

Canadian Women in International Peace and Security: Leading From the Front

Co-organized by WIIS-Queen's and RMC

March 25th, 2018

Currie Hall, Royal Military College

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Opening Remarks

On Sunday, 25 March 2018, Women in International Security (WIIS) at Queen's University partnered with the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) to co-host the "Canadian Women in International Peace and Security: Leading from the Front" workshop. This event brought together a range of exceptional participants to discuss and promote Canadian female leadership in the fields of security and defence. The ultimate intention of the workshop was to engage in fruitful discussion that could inform the Canadian dialogue on women in the broadly defined fields of peace, security, and defence. In particular, emphasis was placed on discussing the policies and processes of the Canadian government and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) with regards to gender mainstreaming.

The informative opening remarks delivered by the President and Vice President of WIIS-Queen's, Lindsay Coombs and Andrea Vovk respectively, provided an overview of the complex challenges that Canada faces within the current security environment. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the rise of asymmetric conflict and powerful non-state actors, the migration of populations as a result of regional instability, the use of children as soldiers, and sexual violence as a tactic of war. To address these challenges, Coombs and Vovk noted that Canada must ensure that gender perspectives are taken into account, and that all voices are heard. During this overview of the security atmosphere, Coombs and Vovk broadly discussed women's engagement in peace and security efforts since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.

They noted that despite various United Nations (UN) resolutions which urge all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in the pursuit of peace and security, there continues to be a crippling gap in terms of women's representation in peace operations. Recognizing that the pace of change has been slow, Canada has been leading from the front, and has pledged to accelerate the pace of change through the Elsie Initiative, a pilot program to increase the participation of women in peace operations. However, Coombs and Vovk noted that in the pursuit of this goal, we must ensure that women are not essentialized and that the contributions of all peacekeepers, of all genders, are valued.

Consistent with Canada's feminist foreign policy, the Elsie Initiative is predicated on the notion that greater diversity in peace operations improves mission outcomes. Indeed, Canada's feminist foreign policy – including its Feminist International Assistance Policy, a new Defence Policy titled 'Strong, Secure, Engaged', and Canada's second Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security – commits Canada to integrating gender perspectives in the design and implementation of its activities both at home and abroad. For instance, 'Strong, Secure, Engaged', sets out the nation's goal to increase the number of women in the forces by 10% by 2026, meaning one in four

CAF members will be women. Nevertheless, it is not just about raising the proportion of women in the CAF, but also ensuring that women serve in substantive roles. Ultimately, while Canada has its own challenges with regards to the recruitment and retention of women, as well as combatting sexual misconduct within its ranks, the CAF can be considered a global front-runner in military gender integration.

Keynote Speaker

WIIS-Queen's and RMC were honoured to host Brigadier-General (BGen) Jennie Carignan as the keynote speaker for the event. During her presentation, BGen Carignan challenged the audience to think about two central questions; why is it important to talk about the roles of women leaders in the twenty-first century? and why specifically should we focus on discussing women in peace and security? While BGen Carignan's remarks focused upon elements of leadership from a gender perspective, she also shared a number of personal anecdotes that added depth and further insight to her words. For example, BGen Carignan shared with the audience that when she was a child, she decided to leave school in protest of the overarching lack of headship from her teacher. This absence of leadership created an anarchic environment in the classroom, and BGen Carignan refused to return to school until the teacher was replaced. This story was relevant as it ties in to her main points on how strong, compassionate, leaders are necessary to achieve success, as well as the ways in which leadership can be most effective. Leadership, according to BGen Carignan, is a basic human need as it provides security to individuals; however, there are certain methods that result in good leadership. Ultimately, when it comes to leadership and what it means to be a leader, gender differences need to be considered.

First Panel: Gender Perspectives on Emerging Security Challenges

Kicking off the first panel of the event, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Sheila Ouellet spoke about the CAF, Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), and UNSCR 1325. Ms. Ouellet provided a summary of the directive of UNSCR 1325, noting the resolution's objective to increase the representation of women in peace and security. While some progress has been made in this regard, Ms. Ouellet noted how there are still a number of contentious problems that continue to persist, like ensuring that women perform substantive roles in peace and security efforts. Ms. Ouellet also discussed the implementation of Canada's Nation Action Plan (NAP), designed to advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda of UNSCR 1325. Furthermore, she talked about how the CAF is implementing UNSCR 1325 and Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) across the institution, as well as incorporating gender perspectives when planning and executing operation. She noted how the incorporation of gender perspectives across the CAF was aided by a group gender champions. These champions held positions as Gender Advisors and facilitated the implementation of GBA+ at the operational level. To ensure government accountability with regards to the incorporation of GBA+ across government departments and the CAF, several steps were taken including a review of the NAP, oversight from the UN, and increased financial backing to support the deployment of women. Moving forward, the CAF still faces a number of challenges as it integrates GBA+ into its practices, like the need to increase training on gender perspectives and transforming performance measurements.

The second speaker of this panel was Captain (Capt.) Elisa Holland, who acts as the lead Gender Focal Point personnel at the Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC), located in Kingston, Ontario. Capt. Holland discussed her own experiences in the forces, and how over the past eight years she has seen significant changes within the CAF to increase gender awareness. Capt. Holland

noted how there has been an increase in the number of female mentors within the Canadian military, and that seeing successful women leaders within the CAF has had an immeasurable impact on both her own life, as well as those of other serving members. Capt. Holland aptly described how these female role models serve as an inspiration, and challenge many traditionally held perceptions of women. Following from this, Capt. Holland noted how heightened levels of diversity within the CAF has facilitated changes in gender perspectives, and how the implementation of gender-based training has increased positive perceptions of using GBA+ in operations. In conjunction with the increased visibility of female role models and elevated levels of gender diversity within the CAF, there has also been an increase in the deployment of women on overseas missions. It is a widely held belief that teams which consist of both men and women are more effective in the field as they can access more segments of the population. Capt. Holland pointed out that when solely men are present in the field, local populations may be apprehensive of engaging with them, but the inclusion of women can make for a more welcoming environment. In turn, this may enable increased interactions between CAF personnel and locals. Lastly, Capt. Holland highlighted some of the ongoing work that is being conducted at PSTC with regards to pre-deployment training, particularly training for deployment on UN missions. She noted that training at PSTC entails both classroom and scenario-based training to prepare soldiers for deployment. To make scenario training as realistic as possible, Capt. Holland discussed how actors are hired who have backgrounds in the cultures where the soldiers on the training course will be deploying to. The intention of these UN accredited training courses is ultimately to increase awareness in gender, diversity, and other areas.

Second Panel: Sharing Experiences of Gender Mainstreaming in the Canadian Armed Forces

Caroline Leprince initiated the discussion for the second panel, providing an analysis of sexual violence and assault within the CAF. Ms. Leprince's preliminary research, which will be published as a book chapter by McGill-Queen's University Press in the near future, focuses on how to alleviate harmful sexual behaviors in the CAF. The publication of "Our Military's Disgrace" in MacLeans in 2014, as well as the Deschamps report in 2015, both focused on the prominence and causes of sexual violence in the CAF. Ms. Leprince stated that within the CAF there is an underlying sexualized environment that perceives women and individuals of the LGBTQ community negatively. To change this environment, Ms. Leprince suggests that the institutional culture of the CAF needs to change as well. This recommendation is in line with the Deschamps report, which also touches upon how the culture of the CAF needs to be reconstructed. Addressing the negative sexual culture that is deeply engrained within the CAF needs to occur incrementally over a three-year period, due to the changeover that takes place in various divisions. This changeover is a primary obstacle to enacting change within the culture of the CAF. Ms. Leprince also highlighted how the military is a total institution where individuals do almost everything together, which can foster this negative sexual environment as individuals mimic the behaviors of others. If in basic training recruits see their higher-ups using negative language and behaviors, it is more likely that they will proceed to do the same, thus creating a vicious cycle that needs to be addressed in a top-down manner. Further barriers also lie within the chain of command, and the processing of reports of sexual assault. In light of these considerations, Ms. Leprince recommends that the reporting of sexual assaults should be removed from the chain of command, individuals should be reprimanded for the use of offensive language, and the CAF should implement a peer-to-peer mentoring system.

The second panelist was Dr. Stéfanie von Hlatky, who shared insights gathered from her personal research project funded by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Dr. von Hlatky discussed the 2016 NATO-Warsaw Summit, that had strong language directed towards Women, Peace, and Security initiatives. There are varying percentages of women present in armed forces among NATO countries, however, most are considerably low. Accordingly, these low percentages illustrate the need for further action to increase women in peace and security initiatives. Dr. von Hlatky noted that while increasing the representation of women in peace and security efforts is an important goal in and of itself, emphasis should also be placed on applying a gendered lens to strategic planning. In order to achieve gender equality in armed forces worldwide, the integration of gender perspective needs to look beyond the numbers of males versus females deployed. In addition, it was mentioned that Canada is considered to be a global leader when it comes to the awareness of gender issues and the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives. In terms of NATO armed forces, there was a substantial difference between the number of females in an armed force, versus how many were actually being deployed. This discrepancy illustrates how issues of gender mainstreaming have not been tackled, despite the adoption of international statutes which urge nations to do so. Not only do adjustments need to be made with regards to the deployment of women, but also concerning the availability of uniforms and equipment designed to fit women. For example, Dr. von Hlatky mentioned that flight suits are tailored to fit the needs of men, but make it increasingly difficult for women to take bio-breaks. A combination of small changes at operational levels, in conjunction with fundamental changes to armed forces, can lead to a more gender inclusive era. Taken as a whole, gender awareness is of critical importance in making organizations better.

To conclude the workshop, Major Hans Christian Breede explored what it means to be a soldier in a modern Canadian military. Maj Breede discussed the dual nature of a soldier's identity in that, on the one hand, a soldier carries with them their civilian perspectives and lives, and on the other hand, their identities are informed by their personal experiences with military service. Maj Breede also noted a different take on GBA+, saying that it reinforces gender stereotypes. This was in contrast to earlier discussions held during the workshop, which framed GBA+ as having solely positive effects. The notion to separate 'men' and 'women' from what it means to be a soldier – meaning portraying soldiers as having no gender constraints – seems to be an overly simplistic 'solution' to gender mainstreaming. Ultimately, removing one's gender identity from what it means to be a soldier does not constitute a solution of the issues at hand. Having gender diversity among soldiers is a necessity, and gender-specific skill sets are something that cannot be ignored. Often, a sense of hegemonic masculinity is a driving force behind how soldiers identify themselves, which can lead to a warrior complex within soldiers. This, in turn, leaves no room for feminine identity among women who served in the armed forces.

Concluding Remarks:

Numerous heterogeneous initiatives have been undertaken to further the inclusion and incorporation of women in international peace and security. As discussed throughout this workshop, the Canadian government, the UN, NATO, and many other actors are all working towards the establishment of inclusive environments. Although a number of efforts have been implemented to ensure the incorporation of gender perspectives in peace and security initiatives – including GBA+, various UN resolutions, and efforts to improve the training of military personnel – various barriers still remain. As highlighted by Caroline Leprince, the culture of the CAF needs to change in order to support the development of more positive perceptions of women, LGBTQ,

and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, as examined by Maj Breede, the way soldiers identify themselves may end up supporting gender stereotypes, which could have unfavorable repercussions on gender equality. Ultimately, increasing women's representation in international peace and security efforts is of paramount importance to ensuring that all voices are heard, that policies are comprehensive, and so that militaries are as operationally effective as possible.