

ATUMUN SOMMERCAMP 2024

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

UN-WOMEN



Position Papers

Establishing women's rights in military organisations

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Welcome from the secretariat

Dear Delegates,

The following document is a collection of Position Papers for the countries represented in our ATUMUN conference on the topic of Establishing women's rights in military organisations. We expect you to have read the Study Guide before reading yours and other's Position Papers. It is of great importance that you read the Position Paper for your respective country before the session begins, as this will serve as the very basis of the negotiations.

When reading your Position Paper, it is important to note the central view that your country represents. We highly recommend that you compliment your Position Paper with your own research. The Position Papers are kept short in order for you to make your own conclusions on top of the position that the paper reveals.

In order for you to be able to have a fruitful debate, we highly recommend that you read other countries' Position Papers as well. By doing so, you will get a better understanding of the topic and the different perspectives that the countries represent.

With this being said, there is another matter that your secretariat would like to formally address.

This topic is one that, unfortunately, can be quite controversial. We want to make it perfectly clear that during our committee sessions, you are not representing you, but rather the nation you have been given. For some of you, this means that you need to negotiate for countries with views that differ greatly from your own personal views.

Lastly, we would like to present an official thanks to all of the co-authors of these Position Papers; Arthur Greve Bendixen, Catrine Kjær Lønneker, Dicte Havmøller Møberg, Lucca Dybtved Kjærgaard, Natasha Singh, Nicoline Meng Aagaard Andersen, Rosa Cathrine Knappe, & Simon Mosgaard Jørgensen

If you have any questions, we would like to remind you that our inbox is open at atumunsekretariat@gmail.com, and if you need any help with your research, we would like to refer to Questions a resolution should answer, Further reading, and Bloc positions in the Study Guide.

Sincerely, your secretariat,

Dicte Havmøller Møberg, Lucca Dybtved Kjærgaard, Nicoline Meng Aagaard Andersen,
& Simon Mosgaard Jørgensen

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Commonwealth of Australia

In the Commonwealth of Australia (henceforth known as Australia), women currently work in over 200 different roles all throughout the Australian Defence Forces and receive the same training, salaries, and opportunities as their male counterparts. Historically, women have been a part of the Australian armed forces since 1899, though until the Second World War they were restricted to only serve in the Australian Army Nursing Service. In 1940, the Women's Australian National Service (WANS) was inaugurated. WANS played an important role in showing the capabilities of women filling roles traditionally held by men.¹

While the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has a history of women undertaking military roles, it has not always been problem free. This came to light in 2012 when the Human Rights Commission made a detailed review of the treatment of Women in the ADF, which produced public awareness in regards to the lived experiences, including discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment. In 2016, the UN Human Rights Commission presented their final report, which included 65 recommendations on gender equality, of which 63 have been implemented while the last 2 focus on long term growth. To further transparency, each year, status on the recommendations are published in a *Women in ADF report*, to maintain focus on the goal of continued improvements. Throughout this, there has been a partnership with the Human Rights Commission to ensure that the work happens with the women and not to the women. This includes working on the cultural shift to actively include women. Rather than being purely about representation, this is directly seen in programs to tailor uniforms, maternity leave provisions, and much more. In 2021/2022, 20,1% of the Australian Defence force consisted of women compared to 14,4% in 2012.²

Currently, Australia does not have conscription for neither men nor women, and has not had it since the end of the Vietnam War in 1972. Whether or not Australia should reinstate it has become a topic of debate in recent years, with some experts saying it is time to reinstate conscription before Australia is drawn into a major war.³ It has been allowed for women to be frontline combatants since 2016.⁴

While Australia has entered multiple security partnerships, some countries are more strongly featured than others. Among those are the US, UK, and New Zealand, but other partnerships also include countries such as Canada, Japan, India, and South Korea.⁵

¹ <https://www.awm.gov.au/women-in-defence>

² <https://www.army.gov.au/news-and-events/speeches-and-transcripts/2023-03-10/united-nations-commission-status-women-address>

³ <https://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/military/australia-must-consider-bringing-back-conscription-as-allout-war-with-russia-looms-expert-says/news-story/b1ced960b821027163b05b15ad47e5e6>

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-28/women-warriors-soldiers-must-be-acknowledged-says-sarah-percy/103018508>

⁵ https://www.apf.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook47p/AustraliaSecurityRelationships

Plurinational State of Bolivia

In the Plurinational State of Bolivia (henceforth known as Bolivia), women have had the possibility to participate in Bolivia's armed forces since the 1980s, when the first group of 47 female army officers graduated. While they could participate as army officers, they were not official soldiers, which required having done the official military service. This was first possible after a change of the law in 2017. This change resulted in the first 131 young women completing their one-year military training, equivalent to the men's conscription. The conscription for men is compulsory between the ages 18-22 with 12 months of service. While the first 'class' graduated in February of 2019, as early as 2016, Gina Reque Teran became the first woman to obtain the rank of army general.⁶ Today, both men and women have the option to volunteer. Men from the age of 16 and women from the age of 18.⁷

The 2019 election ended with violence and dispute and a temporary destabilisation of the government. The following elections in 2020 and 2021 were deemed credible and fair and accepted by the stakeholders. The root causes for the dispute are still relevant today, with violence against women being one of the persistent problems.⁸

Bolivia has since 2022 been working on eliminating the patriarchy through cultural shifts, including President Luis Arce being vocal about the goal of dismantling the patriarchy. This has also been seen in their effort to increase women's representation in the military. From 5,3% in 2015 to 10% in 2021, being one of the few countries in Latin America to surpass the 10%. The cultural shift can also be seen in the policies, explicit anti-harassment policies have been implemented. Furthermore, Bolivia has also established mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting.⁹ However, it is important to note that women are not currently allowed to serve in frontline combat roles.¹⁰

Bolivia is currently working on potential partnerships with multiple different countries, namely China, Russia, and Iran. These countries are the primary suppliers for Bolivia's new defence enhancements and are all under cooperation agreements therethrough.¹¹

⁶ <https://www.latimes.com/espanol/noticias-mas/articulo/2019-02-10/efe-3893662-15115516-20190210>

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/>

⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bolivia/freedom-world/2023>

⁹ <https://wiiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/Enhancing-Security-Womens-Participation-in-the-Security-Forces-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Part-II.pdf> p. 11, 18-19

¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/01/25/map-which-countries-allow-women-in-front-line-combat-roles/>

¹¹ <https://www.riotimesonline.com/bolivias-strategic-defense-enhancements-for-2024/>

Federative Republic of Brazil

The Federative Republic of Brazil (henceforth known as Brazil), was the first country in South America to accept women into their army in the 1980s, though at first it was only in the Women's Reserve Corps. In December of 2017 Public Law No. 13.541 was passed, thereby expanding the military roles women could take. Prior to this, women could only serve in health and support roles. By passing Public Law No. 13.541, they could now serve in all capacities, including combat operations roles and as part of the maritime corps.

Brazil is still actively working on bettering their inclusion of women in different departments of the armed forces. This includes listening to the United States Marine Corps as part of finding the best way to integrate women into the Brazilian Marine Corps. There have been many firsts in recent years regarding women participating in the Brazilian armed forces. This includes two female marine officers set to graduate in 2024,¹² and that the Army's Aircraft Pilot Course as well as the Aircraft Maintenance Management Course had their first female students in March 2024. Another highlight was in February 2024 where a new class of the Marine Soldier Course began, this time with 120 female students out of the 720 students in total.¹³ In 2022, women made up a total of 9% of the Brazilian armed forces. While there is no conscription for women as there is for men, only about 5-10% of the men inducted end up serving.¹⁴ Women are not currently allowed to serve in frontline combat.¹⁵

While Brazil does not have as wide a problem with sexual harassment in the armed forces as other countries, it still happens. 56 criminal lawsuits were filed between 2018 and July 2023.¹⁶ Brazil has not specifically addressed the problem within the armed forces but it has increased focus on sexual harassment at work in general. This was also seen when Brazil took initiative to have the topic discussed at the Organisation of South American States (OSA) in 2023, resulting in a resolution being voted through.¹⁷

Brazil has been seeking to position themselves as a peace broker in the world order by trying to not take sides, though it is still mostly Western leaning. This includes allying with the United States as well as parts of Europe, most notably France. Being a major non-NATO ally has not excluded other military agreements, though less substantial, with countries such as China and Russia.¹⁸

¹² <https://www.marforsouth.marines.mil/News-Photos/News-Article-Display/Article/3435615/brazilian-marine-corps-observes-gender-integration-at-mcrd-parris-island/>

¹³ <https://www.securitywomen.org/post/brazilian-armed-forces-take-historic-steps-toward-the-inclusion-of-women-in-their-operational-sectors>

¹⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/>

¹⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/01/25/map-which-countries-allow-women-in-front-line-combat-roles/>

¹⁶ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2023/07/armed-forces-face-sexual-harassment-allegations-against-soldiers.shtml>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/contact-us/press-area/press-releases/adoption-of-oas-resolution-on-sexual-harassment>

¹⁸ <https://www.gmfus.org/news/new-geopolitics-alliances-rethinking-transatlantic-engagement-global-swing-states/brazil>

People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China (henceforth known as China) has allowed women in their military for a long time. Today, approximately 5% of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) consists of women. This level has been consistent for the past couple of decades.¹⁹ However, until recently only a limited number of positions and opportunities were available for women in the PLA. Furthermore, women can not be conscripted to the PLA and thus all women in the Chinese military are there of their own volition.

The history of women in the Chinese military is long and winded as female generals have played a significant role throughout Chinese History.²⁰ In more recent times, women served in both combat and non-combat roles in the Red Army (1928-1937). After the formation of the People's Liberation Army and the People's Republic of China, women were removed from combat-roles, and in the following force reductions women were a large part of those laid off. This is despite the communist belief that all should be equal. Since the mid 1990's, combat roles and further opportunities for women in the PLA have gradually opened up.²¹ Today, China is a large contributor to the UN peacekeeping forces, which means they also have women stationed in conflict zones.²²

With all of this said, China is by no means perfect when it comes to women in their military. Only a small percentage of the military personnel are women. Furthermore, parts of Chinese society are still locked in worldviews where women cannot be part of the military. This is especially true in rural areas of China, where a large discrepancy between male and female rights can be quite common.²³

The Chinese government and the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, is keenly aware of the fact that they have yet to reach full equality, even though equality between genders might be mandated by law. There is still quite a long way from having equality by law to having de facto equality.^{24, 25}

China will look towards a diplomatic solution which all parties can accept. In the modern world, China is a major power and will thus likely be the one looked towards from many sides in terms of what they can agree to and what they cannot. This does however not mean China can steamroll other countries, as they still have to be diplomatic and take the opinion of smaller countries into account, when deciding on a resolution.

¹⁹ <https://jamestown.org/program/holding-half-sky-part-1-evolution-womens-roles-pla/>

²⁰ <https://www.europeanguanxi.com/post/female-soldiers-throughout-chinese-history>

²¹ <https://jamestown.org/program/holding-half-sky-part-1-evolution-womens-roles-pla/>

²²

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/China%20English.pdf>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <https://english.news.cn/20231030/8795336d90c149268d77fb7996931c36/c.html>

Republic of Cuba

The Republic of Cuba (henceforth known as Cuba), has a mandatory military conscription. The National Defense Act of 1975 establishes that all Cuban males are required to perform military service. This compulsory course runs from 17-28 years of age and lasts for two years. Women may also volunteer for military service but are not subject to compulsory conscription²⁶. The system is designed to ensure that the military remains robust and capable of defending the nation.

Cuba has a progressive approach to the involvement of women in the military, which is deeply rooted in the country's revolutionary history. Since the Revolutionary War, women have actively participated as soldiers and officers in Cuba's military efforts. The establishment of all-female combat units, such as the Mariana Grajales Platoon²⁷ and the Women's Antiaircraft Artillery Defense Regiments, highlights the substantial contributions made by women in the Cuban military. Presently, women are integrated across all branches of the Cuban military, including the Border Guard Battalion at the Guantanamo U.S. naval base, where they hold various ranks ranging from soldiers to high-ranking officers such as captains, majors, and colonels²⁸. Furthermore, women have contributed to international missions in countries like Angola and Ethiopia, underscoring Cuba's dedication to gender equality within its armed forces. The Cuban military actively promotes the advancement of women through military education, with women serving as both instructors and cadets in military schools at the university level. This inclusivity is part of a broader initiative to advocate for women's rights and equality across all facets of Cuban society.^{29 30}

When considering military alliances, established alliances currently involve North Korea, Russia, and China. However, in the pursuit of promoting gender equality and mitigating the vulnerability and discrimination faced by women in the military, Cuba may seek to form an alliance with a more progressive nation such as Norway. This potential alliance would be based on a mutual commitment to advancing gender equality within the military.

²⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/>

²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariana_Grajales_Women%27s_Platoon

²⁸ <https://themilitant.com/2020/07/25/women-in-cuba-have-always-been-in-front-line-of-struggles/>

²⁹

https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=international_immersion_program_papers

³⁰ <https://un-dco.org/stories/gender-equality-daily-commitment-cuba>

Arab Republic of Egypt

In the Arab Republic of Egypt (henceforth known as Egypt), women's participation in the military is a continued debate, especially over the last 15 years. As early as in 2011, the Armed Forces Committee of the National Consensus Conference recommended that military service should include both young men and women. This recommendation was based on the idea that drafting all young people would instil them with discipline and help raise national productivity levels.³¹ For years, women have been campaigning for military service to be an option for Egyptian women, but it has often been met with ridicule and sarcasm. However, derogatory statements from the public are just that since there has never been a trial on how incorporating women in Egyptian military services would work.³² Women have technically been allowed to serve in the military for years, but they have been limited to administrative and medical posts.³³ In 2023, UN Peacekeeping shared the story of an all-women police unit from Egypt working as peacekeepers in Mali helping to detect IEDs and landmines.³⁴

According to the Al-Azhar Council of Senior Scholars, there is no need for women in the military under Sharia. The council explains that Islam has created an alternative for women. That alternative is good cohabitation with their husbands, Hajj, and Umrah. According to the scholars, it would be a disrespect to women for them to be required to fight in the army, especially alongside men. Additionally, they see pregnancy as a 'divine conscription' for a woman. Their opinion is also that a woman's work should be at home and managing her family, which is a 'more severe conscription' than that of a man. The council's opinion is that women should only be allowed to join the armed forces in a few instances, with the most common being for administrative, medical work, or other services away from combat. However, according to Sharia, women are allowed to join the army in the event of an occupation of the homeland.³⁵

While Egypt and the UAE for many years have had a fruitful partnership, it has in later years become strained. One of the reasons for that is them picking different sides in the armed conflict in Sudan, and because of the regional conflict regarding the use of the water from the Nile (Egypt sees Ethiopia's dam as a danger to their water supply, and UAE is set on remaining neutral).³⁶ Egypt is an ally of the US but simultaneously enjoys having connections to Russia.³⁷

³¹ <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/1/15209/Egypt/Young-Egyptian-women-recommended-to-perform-milita.aspx>

³² <https://egyptianstreets.com/2017/08/01/women-in-egypts-army-a-demand-aiming-for-equality-usually-met-with-sexism/>

³³ <https://english.alarabiya.net/perspective/features/2014/12/13/Egyptian-group-challenges-norm-calls-for-female-military-service>

³⁴ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/all-women-police-unit-egypt-breaks-new-ground-mine-action-central-mali-action-peacekeeping>

³⁵ <https://www.egyptindependent.com/al-azhar-says-sharia-does-not-support-recruiting-females-into-military-service/>

³⁶ <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C47v02/>

³⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/18/egypt-agreed-to-supply-arms-to-ukraine-after-us-talks-report>

French Republic

Women were first introduced to the military of the French Republic (henceforth referred to as France) around the 1800s as cantinières. They sold food to the soldiers outside of what was given as rations, and the women had to be married to a man in the regiment in which they were serving. However, the women were not part of the army, they were merely working for the regiments and making their own earnings by travelling with the respective regiments.³⁸ In line with the deep-rooted gender roles in France, women were slowly but surely outphased from the military as soon as the country was no longer at war. When women occasionally were allowed in the military, it was only as medical and service personnel, but after the two world wars, young and healthy men were scarce and France was essentially forced to let women enlist. In 1985, the French government decreed that women were to be allowed in all branches of the armed forces.³⁹ However, women do still not have the same rights as men in the French military, since they are not allowed in the mobile police force⁴⁰ nor in the foreign legion.⁴¹

In 2021, women made up more than 40% of the French army medical corps⁴² but only 5,6% of French military contingents.⁴³ This difference can partly be attributed to societal gender norms.

After evaluating reasons for deaths among women in the military in 2008, it was found that ill-fitting equipment was partially to blame. Therefore, combat protective gear and combat-specific vehicles were re-designed or re-fitted to women's proportions such that they can be more effective in combat.⁴⁴ Furthermore, by working on better integration of women in the French military, female soldiers have had a chance to 'prove themselves'. For example in Afghanistan, where women were an important asset for the ground forces, since they seemed more trustworthy and were able to gain important information by being in contact with civilians.⁴⁵ Maternity and child care policies have been established to make it easier for women to enter and stay in the military.⁴⁶

Discrimination is still a fundamental problem in the French military. Sexual assault incidents get swept under the rug by punishing the serving women and letting the perpetrator stay on their post.⁴⁷ Additionally, young men, who are part of the future of the French military, are becoming more sexist.⁴⁸ In response to heightened sexism in France, the High Council for Equality between Women and Men has proposed a 10-point plan of action in 2023,⁴⁹ but there is still a long way to go before it has been implemented.

³⁸ http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/organization/c_cantinieres.html

³⁹ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45305256>

⁴⁰ <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/gender-and-europe/when-war-disrupts-gender/feminization-european-armies>

⁴¹ <http://foreignlegion.info/joining/>

⁴² <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/the-51/20210709-taking-up-arms-campaigning-for-equality-in-the-military>

⁴³ <https://onu.delegfrance.org/women-in-peacekeeping>

⁴⁴ <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2665&context=etd>, pp. 127-128

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 129

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 130-131

⁴⁷ https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/05/19/metoo-in-the-french-military-female-soldiers-speak-out_6671900_7.html#

⁴⁸ <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20240126-growing-masculinist-culture-in-france-slows-down-fight-against-sexism>

⁴⁹ <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20230123-france-still-very-sexist-watchdog-says-as-women-report-widespread-violence>

Federal Republic of Germany

To better understand the prominence and power of gender norms in today's Federal Republic of Germany (henceforth referred to as Germany), one must look back in history. Up to and during WW2, Nazi propaganda featured women as purely nurturing and caretakers on the home front, since the individuals capable of furthering the Aryan race should under no circumstances be needlessly endangered. Right up to the ending of the war, women's role was to keep the societal machine going so the country's men, young and old, could go to war. Towards the end of the war, Germany was running low on able men and up to 500'000 women auxiliaries were recruited. However, when the war ended they were immediately dispatched.⁵⁰ After that, considering women as part of the military had to wait until the 1960s. Various women's movements criticised the patriarchal German societal structure, and began fighting for gender equality on a larger scale. Naturally, some of the women sought equal access to formerly male-dominated professions, including the positions of soldier. As a result, the Bundeswehr (German military) was pressured by the debate and following political tension to begin allowing women in the German military.⁵¹

According to German law of 1955, women may under no circumstances render service involving the use of arms. This meant that women were only allowed in the German military as medical or musical personnel.⁵² However, after women began getting vocal about obtaining equal rights, the aforementioned part of the law was in 2000 brought before the European Court of Justice.⁵³ The case was ruled in favour of women, as the German state did not adhere to the EU *Council Directive 76/207/EEC (09/02/1976) on equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions*.⁵⁴ In 2001, German law was changed to state that under no circumstances may women be required to render service involving the use of arms, ensuring that women now had unrestricted access to join all branches of the military as volunteers.⁵⁵

Being more than 24'000 individuals strong, women are now an integrated part of Germany's military force. But that does not mean that they do not face discrimination or other issues. Thus, incompatibility with family life and sexual harrasment play major roles in the low recruitment of women to the Bundeswehr. In fact, Germany's female recruitment average of 12,6% is lower than NATO's which is at 13%. Germany's Bundeswehr commissioner in parliament, Eva Högl, recognises the importance of women in the military and emphasises that "*studies show that mixed (gender) teams are always the best, and the strongest*."⁵⁶ Recently, the German government raised their gender equality goal to 20%. Creating and promoting good role models for young girls is underway, and female soldiers continue to be vocal about equal rights and demand better conditions in their barracks.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/women-in-the-third-reich>

⁵¹ [https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1016/S1572-8323\(05\)02019-9/full/html](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1016/S1572-8323(05)02019-9/full/html)

⁵² <https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/identity-of-the-bundeswehr/equal-opportunities/women-bundeswehr>

⁵³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A61998CJ0285>

⁵⁴ The Council Directive can be found here: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/701c4ff4-6cb7-4899-b44b-b1eb65fe2953/language-en>

⁵⁵ <https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/identity-of-the-bundeswehr/equal-opportunities/women-bundeswehr>

⁵⁶ <https://www.dw.com/en/women-still-rare-in-germanys-military/a-68801436>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Republic of Hungary

Historically, the Republic of Hungary (henceforth referred to as Hungary) has officially had women in their military as far back as the 1800s, where they were most often medical personnel but could also be seen in administrative posts. Even though women were employed by the army, they were not soldiers as they were hired according to their civil training and earlier occupation.⁵⁸ This was an easy way for the men to keep the masculine position of soldier to themselves, since that required military training which Hungarian women could not receive back then.

Giving the women credit for their hard work has been an issue for just as long as women have had ties to the military. When retelling history, many prefer characters that fit inside societal roles, and women in professions perceived as masculine were not properly recognised when talking about, for example, Ilona Zrínyi and her defence of Palanok Castle in the 1600s.⁵⁹ The same goes for wives of soldiers and officers, as well as freedom fighters, doctors, and teachers.⁶⁰ It was easier for women to stay under the radar if they did not fit into contemporary gender roles, otherwise they could risk being socially prosecuted for not being ‘proper women’.

As always, gender roles are persevering, and dismantling them is even tougher. Nevertheless, Hungary continues to work hard on that front.⁶¹ However, it is worth noting that Hungary has no targeted laws on gender equality (as of 2022).⁶²

Gender equality in Hungary, measured by the European Institute for Gender Equality’s (EIGE) Gender Equality Index, was one of the lowest in Europe in 2023.⁶³ This picture is however not reflected, when focusing on the military. In 1999, 25% of Hungarian officers and ensign force was composed of women.⁶⁴ In 2018, a woman, Katalin Langenbrick, was appointed as commander of a Hungarian peacekeeping mission for the first time. Even though this feat contributed to clear the way for future young women, she stated that it did not feel like a “*big deal*” and that it did not feel like her gender had been in the way.⁶⁵

The Hungarian government is vocal about their position that homeland defence is a “*whole-of-nation cause*.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, in 2021, Hungary’s government reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the UN Security Council resolution 1325 of October 2000.^{67, 68}

⁵⁸ https://www.vojnodelo.mod.gov.rs/pdf_clanci/vojnodelo356/vd-356-2010-62-2-10-Spinose.pdf, pp.160-161

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 160

⁶⁰ <https://dailynewshungary.com/5-outstanding-hungarian-women-forefront-history/>

⁶¹ Overview of Hungary’s initiatives and progress on gender equality, put together by UN Women: <https://data.unwomen.org/country/hungary>

⁶² <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/hungary>

⁶³ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/HU>

⁶⁴ <https://www.proquest.com/docview/222786055?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>

⁶⁵ <https://dailynewshungary.com/first-hungarian-woman-to-lead-a-military-peacekeeping-mission/>

⁶⁶ <https://defence.hu/news/national-military-strategy-of-hungary.html>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n00/720/18/pdf/n0072018.pdf?token=HwQLXkF7jZJi22mXWm&fe=true>

Republic of India

The Republic of India, henceforth referred to as India, has a long history of incorporating women into military roles, beginning with the Military Nursing Service in 1888. Despite their integration into various other branches of the military, women are still prohibited from participating in combat roles due to concerns about their increased vulnerability if captured.⁶⁹

Although women are not permitted to participate in combat roles, a significant effort to promote inclusivity was undertaken in 2022 when the Indian Minister of Defense approved a proposal to extend maternity, childcare, and child adoption leave for female soldiers, sailors, and air warriors in the armed forces, aligning these benefits with those provided to their officer counterparts.⁷⁰

A new governmental program, launched in September 2022, has enhanced the inclusivity of women in the military. Known as the Agnipath/Agniveer scheme, this military tour of duty program is open to both male and female aspirants aged 17.5 to 21 years. This scheme is particularly notable for its inclusivity, as it offers female participants permanent fighter positions, marking a significant shift from the previous exclusion of women from combat roles in the Indian armed forces. In an official interview, the Chief of Naval Staff reported that over 1,000 women had been integrated into the Indian Navy as of December 2023. These women undergo the same training curriculum, professional courses, and retention criteria as their male counterparts.⁷¹

Opponents of female inclusivity in combat roles often present several arguments of a similar nature. They contend that the patriarchal nature of Indian society may not be ready to accept women in active combat roles. Additionally, there is a genuine concern that male soldiers and officers, particularly those from rural backgrounds, might resist orders from female officers due to societal norms. Furthermore, there is a prevalent perception that men are inherently better suited for combat roles due to their physical strength and aggression.⁷²

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<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/defence-women-in-warfare-former-lt-dr-madhuri-kanitkars-vision-for-indian-women-3404730/>

⁷⁰

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/yearender-2023-10-women-who-created-history-in-indian-army-air-force-and-navy-this-year-11702816771456.html>

⁷¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1945707>

⁷² <https://testbook.com/articles/women-in-the-indian-armed-forces#>

Japan

Japan's constitution frowns upon war and strives for peace, thus they technically do not have an army either. This clause in the constitution was prompted by the Allied forces' determination to disarm, demilitarise and democratise Japan after World War II, in order to secure international peace. However, nearly 80 years have passed and Japan has secured its place in a Western aligned worldview and therefore does not pose the same threat as earlier in history. The JSDF "Japan Self Defense Force", which was in its invention a paramilitary or para-police force has been developed into an actual armed force, and Japan's former Prime Minister Suzuki publicly described it as a military force in 1980. Nonetheless, their peace-oriented constitution makes it impossible to create forced conscription in Japan, as it would be deemed unconstitutional, for all genders.⁷³

Socially when women joined the army they would not have the same possibility of elevating their status like in the US or other western countries. Whereas, many in Japan had the viewpoint early on that women were used to make the SDF look less like an active military. This was done as a way of creating a more soft and demilitarised image of the SDF, to promote its acceptance in Japanese society. However, in the late 60's the SDF needed more personnel in managing roles, and there were not enough qualified men to fill out the positions. Therefore, they permitted female applicants. Later more pressure was laid upon Japan, by the international community, to open the military as a whole for women. But it was first in 1992 that the National Defense Academy began admitting women, and made it possible for them to be senior officers. Moreover, it was because of resolution 1325 (see page 5 in Study Guide) that Japanese women began to participate in peacekeeping missions for the UN. As of the end of March 2022, there were almost 20,000 women in the SDF or about 8% of the forces' total strength. This is still well below the NATO average (12% as of 2019), and the Defense Ministry is hoping to boost the ratio to 12% by 2030.⁷⁴

Currently, the SDF wants to expand their military force and meet the same quota of 2% of BNP in line with NATO standards.⁷⁵ But they are struggling to recruit women. Meanwhile, many cases of sexual assault have been showing up in the media over the last few years, and the structure of the military has been linked to why women may choose not to join. From inside the SDF, women have been criticising that only the scandals get attention, and the day-to-day harassment and hostile environment gets brushed to the side.⁷⁶ Compared to the US, as another country from the Western bloc, Japan has fewer ways of tackling problems of sexual assault inside the military system, where the victims are insured privacy and support if they report in the US. On the other hand, Japan has better rights for women's reproductive rights, like ensuring 8 weeks of leave and up to three years with reduced pay, compared to the US' only 6 weeks of reduced pay.⁷⁷

⁷³ https://wri-irg.org/en/programmes/world_survey/country_report/en/Japan

⁷⁴ <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d00838/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/japan/#military-and-security>

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<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/japan-s-military-looks-for-more-women-after-harassment-claims/7613136.html>

⁷⁷

<https://www.usar.army.mil/News/News-Display/Article/674716/japanese-american-female-service-members-discuss-challenges-opportunities-of-se/>

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth known as North Korea), has the fourth largest military in the world, with both men and women required to serve.⁷⁸ Men often serve for 10 years and women up till 7 years. It is estimated that, at any given time, as many as 20% of North Korean males between the ages of 16-54 are in the military. It is also estimated that 20% of the North Korean military is composed of women.⁷⁹ Women also have the opportunity to serve on the frontlines.⁸⁰

While women make up a large percentage of the military, compared to other countries, it does not mean they have the same opportunities as men. This is most clearly seen in the North Korean Navy, as women are not allowed onto any naval vessel at all. The differences in treatment also include what kind of uniform they can wear. Because women can only be part of the anti-aircraft gun and artillery units, they can only wear the army uniform and not the distinct 'sailor suit' that the North Korean navy is known for. This, along with other things, has led to women in the navy feeling discriminated against and deprived of professional opportunities. All of this came to light during an investigation starting in 2017. The outcome of the investigation seems to have brought no solutions and women keep being told that they need to be loyal to their duties, resulting in the investigation seeming pointless.⁸¹

Horror stories of the treatment of women in the North Korean military are prevalent on the internet. Interviews with North Korean defectors tell a story of malnutrition resulting in absent periods for months or years, lack of sanitary pads, unmedicated abortions, and sexual assault.⁸² While defectors can be the most direct view into the reality of the North Korean army, it is still important to remember that different experiences result in different stories and that women who are content in the North Korean military would not flee and tell their tale.⁸³

When it comes to countries that North Korea is likely to agree with China and Russia are the answers that first come to mind. While they do not have an outright partnership or alliance, they do still benefit from each other on the international scene.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ <https://www.businessinsider.com/rare-pictures-of-north-korea-military-2016-4#north-korea-and-south-korea-were-split-after-the-korean-war-which-began-in-1950-when-75000-soldiers-from-the-north-crossed-the-border-and-invaded-the-south-1>

⁷⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3435700/kim-jong-un-ready-to-send-army-of-500000-women-soldiers-to-the-frontline-if-war-with-the-us-erupts/>

⁸¹ <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-still-forbids-women-from-setting-foot-naval-vessels/>

⁸² <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/north-korean-soldier-reveals-horrific-25751688>

⁸³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-41778470>

⁸⁴ <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/the-china-russia-north-korea-partnership-triple-threat-cant-be-ignored>

Kingdom of Norway

The Kingdom of Norway (henceforth known as Norway) has been a frontrunner regarding women in military service. Norway opened voluntary military service to women in 1976. In 1988, women were allowed in all combat roles. In 2015, gender-neutral compulsory military service was implemented, making Norway the first in both NATO and the EU to do so. The decision to equally draft both men and women has garnered Norway significant international attention. Norway has two main arguments for implementing a universal draft: Firstly, men and women should have equal rights and opportunities in society in general. Secondly, from a military perspective, the armed forces need to recruit the most capable candidates, regardless of gender. Operational demands and high levels of specialisation and technological sophistication necessitate the widest possible recruitment. To best implement universal compulsory military service, Norway has focused on five main areas; Communications, Recruitment, Infrastructure, Personal gear, and Leadership and organisational culture as part of working to create a more equal workplace.⁸⁵

In 2020, 33% of those who completed compulsory military service were women. However, only a small percentage continued with a military career. One main reason for this is believed to be sexism. The Norwegian military has recently received massive criticism in this area, including issues of bullying and sexual harassment as well as systemic problems, such as highly sexual memory aids. Experts believe this is one of the primary reasons that, in 2021, only 18.9% of those employed in the military were women.⁸⁶

Norway has worked closely with UN Women for many years, both through financial donations and resources. Two of the larger projects are ‘Syrian Women in the Lead for Peace and Reconciliation’ and ‘Fulfilment of Women’s Rights through a Sustainable Peacebuilding Process in the Colombian Pacific Sub-Region’.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/9/304861.pdf>

⁸⁶ <https://www.securitywomen.org/post/a-look-at-norways-approach-to-gender-neutral-conscription>

⁸⁷ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Partnerships/Donor%20Countries/Partners-for-change-Norway-en.pdf>

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation (henceforth referred to as Russia) has long allowed women to participate in its military. Initially, serving as volunteers, women were officially permitted to enlist under contract in November 1992 by presidential decree. Currently, women who wish to enlist in the Russian Armed Forces must pass a modified physical examination and undergo pregnancy testing before admission. While foreign men are permitted to join the Russian military, incentivized by it being a pathway to Russian citizenship, foreign women are not granted this opportunity. Once enlisted, women serve in units alongside men rather than in gender-segregated units. Separate barracks and restrooms are provided for women, and the costs are frequently cited as a reason for limiting the proportion of women in service.⁸⁸

Women are employed across various branches of the Russian military, including the Army, Aerospace Forces, Navy (except on specific ships), and Rocket Forces. Nevertheless, not all positions are accessible to women. Despite the growing number of countries permitting women to undertake combat roles, Russian women are barred from frontline combat positions, consequently limiting their service and opportunities on aircrafts, submarines, or tanks. Additionally, although the comprehensive roster of restricted roles is classified, it is known that women are typically prohibited from serving as mechanics and undertaking sentry duties.⁸⁹

Outside of the military, an order from Vladimir Putin currently bars women from over 450 professions spanning various industries, citing concerns that excessively strenuous activities could negatively affect their capacity to bear children. This directive provides a poignant illustration of how women's contributions are valued within Russia.⁹⁰

In October 2023, a mercenary group under the auspices of Russia's Defense Ministry posted an advertisement on Russian social media platforms recruiting women for combat roles in Ukraine. This action comes in the wake of reports in July 2023 indicating that the Defense Ministry was actively recruiting women to fulfil support roles, such as medical personnel and kitchen staff. Furthermore, in March 2023, inmates from Russian women's prisons were being recruited for various positions, including sniper training, paramedic instruction, and drone operation, for deployment in the Ukrainian operation.^{91 92}

⁸⁸ <https://lenta.ru/articles/2014/07/08/womenarmy/>

⁸⁹

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/08/16/russia-opens-350-banned-professions-to-women-stripping-soviet-era-restrictions-a66903>

⁹⁰ <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/11/08/will-russia-send-women-into-combat-in-ukraine-a82990>

⁹¹ <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-boosts-efforts-to-recruit-female-fighters/a-67289702>

⁹² <https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/women-russian-military>

Republic of South Africa

The Republic of South Africa, henceforth known as South Africa, has not had conscription since the abolishment of apartheid.⁹³ Their voluntary military service consists of a minimum of 2 years service, for both men and women.⁹⁴ Women are currently allowed to inhabit all roles within the military, though prejudices in regards to their physical strength and endurance might call their capabilities for certain roles into question. However, women are still being integrated more throughout the military, especially due to the more people-centric approach when it comes to civilians. This has increased the demand for women in peacekeeping operations, based on the claim that women are better at interacting with local civilians, and reduce gender-based violence, while also being an inspiration for local women and girls.⁹⁵ In 2022 women composed 28% of the armed service, while the intake of young women had increased to 40%.⁹⁶

Genderbased violence is a problem within South Africa, and it is no different in the military. With both stories of sexual abuse and exploitation, causing headlines both nationally and internationally.⁹⁷ It is, however, not all negative when it comes to women in the military. A win within recent years, was how it became possible for muslim women to wear head coverings while on duty in 2020.⁹⁸

When it comes to military alliances South Africa sees itself as nonaligned. Though the reality might reflect more unto a multialignment stance of a country that knows its importance as a global actor. In 2022, South Africa's domestic defence industry exported to more than 70 countries. Egypt being one of its primary buyers. Russia was also among the many buyers. South Africa does participate in interstate collaborations with both Russia and China, as well as participating in joint drills with them along with the US, France, Germany, as well as Brazil and India. In general South Africa advocates for the BRICS along with other countries in the global south when it comes to defusing the power of the West.⁹⁹

⁹³ https://wri-irg.org/de/programmes/world_survey/country_report/en/South%20Africa

⁹⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/south-africa/#military-and-security>

⁹⁵

<https://mg.co.za/article/2016-08-08-military-women-need-to-trouble-gender-relations-and-roles-for-peaces-sake/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/modise-wants-to-see-more-women-in-the-sandf/>

⁹⁷ <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/modise-wants-to-see-more-women-in-the-sandf/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/29/south-africas-army-lifts-hijab-ban-for-muslims>

⁹⁹ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vBUVMnQy6uK2KR-g5s6Kik12GMXSwh7vx2FFvGjnviY/edit>

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea (henceforth known as South Korea), is renowned for its proficient military capabilities. The South Korean military, also known as The Republic of Korea Armed Forces, is a highly efficient organisation consisting of the Army, Navy (including the Marine Corps), and Air Force. It is well-equipped and maintains constant preparedness due to the ongoing conflict with North Korea. The military benefits from advanced technology, substantial defence expenditures, and a close partnership with the United States, including joint training exercises and a robust U.S. military presence in the country.

The South Korean military incorporates a mandatory conscription system as a fundamental feature. This policy mandates that all able-bodied male citizens aged between 18 and 28 render military service, typically ranging from 18 to 21 months based on their designated branch of service¹⁰⁰. This conscription framework serves to ensure a consistent inflow of personnel, thereby bolstering the military's manpower and state of preparedness. Widely regarded as a rite of passage and civic obligation, this system has nevertheless been the subject of criticism and calls for reform, particularly in relation to its impact on individuals' personal and professional lives.

In the present day, women have the opportunity to serve in the Korean military, although they are not subject to conscription as their male counterparts are. This distinction may stem from societal resistance to female conscription. According to an opinion poll conducted by Hankyoreh¹⁰¹ 54.9% of respondents expressed opposition to female conscription. Nonetheless, there is evidence indicating differing viewpoints between younger and older generations. In 2022, the Chosun Ilbo¹⁰² reported that 42% of young female respondents expressed support for the conscription of both genders.¹⁰³ The compulsory enlistment of men has led to the establishment of post-military employment benefits that predominantly favour men, placing women at a disadvantage as they commence their careers. This disparity in wages between genders is one of the most significant in the developed world, posing a challenge to the country's long-term economic outlook.^{104 105}

In terms of shared perspectives, South Korea is likely to align with countries known for their progressive stances, such as the USA and the UK.

Further reading:

Note from the secretariat: These sources have been recommended to be read along with your Position Paper, as the subject has been deemed to be especially complex for South Korea. Thus, we strongly recommend you read these sources and do your own research to fully grasp South Korea's perspective on this issue.

- <https://igg-geo.org/?p=15416&lang=en>
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/south-korea-exempts-women-from-the-draft-is-th-at-fair/2017/09/17/e333662e-9896-11e7-af6a-6555caeb8dc_story.html

¹⁰⁰

<https://www.grossmanyong.com/blog/south-korean-military-conscription/#:~:text=Every%20South%20Korean%20male%20is,service%2C%20it%20often%20made%20headlines>.

¹⁰¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hankyoreh

¹⁰² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chosun_Ilbo

¹⁰³ <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/south-korean-conscription-and-the-challenges-of-a-declining-population/>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.securitywomen.org/post/women-in-military-becomes-gender-battleground-in-south-korea>

¹⁰⁵

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/15/world/asia/south-korea-military-sexual-assault-suicide.html#:~:text=More%20than%20400%20cases%20of,%2Dsook%2C%20a%20female%20lawmaker>

Republic of Uganda

In the Republic of Uganda (henceforth known as Uganda) there is an increasing focus and political willingness to increase the rights of women in both the military and police forces. This is mainly due to the need for more women in both the military and the police forces, as women play a key role in conflict resolutions, especially with other women being involved in the conflicts. In 2014, the police force consisted of 15% women, which is only half of the government policy of at least 30% women in all government sectors. Furthermore, only 8% of the staff in Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) are women.^{106, 107}

Unfortunately, the recent history of women in armies of Uganda is not as positive as one might have hoped. This is due to the *Lord's Resistance Army* (LRA)¹⁰⁸ waging a war against the government and president of Uganda. This war has become less prevalent over the past 20 years, with the LRA being largely expelled from Uganda. However, between 1985 and 2005, tens of thousands of girls were abducted and forcibly conscripted into the LRA as child soldiers. This still carries large implications for the former conscripted girls today, as they have been stigmatised and ostracised from Ugandan society.¹⁰⁹

On a more positive note, the fight for equality and more women in Uganda's military is slowly paying off, with the first female general in all of East Africa being appointed in January 2017.¹¹⁰ While strides have been made in terms of improving women's rights in the Ugandan military, there is still a long way to go until all problems have been solved. These problems could be lack of uniforms, lack of salaries, and sexual harassment, with some women reporting being refused promotions for up to 27 years due to refusing of sexual advancements.¹¹¹

Thus, Uganda is in a position where they will have to improve the rights of women in their military to live up to UN standards. This is not likely to be possible through laws alone, and, thus, it will need dedicated programs. Furthermore, Uganda has a non-alignment policy where they try to keep neutral and work together with whichever country can help further their national goals.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.pulse.ug/lifestyle/women-in-army-service/9sw1der>

¹⁰⁷

<https://www.peacewomen.org/content/uganda-ugandan-women-military-police-officers-demand-gender-equality>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lords-Resistance-Army>

¹⁰⁹ <https://lausanne.org/global-analysis/restoring-dignity-ugandan-girl-soldiers>

¹¹⁰ <https://adf-magazine.com/2017/06/uganda-makes-history-with-female-general/>

¹¹¹ <https://peacewomen.org/content/uganda-ugandan-women-military-police-officers-demand-gender-equality>

¹¹² <https://guangzhou.mofa.go.ug/Uganda/uganda%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy>

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (henceforth known as UAE) initiated conscription in 2014 for all men aged 18-30 with a length of 11-36 months depending on one's level of education. Women have the option to volunteer, with a service obligation of 11 months regardless of prior education.¹¹³

Many women have joined the armed forces in the UAE with the goal of being 'champions of peace'. Khawla Bint Al Azur Military School is a key part of this because it is a key step for many on their way to becoming UN peacekeepers. UAE became the first country to train UN Women peacekeepers in September 2018. By November 2022, 357 female cadets from different countries had been trained so far in the UAE, with the third 'class' spanning 15 countries.¹¹⁴ Khawla Bint Al Azur Military School specialises in the training of women for military action. It is a training program lasting three months and is a partnership between UAE and UN Women in the field of military and peacekeeping operations. It is part of the UAE's efforts to promote women, peace, and security. These efforts also include a focus on women's role post-conflict, both in social, political, and economic aspects.¹¹⁵

UAE have in general been working on eliminating gender-based discrimination across the board. This has brought them into the World's top 25 regarding gender balance and decision making positions.¹¹⁶ Women are currently allowed in every military position alongside their male counterparts except for those involving front-line combat.¹¹⁷

Over the last ten years, UAE has worked on strengthening its military ties with African states and other countries in the region. This has been done through multiple different measures, one of them being the training of female UN peacekeepers.¹¹⁸ Besides regional countries, UAE also has a bilateral defence partnership with the US that comes from shared interests in addressing challenges in the region.¹¹⁹ UAE has historically had a close partnership with Egypt, but this has become strained over the later years, especially due to them being on different sides in regards to the armed conflict in Sudan.¹²⁰

¹¹³ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2022/11/21/inside-the-uaes-all-women-peacekeeping-programme/>

¹¹⁵ https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/UAE_en.pdf

¹¹⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-commend-united>

¹¹⁷ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/AE/UPR_UAE_ANNEX3_E.pdf

¹¹⁸ <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/the-uaes-rising-military-role-in-africa-defending-interests-advancing-influence-172825>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3760788/us-and-uae-conduct-joint-military-dialogue/>

¹²⁰ <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C47v02/>

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (henceforth known as the UK) women's involvement in the military has, historically, been limited and often restricted to supportive roles. These roles, although crucial, were primarily non-combatant and focused on administrative, clerical, and nursing duties. Post-World War II, the integration of women into the UK military continued to expand. In 1949, multiple branches were re-established as a permanent part of the armed forces, reflecting the essential contributions women made during the war. The progression towards equality saw significant milestones in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Notably, in 1992, women were allowed to serve in combat roles in the Royal Navy, and by 2016, all combat roles across the armed forces were opened to women.¹²¹

Despite these advancements, the representation of women in the UK military remained low for several decades. By 2021, women made up 11% of the UK Regular Forces and 15% of the Reserves. The Royal Air Force (RAF) had the highest proportion of women, with 15% of its regular personnel being female. However, women were significantly underrepresented in senior roles. As of April 2021, only 5.6% of senior officers were women, indicating persistent challenges in achieving gender parity at the highest levels of military leadership.

The UK government and the Ministry of Defence have recognized these challenges and initiated efforts to increase female recruitment and retention. In response to the Defence Committee's inquiry regarding women in the Armed Forces a new target was set for women to make up 30% of personnel recruited by 2030. This ambitious goal reflects a commitment to addressing the barriers to women's participation, such as the dominating male culture and issues of retention throughout the recruitment process.^{122, 123}

As of 2024, the status of women in the UK military continues to improve and all roles are now fully accessible to women. The British Army promotes equal pay, opportunities, and expectations for all genders, striving to create an inclusive environment where women can thrive personally and professionally.¹²⁴

¹²¹ <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/timeline-women-army>

¹²² <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/representation-of-women-in-the-armed-forces/>

¹²³ <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/fit-fight-women-army-today>

¹²⁴ <https://jobs.army.mod.uk/regular-army/inclusion-values/women-in-the-army/>

United States of America

The United States of America (henceforth known as the US) has a long history with women in the military, dating back to the Revolutionary War. Until then, the roles held by women primarily focused on medical work, cleaning, and keeping up morale. A few dressed up as men and fought alongside the soldiers. The Second World War was the first time women were allowed to openly serve in the military, primarily in non-combatant roles. However, they still often worked close to the battlefield.

During World War II, different organisations were formed. The Army formed the active duty Women's Army Corps (WACS). The Navy formed the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). The Coast Guard formed the Women's Reserve (SPARS). The Marines enlisted women in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. In total, almost 350,000 women served in uniform, most often still behind a desk, freeing up men for combat roles. After the war, they had a hard time obtaining their status as veterans. The hard work these women did paved the way for future generations of women in the military.

In 1972, women were allowed in units that also included men. In 2015, the ban on women in ground combat roles was lifted. Since then, more and more women have entered higher ranks of the military.¹²⁵

In 2021, women made up 17.3% of active-duty military personnel in the US. This means that the US military continues to be a male-dominated field. This is evident in the many reports of sexual harassment and comments, with many men not being comfortable having women in their units. In 2023, USASOC (U.S. Army Special Operations Command) conducted a widespread study to identify the issues. The study revealed massive problems with sexism, isolation, poor-fitting and inadequate equipment, and lack of childcare and healthcare, particularly involving pregnancy. After the study was completed, they made 42 recommendations for moving forward.¹²⁶ Many women have expressed discomfort with reporting sexual harassment because they don't want to come off as difficult. At the same time, many men have expressed uncertainty after sexual harassment training, as they now don't know what they can even say to women without risking their careers.¹²⁷ The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).¹²⁸ Also conducted a comprehensive report in 2023, outlining many recommendations to tackle these issues.¹²⁹

The US has a lot of partnerships and countries that it supports. Many of the US's like minded alliances can be found with NATO-members.

¹²⁵ <https://www.uso.org/stories/3005-over-200-years-of-service-the-history-of-women-in-the-us-military>

¹²⁶ <https://www.soc.mil/wia/women-in-arsof-report-2023.pdf>

¹²⁷

<https://apnews.com/article/army-special-operations-gender-bias-female-sexism-1c904cba739b8ba3720827bd9e77f5f4>

¹²⁸ <https://dacowits.defense.gov/Home/>

¹²⁹

<https://dacowits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/Reports/2023/DACOWITS%202023%20Annual%20Report%20Web%20Version%20rev.pdf>

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, henceforth known as Vietnam, have been vocal supporters internationally of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda within the ASEAN set forth by UN Women. Vietnam does not currently have the policy framework to address the WPS agenda as a whole, but have made pledges to the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, as well as hosted the Triangular Partnership Project.

Vietnam's work regarding the WPS Agenda has been focused on their military and the support for gender equality within. The Ministry of Defence has over the last 10 years issued multiple directives as well as action plans and an action program, all with the purpose of achieving the goals in regards gender equality and the advancement of women within the army. Women representatives in advisory councils as well as teams specifically for overseeing the legal rights and interests of women. Though currently cultural norms are still a hindrance to the role of women in Vietnam.¹³⁰

When it comes to military service then Vietnam does conscript both men and women, but in reality only drafts men.¹³¹ With a military service of 24-36 months depending on which branch you chose.¹³² Women are currently not allowed to do frontline combat.¹³³ In 2023 the rate of Vietnamese female officers taking part in UN Peacekeeping was at 15.5% compared to the UN target for 2028 of 15%. The Vietnamese servicewomen perform in many positions including military observer, nurse, operational staff officer, doctor and training staff officer.¹³⁴

For Vietnam both Russia and the US are important for Vietnam's foreign policy and defence plans. With Russia being critical for both diplomatic and military support, while the US has strong economic and defence ties. Both of which are important when dealing with China regarding disputed seas. In general Vietnam avoids putting all its eggs in one basket. This comes from their "Four No's" strategy, no military alliances, no siding with one country over another, no foreign bases on Vietnamese territory or using Vietnam as leverage, and no force or threats in international relations.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ <https://wps.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/id-ASEAN-WPS-Study-01082021.pdf> pp. 69-70

¹³¹

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/04/23/fewer-than-a-third-of-countries-currently-have-a-military-draft-most-exclude-women/>

¹³² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/>

¹³³

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/01/25/map-which-countries-allow-women-in-front-line-combat-roles/>

¹³⁴

<https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-servicewomen-play-active-role-in-un-peacekeeping-operations-post272357.vnp>

¹³⁵ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/vietnam-s-four-no-s-defence-policy-are-being-tested>