

POLICY BRIEF

How Women, Peace, and Security Could Improve Integrated Deterrence





How Women, Peace, and Security Could Improve Integrated Deterrence

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COVER: Lin Yi (R2), head of the Chinese delegation for the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, speaks at the U.N. Security Council open debate on women, peace, and security at U.N. Headquarters in New York City on March 7, 2023. (Liao Pan / China News Service / VCG via Getty Images)

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Executive Summary

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, codified through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, is missing from the United States' discourse on strategic competition in myriad ways, but its inclusion will be vital for effective integrated deterrence. The U.S. has played an active role in leading WPS issues globally. It has developed national action plans, legislation, national strategies, and institutionally specific implementation plans across four agencies: the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of Homeland Security. Despite these initiatives, however, the WPS agenda remains sidelined and siloed from more critical national strategies such as the national security strategy and the national defense strategy, as well as from professional military education.

In recent years, the U.S. has been increasingly focusing on the overarching goals of strategic competition and integrated deterrence, and including the WPS agenda will be vital to achieving those goals. Strategic competition is interpreted in a variety of ways within the U.S. government. However, in comments

made at the Baltic Military Conference in 2021, Department of Defense (DOD) then-Undersecretary Colin Kahl defined an important component of integrated deterrence to be “working alongside our allies and partners to advance common interests and shared values.”¹ WPS can provide crucial additional perspectives and approaches to this work, so institutionalizing the WPS agenda within strategic competition and integrated deterrence is a low-cost, high-reward value-add for the department.

Anonymous interviews with 63 individuals across the U.S. government, civil society, and academia demonstrate why WPS inclusion matters and elucidate some of the challenges to its integration. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Combatant Command's WPS work serves as a case study for why WPS is vital for building regional resilience and maintaining free and open societies.

Key Recommendations:

■ Increase hiring across all levels. Having WPS expertise in civil society, as contractors, and within and across the military is fundamental for the sustainable and effective implementation of the WPS agenda.

■ Incorporate the WPS agenda into all forthcoming DOD and national security strategies. This will showcase the administration's and the secretary of defense's commitment to this agenda and falls in line with the expectations set by the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017.

■ Mainstream the WPS agenda and gender analysis skills into professional military education. This will allow for a broader reach of knowledge across various military specialties. Mandating additional training using the existing two-hour WPS Joint Knowledge Online courses is a way to reach a wider audience in the meantime.

■ Increase funding for the WPS agenda. This is essential for the long-term success of current WPS programming and creative growth in this space.

■ The WPS agenda in the U.S. is still in its nascent stages of implementation, and additional research is important for the future of the agenda. Such research could focus on topics such as a feminist analysis of statecraft in the Indo-Pacific region, women's economic empowerment as a means of positive and sustainable peace, a gendered lens on climate resilience, and mainstreaming gender analysis into departmental trainings and initiatives.





Introduction

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is a framework developed by civil society and adopted and codified by the United Nations Security Council to address the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls and to promote their participation in all aspects of peace building and conflict prevention. It calls for protecting women's rights, ensuring women's participation in decision making, and preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas. The WPS agenda was first adopted by the U.N. Security Council in 2000 through Resolution 1325 and has since been expanded and reinforced through subsequent resolutions.

In the U.S., the Women, Peace, and Security agenda comprises two National Action Plans (NAPs), a law signed in 2017, one national strategy, and four department-specific implementation plans. The 2017 legislation, signed by then-President Donald Trump, calls for adjusting policies and programs to improve gender equality outcomes and to expand and apply gender analysis to apply this law nationally. This report focuses on the Department of Defense (DOD) Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan, which details the department's WPS strategy with both short- and long-term goals. This plan is part of a whole-of-government strategy to advance the department's work on WPS by developing its "policies, plans, doctrine, training, education, operations, and exercises ...

(thereby) better preparing forces to face the complex challenges of the modern battlefield."²

The Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan lays out three long-term goals that set the foundation for the U.S. Department of Defense's Women, Peace, and Security agenda and define parameters for success across the department. The first goal is to focus on increasing women's meaningful participation at DOD; the second is to increase women's participation in partner nations' defense and security sectors; and the third is to ensure women and girls are safe and their rights protected, especially during conflict and crisis.³ In addition to these long-term goals, there are WPS principles that underpin the U.S. WPS strategy. One principle is

fundamental to incorporating WPS across many DOD plans, strategies, and operations: "Incorporation of a gender perspective into peace and security efforts."⁴ Incorporating a gender perspective is a critical step toward ensuring the inclusion of the WPS agenda throughout national policy and strategy.

The inclusion of WPS into the way leaders think about strategic competition adds additional insight because women play a critical role in building and maintaining stable societies.⁵ The WPS agenda can enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of peace and security efforts by promoting women's participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction. Improving gender equality decreases a country's likelihood



Former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) speaks alongside members of a congressional delegation that traveled to the Indo-Pacific region in August 2022. Pelosi's visit to Taiwan increased tensions with China. The delegation include (L-R) Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Chairman Mark Takano of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (D-CA), Chairman Gregory Meeks of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (D-NY), and Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-WA). (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)



of going to war or resorting to violence first and reduces the odds of states perpetrating violence against their own people.

The arguments around gender equality and conflict do not imply that women are inherently peaceful but that more equal and equitable societies tend to be more peaceful societies.⁶ Feminist scholars have long studied the correlation between the subordination of women by the state and the likelihood that the state would perpetuate violence, as well as the relationship of gender inequality with war and peace. They have theorized that gender equality may promote peace.⁷ Feminist scholars have also argued for decades that the production of the “state” and the relationships between states are mutually constitutive with gender; for example, the state plays a crucial role in shaping and enforcing gender norms, which can affect the gender composition of political leadership and thus alters how international relations and power dynamics are carried out.⁸

Additionally, using a gendered lens provides an alternative and more informed perspective on the state and its relationships. WPS advocates and scholars point out that women bring different experiences of conflict to the table and thus are integral to a state’s understanding of stability, conflict, and society. An intersectional understanding of these differing experiences provides additional ways to conceptualize security, competition, and conflict. Women are not a monolith; there is no single way that the identity of “woman” is experienced. Thus,

different women have different perceptions of security or peace.⁹

In strategic competition, integrating the WPS agenda into foreign policy and security strategies can also serve as a soft power tool, promoting gender equality and human rights and strengthening relationships with key partners and allies. Furthermore, including the WPS agenda can enhance the overall effectiveness of security efforts by drawing on the unique insights and perspectives of women, who are often disproportionately affected by conflict and violence. Incorporating the WPS agenda into policy and strategy goes beyond simply adding women into security forces in the male-dominated security sector; instead, the U.S. should aim to increase women’s influence in decision making at all levels, using WPS and gender analysis as analytical tools.

The lack of inclusion of the WPS agenda, or a clearly articulated gender perspective, in the national security strategy (NSS) and the national defense strategy (NDS) highlights a missed opportunity by President Joe Biden’s administration and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. In fact, the Biden administration is not even necessarily more vocal about the importance of women in national security or the role gender plays in international security than past presidents, despite Biden’s promises to advance gender equality in policy. Not discussing gender in the NSS and NDS documents does not make them gender neutral; it makes them gender blind.¹⁰ Bringing WPS and

a gender lens into these important strategies can further aid the U.S. and its allies and partners to achieve the goals outlined in the NDS and NSS; it paves the way for more effective operations on the ground and leverages the best options and talent the U.S. and its partners have to offer. Not integrating WPS clearly articulates to the world that the work the U.S. is doing includes major weaknesses because, at the very minimum, that work has ignored the diverse knowledge and skills that half the population brings to the table regarding peace and conflict.

Furthermore, having no formal commitments on Women, Peace, and Security in the NSS or NDS creates incoherence in legal obligations and stated values, affecting how U.S. partner nations and allies view the U.S.’s commitment to gender work internationally. U.S. law stipulates that WPS be integral to national strategy. For WPS to inform national strategy, officials need guidance, resources, and leadership to implement fully its inclusion in key documents. The lack of inclusion of WPS in national strategies further silos the WPS agenda and the work being done by the WPS community in DOD and across the interagency, despite its value as a tool in strategic competition and integrated deterrence.

The research for this report, conducted between the summer of 2020 and the fall of 2021, included 63 interviews that took place over Zoom. Interviewees comprised members of civil society,

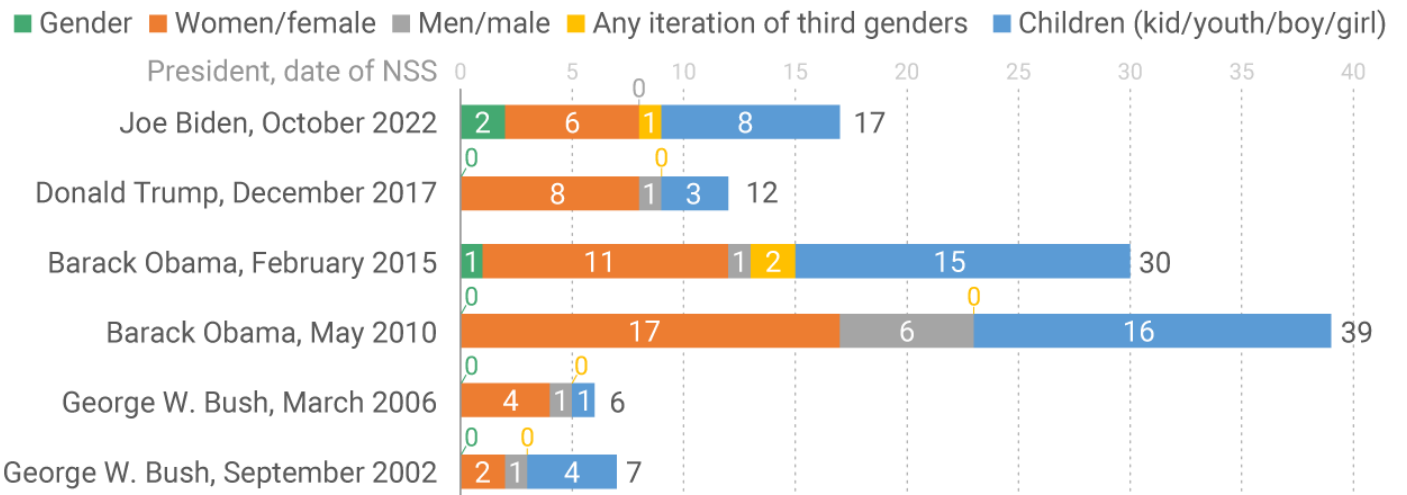




Approaches to WPS for the Past Six Administrations' National Security Strategy Documents

U.S. Presidents have integrated WPS differently into their national security policies, as seen by the number of times key words are used in each administration's National Security Strategy (NSS) document. These are the strategies used since the inception of the WPS agenda in 2002. The limited number of times the Biden administration used WPS-related language in its 2022 NSS necessitates the Biden administration to better bridge the gap between women and national security.

Key words mentioned



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contractors in the Department of Defense, active military personnel, and academics. All interviews were kept anonymous to allow respondents to speak frankly about their experience working on WPS issues, and therefore their place of employment is described herein in general terms, and no identification is made of civil servants versus contractors. For example, all individuals working under the larger umbrella of the Pentagon are referred to as Department of Defense employees, even if they work for a combatant command or a service-specific department. Instead of identifying at which professional military education institution someone is a faculty

member, they are referred to broadly as a faculty member at a "war college."¹¹ Interviewees were identified through purposive and snowball sampling.

Strategic Competition and Integrated Deterrence

A focus on the Asia-Pacific region and competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been a growing priority for the last 10-15 years of American foreign policy.¹² This shift can be seen across multiple presidential administrations through the use of specific phrases, beginning with "pivot to the Pacific," which subsequently shifted to "grand

strategy," "strategic competition," and most recently, "integrated deterrence" as the go-to way in which the U.S. responds to competition.¹³ There was a "strategic" turn toward Asia starting with the Obama administration. Ultimately, this agenda aimed to "promote U.S. interests by helping to shape the norms and rules of the Asia-Pacific region,"¹⁴ according to Manyin, et al. The Trump administration's 2018 national defense strategy (NDS) referred to strategic competition as a priority. The Trump NDS stated that "inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security."^{15,16}



The Biden administration's national security strategy cements strategic competition with the PRC¹⁷ as the primary challenge that foreign policy and national security communities must address. As the strategy lays out, the Biden administration views strategic competition as seeking "to shape the future of the international order."¹⁸ While the strategy addresses many issues, such as the economy, diplomacy, and climate change, this paper focuses on the Department of Defense. The DOD component of the NSS centers on an integrated deterrence approach, defined as "the seamless combination of capabilities to convince potential adversaries that the costs of their hostile activities outweigh their benefits."¹⁹

The 2022 NDS lays out a complex and interconnected security environment that the department faces, from strategic competition with the PRC to threats to the homeland to climate change. DOD seeks to meet these challenges through integrated deterrence, a centerpiece of the NSS and NDS. The NDS describes integrated deterrence as "working seamlessly across warfighting domains, theaters, the spectrum of conflict, all instruments of U.S. national power, and our network of Alliances and partnerships."²⁰ The NDS then lays out different methods of deterrence: deterrence by denial, deterrence by resilience, and deterrence by direct and collective cost imposition. These deterrence methods are a mix of both present and aspirational capabilities in attempting to cover a large swath of military activities, including modernizing nuclear forces,

adding complexity to competitors' military planning and execution, and developing new capabilities and concepts of operations rooted mainly in technology.²¹

Both the NSS and NDS center strategic competition via integrated deterrence, which alleviates some of the critiques that have been made of strategic competition, such as the lack of clarity or bounding in the exact definition of the term.²² One stark critique is that strategic competition is an ill-defined, imprecise, and nebulous agenda with no concrete determinants on where the department should dedicate its resources,²³ whereas integrated deterrence is rooted in conventional deterrence, a concept central to security studies as a field.²⁴ A state's decision to center strategic competition, integrated deterrence, or traditional deterrence depends upon its objectives as well as that state's culture, economy, and technology.²⁵ Gender also plays an important role in how states make decisions about which strategies to pursue.²⁶

With integrated deterrence as the primary focus of the NDS, where the department should focus its resources is much more straightforward as near-peer competitors, like the PRC, compete with the U.S. to shape the security environment. DOD then-Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl spoke at length to the Baltic Military Conference in 2021 about what integrated deterrence means for the department, saying it "recognizes the importance of our greatest strategic asset: working

alongside our allies and partners to advance common interests and shared values."²⁷ Earlier that year, he also explained at the policy office in the Pentagon how an all-encompassing integrated deterrence strategy would work, saying that in addition to conventional domains, the strategy must be expanded to include unconventional domains as well, such as space, cyber, and the informational world. He stated, "These are areas, frankly, where our peer competitors are pressing us, and we have hard thinking to do."²⁸

There are a number of other tools besides making more expensive weapons systems that the U.S. can levy in its attempt to maintain the current global security architecture. As Ali Wyne points out in "America's Great-Power Opportunity," strategic competition goes beyond military dominance; it is "not just about who will dominate the 21st century, but also about what the operating system of that world will be, and the predominant mode of governance within it."²⁹ Therefore, when creating policies related to integrated deterrence and strategic competition, the DOD and foreign policy community should look for ways to shape the operating system of the world that more closely mirror the norms, values, and human rights-focused agenda that the U.S. seeks to promote. An increased focus on further institutionalizing the WPS agenda within strategic competition and integrated deterrence is a low-cost, high-reward value-add for the department.

To date, neither the NDS nor the NSS from the Biden White





U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris speaks via video to the Pacific Islands Forum in Suva, Fiji, on July 13, 2022. (William West / AFP via Getty Images)

House³⁰ incorporate the Women, Peace, and Security agenda or a gender analysis into either of the documents. The NSS and NDS neglect of WPS, despite the WPS agenda having been law since 2017, is a stark reminder that Biden and Secretary of Defense Austin do not recognize or prioritize the value of gendered analysis to national security and defense priorities, despite Biden's historic step of creating the White House Gender Policy Council or focusing on having the most diverse Cabinet in history. The 2017 legislation states that, among other priorities, the U.S. must "integrate the perspectives and interests of affected women into conflict-prevention activities and strategies" and "adjust policies and programs to improve outcomes in gender equality and the empowerment of women."³¹ The law clearly articulates the requirement of including women and gender in conflict-prevention activities.

Where Is Women, Peace, and Security Missing in Strategy?

Strategic competition and integrated deterrence will shape the coming years of defense policy, funding, doctrine, and culture; thus, conceptualizing how to incorporate WPS and gender analysis into these realms is critical. Incorporating WPS into all defense policy is important both to adhere to the 2017 legislation and to make WPS as relevant, useful, and sustainable as possible for DOD. One of the principles in the Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan is the "incorporation of a gender perspective into peace and security efforts,"³² which gives WPS a wide berth to be an important consideration for all DOD planning instead of focusing narrowly on women's participation.

The application of WPS in the DOD thus far has had a narrow focus – relegated mainly to women's

integration into the security sector and/or considered another diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative. Many interviewees who work on this issue both inside and outside the DOD spoke about these limitations. The interviewees also acknowledged that WPS and gender analysis could and should provide a more transformative approach to how DOD conceptualizes strategy and planning. Despite a concerted effort from those working on WPS to think about the broader implications of the agenda, it rarely, if ever, is woven throughout DOD strategy documents or official language around integrated deterrence and strategic competition, particularly vis-à-vis the PRC.³³

Some interviewees expressed concern that bringing WPS into conversations around strategic competition or integrated deterrence is unlikely to be successful. They argue that most senior military leaders have minimal understanding of the value and utility of WPS as a component of military planning. There is also a significant gap in senior national security and military leadership's understanding of the utility of WPS and gender analysis as a vital addition to the broader national security discourse. One individual who has worked with the U.S. military and NATO on issues around WPS was direct in their view that senior military leaders tend to consider WPS to be just a "women's issue".

When you're talking about the shift from Afghanistan to the Pacific, if you're sitting in one of those meetings and you're trying to bring up WPS in the





conversation, it's not going to hold water with a military organization. That is something that the State Department really focuses on. Once you get towards the interagency interactions, either abroad or in a strategic-level meeting, the State Department will be the one to push those issues, and DOD will say, "It's a nice-to-have; that's your department, we don't really focus on that, at least in the initial outcomes." The only thing I can think of is if we get to predeployment planning that soldiers maybe have to do a one-off training that they don't pay attention to. Every time you bring something like this up, if it's not directed by a four-star (general), it's not going to pass the smell test at the table.³⁴

Some interviewees expressed concern that those who engage in WPS are taking things too far by bringing WPS and gender analysis into all aspects of DOD instead of keeping the work more pointed and limited. They expressed apprehension that WPS is just another additive that does not improve mission readiness and success. One civil society leader who has worked on WPS for more than 10 years expressed that they felt many do not see the utility of adding WPS into an individual's core mission: "It can turn some people off if they feel that you are coming on too strong with an agenda that they don't feel helps them achieve their core mission or be a better leader or soldier."³⁵

However, most interviewees spoke about the potential for WPS integration into most, if not all,

DOD policies, plans, and strategies. On the issue of how WPS relates to strategic competition and integrated deterrence or the utility of WPS as a tool in the U.S.'s engagement with the PRC, most interviewees spoke about WPS's relevance and what can and should be done to bring it to the forefront. Many interviewees spoke about the potential of the agenda but said that some individuals' outdated understandings of WPS are holding back its further implementation. A faculty member working on issues around WPS at one of the military war colleges emphasized that WPS needs to be integrated into grand strategy and strategic competition policies, saying:

It has to be connected – you can't have policy without actual tactics. If the rubber doesn't meet the road, you don't have it. You can't just say you want WPS (included). If there is nobody on the ground (doing WPS work), then you don't have anything. Think about grand strategy and WPS and then connect it to the tactical-level engagement."³⁶

One former Air Force captain brought up frustrations around Afghanistan and Iraq having shaped much of the thinking for DOD on moving forward in this new strategic competition space. The interviewee said leadership they have encountered does not see WPS as a critical component of competition with China:

After Afghanistan and Iraq, a lot of the cultural frustration is this sense that the DOD's job is just to go in and win, and (the State

Department and U.S. Agency for International Development) should be dealing with the reconstruction component, and so much of WPS sits in that world for a lot of military people – reconstruction, engagement, civil society – so for someone looking at how are we competing with China and ways to mitigate that conflict or ways the conflict should play out, they don't see gender as having a meaningful lens to understanding that strategy. A lot of people in DOD resented feeling like they were given a mission that the DOD is not meant to have – all the training people would have to go through to go to Afghanistan, like cultural sensitivity trainings, there was a feeling of, "You aren't going to turn a Marine infantry-enlisted guy into a diplomat"; they should secure the space and other agencies should secure those gains.³⁷

The quote above illustrates a trend in both the author's interviews and military doctrine: DOD and senior military personnel may discuss the value of women in conflict, and they may discuss gender within the scope of the global war on terror, but it's unlikely for them to go beyond those narrow focuses. There are three very clear examples of this limited scope. First, in October 2022, the U.S. Army released Field Manual 3.0, the Army's operational field manual that guides "the challenges that shape the operational environment."³⁸ This new manual centers on a multidomain warfighting concept that acknowledges that the battlespace now encompasses





land, sea, air, space, and cyber. Despite this shift to a more expansive understanding of the modern-day “battlefield,” the manual does not acknowledge gender or WPS in any capacity. If the military adage that doctrine drives culture is true, then a failure of doctrine and, hence, military culture, will fail to be more adaptable to insights garnered from WPS.

Another example is the newly created Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan, released to the public in August 2022. While not doctrine, this guidance “clearly identifies how DOD will systematically improve our approach to civilian harm mitigation and response.”³⁹ This guidance sets in motion multiple components that will further institutionalize civilian harm mitigation and response into operational policies across the joint force.⁴⁰ Yet none of the plan’s objectives incorporate gender, gender analysis, or WPS. The failure of the DOD to incorporate gender and WPS into the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan highlights a massive gap in understanding about the utility of WPS and gender analysis in reducing harm to civilians and responding to their needs in conflict.

Lastly, the Biden White House released its Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2022, which focuses on a number of issues such as “prosperity,” “security,” and “resilience.”⁴¹ In this strategy, “women’s leadership” is referenced in relation to U.S. allies and partners, specifically Japan and the Republic of Korea.⁴² Gender is mentioned only once when referring to launching “new



Then U.S. Army Chief of Staff General James C. McConville speaks during a press conference after the opening ceremony of the Indo-Pacific Army Chiefs Conference meeting in Bangkok on Sept. 9, 2019. (Lillian Suwanrumpha / AFP via Getty Images)

high-level engagements” and is listed alongside “health, climate and environment, energy, (and) transportation.”⁴³ However, health, climate, environment, energy, and transportation are all discussed in more detail throughout the document, while gender and the role of women remain relegated to the background. Gender equality and the WPS agenda are central to maintaining and buttressing democratic norms worldwide, and empowering women is critical for building countries’ resilience. Therefore, gender equality and the WPS agenda are integral to the U.S.’s ability to promote prosperity, security, and resilience globally. This is particularly true in the Indo-Pacific region, where the U.S. is working hard to maintain a free and open Pacific. Despite this clear correlation between gender equality and democratic resilience, the WPS agenda is still excluded from the DOD’s overarching strategies and plans.

The concern that WPS and gender are not being considered in the above strategies and plans nor in understanding the operational environment is also reflected by the curriculum at the war colleges. While there are many congressionally mandated curriculum requirements that war colleges must fill, WPS is not one of them. As one war college professor pointed out, the overarching belief is that by adding gender analysis and WPS insights, war colleges would need to remove other curriculum components:

Professional military education is jam-packed with curriculum – you have to include China, Russia, great powers, etc. You have to cover everything. So how can you fit one more thing into the curriculum? It’s a zero-sum game – what are we going to take out to fit WPS in?⁴⁴





One solution to the problem of an already crowded war college curriculum is that the WPS agenda could be mainstreamed throughout the curriculum rather than added as a standalone educational component. Ideally, every war college graduate would leave their institution with some knowledge of what WPS is and why it matters. The above interviewee said that the war colleges must cover “everything,” but if they are not covering WPS or gender analysis, they are leaving valuable principles and analytical tools on the table that future military leaders could use. If war colleges instead focused on incorporating WPS-specific reading and assignments into existing courses – for example, on the PRC, Russia, and great-power competition – then they would not have to remove curriculum components but instead could present WPS, gender analysis, and gendered dimensions within the existing curriculum to strengthen it.

The WPS advocates, practitioners, and experts interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the role that WPS can play across the range of issues and operations that DOD deals with on any given day. One faculty member at a war college who works on issues of gender and WPS was insistent that WPS should be incorporated into U.S. policy around strategic competition, saying, “WPS has been always a human rights issue or a diversity issue, but we can expand it to be an implicit line of effort for our strategic competition strategy with China.”⁴⁵

There are many areas in which inclusion and consideration of

WPS beyond its narrow application thus far would be advantageous for the U.S. The U.S. is facing multiple complex crises, from the conflict in Ukraine, to consistent and ongoing military recruitment issues, to rising tension in the South Pacific. The WPS agenda can offer tools for more robust and informed strategic planning as well as for strengthening alliances. Turning WPS into a line of effort for strategic competition should be a whole-of-institution endeavor, not a side project for select DOD functions.

Where Is WPS Being Incorporated?

USINDOPACOM as a Success Story

Despite the many areas where incorporation of the WPS agenda is lagging, there are, in fact, spaces where WPS advocates are making headway in integrating WPS into strategies of strategic competition and integrated deterrence. Most notably, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Combatant Command⁴⁶ (USINDOPACOM) Women, Peace, and Security team in the Department of Defense has been thinking holistically and strategically about how to grow the WPS agenda beyond a limited scope of women’s roles in the security sector. While every combatant command, both geographic and functional, has a WPS team,⁴⁷ the USINDOPACOM team is the largest, with five full-time WPS staff. By contrast, many combatant commands have just one or two full-time WPS/gender advisers.⁴⁸ The WPS team oversees the implementation

of the WPS agenda both within the combatant command and externally to the whole region. The USINDOPACOM is responsible for the U.S. Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps forces in an area of responsibility consisting of 36⁴⁹ nations that comprise over 50% of the world’s population.⁵⁰

On the next page is a map of the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility, superimposed with information from the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security’s WPS Index, which ranks countries based on women’s inclusion, justice, security, and other factors. This map, which includes each country’s index and ranking, shows how vast the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility is – both geographically and in terms of countries’ approaches to gender equality. With a wide variety of countries that span the index, the USINDOPACOM team is poised to conduct WPS trainings and workshops where civil society leaders, government representatives, and military members come together to learn from one another. The U.S. ranks toward the middle of the countries on the list, and the USINDOPACOM team’s focus on multilateral engagements showcases a willingness to work with and for various countries and their WPS needs.

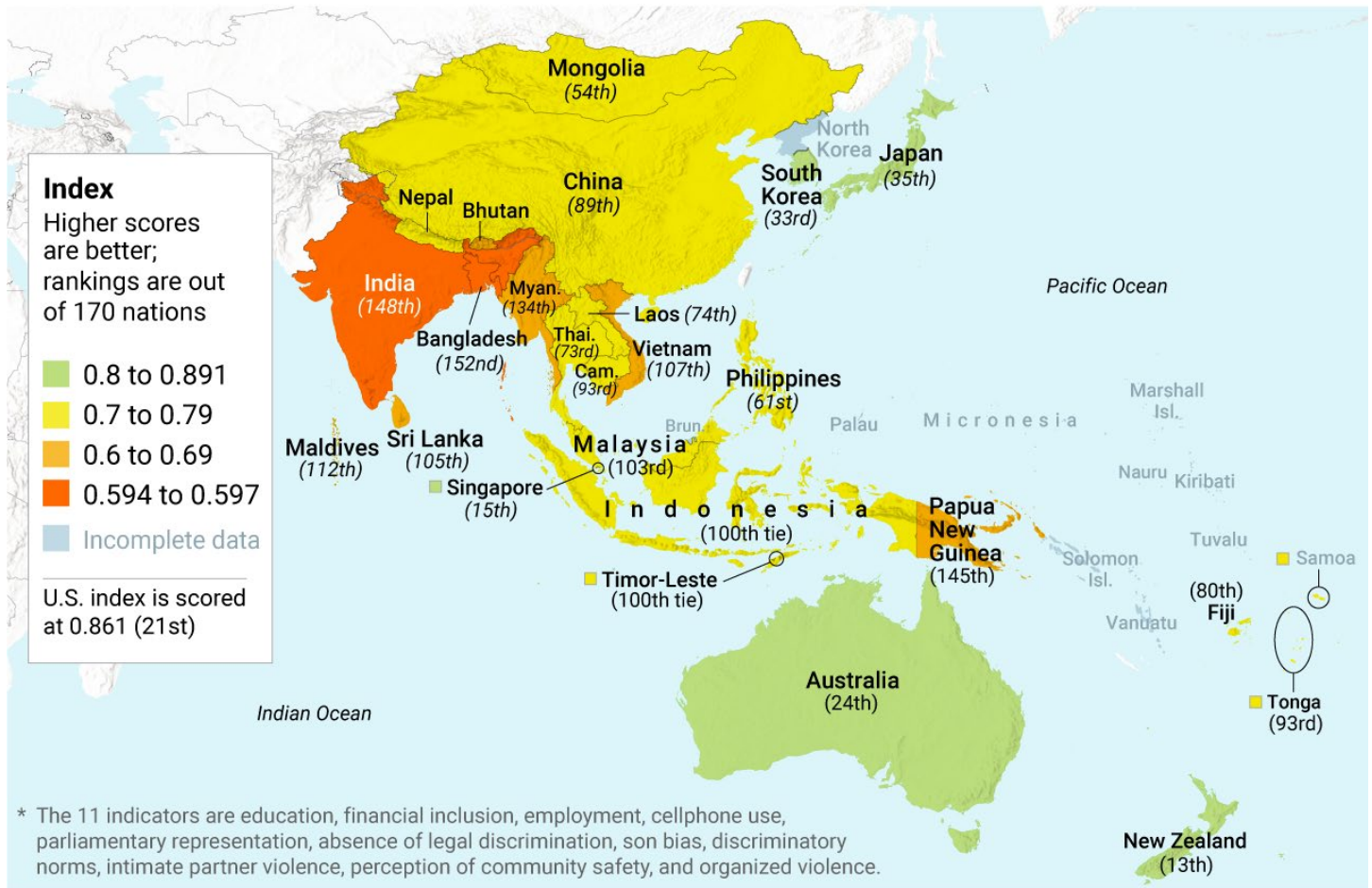
The mission statement of the WPS office at USINDOPACOM refers to the entire theater campaign planning process. It specifies that WPS means incorporating a gender perspective into all aspects of planning and operations. It is





Women's Rights in the Indo-Pacific

Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) scores countries on an index based on 11 indicators* measuring inclusion, justice, and security. To be included in the global index, a country must have data for 7 of those 11 indicators. This map includes those countries in the U.S. military's Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) area of responsibility.



Source: Georgetown University Institute for Women, Peace and Security, NED, ESRI © 2023, The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy

all-encompassing and considers the breadth and depth of how WPS can contribute to a combatant command's mission. The statement reads as follows:

The Office of Women, Peace & Security (WPS) implements the DoD WPS Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan by *mainstreaming a gender*

perspective into theater plans, programs, and policies in order to enable the USINDOPACOM enterprise to *develop inclusive security strategies* that *advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific*.^{51,52}

All interviewees who worked at the Department of Defense in some capacity⁵³ indicated that USINDOPACOM stood out as the example of how best to incorporate

WPS into policies and plans at all levels. One faculty member who works on WPS issues at a war college was frank about the success that USINDOPACOM has achieved and pointed out that its success is somewhat unique: "It is the exception rather than the rule."⁵⁴

USINDOPACOM's work has created a ripple effect across the WPS community. A war college



faculty member praised how far the WPS team has pushed the broader combatant command on this effort, saying, “The USINDOPACOM team is the most robust and forward-leaning and aggressive GENAD (gender adviser) team out of all of the COCOMs (combatant commands).”⁵⁵

These interviews revealed the success that USINDOPACOM has had in integrating WPS into a broad array of plans and policies. Several interviewees mentioned the tireless advocacy of the five-person team at USINDOPACOM. There was a consensus among interviewees that support from the top made a big impact on the depth and breadth of WPS inclusion, including for staffing numbers. Interviewees mentioned a top-down culture at USINDOPACOM that takes WPS seriously and acknowledges how valuable it is at all levels of planning and operations. As one war college faculty member said, “It all comes down to leadership,” and having leaders who are committed to institutionalizing WPS has made a substantial difference.⁵⁶

The success of the USINDOPACOM team is linked to its whole-of-region approach. USINDOPACOM is a diverse region with diverse needs, and the WPS team sees this as an advantage for its efforts. A gender adviser at DOD spoke about why USINDOPACOM is so committed to and forward-thinking in using gender analysis to achieve their goals, saying, “USINDOPACOM has always been unique because of the fact that they have China and Russia. They think more creatively about soft and smart power and are always looking to find something

towards their advantage” for WPS implementation.⁵⁷

A civilian at the Department of Defense who works on WPS issues spoke of the importance of USINDOPACOM’s WPS work in the department’s plans for future operations in the Indo-Pacific region:

In terms of strategic competition in China, if we (WPS advisers) can show in USINDOPACOM a force model and employ a version of WPS and we are empowering women in terms of women’s meaningful participation in the defense and security sector, that strengthens our values-based narrative. It shows that this is what we (the U.S. government) stand for in terms of empowerment in the U.S. So when ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries are seeing who to partner with for security cooperation, they are going to see our WPS work and say they want to partner with us. As opposed to China, who just comes in and builds with their all-male staff.⁵⁸

One of the main ways that the U.S. has spoken about the focus on integrated deterrence is as it relates to partners and allies. If the U.S. is trying to promote the “open world order” that is a clear goal in the NDS, then it must leverage all capabilities and priorities holistically and cohesively; including WPS as part of all trainings, exercises, or multilateral engagements with partner nations only improves these capabilities. The U.S. is currently positioned

to leverage the shared priorities of WPS to build partnerships with other nations and build capacity on WPS around the world as well. WPS is a valuable lens that the U.S. can use to drive additional engagement with partners and allies and to build resilience in regions of critical geostrategic importance.

Why Does Women, Peace, and Security Matter in the Indo-Pacific Region?

As indicated by the national security strategy and national defense strategy, the Sino-U.S. relationship is critical for DOD and the national security community. With the People’s Republic of China mentioned 55 times in the NSS and 88 times in the NDS, the Sino-U.S. relationship will shape much of the general strategic discourse at DOD for the foreseeable future. As mentioned above, there are a number of ways that USINDOPACOM is considering Women, Peace, and Security an integral component in Department of Defense planning around the region, and specifically regarding the PRC. An active-duty Marine who is knowledgeable on WPS issues discussed the need to understand how gender relations in China might affect any potential high-intensity conflict with the U.S.:

Having a cultural understanding of the role women play in China is super important – are they assets and partners to us if we landed on an island and their men are off fighting? Are they giving us intel and food, or are they fighting against us? The Chinese military is both men and women. Do they have both





“ (The one-child policy [in China]) led to female infanticide – it was a clue that bad things were going to come, and it would degrade the security in China. Now that we have more supporting evidence of the disadvantages of a heavily male-dominated society, the WPS (agenda) is very relevant now. ”

Faculty member at a war college

men and women in the room coming up with solutions? Gender and culture could be a huge factor in our campaigns in the South Pacific – are women going to sabotage us? Not once has understanding the Chinese culture been brought up. I have received one intel brief about it. When we start to do Chinese cultural briefs in the Marines, we need to think about the specifics to women and say why thinking about women is important. We missed out on intel in Iraq and Afghanistan; let's not do that again in this new theater of operations. Groupthink and homogeneity do not win wars.⁵⁹

An individual in civil society who has worked in and around DOD for many years on issues relating to WPS explained how a gender analysis asks questions to understand better the role that men, women, boys, girls (MWBG), and individuals with diverse SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics) are playing in society:

Looking at MWBG (in China), what are the biggest threats to

the U.S.? I believe that human flourishing is critical to winning great-power competition. What the one-child policy has done to girls in China – demographics have made China more aggressive. Closing windows of opportunity to girls, the family, the relationships between men and women – all those issues that we used to call women's issues – those are strategic issues.⁶⁰

A faculty member at a war college who teaches on WPS issues also emphasized the importance of using a gender analysis when thinking about the PRC:

In China with the one-child policy, what does that look like now or 20 years later, where you have millions of guys who don't have a female counterpart if they want one to get married? What does that do to stability and security? (The one-child policy) led to female infanticide – it was a clue that bad things were going to come, and it would degrade the security in China. Now that we have more supporting evidence of the disadvantages of a heavily male-dominated

society, the WPS (agenda) is very relevant now.⁶¹

A civilian at DOD who works on issues relating to WPS spoke about these same factors relating to gender, the PRC, and strategic competition, saying, “We need more thinking in China – what the male surplus is doing and thinking about internal domestic security and how that impacts international relationships and competition.”⁶²

The demographic trends in the PRC referenced in the above quotes – the one-child policy, female infanticide, a male surplus, and a heavily male-dominated society – have led to a disproportionate number of men in the country; considering how gender can inform thinking on issues relating to national security and strategic competition, then, will be crucial for the U.S. For example, a theory known as Bare Branch theory posits that many Chinese men are unable to add to their family tree due to a shortage of marriageable women, and thus are “bare branches,”⁶³ which could have a number of implications for Chinese policy. It will be vital for the U.S. not to ignore what a gender analysis of the PRC may show about how the country's





policy decisions are made, which in turn may impact U.S. policy decisions as well. It will also be important to bring gender analysis and WPS into strategic decision making in the region, including taking into account the actual experiences of men, women, boys, girls, and individuals with diverse SOGIESC in society. One faculty member at a war college with an academic background in gender laid out an additional way to frame how the U.S. thinks about China:

One thing, if you are thinking about China, is how perceptions of China as an opponent are feminized or have historically been feminized, which is a substantial stereotype which traces back generations in the U.S. How does that inform strategic positions and analysis of China?⁶⁴

The above quote speaks to the way the U.S. has historically viewed the PRC as a whole and Chinese men in particular as feminized due to racist perceptions.⁶⁵ Discrimination among the U.S. population based on these perceptions bled into policies and legislation, such as the prohibition of Asian men marrying white women and legislation barring Asian men from naturalizing, irrespective of their length of residency in the U.S. As time passed, the “model minority” myth was constructed, which is linked to the ethnocentric idea that Chinese men are more feminine and/or submissive than other (white) men.⁶⁶ These long-held and deeply embedded views still impact American perceptions of the PRC and Sino-U.S. relations and foreign policy today.

The “outside the box” thinking expressed in the above quotes about how gender and WPS might impact Sino-U.S. relations was rare when talking to gender and security professionals across the government.⁶⁷ There are numerous additional ways to conceptualize how Sino-U.S. relations might be impacted by a more thorough gender analysis, and it is a valuable avenue for further research. The perceived threat that the U.S. faces from the PRC is rooted in incongruent political systems that lead to different perspectives on how to shape future security systems across the globe. The Chinese Communist Party relies on a political system that is highly gendered and depends on maintaining control primarily through reinforcing gender norms and restricting women’s rights; this political system is patriarchal authoritarianism, as detailed by Dr. Leta Hong Fincher.⁶⁸

The demographics of the Politburo most acutely showcase the patriarchal authoritarianism employed by the Chinese Communist Party. In its 70 years of existence, no woman has ever been a member of China’s Politburo Standing Committee, and as of 2023, there are no women in the second level of power, which has historically included at least one woman since 1997.⁶⁹ The reveal of the 2022 Chinese Communist Party by President Xi Jinping showcases how little the PRC is committed to gender equality at home, which is matched by its lack of commitment to any WPS agenda abroad. The PRC has yet to adopt any kind of NAP, and it has tried to roll back the efficacy of the WPS agenda

in the Security Council.⁷⁰ Despite this, it still signals support for WPS-adjacent policies. The CCP and Xi are aware of how valuable using gender as a talking point can be on the international stage and have used that to their advantage in the past.⁷¹ Gender and WPS messaging also play a critical role in how the U.S. messages foreign policy internationally. It is critical that the U.S. does not exclusively message on WPS and gender, but instead uses it as a valuable tool to advance a free and fair Indo-Pacific.

What Is USINDOPACOM Doing?

The 2022 U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report laid out where and how the DOD is making progress on implementing the Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan. Much of the progress made, as outlined by DOD, has been due to increasing the hiring of dedicated WPS staff, providing trainings for gender focal points (individuals who help to incorporate gender analysis into their organization or department), and adapting a gender analysis framework. The report also outlined the major success of providing gender adviser support during Operation Allies Welcome to assist Afghan evacuees at military installations.⁷² The progression, implementation, and lessons learned from Operation Allies Welcome would be a valuable avenue for additional research; those in charge of the evacuations and initial response did not adequately understand the gendered needs of the Afghan evacuees fleeing to the U.S. The WPS community across the interagency was deployed to all





Operation Allies Welcome bases and locations. They provided listening sessions, consultations with civil society, and much-needed gender analysis to improve operations and facilities.⁷³ In addition to WPS work being done throughout the Department of Defense and the interagency, the 2022 report highlighted a number of activities carried out by the USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team.

The 2022 congressional report outlines some of the USINDOPACOM WPS team's work, some of which directly relates to components of strategic competition. One notable accomplishment is the development of a "practitioner's field guide" to help DOD personnel across USINDOPACOM to integrate gender components into their planning processes and provide instructions on how to collect and report sex- and age-disaggregated data better to strengthen strategic engagement on WPS priorities in the region.⁷⁴ The USINDOPACOM team is also developing a regional gender adviser network with partner nation security forces from the Philippines, Japan, Australia, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Fiji, the Republic of Korea, and Indonesia.⁷⁵ These efforts show that the team is thinking about the strategic importance of WPS in the military planning process and about how WPS efforts help shore up support for security cooperation in a geographic region that is important for DOD's strategic competition goals as laid out in the NSS and NDS.



Chinese Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission General Fan Changlong and Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry shake hands prior to a meeting at the Ministry of National Defense in Beijing in May 2015. (Saul Loeb / AFP via Getty Images)

The U.S. Joint Staff and the USINDOPACOM Strategic Plans and Policy teams worked together to develop the first U.S. DOD Operational Gender Advisor Course in 2018. The original course was five days of in-person training conducted by USINDOPACOM and other WPS subject matter experts in the DOD that could be exported to other combatant commands. In that first course, 24 students from missions around the globe trained to act as gender advisers in support of operations and exercises within their own cultural contexts. The course's primary goal was to inform trainees to "go back and educate their commands on what this is and how it helps us win and win before fighting," according to Maj. Gen. Suzanne P. Vares-Lum, the mobilization

assistant to the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.⁷⁶ The goal of "win before fighting" is integral to the military's current goals for integrated deterrence. The USINDOPACOM messaging around these trainings is that increasing countries' WPS competencies and ensuring women's meaningful inclusion in the security sector will lead to a free and fair Pacific.

The USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team has developed short- and long-term plans for WPS integration throughout the combatant command and all priority levels. A war college faculty member who works on WPS issues laid out this broad approach in one of their interviews: "USINDOPACOM has a comprehensive plan for their



whole region, and that comes with funding. They are looking at building capacity with U.S. embassies and defense security cooperation agencies.”⁷⁷

The WPS team’s capacity building focuses on resilience; gender equity; and the recruitment, employment, development, retention, deployment, and promotion of women in U.S. partner nations’ national security forces. One interviewee who works at DOD and is familiar with the goals of the USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team laid out the three levels of effort that are being employed in the region:

First, (the team is) working with our partner militaries to develop policies for their own institutionalizing of WPS. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, they are currently developing more inclusive policies yet still face many challenges. We can work with them, especially their newly established Gender Committee, to minimize barriers to help women’s meaningful participation and those women advance to leadership. This is a gender equity component to our work. Second, the operationalization piece: How does a gender perspective improve their (planning and carrying out of) security issues like climate security issues? Third, training gender advisers: helping to develop plans to help (our partner nations) train their own gender advisers so we can build our pool and network.⁷⁸

This three-tiered approach to employing WPS in the region can

be seen most effectively in the growing collaboration between the USINDOPACOM WPS team and Mongolia, as well as across the Pacific Islands.

Case Studies

As discussed above, the area of responsibility for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Combatant Command is enormous and complex. The WPS agendas in each country are vastly different, as are the challenges to achieving gender equality, building resilience, and managing security partnerships. The USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team must work in coordination with in-country civil society groups, security sector institutions, and women’s rights advocates to develop curricula, trainings, and metrics for success that are country-specific. In-country requests for partnerships and NAP development primarily drove the WPS work in Mongolia and the Pacific Islands. Multilateral engagements that develop WPS skills and knowledge across cultural divisions are important for the WPS agenda’s success in the U.S. and that of their partners and allies across the USINDOPACOM region. For that reason, the two case studies below highlight how WPS is integral for accomplishing the broader geostrategic goal for the region: a free and open Indo-Pacific.⁷⁹

Mongolia

USINDOPACOM has jointly conducted multilateral trainings and peacekeeping exercises in Mongolia since 2003 (Khaan Quest and Gobi Wolf).⁸⁰ The exercises

were designed to develop disaster preparedness plans and promote peace and regional security in northeast Asia.⁸¹ Located between the PRC and Russia, Mongolia’s geostrategic importance is widely noted.⁸² Security cooperation activities in Mongolia play an important role in minimizing the sphere of influence of both the PRC and Russia.

Mongolia has been making a public push to increase the number of women among military troops for peacekeeping operations, aiming for 15% of officers and 25% of staff officers to be women by 2027.⁸³ According to interviewees, there has been vocal support from Mongolian leadership for incorporating women into peacekeeping forces. This domestic support, combined with an active USINDOPACOM team seeking ways to integrate WPS into existing U.S. military efforts, has made Mongolia an excellent case study for what the WPS team is accomplishing in the region. The USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team began their first trainings in 2019 in conjunction with U.S. Army Pacific, NATO, and the Australian Defense Forces.⁸⁴ An individual familiar with the CCM’s trainings in the region said of these trainings: “We did five days’ training tailored for defense and law enforcement women. This was women only. We don’t love women-only trainings, but this was necessary at this point, and in this context was billed as women’s mentorship.”⁸⁵

The 2019 training comprised 23 women and was developed to encourage women in the armed forces to conduct gender





analyses before and during disaster response and crises. This mentorship series led to a series of WPS integrations into future trainings of Mongolian defense and security sector personnel.

In 2022, following a pause in most multilateral trainings due to COVID-19, the WPS team led multiple two-day WPS in Peacekeeping Operations trainings during the 2022 Khaan Quest, which had a mixed-gender audience. The focus of these sessions was on identifying gendered security issues and building specific skills, such as conducting rapid gender analyses and data collection. The sessions focused particularly on understanding gender in military operations and in conflict.⁸⁶ One individual involved in this effort spoke about how the team is finding ways to integrate WPS across various operations, saying, “We can look for gaps in ongoing trainings and bring in the (WPS) defense and human security perspectives and what we need to within (existing) partnerships.”⁸⁷

A central focus for the WPS team going forward is to find ways to integrate gender and WPS into current and ongoing exercises. This future focus should allow for broader reach both in terms of how many individuals are exposed to WPS and gender analysis and in terms of how much can be accomplished with limited WPS-specific funding. The WPS team is currently working on integrating gender throughout future Khaan Quest courses and trainings, with an aim toward

full-scale WPS integration in DOD exercises and materials.

Pacific Island Countries

The Pacific Islands are a critical component of the DOD’s policies on integrated deterrence and the PRC. The alliances and security partnerships with island nations in the Pacific region are vital to U.S. national security interests, as was made clear both in the 2022 NDS and in interviews with people aware of regional plans and operations. One interviewee said, “The PRC seeks to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region and leverage its growing capabilities, including its economic influence and the People’s Liberation Army’s growing strength and military footprint, to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interests.”⁸⁸ Notably, the Pacific region has some of the lowest levels of representation of women in parliament and some of the highest rates of violence against women worldwide.⁸⁹ Fostering greater gender equity across the Pacific Island countries is a key focus of the USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team. Again, while not stated in the White House’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, gender equity and the WPS agenda help achieve the overarching goals of the strategy, such as advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific and building resilient communities. As discussed previously, promoting gender equality is critical because there is a correlation between more equitable societies and reduced likelihood of going to war, resorting to violence first, states perpetrating violence against their own people, and the durability of peace, and

because gender equality is a key component of building more liberal democracies.⁹⁰

Multiple interviewees who work on WPS issues at DOD expressed the importance of the Pacific Islands to national security issues. One said, “Pacific Island countries are a priority right now, and there are some major programs coming up that show the evolution of it.”⁹¹ Another spoke about how the Pacific Islands are an integral part of WPS planning in terms of strategic competition in the region, sharing that, “Our small island nations are very susceptible to China’s provocation and bullying and exploitation, so to counter that we are building their resilience from the inside out.”⁹²

The buy-in of Pacific Island countries has been crucial to the success of WPS work in the Pacific Islands region. In 2019, the USINDOPACOM WPS team started working on developing WPS training and a gender adviser course in coordination with the New Zealand Defense Forces, the Australian Defense Forces, and the Pacific Gender Defense Network in Fiji.⁹³ This initial partnership then spurred the Fijian government to request the help of USINDOPACOM to facilitate Fiji’s first-ever Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plan Orientation Workshop in 2022. The development of the Fiji NAP is an important step forward for the USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team in the region, particularly because the request came from Fiji to the U.S. to begin this work; this indicates an interest in a dialogue on the importance of gender dimensions





in security and deterrence, and on the importance of gender equality. The NAP workshop consisted of two phases: Phase I sought to coordinate committees across the Fijian government and civil society, and Phase II developed an outline for the NAP and organized discussions across relevant groups on how to apply gender perspectives in Fijian government policies and programs.⁹⁴

The Fijian government led the Fiji NAP in close coordination with the USINDOPACOM Women, Peace, and Security team. This initiative by foreign allies and partners is crucial to building inclusive and collaborative approaches to security cooperation between the U.S. and the Pacific Islands. It also highlights the strategic thinking on behalf of the WPS team regarding proactively finding avenues for WPS and thus ensuring its long-term success. Based on interviews and public documents

outlining DOD policies in the region, it appears that the WPS team has successfully incorporated their work into exercises with key allies and partners, which reflects the whole-of-government approach as required by integrated deterrence. The effect that WPS can have on the U.S. accomplishing their goals in the region is an underrealized asset. The USINDOPACOM WPS team’s work in several countries across the region is trying to address that strategic shortcoming. By the end of 2023, WPS trainings will have taken place in approximately 30 countries in the USINDOPACOM region, most of which are Pacific Island countries.⁹⁵

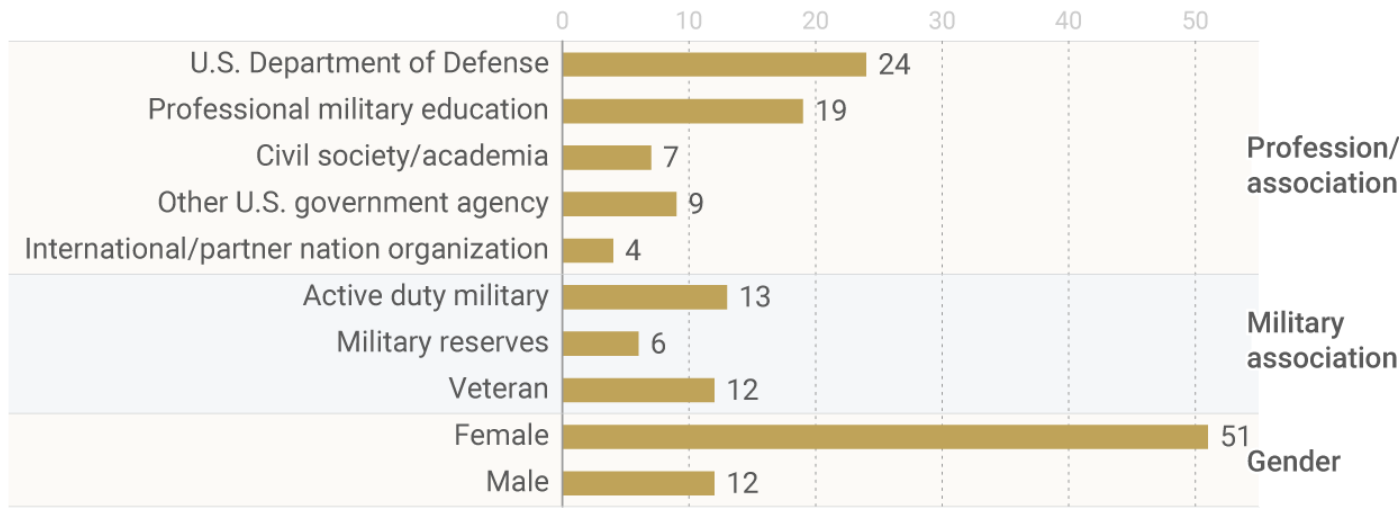
Conclusion

The incorporation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda into the U.S.’s strategic competition strategies with countries around the world is critical for several reasons. First, women’s

involvement in peace and security efforts is correlated with more democratic resilience and durable peace.⁹⁶ Next, countries where women’s rights are prioritized and their status on the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security Index is high have stronger correlations with democracy, women’s empowerment, and democratically resilient governments than countries with low gender equality.⁹⁷ Additionally, having a diverse group of women involved in peace and security decision making brings unique perspectives and experiences to the table, which can help address issues that men may overlook. In the context of the Indo-Pacific region, while traditional gender roles are shifting and progress toward women’s equality is being made, gender norms are nonetheless still deeply entrenched in many places.⁹⁸ The inclusion in strategic decision making of women across various intersecting identities is

Personnel Interviewed During the Research Process

The author interviewed 63 people. Some with multiple affiliations were counted in different categories.



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essential to ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in both peace and conflict.

The DOD has not yet fully applied the WPS agenda and a gender perspective to strategy or policymaking, which means they are missing out on the insights, opportunities, and potential gains that this perspective can bring. The importance of considering gender perspectives in security strategy goes beyond just counterterrorism needs in the Middle East. The department must find ways to integrate WPS into all regional and functional combatant commands and across the joint force. Not only is it the law, but it also provides additional tools that have thus far been overlooked and undervalued. Finally, advancing Women, Peace, and Security aligns with the core values of the Department of Defense and the department's stated commitment to promoting global stability and security. As such, prioritizing the inclusion of women in security and peace efforts is not only the right thing to do but also strategically advantageous for the Department of Defense in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Policy Recommendations

Hiring

The success that the USINDOPACOM team has had with limited time and budget is an indicator that WPS is an underutilized asset across the Department of Defense. Since the Women, Peace, and Security Act's passage in 2017, and with only five team members, the USINDOPACOM

WPS team has successfully engaged with approximately 80% of the region's countries. This team's success highlights how additional WPS personnel at all regional and functional combatant commands can improve WPS implementation across the department's geographic and functional-operational scope. The WPS team is training more gender focal points and gender advisers, but there also needs to be an increase in personnel solely dedicated to doing WPS work rather than double-hatting. This lack of a robust WPS staff across the DOD highlights the department's empty messaging on the agenda. The U.S. should clearly illustrate that WPS/gender equality is important by dedicating staff to it rather than tacking it on as an afterthought.

Policy Language

There are many areas in which DOD can begin to incorporate WPS into upcoming plans, strategies, and policies. While the ship has sailed for including WPS in the national security strategy and national defense strategy, the department should continue to be forward-thinking in how WPS can be integrated into future joint publications, manuals, and strategies. Doctrine drives policy at the department, and if senior leadership wants WPS to be an integral tool, it needs to be incorporated into all future military doctrine. This administration and future administrations should be explicit about support for WPS and how to integrate WPS into relevant strategies and doctrines.

All U.S. national security and foreign policy documents should include

a significant gender analysis. This goal can be accomplished by developing a common interagency understanding of why a gender analysis is helpful for the strategy process and how to conduct a gender analysis that is flexible enough to work across government agencies. Multiple high-level strategies have come out of the Biden administration that tackle issues of integrated deterrence. Still, more often than not, they do not incorporate a gender analysis or WPS lens – such as the White House National Cybersecurity Strategy.⁹⁹ While the administration has released gender-specific strategies, it cannot continue to silo gender- and WPS-specific policies. Instead, the White House and DOD must integrate these themes and skills across priority areas.

WPS needs to be included not just in broad, governmentwide strategy but also in DOD-specific documentation. For instance, WPS should be incorporated throughout the joint publication publishing process; while it has been integrated into many recent joint publications, it still needs to be added to many others. Gender analysis and gender sensitivity could be mandated across policy development processes, but significantly more capacity building will be required for this to happen.

Professional Military Education

Incorporating WPS and gender analysis throughout the professional military education curriculum is an important next step in educating future military leaders. WPS and gender analyses improve operational effectiveness





“ ... if the DOD wants to strive for ‘continuing the Department’s role as a global model for diversity and inclusivity’ and ‘reform(ing) the Department for greater performance and affordability by developing more effective strategies to mitigate risks and optimize mission success,’ as stated in the Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan, it is time to go beyond the bare minimum of WPS training. ”

and add to the tools that military leadership can use to solve foreign policy and national security issues around the world. The WPS agenda is relevant in most, if not all, components of the military curriculum, including staffing issues, cybersecurity, intelligence gathering, force protection, and integrated deterrence and strategic competition. Incorporating WPS throughout curricula instead of making it a one-off discussion would relieve the burden of adding additional classes while theoretically reaching every student in the military education system.

However, full incorporation of WPS and gender analysis into curricula will take substantial time, resources, and expertise. In the interim, a required WPS module for all students would be a valuable first step toward alleviating the problem of students graduating from war colleges without an understanding of WPS or gender analysis. At minimum, this module should address the primary components of the WPS agenda, how the DOD is tasked with implementing the agenda, and what the law

entails. It is long past the time for self-selected gender advisers to be the only people thinking about, implementing, and furthering the WPS agenda. Instead, if the DOD wants to strive for “continuing the Department’s role as a global model for diversity and inclusivity” and “reform(ing) the Department for greater performance and affordability by developing more effective strategies to mitigate risks and optimize mission success,” as stated in the Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan, it is time to go beyond the bare minimum of WPS training.¹⁰⁰

The department already has the infrastructure to ensure that students at the war colleges graduate with a baseline understanding of WPS through the Joint Knowledge Online trainings, since two hour-long WPS Joint Knowledge Online courses currently exist. These courses cover the basics of what WPS is and why it is useful for DOD. It would be easy for the war colleges to add completion of the two WPS courses to their graduation requirements; students whose interest was piqued could

seek out more extensive trainings, but all graduates would at least be familiar with the WPS agenda.

Funding

Funding roadblocks have made further implementation of WPS difficult. The WPS agenda was not funded through the National Defense Authorization Act until 2019. In fiscal year 2019, the funding for WPS activities was \$4 million; by fiscal 2021, it was \$8.5 million.^{101,102} Despite the increase in funding, however, this is a drop in the bucket compared to total defense spending; in the fiscal 2023 budget, Secretary Austin requested a total of \$773 billion for defense spending. While DOD has numerous budgetary demands, the budget also sets the priorities for what is and is not considered important to the department, so it is vital that WPS funding account for more than .01% of the budget allocation. More to the point, the recommendations and additional WPS efforts discussed herein cannot be carried out without additional funding. Adding extra work to the professional military education





system or incorporating WPS into joint publications takes increased capacity, which means increased staff. Having WPS staff at multiple levels, ranging from active duty to civilians to contractors, allows for increased capacity and flexibility in the Pentagon and across the joint force.

Additional Research

The above work is just the beginning of research into what is sure to be a fruitful area for

both those in academia and those aligned with DOD. The overlap between WPS and strategic competition in its various forms (great-power competition, statecraft, integrated deterrence) have a lot to offer both to those working on WPS issues and to those working on strategic competition. WPS is a potentially transformative way for senior leaders at DOD to think about the security issues facing the U.S. Additional research in the U.S. WPS community focused on

strategic competition can make this agenda more consistent and sustainable in the DOD and across the interagency. Additional work and research in this area across a variety of subjects might include a feminist analysis on statecraft in the Indo-Pacific region, women's economic empowerment as a means for positive and sustainable peace, a gendered lens on climate resilience, and mainstreaming gender analysis into departmental trainings and initiatives. □



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- 48 There are a variety of reasons other CCMs have smaller WPS teams, including budget, resources, and interest.
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- 57 Interview conducted on Zoom with an individual from the Department of Defense on April 29, 2022.
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- 59 Interview conducted on Zoom with an individual from the military on October 19, 2021.





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