inclusion and diversity in security and defence, observing not only explicit sexism, harassment, and abuse with regards to NATO operations, but also hidden organizational resistances to women's deployment: processes that are assumed to be objective or taken for granted. Both NATO and member states perpetuate these barriers, which compound and impede women's deployment on NATO operations. These resistances manifested as perceived gender neutrality, force generation processes for NATO-led operations not taking gender into consideration, gendered assumptions regarding women's perceptions of deployment and mission preference, asymmetries between how NATO, member state, and military personnel support women in operations, an overall lack of ownership for how to improve women's deployment at

the NATO and member state level, and a perceived discrepancy between operational effectiveness and women's rights that suggests supporting gender equality puts operations at risk.

Research Design and Methodology

My mixed method, integrated research design explores both decision-maker and individual perspectives. In order to identify and explore resistances at multiple levels of analysis, in Chapters Five and Six, I test some of the aforementioned explanations, such as sexual violence, in addition to scholarly-derived claims through three hypotheses regarding deployment barriers for women: self-selecting out of deployments, gendered assumptions of deployment decision-makers, and gender-neutral force generation processes. Semi-structured interviews with NATO and ally force generators and policy leaders were conducted to provide insight into Women, Peace and Security policy commitments, and perceived barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations. These data were thematically coded (→ Evans and Lewis, 2018, p. 3, 4) and used to develop a survey disseminated to military servicemembers in Canada and Denmark, to test the extent to which force-generator and NATO elites' perceived barriers⁶ resonate with individuals. The responses to the survey were used to test potential explanations for women's deployment from a military member perspective. The survey design leverages a logistic regression to determine whether women are more or less likely to deploy than men on NATO operations.

My quantitative results show that, for the study population, two variables explained deployment: gender and military occupation.⁷ In order to explain the lower deployment frequency for women I operationalize the concept of hidden organizational

resistances as an integral part of military organizational culture. Ultimately, there is a grey zone of resistance within organizational cultures, and support for my argument on "hidden organizational resistances," that impedes the acceptance of women into NATO operations.

Organization of the Book

In *Chapter Two – Hidden Organizational Resistances*, literature on women's participation in military forces is explored. Although there is a growing account of why and how women participate in military forces, there is an opportunity to bolster the available literature that considers how these elements are perceived differently by military personnel and force generators. I identify existing explanations and conceptions of women's participation and deployment, noting that the framing of 'meaningful participation' undermines the very real contributions women make in their roles, regardless of support or non-support trades, and how military cultures perpetuate ongoing challenges to women's integration into the military. With foundational roots in organizational culture and implicit bias, the theoretical contribution of hidden organizational resistance is framed as perceived tensions between operational effectiveness and women's rights, discrepancies for how NATO, member states and military personnel understand and implement inclusive programs and policies, gender neutrality, and a gender-blind force generation process.

Chapter Three – Research Framework bridges the theoretical contribution from Chapter Two with the research design leveraged to explore women's deployment on NATO operations. Interviews with NATO elites, as well as Canadian and Danish force generators and gender experts, provide the organizational (both at the NATO and national level) perceived barriers to

women's deployment on NATO-led operations. Leveraging surveys and interviews with NATO elites, and representatives from Canada and Denmark's militaries, I demonstrate the importance of comparing and contrasting gender inclusive policies in theory and in practice, in addition to the perceptions of deployment decision makers and those who deploy.

Chapter Four – The Battleground: NATO and Gender provides an overview and assessment of the operating environment that hidden organizational resistances manifest within. The chapter clarifies the relationship and relevance of the United Nations' move to promote gender integration under UNCSR 1325, NATO's adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and how the organization has molded these resolutions into the NATO context. An analysis of NATO policies and commitments is also provided, with an assessment of the challenges and opportunities presented to NATO in order to increase diversity in their operations. This section also outlines the division of labour between NATO and allies for the implementation of the NATO Women, Peace and Security Policy and Action Plan and force generation process.

Chapter Five – Passing the Buck: NATO and Member State Support for Women in Operations explores the institutional barriers from NATO elites and Canadian and Danish representatives. The barriers identified for NATO operations are congruent with systematic reviews regarding barriers for women's participation in peacekeeping operations (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018). Unique contributions of this chapter include the identification of barriers such as the type of mission (United Nations or NATO), health concerns (personal or family), gender blindness, assumptions around reverse discrimination and, finally, force generation.⁸ At the national level, both the application system for open positions for units in the Danish case as well as assumptions surrounding burnout due to

deployments in the Canadian case may feed into barriers for women deploying on NATO-led operations. An additional contribution of this chapter are findings of perceived motivations for women deploying on NATO-led operations.

The identified barriers from the previous chapter are then leveraged in *Chapter Six – Deployment Barriers for Women in Context: Individual-level Perceptions and Experiences*. Surveys were distributed to members of the Canadian and Danish Armed Forces to determine to what extent these barriers influence their deployment and redeployment on NATO-led operations. The objectives of this design were threefold: first, to identify the extent to which there is variation between men and women's deployment frequencies on NATO-led operations; second, to assess barriers identified by force generators at both the national and NATO level; and third, to identify motivations for women's deployment on NATO operations. A logistic regression finds that women in the study are six times less likely to have deployed on multiple NATO-led operations, despite volunteering at the same rate as men for deployments. In order to explore this dynamic further, qualitative responses from surveys were assessed. Excerpts contextualize individual experiences and perspectives with regard to women in NATO operations. The gap in redeployment is explained through the hidden resistance criteria found throughout the qualitative responses, juxtaposed to the perceived and experienced barriers to deployment.

Chapter Seven – Hidden Resistance and Organizational Culture in a NATO Context synthesizes the findings from the interview and survey research designs, and conceptualizes hidden organizational resistances. Opportunities and considerations for further research that were beyond the scope of this book are proposed.

Conclusion

In the pages that follow, this book challenges the policies, processes and assumptions that are often taken for granted in military organizational cultures of NATO, Canada and Denmark. The policy implications at both the international and national level are clear: by identifying the hidden resistance barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations, NATO and allies can address and reevaluate the ways gender is taken into consideration in operations, and take steps to increase the representation of women deployed. My argument thus furthers scholarly understandings of military organizational culture – that is, the norms, values and beliefs of the military – and applies this lens to the gendered patterns of deployment.

I make a clear policy and theoretical contribution to understanding women's military participation – a participation that is hindered due to persistent hidden barriers within military organizational cultures. I provide an overview of the NATO structure and how it has implemented its gender agenda, highlighting missed opportunities to lead by example and mitigate the implications of hidden organizational biases at both the NATO and member state level. Through interviews with experts and force generators in NATO, Canada and Denmark, I identify perceived barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations. This is juxtaposed with original survey data that is leveraged to test to what extent these barriers manifest for women. While many of the perceived barriers from force generators are not found to impede women's deployment on NATO-led operations, qualitative evidence demonstrates the permeation of hidden organizational resistances. Hidden organizational resistances and biases embedded in these cultures are exposed when the perspectives of force generators

and policymakers are compared with the experiences of military personnel. Ultimately, *Mission Marginalized* uncovers the ways in which military organizational cultures (→ Acker, 1990) impede women's participation in NATO-led operations, perpetuating the marginalization of women in defence and security.

Chapter Two Hidden Organizational Resistances

"It is evident that the root cause of gender inequality cannot be solved solely by doctrine and training solutions — rather a transformational organisational culture shift is pivotal and critical to the future global security" (→ Trochowska-Sviderok, 2024, p. 27).

At first glance, it would seem that the military career cycle, from recruitment to release, functions fairly effectively and in a relatively uniform way. The initial entry point for new recruits – whether voluntary or conscripted – begins the same: recruits progress through basic training, and from there they may take professional development courses to be promoted to successively higher ranks, and if the strategic situation necessitates it, they may be slotted to deploy. After a career of service, personnel may then release and retire. While a seemingly straightforward process, the reality belies a much more complex and non-linear experience.

The differences in career trajectory and experience are particularly pronounced when considered through a gender lens. In Canada, for example, women in the Regular Force are found to be survivors of sexual violence at more than double the rate of service members who are men, and sexual violence is even more prevalent for Regular Force members who are younger, Indigenous, have a disability and/or are non-heterosexual (→ Cotter and Burczyk, 2023). Men and women also have been found to have different experiences when transitioning to civilian life (→ Eichler, 2016; → Shoemaker and von Hlatky, 2020). In Denmark, a 2017 study found that women cite physical challenges and mental health as reasons for

release, followed by 'unrealistic expectations,' and 'unfulfilled expectations' which have increased from 2 percent to 16 percent between 2014 and 2018 (Forsvarsministeriets Personalestyrelse, 2018, p. 3). These challenges for military women and their experiences with military culture are prevalent across NATO member states (→ Fossey et al., 2019, p. 52).

It is evident that some aspects of the military career cycle, and barriers that influence women's experiences and access to professional milestones, are understood to a greater extent than others. Deployment, for example, is a key professional requirement that is often taken for granted as something that 'happens' or 'does not happen' during military careers. Although literature on military operations is abundant, there is less information available when considering the process for deployments or deploying certain personnel, particularly on NATO operations. This occurs despite the credibility granted to those with multiple deployments during their military career; deployment – at home or abroad – is, after all, the *raison d'être* of most military forces.

This chapter outlines ongoing discussions regarding women's military participation and deployment, and how this literature informs the research design and theoretical framing of hidden organizational resistances for this book. I begin with literature on women's participation in male-dominated occupations, such as the military and politics, followed by the debate regarding women's contributions in exclusively peacekeeping roles. From here, I explore the debunked debate regarding gender and operational effectiveness and then shift to literature on women's participation in male-dominated fields based on three levels of analysis. The first level is focused on the decisions women make, be it due to structural constraints or personal agency: women may opt out of male-dominated spaces due to personal safety concerns, harassment, or imbalances in

the division of labour at home. The second level consists of the socio-cultural elements – norms, values and beliefs – that are exclusionary toward women. The third includes analyses of international or global structures – such as gendered political economy and how international organizations reframe Women, Peace and Security to suit their particular needs, ultimately impeding or ignoring women's participation.

I argue there are mutually compounding barriers at the levels of the individual, national military organizations, and NATO which impede women's deployment. The cross-cutting and converging nature of these barriers are supported by Saskia Stachowitsch's work regarding the "constructed dichotomy between domestic and international levels of analysis" (→ Stachowitsch, 2012, p. 309). That is, these barriers do not operate in neatly defined arcs of fire but instead converge to resist change at multiple levels. Using gender integration in the case of the United States military, Stachowitsch demonstrates how domestic policy, international pressures and gender norms at the state level result in "foreign policy processes that are gendered" (309). This is further reinforced by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, in which interwoven systems of power and oppression converge to disadvantage equity-deserving communities (→ Crenshaw, 1991). Stachowitsch and Crenshaw's works further reinforce the approach for this book, and the importance of deconstructing military organizational cultures at the international organization, ally, and individual levels, and how these cultures interact to produce chasms of responsibility. In this chapter, I demonstrate how these implicit biases and taken-for-granted processes within military organizational cultures, which I refer to as hidden organizational resistances, contribute to the marginalization of women's participation – framed as deployment on operations. While overt discrimination persists in military cultures, it is

hidden organizational resistances that are harder to identify, admit and address. Military organizational culture permeates all levels: military personnel, member states and NATO. But, first, we turn to one of the core debates, which challenges the call for women's increased participation in the military: does increasing women's military participation seek to "make war safe for women?" (→ Shepherd, 2016, p. 325).

Divergence at the Frontlines: Peacekeeping

Feminist scholars diverge in their normative approaches to supporting women's participation in war. Some have challenged the approach that oversimplifies women as "tools of war" or "making war safe for women" by calling for an increase of women's participation in military operations (→ Shepherd, 2016; → Dyvik, 2014). Others challenge pacifist perspectives of women, going so far as to reject biological explanations for certain behaviours, and arguing their use further marginalizes women's participation in defence and security (Aroussi, 2009). Despite the debates regarding the "proper" role of women in defence and security, the representation of women in national armed forces is changing (→ Duncanson and Woodward, 2016). The changing nature of conflict and fighting in war has resulted in the emergence of spaces of conflict that are not always hand-to-hand combat (for example, cyber), but there are also increased opportunities for peacemaking and post-war reconstruction (→ Kennedy-Pipe, 2000). This is not to say that military forces must rely on the changing nature of conflict in order to support women's deployment. While women's increased participation in military forces is often rationalized by pointing to "unique" feminine skills that can be leveraged for specific operations – like

post-conflict reconstruction efforts – others challenge that the framing of these skills should be expanded for all military personnel, challenging 'women's roles' and what are traditionally 'masculine military practices.'

The divergence of these perspectives is on full display in discussions about increasing women's deployment on peacekeeping operations. The issue of shoe-horning women's military participation into exclusively peacekeeping roles is explored in Sahla Aroussi's work, which highlights the divergence of feminist authors and notes how notions of women's "inherent pacifism" and "mythical notions of peacebuilders" – particularly since the emergence of UNCSR 1325 – reinforces gender-based dichotomies and continues to sideline women's participation in defence and security (Aroussi, 2009). While there is a call for increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations from member states and civil society alike, an explicit focus on peacekeeping is steeped in gender bias. Women must be integrated into national armed forces before they can be deployed on any type of operation. With this in mind, to only call for women's increased participation in peacekeeping from troop-contributing countries – as opposed to operations such as the NATO International Security Assistance Force, NATO's multinational mission to Afghanistan until 2014 – may in fact be a barrier to women's participation in NATO-led operations, as there are external pressures further marginalizing women's participation in defence and security (Aroussi, 2009). Ultimately, an emphasis on peacekeeping relegates women to particular forms of participation, countering part of the essence of the Women, Peace and Security agenda which seeks to increase women's meaningful participation across all peace and security efforts.

Canada's National Action Plan for the Integration of the Women, Peace and Security agenda 2017–2022, for example,

explicitly committed to "Strengthen the capacity of peace operations to advance the WPS agenda; including by deploying more women and fully embedding the WPS agenda into CAF operations and police deployments" (→ Government of Canada, 2017a). The intent overall is to improve peacekeeping operations by increasing the representation of women. The 2024 iteration, Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security – 2023 to 2029, revises this commitment slightly, with the goal to "increase the representation of diverse uniformed women in international operations" (→ Government of Canada, 2024a, p. 32). The commitment is measured through the percentage of uniformed personnel deployed to United Nations and/or NATO international operations who are women (→ Government of Canada, 2024a, p. 41), demonstrating a broader approach to military participation beyond peace operations.

Kirby and Shepherd further nuance this discussion by exploring the emergence of what they define as a Women, Peace and Security ecosystem. The authors argue the advantages of such an ecosystem include holistic thinking and an ability to focus on various aspects of Women, Peace and Security, including emerging topics that do not traditionally fit within the four "pillars," such as climate change and engagement of men and boys (→ Kirby and Shepherd, 2021, p. 7). Kirby and Shepherd note that anti-military feminist opposition to NATO has become less evident since NATO actively embraced the Women, Peace and Security agenda (→ Kirby and Shepherd, 2021, p. 6), providing greater space for engagement to understand women's military participation beyond the epistemic deadlock outlined above. This book is aligned with the contributions outlined above: to dictate where women may contribute to peace and security (for example, in exclusively peacekeeping operations) disregards the complexity and diversity of

operations, the multitude of roles that women bring to peace and security efforts, and essentializes women into inherently peacekeeping roles. I contribute to the broader dialogue on Women, Peace and Security with the intent to support women's ongoing advancement in all aspects of security and defence. Against the ongoing assumptions that women's integration into military and defence organizations limit operational effectiveness, in addition to the resistance of military cultures to women's military participation, this contribution is vital.

Breaking Barriers: Women's Participation and Representation

Conventional explanations of women's participation in 'masculine occupations'⁹ have historically considered self-selection, gender equality, labour shortages, political and socioeconomic status of states, and international policy. While these factors provide significant insight into overt barriers that may exist for women's participation and recruitment, I suggest there is an opportunity to also consider the impact of organizational culture on a key element of advancement and retention: deployment.

Scholarly work on women's military participation has focused on the representation of women in national armed forces, and the role of larger, patriarchal cultures and structures that inhibit (or ignore) women's full participation. For example, national legislation and labour shortages have been shown to influence the percentage of women in national militaries (→ Stanley and Segal, 1988, p. 562). The inculcation of military codes of values and ethics based on 'service before self' and warrior hypermasculinity are also argued to exclude women from military service. The foundation and culture of military duty

is seen to be incongruent with women's participation, particularly due to family life, pregnancy, and the expectations of the universality of service.¹⁰ The overall purpose of the military – to be deployable for operations – is argued to be in direct conflict with women who are or become pregnant (→ Taber, 2009, pp. 31–33). Adding to Taber's contribution which notes deployment is in conflict with family, I suggest that perceptions of force generators and gendered assumptions are also pernicious resistances for women's deployment.

Socio-cultural factors, including organizational biases, are often not considered as an international-level explanation that might impede women's participation in the NATO context, as conventional wisdom defers to member states and national military cultures. Taken together, there are missed opportunities for developing a greater understanding of women's participation in terms of deployment, and barriers that may exist. There is also the opportunity to expand socio-cultural explanations for how NATO and member states interact and implement gender-sensitive policies. I consider some of these explanations in terms of deployment participation, while also identifying implications of organizational culture at the international level.

Human Rights, Gender Diversity, and Operational Effectiveness

Beyond the values-driven discourse regarding women's roles in military forces, a common source of resistance to the increased participation of women in military operations is the disproven belief that women's integration limits team cohesion and operational effectiveness (→ Gutmann, 2000). While this myth has been debunked (→ Okros and Scott, 2014; → MacKenzie,

2015), resistance still continues and is observed from military personnel and policy makers with regard to gender diversity writ large. But this resistance is not isolated to military and defence organizations. A study that drew from over 21,000 podcast episodes and digital artifacts found that the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated the rise of online misogyny, due to the radicalization of isolated men and boys and the upsurge in the use of social media to seek connection (→ Wiens et al., 2025). But this rollback is also being observed at the national and international level: over a quarter of US-based global health organizations have removed or altered references to diversity, equity, inclusion, and gender equality on their websites (→ Global Health 50/50, 2025).

The impact to defence and security is far reaching, with gender inequality being tied to democratic backsliding and armed conflict (→ Caprioli, 2000; → Caprioli, 2005; → Elveren et al., 2022; → Ortiz et al., 2023). Consider, for example, the Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness Executive Order released by the White House in the United States in January 2025. The Executive Order blames a "radical gender ideology" that puts physical health and unit cohesion at risk, and claims that servicemembers' whose gender identity and expression differ from their sex at birth "cannot satisfy the rigorous standards necessary for military service" as it "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honourable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle" (→ The White House, 2025). The policy effectively bars transgender and non-binary servicemembers from service in the United States Armed Forces and is one example of a broader, international rollback on gender equality and human rights. In March 2025, the United Nations Secretary General sounded the alarm of the "furious kickback against equality" being observed internationally (→ Blondel, 2025).

Human rights and military effectiveness need not be in competition on the road to greater diversity and inclusion (Kier, 1998). As outlined at the outset of this book, the assumption that these values are mutually exclusive is challenged by the evidence that the integration of diverse groups can occur without disruption to group cohesion. Nevertheless, the case for increased representation of women in security institutions often falls to the "operational effectiveness" rationale (→ Enloe, 1982), because in a military context, it often has the most traction. After all, militaries prioritize mission success. Framing women's increased representation and participation this way is a means to get 'buy-in' from those who may be resistant; if mission success is of primary importance for security forces, one cannot disagree with the operational need for more women.

To this end, militaries and international organizations are increasingly justifying an increase in women's presence based on operational effectiveness, to pre-empt this resistance. Although the scholarly focus in the context of diversity and military effectiveness has often been on peacekeeping, a range of literature points to the contribution that women make to operations in general. These contributions include combating sexual misconduct, supporting a stronger reputation of peacekeeping forces by improving trust (→ Bridges and Horsfall, 2009), and greater representation of individuals who possess qualities like empathy and intuition in soldiering.¹¹ Some scholars argue that women have inclinations towards cooperative strategies and are community focused, which plays a large role in the qualities needed for nation building and peacekeeping (→ Davis, 2009a; → Disler, 2010). Women in operations have also been found to reduce both the number of civilians killed in conflict zones (→ Bove and Ruggeri, 2016), and the negative effects of peacekeeping operations for local populations (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018, p. 16). There are also

practical advantages that women in security forces are able to search women at checkpoints and can establish trust and relationships with a broader section of local populations. Women's integration into military forces may also lead to: improved protection of civilians (especially women and children); deterrence of sexual violence; improved assistance to survivors of sexual violence; a civilizing effect on male colleagues to promote better behaviour; improved intelligence gathering from local women who may otherwise not speak with soldiers, and; serving as role models for local women and girls (→ Bridges and Horsfall, 2009; → Olsson and Tryggestad, 2001; → Jennings, 2011, pp. 3-4, 20, citing → UNDPKO, 2000; → UNDPKO, 2004; → UNDFW, 2007; → United Nations Mission in Liberia, 2010; → Bertolazzi, 2010).

This rights and readiness framing – which explores how human rights and operational readiness need not be in conflict – is also observed in the NATO context, where there has been an upsurge in initiatives and pressure to increase the representation of women not only in national militaries, but for the troop contributions to NATO operations. One key source of data is the Annual National Reports submitted by partner and member states to the NATO IMS Office of the Gender Advisor. In a consolidated document, member states report on women's representation and ongoing initiatives to support women and gender perspectives. Members are asked to report on efforts to support gender perspectives, professional development opportunities, and maternity leave. Overall, NATO policy tends to refer to the operational benefits of women in many instances, with the NATO IMS Office of the Gender Advisor previously noting "the complementary skills of both male and female personnel are essential for the effectiveness of NATO operations" (→ NATO, 2015). This is language that many feminist scholars caution against (→ Kronsell, 2012; → Morais et al., 2022,

p. 108) and has likely led to the reframing of language to focus on gender perspectives. I reinforce this call for nuance when broaching the topic of women's participation, uncovering and challenging the upstream factors and cultures that impede women's participation. This call for nuance has been observed by some national armed forces, which have shifted the dialogue toward reducing barriers to women's participation in all areas of security and defence.¹² This shift from some member states represents a step away from requiring women to contribute something unique to military operations, and rather focuses on how to set the conditions for women's retention and participation.

To conclude, despite the proposed benefits to women's military participation and operational effectiveness, women's participation in military organizations are sometimes met with resistance from critical feminist scholars based on the provision that claims of improved operational effectiveness essentialize women as being "most useful" in particular roles (such as peacekeeping and humanitarian work). This discussion is relevant within NATO operations and non-peacekeeping operations, as there tends to be diverging perspectives on the militarization and essentialization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

I approach this discussion with women's agency and rights in NATO member states at the forefront. It is not that all women who wish to deploy may do so (as this is not the case for men, either); however, hidden organizational resistances and gender bias within armed forces serve as barriers to women's deployment that men need not contend with to the same extent. Addressing these barriers may further support women's equal right to serve (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018, p. 18) and equal access to career-enhancing deployment opportunities. The next section summarizes some of the key factors that are found to contribute

to women's representation and deployment at the individual, military and international levels. I refer to works exploring women's labour force and political participation, broader military participation, and peacekeeping deployments, due to the limited scholarly work exploring women's deployment beyond a narrow peacekeeping context.

Individual-level Explanations

With women's agency at the forefront, military participation can be partially explained by women's motives and experiences – women make decisions that influence their overall presence and participation in male-dominated spaces. In the military context, research has considered how women's choices influence recruitment, retention and overall representation. I define these 'individual level' factors as those in which the individual has agency over the outcome – in this case, deployment on a NATO operation. These explanations tend to consider self-selection, personal preference and personal safety as reasons for limited diversity or integration in military spheres. For example, a report out of the United States found that women participants in the study generally had less interest in participating in combat than men (→ Yeung et al., 2017, p. 16). Conversely, I argue, assumptions about women's preferences may also impede access to deployment for women. While agency is indeed a key variable in this process, there remains a gap in understanding regarding the impact of assumptions or myths that are imposed on women based on their assumed preferences, despite their choice to join the military in the first place.

Erik Hedlund suggests that one of the most critical issues for the future of peacekeeping operations and militaries is how to motivate volunteers to serve in international operations. Hedlund found multiple motivations for deployment, including

(but not limited to) comradeship, altruism, useful merit for future career, adventure, meeting new people, and maturing as a human being. In addition to these factors, he classified one motivation as the "modern motive," that is, enjoyment in escaping for six months from routine to an all-inclusive situation where meals are served, laundry is done, and there is freedom from responsibilities of caring for children and spouses (→ Hedlund, 2011). Hedlund's findings assume, however, that all personnel who are motivated to deploy get to do so, and the author is limited in his generalizability due to a sample consisting only of men. Despite references being made to "men and women," no interviews were conducted with women regarding their motivations to deploy. This is a shortcoming from the literature I address throughout this book: military personnel, until recently, were considered a homogenous group in policy, and military career experiences were considered universal. While not the driving question of this work, a supplementary outcome of my field research found motivations for deployment – including financial, adventure or professional development – that women report. This is required, in part, in order to address ongoing assumptions that men's experiences are universal.

Socio-Cultural Explanations

Socio-cultural explanations for women's participation consider the recruitment and representation of women in military forces, the role of women in national contexts, labour forces, economic participation, and military culture. Research on women's participation in military forces tends to be nation-specific due to the uniqueness of national and military-level policies. Examples from the literature that explain women's representation (or lack thereof) within national militaries include factors such as

national legislation,¹³ conscription, and labour shortages (→ Stanley and Segal, 1988). Ultimately, these studies overwhelmingly find that resistance to adaptation or the integration of women are the result of an overarching masculine civilian culture which infiltrates – and enables, values and supports – the traditional hegemonic masculine military. For example, Yolande Bouka and Romi Sigsworth argue that colonialism and imposed gender norms influenced gender roles in Kenya, and subsequently women's roles in the Kenyan armed forces. The authors find that the introduction of constitutions based on gender equality and non-discrimination resulted in a foundation being laid for women's increased participation in the Kenyan armed forces. These efforts are in tension with continued gender norms and social barriers to gender equality, based on masculinity/patriarchy (and associations with peacekeeping), which inhibit women rising through the ranks and their relegation to traditional support roles (→ Bouka and Sigsworth, 2016).

With NATO's promotion of democratic values in mind (→ NATO, 2018a), a longer democratic history correlates with women's suffrage: a combination that has been found to support higher rates of female labour force participation (→ Beer, 2009). → Kerry Crawford et al. (2014) expand on this and test explanations such as the political and socioeconomic character of states, international norms, and mission demands, and conclude that contributions of female personnel to operations may be influenced by the democratic nature of a member state,¹⁴ but it is largely the result of the size of military armed forces. Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley's work regarding women's deployment on United Nations peacekeeping missions purports that "countries with greater gender equality in the form of women's labour force participation deploy a greater proportion of women in most

military and police peacekeeping missions" (→ Karim and Beardsley, 2017, p. 88). While focused on peacekeeping operations, there is some evidence that countries with longer democratic records – which correlate with gender equality and labour force participation of women – tend to deploy higher proportions of women to both military and police components of peacekeeping missions. As outlined below, based on NATO-derived data, this correlation is weak for NATO operations.

The argument that countries with a higher gender equality index deploy more women, while compelling, does not hold true with regard to their impact on deployment in NATO-led operations. There does not appear to be a link between women's labour force participation and representation in NATO deployments, based on the United Nations Development Programme Gender Inequality Index in 2022 (see → Table 2.1) (United Nations Development Program, n.d.).¹⁵

Table 2.1: Gender Equality and Deployment.

Top 5 NATO Member States Gender Equality Index 2022 (→ UNDP, 2022)	Top 5 Labour Force Participation Rate (%) 2022 (→ World Bank, 2022)	NATO Highest Representation of Women in Military (%) (→ NATO, 2022b)	NATO Highest Percentage of Women Deployed in NATO Operations (→ NATO, 2022b)
Denmark	Iceland	United States (20.70)	Greece (15.53)
Sweden	Netherlands	Hungary (20.10)	Montenegro (15.38)
Netherlands	Norway	France (16.8)	Canada (11.63)
Finland	Sweden	Greece (16.80)	Hungary (9.41)
Iceland	Canada	Latvia (16.5)	Croatia (8.99)

What we do see, instead, is that representation does not tell the whole story with regard to deployments on NATO-led operations. The above table, which leverages data from the World Bank, United Nations, and the 2022 Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, demonstrates that the representation of women in national armed forces and gender equality of a country may not fully translate into improved composition on NATO deployments.

This is further reinforced when comparing the representation of women in the military, those deployed, the representation of women in all operations for member states, and the representation of women deployed on NATO-only operations. For example, in 2021, in comparison to the representation of women in national militaries, 21 members in NATO¹⁶ had notable disparities in the representation of women in the military relative to the number of women who deploy in NATO operations. Countries such as Spain, Luxembourg and Canada reported representation rates for women that were higher than those deployed on NATO operations. A country's representation of women mapped against deployment is the first instance one may notice there are barriers to deployment for women. In my analysis, I have considered data gathered from the NATO IMS Office of the Gender Advisor on the representation of women in member militaries from 2007 to 2020, and on NATO-led operations between 2015 and 2020. Findings demonstrate that countries with the highest representation of women in their militaries do not necessarily deploy the highest percentage of women in NATO operations (at least in the case of Hungary, Latvia and Greece - see → Table 2.2). This begs the question of what barriers may be influencing the differing proportion of women's deployment in NATO operations.

Table 2.2: Top Representation and Deployment Composition of NATO Member States.

NATO Highest Representation of Women in Military (%) (→ NATO, 2022b)	NATO Highest Percentage of Women Deployed in NATO Operations (→ NATO, 2022b)
USA (20.70)	Greece (15.53)
Hungary (20.10)	Montenegro (15.38)
France (16.8)	Canada (11.63)
Greece (16.80)	Hungary (9.41)
Latvia (16.5)	Croatia (8.99)

This is not to say that an increase in representation of women in NATO national militaries has no relation at all to deployment. Although Olsson, Schjølset, and Moller argue that increased female participation nationally does not automatically lead to more women in international operations (→ Olsson et al., 2015, p. 55), NATO data spanning 2015 to 2017 suggests there is a weak/moderate positive correlation between representation in NATO countries and deployment on NATO operations (see Appendix 1). In alignment with the authors, however, is that increased representation does not automatically result in increased deployment rates. Rather, using the case of United Nations peacekeeping missions as an example, "an increase by five percentage points in the domestic female ratio balance of the armed forces translates into a one to two percentage increase in the female ratio balance of the peacekeeping contributions" (→ Beardsley and Karim, 2015, p. 77).

So, what can explain the gap between representation and NATO deployment rates? There are countries in which the representation of women is much higher than the NATO average; however, women comprise a lower percentage for deployment contributions to NATO operations. Alternatively,

there are those with a lower representation rate than the NATO average that deploy a higher representation of women for their NATO contributions. Clearly, the representation of women in NATO national militaries only partially explains deployment composition on NATO operations and increasing representation in military forces within NATO is only the start of the battle. Ultimately, assumptions that increasing women's representation alone will increase deployment may be ineffective if representation in military forces has such a marginal impact (→ Aggestam and Towns, 2019). And, although force size may contribute to women's representation overall in national militaries (→ Crawford et al., 2014), it does not capture deployment composition for troop contributing countries.

Bringing in military organizational culture provides insight into the dynamics at play and why factors that influence representation in military forces may not translate into boots on the ground for women. Akin to → Schein and Schein's 2017 definition of organizational culture, military culture is often characterized as "the deep structure rooted in the prevailing assumptions, norms, values, customs and traditions that collectively, over time, have created shared individual expectations amongst members," a "form of glue that holds people together" (→ Bass, 1996, p. 69); → Caforio, 2009). This culture sometimes manifests as a "harassment-filled" "brotherhood" that ultimately hinders women's integration and military transition to civilian life (→ MacKenzie, 2015; → King, 2015; → Eichler, 2016). The Danish military provides a clear example where historical stories and narratives of women's insufficiency in the military reify themselves as a contemporary narrative of women's ability or inability to serve (→ Muhr and Sløk-Andersen, 2017). Also observed in the Canadian context, various scandals over the last forty years have been attributed to

permissive leadership, a lack of accountability, and military culture (→ von Hlatky, 2025).

Women from almost every non-traditional workplace report having to work within masculine cultures, in which their male colleagues question their ability to do their jobs and their leadership ability (→ Whittock, 2002). Often-observed dynamics of masculinity, sexual harassment and discrimination, social isolation, poor work life balance, visibility and the career pipeline in non-military spaces (→ Whittock, 2002) may also hinder opportunities for women's deployment on operations. For example, some elements of culture may deter women from wishing to deploy or join the forces, such as the high prevalence of sexual assault (→ Jeffreys, 2007)¹⁷ and career pipeline policies can limit women's enlistment in particular military trades or occupations. For example, Albania approved the removal of a policy in 2022 that restricted the proportion of women in the military to 15% (→ NATO, 2022b, p. 20). Findings from Canada demonstrate that as officers move up the rank structure, "the promotion process narrows to a smaller and smaller number of decision-makers and inputs which is acute at the Colonel level and above." Andrea Charron explains that "there is very little if any transparency in the decision-making process at the highest levels." As a result, "idiosyncratic influences are likely then to dominate [promotion processes]. In particular, individuals have a tendency to seek to replicate themselves" when they promote (→ Government of Canada, 2019, p. 33). These promotions are also heavily based on theatre experience, which results in a catch twenty-two: women are not represented at the highest decision-making ranks, where decisions surrounding promotion can be influenced by bias. These decision makers perpetuate myths or assumptions surrounding deployments, merit, and the values placed on masculine or feminine traits in military promotion boards.

There are several components of military culture that may contribute to women's decreased presence in NATO operations. The first is a resistance to change and values of tradition. Despite the context-specific nature of national militaries, I believe there is an overarching 'military culture' that is observed across military organizations. Militaries are steeped in history and tradition, and there is often limited education on the topics of gender and social dynamics, resulting in resistance to change (→ Terriff, 2006; → Egnell et al., 2014). The foundational bones of military culture also reify myths that impede policy progress that would enable women's full and equal participation in military forces (→ Obradovic, 2014; → MacKenzie, 2015). In the case of the United States, for instance, Megan MacKenzie counters common myths that impede women's participation in military combat forces. The author argues that women's exclusion in combat was based on the perpetuation of biases within policies (such as the combat exclusion policy) and myths that "women can't fight" (→ Mackenzie, 2015, n.p.). One myth-busting example, where MacKenzie challenges this perception, was the prevalence of all-women combat units in response to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Another was the myth that women were physically unable to participate in combat; however, MacKenzie notes there was not a standardized combat physical test they could be assessed against in order to demonstrate alignment with certain physical requirements.

Sexism is another component of military culture that may influence deployment. Examples of sexism and sexual harassment exist across many NATO ally militaries. Policy-based analyses have called attention to factors influencing women's representation such as sexual assault and rape (→ Weitz, 2015), and what Sheila Jeffreys coins as the "double jeopardy" – both the fear of rape by colleagues and dying during deployment (→ Jeffreys, 2007). In Canada, this is exemplified by the findings

of the External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces which points to an underlying culture of sexism in the CAF (→ Deschamps, 2015; → Arbour, 2022). With regard to representation, Helena Carreiras argues that the number of women in the military is an important variable to explain the level of gender integration, only when considered in conjunction with other variables. Carreiras differentiates between numerical representations of women and what she considers a "qualified presence," which she describes vaguely as "participation that seems to influence gender integration to a reasonable extent" (→ Carreiras, 2006, p. 127) such as holding positions of power in order to influence policies. The challenge with numerical framing is that it places the onus on women to create change and also assumes military cultures cannot indoctrinate women. In addition, while the clarification in policy of a 'qualified' or 'meaningful' presence may be helpful to improve the contribution of women on operations, this framing inadvertently suggests that women's contributions on deployments may be less meaningful if they deploy in a support role. Sexism is also inherent to discussions on whether women should be allowed to deploy or participate on the battlefield. The irony is that non-military combatants have been employing women in their forces while national militaries continue to discuss whether women can successfully act in the same roles as men (→ Trisko-Darden, 2015, p. 459).

There is also evidence from the literature of how sexism and gender bias translate into a lack of gender-based policy to support women in military service, and on operations. A US study, for example, demonstrates the implications of family care and deployment on women, as well as the challenges of isolation, sexual harassment, and assault (→ Ritchie, 2001). Ritchie's summary provides important context, noting concerns regarding personal safety, challenges with harassment, and

working with local cultures. Many of these challenges and barriers persist, as identified by the Elsie Barrier Assessments noted previously, but there has been a shift in narrative from Ritchie's standpoint that men and women's concerns surrounding family and personal safety are the same. While all deployed servicemembers can share common concerns with regard to deployment, the way these barriers are experienced by men and women vary due to social gender norms, where "women are more likely to face caregiving demands from parents, spouses, and children, and the stresses related to balancing family demands with military careers have been linked to women's higher rates of attrition" (→ Keller et al., 2018, p. 44; → Hall et al., 2019). During a testimony to the Canada's Standing Committee on National Defence, former Infantry Officer Sandra Perron demonstrates how women,

Lose opportunities to deploy on exercises, to punch those leadership tickets that will gain them the personnel evaluation reports to get them promoted, and the courses. ... [W]hen only 10% of the senior officers are women and when 90% of deployed forces are men, it means that women are losing opportunities." As well, Ms. Perron commented that, even following deployment, women are not progressing at the same rate as their peers (→ Government of Canada, 2019, p. 31).

Furthermore, when women do deploy, they often face social exclusion or are ostracized from their team (→ McGraw, 2016). As noted earlier, the expectations of military duty and service before self are argued by Taber to be in contradiction; the culture of military duty is one that does not align with women's participation (→ Taber, 2009, pp. 31–33). Research on the Canadian case, for example, finds that despite NATO commitments, the heteronormative masculine culture that is used to unite the military and support group cohesion is exclusionary towards women and 2SLGBTQI+ people (→ Taber,

2011; → Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2022; → von Hlatky and Imre-Millei, 2022; → McCristall and Babando, 2023).

Troop contributing countries may also refrain from deploying women due to sexism (lack of acceptance), or countries, like the United States, have shown a reluctance to provide troops that might be placed at risk (→ Van Der Meulen and Soeters, 2005). This drives the point further: increased casualties are considered more legitimate if a mission is considered 'vital' for national defence. In comparison, there is a lower tolerance for casualties when the objective is, for example, humanitarian intervention. As a result, there is some evidence of institutional barriers that may hinder the deployment and participation of women in high-risk missions. While there are examples of setting quotas to increase women's representation in armed forces, Afghanistan being a case in point, quotas alone are insufficient. There is also a need to bolster targets through changes to policies, programs, and assumptions. At a national level, research on Canada's defence policy demonstrates the impact of seminal military texts not engaging with feminist perspectives (→ Shoemaker and von Hlatky, 2020) and the implementation of the Employment Equity Act also demonstrates challenges meeting representation targets, particularly in defence organizations, and harkens back to the challenge of using quantitative data alone to draw assumptions; setting goals are the first step, but targets will not meet themselves. There must be resources dedicated and a pathway to implement change in a sustainable way, otherwise hidden organizational resistances will continue to be left unchecked.

Social exclusion of women while on deployment is another example of the impact of sexism in military cultures. Obradovic notes, for example, how "states have, for centuries, produced, reproduced, and relied on military masculinity as an institutionalized form of exclusion of all other masculinities and

femininities" (→ Obradovic, 2014, location 604). Annica Kronsell's work further considers the position of women within these military institutions, and how women adapt to masculine norms in order to be "one of the guys" (2005, p. 292). While not influencing deployment per se, gender integration is a prerequisite for participation within the organization, and for deployment opportunities. As discussed previously, being 'one of the guys' may also influence women's access to mentors and information about various deployments opportunities.

Considerable scholarly work has emphasized the role of military culture as an exclusionary force against women's recruitment and retention. Wed to culture and tradition, policies and processes held by national militaries tend to exclude and overlook women. The impact of military culture on deployment has been studied in terms of social exclusion and isolation but not yet when it comes to how militaries get boots on the ground with a gender and diversity lens. How military cultures within international organizations (such as NATO) compound with national-level military organizational cultures is raised as one of the central contributions of this book as a barrier to women's deployment on NATO-led operations.

International Explanations

The body of literature focused on NATO's implementation of Women, Peace and Security and gender mainstreaming efforts continues to grow. Key contributions have demonstrated the implications of a hypermasculine, externally-facing alliance, in addition to a reinterpretation of the values of the Women, Peace and Security agenda that, I argue, results in hidden organizational resistances within NATO being left untouched. While gender mainstreaming may provide an upstream solution for deployment barriers (i.e. allowing for consideration of

gender norms and family responsibilities and how this may influence deployment opportunities and force generation processes), these have yet to be considered in the literature.

The structural constraints of NATO and member states have been well-articulated by feminist international relations scholar Cynthia Enloe. Employing the structure/agency debate of women in international politics, Enloe uncovers visible and invisible forms of power that oppress and exploit women (→ Enloe, 1989). Enloe's depiction of how women are integral to national security in the military context – yet are ignored or excluded – alludes to the assumptions and scholarly work that considers international factors that may influence women's deployment. This could be due to explicit efforts at the international level to call attention to women's participation more broadly in policy, types of missions, international processes like force generation, and quotas. Expanding on Enloe's work, I consider what happens when women are accepted as equal contributors in military contexts in policy and legislation, but continue to be marginalized due to a lack of organizational acceptance or assumptions when it comes to who should deploy.

Despite international organizations' inclusive practices to improve diversity in security forces – such as the United Nations implementation of quotas for peacekeeping missions (currently at 15% for troop contributing countries) – challenges persist. Such initiatives have spurred concerns amongst scholars and practitioners alike regarding the merit of women if the goal is to merely "meet a target" (→ UN Women, 2018, p. 33), concerns which manifest across masculine-dominated industries. For example, the implementation of a 'pink list' for a command and staff course for the CAF includes the nomination of the top five most deserving female candidates who have met the requirements for the course. The measure was met with

criticism from officers, despite the initiative being stood up to address the systemic challenges that tend to lead to a lower representation of women on the course (i.e. because operational experience is a requirement, the "list was developed for those who joined the CAF prior to 1989 when all occupations were opened to women") (→ Davis, 2007, p. xiii; → Reiffenstein, 2007, p. 7; → Goldenberg and AuCoin, 2007). Discussed further in studies of women's political participation, quotas are found to increase the representation of women in elected office, but can result in new inequalities and backlash, particularly in male-dominated spaces (→ Berry et al., 2020). This backlash includes verbal and physical violence, or male elites in these masculine spaces championing a certain 'type' of participation (→ Berry et al., 2020). Such observations reify themselves in the military, in which masculinity and strength are qualities that are lauded of women in security forces. In the military case, however, the focus is often on the masculine culture while deployed and women's acceptance into operational roles, rather than decisions made regarding why women deploy or not.

Research on women in NATO operations has historically focused on domestic recruiting efforts (→ Stanley and Segal, 1988). The limited focus on gender in NATO operations may be due in part to the fact that NATO's commitment to Women, Peace and Security has been primarily external facing, rather than concerned with reforming its own gendered structures (→ Morais, Turner and Wright, 2022, p. 106). In reviewing Dutch women's participation in NATO peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and Bosnia, Liora Sion finds that women's representation is low, and gender roles and stereotypes of typical "combat missions" tend to be reinforced for peacekeeping (→ Sion, 2008). This suggests that even peacekeeping missions (which would be assumed to attract more women based on literature discussed) have low

representation rates for women. As a result, there may be alternative explanations for women's low deployment rates in NATO operations, from peacekeeping to warfighting. In the United Nations context, Karim and Beardsley found that women tend to deploy to areas where there is the least risk, rather than where they are most needed (2013). Importantly, the authors identify there may be both national-level decision-maker input and personal choice involved in decisions to deploy women to lower risk areas.

In the rare instances where deployment opportunities and barriers are considered in NATO research, the focus has often been on men's experiences while deployed, men's motivations for deployment, the use of quotas, or women in peacekeeping operations specifically (→ Crawford et al., 2014; → Ghittoni et al., 2018; → Karim and Beardsley, 2017). This gap is filled, in part, through the empirical contributions of this book, where the lived experiences and perspective of women in the military are brought to the forefront in order to understand barriers that exist for women deploying on NATO-led operations, and subsequently, professional progress, retention into senior ranks, and representation. In order to shed light on barriers, I propose factors that influence women's participation broadly, including (but not limited to) individual self-selection, labour shortages, military cultures, and international policy commitment. Throughout this book, I integrate this dual dynamic of servicewomen's decision-making and the role of deployment decision makers, while broadening potential influences to include international and domestic force generation processes.

Turning back to NATO, Obradovic has demonstrated the role of national legislation for the integration of women in various NATO military forces and questions why states choose to promote gender integration (→ Obradovic, 2014). Obradovic addresses the limited scholarly work on gender integration in

operations by considering the impact of international organizations' gender mainstreaming initiatives, in order to understand how norms are disseminated throughout NATO and the United Nations. While Obradovic finds that differences in Eastern European and Western countries influence the development of gender friendly policies, the implementation and outcomes of gender-based policy efforts by international organizations and the members that comprise them require further study. To this end, Anita Schjølset considers how conditions may differ between national and international operational deployments (→ Schjølset, 2013). Schjølset's work considers the time frame of 2001 to 2011, and identifies several key insights: first, that there is variation in how NATO allies integrate women into their national forces, and second, despite an increase in representation, there has not been a proportional increase in deployments. Schjølset therefore calls for future research that supports context-specific indicators, such as "type of operation, types of units, and tasks of an operation" (2013, p. 582). While the nuances of particular missions are not the focus of this book, force generator perceptions regarding the perceived danger and risk of a mission, and how hidden organizational resistances may implicate these perceptions, are put forth as barriers that may play a larger role than the type of operation, or task of an operation itself.

Building on Obradovic's call for a greater understanding of how NATO implements gender-friendly policies, in Sara Davies and Jacqui True's *Oxford Handbook on Women, Peace and Security*, von Hlatky articulates the challenges of translating and harmonizing Women, Peace and Security commitments between NATO and its allies (→ von Hlatky, 2018). In short, comprised of member states and allies with their own national priorities, norms, values and beliefs, NATO decisions could be explained as decision making based on the lowest-common denominator. In

the case of gender equality and the participation of women in operations, considerable resistance from allies could result in a policy or program initiative being watered down in order to make it more palatable. In instances where NATO provides broad strokes guidance on gender mainstreaming, there remains a large variation in the implementation of gender equality priorities across member states and allies, but NATO attempts to push its priorities and guide member states through reporting and operations. There is, as a result, a noted connection between defence and foreign policy with regard to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. States have a responsibility to look inward at personnel and defence policies and processes, while simultaneously considering international commitments from NATO and the United Nations like the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the need for diverse forces on operations (→ Kronsell, 2012).

While I explore this interplay between international and national defence commitments in the context of women's deployment on NATO operations, von Hlatky's *Deploying Feminism* provides the first account of the gendered nature of NATO's military operations, bringing to the forefront the tension between the "pointy end" of NATO and gender norms. von Hlatky finds a "reinterpretation" of Women, Peace and Security norms through the exploration of three NATO operations, the results demonstrating the impact of norm distortion – "a process by which institutionalized norms, adopted by a principal (like NATO) are redefined by one of its agents (the military) in a way that is in tension with its original purpose or more forcefully, that changes the original purpose of the introduced norm" (→ von Hlatky, 2022, p. 22). von Hlatky sheds light on the norm distortion of Women, Peace, and Security and NATO's militarization of the agenda, arguing that while representation and participation of women is explicitly articulated as a NATO

objective, the alliance is not really interested in pressing its own member states to achieve it. The result is the militarization of gender to serve operational effectiveness, "leaving military culture untouched" (→ von Hlatky, 2022, p. 27).

Maintained through hidden organizational resistances, military organizational cultures are a barrier to women's integration and participation in military spheres. This is due to organizational cultures shaping attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours through underlying assumptions that implicitly and explicitly influence individuals' feelings toward a certain group (→ Schein and Schein, 2017). Ylöstalo argues that even if a policy or platform is adopted broadly in an organization, it will not garner results unless there is active commitment to it by leadership and military personnel (→ Ylöstalo, 2016). Properly conducted gender mainstreaming efforts, inclusive of gender-sensitive policies, may ultimately influence women's retention in an organization. While gender mainstreaming does not necessarily change the culture of an organization, it may be a first step in setting the conditions for change.

Based on the preceding discussion, military cultures are considered at length at the national level; however, I contribute to scholarly dialogue regarding how the intersections and compounding effects of NATO commitments (or hesitations), along with military cultures in Canada and Denmark, may be more indicative of a much larger and more systemic problem. Research on organizational culture that has considered the integration of women into military forces often overlooks a key element of military culture – the basic underlying assumptions that are taken for granted – and that motivates the day-to-day interactions and practices of military organizations. There are also persistent assumptions regarding women's "proper" and appropriate participation in peace (or conflict) (→ Trisko-Darden, 2015). This is observed at the individual level as a potential

barrier to women's deployment and reifies itself in my data as concerns for women's safety or deployment preferences in the military. The second observation is the focus on explicit barriers that may exist for women's integration (broadly defined), including sexism and harassment. The third is the focus on peacekeeping operations, as well as recruitment and representation: the participation of women is less often viewed in terms of deployment, despite the career impact on retention and promotion it has.

In addition to an understanding of systemic issues that hinder women's deployment on NATO operations, *Mission Marginalized* also makes a methodological and empirical contribution. Qualitative methodologies have been leveraged in order to support a breadth of knowledge and understanding that contextualizes the integration of women into armed forces. There are, however, empirical gaps: women's deployment barriers in the NATO context remain understudied, and my mixed methods approach leverages interviews conducted with senior officials regarding the deployment of women in NATO operations and surveys conducted in tandem with interviews that include the voices of women who did not deploy (or re-deploy) on NATO operations. Although Canadian data can be interpreted to suggest that women are likely to self-select into particular roles, these are often support roles that do, still, deploy. Consequently, there are systemic challenges that may hinder women's deployment on NATO operations.

In short, I argue that there are multi-level interactions that impede women's deployment on NATO operations. I test explanations regarding external barriers to women's participation often found in feminist security studies; however, organizational culture theory and bias in deployment decisions are also taken into consideration, contributing to the literature by both generating and validating explanations for women's low

deployment on NATO operations. Organizational culture and how biases can infiltrate seemingly objective deployment processes is demonstrated using a mixed methods approach exploring the perspective of those responsible for force generation, and those being deployed. The mixed method approach allows for an assessment of NATO, member state and military personnel perceptions of deployment barriers – a gap that must be bridged in the literature.

Unconscious Bias and Organizational Culture

In order to bridge this gap, I consider the impact of rules, norms and policies – embedded in organizational culture – in tandem with unconscious bias. Since hidden organizational resistances are conceptualized as biases based in the framework and function of military organizations, understanding the emergence of bias is a necessary first step. With origins in developmental psychology, Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji's "The Implicit Revolution: Reconceiving the Relation Between Conscious and Unconscious" provides one of the first social applications of unconscious bias, leading to the development of the Implicit Association Test. The authors describe how one may develop implicit attitudes and stereotypes that, "may be established by formative experiences that occur outside of, and perhaps well prior to, formal educational experiences that plausibly play stronger roles in establishing their explicit counterparts. Implicit attitudes and stereotypes may be acquired over many years from language and social experiences that cumulatively construct an overlearned repertoire of cultural expertise ... " (→ Greenwal and Banaji, 2017, p. 866). Put another way, unconscious or implicit biases are those which are often

based on one's upbringing and history, are socialized over time, and often without awareness.

Applied to the individual level, Greenwald and Banaji summarize Nisbett and Wilson's proposal of how individuals address implicit bias and stereotypes, and the limitations of such an approach (→ Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). These limitations are based on the capacity of individuals to objectively reflect on the processes that may result in their perceptions. The example provided is framed as follows: if you were asked to reflect on your thought process toward a certain question, the answer you would provide is likely based on what you think you thought the process was, rather than the objective means to which you came to a conclusion. To use Nisbett and Wilson's words: "When people attempt to report on their conscious perceptions and judgments, they do so not based on valid introspection but by using traces of past (possibly biased) experience to construct (possibly invalid) theories of current data" (→ Nisbett and Wilson, 1977 in → Greenwald and Banaji, 2017, p. 868).

The impact of unconscious bias (that is, individual-level perceptions) regarding gender are even more pronounced. Masculine corporate cultures have been found to impede women's progression and retention, with gender bias in recruitment and promotions widely observed in masculine corporate cultures (→ International Labour Organization, 2015). Barsh and Yee, for example, note the prevalence of "invisible barriers" holding women back in corporate realms: "gender biases in the mindsets of managers can prevent women from advancing into leadership positions" (→ Barsh and Yee, 2011, p. 3). But in addition to the individual-level biases people may bring to their work, organizational cultures have these biases embedded within their systems, processes, and cultures, which in turn can also influence individuals. Three 'levels' of culture are classified by Edgar Schein and Peter Schein, which include

artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. In the military context, artifacts may be exemplified as the organizational structure (hierarchy), mess functions, and decision-making processes. Espoused beliefs and values may include deference to rank, and the importance of operational effectiveness. Basic underlying assumptions may be those surrounding deployments, and deference to military processes.

As outlined above, many of these elements of military culture have been exclusionary toward women, and the implications of these biases are further observed for women in leadership. Robin Ely et al. define invisible barriers as "the powerful yet often invisible barriers to women's advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men" (→ Ely et al., 2011, p. 475). This "second generation" of bias, the authors note, results in perceptions that women are ill-suited for leadership roles. It is depicted in terms of how "many employers now have formal policies and procedures prohibiting race and sex discrimination ... [however], cognitive bias, structures of decision-making, and patterns of interaction have replaced deliberate racism and sexism as the frontier of much continued inequality" (→ Sturm, 2001, p. 460). This second generation is argued to be most prominent in flexible work environments with decentralized governance structures. Contrary to Susan Sturm, whose focus is on the courts and legal system, I argue that these hidden organizational resistances – or organizational biases – are ever more present in rigid, traditional organizations like the military. Military values, which often promote ethical values-based behaviour, fairness, and equality, I argue, may be one such example of a hidden resistance. The assumption that 'declaring' equality results in equitable outcomes and practices perpetuates

issues that are often taken for granted and seen as routine, such as the force generation process and gender-neutral policies. Furthermore, the adoption of gender-neutral policies and initiatives focused on identical treatment often do not result in equitable outcomes. For example, the removal of combat exclusions for women ("equal treatment") does not necessarily have equitable outcomes by addressing the underlying biases and structural challenges that impede women's full and meaningful participation in the combat arms (→ MacKenzie and Gunaydin, 2022).

Organizational culture can provide key insight into military hidden organizational resistances. There are factors that may hinder an organization's ability to adapt and support diverse members (in this case, women in military operations): there are cultures that nurture and support weaker members, and those where it is survival of the fittest (→ Schein and Schein, 2017, p. xvii). Where the military organization – be it NATO, or national-level militaries – may attempt to externally portray a culture in which all members are included and supported (→ Government of Canada, 2009; → NATO, 2014a; → NATO, 2018b; → NATO, 2024a), the cultural DNA that is bred into the function of military organizations – deployment and missions – is one of brute decisiveness and survival of the fittest. The operational effectiveness fall-back of military organizations results in basic, taken-for-granted assumptions (→ Schein and Schein, 2017, p. 76) that hinder an organization's ability to change and adapt. Andrea Goldstein, for example, argues that this resistance manifests based on "historically strong links between masculinities and the military and are crucial in understanding [the resistance to women in combat], which is based on arguments that women are physically and mentally fragile, and will disrupt the institution and unit cohesion of the military" (→ Goldstein, 2018, p. 386).

Military organizational cultures – be they at the national levels of Danish and Canadian armed forces, or at NATO – are more similar than dissimilar, save for several process-related differences. In addition, there is mutual reinforcement of these cultures between NATO and member states. NATO's emphasis on interoperability, for example, extends beyond common equipment, training, and procedures, and includes a shared military culture, comprised of elements Žotkevičiūtė-Banevičienė describes as "soft interoperability" (→ Žotkevičiūtė-Banevičienė, 2022, p. 85). While militaries are composed of subcultures (think, for example, differences between armies, navies, and air forces), and various national-level traditions and cultures, the Venn diagram of western militaries overlap in several key areas: tradition, hierarchy, and military masculinity (→ Duncanson, 2009; → Taber, 2009; → Obradovic, 2014), and within NATO, there are expectations around shared language, ethics, and values.

These elements of organizational culture are more explicitly exemplified in Elizabeth Kier's application to military doctrine and comparison between the UK and France (→ Kier, 1997), and are, in part, exemplified by some of the shared challenges of implementing gender mainstreaming in policy and practice. These challenges include tradition and a lack of education on gender, resulting in a limited increase of women's representation (→ Ylöstalo, 2016). In an example from the Finnish Armed Forces, the organizational resistances considered are those of a clear distinction between "active" and "passive" resistance (→ Ylöstalo, 2016, p. 552). Passive resistance entails "promoting gender equality only superficially, with measures that do not have a real impact" (→ Pincus and van der Ros, 1999, in → Ylöstalo, 2016, p 552). In line with this distinction, I argue that resistance to women's deployment in NATO operations are "hidden" – more insidious and implicit.

While institutionalists and organizational culture theorists may diverge in how they would respond to military organizational culture resistance, the two can inform each other (→ Aten et al., 2012). With the focus on women's deployment on NATO-led operations, the institutionalist may be unable to explain how national initiatives are more ambitious than international guidelines, and how international guidance falls short of providing requirements for diversity in operations. Even in instances where international organizations may depict leadership and progressive adaptation for increasing women's participation (for example, NATO's Bi Strategic Directive 40-1), there continue to be limitations in the progress made at the national level, exemplified by the most recent NATO *Summary of Annual National Reports* where there is an observed decrease in the composition of women on NATO-led operations (→ NATO, 2022b). In instances where NATO has committed to consider force composition on deployments, it has done so through Operational Planning Guides, which are for consideration but do not have a policy or accountability mechanism.

Organizational culture, in contrast, provides a bottom-up explanation that fills in the explanatory gaps of institutionalists, particularly when considering how hidden organizational resistances infiltrate both international and national cultures. These similarities across military organizational cultures have their foundations in hidden resistance and are key elements that result in a lower deployment of women on NATO-led operations. How I operationalize hidden organizational resistances is discussed further below.

Conceptualizing Hidden Organizational Resistances

As previously stated, *Mission Marginalized* explores the implications of masculine military culture and organizational culture, and how they manifest with regard to deployment – a facet of the military career cycle that is argued to be objective and routine. I argue that current frameworks to understand and describe discriminatory behaviours and processes must be improved by further considering nuances in military organizational culture. In part, this is due to the narrow and gendered focus of women's participation in the context of peacekeeping operations due to their stated unique contributions. This ultimately overlooks a majority of NATO and other coalition missions.

Ignoring the influence of gender and unconscious bias neglects key components of military organizational culture. This is particularly prevalent when considering traditional hierarchical military and defence organizations such as national armed forces and NATO. To this end, research has, understandably, focused considerably on how organizational frameworks achieve culture change, so there is space to further assess barriers that exist within these frameworks. While the impacts of tradition have been studied by scholars, its application to NATO's operationalization of gender-based considerations is limited. One example where diversity buy-in is considered in terms of both state and regional security organizations (such as NATO) is Alan Okros' account of diversity and culture change pre-requisites:

Underlying the general refrain that everybody wants coordination but nobody wants to be coordinated by others are clear indicators of cultural differences that reduce effective cross-organisational functioning. To the extent that diversity refers to a capacity to understand and value other points of view, the requirement for multiple organisations in the security sector to work together effectively would suggest that diversity (conceptually) be understood as a key enabler of success. As already indicated in the differentiation between demographic diversity and

identity diversity, the difficulty is that achieving the requisite culture change requires more than executive fiat announcing the new world order and can, in fact, be impeded if the dominant focus is on managing diversity by tracking sub-group representation on Excel spreadsheets (→ Okros, 2009, p. 351).

Okros' excerpt can be mapped against NATO in many ways, such as the lack of coordination and implementation from NATO with regard to policy commitments for women's participation, and how member states defer to organizations to set the tone. As outlined in the previous section, the consideration of military organizational culture has generally focused on state-level cultures, patriarchal masculinities (often toxic masculinities), or on the military organization as one that is based in tradition and, as a result, is resistant to change (→ King, 2015; → MacKenzie, 2015; → English, 2017; → Goldstein, 2018). Those who study organizational culture may suggest that NATO is slow to accept change and adapt due to a 'lowest common denominator' negotiation process at the North Atlantic Council. Since alliance commitments to increase women's deployment on NATO-led operations may be dependent on what the most resistant country may bend to, NATO's ability to "shape the nature" of allies and partner states through the construction of rules, norms and policies (→ Mackay et al., 2011) may be limited. There is evidence at NATO, however, that military organizations have been those that lead the pack in comparison to civilian defence establishments (→ Hardt and von Hlatky, 2020). So, while there may be elements of resistance at the decision-making table of the Military Committee or North Atlantic Council, NATO has demonstrated initial capacity to integrate gender considerations into key policies and, as evidenced in this book, allies look to NATO for this leadership.

Hidden organizational resistances in military organizations – the harder to solve and uneasily discernable barriers – are

observed as perceived tensions between operational effectiveness and gender equality, discrepancies between how NATO, member states, and military personnel understand and implement various women-considerate programs and policies, gender neutrality, and deference to force generation processes.

Recall above how concerns regarding women's integration into military organizations tends to rest on perceived tensions between operational effectiveness and women's rights. In the NATO context, Heidi Hardt identifies informal norms, implicit learning and socialization as temporal factors that influence NATO's crisis response (→ Hardt, 2014), based on what the author deems a tension between functional and normative understandings. This tension is also observed with regard to women's deployment on NATO-led operations at both the NATO and member state levels; it is an asymmetry between operational effectiveness (functionalist) and the rights-based approach to women's participation (normative). Rather than observed norms that are recognized and accepted as part of an organizational culture, these are invisible norms – the hidden organizational resistances to culture change and gender equality for NATO and its allies.

The perceived tension between operational effectiveness and women's rights is exacerbated by disparities for how NATO, member states and military personnel understand and implement inclusive programs and policies. I observe that NATO, member states, and military personnel vary in their perspectives regarding if, why and how women should be integrated into NATO-led operations, particularly if guidelines and expectations are not enforced by NATO. These resistances can be found at both the member state and NATO levels of analysis, manifesting as variation in how NATO and member states employ the Women, Peace and Security agenda and commitments to

women's military participation, and the force generation system that permeates NATO and member state authorities.

Hidden organizational resistances also manifest as gender neutrality due to its historically high prevalence within military cultures. Gender neutrality is based on the history of men, their work, and the segregation of women, and often ignores the need for gender equality approaches based on the assumption there are no gender-based challenges (→ Davis, 2009b; → Acker, 1990). It is this invisibility of gender that perpetuates systems and processes that may result in women being excluded from deployments; where superficial support of gender equality at least promotes a certain narrative, gender neutrality erases this narrative and is based on an assumption that neutrality is, indeed, neutral (→ Eichler, 2016). The result? Seemingly objective processes like force generation, or assumptions that support programs for spouses are universal, lead to barriers for women's deployment. Gender neutrality is part of military organizational cultures, both within NATO and member states, and manifests in the case of deployments as a failure to recognize the persistent implications of myths, barriers, and biases in the deployment selection process. For example, my data collection resulted in observations of force generators and military members "not seeing gender" or selecting women "as long as they can do the job," alluding to a lack of understanding of gender norms and their implicit impact on decision-making.

I also find deference to the force generation process as a key facet of hidden organizational resistance due to the taken-for-granted and perceived unchangeable nature of military organizational culture. There is evidence that military personnel are generally more comfortable with clear processes, structures and plans (→ Capstick et al., 2005). Deference to force generation processes is the result of habitual passive acceptance of what is easily understood and is already in place to ensure survival or

'mission success'. As a result, challenging or changing this process is not often considered.

Conclusion

There is an opportunity to better understand deployment perceptions, barriers, myths and biases that impact women's deployment on NATO operations. I argue that in order to increase the deployment of women on NATO-led operations, NATO, allies, and partners must consider the pervasive role of hidden organizational resistances. These resistances contribute to the ongoing impediment of women on NATO-led deployments and limit mechanisms that may otherwise improve participation. Hidden organizational resistances, I argue, are observed at the individual, ally, and international levels of analysis. Until NATO provides guidance or requirements for a certain percentage of women deployed on troop contingents, states will be able to defer responsibility to increase women's participation on NATO-led operations. In contrast, member states may take responsibility and set internal commitments for their troop contributions beyond peacekeeping operations. Both solutions require a shift in organizational cultures and the assumptions surrounding women's deployment on NATO-led operations. In the next chapter, I expand on how interviews and surveys are used to uncover and contextualize these hidden organizational resistances for women's deployment on NATO operations.

Chapter Three Research Design and Methodology

When asked if they had personally observed benefits to more women in NATO operations, military respondents overwhelmingly shared positive experiences, including increased access and preparation for interactions with local populations, diversity of perspectives and improved innovation, improved social relationships with the team, and different decision-making approaches. Along with references to positive operational influences, one respondent adeptly summarized the "mom's home" effect: more women in a unit improves hygiene for men, and results in a more somber and "well-behaved" tone while deployed. One respondent noted she felt the need to be the cultural bridge builder for the team – both in terms of engaging with local populations and contributing to internal dynamics while simultaneously being "one of the boys". She felt the need to "hold up her end of the bargain" socially, by joining in misogynist and sexual banter. Another participant noted in his response: "when the team works well, gender is not an issue or something you think about at all," suggesting that when teams do not perform as expected, gender (that is, women) is likely the culprit.

These individual experiences are further complicated by institutional efforts to integrate women in NATO operations. The 2024 NATO publication *Military Voices on the Gender Perspective: A NATO Anthology* provides several examples of the ways in which gender perspectives can be considered in response to emerging threats. Several chapters that focused on the integration of women into NATO operations refer to both the

operational contributions women make and the institutional challenges that persist, including sexism and discrimination (→ Prudhoe et al., 2024, pp. 57–60, 63–68). The operational contributions of women, and the critical function NATO plays in providing guidance on gender integration in operations, is not lost on military leaders. When then-Major-General Seymour of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) was preparing his team to deploy to Afghanistan, for example, he "made changes to his force structure to include some women, knowing that when he went, he had to interact with the local population. However, when they redeployed back to Canada, everything went back to the way it was" (→ Shoemaker, 2017, p. 6).

Taken together, these examples demonstrate the complexities that a hidden organizational resistance framework seeks to understand. We see the primacy of operational effectiveness, how gender-based equality progress is precarious upon returning home from deployments, the role of military leaders in decision-making, evidence of latitude in the force generation process,¹⁸ and the conflicting (and contradictory) perceptions from individuals with regard to gender integration and the deployment of women on NATO operations, which reflect and reinforce an exclusionary military culture toward women. This chapter provides an overview of the mixed methods research design I employed for this book, in order to better understand some of the dynamics above, and ultimately answer the question: what are the deployment barriers for women on NATO operations? Beginning with an overview of how I operationalize deployment and the three hypotheses tested in my study, I then discuss the case selection rationale of NATO, Canada and Denmark. To conclude, I provide an overview of the qualitative and quantitative studies that explore decision-maker and individual perceptions of women's deployment on NATO operations.

Research Design: Exploring Hidden Organizational Resistances

I explore the various factors that influence women's deployment on NATO operations using my framework of hidden organizational resistances based in military organizational culture. As depicted in the previous chapter, the integration of women into military operations crosses international and domestic spheres and, as argued by Stachowitsch, transcends "the constructed dichotomy between domestic and international levels of analysis" (→ Stachowitsch, 2012, p. 305). This construction has directly informed the research design of this study. An integrated mixed-method approach (→ Seawright, 2016) using both interviews and surveys identified and tested factors that may influence the deployment rates of women on NATO-led operations.¹⁹ I developed three hypotheses to be tested, which address various levels where organizational culture may influence women's deployment on NATO-led operations: self-selection (through personal safety and sexual violence); the motherhood penalty (imposed and assumed gender roles for women); and the force generation process as inflexible and gender neutral. Together, these two complementary research studies are interpreted to identify barriers to the diverse composition of NATO deployments, and the reasons women do not deploy from the perspective of NATO, Danish and Canadian force generators and experts, and military servicemembers. By exploring these hypotheses at the institutional and individual level, I was able to determine if there are discrepancies in perceptions of deployment barriers for women, and validate and generate new data.

Conceptualizing Deployment

NATO's official discourse on women's participation is derived from the four pillars of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. The Women, Peace and Security agenda frames participation as women's active involvement in consultation, decision-making, operations and policymaking for peace processes. With regard to NATO's adoption and support of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, this holistic and all-inclusive understanding of participation is formally accepted in policy; however, NATO has also amended the meaning – calling back to von Hlatky's norm distortion – of the "participation of women" to expand beyond peace operations, and also considers the gender balance of women in all NATO operations (→ NATO, 2017a).

Blurring these lines further is the array of conceptualizations of participation: a term often not fully defined or assumed to be 'representation' in terms of composition of military forces. As the primary reason for having members in uniform is to have them deploy on military operations, I advance women's participation conceptually as serving women's deployment on military operations. The intent of such a framing is twofold; it addresses an understudied moment in career advancement for women, and it may influence retention and longer-term representation in militaries since deployments are often required for promotions. To this end, there is both a numerical (how many times deployed) conceptualization of women's deployment and participation, and a contextual framing of the hidden barriers that may exist, which are exposed through an organizational culture lens.

This book addresses variation in the dependent variable of the deployment of women in NATO-led operations. Aggregate deployment rates based on the percentage of women that comprise NATO-led operations were used as a baseline and for

the selection of the case countries of Canada and Denmark. In terms of the two studies employed for this research design, deployment as an outcome was operationalized in different ways. For the first study, participants were asked deployment-related questions focused on the process related to force generation, deploying more women on NATO-led operations, and barriers they think exist for women deploying on NATO-led operations.

The survey design operationalized deployment in quantitative terms. Two elements of deployment were identified: deployment and re-deployment on a NATO-led operation. Deployment on a NATO-led operation was defined as a binary variable (yes and no). If a participant responded "yes," they were also asked to identify which operation(s) they had deployed on. Re-deployment was coded based on whether the respondent identified one (or more than one) deployment on a NATO operation. For example, if LCol Doe had deployed on a NATO-led operation (yes), they would then identify which NATO-led operation(s). LCol Doe chose ISAF, SEA GUARDIAN and KFOR. LCol Doe's 'redeployment' would then be coded as a "1+ mission" for the logistic regression.

Overview of Guiding Hypotheses

H1: Concerns regarding personal safety result in women self-selecting out of operational experiences and deployments.

Masculine and exclusionary military culture can negatively impact the decision for some women to enlist in the military (→ Enloe, 1982). This recruitment barrier may also explain low deployment rates for women who self-select out of deployments. Observable implications of the self-selection hypothesis would be found in women being deterred by certain aspects of deployment. This would be observed through

indications that women feel more concerned than men about personal safety during deployments, and whether the length of deployment is a greater deterrent for women than men. An additional observable implication for this hypothesis would include women's self-selection out of deployment opportunities.

Personal safety is understood as feelings of discomfort or unease with regard to experience while deployed. With personal safety being a subjective experience or concern, similar to pain tolerance (→ Jackson et al., 2002), respondents to surveys were asked to complete a self-assessment of their personal safety concerns when deploying. For example, questions included, "Beyond the 'military factor' I am concerned about my personal safety when deployed." Conditional questions followed these responses to probe the type of personal safety concerns identified, such as "Concerns about my personal safety stem from sexual assault." Responses also considered re-deployment likelihood and whether a negative deployment experience caused respondents to opt-out of future deployments. In the survey, this was measured through Likert-scale questions focusing on personal safety concerns, sexual violence while on NATO deployments, and whether the respondent volunteered for NATO-led operations.

H2: Military deployment decision-makers assume women have gender-specific responsibilities and concerns, resulting in fewer women deployed in operations.

The Motherhood Penalty can be described as an unconscious or conscious bias regarding women's labour opportunities. In an experimental design by Lauren Rivera and András Tilcsik, the Motherhood Penalty was observed as an implication of hiring assumptions for women in comparison to men. The authors found that, in comparison to upper-class men, women were not chosen during the hiring process due to hiring managers absorbing stereotypes that portray women as less committed to

full-time, intensive careers (2016). This is echoed by → Elizabeth Kiester (2014), who finds that employers' subjective assessment of family responsibilities negatively impact women at both screening and interviewing stages for employment. Even once women are employed, 2021 Census data for the United Kingdom demonstrates a substantial and long-lasting reduction in mothers' earnings, and a reduction in the likelihood of paid employment following the birth of a child (→ Office for National Statistics, 2025).

Bridging the Motherhood Penalty to the military context, Davis notes that for men and women alike, preconceived notions of "appropriate gendered behaviours" exist for those who are in the military (2007, p. 95). For example, women are expected not to deploy, or the decision is made for them not to deploy. In addition, decision makers may have particular interest in qualities like empathy and intuition in soldiering (→ Disler, 2010). However, I argue this may assume women are "best suited" for peacekeeping operations, or that women do not want to deploy because of family responsibilities. This implicit bias in promotion and selection for deployments – considered a major milestone and financial benefit for soldiers – may negatively influence women's deployment opportunities.

During interviews, questions focused on decision-making processes for mission deployments (peace, deterrence, or conflict), perceptions of increasing women's deployment on NATO-led operations, and potential barriers that force generators have observed first-hand. The observable implications with NATO elites and decision-making personnel are expected to align with notions of gender norms and unconscious biases (→ Kagetsu and Gunderman, 2017), including reference to family commitments and responsibilities, references to their own spouses, daughters and mothers, and assumptions around types of missions members wish to deploy on. In order to understand

what factors may determine whether countries contribute more women to United Nations operations, Khusrav Gaibulloev et al. find that there is a difference between United Nations and non-United Nations peacekeeping operations, in that that troop-contributing countries benefit more from these operations due to financial incentives (→ Khusrav et al., 2015). While the authors focus on peacekeeping operations, countries have been found to make different contributions for combat missions, with → Karim and Beardsley (2013) finding that women tend to be deployed where there is less risk.

H3: The extent to which force generation processes take gender into account when making deployment decisions contributes to variation in deployment rates.

Jacqui True has found that certain gender mainstreaming implementation models can explain the lack of progress in national/international peace institutions, an insight that applies here too, when it comes to force generation processes. True finds in her work that criticisms of gender mainstreaming efforts include the reinforcing of gender stereotypes and assumed homogeneity amongst female groups, and recommends challenging conventional, biased, male-centered frameworks (→ True, 2016). Despite NATO efforts to increase reporting and representation of women in member state armed forces, there is little authority to enforce initiatives. Additionally, institutions are critiqued for having sparse and inconsistent implementation due to lack of political pressure and resource scarcity (→ Olsson and Gizelis, 2013). These institutional challenges and limitations may also be observed during the force generation process, which is often considered objective.

The United Nation's gender parity policy integrates a level of accountability for nations that do not deploy contingents with a minimum 15% representation of women. This hypothesis explores whether the lack of standardized NATO guidance on the

gender composition of troop contributions has implications for women's deployment on NATO operations. Force generation questions focused on perceived flexibility and favouritism in deployment decisions and perspectives regarding women on United Nations and NATO operations. The observable implications for this hypothesis included resistance to quotas and targets for women's deployment,²⁰ force generation processes that do not outline specific goals for women's deployment, and flexibility in the deployment selection process. While I find preliminary empirical support for this hypothesis in Chapter Five, further testing is required.

Case Selection Rationale

Using NATO as a case to address deployment barriers for women is due to the force generation process initiating at the NATO level and the range of missions currently in progress. Moreover, despite international guidelines to increase gender perspectives in NATO, and the representation of women in operations, there is an expectation that women's deployment should be increasing. In the 2014 *Review of the Practical Implications of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, it was demonstrated that since the adoption of the NATO/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Policy on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in 2007, NATO has made significant progress in integrating the gender perspective (→ Lackenbauer and Langlais, 2013, p. 6). Despite this progress, there are challenges navigating the distinction between national and international commitments and civilian and military organizational structures. As Stéfanie von Hlatky and Heidi Hardt observe, these tensions are even greater within NATO with regard to gender, despite

overarching guidelines on Women, Peace and Security (→ Hardt and von Hlatky, 2020).

A comparison between NATO, the United Nations and the European Union (EU) is warranted. Ultimately, while all three international organizations have military coalition missions and robust policies to address gender perspectives and mainstreaming in operations, there are several key criteria that led to NATO as the case of inquiry. The first is the broad mission types that NATO leads. In 2019, missions ranged across peace, deterrence, stabilization and training missions, so the NATO case allowed for a more comprehensive look at the deployment of women beyond the narrow peacekeeping or capacity building scope attributed to the United Nations or EU. The second is the limited influence of a gender parity quota that is found in United Nations missions. With a core hypothesis in question being whether women self-select in or out of operations, the prevalence of a policy that intentionally increases the number of women on a deployment may confound the results. A summary of the criteria are found below in → Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Overview of NATO Case Selection (2021).

International Organization	Types of Missions	Policy on Gender Representation/ Gender Perspectives in Operations	Gender Parity/ Balance Quota
United Nations	Peacekeeping	Yes	Yes
NATO	Peace Deterrence Stabilization Training	Yes	No
European Union	Peacekeeping Training Deterrence	Yes	No

In addition to the focus on NATO, country case studies are critical for this project due to the force generation processes being present at both international and national levels, and the nature of NATO being comprised of multiple member states, each with a common set of values but comprised of unique cultures, political mandates and military functions. As a result, Canada and Denmark are the case studies considered within the broader NATO context.

As the objectives of this project were confirmatory and exploratory, I chose a "most similar" case selection (→ Seawright and Gerring, 2008, p. 298). In this sense, the case countries of Canada and Denmark are similar with regard to key factors, but vary on one of the causal factors of theoretical interest – in this case, force generation – as well as the dependent variable: the deployment of women on NATO-led operations. This variation of the dependent variable is based on the annual percentage of women comprising national contributions to NATO-led operations. Whereas Canada has one of the highest representation rates of women in its national armed forces, it has yet to deploy a similar composition on NATO-led operations. In comparison, Denmark deploys military members with a composition higher than their representation in their armed forces. NATO-derived data from the IMS office of the Gender Advisor from 2015 to 2017 was used to address a common point of resistance of "if there are only 10% women in the forces, how are we expected to deploy 15%?"²¹ Denmark, as noted below in Table 3.2, deploys approximately 9.3% of its forces comprised of women on NATO-led operations, with roughly 6.4% representation. Canada, in comparison, deploys 8.6% on NATO-led operations but is considered a leader in the representation of women at 15.1%.²² Notably, Denmark's use of a job-posting system for deployment opportunities may address what the previously mentioned Elsie Barrier Assessment has identified as

a barrier to women's participation on peacekeeping operations. As per → Jason Seawright and John Gerring (2008), this case selection is one that supports both representativeness and variation in the area of interest: in this case, deployment of women.

Case studies were chosen as the preferred method of analysis due to logistical and accessibility concerns when working with a large number of cases, as well as comparing non-measurable processes (→ Gerring and Cojocaru, 2016, p. 413). The force generation process is an excellent example. With NATO employing its own force generation process at the international level, as well as each individual ally within NATO operating with its own nation-specific force generation process, it is difficult to have an 'apples to apples' comparison. With this in mind, understanding that each case study possesses their own force generation process at the national level allows the researcher to determine variables and unique processes that may influence the dependent variable: in this case, women's participation in NATO operations (see → Table 3.2). In short, the similarities and differences of the two case countries support various objectives of this study. Where the similarities support validating/confirmatory efforts of the survey design due to similar factors (gender equality, labour force participation, parental leave, types of missions), the differences in force generation may be a key factor in the exploratory process.

Table 3.2: Case Country Comparison: Representation and Deployment (2016).

Country	Representation of Women in Military (%) (2016)	Deployment Rate in NATO Operations (%) (2016)	Discrepancy (-/+)
NATO AVERAGE	10.9%	6.8%	- 4.1%
Denmark	6.4%	9.3%	+ 2.9%
Canada	15.1%	8.6%	- 6.5 %

As per Seawright and Gerring, the chosen cases must be independent of each other (2008). Although in the international realm there are assumptions regarding influence and partnerships between states (for example, the United States' influence on Canada's procurement processes) (→ Charbonneau and Cox, 2008), and benchmarking is common between countries and within NATO itself,²³ there is little evidence that supports the notion that the case countries selected have direct implications on each other's deployment of women in NATO operations.

An important caveat to this assertion is the overall influence of NATO as an international organization on the identified case countries. The argument can be made that by the very nature of being NATO allies, the cases are not independent of the influence of the organization. However, as noted by Gerring and Seawright, there is exception when this interaction is the subject of investigation. This is the case for this research design; I argue, in part, that the interaction of NATO and member states' organizational cultures and force generation processes contribute as barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations.

Denmark

Beginning in 2004, ministries in Denmark were required, as a priority, to implement gender mainstreaming, as outlined in the Act on Gender Equality commitment to incorporate gender equality in all planning and administration. As the first NATO country to ratify a National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in 2005 (and revise their NAP in 2008, 2014, 2018, and 2025), Denmark may be considered a leader in policy terms regarding gender perspectives. Following the release of their NAP, the Danish Parliament adopted an amendment to their Act on Gender Equality, which committed to equal representation of men and women on councils, boards and committees (→ UNECE, 2000). Denmark's commitment to gender equality manifests in several mechanisms, one being the Gender Equality Board, which addresses discrimination complaints. With the Nordic countries often considered progressive for women's integration into the military (and often used as benchmarks in policy and research), one would expect Denmark to be a leader in representation and deployment rates for women in NATO operations.

In 2018, Denmark's representation of women fell below the NATO average at 6.4%. However, their representation of women on NATO operations is one of the few countries which is higher than its total military representation (9.3%) and has one of the highest representations of women in NATO-led operations. Denmark is also a unique case given its use of mandatory conscription for both men and women, announcing in 2025 that if recruitment numbers are not met, starting January 2026 the Ministry of Defence will move to a "full equality of gender in the conscription model," requiring women who turn eighteen to participate in compulsory military service (→ Danish Ministry of

Defense, 2024). Although the country is known for its relatively short conscription lengths (approximately four to eleven months), this effort is only used "if there is a shortage of volunteer recruits" (→ Riegert, 2010). Nevertheless, this is a considerable development, aligning with other Nordic countries of Norway and Sweden. An opportunity for future research would be to track the impact of conscription on the Danish case and any impact this may have on the deployment of women. In terms of force generation, the Danish force generation process is conducted by the Danish Ministry of Defence Personnel Department (→ Danish Ministry of Defence, 2020).

Canada

Canada prides itself as an international leader with regard to gender equality, adopting gender-based analysis in 1996 and demonstrating prominent efforts to mainstream gender in the armed forces (→ Parliament of Canada, 2014). Despite Canada's co-sponsorship and adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, it was not until 2010 that Canada produced its first Canada National Action Plan (CNAP), spanning 2010 to 2016. The CNAP reaffirmed commitments to UNSCR 1325 and the follow-on resolutions comprising the Women, Peace and Security agenda, noting that the purpose of the plan is to make missions more effective and to reinforce the government's consistent emphasis on accountability with regard to peace operations (→ Global Affairs Canada, 2010).

The 2016 Chief of the Defence Staff Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions into CAF Planning and Operations discusses the CNAP at length, noting that Canada is committed to the effective implementation of UNSCR 1325 (→ Chief of the Defence Staff, 2016). Commitments from the Directive include the development of a framework to integrate

Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions, and, finally, the support of more women in the Canadian Armed Forces (particularly women in peace operations) (→ Chief of the Defence Staff, 2016). In 2016, Canada had one of the highest representation rates for women in their military (15.1%) and fell above the NATO average for women in NATO operations at 8.6%.

Canada proves to be an interesting case due to its previous Feminist Foreign Policy framework and Canadian leadership of the Elsie Initiative (see Chapter 1). The Elsie Initiative aims to support the United Nations-led effort to increase women's meaningful participation in peace operations through training, financial, and research mechanisms (→ Government of Canada, 2025). Canada is also the only case country that is considering the use of "third gender" in its military.

In terms of deployment policy and force generation, Commanding Officers have the ability to decide whether an operation or deployment opportunity may put certain individuals, the CAF, or public at risk to a greater extent. DAOD 5003 – 0: Restrictions on Duty and Individual Limitations gives discretion to Commanding Officers in light of what the policy notes are:

... procedures to ensure that restrictions on duty are only imposed if the performance by a CAF member of a specific duty poses or is likely to pose a real and demonstrable risk to the operational effectiveness of the CAF or the safety of CAF members or the public (→ Government of Canada, 2007).

To this end, the policy exemplifies the flexibility that may be applied to deployment decisions, and where hidden organizational resistances may come to the fore.

While similar in many instances, including their perceived gender equality, being founding members of NATO, and

strengths for the deployment and representation of women, Canada and Denmark differ in their force generation process. With force generation one of the hypotheses in question, being able to take this factor into consideration is of particular use for this analysis.

Organizational Perceptions of Barriers – Study One

The qualitative component of this project was exploratory in nature. Through 14 interviews with NATO elites, and force generators responsible for deployment decisions, organizational and social barriers for why women do not deploy on operations were identified. Primarily selected in order to determine additional hypotheses and institutional barriers to be tested in the second study, key informant interviews and a snowball method were employed to contact interview participants (→ Gideon, 2012). As a secondary function, in light of how previous work has considered barriers to recruitment, retention and participation of women in military operations, this study serves as a contribution to provide a broader empirical foundation for existing literature.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were chosen as the preferred method for data collection due to the ability to provide insight into behaviour and beliefs of elites (→ Mosley, 2013). Since the study objective was to identify institutional barriers to be tested, interviews followed a semi-structured format (→ Bleich and Pekkanen, 2013) to encourage open discussion about respondents' own decision-making processes, concerns, and perceptions regarding women

in NATO-led operations. As a result, the interviews did not follow an exact standardized format but allowed for free-flowing conversations and rapport to be built with the participants. This was particularly useful given the nature of the conversation and participants trusting and speaking candidly about organizational processes and challenges that may exist in Canada, Denmark and NATO. A limitation to the study may be the likelihood that interviewees filtered some personal perceptions, particularly given my dual position as a researcher and then-Canadian Department of National Defence employee.

Deductive and inductive analysis allowed for the testing of the three identified hypotheses, while also remaining open to additional themes that could emerge to enable a fulsome picture of organizational barriers that may exist for women to deploy on NATO operations. From Jennifer Fereday and Eimear Muir-Cochrane, this hybrid approach "allows the tenets [of social phenomenology] to be integral to the process of deductive thematic analysis while allowing for themes to emerge direct from the data using inductive coding" (→ Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, pp. 82–83). In summary, the pre-generated hypotheses used for this book guided the interviews and deductive analysis in response to the hypotheses; however, an inductive approach was also used to identify additional themes or findings, informing a greater scope of questioning to be developed in the survey questions.

Fourteen interviews were collected in this study due to the objective to address 'what things exist' rather than 'how many of something there are' as well as my objective to explore variables that could be used for the survey (→ Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p. 489, 491). Interviews were held between December 2017 and April 2019, using Skype and Facetime conferencing, as well as in-person interviews in Ottawa, Ontario and Mons, Belgium. The mix of positions and roles of

respondents were required in order to account for both strategic/political commitments and those observed in practice.

Representatives within the gender and diversity, and force generation offices for NATO, Canada and Denmark were interviewed. The interview study population was as follows (→ Guest et al, 2006):

- Four (4) interviews were held with Canadian personnel employed in the force generation process and policy level;
 - Three (3) participants were military, ranging from middle to senior ranks,²⁴ and one (1) participant was civilian as an advisory/subject matter expert role;
- Six (6) within Denmark at the force generation level and policy level;
 - All six (6) participants were military representatives, ranging from middle to senior ranks;²⁵
- Four (4) elites within NATO and SHAPE Headquarters occupying senior policy, advisory and force generation positions. Participants were from both military and civilian staff.
 - Two (2) participants were senior civilians or advisors and two (2) were senior military representatives.

Interview questions provided insight as to whether there are limitations at the organizational level (NATO and allies) regarding knowledge of opportunities or perceived concerns for women to deploy. Members were asked about the force generation process, the United Nations gender parity quota, political decisions and motivations (or deterrents), and barriers they may perceive to exist. Interview questions included questions such as "What traits do you associate with deployments?" and "Does the force generation process include a gender target?" The results from the interview design were

then leveraged in a survey distributed to men and women in Canada and Denmark in order to determine to what extent these barriers, and others identified in the literature review may influence or are perceived to influence deployment.

Following an interview, participants were asked to identify additional personnel that may have experience related to the content. Interviews lasted between thirty (30) and ninety (90) minutes based on participant availability. The study design consisted of a qualitative thematic analysis of individual interview transcripts. Analyses of the interviews involved the transcribing of recordings and the coding of key themes regarding barriers for the deployment of women in NATO operations (→ Campbell et al., 2013).

Individual Level Barriers – Study Two

Study two leveraged an original data set developed from a survey completed by 151 respondents and comprised of quantitative and qualitative questions in order to "generate data that may provide insight into what the numbers actually mean, and broaden theoretical conceptualizations around many of the issues that concern ... researchers" (→ Ward, 2007, p. 2). I employed what Mario Luis Small describes as a "complementary" research design: using large-sample (quantitative) data to test the results derived from small-sample (qualitative) data. As Small suggests, "this approach often produces and tests hypotheses not previously assessed in the literature" (2011, p. 65). As noted above, the first step in the design was analyzing the interview data in Chapter Five (study one) and determining the key themes through coding. Once coded, the main barriers were identified (see Figure 6.1) and used to inform the questions created for the survey of Chapter Six (study two), which provides insight into servicemembers'

perceptions and experiences of barriers for NATO-led operations. Several of these barriers have been previously identified in the Elsie Baseline study; however, the Elsie Baseline study focuses specifically on peacekeeping operations. The Elsie Baseline study also caveats that some barriers, such as knowledge of peacekeeping deployments, and corruption or patronage in deployment selections, are only supported by anecdotal evidence (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018, pp. 22–23). In addition to the barriers identified in study one, study two considered three explanations for women's low deployment rates on NATO-led operations, based on the guiding hypotheses of this book:

1. Concerns over personal safety result in women self-selecting out of operational experiences and deployments;
2. Military deployment decision-makers assume women have gender-specific responsibilities and concerns, resulting in fewer eligible women deployed in operations;
3. The extent to which force generation processes take gender into account when making deployment decisions contributes to variation in deployment rates.

Survey questions were developed to target individual-level experiences and perspectives, and were the preferred method of data collection since the respondent can remain anonymous; given the expectations around military service and deployment, asking questions regarding volunteering, concerns about personal safety, and family responsibilities, are often "close hold" (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018). Since many of the questions were generated based on data from the interview design, surveys were also a means through which the qualitative data generated could be validated or challenged. For example, the interviews from study

one identified personal safety as an assumed barrier for deployment, which manifested as concerns of risk, harassment/abuse, and sexual violence. From here, I developed five-point Likert scale questions asking specifically about personal safety (beyond unlimited liability) as well as fear of sexual assault.²⁶

Participants were recruited through a volunteer convenience sample (→ Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). The survey link and recruitment materials were circulated on social media through Twitter, 'deployment' groups on Facebook, and through a snowball method where points of contact within NATO, Canada and Denmark were asked to share the survey and recruitment materials widely within their organizations.

Consisting of 47 questions, data gathered from the survey allowed for considerations of: gender, marital status, children, what armed forces participants serve with (Canada or Denmark), military environment, occupation, Non-commissioned member or Officer status, Regular or Reserve Force status, years served, preferences for deployment, concerns for personal safety, concerns for sexual assault while deployed, perceptions of favouritism, concerns of home responsibilities, whether they perceived themselves as the primary caregiver, whether NATO operations were perceived as more dangerous, and whether they have volunteered for NATO-led operations. Questions consisted of Likert-scale and open-ended responses, providing greater insight into whether certain aspects of deployment – be it home and childcare, personal safety, prestige, or danger – may influence interest in deployment. Other questions were measured using ordinal measures, such as years of service, or categorical variables, such as deployment history. Survey responses were analyzed using a backward elimination binary logistic regression (→ Belhekar, 2016). This allowed me to first identify variables in the survey that may be associated with

redeployment;²⁷ however, I also included the three variables that would be assumed to be associated with redeployment, based on my hypotheses.²⁸ Qualitative responses were then analyzed to contextualize the findings from the regression, and provide further insight into the differences between men and women's perceptions.²⁹

The population of study were members of the Canadian and Danish militaries who have and have not deployed on a NATO-led operation.³⁰ A total of 151 useable surveys had a gender breakdown of 92 men and 59 women (inclusive of one transgender woman). Twenty-five surveys were completed by women and men who had not deployed on a NATO-led operation,³¹ while 126 had deployed on at least one NATO-led operation. With women's representation averaging 11.1% of NATO member states' active-duty personnel (→ NATO, 2017b, p. 15), the sample for this survey has a higher representation of women in comparison. In 2017, women represented 15.6% and 7.1% of the Canadian and Danish militaries, respectively (→ NATO, 2017b, pp. 85, 117). The breakdown of national military representation consisted of eighty-six (86) Canadian respondents, and sixty-five (65) Danish respondents. Just under half of the respondents were from the Army at 43% (n=65), 27.8% (n=42) Navy, 27.8% Air Force (n=42), one participant from Special Forces, and one 'other'. This environmental breakdown is close to the strength of these environments within Canada and Denmark, where armies tend to be the largest environment, followed by air force, then navies.

Of the respondents, 12.6% (n=19) were single, 73.5% (n=111) were married and 13.9% (n=21) were neither single nor married. Approximately 65% of respondents had children (n=99), with approximately 35% (n=52) not having children. Both officers and Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs) were represented in this

survey, with 68.9% (n=104) officers completing the survey and 31.1% (n=47) NCMs providing their responses. Finally, years of service ranged from three years to thirty-one+ years, with an average service length of 19.25 years.

A logistic regression model was developed using SPSS to determine the relationship between barriers to deployment and the odds of re-deployment. The survey data were exported from Qualtrics to Excel where they were cleaned and coded. The barriers identified were categorized under the larger constructs of the hypotheses tested: personal safety, imposed and assumed roles for women, and force generation. There were also additional questions that were asked in a validating capacity based on interviews and the literature review.

Conclusion

This research design was created to examine hidden organizational resistances and uncover unconscious bias towards women's deployment on NATO-led operations at both the NATO, ally, and individual levels. A mixed method approach was leveraged to identify and test variables that are otherwise often taken for granted when considering deployment and military processes. The research design, followed by case country selection, is itself based on the theoretical framework of hidden organizational resistances, in that Canada and Denmark differ on key areas that are often considered 'unchangeable' – most notably, deployment opportunities and processes. To this end, the design is also best situated to assess the interaction and multi-level barriers that manifest at both NATO and ally levels. In the next chapter, I provide context into the form and function of NATO, how it engages with member states, and how the organization has implemented gender-based programming and policies in response to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Chapter Four The Battleground: NATO and Gender

In a scathing criticism of NATO's influence and decision-making process for nuclear weapons, then-Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Elliott Trudeau declared in 1984: "I bear solemn witness to the fact that NATO heads of state and of government meet only to go through the tedious motions of reading speeches, drafted by others, with the principal objective of not rocking the boat" (→ Martin, 1984). While this may no longer apply with regard to NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the previous chapters demonstrated how NATO implements gender and diversity considerations in such a way that "leaves culture untouched" (→ von Hlatky, 2022, p. 27). Following Trudeau's ironic reference to the "macho posturing" of NATO heads of state, the question is raised as to how NATO has responded to changing social expectations surrounding gender equality.

In order to fully grasp how hidden organizational resistances can be perpetuated within (and between) NATO and member states, a detailed background of the policies, processes, and perceived constraints and restraints are required prior to exploring my empirical findings. This chapter provides an overview of NATO's approach to women in peace and conflict since 1995 (→ Hunt and Lute, 2016), and how NATO has tried to mainstream gender in both its military and civilian branches (→ NATO, 2018c; → Hardt and von Hlatky, 2020). I begin with an overview of the foundational agreements of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the implications of the United Nations efforts in this space, and then turn to NATO's operating structure, policies and processes. I emphasize the strengths and

limitations of key policies, force generation processes, and the implications of not increasing women's participation in NATO operations.

Gendering NATO: Gender Equality Foundations from the United Nations

Although some NATO allies have been actively supporting the integration of women into national armed forces since the 1970s and 1980s,³² the 1995 Beijing Declaration brought international attention to women's equality (→ United Nations, 1995).

Predating UNSCR 1325 by five years, the Beijing Declaration for Action called for "women's empowerment and ... full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power" (→ United Nations, 1995). With its conceptual foundations found in the Beijing Declaration, UNSCR 1325 was unanimously adopted in 2000, and, as outlined below, later institutionalized within NATO in 2007. The following provides an overview of United Nations foundational resolutions and NATO policies as they specifically relate to Women, Peace and Security.

Women, Peace and Security

While countries vary in their recognition and progress of Women, Peace and Security priorities, internationally the focus on women's exclusion from peace and security issues were brought to the fore with the adoption of the UNSCR 1325 – a resolution resulting from activist, grassroots lobbying from civil society. The resolution is comprised of four pillars that call for women's increased presence in issues surrounding prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery. The Resolution:

Reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. (OSAGI, n.d.)

In addition, the Resolution is:

Anchored in the principle that effective incorporation of gender perspectives and women's rights can have a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of women, men, girls, and boys on the ground (→ Peace Women, n.d.).

Instigated with the flagship UNCSR 1325, the Women, Peace and Security agenda is comprised of an additional nine resolutions that together address the disproportionate effect of conflict on women and girls, as well as commitments to decrease sexual and gender-based violence. → Table 4.1 provides a brief outline of some of these additional resolutions that together comprise the Women, Peace and Security agenda that has been adopted and supported in the NATO context.

Table 4.1: Summary of United Nations Women, Peace and Security Agenda Resolutions.

Resolutions	Focus
UNSCR 1820 (2008), UNSCR 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010)	Sexual violence, protection, women in peacekeeping
UNSCR 1889 (2009)	Civilian and military women participation in peace processes
UNSCR 2106 (2013)	Improving mechanisms and implementation of Resolutions, sexual and gender-based violence, improving education and training
UNSCR 2122 (2013)	Integrated approach for women's participation deficit, funding
UNSCR 2242 (2015)	Importance of women in peacekeeping, commitment to increase number of women in peace operations
UNCSR 2467 (2019)	Focuses on sexual violence, including addressing root causes, survivor-centre approaches and strengthened access to justice
UNCSR 2493 (2019)	Reaffirms commitments to UNCSW1325, including urging member states to increase the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping, facilitating women's participation in peace talks, support to women-led peacebuilding organizations and support to civil society

As noted earlier in this book, the United Nations Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018–2028 commits to a goal of 15% women deployed in United Nations peacekeeping military units, (→ UNDPKO, 2017) and acknowledges the multifaceted challenges that result in such a low representation of women on peacekeeping operations (in 2018, around 3.9%) (→ UNDPKO, 2017, p. 4). Commitments from member states, which are considered 'external challenges' by the United Nations, and policies within the United Nations Secretariate control, which are deemed 'internal' challenges, are bridged in the policy statement as follows:

Statements of Unit Requirement now request an Engagement Team (ET) with at least 50 per cent women as part of each Infantry Battalion. As of 01 Jan 2021, ETs will be compulsory for each contingent, and TCCs will not be able to deploy without them (→ UNDPKO, 2017, p. 8).

This is a significant requirement. It mandates a particular composition for troop contributing member states for infantry battalions, which would otherwise be deferred to the purview of member states. Not only does this mandate a particular representation, but the statement identifies repercussions if gender parity is not met.

Discussions which compare force generation between the United Nations and NATO are not unfounded. Although there are key differences between the two organizations, the founding treaty of NATO – the Washington Treaty – has its foundations in the United Nations Charter and shares a commitment to maintain international peace and security (→ NATO, 1949), which it does in part through support to United Nations missions. In particular, NATO's practical cooperation with the United Nations began in 1992 during the support of a United Nations armed embargo against the former Yugoslavia. NATO has also provided support to the United Nations operations in Darfur, Sudan, Somalia and Pakistan, and has implemented several United Nations resolutions beyond the Women, Peace and Security agenda. For example, despite Kosovo's independence in 2008, "NATO agreed it would continue to maintain its presence on the basis of UNSCR 1244" (→ NATO, 2025a).

This close relationship and shared commitment to peace and security feed the discussion at hand. Referring back to Chapter Two, limiting the framing of women's participation in armed forces to peacekeeping has two implications: it both removes the agency UNSCR 1325 wishes to support for women, and misconstrues the nature of United Nations and international missions and how they are comprised. As discussed below in the

NATO context, the force generation process for international operations is not comprised of peacekeeping soldiers, per se. Similar to NATO, for United Nations peacekeeping missions, there is a Force Generation Service that coordinates contributions from troop contributing countries, as well as the facilitation and generation of military contingents (→ United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). Following the assessment of a potential mission, a Concept of Operations is created that outlines procurement requirements (officers, soldiers, specializations). From this point, countries that are known to wish to participate in a United Nations mission, or that are part of the United Nations Standby Arrangement System, are formally asked via a *note verbale* as to their potential contribution for a mission (→ Nilsson and Hull Wiklund, 2014, p. 18). A unique component of United Nations operations is the individual nature of deployments, rather than deploying formed units (as is the process – in theory – for NATO operations). This enables troop contributing countries to select individuals that may more readily respond to representation targets, and support commitments to the participation of women as per the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

To conclude, the emergence of the Women, Peace and Security agenda from the United Nations system has set an important precedent in peace and security efforts, and for NATO, the implications must be underscored. The Women, Peace and Security agenda is critical to the NATO context, particularly due to the range of missions of the organization and when calling for increased attention to sexual and gender-based violence, the empowerment of women and increased participation of women in security and defence. With operations in 2025 ranging from surveillance, to counter terrorism, to capacity-building (→ NATO, 2025a), the integration of gender perspectives must be approached in an intentional way in order to inform diverse

security needs. The following section provides an overview of the NATO operating context, in addition to how NATO has integrated gender perspectives, the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and related commitments into its organizational structure.

The NATO Alliance in Context

Formed in 1949 by the twelve signing members of the Washington Treaty,³³ as a political-military alliance, NATO has its roots in "collective defence and the preservation of peace and stability" (→ NATO, 1949). Contemporary framing of NATO's purpose is the "guaranteeing of the freedom and security of its members through political and military means" (→ NATO, 2018a). This is achieved through its three essential core tasks of deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security, all of which are implicated by the research question under investigation concerning the barriers to women's deployment on NATO operations.

Guiding NATO's strategic vision of these three core tasks is NATO's Strategic Concept. In simplified terms, the Strategic Concept sets the priorities and vision for NATO's core essential tasks for a roughly ten-year timeframe, and save for the Washington Treaty, is one of the primary hierarchical strategic documents for the alliance, guiding "its future political and military development" (→ NATO, 2020a). Most recently published in 2022 amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO's Strategic Concept for the first time in its drafting explicitly refers to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and its integration across all tasks of the alliance (→ NATO, 2022a, p. 3). However, the mainstreaming of the agenda stops at this first reference.

Previously released in 2010, NATO's Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence' prioritized, in part:

- collective defence for members;
- crisis management and stabilization in support of (and in addition to) United Nations and EU partners;
- more political engagement with partners, and a substantial role for them in "shaping the NATO-led operations to which they contribute" and;
- "continuous reform towards a more effective, efficient and flexible Alliance, so that our taxpayers get the most security for the money they invest in defence" (→ NATO, 2010, pp. 4-5).

To this end, the previous Strategic Concept acknowledged that NATO will deploy robust military forces where and when required (→ NATO, 2010). It also commits allies to engage in a continuous process of reform, modernization, and transformation, in order to carry out the full range of NATO operations as effectively and efficiently as possible (→ NATO, 2010, p. 9). The Strategic Concept recognizes that "NATO must have sufficient resources – financial, military and human – to carry out its missions, which are essential to the security of Alliance populations and territory," must "preserve and strengthen the common capabilities, standards, structures and funding that bind us together" and "engage in a process of continual reform, to streamline structures, improve working methods and maximize efficiency" (→ NATO, 2010, p. 34).

The shift in language from the 2010 Strategic Concept to the 2022 release must be underscored. Published during a time of turbulence for the Euro-Atlantic region, the 2022 Strategic Concept focuses on the threats of the Russian Federation, followed by multiple regional and global challenges such as

terrorism, conflict in Africa and the Middle East, and the impact of this instability on civilians. With this international turbulence came an important reframing of the three core tasks, notably the shift from "collective defence" to "deterrence and defence" and the integration of preventative measures to crisis management.

There is, however, no surprise that gender has limited reference in any of these strategic documents; military doctrine and strategic documents often exclude such references (→ Hardt and von Hlatky, 2020, p. 136), and history has shown that when 'real security' challenges emerge, gender considerations fall to the wayside. Discussed further below, NATO's buy-in to gender-sensitive policies and programming at the policy level was not formalized until 2007, with the NATO/EAPC Policy for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.³⁴ But there are still opportunities for ongoing progress – NATO commits to robust military forces; flexibility; sufficient human resources to successfully carry out missions; and the strengthening of common capabilities, standards and structures that align alliance members. These are, ultimately, commitments that can be bolstered by Women, Peace and Security as an operational capability.

Alliance Operations

Now comprised of 32 member states, NATO is best described as a family: "it is large, and it is complex" (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018). "Consisting of multiple headquarters, twenty-nine Centers of Excellence, and ultimately a federation of fifty to sixty entities, all of these actors look to NATO for a standard and terms of reference on particular behaviours. With NATO setting the minimum standard, national militaries then adopt these minimums as their new baseline"

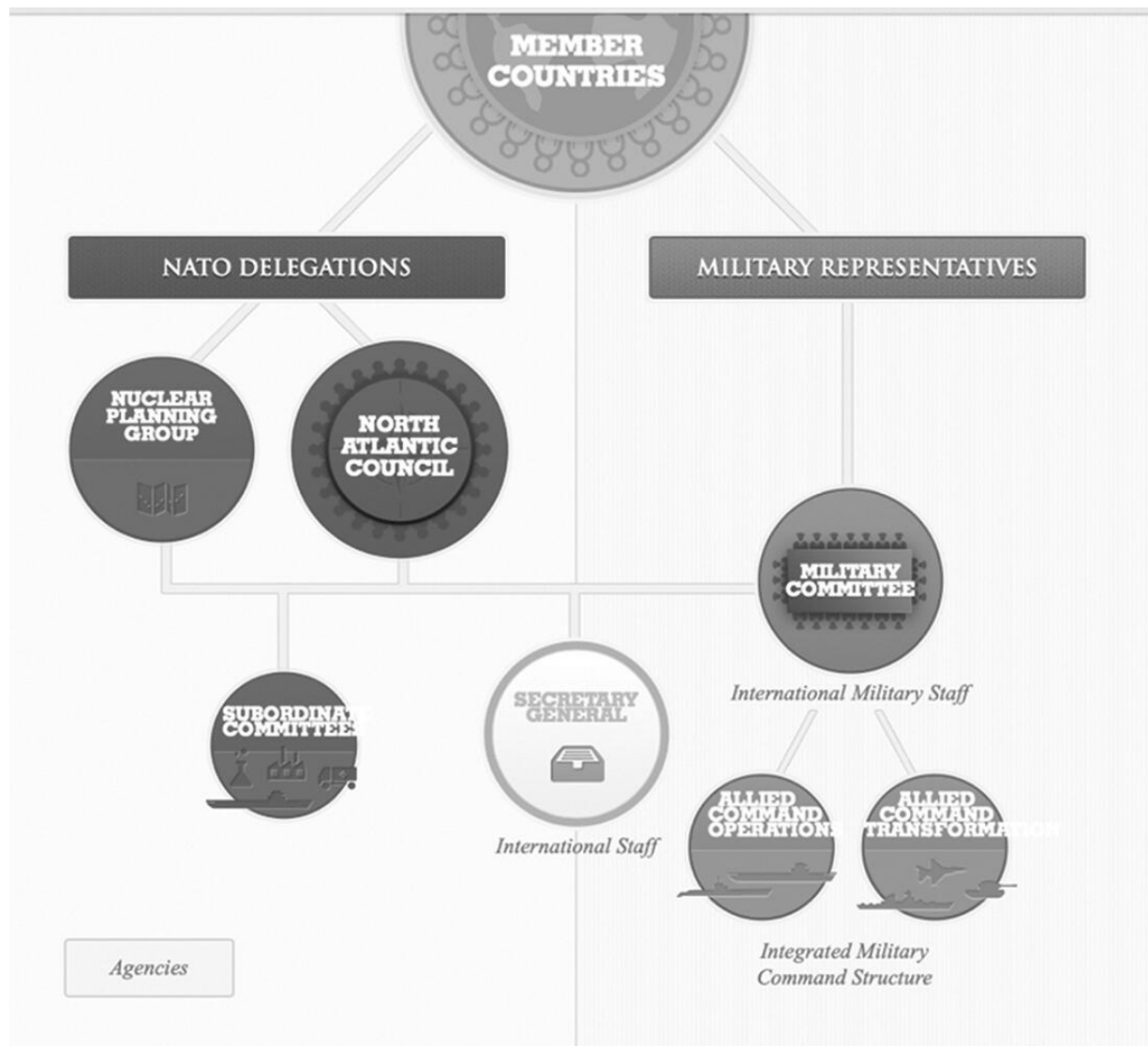
(Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018). To this end, and in line with the regular operating and responsibility of states for implementation of NATO guidance, "nations have the primary responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and gender equality. The provision of trained troops and experts on gender issues, as well as a better gender balance in NATO-led forces depend entirely on national decisions" (→ NATO, 2018b). Member states are "encouraged to make WPS an integral part of their defence and security policies and activities" and the role of "national initiatives, including through the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) and other strategic national initiatives, are essential for making progress in this regard" (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 13). Read in this context, the ownership of Women, Peace and Security – be it expertise or gender balanced forces – is relegated formally to member states. But I argue there are mechanisms through which NATO could set the standard, and as exemplified in the next chapter, nations rely on this guidance.

While countries are responsible for the control and ultimate contribution to a NATO force generation process, Standardization Agreements (STANAGs) at the NATO level are in place to ensure interoperability. Standards are established "by consensus and approved by a recognized body ... they are the rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context" (→ NATO, 2022c). They are the "document that specifies the agreement of member states to implement the standard ... in order to meet an interoperability requirement" (→ NATO, 2022c). So, while there are levels of agency at the national level with regard to who and what is deployed, NATO also standardizes, to an extent, allies' force contributions to NATO-led operations. These standardizations exist at

"operational, procedural, material, and administrative" levels (→ NATO, 2022c). Standardizations range from how to measure and report radiation, visits to NATO and non-NATO ports, procedures for logistics and situation reports, ammunitions interchangeability, and troop contributions (→ NATO, 2016, → 2019b, → 2019c). As outlined in the research design and case selection rationale, NATO is a unique case due to both the scope of military operations, and the prevalence of gender mainstreaming policies, yet no clear target or representation goal for women in NATO-led operations. This is ultimately a form of resistance in and of itself; NATO elites' defer to member states, while member states continue to defer to NATO for guidance. As there are various gender-based assumptions that may shape the ways women participate in member state militaries, NATO toes the line by committing to the premise of gender perspectives, while distancing itself from the responsibility to implement (though this could be addressed through a standardization requirement). However, when NATO does implement policies in response to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, it leverages both political and military sides of the house.

Organizational Structure and Policy Mechanisms

NATO is unique in that it is both a political decision-making body and integrated military-civilian headquarters. The organizational structure includes NATO delegations, the International Staff (civilian) and International Military Staff (military) (→ Figure 4.1). Within the NATO Headquarters, there are several mechanisms leveraged for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda on both military and political sides.



Source: "Working Structures."

→ <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html>

Figure 4.1: NATO Structure.

Article 9 of the Washington Treaty commits to the establishment of a council representative of alliance members – the North Atlantic Council – particularly in recommendations for measures that may be required under Articles 3 and 5. The North Atlantic

Council consists of decision-making civilians from each delegation.

The International Staff, led by the NATO Secretary General, provide advice, guidance and support to the national delegations at NATO headquarters and implement decisions from the senior committees across NATO. Located under the International Staff banner is the Special Representative on Women, Peace and Security, which is a "high-level focal point on all aspects of NATO's contribution to the Women, Peace and Security agenda" (→ NATO, 2018e). The Special Representative on Women, Peace and Security is considered a special office that, in theory, allows direct access to the Secretary General. While this serves an important direct line to decision-making, this unique positioning in the organizational structure of NATO also means it falls outside of standard NATO bureaucratic processes, which are often required to obtain military and political advice and endorsement. A shift to reporting through the traditional NATO bureaucracy – for example, to an Assistant Secretary General – may serve to ease this isolation; however, consultation and buy-in would still need to be intentionally sought from across the organization. The result of reporting directly to the Secretary General is that buy-in or uptake of guidance provided by the Special Representative's office can effectively be ignored, as endorsements and approvals have not been provided through the organizational structure.

While a civilian role, the Special Representative supports the implementation of NATO's commitments to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and in 2020, the role was "framed around the principles of integration, inclusiveness and integrity" (→ NATO, 2020b). This included, but was not limited to, "improving gender balance in NATO's civilian and military structures and encouraging Allies and partners to do the same" (→ NATO, 2020b). However, this language shifted in 2024, with

the role of the Special Representative summarized as advancing NATO's broader gender equality commitments (→ NATO, 2024b). Despite this change, the importance of eliminating barriers for women's participation in NATO operations has been underscored by the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative. For example, former Special Representative Clare Hutchinson addressed the Security Council and reinforced the 2018 NATO Policy and Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The means through which the Special Representative suggested NATO achieve these goals was through "the dismantling of barriers standing in the way of the full participation of women in our Alliance and national forces" (→ NATO, 2018f). Echoed by the sitting Special Representative Irene Fellin during the NATO Summit in 2024, women's participation in military forces is being further bolstered through NATO and allies providing support to women servicemembers in Ukraine, in order to ensure body armour and uniforms fit correctly (→ NATO, 2024c).

On the military side, NATO forces are comprised of contributions from NATO allies and partners, and as a result NATO does not possess a military force of its own. Led by the Military Committee,³⁵ which is the implementation force of the political decisions made, the International Military Staff has two command structures – the Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT). The functions of these groups as they relate to Force Generation are outlined below.

Throughout NATO, additional policy frameworks and working mechanisms have been developed in order to support the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (→ Lackenbauer and Langlais, 2013, p. 6). In 2008, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and the Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation were tasked to draft Bilateral

Strategic Command (Bi-SC) Guidelines on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 to include standards of behaviour expected by NATO-led forces. The resulting Bi Strategic Directive 40-1, and the 2014, 2017 and 2021 revisions, recognize the need to eliminate barriers for the active participation of women internally as well as externally, and acknowledge that, as a matter of credibility, the linkage between external and internal integration of gender perspectives must be emphasized. The most recent iteration, released in 2021, again refers to the unique and different perspectives men and women bring to security challenges, noting "the effective representation and participation of both women and men is critical to the success of the alliance" (→ NATO, 2021a, p. 3). Notably, the 2021 policy also calls for Troop Contributing Countries to "remain aware of the positive effect that including both men and women in appropriate proportion has within the organization," and "consider the positive effect that a more gender balanced force structure can have" for military operations (→ NATO, 2021a, p. 5, 12). Allies and partners are also encouraged to advance awareness of gender perspectives in operations, missions, and exercises (→ NATO, 2012; → 2017a; → 2021a). For example, on military operations where NATO provides support to election activities, Troop Contributing Countries are encouraged to consider gender in force composition (→ NATO, 2021a, p.15). This directive is applicable to ACO, ACT, their commanders, implementers and practitioners, as well as to forces assigned to NATO-led or supported operations and missions. Commanders maintain overall responsibility for implementation, with support of Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points.

Additional policy guidance can also be found in the Allied Command Operations Gender Functional Planning Guide. The Planning Guide notes that "gender perspectives" are wide ranging in application but include considerations of force

structure and composition (→ SHAPE, 2015, p. 3). Further, the Guide calls for gender balanced force generation and deployments at tactical levels. *Gender balancing* considers the "promotion of equal participation of men and women in security institutions and oversight bodies" where "the importance is to recruit and retain women in security and governance sectors" (→ Valasek, 2008, p. 5). In particular, the Guide stresses its:

Critical role to play to ensure that in NATO's military contribution to long term security and stability there is an active promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality (→ SHAPE, 2015, p. 2).

NATO often refers to 'gender perspectives' – even with a webpage on it and action plans that refer to improving gender perspectives (not 'women' per se) in operations. Previous iterations of the website and the aforementioned Bi-Strategic Command Directive (2021) refer to how "The complementary skills of both male and female personnel are essential for the effectiveness of NATO operations" (→ NATO, 2015), suggesting there are unique skills women bring to the table. Recent updates to the website shift language toward the use of gender perspectives, with a welcome adjustment to the 2015 text that implied women are the actors bringing gender perspective to the table (→ NATO, 2024d), rather than as a skillset that can be shared by all personnel.

The International Military Staff (IMS) Office of the Gender Advisor is the contact point for all-things gender, human security, Women, Peace and Security, and responding to and preventing gender-based violence (→ NATO, 2024d). Responsible for liaising with member states, providing advice and reporting, the Office is the central coordinating function for gender perspectives and the integration into military operations, and implementing NATO's Human Security agenda. Within the Office

of the IMS Gender Advisor, all personnel report to the Director General of the International Military Staff (→ NATO, 2025b) (who reports to the Military Committee) and are responsible for coordinating and liaising with all decision-making bodies and strategic functions in NATO.

Under the IMS Office of the Gender Advisor, there is a Gender Advisor (GENAD) and the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP), an advisory committee that promotes gender mainstreaming and the integration of gender perspectives in various NATO activities and operations. GENADs operationalize NATO's gender commitments and are integrated across most military functions (in theory). While the GENAD positions are open to men and women, gender perspectives are often considered women's issues, and questions surrounding implementation are often deferred to women.

The NCGP advises the NATO Military Committee to support NATO's commitments to gender equality and gender perspectives (→ NATO, 2024d). The NCGP, like the Special Representatives Office for Women, Peace and Security, has a direct line to decision-making of the Military Committee but again is tasked with balancing the need for buy-in from the chain of command while simultaneously working outside of it. The NCGP also completes the NATO Annual Summary of National Reports as a core function. These reports have undergone a considerable makeover in recent years. In the 2017 NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives recommendations, the report encourages member states to develop mixed gender engagement capabilities in supporting NATO Maritime Operations (→ NATO, 2018g, p. 79). This is expanded on in the 2018 committee report and recommendations, where the military committee tasks member states to report on how they have developed ways to mitigate the gender diverse engagement capability gap and to report its findings back to the military committee (→ NATO,

2018g, pp. 81, 144).³⁶ Notably, since 2019, recommendations have not been integrated into the Committee's annual summary report. In the case of the 2019 report, an assessment of how many NATO member nations took action toward the NATO Committee on Gender Perspective's 2018 recommendations was included (→ NATO, 2019d, pp. 125–131). The report notes that in 2019, one member nation broke consensus with regard to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives' recommendation to recognize gender perspectives as a capability and approving the development of an implementation plan (→ NATO, 2019d, p. 125), resulting in the recommendations not being published. The most recent report, published in 2022 (four years before the publication of this book), adjusts the language of the Summary Report and frames national contributions as "good practices and lessons learned" to support other nations in developing gender-specific policies in their own contexts (→ NATO, 2022b, p. 10), rather than developing recommendations on behalf of the NCGP.

While there are several additional task forces, advisors and working groups outlined in greater detail in NATO resources, and above in the 'structure' discussion of NATO, I observe a lack of clarity in some of these roles across the organization, in addition to the primary offices responsible for the integration of gender perspectives and gender equality working outside of the formal structure. The challenge is that the bureaucracy and approval process can serve as a mechanism of accountability, oversight and checks and balances, and working outside of these mechanisms may hinder organizational buy-in. Like other military organizations comprised of political/military personnel, there are multiple mechanisms and initiatives in place in order to progress gender-related work. The challenge with this approach is limited communication and mixed messaging across organizations; while an attempt may be made to bridge military

and civilian approaches to gender – as per the NATO task force which seeks to bring together civilian and military staff across the headquarters, for example (→ NATO, 2024b) – there may be a divide not only between the military and political implementation (and understanding) of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, but also between the policy rhetoric and practice.

Gender Policies at NATO

In addition to the policy instruments noted above, the following section highlights additional developments in NATO's gender policies and processes. While NATO's policy suite addresses gender perspectives and women's participation in multiple areas of operations (especially with regard to sexual and gender-based violence in operations), the resolution that features most prominently in NATO documents is UNSCR 1325. The Gender Functional Planning Guide noted above is one exception, as it was most recently published in 2015 – the same year UNSCR 2242 was released.

In 2007, NATO formally adopted UNSCR 1325 through the implementation of the NATO/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Policy on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security agenda, followed by an Action Plan. The policy has had five released revisions (2011, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2024) since the original release in 2007 and is generally mapped onto NATO's priorities of deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. The policy commits to integrating gender perspectives into NATO's wider objectives and core tasks while committing to "yielding a change in mindsets and behaviours ... and promoting awareness and positive changes" (→ NATO, 2014a). With regard to NATO-led operations and missions, the 2014 action plan committed that

"NATO and its operational partners will seek to ensure that Gender Advisers are deployed as part of the Command Group; that women are deployed at all levels in NATO-led operations and missions; and that both troops and commanders have undergone gender training necessary for their role and level. This will ensure that a gender perspective is integrated and that UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions are implemented in the context of the NATO-led operation or mission" (→ NATO, 2014b, para. 16).

In 2014, a distinction was made between the deployment of women and GENADs on NATO-led operations, and the integration of gender perspectives. While this policy may be read to assume that integrating 'women' into deployments automatically integrates a gender perspective, the emphasis on "related resolutions" of the Women, Peace and Security agenda includes Resolution 2242, which calls for an increase of deployed women on operations. While NATO may defer the responsibility of troop compositions to member states, it explicitly commits to women's deployment on NATO-led operations in multiple policy documents. Through identifying enablers to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the policy notes the importance of gender balance and the recruitment of women leaders in both civilian and military roles (→ NATO, 2014a). To this end, the 2018 policy nuances the discussion by focusing on barrier reduction for women, noting:

Systemic inequalities are addressed to ensure fair and equal treatment of women and men in the Alliance. Accountability on all efforts to increase awareness and implementation of the WPS agenda shall be made a priority in accordance with international frameworks (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 11).

Defence and related capacity building efforts will aim at developing institutions that are accessible and responsive to the needs of both women and men, and include the promotion of women's participation in

national armed forces. This can be achieved by including specific elements focused on gender and WPS in the training and education curricula for armed forces and other personnel in the security and defence institutions. This includes elements on how to take the protection needs of women into account, as well as to recognise, prevent, and respond to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 13).

NATO and its partners are committed to show the leadership required to dismantle existing barriers to the full implementation of WPS resolutions and gender equality (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 13).

Notwithstanding the limitations surrounding NATO's binary framing of gender, the coinciding NATO/EAPC Action Plan further dictated specific actions and measures for determining progress in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (→ NATO, 2014b; → NATO, 2021b). Most recently released in 2024, the NATO Policy on Women, Peace and Security reflects NATO's international obligation to the Charter of the United Nations' common values of human rights,³⁷ and "recognizes the mutually reinforcing relationship between Participation, Prevention and Protection." For the first time, the NATO policy recognizes women's rights are being eroded globally, and calls attention to barriers to participation in public and political life as well as peace and security processes. The policy also spotlights areas where NATO has traditionally had a smaller footprint, such as economic and political challenges, climate change, and technology (→ NATO, 2024a), and draws a distinction between human security and Women, Peace and Security. This is a considerable extension of the often-focused approach to gender perspectives, as well as the scope and impact of NATO's efforts: NATO reflects on the complementary goals of its human security and Women, Peace and Security agendas, with a focus on people-centered and rights-based approaches. However, the alliance distinguishes Human Security due to its focus on "safety and security of all

people, while Women, Peace and Security provides a focus on the gendered impact of conflict disproportionately impacting women and girls" (→ NATO, 2024a, para 6). While a fulsome exploration of the distinction between NATO's Women, Peace and Security and Human Security agendas is beyond the scope of this book, the alliance's framing of the reach of the Women, Peace and Security agenda reinforces my observation that a gender perspective is deemed most relevant in circumstances where women or gender considerations may be obvious (for example, recruiting more women into the military). Indeed, while the spirit of the flagship UNCSR 1325 was based on addressing the unique impact of conflict against women and girls, the core objective of the agenda is to build and sustain lasting peace – an outcome that impacts the safety and security of all people.

Shifting back to policies and processes, NATO member states are encouraged to develop NAPs on Women, Peace and Security, and to contribute to annual national reporting through the International Military Staff Office of the Gender Advisor, in order to document progress and developments of a gender mainstreaming approach (→ Olsson and Gizelis, 2013, p. 427). As part of reporting, in 2014 a progress report on the implementation of the NATO/EAPC policy was published. In it, the report notes that despite gender training and education, there was a general lack of awareness among NATO military leaders and troops. However, the 2014 NATO/EAPC Policy has been included as a reference for Defence Planning processes for member states and partners, and capability surveys and recruitment of women states have been collected (→ NATO, 2014c). Notably, the frequency of progress reports in response to the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan diminished after this initial release.

The 2018 Action Plan specifically notes the importance of inclusiveness through the representation of women across NATO and in national forces, with the imperative to enhance operational effectiveness and success. In doing so, the Action Plan commits NATO to "increase the participation of women in all tasks throughout the International Staff (IS) and International Military Staff (IMS), including in meetings, training opportunities, and public engagement" (→ NATO, 2018b, p. 18). However, in reference to the prior discussion, the Action Plan reinforces that member states are responsible for the development, deployment and training of gender balanced forces. Building on this foundation, the 2021–2025 Action Plan (→ NATO, 2021b), endorsed by NATO Defence Ministers in 2021, outlines key goals relevant to the deployment of women, including:

- A robust institutional framework, mainly focused on the 'structure' of how NATO implements and facilitates gender perspectives and considerations across the organization;
- The integration of gender perspectives, including identifying the integration of new and emerging areas for which to consider gender perspectives, and mainstreaming gender across policy, planning, capabilities, and deterrence efforts;
- Building partnerships, networks, and education and training efforts on Women, Peace and Security; and
- Education, training and exercises to integrate gender perspectives beyond gender-specific areas.

The Action Plan is, by design, developed to apply to the interworking of NATO rather than member states, reinforcing NATO's position that the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda falls to the prerogative of member states. This in and of itself provides an entry point to critically appraise

the means through which guidance is provided to member states to set the gender standard: NATO 'opts in' to setting standardization requirements for member states on various elements of interoperability but not gender considerations. As outlined further below, the result is a chasm of guidance regarding force generation and expectations for how member states take Women, Peace and Security elements into consideration for their troop contributions.

In order to understand these mechanisms and the basis of NATO's international commitments, a brief summary of the interconnections between NATO initiatives is outlined in → Figure 4.2.

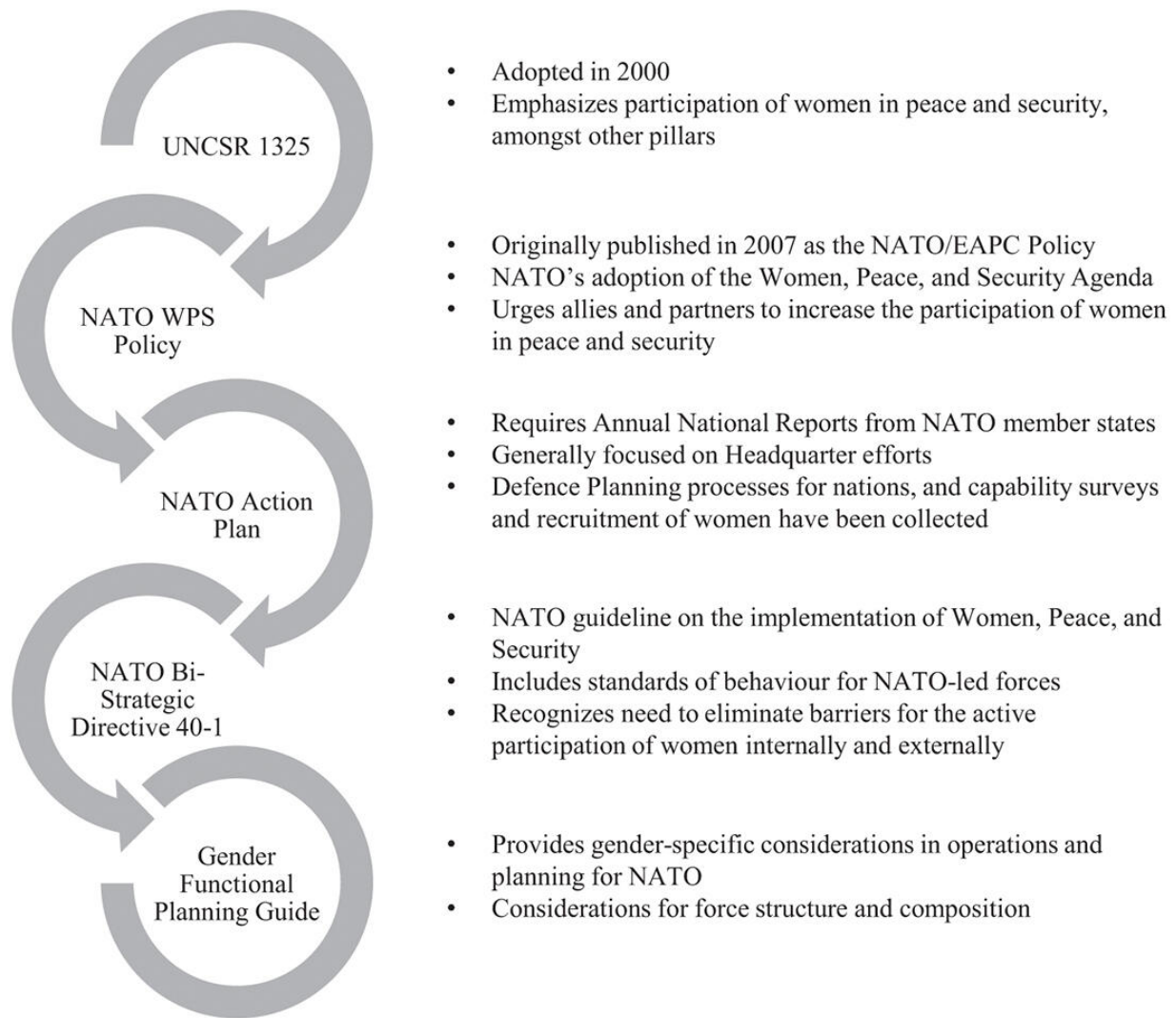


Figure 4.2: Overview of NATO Policies to Implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda (2021).

Force Generation Process and Division of Labour

Although the United Nations and NATO note that the responsibility to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda lies with nation-states, NATO has strong influence in the procurement of materials and personnel for missions. Thus,

although the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security agenda are expected to fall to allies and partners, NATO has mechanisms, chief of which is its force generation process, that can influence the contributions of states to international missions. The process for NATO force generation is as follows (→ NATO, 2025c):

- The Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) are located at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), in Mons, Belgium. SHAPE can be considered the "Translator" of NATO decisions (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018). The ACO is led by the SACEUR.
- The Deputy SACEUR coordinates troop contributions from member states for NATO operations. The Allied Command Operations is responsible for all NATO operations.
- Within the Allied Command Operations, the Force Generation Branch is responsible for resourcing all required capabilities from member states.
- Force generation is "the procedure by which Allies (and partner countries) resource the personnel and equipment needed to carry out North Atlantic Council-approved operations and missions" (→ NATO, 2025c).
- The process begins with the Operational Commander sending a Combined Joint Statement of Requirement (CJSOR) to Allied Command Operations.
- The CJSOR is then provided to member (and partner) states, where decisions are made domestically as to availabilities and priorities.
 - Domestically, member states receive taskings through their Chief of Defence Staff in order to respond with a Force Preparation (FORCE PREP) document. This is often in the form of an Operational Order – a

- document signaling to the various branches within a defence establishment for 'who takes what.'
- Allies and partners also identify caveats in the drafting of a FORCE PREP document, a proposal for personnel and materiel, which is shared at a biannual Force Generation Conference (implemented since 2003). Force Generation Conferences are comprised of troop contributing countries' key staff officers identifying requirements for a 24-month timeframe.
 - The force generation process "is complete when member states reply with a FORCE PREP message, which provides the details of the national contributions" (→ NATO, 2025c).

In his chapter "Perfectly Flawed? The Evolution of NATO's Force Generation Process," John Deni purports that, within the force generation process outlined above, bureaucratic processes at the national level in combination with international bargaining has resulted in a force generation process that is "perfectly flawed." Deni suggests this is a system that, perhaps counterintuitively, develops insufficient forces while also trying to consecutively incentivize members to develop and maintain advanced military capabilities (→ Deni, 2014, n.p.). Although Deni is not referencing the inclusion of women in the force generation process in particular, one might ask why NATO does not utilize its force generation process to increase the representation of women on operations, akin to the United Nations which mandates that women represent 15% of deployed contingents.

The First Rule About NATO: Don't Talk About NATO

This chapter has provided a contextual overview of the creation, implementation and limitations of USNCR 1325, and NATO's foundational efforts to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda. But what does this mean for NATO, and what are the implications on deployments? In the 2014 Review of the Practical Implications of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, it was demonstrated that since the adoption of the NATO/EAPC Policy in 2007, NATO has made significant progress in integrating gender perspectives (→ Lackenbauer and Langlais, 2013, p. 6). Despite this progress, however, there remain limitations to the NATO force generation process, as well as tangible results with regard to women's representation on deployments. Through a comparison between the force generation processes for the United Nations and NATO, for example, the United Nations has, several times over, implemented 'targets' for increasing women on peacekeeping operations (→ UN Women, 2015). Most recently, this manifested in 2017 as a 15% target for troop contributing countries' military contributions to missions (→ United Nations Peacekeeping, 2017). In the event these targets are not met, the United Nations has expressed their intention to hold sanctions over countries in order to persuade compliance. In the NATO context, no such target or compliance mechanism exists, despite the two international organizations articulating similar roles and divisions of labour for member states. An email correspondence with the then-NATO IMS GENAD noted that "There is agreement we should increase the number of women in our deployments. However, an "ideal" number is not recommended" (Email correspondence, NATO IMS Office of the Gender Advisor, 16 February 2018).

Although targets have not been set or specific goals specified for women's deployment, NATO reporting through the required Annual National Reports to the IMS Office of the

Gender Advisor on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 serves as a strong benchmarking mechanism for NATO member states and partners. While there are no repercussions for reporting non-compliance, many allies and partners submit reports regularly, especially in the 2017 to 2022 timeframe. While there has been improvement in reporting, there are limitations to this current framework. Notably, there has not been a public release of the Summary of Annual National Reports between 2022 and 2025, and reports are based on the self-identification of member and partner states, who have different understandings of 'who' is in the military (→ Schjølset, 2013). Some member states include civilian counterparts for defence departments in their counts, and for a period of time, the annual national reports were also not standardized. Member states would submit as they saw fit, with some countries providing greater detail than others.

There is a clear interest and genuine effort on the NATO side regarding benchmarking and tracking progress for women's representation and deployment in member state militaries, though when it comes to guidance and implementation, there is room for improvement. Despite these efforts, however, the representation of women on NATO-led operations remains low, again prompting the question of what barriers might exist for women in NATO operations.

Back to Basics: Women's Agency and Operations

During an interview with a NATO senior official, it was suggested that the current United Nations framework of a 15% target will never be implemented at NATO "because the organization fundamentally disagrees with the premise" (Interview, NATO

Representative, 3 November 2018). Resulting from this seemingly shared perspective, the question must be raised as to why there is an institutional and ally-backed increased call for women's participation in NATO operations, including policy guidance that encourages troop contributing countries to consider gender balanced forces. As depicted throughout this book and in existing literature, there are a range of reasons as to why women's participation in military forces is important (→ von Hlatky et al., n.d.). With this in mind, and in reference to previous chapters' discussions, there is an opportunity to understand why some representatives from NATO suggest the organization does not agree with the premise of a target for women's participation. If this is the case, the example is set for member states to follow suit. Ultimately, this discussion comes back to a rights-based approach through which women should have the agency to participate in military operations, free of barriers that would otherwise not exist were they men.

Conclusion

A shifting international security landscape has necessitated NATO's reframing of its core tasks and revitalization of key strategic documents, such as its Strategic Policy. NATO's Women, Peace and Security efforts, while referenced in some of these core documents, risk being side-lined due to increased international security threats and the perception that gender considerations are an add-on luxury. This dynamic is already being observed with the changing role of the Summary of National Reports and the absence of a public report between 2022 and 2025.

NATO's adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and molding of the resolutions into its operational context provides a basis through which we can now assess the internal

and external barriers to women's military participation in NATO operations. Notably, the structure of NATO gender efforts overwhelmingly resides outside of the regular chain of command, demonstrating the broader framing of gender within the organization. Further reinforcing my argument of hidden organizational resistances, NATO's standardization process, which sets critical interoperability considerations, shies away from considerations of gender perspectives or the participation of diverse perspectives in operations. Rather, guidance falls to an additional Strategic Directive that encourages consideration of gender-balanced forces, rather than setting a standard.

Despite these challenges, there is a strong foundation in place due to the work of those within the organization that must be noted. A suite of operational planning guides and policies, anthology texts with examples of success and future considerations, the revised Women, Peace and Security policy released in 2024, and dedicated staff within these offices that advocate and champion change continue to push for progress, despite organizational resistance. This book serves to further bolster this ongoing work. I challenge, in particular, NATO's deference to allies as a means to distance the organization from committing to increase the composition of women on NATO-led operations, despite policy commitments that acknowledge the importance of increasing women's participation in security and defence. In the next chapter, I probe these preliminary insights further through interviews with NATO elites and Canadian and Danish force generators.

Chapter Five Passing the Buck: NATO and Member State Support for Women in Operations

In 2019, the *New York Times* ran forty stories written by women about life in the military. Selected from over six hundred and fifty submissions, the short vignettes women shared about their experiences ranged from family support and dissent to sexual assault, explaining their roles and how they saved lives, decisions to enlist, and more. One story in particular stands out; Sgt. Holly Ward from the United States Air Force wrote about her deployment experiences as a woman. Her narrative focuses on three overseas deployments and being the only woman on the team; her living arrangements while deployed were separate and further away from her male teammates, resulting in her missing key information and being left behind on movements, and not being notified when her team was leaving the country (→ Katzenberg, 2019). Decisions were made without consultation of Sgt. Ward, influencing her ability to participate during the deployment and leading to her exclusion from activities. Sgt. Ward noted the decision was made for her living arrangements to be separate, which was based on assumptions made for her safety. Such gendered assumptions not only permeate decisions made while women are on deployment; they also influence decision makers and policies that can implicate women's participation before boots are on the ground.

As depicted throughout the literature, the motivations for women's participation are often overlooked or assumed to be the same as men's. Why do women want to deploy? Through

interviews with force generators, I find that career progression, credibility and peer pressure can all be motivations for why members wish to deploy. For some, "It is the valuable experience you get from that job and deployment and use it to further your career" (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019), and for junior members in particular, "you need to deploy to maintain currency," because "there is a street cred to deploying. You're now part of those who have deployed" (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018). But this team dynamic and being 'part of the group' can also result in stigma: "You don't want to be the one left behind. There is a stigma if you say you haven't volunteered to go" (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

This chapter examines force generator and NATO elites' perceptions of women's deployment on NATO-led operations. Hidden organizational resistances are, as articulated in previous chapters, organizational biases that manifest as perceptions and processes that hinder women's participation. Asked if these are 'actual' or 'attitudinal' problems that manifest for force generators and NATO elites, the answer through a hidden organizational resistance lens is both. Attitudinal problems manifest as decisions and biases, and the force generation process is one which appears objective but is, in some instances, flexible and/or biased. These barriers exist for NATO and allies, as demonstrated in the two case studies of Canada and Denmark. My research shows that there are assumptions around women's participation at various steps of the NATO and ally force generation processes that hinder women's deployment opportunities.

I observe how discussions surrounding diversity and women in armed forces result in a catch twenty-two: while there is resistance to diversity on the basis of effectiveness and

cohesiveness on deployment, when diversity initiatives are implemented, they are usually implemented in such a way that those responsible (in this case, force generators) do not have the tools or understanding to push for change. Through a thematic analysis, my hypotheses on the prevalence of force generators' and NATO elites' gendered assumptions, and the impact of the force generation process, are supported. I argue that while hidden organizational resistances manifest as gendered perceptions of deploying more women on operations, they also operate during the force generation process by introducing bias in decisions on who gets to deploy. Analyzing the interview data, I identify organizational-level biases and how decision makers perpetuate gendered assumptions about women's caring responsibilities and how this may impede their willingness to deploy, assumptions regarding women's fear of deployment, and assumptions that women will burnout from multiple deployments. In addition to gendered assumptions, respondents also simultaneously expressed a commitment to gender neutrality in how they approach women's deployment on NATO-led operations, particularly with regard to the perceived objectivity of the force generation process, while also signalling the propensity of preferential deployments. Building on the discussion in the previous chapter, I also observe the reciprocal process of NATO and member states' deferring to each other for the responsibility to support women in NATO operations. Ultimately, these hidden resistances at the organizational level are observed and may impede women's deployment at every stage of decision-making process.³⁸

I begin with a brief discussion on how NATO, Canada and Denmark operationalize women's participation in armed forces and deployments, noting the tension with supporting women's participation based on operational effectiveness. I continue with a brief overview of the research design and analysis process,

followed by my findings. Subsequently, the discussion turns to an overview and assessment of both international and national force generation processes, where there are prevailing views about merit and quotas, and concerns are identified by force generators regarding women's merit and ability to do the job. I conclude by providing an overview of the inductive analysis which identifies additional variables for consideration when investigating the individual-level factors perceived to influence deployments on NATO-led operations (→ Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Framing Women in Military Operations: NATO and Member State Perspectives

As discussed in Chapter Four, NATO's Policy on Women, Peace, and Security and supporting policies such as the Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 have all called for the increased participation of women to enhance the operational effectiveness of operations. But the common assumption that "increasing women in militaries will result in increased deployments" has not been observed in the NATO context (→ Olsson et al., 2015). This reality is exacerbated when considering organizational resistance to diversity in the armed forces.

How the business case for diversity is made may be to blame; attempting to reach certain targets of representation or participation for "workplace diversity" may come at the cost of "valuing diversity" and may lead to stereotypes (→ Heineken, 2009). For example, military organizations tend to emphasize the value-added of women to operations (→ Kennedy-Pipe, 2000; → Bridges and Horsfall, 2009; → Davis, 2009a; → Disler, 2010), rather than recognizing how discrimination in and of itself is a valid reason to reflect on policies, processes and assumptions

that may hinder women's participation in military organizations. As noted earlier in this book, nuance is necessary when broaching the topic of women's representation, and while women's representation on deployments is the focus of this work, it is the upstream factors that impede women's deployment that are explored. Nevertheless, militaries often leverage an instrumental angle – that is, the added value women may bring to military effectiveness or legitimacy – when garnering buy-in for women's participation. For example, in an Auditor General's Report in Canada, it was noted that women must be properly represented in order to ensure operational effectiveness (→ OAG Canada, 2016, sections 5.16, 5.25), and in Denmark, there is acknowledgement that "they [Danish military] are being transformed by a commitment to reflect the composition of Danish society" (→ Shaub et al., 2012, p. 27). Such an approach quickly shifts the onus of military success and legitimacy to women's integration, rather than addressing the assumptions and systems that may discriminate against their participation.

Research has been conducted on United Nations missions and operations, and growing attention has been paid to the European Union context. Scholars Louise Olsson, Anita Schjølset, and Frida Moller identify continued limitations in sex-disaggregated data reporting and problematize the low representation of women in national militaries (→ Olsson and Möller, 2013; → Olsson et al., 2015). Obradovic provides factors that lead to gender inclusiveness through the increased recruitment of women. Her results find that conscription, the percentage of women in professional fields, labour participation and the autonomy of women's movements accounted for 89% of the observed variance in the author's index of gender inclusiveness (→ Obradovic, 2009, p. 51). While Obradovic's findings are relevant and highlight potential factors that may

influence gender inclusiveness, this chapter further explores the role of individual decision makers and seemingly gender-neutral processes as factors influencing women's deployment on NATO operations. As outlined in greater detail in Chapter Three, this study design consisted of a qualitative thematic analysis of fourteen (14) interviews held between December 2017 and April 2019 with Canadian, Danish, NATO and SHAPE Headquarters representatives tasked with planning, force generation and/or Gender Advisor duties.

In order to better understand potential barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations, I considered three explanations. The first is that women self-select out of deployment opportunities due to concerns of personal safety (H1). The second poses that gendered assumptions held by deployment decision-makers results in fewer women chosen for deployment opportunities (H2). Finally, the third explanation (H3) is that the force generation process for NATO-led operations does not take gender into account, resulting in no motivation for member states to adhere to committing more women to NATO operations.

Of the three hypotheses, gender-based assumptions (H2) and 'buck passing' the integration of gender into force generation (H3) garnered the most evidence and support. However, anecdotal examples were provided for H1 regarding concerns of personal safety as a barrier. While force generators were not asked to speak directly to their own experiences, one participant noted the following experience while deployed on a United Nations mission:

Ongoing unacceptable flirting/harassment from multiple UN staff members. Hundreds of texts, invitations to dinner at 9 p.m., asking to touch my hair, stolen undergarments ... I received marriage proposals from about 7 to 10 separate men who persisted even after I explained that a) I wasn't interested and b) I was already married. To which at least

two of them explained that they were also married, but it was irrelevant (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 November 2018).

As will be discussed further below, risk and personal safety were identified by interviewees as potential concerns for women deploying on NATO-led operations; however, from the force generator perspective, these assumptions coincided with additional stereotypes – such as motherhood guilt – and as a result were considered support for H2.

Results – Hypothesis 2: Military Deployment Decision-Makers Assume Women Have Gender-Specific Responsibilities and Concerns, Resulting in Fewer Women Deployed in Operations

Referring back to the introduction, when the decision was made for Sgt. Ward's living arrangements due to concerns of her safety, it left her isolated from her team. The decision was made based on an assumption of necessary protection, without considering the perspective of the individual. Such gender-based assumptions manifested during interviews as perceived preferences of particular missions (and risk), assumptions of home responsibilities and burnout.

Mission Preference

While there is support for the argument that allies shape their personnel contributions based on the level of risk of a mission (→ Khusrav et al., 2015), the impact of decision-makers on these varying mission types have yet to be considered. In order to understand how gendered assumptions may permeate

deployment numbers for women on NATO-led operations, I asked questions regarding the perceived importance of certain missions, for example, based on intensity and combat. A Danish representative noted,

In terms of national operations and NATO-led operations ... I think between us there will always be a different understanding of having been in Afghanistan than Kosovo, for instance. But between us, combat missions like Afghanistan and Iraq will have higher status. UN missions (smiles) have ... a different focus. They are not less important ... but I think combat missions are the ones that ... if you look at a guy's CV, and he served in Afghanistan, he has experience. It counts (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

In addition to the 'street cred' awarded to those who have deployed on NATO-led operations, what is also notable in this excerpt is the participant's example centring around a man deploying to Afghanistan for combat experience. Despite the discussion specifically considering women's deployment on NATO operations, the deference to men deploying is telling for someone who holds a position at the force generation level and indicates who they may perceive as 'more willing' or 'more excited' to deploy. Another interviewee noted the lineup of participants to deploy on NATO operations specifically:

The UN is slow. You don't go on a UN mission when you want to accomplish something. And everyone there wants to accomplish something, whether it is to make a difference or for professional promotion. We have a lineup for volunteers for Afghanistan (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 5 February 2019).

Further, a Canadian military representative noted the consideration of risk and hazard level in deployments and their relationship with types of missions. The risk level often coincides with combat missions and, as a result, are often NATO operations:

Risk level ... and hazard level ... may also make a difference. That correlates to your allowances. Money is a motivator (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

There is evidence that when a mission is considered riskier, states deploy fewer women.³⁹ For United Nations peace operations, fewer women were found to deploy in the early stages of the mission, due to what Kaisa Tidblad-Lundholm classifies as "operational uncertainty" risk. As the mission continues and there is greater knowledge about the operating environment, peacekeeping troop-contributing countries deploy more women (→ Tidblad-Lundholm, 2020). While this argument supports organizational biases that may exist for peacekeeping deployments, the above participant also notes how military members may perceive risk as a motivating force. Thus, the tension that may arise between organizational gendered assumptions and the perception of individuals is further reinforced:

What we do is dangerous. Risk level and hazard level could be a deterrence to someone (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

And the high-risk missions were of interest ... not because they were dangerous ... but because they had to test themselves (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 1 February 2019).

Despite the potential increased risk to personal safety, evidence supports general preference for NATO operations due to professional credibility and recognition. This may be due in part to the below participant's stated benefit of the goal-oriented nature of NATO operations; however, the discussion then shifts to demonstrate their gender bias and how this influences perceptions of job success. There is an assumption that diversity

may risk 'the job' and is in tension with the goal-oriented nature of NATO operations:

But I know from my colleagues, that most would prefer a NATO operation because it seems to us that they are usually better organized, and certainly the goal or task is at the center. It is not so much about representatives from how many nations are there ... so it is a question about how we solve our job the best and solve the task at hand, and not so much about representation from various countries or from various men and women, black or white or religious background, it is not so much about that. It is about doing the job. And I think that is the case for most of my colleagues and certainly for me (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 4 February 2019).

Such perceptions also manifest as observations that particular groups or occupations are more interested in certain missions:

Kosovo started as heated and then when Iraq came along ... Kosovo was not as dangerous. So people wanted to go to Iraq. Then Afghanistan was more dangerous. I think it was especially for the army guys, that they felt they had the best opportunity to try out what they had been training for (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 1 February 2019).

This risk factor and type of mission, however, is a double-edged sword. There is simultaneously a need and desire to go on a high-intensity NATO mission to 'earn your salt,' a financial benefit, as well as increased risk to personal safety. The mission preference language exemplified above, particularly with regard to combat and perceived danger, makes reference to the 'army guys' and beefing up a 'guy's CV', demonstrating the impact of masculinities and risk glorification within national militaries. This expands the organizational culture literature and suggests implicit resistance to women's integration and deployment: we observe numerous participants exemplifying gendered assumptions and hidden organizational resistances through which high-risk missions provide credibility, promotion and

prestige, but also assumptions of the army 'guy' being the key participant and most interested in those missions. In the next chapter, I test the extent to which some of these considerations are more prevalent for women than men.

Family Responsibilities and Assumptions

Imagine you were training for years to be deployed – the ultimate career objective when serving in the military. Your commanding officer asks you about the opportunity; is everything in order? Is there any reason you cannot go?

Personally, I think it would be harder for a mother to leave her children than it would be for a father. I think if you have children it differs. I think I can speak from my own experience ... I'm more confident with my children being fed and clothed and all these things, [more] properly than my wife would be. So ... when she goes off sometimes ... we manage ... (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January, 2019).

Assumptions surrounding family and childcare continue to hinder women's full participation and integration into military organizations.⁴⁰ The excerpt above from a Danish participant demonstrates two challenges. First, there are force generator assumptions of women's concerns surrounding deployment, and rhetoric that focuses on the ability of a mother to better clean, feed, and clothe her children. Second, the challenges spouses face while deployed are also raised, which reinforces guilt that may impede one's support to deploy.

Another participant noted similar challenges, suggesting how multiple postings, fear of deployment, starting a family and having a husband with a career result in women leaving the military altogether:

We can't keep them [women]. It's usually when you start to move around and you start to have children, and the fear of deployment, and how

everything fits in. My husband has a career as well; all of those things. And those concerns ... they say it's not worth it (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 5 February 2019).

These sentiments, from both men and women force generators, highlight assumed preferences and considerations for deployment decisions: it would be harder for a mother to deploy; and women's deployment causes hardship for the partners who stay at home. Ultimately, force generators are in control of important deployment decisions, and I observed evidence of gender bias throughout my discussions with participants. This can ultimately impact who is chosen or bypassed for a deployment, intentionally or unintentionally. These findings also identify potential reasons why women may leave the military: concerns of family, mixed with deployment pressures. However, there is no indication or reflection that the system and processes may be the challenge: instead, women 'do not think it is worth it'. The implications of gendered assumptions may swing both ways with regard to deployment decisions. For example, one participant identifies how, because they are single, they are asked to deploy more often, 'breaking rules for deployment':

I'm single and I'm deployed all the time. They break the rules. Six-month break? I've been told to go more times than others because I don't have a family and they assume I want to deploy (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 November 2018).

Another identified the dynamics of volunteering for deployments, family circumstances and how many times a military member deploys:

Some for a while will go all the time, and then their family reminds them that they want them around more. Or they're at a stage where they say,

"I will not volunteer, but if I'm told to go I will go" (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

These two testimonies highlight the intersection of the force generation and gendered assumptions hypotheses. The evidence suggests that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the force generation process can be flexible (and as a result opens opportunity for bias) and there are assumptions that women may not wish to deploy – assumptions which can ultimately impact deployment decisions.

Burnout

Within these organizational discussions regarding where and how to integrate women into NATO operations, I observed national militaries struggling with domestic and international commitments. Both Canada and Denmark force generators cite challenges with regards to concerns of burnout issues. This is particularly relevant in light of the propensity for unit-level deployments – when an entire unit is chosen to deploy – on NATO operations:

I think what we do now is we adhere to the intent to increase the number of women. But we will not be able to have 20% women in our contingents being deployed. Because we only have 5 or 7 % women ... it means some of us would be deployed more often (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 1 February 2019).

While the availability of women to fill particular deployment roles may influence opportunities (further discussed in the next chapter), the above perspective taken only in the context of women's deployment overlooks a key consideration: if we look at men deploying on NATO-led operations, the same issues of tempo, redeployment, and deployment frequency do not appear

to be a sticking point. Instead, it is an expectation; it goes with the job; they were the right fit; they wanted to go. Depending on whether an individual is in a high-readiness group, the likelihood of deploying may be even higher. These concerns about tempo and burnout only surface when women's deployment is on the discussion agenda. The implications are two-fold: there are gendered assumptions about women not wanting to deploy frequently that are assumed to not exist for men – a gendered myth that may preclude women's deployment opportunities by force generators. And, although not the focus of this book, there is an assumption regarding men's desire to deploy frequently that requires further scrutiny. This assumption of burnout and the disconnect from some women's deployment experiences is exemplified below:

All UN patrol reports require a gender breakdown of the participants which is a reporting metric. When I first arrived, I had pressure to ensure I was out patrolling so the reports could reflect that. Although it wasn't an issue for me, I went on (and led) more patrols than any other [country] in [country] or MLO from my base. I still did the job, but that pressure wouldn't have been there for a male (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 5 January 2019).

Despite reference to a United Nations mission, both the force generation and gendered assumptions hypotheses are supported, because there is demonstration of the impact of United Nations' representation goals for deployments (needing to be seen and reported), and the participant also enjoyed the hard work and being on patrol often. Although concerns regarding burnout and deployment were raised by force generators, Chapter Six finds these concerns are not reflected in the survey answers of women military members.

In conclusion, my analysis revealed clear gendered assumptions that may affect deployment deliberations (H2) for

the case countries of Canada and Denmark, which suggests gendered assumptions implicate women's deployment on NATO-led operations. These gendered assumptions were observed as the pressures and expectations of family for women which may impede their willingness to deploy, an assumed fear of deployment, and assumptions that women will burnout from deployments. Coupled with concerns regarding the merit of women on deployments and the 'goal oriented' nature of NATO-led operations, these assumptions no doubt permeate decision makers, but as discussed next, these gender biases are also observed throughout the force generation process.

Results: Hypothesis 3 – Gender Blindness in Force Generation Processes

While there are nuances for each mission, there are generally similar processes that occur during force generation for a NATO-led operation. As noted in the previous chapter, force generation is "the procedure by which Allies (and partner countries) resource the personnel and equipment needed to carry out North Atlantic Council-approved operations and missions" (→ NATO, 2025c). NATO forces are comprised of contributions from NATO countries and partner states, since NATO does not possess a military force of its own. The force generation process is described in detail for the Afghanistan context in David Auerswald and Stephen Saidemen's work (2014). Recall from Chapter Four that for a specific operation or mission, the Operational Commander provides a Combined Joint Statement of Requirement (CJSOR) to the Allied Command Operation, which outlines resources, equipment and other needs. This is then followed up by senior leader forums and Force Generation Conferences, where Troop Contributing Countries' staff officers

are brought together to determine what is forecasted as needed for 18 to 24 months. Members then make recommendations on which capabilities they can provide (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018). Recall that NATO acknowledges "while the ACO is responsible for resourcing required capabilities, the final decisions for contributions is taken by national capitals."

The observable implications for H3 are centred around flexibility and subjectivity of the force generation process and asymmetries between NATO and member states' regarding commitments to women's deployment on NATO-led operations. Specifically, these barriers were observed as lacking benchmarks for women's deployment, limited repercussions for homogenous teams sent by troop contributing countries, and resistances to quotas. Despite NATO efforts to support the participation of women through several policy mechanisms (recall Bi-Strategic Directive 040-001), NATO ultimately defers to its member states when it comes to troop contributions. Coupled with perceived lack of authority to require increased representation of women on NATO-led deployments from member states, NATO is positioned to be hands-off when it comes to setting the conditions for more women to be deployed. While there are key similarities in the force generation process for NATO and United Nations operations, differences are found at the member state level that, in the United Nations context, are argued to influence women's knowledge of peacekeeping deployment opportunities (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018, pp. 22–23). Despite this book's focus on NATO-led operations, the potential impact of knowledge of deployment opportunities for women spans any type of deployment – United Nations peacekeeping missions or otherwise.

NATO's Force Generators

As noted throughout this book, commitments to increasing women's deployment representation on NATO operations (i.e., through targets) have been limited. At the policy level, a NATO International Staff representative whose work focuses on Women, Peace and Security recognized the need to accelerate the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda but challenged the propensity for narratives that directly link gender perspectives to operational effectiveness. The participant noted that these dialogues are not productive because nobody can define and measure operational effectiveness (Interview, NATO Representative, 6 December 2018). Stéfanie von Hlatky also brings to light the challenge with this narrative with regard to United Nations peacekeeping missions and the Canada-led Elsie Initiative, instead proposing a shift in focus from 'inserting women' and requiring measurable results in order to support their integration towards a "common professional culture and training" (→ von Hlatky, 2017, n.p.).

A gender expert familiar with the force generation process for NATO operations further suggested that NATO fundamentally disagrees with the premise of quotas for women's participation in NATO-led operations (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018). Instead, NATO has set the minimum standard for gender, which highlights the challenges that may arise with consensus-based decision making for international organizations. Referencing NATO IMS Summary of National Reports to the Office of the GENAD (see Chapter Four), a NATO representative notes:

... reports are how NATO exerts power and promotes routine exchange. There are normal processes to highlight where things go and progress. But there is no "stick" with reports. NATO's greatest influence is with accession agreements – elements of gender are normally included in this. For example, Montenegro, there was a stipulation for women throughout the ranks (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018).

Ultimately, the participant above is arguing that while reporting allows for benchmarking and sharing of information, reporting is not a means to create change in and of itself. Instead, the participant suggests accession agreements are a key mechanism through which to stipulate gender representation requirements for NATO member states. But what mechanism is in place for existing member states? Does this mean they are off the hook?

This deference or 'lack of control' over who member states ultimately send on NATO operations is observed at the planning and operational level of NATO. A SHAPE representative, for example, highlighted the limitations to the NATO force generation structure: "NATO has a structure for positions – people give them, and we have little control over who is sent" (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018).

Nevertheless, these perspectives diverge when considering the viability of targets or quotas, where military planners in SHAPE find utility in the United Nations practices: "The United Nations has done a good job integrating targets and certain goals for their objectives for force generation. For the NATO case, we could do this, but we would need to identify why the number of women requested in force generation is required" (Interview, NATO Representative, 7 December 2017). The demand for a rationalization of why women are needed in operations, despite policy guidance (such as the Bi-Strategic Directive 40-1 and Gender Functional Planning Guide outlined in Chapter Four), is exemplary of the gap between policy and implementation for women's participation on NATO operations. NATO clearly identifies the benefits of women in operations, as do ally and partner nations. Yet, when discussing the process of force generation and how women's representation can be increased for operations, there is a fallback to requiring more evidence that women improve operational effectiveness, rather than

focusing on broader gender equality objectives and pre-existing NATO policies to that effect.

While national militaries have authority over their troop contributions, during the NATO force generation process, Standardization Agreements (STANAGs) (see Chapter Four) also ensure interoperability. STANAGs are the "document that specifies the agreement of member nations to implement the standard ... in order to meet an interoperability requirement" (→ NATO, 2022c). They are established "by consensus and approved by a recognized body ... rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context" (→ NATO, 2022c). The influence of NATO STANAGs on member states is exemplified by a Danish representative who discussed how environments interact differently within a NATO structure:

When we assign a ship, we click into a NATO force structure. My staff, all we are doing is looking into NATO doctrine, and nesting our doctrine into whatever is in NATO. In English! Everything in English. Everything we do... . we have a way of going in NATO. This is even more present with navy than army. Because in the army they have regulations. In the navy you have it, but there are not as many levels until you click directly into NATO. The army has more levels because structure is bigger and different. And the air force is even easier. There are even less levels than plane/fighter crafts (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 1 February 2019).

So, can NATO be as 'hands off' in the force generation process for increasing women as it and allies claim? In every other instance of capability requirement, it appears NATO can set the standard – this includes language and the structure of contributions, and other elements of Women, Peace and Security, as exemplified by Canada's Department of National Defence Implementation Plan for the Women, Peace and Security agenda – part of Canada's third national action plan on Women, Peace and Security. The Implementation Plan notes "To

this end, DND/CAF continues to develop policies, formulate plans, and conduct training and operations that align with NATO and UN direction, standards and targets" (→ Government of Canada, 2024b, p. 4). The question is raised as to why this standard or *goal* could not be set for the gender composition of troop contributions? And in cases where units and structures are argued to limit the participation of women, the following further exposes the potential role of NATO: "Units or types of units are actually very much influenced by what NATO is looking at or is lacking at the moment, or we try at least ... we could be better" (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 22 February 2019). So, member states can, indeed, receive and be influenced by guidance from NATO and they will attempt to meet those requirements. This is exemplified by the United Nations gender parity commitment to increase women in peacekeeping operations, yet, the integration of women into NATO-led operations in an intentional way is considered nonviable.

In summary, I observed a tendency to 'pass the buck' within the force generation process; at the NATO level, there is no explicit call or target for women's deployment on NATO-led operations, and there is deference to the national level for what can be committed or contributed during the force generation process. However, NATO has standardization mechanisms that dictate other elements of troop contributions, including but not limited to language. But there is also a fundamental disagreement with the premise of increasing women's deployment on NATO operations due to operational effectiveness, yet in order to have this written into the process for troop contributing countries, rationale must be provided as to why increased women's representation is operationally required – at either the international or national level.

Force Generation in Canada and Denmark

Given NATO's deference to allies and partners when it comes to troop contributions, it is important to also scrutinize the force generation process at the national level. This section provides an assessment of Canada and Denmark's force generation processes for NATO-led operations, and finds a key difference in the process of a job posting board for deployment. As previously mentioned, limited understanding of peacekeeping deployment opportunities was considered by the Elsie Baseline Study as a potential barrier for women's deployment (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018). Understanding that Denmark is able to deploy a higher composition percentage of women on NATO-led operations than it has represented in its forces (a dynamic that runs contrary to assumptions noted earlier in this chapter that this would lead to a shortage of women to deploy), this may suggest the influence of internal cultures in militaries that impede women's access to opportunities or fair consideration of deployments otherwise.

In the Canadian context, there is a force generation plan through which the military operates. First published in the early 1990s as the Canadian Force Employment Manual, improvements to the United States and NATO-led missions operational planning processes resulted in the 'thorough update' of the CF Operational Planning Process. The revised process was found to "closely align with the NATO Bi-Strategic Commands Guide for Operational Planning" (Canadian Forces Joint Publication Process, 2008, p. 2). Consisting of three cyclical phases, the plan includes a high readiness phase (those ready to deploy on short notice), a road to high-readiness phase (a one-year process in order to prepare for high-readiness), and the support phase. The support phase is identified as the opportunity for the "division to reconstitute," support professional development and focus on families (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

NATO-led deployment decisions are more or less handled at the unit level, and force employment is conducted by the Strategic Joint Staff (SJS). At the NATO level, the CJSOR is disseminated, and SJS determines what contribution the Canadian Armed Forces wants or is able to make. This includes capability and political considerations on behalf of the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and Prime Minister. In the event an operation requires a certain capability, before committing, SJS provides the CDS with military options. These then go to the Minister of National Defence, then to Parliament. SJS then approaches the "Level 1s" or "L1s"⁴¹ for force generation and determines if L1s have the capacity to force generate the military option. The request goes from Commanders to unit levels to determine high readiness availability. SJS then makes a bid internationally on the agreed-upon positions, acceptance is confirmed, and requirement dates set (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018) (this is with exception to Latvia, in which case the Canadian Army had taken on a unique role in comparison to other force generation processes). An Operational Order provides all details needed to execute a mission and consists of an organizational chart and description of the mission and goes as detailed as including individual members (by occupation or qualification) that need to deploy (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018). Operational Orders also provide an overview of the political and mission objectives.

The Canadian Armed Forces force generation interview participants suggest that, despite perceived supply and pipeline challenges for women (discussed below), they have yet to run into any insurmountable challenges to meeting expectations with regards to force generation (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018). However, in the United Nations context, conflicting interviews find that with Canada's

mission to Mali, troop contributions fell below 15% women (1 out of 29 deployed were women) and "we almost lost a seat" (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 1 April 2019), which refers to a nation's role in the peacekeeping mission.

In comparison, the Danish force generation process is conducted by the Danish Ministry of Defence Personnel Department (→ Danish Ministry of Defence, 2020). Contrary to the Canadian case, there is very little difference between force generation for United Nations and NATO operations. If a unit is deployed, it is appointed by the Personnel Department (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019). A key difference between the Canadian Armed Forces and Danish Armed Forces is the existence of an application system in Denmark. If a unit has vacant positions available, they are posted, and anyone can apply or be considered for transfer. Interviews suggest that the construction of these units "depends on who wanted the job and who applies" (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

There is, as a result, an opportunity to integrate women into units despite a perceived pipeline issue for deployments, and opportunities both for individual volunteering positions and within-unit deployment appointments. However, resistances are observed, as respondents defer to concerns surrounding merit, accomplishments and previous deployments:

I think, because of the application system, we have seen a tendency that people are applying for positions within those units that go to Afghanistan more than the units that go to Kosovo. When it comes to individual deployments, we are normally picked because it's our turn. But the way our system changed over [the] last few years was that whatever department you're in is given responsibility for [a] number of positions, then they appoint within the department which individual goes to which position (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

At the time of data collection, the Danish Armed Forces had a process of mandatory conscription, to which women may 'opt in.' As noted earlier in this book, however, Denmark announced that if recruitment numbers are not met, starting January 2026, the Ministry of Defence will move to a "full equality of gender in the conscription model," requiring women who turn eighteen to participate in compulsory military service (→ Danish Ministry of Defence, 2024). In the military context, Enloe finds that the exclusion of women from conscription, where it exists, is based on security elites' sexist ideological notions of what attributes are necessary for "competent" combatants and what "incentives" soldiers need (→ Enloe, 1982). The argument may be made that conscription in Denmark was previously stuck in traditional understandings of military duty and deployment: required only for men, though women could volunteer.

Evidence also identified challenges with deployment selections, and assumptions around pipeline issues. Individual and unit deployments are common in NATO-led operations and, although units are more often tasked and deployed on NATO operations, individuals may apply for openings in deploying units (in the Danish context) or be hand-chosen to deploy (in both Canada and Denmark). This runs counter to the narrative surrounding the rigidity of the force generation process. From Canada and Denmark force generators, this distinction was heard often:

[Units] That's the majority of the time I would say. There are only a few Danes on each deployment that would be handpicked (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 22 February 2019).

We have application system in Denmark. If [a] unit has vacant positions, they post them, and anyone can apply. The construct depends on who wanted the job and who applies ... So, there is no direct influence of which missions we go on, but we can apply to positions within those units that

go on missions (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

Normally what we do is assign units. Then, regardless of the number of men or women in that company, they will go. We don't have a quota, we can't control how many women are in the units (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

This insight that there is 'no control' of who deploys on operations, again, runs counter to the previous evidence that there is, indeed, flexibility in the force generation process. To bolster this argument, the assumption that women are not found in enough numbers in certain units is challenged in the NATO force generation process. A NATO representative, for example, was frustrated:

Denmark – these countries are so interesting and annoying. Because ... they don't deploy whole units or set units. So, they can create the unit that they want to deploy (Interview, NATO Representative, 3 November 2018).

When understanding the potential barriers that may exist within the national-level force generation process, merit and decreasing standards are often raised as points of concern by military members and force generators. Although prejudice – understood as derogatory attitudes towards a particular group — is possible towards any group, discrimination is defined as unjust or prejudicial treatment towards a group that has historically been disadvantaged based on identities such as race, class, and sex. Furthermore, there is a need to reflect on the current defence landscape. Both Canada and Denmark are on course to increase the size of their militaries. For example, in Canada, a 2025 Initiating Directive noted the need to increase the reserve force by almost 80,000 members (→ Pugliese, 2025), coupled with a goal to increase the regular force by over 20,000

personnel (→ Pugliese, 2024). Denmark, in a similar vein, announced a new defence structure in January 2019, set to increase the force size (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019). These commitments have been further bolstered by the Hauge Summit Declaration, wherein NATO allies agreed to a new defence spending target of investing 5% annual GDP by 2035 to support NATO's collective security goals (→ NATO, 2025d). With a commitment to increase military size and spending, it should follow that there will be additional opportunities for increased diversity; however, with an increase in personnel, there will likely be greater competition for sought-after positions. The prevalence of these 'fallback' explanations, such as there not being enough women available, or that there is no control of who comprises a unit, are far from insurmountable. But these fallback explanations are often echoed in recruitment sentiments; there is an assumption that by recruiting more women, they will be of lesser quality or merit. Ultimately, the persistence of force generation myths may also impede women's deployment on NATO-led operations. There is considerable deference to force generation being 'unchanging' for NATO operations, despite evidence to the contrary.

Herein lies where force generation supports the framework of hidden organizational resistances. The absence of a goal for women's representation on deployments and biases in the deployment selection process are not explicit barriers (i.e. overtly sexist), nor passive, as conceptualized by Ylastalo (providing support but only in theory). Rather, these processes are taken for granted and assumed to be gender neutral, precluding opportunities for women's deployment. Whilst interview participants deny the possibility of favouritism and bias within the force generation system, there is ongoing deference to the process as objective. Force generators defer to the national-level contributions of states and the lack of control over

what is provided, despite NATO STANAGs that may be used for interoperability (i.e., language) and examples of the success of United Nations sanctions for quotas. Beyond these findings, the assumption that NATO does not possess the mechanisms to force generate women into deployments appears to be a misnomer. This is a hidden resistance in itself; while NATO signals deployment composition is a national-level decision, allies identify examples of when they have deployed women in order to meet international organization quotas, such as United Nations' missions. This chasm of force generation responsibility at the national and international level is argued to be a barrier to women's deployment on NATO operations. Ultimately, if the road to deployment is covered in policy potholes and commitment caverns, there is a lower likelihood that deployment for women will occur.

When Gendered Assumptions Shape Force Generation: Perspectives on Quotas

As articulated by Deni and validated by the interviews above, the NATO force generation process is perceived to be at the mercy of the member states, although in reference to peacekeeping troop contributions, this 'mercy' of national contributions can be influenced by international organizations. The strength of these implications was observed in both Canada and Denmark, when discussions surrounding force generation interacted with gendered assumptions and merit:

We've now identified gender as a factor to be considered. I wouldn't say women's files would get a nod over men's, unless it is a UN mission (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

The UN has set a goal, 15%, and so we have taken initiatives to increase the number of women in armed forces so we can deploy them on operations (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

Quotas and incentives to increase women's deployment in NATO operations were found to be a key point of contention during interviews. These tensions stem from narratives often employed to support women in international operations, the NATO force generation process, and biases regarding the quality of candidates if quotas are used to force generate. What emerged from quota conversations on nearly every occasion were gender-based concerns surrounding merit, standards and ability to do the job:

[Quotas] weren't really well perceived throughout the Armed Forces because with that goal, some demands, or some requirements, had to be lowered. And that's always where we have some discussions, whether we should just have a number of women for the sake of having the number, or for having the right ones, who can live up to the demands that we ask of other soldiers. So it didn't really go down that well (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 22 February 2019).

Notably, the reference to what 'we ask of other soldiers' inadvertently refers to what militaries ask of men. But there were also considerations around 'right fit,' which may signal flexibility in deployment decision-making processes:

Do you direct every woman in the unit to deploy if they're not in the trade? If they're not the right fit? It's difficult (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).

Beyond potential flexibility in decisions, this dichotomy of 'all or nothing' for women's participation was observed throughout interviews. When the discussion touched on the number of women available or reducing barriers to deployment, there was

concern about disregard for occupations. But reducing barriers does not necessarily mean having a gender-balanced deployment. Rather, addressing hidden organizational resistances in deployment may improve opportunities for those who are perceived willing and able to deploy, rather than assuming a lack of interest due to familial commitments or other gender-based assumptions (such as fear of combat).

The intersection of force generation and gendered assumptions are also observed in instances of gender-blindness⁴² and claims regarding reverse discrimination:

It's a balance – we want to increase the number of women but we can't do it and then give the men less of an opportunity to do well in their careers. So, giving everyone the same opportunity and to compete based on their merits and experiences and competencies and all these things. And not on their gender (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 1 February 2019).

Such perceptions suggest that if women are to have equal opportunity, that men are missing out. These zero-sum perspectives regarding women's military participation are frequently observed in interviews and in the halls of military headquarters. While this interview participant stresses the importance of everyone having the same opportunity to compete for deployments, the evidence in this chapter suggests otherwise: gender-based assumptions may preclude equal opportunity for women's deployment.

While the gendered assumptions exhibited by deployment decision makers (H2) and the taken-for-granted gender neutrality of the force generation process (H3) are both observed through this interview study, the discussion is also nuanced because the explanations converge on the topic of quotas and incentives to increase women's deployment on NATO-led operations.

Force Generation as a Hidden Organizational Resistance

Though it should be the case that increasing women's representation will eventually lead to increased deployments, currently, the representation of women in armed forces does not necessarily translate into improved deployment composition (→ Schjølset, 2013; → Beardsley and Karim, 2015). At NATO there are continued remarks regarding how increased recruitment and representation in national armed forces will increase women's participation on operations (→ NATO, 2018h). This is also echoed in the Danish context, for example:

I think putting the focus on getting the females into the armed forces in the first place would automatically increase the number of females in missions. I think there are places where we could definitely see the benefit of deploying females instead of men in advisory roles (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

In addition to the value-added of women's participation being relegated to advisory roles, rather than broadly across the forces, the above excerpt also highlights how the focus is still very much on increasing women's deployment rather than decreasing barriers for deployment (and as a result may influence the propensity to redeploy). On increasing women's deployment on NATO operations, a Danish representative suggests:

You have to be careful when you go down that path. But on the other hand, if you ever want to change the percentage of how many women are deployed, maybe at some point someone has to say "hey, I want more women" (Interview, Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).

Admittedly, this is what the United Nations has achieved and continues to foster through the Elsie Initiative. But command-level force generators are struggling to find the balance between force generation and merit in the NATO context. In Canada, for example, a force generator noted,

It is difficult ... to quantify ... the general understanding. There isn't a bias for women, positive or negative, to deploy. They don't have any fewer options [from a force generation perspective]. Do we have a preference who goes? Yes. Culturally, it is well understood ... we need to deploy women as much as possible. But we have burned women. We have lost a couple because the tempo is so high. But Canada always wanted to showcase ... you can't say you want to recruit [more women] but then not give opportunity or visibility in deployments (Interview, Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 15 October 2018).⁴³

Evidence from force generators in Canada and Denmark, as well as representatives from NATO, allude to challenges that are indicative of organizational cultural resistance and barriers. I observe how force generators deny that women are chosen over men for deployments, up until discussions shift to United Nations peacekeeping operations, at which point women 'are given the nod over men' due to the Gender Parity policy. At that point, there is a fall back to political rhetoric or operational effectiveness (normative and functional tensions): member states note how more women are essential on deployments but then note concerns regarding quality, merit, ability to do the job, and home responsibilities.

This results in both explicit barriers to deployment, such as work/life balance, and implicit barriers such as perceptions that women fear deployment, reverse discrimination, and reference to gender-blind deployments (that is, where force generators suggest they do not 'see' gender or use it as a variable in deployment decisions). Finally, the most insidious force generation barriers are those in which it is assumed to be

objective, and conclusions that there are not enough women in deployable units. Both a lack of reflection regarding 'hand-picked positions' and the application system for open positions for units in the Danish case, as well as assumptions surrounding burnout due to deployments on the Canadian case may feed into barriers for women deploying on NATO-led operations. When it comes to women's deployment on NATO operations, the perspectives of force generators in NATO, Canada and Denmark tend to focus on gendered assumptions concerning why women may not deploy, and deference to the force generation process. These gendered assumptions manifest as preferences towards certain missions and concern for women's burnout, while force generation conversations identify deference to the force generation process, resistance to targets and quotas (pipeline issues), and flexibility in deployment processes.

In an effort to identify what may explain the disparity between Canadian and Danish troop contributions, force generation challenges and gendered assumptions were observed across both cases. In some instances, some of the most stereotypical biases surrounding family responsibilities were observed in the Danish context, contrary to what would be expected. One potential explanation is Denmark's application structure for deployment opportunities; while members must still be chosen from the application process (which may still allow for the insertion of biases), the explicit indication of interest to deploy may mitigate gendered assumptions that may otherwise present themselves by force generators. Understanding that Denmark is able to deploy a higher composition percentage of women on NATO-led operations than it has represented in its forces, this may suggest the influence of internal cultures in militaries that impede women's access to opportunities or fair consideration of deployments otherwise.

The secondary purpose of this interview design was to inform the creation of a survey to identify additional individual-level factors that influence women's deployment of NATO-led operations. While the focus was on force generator perceptions of barriers to deployment, a secondary outcome was identifying deployment motivations for women, to see if there is validity to the assumptions observed regarding women's perceptions of deployment.

Conclusion

In order to identify what barriers may exist at the international and national levels for women's deployment, I conducted fourteen interviews with force generators and NATO elites. Tensions emerged with regard to policy commitment and practice, as well as conventional resistances to women's participation. These included comments regarding reverse discrimination, burnout, unit and force structures, and insight into the types of risks that may be present for deployments. There were similar perspectives and assumptions regarding women's deployment for both Canada and Denmark. The rationale in support of women's increased presence in operations is often operational effectiveness, but the ability to do the job from the force generator's point of view is of primary concern.

This chapter has demonstrated the opportunities for hidden organizational resistances to permeate decision-making, and the limitations of the force generation process itself as a hidden resistance to women's deployment. There is evidence that suggests more dangerous missions yield greater prestige and promotion opportunities, but I observe how force generator bias and gendered assumptions may contribute to women being held back from such deployment opportunities, corroborated by

previous research that has found states deploy fewer women on more dangerous missions. These interviews provided a much-needed lens on the organizational-level decisions and assumptions of force generators, and potential barriers that may influence women's participation at the organizational level of NATO in particular. The following chapter leverages these findings to evaluate whether these assumptions hold true when examined through the experiences of women in the military.

Chapter Six Deployment Barriers for Women in Context: Servicemember Perceptions and Experiences

Women tend to bear the brunt of the weight not only more capably but more readily. Many women have had to choose family or deployment, and if/when they choose deployment they still carry the weight of their family more so than many men I've deployed with (Survey 22).

Barriers to women's deployment on military operations are complex. As established in the previous chapter, there are social and gender norms embedded in decision makers' perceptions that influence deployment for women. I have demonstrated how force generation processes⁴⁴ for various operation types, while similar, vary when it comes to quotas or targets for military operations.⁴⁵ Also, the availability and merit of personnel based on their military occupation – amongst other attributes – was considered by interviewees to be of paramount importance when troop contributing countries make their personnel commitments.

The NATO-specific context, and the potential barriers it poses for women, warrants closer examination. While some barriers identified through the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations⁴⁶ ring true across force generation processes overall, such as interest in re-deployment, decision-maker bias, and incorrect assumptions surrounding the eligible pool of women available to deploy (→ Government of Canada, 2022), some barriers, such as knowledge of peacekeeping deployments, and corruption or patronage in deployment selections, are only supported by anecdotal evidence (→ Ghittoni et al., 2018, pp. 22–23). These gaps are, in part, addressed through my findings in the previous chapters that force generation processes have an element of flexibility. Recall how decision-makers' perceptions of missions differ, and that, across NATO, Canada, and Danish force generators, there were assumptions regarding women's deployment based on family, safety, burnout, and availability of women due to occupation or trade. In my discussions with force generators from Canada, Denmark, and NATO Headquarters, the importance of women to NATO operations was also reiterated. However, national-level representatives and NATO representatives deferred to each other regarding responsibility of supporting greater participation: NATO deferred the ownership for the deployment of women to member and partner states, and states deferred to NATO to identify target numbers for deployments.

With these concerns in mind, there is a need to further explore whether these perceived barriers present themselves for individuals. For example, since women are more likely to assume greater family care responsibilities, is there a propensity for women to self-select out of deployments, or not volunteer for deployment opportunities? This chapter determines if military personnel self-select out of deployments, and are concerned for personal safety or home responsibilities, while accounting for gender, occupation,⁴⁷ years of service, regular or reserve status, and military environment,⁴⁸ amongst other variables. In doing so, I bring evidence to bear for barriers to women's redeployment on NATO-led operations. More specifically, I test explanations using a survey developed from my interview results from the previous chapter (of which the model⁴⁹ includes home responsibilities,⁵⁰ personal safety⁵¹ and volunteer propensity)⁵² and supplement this regression using qualitative survey responses which contextualize the likelihood of deployment on NATO-led operations.⁵³ This approach generates both quantitative and qualitative data, complementing the NATO, Danish and Canadian military organizational explanations outlined in the previous chapter.

This research design specifically targeted servicemember perspectives for NATO deployments and deployment frequency. The objectives of this design were threefold: First, identify the extent to which there is variation between men and women's deployment frequencies on NATO-led operations. The second objective was to assess barriers identified by force generators and NATO representatives. Finally, I identify motivations for women's deployment on NATO-led operations. While explicit barriers to women's participation such as outright sexism and harassment are observed in many instances in this study, I argue that the identified hidden organizational resistances are those that are harder to understand and challenge and, as a result, have persisted unaddressed. Recall the factors in → Figure 6.1 that were identified in the previous chapter. These will be tested to determine to what extent these factors influence men and women's deployments on NATO operations.

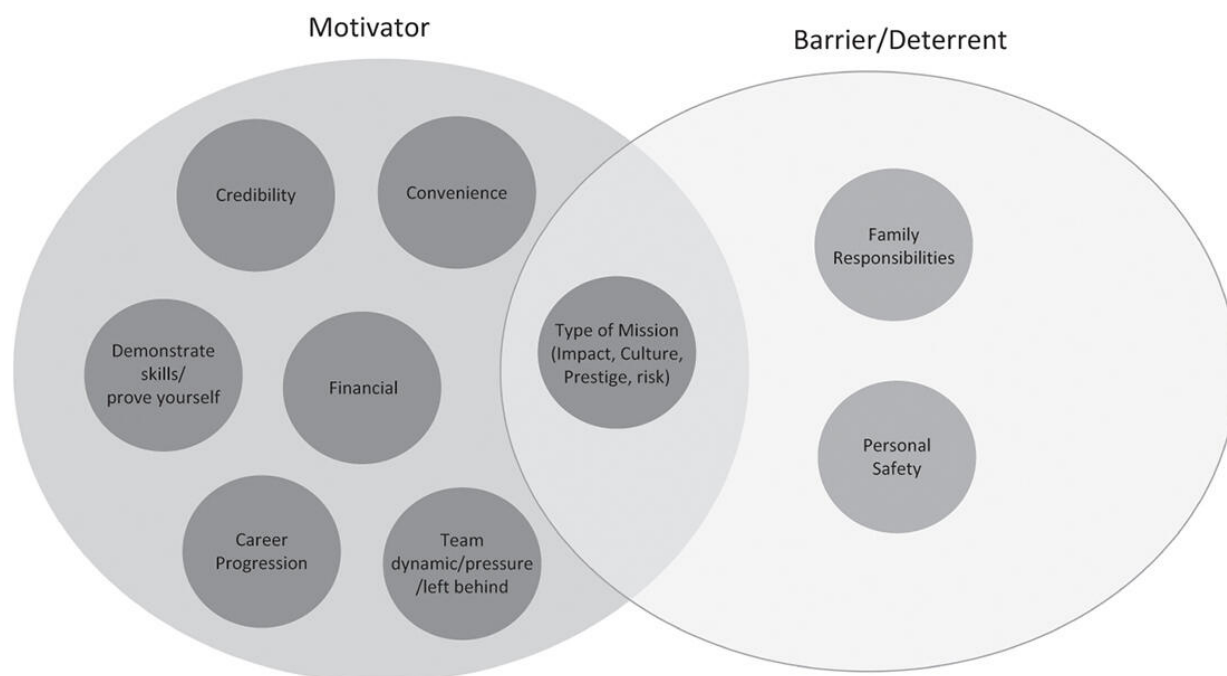


Figure 6.1: Summary of Perceived Motivators and Deterrents for Women on NATO-led Operations.

I find that, embedded in what are seemingly routinized and rationalized deployment processes, there are hidden barriers and patterns of resistance within NATO and national militaries' organizational cultures. The regression from the survey⁵⁴ results reveal that men in the study were approximately six times more likely than women to re-deploy on NATO-led operations. In addition, I find through qualitative analysis that a greater proportion of women are concerned about their personal safety while on deployment but volunteer similar to men, and that both men and women are equally concerned about home responsibilities while on deployment. In this chapter, hidden organizational resistances manifest through responses to short answer questions that demonstrate concerns surrounding merit and ability to 'do the job,' as well as continued reference to the invisibility of gender in deployment decisions. Findings also suggest the force generation process is perceived as both circumstantial and flexible. Ultimately, this chapter finds evidence in support of the force generation (H3) and gendered assumptions (H2) hypotheses, while the 'self-selection' hypothesis (H1) is less supported.

In the previous chapter, interviews were conducted with force generators and NATO elites. It was revealed that force generators suspected home responsibilities, personal safety mission preference type to be key barriers for women's deployment on NATO operations. While the responses of this survey

find a greater proportion of women 'agree' with personal safety concerns, men's responses are similar in their 'ranking' of these factors. For example, 48.9% of men agreed they were concerned about home responsibilities, while just over 49% of women participants agreed. This, in combination with similar volunteer responses, brings to light the barriers affecting women, including how decision makers have gendered assumptions for women's military deployments. While Chapter Seven aligns the findings from these two studies, a key outcome from this chapter is that perceptions of barriers from those charged with decision-making for deployments differ from the identified barriers from those that deploy. Although a greater proportion of women identified personal safety as a concern, the women in this study still volunteered for NATO-led operations similarly to men. Following the results and responses to the posed hypotheses, I discuss the theoretical implications for this chapter, followed by limitations of the study.

While previous work has considered the representation of women in national armed forces, the focus tends to rely on peacekeeping missions. This reliance on peacekeeping missions overshadows potential barriers that may exist for military women in combat operations and beyond.⁵⁵ While women can represent a certain percentage of armed forces, their participation in the functioning of the military 'raison d'être' – in operations – is an understudied area. As noted in the introduction, sex-disaggregated data is harder to come by than the availability of nuclear weapons worldwide.

Making the case for women's inclusion in security and defence is often framed in terms of how they improve operational effectiveness through access to local populations, or certain leadership styles (see Chapter Two). But I argue women's participation in military and security forces should not rest on the heels of their unique contribution to a mission. Consider, for example, if men were questioned as to whether they could contribute to a mission or what unique skill set they bring in order to be deployed. That argument quickly fades. But such an argument, I find, runs rampant in discussions of women's participation in NATO operations. Built into the organizational cultures of NATO, Denmark and Canada are narratives, norms and myths that impede women's deployment on NATO-led operations. These organizational cultures are comprised of traditions, understandings and biases that are explicit and implicit, and manifest as insidious practices in policy and process that are routinized. While noted briefly in the Elsie Barrier Assessment (see Chapters One and Three), force generation biases or preferential selection was not referenced by force generators in the previous chapter as a barrier to deployment – this is understandable, as it would require acknowledgement and admission of these biases and the repercussions that could follow. Rather, in

my findings, some references were made to preferential selection of women over men for United Nations operations. The question of NATO-led deployment selection processes continues to be an understudied potential barrier, which is explored further in this chapter.

Interviews identified several perceived barriers to women's deployment on NATO operations, including family responsibilities and personal safety, but there has yet to be an analysis of women who have and have not deployed on NATO-led operations to determine if these perceived barriers are, in fact, considerations for their individual participation. Ultimately, I find hidden organizational resistances manifest through variation in guidance and low priority of women's participation within NATO, Canada and Denmark (as well as deference to a lack of international guidance from force generators from Canada and Denmark); a lack of national implementation responsibility; claims of gender neutrality and; deference to the force generation process that are found to contribute as barriers to women's deployment of NATO-led operations.

Regression Results: Re-Deployment on NATO Operations

Since 2008,⁵⁶ NATO allies and partners have been encouraged to submit annual reports to the International Military Staff (IMS) Office of the Gender Advisor (GENAD). As outlined in Chapter Four, this office is responsible for providing guidance and implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda for NATO. For several years, these reports were increasingly more detailed and standardized; however, from 2022 to 2025, there was an absence of the publicly available reports which implicates member states and researchers. The most recent publicly available data (2022) is based on submissions from 2021 (five years old at the time of this publication). These reports and coinciding data serve an important function for member states, researchers and civil society by providing a standardization of sex-based reporting for national militaries, particularly in operations. This includes a sex breakdown of national military contributions to operations (as a percentage), classified as "all operations," "NATO operations" and, depending on the country, "UN operation contributions." The challenge with deployment data, whether garnered from NATO annual reports or through national access to information requests, is the military's justified protection of its personnel; my requests for the raw number of personnel deployed by sex, for example, often were returned with "nil" or heavily redacted information, due to the security challenge of sharing how

many military personnel are in a given location. As a result, percentages are employed for this study, although it is understood there are limitations to this approach. For example, Sabrina Karim and Callum Watson have discussed in their work on the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peacekeeping Operations how 22% of women peacekeepers in Norway are women, but this amounts to n=14. In comparison, Ghana has 13.4% representation but deploys n=375 women for peacekeeping (→ Karim and Watson, 2019).

The motivating question for *Mission Marginalized* was based on the discrepancy between women's deployment composition in comparison to their representation in national militaries. For example, in 2017, where women represent, on average, approximately 11.1% of NATO member state militaries (→ NATO, 2017b, p. 15), they only comprised approximately 5.6% of deployments on NATO-led operations (→ NATO, 2017b, p. 45). My findings suggest that this data does, indeed, reflect a dynamic impacting women's deployments. A binary logistic regression finds that men are six times more likely to deploy on multiple NATO-led operations than women (→ Table 6.1). Further, the 'unknown' occupation category was also found to be statistically significant; however, as noted previously, further study is required that appropriately classifies military occupations in a standardized way. The unknown category is likely comprised of support and non-support trades due to a lack of clarity in responses.⁵⁷

Table 6.1: Logistic Regression Results.

	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Wald	df	Significance P-value (Sig.)	Odds Ratio (Exp(B))	95% CI	
							Lower	Upper
Gender (Men)	1.804	.503	12.845	1	.000	6.074	2.265	16.293
Occupation (Support)			5.241	2	.073			
Occupation (non- support)	.211	.584	.131	1	.717	1.236	.394	3.878
Occupation (Unknown)	1.451	.731	3.939	1	.047	4.269	1.018	17.897
Personal Safety Concerned (Agree)			.875	2	.646			
Personal Safety Concern (Disagree)	.375	.590	.404	1	.525	1.455	.457	4.629
Personal Safety Concern (Neutral)	.634	.679	.872	1	.350	1.886	.498	7.136
Concern Home Responsibility (Agree)			1.195	2	.550			
Concern Home Responsibility (Disagree)	-.477	.461	1.068	1	.301	.621	.251	1.533
Concern Home Responsibility (Neutral)	-.443	.644	.473	1	.492	.642	.182	2.269
Volunteer for NATO Operation (Yes)	-.111	.672	.027	1	.869	.895	.240	3.340
Constant	-2.171	.732	8.802	1	.003	.114		

Although an interesting finding, what does this mean with regard to women's deployment on NATO operations? While this model allows for the ability to identify that women participants do, in fact, deploy less frequently than their

male counterparts on multiple NATO-led operations, it does not provide the ability to compare men's and women's responses for how personal safety, gendered assumptions and volunteer propensity may tie in. Qualitative responses are used to provide context and illuminate differences between men and women respondents for each hypothesis, including additional variables or observable implications that were not included in the model due to smaller population size.

As summarized in Chapter Three,⁵⁸ H1 focused on personal safety and self-selection out of deployment opportunities. The observable implications for this hypothesis included women's self-selection out of deployment opportunities due to general safety concerns and fear of sexual violence, and were measured through Likert-scale questions focusing on personal safety concerns, sexual violence while on NATO deployments, and volunteer propensity. Since the focus of this hypothesis was whether women self-select out of deployment opportunities, those who 'had not deployed on a NATO-led operation' were also asked if it was because they declined the opportunity. Of those who had not deployed on a NATO-led operation, sixteen (16) were women (inclusive of one transgender woman) and nine (9) were men. Four (4) had declined the opportunity, equally divided by men and women. Two responded that family reasons led to their declination, one mentioned bad timing, and another had civilian career commitments. While a small sample, two men and two women in the study declined a NATO deployment opportunity, and women were more highly represented as those who had not deployed.

Overall, respondents mostly 'strongly disagreed' (n=45) or 'disagreed' (n=48) when asked about concerns of personal safety, as well as fear of sexual assault while on NATO deployments.⁵⁹ When asked if *beyond unlimited liability, I am concerned for my personal safety on deployment (abuse, harassment)*, 13.6% of women-identified participants responded 'strongly disagree' (n=8), 35.6% responded 'disagree' (n=21), 23.7% 'agreed' (n=14) and 3.4% 'strongly agreed' (n=2).⁶⁰ In comparison, approximately 70% of men 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' (n=37 and n=27, respectively), while approximately 11% (n=10) 'agreed' and 3.3% 'strongly agreed' (n=3).⁶¹ Ultimately, women in the study responded that they were more likely to agree or strongly agree they are concerned about personal safety.

When asked if members were *concerned about sexual assault* on deployment, 67% of women 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' (n=14 and n=26, respectively), and approximately 20% 'agreed' (n=12).⁶² In comparison, men were found to 'strongly disagree' (82%) or 'disagree' (15.2%). No men respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement. Women were more likely to agree they were concerned about sexual violence on

deployment, whereas men only disagreed or strongly disagreed (or neutral). The findings from the above two questions are particularly notable: as outlined below, women still volunteer to deploy but are navigating concerns of personal safety. For NATO and its allies, this raises opportunities to improve the working conditions of deployments with regard to operational culture.

When asked if members have volunteered to deploy on a NATO-led operation, approximately 83% (n=126) had volunteered to deploy, and 16.6% (n=25) had not. Broken down by gender, approximately 80% of women respondents and 85% of men had volunteered to deploy on a NATO-led operation. In sum, while there is support for personal safety concerns (H1), relatively the same percentage of men and women in this study had volunteered to deploy on a NATO-led operation. This suggests that despite personal safety and sexual assault concerns, the self-selecting-out hypothesis was not strongly supported.⁶³ Contrary to the perceptions of force generators noted in the previous chapter (surrounding merit, ability to do the job, and fear of deployment), women continue to volunteer and contribute to NATO deployments, despite the added operational concerns regarding personal safety that are not indicated to the same extent by men.

My conclusion is further bolstered by responses from participants who have deployed when asked *Did your experience on a NATO-led operation negatively impact your interest in redeploying?*⁶⁴ Of the 23 women who responded, approximately 95% (n=22) responded 'no' while 5% (n=1) responded 'yes'. Fifty-three men responded to the question, with 94% (n=50) replying 'no' and 6% (n=3) responding 'yes'.

There was considerable support for the second hypothesis regarding gendered assumptions and the motherhood penalty. Questions from my survey focused on respondents' concern around home responsibilities, perceptions as primary caregivers and mission preferences. When asked *if/when I deploy, I worry about whether home responsibilities will be taken care of*, 10.9% (n=10) of men responded 'strongly disagree', 26.1% (n=24) 'disagree', 35.9% (n=33) 'agree' and 13% (n=12) 'strongly agree'.⁶⁵ In comparison, 11.9% of women (n=7) 'strongly disagreed', 27.1% (n=16) 'disagreed' with concern about home responsibility, whereas 27.1% (n=16) 'agreed' and 22% (n=13) 'strongly agreed'.⁶⁶ Men and women in this study were similarly concerned about home responsibilities while on deployment, in the sense that 48% of men and 50% of women agreed to some extent that they were concerned about home responsibilities. However, women were more likely to 'strongly agree' with the statement.

When asked *I am the primary caregiver in my family*, 6.5% (n=6) of men responded 'strongly disagree', 26.1% (n=24) 'disagree', 40% (n=37) 'neutral',

18.5% (n=17) 'agree' and 8% (n=8) 'strongly agree'. In comparison, 28.8% (n=17) of women in this survey either strongly disagreed or disagreed they were considered the primary caregiver in their families, and approximately 39% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' (n=15 and n=8, respectively). Ultimately, women were more likely to agree or strongly agree they are the primary caregiver.

Definitions of home responsibility and primary caregiver were not provided for this survey, although 'home responsibilities' in the survey provided qualifiers such as meal preparation and scheduling. For heterosexual couples, there is often a gap in belief and reality in terms of division of household labour; where men believe they are dividing up household responsibilities equally, research finds women maintain caring for the majority of emotional and 'invisible' labour (→ Pew Research Centre, 2015). Nevertheless, women were more likely than men to agree or strongly agree they are the primary caregiver in their family, whereas men and women were equally concerned about home responsibilities. This result for women may be explained, in part, from interview and survey examples where women shared that their husbands appear to have more community support when women are on deployment, or how women often take care of long-term household responsibilities prior to deployment.⁶⁷ Further research into this dynamic may also consider the influence of dual military couples on these statistics, as well as 2SLGBTQI+ families and support.

When asked for deployment preferences, respondents were provided the opportunity to select from a NATO Mission, a United Nations Mission, a National Mission or a US-led coalition. The majority of respondents – 58.3% (n=88) – identified a NATO-led mission as their preference, followed by United Nations-led missions at 17.9% (n=27), then US-led coalitions at 13.9% (n=21), and finally a nationally led mission at 9.9% (n=15). When asked why they would prefer a NATO-led mission, respondents specified that "NATO-led operations benefit from having the resources of all contributing nations, as well as better Rules of Engagement than the UN," "better NATO policies" and "the benefits of women in cultural exchanges." For example, one respondent noted that they "also feel more comfortable with some of the regions NATO deploys to, compared to the UN" (Survey 41). Nearly 60% of women respondents preferred a NATO-led operation, with men closely agreeing at 57.6%. Second for both groups was a United Nations-led mission. For women, the third preference was a national-led mission, whereas for men it was US-led. This suggests that there is not necessarily an inherent interest in United Nations peacekeeping missions for women, as is often assumed due to the 'nature of the work' of such missions. Preferences instead seem to focus on the return on investment for

NATO-led operations, productivity within these missions and greater resource support.

Although these findings suggest some support for the gendered assumptions and motherhood penalty hypothesis, particularly around lacking support for women who deploy, women's propensity to volunteer for NATO-led operations in combination with similar mission preferences to men suggest that, at the individual level, the assumed barriers based on gendered assumptions from force generators are not strongly reflected in the lived experiences of respondents. This contrasts to research on various elements of the military career cycle, in which research that considers women's recruitment and retention tends to focus on fears of deployment and family (→ Waruszynski et al., 2018). The propensity for women to have comparable responses to men regarding volunteering for a NATO-led operation is yet another observation in support of the gender-based assumption hypothesis: force generators suggest home responsibilities may be a barrier for women wanting to deploy, yet women in this study do not cite home responsibilities as a concern more than men. While in reality women are found to have a larger share of home responsibilities, in terms of deployment, concerns around the home life are observed equally for those in the study. This equal concern may also be attributed to men often thinking they take on more home responsibilities than they actually do (Kamo, 2000; → Pew Research Centre, 2015). This observation, coupled with similar volunteer responses, suggests there are biases against women that are not as prevalent for men: biases that exist despite the reality that both men and women have similar home responsibility concerns.

Turning to the third hypothesis, which focused on force generation processes, questions addressed perceived flexibility and favouritism in deployment decisions and perspectives regarding women on United Nations and NATO operations. Observable implications included some perceived flexibility in the deployment selection process, resistance regarding quotas and targets, and 'pipeline' issues.

When asked if *men are favoured over women for deployment*, the majority (72%) of participants 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed', with approximately 14% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing.' By gender, 67.8% of women in the study 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that men are favoured over women for NATO-led deployments; however, approximately 24% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' (n=12 and n=2, respectively).⁶⁸ In comparison, 76.1% of men either 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' that men are favoured over women for deployments (n=28 and n=42 respectively), whereas 7.6% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' men are favoured over women for deployment.⁶⁹ In sum, a higher percentage of men in this study disagreed that men are favoured over women

for deployments, and a greater percentage of women agreed that men are favoured over women for deployments.

When asked if *women are favoured over men for NATO deployments*, the majority of women 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' (76.3%), with 13.6% either 'agreeing' (n=7) or 'strongly agreeing' (n=1) with the statement. In comparison, the majority of men 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' (67.4%), with 12% 'agreeing' and 4.3% 'strongly agreeing'. In short, the majority of respondents disagree women are favoured over men for NATO deployments; however, men are less likely to disagree and marginally more likely to agree with the statement.

In general, both men and women from this survey concur that neither men nor women are favoured for deployments. However, women are more likely than men in this survey to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that men are favoured over women for NATO deployments, whereas the percentage of men who agreed that women are favoured over men for deployments was slightly higher than women.

When asked if *there should be targets for women on NATO deployments*, respondents mostly 'disagreed' (30.5%) or 'strongly disagreed' (14.6%), with 31.8% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing'. Broken down by men and women, 46.7% of men responded 'strongly disagree' (17.4%) or 'disagree' (29.3%), comparable to approximately 42.4% of women who 'strongly disagreed' (10.2%) or 'disagreed' (32.2%). While the majority of respondents disagreed to some extent, a higher percentage of men strongly disagreed, and men and women were found to agree with the statement at 26.1% and 27.1% respectively.⁷⁰

While perceptions of quotas and targets may not directly act as a barrier to women's deployment, it is indicative of organizational cultures and perceptions that may hinder progress and enable other barriers and hidden organizational resistances. For example, in the previous chapter there were concerns from force generators that quotas and targets can impact merit and ability to do the job. Further, perceptions of favouritism may manifest as barriers within the force generation process, as some military members are 'fast tracked' for promotion and require a deployment. Where decision-maker and policy leader interview participants perceived the force generation process was taken as granted and therefore could not benefit men or women for deployment opportunities, the responses above indicate perceptions of flexibility and favouritism in the deployment process: perceptions which are supported by qualitative statements below.

In sum, the hypothesis of women self-selecting out is found to have minimal application to the research question, as is personal safety, despite

women in this study agreeing more than men that there are concerns of sexual assault and personal safety. With all things considered equal, women deployed less frequently on multiple missions than men. The resulting conclusion is that there is a causal mechanism which is unaccounted for when considering deployment and redeployment, which is not explained significantly by the propensity to volunteer or desire to re-deploy. While military occupation status as a support or non-support role were not found to be statistically significant, the 'unknown' category was found to deploy approximately four times more than support roles. It may be concluded that there are additional barriers that go unrecognized or ignored due to the process-related and gendered assumptions within NATO, Canada, and Denmark. These barriers are found throughout the deployment process – be it considerations of merit to deploy, assumptions surrounding targets, assumptions of family considerations and international and national force generation processes.

Discussion and Theoretical Implications

Organizational culture provides insight into the structural and constraining factors to motivate and respond to change in gendered understandings between NATO and member states. NATO and member states are built upon 'hidden' structures of resistance – that is, not active or passive resistance, but hidden organizational resistances based in traditional or misunderstood gendered assumptions and deference to military processes. In this case, those resistances manifest as gendered assumptions, functional and normative tensions within the organization, asymmetries at the international and national levels, gender neutrality and deference to the force generation process. While the next chapter brings together the two previous empirical contributions, this section provides an analysis of the survey design research as mapped on to the criteria for 'hidden organizational resistances'. Notably, there is no doubt that active resistances, such as blatant discrimination and sexism, are prevalent in military settings. The challenge, however, is with organizations that claim to have reached a threshold of equality, while simultaneously stating that challenges either do not exist or cannot exist due to the current structure of force generation processes. These denials are examples of hidden organizational resistances that contribute to continued barriers to women's military deployment on NATO-led operations.

A Functional and Normative Tension Between Operational Effectiveness and Women's Rights

A functional and normative tension exists between operational effectiveness (functionalist) and the rights-based approach to women's participation in NATO-led operations (normative). Resulting from the survey responses, it is found that equally amongst men and women, concerns surrounding the ability to 'do the job' persist when asked about women deploying on NATO-led operations. For example,

Deployment was good overall. I had to work three times as hard to be taken seriously and prove my worth, though (Survey 6).⁷¹

Problem is trust of [the] individual. Are you chosen because of gender or skills? The latter will be preferred (Survey 74).

This perspective, of being chosen based on skills although appearing gender neutral, demonstrates organizational culture resistances and results in real and perceived barriers to women's deployments. For example, several respondents noted challenges women face for deployments and quotas:

One of the challenges I've faced is the insinuation that you are only there because you are female (Survey 29).

I have experienced discrimination based on my sexuality and sexual identity, though most commonly in the form of microaggressions. I do find women need to prove themselves more than men, but our trade is so short that has not been a factor for me deploying; however, I have still always been the (significant) minority sex while deployed. I think that quotas for deployments can have the potential to be a good thing but since we cannot achieve minimum quotas within Canada domestically, we are setting ourselves up for further stigma and complaints (e.g. by willing and deplorable men), either in the form of women being "favoured" for positions on the basis of sex despite having so few numbers but, also, anecdotally women have tended to have increased stresses while deployed because they are the primary caregivers so often and their (often male) spouses can't cope as readily with being the one left behind (Survey 19).

I certainly believe the missions would benefit from greater deployment of women; however, I think that having targets and quotas brings an immediate question mark to every woman being deployed – is it because she is the best for the job? Or because the country must hit a target or quota? The problem with such targets is that some nations can have difficulties finding enough suitable women for fulfilling such targets. Then we end [up] with women either not volunteering, or with lower demands than applied to the men. This affects other women negatively since some men can't differentiate between the deployed women ... (Survey 23).

These excerpts are pertinent and reflect the impact of assumptions about merit and ability to do the job. There is a clear concern surrounding trust of partner states or units where women are integrated; for the other deployed members' safety, there is uncertainty as to whether this woman was deployed due to her

skills or gender. This results in prevailing bias and concern about one of the most critical aspects of deployments where resistance is observed – a zero-sum decision between safety of the team and operational effectiveness, or gender equality. The assumptions and need for qualifiers that 'as long as individuals can do the job', while also challenging favouritism in deployments, are not reflected in data when speaking about men's deployment experiences. There is an ongoing, perceived challenge between women having the right and ability to deploy on NATO-led operations without the operational effectiveness of a mission being compromised. This perspective, as noted in the previous chapter, is also echoed at the NATO and national force generation levels. It provides an insight into the presumptions and understandings of different missions, and the capabilities of women within them. First alluded to in Chapter Five, perceptions and assumptions of how targets can risk operational effectiveness are considered a cultural barrier to deployment.

Gender Neutrality

The assumption that gender neutrality is the same as gender equality is not new and has been challenged on the basis of gender-neutral initiatives deferring to masculinity or men as the norm (→ Davis, 2009b). Where passive resistance to gender equality, for example, involves "promoting gender equality only superficially, with measures that do not have a real impact," (→ Pincus and van der Ros, 1999, n.p.) gender neutrality ignores the need for gender equality approaches based on the assumption there are no challenges or that treating all persons the same is the most equitable approach. An example of such a barrier is the 'pink tax' for women's military uniform tailoring in light of gender-neutral uniforms – uniforms that, in reality, are deferring to a masculine fit (→ Goldstein, 2016). It is this invisibility of gender that leads to the hidden organizational resistances that coincide with these assumptions: where superficial support of gender equality at least promotes a certain narrative, gender neutrality erases this narrative and is based on an assumption that neutrality is, indeed, neutral. Such perspectives are pervasive in organizational culture and influence deployment conversations due to a lack of effort to recognize persistent implications of myths, and oversight of barriers and bias in the selection process. For example,

Typical resistance ... today this does not manifest itself so openly, but its nuanced and well alive in these hardened units. I have been witness to women being ordered to shave ... I have been witness to women being assaulted in operations and training, I have been witness to women being harassed, bullied and rumored about ... endlessly, and by senior officers. This still occurs today. This is the state of the old guard that's still in charge (Survey 16).

Of particular interest from this excerpt is the notion that the examples provided are 'nuanced' manifestations that are not openly exclusionary or discriminatory, which in itself is a denial of outward sexism. Such denial is observed below:

In two out of three missions I have cooperated with women. I see no gender or colour in my colleagues. You are what you do, not what you look like. When people are deploying I don't see the point in quotas or targets for women. I prefer to work together with the best, no matter gender or cultural background (Survey 67).

Two biases are exemplified in this excerpt. The participant's response suggests that women are minimally qualified in operations where there are representation targets; however, the rest of the contributions (of men) consist of 'the best'. Furthermore, the respondent's perception of not seeing gender (or race) has been argued to be a disassociation mechanism; if one cannot see race or gender, one does not need to deal with the consequences or unconscious biases that may exist (→ Lundine et al., 2019).

I have good experience deploying in teams with diversity. It may offer a better assortment of knowledge and skills. And enhanced empathy among teams. To the record I find it important to clarify, that I don't deal with men and women, only soldiers with different strengths (Survey 70).

I think the best person should be chosen based on qualification, experience and suitability for the job, regardless of gender. Creating targets based on gender is arbitrary and unrelated to how an individual will be able to conduct their primary job (Survey 26).

Again, we observe the contradiction between valuing men and women, or diverse teams, but also the qualifier that it should only focus on strengths and merit. This gender neutrality may also implicate supports for deployment for both men and women:

While women and men experience parenting differently, being deployed as a mother was a particularly hard experience for me. I felt judged. I also felt like I had to construct a support system on my own in order to be able to deploy (Survey 28).

The biggest issue overall that I have seen/experienced is not necessarily with women being deployed but with less than adept spouses being left back home. An interesting anecdotal experience recently was hearing of women who, on top of all their deployment responsibilities, workup training, etc., all arranged to complete their entire family's Christmas shopping (for children/Santa, spouse and their/their spouse's families), including arranging wrapping and delivery ... Because they didn't want that to be a burden for their spouse. When asked if their spouse had ever done that for them when they were the ones left home while their spouse was gone, not only was that not the case but they couldn't imagine ever asking that of their partner (Survey 19).

Understanding that as the demographics of military organizations are slowly shifting, the programs and services for these groups have not followed suit in a proactive way. Women are deployed but families are not supported due to lack of adaptation to family policies and programming, and a lack of community support.

Gender-Blind Military Processes

The hidden organizational resistances and deference to force generation processes found in Chapter Five are also observed in qualitative survey responses. While force generation processes may be specific to military operations, when considering organizational culture and hidden organizational resistances, the force generation process is argued to be both 'part' of the hidden culture and a victim of it. For example, one respondent defers to the force generation process as 'circumstantial':

My experiences have been highly varied. While deployed with ISAF, the sub-unit with which I deployed only had very few female members. This was not the result of a deliberate choice, rather circumstantial. In my other deployments, women comprised integral parts of the teams. They were not selected because of a gender requirement. Rather, they were the right person, at the right place at the right time with the right qualifications (Survey 14).

Despite this set of circumstances of being the right person, at the right place, at the right time, other respondents identify the flexibility in deployment decisions:

They have someone on the fast track for promotion and this would be beneficial experience to have (Survey 53).

Selection based on favouritism and career enhancement of selected peers is common (Survey 52).

Beyond this contradiction, several respondents identified the overall lack of accepting culture of women in the military and leadership positions:

It is important to recognize that there are differences between drafted and voluntary armed forces. Unless the country has gender equality when conscripting the young people as in Norway and Sweden. In Denmark we only draft young men, regulated by law, thus we as a society communicate that military service is not for young females. We do allow them to serve alongside their male comrades, but we find it difficult to up their numbers in the regular force (Survey 50).

There are challenges, but the biggest challenge above all is acceptance and employment of women in operations, especially in leadership roles. Sadly, still today we have a culture of

men, typically white heterosexual men, who command operations and units on these operations. Most ground operations are Canadian Army led, which means Commanders and Officers are predominantly all male and originate from Combat Arms Units, known to be traditional and very difficult environments for members who don't fit the mold to lead in (Survey 16).

This ability to 'fit the mold' in order to lead – or even participate – is yet another manifestation of organizational culture resistance. If there is limited acceptance of women in operations, there are implications towards promotion opportunities and leadership opportunities. This hidden resistance could be argued to preserve the system, assumptions and processes which exclude women in the first place. This deference to the force generation process is observed further:

I believe that targets are the wrong approach. In many countries the number of women serving in the military is between 10 and 20 %, thus it is a challenge to meet such targets for all countries. I don't believe that any IO will benefit from such targets because it will render the troop contributing countries in a situation where they find it difficult to meet the deployed targets (Survey 92).

Yet, for countries like Denmark, NATO IMS Office of the Gender Advisor Reports show the possibility to deploy a similar or higher representation of women in a troop contribution, even if women comprise less of their military. The participant also shuts down any type of target for deployment numbers based on the perceived inability to reach it. Such an assumption – that a target is not useful if it is perceived as impossible – hinders organizational progress to addressing barriers that may make reaching deployment targets possible in the long term.

Out in the Open: Active Resistance to Women's Deployment

Although the prior section demonstrates how hidden organizational resistances are barriers to women's deployment on NATO operations, I would be remiss to exclude the active resistances to women's participation that I observed. The following provides a brief overview of explicit barriers for women in NATO operations, which manifested as leadership challenges and blatant sexism (→ English, 2017):

On my mission to KFOR the women got the worst facilities regarding showers and toilets because the commander was not fond of women in the armed forces (Survey 87).

Most of the time, I really enjoy working in teams with both men and women. However, on occasion, especially on longer missions, the boundaries between what is fun and what is disrespectful and sexual harassment seem to become blurred. When acceptance, or even

participation, from leadership is present, the boundaries are pushed in a negative direction (Survey 83).

I am an infantry man. That is a job for man. Most women are not strong enough to do the job. Not because they do not want to be, but because men and women are not born physical[ly] alike and thus very few women can be as strong as men. Their bodies are different. I do not want to not have women in the infantry. I am not a male chauvinist, but ignoring nature in the name of women's rights is plain stupid. I have been in units during deployment to both Iraq and Afghanistan where women in infantry units have been left at base, because their bodies "gave up" from the strain. Then the unit is "one man Down" and loses combat effectiveness, at the risk of the rest of the functional soldiers (Survey 59).

While these blatant examples of sexism may be jarring and indicative of resistant military organizational culture, they are just that: easy to see, easy to identify. While perhaps not 'easy to address,' these perspectives are those that may be addressed with policy reforms often resulting from scandals, such as the External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces (→ Deschamps, 2015) and the Independent External Comprehensive Review (→ Arbour, 2022) in the Canadian Armed Forces. Both investigations emerged from a series of sexual violence and misconduct incidents, resulting in a roster of recommendations to improve military culture and the institutional response and prevention of sexual assault. The divergence with hidden organizational resistances is the subtle organizational culture elements that are harder to identify and address, but are ongoing and result in long-term barriers to progress.

Challenging the Narrative: Motivations for Women's Deployment on NATO Operations

Recall that men's motivations for deployments (for peacekeeping) centred around nine factors: comradeship, altruism, earning money, useful merit for future career, adventure, meeting new people, maturing as a human being, travelling to exotic places, and convenience of deployment (→ Hedlund, 2011). For women respondents in my study, → Figure 6.2 depicts the motivations for deploying on NATO operations:

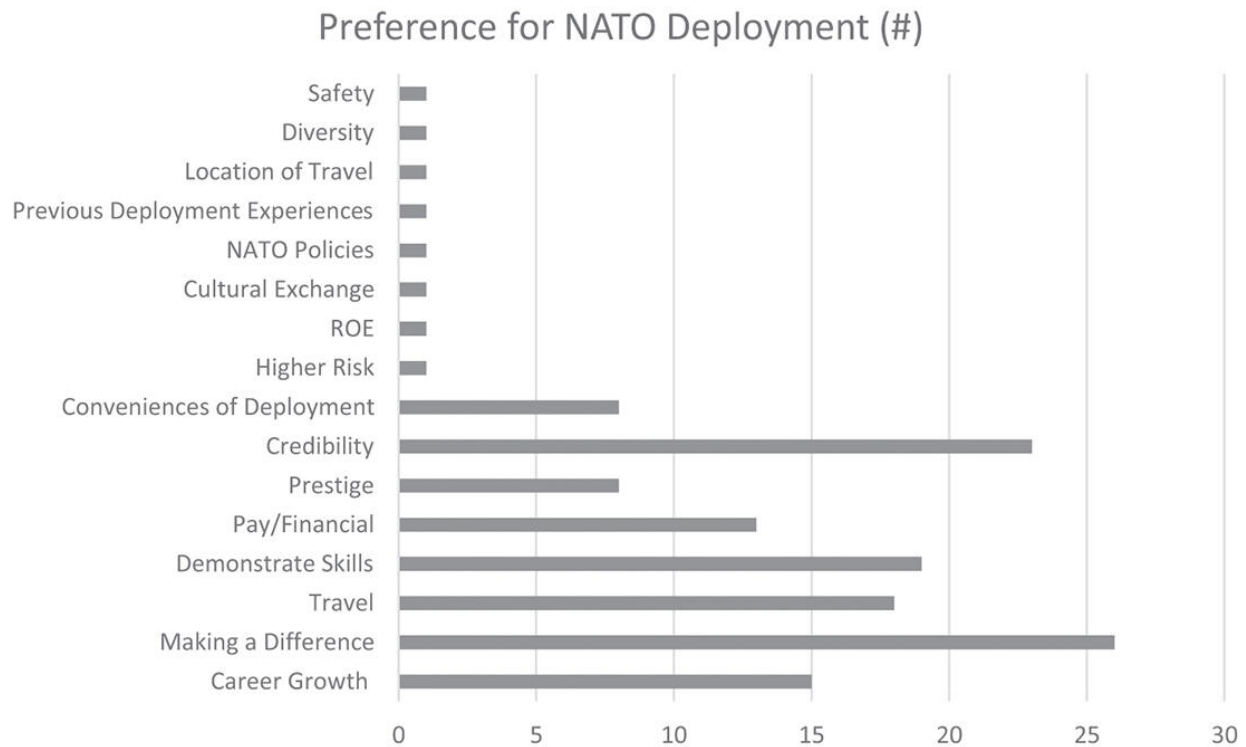


Figure 6.2: Women's Motivations to Deploy on a NATO-led Operation.

The altruistic motivator (making a difference) was the most common reason for wanting to deploy on a NATO-led operation. Credibility and a demonstration of skills were the next most common, followed by travel, career growth and pay. While *Mission Marginalized* is primarily intended to explore hidden organizational resistances, shifting the lens to also understand motivations for women's deployment reinforces that women are active and ambitious contributors to national armed forces. This, in turn, challenges the hidden organizational resistance of gender-based assumptions found in the previous chapters, where force generators suggest women may be less interested in deployments or are wanting to opt-out.

Limitations

One limitation to this survey design is the prevalence of overwhelmingly Caucasian survey respondents. Although respondents were asked to identify their race or ethnicity, this is likely the result of the general composition of the Danish Armed Forces and Canadian Armed Forces. However, in the CAF, 8.4% self-identified as a visible minority and 2.8% identified as Indigenous in 2018 (→ DND/CAF, 2019, p. 26). This was not reflected in the studies. There is a high

likelihood that these populations experience even further marginalization, particularly when considering the intersections of gender, sex, race, ethnicity and language (→ Crenshaw, 1991), which may influence deployment propensity and bias. Alternatively, diversity and multiple languages may promote additional deployment opportunities that would otherwise not be available to Francophone or Anglophone speakers alone.

While other variables may be associated with redeployment, the small sample size provided limited power and, as a result, the confidence limits for this study are wide. Future research should build on this study by recruiting a larger sample size and a greater number of women who have not deployed on a NATO-led operation, which would also support an improved study sample and limit selection bias (→ Lewis-Beck et al., 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter found that women are six times less likely to redeploy on multiple NATO-led operations than men, and that there is a shared resistance to deployment targets from both men and women. It was argued that this is due, in part, to hidden organizational resistances in organizational culture. While women participants responded in a higher proportion than men with concerns regarding personal safety, responses were similar for volunteer propensity, interest in re-deploying and home responsibilities, which contradicts some of the key gender-based assumptions held by force generators in Chapter Five. Qualitative responses provided insight beyond the three stated hypotheses to further contextualize hidden organizational resistances that emerged, including norms and myths of merit, the invisibility of gender, and flexibility in the force generation process. Collectively, these hidden organizational resistances hinder women's deployment on NATO-led operations. They manifest as tension between operational effectiveness and valuing diversity, an organizational culture that defers to 'the structure' of force generation processes, and a gap between NATO and national assumptions and lived realities of military personnel for deployments.

Ultimately, despite women in this survey having greater concern for personal safety and sexual assault while on deployment, survey responses were interpreted to find that men and women are equally concerned about household responsibilities (that is, both 'agree' to the same extent but women are more likely to 'strongly agree'), which runs counter to interview perceptions of barriers for women specifically. This tension between organizational assumptions and individual experiences is further found in assessments of deployment preferences, where women and men were equally

likely to prefer NATO-led operations. This ultimately challenges the notion that women prefer certain missions due to perceived duties (for example, United Nations peacekeeping missions). Perceptions of favouritism for deployments inform further discussion in the following chapter about the force generation process. Whereas interview respondents in Chapter Five deferred to the force generation process as inflexible or unchanging, perceptions and evidence of flexibility and favouritism in the deployment process, either for men or women, at the individual level were observed. These multi-dimensional barriers, be they between operational effectiveness and rights-based approaches, gendered assumptions and a disconnect between decision makers and military personnel's experiences, and deference to seemingly objective force generation processes, culminate as hidden organizational resistances to women's deployment and participation on NATO-led operations.

Chapter Seven Conclusion

The reason why so few women deploy on NATO-led operations is not clear cut. While a list of potential barriers to women's deployment are found in initiatives such as the Elsie Barrier Assessment,⁷² my study has challenged the less visible, taken for granted processes and assumptions that influence women's participation. I expose hidden barriers – or resistances – to women's participation on NATO-led operations which are rooted in military organizational cultures in NATO and its allies, as demonstrated by the case countries of Canada and Denmark. These hidden organizational resistances to women's military participation manifest as assumptions women do not wish to deploy, a lack of support to women who do deploy, and resistance to gender-based considerations when it comes to NATO-led force generation.⁷³

As previously noted, the answer to women's deployment on NATO-led operations is not as straightforward as 'there are no women in deployable positions' and cannot be explained by representation in national militaries alone. Rather, some barriers to women's deployment are observed in the assumptions and processes of both international and national military organizations. Myths about the trade-off of operational effectiveness and rights-based approaches⁷⁴ emerged during interviews with NATO, Canada, Denmark, and in survey evidence. In addition, there is a lack of ownership regarding women's deployment on operations between NATO and its allies, resulting in a chasm of responsibility and a 'hands-off' approach to committing more women in NATO-led operations. Furthermore, gender neutrality in force generation and across support

programs and policies allows for barriers to persist and, subsequently, their very existence denied, but is also in itself a means to ignore the biases and systems in place that support a masculine-centric military. Assumed barriers held by force generators that are not supported by the survey data, such as women opting out, is yet another hurdle to overcome. Ultimately, the culminating effect of both national and international barriers to women's participation, in addition to the individuals who are indoctrinated and perpetuate the organizational culture, contribute to dynamics that hinder women's deployment.

Mission Marginalized demonstrates that barriers to women's deployment on NATO operations are perpetuated by hidden organizational resistances rooted in military cultures. While most support was found for the force generation (H3) and gendered assumptions hypotheses (H2), an assessment of both organizational and individual-level perceptions of women's deployment showcased how asymmetries in these perceptions may further hinder women's participation. What also emerged inductively from these studies were examples of tensions between operational effectiveness and normative reasons for participation, perceptions of gender neutrality, and deference to the force generation process that together are the hidden organizational resistances perpetuating barriers for women's participation. Women in this study, as a result, were six times less likely to redeploy on multiple NATO operations in comparison to their male counterparts, despite similar volunteer propensity and perceptions of home care.

Emerging from these findings are implications and recommendations for NATO, Canada, Denmark, and similar countries and international organizations. Most notably, allies and partners may benefit from a critical assessment of deployment processes and decisions. Furthermore, shifting

perspectives in order to understand women's deployment motivations for NATO operations (an additional empirical contribution of this work) may enable support for deployment opportunities as organizations seek to challenge gender bias. For NATO, recommendations focus on leveraging existing accountability mechanisms like the Annual Reports to the IMS Gender Advisor. Limitations of the studies are then identified, followed by avenues of future research that may address and respond to these identified challenges.

Theoretical Contribution

While women's participation in security and defence has garnered considerable scholarly attention, the compounding implications of international and national military organizational culture on women's participation, juxtaposed against individual experiences and perceptions, is a unique contribution of this book. Acknowledging the importance of approaches that critique the co-optation of UNSCR 1325 and militarization of women in security as contributions to advancing broader gender equality debates (→ Nikoghosyan, 2017), and the proposal that women have unique characteristics that improve operational effectiveness (→ Bridges and Horsfall, 2009, p. 126), I suggest that relegating women's participation solely to that of peacekeeping, or supporting women's deployment because of their unique operational capabilities, undermines women's agency and gender equality. Such approaches are also questioned at length by critical feminist scholars (→ Duncanson and Woodward, 2016), particularly given the essentializing nature of this narrow call to participation.

Studies considering the intersection of military culture and women's deployment on operations are scarce, with research regarding women's participation often considering the role of

critical mass in changing culture. This is critiqued by Hudson, who notes "there is very little evidence that women in the military have actually succeeded in breaking down masculinist militarist cultures" (→ Hudson, 2012, p. 452). Arguably, nor should it be women's responsibility to do so. Hudson also argues, "We should also not underestimate the power of mechanisms such as institutional culture and habit within the military, which at times overwrite normative codes about gender sensitivity" (p. 452). Hidden organizational resistances do not run counter to overt military masculinities embedded within organizations. Rather, hidden organizational resistances are another layer of discrimination, and a barrier to ongoing feminist work exploring the participation of women in national militaries. I further problematize the prevalence of these resistances at NATO, but also at the national level through two case studies (Canada and Denmark); the compounding nature of hidden resistances, based in military organizational cultures, perpetuates ineffective gender-inclusive initiatives.

Aligning Results: Hidden Organizational Resistances

Hidden organizational resistances manifest between NATO, Canada, and Denmark and are, in some cases, reinforced by individual perceptions. The functional and normative tension – that is, between operational effectiveness and human rights – was observed at both NATO and the two case countries of study. Interviews with force generators at NATO demonstrated there is also a fundamental disagreement with the premise of increasing women's deployment on NATO operations due to operational effectiveness, yet in order to have this written into the process for troop contributions, the rationale must exist as to why

increased women's representation is operationally required. The national-level calls for why women are needed in operations, despite being written into NATO policies such as the Bi-Strategic Directive 040-001, results in an ideological stalemate; the policy is there, and yet questions remain as to the potential benefit of increasing women in operations. This 'won't touch with a ten-foot pole' mentality toward addressing women in NATO operations by both NATO and allies enables a chasm of commitment, which is then reified by servicemembers.

Both NATO and ally-level apprehensions perpetuate the assumption that operational effectiveness is inhibited by rights-based approaches, though these need not be mutually exclusive. Both men and women servicemembers demonstrated this tension. I observed considerable acknowledgement that gender diversity improves operational effectiveness; however, in the same vein, this was only if 'the person could do the job.' These views regarding the positive operational impact of gender, in contrast to insistence and biases regarding 'ability to do the job,' may be indicative of ongoing gender-based training in NATO member countries. Put another way, concerns regarding 'ability to do the job' are rather concerns about 'women's inability to do the job.' There is a superficial recognition gender diversity is needed (achieved through formal training, for example); however, the hidden organizational resistances rise to the surface with doubts regarding women's performance. In the military context, the importance of leadership and policy guidance must be underscored; the tension between whether operational effectiveness is at risk or whether we should decrease barriers to deployment and participation for women exists across all levels of analysis.

I also observed a disconnect between NATO, Canada, and Danish force generator perspectives and those of servicemembers. This is exemplified in the NATO and national-

level disagreement about force generation 'pull' for troop contributing countries and the division of responsibility between NATO and ally nations. This is also found between the perspectives of those representing the organization, and individuals. For example, where force generators at both the SHAPE and within national force generator units assumed that women did not want to deploy because of home responsibilities and concerns of burnout, these concerns did not present more for women than men. While a higher percentage of women respondents were concerned of home responsibilities and personal safety, these variables were not found to be statistically significant with regard to deployment. Further, men and women were similarly volunteering for operations, and there were similar mission preferences. This misalignment between force generators and perceptions of the individuals they deploy may ultimately influence perceived concerns of deployment and unintentionally favour men – or those who they believe to have fewer concerns of home responsibilities – from deploying.

While these gendered assumptions of women's concerns regarding home responsibilities may be a barrier to deployment due to decision-maker bias, the opposite was also observed: there is gender neutrality in the deployment process and decisions that overlook capable women. This gender neutrality is observed at the national level for Canada and Denmark, where individuals are chosen based on 'best fit' and an 'ability to do the job' – sentiments that seemingly sound objective but are steeped in bias. While gendered assumptions may hinder the consideration of women on deployment due to perceived home responsibilities, decisions often are considered or portrayed as gender-neutral and, as a result, ignore the consideration or barriers for women looking to deploy. The decision rests on a gender contradiction: there is denial of considering gender in the first place in order to appear equal, and yet when gender is

considered by force generators, it is done so in a way that perpetuates stereotypes or biases by assuming home responsibilities hinder women's interest in deploying.

Gender neutrality also persists at the individual level. Both men and women consider 'ability to do the job' of primary importance. Many do not 'see gender' or 'see colour' in their teammates. But as we understand, ignoring gender allows individuals to deny their role in upholding gender stereotypes; it enables individuals to distance themselves from addressing the systemic and individual biases that exist in the policies, practices and structures of military organizations. Perceptions of gender neutrality also have knock-on effects when representation goals are proposed for operations: targets are often not supported because they are perceived as unnecessary (ability to do the job should be paramount) or it requires reflection of one's role – or an organization's role – in perpetuating gender-based discrimination (denying one's role in upholding gender stereotypes).

How do these gender-neutral perceptions impact women's deployment on NATO-led operations? While the gender-neutral assumptions of military personnel – both men and women – is considered a proxy for the organizational culture and how it approaches women's participation, the inverse may also be true: perceptions may also influence the reification of gender-neutral cultures, support for personnel, and policies that would improve the continued participation of women. Put another way, the individuals that comprise the organization and are manifestations of its culture also influence and perpetuate the culture. This is argued to be the case in both NATO and national militaries; gender-neutral policy and programming may inhibit servicemembers from seeking help or feeling supported by their employer. At the NATO level, member states comprise and perpetuate the gender-neutral framework found in

organizational cultures by deferring to force generation processes that do not consider gender. This results in a reification at NATO where leaders note that members have not bought into the need for gender-specific representation goals on operations.

While gender neutrality in the force generation process is one inhibitor to women's deployment, deference to the inflexibility of this process is another barrier identified that is considered a hidden resistance. This dynamic was observed at NATO through a lack of explicit targets for women's deployment on NATO operations, and there was deference to ally members with respect to contributions for the force generation process. However, NATO has standardization mechanisms, such as STANAGs (see Chapter Four) that dictate other elements of troop contributions, and countries were criticized in interviews for claiming their inability to deploy women due to unit composition or availability. Examples of deployment decisions based on United Nations standards were also observed, suggesting there is some flexibility in the process. This flexibility provides gaps in which women's deployment opportunities may fall, and inconsistency and ownership in both NATO and national militaries to support more women in operations were observed.

At the servicemember level, there were also examples provided of perceived force generation flexibility. There was evidence of individuals being chosen because they were being fast tracked for promotion, and there were assumptions around not wanting to deploy. This individual-level flexibility opens the door for biases and favouritism to influence decisions, and force generators being able to exercise more discretion than often assumed.

The perception that operational effectiveness and gender integration on deployments are mutually exclusive is rooted in military organizational cultures and underlying assumptions of

women's capacities and abilities. The asymmetry between decision-makers at NATO, Canada, and Denmark, and individual experiences enables organizations to 'pass the buck' of responsibility on gender-responsive policies and initiatives. Furthermore, the barriers that force generators perceive to impact women's deployment were not reflected in women's responses in the survey to the same extent. Force generator barriers were also exemplified through assumptions around preference for United Nations missions, which were not reflected in men and women's responses for deployment preferences. Gender neutrality – exhibited by both individuals and organizations – renders these barriers and systemic challenges invisible. For as long as gender neutrality is promoted as the practice of the day, systemic biases will continue, and inclusive policies and supports cannot be realized. Finally, specific to military deployments, the deference to the force generation process renders international and national military organizations 'powerless' to address the issue. Evidence of these hidden organizational resistances have implications for both national and international stakeholders.

Implications and Recommendations

This assessment of NATO and national military organizational cultures has several implications when considering the deployment of women on NATO operations. While there are various points of entry to integrate women into the force generation process, there is resistance due to NATO and national-level concerns of operational effectiveness. These stem from gendered assumptions of a lack of merit for positions. The following provides key implications and recommendations for ally and partner nations, and NATO.

National-Level Implications

Beyond force generation contributions, there are political objectives that may be considered at the national level. For the two case countries of Canada and Denmark, there is ongoing political commitment to Women, Peace and Security, with Canada going as far as sponsoring the Elsie Initiative to increase women in peacekeeping operations, and committing an Ambassador to Women, Peace and Security from 2019 to 2025. Denmark was also the first country to adopt a National Action Plan in support of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and has since released four additional action plans, with its fifth iteration spanning 2025 to 2029 (→ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2014; → 2025). While there is political commitment to women's participation, in practice, this falls short for NATO military operations.

Particularly when looking at organizational resistance to quotas and assumptions regarding merit, there is deference to the force generation process for NATO, Canada, and Denmark; however, there is a critical difference in the Danish employment process through a job board of available deployment opportunities. Finally, there is disparity in the 'pipeline' issue of women not being in deployable units or being unavailable. While national militaries of both Canada and Denmark acknowledge this challenge, Danish deployment opportunity boards may address this in part, as it mitigates the barrier of limited knowledge of deployment opportunities. For those countries that argue there are simply not enough women to deploy in units, NATO representatives have identified states' ability to create the units they wish to deploy.

Despite Denmark's application system for deployments, Chapter Six found there was not a statistically significant finding between Canada or Denmark with regard to deployment of

women on NATO operations (that is, the country as a variable was not statistically significant). This may, in part, be explained by the permeating impact of hidden organizational resistances. While the application system may improve knowledge and access to particular deployments in Denmark, individuals who are behind the application system, making the decisions around who is accepted, may apply biases in the process due to deference to the force generation process. Gender neutrality may also play a role; if qualified personnel are not chosen with a gender lens in mind, there is no process in place to recognize the need for improving the deployment process. Indeed, while the application system may improve understanding and awareness for NATO deployments, the barriers are in the culture of the organization – in both the Canadian Armed Forces and Danish Armed Forces. While I suggest that the application system for Denmark can still leave room for individual bias to permeate deployment decisions, an explanation for why Denmark is able to deploy a higher percentage of their troop contributions on NATO operations stems from the interview data: one participant suggested that smaller countries may have more adaptability in the creation of their force contributions, again suggesting flexibility in the force generation process.

But there are options for national militaries. Based on qualitative survey data, several policy measures may improve deployment of women on international operations, and NATO deployments in particular. For ally and partner nations, these include a commitment to reducing barriers to deployment, reflection on force generation processes and decisions, and improved understanding of deployment motivations for women. For NATO and international organizations, requiring member states to report on these recommendations is a first step. Integrating gender-based considerations into operational requirements for CJSORs is another example.

Commitment to reducing barriers to deployment. While the intention of this book was to identify barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations, the focus of discussions often turned to quotas, targets and the pool of available women (pipeline issues). Since organizations tend to focus on the narrative of meeting an operational target, a shift toward addressing the systemic barriers to participation for women, which may in turn contribute to increased deployments, would be a viable framing for member states.⁷⁵ In the current climate, this requires first recognizing the existence and impact of hidden organizational resistances – including gender neutrality – in both Denmark and Canada. This has been raised as a critical consideration for operational effectiveness, particularly in light of the male-dominated nature of military organizations (→ Karim, 2016). While education plays an important role in communicating these nuances, the impact may only be observed at the policy level, and as a result may not change the culture of the organization.

Force Generating. Force generators in Canada and Denmark lean on a contradictory explanation for women's deployment: there is a barrier based on process (force generation does not consider gender) and pipeline issues (there are not enough women to go). However, there are measures and mechanisms to deploy more women on international missions. At the servicemember level, there were also examples of preferential deployments or assumptions of not wanting to deploy. A critical review of national deployment decisions and processes is therefore recommended. Evidence of the last review of the force generation process for the Canadian Armed Forces, for example, was in 2011 (→ Government of Canada, 2011). While staff papers have begun to challenge the force generation process and express the desire for an update (→ Dillon, 2018), there has yet to be a critical appraisal of the force generation process using a

gender mainstreaming lens. Such a commitment is not unfounded, and as noted at the outset of this book, many United Nations-troop contributing countries, including Canada, have committed to the large-scale Elsie Barrier Assessment for Women in Peacekeeping Operations (→ DCAF, 2020). To disregard barriers for women to participate in combat or non-peacekeeping missions in itself demonstrates a resistance to women's participation beyond a particular context. To this end, greater effort must be placed on addressing and mitigating the potential impact of selection bias for deployments. Force generation should consider gendered assumptions regarding women's interest (or lack of interest) in deploying. While determining what is possible to respond to the force generation request, member states – if they track their personnel by gender or other identifying factors – may be able to better identify personnel available and shape their contributions to FORCE PREP documents to align with that availability.

Consider Pull Factors. Returning to the literature on deployment motivations, which has considerably focused on men's experiences (see Chapter Two), member states must also consider the 'pull' factors for women's deployments. Reframing both the academic and policy focus of deployments to understand that women do, indeed, have motivations for deploying will support a shift in perception that assumes women do not wish to deploy.

International Implications

What role does NATO have, if any, when it comes to increasing women's deployments in NATO operations? I have found throughout this book that, at NATO, there is a 'hands off' approach to reducing barriers to women's deployment in operations, with frequent reference to the national

responsibilities for troop contributions. This hands-off approach runs counter to the realities of NATO commitments through policy and directives, such as Bi-Strategic Directive 040-001, which calls for an increase in women's participation in operations. This contradiction is further exemplified by the implementation of STANAGs, which monitor and guide interoperability all the way to language of work. These points of entry within the force generation process could enable NATO to set requirements for troop contributions, or support allies in improving the conditions for women's deployments. The following recommendations may support NATO's response to these barriers and challenges, while functioning in a collaborative and alliance context:

Understanding Barriers for NATO, allies, and partner nations: The findings from this book have identified the requirement for a context-specific NATO barrier assessment that could be undertaken by NATO and allies. Further research into the implications of STANAGS, reviews of policy measures to improve deployments, and an assessment of the NATO force generation process would serve to identify barriers and opportunities with the NATO context in mind. Furthermore, exploring the potential confounding impact of the United Nations' deployment quota for women on NATO deployments would serve to better understand additional, external factors that may influence the composition of troop contributions.

Using Reporting as a Stick. NATO allies and partners are already encouraged to report annually to the IMS Office of the Gender Advisor on their contributions to NATO operations and efforts to support women in the military (noting, however, that a publicly available report was not released between 2022 and 2025). With the exception of reporting a percentage of troop composition for NATO deployments, reporting questions do not center around deployment participation or policies but instead

focus on recruitment and retention. The integration of a monitoring question to address what initiatives are in place for allies and partners to reduce barriers to women's deployment is a potential first step to encourage reflection on the unassuming systems and structures that may perpetuate inequalities.

Set the Expectation. NATO serves as a guiding force for allies and partners and possesses the authority to direct requirements for military contributions. At the outset, during the creation of the CJSOR – the document outlining NATO's ideal menu of materiel and personnel for an operation – a goal for a certain representation of women or considerations of deploying prepared women could be included. While the ultimate decision is at the discretion of allies and partners, the goal could inform guidelines and policies such as the FORCE PREP, and would support consideration of the requirement as an initial step.

Female engagement platoons, financial motivations or the integration of a caveat are three additional examples of how to counteract systems and structures that may hinder women's deployment (Interview, NATO Representative, 7 December 2017). Caveats, as described in Chapter Four, include nation's limitations but also rules of engagement. As a result, a rule of engagement may include representation goals for troop contributions. Another point of entry could be during the biannual force generation conferences, which take into consideration long-term personnel and materiel planning for a particular operation, and provide a space for recommendations regarding Women, Peace and Security as a capability.

Yes, there is NATO deference that representation is up to member states and what they will provide. However, there are examples of how other international organizations in similar circumstances have influenced deployment composition from member states, and there are processes and standardization mechanisms in place that could specify the representation and

composition of NATO contributions and hold member states to account if they do not comply. Targets and quotas may extend beyond the 'interest' of NATO and, frankly, are a limited approach to address hidden organizational resistances in the organization. Greater awareness of the barriers that exist within the framework of NATO itself (i.e., the force generation process and the expectations of member states) - which women face in order to deploy on NATO-led operations - is required. Taking a leadership role and providing recommended considerations to allies and partners, for example, may be an opportunity for NATO to support the identification of hidden organizational resistances at the national level, as member state deference to international guidelines is clear.

These recommendations may be well tailored to other international organizations and security contexts. The European Union, for example, much like NATO, has deferred responsibility for troop contributions to member states but has released several policy directives regarding gender mainstreaming and the integration of gender perspectives. These findings may also inform ongoing United Nations programs, like the Elsie Initiative for Peacekeeping Operations. It is not enough for international organizations and member states to approach this challenge in isolation; a coordinated effort that recognizes the cross-cutting implications of military organizational culture is required in order to fulsomely identify and address barriers to deployment.

Responding to Limitations: Research Avenues and Future Focus Areas

This study brings to light hidden organizational resistances in organizational culture and its implications for women's deployment. While barriers to women's deployment were

identified at the conceptual level in terms of asymmetries between international and national perceptions, bias toward deployments, and supports for women who deploy, further research should also consider the impact of the type of missions that member states contribute to and consider the potential impact of foreign policy commitments to women's military participation. This may include, for instance, motivations for ally contributions to NATO operations, locations, and types of missions.

A second area of study includes a broader scope and diversity of participants. Demographic characteristics were controlled for in this study, including marital status, children, age and years of service. Particularly when considering the role of hidden organizational resistances and unconscious bias, literature has demonstrated the compounding effect of various demographics and systems of oppression (→ Crenshaw, 1991). A more diverse study population, including but not limited to various identity factors, including dual-service status (as the balancing of deployments between two personnel may further inhibit deployment opportunities), may further nuance the discussion. Studies that consider barriers for 2SLGBTQI+ personnel are also of particular relevance, in light of national-level commitments in response to the LGBT Purge settlement in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Further research could also consider deployment barriers for those who have not deployed. 'Redeployment' was used as a proxy for deployment in this study, in part due to limitations of the sample. While I argue hidden organizational resistances that implicate women's ability to redeploy on a NATO operation may be similar to those who have never deployed, this claim requires further exploration.

As an Anglophone, interviews and the survey were conducted in English. While NATO-interoperability requires

English as the functional language, this may have resulted in limited participation of strictly Francophone Canadians and Danish-speaking personnel. The implications on the study may be minimal as the overwhelming populations of the case countries speak English as their primary or secondary language, but there is an opportunity to further study these populations and the impact of unilingual or limited English-speaking personnel deploying on NATO-led operations, as well as the barrier of an English requirement on deployment.

Finally, a larger sample could serve to improve the confidence intervals of this study. While an attempt was made to increase the population size by reopening the survey, a larger population would provide greater clarity and accuracy for the regression.

Conclusion

When asking survey participants if they can identify the benefits of more women on NATO operations, one response was particularly telling: "I have not observed more women in operations" (Survey 56). While NATO data depict a slow increase in the composition of women on operations, the reality is that this is not being observed on the ground. In response, I questioned: what are the barriers to women's deployment on NATO-led operations? While my argument calls to attention the hidden organizational resistances that exist for women's deployment participation, including gendered assumptions held by force generators and the force generation process itself, through interviews and surveys I have also identified the challenges at a structural level that may impede the changes necessary to support women in operations. These include, for example, the hands-off approach to committing to more women on operations on behalf of NATO, Canada and Denmark, despite

standardization and policy commitments observed for other requirements such as language, unit size and bullet calibre.

The operational relevance of increasing diversity and inclusion within military forces has resulted in a special focus from military organizations, with offices being stood up, and public statements about the importance of women's participation. This special focus is followed by a caveat that impedes commitment to change – members choose not to commit to a particular number of women on NATO-led operations. The prevalence of hidden organizational resistances identified in this study perpetuate these challenges. The barriers surrounding the perceptions of merit and an inflexible force generation process are taken for granted and considered unchanging elements of military service. Responding to such organizational resistances – barriers that hinder adaptation and counter the shared values of gender equality and Women, Peace and Security – is critical as NATO and allied members work together to ensure the alliance remains fit for purpose in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

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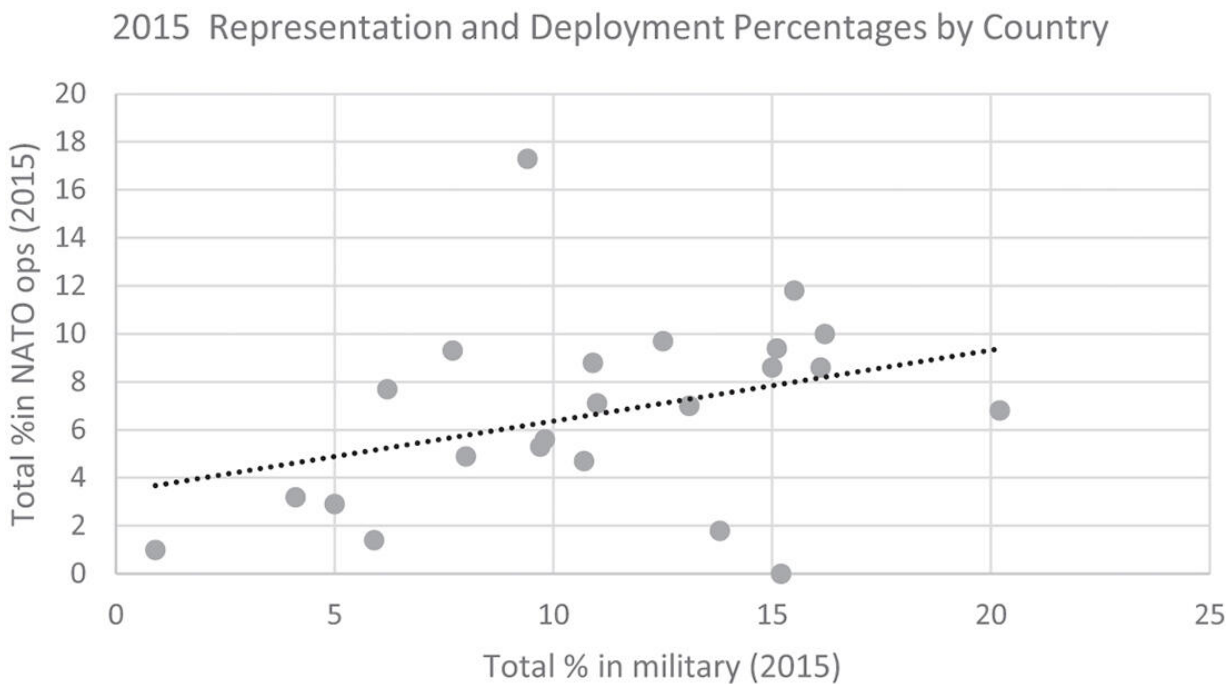
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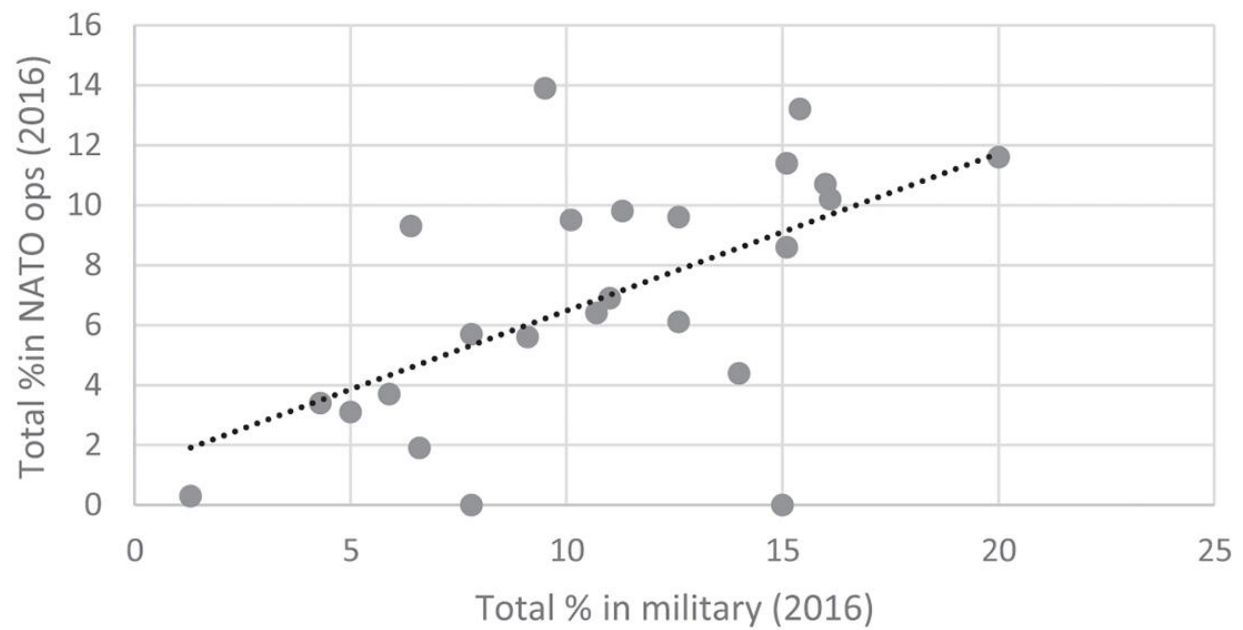
Appendices

Appendix 1 Correlation: NATO Representation and Deployment Composition

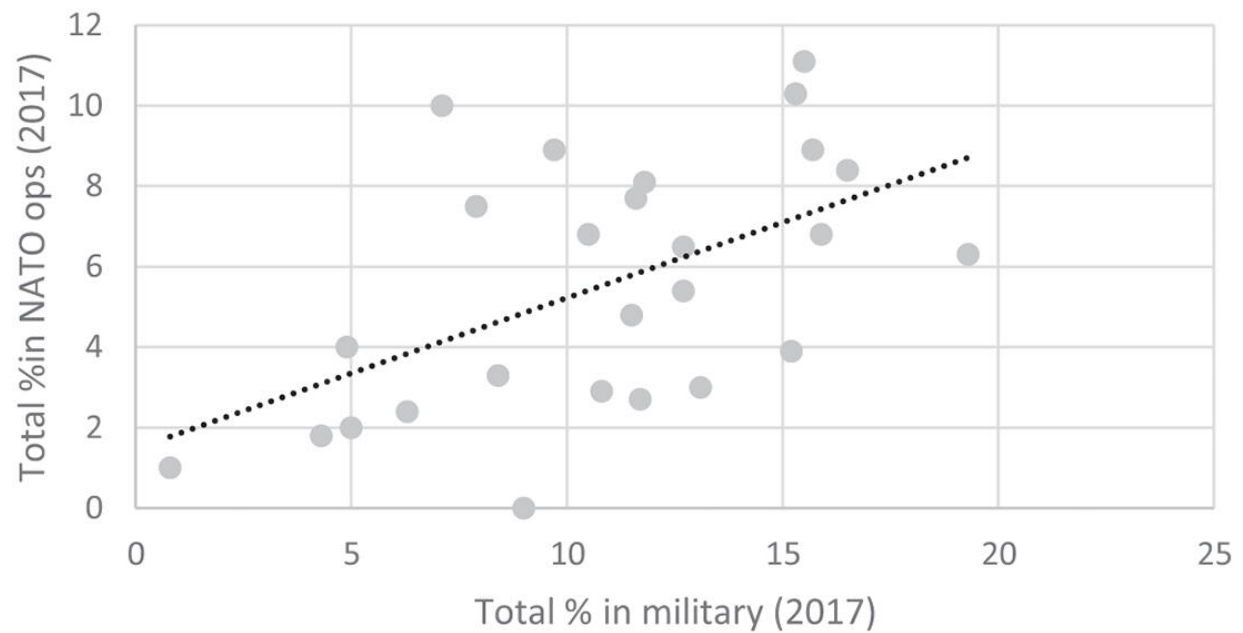
Year	Correlation
2015	0.346266663
2016	0.577449106
2017	0.533772758



2016 Representation and Deployment Percentages by Country



2017 Representation and Deployment Percentages by Country



Appendix 2 Descriptive Statistics

Gender (Man/Woman)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.39
Std. Deviation		.490
Minimum		0
Maximum		1

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	92	60.9	60.9	60.9
	1	59	39.1	39.1	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Children (Yes/No)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.34
Std. Deviation		.477
Minimum		0
Maximum		1

Children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	99	65.6	65.6	65.6
	1	52	34.4	34.4	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Nation (Canada/Denmark)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.43
Std. Deviation		.497
Minimum		0
Maximum		1

What Nation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	86	57.0	57.0	57.0
	1	65	43.0	43.0	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Occupation (Support/Non-Support/Unknown)

Statistics (Occupation)

N	Valid	150
	Missing	1
Mean		.95
Std. Deviation		.577
Minimum		0
Maximum		2

Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	29	19.2	19.3	19.3
	1	100	66.2	66.7	86.0
	2	21	13.9	14.0	100.0
	Total	150	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.7		
Total		151	100.0		

Reserve Force/Regular Force

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.90
Std. Deviation		.300
Minimum		0
Maximum		1

Regular or Reserve Force

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	15	9.9	9.9	9.9
	1	136	90.1	90.1	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Years Served

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		19.25
Std. Deviation		8.067
Minimum		3
Maximum		31

Personal Safety (Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.58
Std. Deviation		.795
Minimum		0
Maximum		2

Personal Safety

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	93	61.6	61.6	61.6
	1	29	19.2	19.2	80.8
	2	29	19.2	19.2	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Men Favoured Over Women (Perception) (Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.41
Std. Deviation		.724
Minimum		0
Maximum		2

Favouritism – Men

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	110	72.8	72.8	72.8
	1	20	13.2	13.2	86.1
	2	31	13.9	13.9	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Home Responsibilities (Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		1.11
Std. Deviation		.928
Minimum		0
Maximum		2

Home Responsibilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	57	37.7	37.7	37.7
	1	20	13.2	13.2	51.0
	2	74	49.0	49.0	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Volunteer for NATO Operation (No/Yes)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.83
Std. Deviation		.373
Minimum		0
Maximum		1

Volunteer for NATO Operation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	25	16.6	16.6	16.6
	1	126	83.4	83.4	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Deployment Preference (NATO/UN/National/US-Led)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		1.79
Std. Deviation		1.097
Minimum		1
Maximum		4

Deployment Preference

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	88	58.3	58.3	58.3
	2	27	17.9	17.9	76.2
	3	15	9.9	9.9	86.1
	4	21	13.9	13.9	100.00
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

NATO Operations are More Dangerous (Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

Statistics

N	Valid	151
	Missing	0
Mean		.79
Std. Deviation		.786
Minimum		0
Maximum		2

NATO Operations are More Dangerous (Disagree/Neutral/Agree)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	65	43.0	43.0	43.0
	1	52	34.4	34.4	77.7
	2	34	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	151	100.0	100.0	

Deploy/Redeployment (One Deployment/More than One Deployment)

Statistics

N	Valid	126
	Missing	25
Mean		.40
Std. Deviation		.493
Minimum		0
Maximum		1

Deploy/Redeployment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	75	49.7	59.5	59.5
	1	51	33.8	40.5	100.0
Total		126	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	25	16.6		
Total		151	100.0		

Appendix 3 Summary of Motivators Identified in Interviews

Type of Mission

Soldiers are often occupied by the thought of achieving something. You want to make a difference. And it's very hard to make a difference in a UN mission (Interview with Danish Armed Forces Representative, 5 February 2019).

A ridiculous number of UN staff and UN military asked to have their picture with me – I was an anomaly ... there was general commentary by my international military colleagues about what is appropriate for a woman/what I should do differently. For example, my [redacted] MLO colleague approached me and explained to me that it is inappropriate for women to swear, at another time my [redacted] MLO colleagues stormed out saying it was inappropriate for a female to show a man how to use a computer, and the [redacted] refused to submit J2 reports to me directly rather preferring to hand them to the SMLO who turned and handed them to me (Interview with Canadian Armed Forces Representative, 5 January 2019).

Financial incentive

I can say that with some weight is that some [on mission] were very occupied of the fact that they wanted to survive and save money, because that was their one chance in life to be able to give their children a possibility to go to school and to educate themselves and have a better life (Interview with Danish Armed Forces Representative, 5 February 2019).

Demonstration of your skills/prove your strengths

The few female colleagues I have had all enjoy being on international tours or NATO operations because it is part of the job, and because when you come from the army that is where you can actually prove and perform your duty (Interview with Danish Armed Forces Representative, 22 February 2019).

Convenience

I know ... for some ... it's a matter of convenience to be deployed. Because you're in the same setting every day; you're putting on the same clothes every day; you get fed three times a day. Basically, all you have to think about is yourself and your job. You don't have to think about anything else. So, I experience from some of the personnel I've had in my unit ... that they deploy often for that (Interview with Danish Armed Forces Representative, 25 January 2019).⁷⁶

Prestige

It is important if you get a medal or not. (Laughs). For example, in the navy, for some deployments you don't get a medal and that's annoying. Where other deployments you get a medal. It's actually more about being away and the experience and the pay and the medal than the mission (Interview with Danish Armed Forces Representative, 1 February 2019).

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Notes

- 1 Note that Robert Egnell calls for both the integration of women and gender perspectives into operations in order to observe these benefits.
- 2 Though efforts to support women's equality date back to the 1970s (→ Wright et al., 2019).
- 3 Consider, for example, the role of the Employment Equity Act for the Canadian Armed Forces Regulations. The intent of the Act is to identify and mitigate barriers to participation for four designated group members, one of which is women.
- 4 Specifically, the UN defines gender mainstreaming as "ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects," but as discussed later in this book, the success of this approach is often limited or not followed through.
- 5 While gender mainstreaming does not only apply to women, its employment in military spheres is often used in this way.
- 6 Concerns of personal safety, gendered assumptions and force generation. Additional themes also emerged, such as burnout and operational effectiveness concerns. These were maintained throughout the research design

as they were deemed relevant to the overall research question of women's deployment, as per → Evans and Lewis (2018, p. 4).

- 7** Note that the statistically significant response for military occupation was the 'unknown' category, and as a result requires further study.
- 8** Additional observations include perceptions that there are not enough women in deployable units, and in general there is a lack of reflection regarding the impact of "hand-picked positions."
- 9** Such as politics or military careers.
- 10** In Canada, Universality of Service refers to a broad set of requirements for military members: to perform their occupational duties in addition to general defence related requirements, minimal operational standards, etc. (DAOD 5023-0 suite). Often for member countries this type of policy refers to their deployability, which → Taber (2009) argues is in tension with women's participation.
- 11** Which are often perceived as 'inherently feminine.'
- 12** For example, Canada's Global Affairs and the Department of National Defence.
- 13** Such as gender equality legislation.
- 14** Rather than an attempt to promote 'gender diversity'.
- 15** A brief analysis was conducted using the Human Development Data from 1990 to 2015 collected by the

United Nations Development Programme to determine if gender equality in a country through labour force participation explained women's deployment. Women's labour force participation and representation in NATO countries found within the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index, as well as the raw data and reports from the programme, were assessed to determine if the "inequality index" informs deployment rates for women. When comparing the proposed case countries in NATO using the IMS Office of the Gender Advisor Reports to each country profile in the Gender Equality Index Human Development, a correlation was not found.

- 16** United States, Norway and the United Kingdom did not submit statistics for NATO operations.
- 17** Understanding that sexual violence could also be considered an exclusionary element of culture.
- 18** Which refers to policies and agreements used to staff military operations.
- 19** This research was approved by the Queen's University Research Ethics Board (GREB Ref #: GPLST-143-18; TRAQ # 6024766) and approved by the DND/CAF Social Science Research Review Board (SSRRB) in accordance with DAOD 5062-0 and 5062-1 under SSRRB Approval # 1787/18F.
- 20** The interview and survey design considered more variables than those mentioned as observable implications. This is due to the validating objective of the study and determining whether these variables

manifest in an independent research project, and if so, testing to what extent these influence deployment on NATO-led operations. Some of these variables were drawn from previous literature, particularly as they relate to the representation of women in armed forces. There is an assumption that factors that may be barriers to representation for women in the armed forces in general may also influence deployment on NATO-led operations. The following additional independent variables were tested in this study, with details of the operationalizing outlined in their respective chapters: *Convenience factor* (see → Hedlund, 2011) and *Risk level* (see → Karim and Beardsley, 2013).

- 21 15% is often taken as a reference point due to United Nations gender parity efforts.
- 22 As of 2026, this representation is 16.7%.
- 23 This benchmarking is exemplified by the IMS Office of the Gender Advisor Annual Reports.
- 24 Major and above.
- 25 Major and above.
- 26 Note that due to smaller response rates, five-point Likert scale responses were coded into three-point scales (disagree/neutral/agree) for the regression.
- 27 Which included gender, children, what armed force the participant served with, occupation, regular or reserve status, years served, preference for deployment, perceptions of men being favoured, and perceptions

that NATO operations are more dangerous than non-NATO operations.

- 28** These three variables reflected the self-selection hypothesis (personal safety) gendered assumptions from decision makers (home responsibility) and whether participants had volunteered for a NATO-led operation.
- 29** Likert-scale summaries and excerpts from short-answer responses.
- 30** Descriptive statistics of the population can be found in Appendix 2.
- 31** Whilst an attempt was made to increase the number of non-deployed respondents by re-opening the survey for three months, n=25 was not enough to conduct a regression. A summary of their survey responses is provided in Chapter Six.
- 32** Excluding, of course, the integration of women into the war effort during World War One and World War Two.
- 33** Or North Atlantic Treaty.
- 34** Though it is acknowledged that efforts to support women's equality date back to the 1970s. See for example → Wright et al. (2019).
- 35** The military committee consists of Chief of Defence Staff from NATO member states, some international staff representatives, an executive body, and ACO and ACT.

- 36** In its response, the CAF notes that during the planning phase of international operational deployments, it "strives to ensure there are an adequate number of qualified females deployed, in accordance with available work force, in order to fulfil mandated tasks/requirements" (→ NATO, 2018g, pp. 81, 144).
- 37** In addition to individual liberty and democracy.
- 38** These findings are also used to inform the survey design (Chapter Five), to determine whether there is a discrepancy in perceived barriers for women's deployment on NATO-led operations between force generators and those servicemembers who have completed the survey. This discrepancy is key to this book's argument as it is a core criterion for hidden resistance; NATO, member states, and military members vary in their understanding of why women's deployment should be supported, and how to do so. These variations provide an opening in which interpretation or subjectivity may influence women's deployment on NATO-led operations.
- 39** Particularly at the beginning of a mission, where the battlespace and context are still being understood.
- 40** Interview data from force generators found recognition that there has been a generational shift in the expectations of family; however, there are limitations in how family changes influence deployment decisions and offers. Unexpectedly, anecdotal evidence finds that individuals who do not have dependents or a spouse may be asked to deploy more often than those who do.

- 41** These are often environment commands, such as Commander of the Army, Navy or Air force.
- 42** NATO employs the United Nation's definition of gender blindness: "*Gender blindness* is the term used to refer to the failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men/boys and women/girls are assigned to them in specific social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programs, policies and attitudes which are gender blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs. They maintain the status quo and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations" (→ Office of NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, 2021). For more on the implications of gender blindness or gender neutrality in the Canadian Forces, see → Davis (2009b).
- 43** Quote has been edited for clarity.
- 44** The mechanism(s) through which nations and international organizations 'staff' and commit resources to an operation.
- 45** Be they national, UN-led, or NATO-led.
- 46** An "innovative, multilateral pilot project that is developing and testing a combination of approaches to help overcome barriers and increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations" (→ Government of Canada, 2025).

- 47** Military occupation was grouped by "support," "non-support" and "unknown" roles, with no statistically significant association for any of the three categories. Due to data quality issues, further study is required that provides options for choice for military occupation in order to probe this association further.
- 48** Group title for whether someone serves with the Army, Navy, Air force or Special Forces (SOF).
- 49** For the regression, five-point Likert-scale responses were condensed into 3-point scales due to the smaller sample size. Discussion of the qualitative responses retain the original responses on a five-point scale.
- 50** Home responsibilities were measured by a Likert-scale question: *If/when I deploy, I worry about whether home responsibilities will be taken care of.* Clarity and examples were provided in the survey instrument for what home responsibilities could entail, including coordinating schedules, food, etc.
- 51** Personal safety is understood in this work as feelings of discomfort or unease. With personal safety being a subjective experience or concern – similar to pain tolerance – respondents to surveys were asked to complete a self-assessment of their personal safety concerns (or lack thereof) when deploying. For example, questions included "Beyond the 'military factor' I am concerned about my personal safety when deployed." Questions followed these responses to probe the type of personal safety concerns identified, such as "Concerns about my personal safety stem from sexual

assault." Responses used a Likert scale to measure feelings of personal safety.

- 52** Volunteering was measured using a binary 'yes/no' response to the question "have you volunteered to deploy on a NATO-led operation?"
- 53** The survey design operationalized deployment in quantitative terms. Two elements of deployment were identified: deployment and re-deployment on a NATO-led operation. Deployment on a NATO-led operation was defined as a binary variable (yes and no). If a participant responded "yes," they were asked to identify which operations they had deployed on and the date of the most recent deployment. Re-deployment leveraged the deployment data by coding the 'yes' responses for deployment based on a binary 'yes/no' for re-deployment based on one or more than one NATO-led mission. For example, if Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) Doe had deployed on a NATO-led operation (yes), they would then identify which NATO-led operation(s). LCol Doe chose ISAF, SEA GUARDIAN and KFOR. LCol Doe's 'redeployment' would then be coded as a "1+ mission" for the logistic regression.
- 54** See Chapter Three for Research Framework and Methodology summary.
- 55** In addition to assumptions surrounding barriers being similar for combat and non-combat missions.
- 56** Available online reports date back to 2008.

- 57** Further studies should provide pre-listed occupations and classify them as support or non-support functions.
- 58** Also see Chapter Three for a breakdown of the survey population.
- 59** Personal safety: Approximately 61.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed; Sexual assault: 86% strongly disagreed or disagreed.
- 60** Neutral n=14.
- 61** Neutral n=15.
- 62** Neutral n=7.
- 63** Personal safety and sexual assault are also not statistically significant in the regression for redeployment.
- 64** A logic error in the first week of the survey distribution resulted in this question being skipped for respondents, even if they had deployed on a NATO-led operation. As a result, the number of respondents for this question (n=76) is less than the total number of participants for the survey (n=151).
- 65** Neutral n=13.
- 66** Neutral n=7.
- 67** Examples of this dynamic are found below.
- 68** Neutral n=5.
- 69** Neutral n=15.

- 70** For women, 27% 'agreed' and 6.8% 'strongly agreed'. For men, 26.1% 'agreed' and 4.3% 'strongly agreed.'
- 71** Some responses have been shortened.
- 72** And include, for example, lack of knowledge of deployment opportunities.
- 73** Force generation is the process for international organizations and states to develop and produce personnel for a military operation.
- 74** In Chapter Two, the "rights versus readiness" debate is expanded on. In summary, scholars problematize the assumption that women's rights must be in conflict with operational military readiness, or that operational readiness is hindered by increasing women's representation.
- 75** While this section does not focus on NATO, such an approach led by NATO would also be viable guidance to member states.
- 76** This factor for deployment was found to influence deployment decisions in work conducted by Erik Hedlund. However, in his work, the author interviews men exclusively and also only in relation to UN missions.