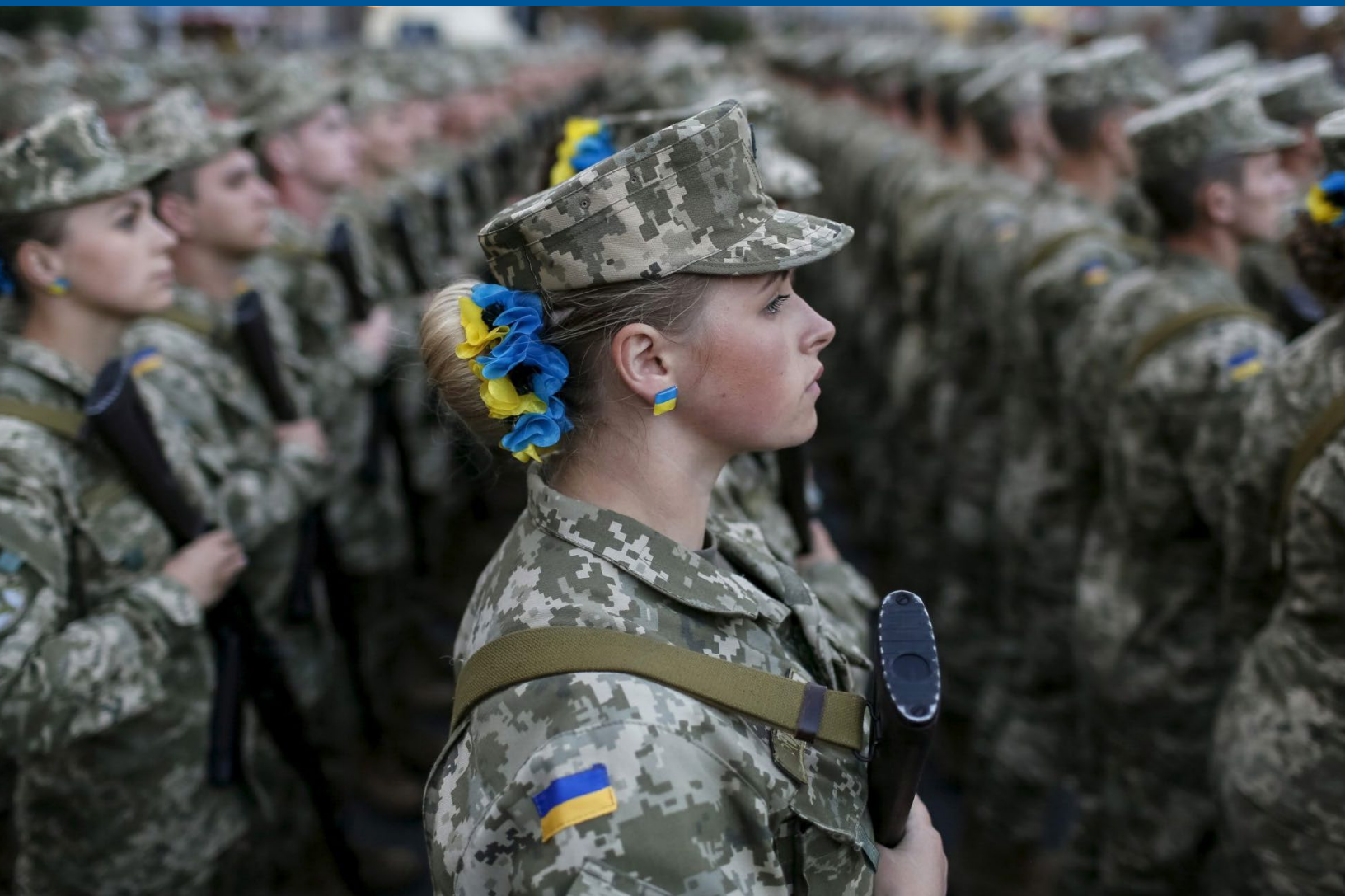


# Beyond munitions: A gender analysis for Ukrainian security assistance

Cori Fleaser



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**OUR SECURE FUTURE**

Women Make the Difference  
*a program of One Earth Future*

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**Cori Fleser**

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Cover: A Ukrainian soldier sporting national colors pictured during a Kyiv military parade. REUTERS/Gleb Garanich.

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August 2022

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## Foreword

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**F**rom the hospitals of Mariupol to the streets of Bucha, the Russian war in Ukraine has extracted an unacceptably high cost, while banding NATO allies and partners together in an unprecedented tide of support. In bilateral and multilateral security assistance packages, the transatlantic community has sent Ukraine javelins, High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARs), and all manner of weapons to defend against the Russian invasion. Still, Russia's war continues against the nation of Ukraine and its people.

So how should future military assistance account for the different impacts of the war on Ukrainian civilians? What strategies remain for NATO allies and partners to enhance their support beyond weapons and materiel? The answer lies in using gender analyses to zero in on the unique human security challenges facing Ukraine.

When we overlook the role of gender in conflict, we miss the opportunity to both lead with our values and make our military support more effective. Applying a gender analysis to our security assistance is a solution that allies and partners already agreed to implement in forums from the United Nations to NATO. In fact, it's a tool that many allies have already developed within their own militaries. Now is the time to employ it in support of Ukraine.

This starts with acknowledging the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda. The WPS Agenda, passed under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, recognizes the disproportionate impact of conflict on

women and girls, and their critical role in reconstructing societies. Militaries can apply gender analyses to better understand and tailor assistance to the unique security environments in which they operate.

To help policymakers think through how a gender analysis can shape what security assistance should look like—and, in many cases, how allied militaries can implement solutions at scale, and consistent with political decisions that have already been made—we are proud to offer this issue brief. Our intention is to demonstrate to global decision-makers that incorporating gender can and should, be integrated in real-time conflicts to achieve real results.

Our support to Ukraine must not waver, but more can be done to mitigate the severe impact of Russia's war on the Ukrainian people. Allies and partners already have the political mandate to integrate the WPS agenda into their operations. They already have the tools, training, and technical expertise to implement it in the field. The next step is making this common practice. This issue brief spells out ten steps for how to do so in Ukraine.

— **Sahana Dharmapuri and Christopher Skaluba**

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*Christopher Skaluba is the director of the Transatlantic Security Initiative in the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security.*



## Introduction



NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security is Irene Fellin with Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada); Anniken Huitfeldt (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway); Ann Linde (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden); Liz Truss (Secretary of State, United Kingdom); Thórdís Kolbrún Reykþjórd Gylfadóttir (Minister for Foreign Affairs, Iceland); Tanja Fajon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia); Annalena Baerbock (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Germany) and Ludivine Dedonder (Minister of Defence, Belgium). NATO/Flickr.

**T**he 2022 NATO Strategic Concept, which was adopted in June and supersedes a 2010 version, is known for several significant firsts, including a focus on China and an emphasis on climate change. Another important first concerns the need to integrate “human security and the Women, Peace and Security agenda” across all of NATO’s core tasks<sup>1</sup>: deterrence and defense; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security. The Strategic Concept—which provides a security diagnosis that is meant to influence policy<sup>2</sup>—highlights gender equality as a reflection of NATO’s values. It

also calls attention to the disproportionate impact of pervasive instability, including conflict-related sexual violence, on women, children, and minority groups. This inclusion reflects agreement among allies that gender equality and human security are core components of individual and collective security.

Allies are witnessing the linkage between gender and human security in real time through the Russian war in Ukraine. As the war enters its sixth month, nearly each week brings new reports of war crimes, genocide, and

<sup>1</sup> NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, Preface, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Luis Simón, “The Madrid Strategic Concept and the Future of NATO,” *NATO Review*, June 2, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2022/06/02/the-madrid-strategic-concept-and-the-future-of-nato/index.html#:~:text=NATO's%20Strategic%20Concept%20is%20meant,policies%20for%20years%20to%20come>.

sexual violence perpetrated by Russian forces against Ukrainians.<sup>3</sup> Since the February invasion, the Kremlin has intentionally targeted Ukrainian civilians in bread lines, apartment buildings, schools, churches, and hospitals, while employing disinformation campaigns to obfuscate the reality of Putin's "special military operation" from the Russian public.<sup>4</sup> By the end of May, Ukraine had identified more than six hundred Russian war crime suspects.<sup>5</sup> While Ukraine is not a member of the Alliance, the outcome of the war in Ukraine—and human security of its citizens—is of vital importance to NATO, European security, and the rules-based international order emphasized throughout this Strategic Concept.

Some advocates have encouraged NATO to be more proactive in addressing gender and human security issues in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> NATO has policies and guidelines on the protection of civilians;<sup>7</sup> women, peace, and security;<sup>8</sup> children

and armed conflict;<sup>9</sup> and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence,<sup>10</sup> and action plans or handbooks to support their implementation. These frameworks, however, only apply to NATO-led operations and no such operations currently exist in Ukraine. In a war where NATO is not directly involved, but can readily see the impact on Ukrainian civilians, what does implementing policies on women, peace, and security and human security look like? How should NATO allies understand and account for the human security challenges in their bilateral assistance to Ukraine? Beyond the NATO policy documents and the global United Nations Security Council mandates,<sup>11</sup> the gendered nature of the conflict in Ukraine is a core component of examining the war, its impact on civilians, and planning-informed military action. Many allies have the information and capabilities to address such human-centered issues—they just need to incorporate them in their bilateral military assistance. This is more possible than it seems.

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- 3 Valerie Hopkins, "After Rapes by Russian Soldiers, a Painful Quest for Justice," *New York Times*, June 29, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/29/world/europe/ukraine-russia-rape.html>.
  - 4 Sarah Petrin and Marla Keenan, "A No-Fly Zone Over Ukraine? The Case for NATO Helping in Other Ways," *New Atlanticist* (blog), Atlantic Council, March 18, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/a-no-fly-zone-over-ukraine-the-case-for-nato-helping-in-other-ways/>.
  - 5 "Ukraine Identifies 600 Russian War Crime Suspects: Prosecutor," *Al Jazeera*, May 31, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/31/ukraine-has-identified-600-russian-war-crime-suspects-prosecutor>.
  - 6 Katharine M. Wright, "A Feminist Perspective on the Russian-Ukraine War: Implications for NATO," *LSE Women, Peace and Security* blog, London School of Economics and Politics, March 8, 2022, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2022/03/08/a-feminist-perspective-on-the-russian-ukraine-war-implications-for-nato/>.
  - 7 NATO, "NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians Endorsed by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016," Press Release, July 9, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133945.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133945.htm).
  - 8 NATO, "Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2025," Official Text, last updated October 21, 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_187485.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_187485.htm).
  - 9 "Human Security," NATO (website), last updated July 18, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_181779.htm#children](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_181779.htm#children).
  - 10 NATO, "NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence," Official Text, last updated June 2, 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_184570.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_184570.htm).
  - 11 "Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security," UN Peacemaker (website), <https://peacemaker.un.org/wps/normative-frameworks/un-security-council-resolutions>.

## Gender analysis: A tool for understanding the human security environment in Ukraine



People fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine arrive at the train station in Zahony, Hungary March 3. REUTERS/Bernadett Szabo.

**W**ith the evolving conflict dynamic in Ukraine, humanitarian organizations such as UN Women and CARE International have published comprehensive analyses highlighting gender dynamics and human insecurity in Ukraine as a result of Russia's aggressive military campaign.<sup>12</sup> These analyses show, for example, that the majority of people fleeing Ukraine are women, girls, and boys, as Ukrainian men between the ages of eighteen and sixty have been conscripted to fight; the crisis is largely exacerbating preexisting gender and intersectional inequalities and discrimination; and incidents of gender-based violence,

particularly domestic violence and conflict-related sexual violence, are reportedly increasing.<sup>13</sup> The gender analyses come with recommendations for humanitarian actors, operating in Ukraine and neighboring countries, which have been vital in providing tailored services, shelter, and care for Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people.

The analytical products also are useful for militaries, which often excel at analyzing and distilling information to inform their operations and activities. Gender analysis provides militaries with a comprehensive range of information about the different ways the war in Ukraine is impacting civilians

<sup>12</sup> UN Women and CARE International, *Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine*, May 4, 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/05/rapid-gender-analysis-of-ukraine>; and "Rapid Gender Analysis Ukraine," CARE International Rapid Gender Analysis Brief, March 2022, <https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/Ukraine-Rapid-Gender-Analysis-Brief-Final.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> "Reports of Sexual Violence in Ukraine Rising Fast, Security Council Hears," UN News (website), June 6, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1119832>.



based on social norms and behaviors associated with their identity as a man, woman, or gender diverse person and other identity characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, or disability status. For example, a single Ukrainian man over the age of sixty with a physical disability has had different challenges and experiences, and will make different decisions about his needs during this conflict than a Roma woman in her twenties who is married with three children. While this may seem intuitive, these are important details for responding to the unique and different needs of the estimated 12.8 million displaced Ukrainians from both a humanitarian and military perspective.<sup>14</sup>

A gender analysis centers people—not the nation state, weapons, or equipment—when understanding security needs and interventions for the purposes of providing support, which in this case is to Ukraine. As the war continues and allied militaries increasingly deploy forces to locations across Eastern Europe, information gleaned through gender analyses will contribute to military planning for

contingencies.<sup>15</sup> Such information can ensure that military assistance and planned operations do not further exacerbate the deteriorating human security conditions on the ground. The challenge for militaries is often articulating the change in their tasks, requirements, or capabilities to respond to such conditions.

The sections below seek to highlight some of the salient gender-based information for allied militaries to better understand the human security environment in Ukraine. This brief does not suggest that other information is not germane or should be ignored, but rather seeks to distill information relevant for shaping current and future allied military responses. This brief does not argue that gender analysis can or should be used to wage war more effectively from a purely military operational perspective. It takes the position that to be considered militarily effective, military action must meet its desired objectives while mitigating cost and negative impact on civilians and humanitarian actors operating in the same space.

14 “Ukraine: Millions of Displaced Traumatized and Urgently Need Help, Say Experts,” United Nations Human Rights, Press Release, May 5, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/ukraine-millions-displaced-traumatized-and-urgently-need-help-say-experts>.

15 “NATO Forward Forces Tracker,” Transatlantic Security Initiative, Atlantic Council, May 17, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/trackers-and-data-visualizations/nato-forward-forces-tracker/>.

# The Kremlin's gender playbook

**T**he Kremlin has intentionally targeted and exploited societal gender fault lines through hybrid warfare as a reliable tactic for destabilizing cohesion and unity among populations throughout Europe. Though its hybrid campaigns focus on many issues, gender issues are some of the most divisive and polarizing for local populations, making them ripe for targeted disinformation. In the Ukraine conflict, for example, the Kremlin accused a woman who gave birth in the immediate aftermath of the Mariupol maternity hospital bombing of being an actress paid by Ukraine to sow uncertainty about the reality of its operations.<sup>16</sup> Separately, the Kremlin has continued to deny allegations that Russian forces committed acts of rape and sexual violence against Ukrainians,<sup>17</sup> discrediting the claims as a hoax.<sup>18</sup>

This is not a new tactic for Moscow. To maintain a level of control and influence in post-Soviet states, the Kremlin has historically weaponized gender. Disinformation campaigns attack LGBTQ+<sup>19</sup> and women activists,<sup>20</sup> politicians,<sup>21</sup> and other leaders to discredit them, humiliate them, or place them in a heightened risk of retaliatory violence. This weaponization is a notorious tactic of authoritarian and aspiring authoritarian regimes to degrade efforts toward democratization.<sup>22</sup> In Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine, for example, rolling back LGBTQ+ and women's rights has been a canary in the coal mine for the Kremlin's influence in the face of democratic progress in those countries. Russian disinformation has succeeded—across Europe and in North America—in weaponizing sexist, racist, and homophobic belief sets within influential and excitable demographics to shift outcomes in elections and undercut

democracy.<sup>23</sup> Russia's influence campaigns often proliferate the falsehood that expanding rights for women and LGBTQ+ individuals takes away rights from others. They link this expansion of rights for all to "Western influence" in a bid to undermine democratic movements, political candidates, and partnerships between post-Soviet states and the European Union and NATO. To the Kremlin, democratic progress within post-Soviet states is a threat to Russia's traditional values and puts the future of Russia in danger.<sup>24</sup>

In his speeches on Ukraine, Putin consistently references his goal of defending Russian "traditions" and "culture" as a justification for the Russian invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.<sup>25</sup> Putin's calculated messaging is intended to demonstrate linkages in defending a shared national Russian identity rooted in traditional gender roles, norms, and expectations among Russian and Ukrainian men and women. His messaging is intended to "other," or establish an "us versus them" mentality, both at the national level toward NATO and the West and at the individual level toward those who challenge status quo norms and seek to expand socio-cultural gender roles, rights, and responsibilities to evolve Ukrainian society. In this way, Putin proliferates his own connections between individual identity and collective security. So when Putin claims Russia is being "threatened" by NATO at its borders, he is not only speaking of the political-military Alliance—but also the democratic world order that NATO stands for and the expansion of rights and liberties for all.

Since the Russian invasion, the Kremlin's hybrid warfare campaigns have flooded the information environment

- 16 Marianna Spring, presenter, "Marianna Vyshemirsky: 'My Picture Was Used to Spread Lies about the War,'" *War on Truth* (podcast), BBC, May 16, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-61412773>.
- 17 Miriam Berger, "Ukraine Has Accused Russian Troops of Rape, a Tough Crime to Prosecute," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/05/ukraine-russia-rape-war-crime/>.
- 18 Jeanne Whalan, Robin Dixon, and Mary Ilyushina, "Russia Denies and Deflects in Reaction to Bucha Atrocities," *Washington Post*, April 22, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/04/russia-bucha-atrocities-war-crimes/>.
- 19 J. Lester Feder and Susie Armitage, "Ukrainian Nationalists Post Photo Album Threatening LGBT Activists," *BuzzFeed News*, June 8, 2015, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/ukrainian-nationalists-post-photo-album-threatening-lgbt-act>.
- 20 "We Will Not Be Silenced: Solidarity with Women's Rights Activists across Eurasia," *Equality Now* (website), June 18, 2021, [https://www.equalitynow.org/news\\_and\\_insights/we\\_will\\_not\\_be\\_silenced\\_solidarity\\_whrds\\_eurasia/](https://www.equalitynow.org/news_and_insights/we_will_not_be_silenced_solidarity_whrds_eurasia/).
- 21 Nina Jankowicz, "How Disinformation Became a New Threat to Women," *Coda Story*, December 11, 2017, <https://www.codastory.com/disinformation/how-disinformation-became-a-new-threat-to-women/>.
- 22 Laura Thorton, "How Authoritarians Use Gender as a Weapon," *Washington Post*, June 7, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/07/how-authoritarians-use-gender-weapon/>.
- 23 Lucina Di Meco and Kristina Wilfore, "Gendered Disinformation Is a National Security Problem," *TechStream*, Brookings Institution, March 8, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/gendered-disinformation-is-a-national-security-problem/>.
- 24 Amanda Taub, "Why Putin Name-Checked J.K. Rowling," *New York Times*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/31/world/europe/putin-jk-rowling.html>.
- 25 Bridget Kendall, "Crimea Crisis: Russian President Putin's Speech Annotated," *BBC News*, March 19, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26652058>; and Luke Harding, "Putin's Rambling Ukraine Speech Leaves Western Diplomats Scrambling," *Guardian*, February 22, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/22/putin-russian-president-ukraine-speech-western-diplomats-scrambling>.

with justifications for its invasion,<sup>26</sup> denials of mass atrocities,<sup>27</sup> and other mischaracterizations of the truth to breed uncertainty about the war among Russians, Ukrainians, and global audiences. The narrative, themes, and mechanisms for spreading Russian disinformation account for and exploit gender fault lines among the local populace to

weaken societal cohesion and resilience. As allied militaries monitor the information environment from their capitals and establish their forces in Eastern Europe, they cannot afford to overlook Russia's weaponization of gender as part of its campaign of aggression in Ukraine.

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26 Jessica Brandt, Valerie Wirtschafter, and Adya Danaditya, "Popular Podcasters Spread Russian Disinformation About Ukraine Biolabs," Brookings Institution, March 23, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/popular-podcasters-spread-russian-disinformation-about-ukraine-biolabs/>.

27 Reuters, "Russia Denies Killing Civilians in Ukraine's Bucha," April 3, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-denies-killing-civilians-ukraines-bucha-2022-04-03/>.

# Conflict-related sexual violence: Tactic of the war in Ukraine



Army Sgt. Christine Won, right, helps Capt. Danielle Rant adjust a rifle sling during a reserve officers military competition at Camp Ethan Allen, Vt., July 19, 2022. The three-day team event consisted of NATO and Partnership for Peace nations in Europe. Army Staff Sgt. David Graves/US Department of Defense Photos.

International organizations and national and local non-governmental organizations have warned of increases in conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) since the beginning of the invasion in February. NATO defines CRSV in its 2021 policy as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly

linked to a conflict.”<sup>28</sup> As the war in Ukraine evolves, these organizations continue to report on the increased risk of CRSV faced by women and girls since they are overrepresented in the refugee and internally displaced person populations. La Strada International,<sup>29</sup> a European platform against human trafficking, has highlighted how established human trafficking avenues in Ukraine run by criminal organizations continue to put more Ukrainians at risk of human trafficking, including sexual slavery, the

28 NATO, “NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,” Official Text, last updated June 2, 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_184570.htm#:~:text=NATO%20condemns%20all%20acts%20of](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_184570.htm#:~:text=NATO%20condemns%20all%20acts%20of).

29 La Strada International, “La Strada International calls for urgent measures to protect Ukrainians and other refugees” 2022, <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/resource/la-strada-international-calls-for-urgent-measures-to-protect-ukrainians-and-other-refugees/#:~:text=La%20Strada%20Ukraine%20has%20received,like%20basements%20or%20metro%20stations>.



longer the war continues.<sup>30</sup> The UN Refugee Agency reports that displaced LGBTQ+ people “frequently experience continued harm,”<sup>31</sup> as they flee emergency situations in their home countries, in transit to new destinations, and upon arrival in places of asylum.<sup>32</sup> This includes stigmatization, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, and exclusion from access to essential services, including gender-affirming healthcare. Transgender and gender diverse people fleeing Ukraine have reported challenges crossing the border into neighboring countries when their gender or physical presentation does not correspond with legal identity documents.<sup>33</sup> Gender analyses have further highlighted the risk of forced marriage among the Roma population as a result of the conflict, reinforcing multiple forms of discrimination against Roma girls, and decreasing their ability to reach out for support of authorities, who may not want to interfere with what is perceived as a “cultural practice” of an ethnic group.<sup>34</sup>

Separate but related are the reports that Russian forces inside Ukraine are intentionally using sexual violence as part of their military campaign to instill fear and impose physical and psychological harm and trauma on the Ukrainian population.<sup>35</sup> Sexual violence, when used to wage war on a population, takes civilian bodies and centers them as the battleground where the warfighting tactics of torture and rape take place. This results in physical and psychological harm for survivors and witnesses of the violence, and has long-term impacts on the whole population. **Sexual violence as a tactic of war is systematic and intentional; it is not a crime of opportunity in a chaotic environment.** Recent surveys conducted in Ukraine indicate that 93 percent of Ukrainians have heard of rape or sexual assault by the Russian or pro-Russian forces, and 20 percent say that they personally know someone who has been raped or sexually assaulted by the Russian or pro-Russian troops

since the invasion started on February 24, 2022.<sup>36</sup> Most reporting indicates women are the primary targets of sexual violence; however, it is important to acknowledge that younger men and boys, specifically, may be particularly at risk. Given the more rigid and traditional gender roles prevalent in Ukraine, feelings of shame, embarrassment, or emasculation may prevent boys and younger men from reporting and seeking support. Sexual violence remains one of the most hidden crimes being committed against Ukrainians in this war.<sup>37</sup>

CRSV is a dynamic of the war in Ukraine that allied militaries must plan for since they will ultimately encounter survivors of CRSV. Military forces and security sector actors, including local police forces, can leverage information from gender analyses to understand vulnerability and risk factors for different subgroups of refugees and internally displaced people as well as indications and warning of CRSV and exploitation. Understanding gender and other human factors—such as ethnicity, age, gender expression, and ability status—helps militaries make sense of civilian behavior and decision-making, which can be useful information for intelligence estimates and military plans. This can help frontline military actors distinguish friendly and adversarial actors and identify survivors, especially among high-risk groups such as women, children, LGBTQ+ populations, and ethnic minorities, to ensure they can safely access services from the humanitarian response effort. While it is not the remit of military forces to provide CRSV support services for survivors, allied militaries in bordering countries will ultimately come into contact with the civilian population seeking services and support as they flee Ukraine. Allied militaries should be prepared to engage civilians appropriately with consideration for risk factors and trauma that war imposes on people and, as part of their plans, identify the process for connecting survivors with humanitarian services.

30 Miriam Berger, “Human Trafficking Likely to Increase as Ukraine War Drags, Groups Warn,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/10/human-trafficking-ukraine-war-russia-refugees/>.

31 Julia Lee, “‘Danger Everywhere’: War and Transphobia Create Perfect Storm for Trans Ukrainians,” NBC News, April 8, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/danger-everywhere-war-transphobia-create-perfect-storm-trans-ukrainian-rcna23567>.

32 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *LGBTQ+ Persons in Forced Displacement and Statelessness: Protection and Solutions*, Discussion Paper, UNHCR Division of International Protection, 2021, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/611e16944.pdf>.

33 Brian Dooley, “Biden Should Speak Out on Trans People Blocked from Leaving Ukraine,” Human Rights First (blog), March 24, 2022, <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/biden-should-speak-out-trans-people-blocked-leaving-ukraine>.

34 “Challenges Faced by Roma Women and Girls Affected by the Russia-Ukraine Military Conflict in Donbas (Eastern Ukraine),” Anti-Discrimination Centre (ADC) Memorial, April 7, 2021, <https://adcmemorial.org/en/publications/challenges-faced-by-roma-women-and-girls-affected-by-the-russia-ukraine-military-conflict-in-donbas-eastern-ukraine/>.

35 Laurel Wamsley, “Rape Has Reportedly Become a Weapon in Ukraine. Finding Justice May Be Difficult,” National Public Radio (NPR), April 30, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/30/1093339262/ukraine-russia-rape-war-crimes>.

36 Ragnhild Nordås, Louise Olsson, Gudrun Østby, and Torunn L. Tryggstad, “Ukrainian Women Engage in Resistance and Should Be in the Peace Talks,” Opinion, *ScienceNorway* (English version of Norwegian science magazine), April 29, 2022, <https://sciencenorway.no/gender-opinion-researchers-zone/ukrainian-women-engage-in-resistance-and-should-be-in-the-peace-talks/2019035>.

37 “Sexual Violence ‘Most Hidden Crime’ Being Committed against Ukrainians, Civil Society Representative Tells Security Council,” UN Security Council (webpage), Meetings Coverage, June 6, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14926.doc.htm>.

## The agency of Ukrainian women



Army Sgt. Christine Won, right, helps Capt. Danielle Rant adjust a rifle sling during a reserve officers military competition at Camp Ethan Allen, Vt., July 19, 2022. The three-day team event consisted of NATO and Partnership for Peace nations in Europe. Army Staff Sgt. David Graves/US Department of Defense Photos.

**T**he cautionary recommendation from many gender analyses is to not make gendered assumptions that Ukrainian women and girls are all victims in need of protection. If gender analyses are oversimplified when interpreted, military actors may conclude that women are inherently victims in need of protection and the de facto intervention is that (male) military actors are charged with protecting them—rather than seeing their contributions to the war effort and factoring this into their military assistance to Ukraine. Kateryna Cherepakha, president of the organization La Strada-Ukraine, cautions against viewing

women as “mere victims” in this war. Summing up her view, a Norwegian opinion piece states: “Fortifying stereotypical assumptions of women as victims only can reinforce ideas about the need for a protective culture in which women’s agency and power are belittled.”<sup>38</sup>

Since 2014, the Ukrainian military has reported a dramatic increase in women in the military—a rise directly attributed to the threat posed by Russia following the annexation of Crimea and the warfighting in the Donbas.<sup>39</sup> Following the 2022 Russian invasion, an unknown number of women

38 “Sexual Violence,” UN Security Council.

39 Molly Olmstead, “How Women Forced Ukraine to Welcome Them into the Military,” *Slate*, March 3, 2022, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2022/03/ukraine-women-russia-putin-military.html>.

have joined the army or volunteered for civilian resistance efforts<sup>40</sup>—as they did in World War I in the Austro-Hungarian army and in World War II in the Red Army.<sup>41</sup> In the fight against Russian aggression, there are accounts of women in the Ukrainian forces defending their country as snipers, combat medics, artillery officers, and in other logistics and noncombat support roles.<sup>42</sup> Women’s active contributions to the defense of Ukraine, amplified through the media, should shift the narrative surrounding women’s motivations and agency within this war.<sup>43</sup> Acknowledging the different motivations of women for staying in Ukraine to fight further demonstrates women are not a homogenous group, and their motivations for fighting are not solely linked to their gender roles as family caregivers or relational to men as their wives, mothers, sisters, or aunts. Women’s agency—their ability to determine and act on their own individualized goals and motivations—is a core component of this war, whether they decide to stay in or leave Ukraine.

It may seem contradictory to discuss the risks faced by women and girls in this conflict and then highlight their agency—but it is not dichotomous. This is the complexity that gender analysis illuminates and the nuance it demands of interventions—humanitarian or military—in conflict-ridden situations. Eliminating wholesale assumptions of women’s victimization and examining their motivations is a critical piece of gender dynamics in conflict. It also helps outside actors detect the different challenges facing civilian Ukrainian men.<sup>44</sup> The traditionally rigid roles ascribed to Ukrainian men and women have already morphed over the course of this war and will continue to change. For allied militaries, this means embedded planning assumptions about friendly forces and the civilian population cannot remain static, and instead need to adapt to account for gender-based changes as plans for future operations are adjusted based on new intelligence.

40 Monica Hesse, “The Strength of Ukrainian Women Is on Display,” *Washington Post*, March, 1, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2022/03/01/ukraine-women/>.

41 Lauren Freyer and Iryna Matviyishyn, “Ukrainian Women Are Volunteering to Fight—and History Shows They Always Have,” NPR, March 19, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/19/1087712539/ukrainian-women-are-volunteering-to-fight-and-history-shows-they-always-have>.

42 Amie Ferris-Rotman, “Women in Ukraine Play a Critical Role in the Fight against Russia,” *Time*, March 22, 2022, <https://time.com/6159261/women-ukraine-war-russia/>.

43 Jessica Tu, “‘Surreal’: How Women of Ukraine Are Taking On the Invading Forces,” *Women’s Agenda*, February 28, 2022, <https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/surreal-how-women-of-ukraine-are-taking-on-the-invading-forces/>.

44 Charli Carpenter, “Civilian Men Are Trapped in Ukraine,” *Foreign Policy*, July 15, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/15/ukraine-war-conscription-martial-law-men-gender-human-rights/>.



# Women's civil society networks are saving Ukrainians

In every locality around the world, there are local networks of women—often undetected by Western media, leaders, and other outside actors—operating across their communities and making lifesaving impacts. Women's civil society networks often have the ground truth of conflict dynamics, and access that allows them to acutely understand and provide tailored services to address the human security challenges manifesting as a result of war.<sup>45</sup> For example, at the border between Ukraine and neighboring countries such as Poland<sup>46</sup> and Moldova,<sup>47</sup> women's rights organizations and civil society organizations have been critical to providing localized, culturally specific and sensitive support to at-risk groups seeking refuge. These organizations have been operating at max capacity during the lead-up and throughout the 2022 Russian attack on Ukraine. They have also provided useful insights and recommendations for shaping international humanitarian and military assistance based on their knowledge of the conflict.<sup>48</sup>

While humanitarian assistance efforts employ a variety of models and mechanisms for engaging local civil society, it can be understandably more challenging for military actors to ensure these insights and recommendations are considered as part of military assistance and planned operations. International and national organizations like CARE International,<sup>49</sup> the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund,<sup>50</sup> and the Ukrainian Women's Fund<sup>51</sup> are often helpful starting points for military actors to understand the local

civil society landscape given their local networks. Some of these larger organizations also have security sector liaisons specifically dedicated to improving coordination with military and other security actors. International and national level organizations are helpful conduits for distinguishing between local organizations that are amenable to working with the military and those who do not want any real or perceived affiliation. This is an optimal way for military forces to take stock of the civil society landscape without overtaxing the local network with information requirements.

Importantly, women's civil society organizations in Ukraine are facing their own unique challenges as a result of the war: supply chain delays, insufficient resources and capacity to meet demand, and limited access to coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes led by international actors, among others.<sup>52</sup> As nonhumanitarian actors with a different mission, allied militaries may never fully map these interconnected, localized networks, yet may be operating in and around them in the same environment. It is paramount that allied militaries take steps to understand how the local network operates so that military action does not negatively impact their efforts. The key takeaway for military operators is not to replace or upend the system built and implemented by these networks, but to ensure it is sustained, continues operating, and remains informed about planned military action through appropriate intermediaries.

45 VOICE Amplified and HIAS, *Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine*, Regional Assessment Report/Ukraine Crisis Response, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs via ReliefWeb (service), May 26, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/regional-assessment-report-ukraine-crisis-response-waiting-sky-close-unprecedented-crisis-facing-women-and-girls-fleeing-ukraine>.

46 CARE: Gender in Emergencies, "Ukraine Crisis: Localization in Practice: Realities from Women's Rights and Women-Led Organizations in Poland," via ReliefWeb, May 17, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/ukraine-crisis-localization-practice-realities-womens-rights-and-women-led-organizations-poland>.

47 "Promoting Social Cohesion through Cultural Activities," Moldova Refugee Response, Inclusion and Livelihoods Working Group, Co-Chaired by the Moldova State Chancellery and UN Development Programme, Issue Brief no. 3, ReliefWeb, May 11, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/moldova-refugee-response-inclusion-and-livelihoods-working-group-co-chaired-state-0>.

48 "Realizing Women, Peace & Security in Ukraine," Event Recording, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, May 9, 2022, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/event/realizing-women-peace-security-in-ukraine/>.

49 "Ukraine," CARE International (country webpage), <https://www.care-international.org/our-work/where-we-work/ukraine>.

50 "Ukraine," Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (country webpage), <https://wphfund.org/countries/ukraine/>.

51 "Donors and Partners," Ukrainian Women's Fund (webpage), <https://uwf.org.ua/en/donors-and-partners/>.

52 UN Women, "Rapid Assessment: Impact of the War in Ukraine on Women's Civil Society Organizations," Action Brief, Summary of Survey Conducted March 4-10, 2022, ReliefWeb, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/rapid-assessment-impact-war-ukraine-womens-civil-society-organizations-march-2022>.



## Recommendations



Members of the Oregon Army National Guard unload blankets, snacks and clothes at the Center for Protection of Women and Children in Kosovo, July 24, 2020. The soldiers are working to build relationships with residents of the shelter. Army Capt. Nadine Wiley De Moura/US Department of Defense Photos.

**M**ilitary assistance for Ukraine has involved radar and anti-armor systems, ammunition, vehicles, and aircraft to support Ukraine's defense of its sovereign territory. In the weeks following the Russian invasion, NATO allies bolstered allied force posture by deploying air defense, armor, and infantry forces, among other capabilities, along NATO's eastern flank. Interestingly, no reporting describes how this support is necessary for countering the gendered impacts of Russia's hybrid warfare, addressing instances of CRSV, understanding women as warfighters in Ukraine, or sustaining the critical role of localized civil society networks. Yet these are some of the many human security dynamics that will shape the outcomes in Ukraine and, importantly, contextualize the battlespace Ukraine's military is currently operating in and allied militaries are observing from their deterrence posture. The recommendations below seek to help allied militaries accommodate

gendered human security challenges within the context of the support they are providing for the defense of Ukraine; they are not all encompassing and should be reevaluated as the conflict evolves and new information becomes available. Notably, the tactical recommendations should not be considered the primary course of action: they represent a minimum viable capability to enable action and prevent inaction.

### Tactical

**1) Incorporate human security guidance into commander's intent.** Military leadership can direct forces to accomplish the mission in a gender-responsive way that protects or mitigates harm to civilians. The implied tasks for accomplishing the mission can account for the gender and human security dynamics highlighted in this brief and others as they emerge over time. Guidance can be as

simple as acknowledging up front that mission success is dependent on civilian as well as military outcomes, and providing gender and human security-related tasks such as including techniques for civilian harm mitigation as part of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) during training missions, and ensuring that gender- and age-disaggregated information about the civilian population is part of reporting requirements to headquarters for use in future capability planning. Deployed tactical forces do not have the ability to change the military mission; but they do have the ability to change how they accomplish the mission objectives. Adaptation can be cost free, and it often starts with a leadership decision.

**2) Develop and provide specialized training for deployed forces.** Military forces can request specialized training to be conducted at their deployed locations. Some militaries have incorporated gender and human security concepts into pre-deployment training; others have not. All militaries have a long list of predeployment training and readiness checks that inhibit their ability to take on specialized training before deployment. In this case, training forces in theater may be the only option, when possible. Requested training could include short sessions for operational forces on TTPs for the protection of civilians or accommodating gender and human security aspects in military operations. Specialized training can be tailored to the capability military forces are performing (e.g., infantry, artillery, air defense, medical, etc.) to optimize the understanding of what military forces do and the impact on the civilian environment and vice versa. Furthermore, many allied militaries have gender advisors and protection of civilians specialists who have developed and can adapt training modules to respond to such training requests. These specialists, however, often need a demand signal and a specific request from ground forces if such training was not identified as a requirement in advance. To be clear, a short one-off training while on deployment is a mitigation strategy, not a solution. But it is an available option and should be provided to forces deploying to the eastern flank.

**3) Balance threat and civilian intelligence assessments.** Military intelligence can expand its focus to better understand the civilian context and the threat or enemy. The enemy gets a vote, as the military saying goes; civilians should too. Intelligence can sometimes focus so intently on understanding threats from the enemy, and understandably so, that this can limit resources dedicated to

understanding the civilian context or the potential impacts of planned military action on the civilian population. For the purposes of joint targeting—or the way militaries prioritize and select facilities, individuals, and other entities for applying a kinetic or nonkinetic military capability—allied militaries should ensure they evaluate the presence of civilians in and around areas of high value targets. This means deconstructing differences in civilian men’s and women’s patterns of movement and use of facilities, roads, or equipment. It means factoring into targeting equations civilian movement and use of subways,<sup>53</sup> schools,<sup>54</sup> and industrial plants<sup>55</sup>—areas where civilians have taken shelter—which may be impacted as a result of military action, and identifying options to retain military effectiveness, civilian safety, and freedom of movement.

Allies already have access to military doctrine that explains how intelligence can incorporate gendered civilian considerations into tactical and operational assessments. The NATO Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting includes guidance to commanders and staff to include a gender analysis as part of joint target development in recognition that gender has an impact across the human, physical, and informational environments.<sup>56</sup> Militaries also have robust, formalized processes by which they gather data to inform their operations (i.e., intelligence preparation of the battlefield). Militaries can include requirements to gather specific information on the civilian population for the explicit purpose of mitigating civilian harm and accounting for the gender and human security dynamics present in the operational battlespace. **To understand the civilian population is to understand gender.** It is impossible to gain clarity about civilians without understanding the gender norms and dictates that influence their behavior and decision-making. Militaries can choose to adapt their intelligence requirements to gather this type of specific information.

## Operational

**4) Provide gender-specific healthcare and equipment.** Military assistance and supplies for Ukraine should include gender-specific healthcare and equipment. Medical facilities are often safe, private spaces for survivors of gender-based violence to disclose their experience to healthcare providers. Allied military medical support should be prepared to identify and interact with survivors of CRSV, including LGBTQ+ and gender diverse individuals,

53 Andrew E. Kramer and Lynsey Addario, “15,000 Are Sheltering in Kyiv’s Subway,” *New York Times*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-shelters.html>.

54 “Ukrainian School Used as Shelter Leveled by Russian Airstrike,” CNN (video), <https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2022/05/08/luhansk-school-airstrike-russia-ukraine-kiley-vpx-nr.cnn>.

55 Jeanine Santucci and Ella Lee, “UN Trying to Rescue Civilians Sheltering in Mariupol Steel Plant’s Bunkers; More Bodies Found Outside Kyiv: April 30 Recap,” *USA Today*, April 30, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/04/30/ukraine-russia-invasion-live-updates/9590197002/>.

56 NATO, “Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting,” Allied Joint Publication AJP-3.9, Edition B, version 1, NATO Standardization Office, November 2021, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1033306/AJP-3.9\\_EDB\\_V1\\_E.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033306/AJP-3.9_EDB_V1_E.pdf).

and know how to connect them with sexual and reproductive healthcare and psychosocial support services. The UN Population Fund estimated there were around 265,000 pregnant women in Ukraine at the start of the 2022 crisis, and approximately 80,000 were expected to deliver over the next three months.<sup>57</sup> Such information enables allied military medical support in neighboring countries to coordinate with the humanitarian response effort and (where requested) anticipate providing maternity care including attending births, pre- and post-natal support, and basic infant needs such as bassinets and baby formula.

Most allied military security assistance to Ukraine is for equipment, weapons, radar systems, helicopters, and tactical vehicles. To accommodate women in the Ukrainian forces and civilian resistance who remain in Ukraine, allied militaries should, at a minimum, include feminine hygiene products in first aid kits and provide gender-specific personal protective equipment, including helmets, boots, and body armor that better fit and protect women's bodies, as part of equipment packages. Often personal protective equipment such as tactical bulletproof vests do not fit women properly because they were initially designed for the average male body. This puts women at an increased risk for injury since the equipment does not protect the same areas that it would on a man. NATO members are aware of such gender considerations, which are included in NATO annual defense planning capability surveys, and a similarly gender-sensitive approach should be applied to military assistance to Ukraine.<sup>58</sup>

**5) Counter gender disinformation.** As part of continuously evaluating the information environment, allied militaries—specifically their military intelligence, psychological operations, civil-military analysis, and military public affairs entities—should ensure they are identifying and examining gender-based messaging being weaponized to support the Kremlin's disinformation campaign about its actions, plans, and foreign policy position. Key themes for the Kremlin's disinformation narratives often include discrediting women's contributions or experiences in the conflict, demonizing or targeting LGBTQ populations, and using feminized language associated with Ukrainian military action or narratives that associate Russian success with traditional and rigid gender norms. It has historically been difficult to block or refute Russian propaganda, but

allied militaries can counter its effects on the population by examining how gender roles and stereotypes are being exploited to influence support for Russian military operations in Ukraine. This will be helpful for identifying at-risk populations for Russian disinformation and designing alternative narratives to counter the Kremlin's propaganda. Helpfully, the UK government provides ten steps in this “how to” guide to counter gendered disinformation, which includes key questions allied militaries can incorporate in their understanding of the information environment.<sup>59</sup>

**6) Deploy civil-military cooperation capabilities.** Allied forces should ensure they incorporate civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) elements into the forces being deployed. These elements help overcome the communication gap between military and civilian authorities, organizations, and agencies and would be a necessary capability given the presence of military forces, humanitarian actors, and affected populations of Ukrainians in the same locality. Allies have access to the NATO Allied Command Operations Protection of Civilians *Handbook* to inform CIMIC planning.<sup>60</sup> The handbook emphasizes understanding the human environment, identifying risk factors for vulnerable groups, and clarifying the rules of engagement for military forces that include relevant TTPs, and reporting standard operating procedures for civilian protection and harm mitigation. The CIMIC capability was built for situations like the one unfolding in Ukraine. Rather than reacting to the situation that ultimately unfolds, information gleaned through gender analyses indicates a CIMIC capability will be as necessary as infantry, armor, and air defense for deployed forces.

**7) Diversify force composition for deployed CIMIC teams.** If CIMIC teams ultimately deploy, allied militaries should intentionally plan to deploy women in uniform to support civil-military engagement. A critical enabler for CIMIC is the ability to deploy mixed teams of men and women in uniform. Based on peacekeeping operations globally,<sup>61</sup> and NATO operations in Afghanistan,<sup>62</sup> allied militaries know that having trained women military operators engage with civilian populations results in outcomes more advantageous to both the military and humanitarian objectives because of the ability to overcome gender-based constraints for interacting with different people. Though Russian aggression in Ukraine is a different conflict scenario, this lesson is still relevant and applicable,

57 “UNFPA Appeal for Ukraine,” UN Population Fund, April 2022, <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/unfpa-appeal-ukraine>.

58 NATO, “Women, Peace and Security at NATO: Integration, Inclusiveness, Integrity,” Fact Sheet, November 2020, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/2010-factsheet-WPS-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/2010-factsheet-WPS-en.pdf).

59 “Quick-Read Guide: Gender and Countering Disinformation,” Government of the United Kingdom, January 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/866353/Quick\\_Read-Gender\\_and\\_countering\\_disinformation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/866353/Quick_Read-Gender_and_countering_disinformation.pdf).

60 NATO, *Protection of Civilians Handbook*, NATO Allied Command Operations, 2020, <https://shape.nato.int/documentation>.

61 Robert U. Nagel, Kate Fin, and Julia Maenza, *Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations*, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, May 2021, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/gendered-impacts-on-operational-effectiveness-of-un-peace-operations/>.

62 Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence (CCOE), “Female Engagement Teams,” CCOE Observation Paper, n.d., <https://www.cimic-coe.org/resources/cimic-messenger/female-engagement-teams.pdf>.



particularly because of the information learned through gender analyses of Ukraine. Simply put, women sometimes feel more comfortable speaking to other women and sometimes men also feel more comfortable speaking to women. By having diverse groups of people comprise deployed CIMIC teams, allied militaries have flexibility to adapt in real time to overcome sociocultural and gender-based constraints to interaction with civilians. This is a warfighting advantage. Since militaries are mostly comprised of men, they must think proactively about deploying women CIMIC operators.

Importantly, it is difficult to surge women in uniform with the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage civilian populations. Engagement is a capability that must be built; an operator's gender refines and adds nuance to the capability, but in and of itself, one's gender does not guarantee effective outcomes without sufficient training and skills. Therefore, identifying gender diversity as a requirement up front in force generation and planning fosters success for women on CIMIC teams by ensuring proper training and preparation; it enables planners to account for this capability in future military planning; and it prevents women assigned to other capabilities from being pulled away from their unit for something they have not been trained or deployed to do. This is not an argument for increasing women in the military for the sake of numbers; this is an argument for proactive capability planning with intentional consideration of gender for civilian engagement.

## Strategic

**8) Bolster NATO's internal gender and human security capacity.** NATO headquarters has internal teams and senior advisers dedicated to interpreting gender and human security information for use in planning action for the Alliance. Though NATO is not actively leading a military operation, the Alliance is coordinating support and enabling consultation among allies. At the political level, the NATO secretary general special representative (SGSR) for women, peace, and security and the Human Security Unit are actively tracking and managing gender and human security challenges arising from the war in Ukraine. On the military side, the International Military Staff Office of the Gender Advisor (IMS GENAD) provides complementary advice and expertise to the NATO Military Committee.

Where allies are limited in their bilateral military assistance to Ukraine, they should consider bolstering the efforts of the SGSR, Human Security Unit, and IMS GENAD through staffing and dedicated resources. This would provide the staff support to embed gender and human security considerations within strategic and operational documents guiding NATO's support for Ukraine. Over the next year, national level staffing support and additional resourcing to the internal gender and human security teams at NATO would cost allies a fraction of one attack helicopter valued between \$849,000 and \$1.1 million.<sup>63</sup>

Many allies have spent the last two decades building up their cadres of military gender advisors, which are dedicated military positions responsible for translating gender analyses into military action. Now is the time to leverage this expertise. NATO gender advisors at the headquarters and Allied Command Operations are already actively working to integrate and account for gender and human security information within NATO's defense plans, the high readiness elements of the NATO Response Force, and the eight multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Those allied militaries deploying national forces to the eastern flank should also identify options for deploying a trained and qualified gender advisor to provide real time gender and human security inputs to military plans, intelligence, and targeting as the war evolves.

**9) Advocate for women's participation in peace negotiations.** Political consultation regarding Ukraine and Russia should emphasize the necessity of women serving as mediators and negotiators during peace talks. As the Western allies speculate on the conditions that would bring Ukraine and Russia to a cease-fire and peace negotiation, they should also advocate for the intentional inclusion of women as part of the peace process.<sup>64</sup> Despite more than three decades of research analyzing the longevity of outcomes associated with women's participation in both formal and informal peace processes,<sup>65</sup> few allies have drawn on the findings as part of their political commentary and consultation about the future of Ukraine.<sup>66</sup> Where many are focused on restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and rightfully so, research demonstrates that the inclusion of women as negotiators and participants during peace talks ensures that human security, transitional justice, and

63 Sebastien Roblin, "Ukraine Has Its Own Mi-24 'Flying Tank' Helicopters to Fight Russia," 1945, April 25, 2022, <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2022/04/ukraine-has-its-own-mi-24-flying-tank-helicopters-to-fight-russia/>.

64 "Growing Calls for Peace Talks to End War in Ukraine" Deutsche Welle. June 6, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/growing-calls-for-peace-talks-to-end-war-in-ukraine/av-62069821>.

65 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), "Women's Participation in Peace Processes," CFR Interactives, n.d., <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>.

66 Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, "Women's Participation and a Better Understanding of the Political," in *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015, 36-63, <https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/CH03.pdf>.



democratic developments are amplified as part and parcel of restoring state security.

In the few negotiations between Ukraine and Russia in 2022, women have been noticeably absent. Some argue it is often difficult to find qualified women to participate in the process, but women's civil society networks in Ukraine were particularly active in shaping Ukraine-Russia discussions following the 2014 annexation of Crimea and should be included again.<sup>67</sup> Others argue that there is a dearth of trained women mediators and peace builders to facilitate the discussions. Helpfully, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has instituted a promising model for creating a network of women with such skills.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, among the allies offering assistance to Ukraine are nations with feminist foreign policies and national directives on gender equity and equality; advocating for women's inclusion throughout the peace negotiations is one action they can take to shape positive outcomes for the future of Ukraine.

**10. Elevate the protection of civilians in bilateral defense talks with Ukraine.** Allies have the option of elevating the impact of military operations on civilians during bilateral defense and military talks with Ukraine. This would place the protection of civilians in the context of ongoing military operations, open the door for Ukraine to highlight challenges in protecting civilians, and perhaps help shape future military assistance from allies. By elevating civilian harm and protection needs within defense coordination channels, allies can communicate what capabilities and training they can provide to assist the Ukrainian military with its engagement and protection of civilians. This puts options on the table that Ukraine can request. If allies are able to train Ukrainian soldiers on new weapon systems, patrol tactics, and first aid in the midst of war, they should also be possible to provide training on methods for protecting civilians, including specific tactics and rules of engagement.<sup>69</sup> Military assistance can be thought of more comprehensively than weapon systems and ammunition.

67 Almut Rochowanski, "Ukraine: Europe Should Walk Its Talk on Women, Peace and Security," Commentary, European Leadership Network, April 22, 2022, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/ukraine-europe-should-walk-its-talk-on-women-peace-and-security/>.

68 "OSCE Secretary General Launches Networking Platform for Women Leaders Including Peacebuilders and Mediators," Organization for Security and Co-operation, Press Release, December 7, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/secretary-general/507254#:~:text=VIENNA%2C%207%20December%202021%20%E2%80%93%20OSCE>.

69 Eric Schmitt, "Special Military Cell Flows Weapons and Equipment into Ukraine," *New York Times*, July 27, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/27/us/politics/ukraine-weapons-center.html>.

## Conclusion

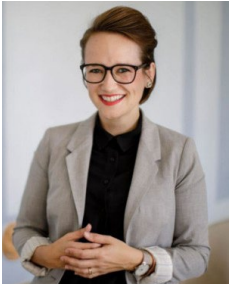
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**T**he NATO Strategic Concept acknowledges the important relationship of national-level decision-making to the collective security of the Alliance and Euro-Atlantic region. Right now, allies are making individual decisions to defend Ukraine because it is in the interests of European security and the collective values that bond allies together. Allied military assistance to support Ukraine's defense of its territorial integrity is remarkable; so, too, is the ability to rapidly mobilize deterrent forces in Europe. But the security and sovereignty

of Ukraine is also contingent upon the human security of Ukrainians living within its borders. Beyond the policy documents and international mandates, allied militaries have an operational responsibility to mitigate the potential impacts of military assistance and operations on civilians. They already have access to information and capabilities that enable the integration of human security considerations into military decision-making. Now allied militaries need to take the next steps to put these considerations into action for the future of Ukraine and European security.

## About the Author

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**Cori Fleser** is a nonresident fellow with the Transatlantic Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security and a senior specialist with Forge Group LLC. She provides technical subject matter expertise to defense and military institutions to implement women-, peace-, and security-focused policies, programs, and initiatives. In this capacity, she has advised foreign militaries, US combatant commands, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy on gender's effects on global, national, and individual security. She is an expert in accounting for these gender dynamics within military plans, programs, and operations.

Prior to her work on women, peace, and security, Fleser previously supported the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a joint planner and served as an analyst for US special operations forces. She also previously designed wargames for military and commercial organizations with Booz Allen Hamilton. Before working in the national security space, Fleser worked for several nongovernmental organizations focused on the development of girls' leadership, gender-based violence prevention, and foreign-aid reform.

Fleser has participated in fellowships at the German Marshall Fund, Atlantik-Brücke, and the National Endowment for Democracy. In 2020, Fleser was one of the fourteen NATO 2030 Young Leaders, the sole US representative, appointed as an advisory body to the NATO Secretary General. While there, she co-authored a report with recommendations for strengthening the Alliance through 2030 and beyond. In 2021, Fleser was selected to participate in the Shawn Brimley Next Generation National Security Fellowship with the Center for a New American Security.

Fleser has an MA in sustainable development with a focus on gender and security from the School for International Training Graduate Institute and a BA in international affairs and German with a minor in women's, gender, and sexuality studies from James Madison University.



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