



NATO Research Task Group (RTG) 307: Integrating Gender and Cultural Perspective in Senior Officer Professional Military Education

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The NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) Human Factors and Medicine (HFM) Panel has approved a Research Task Group (RTG) to examine the pedagogy and curricula necessary for national level professional military education (PME) that allows senior generalist staff officers to understand and apply gender and cultural perspectives across the full scope of potential duties. The kick off meeting of the RTG was held on December 13-14, 2018 at NATO STO's Collaboration Support Office (CSO) in Paris.

The meeting was convened by the Canadian lead of the RTG and brought together academics from Finland, Norway, Poland, and the U.S., specifically the Canadian Forces College, Finnish Defense Forces International Centre, Norwegian Defence University College, Polish Defense Academy, and National Defense University¹.

The five participants gave country-specific presentations providing an overview of the state of gender/culture in PME and relevant national level policies that guide that education.

The workshop uncovered several challenges going forward, including: lack of common understanding

of terminology; focus on targeted courses versus integration into broader learning; education across all ranks; and differing emphasis on strategic vs operational levels.

Each country represented is at a different point with regard to the internal and external focus on gender in military operations. This complicates the RTG's approach. For some of the RTG participant countries, the focus is on the internal treatment of gender within the armed forces. For others, the focus is entirely external, on the manner in which operations are executed. Others have elements of both. Further, some are focused narrowly on gender perspectives in the context of military planning while others place gender in the broader context of human security and protection of civilians (both Finland and Norway).

Finland's activities cover both the internal and external: women's participation and promotion within the Finnish armed forces, and gender considerations in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Poland is focused on the internal societal stereotypes that get in the way of gender integration and education in the Polish military. Canada's approach to gender includes both the internal emphasis on demographic and identity diversity, and gender equality; as well as on international operations which range from NATO collective defence, deterrence and interdiction missions, to UN PKO, to capacity building of security forces in Iraq and other countries. The

¹ Eleven nations are represented on the RTG but not all were able to attend this session. In addition to the 5 participating in the workshop, they are Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Netherlands, New Zealand & UK.

United States has focused on tactics with the use of Female Engagement Teams in operations. Norway is externally focused on both UN peacekeeping missions and NATO missions in Afghanistan, the Balkans and interdiction missions in the Mediterranean.

NATO has been addressing gender through doctrine, including the assignment of a Gender Advisor (GENAD) to military operations², anticipating they would operate similar to Legal Advisors. Individual nations have made assumptions about GENADs, including that they enhance interoperability and effectiveness of NATO-led missions. (For a discussion of the shortcomings of NATO GENADs, please see Bastick and Duncanson.³) The RTG participants raised the question of how military effectiveness is defined, and noted that some⁴ have suggested abandoning the military effectiveness argument for justifying the use of GENADs since the research to define and measure military effectiveness is lacking.

Workshop participants decided to address this gap in research and to include research on operational effectiveness and how it is defined as part of the RTGs work plan. The research would examine what if any effect diversity has on military operational effectiveness as compared to the

² NATO Bi-SC 40-1 Directive calls for applying gender perspective across all NATO-led operations, missions, training and exercises for the three core tasks of collective defence, cooperative security, and crisis management. From there, the GENAD provides advice on its implementation, and the integration of gender perspective including, but not limited to, operations/missions, crisis/conflict analysis, concepts, doctrine, procedures and education and training. <https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/structure/genderadvisor/nu0761.pdf>

³ Megan Bastick & Claire Duncanson (2018) Agents of Change? Gender Advisors in NATO Militaries, *International Peacekeeping*, 25:4, 554-577, DOI: 10.1080/13533312.2018.1492876

⁴ The 2018 Annual meeting of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspective included discussions on the need to move beyond efforts to link directly to military effectiveness to focusing on how gender contributes to military capabilities. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_155527.htm

plethora of research that shows the impact of team diversity on the bottom line of private corporations.

The fundamental question for the group is “what is the narrative about why we’re trying to deliver this type of learning?” Articulating the rationale and implications will provide a convincing narrative about its importance to PME, including the relevance of gender and culture perspective across the full spectrum of military operations, particularly conventional warfare.

The participants began to map out the research plan and propose three inter-related lines of work.

- 1) Examination of the rationale and evidence for how enhancing gender perspective will actually contribute to military effectiveness (the ‘why’ and ‘what’ that we seek to deliver);
- 2) Consideration of pedagogy and curricula (the conceptual ‘how’ that we seek to deliver); and
- 3) Identification of resource materials and best practices (the practical ‘how’ of what we seek to deliver).

The following questions will serve to guide the RTGs ongoing work:

- What is the best approach for incorporating gender and culture (in the context of whatever learning nations are doing already)?
- What PME learning outcomes do we want to produce?
- How do we develop gender and cultural sensibilities? It’s not only a matter of what topics are covered but how they are covered: e.g., embedded in exercises; writing competitions.
- Why is education necessary to accomplish the mission? (The training universe is large in this area but education is not.)

RTG participants noted the importance of highlighting and differentiating focus on education vs training; and PME vs civilian education. While NATO and various nations have focused on short training courses for those selected to fill GENAD roles, this RTG project is focused on education of generalist military personnel as part of career PME. Many civilian universities have aspects of gender and culture programs that may inform the group’s work. However, educating experienced professionals to integrate gender perspectives into

military practice requires different learning which makes the work of this RTG unique.

Expected deliverables from the RTG in the future include annual and interim progress reports based on STO requirements; a final technical report; and an on-line repository of reference curricula and best practices. The group also anticipates opportunities for policy briefs and academic publications.

The RTG team agreed that in as much as possible, future meetings will be organized around related meetings such as the June 2019 NATO Committee on Gender Perspective in Brussels and the November 2019 the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society (IUS) conference in Washington DC. These “meetings of opportunity” will maximize travel resources.

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