



ACADEMIA MILITAR

Gender perspectives in the Special Operations Forces: A Systematic Literature Review

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Mestrado Integrado em Ciências Militares, na especialidade de Infantaria

Relatório Científico Final do Trabalho de Investigação Aplicada

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EPIGRAPH

“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.”

Theodor Seuss Geisel

DEDICATION

To my parents, brother, comrades and friends for the unconditional love and support over these years.

I owe them everything

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people, without whom I would not have been able to complete this research, and without I would not have made it through my master's degree.

I want to express my deep gratitude to my thesis advisor Infantry Major João Reis, PhD for your support, patience, time, guidance, and in particular availability to clarify my doubts when needed. For all the words of motivation and for always pushing me to give my best.

My special regards to Sofia Menezes, PhD for providing guidance, feedback, availability and language revision throughout this project.

Lieutenant-Colonel Paulo Machado, for the insights regarding gender integration

I would also like to thank the Erasmus+ Program for the opportunity to travel to Poland to develop my research and to *Akademia Wojsk Lądowych* for receiving me.

My sincere thanks Major Pietrakowski for all the help and friendship during my stay in Poland and for teaching me to “stay frosty”.

A special thank to all my family, friends and comrades, whose assistance was a milestone in the completion of this project.

I must express my very profound gratitude to my father Emídio, my mother Manuela and my brother André for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my entire life. This would not be possible to accomplish without you. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to provide insights about gender perspectives in the special operations forces. The methodological approach was focused on a systematic literature review, with the objective of assessing opportunities regarding gender integration in the special operation forces.

Most of the special operations forces of Western armies, have opened all combat positions for women, including in the special operations forces. However, the percentage of women serving in these positions is very limited.

Women have participated in direct combat, inclusive with special operations forces. Nevertheless, they were never fully integrated in the teams, only participated as enablers providing capacities that operators do not have and are considered crucial to the mission.

Our research has evidenced that special operations forces benefit with the integration of women in some roles, more specifically in special reconnaissance missions. Therefore, we believe that in the near future, servicewomen will succeed in recruitment and operational training in the special operations forces, and it is probable that their first combat first role will be within these tasks.

Keywords: Special operations forces; Women; Combat; NATO

RESUMO

O objetivo desta investigação, é fornecer informação relativamente às perspetivas de género nas forças de operações especiais. A abordagem metodológica, foi baseada numa revisão sistemática da literatura, com o objetivo de avaliar as oportunidades relativas à integração de género nas forças de operações especiais.

A maior parte dos exércitos do Ocidente, já abriram funções de combate para as mulheres, inclusive nas forças de operações especiais. Contudo, a percentagem de mulheres que servem nestas funções é muito limitada.

As mulheres já participaram em combate, inclusivamente com as forças de operações especiais, porém, nunca como parte integrante das equipas, apenas participaram como facilitadoras, providenciando capacidades que os operadores não possuíam e que se relevavam cruciais para a missão.

A nossa pesquisa demonstrou, que as forças de operações especiais beneficiariam com a integração das mulheres em algumas funções, mais especificamente em missões de reconhecimento especial. Portanto acreditamos que num futuro próximo, militares do sexo feminino terão sucesso em completar o recrutamento e treino operacional, nas forças de operações especiais, e possivelmente as suas primeiras funções serão integradas no reconhecimento especial.

Palavras-chave: Forças de Operações Especiais, Mulheres, Combate, NATO

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS LIST

CA	Civilian Affairs
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CST	Cultural Support Teams
GCC	Ground Close Combat
HNS	Host Nation Support
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
MA	Military Assistance
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SAS	Special Air Service
SBS	Special Boat Service
SEAL	Sea Air and Land
SMB	Special Missions Battalion
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SR	Special Reconnaissance
SU	Subject Terms
TAA	Training, Advising and Assisting
TI	Title
TX	Text
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
YJP	Yekineyen Parastina Jin

INTRODUCTION

This manuscript is a scientific report of a master's degree program in military science, investigates the topic "Gender Perspectives in the Special Operations Forces: A Systematic Literature Review".

Regarding the special operations forces, allegedly they began to have a greater focus in the Second World War after the major participants such as Great Britain, Germany and United States of America (USA) realized their importance in sabotage and reconnaissance missions and partisan activities behind enemy lines (Shamir & Ben-Ari, 2018).

In light of the above, Britain established the Special Operations Executive, which was an intelligence gathering and sabotage agency and developed numerous commando units to harass German forces, linked up with partisan forces in Axis occupied territory, and conducted strategic operations in Europe (Johnson, 2006).

Moreover, on the postwar, the world witnessed an increasing succession of limited insurgencies, while British and French forces faced nationalist insurgencies in their colonial territories. Thus, these counterinsurgency campaign saw extensive use of Special Operations Forces (SOF) units (Johnson, 2006). Meanwhile, the USA and the Soviet Union fought a battle of ideology over global spheres of influence more commonly known as the cold war (Pedahzur, 2016).

In the second half of the 20th century, the range of SOF missions had expanded to insurgency operations against Nazi Germany, counterinsurgency and nation-building operations. In the 1980s and 1990s SOF were restructured in many armed forces around the globe in order to synchronize activities of special units from different branches (Shamir & Ben-Ari, 2018).

By the end of the Cold war, SOF started to be employed in all types of operations, not only unconventional missions, but also those in support of NATO conventional forces specially reconnaissance missions (Moran, 2016).

SOF has had an increased focus since 2001 (McCabe, 2017) and have become prominent in contemporary counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations (Moran, 2016). For instance, as stated by Lamb (2014), SOF have been the units chosen to fight irregular threats (i.e. terrorism and insurgency). As reinforced by Johnson (2006), SOF are considered the force of choice and the best solution against a spectrum of irregular threats,

both civilian and military leaders have been supporting SOF for irregular warfare, in a way that has never happened before in the history of Special operations community, In that regard, the US SOF have been deploying forces in the last 15 years worldwide associated with intelligence cooperation, these efforts have been heavily effective against terrorism (Byman & Merritt, 2018).

In the United States and many NATO countries there have been an increasing number of requests from simply the integration of women, in all of the armed forces, to the right to participate in ground close combat roles (Kennedy-Pipe, 2000). Although many countries have taken steps towards removing the limitations to women, in accessing ground close combat roles there is still a slow growth in recruitment numbers (Cawkill, Rogers, Knight, & Spear, 2010).

But, from what we analyzed of the special operations forces during the war period, and, in recent days, these forces are still dominated by male gender perspectives. Some research regarding SOF and women come from the USA, studies such as those from Gasca, Voneida e Goedeck (2015) and Turnley (2019). However, the aforementioned studies essentially referred to the legislative update, where the US SOF adopted a gender-neutral occupational performance (Doan & Portillo, 2017; Gasca et al., 2015), which means women were no longer barred from applying to SOF's rigorous pipeline.

In addition, we have also learned from Reis, Gonçalves, Menezes e Kaczynska (2020) that in some of the European Union countries such as Portugal, women have not been part of SOF. In Denmark as well no female has been able to pass the selection process even though female soldiers perform various roles in the Danish armed forces (Haugegaard, 2019).

However, according to Turnley (2019) in the US SOF women can be integrated in SOF community in a few ways similar to part-time, these elite teams include women for a short period of time in order to get capabilities provided by females (e.g. talking to other women due to religious beliefs) and then release them when these capabilities are no longer needed. In fact Gasca et al. (2015), reinforces that female SOF enablers have already made significant contributions to both conventional and SOF missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as the ability in gaining trust and access to indigenous female populations. Moreover, Haugegaard (2019) claims that women have been deployed with the Danish SOF, these female specialists participated in selected SOF training courses so they could be attached to their teams for deployment.

To the best of our knowledge, the existing literature does not focus enough on gender perspectives in the special operations forces; that is, for example, there is still no consensus on whether or not women on duty should access combat missions. Thus, our research intends to provide some relevant insights in that regard.

The aim of this research is to synthesize the current knowledge about the gender perspectives in the special operations forces (SOF), in order to understand into what extent different sex roles are integrated in this type of forces. In that regard there is an underlying question that emerges from the literature: Do women have the same opportunities as men in accessing the special operations forces across all military operations?

This manuscript is structured in five chapters: after the introduction, the second chapter presents a theoretical framework, based on a short conceptualization about the main themes. On the third chapter, we focused the methodological process emanated from a systematic literature review. The fourth chapter focus on the discussion.

Finally, the conclusions are presented along with some contributions, limitations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER I - CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MAIN THEMES

The armed forces around the world of the modern democracies have been suffering a cut down in personnel in the last two decades (i.e. less is more), notwithstanding the SOF have had an impressive growth in terms of funds, units, personnel and missions (Shamir & Ben-Ari, 2018). This idea is reinforced by Marsh, Kiras e Blocksome (2015, p. 2), who states that “there has been a proliferation of SOF across the globe over the past 20 years”, probably due the positive returns on investment, since SOF are comparatively small-size and highly effective in combat terms (Burgos, 2018). These arguments clearly show the relevance of SOF in the armed forces around the world; therefore, it is in that regard that our dissertation tries to shed some light on the SOF missions through the lenses of gender mainstreaming.

2.1 Unconventional Warfare

“Unconventional Warfare consists in “operations and activities that are conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area” (US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014, p.11). According to Byman and Merritt (2018) the original function of SOF was irregular (unconventional) warfare, which covered not only subversion, sabotage and intelligence, but also training, advising and assisting (TAA) local guerrilla forces in hostile territory. “Unconventional warfare differs from other forms of wars by the use of irregular, local or proxy forces against local (...) governments” (Banasik, 2016, p. 38). Johnson (2006) refers the importance of knowing the cultural habits and language, for SOF members, in order to work along with indigenous individuals. These skills would help in supporting successfully local insurgencies against governments.

Unconventional warfare includes: guerrilla warfare, covert and clandestine operations, sabotage, subversion and reconnaissance. The goal is to help winning the war by working with local populations, in order to do so, SOF must win indigenous forces trust so they live, eat, share living conditions with them (Simons & Tucker, 2003).

As stated by Lewis (2019), SOF are trained to build local partnerships, and be aware of the local environment, in order to work in politically sensitive areas. In addition, Fridovich and Krawchuk (2007) argue that unconventional warfare is used along with foreign internal

defense, because it is a more sophisticated method of addressing threats, since a country cannot simply enter another independent country and conduct direct actions (kill-or-capture missions). According to Frunzeti (2012) unconventional warfare characteristics are not simply the antithesis of conventional warfare, because they can coexist in the same actions in order to ensure success i.e. in a deployment might be SOF elements who are providing TAA to locals, and other forces in conventional combat.

2.2 SOF missions

Before focusing on the SOF missions, we will firstly find a definition for SOF. Shamir and Ben-Ari (2018) define SOF as high-quality personnel selection through rigorous tests and trials, trained for intensively large periods, that can operate in small teams behind enemy lines. Ratifying this previous definition, McCabe (2017, p. 1) states that “SOF are elite, highly trained and educated personnel who conduct operations that typically exceed the capabilities of conventional force”.

On the other hand, Pedahzur (2016) states that defining SOF is a challenging task, since it is difficult to find a common definition around the world’s militaries. Nevertheless, there are some authors who take a first step in differentiating the special forces. For instance, Brailey (2005, p. 7) defines SOF as “those discrete elements of legitimate state-based military forces that are specifically selected, trained and organized to conduct special operations” distinguishing from other special forces units such as, paratroopers, who carry out airborne conventional operations, or marines, that carry amphibious conventional missions.

SOF are highly specialized, especially because they operate as a small, agile operational elements, which have a small imprint (Nicolaescu, 2017). These elements are generally used to solve strategic issues, due to their expertise in planning, synchronizing and execution of tactical actions (Lewis, 2019). Furthermore, different SOF share some commonalities, such as being specific to a country requirements, besides a shared elite status (Brailey, 2005).

We have learned from Martin (2014) that USASOC (US Army Special Operations Command) developed two concepts; surgical strike (direct actions) where SOF are employed in precision activities, these are short-term missions and do not necessarily accomplish anything sustainable for the nation, and special (unconventional) warfare, which is a long

term effort in supporting emergent and local solutions and involve a combined use of lethal and non-lethal actions. Executed primarily by trained forces that fight alongside indigenous individuals, in different combat formations and have a full understanding of the cultural environment and language, specialized in small-unit tactics, subversion and sabotage.

As reported by Kiras (2019), direct or indirect missions, points to the their control and effects along with regards in time. However, the terms direct and indirect actions are used as well to explain different SOF objectives and skill sets, which SOF units tend to specialize in. This can be confusing and misleading, thus special operations community stopped using these terms because they weren't helpful (Lamb, 2014). Therefore authors seek to find new concepts, Moran (2016, p. 1) gives the black and white notions, “there are two types of operations: «white» is the acknowledged open combat, kill/capture missions and also training/mentoring local forces and «black» also known as covert or clandestine kill/capture and assistance to local forces”.

Unlike conventional forces, SOF tend to operate in a non-transparent way and its missions often try to minimize collateral damage (Martin, 2014).

According to McCabe (2017), these operations are only successful when conducted by SOF as a result of their training, equipment, experience, leadership and education they receive throughout their careers. That is why SOF are now consistently deployed in a diverse array of missions around the globe (Long, 2016).

The SOF are a valuable tool for political and military leaders due to, the sum of their capabilities give these forces ways to address promptly problems in a successful and economical point of view (Kiras, 2015).

2.2.1 Direct actions

The ability of SOF to conduct critical missions with both speed and precision or patience and discretion has been proved over the last 30 years, and these actions have resulted in strategic consequences (Marsh et al., 2015) mainly due to “technological advances, particularly in command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillances and reconnaissance, have expanded SOF capability and reach” (Long, 2014, p. 540).

According to Lamb (2014), the direct approach is about SOF engaging a discreet threat themselves. Furthermore, Simons and Tucker (2003) state that, direct action, are short-

duration operations directed at specific targets such as raids and ambushes. It may involve rescuing hostages, eradicating an enemy force or position. Usually are high strategic or operational value, missions. Long (2014, p. 544) also describe these operations as “rapid offensive operations to destroy or capture a target, usually by means of secrecy and surprise”. Moreover, Kiras (2019) says that these missions are limited in time and space, in case of failure, the military politically and strategy consequences are significant.

For NATO (2013, p. 1-1) “direct action entails short-durations strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted with specialized capabilities to seize, destroy, exploit, recover or damage designated targets in hostile, denied or diplomatically and/or politically sensitive environments”.

2.2.2 Special reconnaissance

NATO (2013b, p. 1-1) defines special reconnaissance (SR), as “reconnaissance and surveillance actions normally conducted in a clandestine or covert manner to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces”. However, Long (2014, p. 544) added the following: “special reconnaissance involves covert collection of intelligence typically in denied enemy areas”. Unlike direct actions, which can be over in minutes, but closely related, a unit performing a SR collection can use a static observation post for weeks, also there is no need for the surprise factor, normally the presence of this type of SOF units is clandestine, discreet or covert. These missions are carried out in order to collect information and its principles are cover, exploit and reporting (Westberg, 2016).

An SR collection mission can be clandestine,¹ discreet², and overt³, their purpose involves intelligence requirements, desired end state and time available to carry out the mission (Westberg, 2016). As Brailey (2005, p. 39) states in “SR missions the forces provide target acquisitions, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance”. For Kiras (2019)

¹ Clandestine operations where the operation is conducted by uniformed soldiers and their activities cannot be confirmed or denied.

² Discreet operations are carried without military uniform, and the sending nation can call plausible deniability.

³ Overt operations means that its purpose and existence is open to public knowledge.

special reconnaissance will change and overshadow all other roles and missions due to increased necessity for intelligence, as SOF grow.

2.2.3 Military Assistance

After some research on this subject, specially Long's (2014) paper on NATO, we have found that Military Assistance (MA) has been partially supplanted by the term Host Nation Support (HNS). Having this in mind, the NATO official definition is “the civil and military assistance rendered in peace, crisis or conflict by a Host Nation to allied forces and organizations which are located on, operating in or transiting through the Host Nations’ territory” (NATO, 2013a, p. 1). As Otzulis and Ozolina (2017) stated HNS involves a wide range of different public administration institutions which cover a wide spectrum of responsibilities namely infrastructure, economics, finances, internal security, but also responsibility of the send nation and host nation armed forces. Furthermore, when developing this type of policies, it is important to have intercorrelations between armed forces and the civilian infrastructure, so as to receive allied forces.

2.3 Women in the military

According to Mankowski, Tower, Brandt & Mattocks (2015) women used to serve mainly in gender-specific roles, such as, medical services, administration, and communication. King (2013) states that women have served in the military as nurses, since the 19th century in the Crimean War and American Civil War. Before the middle of the twentieth century, the armed forces tended to exclude women, from positions other than in medical roles. Since then, Western armed forces started to allow women in a wider range of combat service support roles such as logistics, maintenance, military police and personnel administration (Barry, 2013). But, to the best of our knowledge, the Second World War was marked as the starting point of female integration in the military (King, 2013).

The inclusion process was different from country to country. For instance, British women were allowed to enter military service in the 1950s (Fitriani, Cooper & Matthews 2016). Moreover, King (2013) states that women served in administration and as office staff, and some flew planes, drove vehicles, operated radar and ant-aircraft guns (even though they

were not authorized to fire them) during the Second World War. After the end of the Second World War, the Women's Royal Army Corps was finally recognized as having military ranks, and only then they were able to bear arms. After 1989, servicewomen were allowed to assume Royal Air Force combat roles and, in 1990, they were allowed to serve on Royal Navy Ships. However, women still were not allowed to go to frontline combat roles in the Royal Air Force Regiment, Infantry, Royal Armoured Corps and the Royal Marines (Fitriani et al., 2016).

On the other hand, during the Second World War, Norway open non-combat positions for women, in order to have more men in combat positions. In 1985, all positions were opened up for voluntary women, but after the end of cold war the number of men has dropped to an all-time low in 2002, which helped the discussion of equal treatment in military service. In 2013, this practice was changed and introduced a selective gender-neutral conscriptions in Norwegian Armed Forces (Steder & Rones, 2019).

In the USA, this inclusion also started in the Second World War, the upcoming need for manpower impelled the congress to open more service roles, and in 1942 Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Marine Corps Women's Reserve and later on Navy Nurse Corps and others, started to open service roles. By the end of the war nearly 400.000 women had serve in the armed forces of which 543 died in the line of duty and 84 were held prisoners of war. In 1948, under the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, women could not serve in aircraft engaged in combat or likely to be engaged missions, and limited the proportion of 2% for the enlisted force and 10% for officers (Kamarck, 2015). Nevertheless, this quota limiting law was abolished in 1967, and legal restrictions on roles of women, in the armed forces, were removed in 1990s. As well as the "risk rule" which excluded women from units with high probability of engaging in ground combat such as infantry, armour, artillery, combat engineers, air-defense artillery and special forces (Barry, 2013). On January, 2013, the Secretary of Defense rescinded all ground combat restrictions for women, and implement this law no later than January, 2016, (Kamarck, 2015) in order to start gender-neutral occupational performance standards for all positions within the military (Doan & Portillo, 2017). After the pass of this law, women's eligibility to serve in Ground Close Combat roles was reinforced after two female graduate from US Army Ranger's School in 2015 (Fitriani et al., 2016).

In Canada, since 1980s, there have been efforts to change the male demographics in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). In 1977, women made up to 5.6% of the forces, and in 1995

it was 11% bearing more than 14.000 women serving. Despite the efforts to reach a quota of 25% of women in 2017, there were still about 14.000 women in CAF, and only 2,5% of regular force army combat arms, which indicates the proportion of combat roles remains very small (Lane, 2017).

Nonetheless, 35 per cent of the Kurdish forces belong to the Women's Protection Units (Yekineyen Parastina Jin, YJP), in an estimated total of 15.000 female Kurdish fighters who engaged in a fight against Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq. Formed in 2012 as an autonomous women's army that has more than 100 battalions conducting operations across Syria's Kurdistan region (Fitriani et al., 2016).

Poland first accepted women in national military schools, in the year of 2003, also a year later women were allowed to volunteer and serve in all military posts. As of 2016 Polish Army had 3.000 female deaths in combat (all in the Second World War) a total of 100.000 personnel in the armed forces which 2.385 (2%) were women (Fitriani et al., 2016). In France women are employed in close combat roles, in fact as of 2006 19% of the French military were females and 1,7% served in combat infantry as they are allowed to serve in all roles except submarines and riot control gendarmerie (Cawkill et al., 2010) although according to Fitriani et al. (2016, p. 18) that number as dropped to 14% comprising 33.000 women .

Furthermore, in the last 25 years there has been a tendency to include women as engineers, in artillery, military intelligence, aviation and signals however most armies continue to exclude women from roles that require close combat with the enemy such as Infantry and Armoured units (Barry, 2013). According to Haring (2013) in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden women already serve in close combat specialties furthermore the Israel Defense Force women comprise about 34% of the force.

Although women are allowed to join all types of combat units in some western armies, very few women have in fact served in close combat roles, a major fact behind these numbers is the very demanding physical requirements for such roles (Barry, 2013). In the Norwegian Armed forces the share of women has been low or none in combat units (Steder & Rones, 2019). However King (2013), states that a small minority of physically capable women were judged only on their performance and not their gender, might be integrated into the infantry.

Women have proven their value in combat, they have been recognized for their heroism, two earning Silver Star medals (Burelli, 2012). Moreover 161 women have died,

1015 were wounded in action and more than 9000 women have received Army Combat Action Badges (Kamarck, 2015).

In sum the trajectory of female participation in war has been clear, from the Second World War to 1970 female role was minor and supportive of the military with their own corps. In the next 20 years until the beginning of 1990 women started to integrate in the armed forces, but still the combat functions were closed to them, and from 1990 until today the integration process has been increasing in numbers, as combat service support were opened up (King, 2013).

2.3.1 Women integration in SOF

Women have served along with SOF units, in order to build relationships with locals by gathering intelligence, as some countries have units or training programs, such as China, Russia or South Korea. In other countries such as in the United States servicewomen are employed in Cultural Support Teams supporting SOF, and in the United Kingdom, women were employed during Second World War in their Special Reconnaissance Regiment (Steder & Rones, 2019).

In the United States armed forces, female SOF enablers have made significant contributions in SOF missions, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as the ability to interact with female adults and children, due to their customs and religious beliefs from interacting with males (Gasca et al., 2015). As a result of their capacity to “change” their identity from male-like authority as a soldier and their female side in order to obtain information from both men and women. (Haugegaard, 2019).

Moreover, women serve in army SOF as enablers, although they were not allowed in SOF until 2016 they were integrated in SOF community, similar to an external contract in civilian business, acquiring unique capabilities when needed and then relieve them when they were no longer needed (Turnley, 2019). They most likely serve in one of these units within the Special Operations; Civilian Affairs (CA) focuses on engaging with locals and building strategic connections with local leaders; Military Information Support Operations (MISO) a unit focused to gather intelligence and analysis; and Cultural Support Teams (CST) a recent unit composed exclusively by females that deploy with special forces, specifically to interact with women and children (Doan & Portillo, 2017). In 2016, after the law passed and positions

were opened in SOF, women were able to apply to join SOF, however as of the publication of Turnley's article in 2019, no females had successfully passed the selection tests for admission in SOF teams, that is why there are not yet any female members of SOF teams (Turnley, 2019).

According to Gasca et al. (2015), the South Korean case is a successful example of gender integration. In fact, a small number of female operators are part of 707th Special Missions Battalion (SMB), a South Korean elite counterterrorism unit, as their role is respected by the male members of the unit and is defined by their unique capabilities and access gained based on gender. These women are fully integrated in a SOF unit, they have gender-neutral training and performance standards that allow them to be included in the full spectrum of the 707th SMB missions.

Even though this is a very good example for the South Korean armed forces, this country still struggles with women integration in other combat units, women are prohibited by law from entering combat units other than 707th SMB and from participating in combat directly (Hong, 2002).

The Norwegian armed forces approach is different from other nations. After 1985 all positions (i.e. combat roles) in Norwegian armed forces were opened to women (Steder & Rones, 2019). However, Rones and Steder (2017) argue that no women have won a position among the selected men in Norwegian SOF (as cited in Steder & Rones, 2019, p. 54).

Therefore, in 2014, the Norwegian armed forces established a pilot project name *Jegertroppen*, which is an all-female SOF platoon, here women compete against other women and not men, in order for women to have a fairer selection process (Steder & Rones, 2019). However Gasca et al. (2015), states that for a successful female integration SOF, women are required to meet the same standards as men. Although having a different selection process, based on women's physical terms and capabilities, the education in the *Jegertroppen* after selection, is based on the same physical and operations requirements as men (Steder & Rones, 2019).

CHAPTER II - METHODOLOGY

As mentioned before, this dissertation follows a systematic literature review. The aim of this research is to provide a state of the art of the existing literature, in order to develop new knowledge (Tranfield, Denyer & Smart 2003). According to Thorpe, Holt, Macpherson e Pittaway (2005) a systematic literature review intends to bring together the largest number of existing studies relevant to the research, regardless of their published location or background. In sum, is an analysis of current data from other authors research studies (Boyle, Connolly & MacKay 2016).

One of the main objectives of a systematic review is to follow a methodology that ensures clarity and replicability (Adams, Bessant & Phelps 2006), that is why “ The review strategy has a number of stages designed to provide a systematic and explicit method for the review(..)” (Pittaway, Robestson, Munir, Denyer & Neely 2004, p. 138). In this dissertation the method used was provided by Thorpe et al. (2005) and Tranfield et al. (2003) which is composed by three phases, starting with planning the review, conducting the review, and reporting and dissemination, nevertheless Pollock and Berge (2018) argue that there are different types of methods for conducting a systematic review for different types of questions.

According to Gough, Thomas e Oliver (2012) systematic reviews can be applied to answer an array of different questions, and so they argue that key principles, such as being comprehensive, systematic and transparent should be used by the authors with the purpose to better understand current issues (Snilstveit, Oliver & Vojtkova 2012). In order to do so with the needed clarity, we chose to limit the review only to published journal articles (i.e. peer reviewed).

A systematic review is motivated by an interest in a topic, and has to answer a question that clarifies the problem to be addressed (Pollock & Berge, 2018). The question addressed must be accurately defined, because it will dictate which articles are to be included or rejected (Greenhalgh, 1997). Considering this, all articles that are not related with the military sciences are to be rejected as well as those related with military sciences but from other points of view such as medical studies about personnel, missions training and others.

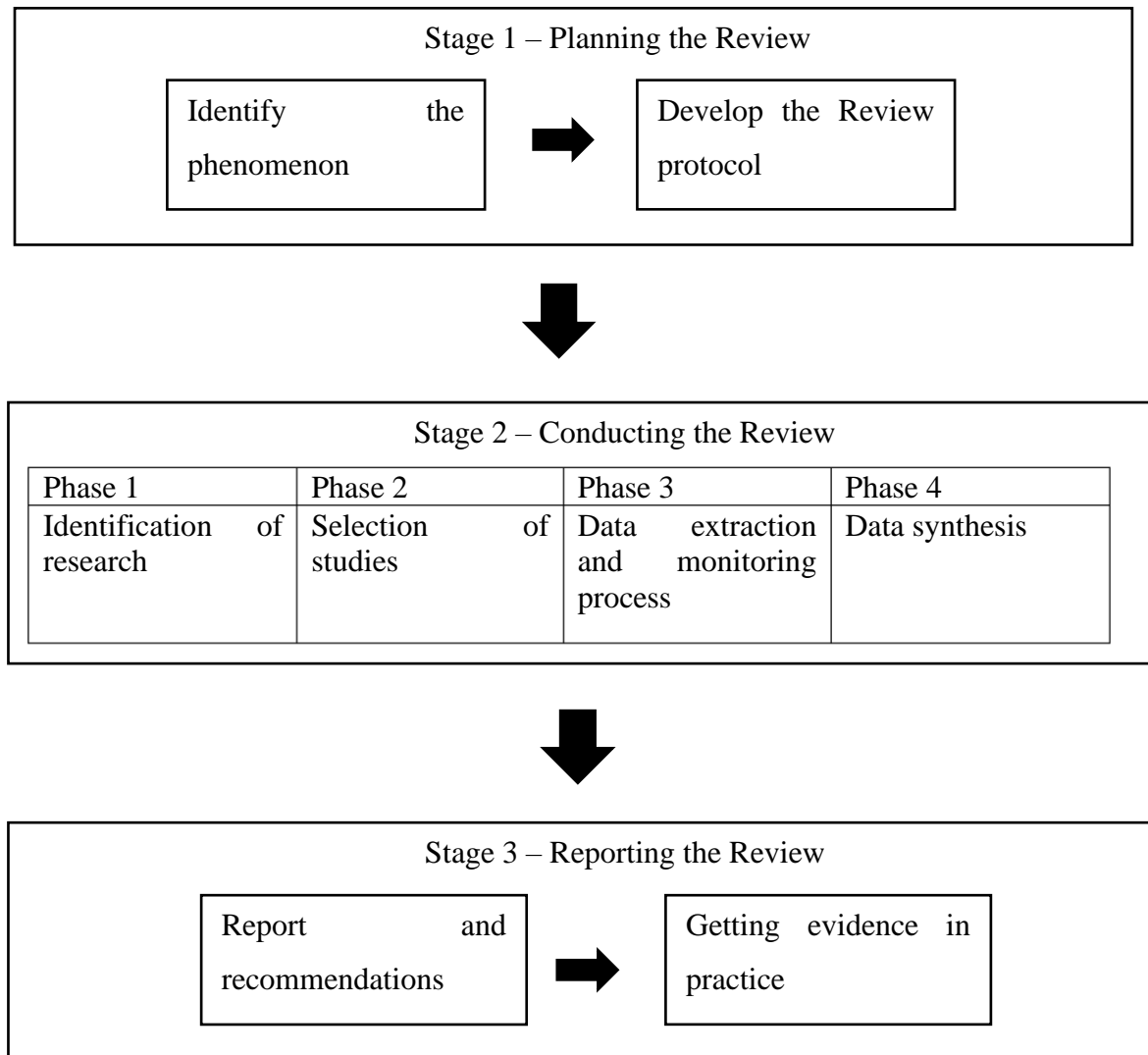


Figure 1 - Process used for the Systematic review

Adapted from Thorpe et al. (2005) and Tranfield et al. (2003)

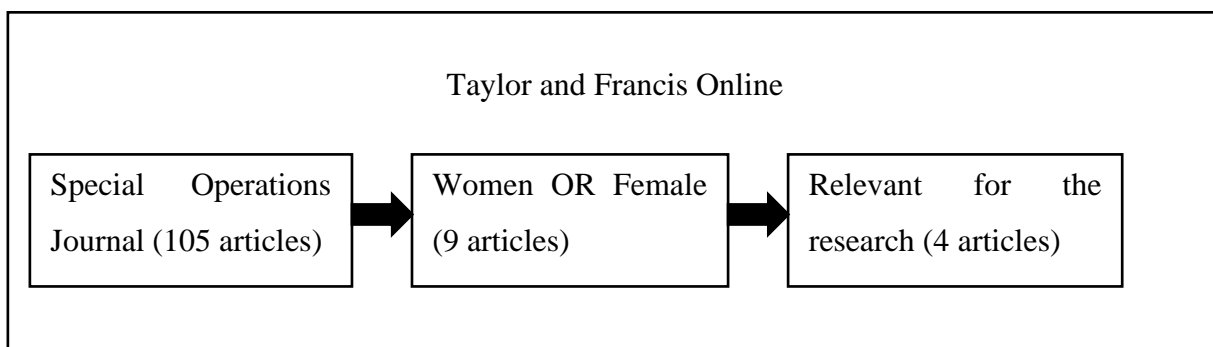
In light of the above, EBSCO database and the search engine Taylor and Francis Online were used. The EBSCO database was chosen because of its high coverage, as it contains other databases such as JSTOR, LexisNexis, HathiTrust, DOAJ and more; the Taylor and Francis Online search engine was selected because it comprises more than 4.200.000 journal articles, in particular, from the Special Operations Journal, where studies about the Special Operations Forces around the world are published.

The search was conducted in March 19th, 2020, and the search strings were developed based on the keywords identified, using a form of brainstorming, according to the criteria for the study in particular “Special Operations”, because it concerns the main theme relative to

the study; “Women”, “Female”, were chosen to integrate gender as a foundation of this study; “Combat”, was added to provide insights about service women; finally “NATO”, because the conceptualizations of the main themes was grounded in the NATO’s concepts. These keywords similarly to the study conducted by Pittaway et al. (2004) were made into search strings and the process of identification included a first raw search about the themes and use the main concepts as a base products of a brainstorm. The search strings were used in the search process using Boolean operators (Schmeisser, 2013). Our intention was to limit the review to women who serve in combat roles, although it was considered important the keyword “servicewomen”, we chose not to include in the search string because it relates to all women in the military service.

The articles selected were exclusively in the English Language with the purpose of eliminating misunderstandings.

Table 1 - Articles collected from Taylor and Francis Online



Starting with the search engine from Taylor and Francis Online, at first, we restrain to the Special Operations Journal so we can get research directly related with the special operations’ academic community. Thus, we retrieved 105 articles published exclusively by special operations scholars by using the search string “Women” OR “Female” in the Title, the search was down to 9 articles, which 4 of them were found relevant to the research, as shown in Table 1.

Table 2 - Results by using the research string “Special Operations” AND “Women”

	EBSCO	Search: Special operations AND Women
Search	Special Operations: Title Women: Text	141
Document types	Articles (peer reviewed)	117
Language	English	109
Duplicates	Removed	80
Relevant		6 (2)

The second search, observed in Table 2, used Special Operations in the Title (TI) AND Women in all the text (TX), the string women was searched in the full text, in order expand the search, because of the gap found in this subject, which provided 141 results after selecting Academic Journals it was down to 117 after we selected English language 80 were left, 6 of them relevant, 4 were duplicates (from the previous search) and eliminated, leaving only 2.

Table 3 - Results by using the research string “Women” AND “Combat”

	EBSCO	Search: Women AND Combat
Search	Women: Title Combat: Title	401
Document types	Articles (peer reviewed)	318
Language	English	290
Duplicates	Removed	136
Relevant		9

The following search, presented in Table 3, used Women in the Title(TI) AND Combat in the Title(TI), limiting the review to title searches is useful when faced with considerably big lists to review in short period of time (Pittaway et al., 2004).

In view of the foregoing EBSCO returned 401 results after selecting Academic Journals it was down to 318 and after we selected English language 290 were left 20 them relevant, with this many articles to analyze we chose to sort them with the help of a bibliographic software Mendeley where a string such as Ground Close (Combat) were added and ended up with 9 articles.

Table 4 - Results by using the research string “Special Operations” AND “NATO”

	EBSCO	Search: Special Operations AND NATO
Search	Special Operations: Title NATO: Text	630
Document types	Articles (peer reviewed)	96
Language	English	80
Duplicates	Removed	53
Relevant		17

Table 4 show us the last search used the strings Special operations in the title (TI) and NATO in the text (TX) in order to have a better understanding of SOF missions, training and access in NATO SOF, the search provided 630 articles which 17 were found relevant.

Table 5 - Resume of the search

	Where	String	Number of articles
Search	Taylor and Francis (SOJ)	Women AND Female	4
Search	EBSCO	Special Operations AND Women	2
Search	EBSCO	Women AND Combat	9
Search	EBSCO	Special Operations AND NATO	17
Total			32

From 1.194 documents 1.158 were rejected comprising a total of 32 relevant articles, as a result of a number of searches such as shown in Table 5. After the selection the articles were separated in three main themes, the ones who focus Special Operations Forces and NATO; the ones focusing on Women in combat; and finally, the ones related both with Special Operations and Women.

3.1 Bibliometric analysis

According to Broadus (1987), bibliometrics is the quantitative study of publications, bibliographic citations, and their alternatives (i.e. monographs, chapters or periodical articles), that follows a structure and is expressed in physical units. Bibliometric techniques, are used by researchers, to evaluate the progress and distributions of the scientific articles under study (Tsai, 2011).

There are some databases that provide analytical tools, capable of analyzing the search results (e.g. Scopus), which may provide some insights, about the most productive authors or the productivity over time, specific to that search (Andres, 2009). Since EBSCO database does not provide such tools, the data collection and the graphic design had to be handmade by the author.

Bibliometric indicators, are used to assess primarily authors and journals (Andres, 2009), but given the specification of this work, we chose to evaluate the timeline of the publications and their subjects, in a similar way to Perkmann et al. (2013). Andres (2009), also states that these indicators must not be used in isolation, as a measure of performance, that is why, following the bibliometric study a content analysis takes place.

3.2 Content analysis

A look into overall picture of the data and articles, such as suggested by Andres (2009) was carried out during the search of raw bibliographic data. It was a simple overview of the data in the documents found, with the purpose of identifying publications, that were not related to our research question and area of study (e.g. Medical special operations), seeking to minimize mistakes concerning the accuracy of the data provided by the database.

Content analysis, is the process that analyses qualitative textual data, and groups it in categories, in order to identify patterns and is also an analytic method, that synthesizes data with the intention, of giving meaning to phenomenon of the study (Given, 2008), and allows researchers to analyze unstructured data (Krippendorff, 2004) . Harwood and Garry (2003) use the word malleable, to describe this technique because it analyses a widespread of research studies, and diverse kinds of data, in other words it is a flexible tool that is able to be adapted to different situations, that is different studies with different objectives and data.

The patterns, mentioned in the paragraph above help researchers learn plenty about institutions, organizations, groups and individuals (Mills, Eurepos & Wiebe 2010).

According to Given (2008) the categories identified must be clustered in a way that guarantees comprehension, covering all categories identifiable so that all data can be categorized and exclusive, this ensures that there is no redundancy (i.e. an article cannot belong to more than one category), this will strengthen the reliability of the analyses and conclusions that will be drawn.

Qualitative content analysis is applied to social sciences, when there is textual data to be analyzed, it is used in analyzing perceptions but the researchers recognize that the interpretation might be subjective (Given, 2008). There are other weaknesses related to the objectivity because this technique demands a rigorous analysis of the categories and only considers frequencies (Harwood & Garry, 2003). To mitigate this weaknesses Harwood and Garry (2003) the data must be sequentially analyzed, and also a well described data collection process improves accuracy to the analysis.

However, Given (2008) states that a method for improving trustworthiness is through data triangulation using more than one researcher to analyze the data and search for common or contradictory ideas, this process provides grounding to the conclusions drawn by the authors. Moreover, Humphreys and Wang (2018), suggest that, in the social sciences, the most widely used technique to analyze textual data, is to compare them between groups and through the years.

It is only possible to conduct content analysis, when there is physical record of communication (Mills et al., 2010), in our particular case, this forms of communication comes in the shape of journal articles. This method, can be achieved by using low-tech materials, because it is sufficient for small amounts of text (Given, 2008) that is the reason we didn't use content analyzing software such as NVivo, ATLAS.ti or MAXQDA.

The articles were organized, and then read in chronological order (Mustak, Jaakkola & Halinen 2013) so we can get a sense of the subject, and understand the evolution of women integration over time (Gabbott, 2004). The reading process, consisted in a full-text read of the articles and the subsequent relevant data extraction, which was analyzed and synthesized according to the review process (Schmeisser, 2013).

3.2.1 Categories

In order to organize the findings of the content analysis there are some analytic units that must be developed, designated as categories, these should be related to the phenomenon of the study (Given, 2008). Moreover, the categories defined should ensure the description of the phenomenon so data can be placed in these categories, on which analysis will be conducted as a means to withdraw the most relevant ideas (Cavanagh, 1997). Categories are created by the researcher and intend, with the analysis of ideas, to generate knowledge to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

Categories can be developed by deductive method, which means they emerge from prior studies, literature review or even the authors experience and knowledge (Given, 2008) however not all the categories, that result from a preliminary data analysis, will be possible to anticipate, because of the nature of content analysis (Cavanagh, 1997).

Given (2008) also stated that an inductive method can be applied but, in this case, there is not an initial analysis. The categories are only defined after the review of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) which was the method applied in this dissertation.

This dissertation uses the methodology from above in order to provide insights about women in the military and their integration on Special Operations Forces.

CHAPTER III- RESULTS

This chapter presents a brief discussion of the research findings. It is divided into five subchapters, one for the bibliometric overview and four corresponding to each identified category. Four categories were created, which were the ones that emerged from the data (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

All the 32 articles were fully-read and noted the main ideas by the researcher and then, placed in the categories displayed in Table 6, which presents the categories and subcategories found. After the table was filled according to the categories, as shown in Appendix- A, we proceeded with the analysis.

Table 6 – Categories defined for the content analysis

Category	Sub-Category
Servicewomen	Combat Support
SOF Tasks	Missions Training
Incorporation	Legislation Selection
Capabilities	Enablers Physical

Thereafter, the most relevant excerpts from each author were placed in a unique table (see Appendix-A). Excerpts from different authors, that shared the same facts, were not placed in the table, in an attempt not to be redundant.

However, those who share same idea have been placed in the table to reinforce the authors argument, and the contradictory ideas were also placed in the table. Moreover, in each subchapter there a discussion of the findings from the analysis of the articles.

4.1 Brief overview

Over the last 20 year there has been an increasing number of articles published regarding the Special Operations Forces⁴ and so we decided to analyze this topic using a graph similar to the one that Perkmann et al. (2013) used in their study, with a span of 20 years.

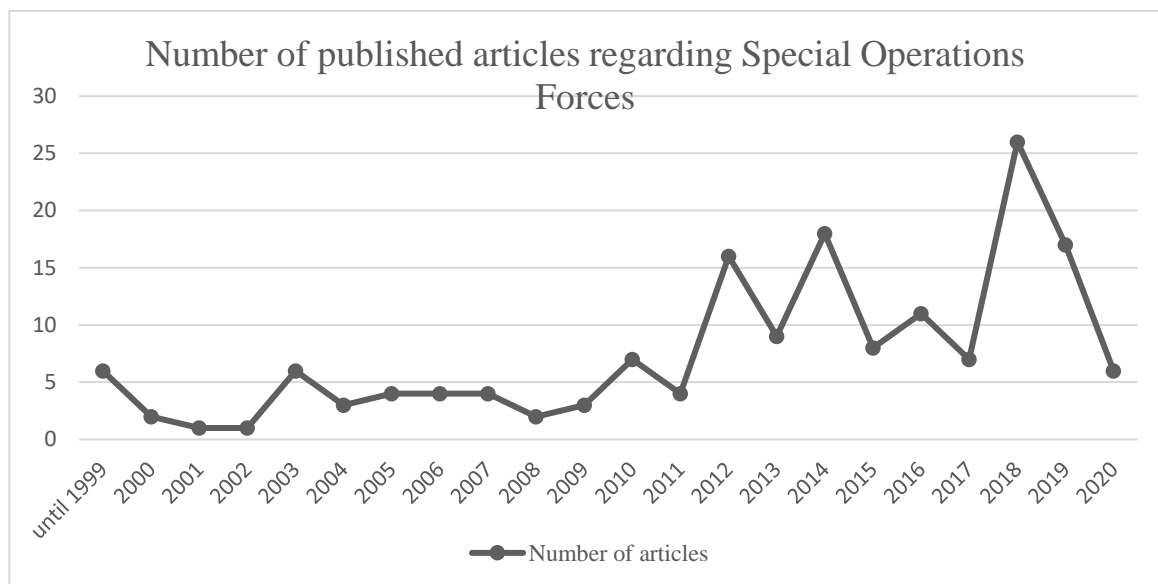


Figure 2 - Number of published articles regarding Special Operations Forces

As we can observe form the Figure 2, the number of published articles started to rise in 2012. A possible explanation for this increase, was due the high media coverage on the raid at Osama’s bin Laden hideout in 2011, This reference is mentioned in most of the articles and had immediate impact in SOF’s acknowledgment around the world and, therefore, an increased curiosity of the academic community to study this subject.

However, we noticed an increasing number of publications in 2018, which can be related with the war on terrorism and the growing of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), (i.e. ISIS) as mentioned by Fabian (2018) and Moyar (2018).

⁴ These articles result from a primory search, using the string “Special Operations Forces” in the title, in order to provide some insights about the research in this topic.

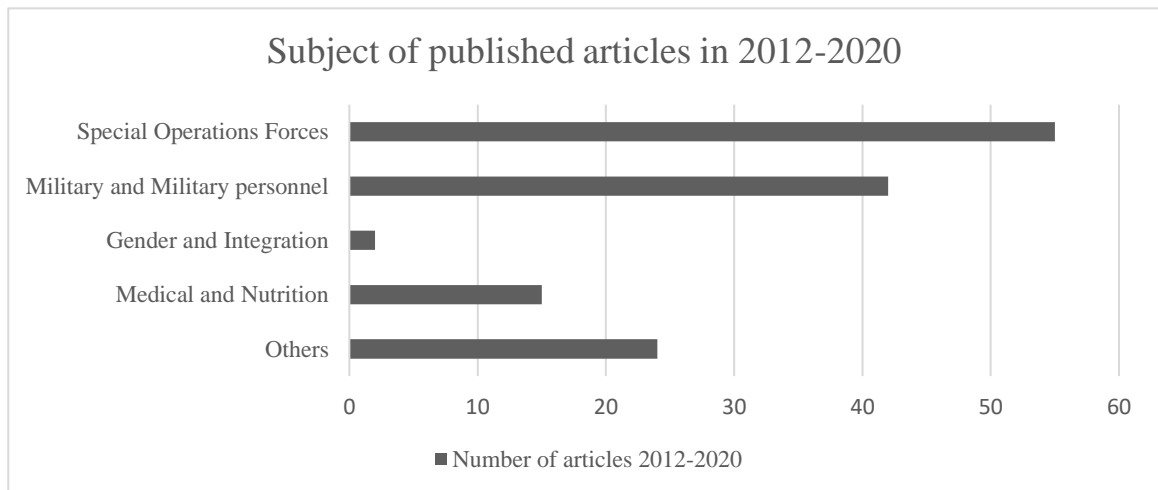


Figure 3 - Subject of published articles in 2012-2020

From 128 published articles⁵, which started to be published in 2012, until 2020, we analyze the Subject terms⁶ (SU), as displayed in Figure 3, in order to have a better understanding on the evolution of academic research regarding special operations forces. As expected, 55 are directly related to the Special Operations Forces⁷ itself whereas 42 are related with military/military personnel, 15 studies related to medical/nutrition⁸ and 24 were classified as others⁹. However, only 2 articles refer to gender/integration as we observe this deficit, clearer are the gaps that this investigation intends to fill.

4.2 Servicewomen

This category aims to get a better understanding of women support roles, and access to ground close combat (GCC) roles.

In the US Army women served mainly as nurses in the Second World War, but also in the battlefield in risky environments working as scouts, spies and telephone operators, in

⁵ These are all the articles published in EBSCO related to Special Operations Forces between 2012-2020 from the search conducted in Figure 2.

⁶ To facilitate the comprehension and ease the reader similar subjects were grouped in related areas or categories, e.g. Special operations and Special forces, medical and nutrition.

⁷ The categories included were Special operations, Special operations forces, Special Forces.

⁸ Includes the follow categories; psychological stress, body composition, energy metabolism, medical cooperation, muscle strength, nutrition, psychology of movement, military medicine.

⁹ The category others includes articles that its subject did not fit the purpose of the investigations and its number was not relevant e.g. training, securities, reaction time.

addition to support mission as maintenance engineers for aircraft and as drivers (Zenor-Lafond, 2008).

Before the 9/11 attacks, Miller (1998) argued that women shall be allowed to volunteer for GCC roles, supporting the theory that women should meet the same physical standards as men, so they could be able to carry out their job without compromising it (i.e. if the requirements were lowered, it might risk people's lives).

Meanwhile, in the post 9/11 era, women in Iraq and Afghanistan contradict the existing stereotype of women's aptitudes for GCC roles (Goldstein, 2018). Both, Fitriani et al. (2016) and Wright (2018), pointed out that, due to 360 degrees threat from insurgent (i.e. asymmetric) tactics used in these theaters of operations. Servicewomen employed in non-combat missions (e.g. service-support missions) found themselves engaging in combat. The last argument supports Miller (1998) statement that women in GCC would prove themselves if given the opportunity.

Thus, they ended up playing an active role, despite being excluded by law to access GCC roles (Farnell, 2009). Furthermore, both men and women, did not find this participation of women, have affected the commanders decisions at a tactical level (Barry, 2013).

King (2013), reports that British servicemen highlighted women's performance in specialized roles (e.g. medics, do handlers and engineers) along with GCC troops. However, Barry (2013) found that, when questioned about mixed-sex teams deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the most of the male interviewees did not like the idea of women being incorporated in Infantry or Armour. Regardless of this disliking from the male part, Goldstein (2018) assures that women were indeed combat operators, while deploying along SOF, however, they lacked the SOF training and formal recognition.

Some Western countries have lifted all bans on women's access to GCC roles, nonetheless, there is only a small amount of women who have actually served (Barry, 2013). As we learn from Reis et al. (2020) Polish SOF do incorporate females in their units, they work mainly in logistics and they do not carry out tactical missions whatsoever.

There are some reasons why women tend to avoid to be included in GCC roles, although some seek to integrate the male environment, according to Barry (2013) the appeal in females for GCC roles is less evident than in men. Miller (1998), in her article about feminism and the exclusion of women from combat states that, during interviews to servicewomen, they did not seem interested in changing the combat exclusion policy, and felt they were "misrepresented by feminist activists".

The armed forces handling of this issues will dictate the future of women's access in GCC roles, and higher ranked recognized positions despite that Zenor-Lafond (2008) says that women have volunteered to war from the past to the present days, and will continue in taking risks for their nation and fellow comrades.

4.3 SOF Tasks

This category intends to frame SOF missions and training in order to provide some insights on their capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. However, Fabian (2018) highlights that due to the confidentiality inherent to SOF, there is an absence of research concerning NATO SOF.

For Shamir and Ben-Ari (2018) SOF operators are "specialized generalists", which means they can conduct an array of missions from high to low intensity. In that regard, Spearin (2014) also underlines these forces flexibilities on all levels i.e. tactical, operational and strategic.

SOF mainly operate with a political objective (Peterson, 2014), but Jogerst (2002) goes further by arguing that SOF is «tailor-made» for the unconventional warfare. Supported by Titulaer and Kitzen (2020) that SOF have been specializing in unconventional warfare. SOF are now the primary option to conduct this type of warfare and asymmetrical threats (Johnson, 2006).

Pacek (2012), argues that these asymmetric threats make the battlefield no longer linear, and SOF is in constant search for new capabilities. We will see further in this paper that there are some capabilities, which only women can provide to SOF.

Peterson (2014) defends that SOF singular ability to augment regional security, by partnering up with allies and friendly nations, are able to counter local threats as shown in an article from Coughran (2014) about Special Operations Advisory Groups. TAA missions are a capacity that should be enhanced, whilst precision strike capabilities are preserved on a high level, in order to employ them at the same time for better strategic results (Peterson, 2014).

Because of the nature of these forces, the SOF conduct missions may range from the long duration activities i.e. TAA missions, to precision offensive missions (Morrison, 2014), such as being deployed in small units with light equipment, having a trained skill set and intelligence support (Gentry, 2017).

Given SOF range of skill sets “they can move, shoot and communicate while employing supporting fires from any source” (Jogerst, 2002, p. 99), which allows them to have strategic usage of air, land and naval domains (Morrison, 2014) meaning SOF are interoperable with other forces.

Johnson (2006) argues that interoperability is shown by the use of close air support employing conventional forces, and serving as a force multiplier for conventional operations (Burgos, 2018).

To frame SOF missions within the NATO context, Long (2014) clarifies and separates this missions in several types being: Military Assistance, Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance - this meets the conceptualization made in the Chapter II. However, some authors describe the same missions, but do not frame them in NATO, both Moore et al. (2003) and Moran (2016) talk about Special Reconnaissance and Direct Actions without framing in NATO’s bases, which may be confusing for some.

Fabian (2018), acknowledge that NATO SOF have become prominent in fighting NATO’s enemies (i.e terrorism and insurgency), however there is a gap in developing an effective theory against “near-peer” opponents.

The environment where SOF operates has become more complex and exigent (Gulyás, 2012), and politically sensitive (Titulaer & Kitzen, 2020), for those reasons SOF operators, as elites of the militaries around the world, are known for their capabilities as performers they are able to operate in the field (Pacek, 2012).

Moreover, Titulaer and Kitzen (2020) argue that due to their high education and training they fit to operate in this environment, and also their age makes them more mature compared to conventional forces (that normally are young aged).

Nowadays, SOF are deployed in Iraq and Syria in a training, advising and assisting mission framed in the Military Assistance against ISIL (Goldstein, 2018). Servicewomen have also been deployed with SOF teams, however most of their job is supporting operations as information or intelligence analysts and as interpreters for instructors (Haugegaard, 2019), the so called enablers.

Besides women only started to be allowed to serve in combat roles in the US SOF as of 2016 (Gasca et al., 2015), Goldstein (2018) reports in her article that servicewomen have in fact served with US SOF (SEAL), women were trusted to be «employed as extra shooters», during deployment to Afghanistan, in 2014, which means they ended up playing in the same role of SOF operators, without the proper training, despite not being acknowledge as one. Gasca et al. (2015) state that including women in SOF teams does add sense of unity and

teamwork, the mentioned employment of women in combat from SOF members reveals trust in women to combat.

Women have not been applying to SOF, because they are aware of the physicality of the selection (Farnell, 2009).

Although women did not serve in combat positions, it does not mean they are not capable of doing so, in fact, in the Second World War women serving in the OSS (i.e. former CIA) have done sabotage and reconnaissance missions (Goldstein, 2018).

Having UK as an example, women are forbidden to serve in SAS or SBS. Nevertheless they are encouraged to serve in Special Reconnaissance Regiment (Barry, 2013).

Both Barry (2013) and Gasca et al. (2015), agree that women have an advantage in conducting covert surveillance (e.g. using civilian clothes), not only they can conceal an operation, but also in some environments they can be overlooked and increase the success of the mission. Women training should include human intelligence (HUMINT), because of the reasons mentioned above (SR missions), and also they are a vital capability for SOF operations (Gasca et al., 2015).

Despite SOF are not supposed to engage the enemy, in MA missions, unless in self-defense, because the objective is to provide tools for the mentored forces to do so, in practice, they do engage when accompanying the local forces (Moran, 2016), this is one of the reasons why Gasca et al. (2015) defends that it is important for women on CST's to have a channeled training along with SOF, so they are able to deploy along with SOF safely.

However, women have integrated some of the SOF training exercises, in some countries, like Denmark so they could deploy with SOF as enablers (in this case military linguists), despite that women are left out during training by their male counterparts (Haugegaard, 2019).

According to Fitriani et al. (2016) and King (2013) studies there are several reasons against integration of women in combat, such as opposition from some of the military, legislative, cultural, but the most discussed are by far political and women physical shortcomings. Farnell (2009) claims that takes more than physical strength to maintain their health and fitness to fight, and these mental requirements apply to man also like competence and skill only acquired by training. This is reinforced by Long (2014) by saying that once these operators enter SOF, they have to acquire and retain specific skills.

Furthermore, some of this reasons have already been demystified when in 2015, after six severe months, two women completed US Army Ranger School (Fitriani et al., 2016).

4.4 Incorporation

This subchapter is dedicated to women integration in GCC roles, aiming to understand how the integration policies have been evolving and also the changes in the selection process.

In the Second World War women were recruited to serve as nurses and, office staff, they also flew to deliver recently arrived planes and tested repaired aircrafts, yet they were not allowed to fly into battle (Zenor-Lafond, 2008).

As we learnt from Miller (1998), feminists strongly promote women integration in GCC roles, based on equality of rights, disregarding that others have given up several of their own rights, for the greater good of the military institution, and the feminist framing of the debate is not adapted to the reality of the military.

For Zenor-Lafond (2008), one of the main reasons for declining women into the military, after the end of the war, was the excess of personnel, which led to discriminatory policies against women, they were no longer chosen out of necessity, but rather for their beauty, and this took female motivation, for integration, away.

Farnell (2009) defends that, the essence for a successful integration of women in GCC roles, relies in a cultural issue, more than a policy issue, in view of the fact that by changing the values and beliefs on society is worth more effort, as a result of changing the cultural issue, the policies would end up changing as well. Moreover, when introduced, the new policy must ground, in allowing all military personnel without regard of gender, to gain access to all specialties including GCC roles.

The policy change in the US Army, as referred by Doan and Portillo (2017), Gasca et al. (2015) and Turnley (2019) that took place in 2016, where the ban on females in accessing combat positions was lifted, created gender-neutral performance standards for all positions, implementing thereby, full integration. Other countries, such as Norway, even though all positions have already been open for all women since 1985, followed this example by and adopting a gender-neutral recruiting, in order to increase the percentage of women in combat units (Steder & Ronnes, 2019).

According to Fitriani et al. (2016), a change has occurred mostly in Western countries regarding the value of women in combat, in fact they defend Farnell (2009) point of view by stating that each country has their unique combination of factors (i.e. social, religious and cultural) for allowing or denying women in GCC roles.

Furthermore, SOF perspective as shown by Doan and Portillo (2017) is that female enablers are helpful when talking to indigenous women in some countries (i.e. in some cultures women are forbidden to talk to men, other than their husbands), and so they agree with, the inclusion of females in SOF units, but only as enablers. Male operators argue that even though there is an advantage in having this capacity to engage with foreign women and children, the downside is servicewomen could not engage with local males, and so these positions should remain closed to females.

In UK, women have served in infantry regiments (e.g. the Royal Marines, or Parachute Regiment) because these are usually the positions more physically demanding. In these regiments they had no trouble on being accepted, by their male counterparts, as an integral part of the unit as long as they maintained professional standards (including physical capabilities and training) as described by King (2013).

As we show previously in this dissertation, most of SOF positions are now open to women. According to Turnley (2019), in the US SOF, there are no record of women passing the selection for admission in SOF. The same happens in Norway, although females have attended the selections processes, no women has earned a position among the selected (Steder & Rones, 2019). Furthermore, in Portugal, Reis et al. (2020), state that no women have served in this countries' SOF.

Moreover, Steder and Rones (2019) justified the need for women integration in SOF, due to the importance of different skills and abilities that women have. As reinforced by Goldstein (2018) diverse capabilities of each individual contribute a great deal, for SOF teams. Shamir and Ben-Ari (2018) emphasis that the strict requirements, tests, training and result in the best selection, consequently, SOF becomes highly-qualified, in terms of personnel.

We have learnt from Reis et al. (2020) that the special operations course is a grueling course from both physical and psychological (i.e. mental toughness, technical and tactical capabilities) perspectives, where trainees are in constant pressure. Tepe, Yarnell, Nindl, Van Arsdale & Deuster (2016) refers that the majority of the positions, physical standards are only related to the individual overall health and fitness, thus soldiers who serve in particular positions, where the physical requirements are essential to ensure the success of their job, must have this standards well defined, as is the case of SOF operators.

Until women are capable of passing these challenging selection courses, the military, cannot prescind these unique women's capabilities. So in order to fill these gaps, the military has to acquire these capabilities through enablers (Turnley, 2019). However Gasca et al.

(2015) suggests that SOF enablers should be incorporated in SOF as a whole (i.e. be involved in training and planning, not only executing), and not as outsiders, whose only job is to “enable”, through breaking language barriers or defusing IED’s.

On the contrary, Goldstein (2018) defends that physical and marksmanship abilities are required, but are not the most important for enablers, because they are deployed to do a specific job such as, defusing bombs, or work as medics and these skills are more relevant than the ability to perform very well physically

4.5 Capabilities

In this subchapter, women’s capabilities are analyzed in three ways, as enablers, and their physical and cognitive skills, as we intend to have a better understanding of the researcher’s points of view.

As we have seen in the conceptualization chapter, women serve in SOF as enablers, due to their unique capabilities to talk to other women and children in some countries, where religious or cultural beliefs do not allow women talk to men. Thus, they serve mostly in this intelligence gathering areas when deployed with SOF.

When deployed with GCC units, their job was mainly to conduct weapon searches on other women in war zones, these tasks that could only be performed by females led to a growth of female personnel in NATO’s countries armies (Fitriani et al., 2016).

Women serving as enablers, have two approaches when carrying out their missions: the first is to engage with the local population, especially women and children, conducting HUMINT missions and interrogations; the second is as a technical expert, that normally are deployed when is crucial for the mission and the operators lack knowledge on the subject-matter (e.g. defusing a certain type of bombs), (Goldstein, 2018).

For Gasca et al. (2015) SOF enablers, provide the deployments with unique skills that contribute in large scale for SOF missions. When women succeed, if they ever will, in completing the SOF, tough selection and training course, they will stop being enablers and start being inherent part of SOF (Turnley, 2019). For Reis et al. (2020) a possible way is to find a pioneer group of women that succeed in taking the course, and this will inspire other women to apply.

The reason why the number of women serving in GCC roles is low, is due to high standards physical fitness requirements. In general, armies tend to increase this standards for GCC roles comparing to other positions, logistics, medics, and others (Barry, 2013). For King

(2013), there are not many women who can perform at the same level as men, however those who can, should not be excluded from doing so. According to a study on mixed-gender elite teams by Knarr, Turnley, Stewart, Rubright & Quirin (2014) the inclusion of females in SOF has the objective of providing these teams with mission capable tools.

Furthermore Haugegaard (2019) finds in a study that, although physical component is in fact important, women serving as enablers, do not need to have exceptional physical fitness or military skills because their expertise is to provide language skills and cultural awareness.

As well Knarr et al. (2014) find that these ambitious women with will to enter SOF and that might qualify, would do so in small numbers.

Both Barry (2013) and Gasca et al. (2015), argue that a small percentage of women would meet the required physical standards in GCC roles, including SOF. However, Barry (2013) states that the US Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff General argues that some specialties should remain exceptions, whereas Gasca et al. (2015) claims that an approachable way of doing so, is to have gender-neutral physical standards to both men and women (i.e. the same physical standards regardless of their gender). Reis et al. (2020) found that, much like the other countries, the physical element in Portuguese SOF was highly valued, although this is an important criterion the technical and intellectual component has been gaining more value.

Women would find this integration much easier, if they had the same physical fitness as men (Miller, 1998), as we can see one of the most used arguments against women integration in GCC roles, is the decrease of physical standards (Wright, 2018). The quality of the individuals should be based on merit (i.e. performance) and not on gender, to enforce equality of standards, the US army when opening all position to women ensured that both men and women should be treated equally in terms of physical standards, stating that women will carry the same weight and the same guns as men. (Wright, 2018).

Miller (1998) stated that women entered service with higher cognitive abilities, whereas Barry (2013) claims that aggressiveness and low resilience (i.e. emotional) are factors that decrease women's abilities to serve in GCC roles.

The evidence suggests that, there is no disparity at the cognitive level, between both genders. This level has been increasing its value in SOF and changing the physical paradigm (Reis et al., 2020). Besides SOF units work with mixed roles as Shamir and Ben-Ari (2018) argue, SOF members are not exclusive to combat, in fact, they also master in other areas such

as medical or diplomats (the researcher calls them warrior-medical-experts, for instance), which makes them specialized in more than combat.

Thus, women associated with this specializations can augment the group intellectual skills, and increase the range of abilities, in SOF (Gasca et al., 2015). For instance Steder and Rones (2019), highlight this increasing of capabilities, given as an example how helpful was to have women training other women, in Afghan Police Unit (i.e. a special police, which included female officers), and how this women-to-women mentoring, was crucial to these forces success.

Haugegaard (2019), shown that in some environments, women were able to collect information from both men and women of the local population, they were able to swap between, their soldier (more masculine) identity to be viewed as an authority, and to their identity as a feminine figure.

Doan and Portillo (2017) in their study, while interviewing SOF operators and women serving along SOF, came across a new concept, the “third-gender”, they found that indigenous men viewed military females in a different way, from the local women, and so they did not treat them neither as male nor female. Turnley (2019) states that, women have the ability to “shift” their identity, and being placed “third gender” category, which allowed them to interact with indigenous populations, especially the societies centered in male dominance, because seeing a woman in uniform confused them. Servicewomen showed two sides of the same person, on the one hand is a soldier in uniform, however is a female, and so this third gender category, is neither fully male or fully female.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research synthesizes the participation of women in GCC roles especially in SOF, and their integrations in this position. We were able to understand throughout the investigation, the advances in integration policies and the benefits that women bring into SOF combat positions.

As we learnt throughout the research, during the war periods women were employed mostly in non-combat roles until the war on terrorism started to grow after the 9/11 attacks, where a great number of troops were sent into combat to fight terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In these theaters of operations women served mostly in non-combat operations. However, even though they were supposed not to be involved in combat, due to the nature of the threat, they ended up engaging with the enemy. As a result, the discussion to lift the ban on women to GCC roles has become more prominent.

We observed that most Western countries have lifted their combat exclusion policies by 2016, so the timeframe for analysis of women's performance in GCC is small. However, the intention is to focus on GCC roles in SOF, as we found that most countries do not employ women in SOF, as some SOF employ them as enablers when needed, and others despite including women, they only serve in supporting SOF (e.g. logistic missions).

Resulting from the vast array of missions, SOF are able to conduct the inclusion of women in some of these missions, and is fundamental to the success of those missions. According to the results of the investigation, the most important capabilities women provide SOF are: on one hand, the ability to communicate with indigenous population in ways, that males could not, not only in communicating with other women and children and collecting intelligence, but also in developing trusting bonds with them because of the way these populations look a women. On the other hand, their capacity to undertake SR missions, and especially covert surveillance that conceals the objective and/or the existence of the mission, being able this way to collect more reliable information, when conducting HUMINT missions.

Also, there is an advantage in Military Assistance, when in training, advising and assisting missions that comprise women, this is facilitating in the way that women understand each other's characteristics, and give more accurate advices to other women.

The women's unique capacity of «shifting» their personality in order to interact with different genders, in foreign countries, reveals an extraordinary cognitive ability.

Moreover, women who usually serve as linguist also serve as cultural supporters, which has a big impact on SOF training, in how to act according to religion and cultural differences in order not to disrespect local populations and win hearts and minds.

Furthermore, most of the legislative barriers were already surpassed on the integration of women in combat positions, whereas the discussion now has become more about changing the cultural opinions.

In the opinion of some researchers about the inclusion of women span, there are no doubt that the inclusion of women in SOF is in fact substantial, and the increase in SOF capabilities is vital for future missions. However, a few fear that the lowering of the standards, if happens, it might compromise not only SOF missions but also the loss of elite status comparing to other SOF, regular forces or special forces.

For a successful integration of women in SOF roles, the policies must rely on a settlement, where they have access to the selection courses, while all gender-neutral requirement standards are maintained. This must happen not only for their own safety and the safety of the members in the force, but also to ensure they do not suffer any discrimination from their male counterparts, considering that the success from these teams, comes from high-standards in selection, training as well as cohesion between team members.

Furthermore, if or when women will take part in a SOF training course, they must have physical and mental strength to endure extreme conditions, as well as cognitive and intellectual, due to the level of expertise required to operate new military technologies, especially the first women that might be able to successfully pass selection and training, because they will not have any role model to follow.

The future of women in SOF is unclear, although we are led to think, that in the future females will be a part of most SOF, thus we tend to believe they will be better employed in covert special reconnaissance missions, where they will use HUMINT training to blend among the population to gather intelligence, so these will be the first positions women will perform, after finishing their training course.

Answering the research question, as of today, most of SOF are open to women. From the legislation perspective women have the same opportunities as men in joining the SOF, however there are some differences in physical capacity, from this point of view men have better opportunities in joining SOF given their natural physical capacity usually better than

women's. This does not, in any way, mean that some women are not physically as good as men, but in order for this to happen they have to train their physical fitness more than men

Limits of the investigation

This research is limited in the way, that was only used one database and one search engine, which limits the scope of the review. In order to provide more insights other databases and a larger number of articles must be reviewed.

One of the constraints in this manuscript is the constant updating of the EBSCO database, where new literature is published, thereby the data collected from these studies represents a brief overview of data in the database, limited in a short timeframe.

The review is limited to published journal articles. Besides books and conference papers might provide evidence of knowledge, but were not considered in the paper.

The keywords used in the search were fundamental to the selection of the articles, this selection limits the investigation due to a systematic review as a method is limited, because it does not cover the whole span of knowledge relevant for a specific phenomenon,

The limits of this investigation were the not only short timeframe for carrying out the investigation, but also the focus of the research had to change after 6 weeks into the study, due to the coronavirus outbreak pandemic, the initial intention was to give gender perspectives in access and missions in Polish SOF, and it was changed to a systematic literature review about Gender perspectives in SOF.

When the outbreak started, the author was in Poland, under the Erasmus+ program, conducting case study research and had to return to its home country.

Insights for future research

It is quite evident that a gap in gender studies regarding SOF exists. Thus, we suggest each NATO country to study their specific cases in their own militaries, specifically SOF units. Because every nation has different values and beliefs, which makes each country's case study unique.

Future research may also focus on women integration, in Special reconnaissance units and teams.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A –CONTENT ANALYSIS BY CATEGORIES

Author/Category	Servicewomen	Incorporation	Capabilities	SOF tasks
Article excerpts				
(Baker, 2019)				<p>Missions: “It is self-evident that a technological capability which allows SOF to carry out advise and assist missions remotely greatly reduces the risk to the SOF personnel involved.”</p>
(Barry, 2013)	<p>Combat: “A significant minority of Western armies have removed all restrictions on the role of women, allowing them to join all types of combat units. But in every such case, very few women have in fact served in close combat roles.”</p> <p>“The evidence suggests that very few women are attracted to the ground close combat role and those that are leave earlier than their male counterparts.”</p> <p>“(…) both men and women, felt that the presence of servicewomen had not been a distraction and had not affected the judgement of tactical commanders.”</p> <p>“But the majority of male soldiers interviewed were uncomfortable with the concept of women serving in armour or infantry.”</p>		<p>Physical: “(…) although some women would meet the very high physical standards required to serve in combat units, including special forces, the new principles may lead to an assessment that some specialties and ratings should remain exceptions.”</p> <p>“A major factor behind the small numbers of women serving in combat roles is the rigorous physical fitness requirement for such roles. All armies set more demanding standards of fitness and endurance for infantry and other close combat roles than for logistic, medical and supporting branches.”</p> <p>Cognitive: “Other reasons cited by the militaries concerned include a perceived lack of emotional resilience or aggressiveness (…).”</p>	

(Burgos, 2018)				Missions: “While it is true that over the course of their history SOF have often been adjuncts to, or force multipliers for, conventional military operations.”
(Coughran, 2014)				Missions: “A SOAG’s mission is to train, advise, and mentor a senior staff headquarters within the Afghan security forces. Essentially, they signal a shift in strategy from U.S. and NATO leadership.”
(Doan & Portillo, 2017)		<p>Legislation: “(...) Secretary of Defense announced the Department of Defense was rescinding the policy and would begin to create gender-neutral occupational performance standards for all positions (...)”</p> <p>“Male soldiers (...) were willing to concede inclusion of female soldiers but only within a strictly defined capacity as “enablers” to all-male Special forces units. (...) the vast majority of male soldiers argued some positions in the military should remain closed to women contending they could not engage with local male populations.”</p>	<p>Cognitive: “Being placed in this “third gender” category by the indigenous populations with whom they were worked, and/or having female gender identity ascribed as a secondary or tertiary identity, appears to have allowed many female soldiers to have effective interactions with the local population in male-dominated societies.”</p>	

(Fabian, 2018)				<p>Missions: “NATO SOF has become the best tactical counterinsurgency force in the world, but it also fell into the trap of these experiences. While fighting insurgents around the world NATO SOF has not encountered or more importantly have not developed effective theories against near-peer adversaries and their innovative concepts. In addition, during the last decade NATO SOF fought hard to become a recognized independent service within the alliance (...).”</p> <p>“(...) the traditional secrecy of special operations forces can account for some of the lack of research on the topic (...).”</p>
(Farnell, 2009)	<p>Combat: “(...) women are an increasingly integral part of the force. They are playing an active role in direct combat activities, although officially they remain excluded from assignments to direct combat units.”</p>	<p>Legislation: “Values, beliefs, and personal preference are at the core of and are the essence of resolving the cultural issue. In short, much of the energy and study that go toward changing the policy need to be redirected toward changing culture.”</p> <p>“The new policy should allow soldiers, regardless of gender, to volunteer to serve in all</p>		<p>Missions: “Consider the duties performed by the Special Forces and Ranger units, for example. Typically, these units seek to engage the enemy and often require extended periods in a field environment where everything needed is carried on the members’ backs. (...) service woman with field experience is fully aware of the physical demands and hygienic</p>

		specialties. Policy expectations must be rooted in capabilities, not gendered stereotypes and antiquated cultural perceptions.”		requirements of carrying everything needed.” Training: “The differences, however, are not all related to physical strength. It takes more than simple brute strength and stamina for women to remain healthy and fit to fight in the setting just described. It requires training, skill, commitment, and competence just as it does for men.”
(Fitriani et al., 2016)	Combat: “(...) in irregular, insurgent wars lines of combat are ill-defined and fluid. Thus, a greater number of combat-support and possibly service-support roles performed by women will increasingly mean they will find themselves in combat zones.”	Legislation: “Another factor (...) to allow women on the front line has been the change in the views of (primarily Western) policy-makers as to the military worth of women. Indeed, it appears that the taboo on women serving in combat roles has largely been based on cultural, social and religious factors unique to the country in question: when the cultural, social and religious context changes, there will be comparable changes (...).”	Enablers: “(...) operational responsibilities for female soldiers. Increasingly, they have been required to conduct weapons searches of Muslim women in conflict zones. Patriotism and the rise in such gender-specific tasks have helped to increase the number of women in NATO armies.”	

<p>(Gasca et al., 2015)</p>		<p>Legislation: “(...) In January 2013, the secretary of defense rescinded the 1994 policy entirely, charging each Armed Service with implementing full integration by 2016 (...)”</p> <p>Selection: “(...) building a force of female SOF enablers who are fully integrated with SOF operators and teams, in all levels of planning, training and execution.”</p>	<p>Enablers: “(...) female SOF enablers made significant, unique contributions to (...) SOF missions. (...) such as the ability to interact with indigenous children and female adults forbidden by local customs from interaction with male service members.”</p> <p>Physical: “(...) studies done by (...) other nations demonstrate that, while a small percentage of women are capable of meeting gender-neutral physical standards required for service in ground combat units (...)”</p> <p>“One avenue will be gender neutral, mandating that women meet the same standards as men to become SOF operators.”</p> <p>Cognitive: “Women in SOF can also increase the collective intelligence of a team or group.”</p>	<p>Missions: “(...) with increasing collective intelligence of SOF teams and operations, female inclusion into small SOF teams can increase task cohesion.”</p> <p>“Female SOF operators and enablers may bring an element of disguise to operations because they may be more likely to go unnoticed during some operations conditions.”</p> <p>Training: “Women on CSTs should have a formalized training pipeline (...) codified and placed into doctrine.”</p>
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(Gentry, 2017)				<p>Missions: “Special operations forces (SOF) typically are small, relatively light-armed forces that rely on both their skills, and the stealth and surprise generated largely through intelligence support, to conduct strategically important missions that are often covert or clandestine.”</p>
(Goldstein, 2018)	<p>Combat: “Women warriors have served globally on front lines and behind enemy lines in combat for centuries, most conspicuously in the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, defying gendered stereotypes about women’s combat capabilities.”</p> <p>“By the end of the program in 2014, CSTs and FSTs were de-facto combat operators without the formal recognition, career path, and training pipeline typically required.”</p>	<p>Selection: “SOF culture emphasizes capabilities and impact individuals can bring to the team. While the ability to shoot and move in combat and baseline, physical capabilities are required, they are bare minimum qualifications. For enablers, the ability to diffuse a bomb, heal a wound, intercept electronic signals, or gather and analyze intelligence exceeds the importance of doing pullups.”</p>	<p>Enablers: “Women embedded in ground combat units served in one of two roles: as technical subject matter experts, or specifically as women to engage with the local population.”</p>	<p>Missions: “SOF currently deployed to Iraq and Syria in support of Operation Inherent Resolve are not considered “combat troops” because their mission is to train, advise, and assist the Iraqi military in its fight against ISIL.”</p> <p>“World War II also saw a number of civilian and military women serve in the Office of Strategic Service (...) dozens of others were assigned to conduct sabotage, reconnaissance, and intelligence collection behind enemy lines. Their “capabilities” were too significant for their governments to ignore. They had the same intellect and thirst for adventure as their male counterparts.”</p>

				<p>“(…) reports from a 2014 SEAL team deployment to Afghanistan indicate that these women were trusted enough to be employed as extra shooters.”</p>
(Gulyás, 2012)				<p>Missions: “(…) Furthermore, the security environment in which the Special Operations Forces (SOF) has to operate is increasingly complex and demanding.”</p> <p>“Commanders can be able to manage complex battlefields including NATO forces, co-operative forces, non-alliance forces, commercial civil field and air traffic and humanitarian airlifts, in which the loss of life by a single non-combatant or friend through fratricide will have major international repercussions.”</p>
(Haugegaard, 2019)			<p>Physical: “(…) some men mention physical standards, but since the expertise military linguists provide is language fluency and cultural knowledge, the military linguists deployed with SOF do not need to impress their team with extraordinary military skills or physical fitness.”</p>	<p>Missions: “They supported operations in various ways: the collections of information in the intelligence cycle; as information analysts: as interpreters for instructors in training and capacity building as part of a boarding team at sea.”</p>

			<p>Cognitive: “Another operations advantage is that female specialists most likely can “shift” their identity between “male-like authority as a soldier, and their female self. In this manner, they are able to obtain information from both local men and women.”</p>	<p>Training: “The female specialists participated in selected SOF training courses in order to be able to joint their teams for deployment.”</p> <p>“(…) during the training of Danish military linguists. Men occasionally exclude female specialists and female soldiers during training in the home unit.”</p>
(Jogerst, 2002)				<p>Missions: “The consensus seem to be that these forces are tailor-made for the unconventional nature and uncertainty of this war.”</p> <p>“SOF personnel have proven uniquely suited for this networked, distributed warfare. Special Forces (…) provide a tactical force with a broad range of skills (…) They can move, shoot and communicate while employing supporting fires from any source (…) because there are interoperable.”</p>
(Johnson, 2006)				<p>Missions: “(…) SOF are considered the force of choice to confront a broad spectrum of irregular threats that dominate the current security</p>

				<p>environment. (...) SOF is the best military solution to unconventional and asymmetric threats.”</p> <p>“(...) the ability of close-air support to greatly enhance the effectiveness of SOF, better integration and coordination with conventional forces, and the ability of SOF to generate accurate intelligence from local populations (...).”</p>
(King, 2013)	<p>Combat: “On very similar criteria, British soldiers have repeatedly reported the excellent performance of women on the front line in specialist roles with the infantry and their consequently unproblematic integration.”</p>	<p>Selection: “(...) personnel from these regiments had no difficulty in accepting female accession as long as professional standards were maintained.”</p>	<p>Physical: “(...) very small group of women can perform at the higher levels required of men in the infantry does not seem to be a reason to exclude those females who can do so.”</p>	<p>Training: “(...) combat performance – and, specifically, cohesion – relies more on training and professional competence. (...) individuals are judged not so much on their personal characteristics, but on their professional ability (...).”</p>
(Long, 2014)				<p>Missions: “The utility of SOF for most likely NATO missions is demonstrated by examining the key missions of NATO SOF within the context of present, past, and potential future NATO operations. NATO SOF prepare to conduct military assistance (MA), direct action (DA), and special reconnaissance (SR) operations.”</p>

				Training: “Once recruited, SOF need to gain and maintain specialized skills. This training, along with exercises to operationalize the training (...).”
(Miller, 1998)	<p>Combat: “(...) not all men buy into them or are opposed to women in the military.”</p> <p>“(...) if given the opportunity to participate in direct ground combat, they (women) would prove to be fearless warriors.”</p> <p>“(...) harassment would decrease if women had the same policy as men because women would then be viewed as equal contributors.”</p> <p>“(...) Army women would support a policy that allows women to volunteer for the combat arms if they qualify but would not involuntarily assign them.”</p> <p>“Again, any (...) position will have to support physical entrance requirements to prevent the assignment of</p>	<p>Legislation: “(...) arguments for integrating women into the military rest primarily on the demand for equal rights of women as individuals.”</p> <p>“(...) may be problematic to argue for individual rights in an organization where even the most privileged members have sacrificed some of their rights for the good of the military (...) This organization is particularly unwilling to sacrifice efficiency for the sake of individual rights because the possible stakes are life and death, not reduced profit margins.”</p>	<p>Physical: “Army women would find integration easier if women could physically do all that men can do, but many are reminded constantly during the course of their daily work that this is not often the case.”</p> <p>Cognitive: “(...) women enter the service with higher mental and aptitude test scores than men.”</p>	

	<p>women who would not be capable at their jobs.”</p> <p>“(…) this policy would help prevent a backlash against military women from soldiers who would believe that the standards were lowered and people's lives were unnecessarily risked for the sake of affirmative action.”</p>			
(Moore et al., 2003)				<p>Missions: “(…) the traditional combat missions, such as Special Reconnaissance in the enemy rear and Offensive Actions against targets of strategic or operational importance.”</p>
(Moran, 2016)				<p>Missions: “The first is tactical. In the current context SOF have been better able to perform functions that large numbers of troops operating conventionally have not. These include reconnaissance, forward air control, hostage rescue, training and mentoring local forces and, perhaps most controversially, targeted killing.”</p> <p>Training: “Away from combat or a conflict situation, SOF theoretically have the duty to</p>

				remain within the parameters of their mission, using force only when absolutely necessary for self-defense or to prevent the loss of life. However, in practice, training and mentoring roles can see SOF engaging in combat with little scrutiny.”
(Morrison, 2014)				<p>Missions: “Special Operations power means and its strategic utility alongside those of the air, maritime, and land domains.”</p> <p>“These capabilities might include the surgical application of force through offensive action, more methodical long-term efforts that support and influence others through training, advice, and assistance, or as in most instances a combination of both.”</p>
(Pacek, 2012)				<p>Missions: “Nowadays, Special Operations Forces development planners’ attention is drawn to acquiring capabilities, which are necessary to accomplish tasks in a modern, non-linear battle environment and facing asymmetric threats.”</p>

				<p>Training: “Special Operations Forces (SOF) are the elite of the modern armed forces in every country (...) based upon exceptional effectiveness (...) inaccessibility for an ordinary person. (...) results not only from their perfect technique and equipment (...).”</p>
(Peterson, 2014)				<p>Missions: “SOF has the unique capability of operating in a pre-crisis capacity to enhance regional security by working with allies and partners, in less obvious ways, to enhance regional partnerships.”</p> <p>“Operating primarily in the political domain of warfare, SOF should expand its capacity to enable friendly nations to combat regional threats; at the same time, it must maintain its current capability to conduct precision strategic strikes. Both of these elements of special operations are necessary (...).”</p>
(Reis et al., 2020)	<p>Support: “Polish Special Forces (...) integrate women at SOF units, especially in logistics areas, but they are not directly involved in tactical operations.”</p>	<p>Selection: “(...) although official documents show that the special operations course is still very demanding from the physical point of view, it is increasingly becoming more technical, whereas the</p>	<p>Physical: “(...) until very recently the physical component of SOF in Portugal was highly valued (...).”</p> <p>Cognitive: “(...) this paradigm has been changing, while the</p>	

		<p>adaptability, the complex technical and tactical capabilities of SOF students are pushed to limit.”</p> <p>“(…) the reality is that up to the present days no women have been part of the Portuguese SOF.”</p>	<p>technical and intellectual component is highly appreciated (…) there are no scientific evidence concerning technical and intellectual discrepancies between men and women.”</p>	
(Shamir & Ben-Ari, 2018)		<p>Selection: “(…) addition, all SOF consist of very high-quality personnel, selected through rigorous tests and trials, and trained intensively for long periods.”</p>	<p>Cognitive: “SOF troops or units easily exemplify many of the mixed Roles soldiers are tasked with today: for instance, they can be warrior-diplomats, warrior-medical-experts (…)”</p>	<p>Missions: “(…) SOF are specialized generalists: they possess extremely varied and at times tension-filled abilities for action in a variety of fields straddling high- and low-intensity engagements, nation-building and humanitarian missions, and training indigenous forces and liaising with other national forces.”</p>
(Spearin, 2014)				<p>Missions: “These forces (…) “specialness” and flexibility at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. They have a relatively small footprint, whether in the context of budgets, “boots on the ground,” or with respect to much larger and more expensive conventional forces.”</p>

<p>(Steder & Rones, 2019)</p>	<p>Combat: “The positive with women in NorAF during the Second World War gradually formed the modern role of the Norwegian military leaders as promoters of women in the armed forces, especially in non-combat positions.”</p>	<p>Legislation: “Despite the fact that all military positions have been open for qualified Norwegian women since 1985, the share of women has always been low or absent in the combat units.”</p> <p>“Finally, in 2013, the Norwegian politicians decided to change current practice and introduced the selective gender-neutral conscription service in Norwegian Armed Forces, expected to be fully implemented by the fall of 2016.”</p> <p>Selection: “Some women have attended the rigorous selection competition, but no women have won a position among the selected few in this hard competition”</p> <p>“Diversity is justified through the operational need for personnel with different skills and abilities (...).”</p>	<p>Cognitive: “(...) need for women (...) particularly clear in the work of training the Afghan Special Police Unit,” a separate unit with female special police officers.”</p>	<p>Training: “Given the <i>Jegertroppen’s</i> specialization in urban special reconnaissance the need for muddy obstacle courses and long walks with heavy backpack are not needed.”</p>
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(Tepe et al., 2016)		<p>Selection: “(...) need for criterion-referenced physical standards tests based on operational requirements. Such tests would be necessary to place Service members in specific operational specialties for success across their military careers. Although all services have mandatory physical fitness tests, these mainly assess general health-related fitness components rather than job related and functional readiness.”</p>		
(Titulaer & Kitzen, 2020)				<p>Missions: “SOF traditionally have specialized in conducting unconventional warfare in which going native among the population and training local forces are key to success. In addition to these specialized capabilities, SOF personnel is furthermore deemed more apt for operating in a political sensitive environment because of their level of education and training as well as their relatively senior age.”</p>

(Turnley, 2019)		<p>Legislation: “Despite the ban on females in combat positions in American forces until January 2016, American females have operated in the battlespace in Iraq and in Afghanistan in various capacities for several years.”</p> <p>Selection: “(...) no females have successfully passed the selection and assessment tests for admission to these elite teams.”</p> <p>“Until there are females who can pass the physically and otherwise demanding assessment and selection courses in the various services, the military services “contract” or “buy” capabilities they believe only female can fill.”</p>	<p>Enablers: “If and when females are able to pass the grueling physical tests (...) will no longer be an “enabling capability” but an integral part of the teams and of its self-definition.”</p> <p>Cognitive: “The person in uniform – who was female but yet was in a combat role, confounding and confusing local definitions of gender – thus took on aspects of a “third gender,” clearly not male, but yet not fully female.”</p>	
(Wright, 2018)	<p>Combat: “There were no front lines, as Iraqi insurgents used guerilla tactics to fight in a 360-degree environment, relying on rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to target the kinds of areas where American servicewomen often operated. As a result, women engaged in combat on an unprecedented scale.”</p>		<p>Physical: “One persistent argument against integrating women into combat units is that doing so entails lowering the standards for physical strength and fitness.”</p>	

<p>(Zenor-Lafond, 2008)</p>	<p>Combat: “It is well known that throughout American history women have served bravely as nurses. What is less known is that they also functioned near the front lines as camp workers, scouts, spies, soldiers, and telephone operators.”</p> <p>Support: “By the time America entered World War II (...) but in this war women also repaired and flew planes and drove jeeps.”</p> <p>“Whether or not women aspire to military careers in the future will probably depend on how the military handles these important issues. However, it seems very likely women will continue to volunteer during war time. From the American Revolution to the Iraq War, women have put themselves at risk for their comrades and country”</p>	<p>Legislation: “A possible reason for the decline in female enlistment following the end of World War II may be discriminatory policies by the military itself.”</p> <p>“Whether many women no longer saw themselves as fighters, or if military life, with its focus on femininity and beauty, offered young women little different from a civilian life, women were not motivated to go to war this time.”</p>		
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