

Women for Stability and Security: Women's Engagement in Military International Verification Activities

Maria Brandstetter

Confidence- and Security-Building Measures Officers, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre Master of Arts in International Relations, Webster University Vienna

Maria.brandstetter@osce.org

Isabella Neri

Former Intern at OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and at the Delegation of the European Union to the International Organizations in Vienna; Master in International Relations; Master of Advanced International Studies (MAIS), Diplomatic Academy of Vienna/University of Vienna; Master of Advanced International Studies (MAIS), Diplomatic Academy of Vienna/University of Vienna

isabellaneri23@gmail.com

Abstract

The 2011 Vienna Document 2011 on confidence- and security-building measures remains one of the cornerstones of European security. It enhances trust and confidence among participating states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and allows for intrusive verification measures by the OSCE states. Despite the significant success achieved by many OSCE participating States in increasing the number of women in their armed forces, the number of women who participate in military verification (under this Document) remains low. This article contains information regarding international military cooperation related to the verification of military activities in which women's involvement remains low. It also provides suggestions for further research concerning the reasons why so few women participate in the military verification activities and for ways to increase their participation.

Keywords

Vienna Document – confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) – arms control – gender – women – armed forces – UNSC Resolution 1325

Introduction

The OSCE and its participating States have worked to promote women as a driving force in areas related to politico-military aspects of security in the OSCE region. Though discussion concerning the integration of females in national armed forces and security-related sectors is now high on the agenda of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, a gender-sensitive approach to OSCE confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) remains out of reach. A significant amount of the available literature covers OSCE work done in the area of CSBMs—particularly the Vienna Document—and its effect on security in Europe. At the same time, activities intended to verify the involvement of women in the military verification activities have not been examined, and it is traditionally a male-dominated field.

This article aims to inform readers about international military co-operation related to the verification of military activities in which women's involvement remains low and to suggest further research that is needed to identify ways to increase the participation of women.

Women and Armed Forces

Considerable work has been done in previous years to bring a gender perspective into international efforts in the politico-military field and OSCE. The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and various OSCE Ministerial Council decisions underline the importance of involving women in mediation and the peace-making processes, including those related to building military stability, predictability and trust.¹

The OSCE has worked on the basis of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The plan was adopted in 2004 to streamline gender OSCE activities and to raise awareness of the issue among the OSCE participating

1 For example, in Ministerial Council Decision Nr. 7/09, OSCE participating states agreed to, “provide for specific measures to achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies, including security services, such as police services” and to “[c]onsider taking measures to create equal opportunities within the security services, including the armed forces to allow for balanced recruitment, retention and promotion of men and women”.

In Ministerial Council Decision Nr. 14/05, OSCE participating states agreed to, “regularly evaluate their efforts at gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, conflict management and rehabilitation processes to be used for gender-sensitive training purposes, and in implementation of relevant commitments”.

states. But let us be honest. To talk about gender equality is to talk about culture, traditions and prejudices. This is why, when discussing gender equality in the military, we are not seeking revolution but a gradual evolution of the role of women in the changing society of today.

The benefits of this approach have been emphasized in a number of studies. Women's inclusion in armed forces and operations is an issue of women's rights and gender equality. It is also, however, a matter of operational effectiveness and of the ability of military forces to implement their mandates. Experience, recent findings of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, and the United Nations' (UN) Global study on United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 have shown that women's participation in armed forces and operations ensures better contact with local populations; enhances situational awareness, intelligence-gathering and early-warning capabilities; and makes it possible to account better for the needs of a diverse population. These are just some examples of the positive impact of women's participation in military operations. Sixteen years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, and despite existing efforts by the international community, women continue to be severely underrepresented in armed forces, operations and peace- and security-related activities.

In fact, national policies on women in the armed forces have already been established in many OSCE states. OSCE transparency measures in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security² invite states to share information on a voluntary basis about the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 in their armed forces. The indicative list of questions was developed in 2011 and covers issues pertaining to women, peace and security that can be used by states while providing their national reports to the OSCE on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. The questionnaire and the accompanying reference guide consider three main areas: prevention, the participation and protection of women.³

Though more than half of OSCE participating States have provided answers to the questionnaire at least once, many did not follow the suggested format of indicative questions. Therefore, no comparative data can be drawn from the

2 The full text of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security can be found at the OSCE website: <http://www.osce.org/fsc/41355>.

3 The full text of the questionnaire can be found on the OSCE website: <http://www.osce.org/fsc/80988?download=true>. The OSCE has also adopted a reference guide on the questionnaire on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. The reference guide includes three main areas of consideration: protection, the participation and prevention. For more information, see www.osce.org/fsc/80988?download=true.

national reports. At the same time, responses provide sound factual information concerning various aspects of the participation of women in the armed forces and of best practices and policies for attracting and retaining a greater number of women in the armed forces. For example, Lithuania's national legislation provides principles of non-discrimination and gender equality in the national defence system. Iceland has established a new national action plan on UNSC 1325, incorporating the main elements of the follow-up resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS). Slovenia has stated that issues addressed in the WPS resolutions have been integrated into various educational programmes and have also become components of the Slovenian Armed Forces education and training system.⁴

National responses show a positive trend in the strengthening of the role of women in the armed forces in the OSCE area. For example, in the UK, the proportion of female officers in the regular forces increased from 4.8% in 1980 to 12.7% (with 9.4% of other ranks) in 2014.⁵ Females comprise about 10% of the junior ranking staff in the Russian armed forces.⁶ In Slovenia, women comprise 16.1% of all the armed forces.⁷ Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and the United States are some of the OSCE States that have removed barriers to females from all or practically all branches of the armed forces.⁸

Confidence- and Security-Building Measures: What are They?

Underpinning OSCE's cooperative approach to security, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) developed a comprehensive

4 National responses to the OSCE Code of Conduct Questionnaire, and particularly the voluntary submissions related to the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325, can be found at the OSCE website: <http://www.osce.org/fsc/86841>.

5 T. Rutherford, *Defence Personnel Statistics*, UK Parliament, 2014. Retrieved 5 January 2016 from UK Parliament, <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN02183/SN02183.pdf>.

6 Russian Army. (5 January 2016). *Russian Army*. Retrieved from Russian Army: <http://russianarmy.ru/zhenshhiny-v-armii>.

7 Ministry of Defence: Slovenian Armed Forces. (5 January 2016). *Ministry of Defence: Slovenian Armed Forces*. Retrieved from Ministry of Defence: Slovenian Armed Forces: <http://www.slovenskavojska.si/en/about-the-slovenian-armed-forces/>.

8 Mulrine, A. (25 January 2013). *8 Other Nations That Send Women to Combat*. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130125-women-combat-world-australia-israel-canada-norway/>.

set of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). These were first introduced in 1975. The Vienna Document remains one of the most important confidence- and security-building measures in the OSCE area that provides for predictability and increased trust among the OSCE participating States.⁹ Built on the two major pillars of transparency and verification, it regulates the commitment of all OSCE participating States to annually share information on armed forces and major weapons systems, military budgets, defence planning and planned military activities. On the other hand, it establishes a verification regime for inspections and evaluation.

The Vienna Document allows OSCE participating States to carry out inspections to confirm the absence of notifiable military activity and to conduct evaluation visits to verify the annual exchange of military information. The quota system regulates the number of inspections and evaluation visits that each OSCE participating State is obliged to accept. These quotas are also called passive quotas. At the same time, there are no limits on how many active verification activities each participating State can conduct annually. Additionally, approximately twenty bilateral and regional agreements have been adopted under the Vienna Document's Chapter x that encourage further agreements on CSBM to promote transparency and foster the climate of trust. Such additional agreements often include additional opportunities for verification, such as additional inspection and evaluation quotas. For example, under an agreement signed between Finland and Sweden in 1998, the two countries can each conduct one additional inspection and one evaluation visit each calendar year.¹⁰

In accordance with the Vienna Document, an inspection or evaluation team comprises up to four members. They are drawn from up to three OSCE participating States (Vienna Document, Paragraph 91). The majority of such verification missions are conducted with multinational teams.

OSCE participating States have established national verification centres with a mandate to compile military information that is annually subject to exchange among all OSCE participating States. The verification centres are also responsible for hosting and conducting military verification activities, including inspections and evaluation visits under the Vienna Document of 2011. These centres are quite different in format, structure and size. Staffing ranges from two to 160 persons.

9 Full text of the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures can be found here <http://www.osce.org/fsc/86597>.

10 SIPRI Research Report No. 18, *Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in the New Europe*, 2004, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Despite the positive trend in the participation of women in the armed forces, there is still a gap in understanding the correlation of this general data to specific functions of the armed forces. There is also a need to examine how women participate in the military-verification activities regulated by the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures adopted in 2011.

Women and CSBMs

Research into the participation of women in Vienna-document verification activities has been conducted by the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre by using data provided by the participating States for 2011 to 2015. The study—results of which have not been released publicly—found major trends concerning the overall participation of women in verification activities under Vienna Document 2011.

The study found that, on average, women constitute only five to six percent of the overall inspection/evaluation teams. This data applies to all kinds of inspections and evaluations conducted under the Vienna Document's verification regime. Of the 2,743 team members who were scheduled for verification activities under the Vienna Document during the studied period, fewer than 160 were women.

The numbers are even lower regarding regional agreements on CSBMs that allow for additional verification opportunities among countries under the Vienna Document that enter into additional bilateral or multilateral agreements. On average, only three and four percent of the overall notified team members are women (for inspections and evaluations, respectively). Of 1,058 team members scheduled for regional verification measures under the Vienna Document, fewer than forty were female.

Of the 192 women who participated in verification activities during the reporting period, five (or three percent) were team leaders. Given that the total number of verification activities comprised 914 inspections and evaluation visits, only 0.5 percent were led by a woman.

It should be noted that the actual numbers of women taking part in verification activities may be even lower, as the numbers presented include not only inspectors and auxiliary personnel, but also reserve personnel. Reserve personnel would be engaged in an inspection only if the originally planned inspection-team members were unable to participate.

Despite the low overall number of women who participated in Vienna-Documents 2011 verification activities, a positive trend can be identified in the increasing proportion of female inspectors participating in some type

of verification activities. Particularly, data from 2014 and 2015 show a sharp increase in the proportion of female inspectors who participated as part of the evaluation teams. The proportion of female inspectors participating in evaluation visits in the OSCE area in general increased from two percent in 2013 to seven percent in 2014 and to eight percent in 2015. The proportion of female inspectors participating in evaluation visits under regional cooperation agreements increased from three percent in 2013 to five percent in 2015.

Even though participation of females in verification activities remains low, it should be noted that every fifth verification activity, be it an inspection or an evaluation, has included a woman. This number applies to general verification activities conducted under Chapter IX of the Vienna Document. The numbers are slightly lower for the inspection and evaluation visits conducted under regional agreements on CSBMs, which comprise about 14% to 16% of verification activities.

Another positive trend is in the role of females who participate in inspections and evaluation visits. Research shows that the majority of women planned for inspections and evaluation visits had a military rank. Also, most were identified as inspectors rather than as auxiliary personnel (interpreters). However, comparing the percentage of women without military rank with the percentages of female inspectors suggests that some women without military rank were notified for verification activities as inspectors.

Though the majority of women were notified as inspectors in verification activities, the proportion of females serving as auxiliary personnel was still relatively high and constituted in some years up to 67 percent of all females notified for verification activities.

What's Next?

In recent years, the targeted national policies that encourage the participation of women in armed forces have led to more women serving in armed forces in the OSCE area. However, there is still large discrepancy between the overall number of women who participate in armed forces and the number of women who participate in verification activities. The study notes that a growing number of women participated in verification activities during the studied period. However, the average numbers remain low compared with the national statistics concerning the proportion of women in armed forces.

Indeed, in recent years, a number of OSCE participating States have been opening more branches within their armed forces to which women are eligible to apply, including active combat positions. It will, however, take time

for these women to make it to national verification centres that conduct Vienna-Document verification activities, as these centres are looking for experienced, non-commissioned officers of higher ranks, starting with majors. Most of these women are now at the captain rank and will need another five to ten years to make it to those ranks.

Conclusions

Women already play an active role in military verification. However, their numbers remain disproportionately low compared to other sectors of armed forces. In order to move forward on the issue, further research must be conducted to identify the reasons for this disparity. Apart from eligibility issues that may prevent women from applying for jobs in national verification centres, other factors should be considered, including national policies, career opportunities, family planning, childcare and cultural issues.

National policies need to be put in place to promote the participation of women in verification activities. The communities of those involved in verification also need to be involved in the process of elaborating such policies to gain greater acceptance for them and to tailor them to the specifics of the sector. Verifiers are vital with respect to providing information about the current status, and their support is essential to introducing any changes. Therefore, more intense dialogue among policy-makers and practitioners in the area of verification should be initiated concerning national policies that promote women's participation in verification activities, including that conducted by military personnel and civilians. Possible reasons should be discussed for the low number of women who currently participate in verification activities. In particular, both male and female inspectors should be invited to share their experiences concerning gender mainstreaming.

Finally, the OSCE should consider developing common guidance and training tools that could be applied as part of the inspectors' training and could be integrated into training programmes offered by states and intergovernmental institutions. Such training programmes would help ensure the sustainability of the initiatives on gender mainstreaming and promote gender awareness among staff involved in verification.

About the Authors

Maria Brandstetter works as Confidence- and Security-Building Measures Officer at the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre where she specializes in military

transparency measures and arms control aimed at increasing military stability, predictability and trust among OSCE participating States. She has also worked extensively on small arms and light weapons control issues, where she developed proposals on enhanced small arms control measures (i.e. export, deactivation, assistance) and transparency measures as well as implemented technical assistance projects in various OSCE States. Isabella Neri is active in the field of International Relations with a focus on foreign and security policies and gained her first international professional experience with the United Nations, European Union, Wassenaar Arrangement and the OSCE. She graduated from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna in 2015 (Master of Advanced International Studies).