

THE CHALLENGES OF THE PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE SERBIAN ARMED FORCES

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Abstract

This paper examines the roots of the disproportionately low representation of women in command and management positions as compared to their outstanding involvement in all the activities of the Serbian Armed Forces. The key source for this empirical research is the data compiled by surveying military personnel of both sexes on the functioning of the gender-mixed military and organizational units of the Serbian Armed Forces. Within this authentic pool of information about the respondents' opinions, attitudes, and sentiments, the paper aims to identify whether, and to what extent, the advancement of women in military service lags due to gender stereotypes, which structures contribute to this problem the most, and whether there are other reasons for such a low representation of women in high-ranking positions. The methods applied are statistical analysis and *Chi-squared* statistics (χ^2), which determine the deviations in the answers of groups of respondents, and the assessment of the statistical significance of this deviation (*p-value*). The results indicated two groups of causes: sporadic informal slowing of progress by senior officers, and the psychological and physical maladaptation of a significant number of women to field tasks.

Key words: gender equality, Serbian Army, women in the army, promotion requirements, discrimination

ИЗАЗОВИ ПРОФЕСИОНАЛНОГ НАПРЕДОВАЊА ЖЕНА У ВОЈСЦИ СРБИЈЕ

Апстракт

У раду се истражују узроци непропорционално ниске заступљености жена на командним дужностима у односу на њихово успешно укључивање у све сфере активности Војске Србије. Кључни извор за ово емпиријско истраживање су подаци прикупљени анкетањем војних лица оба пола о функционисању родно

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мешовитих састава Војске Србије. Циљ рада је да се унутар ових аутентичних информација о мишљењима, ставовима и осећањима испитаника открије да ли и у којој мери је напредовање жена у војној служби успорено због родних стереотипа, које структуре највише доприносе овом проблему, и да ли постоји неки други узрок њихове мале заступљености на високим положајима. Коришћени методи су статистичка анализа и Хи статистика (χ^2), којима се утврђују одступања у одговорима група испитаника, као и оцена статистичког значаја ових одступања (п-вредност). Резултати су указали на две групе узрока: спорадично неформално успоравање напредовања од стране високих официра, и психолошка и физичка неприлагођеност значајног броја жена теренским задацима.

Кључне речи: родна равноправност, Војска Србије, жене у војсци, услови напредовања, дискриминација

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality in all spheres of society is one of the key aspects not only of democracy but also of civilizational advancement, defying any form of discrimination, positive or negative, including gender-based discrimination. Gender equality is one of the basic democratic values necessary in the EU accession process (Bašaragin and Savić, 2021, p. 207). Moreover, the non-acceptance of the concept of gender neutrality diminishes the likeliness of choosing the potentially most successful candidates for specific occupations (Kilibarda, Šaranović, and Rokvić, 2015; Bjekić and Jelača, 2019). The concept of gender-neutrality is a dominant attitude and a significant characteristic of the post-modern military (Rothschild and Davies, 1994; Harries-Jenkins, 2006; Carreiras, 2006, etc.).

Based on UN documents and recommendations (UN Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security, UN Security Council, 2000), the Serbian military and legal systems provide all the formal conditions for the equal advancement of women in the army. The entire defence system of Serbia, from training to promotion procedures, is adapted to the natural physical potentials of both sexes. Marketing tools for making the military vocation more appealing to women, and for bringing the female soldier model closer to society as a whole have been developed. The results have been noticeable.

The representation of women in the Serbian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was around 19% until the year 2015, when faster growth ensued so that, in 2019, the representation of women reached 22% (MoD, 2011; MoD, 2015; MoD, 2019). Comparative data shows that Serbia does not fall behind the average figures of most NATO members, who have set the highest standards for gender equality. The share of women engaged in the Serbian Armed Forces is almost equal (11.7%) to the average of NATO countries, which is 12% (NATO, 2019, p. 23). Among NATO countries, Hungary is at the top, with 20% of their army personnel consisting of women, while women in the Bulgarian,

American, Canadian, and French troops make up about 16% of the army personnel (NATO, 2019; Manning, 2019). The lowest representation of women among NATO armies is in Turkey, with 0.3 % of their army personnel consisting of women, and Italy and Montenegro, where women make up about 6% of the army personnel (NATO, 2019).

On the other hand, data on women's rankings in the Serbian Armed Forces shows a different picture. An essential part of the concept of gender equality – advancement in officer ranks and leadership positions, falls behind other achievements. The representation of women in management positions is 8.5% (MoD, 2019, p. 2). Women make up less than 7% of officer personnel, of which the most significant number is in lower officer ranks – about 25% (second lieutenant and lieutenant). In comparison, in the group of higher ranks (major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel), women account for less than 1% of personnel. There is still no woman in the rank of a general in Serbia. Serbia falls behind Macedonia (3%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2%) in the share of women among senior officers (Balon, 2014, p. 26). In that matter, the Balkan countries fall significantly behind NATO countries, where the representation of women in different ranks is relatively balanced with the representation of men. They “were only slightly underrepresented in the officer's and NCO's ranks and overrepresented among the enlisted” (Carreiras, 2006, p. 110).

Literature cites demographic, economic, and security conditions, labour force characteristics, and, particularly, cultural characteristics, social values about gender, and social values about family as the causes of the lower representation of women in the armed forces, especially in the highest ranks (Segal, 2006; Woodward and Duncanson, 2017). Given that the first generation of women was enrolled in the Military Academy as recently as 2007, the number of those who have achieved the right to high positions over time is significantly lower than the number of men who are candidates for these positions. These reasons do account for the lower representation, but not for the sparse share of women in command and management positions. In reality, women occupy prominent political and economic positions in Serbian society, which is a fact that sheds particular light on the problem, proving that the aforementioned discrepancy within the military is not a matter of traditional collective attitudes.

This research aims to discover the causes of the slow-going progress of women in terms of their professional advancement in the Serbian Armed Forces. The research is based on the surveys of members of the mixed-gender military and organizational units, conducted at their workplaces in the Serbian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence. Within this authentic pool of information about the respondents' opinions, attitudes, and sentiments, the paper aims to identify: whether, and to what extent, the advancement of women in military service lags due to gender stereotypes, which structures contribute to this problem the most, and

whether there are other reasons of such a low representation in high-ranking positions.

The first chapter of the paper deals with research methodology. The second part consists of three sections analogous to set research goals, and deals with three different aspects of the position of women in the armed forces. These are: a) the perception of discrimination, b) military structures slowing down the advancement of women, and c) women on field assignments.

The segmentation of the problem resulted in the need for the research results of each mentioned aspect to be taken into account simultaneously with the discussion.

METHODOLOGY

Data

The basis of the empirical research are the unprocessed and, in part, processed sets of data from the Institute for Strategic Research' survey from 2019. A survey of the military personnel of gender-mixed military and organizational units is an essential precondition for women in the Armed Forces, rather than just a normative inclusion. It yields data on the cognitive, emotional, and motivational foundation of the Armed Forces' members of both sexes (Višacki and Šaranović, 2015, p. 86), providing an insight into deeper layers of interpersonal relations, and enabling prompt systemic adjustment.

The total number of respondents was 480, and the questionnaire comprised 46 questions. The survey classifies interviewees following several criteria, the relevant ones for this research being the structure of respondents by gender, rank, and age. According to age, respondents were divided into groups of people under 30, people between 30 and 40, and people over 40.

According to rank, the respondents were classified into four groups:

- II professional soldier;
- II non-commissioned officer;
- III junior officer: Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Captain First Class;
- IV senior officer: Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General, Major General, Lieutenant General, and General; (the official website of the Serbian Armed Forces, 2020).

The sample of respondents comprised all rank categories, with no generals surveyed among senior officers.

Table 1. Structure of respondents

The rank of respondents				
Soldier	NCO	Junior officer	Senior officer	Civilian
44	143	186	82	25
Gender		Age		
Men	Women	<30	31–40	>40
313	167	178	133	169

Source: (Šaranović, Kilibarda and Marček, 2021, p. 276).

Research Methods and Design

This research focuses on the challenges of women's advancement in military service. Therefore, from a comprehensive survey which is part of a larger project, data on respondents' answers to only four questions was selected and divided into two groups. The first two questions are posed in such a way as to encourage a rational assessment of the respondents, while the other two allow for greater freedom to state personal and emotional attitudes towards strengthening the role of women in the army.

In no case can the answers of the respondents be *a priori* acknowledged as accurate, but their objectivity can be assessed using:

- a) *Chi-squared* statistics (χ^2) to determine the discrepancies in the answers within the same gender group to two similar questions; and
- b) The statistical significance of this deviation (*p-value*).

Although it may not be precise, this data represents the most helpful information on informal relations within the armed forces.

The first group of questions:

1. *Are the same criteria applied in practice for both men and women during official evaluation and other forms of valuation of the work results of subordinates?*
2. *Assuming that they perform their duties equally responsibly and successfully, do men and women stand equal chances of promotion in practice?*

Both questions are formulated in such a way as to elicit a rational assessment (objectivity of superiors and conditions for advancement) rather than a personal point of view. Still, the first question offers more room for expressing possible competitiveness between the sexes, as it is impossible to use only reason to assess whether the evaluation is completely objective. The second question requires a somewhat higher degree of inclusion of the rational component because the degree of progress achieved (women) is quite measurable.

High χ^2 and high statistical significance (*p-value*<0.01) showed a statistically significant discrepancy between the answers to these questions within the same group. Based on these results, one could separate

the rational assessments of the respondents on the equality of conditions for advancement from personal and emotional feelings of discrimination against their gender group. The responses to these questions and deviations within the same groups make it possible to assess the hypothesis of the resistance to female members of the Serbian Armed Forces taking up the highest leadership positions and ranks. One could expect a significant disproportion in the answers in favour of the second question.

If this hypothesis is confirmed, the next assignment will be to investigate which groups of military personnel show the most outstanding resistance to the advancement of women in the Armed Forces, whether they are in a position to influence it, and their motives. Since there are no formal obstacles to women's advancement, the identification of these groups has to be based on their attitudes, stereotypes, and emotions (e.g. fear of the Armed Forces operating with women in command). This can be investigated by classifying and analysing the answers to the following two questions:

3. *What is your attitude towards further increasing the number of women serving in the Armed Forces?*
4. *Were the number of women in senior command and management positions to increase significantly, how would this affect the quality of management and command?*

The third question asks for the respondents' position directly. While the fourth question also requires a personal attitude to be expressed regarding this issue, it does so indirectly, and so points to the reasons behind the resistance to the advancement of women.

The answers were divided according to the rank and age group of respondents. These two questions were answered only by professional military personnel, with no civilian personnel included.

After classifying the responses into age and rank groups, discrepancies in the answers to these questions among the groups were determined in order to identify the structures with the most substantial resistance to women's advancement. Here, differences concerning the questions, expressed within the same group, are analysed as well. All the unexpected discrepancies could offer valuable information, as in the previous case.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In line with the dominant social attitudes, most respondents of both sexes gave positive and gender-tolerant answers. However, the share of those who do not have a positive attitude towards the efficiency, ability, and responsibility of women in the Armed Forces is very high, ranging from 20% to over 40%, depending on the question. The results are summarized in three parts.

*The Serbian Armed Forces Members' Perception
of Gender Discrimination in the Advancement Process*

The perception of gender discrimination was evaluated by analysing the first two questions. Regarding the opportunities for advancement in relation to gender, both sexes consider themselves the neglected side, although this is much more pronounced among male respondents.

*Table 2. Fairness of evaluation and equality of opportunities
for advancement in the Serbian Armed Forces (%)
(by gender)*

	Men	Women
<i>Do the same criteria apply to men and women when evaluating the performance of subordinates?</i>		
The same criteria are generally applied	68	83
There are frequent deviations from the actual criteria in favor of women	27	6
There are frequent deviations from the actual criteria in favor of men	2	9
Other answers	3	2
<i>Do men and women have equal opportunities to advance in the service?</i>		
The opportunities are primarily equal	65	44
Women have greater opportunities	19.5	4.2
Men have greater opportunities	12.1	50.3
Other answers	3.5	1.8
χ^2 statistics M/F	$\chi^2= 89.94; p\text{-value}<0.00001$	

Source: data according to Šaranović, Kilibarda, and Marček, 2021, p.151, p. 158.

Regarding the fairness in assessing the work performance of men and women, a significant portion of respondents (68% and 83%) believe the same criteria are applied. However, according to the answers to the second question, which is more critical for this research, significantly fewer respondents think that there is no discrimination regarding advancement opportunities (65% and 44%). The number of women who believe there is no discrimination is twice lower with the second than with the first question, which is the first of several discrepancies within the group favoring the initial hypothesis of informal obstacles for the advancement of women in the Serbian Armed Forces.

If only the first question is taken into account, it is clear that there is a gender-determined position about 'the other ones' being in a better situation. At the level of gender, there is some competitiveness encouraging subjective evaluations. This subjectivity, especially among women, is not high (9%). Strongly indicating the problematic progress of women is the intensely high disproportion in the answers to these two questions among female respondents (Table 2), confirmed by *Chi-square* statistics (Table 3).

Table 3. Differentiation to questions by gender groups

	χ^2	<i>p-value</i>
F1/F2	97.82	0.00001
M1/M2	68.57	0.013

Source: authors

Unlike the minimum 9% who think that men are permanently favoured, more than 50% of women estimate that men have better opportunities for rank progression. Among this 50.3% of female respondents, almost all belong to the group of junior officer ranks. In favour of their objectivity regarding this issue, we underline that nearly 83% of women believe that the evaluation is fair. In fact, 6% of the female respondents think it is even biased in their favour (Table 2), which means that about 90% of women *do not believe* that men are favoured in general. For this reason, the 50.3% of responses claiming that men are favoured in professional advancement must be considered objective, that is, based on facts.

Unexpected replies to the second question result from developing a new position, one separate from the fundamentally positive or negative attitude towards the opposite sex. That is why these results can be considered a significant indicator that there are informal obstacles to the rank progression of women in practice.

An additional observation can be made about the answers to these two questions once the respondents' rank is taken into consideration (Table 4).

In four out of the five groups classified by rank, the number of respondents who believe that men are favoured ranges from 0% to 2%. On the other hand, the number of military personnel who believe that the criteria for women are frequently more lenient is more significant by far, and even relatively high among soldiers and non-commissioned officers (48% and 31%) (Table 4).

There are no extraordinary discrepancies among the respondents. One could claim that there is a certain degree of flexibility in evaluating women and their work results, but this claim does not seem to correlate with the rank progression of women in practice.

Among the highest-ranking officers (major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel), a significant portion of the respondents believes that the chances for advancement in the Armed Forces are equal for both sexes. We take this opinion and its objectivity with considerable reserve, because it is exactly this group that decides on advancement. Therefore, it is not likely that many of them would consider themselves biased. Even with that fact in mind, in this group, there are more respondents who estimate that men have greater chances for advancement (12.2%) than there are those who believe that it is women who have greater chances for rank progression (7.3%). The assessment of this 12.2% can be considered an objective as-

assessment with great certainty, because it shows the self-critical attitude of the very group deciding on advancement. Moreover, this is not a matter of the competitive relationship between the two sexes because 99% of this group, as already mentioned, is comprised of men.

Table 4. Fairness of assessment and equal opportunities for advancement in military service (by rank)

Respondent's rank (%)					
Do the same criteria apply to men and women when evaluating the performance of subordinates?					
	Soldier	NCO	Junior Officer	Senior Officer	Civilian
The same criteria are generally applied	45.4	62.9	80.6	86.6	80
There are frequent deviations from the actual criteria in favor of women	47.7	31.5	8.1	9.7	16
There are frequent deviations from the actual criteria in favor of men	2.3	2.1	9.2	0.0	0
Other answers	4.5	3.5	2.1	3.7	4
Do men and women have equal opportunities for advancement in service? (%)					
	Soldier	NCO	Junior Officer	Senior Officer	Civilian
Equal opportunities	54.5	63.2	48.6	74.4	44
M have greater opportunities	18.2	12.5	40.0	12.2	40
F have greater opportunities	25.0	21.5	8.6	7.3	16
Other	2.3	2.8	2.7	7.3	0

Source: First edition – Šaranović, Kilibarda, and Marček, 2021, p.153; second edition – authors' calculation.

What Structures Slow Down the Advancement of Women in the Serbian Armed Forces?

The answers to the third and fourth questions are analysed in order to single out the groups of military personnel who have a negative personal attitude towards strengthening the role of women in the Armed Forces. The answers were divided by age and rank groups.

In line with the subtitle, this section will focus on the relationship between the respondents' structure and *negative attitudes towards women's advancement*.

Differences between the responses of different age groups were clearly expressed ($\chi^2=17.3$ and $\chi^2=25.4$) and statistically significant ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Expectedly, the results show a significantly higher resistance to women in the army in older groups of respondents (31–40; 40+), among whom as many as 37% and 30% believe that increasing the number of women in the army would lead to a decrease in the operational capacity of the Serbian Armed Forces.

Table 5. The generational divide in attitudes towards the advancement of women in the Serbian Armed Forces

	Age <30	31-40	>40
3. The position to further increase the number of women in the armed forces			
1. Justified to increase the number in all branches and services of the Armed Forces	19	20	11
2. Justified for duties that do not require great physical effort	49	36	54
3. Not justified, would adversely affect the operational capability of the Serbian Armed Forces		37	30
4. Other answers	10	7	5
χ^2 statistics	$\chi^2=17.348$; p -value=0.008		
4. Effects of increasing the number of women in command and management positions			
1. Favorable	23	10	9
2. Adverse	22	26	25
3. No effect	40	55	57
4. Other answers	15	9	9

Source: authors

Negative attitudes about the increase in the number of women in the Serbian Armed Forces (in general and in high positions) are reasonably evenly distributed per age and rank groups. One would expect that the greatest opponents of strengthening the role of women in the army belong to the oldest group of respondents and high-ranking officers. These expectations are based on the fact that the older generation finds it more difficult to accept changes to the established structure and value system, i.e. they are more prone to stereotyping that men and women differ in the psychological characteristics essential for success in the military profession (Boldry, Wood and Kashi, 2001). In addition, their motive for preserving their positions is supposed to be the strongest one.

Yet, this research did not clearly show this in all matters. The assumption is supported by the results showing that this age group has the lowest share (11%) of positive attitudes about increasing the number of women in the army (Table 5). On the other hand, the negative attitude towards expanding the number of women in the military and their advancement is pervasive in all rank groups. It ranges from 21% to 43%, with a lower figure among senior officers (the oldest ones) than among soldiers and non-commissioned officers (Table 6).

Table 6. The attitude of military personnel towards the increase in the number of women in the armed forces (%) (by rank)

	Soldier	NCO	Junior officer	Senior officer
The position to further increase the number of women in the armed forces				
1. Justified to increase the number in all branches and services of the Armed Forces	30	11	14	9
2. Justified for duties that do not require great physical effort	27	43	47	48
3. Not justified, would adversely affect the operational capability of the Serbian Armed Forces	43	40	21	34
4. Other answers	-	6	14	9
χ^2 statistics	$\chi^2=21.724$; p -value<0.0013			
Effects of increasing the number of women in command and management positions				
1. Favorable	18	13	21	6
2. Adverse	36	29	20	28
3. No effect	44	50	43	54
4. Other answers	2	8	16	12
χ^2 statistics	$\chi^2=24.063$; p -value<0.004			

Source: first question – authors, second question – Šaranović, Kilibarda, Marček, 2021, p.207.

As mentioned at the beginning, to answer the question of who is slowing down the advancement of women in the army, it is necessary to find out which groups are the most significant opponents of women's advancement, and which structures *can* slow it down. The fact that high-ranking officers are not the group with the most negative attitudes does not mean that they are not the ones most responsible for the slow advancement of women to high-ranking officer ranks. The most significant part of the Serbian Armed Forces members who do not support women in progressing to managerial positions are in the group of professional soldiers (43% and 36%).

This is a worryingly significant part, and it deserves more attention further on. However, they cannot pose insurmountable obstacles to advancement. On the other hand, senior officers have both the motive and the opportunity to slow down or limit the advancement of women to senior officer positions. As many as 34% of these respondents believe and directly state that more women in the army would negatively affect the operational capability of the Defence Forces. As many as 28% think that increasing the number of women in command and management positions would negatively affect the command system. Senior officers cannot affect the influx of new generations of women, nor can they oppose promotion procedures, but their

informal role can be assumed to be a disruptive factor. Although they do not form the majority, we believe that the opposition of one third of the high-ranking officers to the advancement of women in the army is an extremely high percentage and a very important factor in women's slow advancement. The point is that the number of high positions is many times smaller than the number of candidates who meet the formal criteria for promotion. With such competition, the voting of one third of the decision-makers in favour of males is crucial for the slow progress of women in the Armed Forces. This slowdown is informal in nature, as senior officers have the discretion to challenge any of a number of a candidate's characteristics outside the formal criteria, without citing gender characteristics.

Insufficient Preparedness of Women for Advancement in the Serbian Armed Forces

This section analyzes the same data as the previous one (presented in Table 6). However, now the focus is on analyzing the differences between the answers to questions 3 and 4 within the same groups of respondents. These differences are a potential indicator of another obstacle to the advancement of women in the military, which could not be foreseen at the beginning of this research, but which was observed during the analysis of the results of the previous section.

Within the structure of the answers to the questions presented in Table 5, Table 6, and Graph 1, special attention is drawn to the unexpected fact that within all *seven groups of respondents* (age and rank), there is a greater prevalence of negative attitudes towards increasing the number of women in the army in general, than there is towards women in command and management positions. To put it simply, members of the Serbian Armed Forces would rather accept an increase in the number of women in the highest positions (although negative attitudes on this issue are relatively widespread too) than an increase in their overall number (Figure 1).

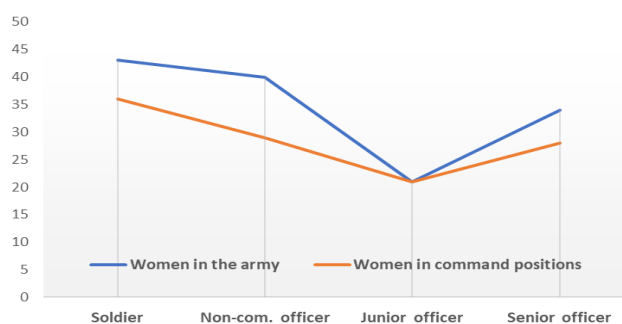


Figure 1. The negative attitude of military personnel towards strengthening the position of women in the Serbia Armed Forces (%)

Source: authors

The answers of this portion of respondents cannot be explained by gender bias or negative competitive emotions because, in that case, this relationship would be the other way round. Stereotypes and prejudices about women's poorer managerial and command abilities would cause significantly greater resistance to women at high places than to the overall number of women in the army. These respondents did not give an emotional, but a somewhat rational assessment that further increase of women in the military could have adverse effects on the operational capability of the Defense Forces. The adequacy and accuracy of their position are not the subject of this research.

The difference between the answers to the third and fourth question within the same group of respondents can be summarized in three groups, all pointing to the respondents' opinion that women are less ready for field tasks:

- a) Fewer negative attitudes towards women in management positions than towards an increase in their total number in *all ranks and generations*;
- b) The attitude concerning the reduction of the operational capability of the Serbian Armed Forces as a consequence of the increase in the number of women in the army is most widespread in the group of professional soldiers, who know the most about field assignments;
- c) In contrast to other areas in which women in Serbia have been accomplishing significant feats for decades (political, business, financial, and other areas), their ability and preparedness for accomplishments in the armed forces have not yet been affirmed.

The problem of women's unpreparedness for field tasks has already been noted in domestic and world literature. This refers not only to women's physical abilities, which are a necessity for work in the field, but also to their insufficient preparedness to work in bad weather conditions, to participate in field operations lasting for many days (being separated from their families), to stay outside functional closed facilities and the like (Šaranović, 2011). According to military medical research, although no gender or ethnicity differences in psychological distress were observed in the field, women showed significantly higher levels of anxiety in the initial stages of accomplishing field assignments. Similar results were noted by Joiner et al. in 2000 (cited in Davis Martin et al., 2006) and Rosen et al. (2000).

The opinion of the respondents who are directly involved in the functioning of gender-mixed compositions in the field is a significant indicator that it is necessary to investigate in practice whether this problem really exists in the Armed Forces.

Although the topic of this research is the challenges of women's advancement in the Serbian Armed Forces, the issue of them progressing to the highest command and management positions cannot be separated

from the issue of their insufficient preparedness for field assignments. This is a potentially severe problem for the whole concept of including women in the defense system. According to more than 40% of respondents, appointing people unprepared for field assignments to command and management positions in peacetime would undoubtedly result in “weakening the operational readiness of the Armed Forces” in case of security challenges or armed conflicts.

In addition to the opinion that many women are not ready for demanding field conditions, another form of women’s insufficient preparedness for advancement poses a potential problem. Another group of answers indicates that part of the problem of the slow progress of women in the Serbian Armed Forces lies in their specifics. The least expected responses are the opinions of a significant number of women (data from Table 6) stating that their additional engagement at all posts would have adverse effects on the efficiency of the Serbian Armed Forces. In the group of junior officers, with women making up 92% of the sample, more than 20% of women had such an opposing opinion. In the entire sample, it is 12% of women and a significant number of neutral answers.

The analysis of these two groups of answers, and their combination both indicate the possibility of the *insufficient preparedness* of a substantial number of women to advance to the highest ranks. This research does not provide sufficient elements to assess what this lack of preparedness actually means.

CONCLUSIONS

To say nothing of the post-transition period, traditional attitudes on the role of women in the Balkans, especially in Serbia, have already been substantially reduced in the post-war period. In the last twenty years, women have proved themselves equally capable of holding the same posts and performing the same jobs as men. In the last twenty years, women have proved themselves equally capable of holding the same posts and performing the same jobs as men, such as entrepreneurs, company managers, ministers, all the way to the central bank governor and the Prime Minister. On the other hand, women in senior positions in the military seem to be accepted mainly declaratively. Despite the clear commitment of the Serbian Armed Forces, society, and the State to gender equality, and although the total share of female personnel in the Serbian Armed Forces is increasing, the number of women among high-ranking officers and in managerial positions is modest.

An increase in the number of women in high positions in the Serbian Armed Forces can be expected over time, as their enrollment rate in the Military Academy and the Military Medical Academy is constantly increasing. This increases the statistical probability that more of them will progress to command and management positions once they have complet-

ed career forms of training (Command Staff and General Staff Training). However, the reasons for women progressing only to the lower officer ranks will not cease to exist.

This research analyzed the answers of members of the Serbian Armed Forces to four questions related to the advancement of women in the Armed Forces, both directly and indirectly. Statistical differences in responses were examined between the groups of respondents and also *within* the observed groups. In this way, possible gender animosities and stereotypes have been separated from the respondents' objective (not necessarily accurate) assessments.

The results showed that there are several independent causes limiting the availability of senior officers' posts to female members of the Serbian Armed Forces. Primary importance can be attributed to none of these causes.

The first group of causes refers to the expected favouring of men in rank progression in the Serbian Armed Forces. This phenomenon, though, is neither one-way nor straightforward. Conditions for advancement in practice favour men, but at the same time, there is a significant degree of concessions to women when evaluating their performance. The existence of more lenient criteria does not mean that the presence of women in the Armed Forces is condoned. In fact, they are more probably a reflection of the need to satisfy the form imposed by Serbia's commitment to meeting the standards of Resolution 1325 and the demands of developed countries. Informal ways of slowing down the advancement of women to high positions are present, but they cannot provide an explanation for the symbolic number of women in the highest positions. They are indicated by a combination of a) statistical estimates that attitudes about the easier advancement of men are objective (differences in answers to questions 1 and 2) and b) the negative attitudes of decision-making senior officers toward women's advancement.

The second group of possible causes of the slow advancement of women in the army is indicated by the opinions of a significant number of respondents about the reduced readiness of women for the highest challenges posed by this profession. For the defense system of Serbia and the whole concept of engaging women in the Armed Forces, it is necessary to investigate the reasons behind such opinions of the members of these gender-mixed units.

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ИЗАЗОВИ ПРОФЕСИОНАЛНОГ НАПРЕДОВАЊА ЖЕНА У ВОЈСЦИ СРБИЈЕ

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Резиме

Како су у војном и правном систему Србије обезбеђени сви формални услови за равноправно напредовање жена у војсци, а одбрамбени систем је прилагођен природним потенцијалима оба пола, заступљеност жена у Војсци Србије је на високом нивоу. У просеку, Србија не заостаје за НАТО чланицама, којима су постављени највиши критеријуми у погледу родне равноправности. Насупрот томе, заступљеност жена на командним дужностима је незадовољавајућа. У вишим официрским чиновима жене су заступљене свега 1%.

У фокусу овог рада су узроци успореног напредовања жена у Војсци Србије. Кључни извор за ово емпијско истраживање су подаци прикупљени анкетањем 480 војних лица оба пола о функционисању родно мешовитих састава. Коришћени методи су статистичка анализа и Хи статистика (χ^2), којима су утврђена кључна одступања у одговорима група испитаника на слична питања како би се релативно објективна процена раздвојила од пристрасности према сопственој групи (по чину или полу). Истражене области су: а) перцепција родне дискриминације, б) војне структуре које исказују неслагање са напредовањем жена и в) проблем који се испољио током анализе, неспремност жена за теренске задатке.

Резултати су показали да неколико независних узрока ограничава женским припадницима ВС доступност највиших официрских позиција, при чему се ни једном од њих не може приписати примарни значај. Прва група узрока се односи на фаворизовање мушкараца у напредовању. Неформални начини успоравања напредовања жена до високих позиција су присутни, али не у тој мери да би дали објашњење за симболичан број жена на највишим позицијама. Друга група узрока је неспремност самих жена за највише изазове које доноси ова професија. Анализа са великом поузданошћу упућује на психолошку и физичку неприлагођеност значајног броја жена теренским задацима. За даља истраживања, како на терену, тако и у науци, отворено је питање да ли су теренски задаци заиста прилагођени физичким могућностима жена, али и питање да ли су жене психолошки спремне за све задатке које војни позив подразумева.