

GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY – SAF EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.18485/isimod_strint.2023.ch12

Keywords:

contemporary conflicts,
gender equality,
scientific paper,
professional development

Abstract: *The subject of our research is the concept of gender equality, whose understanding is important for the development of society and organisational systems in which human rights and gender equality are respected, there is tolerance and discrimination is prohibited. With this paper we would like to emphasize the contribution of scientific research work as a problem-based foundation of professional development and training of employees in the security sector for better understanding, acceptance and implementation of the concept of gender equality. We will present the level of gender equality reached in the Western Balkan region by considering situation in the defence systems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia, on the basis of current analyses, available programmes and research on views about gender equality problems. We have found out that there are similarities and certain specifics of the programme concepts of professional development and training of employees, as well as the results of scientific research papers, and also the identification of problems and possible solutions by employees in the defence systems. The conclusion of this paper is that scientific research work, as the authentic experience of the defence system of the Republic of*

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Serbia and training of employees based on research practices, greatly contribute to raising the awareness of the defence system personnel about the importance of gender perspective, not as an element that has to be added somewhere, but as a more effective way of thinking and defining all important issues and concepts in the defence systems.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century and the new millennium, certain intervention was announced in every field of life, presented as suitable for human and society of the "new age" - a human being with an inalienable right to fully develop all their potential and a society determined to create conditions in which this right can be exercised. Among the issues that could not be avoided when talking about assumptions for a "better tomorrow", there has been the issue of improving human rights, and within it, the issue of gender equality. Thus, on the eve of the 21st century, on October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) issued Resolution 1325 entitled Women, Peace and Security, which emphasizes the importance of greater involvement of women in all activities for the maintenance and the promotion of peace and security. This Resolution requires the UN member states to undertake measures that, mainly, should ensure a greater number of women participate in decision-making at all levels, introduce gender perspective and training in peacebuilding, develop training programmes related to specific rights and needs of women and guarantee a greater degree of protection of women against gender-based violence, especially rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Gender perspective is important for the armed forces because its introduction is an obligation arising from ratified international documents and national norms that correspond to the highest democratic standards. The integration of gender perspective into the defence system implies incorporating experiences, knowledge and interests of men and women and is a means for developing a new modern concept of the defence policy, as well as new processes of their implementation and evaluation that are suitable for security challenges in the 21st century. The defence system reform is successful if it is supported by society, which is possible if women and men have equal opportunities to influence decisions and their implementation in the defence system.

Since women make up a half of the world population, including Serbia, the gender issue is also an issue of development policy, that is, of responsible planning of the future of a country. One of the main human rights is gender equality in terms of the right to work under equal conditions in all professions, including the military one. Considered from this point of view, gender equality in the military is an implicit obligation of every country to follow examples of good practice in this field, i.e. to become a part of the world in which

room for discrimination against people on any basis is systematically restricted – by innovating legal regulations and its consistent implementation in practice.

At the same time, this obligation is directly or indirectly imposed by some other circumstances. First of all, the specificity of the role of the military in new, non-traditional forms of its engagement, such as hybrid and cyber warfare or participation in peacekeeping missions, which has provided not only room, but also an additional need to include women in the military. The change in the warfare character has imposed on the armed forces the need to use some new competencies (knowledge and skills), where those that women successfully master are particularly welcome. In some of these situations, women are practically irreplaceable, which, above all, refers to those situations in which the military personnel can find itself as participants in humanitarian operations in different parts of the world. Namely, it is well-known that the customary law of some nations does not allow the presence of men in places where there is the local female population, which means that without the presence of women it is not possible to establish an appropriate contact and achieve high-quality cooperation with those who are being assisted. Even when there is no such a strict ban on contact with foreigners, there is a number of situations in which female engagement is preferable to male engagement (providing first aid to the female civilian population, medical-hygiene training, etc.). Advocating for more versatile engagement of women in special operations – operations different from war – has undoubtedly coverage in contemporary social-psychological and ethical observations of interpersonal communication and group dynamics. They interpret in a somewhat different way compared to traditional understanding the issues such as the ability to work successfully with other people, the ability to make valid ethical decisions in unforeseen circumstances and in the context of situational factors, the ability to make valid moral judgements that will affect a great number of people, the ability to successfully motivate other people.

Nowadays, according to the democratic model of military organisation, soldiers are not expected to be "blindly obedient" to their superiors when their orders are wrong or obviously morally questionable, thus leaving them initiative and room for an individual moral judgement. According to the democratic model, moral responsibility is distributed differently, in contrast to the classic model, according to which moral responsibility is almost entirely related to senior officers. Younger officers have simply followed orders and, in most cases, have not borne direct moral responsibility for their actions. Therefore, ethics is studied today as a compulsory subject at the military academies in the world. In addition, an increased emphasis on personal capabilities and skills, indirect control in military education, as well as more frequent emphasis on material benefits and group goals has paved the way for the understanding that army officers and leaders should also be military managers. These new circumstances undoubtedly represent an advantage for women, because usual arguments about the difficulty of military service, which is inappropriate for the fair sex, are questioned. Stamina and endurance, which have been traditionally understood as one of the priorities among military capabilities, and which still have, undoubtedly, great importance, are no longer of an eliminatory character,

considering that there is enough military duties for which they are not of crucial importance. Moreover, in accordance with the democratic model and characteristics of contemporary conflicts, the earlier classic emphasis on discipline has been softened by new requirements for knowledge of information technology, critical and analytical thinking skills and communication skills necessary for successful teamwork. *"The widespread use of modern information technology and the phenomenon of information abundance have led to the intensification of competition with regard to information, which has, in turn, led to an increase in the number and type of security challenges in the contemporary environment based on conflicts and influence through information."* (Miljković&Pešić, 2019, p. 1080). The modern security environment and cyberspace have a great impact on human security, starting with the creation of the so-called "Internet addicts" to digital gender-based violence. *"Cyberspace is the virtual world that enables people to communicate impersonally in real time (Facebook, forums, e-mail...). Facebook has become the most dominant form of impersonal communication because it provides people with great opportunities, starting with a real profile, through a 'boosted' one, all the way to a completely changed or even 'borrowed' identity".* (Đorđević et al., 2011, p. 1648).

The analysis of the integration indicators of the concept of gender equality in the Western Balkan countries

The concept of gender equality and its implementation in the defence systems of the Western Balkan countries contributes to the spread of awareness of gender equality, the prohibition of discrimination, the strengthening of human rights and freedoms as a good basis for strengthening human security, which is recognised as a main prerequisite for the development of society in the 21st century.

This paper includes the analysis of the available data on the integration of the concept of gender equality in the defence systems of four Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Serbia) for the period 2019-2021. The main literature for this analysis has been the publication "Integracija rodne perspektive u vojno obrazovanje i obuke sistema odbrane zemalja Zapadnog Balkana". In the chapters of the aforementioned publication, the state of gender equality in the defence systems in each country has been analysed in detail. For the needs of our paper, the analysis is in the function of providing insights into the importance of relating the profession and science in solving specific tasks on the problem of gender equality.

The issue of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination are defined by the Constitution, as the highest legal act of the state, in all four Western Balkan countries. In addition, they are signatories to numerous international conventions, protocols and agreements: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Optional Protocol (1999), United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security (2000), Council of

Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), Beijing Convention and Platform for Action, United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development until 2030 (Agenda 2030).

In the analysed countries, various laws defining gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination have been adopted, which can be said to be the result of signing international documents, and also a consequence of the development of society's awareness of the importance of the concept of gender equality for social development. These are primarily the Gender Equality Law, the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination and the Labour Law. In all four countries, there are also strategies that develop policies and actions to reach gender equality in society in various fields, such as economy, social policy, health and education. The national action plans for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 have been defined.

Normative acts in the defence systems of the Western Balkan countries do not contain discriminatory views or different criteria depending on gender. Non-discrimination is expressed by the statement: "terms used in the document, which have gender meaning, refer both to men and women". There are clearly defined criteria for military education and admission to military profession, which refer to the test of physical, mental and health capabilities in accordance with the requirements of the professional service. The concept of gender equality is present in the curricula during military education within social sciences subjects with a tendency to expand topics and number of subjects. Furthermore, there is the professional development of employees during military training by certified instructors for gender equality issues, with a tendency to increase their number, as well as the number of unified literature for the professional development of employees. The activities of professional development on gender equality contribute to raising employees' awareness of the importance of respecting human rights, creating work environment without discrimination, and also increasing the efficiency of military operations and missions.

A real indicator of respect for the concept of gender equality in all countries is providing opportunities for formal education and employment of women, which has increased their number in the military professional personnel. According to the 2019 research, women made up 6.5% of the total professional personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 6.2% in Montenegro, 9.5% in North Macedonia and 8.7% in Serbia (UNDP/SEESAC, 2021). Upon completion of formal education at the military academies, where countries train their future officers, initial duties are in accordance with the first initial ranks. By promotion to higher ranks, along with gaining professional experience, the conditions for the continuation of female professional development at forms of higher education (Command Staff Course/General Staff Course) are acquired, thereby increasing the number of women in higher ranks and managers of greater military organisational units.

With the increase in the number of women in military organisations, the number of certified instructors, whose task is to train employees on the issue of gender equality, also increases. Working bodies are formed, various thematic and periodic analyses on the issue of gender equality are conducted in accordance with the signed international and national documents that regulate this field. Organic

positions are established or organic duties of gender equality advisers are added at different levels of the organisational structure (Adviser to the Minister of Defence, Adviser to Chief of General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces, etc.). Office for Gender Equality has been established in the Human Resources Sector of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, as an internal unit that performs tasks and coordinates activities related to the implementation of gender equality policy. There is gender budgeting and the use of gender-sensitive language is under consideration (in some countries, for example, Montenegro, the Register of occupations and titles of women has been adopted as a contribution to the use of gender-sensitive language in the sphere of public communication). Personnel of the MoD and AF of all four countries of the Western Balkans took part in a regional survey that resulted in the conduct of two regional studies (2014, 2021) on the position of women in the Armed Forces of the Western Balkan countries. Further cooperation on monitoring the integration of the concept of gender equality was additionally strengthened by signing the joint Declaration in Budva in 2021.

Scientific research on gender equality as a contribution (guidelines) to the professional development of employees in the defence systems

In order to consider the contribution of scientific research for the needs of this paper, we will present a series of projects that follow the development of the concept of gender equality and its integration into the defence system of the Republic of Serbia. The objective of this part of the paper is to indicate the importance of empirical knowledge about the problems of gender equality integration as a topic of future professional development during formal military education of future officers or during military training of employees in the defence system.

The objective of the project *Obim i modaliteti angažovanja žena u savremenim armijama* (2003-2005) was to gain some insight into the practice of female engagement in modern armies, to consider the main factors that determine the current situation and, based on this knowledge and experiences of the Yugoslav Army, to assess real needs (extent and most suitable modalities) of female engagement in the Armed Forces of Serbia and Montenegro. The tasks of the research were to define to what extent women are represented in personnel structure of modern armies, in what capacity they are most often engaged in the military, what types of jobs they primarily perform in the military, what the situation regarding female engagement in relation to contemporary trends in this field is in the Armed Forces of Serbia and Montenegro, whether certain organic positions in the military, which used to be exclusively staffed by men, can adequately be staffed by women.

The most important conclusion of this project was that there is a positive attitude towards greater involvement of women in the military, but that it is not real that all

duties are available to them. At the same time, there is real professional maturity of women in the assessment that they could not replace men in all jobs in the military, and that they do not expect to be completely equal to them. The general conclusion of this research is that it is possible to significantly increase the engagement of women in the military, but not their equal representation in all branches and services. Their number should primarily be increased in all jobs in the military whose main content of work is manning sophisticated technical equipment, provided that work environment does not set demands that are not in accordance with the specifics of female organism, i.e. that working conditions do not endanger some of their vital functions (roles) such as, for example, motherhood. The majority of such duties are in the air-technical, naval-technical, medical and traffic services and in the so-called non-combat branches such as signal, CBRN, electronic reconnaissance and counter-electronic operations and air surveillance, early warning and guidance. In combat branches (infantry, artillery, armoured cavalry units, air defence artillery and missile units, engineers), especially in the commands and headquarters of higher units, there are organic positions that, according to the assessments of respondents of both sexes, could and should be staffed by women with appropriate military competencies. These findings were, of course, significant for the decision to educate girls at the Military Academy and to activate other forms of basic professional military training of women (Šaranović, 2006).

During 2006, taking into account the results of the project *"Obim i modaliteti angažovanja žena u savremenim armijama"*, as well as the ongoing reform of the Serbian Armed Forces, the Strategic Research Institute, together with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, organized the first international conference entitled *"Žene u vojsci"*. One of the key issues was the issue of human resources and the place and role of women in the Serbian Armed Forces. The conference was held after the decision of the Military Academy of the Republic of Serbia on the enrollment of the first generation of women in 2007/08 school year. It was the first step towards opening the possibility for women to acquire necessary military knowledge and expertise, as well as their participation in the reforms and professionalisation of the Serbian Armed Forces. Aware of the complexity of the task, and not neglecting our experiences, we have thought of the valuable experiences of countries with a long tradition – Russia, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Great Britain and France. Representatives of international organisations participated in the conference and presented important relevant international standards and recommendations. Some of them were that the decision is an expression of respect for female human rights and an indicator of the increase in democratic standards in Serbian society as a whole, that the inclusion of women in military education requires special consideration of admission criteria in order to avoid imposed standards based on the traditional evaluation of male-female capabilities and talents, that the inclusion of women will contribute to bringing the Serbian Armed Forces closer to European standards, thus creating a precondition for its contribution to regional and international efforts to maintain and build peace.

The concept of gender equality continues to be studied by the project *Uticaj informisanosti o vojnom pozivu na motivaciju učenika srednjih škola za studiranje na VA*, which is based on the empirical research entitled *Stavovi srednjoškolske omladine o školovanju na Vojnoj akademiji*. The idea of this kind of research is the beginning of the education of girls at the Military Academy and the need to consider the attitudes and professional motives of Serbian high school graduates. The research on the attitudes of high school youth about education at the Military Academy covered 67 high schools and secondary technical schools from 25 Serbian districts, and a total of 2,527 students were questioned, including 1,407 girls. The orientation that the target group should be high school students is based on the assumptions that they are not yet directly determined regarding the choice of profession and that they are students with general education. The basis of this methodologically set research is the research by Professor Desimir Pajević, PhD, on the topic *Motivacioni činioci izbora vojne profesije*, which has been conducted in the earlier period in the military +. The research is based on modern theoretical achievements in the field of work psychology and professional orientation. It had the task, *inter alia*, to determine to what extent and in what way high school graduates were informed about the living and working conditions at the Military Academy and whether there are differences between the sexes in this respect; to what extent high school graduates, especially girls, are interested in studying at the Military Academy, as well as whether and what kind of relationship there is between socio-economic and educational characteristics of students and their interest in continuing their studies at the Military Academy. The results and general conclusion of the research is that the graduates were very little informed about military profession and the content and conditions of the implementation of the curriculum at the Military Academy. According to the research findings, the main sources of information were TV shows with military topic, and the greatest influence on the decision to choose the Military Academy was exerted by informal social groups that the respondents belonged to (Šaranović et al., 2008). An interest in education had a growing tendency that is still present today. The results of the project on the need to improve the general information of graduates about military profession and studies at the Military Academy were used in the development of *Smernice za strategiju komunikacije Ministarstva odbrane i Vojske Srbije za 2008. godinu* (Ministry of Defence, 2008). In accordance with the results, and in order to promote military profession and military education, a project - monograph *Maturanti o profesiji oficir* has been executed, whose promotion was held in Belgrade, in the ceremonial hall of the Military Academy, in February 2009. In addition to high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces and associates of the Institute from military and civilian teaching and research organisations, the promotion was attended by representatives of all secondary schools, where the empirical research was carried out, including secondary school principals, pedagogues and psychologists, as well as up to 10 high school students from each of the schools. High school students and their pedagogues, psychologists and directors were given a tour of the teaching, sports and boarding facilities of the Military Academy. High school students had an opportunity to socialise with students and have lunch together in the

dining hall of the Military Academy. This project has emphasized a good model of popularising military profession and military education among members of both sexes, namely the execution of the empirical research in secondary schools and the call for promotion of results and peer socialising in military environment. Confirmation of this attitude is the address of cadet Ana Tasić, who was a high school graduate at the time of the execution of the empirical research and a part of the research sample.

The process of recognising and developing the concept of gender equality in the military system has been followed by the process of integrating girls into the Military Academy and the issue of their professional selection for military profession. On the basis of the research, the monograph *Školovanje devojaka na Vojnoj akademiji* (Šaranović & Kilibarda, 2007) elaborates an empirical database on issues of motives, level of motivation, interest, psychological and educational capabilities. The commitment to equalise men and women in the military, in terms of rights and obligations, as a prerequisite for respecting the "principle of equal opportunities" in professional development, meant the same treatment in the selection procedure for professional training. Starting from this principle, the only acceptable solution regarding the selection of women for studies at the Military Academy was to select them according to the same selection procedure, using the same battery of tests. According to the existing selection procedure, physical fitness test and psychological test of candidates were carried out. The psychological test included the usual determination of the level of intellectual abilities; the evaluation of the level of emotional maturity; the evaluation of the level of social maturity; the evaluation of the level of motivation for military profession and appropriate guidance; the determination of the level of educational success, preferences, habits and specific knowledge important for studies at the Military Academy. The main goal of these tests was to predict the success of candidates for studies at the Military Academy. The prediction project was validated on a male sample, partially, given that the prediction was made on the basis of initial success at the Military Academy, and not on the basis of the final status, after the graduation from the Military Academy. Therefore, full validation was yet to come and, in the following period, it inevitably included the results of the psychological test of female candidates and the results of their educational success during studies. It was also an opportunity to try out and select some other tests that will eventually be used in the selection process. Until then, the selection of female candidates was carried out based on the criteria established on a male sample.

Previous experiences on female engagement in organic duties in the military and the possibilities of their further engagement are summarised in the third study *U korak s vremenom: Ministarstvo odbrane i Vojska Srbije na putu objektivizacije rodne ravnopravnosti* (Šaranović & Kilibarda, 2011), which represents a kind of synthesis of what was done in the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces from 1980s until 2010. This study contains many questions, doubts regarding the manner to implement the concept of gender equality in the military, because the topic itself has "suddenly" appeared on the agenda within the reform of the defence system, so many people, primarily those who were supposed to implement decisions on female engagement in the Serbian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence

(commanding officers, heads of departments, etc.) were "caught up" in the execution phase of this task. Through research, an effort has been made to shed light on this phenomenon firstly theoretically, and then to elaborate it empirically in order to find the most adequate solutions for female engagement in the Armed Forces, so that this initiative would get the true essence and meaning, and therefore a long-term character. In the following phase of the implementation of gender equality, this topic acquires an institutional character, so first of all the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces are getting involved in the systemic solution of this issue, so that in the end, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, in accordance with the undertaken obligations, will develop an Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The study includes the following parts: Introduction, First step – Consulting the lessons and messages of the past; Second step – Gaining an insight into the results of modern research on the characteristics of the sexes; Third step – Defining one's own position in relation to the current situation and dominant trends in the world; Fourth step – Identifying jobs in the armed forces where women should primarily be engaged; Fifth step – Intensification of the admission of women into professional military service; Sixth step – Commencement of female studies at the Military Academy; Seventh step – Engagement of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces in the development of the NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325; Part Eight - Next Steps.

The continuation of the implementation of the concept of gender equality in the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces was the work on the project *Prilagođenost studenata VA uslovima školovanja i obuke* (2010-2012), whose implementation included the Military Academy. The general objective of the project was to define the determinants of successful (psychological, sociological, physiological) adaptation of the Military Academy cadets to studies' conditions. The general and specific objectives of the research were to determine whether and in what correlation the variables of information about military education and profession, type and success in high school are with the success of adaptation to studies at the Military Academy, as well as to establish statistically significant differences between the profiles of adapted and non-adapted male/female cadets on the conditions of studies at the Military Academy. The obtained results have shown that there is a great influence of completed high school and school success, motivation for military profession, level of information on the degree of adaptation to the conditions of studies at the Military Academy. Respondents who had more information about educational requirements before deciding to study at the Military Academy had the opportunity to better self-evaluate their personal capabilities and self-prepare for the upcoming difficulties of specific studies. Respondents with better secondary school success achieve better educational results at the Military Academy (passed a greater number of exams and with higher average marks) compared to respondents with weaker school success. Respondents who have completed high schools (military or civilian), unlike respondents who have completed other secondary schools (economic and medical), are better adapted and more satisfied with the conditions of

studies and are more efficient in the educational process. Respondents who are more motivated for studies at the Military Academy are also more adapted, more satisfied with the conditions of studies and more educationally efficient compared to other respondents. The practical contribution of the project itself was the identification of problems and specifics that follow the process of adapting female cadets to the conditions of life and studies at the Military Academy, and, based on that, suggesting measures that would contribute to the provision of more favourable conditions for the full integration of women into military environment, as an essential prerequisite for the success of training future officers (women and men) for commanding mixed military units. The key role in this process is played by professional selection and objective information of potential candidates about military profession and the specific educational process of training for officer duties.

The following project was *Rodni aspekt u vojnoj profesiji* (2013–2015), within which, in 2013, the subproject *Žene lideri* was executed, whose empirical basis was used to conduct research on a sample of officers of the Command Staff and General Staff Course. The subject of this research were officers' views on women in leading positions. Three research questions were asked: about the aspects that contribute to less percentage of women being represented (compared to the percentage of men) in higher hierarchical positions; about the importance of social support for women in the system for their career development and how much such support is provided by officers who are preparing for leading positions in the Armed Forces. The second part of the work on the project is the empirical research on a sample of 1058 respondents at tactical level, which was carried out in units during October and November 2013. This research continued the study of the concept of gender equality in the military system by establishing views on the normative, institutional, social and psychological assumptions for the implementation of gender equality and to what extent they have been fulfilled. Values and views on gender equality have been studied in the sense of whether they are different in relation to civil public opinion, how homogeneous/heterogeneous they are and how their structure is affected by certain socio-demographic characteristics (gender, level of education, rank, social origin, etc.), as well as whether they represent an obstacle or a recommendation for the development of the concept of gender equality in the military system. The problem has also been considered from the level of organisational culture and the possibility of using experiences of implementation of gender equality from the defence systems of other countries. An integral part of the project was the international scientific conference *Rodna ravnopravnost u sistemu odbrane – dostignuća i perspektive* (2015), organised by the Strategic Research Institute and UNDP/SEESAC. Scientific announcements from the conference have proposed practical policies, including the most significant ones: political and military leaders of the highest level are an important target group that should be informed and educated for their active involvement in the process of implementing gender perspective in the defence system and providing their support; the need for professional development and training as the most effective methods of combating gender stereotypes and

prejudices has been emphasized, and in this sense, the role of educational institutions and the scientific community has been analysed; the need to include gender perspective in the entire process of crisis management has been expressed; the importance of social and cultural context has been emphasized when considering gender issues, which is particularly important in multinational operations; the role of the media and the importance of forming public discourse on gender issues are recognised; the importance of forming mechanisms that would provide an adequate balance between personal and professional life has been pointed out.

The result of many years of experience in scientific research and active participation in the implementation of the concept of gender equality in military organisation is the monograph *Rodna ravnopravnost u Vojski Srbije – nasleđe, dostignuća, izazovi* (Šaranović et al., 2021). In it, in addition to the mentioned indicators of the progress of the Serbian Armed Forces in the field of gender equality, which bear witness to the manifest aspects of gender equality, the authors have obtained the necessary additional knowledge for a more complete picture of such a phenomenon, for considering its deeper, less accessible layers through direct observation. They refer to the degree of integration and social status of women in military organisation - to how the other members of the collective of both sexes have accepted them as superiors and subordinates and to the social climate in gender-mixed collectives. The basic aspect of the concept of gender equality is indicated by the degree of mutual support and mutual respect of men serving in the military, as well as their perception of the effectiveness of gender-mixed units and belief in justification, i.e. profitability of increasing the representation of women among professional military personnel. Statistical analyses of empirical data on the effectiveness of gender-mixed teams show that it is equally difficult, or easy, for members of both sexes to adapt to the specifics of military profession. "On the basis of the average values of the respondents' answers on the Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization, it can be concluded that the first five ranks, i.e. the most difficult adaptability to the conditions of military organisation are the following indicators: 'ratio of salary to work difficulty'; 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service'; 'stressful situations at work'; "overtime unplanned engagement in the workplace" and "separation from family for several months due to participation in peacekeeping operations". (Marček & Šaranović, 2022, p. 88). The results presented through the chapters of the monograph point to the conclusion that there is a great degree of congruence between the normative and the manifest in the objectification of the concept of gender equality in the military system, as well as measurable achievements of gradual, but constant progress in this field; that it is justified to refrain from sudden or careless steps in the sense of favouring attractive, but in practice difficult to implement solutions; that it is important to know good solutions from foreign armies, but it is more important to monitor and evaluate the situation by individual indicators characteristic of certain area; that the implementation of the concept of gender equality requires careful conceptualization and expert objectification in order not to lead to problems with the efficiency and effec-

tiveness of military collectives (Šaranović et al., 2021). Respondents' views on the increase in the number of women in the Serbian Armed Forces are mostly positive and are based on measurable indicators, although there are also negative views. "Negative attitudes about the increase in the number of women in the Serbian Armed Forces (in general and in high positions) are reasonably evenly distributed per age and rank groups". (Šaranović et al., 2022, p. 724)

The results indicate that there is already a high degree of formal equality of rights between men and women in terms of the availability of training for duties in military profession, as well as the possibility of advancement in the service based on professional development during work and through work. The second group of benefits, i.e. assumptions for increasing the reputation of women in the military collective and the armed forces in general, consists of the results that women achieve in the selection process for admission to military schools and their educational success during studies, their satisfaction with the choice of military profession and adaptation to living and working conditions in military environment, as well as the successful performance of professional duties, as evidenced by the data on the prevailing positive attitude of the military personnel towards the presence of women in ranks. Moreover, their presence generally has a favourable effect on interpersonal relations in military environment and they are relatively well-accepted as superiors and subordinates in gender-mixed units. The main obstacles to the strengthening of the status of women in military environment and their equalisation with male representatives are of an informal character and are related to the cultural patterns of the image of a woman in uniform, which, although greatly changed in relation to the traditional view, is still coloured by the stereotypical understandings of military profession as typical "male engagement" according to which a servicewoman should not and cannot be expected to be equal to a serviceman. In accordance with such a preconception, there is a lot more men than women who tend to consider gender-mixed collectives as less efficient in performing tasks and as less favourable social environment than collectives made up of men. Therefore, it is not unusual that men are much less convinced than women of the justification of further increase in the number of women among the professional military personnel and that a small percentage of them believe that the presence of women in high commanding and managerial positions would have a favourable effect on the quality of management and command (Šaranović et al., 2021). Certainly, women themselves have to deal with the challenges that this profession brings, which are, first of all, the psychological and physical unadaptability of a great number of women to field tasks. (Šaranović et al., 2022).

Such indicators point to the possibility of lower affirmation of the role of women in military profession, which may represent an obstacle to the further implementation of the concept of gender equality, and as a consequence may also result in a decrease in a female interest in military profession, which reduces the chance that, based on professional competencies, members of the female sex have a successful military career (Šaranović et al., 2021). A decrease in interest in military profession may also be a consequence of the fact that military profession is no longer new and interesting for women, but is taken for granted, and that there are already certain experiences of

women in military organisation that are transferred in informal groups they belong to. Longitudinal studies of value orientations, professional commitments and motivation for military service show that military profession will always be one of the options for the future professional choice of members of the male population (Pajević et al., 1975, Pajević, 1983, 1985, 1987, Stupar-Đurišić et al., 2006, Dimitrijević et al., 2007, Đorđević et al., 2007, Šaranović et al., 2007, 2008, Đorđević, 2014, Marček&Pešić, 2021).

Scientific research results can be implemented in professions dealing with health, sociological, psychological and andragogical problems of human resources in military environment through the development of military publications that can be used in training and professional development of the defence system personnel. One of the proposals for practical policies that has originated as a result of work on the scientific projects of the Strategic Research Institute: *Psihološki aspekti uspešnosti u vojnoj profesiji* (2011-2014), *Sistem vrednosti pripadnika vojske kao preporuka ili prepreka za evroatlanske integracije* (2008-2009) and *Rodni aspekt u vojnoj profesiji* (2013-2015), is a proposal for measures for the prevention of violence and discrimination in the organisational units of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces. This proposal has initiated the need for the development of the work of military literature entitled *Prevenција diskriminacije i nasilja u Ministarstvu odbrane i Vojsci Srbije* (Vidaković et al., 2020), which has an informative and educational function, and is intended as additional literature for conducting training for professional members of the Serbian Armed Forces and employees of the Ministry of Defence.

Scientific research work, together with systemic and organisational changes in the defence system, as well as permanent individual and military professional development of employees has created the need of the system to structure publications in the field of gender equality in which knowledge would be systematised and presented in a way suitable for further professional development. This is how *Priručnik za obuke iz oblasti rodne ravnopravnosti u MO i VS* (Višacki&Đurović, 2016), a unique publication in this field in the region, has been developed. The publication was promoted in March 2016, which was followed by the execution of a series of training conducted by male/female instructors of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces. During the training, special emphasis has been laid on gender stereotypes, saying that women and men differ in numerous psychological characteristics relevant to success in military profession. The aim of the training was to point out the discrepancy that arises between unfounded generalisations and stereotypical characteristics of women, on the one hand, and the required characteristics for the role of a soldier, on the other hand, which can have negative effects in the process of assessing possible success, evaluating, rewarding, promoting and career guidance in military profession. In addition to military training for employees of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, within the framework of developed cooperation with international organisations (UN Women, Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces – DCAF, United Nations Development Programme UNDP/SEESAC), participated in the regional project (2012-2016) with UNDP/SEESAC. The result of this

cooperation is the regional study *Položaj žena u oružanim snagama Zapadnog Balkana* (UNDP/SEESAC 2014) and the established regional network of certified male/female instructors for gender equality in the armed forces.

Conclusion

Security is a main prerequisite for the sustainable development of societies in the 21st century, and progress towards higher standards of gender equality is one of more or less recognisable trends in most societies of the modern world. The Armed Forces of the Western Balkan countries, as positive and developmentally oriented working environment, act in a planned and responsible manner in the direction of integrating the perspective of equal opportunities and responsibilities in daily activities - at strategic, operational and tactical level. In this way, with the undertaken measures and activities, they testify to the gradual change of outdated discriminatory attitudes, opening room for women, with their potential, to change the security sector, contributing to it being guarantor of peace and stability.

The future of the concept of gender equality in the defence systems of the Western Balkan countries, on the basis of similarities, and also specificities, identified as a result of scientific research practices, carried out through a correct and original methodological approach, which guaranteed the reliability of the obtained results and their useful value in a scientific-theoretical and practical sense, speaks of an amount of prudence, when it comes to still existing biased, stereotypical interpretation and unfounded generalisations of the gender aspects of the functioning of military organisation and the relativisation of the officially verified achievements of servicewomen. This raises doubts about the justification of increasing their representation in military profession. As research shows, the silent and informal disqualification of women in the military collective can have an impact on female self-confidence and their professional identity, which can be a justification for those with lower ambitions and weaker working habits to have a casual attitude towards professional tasks, which certainly affects affirmation of women in military profession and the integration of the concept of gender equality.

Individual beliefs and attitudes about the professional engagement of women in military profession cannot be removed by legal acts, but it is possible to make them meaningless by presenting convincing evidence of their unfoundedness. Certainly, experiential knowledge and research of current problems are the basis of education of future military personnel and military professional training of employees in the Armed Forces of the Western Balkan countries. Teaming up on empirical research of the civilian and military sector, as well as regional teaming up (in accordance with the joint Declaration signed in Budva in December 2021), are ways that can contribute to the strengthening of the concept of gender equality in the Western Balkan countries. For this engagement, based on examples of identified good practices and research findings, offering an original methodological approach, instru-

ments and research sample, the Republic of Serbia and its researchers are ready to provide the necessary knowledge and many years of experience dealing with the topic of gender equality.

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