



# Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Mainstreaming, Peacekeeping and Turkey's Defence Policies

**Gizem Bilgin Aytaç**

In general, women are often portrayed as 'compromising', 'calm' and 'patient', or 'natural-born negotiators'. As feminist literature agrees, these portrayals enable gender hierarchies and promote the notion of masculine and feminine as well as shaping gendered power relations in all levels of society. The feminist International Relations literature has a consensus that women are not natural-born peacebuilders. However, it is underlined that while women are experiencing painful consequences of conflicts, they are excluded from peace processes. To ensure women's inclusion in peace and security processes and to increase women's representation in conflict and post-conflict regions, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) signed Resolution 1325 (RES/1325) in 2000.

While gender mainstreaming in global politics can be dated back to the 1995 Beijing Declaration of the United Nations, UNSCR 1325 introduces the gender perspective to all war and peace processes. The Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda of UNSCR 1325 sets out principles and regulations, particularly for the members and partners of security and defence organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Parallel to UN Security Council resolutions on WPS, NATO aims to address gender inequality and to integrate WPS throughout the Alliance's three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.<sup>1</sup> NATO allies have adopted the WPS agenda and support gender mainstreaming through three principles:

*a. Integration: Gender equality must be considered as an integral part of NATO policies, programme, and projects guided by effective gender mainstreaming practices. To achieve*

*gender equality, it must be acknowledged that each policy, programme, and project affects women and men.*

*b. Inclusiveness: Representation of women across NATO and in national forces is necessary to enhance operational effectiveness and success. NATO will seek to increase the participation of women in all tasks throughout the International Military Staff and International Staff at all levels, including in meetings, training opportunities and public engagements.*

*c. Integrity: Systemic inequalities are addressed to ensure fair and equal treatment of women and men Alliance-wide. Accountability on all efforts to increase awareness and implementation of the WPS agenda shall be made a priority in accordance with international frameworks. <sup>ii</sup>*

Turkey is a major ally of the UN, NATO and the OSCE. Being a party to these international organisations and alliances requires the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) to develop policies sensitive to the WPS agenda. As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, it is crucial to look at increasing women's participation in Turkish peacekeeping and defence policies.

The report's methodology is two-fold: i) it incorporates the personal observations and experiences of the former Gender Advisor of Turkey in the Afghanistan Mission; and ii) it reviews NATO Annual Reports and UN Peacekeeping Operations data.

Based on the following issues, this report analyses the WPS agenda with a specific view to the peacekeeping and defence policies of Turkey, and highlights the role of women in Turkish military structures and peacebuilding processes by looking at: the numerical representation of women in combat positions and decision-making mechanisms, gender equality in cross-border operations, and limitations in women's representation in military and peacekeeping operations. This policy report provides recommendations to empower women in military organisations and peacekeeping missions.

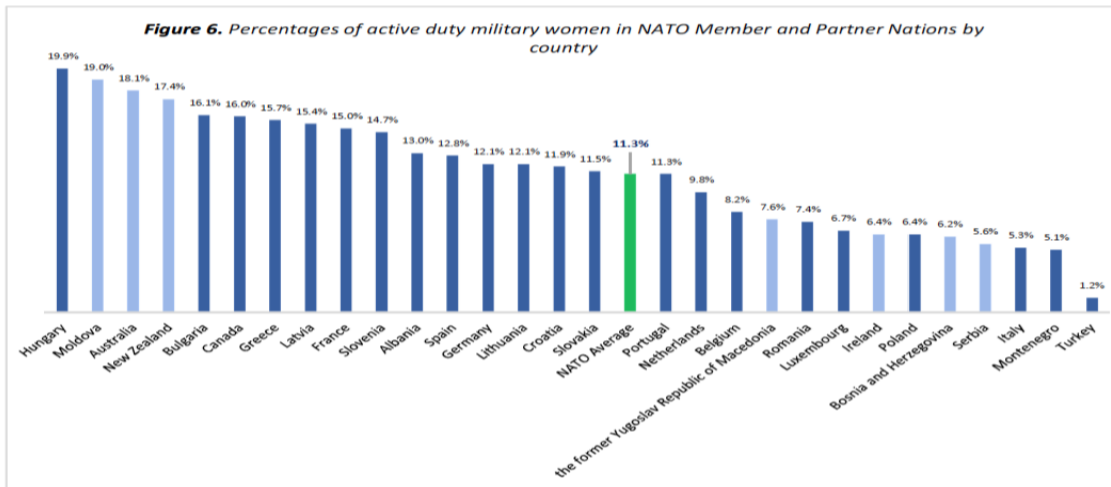
## **Representation of Women in Turkish Armed Forces: Combat Positions and Decision Making**

Gender mainstreaming and equal representation of men and women need to be ensured in the peace processes for implementing the WPS agenda. The NATO alliance provides a framework for policy in terms of WPS agenda for Turkey. NATO has a positive impact on expanding gender mainstreaming principles, advising that a minimum of 4 percent of armed forces of allies should be women. NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives is publishing annual National Reports that provide data on women's representation in member and partner states. According to NATO's 2018 data, active military women represent 11.3 percent of NATO Member Nations armed forces. As presented in Figure 1, Turkey has unfortunately the lowest percentage of women (1.2 percent) on active duty.<sup>iii</sup>

In the TAF there are very few women senior officials and no women generals. This pattern of low representation is also observed throughout different ranks. Because of the recruitment numbers, the ratio of women personnel in the total number as officers, civil servants and non-commissioned officers is 1 percent, which is well below the 4 percent target set by NATO. Even though the TAF is implementing this 4 percent quota in personnel recruitment, the number of women applying for positions in the TAF is still not sufficient.<sup>iv</sup>

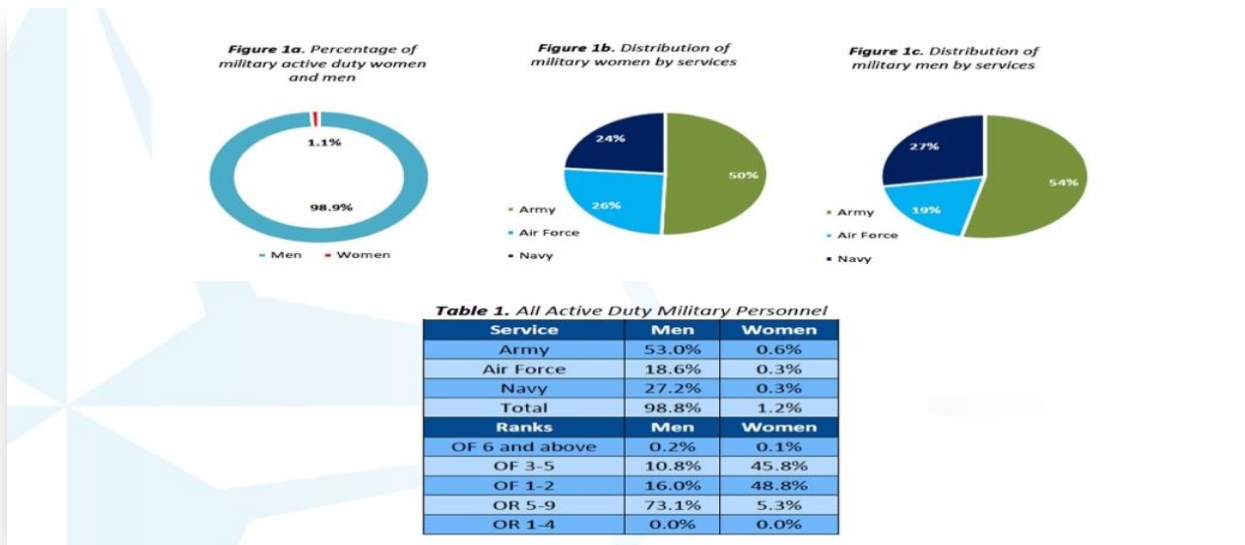
Figure 2 shows the distribution of male and female active duty military personnel in the TAF according to rank and service. Women officers in senior ranks represent under 0.1 percent. The majority of women officers are colonels and lieutenants; they represent 0.6 percent of individuals in these ranks in the army and 0.6 percent in the navy and air forces combined. The highest representation of women is non-commissioned officers (NCOs), at 5.3 percent.

Figure 1:



Percentages of active duty military women in NATO Member and Partner Nations by country Source: NATO, "Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives" p. 20

Figure 2:



Distribution of Women and Men by Rank

Other Ranks (OR)	Officers (OF)
OR 5-9: Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs)	OF 6 and higher: Generals
OR 1-4: Privates and Corporals	OF 5: Colonels
	OF 4: Lieutenant Colonels
	OF 3: Majors
	OF 1-2: Junior Officers

Representation of Women in Military Turkey; Source: NATO, "Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives," pp. 53 and 281.

In Turkey, the military institution with the highest number of women personnel is the Gendarmerie. In February 2020, 228 women NCOs in the Gendarmerie completed their training for the commando unit. One of the reasons for the increased number of female personnel is that the Gendarmerie General Command is attached to the Ministry of the Interior which is, inter alia, responsible for implementing Law 6284 to Protect Family and Prevent Violence against Women. The Gendarmerie is among the law enforcement agencies that implement this law; in practical terms, the Gendarmerie is responsible for reporting cases of violence against women and children directly to the Violence Prevention Centres (ŞÖNİM). Notably, the rise in the numeric representation of women in the Gendarmerie is an important development; however, it has to be noted that this approach reinforces the understanding that violence against women is a women's issue, rather than a public health or a women's rights violation issue. This perception sees women in law enforcement as only authorised for women's issues. But domestic violence is a multidimensional issue that affects women, men, people with disabilities, children and LGBTQIA. Combating violence against women is a struggle that requires a gender equality perspective in decision-making mechanisms.

### **Gender Equality in Cross-Border Operations and Peacekeeping Operations**

There is equal opportunity in personnel selection in Turkey's NATO and UN operations: *'Enlistment requirements and physical fitness tests are the same for women and men. However, the fitness parameters differ as women are graded differently regarding running time, push-up score, etc. The differences in enlistment requirements are related to physical characteristics (e.g., height, weight) between women and men, as women face fewer limitations than men.'*<sup>v</sup> In other words, male or female personnel who meet the staff qualifications and language skills are selected regardless of their gender. In the TAF the number of male staff is significantly higher. Armoured and submarine units do not have women personnel.<sup>vi</sup>

As a member of the UN, NATO and OSCE, Turkey has been participating in peacekeeping missions. Thus, it contributes to these organisations' corporate training concerning gender mainstreaming supported by UNSCR 1325, as follows:

- In 2017 and 2019, the Peace Operations Training Institute conducted two essential personnel trainings for TAF personnel.
- In 2020, under NATO accreditation, the Swedish Armed Forces Training Centre conducted gender advisor and gender focal point courses for TAF personnel.
- The Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism released "The Report of the Women in Terrorism and Counterterrorism Workshop" held in May 2019, and conducted an online conference in 2020.

As the former Gender Advisor informed us about the Afghanistan mission and Turkey's role, TAF personnel carry out activities and projects for the local population, including women and children in Afghanistan. According to her, meetings and coordination with local Afghan women were held among ministries and female personnel in the security sector. All civil-military cooperation activities were implemented step by step, taking women's needs into consideration. With female personnel's awareness in communication, women officers and NCOs work in regional development and civilian-military cooperation teams, and national support unions. These units participate in peacekeeping operations.<sup>vii</sup>

From 1 January 2015 on, Turkey has provided services within the NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan Training Advise and Assist Command Kabul to the Afghan National Army and National Police. These services include planning, reporting, research and development. Turkey carries out consultancy activities on the personnel management system, logistics and operational issues in this context. The NATO gender advisor unit conducted interviews with female personnel in the national police, Afghan Civil Order Police, armed forces, military schools and institutions. Considering Afghanistan's religious and cultural structure, the mission has identified that female translators were absent, which is a severe deficiency in terms of women's representation among the staff. Visits to relevant institutions and interviews held with female personnel within the counselling services were shared as positive steps. As a result of these visits and interviews, gender-related issues were identified, solutions were discussed and consequently, the female staff's working conditions were improved. Furthermore, Afghanistan mission accepted the importance of gender advisors.<sup>viii</sup>

In the 2018 National Report, NATO remarks: *'In the TAF, there are no strategies or policies to address sexual harassment and sexual assault, nor programs or training related to their prevention. There are no formal procedures in place for women and men to report incidents. In 2018, there have been no incidents related to sexual harassment or abuse reported in the TAF'*.<sup>ix</sup> The low number of female staff working abroad depends on the lack of female staff applications and/or qualified female staff applications, language score, etc. In the classical patriarchal social structure, women do not want leave their families and children to go abroad. Since there is no difference in wages between genders, low wages are not a causal factor. There have been no cases of sexual violence reported within the TAF as of the time of this writing. Disciplinary offenses are the same for men and women within the legal framework of Law No. 926. However, there are no specially authorised units for sexual harassment cases.

### **Limitations in Women's Representation in Military Structures and Peacekeeping Operations**

UN peacekeeping mission urges participants/allies to include 15 percent female personnel. Turkey remains far below this proportion. According to the 31 May 2018 data, Turkey had assigned only one woman peacekeeper. Likewise, according to October 2020 data, TAF did not have any assigned women peacekeepers in 2020.<sup>x</sup>

As stated in the NATO 2018 National Report, Turkey generally does not introduce any positive policies to increase women's recruitment in the Armed Forces. Instead, there are restrictions on women serving in the TAF, along with restrictions that apply only to national or cross-border operations. Significant active-duty positions are not open to women in the TAF: *'Restrictions that apply to operations are Armoured, Artillery and Infantry (front-line combat positions), Submarines, Divers and Special Forces. There are no plans to eliminate such restrictions, and there is no military entity that oversees integrating gender perspectives in the military'*.<sup>xi</sup>

TAF Personnel Law outlines the legal framework for recruitment and retention policies but there is no specific policy to encourage women's recruitment and retention policies, and there is no specific network and support group in the TAF promoting women.

## **Recommendations for Increasing Women's Participation in Armed Forces**

There are some possible mechanisms and incentives to increase the number of women in the overall structure of the Turkish Armed Forces.

### **1. Increase financial incentives for women to work in the TAF and Foreign Missions**

- Equal pay is a key principle for ensuring gender equality among military staff. Turkey is implementing one of the best wage policies among NATO countries. Yet, TAF should make any additional financial mechanism at its disposal to promote higher wage standards and living conditions. As a best practice, the Republic of Bulgaria, which has one of the highest women recruitment, manages to attract more women by providing main and supplemental wages to military and civilian personnel of the Ministry of Defense and promoting foreign duties with travel bonuses.<sup>xii</sup>
- More attractive conditions should be created for women in foreign missions, particularly in combat positions. Policies such as special measures such as quota, educational and financial incentives, and salary benefits can increase women's representation in foreign missions. It is possible to prevent the conditions that cause women to hesitate from applying for domestic or foreign duties.

### **2. Eliminate informal barriers**

- Change in marital status or having children can cause women to undertake care work and hinder them from participating in the workplace. This situation causes the female personnel to hesitate to apply for combat duties and senior positions within the TAF and even peacekeeping duties. Eliminating the informal barriers can be achieved by integrating financial and social security facilities into the TAF personnel recruitment.

### **3. Cooperation amongst different actors of the security sector**

- Cooperation of all state and non-state actors might contribute to this end. Increasing collaboration between grassroots actors with state institutions can also influence the promotion of the National Action Plan.



- The Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs can agree on a protocol whereby women ambassadors can be appointed as civilian advisors to the Turkish Armed Forces in foreign missions.
- Design and implementation of peace missions are crucial in TAF for gender-mainstreaming defense policies.
- Integration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in advocating the WPS agenda would be an important initial step: NGOs working on gender issues need to be informed about the WPS agenda. For instance, in peacekeeping operations, UN shadow monitoring reports from women's NGOs will be vital to support conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Iraq, for example, has a NAP since the 2014 attacks of the Islamic State. The Iraq 1325 Initiative has written the NAP in collaboration with government ministries.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### **4. Increase gender awareness and action against gender based violence**

Women mostly work as medical staff in cross-border operations. In particular, women can be directed to combat classes outside of this area. Therefore, changes may be made in the TAF Personnel Law. Since 2015, female Gendarmerie NCOs have been actively involved in combating domestic violence. Especially in foreign missions, this personnel can work in relief and recovery missions. As a good practice, the Hungarian Army Forces (HAF) is the army that most represents women in NATO. Women constitute 14 percent of the HAF, representation which increased by 4 percent in 2018 alone. This is mainly because the HAF has a special committee called 'Committee for Military Women.' Although they have fewer women represented in higher ranks and no female quota, they have well-organized and attractive maternal and paternal leave mechanisms.<sup>xiv</sup>

- Increasing knowledge on sexual violence before, during and after conflict for TAF personnel and foreign missions
- Legal framework and special units against sexual violence need to be built also in the TAF, as well as in the UN and NATO missions. The best practices in NATO coping with the sexual violence are Germany, France, and Belgium implementing their NAP strategies. Also, Serbia is one of the major countries that had revised their NAP according to the monitoring mechanisms and Gender Advisor units in their military structure. Similar to other pillars of gender equality policies, coping with sexual violence needs special gender advisor units in

military organizations.<sup>xv</sup> The realization of this is only possible by introducing a National Action Plan (NAP) created under the framework of the Istanbul Convention and Law 6284.<sup>xvi</sup>

## Conclusion

This study focuses on women's representation in peacekeeping in military organisations, within the women's peace and security agenda under UNSCR 1325. Recommendations are made to increase participation according to the WPS agenda's four pillars. These recommendations were evaluated by obtaining expert opinions and performing a literature review. Turkish military institutions are implementing the WPS agenda because of the normative framework that NATO and the UN suggest. Therefore, the TAF trains its military personnel within the context of WPS frameworks of international organisations. However, the TAF still needs legal and ethical regulations to increase female personnel employment applications. Women personnel in the TAF pass through the same disciplinary procedures as men, including in sexual harassment cases. This situation could well discourage women, depending on rank hierarchies in the military. Special units need to be built for sexual violence accusations for implementing an equal disciplinary law for the military. Furthermore, if Turkey wants to be an active actor in international peace and conflict resolution processes, there is an urgent need for an NAP and promoting women's participation in the military institutions, especially in senior positions. Gender equality in defence policies and security is vital and needs to be implemented in the TAF and other decision mechanisms.

Recommendations also include collaboration with NGOs for implementing the WPS agenda in Turkey. Only a few NGOs focus on peace and women's relations in Turkey, and there is no specific organisation focusing on the WPS agenda. Initiatives like Women in Foreign Policy are vital for reporting the conditions and promoting feminist foreign policy that will also support actors in writing an NAP.

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<sup>i</sup> NATO, *NATO/EAPC Women, Peace and Security Policy and Action Plan 2018* (2018), 11.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.* 11

<sup>iii</sup> NATO, *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives*, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/7/pdf/200713-2018-Summary-NR-to-NCGP.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/7/pdf/200713-2018-Summary-NR-to-NCGP.pdf), 15–17.

iv *Ibid.*, 281.

v *Ibid.*, 281.

vi *Ibid.*, 283.

vii G. Somuncu, Former Gender Advisor of Afghanistan NATO mission.

viii *Ibid.*

ix NATO, *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations*, 283.

x UN Peacekeeping, *Operational Effect and Women Peacekeepers: Addressing the Gender Imbalance* (2020), <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>.

xi NATO, *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations*, 282.

xii *Ibid.*, 117

xiii Iraq NAP, *National Action Plan for Implementation of the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security 2014–2018, Final Draft* (2014).

[https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/final\\_draft\\_Iraq- nap\\_1325\\_eng.pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/final_draft_Iraq- nap_1325_eng.pdf), 2

xiv NATO, *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations*, 179

xv *Ibid.*, 85–86.

xvi Turkey ratified the so-called Istanbul Convention, as it was opened for signature in this city, in 2012. This treaty is a unique legal instrument to tackle violence against women. It covers not only domestic violence but other forms of violence against women including psychological and physical abuse, sexual harassment, rape, crimes committed in the name of so-called “honour”, stalking, and forced marriage. The Convention requires states to implement a comprehensive array of practical measures to prevent violence against women, to protect the victims and to prosecute the perpetrators. It also creates a specific independent monitoring mechanism, the GREVIO, in order to ensure the effective implementation of its provisions by the States Parties. Importantly, the Convention sends out a powerful signal to society that domestic violence can never be considered a private or a family matter; it is a human rights violation and should be of concern to society as a whole. The decision to ratify the Convention was adopted unanimously by the Turkish Parliament and the text is supported by all women’s rights defenders in Turkey who have demonstrated across the country to call for its full implementation. However, on 20 March 2021, with a presidential decree announcing the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.



Gizem Bilgin Aytac is an Assistant Professor at Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics, Department of Political Science and International Relations. She graduated from Istanbul University, Faculty of Political Science, Public Administration in 2004. In 2007 she finished her MA in International relations at Marmara University with her thesis “Social and Political Changes in 1970’s Turkey and its Reflections on Turkish Foreign Policy”. She studied at Bologna University, Italy as a visiting scholar in 2012 for seven months with the Turkish government Higher Education Council scholarship. During her thesis, she conducted field research in 2012, Iraq. She took her Ph.D. degree at Istanbul University with her dissertation titled “Third World Security and Humanitarian Intervention” in 2013.

She is a member of the Women in Foreign Policy. She has local and international manuscripts and book sections. She is now focusing on feminist IR literature, Women, Peace and Security agenda, and Human Security. She gives several graduate and undergraduate lectures: Security Theories, International Relations, Current Issues in IR, Global politics and Women and International Security.

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[✉ womeninforpol@gmail.com](mailto:womeninforpol@gmail.com)

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[✉ cats@swp-berlin.org](mailto:cats@swp-berlin.org)