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Policy Brief
"Security Management Network"

PROMOTING WOMEN IN THE ALBANIAN ARMED FORCE

FROM A VISIBLE TO AN OPERATIONAL GENDER BALANCE

From a visible to an operational Gender Balance

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Introduction

Having spent more than a period of 20 years in the Armed Forces of a transitional country, the today female military officers are somehow in a privileged position of being among the fewest women to be symbolically in a charged profession considered randomly a highly-dominated male profession. Indeed the military constitutes an archetypical symbol of masculinity characterized by physical strength and aggression. (Williams, 1989). Here, in Albania, the effects of the gender equality are found on the challenges between the working and the daily life. Such policy brief focuses on the opportunities and obstacles of changing gender relations within the traditionally male-dominated Albanian Armed Forces. Based on a thorough legal analysis, a focused policy - institutional assessment and introduction of a best practice - case of Rumania as a comparative review, the document will aim *at exploring the dynamics of the gender equality, the patterns of integrating women in the promotion procedures in the armed forces and consequently re-establishing gender relations within and outside the Albanian armed forces in general.*

Changing perceptions of gender policy in armed forces

Gender is seen as a structure of social relations and as a set of practices within the framework of these relations. (Connell 2002). Thus creating effective gender balance in sectors that man predominantly decides or represent the power consists in a social interaction challenge. While assured by a full-fledged legal system approximated by NATO standards and/or completed by national benchmarks the affronting with the reality seems to be a cumbersome terrain in which practices the legal values is very often bargained by the cultural mentality and inherited political belongings. Although the national actions plans, strategies and other parts of the policy and political compilations at a national level show a high level of awareness and approximation toward a gender quality perspective, the integral part of such concept ahs more to do with the organizations process, touching upon reciprocal roles of all parties involved, women, men, decision-makers (takers), government, society, media etc. When women enter or start to integrate in a highly male –dominated institution, they apply different strategies to cope with their minority status.

For example, one strategy is to consider gendered power relations to be a result primarily and mainly of the quantitative distribution of men and women. i.e women minority status in a workplace. Another example is the ‘gender neutral’ strategy, which renders gender irrelevant, invisible and unproblematized (Wahl 1992). However in societies traditionally dominated by men, or organizations that power is mostly male-oriented, its more interesting to see the depth of the gender equality analysis. What really happens and represents a risk for the functional integration of women in such cases, is the exclusionary process of reproducing segregation or in other words a new model of potential selective inclusionary, which under the label of gender equality allows women to be part of institutional structures, however their advancement, promotion is skeptically guarded or not transparently followed over time. Actually, this kind of active

participation and changing of women role is the working life potentially contributes to the construction of more equal relations in each organization.

Attempts to change the gender relations in the Armed Forces have quite a history in the dynamics of the Albanian state. Indeed, by including women in the Armed forces somehow puts down the last gender boundaries in a society. In the Albanian society such mechanism was introduced since early in the previous monism system. Women were not only part of the Armed forces, but many of them also in the combat duties. Such position towards their role was not only an inherited doctrine but also an integrated approach toward the egalitarian position of both genders in the powers and actions taken in the military. Women were found in navy, army infantry, etc. There were indeed many women as high officers commanding the armed forces at different sectors. They were educated, trained and moreover treated as their male colleagues. In addition women officers before the 90s were seen as models of social promotion and strategic factors. Somehow the women position in the armed force before the 90s gave them a supreme role – impacted definitively by the ideological approach of their inclusion in the Army – however did not leave room for any discrimination because of gender as such, and spots of violence or abuse addressed to gender and age were not perceived at all. After 90s such phenomenon did not take a progressive development. Women were still part of the armed forces but while some of them kept the old promotion grades of the previous system, others were either affiliated in clerical works, such as working secretaries, logistics, offices administrators or managers of maintenance compartments, or stopped at all working for the armed forces getting advance retirement due to the non- familiar environment created in the army.

While reviewing the statistics of women participation in the Armed Forces in Albania the situation looks optimistic quantitatively but rather non very prominent qualitatively. Although women have not achieved the status that some would like, others believe the services have gone too far. In addition to remaining a minority, the percentage of women in the higher officer and enlisted ranks continues to be lower than the percentage of women in service. The work of creating a more gender equal organization in the Army is focused not only on structural but also organizational obstacles, particularly concentrating on three issues:

1. increasing the share of women officers, conscripts and superiors [power]
2. facilitating the combination of work and parenting [family]
3. attending to unwarranted grades/promotions differentials between women and men [promotion]

Negotiating today the position of women is not a simple white and black scenario. What is rather aimed it is the raising of awareness on the gender balance, establishing a gender sensitivity approach among the Armed Forces, rather than pretending a gender-balanced army. It implies necessarily boundaries of including and excluding women from the real operational processes in the armed forces. The policy of gender (sex) nowadays can be analyzed under a dual-view: the numerical criteria associated with the presence of women in a defined context (gender balance) and the qualitative criteria, the need to engage women and men in political processes, economic, military and social (gender mainstreaming-participation in peace operations). It typically exists a male-dominant

culture in the Armed Forces, a kind of which women are expected to conform. Paradoxically incidents that hinder women ability, hide the internal discrimination and obstacle women advancement in their grades in time, have become so common that could be labeled also the commanding way of hierarchy relations in the Armed Forces. Such current 'arrangement' shows that experience and seniority are very important when it comes to setting boundaries for which practices are considered legitimate and which are not. Evidentially the age is not the only aspect of importance. Competence and performance should be seen by an 'equal opportunity' eye, and gender balance principles should be applicable effectively also in this respect.

Legal framework analysis

Based on the Albanian Constitution, article 18, is determined that *all are equal before the law. No one may be unjustly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic condition, education, social status, or ancestry.*

Despite that, the Albanian Constitution determines even the positive discrimination in its basic principles for women. This means that, women should be treated better than men on different aspects such promoting, building capacities, grading, finding opportunities, etc.

As in different fields, there are several laws and sub laws in Albanian legislation that define and specify the promotion of the military persons in grades and responsibilities, such as the law no 9171 date 22.01.2004 "On ranks and military career in the armed forces of the Republic of Albania". Based on this law, the military career is the sequence of the military responsibilities while serving in Armed forces, by education, capacity building, professional leadership skills and seniority of service. One of the manners that the women are promoted in Armed forces is the ranks. The military ranks in the armed forces are classified into low grade, high grade and major grades and for each of this are defined the time needed in one rank. So, this law defines the criteria for acceptance and the responsible authority, the order of rank, promotion in ranks and the responsibilities that derives by special character of the duty and armed forces service and the career interruption. In this law, have no special treatment or different criteria for the promotion of women in armed forces. The same situation is showed even in two sub laws; Council of Ministers' decisions, when for the women have no different in treatment. The Council of Ministers' decision no. 554, date 2.7.2004 on "Unification of military grade organic functions at all levels of hierarchy control and management of the armed forces of the Republic of Albania" and the Council of Ministers' decision no.431, date 2.07.2004 on "Promotion criteria for officers, NCOs and soldier reservists".

Based on the law¹ on the statute of the armed forces officers, the only difference in treatment that is defined is the period of 12 years that the women should have as service seniority meanwhile the men 15 years, in order to have the right of the preliminary retirement.

¹ Law no.9210, date 23.03.2004

Furthermore the two main strategic documents of Ministry of Defense², have no provisions for eliminating the discrimination based on gender in armed forces, or have no strategic objectives related to the promotion of women in high grades and responsibilities.

Actually, the main national legislation on the grading in the army knows the right to women to have equal rights and chances to be accepted by the Armed Forces for careers as officers and gradually be allowed into their various establishments but special criteria or different treatment for women is missing in order to fulfill even the requests of the law on gender balance, such as the quota of 30% of women in public administration.

Now, Albania is a member of NATO and what we should make the effort in approximation the legislation and strategies as per NATO standards.

Since in October 2000, UNSCR 1325 was adopted by the United Nations, on women, peace and security recognized the disproportionate effect of conflict on women and underlined the essential role of women in the prevention of conflict, as well as in post-conflict peace building and reconstruction efforts. It aims at the integration of gender considerations into all aspects of security work. It also targets increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions, as well as consultation with local and international women's groups.

Since 2000, three additional UNSC Resolutions regarding women in armed forces have been adopted: UNSCR 1820, UNSCR 1888 and UNSCR 1889. The implementation of UNSCR 1325 is supported through National Action Plans for around 22 nations and some others are in process. Until now Albania has not prepared a National Action plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 or other acts for gender prospective.

Meanwhile NATO structures have done a lot of steps in promoting women in armed forces since the UNSCR 1325. On the military side, the Committee on Women in the Armed forces changed its terms of reference and name to become the Committee on Gender Perspectives in summer 2009 to formally support UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions, while an Office on Gender Perspectives was established in the IMS.

While the implementation of the Directive has already demonstrated positive results in NATO-led operations, it is recognized that mainstreaming gender perspectives requires a continuous and shared effort until it becomes the norm. This work is being taken forward by an ACO Gender Perspective Working Group which was established by SHAPE Chief of Staff in May 2010 and is making efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 recommendations and operational lessons identified in all aspects of NATO-led operations.

In general, ensuring women have access to decision – making bodies, the number of women in workforce needs to grow, particularly in senior position, etc.

² The Integrated plan for 2010, Ministry of Defense, published on December 2009 and The strategic document of Armed forces of Albania, entered into force 20.5.2005 with the law no. 9419

But Albania has a lot to do in frame of the recognizing the role of women in armed forces. Integration of gender perspectives requires a comprehensive strategy, including operational planning and execution process³.

Romania as a best practice example

For the purpose of this policy brief it was selected, Romania as it has a similar tradition with our country including the Armed Forces progress and the NATO membership experience. Being under a dictatorial regime for almost 50 years the presence of women in the armed forces became evident immediately after 2001.

Women in the Romanian Armed Forces have more than 30 years history of military service, and although for a long period of time female military personnel were assigned primarily to medical, administrative or secretarial positions, things have started to improve since 2001, when the Romanian Ministry of National Defense launched a female recruitment and selection program aimed at promoting women according to their genuine aptitudes, achievements and potential.

The Constitution of Romania stipulates the equality of rights between men and women and guarantees equal gender opportunities upon assignment to public, civil or military positions.

At legislative level, the Constitutional provisions were implemented through the Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 for the prevention and sanctioning of any form of discrimination while exerting the right to labor, the freedom to choose a profession, the right to equal payment for similar work, the right to education and professional training. The Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities for men and women provides several legal measures for the exclusion of any form of direct or indirect gender discrimination in all branches of Romanian public activities

At the moment, the number of military women totals 1,978, representing 5% of the total Romanian Armed Forces manning. The manning of women within the Ministry of National Defense consists in 281 female military personnel occupy General Staff positions, 725 can be found in the central structures, 630 female officers, WOs and NCOs are assigned to Land Forces, 256 to Air Forces and 86 to Naval Forces.

Repartition of female officers within the Romanian Armed Forces in percentage according to rank is presented as follows:

- Military personnel analysis –female military staff, enlisted soldiers out of the total of the military personnel - military staff, enlisted solders: 3.16%
- Female officers at brigadier/one star general rank (at least) represent 2.63% out of the total number of generals. Female officers distribution out of the total of officers: 5.29%
- Female senior officers distribution out of the total of senior officers: 4.55%

³ Words of Lieutenant colonel Pierre Duchesne

- Female junior officers distribution out of the total of junior officers: 6.18 %
- Female non-commissioned officers and warrant officers distribution out of the total of non-commissioned officers and warrant officers: 5.46%
- Female enlisted soldiers distribution out of the total of enlisted soldiers: 0.47%
- Deployed women distribution out of the total of deployed personnel in missions/exercises abroad: 2.18%

Bringing the total percentage of women in Romanian Armed Forces is **27.29**.

Military institutions provide equal opportunities to both men and women in terms of training as well. All admission examinations, except for the physical performance tests, are conducted under equal conditions with male candidates and basic training is provided to both genders. Romania's participation in peace-keeping missions, like ENDURING FREEDOM, KFOR or IRAKI FREEDOM was supported by the devotion, performance, courage and ability to adapt to special situations of the female personnel deployed in operational theaters. Thus, 10 female officers and 27 female non-commissioned officers participated in these operations on a voluntary basis and they all have done and will continue to do an excellent job in difficult and challenging conditions.

In the Romanian Armed Forces the same requirements for career promotion are established for both men and women. Military careers are managed objectively, without gender discrimination and laying a greater stress on individual aspirations, performance and abilities.

The goal of the female colleagues is to fight the attitude of discouragement and isolation and to prove that respect towards women's potential can only be imposed by means of direct competition, in the interest of entire society. It is a clear mark of success that women have managed to integrate into each military service, as well as in the central directorates, and that more than 71% of them have a higher education diploma.

Before the 2005-2006 academic year, there was no gender dependant number of seats in military educational institution. That was why in 2004-2005 academic year female candidates admitted in military high schools represented over 50% out of the total number of candidates.

Starting with the 2005-2006 academic year, some of the military education institutions have established a specific number of seats for female candidates.

In the 2007-2008 academic year, the number of seats allotted to female candidates in military universities is as follows:

The Army Academy:	12.27%
The Air Force Academy:	5.44%
The Navy Academy:	3.77%,

except for the navy electro-mechanics specialty no seats for female candidates were planned.

In some military institutions for higher education where the number of seats for female candidates has not been clearly specified, the percentage of female students is the following:

The National Defense University:	0%
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The Military Medical Institute:	60%
The Military Technical Academy:	39.02%
In the military schools for non-commissioned and warrant officers, the seats available in each branch institution were:	
-Army:	5%
- Air Force	29.41%
- Navy	8.16%

In the military high schools 20.13% out of the total number of seats was allotted for female candidates.

Some specialized fields of training, i.e. “vehicle”, “artillery and rockets”, “aircraft board radio electronics”, “navy and anti-aircraft artillery”, “navy and anti-aircraft rockets ” “navy electric installations and motors” have not been open to female candidates.

The seats reserved for female candidates in all educational institutions were 100% filled therefore proving the increasing interest of women for the military career.

Deployments (i.e. peace support operations, peacekeeping operations)

At present, under the provisions of the national laws and regulations, there have been only voluntary basis deployments. Currently there is a pending regulation regarding the mandatory deployment for the entire military staff.

Women’ s deployment is a favorable experience. Women have perfectly adjusted to the new environment. The total number of the deployed women represents about 2.5% out of the total deployed personnel in the operations: ENDURING FREEDOM-AFGHANISTAN, KFOR, KOSOVO and IRAQUI FREEDOM.

To sum up;

The process of women’s integration in the Romanian Armed Forces is irreversible and it proves to be a success. This process is far from reaching the final stage and sustained efforts are still necessary for the ongoing promotion of gender policies. Women’s career development, especially to leadership positions, represents a challenge and a proof of a fully democratic society worldwide.

Recommendations

1. Albania should prepare the national action plan and directives to promote gender mainstreaming in frame of the implementation of UNSCR 1325.
2. Identification of a country, NATO’ member as best practice related to gender balance, not only in grades but even in the building capacities of women.
3. Promote equal opportunities to men and women in promotion in grades and responsibilities.
4. Improving the Albanian legislation related to the facilitating procedures especially for the physic tests to the women in Armed forces during their pregnancy or childbirth.

It is time that the gender equality in the Armed Forces should be seen more in the qualitative approach rather than simply in the quantitative figures (women in the army should not simply be recruited and contracted but engaged and treated the same ay as

their male colleagues). Such approach would improve their position and shape better the gender equality in the overall Albanian society.

Individual perceptions of gender equality, of either women or men should be now transformed and perceived as state structured attitude in which the conditions of applicability are designed by the legislation but practiced by the actors themselves. Internal hidden discrimination in Armed Forces towards women should come up to an end, by women themselves and then be abolished also at their male colleagues. Some look beyond individual qualifications to group performance and contend that even if women meet all necessary qualifications and can perform the necessary tasks, they might decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of the armed forces. In such view, having women in large numbers might impair the morale and efficiency of men who have taken pride in the masculinity of their profession. Instead what is the needy scenario in the Albanian Armed Forces is the quality of the already engaged women and their empowerment as per the criteria and qualification men are faced in these structures.

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TABELA E PERSONELIT FEMËR NË FASH, SIPAS GRADAVE PËRKATËSE

Nr.	Gradat për Officeret	Femra	Në përqindje
1	Kolonele	2	2.7%
2	N/Kolonele	28	8.25%
3	Majore	69	11.6%
4	Kapitene	23	6.76%
5	Togere	130	19.9%
6	N/Togere	88	26.4%
	Shuma	340	14.5%
Nr.	Gradat për Nënoficeret	Femra	Në përqindje
1	Kapterre	40	19.1%
2	Rreshtere	106	10.6%
3	Tetare	160	12.4%
4	N/Tetare	147	13.4%
	Shuma	453	12.6%
Nr.	Gradat për Ushtaret Profesioniste	Femra	Në përqindje
1	UP1	154	11%
2	UP2	179	8.6%
	Shuma	333	9.6%
	TOTALI	1126	13.2%

Femra civile në Forcat e Armatosura, gjithsej janë: 762, ose 30% e personelit.