



# THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS FEMALE ARMY IN GEOPOLITICAL STABILIZATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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## Abstract

The Middle East is an area that has many geopolitical interests, which has resulted in the emergence of political instability. This has affected the security conditions and the world's political economy. Female peacekeepers are sent by intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), to carry out political stabilization programs in the Middle East. Significant effort has been made by the United Nations to carry out female soldiers' operations as peacekeepers. This study focuses on the role of female UN soldiers for maintaining geopolitical stabilization in the Middle East. The role of inter-governmental organizations (IGO), female military, and geopolitical interests is used as key concepts in this study. This research uses a qualitative-explanatory approach that studies the crucial role of female soldiers in IGO's efforts for geopolitical stabilization.. The main argument is female soldiers sent by the UN have a positive contribution to the keeping of peace in the Middle East region.

**Keywords:** Females Military, United Nations, Geopolitics, Middle East.

## Abstrak

Timur Tengah merupakan area yang memiliki banyak kepentingan geopolitik, sehingga sangat rentan pada instabilitas politik. Hal ini berdampak pada kondisi keamanan dan ekonomi politik dunia. Penjaga perdamaian perempuan ditugaskan oleh organisasi antar-pemerintah, seperti Persatuan Bangsa-Bangsa (PBB) untuk menjaga stabilitas politik di Timur Tengah. Usaha yang signifikan telah dilakukan oleh PBB dengan melibatkan tentara perempuan dalam operasi penjagaan perdamaian. Studi ini fokus pada peran tentara perempuan PBB dalam penjagaan stabilitas geopolitik di Timur Tengah. Peran organisasi antar pemerintah (IGO), tentara perempuan, dan kepentingan geopolitik menjadi konsep utama dalam tulisan ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-eksplanatif yang menjelaskan peran krusial tentara perempuan penjaga perdamaian dalam usaha IGO (Intergovernmental Government Organization) untuk menjaga stabilitas geopolitik. Argumentasi utama dari studi ini bahwa tentara perempuan penjaga perdamaian yang dikirim oleh PBB memiliki kontribusi positif dalam penjagaan perdamaian di wilayah Timur Tengah.

**Kata Kunci :** Tentara perempuan, Persatuan Bangsa-Bangsa, Geopolitik, Timur Tengah.

## Background

In International Relations matters, geopolitics is the integrated study of geography and politics that analyzes the regional structure of a state as a strategy of foreign policy. Rudolf Kjellen has argued that geopolitical is a form of

life that is based on demographic, economic, political, social, and geographical factors.

Geopolitics emphasizes the influence of geography on international political decisions. The Middle East has been experiencing significant structural shifts in terms of the



position and the number of actors in the region<sup>1</sup>. Referring to the literature on Middle East studies, many factors that influenced geopolitics developed in the region. In this case, the geopolitical perspective was strongly influenced by the configuration of internal forces, the involvement of external influences, and the strengthening of new political actors in the region<sup>2</sup>.

In this discussion, new political actors have become the main subject of discussion. One of these is female military personnel who are assigned to respond to geopolitical issues in the Middle East. These issues relate to international political agendas, security, and the political economy. International political turmoil in the Middle East is characterized by high-security issues caused by historical factors, internal turmoil, and intervention from external parties, all of which give rise to power competition among states.

In International Relations matters, the woman's role in the military's is related to the promotion of female participation in the creation of political stability coordinated by intergovernmental organizations. As stated in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), there are two roles of female military personnel in human security issues.

First, female military personnel addresses the problems faced by women as victims or survivors of war. It also promotes women as agents of peace. In other words, UNSCR 1325 emphasizes two fundamental issues related to the impact of

war and conflict on female, and the need for all UN peacekeeping operations to increase the participation of female personnel<sup>3</sup>. The development of female's participation is recognized in decision-making processes for the prevention of conflict and the post-conflict environment<sup>4</sup>. Resolution 1325 also recognizes that women and girls have special needs and that peacekeeping personnel needs special training to adequately understand these needs<sup>5</sup>.

This article will analyze the deployment of female soldiers, which is considered to be able to create new conditions of peace in the Middle East. The question is what role do female military personnel play of the region?

Western discourse studies does not broadly explore the role of women in the Middle East as being capable of self-reflection and independence. The book *Female and the Family in the Middle East: New Voice of Change* criticized the views of Western scholarship on the role of women in the region. It argues that many studies lacked the samples needed to corroborate information on how people actually live in the Middle East. In other words, the conceptualization of women in Western studies promotes secularism and bias.

In the Middle East, a new revolution for women was proclaimed in Libya's government policies since 1969. The discourse of 'the right to work' then grew in Algeria and was followed suit by the people of Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon. They advocated for the state to support access to jobs, such as social welfare facilities as the factory

<sup>1</sup> Kristina Kausch, "Competitive Multipolarity in the Middle East," *International Spectator* 50, no. 3 (2015): 1–15.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Dorsey, "Transition in Middle East: Transition to What?," *BESA Center Perspectives Paper* No. 684, no. December 13 (2017); Muhammad Shabbir, "Emerging Middle East: Interplay of the New Power," *ISSRA Papers* (2013): 25–44; May Darwich, *Great and Regional Powers in the Middle East: The Evolution of Role Conceptions, Shifting Global Politics and the Middle East*, vol. 34, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Sjoberg, Laura. *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives*. *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Palomo, Jesus, Cristina Figueroa-Domecq, and Pilar Laguna. "Female, Peace and Security State-of-Art: A Bibliometric Analysis in Social Sciences Based on SCOPUS Database." *Scientometrics* 113, no. 1 (2017): 123–148.

<sup>5</sup> Bridges, Donna, and Debbie Horsfall. "Toward a Gender-Balanced Force." *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no. 1 (2009): 120–130.



or office work.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the movement for women's emancipation has reached the Middle East.<sup>7</sup>

The important place of women in dealing with the various turmoil in the Middle East can be seen in the Palestinian refugee crisis in South Lebanon since 1981<sup>8</sup>. Although their contribution has not been large, it was recognized that women learned to use weapons for self-protection. The number of personnel of female soldiers under the United Nations have increased from year to year. This is because they were able to provide solutions to protect against violence.

In this paper, we analyze the characteristics of women who are able to contribute to the stability of the Middle East. In the study of international relations, this discourse is often related to gender studies. However, the notion of female independence is also connected to feminism. This paper refers to view of the role of women in society that cannot be explained epistemologically. In addition, the article also reflects on Islam's view on the matter as a perspective that is often ignored. Moreover, there is a general view that considers women's activities in the military as being taboo, especially in the Middle East.

#### *Female Peacekeepers*

Talking about female's role nowadays cannot be separated from gender discourse, especially when examining female's role in conflict resolution. According to Goffman, gender in the biologically perspective refers to the behavioral aspects of both men and women<sup>9</sup>. In a broader sense, Lorber & Farrell has argued that gender is an activity that regulates the normative position

of behavior and activities that are appropriate for one gender category<sup>10</sup>. While in the sociological view, Halford and Leonard said that society does not come in built with behavior and characteristics for being masculine or feminine; rather, gender is constructed by culture and the community and is nurtured and perpetuated by culture<sup>11</sup>.

The affirmation of women's involvement in work that is usually done by men is clearly stated in the Human Rights Convention that eliminates all acts of discrimination against female in 1984 and the convention on economic, social, and cultural rights in 2005. Thus, the convention that promotes the elimination of discrimination of women's rights regarding guarantees to get work on an equal footing with men, such as the right to work; the right to equal employment opportunities; the right to have a job and profession, the right to develop, secure work and any benefits and services, and the right to receive training; the right to have equal respect; the right to receive social worker security, in particular, to receive a state pension, from disability, illness, and inability to work and the right to rest and receive wages; as well as the right to health protection and the safety of working conditions<sup>12</sup>.

The conception of female's human rights in the Western perspective does not defines the role positioned by female as part of gender studies which then leads to the power of female in leading. In the article "Pendidikan Politik Untuk Perempuan" in the book *Female in Public Sector*, it is said that female's bargaining position refers to the strength to understand politics that is polite, full of love, full of honesty, full of coordination,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Warnock F (edt.) 1985. *Female and the Family in the Middle East: New Voice of Change*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

<sup>8</sup> *Op.Cit.* Elizabeth W.F. Hlm. 163.

<sup>9</sup> Goffman, E. 197. *Gender Advertisements*. New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>10</sup> Lorber, J. & Farrell, S. A. (1991). *The Social Construction of Gender*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc

<sup>11</sup> Halford. S & Farrell, S.A. 1991. *Gender, Power, and Organisations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>12</sup> Siti Hariti Sastriyani (ed.). 2008. *Female in Public Sector*. Yogyakarta: Pusat Studi Wanita Universitas Gadjah Mada dan Tiara Wacana



and responsibility as citizens. This perspective can build world peace and a democratic country that comes from self-awareness, heart, and soul<sup>13</sup>. However, this article identifies the statement as a manifestation of the feminist movement, which is an instinct and characteristic of female who have been born in feminine psychology and tend not to be possessed by masculine traits. Thus, the principle of 'equality' in the feminist movement is irrelevant in this discussion. Moreover, the article agrees that the peace can be created by women by creating harmony in themselves first and within the family.

In other words, this is the main function of women. The word equality here must be clarified, what is meant by balance? The book *Diskursus Sains dan Feminisme* identifies that feminism as a political movement for social change. Thus, the concept of feminism is not the focus of this discussion, because it has epistemological differences. After all, the core of feminism is the absolute independence of women who are independent from things outside of themselves, including the state.

Female peacekeepers in the sense of female's participation in the military are no longer a new thing in international affairs. This is especially the case for their involvement in security issues. In its development, female military soldiers has become part of international political actors. In a broader context, the role of women as peacekeepers ensures that they participate in decision-making forums to resolve conflicts and build peace<sup>14</sup>.

Military operations in maintaining the security of conflict areas involve international parties, including the United Nations. Through, Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325)

women became involved in peace and security efforts. The existence of female peacekeepers in military operations has improved security in conflict areas. Female peacekeepers are considered to be able to help create a conducive environment for peace and political diplomacy.

In peace missions, the role of female peacekeepers in this discussion is focused on military operations whose task is to ensure the protection and fulfillment of their needs and access to humanitarian assistance, both military soldiers who are members of the UN female peacekeepers and military soldiers recruited by civilians. Women who have their own distinctive behavior and characteristics are considered not to have a positive effect on reducing victims of violence. On the other hand, the combinations of the two is also not in line with the patriarchal culture that dominates society. Egnell has stated that the presence of women in the military increases the effectiveness of the military itself. However, efforts are needed to clarify the roles and functions of women in military environment<sup>15</sup>. The function and capacity of female soldiers as added value in military operations is useful for realizing regional stability and conflict resolution.

#### *Inter-Governmental Organization*

Moral authority is the power of an International Governmental Organization to legitimately speak in regard to the regional issue at hand in order to get both conflicting parties to sit down at the same table and resolve their issues.

IGOs are primarily agents of their member states and focus on their structural attributes, decision-making processes, and programs. After all, IGOs are formed by states and states grant IGOs responsibilities and authority to act.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Hlm. 441-442.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine A. Onekali, "Female in Peacekeeping: The Emergence of the All-Female Uniformed Units in UNMIL and MONUSCO," *Accord. 20 years of contributing to peace* Issue 2 (2013): 42-51.

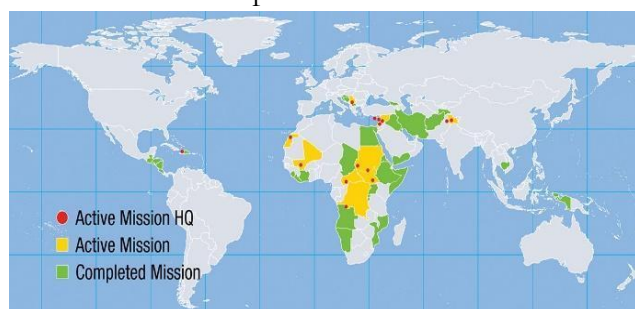
<sup>15</sup> Robert Egnell, "Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness: Implementing UNSCR 1325 and the National Action Plan on Female, Peace, and Security," *Institute for National Strategic Security* 6, no. 1 (2016): 72-89.

International organizations have structures, norms, principles, and agreements that are mutually agreed upon to achieve the goals of the organization. The role and function of the organization is to achieve common goals and carry out institutional functions. Government organizations are non-state actors who discuss the problems they face. As independent actors, international organizations can make their own decisions without being influenced by power or coercion from external factors.

United Nations as an inter-governmental organization has the function to secure and maintain international peace, based on international declarations, the UN Charter, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the Statute of International Court. These agreements stress the importance of IGOs in securing peace in the Middle East.

#### *The Role of Female Peacekeepers as Conflict Resolution Actors*

The activities of female peacekeepers were compiled by UN Peacekeeping which began operating in 1948 until 2018 for approximately 70 years. More than 1 million peacekeepers both male and female consisting of military, police, and security personnel from 125 countries joined the operation. UN security protection has spread across 14 areas of operation<sup>16</sup>.

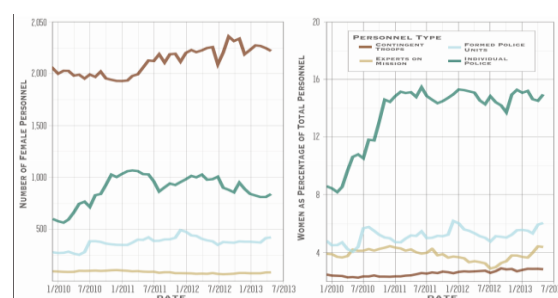


**Figure 1.** UN Peacekeeping Operation Area

**Source:** (United Nations 2018)

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, 2018, UN Peacekeeping. Diakses di <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-70-years-of-service-sacrifice>.

Resolution 1325 on security, and peace emphasizes that women have a role in the prevention, negotiation, peace operations, and resolution of world conflicts. The percentage of women in peacekeepers is still relatively low, as evidenced by the growth in the number of female military personnel over the past 20 years, amounting to 3% of military personnel and 10% of UN security personnel<sup>17</sup>. The UN Security Council emphasizes that women are very influential in peace and post-conflict efforts.



**Graph 1.** Woman Participation in UN Peacekeeping 2010-2013

**Source:** Dharmapuri 2013

In Dharmapuri's report, several reasons has led to the lack of female participation in UN peacekeeping. One of them is that many member states still have not implemented Resolution 1325 regarding women and security+. The resolution outlines that children and women are two actors who tend to be treated unfairly in conflicts, thus they require special protection from various actors, on the one hand. Thus resolution also underlines efforts to increase women in military operations services. The second reason is the gap in data and analysis of women's participation in national and global security institutions, as well as the large social bias regarding gender equality, especially in security and military issues<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations University, Why the United Nations Needs More Female Peacekeepers, Diakses di <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-un-needs-more-female-peacekeepers.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Sahana Dharmapuri, "Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Female's Participation in UN Peacekeeping," *Providing for Peacekeeping* NO. 4, New York:

The contribution of women as peacekeeping military troops is still less than 3%<sup>19</sup>. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace, and security which was formed on October 31, 2000, emphasized the significance of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peace building, peace keeping, humanitarian action in post-conflict reconstruction, and stressing the importance of equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts to maintain, promote peace and security<sup>20</sup>. Thus, it is necessary to protect women's rights and their full involvement in all aspects of promoting and maintaining peace and security.

The role of women is also strengthened in decision-making. Their action must also be protected by a zero-tolerance attitude towards sexual exploitation and violence in UN peacekeeping operations<sup>21</sup>. Several countries such as Indonesia, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom have involved women in various military issues in the last decades. In 2012, more than 20,000 female members of the US military were directly involved in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts<sup>22</sup>.

The involvement of women in military operations is unique because female are often victims of armed conflict, but on the other hand, they are empowered to become agents of change after the conflict. Their involvement has a positive impact in maintaining and building long-

term peace which is very important for the effectiveness of conflict resolution<sup>23</sup>. The decline of women in military operations in a conflict area poses a big risk to the existence of women themselves, given the greater contribution of female as decision-makers in a political institution. Efforts to promote regional peacekeeping carried out by female soldiers in the Middle East are not only based on assumptions and predictions but are also a manifestation of a strategy in executing decisions on the ground.

Female military soldiers also serve as team leaders in upholding human rights, monitoring elections, and supervising local and international personnel. In general, the influence of women in peacekeeping missions is as follows<sup>24</sup>:

1. Women have a positive influence. The presence of female military soldiers can contribute positively to the condition of women in their country in guarding against violence, as has happened in South Africa in preparing for general elections.
2. The participation of women in UN peacekeeping missions is oriented to the need for the latest code of ethics for UN peacekeeping, especially human rights and gender issues.
3. In carrying out their duties, women are considered to have compassion, less inclined to coercion in bringing about peace, are willing to listen and learn, and contribute to stability and morality in assisting the peace process.
4. The presence of women can foster self-confidence and trust among local communities.
5. Women are successful negotiators. They actively propose constructive solutions and are often willing to take innovative

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*International Peace Institute* 4, no. 4 (2013): 1–22, [ahttps://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi\\_epub\\_not\\_just\\_a\\_numbers\\_game.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_epub_not_just_a_numbers_game.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *Op.Cit.* Conflict Trends. Hlm. 9

<sup>20</sup> OSAGI. Landmark Resolution on Female, Peace and Security. Diakses di <https://www.un.org/femalewatch/osagi/wps/>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, Hlm. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Reis, João, and Sofia Menezes. "Gender Inequalities in the Military Service: A Systematic Literature Review." *Sexuality and Culture* 24, no. 3 (2020): 1004–1018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-019-09662-y>.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, Hlm. 9

<sup>24</sup> UN Department for Policy Coordination, "Female 2000 Role of Female in Peace-Keeping," 1995.



approaches to establish dialogue with polarized groups.

6. Women sometimes also use unconventional means to defuse potentially violent situations.
7. Female's participation also breaks traditional views and stereotypes in various countries and local communities where female's operations are assigned.
8. In addition, many women are also willing to accept the challenges of work in all situations, including in dangerous and isolated areas.
9. Civilian female peacekeepers can work effectively in the military and become police officers.

It is the nature and character of these women that allows them to contribute to military missions by harmonizing with the psychological conditions of civil society. The roles of men and female in terms of use are essentially the same, both men and female complement and help each other<sup>25</sup>. This complementary and non-competitive nature can support sustainable life on earth<sup>26</sup>.

#### *Women's Freedom in the Military from an Islamic Perspective*

The Middle East is an area that has the largest Muslim population compared to other religions. Often, Islamic principles regarding women are considered more patriarchal and discriminate against them. Of course, when reviewing the role of women in the military aspect from an Islamic point of view, special considerations must be taken into account. It is necessary to look back at the history in the Middle East regarding the involvement of female in military operations.

<sup>25</sup> M Hajir Mutawakkil, "Keadilan Islam Dalam Persoalan Gender," *Kalimah* 12, no. 1 (2014): 67–89.

<sup>26</sup> Dinar Dewi Kania, 2018, "Delusi Kesetaraan Gender", Jakarta: AILA Indonesia, Hlm. 133-134.

Historically, we can reflect again on how the prophet Muhammad considered the involvement of women in men's activities. He considered women as noble people who can participate in life together with men. The involvement of women is not only to meet the needs of men's sexuality but to carry out activities that are in accordance with their nature. However, the nature of one woman with another woman is different, for example, the difference in nature between female who are married and widowed or who are barren. The protection of women in the style of the prophet Muhammad is very relevant, namely by imposing restrictions to keep men and female from moral decadence<sup>27</sup>.

Based on Islamic law which is also applied in Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, the participation of women in war is not a taboo subject. The Prophet once fought with Umm Sulaim and several other females from al-Ansar (HR. Muslim). The role of women at that time was to provide drinks, treat wounded soldiers, and get a share of the spoils of war (not a full share) (HR. Muslim). More broadly, the role of female as troops in war was attested by HR Bukhari who wrote on the authority of ar-Rubayyi bint Mu'awwidz that "We were with the Prophet SAW in the war, we were in charge of watering the soldiers, serving them, treating the injured, and delivering the wounded and killed to Medina"<sup>28</sup>. The participation of women in this matter occurs in an emergency, such as when the number of men in the conflict field is not large. This offers an opportunity given by God to carry out *jihad* and die as a martyr. In other words, their freedom to participate voluntarily in an emergency situation is part of the exemplary practice (*sunnah*) of Muhammad<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Abdul Halim Abu Syuqqah. 1997. *Kebebasan Wanita* Jilid 3. Jakarta: Geman Insani Press. Hlm. 51-54

<sup>28</sup> Abdul Halim Abu Syuqqah. 1997. *Kebebasan Wanita* Jilid 2. Jakarta: Geman Insani Press. Hlm. 511

<sup>29</sup> *Op.Cit.* Kebebasan Wanita Jilid 3.



In Islamic law, the participation of women in *jihad* is part of prophetic teachings when he was at war. In the Hadith narrated by Bukhari there was a woman who accompanied her husband to fight with Muhammad 12 times, while her sister took part in war six times. The permission given Muhammad for this kind of involvement means that he affirmed female military participation. Even though in these conditions it is easy to slander, the Muslim community is not allowed to slander as long as the involvement of women in war does not exceed the limit<sup>30</sup>.

Female's participation in men's activities in question is an activity that is classified as good and noble. The man's environment it must contain activities that are useful and clean, both concerning worship and morals, science and thought, or concerning social and political activities. Based on the sayings of the Prophet, in carrying out professional activities, such as serving the armed forces, an Ansar woman named Umm Atiyyah fought with Muhammad seven times by replacing the duties of men when they traveled and made food for them. Some of the conditions that allow female to carry out these professional activities are helping their husbands, fathers, or brothers who are poor; realizing the interests of the Muslim community; and sacrificing in a good way<sup>31</sup>.

In the book *Feminist, Islam, and Nation*, women's contributions are domestic programs, such as raising their skills, household management, and productivity. In addition, she is also involved in health, hygiene, and childcare. Generation formation through women's upbringing is fundamental. As the saying has it, 'Educating a mother is to educate the nation'. The emancipation of women in education gave birth to many competent females in the field of education, such as teachers, in the field of health, such as doctors and nurses, in the field of law,

such as advocates, and the revival of their contributions in writing and the state bureaucracy and politics<sup>32</sup>.

### *The Role of Women in Military Operations as Peacekeepers in the Middle East*

Women who are involved in the military have three different roles, namely: (1) combatants. However, the role of female soldiers in the action of combatants who are active in combat is still less than the number of male soldiers. (2) Support War (non-combatant). As soldiers, women play a supporting role in military operations, such as cooks, messengers, health workers, porters, and other supporters. Their participation is often not demonstrated during the conflict. There is a blockade of their service access after the conflict. (3) Dependencies, namely wife, widow, daughter, and part of a male combatant soldier's family. They are brought to the battlefield during the conflict, then return to their home communities when the conflict ends.

The relationship between the three roles shows that women can combine roles, namely warrior, spy, cook, mother, and wife all at once. Thus, women fulfill many roles that cannot be separated<sup>33</sup>. The two-sided contribution of female military soldiers (hard and soft) shows that female military soldiers can play a major role in efforts to achieve long-term and stable peace. However, in the context of female military operations, it does not justify acts of violence and repression that can threaten the lives of women. If a conflict that ends in war is forced to be carried out, then the concept of war must uphold the principles of just war, both physically and psychologically in realizing safety and peace. In this context, war is used as a means of conflict resolution and not an end in itself<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> *Op.Cit.* Kebebasan Wanita Jilid 3. Hlm. 182.

<sup>31</sup> *Op.Cit.* Kebebasan Wanita Jilid 3. Hlm. 406-432.

<sup>32</sup> Margot Badran. 1994. *Feminist, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, Hlm. 13-14.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Resolusi Konflik dalam Islam, Hlm. 10-19.





Since 2015, the network of female's military operations has grown and has received the attention of many parties. The presence of female's military is considered to have a lasting influence and that they provide inspiration to women and children that they have strong role during times of violence. Despite the contribution of women in UN Peacekeeping, the military, police, and civilian personnel, their numbers are still relatively low. Member countries and the UN itself are trying to increase the role and contribution of females in maintaining security during and after conflict.

The Middle East is one of the regions in the world that has historical factors, military strength, and armed forces that influence the study of international relations. Peace and security are important issues in building regional stability in the Middle East considering importance of human rights issues, the intervention of petroleum commodities by countries in the region, controversies over the development of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, territorial disputes, government coups, political and religious ideological conflicts, and the struggle for oil resources.

Political, social, and economic factors also have a major influence on the stability and security of the Middle East. The challenges of the region coupled with issues of poverty, illiteracy, and consequential powerlessness have increasingly contributed to its instability. The involvement of the international community in minimizing this conflict is very diverse, the UN Security Council, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and foreign military assistance are examples of parties directly involved in efforts to manage the conflict.

Foreign military assistance in this regard comes from the involvement of female soldiers as important actors in Middle East military issues. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 states that the involvement of women in conflict, in

general, is a representation and negotiation of peace<sup>35</sup>. As we know, conflicts and ceasefires that occur in the Middle East region greatly impact the political economy and social life of the people, so the presence of a female in military operations is a form of conflict management.

Female soldiers as representatives of international governmental organizations in international politics (UN Female Military) are identified as actors who can influence peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding within the broader role of the humanitarian field<sup>36</sup>. The real involvement of women in war eliminates their right to immunity as a category of non-combatants in war, because women who are directly involved in protecting and even participating in war have the same position in international law as non-civilians<sup>37</sup>.

However, the challenge for female soldiers is that the military operations they carry out are related to the opportunities and challenges (stereotypes) that develop in society. Women have the right to have equal opportunities in the military, but it is still a big challenge for some parties, where three basic things still clash with society stereotypical view of women: posttraumatic stress disorder, femininity and egalitarianism, as well as sexual assault and harassment<sup>38</sup>. The conflict of understanding that develops in the international community regarding the roles and duties of women, has made some parties consider that the presence of

<sup>35</sup> United States Institute of Peace, 2011, *The Role of Woman in Global Security*, Washington D.C.: USIP.

<sup>36</sup> Zulvyanie Pilgrimmy Firohmatillah and Arfin Sudirman, "Peran Korps Wanita TNI Sebagai Pasukan Pemeliharaan Perdamaian PBB Dalam Humanitarian Assistance Di Lebanon," *Indonesian Perspective* 4, no. 2 (2019): 133–149.

<sup>37</sup> Ahmad Al-Dawoody, 2011, *The Islamic War of Islam*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

<sup>38</sup> João Reis and Sofia Menezes, "Gender Inequalities in the Military Service: A Systematic Literature Review," *Sexuality and Culture* 24, no. 3 (2020): 1004–1018, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-019-09662-y>.

women in security and conflict issues is still taboo.

The United States (US) is one example of a country that took part in sending its military forces to maintain security during a ceasefire in the Middle East region<sup>39</sup>. Traditional society's understanding of the role and duties of a woman underwent significant change. Women not only settled and took care of the house but could become part of international peace efforts<sup>40</sup>.

Female's military operations are listed in the UN Security Council Declaration. In international law women and children are two parties that fall into the category of non-combatants. However, along with the significance of women as conflict reducers, they are also actively involved in many armed conflicts and have been part of various wars throughout history (as combatants). Since World War II, female military soldiers have participated directly in combat as a support unit, such as the German and British military forces. Since then, women have taken on more significant roles and have been increasingly trusted to join the armed forces, both voluntarily and involuntarily, as both combatants and non-combatants<sup>41</sup>.

Countries in the Middle East are known to restrict women's movement which is legalized in their country's regulations. This is often a contradiction for human rights enforcers and is often considered as oppression. The existence of female military soldiers has emerged since the Prophetic era, especially the era of the Prophet Muhammad. When war broke out, civilian female would work together as a support system for male military soldiers. Their roles as soldiers have a mutually supportive context. Male soldiers

operate using weapons on the battlefield, while female soldiers operate as healers for victims, provide protection for women and children and provide necessities during the war without resorting to violence, except in urgent situations.

As a manifestation of the mission of stability in the Middle East region, female peacekeeping actions were carried out to expand expertise and ensure that the demands and needs of the war are taken into account. This is an effort to guarantee the rights and needs of female and gain public trust, especially among women. In other words, promoting the role of female in conflict and war-torn countries is very important. The UN Peacekeeping Forces military unit has four military operations involving female soldiers in the Middle East, namely: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Between 2016-2020, UN military assistance to the Middle East region underwent a slight change, the involvement of female in military aid operations also increased in those five years.

**Table 1.** Military; Female (F) and Man (M) 2016-2020

Year	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
UNAMI	2745	161	2769	141	2705	182	2775	144	2733	171
UNDOF	9400	312	9888	341	10791	356	10584	439	11258	447
UNIFIL	21993	1674	19885	1142	17351	1932	15004	1494	14596	1699
UNTSO	1674	114	1623	181	1633	1932	1591	204	1566	225
TOTAL	135.8	5.2	134.16	5.80	132.4	6.6	129.95	7.28	130.1	7.54
	12	61	5	5	80	48	4	1	52	2

Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>

<sup>39</sup> ODI, 2014, Woman's Participation in Peace and Security. Briefing, London: Odi.org.

<sup>40</sup> Lotte Vermeij, "Taboos and Stigmas Facing Military Female," *Woman First, Soldier Second*: (2020): 2-18,

<sup>41</sup> Charlotte Lindsey, "Female Facing War: ICRC Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Female" (2001): 274pp.



Based on the quantity, the average number of females on a global scale, in peacekeeping missions is still around 4%<sup>42</sup>. This indicates that the contribution of women to world peace missions is still low. This quantity shows that there is an increase in female military operations in the Middle East under international organizations and under the auspices of the United Nations (special operations) which are spread in various countries in the Middle East. UN Peacekeeping, UNAMI, UNDOF, UNIFIL, and UNTSO, are manifestations of the supra-geopolitical system that embodies the international collective security system.

Then, this geopolitical sphere has a big influence on actions and decision-making in the case of geographic scope. In addition, the existence of different military operations is part of a geopolitical sub-system involving female's military movement, such as the Kurdistan female military personnel in Iraq and Lebanon.

Female military operations play an important role in the geopolitical system because their actions influence security conditions in complex geographical areas, such as gender-aware recognition and policies, accessibility and communication, cooperation and partnership, cultural sensitivity, and warmth towards local communities, military assertiveness required in the task of demilitarizing, gathering weapons, clearing landmines, and capturing war criminals. Women's military operations carried out are part of a 'regenerated military' which is not based on masculine identity, but rather a flexibility, built through relationships of equality, empathy,

concern, respect, and recognition of commonalities and shared experiences<sup>43</sup>.

## Conclusion

The general framework for geopolitical battles in the Middle East is one where the level of conflict vulnerability is very high. The formulation of conflict resolutions often encounters obstacles due to the interests of various actors, both internal and external. This results in the region being a very strategic area in international politics. This paper presents an argument for the role of female soldiers who can contribute to conflict resolution in the Middle East.

Based on the discussion, the existence of female peacekeepers in Middle East geopolitics has two main roles, namely first as managers in carrying out peace missions including connecting the military with local communities, especially women and children. The involvement of female soldiers in geopolitics in the region can change the perspective and paradigm of security, especially in influencing the psychology of war victims. The presence of female's military personnel is considered as a complement in bridging various actors, especially civil society with the military, and has the function of ensuring peace in conflict-prone areas.

The presence of female military soldiers is an agent of peace that changes the geopolitical paradigm in the Middle East which is generally dominated by men. Female military operations in the Middle East from a historical point of view are not new, because they have existed since Prophetic times. This can provide a new perspective to eliminate stereotypes and affirm the argument that female has a big role in making and preserving peace. The existence of women in the military can pave the way for their role in the Middle East as geopolitical peacekeepers.

<sup>42</sup> Sariah Ghazzaoui, "Female, Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa Region: Factsheet," 2016, [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Claire Duncanson and Rachel Woodward, "Regendering the Military: Theorizing Female's Military Participation," *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2016): 3–21.



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