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GENDER EQUALITY WITH REGARD TO THE CURRENT CHALLENGES TO UKRAINE'S NATIONAL SECURITY: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS

The article examines the legal and institutional mechanisms for integrating gender equality into the national security and defence sector of Ukraine. The analysis of the legal framework governing gender policy, in particular in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, is carried out. Particular attention is paid to the role of international standards, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Istanbul Convention, in ensuring equal access of women and men to participation in defence processes.

Based on theoretical analysis and empirical data, the article examines the impact of gender balance on the effectiveness of the national security sector, in particular its managerial, operational and strategic components, in the context of modern military challenges. It is found that the integration of gender equality contributes to the efficiency of the defence sector, but requires improvement of legal regulation and changes in institutional approaches.

The results of the study indicate the need to revise legislative acts and introduce gender-sensitive approaches in the planning and execution of military operations. The article provides recommendations for strengthening the legal framework for gender equality in the security and defence sector of Ukraine. It is concluded that gender equality in the military does not mean mandatory establishment of equal obligations for both sexes. It is important to take into account the specifics and capabilities of each gender, ensuring equal access to military service on a voluntary basis, which is a more effective and fair approach. This allows to take into account the individual characteristics of women and men, thus ensuring the harmonious functioning of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the context of modern challenges and needs of society.

Key words: *gender, gender equality, national security of Ukraine, defence sector, martial law, Armed Forces of Ukraine.*

Original article

INTRODUCTION. Under the current conditions of global changes and challenges, gender equality issues are of particular importance for national security. The introduction of a special legal regime of martial law in Ukraine necessitates reviewing and adapting existing security strategies from a gender perspective. This includes ensuring women's equal access to decision-making in the defence sector, supporting women in the military, and developing policies that take into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different gender groups in crisis situations. The relationship between gender equality and national security is complex and multifaceted and requires both theoretical analysis and practical implementation of effective strategies.

Gender equality in national security and defence is becoming an important aspect that affects not only the country's domestic policy, but also its international image and relations. Ukraine, striving for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and fulfilment of international obligations, in particular in the context of the Istanbul Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals, cannot ignore the issue of gender equality, including its aspects in the military sphere.

The topic is particularly relevant in the context of finding new approaches to improving the effectiveness of the country's defence capability. Equal involvement of women and men in decision-making, planning and execution of defence

tasks allows to maximise the potential of the entire population to ensure national security.

Awareness of how gender aspects are integrated into the security and defence sector is key to developing effective policies aimed at creating inclusive, equitable and effective defence forces. The relevance of the study is driven by the need to critically analyse the existing barriers to gender equality in the army, including stereotypes, organisational, cultural and legal restrictions.

Therefore, the topic of gender equality in the context of Ukraine's national security is becoming one of the most important, combining both theoretical aspects of gender studies and practical needs of reforming the country's defence sector. The development and implementation of gender-sensitive approaches in Ukraine's defence policy should be an important step towards strengthening national security, sustainable development and achieving equality.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH. *The purpose* of the article is to carry out a comprehensive legal analysis of the existing mechanisms for integrating gender equality into the national security and defence sector of Ukraine, and to develop scientifically based recommendations for their improvement, taking into account current challenges, the experience of women's involvement in military service and international human rights standards, especially in the context of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. The study was prompted by the need to respond to the current challenges faced by Ukraine on the way to achieving gender equality in the context of political instability and the legal regime of martial law.

To achieve this goal, the following *objectives* were set:

- to theoretically substantiate the importance of gender equality in the context of national security, to analyse academic works that consider theories of gender equality and their application in the security and defence sector;

- to empirically investigate the impact of gender equality on the effectiveness of military and security structures, to study statistical data on the participation of women in the Ukrainian security forces and to assess their contribution to national security;

- to develop recommendations for improving the legal framework for gender equality in the military and national security sector.

METHODOLOGY. The methodology of the study on gender equality with regard to the national security of Ukraine is based on a comprehensive approach that includes a number of inter-related scientific methods. The basis for the analysis was the application of the theoretical

method, which allowed to summarise scientific works and legal acts on gender equality in the defence sector. An important data collection tool included sociological methods, which helped to collect information on women's participation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and assess the impact of social and cultural barriers on gender equality.

The obtained data were analysed using the statistical method, which allowed to identify trends in the number of women in military structures and their impact on the effectiveness of military operations. To compare international experience and find successful approaches, the comparative legal method was used, which allowed us to study the practices of ensuring gender equality in the armies of other countries, including NATO member states.

The formal legal method allowed us to analyse the current Ukrainian legislation regulating gender issues in the defence sector and identify legal gaps that need to be addressed. Based on existing trends and in order to anticipate future challenges, a predictive method was used to forecast possible changes in the legal regulation of gender equality in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Consequently, the use of these methods allowed for a comprehensive analysis covering theoretical, social and legal aspects of the study and the development of recommendations for improving the integration of gender equality in the military sphere.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. The relevance of studying the issue of gender equality lies in the fact that the world has long recognised that prioritising gender equality in reforms of all national institutions is closely linked to the fundamental values of democracy, individual freedoms and human rights, and is a component of democratic control in all spheres (Kucherenko, Tinin, Timofieiev, 2023, p. 67; Tinin, 2023, p. 432). Since the outbreak of hostilities in the east of our country, and especially since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has begun to actively implement advanced methods and means of other countries to improve the effectiveness of defence capabilities. In the context of European integration, the issue of gender equality is extremely important for Ukrainian society in general and the security and defence sector in particular. Today, a targeted state policy to achieve gender equality is a crucial condition for directing the activities of national institutions to ensure and guarantee equal rights, freedoms and opportunities for men and women, promote gender democracy, develop gender culture and prevent gender discrimination (Kucherenko, Tinin, Timofieiev, 2023, p. 67).

The share of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine continues to grow, which is reflected in the increasing number of women in leadership positions and combat units. Today, in line with current trends, women not only hold various military positions, but also actively participate in combat operations, which demonstrates their high competence and effectiveness in performing their duties. According to research, women in the military often demonstrate a high capacity for empathy and consideration of the national, cultural and religious peculiarities of the countries where military operations are conducted. This makes it possible to create more harmonious and effective units capable of achieving better results in difficult conditions (Kucherenko, Tinin, Timofieiev, 2023, p. 67; Tinin, 2023, p. 433).

An important condition for ensuring gender equality is legal support at the state level, which guarantees women and men equal rights to serve in the armed forces, as well as protection of their rights and development of opportunities. The Constitution of Ukraine establishes the principle of equality enshrined in Article 24, which provides for equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the socio-political, cultural and other spheres of activity¹. The Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” of 8 September 2005, No. 2866-IV, also contributes to the implementation of this principle in practice². In addition, the implementation of international commitments, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, ensures the integration of gender equality into national legislation and policy, and defines the main directions of gender policy implementation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including the involvement of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention³. An important step was the increase in the number of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, where as of the end of 2023, more than 62,000 women serve, of whom 43,479 are military personnel,

which is an important aspect of gender policy implementation (Buket, Provorny, 2023).

One of the key areas of gender mainstreaming in the security and defence sector is the development of research on gender issues and national security policy. Gender equality plays an important role in ensuring social development. Studies conducted in this area show a positive correlation between ensuring equal gender rights and women’s benefits in the social, economic and political spheres. Data shows that positive achievements of women in legal, social and economic status contribute to the development of society as a whole.

Improving the legal status of women, establishing gender equality and creating a true gender balance are key aspects of social development. In democratic societies, combining family and professional life for women and men, as well as providing them with the opportunity to exercise their equal rights, are considered to be the main components of solving social problems. Achievement of gender equality and its implementation in the system of social relations is a fundamental value that causes real changes in the economic, humanitarian and social spheres and is a powerful reserve for the progress of any state (Uvarova, 2018, p. 18).

One of the main signs of democracy development in the 21st century is the elimination of all forms of discrimination and overcoming gender inequality. “At the same time, in a number of countries that have chosen the democratic path of development, including Ukraine, there is still a gender imbalance in every sphere of life to varying degrees, which objectively makes it impossible for public structures and the private sphere to function properly. The lack of gender equality causes destructive processes in society, creates obstacles to social unity and, as a result, hinders sustainable human development and prosperity” (Hrytsai, 2018, p. 11). Therefore, ensuring equality between men and women is one of the main issues of Ukrainian state-building.

The term “gender” was introduced into the social sciences to define new strategies for regulating socio-sexual relations around the world and to launch gender studies. The main purpose of such studies was to analyse the relations between women and men, identify their common and distinctive features, as well as to reveal the role of sexes, the constructs of femininity and masculinity. Gender as a concept encompasses various aspects, including social roles, cultural expectations and political strategies aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for both sexes (Aheieva et al., 2004, p. 25).

¹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (1996). *Constitution of Ukraine* (Law No. 254к/96-ВР). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254к/96-ВР>.

² Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (2005). *On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men* (Law No. 2866-IV). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2866-15>.

³ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. (2020). *On approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” for the period up to 2025* (Regulation No. 1544-p). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1544-2020-p>.

Globalisation and the subsequent interconnection of nations have necessitated the inclusion of the concept of gender in various practical transformations. The concept has found its way into political strategies, the legal frameworks and norms that govern them, and the overall transformation of all aspects of life that affect both men and women. The term “gender” has become a descriptor of social and governmental change as it is shaped by the actions and relationships of people of different genders. Gender is now an important structure in the field of real transformations in social relations, and the status of women and men is its fundamental component. The concept of gender is gaining more and more recognition and attention not only in academic and scientific discourse, but also in the political and legal analysis of gender equality in Ukraine (Aheieva et al., 2004, p. 11).

First, let’s analyse the concept of gender. Typically, gender is primarily associated with biological attributes such as the structure of the genitals, reproductive system and chromosome set. However, in society, we often define people as male or female based on social attributes such as hair length, clothing style and colour, as well as certain behavioural traits such as aggression or tenderness. Therefore, we often find out the sex of a baby before it is born so that we can buy appropriate clothes and toys for a boy or a girl. In fact, children’s toy stores often have separate sections painted pink or blue to indicate toys for girls or boys, respectively. Even in higher education institutions, we tend to choose the appropriate majors based on gender stereotypes: girls tend to study philology and boys tend to study the sciences. These social characteristics assigned to men or women are called gender

Society is riddled with gender stereotypes that are based on biological characteristics and dictate social roles for men and women. These stereotypes encompass femininity and masculinity, which are traditionally associated with female and male characteristics, respectively. However, gender goes beyond simple descriptions and serves to critique the limited behavioural expectations placed on women and men. Gender studies challenge the notion of gender polarisation, which focuses solely on the differences between the sexes, as women, like men, are a diverse group in themselves. When discussing gender, the main issue is inequality, not just differences between men and women. Inequality generates discussions about the hierarchy, stratification and power dynamics embedded in gender relations. Power is the unequal distribution of resources such as economic wealth, time and social status.

Gender theory seeks a transformative shift in social norms to achieve gender equality (Oksamytna, 2004, p. 162).

In the broadest sense, gender can be defined as follows: “Gender is a system of values, norms and characteristics of male and female behaviour, lifestyle and way of thinking, roles and relationships of women and men modelled by society and supported by social institutions, acquired by them as individuals in the process of socialisation, which is primarily determined by the social, political, economic and cultural context of life and fixes the idea of a woman and a man depending on their sex” (Aheieva et al., 2004, p. 11).

Concepts, as well as people, have their own time and place of origin. The term “gender” originated in the United Kingdom. In English, the word “gender” literally means grammatical gender – masculine, feminine or neuter. Over the time, the concept has evolved to encompass the social and sexual attributes associated with a particular sex, distinct from its biological components such as genetics, morphology, anatomy and physiology. These socio-sexual characteristics cover various aspects of life, including lifestyles, behaviours, intentions, aspirations, etc. Gender goes beyond individual men and women to include the dynamics between them as social groups and the broader structure of gender relations. It encompasses the social roles played by women and men, girls and boys, and the ways in which these roles are socially constructed (Oksamytna, 2004, p. 162).

Gender is a complex and multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects of social life and interaction. In the scientific literature, gender is considered in several ways. Firstly, gender is defined as a social, role and cultural interpretation of personality traits and behavioural patterns of men and women that differ from their biological sex. This approach emphasises that gender roles are shaped by social interactions and cultural contexts rather than by biological differences (Oksamytna, 2004, p. 170).

Secondly, gender is seen as a process of socialisation for individuals born into the biological categories of female or male. This means that from birth, a person is subjected to socialisation that shapes their gender identity in accordance with society’s expectations of their sex. In this context, social norms and expectations define the behaviours and roles associated with male and female sex (Babenko, 2023, p. 188).

Thirdly, gender is also interpreted as a policy of equal rights and opportunities for men and women, as well as activities to create mechanisms for the implementation of this policy. This includes the development and implementation of

legislative and policy measures aimed at ensuring gender equality and overcoming discrimination. The importance of this interpretation lies in the fact that it recognises the need for active action on the part of the state and society to achieve true equality between the sexes (Oksamytna, 2004, p. 170).

Thus, the concept of gender encompasses not only biological differences, but also social and cultural factors that determine the roles and expectations of men and women in society. This confirms that gender roles and stereotypes are the result of long-term social interaction and can change in line with changes in society and culture (Oksamytna, 2004, p. 170). In all these meanings, gender is studied in the system of scientific gender studies. Gender studies can use the following methods that generate gender knowledge within political science, such as:

1) a theoretical method, which is the main methodology and connects the totality of knowledge gained by all methods into a conceptual vision of the problem. The theoretical method in gender studies makes it possible to define the range of existing problems and clarify the subject of study, determine the place of gender knowledge in the system of social sciences as a whole or within individual sciences;

2) a sociological method of studying gender, which allows to correlate any gender parameters with other social characteristics;

3) a statistical method of gender analysis, which involves the introduction and application of indicators that demonstrate the degree of equity in the distribution and use of national goods and services between social groups, taking into account the gender factor;

4) an empirical method, which is closely related to gender statistics and attests to the existence and significance of facts, real events, specific actions, etc. It reveals positive and negative experiences of gender equality, confirms or refutes the correctness of certain theoretical models or schemes (Oksamytna, 2004, p. 174).

In addition, the prognostic method is also important, as it makes it possible to determine the prospects for gender development, taking into account the gender situation in the country. Advance knowledge on gender as a component of the social development forecast leads to a rethinking of many basic categories (Hrytsai, 2018, p. 91).

The so-called gender mainstreaming approach to the problem of equality between women and men is of particular importance in the methodological system of gender studies. Given the difficulties of translation, Ukrainian scholarly literature increasingly uses a calque of the Eng-

lish-language term “gender mainstreaming” (Gerbert, 2012, p. 357).

In order to fully understand the complex dynamics of gender in society, it is important to have a systematic understanding of its holistic nature, encompassing the various systems of interconnection and interaction between men and women. In addition, scientific analysis of the patterns of evolution, growth and change is crucial. In practical terms, therefore, a comprehensive approach involves restructuring, improving and evaluating decision-making procedures to ensure that gender equality is integrated into all areas and at every level. This can be achieved through the active involvement of stakeholders responsible for policy implementation (Aheieva et al., 2004, pp. 27–28).

In gender research, it is crucial to emphasise the concept of gender equality. As stated in legal norms, gender equality refers to the equal legal status of both women and men, as well as equal prospects for its realisation. It ensures that persons of either sex can participate in all aspects of public life on equal terms. The concept of gender equality encompasses the fundamental notion of ensuring the equality of legal and practical rights of men and women, as well as equal opportunities for the exercise of these rights.

Women and men should enjoy the same social status, have the same conditions for the realisation of all human rights, the same opportunities to contribute to the political, economic and social development of the state, and to benefit equally from the results of development (Libanova, 2012, p. 142).

Gender equality is the process of fair treatment of women and men, the essence of which is to achieve social justice with due regard to the gender specifics of the sexes. Special measures are often required to address historical and social imbalances that impede gender equality. Gender equality covers various aspects – it is not only a legal category, but also an idea and a principle of law. The concept of gender equality should be understood as the equal legal status of women and men, which includes rights, freedoms and responsibilities. It also implies the creation of an environment that allows individuals to fully realise their abilities and opportunities in all spheres of private, public and state life. Despite numerous studies conducted by domestic and foreign scholars over several decades, the principle of gender equality is still not universally recognised as one of the key principles of law. Nevertheless, gender equality remains a fundamental principle for the development of civil society and the rule of law (Aheieva et al., 2004, p. 26).

In order for a modern state governed by the rule of law to achieve gender equality, it is crucial

to have effective legislation that upholds the principles of justice, dignity and equality. This legislation should also be in line with international standards to ensure that national legislation on gender equality is developed. However, good legislation is not enough; there must also be mechanisms to support its implementation. If existing legislation designed to promote gender equality is not implemented in society, it becomes ineffective and loses its purpose. Gender equality can only flourish in a society where people embody appropriate legal, moral and ethical norms in their daily actions and behaviour. Nevertheless, the implementation of legislation that promotes gender equality must also be backed by state guarantees, which can be achieved by placing appropriate obligations on state institutions (Hrytsai, 2018, p. 105).

The effectiveness of the state in building a united, progressive and promising society is demonstrated by the implementation of mechanisms for observing the principle of gender equality, as evidenced by international experience. The degree of protection of women's rights reflects the overall development of society. Thus, ignoring gender equality issues raises doubts about the entire system of public administration. The mechanism for ensuring gender equality is an integral element of the comprehensive system of observance of human rights and freedoms (Honiukova, Pedchenko, 2016, p. 116).

Improving the status of women, bridging the gender gap and creating an effective system to support gender equality can be achieved through scientific progress and further integration of scientific results into the process of creating and applying laws. It is important to note that currently there is no universally accepted definition in the legal literature that would clearly outline the mechanism for ensuring gender equality. The absence of a standardised definition hinders the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding how to promote gender equality. Scientific discussions raise many questions about the need for a scientific definition of the concept of "gender equality mechanism". To understand it, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the concept of 'mechanism' and refer to the etymology of this term (Hrytsai, 2018, p. 106).

In the most general sense, a mechanism is "the internal structure, system of something, a set of states and processes that make up a certain physical, chemical or other phenomenon" (Busel, 2001, p. 667).

In legal dictionaries, the word "mechanism" is usually used as a component of legal terms to explain certain legal phenomena in theoretical and research works of scholars (Koval, 2010, p. 94).

This term is, for example, used when analysing the concept of "mechanism of the state", when substantiating the concept of "mechanism of legal influence" and revealing the essence of such legal phenomena as the mechanism of legal regulation, the mechanism of implementation of legal norms, the mechanism of ensuring human rights and freedoms, etc. (Kobzar O., Kobzar T., 2021, p. 95).

The mechanism allows linking the elements that ensure the principle of gender equality into a structural and functional unit and giving them dynamic content. A sign of the mechanism for ensuring the principle of gender equality is its characteristics and categories that reflect its content. Defining the concept of "mechanism for ensuring the principle of gender equality", it is necessary to consider in more detail its main features, including

1) regulation. The legal mechanism of the rule-of-law state is organised through legal regulatory methods and means. Legislative provisions that ensure the principle of gender equality should be based on the rule of law and principles of justice;

2) systemic and functional content. Dialectics considers parts and the whole in a dialectical unity. When forming a whole, a new quality is created, which is not reduced to the sum of the properties of its parts, but it is determined by the parts, their number and a certain type of their interaction;

3) dynamism and stability. The mechanism for guaranteeing the principle of gender equality is a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly evolving, changing, improving and constantly operating;

4) focus. The purposeful nature of the mechanism for guaranteeing the principle of gender equality means that its action is aimed at achieving a specific goal - implementation of the basic legal principle of social equality by achieving a state of genuine equality between men and women in all spheres of life;

5) existence of general and special conditions that guarantee the functioning of the mechanism. At the same time, the mechanism of protection of the principle of gender equality cannot be equated with the protection of the principle of gender equality, as the mechanism is broader and more diverse;

6) permanent nature and effectiveness. The main role of the gender equality mechanism is not only to formulate and implement strategies for ensuring equal rights and opportunities, but also to monitor the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at improving the situation of women and men. Gender equality mechanisms can serve as catalysts for integrating gender

issues into decision-making and governance systems (Hrytsai, 2018, pp. 109–112).

Mechanisms for ensuring the principle of gender equality have a specific structure, which is proposed to include regulatory and legal and organisational (institutional) subsystems. In the scientific literature on gender issues, the regulatory and legal components are considered as a legal mechanism. A legal mechanism is understood as a set of legal means that allow bringing the behaviour of subjects of social relations in line with legal norms (Kolodiy, Kopieichykov, Lysenkov, 2003, p. 261).

Legal mechanisms “as constructions of positive law formalise a ‘set’ of legal regulators: rights, obligations, prohibitions, principles, presumptions, fictions, terms, procedures, incentives, measures of responsibility, etc. The substantive organisation of the legal mechanism reflects the internal logic of legal regulation, peculiarities of special legal influence on a certain social relation taken in a specific historical manifestation” (Alberda, 2013, p. 66).

The regulatory and legal component of the mechanism for ensuring the principle of gender equality is a set of legal means by which society and the state influence the implementation of the principle of gender equality (Hrytsai, 2018, p. 116).

The system of legal and regulatory support for gender policy in Ukraine is a set of international and national legal acts that establish the foundations, principles and mechanisms for implementing gender equality in all spheres of public life. In the current security situation, when women are increasingly involved in the security and defence sector, the issue of gender equality is becoming extremely relevant, requiring further development and improvement of the legal framework. Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women” stipulates that the legislation ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women consists of the Constitution of Ukraine, this Law and other regulatory acts. If an international treaty of Ukraine establishes other rules, the rules of the international treaty are applied¹.

The regulatory and legal component of the mechanism for ensuring the principle of gender equality “as an integral structure is represented by a system of interrelated substantive and procedural rules of law. It is objectively reflected in the system of the current legislation of Ukraine, which consists of: laws of Ukraine; by-laws; international

legal acts and treaties ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine” (Hrytsai, 2018, p. 117).

The institutional (organisational and legal) component is ensured by the activities of entities that influence the principle of gender equality in society. Today, the role of institutional mechanisms is significantly expanding and deepening. International experience shows that existing institutional mechanisms are in a state of transformation in terms of their nature, role and functions. As for the social sphere, a broader mechanism is needed today, namely a political one. That is, a mechanism is needed that would ensure the integration of political gender equality into general political strategies and ensure its implementation (Kyselova, 2006, p. 146).

Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” stipulates that the institutional element of the mechanism for ensuring gender equality is made up of bodies, institutions and organisations with powers in this area. These include the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, a specially authorised central executive body for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, executive authorities and local self-government bodies, authorised persons (coordinators) appointed by them, as well as public associations².

For the purpose of bringing the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” in line with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as well as to implement the provisions of the National Human Rights Strategy of 25 August 2015, the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” was supplemented with Article 7-1. It sets out a list of actors involved in preventing and combating gender-based violence. These entities include the authorised central executive body for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, executive bodies, including authorised units of the National Police of Ukraine, local state administrations, local self-government bodies, centres for free secondary legal aid, courts, prosecutors, general and specialised support services for victims, citizens of Ukraine, foreigners and stateless persons who are legally in Ukraine. On a voluntary basis, enterprises, institutions, organisations regardless of their form of ownership, public associations and foreign non-governmental organisations, individual entrepreneurs who meet

¹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (2005). *On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men* (Law No. 2866-IV). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2866-15>.

² Ibid.

the criteria for the activities of entities providing social services, as well as individuals providing social services, including childcare services, may be involved in this activity¹.

To create a stable, just and developed society, states must establish mechanisms that promote gender equality. This will also allow women to exercise their rights and eliminate gender discrimination. Establishing a mechanism to ensure gender equality involves consolidating and harmonising the operation of its regulatory, organisational and legal (institutional) elements.

The identification of possible ways to implement gender policy is based on international and national commitments to gender equality and women's rights. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is one of the first documents that reflects Ukraine's international commitments to gender equality. In addition, Ukraine has ratified the main international documents on the possible level of rights for men and women, including the Beijing Declaration, the International Labour Organization Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ukraine is a party to the main international human rights treaties: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In 2020–2021, Ukraine became an official participant in international initiatives such as the Biarritz Partnership and the Coalition for the Advancement of Gender Equality, a member of the International Coalition for Equal Pay (EPIC), and joined the Friends of Women, Peace and Security, demonstrating its readiness to implement UN Security Council resolutions².

The Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the Period up to 2025" of 28 October 2020 provides for the identification of possible ways to implement gender policy in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The National Plan stipulates that the designated central executive authorities are tasked with implementing and ensuring the principles of

gender equality in the areas of women's participation in peacekeeping, conflict and violence prevention, protection of women and girls affected by conflict, assistance and rehabilitation. These features ensure equal access for men and women to educational institutions at all levels in the security and defence sectors³.

Each document of international commitments contains provisions on the principle of equality of men and women in choosing a career and promotion, so we consider improving the system of recruitment to the Armed Forces of Ukraine to be one of the areas of implementation of the gender policy. National regulations also enshrine the principle of gender equality. Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine stipulates that privileges and restrictions based on race, skin colour, political, religious and other beliefs, gender, national and social origin, property status, place of residence, language and other characteristics are not allowed. Equality of rights between women and men is ensured by providing women with equal opportunities with men in social, political and cultural activities, education and vocational training, in work and remuneration for it; special measures for the protection of women's labour and health, and the establishment of pension benefits; creation of conditions enabling women to combine work and motherhood; legal protection, material and moral support for motherhood and childhood, including the provision of paid leave and other benefits to pregnant women and mothers⁴.

The beginning of a new stage of active hostilities by the Russian Federation poses new challenges for the security and defence sector of our country, in particular in the issue of gender equality in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In this context, it is extremely important not only to implement the procedures and provisions (norms, requirements) of NATO standards, but also to apply them. As part of deepening cooperation with NATO and implementing its standards and principles into Ukrainian legislation, in order to achieve full compatibility of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with the respective forces of NATO member states, it is necessary to focus on gender equality. In particular, this issue was highlighted

¹ Ibid.

² Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. (2022). *On approval of the State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030 and approval of the operational plan for its implementation for 2022–2024* (Regulation No. 752-p). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/752-2022-p>.

³ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. (2020). *On the approval of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" for the period up to 2025* (Regulation No. 1544-p). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1544-2020-p>.

⁴ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (1996). *Constitution of Ukraine* (Law No. 254к/96-ВР). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254к/96-вр>.

in the provisions of Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 “Integration of UNSCR 1325 and Gender Perspectives in NATO Command Structures, including Protection Measures in Armed Conflict”, the NATO Policy on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and Other Relevant Resolutions (first approved in 2007, updated in 2014, 2018), the NATO Standard AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine of 2017 (emphasis is placed on the expediency of taking into account the gender component in all NATO operations and missions), the NATO Standard AJP-03 Allied Joint Doctrine, Edition C (Version 1) of 2019, which specifies the functions of gender advisers, etc. At the same time, the 2030 global development goals confirm the relevance of this issue in terms of international priorities. Moreover, the challenges facing Ukraine’s security and defence sector today make the issue of women’s military service relevant both in terms of current problems and for further ensuring the state’s defence capability and guarantees of peace and non-recurrence of conflict (Cherviakova, 2022, p. 149).

The Armed Forces of Ukraine have developed a gender policy that is in line with the national policy, which ensures effective implementation of the gender approach in military life and guarantees equal rights and opportunities for people regardless of gender.

At the national level, the goals of implementing a gender approach in the security and defence sector of Ukraine are formulated in the norms adopted in the National Security Strategy of Ukraine and the Strategic Defence Bulletin of Ukraine. By introducing the concept of gender equality into legislative acts, the personnel management system of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other defence forces is being transformed into a promising model that is in line with NATO gender policy. This approach involves updating existing military systems to ensure equal opportunities for women at all levels of service. This includes: 1) implementation of the human-centred principle in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the defence forces, taking into account gender aspects; 2) effective management of the career development of servicemen in compliance with the state policy of gender equality; 3) integration of gender equality in the defence forces into the recruitment process, during military service, during discharge from military service and social protection of veterans, and other tasks¹.

¹ President of Ukraine. (2020). *On the Decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine of 14 September 2020 “On the National Security Strategy of Ukraine”* (Order No. 392/2020).

Given Ukraine’s history and traditions, the issue of gender equality takes the form of integrating women into the national security and defence sector. Stereotypes and traditions include the attitude to women as passive participants in armed conflicts (Mehrl, Dworschak, 2021).

In October 2021, the Institute for Mass Media Research conducted a survey and found that the media rarely mention women servicewomen in their stories. While almost all media resources mention men, only 5 % of respondents mentioned women. Today, the number of stories about women fighting alongside men on the front line has increased significantly².

The increase in the number of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine was generally observed in two stages: in 2014 and in 2022 after the start of the full-scale invasion of Russia. This means that women have also been sensitive and responsive to threats to their nation and military invasions, although the patriarchal notion that soldiers should be men still exists (Skibitska, 2022).

According to statistics, since 2014, the number of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine has increased by 2.5 times, and the number of female officers has increased sevenfold. The number of women in all categories of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has begun to increase. Thus, in 2014, the total number of women was 49,926, including 16,557 servicemen, 1,633 officers, 4,754 NCOs, 9,707 soldiers, 370 cadets, and 33,369 civilian personnel. And as of 1 March 2023, there were 60,538 women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including 42,898 servicewomen. According to Liliia Humeniuk, a specialist in the Gender and Religious Organisations Division of the Humanitarian Support Department of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the number of women in the military has increased by 2.5 times since 2014. In addition, the issue of gender equality has received due attention in society, so women are more actively trying to join the army. Today, the share of women in leadership positions is 11 %. A representative of the defence ministry noted that the

<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/392/2020>; President of Ukraine. (2021). *On the Decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine of 20 August 2021 “On the Strategic Defence Bulletin of Ukraine”* (Order No. 473/2021). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/473/2021>.

² Institute of Mass Information (2021, October 15). *Only 5 % of mentions are of women in the military in the media - IMI research*. <https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/na-zgadky-pro-zhinok-vijskovosluzhbovyts-v-media-prypdaye-lyshe-5-doslidzhennya-imi-i41836>.

positive dynamics indicate that the Armed Forces of Ukraine are undergoing serious changes due to the systematic work of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine¹.

The rights of women servicewomen to hold military positions were increased with the adoption of the Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine “On Amendments to the List of Staff Positions of Private NCOs and Sergeants and Corresponding Military Ranks and Tariff Classes of Positions” of 5 July 2022 No. 179, which significantly expanded the list of combat positions for women servicewomen (Institute of Mass Information (2021, October 15). Only 5 % of references to women in the military are made in the media – IMI research².

We would like to draw attention to some of the new scientific publications on this topic. In her article, T. Martsenyuk (2024, p. 47) provides a thorough analysis of gender equality in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, focusing on social, legal and organisational aspects. She emphasises the achievements of recent years, in particular, the expansion of women’s access to combat positions and military education, which became possible due to changes in legislation and the political will of the country’s leadership. The author emphasises the need to create a gender-sensitive organisational culture in the Armed Forces. This includes overcoming traditional stereotypes that still prevail in military units, as well as ensuring equal treatment of women in all aspects of service (Martsenyuk, 2024, p. 45). The researcher also emphasises the need to introduce specialised support programmes for women in the armed forces, including psychological assistance, career counselling, and measures to prevent and respond to sexual harassment. An important aspect is the development and implementation of clear and effective mechanisms that allow women in the armed forces to seek help without fear of retaliation or stigmatisation (Martsenyuk, 2024, p. 48).

The scholar proposes a comprehensive approach to addressing gender equality in the Armed Forces, including expanding opportunities for women in military careers, improving infrastructure and logistics, and raising awareness of

gender issues among the command staff. She emphasises that the successful integration of gender issues into the military will contribute to the overall effectiveness of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and improve Ukraine’s international image (Martsenyuk, 2024, p. 50).

N. Bondarchuk and I. Kravchuk (2024, p. 18) in their study also pay attention to the issue of gender equality in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, focusing on the legal and practical aspects of this process. They analyse the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the context of reforms aimed at integrating Ukraine into NATO standards. One of the main challenges, according to the researchers, is the need to change the organisational culture of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which involves the inclusion of gender issues at all levels of planning and management of military operations.

The authors also focus on problems related to the logistical support of women in the military. They emphasise that the lack of specialised uniforms, protective equipment and other equipment adapted for women remains a serious obstacle to achieving full gender equality. This does not only affects the comfort and safety of women servicewomen, but can also have negative consequences for the overall effectiveness of military operations (Bondarchuk, Kravchuk, 2024, p. 19).

The researchers’ recommendations focus on a comprehensive approach to reforming the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which includes the implementation of specialised programmes to support women, improving the provisioning policy, and raising awareness of gender issues among the military command. Successful completion of these tasks will not only improve the conditions of service for women, but will also strengthen the overall effectiveness and international standing of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (Bondarchuk, Kravchuk, 2024, p. 19). We believe that the proposal to establish the position of the Commissioner for Women’s Military Service in Ukraine, similar to the corresponding position in the Polish army, is important, but requires additional analysis in view of the existing institutional mechanisms in Ukraine. Today in Ukraine, the activities of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights cover a wide range of issues, including the protection of the rights of servicemen and women regardless of their gender.

In this case, it would be worth considering the introduction of a military ombudsman whose activities would cover the protection of the rights of all military personnel, regardless of gender. Such an ombudsman could specialise in protecting the rights of the military in the areas of social

¹ UKRINFORM. (2023, March 3). *The number of women in the Armed Forces has increased by 2.5 times since 2014*. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubricato/3682549-kilkist-zinokvijskovih-u-zsu-z-2014-roku-zrosla-u-25-raza.html>.

² Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. (2022). *On Amendments to the List of Staff Positions of Private NCOs and Sergeants and Corresponding Military Ranks and Tariff Classes of Positions* (Order No. 179). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0757-22>.

security, medical care, logistics, and protection from discrimination and violence.

Therefore, instead of creating a highly specialised position, it would be more appropriate to create an institutional mechanism that would ensure a comprehensive approach to protecting the rights of all servicemen and women, including gender aspects. This will contribute to a more effective implementation of the gender equality policy in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and ensure that national approaches are in line with international standards, in particular NATO standards, which Ukraine is seeking to integrate into.

The analysis of research shows that gender equality in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is not only an important social and legal issue, but also a critical component of the overall combat capability of the army. Despite significant progress in ensuring women's equal access to combat positions and military education, a number of problems remain that need to be addressed. These include removing barriers to logistical support and creating an inclusive organisational culture that recognises and supports the role of women in the military.

Gender equality is a fundamental principle that provides for equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of public life, including military service. However, it is important to understand that gender equality should not automatically lead to the establishment of equal responsibilities for both sexes, especially when it comes to issues such as military service. In 1976, the NATO Committee on Women in the Armed Forces was established to promote equal rights and opportunities for women in the military structures of NATO member states. In 2009, this committee was renamed the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, reflecting the changes in the approach to gender issues and the expansion of its mandate. This transformation emphasised the need to integrate gender perspectives into all areas of the armed forces, as well as to recognise the role of gender equality as an important factor in ensuring the effectiveness of military operations. The main objective of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives is to introduce a gender perspective into the armed forces that takes into account both the specifics and challenges faced by women in the armed forces (Zahumenna, Hrelia, 2024, p. 74; Bondarchuk, Kravchuk, 2024, p. 18). Analysing the experience of NATO countries, in particular the activities of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, it becomes clear that gender integration in the armed forces requires adapting approaches to the real needs and capabilities of both women and men. Women's in-

volvement in military service should be voluntary, as this ensures a balance between rights and responsibilities, including taking into account the physiological, social and cultural aspects that affect women in a military environment. Compulsory military service for women can have negative consequences, such as increased levels of stress, mental and physical strain, which can negatively affect the effectiveness of military operations and the morale of personnel. In addition, the experience of countries that have introduced voluntary military service for women shows that women who choose to serve consciously and voluntarily are more motivated and prepared to perform their duties. This increases the overall effectiveness of military operations and contributes to a healthier and more balanced military environment.

CONCLUSIONS. Thus, ensuring gender equality in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is a key factor in strengthening the country's defence capability and fulfilling Ukraine's international commitments, in particular, NATO standards. Equal participation of women and men in the military contributes to the effectiveness of military units and strengthens Ukraine's international image.

However, despite the progress made, the problem of gender inequality remains relevant. The main obstacles are social stereotypes, organisational and legal barriers that hinder women's integration into the military. Legal reforms are essential to ensure equal opportunities for women, including access to leadership positions and combat missions. It is also necessary to implement special support programmes for women in the military and develop a gender-sensitive organisational culture.

It should be noted that gender equality in the military does not mean that both sexes are obliged to perform the same duties. It is important to take into account the specifics and capabilities of each gender, ensuring equal access to military service on a voluntary basis, which is a more effective and fair approach. This allows taking into account the individual characteristics of women and men, thus ensuring the harmonious functioning of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the context of modern challenges and needs of society.

In general, further improvement of the legal framework and implementation of international experience will contribute to building a modern, effective army capable of meeting the challenges facing Ukraine's national security and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all servicemen and women.

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ГЕНДЕРНА РІВНІСТЬ У КОНТЕКСТІ СУЧАСНИХ ВИКЛИКІВ НАЦІОНАЛЬНІЙ БЕЗПЕЦІ УКРАЇНИ: ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ТА ПРАКТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ

У статті розглянуто правові та організаційні механізми інтеграції гендерної рівності в сектор національної безпеки та оборони України. Проведено аналіз нормативно-правової бази, що регулює гендерну політику, зокрема в Збройних Силах України. Особливу увагу приділено ролі міжнародних стандартів, таких як Резолюція Ради Безпеки ООН 1325 і Стамбульська конвенція, у забезпеченні рівного доступу жінок і чоловіків до участі в оборонних процесах.

На основі теоретичного аналізу та емпіричних даних досліджено вплив гендерного балансу на ефективність сектору національної безпеки, зокрема його управлінських, операційних та стратегічних компонентів, в умовах сучасних воєнних викликів. Виявлено, що інтеграція гендерної рівності сприяє підвищенню ефективності оборонного сектору, але потребує удосконалення правового регулювання та зміни організаційних підходів.

Результати дослідження вказують на необхідність перегляду законодавчих актів і впровадження гендерно чутливих підходів у планування та виконання військових операцій. У статті надано рекомендації щодо посилення нормативно-правового забезпечення гендерної рівності в секторі безпеки та оборони України. Зроблено висновок, що гендерна рівність у військовій сфері не означає обов'язкове встановлення однакових зобов'язань для обох статей. Важливо враховувати специфіку й можливості кожної статі, забезпечуючи рівний доступ до військової служби на добровільних засадах, що є більш ефективним та справедливим підходом. Це дозволяє враховувати індивідуальні особливості жінок і чоловіків, забезпечуючи таким чином гармонійне функціонування Збройних Сил України у контексті сучасних викликів та потреб суспільства.

Ключові слова: *гендер, гендерна рівність, національна безпека України, оборонний сектор, воєнний стан, Збройні Сили України.*

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