

# Implications of Indigenous Cultures on Mixed-Gender Teams

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## Preface

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This report documents the results of a quick response study that RAND conducted for U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). The objective of the study was to assess how indigenous roles of women may affect how local forces around the world respond to and interact with female Army Special Forces (SF) soldiers. The project was comprised of three tasks: 1) conduct a literature review on the roles of women across geographic regions, 2) identify factors that may be changing women's roles, or which may contribute to variations across geographic regions, and 3) provide insights on how the roles of women in different regions/countries may affect the response of local forces and communities to female SF soldiers. The study was conducted over a five month period from March 3, 2015-July 31, 2015.

At the sponsor's direction, RAND identified the following factors across all six geographic combatant commands (CCMDs): 1) traditional roles of women in each country, 2) potential challenges that female SF soldier may face in each country (including issues that could impact mission effectiveness; cultural, ethnic, and religious challenges; safety issues to units; and safety issues to individual female soldiers), 3) potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide to missions in each country, and 4) factors that may change the future roles of women in each country. The findings of this study should be of interest to military and civilian policymakers, those interested in the implications of integrating women into direct ground combat positions, and those interested in broader challenges that Army SF soldiers may face around the world.

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## Summary

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Army Special Forces (SF) have a unique special warfare mission set that involves conducting operations through and with indigenous forces in politically sensitive and/or hostile environments. This includes conducting both foreign internal defense (FID)<sup>1</sup> and unconventional warfare (UW).<sup>2</sup> This special warfare mission set differs from the mission set carried out by conventional forces because Army SF units must conduct long-duration operations in denied areas that are designed to train, advise and assist host nations in conducting special operations, and to build indigenous warfighting capabilities.<sup>3</sup> Army SF units must also interact with indigenous societies and local forces in order to assess the operational environment, shape local conditions, deter adversaries, influence or reinforce local attitudes and behaviors, and disrupt adversaries. Other core Army SF special warfare activities include: counterterrorism (CT), special reconnaissance (SR), and security force assistance (SFA).<sup>4</sup>

If SF positions are opened to women, these female soldiers will also need to operate within local social norms and customs and interact closely with indigenous forces to train, advise and assist them. However, those social norms and customs vary across the world and U.S. forces routinely operate in countries around the world that have high levels of gender discrimination and other issues (such as restricting the movement of women) that could potentially pose some challenges for female SF soldiers as they carry out their missions. Therefore, given this unique mission set, the integration of women into SF units has a unique set of potential implications that conventional forces and most other Special Operations Forces (SOF) components do not have. Because the ability to be accepted and trusted by indigenous forces is key to the success of SF units, the response of indigenous peoples to female Army SF soldiers will be critical to mission effectiveness and, ultimately, success.

To identify some of the potential implications of integrating women into SF units, USASOC asked RAND to conduct a preliminary analysis of 209 countries to identify challenges that female SF soldiers may face across the globe, as well as potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide across the globe. The 209 countries included in the study represent all of the countries that fall under the six combatant commands' (CCMDs') Areas of

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<sup>1</sup> The FID mission is comprised of assisting another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security (Joint Publication 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 12 July 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The UW mission is comprised of Activities to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or within an underground, auxiliary, and guerilla force in a denied area (Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, 16 July 2014).

<sup>3</sup> See United States Army, *Special Operations*, ADRP 3-05, August 2012.

<sup>4</sup> See United States Army, *Special Operations*, ADRP 3-05, August 2012.

Responsibility. The study was conducted over a five month period from March 3, 2015-July 31, 2015.

## **Study Approach**

The project was comprised of three tasks: 1) conduct a literature review on the roles of women across geographic regions, 2) identify factors that may be changing women's roles, or that may contribute to variations across geographic regions, and 3) provide insights on how the roles of women in different regions/countries may affect the response of local forces and communities to female Army SF soldiers. In Task One, the research team conducted in-depth analyses of the roles of women across all six U.S. geographic CCMDs (USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, USNORTHCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM) using secondary sources, including government reports, nongovernmental publications, academic publications, and other open sources.

In Task Two, we identified the following factors that were of most interest to USASOC across all six geographic CCMDs: 1) traditional roles of women in each country, 2) potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country (including issues that could impact mission effectiveness; cultural, ethnic, and religious challenges; safety issues to units; and safety issues to individual female soldiers), 3) potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide to missions in each country, and 4) factors that may change the future roles of women in each country.

Finally, our findings from the first two tasks informed the development of our conclusions, our insights on the implications of those conclusions, and our insights on how the roles of women in different regions/countries may affect the response of local forces and communities to female SF soldiers.

## **Caveats and Limitations**

Given the short timeframe, and limited scope and budget of this project, we were not able to we were not able to evaluate the potential challenges that we identify in this report against the experiences that women in the military have actually had while operating in the different regions. Nor were we able to collect the perspectives of male SF soldiers who have operated in the different regions regarding their thoughts on what potential enhanced capabilities female SF soldiers could provide or what challenges they may face in particular countries. Therefore, we relied solely on secondary, open source information. We understand that this approach leaves out critical empirical evidence from military and civilian operational experiences of women already deployed around the world in some capacity, therefore we strongly recommend that any future work that USASOC conducts on this topic should include the perspectives of SF soldiers, as well as lessons learned from other military, civilian (e.g., the United States Peace Corps and the

Department of State), and nongovernmental organizations that assign women to countries that have high levels of gender discrimination or other potential challenges.

The findings of this study are also limited in their scope to the data that was publicly available. It is important to note that the quality and consistency of the information that we found on countries varied substantially. To address this, we developed an Excel database tool, which allowed us to systematize the collection of our data and in turn, to make comparisons across countries.

Additionally, given our short timeline and our limited budget, we focused our analysis at the country level rather than at the sub-country level. However, it is important to note that within many countries (and even within regions in those countries), there are great variations in gender norms and roles. Therefore, our country ratings only represent an average intensity of the challenges that female SF soldiers may face in a particular country. Where we think it is particularly important, we do provide a more nuanced discussion of the diversity of the roles of women, the challenges they may face within countries, and potential enhanced SF capabilities that women may be able to provide. However, if future analyses are undertaken on this topic, a complete analysis should include more detailed documentation of the nuances within countries.

Lastly, we caution that given rapid changes occurring in some regions and countries, our findings are limited to the current political, social, and economic circumstances in each country. The potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide and the challenges that they may face in each country will likely be fluid in many places, therefore this data will need to be updated and revised accordingly.

## Findings: Cross-Cutting Trends Across Combatant Commands

### *Potential Challenges Female SF Soldiers May Face Across Regions*

We found three common potential challenges female SF soldiers may face across regions:

- Foreign internal defense may be difficult to conduct in some regions
- The movement of female SF soldiers may be restricted in some regions
- Violence against women is a concern in many countries.

One of the most common challenges we identified across regions is that female SF soldiers may face difficulties in carrying out FID missions in patriarchal cultures where local forces may refuse to interact with and take instruction or orders from female soldiers in positions of authority. Our findings indicate that this could be a prevalent problem across regions, but it could be particularly severe in parts of USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM's AORs. It could also be particularly problematic for female SF officers who outrank the indigenous forces that they are training.

We also found that local norms and customs may restrict the movement of female SF soldiers in some regions—especially in parts of USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM and USPACOM’s AORs. This could be particularly problematic in Muslim countries where women are not allowed to be in public areas during particular times of the day and women are not allowed to be in public without their husband or a male relative. Such restrictions could potentially inhibit the ability of female SF soldiers to interact with indigenous communities and forces.

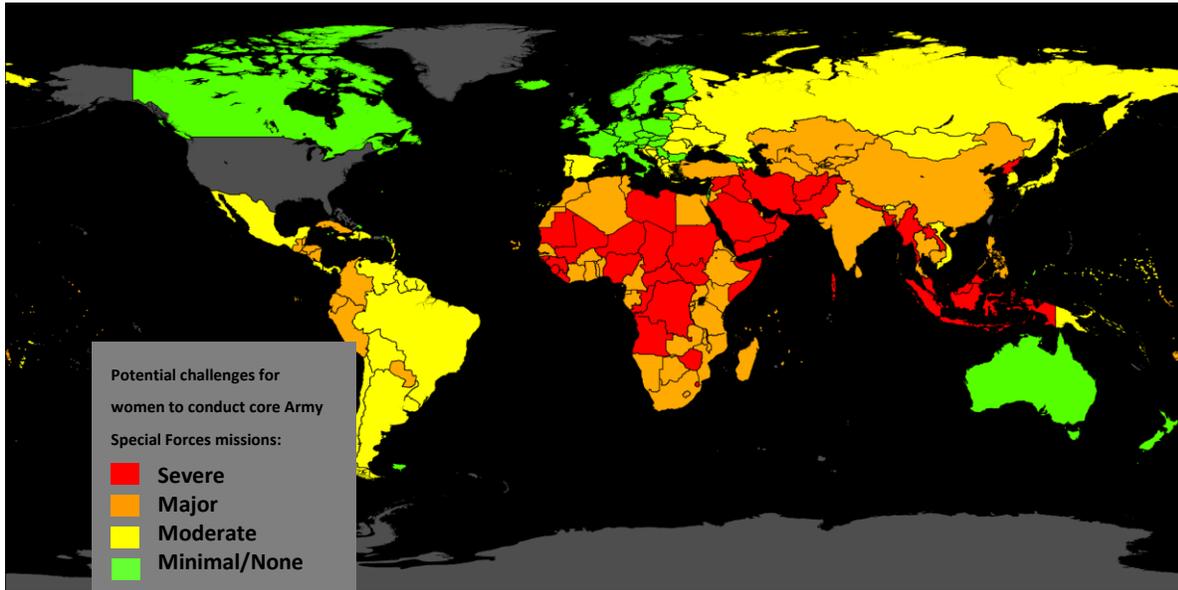
Lastly, we found that violence against women is prevalent across all regions of the world, but especially in USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM’s AORs. In some areas, rape is viewed as a legitimate weapon of war and violence against women is used as another means to reinforce the dominance of men over women. Such violence could present a safety issue to female SF soldiers who are operating alone or in groups in these areas. This issue may not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, but female soldiers will need to be aware of it so that they can take appropriate precautions.

While the issues above are identified as potential challenges, these challenges could potentially be mitigated through a variety of ways (e.g., reassigning tasks among team members in response to the local context, ensuring women are armed as often as possible or that they do not conduct missions alone when possible, or avoiding situations in specific areas that may contradict local cultural and gender norms). Identifying such mitigation strategies and evaluating their effectiveness was out of the scope of our study, but if women are integrated into SF units, next steps in the implementation process should include identifying lessons learned from other organizations that deploy women overseas (such as the United States Department of State, and the United States Peace Corps). These lessons could provide valuable insights into effective, evidence-based practices to mitigate the potential challenges identified in this report.

### *Summary Findings Regarding Challenges Across Regions*

After collecting data on all 209 countries in our study, the research team then rated the potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country along a four-point scale: 1) severe, 2) major, 3) moderate, and 4) minimal/none. In order to rate each country, we looked across all of the information that we collected on each country and then identified the potential overall intensity of the challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country. In order to establish a high level of inter-rater reliability, the research team members looked over each other’s country ratings and the data upon which they were based, discussed differences across them and then adjusted them accordingly so that there was agreement across the research team on the final ratings. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure S.1. As indicated by this figure, the intensity of potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face are context dependent and vary tremendously. The areas shaded in red are likely to pose the greatest challenges to female SF soldiers, whereas the areas shaded in orange are likely to pose major challenges, the areas shaded in yellow will likely pose moderate challenges, and the areas shaded in green are likely to pose few or no challenges.

Figure S.1. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across Regions



Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

Table S.1 presents a breakdown of the number of countries in each of the four intensity categories in each CCMD. The findings indicate that the intensity of potential challenges for female SF soldiers around the world are relatively evenly distributed across the categories, meaning that based on our findings, it is difficult to generalize about the intensity of potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face. We found that they may face more challenges in some areas than others, and they will likely face minimal/no challenges in a significant portion of the globe.

The findings indicate that USAFRICOM and USCENTCOM are likely to be the most challenging CCMDs for female SF soldiers to operate in—our findings indicate that all of the countries in those CCMDs pose either severe or major challenges to female SF soldiers (primarily due to restrictions on their movements and access, and the potential for male indigenous forces to refuse to work with female soldiers). As a whole, USPACOM is likely to be the next most challenging CCMD for female SF soldier to operate in, however, USPACOM is an extremely diverse region and we did identify enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could potentially provide in provinces/regions within some USPACOM countries that may be more receptive to female SF soldiers than the country as a whole (e.g., some Muslim areas like Java and some indigenous groups in Indonesia that give women more rights). The next most challenging CCMD is likely to be USSOUTHCOM, however, we identified no countries in USSOUTHCOM’s AOR that pose severe challenges to female SF soldiers. While the common perception is that USEUCOM countries will not pose challenges to female SF soldiers, our data indicates that this is true for the most part, but some countries may pose moderate challenges (e.g. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Macedonia) and that Turkey could pose major challenges. Lastly, in

the USNORTHCOM AOR, we identified that female SF soldiers may face moderate challenges in Mexico. It is important to note that we also found that female SF soldiers may be able to provide the greatest enhanced capabilities in those areas that may be the most difficult to operate in (e.g., USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM) because they may be able to provide access to populations and information that male soldiers cannot due to cultural and religious norms. We discuss the enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers may be able to provide in more detail below.

**Table S.1. Distribution of Challenges Across Regions**

	AFRICOM	CENTCOM	EUCOM	NORTHCOM	PACOM	SOUTHCOM	TOTAL
Severe	19	9	0	0	10	0	38 (18%)
Major	35	11	1	0	9	13	69 (33%)
Moderate	0	0	18	1	13	23	55 (26%)
Low	0	0	31	2	4	10	47 (23%)
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	54	20	50	3	36	46	209 (100%)

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

*Summary Findings Regarding Potential Enhanced Capabilities Female SF Could Provide Across Regions*

Despite the potential challenges outlined above, we found common potential ways in which female SF soldiers could potentially provide enhanced capabilities in all of the regions in the following core SF activities:

- CT, SR, SFA, and UW capabilities to collect information and intelligence
- Facilitating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms
- Training and advising female indigenous military and police forces.

Across regions, we found that female SF soldiers could potentially provide enhanced CT, SFA, SR and UW capabilities by potentially gaining access to critical female populations to collect information and intelligence in ways that male SF soldiers may not be able to do so. In particular, female SF soldiers may be able to access local female populations, as well as nascent, but expanding women’s groups and movements that are becoming more powerful in some regions (especially USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM’s Areas of Responsibilities (AORs)). Connections to these groups could provide valuable information and intelligence, as well as opportunities to shape the perspectives of indigenous populations.

Our analysis also found that women in some regions (especially in USAFRICOM, USPACOM and USSOUTHCOM's AORs) play major roles in conflict resolution mediators or as "bridge-builders" between warring communities. There is also indication that when conflict erupts in some regions such as USAFRICOM's AOR, women take on different and often more prominent leadership roles in their communities, becoming key decisionmakers and influencers with their communities—filling leadership voids left by men who are away fighting. Female SF soldiers may be able to gain more access to these types of women and enhance the capabilities of SF teams to shape and influence the local environment, as well as facilitate local conflict resolution mechanisms that could in turn decrease the longer-term need for U.S. forces to become involved in those conflicts.

Lastly, our findings also indicate that women are entering military and police forces in larger numbers in some regions such as USAFRICOM and USCENTOM's AORs. For instance, 30 percent of the Eritrean military is comprised of women<sup>5</sup> and in some countries in USCENTOM's AOR women have recently been allowed to enter the military and police forces. However, given regional cultural norms in some areas, men may not be able to train these women. In those countries where training is segregated along gender, female SF soldiers could enhance the training and broader SFA capabilities of SF units.

## Potential Opportunities and Challenges in Each of the CCMDs

We also identified potential opportunities in which female SF soldiers could provide enhanced capabilities in each of the six CCMDs (USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, USNORTHCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM), as well as potential challenges they may face in each region. For each region, we identified: 1) traditional roles of women in each region, 2) potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers may be able to provide to missions in each region, 3) potential challenges that female SF soldier may face in each region (including issues that could impact mission effectiveness; cultural, ethnic, and religious challenges; safety issues to units; and safety issues to individual female soldiers), and 4) factors that may change the future roles of women in each region. Below, we present a brief summary of our findings for each region.

### *USAFRICOM*

The USAFRICOM AOR is likely to be one of the most difficult regions for female SF soldiers to operate in. Women's roles are severely restricted in most countries, many societies are patriarchal, and violence against women is common. However, women in the USAFRICOM AOR also play unique roles in their communities as mediators during conflicts, and some women also take on powerful leadership positions in their communities to fill the voids left by men who

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<sup>5</sup> African Development Bank, Human Development Department, "Eritrea: Gender Profile," November 2008.

are away fighting. Female SF soldiers could potentially enhance existing SF capabilities in this AOR by working with these types of women to facilitate conflict resolution and gain access to information and intelligence.

### *USCENTCOM*

The USCENTCOM AOR is also likely to be one of the most difficult regions for female SF soldiers to operate in, primarily because most societies in the region are patriarchal and conservative interpretations of Islam restrict the activities and movement of women. As a consequence, men in the region may refuse to take orders from female SF soldiers conducting FID missions, and female SF soldiers operating in the region may be restricted in their movement and access. However, female SF soldiers could gain access to women and female gendered spaces in ways that men cannot. Opportunities for such engagement and intelligence gathering may be greatest in more liberal areas and countries in the region (e.g., Kuwait, Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, UAE, Qatar) as well as major cities (e.g. Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, Muscat in Oman).

### *USEUCOM*

While as a whole, USEUCOM is likely to be more amenable to female SF soldiers than other regions, our findings indicate there are some countries in the USEUCOM AOR that may present challenges to female SF soldiers and they are important to be aware of (e.g., Turkey, Belarus, and Russia). We found that gender stereotypes remain entrenched in some countries and that female SF soldiers may not have access to certain spheres or activities. However, as a whole, female SF soldiers may face fewer challenges in conducting FID operations in the USEUCOM AOR because many countries in the region have significant numbers of women in their militaries, therefore men may be more used to working with military women in leadership positions

### *USNORTHCOM*

As one of the United States' closest allies, Canada presents strong opportunities for cooperation and training and both countries share most of the same cultural norms regarding gender equality. Mexico on the other hand will likely be less receptive of female SF soldiers because it is a deeply patriarchal society and has retained a strong culture of machismo. Thus it may be more difficult for female SF soldiers to carry out FID missions in Mexico.

### *USPACOM*

Given the tremendous diversity of religions, cultures, and economies in the USPACOM AOR and within countries, roles of women in region vary widely. As a result of this diversity, customary laws and norms regarding gender issues often come into conflict with religious and civil laws (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore), thus creating some

confusion regarding which of those laws and norms supersedes the others. Some areas in the region are also undergoing rapid changes, in particular, with regard to women's roles in the economy and broader ideological struggles between conservatism and liberalism. This could potentially offer female SF soldiers opportunities to connect with local women who are focused on countering radical Islam and other conservative forces. Matrilineal cultures in the region could be leveraged for intelligence gathering and conflict resolution, and men from those cultures may be more accustomed to interacting with women in roles of authority.

### *USSOUTHCOM*

The USSOUTHCOM AOR is dominated by patriarchal societies and a strong culture of machismo, and as a result, indigenous male forces in some parts of the region may be less willing to take orders from female SF soldiers during FID missions. Roman Catholicism is also often used in the region to reinforce conservative views of women's roles and restrict their rights. Restrictions placed on women in the region may also limit the access of female SF soldiers to certain locations or political/economic arenas. Finally, the region has a strong culture of violence and sexual harassment against women that may threaten the physical safety of female SF soldiers. These challenges may be greatest in isolated rural areas. However, women in the region are often well-educated and have greater equality and freedoms than women in some other regions. The USSOUTHCOM AOR is also undergoing some cultural changes, including a burgeoning number of women's groups, as well as increasing numbers of female political and economic leaders. Female SF soldiers could potentially leverage connections with these women to gain access to information and local populations. Opportunities for such engagement may be greatest in major cities and more liberal countries (including Argentina, Peru, Chile, Brazil).

## Conclusions and Implications

Given the findings presented in the previous chapters of this report, four main conclusions arose from our analysis:

- Responses of local forces and communities to female SF soldiers are likely to be very context dependent
- USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM will likely be the most challenging AORs
- Female SF soldiers may provide enhanced capabilities for CT, SFA, SR and UW in some regions
- FID may be particularly challenging for female SF soldiers in some regions.

Our findings indicate that there will likely be great variations (not only across countries, but also within them) in the ways indigenous forces may respond to female SF soldiers. Because

gender norms vary so much at the local level, that local context will likely impact the types of opportunities and challenges that individual teams with female SF soldiers may have on any particular mission in any particular local area. For some missions in some areas, female SF soldier could be great assets. For other missions in other areas, female SF soldier may find it challenging to carry out those missions due to local gender norms.

Our findings indicate that the most challenging AORs for female SF soldiers to operate in will likely be USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, and parts of USPACOM and USSOUTHCOM. It is likely that female SF soldiers operating in these AORs will face the most resistance from local forces during FID missions, the most restrictions in their movement and access, and the most threats of violence due to their gender. However, it is important to note that we also found that female SF soldiers may be able to provide the greatest enhanced capabilities in these same regions because they may be able to gain access to populations and information that are not accessible to male SF soldiers.

Our findings also indicate that female SF soldiers may be able to provide enhanced capabilities for the following special warfare missions: CT, SFA, SR and UW. In some countries, female SF soldiers may be uniquely positioned to gain access to information, influence portions of the local population, or train female members of the local military or police forces. Female SF soldiers may also be able to establish relationships with key local female influencers in ways that male SF soldiers cannot. While female enablers such as Cultural Support Teams and Female Engagement Teams have provided such support in the past as niche enablers, in those areas where the local context warrants, there may be an advantage to having female SF soldiers organic to SF units so that they can establish long-term working relationships with both indigenous communities and the unit.

Our findings also indicate that the most challenging mission for female SF soldiers in several AORs is likely to be FID. In some areas with strong patriarchal cultures (particularly in USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM), indigenous forces may refuse to be trained by female SF soldiers or to take orders from them due to local gender norms. This may be especially challenging when female SF soldiers outrank the indigenous forces they are charged with training. Anecdotally, we are aware of analogous situations in which local forces have resisted taking orders from male U.S. forces due to local norms (e.g., local indigenous Muslim forces refused to take orders from U.S. soldiers who did not have beards). Situations in which either male or female SF soldiers experience resistance from local forces could be handled in the same manner.

These conclusions have three major implications:

- Information on the local context in which operations will be conducted is critical
- Effective strategies need to be identified to mitigate potential challenges female SF soldiers may face

- Potential implementation strategies (including assignment policies for female SF soldiers) also need to be identified and evaluated.

Given the tremendous diversity in how local forces may respond to female SF soldiers, information on the local context in which operations will be conducted is critical. Such detailed information can help USASOC decide where female SF soldiers may face challenges due to the local context, and where they could provide enhanced SF capabilities. Such information about the local context could also provide valuable information for SF missions in general as well, and could impact assignment decisions for both male and female SF soldiers.

In addition, further research needs to be conducted to identify effective ways to mitigate the potential challenges identified in this report. The United States routinely sends female diplomats and non-infantry female service members into regions and countries around the world—including some that we have identified as potentially particularly challenging. The lessons learned from those experiences could provide important insights into how other organizations have mitigated the potential challenges that we identify.

If SF positions are opened to women, USASOC will need to decide on the processes and policies for assigning missions and regions/countries to female SF soldiers. Because there is likely to be great diversity in how local forces may respond to female SF soldiers, decisions regarding which missions and which regions/countries female SF soldiers are assigned to may need to be context dependent. This could involve various options, including establishing a uniform, centralized process or delegating authority to local commanders. However, if USASOC chooses to delegate authority over assignment decisions to local commanders, clear guidelines and policies will be needed to avoid confusion on both the part of commanders and female SF soldiers. Whatever process is chosen, assignment decisions should ultimately be tied to mission effectiveness and the soldier—whether male or female—that can most effectively carry out the particular mission at hand should be assigned to it.

## Potential Areas for Future Research

If SF positions are opened to women, we suggest several potential areas for future research that could assist USASOC in developing implementing policies for integrating women into SF units. These include:

- A deeper dive on challenges that female SF soldiers may face and capabilities they could provide in specific countries or regions
- A deeper dive on challenges that female SF soldiers may face and capabilities they could provide on specific missions
- An analysis of how to mitigate potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face. This could include:

- Identifying lessons from other organizations that assign women to areas with high levels of gender discrimination (e.g., the United States Peace Corps, the United States Department of State)
- An analysis of potential implementation policies, including:
  - Criteria for assigning women to missions
  - Guidance for commanders.

## Acknowledgments

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## Abbreviations

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AOR	Area of Responsibility
CCMD	Combatant Command
CT	Counterterrorism
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DGCDAR	Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SF	Special Forces
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SR	Special Reconnaissance
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USAFRICOM	United States Africa Command
USUSCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USUSEUCOM	United States European Command
USUSNORTHCOM	United States Northern Command
USUSPACOM	United States Pacific Command
USUSSOUTHCOM	United States Southern Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare

# 1. Introduction

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## Background and Study Purpose

On January 24, 2013, the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced the rescission of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR).<sup>6</sup> The 1994 DGCDAR restricted assignments of women to military occupational specialties or positions in or collocated with direct ground combat units below the brigade level, in long-range reconnaissance and special operations forces, and in positions including physically demanding tasks.<sup>7</sup> The effect of this rescission will be to open previously closed occupations—including military occupational specialties in Army Special Forces (SF)—to women who can meet occupation-specific, gender-neutral standards of performance. The services were required to report their implementation plans to DoD by May 2013 and they have until January 2016 to seek any exemptions if they want any positions to remain closed to women.

Army SF has a unique special warfare mission set that involves conducting operations through and with indigenous forces in politically sensitive and/or hostile environments. This includes conducting both foreign internal defense (FID)<sup>8</sup> and unconventional warfare (UW).<sup>9</sup> This special warfare mission set differs from the mission sets of conventional forces because Army SF units must conduct long-duration operations in denied areas that are designed to train, advise and assist host nations in conducting special operations, and to build indigenous warfighting capabilities.<sup>10</sup> SF units must also interact with indigenous societies and local forces to assess the operational environment, shape local conditions, deter adversaries, influence or reinforce local attitudes and behaviors, and disrupt adversaries. Other core Army SF special

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<sup>6</sup> United States Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments; Subject: Elimination of the 1994 Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule,” January 24, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> United States Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Memorandum: Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule,” January 13, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> The FID mission is comprised of assisting another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security (United States Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 12 July 2010).

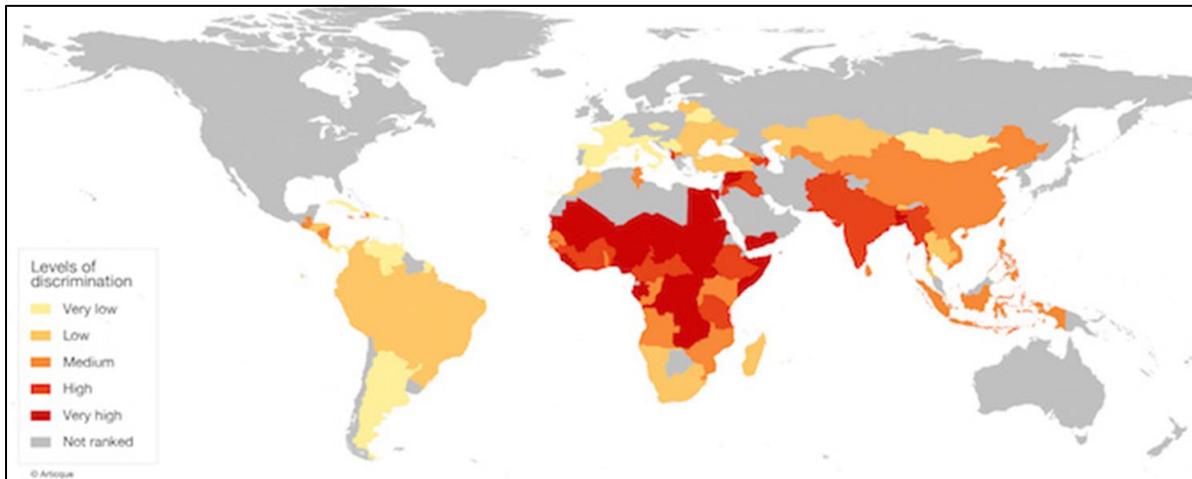
<sup>9</sup> The UW mission is comprised of Activities to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or within an underground, auxiliary, and guerilla force in a denied area (United States Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, 16 July 2014).

<sup>10</sup> See ADP 3-05, August 31, 2012.

warfare activities include: counterinsurgency, counterterrorism (CT), security force assistance (SFA), and special reconnaissance (SR).<sup>11</sup>

If SF positions are opened to women, these female soldiers will also need to operate within local social norms and customs, and to interact closely with indigenous forces to train, advise and assist them. However, those social norms and customs vary across the world. Some countries around the world have high levels of gender discrimination (see Figure 1.1) and other issues (such as restricting the movement of women) that could potentially pose challenges to female SF soldiers as they carry out their missions. As indicated by Figure 1.1., the areas which the highest levels of gender discrimination include Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

**Figure 1.1. Global Levels of Gender Discrimination**



Source: OECD, Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2014.

Therefore, given this unique mission set, the integration of women into SF units has a unique set of potential implications that conventional forces and most other Special Operations Forces (SOF) components do not have. Because the ability to be accepted and trusted by indigenous forces is key to the success of SF units, the response of indigenous peoples to female Army SF soldiers will be critical to mission effectiveness and, ultimately, success.

To identify some of the potential implications of integrating women into SF units, USASOC asked RAND to conduct a preliminary analysis of 209 countries to identify potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face across the globe, as well as enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers may be able to provide across the globe. The 209 countries included in the study represent all of the countries that fall under the six combatant commands' Areas of Responsibility. The study was conducted over a five month period from March 3, 2015-July 31, 2015. The findings from this study provide important information to USASOC leadership as it

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<sup>11</sup> See United States Army, *Special Operations*, ADP 3-05, August 2012.

decides if and how women should be integrated into SF units. The results will also help SF soldiers prepare for engagements under the full range of SF core missions and activities.

## Study Scope and Approach

The project was comprised of three tasks: 1) conduct a literature review on the roles of women across geographic regions, 2) identify factors that may be changing women's roles, or that may contribute to variations across geographic regions, and 3) provide insights on how the roles of women in different regions/countries may affect the response of local forces and communities to female Army SF soldiers. In Task One, the research team conducted in-depth analyses of the roles of women across all six U.S. geographic CCMDs (USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, USNORTHCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM) using secondary sources, including government reports, nongovernmental publications, academic publications, and other open sources.

In Task Two, we identified the following factors that were of most interest to USASOC across all six geographic CCMDs: 1) traditional roles of women in each country; 2) potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country (including issues that could impact mission effectiveness; cultural, ethnic, and religious challenges; safety issues to units; and safety issues to individual female soldiers), potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide to missions in each country; 3) potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide to missions in each country; and 4) factors that may change the future roles of women in each country. We also designed an Excel spreadsheet database tool to allow us to systematically collect this information and compare across countries. For each of the 209 countries in our study, the database tool identifies: 1) traditional roles of women (e.g., political, social, economic, religious, ethnic, other); 2) potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers can provide; 3) potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face (e.g., cultural issues, religious issues, ethnic issues, issues that could impact mission effectiveness, safety issues to the unit, safety issues to individual women); and 4) factors that may change the future role of women (e.g., political, social, cultural, economic, religious, ethnic).

Finally, our findings from the first two tasks informed the development of our conclusions, our insights on the implications of those conclusions, and our insights on how the roles of women in different regions/countries may affect the response of local forces and communities to female SF soldiers. As part of our conclusions, the research team looked across all of the data that we collected on each country and rated the potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country. We rated those potential challenges along a four-point scale: 1) severe, 2) major, 3) moderate, and 4) minimal/none. In order to rate each country, we looked across all of the information that we collected on each country and then identified the potential overall intensity of the challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country. When a country had some regions or pockets of areas that could be more challenging than others, we tried to identify

the average intensity of the challenges that female SF soldiers may face as a whole in a particular country. In order to establish a high level of inter-rater reliability, the research team members looked over each other's country ratings and the data upon which they were based, discussed differences across them and then adjusted them accordingly so that there was agreement across the research team on the final ratings. The ratings for each the 209 countries in our study can be found in Appendix A.

## **Caveats and Limitations**

Given the short timeframe, and limited scope and budget of this project, we were not able to evaluate the potential challenges that we identify in this report against the experiences that women in the military have actually had while operating in the different regions. Nor were we able to collect the perspectives of male SF soldiers who have operated in the different regions regarding their thoughts on what potential enhanced capabilities female SF soldiers could provide or what challenges they may face in particular countries. Therefore we relied solely on secondary, open source information. We understand that this approach leaves out critical empirical evidence from military and civilian operational experiences of women already deployed around the world in some capacity, therefore, we strongly recommend that any future work that USASOC conducts on this topic should include the perspectives of SF soldiers, as well as lessons learned from other military, civilian (e.g., the United States Peace Corps and the Department of State), and nongovernmental organizations that assign women to countries that have high levels of gender discrimination or other potential challenges.

The findings of this study are limited in their scope to the data that was publicly available. It is important to note that the quality and consistency of the information that we found on countries varied substantially. To address this, we developed the Excel database tool described above, which allowed us to systematically collect the data that found and in turn, to make comparisons across countries.

Additionally, given our short timeline and our limited budget, we focused our analysis at the country level rather than at the sub-country level. However, it is important to note that within many countries (and even within regions in those countries), there are great variations in gender norms and roles. Therefore, our country ratings only represent an average intensity of the challenges that female SF soldiers may face in a particular country. Where we think it is particularly important, we do provide a more nuanced discussion of the diversity of the roles of women, potential challenges they may face, and the potential enhanced SF capabilities that women may be able to provide within countries. However, if future analyses are undertaken on this topic, a complete analysis should include more detailed documentation of the nuances within countries.

Lastly, we caution that given rapid changes occurring in some countries, our findings are limited to the current political, social, and economic circumstances in each country. The potential

enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide and the challenges that they may face in each country will likely be fluid in many places, therefore this data will need to be updated and revised accordingly.

## **Organization of this Report**

Chapter Two presents an overview of cross-cutting trends across CCMDs. We begin this chapter by discussing trends across the regions, including common potential challenges they may face across regions, and our summary findings regarding the potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country and our analysis of that data across CCMDs. We end the chapter by discussing common potential enhanced capabilities that female SF could provide across regions.

Chapters Three through Eight present our findings regarding opportunities for enhanced capabilities that female SF soldier could provide in each of the six U.S. geographic CCMDs (USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, USNORTHCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM), as well as the challenges they may face in each region. In each of these chapters, we discuss: 1) traditional roles of women in each region; 2) potential challenges that female SF soldier may face in each region (including issues that could impact mission effectiveness; cultural, ethnic, and religious challenges; safety issues to units; and safety issues to individual female soldiers); 3) potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers may be able to provide to missions in each region; and 4) factors that may change the future roles of women in each region.

Chapter Nine presents our conclusions and their implications. In this chapter, we identify main conclusions about our analysis across geographic regions, as well as identify the implications of those conclusions for USASOC. We end this chapter by identifying several possible next steps for potential future research that could provide additional information to USASOC on this topic, should Special Forces positions be opened to women.

Finally, Appendix A presents the country ratings for each of the 209 countries in our study by region.

## 2. Cross-Cutting Trends Across Combatant Commands

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Before delving into our findings for each individual CCMD's Area of Responsibility (AOR) in Chapter Three through Eight, this chapter first reviews some of the cross-cutting trends that we found across regions. In particular, we discuss potential challenges that female SF soldiers could face across regions, review our summary findings on the intensity of potential challenges across CCMDs, and discuss potential enhanced capabilities that female SF soldiers could provide across regions. We first turn to a discussion of potential challenges that female SF soldiers could face across regions.

### Potential Challenges Female SF Soldiers May Face Across Regions

Across regions, we found three common challenges female SF soldiers may face across regions:

- Foreign internal defense may be difficult to conduct in some regions
- The movement of female SF soldiers may be restricted in some regions
- Violence against women is a concern in many countries.

We discuss each of these below.

#### *Foreign Internal Defense May be Difficult to Conduct in Some Regions*

One of the most common challenges we identified across regions is that female SF soldiers may face challenges in carrying out FID missions in patriarchal cultures where local forces may refuse to interact with or take instruction or orders from female soldiers in positions of authority. Our findings indicate that this could be a prevalent problem across regions, but it could be particularly severe in parts of USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM's AORs. It could also be particularly problematic for female SF officers who may outrank the indigenous forces that are being trained.

#### *The Movement of Female SF Soldiers May be Restricted in Some Regions*

We also found that local norms and customs may restrict the movement of female SF soldiers in some regions—especially in parts of USCENTCOM and USPACOM's AORs. This could be particularly a problem in Muslim countries where women are not allowed to be in public areas during particular times of the day and women are not allowed to be in public without a male husband or relative. This could potentially inhibit the ability of female SF soldiers to interact with indigenous communities and forces. However, such restriction of movement is extremely dependent on the local context and as a result, in some areas female SF soldiers might actually have increased access and freedom of movement if they are in uniform. In other areas where

hostility toward U.S. troops is high, they may have increased access by instead blending in to the local female population.

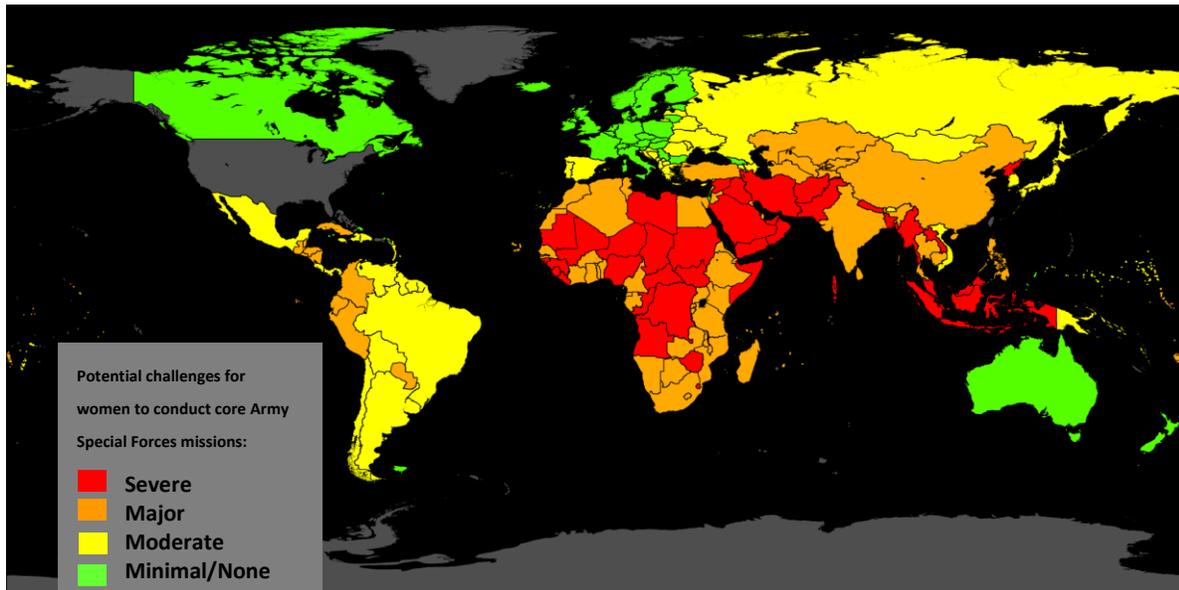
### *Violence Against Women is a Concern in Many Countries*

Lastly, we found that violence against women is prevalent across all of the regions of the world, but especially in USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM's AORs. In some areas, rape is viewed as a legitimate weapon of war and violence against women is used as another means to reinforce the dominance of men over women. Such violence could present a safety issue to female SF soldiers who are operating alone or in groups in these areas. This issue may not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, but female soldiers will need to be aware of so that they can take appropriate precautions. While this is a concern and something that female SF soldiers should be aware of when operating in areas where violence against women is prevalent, this could potentially be mitigated through a variety of ways (e.g., ensuring women are armed as often as possible or that they do not conduct missions alone when possible).

## Summary Findings Regarding Challenges Across Regions

As discussed in Chapter One, after collecting data on all 209 countries in our study, the research team then looked across all of the data that we collected for each country and rated the potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face in each country. We ranked these challenges along a four-point scale: 1) severe, 2) major, 3) moderate, and 4) minimal/none. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 2.1. As indicated by this figure, the intensity of potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face are context dependent. The areas shaded in red are likely to pose the greatest challenges to female SF soldiers, whereas the areas shaded in orange are likely to pose major challenges, the areas shaded in yellow will likely pose moderate challenges, and the areas shaded in green are likely to pose few or no challenges. Not surprisingly, the areas that pose the biggest challenges in Figure 2.1 are also the same general areas that have the highest levels of gender discrimination as indicated in Figure 1.1 (i.e., Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia). However, our analysis also indicates that parts of Central and South America may also pose major or moderate challenges to female SF soldiers—particularly when trying to conduct FID or train indigenous forces within patriarchal cultures or cultures dominated by machismo.

Figure 2.1. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across Regions



Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

Table 2.1 presents a breakdown of the number of countries in each of the four intensity categories in each CCMD. The findings indicate that the intensity of potential challenges for female SF soldiers around the world are relatively evenly distributed across the categories. USAFRICOM and USCENTCOM could be the most challenging CCMDs for female SF soldiers to operate in—all of the countries in those two CCMDs pose either severe or major challenges to female SF soldiers. As a whole, USPACOM is likely to be the next most challenging CCMD for female SF soldier to operate in. However, USPACOM is an extremely diverse region and we caution that these ratings are by countries rather than regions within countries, therefore there female SF soldiers may be able to provide enhanced capabilities in regions within USPACOM countries that may be more receptive to female SF soldiers than the country as a whole (e.g., some Muslim areas like Java and some indigenous groups in Indonesia that give women more rights). This diversity in USPACOM is also reflected in our data. It is the only CCMD that has countries in all four of our rating categories. The next most challenging CCMD is likely to be SOUTHCOM, however, we identified no countries in that CCMD that pose severe challenges to female SF soldiers. While the common perception is that USEUCOM countries will not pose challenges to female SF soldiers, our data indicates that while that is true for the most part, some countries may pose moderate challenges and that Turkey could pose major challenges. Lastly, in USNORTHCOM, we identified that female SF soldiers may face moderate challenges in Mexico. It is important to note that we also found that female SF soldiers may be able to provide the greatest enhanced capabilities in those areas that may be the most difficult to operate in (e.g., USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM). For the country ratings for each of the 209 countries in our study, please see Appendix A.

**Table 2.1. Distribution of Challenges Across Regions**

	AFRICOM	CENTCOM	EUCOM	NORTHCOM	PACOM	SOUTHCOM	TOTAL
Severe	19	9	0	0	10	0	38 (18%)
Major	35	11	1	0	9	13	69 (33%)
Moderate	0	0	18	1	13	23	55 (26%)
Low	0	0	31	2	4	10	47 (23%)
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	54	20	50	3	36	46	209 (100%)

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

The key takeaways from this analysis are that AFRICOM, CENTCOM and parts of PACOM are likely to pose the most severe challenges to female SF soldiers. We explore why this is the case in more detail in each of the following six regional chapters.

## Potential Enhanced Capabilities That Female SF Soldiers Could Provide Across Regions

Despite the challenges identified above, we found common ways in which female SF soldiers could potentially provide enhanced capabilities across the regions in the following core SF activities:

- CT, SFA, SR and UW capabilities to collect information and intelligence
- Facilitating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms
- Training and advising female indigenous military and police forces.

We discuss each of these below.

### *CT, SFA, SR and UW Capabilities to Collect Information and Intelligence*

Across regions, we identified that female SF soldiers could potentially provide enhanced CT, SFA, SR and UW capabilities by potentially gaining access to critical female populations to collect information and intelligence in ways that male SF soldiers may not be able to do so. In particular, female SF soldiers may be able to access nascent, but expanding women’s groups and movements that are becoming more powerful in some regions (especially USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM’s AORs). Connections to these groups could provide valuable information and intelligence, as well as opportunities to shape the perspectives of the indigenous population. The opportunities for such female SF engagement may be greatest in the cities and more liberal countries. Female SF soldiers could also potentially leverage opportunities to

engage with matrilineal cultures because men in these cultures may be more amenable to women in roles of authority.

### *Facilitating Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms*

Our analysis also found that women in some regions (especially in USAFRICOM, USPACOM and USSOUTHCOM's AORs) play major roles in conflict resolution or as "bridge-builders" between communities. There is also indication that when conflict erupts in some regions such as USAFRICOM's AOR, women often become key decisionmakers and influencers with their communities and fill the leadership voids left by men who are away from their communities fighting in conflicts. Female SF soldiers may be able to gain more access to these types of women and enhance the capabilities of SF teams to shape and influence the local environment, as well as facilitate local conflict resolution mechanisms that could in turn decrease the long-term need for U.S. forces to become involved in those conflicts.

### *Training and Advising Female Indigenous Military and Police Forces*

Our findings also indicate that women are entering military and police forces in larger numbers in some regions such as USAFRICOM and USCENTOM's AORs. For instance, 30 percent of the Eritrean military is comprised of women<sup>12</sup> and women in some countries in USCENTCOM's AOR have recently been allowed to enter the military and police forces. However, given regional cultural norms, men may not be able to train these women in some countries. In those countries where training is segregated along gender, female SF soldiers could enhance the training and SFA capabilities of SF units.

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<sup>12</sup> African Development Bank, Human Development Department, "Eritrea: Gender Profile," November 2008.

### 3. Opportunities and Challenges in USAFRICOM

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#### Overview of Traditional Roles of Women in USAFRICOM

According to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and much literature published on international development, the poorest person on earth lives somewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa and is probably a woman.<sup>13</sup> Compounding this unfortunate reality is a traditionally patriarchal society in almost every USAFRICOM country, although there are variations depending on more granular levels of analysis (e.g. village, tribe). Across the USAFRICOM region, women are not afforded the same rights as men under law. Even where they are legally equal to men, it is common for decisions to be taken by male heads of households or male local chiefs and leaders.<sup>14</sup>

This means that, for the most part, women generally do not feature prominently in decision-making in most USAFRICOM countries although women do play important roles in conflict resolution under certain conditions.<sup>15</sup> This presents a range of challenges in and of itself, but above all else it offers fewer opportunities for female-to-female engagement on certain missions. Most African women are considered by men to be a lesser status ascribed to them by tradition and custom, or as a result of overt discrimination. Many women suffer blatant forms of discrimination due to the intersection of gender with such factors as race, language, religion, political, etc. that often lead to a compounded disadvantage.

Sexual and other violence against women has been a feature of conflicts across Africa, from Sierra Leone and Liberia to Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).<sup>16</sup> In the eastern DRC, conflict has led to the deaths of over 3 million people and women are often deliberately targeted for violence. Rapes in the DRC have been so brutal and systematic that UN investigators have labeled them “unprecedented,” as many victims die while others are infected with HIV. To survive, these neglected portions of society are left to forage for food and water, which makes women vulnerable to further brutality and violence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Agnes Loteta Dimandja, “The Role and Place of Women in Sub-Saharan African Societies,” *Global Action on Aging*, July 30, 2004, <http://www.globalaging.org/elderrights/world/2004/subsaharan.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> The World Bank, “Improving Gender Equality in Africa,” February 5, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/brief/improving-gender-equality-in-africa>.

<sup>15</sup> Judy El-Bushra, “Fused in Combat: Gender Relations and Armed Combat,” *Development in Practice*, Vol.13, Nos. 1 and 2, May 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Amber Peterman et al., “Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol.101, No.6, June 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Olivia Ward, “Ten Worst Countries for Women,” *The Star*, March 8, 2008, [http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/03/08/ten\\_worst\\_countries\\_for\\_women.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/03/08/ten_worst_countries_for_women.html)

Even in countries not at war, women are frequently raped, beaten and victimized in other ways. Only rarely do police or prosecutors take such crimes seriously, reflecting both a lack of will and the bureaucracy and institutions to maintain the rule of law. Even worse, policemen and soldiers —whose job supposedly is to protect citizens —have all too often been among the abusers. In several conflicts throughout the USAFRICOM region, African peacekeepers sent to protect citizens acted rapaciously, extorting and violating the non-combatants they were sent to protect. During the civil wars of West Africa, “sobels,” shorthand for soldier-rebels, were behind many of these attacks. “Sobels” were underpaid soldiers who posed as rebels to extort and steal from civilians.<sup>18</sup>

Women’s roles throughout Africa are limited more so than in many other countries, although there are notable exceptions like the primarily matrilineal cultures places like northern Mozambique and among the Tuareg women in Mali and other parts of the Sahel.<sup>19</sup> Women in some countries (e.g., Algeria) have made progress in gender equality while others (e.g., Chad, Niger, Sudan) still lag behind. The World Economic Forum listed ranked Ivory Coast, Mali and Chad among the lowest rated countries for gender equality in the entire world in 2014.<sup>20</sup> In many patriarchal African societies, women are treated as subordinate. Rape is pervasive and during conflict has been used frequently as a weapon of war by armies, militias and even child soldiers.<sup>21</sup> Even after conflict has ceased, many women attempting to reintegrate back into society are scarred by posttraumatic stress disorder. Services to help citizens recover from the trauma of war are under-resourced and under-prioritized.

### *Cultural*

Harmful traditional practices remain prevalent throughout the USAFRICOM AOR. Female genital mutilation (FGM) and the lingering health effects of this practice continue to plague many African countries, although research indicates that it is finally declining in some of them.<sup>22</sup> In many cases, where tradition is strong and enduring, especially in less developed rural areas, traditions and potentially harmful practices are linked to culture. In many countries, almost all young girls are cut without exception. In Somalia, the prevalence is 98 percent, in Guinea 96

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<sup>18</sup> William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, pp. 125.

<sup>19</sup> Flora Drury, “Sex and the Sahara,” *Daily Mail*, June 24, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3131511/Sex-Sahara-Striking-photographs-mysterious-Islamic-tribe-women-embrace-sexual-freedoms-dictate-divorce-don-t-wear-veil-men-want-beautiful-faces.html>.

<sup>20</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Rankings, 2014*, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/rankings/>.

<sup>21</sup> Olivia Ward, “Ten Worst Countries for Women,” *The Star*, March 8, 2008, [http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/03/08/ten\\_worst\\_countries\\_for\\_women.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2008/03/08/ten_worst_countries_for_women.html).

<sup>22</sup> Priyanka Pruthi, “New UNICEF Report on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Turning Opposition into Action,” UNICEF, July 22, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929\\_69881.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_69881.html).

percent, in Djibouti 93 percent. In Eritrea and Mali the figure is 89 percent and a prevalence of 88 percent was reported in both Sierra Leone and Sudan.<sup>23</sup>

Even relatively straightforward health-care related capabilities are underdeveloped. With just 11 percent of the world's population, Africa accounts for more than 50 percent of maternal deaths and the probability that a woman will die from a maternal cause is one in 31 in sub-Saharan Africa compared with 1 in 4,300 in developed regions.<sup>24</sup> Tracking changes in African culture will be important as demographics suggest a youth movement in many African countries. With the ubiquity of social media and the reach of Western culture, including the importance of issues like gender equality and human rights, through the steady onward march of globalization, changes are on the horizon and fast change should not be ruled out as a distinct possibility.

### *Economic*

Throughout the USAFRICOM region, women have historically been excluded or at least heavily discriminated against in the economic sphere, although this is beginning to change as African countries open up to more foreign investment and a greater role for the private sector.<sup>25</sup> Traditionally women have had fewer, if any, rights of inheritance which leads directly to difficulties accessing land or finance. Of course, there are exceptions, such as in northern regions of Mozambique, where certain groups are matrilineal.

Women frequently bear the burden of agricultural labor, including gathering firewood or tending family fields and plots of land.<sup>26</sup> African women comprise nearly 70 percent of the agricultural labor and produce about 90 percent of all food, yet a majority of African women are employed in the informal sector or in low-skilled jobs. Moreover, the percentage of women employed in the non-agricultural sector is among the lowest of the world at approximately 8.5%).<sup>27</sup> In addition, everyday household chores from cooking to cleaning means less time available for a woman to even consider taking on paid employment. These traditional roles span culture, economics, ethnicity, politics, religion and society. As in many cultures, child care and tending to the sick and elderly falls under the domain of women's responsibilities.

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<sup>23</sup> Sarah Boseley, "What is Female Genital Mutilation and Where Does it Happen?" *The Guardian*, February 6, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/06/what-is-female-genital-mutilation-where-happen>.

<sup>24</sup> "Our Africa: Women's Health Challenges," <http://www.our-africa.org/women>.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Brenton, Elisa Gamberoni and Catherine Shear, eds. "Women and Trade in Africa: Realizing the Potential," The World Bank, 2013, [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/11/08/000442464\\_20131108144416/Rend ered/PDF/825200WP0Women00Box379865B00PUBLIC0.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/11/08/000442464_20131108144416/Rend ered/PDF/825200WP0Women00Box379865B00PUBLIC0.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Cheryl Doss et al., "The Role of Women in Agriculture," Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, ESA Working Paper No.11-02, March 2011.

<sup>27</sup> "Africa: The Role of Women in the Economy," *African Bulletin*, December 6, 2010, <http://www.african-bulletin.com/6194-africa-the-role-of-women-in-the-economy.html>.

Poor or no access to childcare facilities or health and support services in many regions means that significant amount of women's time could be spent caring for family members. Women commonly face discrimination with respect to owning business and participating in the licit economy. Foremost among the list of sectors where women are discriminated against is the economy, where they work in highly insecure and poorly paid jobs with scant opportunities for advancement.<sup>28</sup> Where African women do work outside the home, it is mostly in the informal economy.

### *Ethnic*

Throughout Africa, there is somewhat wide variation of specific customs and cultural mores depending on the particular ethnic group. This is an area where context matters and where individual ethnic groups may provide unique opportunities/challenges. For example, in Kenya, women from the Luo ethnic group have played a role in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peace building. In the Cameroonian ethnic group of the Guidar, the *mazake* (old women) are entrusted with keeping watch over the community. Also in Cameroon among the Bamileke, a mother of twins is considered to be a special blessing from God and granted the position of peacemaker.<sup>29</sup> Finally, in Nigeria, the Igbo grant paternal aunts or lineage daughters the responsibility to resolve conflict or reconcile with adversaries. In Western Nigeria, among the Yorubas, the title *Iya lode* is given to the leader of women in the community conferring the right to be one of the Council of Oba and participate in resolution of conflicts.

In Sudan, women living in the Darfur area of western Sudan have been subjected to abduction, rape or forced displacement which is responsible for destroying the lives of more than one million women since 2003. Janjaweed militias have terrorized Black African women through systematic rape.<sup>30</sup> Access to justice is unheard of for the female victims of violence. Ongoing violence between tribes, clans and sub-clans in Somalia has exposed women regularly to rape, poor health care for pregnancy, and attack by a range of heavily armed gangs and militias.

### *Political*

The political landscape across Africa is changing, albeit slowly, as women's rights groups and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to gender equality are advocating for female participation across a range of socio-economic areas. While this seems to be a broad trend, it is important to look closely at each individual country as some areas more progressive than others.

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations Women, "United Nations Women: Africa," <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/africa>.

<sup>29</sup> UNESCO, "Women and Peace in Africa: Case Studies on Traditional Conflict Resolution Practices," Paris: UNESCO, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Sudan: Mass Rape by Army in Darfur," February 11, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/11/sudan-mass-rape-army-darfur>.

Historically, political power was closely tied to martial tradition in some African societies that were characterized by post-colonial patronage networks and legacies of corruption, as well as fragile states plagued by a history of coups, counter-coups and invasions.

Not all political developments have been negative, however. Some nations – such as Rwanda and Tanzania – have created a constitutional requirement for the government to include a certain number of women while in Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, became the first woman to be President of a modern African nation and in 2012, Joyce Banda became Malawi's first female President.<sup>31</sup> In Kenya, for the first time in the country's post-colonial history, a female foreign minister and female defense minister were sworn in. In Rwanda, 64 percent of the members of Rwanda's lower house of parliament are women, making it the country with the highest percentage of female parliamentarians in the world.<sup>32</sup>

### *Religious*

Figure 3.1 identifies the major religion in countries across the world. Religion throughout the African continent is generally split between Islam in North Africa and Christianity and traditional beliefs/native religious throughout most of Sub-Saharan Africa, with significant pockets of Muslims in both West Africa and East Africa, especially the Horn of Africa. Religions in Africa (particularly Islam/Christianity/Animist) play a major factor in defining women's roles.

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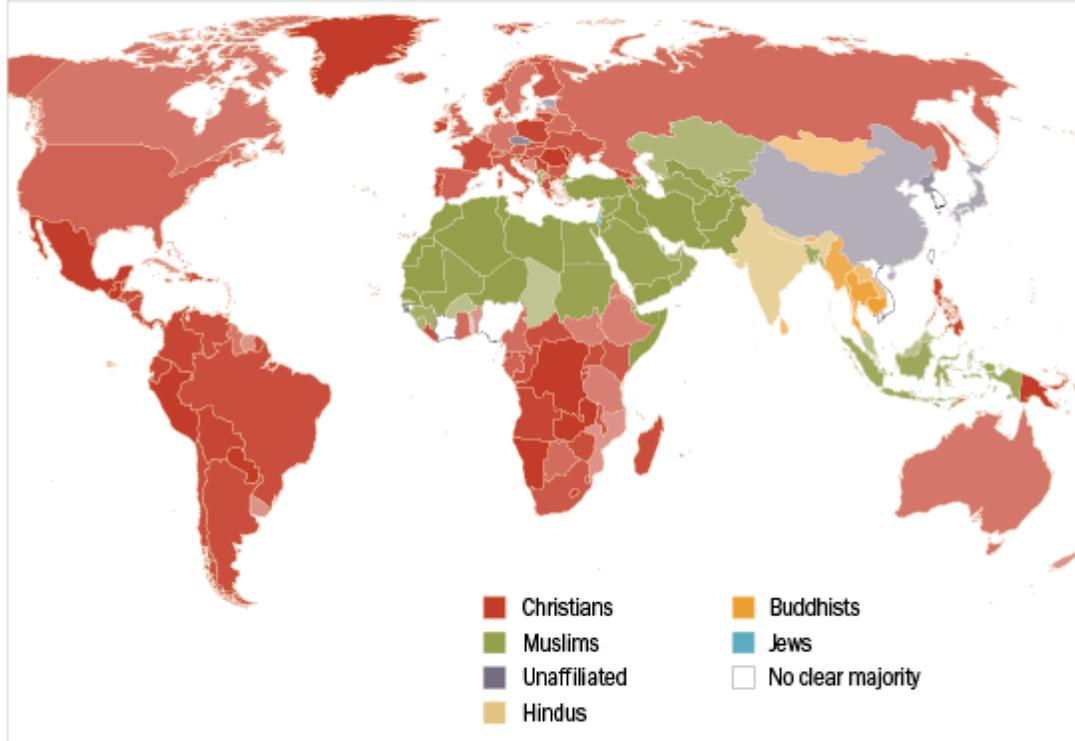
<sup>31</sup> Anne Look, "Women on the Rise in African Politics," *Voice of America*, February 8, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Bartholomäus Grill, "Taking Charge: How African Women are Making Major Gains," December 5, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/women-play-increasingly-important-role-in-african-life-and-politics-a-937146.html>.

Figure 3.1. Major Religions, By Country Across the World

**Majority Religion, by Country**

Countries are colored according to the majority religion. Darker shading represents a greater prevalence of the majority religion.



Nine countries have no clear religious majority: Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Macau, Nigeria, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Togo and Vietnam. There are no countries in which adherents of folk religions make up a clear majority. There are also no countries in which followers of other religions (such as Bahai's, Jains, Sikhs, Shintoists, Taoists, followers of Tenrikyo, Wiccans or Zoroastrians) make up a clear majority.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

SOURCE: Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Global Religious Landscape," December 2012.

Nigeria has been wracked by continuing spasms of religious violence, more recently perpetrated by Boko Haram, which has begun training women and children to prepare for an improvised explosive device campaign around the Lake Chad region. This militant group mixes traditional Salafist jihadi beliefs with an explicit view that Western-style education is sinful, especially for women.<sup>33</sup> Even where Nigerians have not joined with Boko Haram to partake in terrorism and other acts of political violence, more traditional Muslims may agree in general with the sentiment that women should not receive an education. In northern Nigeria, women are still largely without rights while in southern Nigeria, women are permitted to be educated and hold economically prosperous positions. In general, Christian countries *may* be more welcoming to women than Muslim countries or regions.

<sup>33</sup> Nina Storchlic, "The New Face of Boko Haram's Terror: Teen Girls," *Daily Beast*, December 13, 2014.

## *Social*

As aforementioned in the section on cultural issues, social issues are also susceptible to changing global opinions and the erosion of local and tribal mores and customs over time. On the education front, girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys and the already scarce resources (including separate bathroom facilities) are more likely to be allocated for males who are viewed as more likely to earn wages in the traditional role of “breadwinner.” Menstruation is taboo in certain parts of Africa and it prevents girls from attending school.

A popular strain of thinking that dominates many traditional African societies is “why educate girls and women when they will be in the home anyway?” In many cases there can be pressure to marry girls and women off young, providing the double benefit of jettisoning an economic burden while perhaps reaping a modest dowry in return. In some countries, arranged marriages are still common, as is polygamy. In many African societies, rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment is absolutely rampant and culturally a major issue.

## Challenges for Female SF Soldiers in USAFRICOM

In some countries, tribes, or clans, men may refuse outright to deal with female SOF, which could affect the SOF core mission. Several countries where this could be the case include: Niger, Chad, DRC, Cameroon, Mozambique, Central African Republic. Like the Middle East, African societies are mostly patriarchal and men may be unwilling to work directly with or take orders from women. In many of these countries, women are absent from the public sphere altogether or only present in small numbers, so female SF soldiers may attract attention by their mere presence. In extremely rural areas, locals may even seem confused by seeing a woman in uniform being treated as an equal or superior by her male colleagues. Explaining this as “normal behavior” could easily be misconstrued or lost in translation.

Religion matters: Islam dominates in North Africa and parts of East and West Africa, and places many restrictions on women that will likely limit areas for collaboration between female SF and indigenous populations. In this sense, many parts of Muslim societies in Africa may seem more culturally similar to USCENTCOM countries when compared to other USAFRICOM countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Religious conservatism may pose obstacles for single women working alone in some locations and communities. Violence against women (including rape as a weapon of war) is widespread and may present a physical safety issue.

The potential for conflict to occur in Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to remain high even after some of the region’s countries graduate into a more intermediate age structure because of the probable large number of ethnic and tribal minorities that will remain more youthful than the overall population. These “youth bulges” could be exacerbated by issues like climate change, health pandemics and access to resources, which places even greater emphasis on identifying key decisionmakers and ways to collaborate with locals.

### *Issues that Could Impact Mission Effectiveness*

Despite modest gains made by women's organizations throughout the continent, men remain dominant in the patriarchal USAFRICOM countries. This means that in some, perhaps many situations, men will likely be unwilling to follow the orders of a female soldier, no matter the rank. In certain countries, especially USAFRICOM countries with military and security services considered prestigious within their respective countries and societies (e.g. Nigeria, Ethiopia) men could outright refuse to work for or with female soldiers. Traditionally male entities such as village councils or officers' clubs) might prove to be exclusive beyond negotiation.

If male military soldiers are unwilling to accept training and advisement from women, multiple mission sets could be negatively impacted. Conducting FID, CT, UW, and SR could be a challenge for female SF soldiers with restricted access to host-nation counterparts, decision-making organizations or even more parochial entities like government-aligned informal militias. Barriers and challenges faced by female soldiers are likely to be greatest in the Muslim north of USAFRICOM countries, including Nigeria, Niger, and large swaths of the Sahel as well as portions of both West and East Africa, especially the Horn of Africa.

### *Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Barriers*

In certain USAFRICOM countries where women are seldom viewed alone in public, the mere presence of female SF soldiers could attract attention. This is especially true if female SF soldiers are not dressed in traditional attire, thus compromising clandestine activities or covert action. This could potentially cause complications in CT, UW, and SR missions, while FID missions might be more difficult if male security force members from the host nation are unwilling to take orders or direction from female SF soldiers or at a baseline level, to even interact directly with these women.

From a religious perspective, it is important to be aware of differences between African Christianity and African Islam when dealing with women in different religious roles. Attempts to pass and enforce laws in heavily Muslim regions (e.g. Tunisia) dictating that women remove their veils are particularly likely to spark violent protests, especially in areas with a heavy Salafist concentration.

From a cultural standpoint, as individuals with HIV/AIDS live longer from increasing access to antiretroviral drugs, it is important to monitor how these women are perceived in society in the future. The same goes for underrepresented demographics like rape and sexual assault survivors and war widows, all of whom may be stigmatized in African societies.

Barriers and challenges faced by female SF soldiers are likely to be greatest in more conservative areas and countries, including the Muslim north of Nigeria. Challenges will be less severe in countries where women have more freedoms, including parts of South Africa, Namibia, Algeria and other African countries with vestiges of European cultural influence.

### *Safety Issues to Units*

In social settings that preclude contact between unmarried women and men, the close interaction of men and women in USAFRICOM countries, to include shared quarters but also more banal interactions may attract attention and possibly retaliation. Furthermore, it will be even more important to pay close attention to safety issues during times of violent upheaval, such as riots, demonstrations, protests or coups. During protests in Guinea in 2009, government soldiers killed over 150 people and there were widespread reports of soldiers raping women in the streets.<sup>34</sup>

### *Safety Issues to Individual Female Soldiers*

Since women in many USAFRICOM countries face intimidation, domestic abuse and sexual violence as a form of retaliation and punishment for violating traditional cultural norms or religious laws, female SF soldiers will need to be extremely cautious. This includes remaining careful to observe cultural and religious norms, while also dressing appropriately and behaving according to prevailing customs. This will help mitigate attracting attention or subjecting themselves to the threat of violence. It is important to note that being stared at by groups of men may not necessarily be about being a soldier, it may be more about the cultural norm of men staring at women (especially in North Africa). Also, female SF soldiers will need to be aware of those areas that may be particularly dangerous for women traveling alone so that they can be prepared. For instance, in 2014, reports of car jackings spiked in the Angolan capital of Luanda where the most vulnerable drivers are women driving alone in the early morning or late evening.<sup>35</sup> While these concerns may not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, they are concerns that female soldiers will need to be aware of so that they can take appropriate precautions.

For the intensity ratings of challenges that female SF soldiers may face in all 54 USAFRICOM countries, please see Table A.1, A.2, and A.3.

## Capabilities That Female SF Soldiers Could Provide in USAFRICOM

In certain countries throughout Africa there are a growing number of women in some African militaries. For instance, women comprise more than 30% of the Eritrean military and also serve in direct combat operations. Female soldiers in Eritrea played a large role in both the Eritrean

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<sup>34</sup> Alhassan Silla, "Guinea Protest: Soldiers Raped Women in Streets, Killed Dozens of Protesters, Witnesses Say," *Associated Press*, November 29, 2009, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/09/29/guinea-protest-soldiers-r\\_n\\_302633.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/09/29/guinea-protest-soldiers-r_n_302633.html).

<sup>35</sup> "Rise in Armed Attacks on Car Drivers Increases Localised Risk of Muggings in Angolan Capital," *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report*, Vol. 21, No. 158, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1552763000?accountid=25333>.

civil war and the border dispute with Ethiopia.<sup>36</sup> Women are also free to volunteer for the Gambian armed forces and in 2011 the first female army general was decorated. Additionally, in 2011 almost 26.6% of the uniformed services of the South African National Defence Force consisted of women.<sup>37</sup> Female SF soldiers could potentially train these women (especially in countries where interactions between men and women are limited) and they could serve as mentors to these women.

In other societies, women are seen as “bridgebuilders” between conflicting communities (e.g. Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Namibia, Somalia, and Tanzania). Female SF soldiers could potentially work with these women and facilitate their roles as conflict mediators. Conflict can lead to changing roles of women in Africa as well as lead to opportunities to participate in conflict resolution. Female SF soldiers could potentially work with indigenous women to facilitate conflict resolution, as well as work with political leaders, females in the military and security forces, NGOs and women’s rights groups, and those in the culture/society with honorable titles or thought to possess spiritual powers.

A number of countries are recruiting more women into their police forces, and to a lesser extent into their armies. That has helped to change their exclusively male cultures and has pushed them to take gender-based violence more seriously. In Somalia, a group of young unmarried women (*Heerin*) from one of the warring clans, often visits with the opposing clan (without the knowledge or consent of their families). The women offer themselves to be married to the opposing side in an effort to set in motion a peace process that might eventually lead to an end in the conflict. Similar practices are reportedly undertaken by the Igbo of Nigeria.

In Cameroon, sometimes the first wife is invited to join men in assemblies to resolve conflicts. Namibian women play a strategic role in the healing of the wounds of war, where killers must be purified by ‘magic rites’ otherwise the desire to kill will spread to other people.<sup>38</sup> Socio-cultural norms in Tanzania support high fertility and where these norms are not likely to change rapidly especially in a context where productive and reproductive roles go together and where women’s labor force participation generally has not been empowering. In Swaziland, Africa's last absolute monarch declared that his mother—the *ndlovukati*, or “she-elephant”—serves as his equal.<sup>39</sup>

Much of the lore of women revolves around monarchical settings. A queen ruled the constitutional monarchy of Lesotho for 20 years, and women chiefs are common in its rural villages. In Ghana, queen mothers can nominate chiefs and kings, and in some cases even

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<sup>36</sup> African Development Bank, Human Development Department, “Eritrea: Gender Profile,” November 2008.

<sup>37</sup> “Fact File: SANDF Regular Force Levels by Race & Gender,” *Defence Web*, April 30, 2011, [http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=16708:fact-file-sandf-regular-force-levels-by-race-a-gender-april-30-2011-&catid=79:fact-files&Itemid=159](http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16708:fact-file-sandf-regular-force-levels-by-race-a-gender-april-30-2011-&catid=79:fact-files&Itemid=159).

<sup>38</sup> UNESCO, “Women and Peace in Africa: Case Studies on Traditional Conflict Resolution Practices,” Paris: UNESCO, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Dina Kraft, “African Women Taking Role as Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 2004.

impeach them while in South Africa, women have been de-facto chiefs in many rural areas in recent times, serving in place of sons after the deaths of their husbands. Sometimes it is because the sons are too young, or because they are working or studying in the city. Among the Balobedu tribe in rural South Africa, “the rain queen” is believed the queen to possess magical powers passed by her mother and other ancestors, allowing her to transform clouds and create rain. It is interesting to note that these powers were so widely believed through the centuries that the Balobedu was left largely unmolested, even in the midst of ongoing conflict in the country.

In Nigeria today, women cannot rise to a position equivalent to chief or paramount ruler, although in several ethnic groups, including the Yorubas, women can be given lesser titles that let them sit on traditional ruling councils. These titles are usually not hereditary, but achievement-based appointments in recognition of leadership qualities and in Zimbabwe, women are often highly regarded in the community as spirit mediums - believed to be intermediaries between the physical and spiritual worlds.

## Factors that May Change the Future Role of Women in USAFRICOM

Traditional roles of women are gradually changing as women have become increasingly involved in new roles outside of the home. For instance, in Algeria, women comprise 70 percent of the country’s lawyers and 60 percent of its judges. Also in Algeria, women have risen to prominence in medicine, science and police force/security sector.<sup>40</sup> As referenced above, in places like Liberia and Malawi, women have been elected to some of the highest offices in the country. As women become more accepted in prominent roles, their traditional place in conflict mediation could become more pronounced. This could have relevance for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs, postconflict stability, Truth and Reconciliation commissions, settling electoral disputes and a range of other important issues of concern that could be related to SOF missions. Women can play an important role in the postconflict reintegration of ex-combatants into society and may also be critical nodes of information and intelligence in refugee camps. NGOs focused on highlighting and promoting gender equality have created new opportunities for women (economic, political, social, etc.) and microfinance is typically more successful among women.

Another interesting trend to keep a close eye on is women’s participation in the economy.<sup>41</sup> As government leaders become more responsive to the benefits of female participation in the work force for the good of the overall national economy, there could be a concerted effort to remove taboos around women working in the private sector. Although it is still a major struggle,

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Slackman, “A Quiet Revolution in Algeria: Gains by Women,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Women, “Discrimination Against Women Persists Around the Globe Hampering Development,” United Nations Women Press Release, July 5, 2012, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/7/discrimination-against-women-persists-around-the-globe-hampering-development>.

in various African countries women are attempting to take on increased economic responsibilities within the household. There are several reasons for this that varies by country. In Uganda, for example, men no longer have access to the economic resources, including agricultural land they did before that country's civil war. In places like Sudan and Angola, women displaced by the conflict now have greater income-generating capacities in urban cash economies than they did in rural areas. Displacement from war, although disruptive in myriad facets, may also open up new ways of life or access to new skills as it has done in several Sahel countries, including Mali. Finally, as men die off in war, the proportion of female-headed households increases (to around one-third of the total population in some countries, such as Sudan and Mali).

In countries where progress is finally occurring, even if at a slower pace, this could portend a gradual change in mindset and a shift away from traditional or customary practices that are harmful. Clearly, education is a key component of much of the positive involvement of NGOs throughout the USAFRICOM AOR. These organizations should not be regarded lightly. While some may be averse to interacting or cooperating with the U.S. military, many will cooperate. These organizations often maintain institutional knowledge of the way things work on the ground and can provide valuable insights into a country, culture or tribe's way of life—political, social, economic—facilitating more effective interaction in many cases.

## 4. Opportunities and Challenges in USCENTCOM

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### Overview of Traditional Roles of Women in USCENTCOM

Women in the USCENTCOM AOR have traditionally taken a subordinate position to men, politically, socially, culturally, and economically. Due to cultural norms and religious laws, women in some countries in the region face significant restrictions their movement, behavior, and attire. In some countries, women have few legal rights, are subordinate to men, and are expected to remain in the home, separate from men, and out of the public sphere. Strict rules about the interaction of women and men are also pervasive in some areas, including politics, the economy, and social interaction. While there are some variations across countries in the region, women face discrimination, restrictions, and strong cultural stereotypes across the USCENTCOM region. Furthermore, despite the spread of technology and Western influences through the USCENTCOM region, cultural, religious, and social restrictions continue to have a defining influence on women in the region. The position of women in USCENTCOM countries is likely to pose challenges for female SF soldiers operating the region. However, having female SF soldiers in units operating in the region may also provide some enhanced capabilities.

#### *Cultural*

Cultural stereotypes in the region are strong and pervasive. These stereotypes keep men and women in traditional roles: women's primary roles remain caring for the children, and men dominate in the public sphere and labor market. Women are generally also subordinate to men, and are expected to be obedient to their husbands and fathers. These cultural stereotypes permeate all aspects of society and all countries in the region. For instance, in Oman women are largely subordinate to men and face restrictions on what they can do and wear in public. Women and men tend to be separated in social situations and women need the permission of their husbands to travel abroad. Women traditionally marry rather young and then remain in the home, filling their domestic role as mothers and wives. Women are able to attend school, but seats for women in upper levels of education are limited.<sup>42</sup> In UAE, in traditional families, women work

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<sup>42</sup> "Culture of Oman," Cultures of the World, Accessed March 20, 2014, "Fighting for Women's Rights," *BBC News*, Special Report, October 27, 2008; UNICEF, "OMAN: MENA Gender Equality Profile: The Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa," 2011; Mary Jane Deeb, Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Oman, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b6ec.html> [accessed 19 March 2015]; Chatty, Dawn. "Women Working in Oman: Individual Choice and Cultural Constraints," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2000, pp. 241-54.

primarily in the home, although this has changed somewhat. They also generally have limited educational opportunities.<sup>43</sup>

Even in countries where women have a degree of flexibility, they are still expected to conform to prevailing stereotypes and to fulfill traditional gender roles. For example, women in Bahrain are more active in the public sphere than in some Arab nations. Although women still remain in the home, raising children is one of the most important jobs a woman takes on and one that provides women a certain degree of authority and respect.<sup>44</sup> Cultural stereotypes and restrictions placed on women are somewhat less in the former Soviet Republics largely due to decades of Soviet influence. For instance, in Kazakhstan, women enjoy a fair amount of equality with men and independence. They are able to attend school and to participate in women's organizations. This is especially true in cities. However, traditionally, women still occupy secondary roles to men and the society is patriarchal with men enjoying greater status in the home and occupying most positions of power.<sup>45</sup>

### *Religious*

Strong cultural expectations for women are closely intertwined with the pervasive influence of religion in the region. The majority of the countries in the USCENCOM region are Muslim, and Islam as it is practiced in most countries in the region has a strong conservative influence that reinforces cultural norms and traditional gender roles in which women remain in the home and subordinate to their husbands and fathers. In most Muslim countries in the USCENCOM region, religious laws place restrictions on women's behavior, dress, and often legal rights. For example, women are expected to cover their faces and bodies; they lack legal rights to property and custody of their children; and can be punished for interacting with men who are not family members. Religious laws limit the rights of women in most countries—in the court of law, women are considered only half a person and their testimony is worth less than a man's. Religious law permeates all aspects of society and all interactions between men and women. Religious laws are stronger in countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and somewhat weaker in others, including the former Soviet Republics (where

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<sup>43</sup> "Culture of the United Arab Emirates," Countries and their Cultures, <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-Arab-Emirates.html>; Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates, International Federation of Human Rights, January 2010, "Women in the UAE," [www.sheikhmohammed.ae](http://www.sheikhmohammed.ae).

<sup>44</sup> Bahrain Economic and Development Board, "Bahrain: Women-Living and Working in Bahrain," May 2013; *National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain on Progress Made in the Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +20*, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Michelle Witte, "Steppe Sisters: Kazakhstan's Rising Women Politicians," *The Edge*, 2015, "Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issue in Kazakhstan," Peace Corps Information Sheet, accessed 2015; "The Culture of Kazakhstan," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015; Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," 2015.

religion was more or less banned under Soviet rule).<sup>46</sup> In Saudi Arabia, for instance, religious laws and national laws blend together. Under these laws, women are not permitted to even leave the home without their guardian's permission, they face significant consequences for socializing too closely with men outside their families, and when they are in public they are expected to cover their bodies and faces.<sup>47</sup> In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan religious laws are less pervasive, especially in major cities. Both countries are largely Muslim, but Muslim traditions and Islamic laws are held more loosely and have less of an impact on women's lives. However, even in these countries, women are typically subservient to men and are expected to remain in the home raising the children.<sup>48</sup> In another former Soviet Republic, Turkmenistan, Soviet traditions promoted equality between women and men, but this has faded somewhat since the country's independence. Now, Islamic traditions as they are practiced in the country promote the subservience of women to their husbands and limit the rights of women in the public sphere.<sup>49</sup>

### *Social*

Women in USCENTCOM countries have traditionally been expected to remain in the home, caring for the children and responsible for domestic affairs, while men have worked outside the home. Social interactions between men and women have traditionally been carefully controlled.

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<sup>46</sup> Anastasiya Hozyainova, "Sharia and Women's Rights in Afghanistan," US Institute for Peace, Special Report, 2014; "Culture of Afghanistan," Countries and their Cultures, accessed March 20, 2015; Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Yemen, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html> [accessed 13 March 2015]; "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, 2015; Toktayim Umetalieva, "The position of women in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asian countries," March 2004; Tanzeen Ali et al., "Gender Roles and Their Influence on Life Prospects for Women in Urban Karachi, Pakistan: A Qualitative Study," Global Health Action, 2011; US State Department, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, 11 March 2010, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia", 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>.

<sup>47</sup> United States Department of State, *2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia*, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, 11 March 2010, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia," 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," 8 July 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>; Amelie Le Renard, "Only for Women: Women, the State, and Reform in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal*, Volume 62, No. 4, Autumn 2008, pp. 610-629.

<sup>48</sup> Maum Momaya, "What is the Status of Women in Kyrgyzstan?" June 11, 2009; Martha Brill Olcott, "The Role of Women," *Kyrgyzstan Country Study*. Glenn E. Curtis, editor. Library of Congress Federal Research Division, March 1996; Umetalieva, 2004; "The Global Gender Gap Report 2013" ([http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20)). World Economic Forum, pp. 12–13.; Witte, 2015; United States Peace Corps, "Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issue in Kazakhstan," Peace Corps Information Sheet, accessed 2015; "The Culture of Kazakhstan," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015; Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," 2015.

<sup>49</sup> "Women Second Class in Turkmenistan," Human Rights House Network, Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Turkmenistan Country Profile," Social Institutions and Gender Index, <http://genderindex.org/country/turkmenistan>, accessed July 23, 2010.

In many countries, including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Iraq, men and women rarely interact in social settings. Even in the home, there are sometimes separate areas for men and women.<sup>50</sup> In most countries, men and women who are not married cannot live together or be seen together in public. Punishments for violating these laws are severe. Women also face domestic abuse and the threat of domestic violence and kidnapping. Due to their limited legal rights, women who suffer from violence have little legal recourse. In many countries, women also lack basic rights to education and health care.<sup>51</sup> Social restrictions are among the greatest in Saudi Arabia. Saudi women are severely restricted in what they can do and where they can go. They cannot drive and must have the permission of their male guardian to travel, enter school, or even visit a friend. In Saudi Arabia, public spaces such as banks, restaurants, public transportation, museums, and stores are segregated between men and women. Men and women in Saudi Arabia are also educated separately and women are required to be completely covered in public (in abayas) and to cover their hair and face.<sup>52</sup>

In some cases, women do have a larger role in the public sphere. In Bahrain, for instance, women are more active in the public sphere and are able to attend school.<sup>53</sup> In the former Soviet Republics, including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, women enjoy a greater degree of social equality with men, largely due to Soviet influence. Under Soviet rule, men and women were

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<sup>50</sup> Trust in Education, "Life as an Afghan Woman," 2015, accessed March 20, 2015; Hozyainova, 2014; "Culture of Afghanistan," Countries and their Cultures, accessed March 20, 2015; United States Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," March 11, 2010, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>; "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia," Human Rights Watch, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," July 8, 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>; Le Renard, 2008; Jeremy Sharp, "Saudi Arabia: Reform and US Policy," Congressional Research Service, October 2004; "A Big Cultural Shift for Saudi Arabia," *The National*, January 22, 2015; Kathryn M. Coughlin, "Muslim Women and the Family in Iraq: Modern World," ABC-CLIO, <http://dailylife.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1424571?terms=iraq+women%27s+rights>), accessed on April 25, 2013; Zainab Selbi, "Why Women Are Less Free 10 Years after the Invasion of Iraq," CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/18/opinion/Iraq-war-women-salbi>, accessed on May 15, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> See for example, International Federation of Human Rights, "Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates," January 2010; "Women in the UAE," [www.sheikhmohammed.ae](http://www.sheikhmohammed.ae); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Turkmenistan Country Profile, *Social Institutions and Gender Index*," <http://genderindex.org/country/turkmenistan>, accessed on May 15, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> United States Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, 11 March 2010, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia," <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>, 2013; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>, July 8, 2009; Le Renard, 2008; Sharp, 2004; "A Big Cultural Shift for Saudi Arabia," *The National*, January 22, 2015

<sup>53</sup> Bahrain Economic and Development Board, "Bahrain: Women-Living and Working in Bahrain," May 2013. National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain on Progress Made in the Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +20, 2014.

treated more equally and women had some independence from men.<sup>54</sup> More recently, however, women in these countries have retained some autonomy from men, but have also seen a reversion in their social role in countries like Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>55</sup> However, even in countries where women have less restricted social lives, they are still expected to fulfill their household duties and remain in a subordinate position compared to men. For example, in Jordan, where women have gained rights in many spheres, women are generally separated from men in social situations, do not socialize with men, and are considered subservient to men.<sup>56</sup> In Egypt, the family is the most significant social unit and most women occupy traditional roles in the home. Women are permitted to attend schools, but are often segregated from men. Women and men are segregated in many aspects of life, including on public transportation.<sup>57</sup>

### *Economic*

Women have not traditionally held jobs outside the home. In some cases, including Saudi Arabia, women are not permitted to work without the permission of their male guardian. In others, including Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen, women are permitted to work outside the home, but most do not. In countries including Kuwait, Uzbekistan, and Oman, when women do work outside the home, they tend to be concentrated in traditionally female jobs such as education, clerical work, and the service sector (retail or domestic service).<sup>58</sup> Women who live in rural areas may also work on family farms, in subsistence agriculture or caring for livestock. In Yemen, for example, women are largely responsible for agricultural work after long-term male migration

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<sup>54</sup> United States Peace Corps, "Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issue in Kazakhstan," Peace Corps Information Sheet, accessed 2015; "The Culture of Kazakhstan," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015; Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," 2015; Momaya, 2009; Olcott, 1996; Umetalieva, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> "Women Second Class in Turkmenistan," Human Rights House Network, Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2012; Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Turkmenistan Country Profile," <http://genderindex.org/country/turkmenistan>, accessed on May 15, 2015; "Uzbekistan: Women's Political Rights Reviewed," IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, April 24, 2002; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, "Report on CEDAW: Concluding Observations on Uzbekistan," 2006.

<sup>56</sup> "Cultural Issues and Survival Tips: Life in Jordan," <https://sites.google.com/site/lifeinjordan/family-life/cultural-issues-survival-tips>; "Jordan, Culture and Etiquette," *Rough Guides*, <http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/middle-east/jordan/culture-etiquette/>, accessed May 22, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2013*, 2013, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20), pp. 12–13; "Egypt: Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/egypt-country-profile.html>, accessed March 20, 2014.

<sup>58</sup> "Kuwait: Language, Customs, Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/kuwait-country-profile.html>, accessed 3/20/2015; "Culture of Kuwait," Countries and their Cultures," <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Kuwait.html>, accessed March 20, 2015.; Chatty, 2000; UNICEF, "OMAN: MENA Gender Equality Profile: The Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa," 2011; Deeb, 2005; "Uzbekistan: Women's Political Rights Reviewed," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis*, April 24, 2002; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, "Report on CEDAW: Concluding Observations on Uzbekistan," 2006.

reduced the male population available for these tasks.<sup>59</sup> In Lebanon, women are permitted to work outside the home, although the majority of women remain in the home. Women who do work tend to remain in specific sectors such as education and clerical work. Women who do work outside the home often have part-time jobs and earn much less than their male colleagues.<sup>60</sup> In some countries, weak economic conditions place another layer of constraints on the employment and economic empowerment of women. For example, in Afghanistan, recently women have been allowed to take jobs outside the home with the permission of a male guardian, but given high unemployment, employers are often reluctant to hire a woman over a man.<sup>61</sup>

There are countries in the USCENTCOM region where women do take a more active role in the economy. For example, in Kazakhstan, the Soviet influence means that many women continue to work outside the home.<sup>62</sup> In Kyrgyzstan, there is a high level of female employment in cities, but women in rural areas are more likely to remain in the home.<sup>63</sup> In Qatar and UAE, women work in a variety of sectors, including health, education, law, and hospitality.<sup>64</sup> In Bahrain, women now make up over one-third of the labor force.<sup>65</sup> However, even in these countries few women hold positions of power in the economic sphere and women are still expected to fulfill domestic duties in addition to any outside employment. Importantly, there is a significant urban-rural divide in employment in USCENTCOM countries. Employment outside the home is much higher among women in major cities and lower in rural communities.

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<sup>59</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Yemen, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html>, accessed 13 March, 2015; Joke Buringa, *Bibliography on Women in Yemen*, American Institute for Yemeni Studies, 1992; UNICEF, "The Situation of Women and Children in the Republic of Yemen," 1992. Anil Polat, "Solo Female to Travel to Yemen, Questions Answered," *FoXnoMad*, June 25, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), "Lebanese Women in Work Force/Economy," [http://swmena.net/library/uploads/pdf/Economic\\_and\\_Education\\_Status\\_Topic\\_Brief.pdf](http://swmena.net/library/uploads/pdf/Economic_and_Education_Status_Topic_Brief.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Trust in Education, "Life as an Afghan Woman, 2015, <http://www.trustededucation.org/resources/life-as-an-afghan-woman/>, accessed March 20, 2015; "Culture of Afghanistan," Countries and their Cultures, accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> United States Peace Corps, "Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issue in Kazakhstan," Peace Corps Information Sheet, accessed 2015; "The Culture of Kazakhstan," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015; Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Momaya, 2009; Olcott, 1996; Umetalieva, 2004.

<sup>64</sup> "Culture of the United Arab Emirates," Countries and their Cultures, <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-Arab-Emirates.html>; International Federation of Human Rights, "Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates: January 2010; "Women in the UAE," [www.sheikhmohammed.ae](http://www.sheikhmohammed.ae); State of Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatari Women," <http://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/Qatar/Pages/QatariWomen.aspx>, accessed March 20, 2014; Courtney King, "For Qatari Women, Change Slow in Coming: ABC News Reporter's Notebook, April 11, 2014; "Culture of Qatar," Cultures of the World, Accessed March 20, 2014; "Life in Qatar," <http://www.lifeinqatar.com/en/section/living>, accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Bahrain Economic and Development Board, "Bahrain: Women-Living and Working in Bahrain," May 2013. *National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain on Progress Made in the Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +20*, 2014.

## *Political*

Women have also typically been excluded from the political sphere in USCENTCOM countries. Women have not traditionally held positions of authority and influence and are severely underrepresented in governments throughout the region. There are extreme cases of this exclusion, including Afghanistan where women were entirely excluded from the public sphere under the Taliban, Yemen where women have little if any political involvement, and Saudi Arabia, where women do not hold public positions.<sup>66</sup> However, there are exceptions. For example, in Kuwait and Bahrain, women are active in the civil service and are able to vote, although they do not hold positions of political power.<sup>67</sup> In other countries, while the majority of women are not politically active, there are women who hold political positions—even some positions with political power. Examples include Pakistan, which had a female Prime Minister, and more recently Qatar, where women have recently taken some ministerial positions.<sup>68</sup> In other countries, including Oman and Lebanon, women have not been active in the government, but do have some political voice through reasonably strong women's organizations.<sup>69</sup> However, even in these cases, simply having a female leader is not a signal that women share equal rights in all areas of society. Instead despite having women in more senior positions, average women in Pakistan, Qatar, and elsewhere still lack political involvement and legal rights.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Yemen*, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html>, accessed 13 March 2015; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken", <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>, July 8, 2009; "KSA Female Employment Rate Among Lowest in MENA Region" *Arab News*, <http://www.arabnews.com/news/445991>, 25 March 2013, accessed March 20, 2015; Le Renard, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> "Kuwait: Language, Customs, Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/kuwait-country-profile.html>, accessed 3/20/2015; "Culture of Kuwait," *Countries and their Cultures*, <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Kuwait.html>, accessed March 20, 2015; May Al Otaibi and Amos Owen Thomas, "Women Candidates and Arab Media: Challenging Conservatism in Bahraini Politics," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Volume 8, Issue 2, October 2011, p. 135.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Table 4: Gender Inequality Index," <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>, accessed on November 7, 2014.; Kamilia Lahrichi, "Where Does Qatar Stand on Women's Rights," *Your Middle East*, December 11, 2014; "Qatari Women," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accessed March 20, 2014; Courtney King, "For Qatari Women, Change Slow in Coming," ABC News Reporter's Notebook, April 11, 2014; Council on Asian Transnational Threat Research, "Women in Pakistan," *Asian Conflicts Reports*, Issue 8, October 2009, [http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror\\_Tribes\\_and\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Women\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror_Tribes_and_the_War_on_Women_in_Pakistan.pdf); Mariam S. Pal, "Women in Pakistan: Country Briefing Paper," Asian Development Bank, 2000, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32562/files/women-pakistan.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> BBC News, Special Report, October 27, 2008; UNICEF, "OMAN: MENA Gender Equality Profile: The Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa," 2011; Deeb, 2005; International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), "Lebanese Women in Work Force/Economy," [http://swmena.net/library/uploads/pdf/Economic\\_and\\_Education\\_Status\\_Topic\\_Brief.pdf](http://swmena.net/library/uploads/pdf/Economic_and_Education_Status_Topic_Brief.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Table 4: Gender Inequality Index," <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>, accessed on November 7, 2014; State of Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatari Women," <http://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/Qatar/Pages/QatariWomen.aspx>, accessed March 20, 2014; Courtney King, "For Qatari Women, Change Slow in Coming," ABC News Reporter's Notebook, April 11, 2014; Council on Asian Transnational Threat Research, "Women in Pakistan," *Asian Conflicts*

## *Ethnic*

The traditional role of women does vary by ethnic group in many USCENTCOM countries. In general, rural areas and older generations tend to be more attached to traditional roles for women and to place greater restrictions on the rights and opportunities of women outside the home. For example, in Yemen, areas around the city of Muscat tend offer more freedoms to women, while rural areas and other parts of the country continue to adhere to more traditional roles.<sup>71</sup> In Saudi Arabia, Riyadh is considered much more liberal than the more conservative Jeddah. In countries where tribal connections are important, treatment of women may vary by tribe. For example, in Iraq and Yemen there are many tribes and tribal customs vary across the country.<sup>72</sup> In Jordan, Bedouin tribes tend to adhere more firmly to traditional gender roles than is the case in other parts of the country.<sup>73</sup> There are also some differences by religious group. For example, in Kazakhstan and Lebanon, women living in Christian communities tend to have more rights than women in Muslim communities.<sup>74</sup>

## Challenges for Female SF Soldiers in USCENTCOM

### *Issues that Could Impact Mission Effectiveness*

Because men are dominant in the patriarchal USCENTCOM countries, they may not be used to and unwilling to take orders from female soldiers. In extreme cases, they may be unwilling to even work closely with female Soldiers. Female soldiers may also find it difficult to be taken

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*Reports*, Issue 8, October 2009,

[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror\\_Tribes\\_and\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Women\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror_Tribes_and_the_War_on_Women_in_Pakistan.pdf); Pal, 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Yemen, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html>, accessed 13 March 2015; UNICEF, "The Situation of Women and Children in the Republic of Yemen," 1992.

<sup>72</sup> United States Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, March 11, 2010, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia," <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>, 2013; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>, July 8, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> "Cultural Issues and Survival Tips: Life in Jordan," <https://sites.google.com/site/lifeinjordan/family-life/cultural-issues-survival-tips>; "Jordan, Culture and Etiquette," *Rough Guides*, <http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/middle-east/jordan/culture-etiquette/>, accessed May 22, 2015.

<sup>74</sup> United States Peace Corps, "Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issue in Kazakhstan," Peace Corps Information Sheet, [http://peacecorpswiki.org/Diversity\\_and\\_cross-cultural\\_issues\\_in\\_Kazakhstan](http://peacecorpswiki.org/Diversity_and_cross-cultural_issues_in_Kazakhstan), accessed 2015; "The Culture of Kazakhstan," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015; Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," 2015.; Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Gender Equality in Lebanon," <http://genderindex.org/country/Lebanon>; International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), "Lebanese Women in Work Force/Economy," [http://swmena.net/library/uploads/pdf/Economic\\_and\\_Education\\_Status\\_Topic\\_Brief.pdf](http://swmena.net/library/uploads/pdf/Economic_and_Education_Status_Topic_Brief.pdf); Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon Laws Discriminate against Women," January 19, 2015; "Culture of Lebanon," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015.

seriously by men and may struggle to gain access to certain spheres or groups of people, including all-male social and political groups (e.g. tribal councils or military clubs). This may create barriers for female soldiers in conducting missions. For example, conducting FID may be difficult if male military soldiers from the host nation are unwilling to accept direction from women. Mission such as CT, UW, and SR may also become difficult for female SF soldiers who may face limitations on travel and access to certain areas or at certain times, or who may be unable to discreetly gain access to key soldiers or organizations. Barriers and challenges faced by female soldiers are likely to be greatest in more conservative areas and countries, including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, U.A.E, and Oman.

### *Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Barriers*

As noted above, cultural and religious barriers place restrictions on the behavior and movement of women. As a result, women may have difficulty accessing certain spheres of public life, individuals, or organizations and may be placed in subordinate positions to men when they are allowed to interact with them. This may create complications in CT, UW, and SR missions. FID missions may be complicated by the fact that male security force members may be unwilling to take orders or direction from female SF soldiers, and in some cases to even interact directly with these women. Furthermore, since women are rarely seen in public alone in many of these countries, even the presence of female SF soldiers may attract attention—especially if the female SF soldiers are not dressed in traditional attire, thus compromising any sort of covert operation. Barriers and challenges faced by female SF soldiers are likely to be greatest in more conservative areas and countries, including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, U.A.E, and Oman. Challenges will be less severe in countries where women have more freedoms, including Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar.

### *Safety Issues to Units*

Because there are strict religious and cultural rules governing the interaction of women and men in USCENTCOM countries, men and women in U.S. military units will also need to be cautious and sensitive in their interactions with each other, particularly in public. For instance, in most countries, there are rules against unmarried women and men engaging in social settings and living together. Because male and female soldiers interact closely and may share quarters, their normal interactions may attract attention and possibly retaliation or punishment.

### *Safety Issues to Individual Female Soldiers*

There are several potential safety threats to female soldiers working in the USCENTCOM region, particularly women working alone or under cover. First, violence against women in the region is a severe and common problem. Women face violent retaliation and punishment if they are seen to be violating traditional cultural norms or religious laws. Female soldiers working in the region would need to be careful to observe cultural and religious norms, dressing

appropriately and behaving according to prevailing customs in order to avoid attracting attention or subjecting themselves to the threat of violence. Finally, since it is rare for women to travel alone in public, female SF soldiers would need to guard against attracting attention in day-to-day activities in the public sphere. Even in countries where religious influence is less pronounced, specifically the former Soviet Republics, violence against women and sexual harassment are significant obstacles and concerns. These concerns may not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, but female soldiers will need to be aware of so that they can take appropriate precautions.

For the intensity ratings of challenges that female SF soldiers may face in all 20 USCENTCOM countries, please see Table A.4 and A.5.

## **Capabilities That Female SF Soldiers Could Provide in USCENTCOM**

Despite challenges, female SF soldiers could provide a number of enhanced capabilities in the USCENTCOM region. The most obvious capability that female SF soldiers could provide is greater access to portions of the local populations and to information. Due to cultural and religious restrictions, male SF soldiers are often not able to interact with local women, either to search them or engage them for the purpose of intelligence gathering or relationship building. This poses a significant barrier to SF units. Having women as part of SF teams could provide new access to women and to female spaces and organizations throughout the region. Female SF soldiers could interact with women in social gatherings intended for women only as well as in women-only schools and universities throughout the region. This would be beneficial for CT, SR, and UW missions as it would provide access to new populations of individuals and types of information. This could be directly beneficial to intelligence-gathering missions and could help SF units be aware of unrest within the population, planned protests, and even terror plots. The relationships that female SF soldiers may be able to form with women could also contribute to the broader goal of building more constructive relationships with local communities. This might indirectly improve intelligence-gathering efforts and contribute to SR and UW mission effectiveness as well.

Female SF soldiers could target a number of specific types of women and organizations in order to reap benefits such as increased intelligence and community relations. First, women who have taken senior positions in political and economic spheres could serve as valuable contacts as they represent the leading edge of women pursuing a more public role. As such, they have a unique ability to both gather and share information and serve as leaders within their communities. Similarly, engaging female entrepreneurs in these countries might be another way to gain access to female thought leaders. Opportunities to engage these women may be greatest in countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Oman, Kuwait, the more liberal, northern part of Kyrgyzstan, and even in Pakistan. A second possibility would be to target women's organizations, particularly those advocating for increased rights for women in

countries such as Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Oman, and Tajikistan. Women attending universities in countries like Qatar, UAE, Oman, Yemen, and Egypt (countries where other opportunities for engagement might be limited) could be another valuable target population. Engagements of these sorts are likely to advance mission effectiveness as they may provide opportunities to gather information as well as the ability to form lasting alliances with powerful women in local communities. Importantly, the value of these engagements may vary within countries, being greatest in major cities and less promising in rural areas.

Another opportunity for female SF soldiers would be FID missions with host nation security forces that are beginning to integrate women. Women in security forces in the USCENTCOM region are small in number. In many cases, women were only recently allowed to join these security organizations and could benefit from positive female role models, as well as additional training tailored to their specific challenges. Male SF soldiers may not be able to interact with these women and so having female SF soldiers to train them could provide a valuable opportunity for engagement. These opportunities are likely to be greatest in countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Jordan, which all have increasing numbers of women in their security forces. Engagement with female members of host nation security forces may be especially valuable in Afghanistan and Pakistan where security forces are weak but also crucial bulwarks against the spread of local violence and radicalism.

## Factors that May Change the Future Role of Women in USCENTCOM

There are a number of factors that may change or affect the future role of women in the USCENTCOM region. The majority of these factors are likely to increase opportunities for women, but there are also some forces that could further restrict the role of women in the region. Thus, while women are likely to gain some additional freedoms, rights, and opportunities, they are also likely to continue to face significant limitations and obstacles. In addition, the role of women is likely to continue to vary across the region.

Politically, women have recently gained additional rights and have become increasingly active, voting in greater numbers and taking on a greater number of political positions, including some with power and influence. The political position and opportunities of women in many countries have been supported by government initiatives aimed at training women to be prepared for political roles as well as the activities of women's groups that have been advocating for women's rights and against cultural stereotypes. In Bahrain, for example, the country adopted a National Action Charter focused on the issue of women's rights and advancement. This included the intention to increase the representation of women at all levels of government.<sup>75</sup> Women have also made political gains in Jordan, Kuwait, and Qatar, where they are entering the political

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<sup>75</sup> *National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain on Progress Made in the Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +20*, 2014.

sphere in greater numbers. Women in Kuwait play a major role in the civil service and women in Qatar have even taken on ministerial positions.<sup>76</sup> In Oman, the government has been active in increasing the number of women in government, including appointing women to the State Council and to some ministerial positions. More women in Oman are entering into the political sphere, running for office, and participating in other political groups and activities.<sup>77</sup>

However, these political gains have not been rapid or universal. Women continue to be severely underrepresented in governments throughout the region, even in those countries just mentioned where they have made significant progress. Women are also still excluded from positions with real power and influence in most cases. In addition, political progress has not been universal. Governments in some countries have shown little true support for advancing women's rights or increasing the representation of women in politics. Women remain largely excluded in Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkmenistan, among other countries.<sup>78</sup> For example, in Iraq, there is little political will to improve the status of women's rights and women have few civic organizations to fight for their own rights.

With diminished Western influence, forces in the region that support the role of women in the public sphere are also lessened. This may lead to retrenchment in the traditional political and social roles of women, and an increase in obstacles faced by female SF soldiers.<sup>79</sup> In Pakistan, there has been some attention paid by the government, at least in rhetoric, to advance the participation of women in politics. However, most reforms have had little meaningful effect in

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<sup>76</sup> "Kuwait: Language, Customs, Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/kuwait-country-profile.html>, accessed 3/20/2015; "Culture of Kuwait," Countries and their Cultures, <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Kuwait.html>, accessed March 20, 2015; State of Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatari Women," <http://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/Qatar/Pages/QatariWomen.aspx>, accessed March 20, 2014; Courtney King, "For Qatari Women, Change Slow in Coming," ABC News Reporter's Notebook, April 11, 2014; "Culture of Qatar," Cultures of the World, Accessed March 20, 2014; "Life in Qatar," <http://www.lifeinqatar.com/en/section/living>, accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>77</sup> "Fighting for Women's Rights," BBC News, Special Report, October 27, 2008; UNICEF, "OMAN: MENA Gender Equality Profile: The Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa," 2011; Deeb, 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Salbi, 2013; John Leland, "Iraqi Women Are Seeking Greater Political Influence," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2010; Trust in Education, "Life as an Afghan Woman," <http://www.trustededucation.org/resources/life-as-an-afghan-woman/2015>, accessed March 20, 2015; Hozyainova, 2014; "Culture of Afghanistan," Countries and their Cultures, accessed March 20, 2015; United States Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," March 11, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia", 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," July 8, 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>; "Women Second Class in Turkmenistan," Human Rights House Network, Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2012; Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Turkmenistan Country Profile," <http://genderindex.org/country/turkmenistan>.

<sup>79</sup> Salbi, 2013; Leland, 2010; Suaad Allami and George Phelan, "The United States and Women's Rights in Iraq: Legacy Interrupted," *Women's Law Journal*, Vol. 97, No. 20, 2012.

practice and there is resistance to greater political roles for women from religious leaders and men.<sup>80</sup>

In the economic sphere, women in USCENTCOM countries have made gains in the labor market, both in terms of the number of women employed and the range of sectors open to them. Especially in major cities, women are increasingly taking jobs outside of the home. Women have made economic gains even in countries where they still have limited rights in other areas. For example, in Oman, women have entered new sectors such as journalism.<sup>81</sup> In Saudi Arabia, women have taken jobs in information technology, politics, business, although they still face discrimination and must have the permission of their male guardian to work outside the home at all.<sup>82</sup> In Pakistan, women now hold jobs in business, the police force and the government.<sup>83</sup>

Urbanization and economic development in the region have helped to create new jobs for women. This has been reinforced by government-run and NGO programs that support, train, and fund female entrepreneurs who are able to sell their own goods at markets.<sup>84</sup> However, despite this progress, women still face discrimination from some employers, a pay gap with men, and a limited number of economic opportunities compared to their male colleagues. Furthermore, in many countries most women continue to remain in the home. This is particularly true in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.<sup>85</sup>

Women have made less progress in social and cultural spheres. Cultural stereotypes remain strong. Women are still subservient and subordinate to men and face significant restrictions on

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<sup>80</sup> Council on Asian Transnational Threat Research, "Women in Pakistan," *Asian Conflicts Reports*, Issue 8, October 2009; [http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror\\_Tribes\\_and\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Women\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror_Tribes_and_the_War_on_Women_in_Pakistan.pdf); accessed March 20, 2015; Pal, 2000; Tanzeen Ali et al., "Gender Roles and Their Influence on Life Prospects for Women in Urban Karachi, Pakistan: A Qualitative Study," *Global Health Action*, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Chatty, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> "KSA Female Employment Rate Among Lowest in MENA Region," *Arab News*, <http://www.arabnews.com/news/445991>, 25 March 2013, accessed March 20, 2015; "Higher Education: the Path to Progress for Saudi Women", *World Policy*, October 18, 2011, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2011/10/18/higher-education-path-progress-saudi-women>.

<sup>83</sup> Hayat, Malik, "Pakistan Employment Trends for Women," Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit Ministry of Labour and Manpower, Vol. 5, No. 2: pp. 13–17, <http://www.lmis.gov.pk/PETFW%20FINAL%20DRAFT.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, "Study on Ways and Methods to Eliminate Sexual Harassment in Egypt," 2013, <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Sexual-Harassment-Study-Egypt-Final-EN.pdf>; "Egypt: Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, accessed March 20, 2014; Rogers, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Freedom House, Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Yemen, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html>, accessed 13 March 2015; United States Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, March 11, 2010, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia", 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," July 8, 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>; Trust in Education, "Life as an Afghan Woman," 2015, accessed March 20, 2015; Hozyainova, 2014; "Culture of Afghanistan," *Countries and their Cultures*, accessed March 20, 2015; Salbi, 2013; Leland, 2010.

their behavior, dress, and interaction with men. Women are, however, beginning to challenge these cultural stereotypes in some areas. Women are achieving greater parity with men in education and are gaining some autonomy from men. Progress in the social arena has been greatest in major cities and in countries including Jordan, Qatar, and even to an extent in Pakistan and Yemen.<sup>86</sup> In Jordan, for instance, greater openness, more technology, and exposure to Western cultures provide more freedom to women and may reduce potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face.<sup>87</sup>

Better education for women also alters their roles in society and gives them additional independence. In Kuwait, women are joining civic organizations and pushing for expanded rights. Western influences may also help open new opportunities. However, traditional influences could work in the opposite direction.<sup>88</sup> In Oman, Western influences, technology, and increasing female education may all contribute to increased freedom and opportunities for women in the social sphere.

At the same time, traditional practices and customs continue to reinforce traditional gender roles that keep women separate from men.<sup>89</sup> Even in Saudi Arabia, small groups of women have been advocating for greater rights and opportunities and challenging traditional gender stereotypes. There are small groups of women who refuse to accept traditional roles and have been rejecting social convention, by remaining single, pursuing divorce, working outside the home, and defying the driving ban.

Technology and social media in Saudi Arabia are also important and have been giving women opportunities to express their attitudes and opinions more freely. However, more

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<sup>86</sup> "Cultural Issues and Survival Tips: Life in Jordan," <https://sites.google.com/site/lifeinjordan/family-life/cultural-issues-survival-tips>; "Jordan, Culture and Etiquette," *Rough Guides*, <http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/middle-east/jordan/culture-etiquette/>, accessed May 22, 2015; State of Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatari Women," <http://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/Qatar/Pages/QatariWomen.aspx>, accessed March 20, 2014, accessed March 20, 2014; "Life in Qatar," <http://www.lifeinqatar.com/en/section/living>, accessed March 20, 2015; King, 2014; "Culture of Qatar," *Cultures of the World*, Accessed March 20, 2014; Tanzeen Ali et al., 2011; Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Yemen*, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html>, accessed 13 March 2015; Buringa, 1992; UNICEF, "The Situation of Women and Children in the Republic of Yemen," 1992.

<sup>87</sup> "Cultural Issues and Survival Tips: Life in Jordan," <https://sites.google.com/site/lifeinjordan/family-life/cultural-issues-survival-tips>; "Jordan, Culture and Etiquette," *Rough Guides*, <http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/middle-east/jordan/culture-etiquette/>, accessed May 22, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> "Kuwait: Language, Customs, Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/kuwait-country-profile.html>, accessed 3/20/2015; "Culture of Kuwait," *Countries and their Cultures*, <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Kuwait.html>, accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>89</sup> "Culture of Oman," *Cultures of the World*, Accessed March 20, 2014; "Fighting for Women's Rights," BBC News, Special Report, October 27, 2008; UNICEF, "OMAN: MENA Gender Equality Profile: The Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa," 2011.

traditional communities and older generations in the country have actively resisted these changes.<sup>90</sup>

In contrast, the public sphere remains mostly closed to women in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, as well as in the UAE.<sup>91</sup> Restrictions have become somewhat greater in some countries as well, including Egypt since the recent revolution. Specifically, the resurgence of radical Islam in the country may push women into more traditional roles. In fact, the re-emergence and spread of radical Islam is a factor that may affect the position of women in a number of countries in the region including Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, technology and exposure to Western culture and norms have made young women in Egypt more vocal and less conservative and traditional.<sup>93</sup>

Religion continues to exert a strong influence on the opportunities and roles for women. Despite Western influence, modernization, and technological progress, religious restrictions on women remain strong throughout the region. In fact, the resurgence of radical Islam throughout the region could pose additional obstacles to women if it leads to a strengthening of religious restrictions and influence on both social and cultural norms. This is true in many countries,

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<sup>90</sup> "Higher Education: the Path to Progress for Saudi Women," *World Policy*, October 18, 2011, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2011/10/18/higher-education-path-progress-saudi-women>; Yakinj Ertürk, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences: Mission to Saudi Arabia," United Nations, April 2009, [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/11session/A.HRC.11.6.Add.3\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/11session/A.HRC.11.6.Add.3_en.pdf); United States Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Saudi Arabia," March 11, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136079.htm>, accessed March 20, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2013 - Saudi Arabia", 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights Promises Broken," July 8, 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a55b2c112.html>; Le Renard, 2008; Sharp, 2004.

<sup>91</sup> "Cultural Taboos in the UAE," Advice for Living Abroad, published by Reach to Teach; "Culture of the United Arab Emirates," Countries and their Cultures, <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-Arab-Emirates.html>; International Federation of Human Rights, "Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates," January 2010; "Women in the UAE," [www.sheikhmohammed.ae](http://www.sheikhmohammed.ae); World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2013," 2013, pp. 12-13, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20); "Culture of Tajikistan," [www.everyculture.com](http://www.everyculture.com); "Cultural Information: Tajikistan," Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada: Factsheet, accessed March 2015; "Cultural Guidelines," Travel Tajikistan, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html>.

<sup>92</sup> Trust in Education, "Life as an Afghan Woman," 2015, accessed March 20, 2015; Hozyainova, 2014; "Culture of Afghanistan," Countries and their Cultures, accessed March 20, 2015; Salbi, 2013; Leland, 2010; Kathryn M. Coughlin, "Muslim Women and the Family in Iraq: Modern World," ABC-CLIO, <http://dailylife.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1424571?terms=iraq+women%27s+rights/>, accessed on Apr 25, 2013; Allami and Phelan, 2012.

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, "Study on Ways and Methods to Eliminate Sexual Harassment in Egypt," 2013, <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Sexual-Harassment-Study-Egypt-Final-EN.pdf>, 2013; "Egypt: Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, accessed March 20, 2014; Rogers, 2011.

including not only Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, but also the former Soviet states where the influence of Islam has been less.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that despite progress that has been made, violence against women and sexual harassment remain significant issues that only feebly addressed by the region's governments.

Overall, these changes in the roles of women are likely to somewhat reduce the challenges faced by female SF soldiers. However, because the pace of the change has been so slow and uneven and because women continue to face significant discrimination and restrictions in most areas of life, the USCENTCOM region is likely to remain a relatively challenging sphere for female SF soldiers.

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<sup>94</sup> Trust in Education, "Life as an Afghan Woman," 2015, accessed March 20, 2015; Hozyainova, 2014; "Culture of Afghanistan," Countries and their Cultures, accessed March 20, 2015; Salbi, 2013; Leland, 2010; Coughlin, Kathryn M. "Muslim Women and the Family in Iraq: Modern World," ABC-CLIO, <http://dailylife.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1424571?terms=iraq+women%27s+rights>, accessed on Apr 25, 2013; Allami and Phelan, 2012; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, "Study on Ways and Methods to Eliminate Sexual Harassment in Egypt," 2013, <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Sexual-Harassment-Study-Egypt-Final-EN.pdf>; "Egypt: Language, Culture, Customs, and Etiquette," *Kwintessential*, accessed March 20, 2014.; Rogers, 2011; Ali et al., 2000; Pal, 2000; Council on Asian Transnational Threat Research, "Women in Pakistan," *Asian Conflicts Reports*, Issue 8, October 2009, [http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror\\_Tribes\\_and\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Women\\_in\\_Pakistan.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4907~v~Terror_Tribes_and_the_War_on_Women_in_Pakistan.pdf); Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Turkmenistan Country Profile" <http://genderindex.org/country/Turkmenistan>; Umetalieva, 2004; United States Peace Corps, "Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issue in Kazakhstan," Peace Corps Information Sheet, accessed 2015; "The Culture of Kazakhstan," Cultures of the World, accessed March 20, 2015; "Cultural Information: Kazakhstan," Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade Department, 2015.

## 5. Opportunities and Challenges in USEUCOM

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### Overview of Traditional Roles of Women in USEUCOM

Given its strong historical and cultural connection with the United States, some might assume that female SF soldiers will not face substantive challenges while carrying out missions in the USEUCOM AOR. Yet given recent economic and demographic changes in this region, a closer analysis of this region is warranted. Given the region's size as well as its cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity, it is not surprising that the roles of women also vary across the region. For instance, Western European countries share similar cultural norms as the United States regarding gender norms and women's rights, while many countries in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Central Asian countries in the USEUCOM AOR tend to hold more conservative perspectives on the roles of women.

#### *Cultural*

There are important cultural differences across the USEUCOM region that influence the way gender norms have traditionally been defined. For instance, the Nordic and Baltic countries, along with the Netherlands emphasize consensus-building as a rule. As a result, cultural norms in these areas generally emphasize gender equality and equal rights. In parts of southern and southeastern Europe (e.g., Cyprus, Greece, Macedonia, Portugal, and Romania), many cultures tend to be more hierarchical and patriarchal. The definition of gender roles in Russia and the former Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe have also been influenced by the communist periods in their histories, during which women were encouraged to take on new roles outside the household—in particular in the workplace. In addition, gender roles in some countries have been heavily influenced by religions norms. This includes Islamic countries in the USEUCOM region (e.g., Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Turkey) and some regions in the Northern Caucasus, as well as Roman Catholic countries such as Austria, Italy and Poland.

#### *Economic*

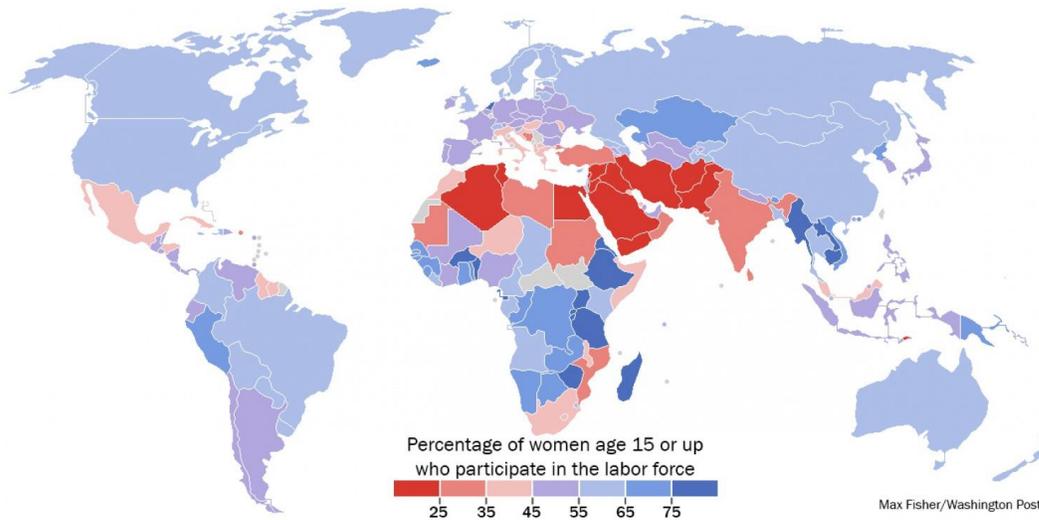
Women in this region have entered the workforce in larger numbers and significant progress toward economic equality has been made. For instance, Central and Eastern Europe have emerged as leaders in developing female senior executives. In a recent PriceWaterhouse Cooper survey, seven of the top 10 countries for female representation among senior executives are in Eastern Europe, headed by world leader Russia, where four out of every 10 business leaders are women.<sup>95</sup> However, challenges remain. For instance, research indicates that women work in less

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<sup>95</sup> Henry Foy, "Women in Eastern Europe Lead the Way to Senior Roles," *Financial Times*, May 6, 2015.

valued jobs and sectors (health, education and welfare sectors), receive lower remuneration, and work more part-time than men (women account for over 75% of part-timers).<sup>96</sup> In addition, there are disparities between the economic opportunities for women in urban areas versus rural areas, as well as richer countries, versus poorer countries (e.g., Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine). As in other regions, women's participation in the formal labor market generally tends to be higher in urban and richer countries (see Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1. Female Labor Force Participation Around the World**



Source: World Bank / World Development Indicators (Max Fisher/The Washington Post).

These differences in economic roles have also helped to redefine the roles of women around the region. Many countries that have high levels of female participation in the labor force (e.g., countries in Northern Europe) have focused their policies on protecting women in the workforce as well as family leave policies.

### *Ethnic*

Ethnic minorities are common across Europe, and throughout its history, this region has experienced periodic tension between the evolving mix of cultures, ethnicities, and religions that have co-existed at any one time in the region. Recently, the influx of migrants into Europe from areas in North Africa and the Middle East has reignited the debate about the rights of ethnic minorities versus ethnic majorities in the USEUCOM region. Part of this most recent debate centers around a conversation regarding the appropriate roles of women in society, and the tug-of-war between more traditional, conservative roles versus more liberal roles. The contours of

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<sup>96</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, *2012 Gender Equality Index*, 2012.

this debate is still emerging and developing, but it is a good example of how differing perceptions of social roles are defined by culture, ethnicity, religion and history.

### *Political*

Women's participation in politics has generally increased across the USEUCOM region. Female participation in politics is generally highest in Western Europe. In 2010, 44 percent of parliamentary seats were occupied by women in Sweden—the country with the highest proportion of women in parliament without a gender quota.<sup>97</sup> During the communist era, quotas on the number of women in national legislature were implemented through the Central and Eastern European region. As a result of those quotas being rescinded, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of women elected to post-1989 parliaments across Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>98</sup> However, the number of women in parliament in this region is slowly climbing.

### *Religious*

While Christianity has been the dominant religion in Europe for centuries, minority religions are rapidly growing. Islam is now the fastest-growing religion in Europe, with nearly five million Muslims living in France and four million Muslims living in Germany.<sup>99</sup> In many areas Christianity and church attendance is waning. In 2010, only 51 percent of citizens in the European Union's 27 countries said they believed in God, and in Sweden, Estonia and the Czech Republic, that number fell below 20 percent.<sup>100</sup> However, growth in Islam is increasing. The Pew Research Center estimates that in the European Union, Islam will grow from 4.5 percent in 2010 to 7.1 percent in 2030. The potential impact of this growth is discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter. However, it is clear that interpretations of the various religions in the region (primarily Islam and Christianity) have played a major role in defining and reinforcing traditional gender roles in the region throughout the region's history.

## Challenges for Female SF Soldiers in USEUCOM

### *Issues that Could Impact Mission Effectiveness*

Given that pockets of patriarchy remain in the USEUCOM AOR, we expect that female SF soldiers could encounter some challenges in carrying out missions in some parts of Europe (e.g.,

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<sup>97</sup> Leila Rafei, "Which Country Has the Highest Proportion of Women in Parliament?" The World Bank, March 4, 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Amanda Sloat, "Fixing an Old Divide: The Political Participation of Women in an Enlarged Europe," May 15, 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Salima Korona and Carlos H. Martinelli, "How Islam Became the Fastest-Growing Religion in Europe," *Time*, January 16, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Ames, "Religion in Europe, Also in Crisis," *Global Post*, June 3, 2013.

Belarus, Georgia). For instance, some male indigenous forces in some parts of the region may resist interacting with female American soldiers. This could inhibit their FID mission. In addition, in Muslim countries such as Azerbaijan and Turkey, female SF soldiers may be restricted in their movement, as well as access to populations and information. This could inhibit their CT, SR, UW missions. Barriers may be greater in rural communities and among immigrant communities.

### *Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Challenges*

The main cultural challenges in the region stem from conservative cultural and religious interpretations of appropriate gender roles. Some cultures in the region remain highly patriarchal and conservative religions in the region (especially Islam) may call for strict restrictions on the movement and access of female SF soldiers.

For the intensity ratings of challenges that female SF soldiers may face in all 50 USEUCOM countries, please see Table A.6, A.7 and A.8.

### **Capabilities that Female SF Soldiers Could Provide in USEUCOM**

Despite the potential challenges outlined above, female SF soldiers could provide enhanced capabilities when operating in the USEUCOM AOR. In countries across Western Europe that share similar gender norms as the United States, female SF soldiers could easily blend in with those societies and establish cooperative relationships with both indigenous men and women. Female SF soldiers may also have fewer difficulties interacting with male members of those militaries during FID or SFA missions because they are accustomed to interacting with female military members. In Muslim countries (such as Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey), female SF soldiers could potentially provide access to places and information that male SF soldiers could not. In addition, in countries where female soldiers are just beginning to enter their militaries (such as Armenia), female SF soldiers could also potentially provide enhanced capabilities in training those forces and mentoring women in those militaries.

### **Factors that May Change the Future Role of Women in USEUCOM**

Europe has been undergoing rapid changes that may impact the future roles of women. For instance, Europe is undergoing a demographic change in which fertility rates are dropping and population growth is stagnating. According to some estimates, Europe is the only region projected to see a decline in its total population between 2010 and 2050.<sup>101</sup> However, large numbers of migrants (especially from North Africa and the Middle East) are entering Europe in an attempt to flee conflict and economic hardship. Some of these migrants hold more

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<sup>101</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, "Europe," April 2, 2015.

conservative views on gender norms, which could potentially change the future roles of women in the region or at least spark intense debate over what those roles should be.

Changes in religious affiliation may also impact future roles of women in USEUCOM. As indicated in Figure 5.2, although Christians are expected to remain the largest religious group in the region, Europe’s Christian population is expected to drop by about 100 million people, falling from 553 million in 2010 to 454 million in 2050. Europe’s Jewish population also is expected to shrink, from 1.4 million in 2010 to 1.2 million in 2050. Europe’s Muslim population is projected to increase by 63 percent, growing from 43 million in 2010 to 71 million in 2050.<sup>102</sup>

**Figure 5.2. Size, Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups in Europe, 2010-2050**

**Size, Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups in Europe, 2010-2050**

	2010 ESTIMATED POPULATION	% IN 2010	2050 PROJECTED POPULATION	% IN 2050	POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2050	% INCREASE 2010-2050	COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (%)
Christians	553,280,000	74.5%	454,090,000	65.2%	-99,190,000	-17.9%	-0.5%
Unaffiliated	139,890,000	18.8	162,320,000	23.3	22,420,000	16.0	0.4
Muslims	43,470,000	5.9	70,870,000	10.2	27,400,000	63.0	1.2
Jews	1,420,000	0.2	1,200,000	0.2	-220,000	-15.2	-0.4
Hindus	1,380,000	0.2	2,660,000	0.4	1,280,000	92.9	1.7
Buddhists	1,350,000	0.2	2,490,000	0.4	1,140,000	85.0	1.5
Other Religions	890,000	0.1	1,100,000	0.2	210,000	23.3	0.5
Folk Religions	870,000	0.1	1,590,000	0.2	720,000	83.1	1.5
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>742,550,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>696,330,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-46,220,000</b>	<b>-6.2</b>	<b>-0.2</b>

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. Population estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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Source: Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “Europe,” April 2, 2015.

The religiously unaffiliated population in Europe is also expected to grow because of high levels of religious switching, largely from Christianity.<sup>103</sup> Future migration is also expected to alter the religious landscape of Europe in future decades. As migration from Asia to Europe continues, Hindus, Buddhists and of folk religions and other religions all are expected to increase slightly as a share of the European population. By contrast, migration is expected to decrease the share of the region’s population that is Christian or unaffiliated.<sup>104</sup> These shifts away from

<sup>102</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “Europe,” April 2, 2015.

<sup>103</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “Europe,” April 2, 2015.

<sup>104</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “Europe,” April 2, 2015.

Christianity and toward Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and folk religions may impact how future gender roles are redefined in this region.

## 6. Opportunities and Challenges in USNORTHCOM

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### Overview of Traditional Roles of Women in USNORTHCOM

Three countries in the USNORTHCOM AOR are included in our study: the Bahamas, Canada, and Mexico.<sup>105</sup> Given that the United States, Bahamas and Canada share similar cultural norms regarding gender roles, we do not anticipate that female SF soldiers would encounter any substantive challenges operating in those countries. However, Mexico is highly patriarchal and dominated by a culture of machismo and Mexico has very clearly defined traditional gender roles. As a result, the remainder of this chapter primarily focuses on gender roles in Mexico and how they may influence how indigenous cultures may interact with female SF soldier.

#### *Cultural*

Although women and men are equal before the law in Mexico, clear differences persist in terms of authority and privileges. Women play crucial roles in the family and motherhood is esteemed in Mexico, but men remain the dominant head of the household. Women in Mexico are also seen as the caretakers of morality and they play a major role in religion—particularly Catholicism. There are two key cultural icons in Mexico for defining femininity: La Malinche and the Virgin of Guadalupe. The myth of La Malinche refers to the Indian woman who was given to conqueror Hernán Cortés in 1519. In contrast to La Malinche, the Virgin of Guadalupe represents suffering and sacrifice. This has given rise to the image of the submissive, self-sacrificing, but virtuous woman (*la abnegada*).<sup>106</sup>

#### *Economic*

As in other regions, women are playing an increasing economic role in Mexico—especially in urban areas. Female participation in the labor market has increased, however, some challenges remain. For instance, women in Mexico are paid less than men, particularly in top professions and the gap is widening.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, a 2012 World Development Report found that for each dollar men earn in Mexico, women earn 20 cents.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas) are also in the USNORTHCOM AOR, but we do not include them in our study because they are U.S. territories.

<sup>106</sup> “Mexico,” Countries and their Cultures, accessed July 8, 2015.

<sup>107</sup> The World Bank, “Women Play Key Role in Economic Gains in Latin America and the Caribbean,” August 29, 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/08/29/women-play-key-role-in-economic-gains-in-latin-american-and-caribbean>.

<sup>108</sup> The World Bank, *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, 2012.

### *Ethnic*

Mexico is comprised of several ethnic groups. The mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) group accounts for 62 percent of the population, Amerindian people or predominantly Amerindian people account for 28 percent, and 10 percent of the population is white.<sup>109</sup> Mexico's indigenous groups include the Nahuas, Otomís, Mayas, Mixtecos, Tzeltales, Tzotziles, and Zapotecas.<sup>110</sup> Rural and indigenous groups tend to retain strong traditional gender roles in which women are primarily caretakers of their children first and foremost, and then of their husbands.

### *Political*

Women's participation in the Mexican political system has been steadily increasing. Women hold 38 percent of the lower chamber of congress and 33 percent of the upper chamber of congress (a higher proportion than the United States)<sup>111</sup>—this is largely due to legal requirements that mandate that 40 percent of each party's candidate lists for Congressional seats be reserved for women. In 2012, Josefina Vázquez Mota was elected to run as the first female candidate for president and by some indications, women are voting in larger numbers in Mexico than men.

### *Religious*

As of 2012, 84.9 percent of Mexicans were Catholic, 10.1 percent of the Mexican population is Other Christian, and five percent of the population is Non-Christian.<sup>112</sup> Mexico has the second largest Catholic population in the world and 8.8 percent of the world's Catholic's live in Mexico.<sup>113</sup> The predominance of Catholicism in Mexico has had a major influence on the definition and reinforcement of traditional gender norms in Mexico. However, there has been a steady drop in the number of Catholics in Mexico. In 1970, 96 percent of the Mexican population was Catholic. In 2014, the number of Catholics in Mexico dropped to 81 percent and the number of Protestants has slightly increased.<sup>114</sup> This change could impact the way that gender norms are redefined and reinforced in Mexico.

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<sup>109</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook: Mexico*, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> "Mexico," Countries and their Cultures, accessed July 8, 2015.

<sup>111</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," June 2015; "Women in Mexican Politics: The XX Factor," *The Economist*, February 12, 2012. Mexico's parliament consists of a lower chamber with 500 members and a higher chamber with 128 seats.

<sup>112</sup> Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," 2011.

<sup>113</sup> Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," 2011.

<sup>114</sup> Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region," November 13, 2014.

## Challenges for Female SF Soldiers in USNORTHCOM

### *Issues that Could Impact Mission Effectiveness*

Given the patriarchal, culture of machismo in Mexico, we expect that female SF soldiers could encounter some moderate challenges in carrying out potential missions in Mexico. Some male indigenous Mexican forces in some parts of the country may resist interacting with female American soldiers. In addition, female SF soldiers may not be able to gain access to some traditionally all-male social and cultural spheres. This could potentially impact their ability to establish trusted relationships with local communities, collect information, and shape local conditions.

### *Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Challenges*

While gender roles are changing in Mexico, our findings indicate that female SF soldiers may face some challenges when operating with indigenous forces in Mexico that adhere to traditional conservative cultural and gender norms. Female SF soldiers are more likely to encounter these sorts of challenges in rural areas than in more urban areas. In addition, female SF soldiers may face some obstacles due to conservative religious interpretations of appropriate gender roles.

### *Safety Issues to Individual Female Soldiers*

Violence against women in Mexico is a serious potential concern for female SF soldiers. This violence is exacerbated by ongoing violence carried out by drug cartels and gangs in Mexico. In northeastern Mexico (a major drugs battleground), the number of women slain jumped over 500 percent between 2001 and 2010 and about 4,000 women disappeared in Mexico in 2011-2012, mostly in Chihuahua and the State of Mexico.<sup>115</sup> On July 30, 2015, Mexico issued its first ever “gender alert” in the central State of Mexico in response to a high incidence of killings and disappearances of women.<sup>116</sup> Amnesty International reports that six out of 10 female Central American migrants are raped passing through Mexico.<sup>117</sup> In addition, women are often the targets of kidnappings and human trafficking.<sup>118</sup>

If the severity of this problem in Mexico continues, female SF soldiers will need to be aware of where violence has been most prevalent so that they can take precautions. As mentioned

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<sup>115</sup> Anahi Rama and Lizbeth Diaz, “Violence Against Women ‘Pandemic’ in Mexico, *Reuters*, March 7, 2014.

<sup>116</sup> “Mexico: Government Declares Alert for Violence Against Women,” Associated Press, July 30, 2015.

<sup>117</sup> Anahi Rama and Lizbeth Diaz, “Violence Against Women ‘Pandemic’ in Mexico, *Reuters*, March 7, 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Jennifer Clement, “Mexico’s Lost Daughters: How Young Women Are Sold Into the Sex Trade by Gangs,” *The Guardian*, February 8, 2014; *United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2014.

above, such violence could also potentially inhibit the movement of female SF soldiers—especially if they are operating alone. In such cases, decisions regarding whether female soldiers should operate in uniform or in civilian clothing will need to be made based on local conditions. In some cases female soldiers may be safer operating in uniform; in other cases, they may become more of a target if they are in uniform.

For the intensity ratings of challenges that female SF soldiers may face in all 3 USNORTHCOM countries, please see Table A.9.

## Capabilities that Female SF Soldiers Could Provide in USNORTHCOM

Despite the potential challenges outlined above, female SF soldiers could provide enhanced capabilities when operating in the USNORTHCOM AOR. In places such as Canada and the Bahamas, which share similar gender norms to the United States, female SF soldiers could easily blend in with those societies and establish cooperative relationships with both indigenous men and women. In Mexico, female SF soldiers could potentially provide access to places and information that male SF soldiers cannot. In addition, since women are allowed to enter the Mexican military,<sup>119</sup> female SF soldiers could also potentially provide enhanced capabilities in training Mexican forces and mentoring Mexican military women.

## Factors that May Change the Future Role of Women in USNORTHCOM

Roles of women in Canada and the Bahamas will likely continue on the same trajectory that they are on currently, in which women's rights continue to expand. However, in Mexico, it is likely that gender roles will evolve as demographics continue to shift and increasing numbers of younger women potentially challenge traditional cultural and gender norms. In addition, if the current trend continues toward decreased religious affiliation with Catholicism, this may also have an impact on how gender roles in Mexico are redefined. Lastly, migration patterns are already having an impact on how gender roles are defined in Mexico and if they continue, they could redefine traditional gender roles—especially in rural Mexico. Every year for the past decade, 200,000 Mexican men have left for the U.S., and as a consequence, women in rural areas have had to take on the roles that their husbands used to occupy, including running family businesses, and playing increased roles in local economies.<sup>120</sup> This trend could continue to expand the definitions of women's social and economic roles in Mexican society.

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<sup>119</sup> Women are not allowed to serve in the combat arms and serve almost exclusively in the areas of administration, medical care, communications, and physical education.

<sup>120</sup> Jean Guererro, "In Mexico's Countryside, Machismo on the Wane," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2012.

## 7. Opportunities and Challenges in USPACOM

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### Overview of Traditional Roles of Women in USPACOM

Of the six CCMD's, the USPACOM AOR is one of the most diverse in terms of culture, ethnicity, economics and religion. It is also one of the most dynamic regions, with rapid economic and political changes occurring throughout the region. As a result, the roles of women and their decisionmaking authority within the family and society also vary. More women in the region have access to higher education and this has contributed to narrowing gender gaps in the region's labor force participation—especially as women take on new roles in changing regional economies. In addition, more women have entered positions of political authority in the region, and burgeoning new regional and local nongovernmental organizations are focusing on promoting women's issues and women's rights.

Despite these gains though, women in the Asia-Pacific region continue to lag behind men in the areas of business leadership, business ownership, and political participation. For instance, women are still most likely to be found in the most vulnerable employment in agriculture and the informal sectors, and undertaking most of the unpaid work in the productive and reproductive spheres.<sup>121</sup> In addition, women's parliamentary representation in the Asia-Pacific region is just 18 percent, only a marginal improvement from 1995 when they comprised 12 percent. Women's rights are also severely restricted in some countries based on religions—especially in Muslim countries/regions that institute Sharia (e.g., Brunei, areas of Kelantan in Malaysia, Aceh province in Indonesia, and Mindanao province in Philippines).

The rapid changes that are occurring in this region could have major impacts on the potential future roles of women. For instance, the outcomes of current ideological struggles between conservatism and liberalism could frame the future roles of women in some countries. In addition, continued urbanization in the region may also contribute to shaping gender norms. Lastly, demographic changes may also have an impact on gender roles if increasing numbers of young women continue to challenge traditional cultural norms. Given the region's diverse cultural, social, economic and religious landscape, it may be difficult to provide general rules for the employment of female SF soldiers in this region and such decisions may need to be context dependent.

#### *Cultural*

Many women in the region (especially in rural areas) continue to carry out traditional roles, such as caring for the household and domestic tasks. However, in some countries and many urban areas, women are often well-educated, they have greater equality and freedoms, and most

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<sup>121</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 7.

countries protect the rights of women to work outside the home, as well as maternity leave. However, unequal gender roles continue to constrain women's lives in many countries in the region. For instance, discriminatory and harmful practices such as son preference and child marriage persist in some places such as China and India, and violence against women and girls is pervasive, with perpetrators subjected to little moral or legal sanction.<sup>122</sup>

### *Economic*

It is difficult to generalize about the economic position of women in the USPACOM region because there is such a wide range of differences across economies. For instance Cambodia, Laos and Timor-Leste are among the poorest countries in the world, and Brunei Darussalam and Singapore are among the most prosperous. In middle income and emerging middle income countries such as China, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and to a somewhat lesser extent, Indonesia, women are significantly integrated into the workforce.<sup>123</sup> At the same time, in the poorest countries in the region, (such as Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Laos, Cambodia, remoter provinces of Indonesia, and some Pacific Islands), the disparity between women and men in economic and health outcomes remains high.<sup>124</sup> Overall, more than 60 percent of workers in the Asia-Pacific region are characterized as 'vulnerable' (meaning they are own-account workers, unpaid family workers, or in casual, part-time or temporary employment) and women make up a disproportionately large share of these vulnerable workers.<sup>125</sup>

In general, women in rural areas of the region also have fewer economic opportunities than women in urban areas, although there are exceptions. For instance, in rural Bangladesh, women have traditionally played an important role in a wide range of income-generating activities, including cow fattening and milking, goat farming, backyard poultry rearing, cane and bamboo works, silk reeling, handloom weaving, garment making, fishnet making, and handicrafts.<sup>126</sup> A significant number of rural women, particularly from extremely poor landless households, also engage in traditional male activities such as paid labor in construction, earthwork and agricultural work. The "tradition of female seclusion is overlooked to provide for the economic needs of the family."<sup>127</sup> Nearly 50 percent of women in South Asia and over 60 percent in the

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<sup>122</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup> The World Bank, "Gender in East Asia and Pacific," 2013.

<sup>124</sup> The World Bank, "Gender in East Asia and Pacific," 2013.

<sup>125</sup> International Labor Organization, "Equality and Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific," <http://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/equality-and-discrimination/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>126</sup> Revathi Balakrishnan, "Rural Women and Food Security in Asia and the Pacific: Prospects and Paradoxes," Food and Agricultural Organization, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2005.

<sup>127</sup> Revathi Balakrishnan, "Rural Women and Food Security in Asia and the Pacific: Prospects and Paradoxes," Food and Agricultural Organization, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2005.

Pacific Islands are still concentrated in agriculture and unpaid work on family agricultural enterprises accounts for 34 percent of informal employment for women in India.<sup>128</sup>

Women make up nearly half of business owners in the region, but aside from East Asia, women have a higher unemployment rate than men (almost twice the global average).<sup>129</sup> Women also continue to face challenges breaking into higher management positions in the region. According to a 2015 Grant Thornton survey entitled "Women in Business: The Path to Leadership," the proportion of senior business leadership roles held by women in the Asia-Pacific region has dropped to 20 percent, below both the global average of 22 percent and the long-run average for the region of 24 percent.<sup>130</sup>

Increased educational attainment and participation among women continue to improve in the region and have helped drive economic growth. In addition, as countries in the region have shifted to export-oriented economies, lower-paid women have become essential to factory work. In countries like India and Bangladesh, where there has been a big increase in the number of women taking up regular employment since 2007.<sup>131</sup>

However, women are still more likely to earn less than men and be employed in insecure jobs, less likely to advance in their career and do more unpaid work.<sup>132</sup> Gender differences remain, especially in Southern Asia (e.g., Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) and the Pacific Islands, with women most likely to be found in the most vulnerable employment conditions.<sup>133</sup> Few girls pursue science and engineering degrees, and the number of female-owned and run businesses in the region is less than half of male-owned and run businesses.<sup>134</sup>

### *Ethnic*

The Asia-Pacific region is also one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the world. For instance, there are 56 different ethnicities in China alone. Throughout the Asia-Pacific region, there is wide variation of social norms across these ethnic groups. It is important to note that nearly three-quarters of the world's indigenous people's live in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>135</sup> These

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<sup>128</sup> Asian Development Bank, "Gender Equality and Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific," September 18, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> UN Women, "Asia and the Pacific," <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/asia-and-the-pacific>.

<sup>130</sup> "Survey: Asia-Pacific Firms See Fewer Women in Leadership Roles," *Bangkok Post*, March 15, 2015.

<sup>131</sup> Mastercard, *Index of Women's Advancement 2015*, 2015, <http://www.masterintelligence.com/content/intelligence/en/research/reports/2015/mastercard-index-of-womens-advancement.html>.

<sup>132</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2014*, OECD, 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2014*, OECD, 2014.

<sup>134</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2014*, OECD, 2014.

<sup>135</sup> Asian Development Bank, "Indigenous Peoples," 2015, <http://www.adb.org/site/safeguards/indigenous-peoples>.

societies often have unique cultures, traditions and norms, and are often marginalized. For instance, in Bangladesh, the Ahmadiyya and Rohingya communities continue to face harsh treatment and threats.<sup>136</sup> In India, over 84 million Adivasis (original indigenous people) from more than 500 tribal groups live in western, central, eastern and north-eastern India.<sup>137</sup> Adivasis remain the poorest socio-economic group in India, with low literacy and the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the country. The risk of an Adivasi child dying before the age of five is 25 percent higher than that of a nontribal child.<sup>138</sup>

The Asia-Pacific region also has a large number of matriarchal, matrilineal and matrifocal cultures.<sup>139</sup> Examples of these types of cultures include: the Philippines, the Mosuo in China, the Minangs in Indonesia, the Khasis in northwest India, tribes in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. In these cultures, women often hold positions of authority and serve as decisionmakers within their communities. In some ethnic groups, women play important roles in society as religious leaders, key community decisionmakers, or as conflict mediators. For instance, in South Korea and parts of northeast Asia, women have taken on roles as shamans or “mudangs” who serve as a mediator between the human and spirit worlds.<sup>140</sup> These ethnic groups could be important sources of information and engagement SF soldiers in the region and female SF soldiers may be able to access these populations in ways that male soldiers may not be able to. Men in matriarchal cultures may also be more willing to work with female SF soldiers since they are more accustomed to women in roles of authority.

### *Political*

Regional gains in education and labor force participation described above have yet to effectively translate into gender equality in political leadership. Though women have the right to stand for election, advances in women’s participation and leadership in political processes have been slow, and women continue to have a weaker voice than men in decisionmaking bodies in the region—holding just 18 percent of the seats in national parliaments across the region.<sup>141</sup> Only in the Philippines has female representation in national government risen above 10 per cent.<sup>142</sup> The Pacific region has the lowest parliamentary representation of women in the world. Among the island nations of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga,

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<sup>136</sup> Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, 2013, p. 127-128.

<sup>137</sup> Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, 2013, p. 135.

<sup>138</sup> Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, 2013, p. 135.

<sup>139</sup> Matriarchal cultures are cultures in which women rule families, clans, or tribes, whereas matrilineal cultures determine descent through the female line, and in matrifocal cultures, mothers are considered the head of the household.

<sup>140</sup> Choe Sang-Hun, “Shamanism Enjoys Revival in Techno-Savvy South Korea,” *The New York Times*, July 7, 2007.

<sup>141</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>142</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, “Women in Southeast Asia,” *Asia Society*, 2015, <http://asiasociety.org/women-southeast-asia>.

Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, only 4.7% of elected representatives were women as of January 2014.<sup>143</sup>

However, in recent years the number of women holding public office in the region has increased, especially in local government—partly due to the implementation of gender quotas in some countries such as Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and Nepal. Bangladesh has also achieved the eighth lowest gender gap in political empowerment in the world.<sup>144</sup> Some significant political successes were achieved by women in the region in 2014. For instance, eight women were elected to Parliament in Fiji’s first democratic elections since the 2006 coup, one of whom was appointed as the first-ever female Speaker of the House in the Pacific.<sup>145</sup> Additionally, in Solomon Islands, Freda Tuki became only the second woman to be successful in a national election, while a record 18 women ran for office.<sup>146</sup>

### *Religious*

The Asia-Pacific region is one of the most religiously diverse regions in the world. Hindus are the largest religious group in the region, comprising around 25 percent of the region’s population. This is followed by Muslims, who make up 24 percent of the population, and unaffiliated people who account for 21 percent of Asians. A little more than 12 percent, or one-in-ten, are Buddhists. The share of people in the region who are followers of folk or traditional religions – including Chinese folk religions and Australian aboriginal religions – is nine percent. Christians comprise seven percent of the region’s population, while Jews and followers of other religions each make up less than 1 percent of the population.<sup>147</sup> The Asia-Pacific region is also home to 99 percent of the world’s Hindus, 99 percent of the world’s Buddhists, 90 percent of the world’s followers of folk or traditional religions, 76 percent of the world’s religiously unaffiliated, and 66 percent of the world’s Muslims.<sup>148</sup>

As indicated by Figure 7.1, many of the most religiously diverse countries in the world are in the Asia-Pacific region, including China, Japan, South Korea, Suriname, and Vietnam. The Pacific Island countries generally have fairly low levels of religious diversity, as do some Southeast Asian countries like the Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and South Asian

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<sup>143</sup> Lesley Clark, “Options for Promoting Increased Participation of Women in Parliaments and in Elected Bodies at Sub-National Level in the Pacific Region 2014-2017,” United Nations Development Programme, Pacific Centre, January 2014.

<sup>144</sup> Sameer Khatiwada, “A Quiet Revolution: Women in Bangladesh,” International Labor Organization, January 29, 2014, [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS\\_234670/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS_234670/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>145</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 16.

<sup>147</sup> Pew Research Center, “Global Religious Diversity,” April 2014.

<sup>148</sup> Pew Research Center, “Global Religious Diversity,” April 2014.

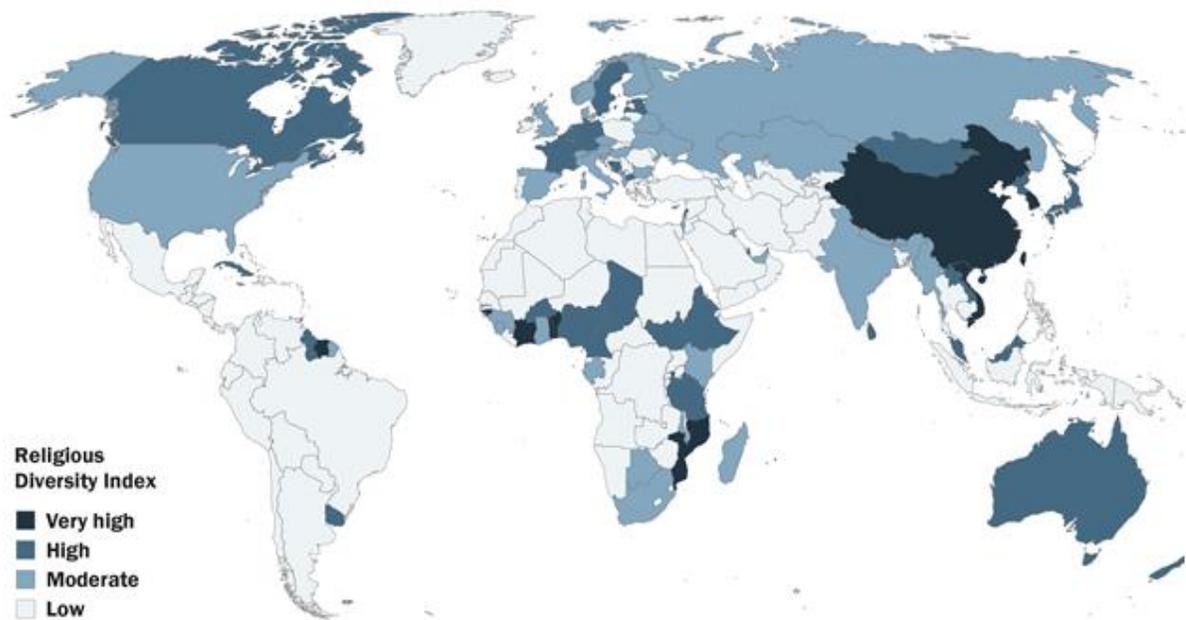
countries.<sup>149</sup> With notable exceptions, most USPACOM countries with high religious diversity have not experienced a high degree of civil conflict related to these religious differences.<sup>150</sup> On the other hand, many relatively homogeneous religious countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand, Timor-Leste and the Philippines have all experienced civil unrest of varying degrees.<sup>151</sup> Some of this unrest has stemmed from religious conflict. For example, there have also been long-standing tensions between fundamental Buddhist sects and Muslims in Thailand, Sir Lanka and Myanmar.

Figure 7.1. Global Levels of Religious Diversity

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### Levels of Religious Diversity

*Countries are shaded according to level of religious diversity*



Based on Religious Diversity Index scores. For more information about how the index is calculated, see the Methodology. Data are for 2010.

"Global Religious Diversity," April 2014.

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Source: Pew Research Center, "Global Religious Diversity," April 2014.

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<sup>149</sup> Pew Research Center, "Global Religious Diversity," April 2014.

<sup>150</sup> The exceptions to this rule include China, Malaysia and Sri Lanka (Pew Research Center, "Global Religious Diversity," April 2014).

<sup>151</sup> Pew Research Center, "Global Religious Diversity," April 2014.

Religion in the region has also influenced how women's roles have been defined. For instance, some indigenous religions in the region feature both male and female deities, and in some indigenous religions, women are viewed as mediums to the spirit world. Gender stereotypes in the region have also been reinforced by religious teachings or the way that the various religions in the region are interpreted and practiced. For example, many Buddhists believe that rebirth as a woman rather than a man indicates that less merit was accrued in past lives.<sup>152</sup> Strict interpretations of Islam (e.g., such as Sharia), also limit women's access to public spaces and restrict women's activities and movements. Additionally, fundamental interpretations of Catholicism in the Philippines has also been used to reinforce traditional gender roles. It is important to note though that there is variation across the region in the ways different religions are practiced as well as their influence on defining women's roles and rights. For example, some Muslim areas (e.g., Java and some indigenous groups in Indonesia) give women more rights. It is important to identify these areas because female SF soldiers may have more latitude in their movements in these areas, as well as their interactions with local men and women.

### *Social*

Asia has experienced the most rapid demographic change in the world. Its population of 4.3 billion accounts for 60 percent of the world's population. Three other social issues greatly impact the lives of women in the USPACOM region: 1) access to education, 2) access to health care, and 3) violence against women. Most countries in the region have attained gender parity in secondary education and several have higher female-to-male ratios in attendance at this level.<sup>153</sup> In Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines there are more female graduates than males; the rates for Vietnam and Indonesia are almost equal.<sup>154</sup> This expansion in education has also contributed to the blossoming of female-oriented NGOs.

While women in the region have generally gained more access to education, the same cannot be said regarding access to health care. There remain great disparities across the region regarding the degree to which women have access to health care. For instance, more than 60 percent of adolescents in South and Southeast Asia who wish to avoid pregnancy still do not have access to modern contraception.<sup>155</sup> In addition, almost 40 percent of maternal deaths worldwide occur in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>156</sup> In South Asia, more women die in childbirth - 500 for every 100,000

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<sup>152</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, "Women in Southeast Asia," Asia Society, 2015, <http://asiasociety.org/women-southeast-asia>.

<sup>153</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>154</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, "Women in Southeast Asia," *Asia Society*, 2015, <http://asiasociety.org/women-southeast-asia>.

<sup>155</sup> United Nations Population Fund, *State of the World Population: 2012*, 2012.

<sup>156</sup> World Health Organization, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund and The World Bank, *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010*, 2010.

live births - than in any other part of the world except Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>157</sup> India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar account for almost 98 percent of the maternal deaths in South and Southeast Asia, and the same five countries contribute to 99 percent of the total neonatal deaths in the region.<sup>158</sup> However, there has been some progress made on this front in other countries. For instance, Malaysia has reduced maternal mortality rates by more than 45 percent over the past two decades and now has one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the region.<sup>159</sup>

The region also continues to make progress in the area of policy and legal reform to eliminate violence against women, with several new laws promulgated in 2014. For instance, the Laos National Assembly approved a new Law on Violence against Women and Children in 2014.<sup>160</sup> In addition, four Pacific countries endorsed new legislation to address violence against women: Kiribati, one state from Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk), Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.<sup>161</sup>

## Challenges for Female SF Soldiers in USPACOM

### *Issues that Could Impact Mission Effectiveness*

Like in other regions of the world, female SF soldiers could face challenges in some areas – particularly in areas where their movement and access to information or local populations may be restricted and in areas where male indigenous forces may refuse to work with them or take orders from them. The areas where this will likely be of most concern is in areas where Islam is strictly interpreted (e.g., Brunei, parts of Malaysia, and parts of Indonesia) and in rural areas. Such restrictions could impact CT, FID, SR, and UW missions.

### *Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Barriers*

Female SF soldiers may encounter some barriers stemming from the cultural, ethnic, and religious issues discussed above. In particular, female SF soldiers may have difficulty earning the respect of male indigenous forces in some areas of the USPACOM region where women are viewed as subordinate to men and where there are few women in roles of authority. This could be particularly problematic in areas where the dominant religions in the regions (e.g., Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism) are interpreted strictly and used to reinforce traditional gender roles in society.

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<sup>157</sup> The proportion of deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants is as low as 18% in Bangladesh, 19% in Nepal, and 20% in the Lao PDR. (Asian Development Bank, “Gender Equality and Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific,” September 18, 2012).

<sup>158</sup> Gaurav Sharma, “Maternal, Perinatal and Neonatal Mortality in South-East Asia Region,” *Asian Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-14.

<sup>159</sup> World Health Organization, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund and The World Bank, *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010*, 2010.

<sup>160</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 20.

<sup>161</sup> Andrea Lee Esser, *Annual Report 2014*, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014, p. 21.

### *Safety Issues to Units*

In some areas of the USPACOM region, social and religious norms may prevent interactions between unmarried men and women. Such interactions among unit members (especially when not in uniform—either on a mission or in their off time) may attract attention and punishment. These are issues that will not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, but units will need to be aware of such issues when operating in these areas and they may need to modify the ways in which they interact with each other in order to blend in with local norms.

### *Safety Issues to Individual Female Soldiers*

Violence against women is a common problem across the USPACOM region, but it is particularly prevalent in parts of Southeast Asia, India, and Nepal. Of particular concern to female SF soldiers are the prevalence of rape and acid attacks that are directed at nondomestic partners. While these concerns may not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, they are concerns that female soldiers will need to be aware of so that they can take appropriate precautions.

For the intensity ratings of challenges that female SF soldiers may face in all 36 USPACOM countries, please see Table A.10, A.11, and A.12.

## **Capabilities that Female SF Soldiers Could Provide in USPACOM**

Despite these challenges, female SF soldiers could provide a number of enhanced capabilities in the USPACOM region. Female SF soldiers could enhance CT, SR, and UW missions by providing access to new populations of individuals and types of information. This could be directly beneficial to intelligence-gathering missions and could help SF units become aware of emerging unrest within the population, planned protests, and other grievances. The relationships that female SF soldiers may be able to form with local women could also contribute to the broader goal of building more constructive relationships with local communities. This might indirectly improve intelligence-gathering efforts and contribute to SR and UW mission effectiveness as well. Importantly, the value of these engagements may vary within countries, but they may be greatest in those areas where they can access populations and information that male SF soldiers may not be able to access.

## **Factors that May Change the Future Role of Women in USPACOM**

The social, cultural, religious and economic landscape of the USPACOM region is changing rapidly and these changes may have important effects on the future roles of women in the region. One of the most important factors that may redefine future gender norms is the increased role that women are playing in the regional economy. Female participation in the regional economy is increasing (even in many rural areas) and as women earn more money and take on new roles at their workplaces, this is changing the role of women in the household, as well as their role in

society. These changes often come in conflict with more traditional gender norms and with strict religious customs. For instance, in Bangladesh, as more women in the region have become factory workers in the garment industry, female garment workers have clashed with conservative Islamic forces over restrictions on their movements in public that would ultimately prevent them from being employed outside their household.<sup>162</sup>

Other factors that may change the future roles of women in the region are changing demographics and religious affiliation. Countries in South, Southeast and West Asia are still undergoing a demographic transition. Their fertility rates are generally higher than replacement rates, and life expectancy is generally lower than 70 years.<sup>163</sup> Rapid population growth will continue to be a challenge in these areas, and this growth could cause tension between traditional gender norms and a rapidly growing population of young women who may want to take on new gender roles.

Changes in the religious makeup of the region may also change future gender roles (See Figure 7.2).

**Figure 7.2. Size, Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups in Asia-Pacific, 2010-2050**

**Size, Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups in Asia-Pacific, 2010-2050**

	2010 ESTIMATED POPULATION	% IN 2010	2050 PROJECTED POPULATION	% IN 2050	POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2050	% INCREASE 2010-2050	COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (%)
Hindus	1,024,630,000	25.3%	1,369,600,000	27.7%	344,970,000	33.7%	0.7%
Muslims	986,420,000	24.3	1,457,720,000	29.5	471,290,000	47.8	1.0
Unaffiliated	858,490,000	21.2	837,790,000	17.0	-20,700,000	-2.4	0.1
Buddhists	481,480,000	11.9	475,840,000	9.6	-5,640,000	-1.2	0.0
Folk Religions	364,690,000	9.0	366,860,000	7.4	2,170,000	0.6	0.0
Christians	287,100,000	7.1	381,200,000	7.7	94,100,000	32.8	0.7
Other Religions	51,920,000	1.3	48,650,000	1.0	-3,280,000	-6.3	0.2
Jews	200,000	< 0.1	240,000	< 0.1	40,000	21.2	0.5
<b>Regional total</b>	<b>4,054,940,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,937,900,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>882,960,000</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>0.5</b>

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. Population estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source, Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, "Asia-Pacific," March 27, 2015.

<sup>162</sup> Jason Burke and Saad Hammadi, "Bangladesh Simmers As Islamic Conservatives and Progressives Clash," *The Guardian*, April 16, 2013

<sup>163</sup> Zhongwei Zhao, "Population Change Will Shape Asia's Future," East Asia Forum, March 13, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/03/17/population-change-will-shape-asias-future/>.

While Hinduism was the dominant religion in the region in 2010, the Pew Research Center estimates that by 2050, by 2050, the number of Muslims in the region is projected to grow number by 48%--meaning there will be an estimated 88,120,000 more Muslims in the regions.<sup>164</sup> This growth could impact gender roles in the region (especially if strict interpretations of Islam become more prevalent in the region).

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<sup>164</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, "Asia-Pacific," March 27, 2015.

## 8. Opportunities and Challenges in USSOUTHCOM

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### Overview of Traditional Roles of Women in USSOUTHCOM

Most countries in the USSOUTHCOM AOR have historically been extremely patriarchal. There is a strong culture of *machismo* in the region, in which men dominate the public sphere, are the heads of the household, and the primary bread winners of the family while women care for the children, the housework, and their husbands. In many countries, women have not traditionally taken significant roles in the political or economic spheres. In fact, in many countries, women were not legally permitted to enter into politics or work outside the home until the mid-1900s or later. Women in some countries have traditionally lacked personal and financial autonomy, been dependent on their husbands, and been disproportionately affected by poverty. Where they have been able to enter the labor force, women have been limited to “female” sectors such as health care, administrative jobs, and domestic service. They also continue to be paid significantly less than their male counterparts. Socially, men and women are sometimes segregated, with women and men participating in different activities in their own spaces. Women have faced significant obstacles to education and sometimes adequate health care in many countries. Another serious issue pervasive throughout the USSOUTHCOM region is violence against women—both domestic violence by husbands against their wives and indiscriminate violence, including rape, kidnapping, and murder, targeted at women. This violence is sometimes linked to the aggressive masculine culture and in other cases is perpetrated by gangs or used as a tool of warfare by criminal organizations or drug cartels. Importantly, there is some variation in the traditional roles and positions of women throughout the USSOUTHCOM region. While in some countries women continue to face significant discrimination and violence, in others, women are becoming more equal members of society. There are also variations within countries: in some countries there are women who have taken significant political roles or leadership positions in business, but the average woman continues to face discrimination and obstacles to equal treatment.

#### *Cultural*

Strong cultural stereotypes, masculine dominance, and pervasive *machismo* in the USSOUTHCOM countries have tended to reinforce traditional gender roles. Women have traditionally been expected to care for the children and to manage the household. Women are generally subordinate to their husbands and tend to remain in the home, but in some countries they have often been permitted to work outside the home and have not been excluded from the public sphere. Men are typically the head of the household, but throughout the region there are

single-parent families led by women. In many cases, these female-led households result from absentee fathers and these households face significant poverty.

There is some variation within the region in the cultural expectations placed on women. Women in some of the smaller island nations, such as Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and Saint Lucia have often had more freedom than women in other countries in the region.<sup>165</sup> In contrast, in Nicaragua, women are expected to adhere to traditional roles and values, marrying young, having many children, and remaining in the home. Some women work outside the home but there is a strong machismo culture in the country and women are subordinate to their husbands.<sup>166</sup> This is typical of many countries in the region. In Peru, the society is patriarchal and women traditionally remain in the home or work in agricultural jobs. Women are generally expected to be obedient to their husbands and the legal rights of women are not well protected. Women face also discrimination and poor health outcomes (and have particularly high rates of maternal mortality), they have less education and lower literacy rate than men as well.<sup>167</sup>

### *Economic*

In the economic sphere, women have traditionally remained in the home, managing domestic affairs rather than taking employment outside the home. Where women have entered the labor market, they tend to be concentrated in traditionally “female” sectors, such as domestic service, nursing, education, clerical work, and retail. This is especially true in countries such as Costa

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<sup>165</sup> "Culture of St. Kitts and Nevis," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 3, 2015; "Women's Anti-Discrimination Committee Takes Up St. Kitts And Nevis: Praises National Machinery Established To Protect Women's Rights," *UN Press Release*, June 2002; "Culture of Saint Lucia," Countries and their Cultures, Accessed April 3, 2015; "Saint Lucia's Report to the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean," June 2010; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, "St. Lucia Responses to the List of Issues and Questions for Consideration of the Combined Initial, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Periodic Report," 2006; United Nations, *National Review: Trinidad and Tobago, Division for Gender Affairs of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the way to Beijing+20*, September 2014; "Statement by Senator the Honorable Dr. Daphne Phillips Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago," June 6, 2000; "Culture of Barbados," Countries and their Cultures, Accessed April 12, 2015; "Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: Barbados," August 5-23, 2002; United Nations, "Overview of the Achievements and Challenges in Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," Prepared by the Bureau of Gender Affairs, June 2004, the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly," June 2000.

<sup>166</sup> Tim Merrill, ed., *Nicaragua: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1993; Laura Carlsen, "Nicaragua: A Dangerous Place for Women," Americas Program, March 14, 2013; Association for Women's Rights in Development, "Nicaragua: Decree To Implement Law On Violence Against Women - A Setback For Women's Rights," November 14, 2014; Tim Rogers, "Feminists Denounce Nicaragua's Culture of Impunity," *Nicaragua Dispatch*, March 19, 2013; "Culture of Nicaragua," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; Elena Vargas, "Closing the Gender Gap in Nicaragua: Who's on Top?," <http://www.internationalhealthpolicies.org/>, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>167</sup> "Challenging Macho Culture and Violence in Peru with Radio Theater," *Diakonia*, accessed April 15, 2105; "The Global Gender Gap Report 2013," World Economic Forum, 2013, pp.12-13, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20); "Culture of Peru," Countries and their Cultures, April 15, 2015.

Rica, Honduras, and Venezuela.<sup>168</sup> Women tend to be paid significantly less than men for equal work and often work in sub-standard conditions with few protections. As an example, women in El Salvador are still largely confined to working in textile factories known as “maquilas, where there are few regulations to protect workers.<sup>169</sup> Many women also work in the informal economy, selling goods in local markets or working as domestic servants.

Economic realities in the region have forced some women into employment outside the home in order to make enough money to support their families. For example, in Grenada women have taken a greater role in the market economy to support their families.<sup>170</sup> In Colombia, women took on a greater role in the labor market during the civil war when men were involved in fighting.<sup>171</sup> In other cases, very weak economic conditions keep women from taking a major role in the economy. This is also true in places such as Antigua and Barbuda.<sup>172</sup> In addition, it is common for women in rural areas to work in farming and agriculture, as well as to sell produce and other homemade goods in local markets.

### *Ethnic*

There are differences by ethnic group in the role of women in the USSOUTHCOM region. Many countries, including Peru, Belize, Guatemala, Suriname, have indigenous and tribal populations that live in rural and remote areas. Women in these tribal communities, along with women in rural areas more generally, are more likely to take traditional roles in the home. However, they often frequently participate in informal economic activities, particularly

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<sup>168</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, "With an Executive Order, Costa Rica Makes Progress on Women's Economic Autonomy," February 28, 2014; Richard A. Haggerty, ed. *Venezuela: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1990; Venezuela Information Office, "Revolutionizing Women's Roles in Venezuela," October 11, 2008; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Honduras: United Nations Human Rights Expert Calls For Urgent Action To Address Impunity For Crimes Against Women And Girls," <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14833&LangID=E>, accessed May 1, 2015; Honduras Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, *Report Of Honduras On Implementation Of The Beijing Platform For Action (1995) and The Outcome Of The Twenty- Third, Special Session Of The General Assembly (2000) (For the period 1995 -2004)*, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 2004.

<sup>169</sup> Oxfam Canada, "El Salvador: Working for Women's Rights in Factories," 2015; Dominguez et al., "Women Workers in the Maquiladoras and the Debate on Global Labor Standards," *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2010, pp. 186-189.

<sup>170</sup> Peter Richards, "Politics-Genada: Women Making Their Presence Felt" *InterPress News*, December 23, 1998; "Culture of Grenada," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 14, 2015; United States Department of State, Grenada Human Rights Report, 2013.

<sup>171</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Colombia Case Study*, 2012; Tula Connell, "Colombia: Many Women Workers Face Job Discrimination," *AFL-CIO Blog*, May 14, 2103.

<sup>172</sup> Caribbean Development Bank, *Country Gender Assessment: Antigua and Barbuda*, June 2014; International Women's Rights Action Watch, "Antigua and Barbuda," 1995; Statement by Sheila Roseau, Ministry of Education, to the Commission on the Status of Women, March 2010.

subsistence farming.<sup>173</sup> Again, there are exceptions. For example, the Amarya who live in Belize have a matrilineal society and many female deities, which has given women a more central role in the public sphere. The Amarya also believe that the sexes are complementary and that the roles played by men and women, while different are equally important.<sup>174</sup> As another example, the Kuna in Panama place great importance on women as leaders in the community and the respect they provide to women extends even to adolescent girls.<sup>175</sup>

### *Political*

Women have not traditionally played a major role in politics. Men have dominated the political sphere and have held the majority of leadership positions. In some countries, women faced legislative barriers to entry into the political sphere, but in others, cultural and social norms have kept women out of government jobs. For example, in Barbados, women have avoided the political sphere because it was viewed as hostile and aggressive.<sup>176</sup> In Uruguay, women report that to be successful in the political sphere, they must adopt “masculine” behaviors.<sup>177</sup> In other countries, such as Jamaica and Dominica, women have been able to enter political life, but are limited to low-ranking positions.<sup>178</sup>

There are notable exceptions however. In some countries, women have taken on important political roles. One example is Eva Peron in Argentina. Under Eva Peron, the political involvement of women in the country increased significantly. Women also became more politically active in Argentina during the 1970s when the mothers of the “disappeared” staged

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<sup>173</sup> See for example: "Culture of Belize," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; WIN Belize Strategic Plan 2009-2011, [http://www.winbelize.org/press-room/publications/doc\\_download/5-win-belize-strategic-plan-2009-2011/](http://www.winbelize.org/press-room/publications/doc_download/5-win-belize-strategic-plan-2009-2011/); World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2012," 2012, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf); "Culture of Peru," Countries and their Cultures, April 15, 2015; United States Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Report: Suriname*, April 8, 2011; "Culture of Guatemala," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2014.

<sup>174</sup> UNICEF, "The Situation of Women in Bolivia," [http://www.unicef.org/Bolivia/children\\_1538.htm](http://www.unicef.org/Bolivia/children_1538.htm), accessed February 25, 2012; "The Culture of Bolivia," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>175</sup> "Culture of Panama," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; Gaelle Sevenier, "The Kunas of the San Blas Archipelago of Panama: An Autonomous Warrior Tribe," April 23, 2004.

<sup>176</sup> "Culture of Barbados," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 12, 2015; "Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Barbados," August 5-23, 2002; "Overview of the Achievements and Challenges in Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", Prepared by the Bureau of Gender Affairs, June 2004.

<sup>177</sup> United Nations, "Young Uruguayan Women Aim to Boost Their Role in Politics," Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, August 25, 2013; "Culture of Uruguay," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 14, 2015.

<sup>178</sup> "Making Great Strides, Jamaica Broke 'Glass Ceiling' by Electing Women to Prime Minister's Office, Other Senior Posts, Anti-Discrimination Committee Hears," Summary of Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women 1047th & 1048th Meetings (AM & PM), July 13, 2012; The World Bank, "Dominica - Women Participation Female Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers (% of total), ILO Key Indicators of Labor Market," <http://data.worldbank.org/country/dominica>; "Culture of Dominica," Countries and their Cultures, Accessed April 15, 2015.

protests and exerted political pressure on the government to provide information on the location of their loved ones.<sup>179</sup> In Brazil and Argentina, for instance, there are female presidents. Women have also taken on more substantial political roles in Curacao where they have been active as civil servants and have taken on ministerial positions and in Nicaragua where the Sandinistas encouraged women to take a larger role outside the home, which spawned a national women's movement and advanced women's rights.<sup>180</sup> They have been active in politics in Guyana for decades and hold ministerial positions in Haiti.<sup>181</sup> However, in countries such as Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia women continue to be largely excluded from the political sphere.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> United States Department of State, *Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Argentina*, 2006, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78877.htm>; "Culture of Argentina," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; Foundation for Sustainable Democracy, "Gender Equity Issues in Argentina," <http://www.fsdinternational.org/country/argentina/weissues>; Soledad Vega, "Women's Rights: An Unfinished Business," *The Argentina Independent*, March 29, 2013.

<sup>180</sup> Governments of Curaçao and Saint Maarten in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program, *Curacao and St. Martin, First Millennium Development Goals Report*, January 2011; Association for Women's Rights in Development, "Nicaragua: Decree To Implement Law On Violence Against Women - A Setback For Women's Rights," November 14, 2014, <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/nicaragua-decree-implement-law-violence-against-women-setback-womens-rights>; Tim Rogers, "Feminists Denounce Nicaragua's Culture of Impunity," *Nicaragua Dispatch*, March 19, 2013; "Culture of Nicaragua," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; Elena Vargas, "Closing the Gender Gap in Nicaragua: Who's on Top?," <http://www.internationalhealthpolicies.org/>, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>181</sup> "Culture of Guyana," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 13, 2015; Government of the Republic of Guyana, "National Development Strategy, Chapter 21: Women, Gender, and Development," April 17, 1996; Maitreyi Das, "Women's Autonomy and Politics of Gender in Guyana," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 23, Jun. 3-9, 2000, pp. 1944-1948; Government of the Republic of Guyana, *National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session on the General Assembly (2000)*, June 2014; Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Haiti Program, "Towards Genuine Application of the Gender Quota in Haiti: the Importance of Strengthening the Capacity of Women in Political Parties," March 3, 2014; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, "A Gendered Analysis of Haiti's Legal Framework," March 18, 2015; United Nations Development Programme, "Women's Economic Empowerment," accessed April 15, 2015; "Haiti-Politic: Women in Politics, Haiti far ahead of OAS countries," *Haiti Libre*, June 3, 2013; "Culture of Haiti," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>182</sup> Nina Pacari, "Ecuador: Unfinished Business: The Political Participation of Indigenous Women," *Women in Politics Beyond the Numbers*, accessed May 1, 2015; United Nations Development Programme, "Table 4: Gender Inequality Index," <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>, November 7, 2014; UN Women, "Time for Women to Shape Politics in Guatemala," September 9, 2011; National Democratic Institute, "New Report Examines the Reality of Women's Participation in Guatemalan Politics," January 24, 2014; United States Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Report: El Salvador*, 2010; United Nations Development Programme, "Women Gain Ground in El Salvador's Politics," 2012; Terry Gibbs, "Women and the Struggle for Social Change in Colombia," CETRI, October 2007; "The Culture of Colombia," Countries and Their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; United Nations Development Programme, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Colombia Case Study*, 2012.

## Religious

The majority of countries in the USSOUTHCOM region practice Christianity, predominantly Roman Catholicism. The church is a powerful social institution in the USSOUTHCOM region that exerts a conservative influence, reinforces patriarchal tendencies, and supports traditional roles for women. The church tends to encourage women to live virtuously and to serve their families and husbands. In some countries, it also limits the access of women to birth control and abortions. The influence of the church, however, varies across the region. It is more influential in Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Ecuador, and Peru.<sup>183</sup> It is less influential in Venezuela, Guyana, and some of the island nations like Saint Kitts and Nevis, Aruba, and Barbados.<sup>184</sup>

Importantly, however, there are other religious influences in the region, some of which promote a distinctly different role for women. For example, in some tribal communities in Belize, women and men serve equally as healers and shamans.<sup>185</sup> In Bolivia, indigenous religious have female deities and as a result, afford greater power and respect to women.<sup>186</sup> Similarly, in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, women play more significant roles as healers in folk religions.<sup>187</sup>

## Social

Although women are active and present in the public sphere in most USSOUTHCOM countries, women face discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic and sexual violence, and other challenges due to gender. In general, social relations in the region are affected by the cultural machismo and patriarchal social structure. Men tend to be dominant, but also respectful of their wives and mothers. In Chile, for instance, women gain a great deal of respect from their roles as mothers.<sup>188</sup> Many social activities, such as barbecues, soccer games, and parties, are

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<sup>183</sup> "Culture of Argentina," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; Foundation for Sustainable Democracy, "Gender Equity Issues in Argentina," 2015; "Culture of Brazil," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "A Boon for Ecuador's Women," *New York Times*, November 4, 2014; "Culture of Ecuador," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 1, 2015; Richard A. Haggarty, ed., *El Salvador: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988; "Culture of El Salvador," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 2, 2015.

<sup>184</sup> "Culture of Barbados," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 12, 2015; "Culture of St. Kitts and Nevis," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 3, 2015; "Culture of Aruba," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>185</sup> "Culture of Belize," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>186</sup> "The Culture of Bolivia," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>187</sup> "Rewinding History: The Rights of Haitian Women," *2005 Report of the Let Haiti Live Women's Rights Delegation sponsored by the Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA)*, January 2005; "Culture of Haiti," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "Culture of the Dominican Republic," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 1, 2015.

<sup>188</sup> Rosario Underage, "Women and Work in Chile," University of Warwick, Background and Study proposal, n.d., [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/centres/gender/research/posters/rosario\\_underraga\\_-\\_poster.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/centres/gender/research/posters/rosario_underraga_-_poster.pdf); "Family and Gender Issues in Chile," from Chile: A Country Study, Federal Research Division, Library

gender segregated. This segregation is not necessarily discriminatory or even burdensome, but simply the tradition and the preference of men and women. In Argentina, for example, this type of social segregation is common, although women enjoy a greater degree of equality with men in this country than others in the region.<sup>189</sup>

There is, of course, variation by country. For example, in El Salvador, the society is patriarchal and a culture of machismo is prevalent. Women face significant discrimination and cultural stereotypes, which force them to remain subservient to their husbands. Women in the country have traditionally had little autonomy and few legal rights (they are protected by some legislation now).<sup>190</sup> In Honduras, women occupy traditional roles, remaining in the home to raise and care for the children. They are also expected to manage the household. Women in Honduras face domestic violence and sexual harassment. In most aspects of life, women in the country are subservient to men and expected to be submissive to their husbands.<sup>191</sup> In some countries, the social progress of women is mixed. For instance, women in Dominica continue to face a good deal of discrimination, but are also active in their local communities and are at the center of many kinship networks.<sup>192</sup> Similarly, although women in Haiti face discrimination and unequal rights as a result of gender, but the influence of African matriarchal systems in Haitian culture places women at the center of society—particularly within Haitian vodou culture.<sup>193</sup>

The social roles of women also vary significantly according to social class. In Colombia, for example, while wealthier women tend to remain in the home, caring for their children and engaging in leisure activities with other wealthy women, women in poorer classes are often

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of Congress, Washington DC, March 1994; "Culture of Chile," Countries and their Cultures, accessed Pail 20, 2015; Steven Bodzin, "In Chile Women Politicians Rise but Women's Rights Lag," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 15, 2013; Margaret Power, "Gender and Chile's Split Culture," *Chile: A Changing Country*, Spring 2004.

<sup>189</sup> Foundation for Sustainable Democracy, "Gender Equity Issues in Argentina," Soledad Vega, "Women's Rights: An Unfinished Business," *The Argentina Independent*, March 29, 2013.

<sup>190</sup> Haggerty, 1988; Julia Zulver, "El Salvador: Crisis of Masculinity in a Machista Society," *Open Democracy*, October 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/julia-zulver/el-salvador-crisis-of-masculinity-in-machista-society>.

<sup>191</sup> "Culture of Honduras," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 1, 2015; "Honduras: United Nations Human Rights Expert Calls For Urgent Action To Address Impunity For Crimes Against Women And Girls," <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14833&LangID=E>, accessed May 1, 2015; Honduras Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, *Report Of Honduras On Implementation Of The Beijing Platform For Action (1995) And The Outcome Of The Twenty- Third, Special Session Of The General Assembly (2000) (For the period 1995 -2004)*, Tegucigalpa, Honduras April 2004.

<sup>192</sup> Commonwealth of Dominica, *Report On Two Areas of Achievement and Challenges in Respect to the Brasilia Consensus Presented at the Twelfth Session of the Regional Conference on Women In Latin America and the Caribbean*, September 17th 2013; Commonwealth Of Dominica, Bureau of Gender Affairs Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs, *National Review On The Implementation Of The Beijing Declaration And Platform For Action (1995) And The Outcomes Of The Twenty Third Special Session Of The General Assembly (2000)*, April 2014.

<sup>193</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), *The Right of Women in Haiti to be Free from Violence and Discrimination*, OEA/Ser.L/V/II, Doc. 64, March 10, 2009; Let Haiti Live Women's Rights Delegation sponsored by the Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA), "Rewinding History: The Rights of Haitian Women," January 2005.

forced to work in low paying jobs and then care for their children and households. In other cases, women are forced to live as single parents, often facing poverty as a result.<sup>194</sup> These divisions by social class are common throughout the region.

It is also important to note that there is the significant amount of violence perpetrated against women in USSOUTHCOM countries. This violence comes in many forms, including domestic abuse by husbands against their wives and more indiscriminate violence perpetrated against women by individuals in drug cartels, gangs, and criminal organizations. This violence includes rape, murder, and kidnapping. Violence is most severe in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Colombia, but it is pervasive throughout the region. As an example, Guatemala has one of the highest murder rates of women in the world and other countries in the region are not far behind.<sup>195</sup> While many governments have taken steps to attempt to control and rein it in, their success has been limited at best.

## Challenges for Female SF Soldiers in USSOUTHCOM

### *Issues that Could Impact Mission Effectiveness*

Although there are many opportunities for female SF soldiers to provide enhanced capabilities in the USSOUTHCOM region, they are also likely to face some significant challenges. While these challenges may vary somewhat in severity by country, they are likely to be similar across the region. Perhaps most significantly, the strong culture of machismo means that local men and male security force soldiers may be unwilling to work with or take orders from women. This could pose a significant obstacle to most SF operations, including especially FID, but also UW, CT, and SR. The patriarchal culture also results in some segregation between men and women, and female SF soldiers may be denied access to certain activities, from spheres considered “masculine,” and from interacting with certain groups of people. These exclusions could cause significant obstacles for female SF soldiers, particularly in CT and SR missions where a lack of access and barriers to admission could be significant challenges to mission completion.

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<sup>194</sup> Gibbs, 2007; United Nations Development Programme, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Colombia Case Study*, 2012; "The Culture of Colombia," Countries and Their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015.

<sup>195</sup> See for example: United States Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Report: El Salvador*, Washington DC, 2010; Human Rights Watch, "Guatemala: Women and Girls Face Job Discrimination," February 12, 2002; Guatemala Human Rights Commission, "Women's Right to Live," 2015; Jody Williams and Lisa VeneKlasen, "Obama: stand Up for Women's Rights in Honduras," *CS Monitor*, December 14, 2009; Jessica Weiss, "Women's Rights in Colombia: Acid Attacks on the Rise," *World Affairs Journal*, n.d.; Karen Blanc, "Violence Against Women: Reporting from Colombia," UN Volunteers, Volunteer Voices, September 2008.

### *Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Barriers*

Cultural barriers for female SF soldiers are likely to result from the patriarchal society and the culture of machismo that pervades public life, including especially the military. As noted above, due to a strong patriarchal culture, men may be unwilling to take orders from or work closely with women. They may also place less importance on or even ignore the opinions of women. This could affect the ability of female SF soldiers to complete important missions—particularly FID missions. Other missions such as CT and SR may also be affected, especially if female SF soldiers are denied access to key meetings or prevented from forming contacts with important male leaders due to their gender. Furthermore, even where they are able to gain access to typically “male” spheres, a single female is likely to stand out and this may compromise the mission. These cultural barriers may be greatest in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru where patriarchal cultures are strongest.<sup>196</sup>

Religious barriers may exist due to the conservative and traditional influence the Catholic Church as an institution exerts in many USSOUTHCOM countries. This influence is likely to reinforce the patriarchal culture in the region and may contribute to the challenges described above. Religion has the strongest influence in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Argentina, and Bolivia.<sup>197</sup> There is some variation in religion, however. In Suriname, Guyana, and the Caribbean Islands there is more religious diversity. However, even in these nations the majority of religious groups are patriarchal and promote conservative roles for women.<sup>198</sup>

In terms of ethnic barriers, these are likely to be greatest in rural areas and among indigenous communities which are often more conservative and unaccustomed to working directly with Western militaries. Even cultures that provide women more respect and freedoms are often extremely isolated and this may complicate their interactions with female SF soldiers. This is likely to be most problematic in countries with many indigenous populations, including

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<sup>196</sup> See for example: Haggerty, 1988; "Culture of El Salvador," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 2, 2015; "Culture of Guatemala," Countries and their Cultures, Accessed April 15, 2014; "Culture of Honduras," Countries and their Cultures, Accessed May 1, 2015; "Challenging Macho Culture and Violence in Peru with Radio Theater," Diakonia, accessed April 15, 2105; World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2013," 2013, pp. 12-13, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20); "Culture of Peru," Countries and their Cultures, April 15, 2015; Merrill, 1993.

<sup>197</sup> See for example: United States State Department, *Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Argentina*, 2006, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78877.htm>; "Culture of Argentina," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "The Culture of Bolivia," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "Culture of Ecuador," Countries and their Cultures, Accessed May 1, 2015; Haggerty, 1988; "Culture of El Salvador," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 2, 2015; "Culture of Guatemala," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2014; "Culture of Honduras," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 1, 2015; "Culture of Ecuador," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 1, 2015.

<sup>198</sup> Anna Mahjar Barducci, "Wearing the Hijab in the Caribbean," August 1, 2011, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2313/hijab-Caribbean>; "Culture of Guyana," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 13, 2015; Dr. Satja Jabar, "Big Challenges Ahead: Suriname 2012," Social Watch: Poverty Eradication and Gender Justice, 2010; United States Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Report: Suriname*, April 8, 2011; "Culture of Suriname," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 14, 2015.

Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Belize.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, simply having to navigate all the different cultural expectations and communities may be a challenge, given that each treats women in a slightly different way.

### *Safety Issues to Individual Female Soldiers*

The greatest safety challenge to female soldiers in the USSOUTHCOM region stems from the extensive and rampant violence that is pervasive throughout the region. Women face significant threats from violence perpetrated by gangs and other violent criminals. In some cases, this violence is associated with ongoing conflicts in the region: rape and kidnapping is often used as tool of war in these conflicts. In other cases, it is associated with drug wars and human trafficking rings.<sup>200</sup> Regardless of its source, although some governments have taken steps to combat this violence, these steps have been largely unable to stem the violence experienced by female soldiers. Furthermore, in some cases the extremely patriarchal culture places women danger. For example, in El Salvador, a number of women have been imprisoned for having miscarriages, with prosecutors arguing that their miscarriage is a form of "murder."<sup>201</sup> In other countries, women lack legal and human rights protections. Although female SF soldiers may be partly protected from this violence, particularly if they are in uniform, they may still face the threat of violence when operating covertly or if trying to blend in with the local population. In some cases, their status as U.S. military soldiers may even make them a greater target for criminals or criminal organizations. While these concerns may not prevent female SF soldiers from operating in these areas, they are concerns that female soldiers will need to be aware of so that they can take appropriate precautions.

For the intensity ratings of challenges that female SF soldiers may face in all 46 USSOUTHCOM countries, please see Table A.13, A.14, and A.15.

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<sup>199</sup> "Culture of Belize," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "United Nations Development Programme, Table 4: Gender Inequality Index," <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>, accessed November 7, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2013, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2013," [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20); "Culture of Peru," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; UNICEF, "The Situation of Women in Bolivia," [http://www.unicef.org/Bolivia/children\\_1538.htm](http://www.unicef.org/Bolivia/children_1538.htm), accessed February 25, 2012; "The Culture of Bolivia," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "Culture of Ecuador," Countries and their Cultures, accessed May 1, 2015.

<sup>200</sup> Pan-American Health Organization and Center for Disease Control (US), *Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Comparative Analysis of Population-Based Data from 12 Countries*, 2014.

<sup>201</sup> Erika Guevara-Ross, "El Salvador and Las 17," *The New York Times*, March 2, 2015.

## Capabilities That Female SF Soldiers Could Provide in USSOUTHCOM

There are many ways in which female SF soldiers in the USSOUTHCOM region could provide additional capabilities to ongoing missions. Although women continue to face discrimination and the threat of violence, an increasing number of women in many countries are fighting for more rights and taking a larger role in the public sphere. Although this shift is coming slowly and comes with its own set of obstacles, the changing role of women also provides space for female SF soldiers to engage new local female leaders. First, because men and women remain segregated in many countries, female SF soldiers may provide access to new segments of the population that were off-limits or difficult to access for male soldiers. This may be important for any CT or SR mission that involves information gathering or intelligence collection. It also provides a new source for contacts, allies, and local support. Furthermore, female SF soldiers may also serve as valuable role models for female members of USSOUTHCOM country militaries. Because many of these countries have relatively few women in their military forces and because the culture in these militaries is often especially masculine, having female trainers may be especially important in facilitating the development and integration of these women.

Female SF soldiers may also be uniquely able to engage with the growing number of women's organizations who are fighting for women's rights. These opportunities may contribute to a variety of SF missions, including CT, SR, and UW. In each case, the ability to engage directly with local women on the cutting edge of society can provide important alliance, access to influential spheres and people, and key pieces of information and intelligence. Female SF soldiers may be able to engage these women more effectively and constructively than male SF soldiers, gaining valuable contacts, allies, and information.

## Factors that May Change the Future Role of Women in USSOUTHCOM

Although women continue to face discrimination, violence, and a paternalistic culture, changes in their political, economic, and social status is occurring slowly, albeit in some nations more than others.

Political progress for women in USSOUTHCOM countries has been uneven. In some countries, they are more widely represented, while in others, they continue to face significant discrimination. For instance, in Bolivia, as much as ½ of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies were made up of women.<sup>202</sup> In Venezuela, women are also increasingly entering the political sphere and taking leading roles in government. Four out of the five most senior leaders are

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<sup>202</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Supporting Inclusive National Development through Increased Women's Political Representation," 2012.

women and women have high voter turnout in elections. Women also hold a large number of local government positions.<sup>203</sup>

In other areas, changes have been slower. In Panama, for example, women remain severely under-represented in politics, but there are government departments focused on women's rights and a fairly significant government commitment to improving female political empowerment.<sup>204</sup> However, women continue to face political obstacles in many countries and in many forms. In some countries, women still face discrimination and find it difficult to enter into political positions, particularly those at high ranks. In many cases, women find that they are able to enter into political positions, but that once there they are given less important assignments or are relegated to subordinate committees. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, many continue to characterize the political sphere as an "old boy's network."<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, in many countries, even the presence of a female in a senior leadership position does not mean that the average woman has expanding political rights or opportunities. Brazil, Argentina, and Jamaica all have female leaders, but women in those countries continue to face obstacles and discrimination.<sup>206</sup>

In the economic sphere, women have similarly slowly been gaining access to an increasing variety of jobs in a larger number of sectors. More and more women are now working outside the home as well, although they continue to face extensive discrimination and large pay gaps compared to their male colleagues. In some cases, women have been able to ascend to senior economic positions. There are also an increasing number of government and NGO-sponsored initiatives to support female entrepreneurship and job training programs to encourage more extensive female employment. However, for the most part, women remain in lower ranking and lower paying economic positions. Women also continue to face substantial obstacles to their employment. They often face discrimination in hiring, are still often concentrated in traditionally female jobs, and earn less than their male counterparts. The labor markets in USSOUTHCOM countries are also often segmented by gender, and women are often confined to traditionally "female" sectors such as domestic service and clerical work. Women also are disproportionately affected by poverty and hold a smaller share of senior leadership positions in major companies. Importantly, even where women are working outside the home in greater numbers, they are still expected to fulfill their domestic duties. Thus, their economic empowerment has somewhat increased their overall workload.

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<sup>203</sup> Dutka, 2015; Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, "10 Advances in Women's Rights," March 2013.

<sup>204</sup> David Carrasco, "Women: New Door Opens to Equality in Panama," *InterPress Service*, February 25, 1996.

<sup>205</sup> Reshma Baal, "Few Women in Politics," *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*, June 30, 2011

<sup>206</sup> "Making Great Strides, Jamaica Broke 'Glass Ceiling' by Electing Women to Prime Minister's Office, Other Senior Posts, Anti-Discrimination Committee Hears," Summary of Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 1047th & 1048th Meetings (AM & PM), July 13, 2012; Jonathan Watts, "Brazil's Women Politicians March On – But the Pace is Still Too Slow for Many," *The Guardian*, February 19, 2012; Vega, 2013.

Change in the economic sphere has been uneven throughout the region. For example, in Brazil, women are taking a larger role in the labor market. Women are prominent in education and journalism and as small business owners (more than 50% of firms have women among the principal owners and women make up 44% of the labor force as of 2013).<sup>207</sup> In Chile, women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers and taking jobs in social work, education, and nursing. Women also make up a sizeable portion of doctors, journalists, and judges. However, while over 50% of its professionals are women, Chile has a large gender pay gap and one of the lower female labor force participation rates in the region (less than 40% of the labor force is women).<sup>208</sup> Progress has been less remarkable in Paraguay, where women are entering the workforce in larger numbers, but where discrimination against hiring women is more extensive. In fact, until the 1990s, legal provisions kept women out of certain sectors. Female employment remains concentrated in certain “female” occupations, and women are paid significantly less than men. Barriers faced by women in rural communities are even more significant.<sup>209</sup> Finally, in Bolivia, women continue to be discouraged from working outside the home by their families, are paid less than men, and work primarily in agriculture and sectors such as education, nursing, and textiles. However, their participation in the labor market has been aided by training programs and government initiatives aimed at increasing their involvement and encouraging women to start small businesses.<sup>210</sup>

In the social sphere, women are making some progress towards equality although traditional stereotypes and expectations remain strong and continue to affect the freedoms afforded to women and their position within the family and the home. Women have been making progress in education, and this is likely to gradually improve their economic prospects as well. The social and cultural changes are partly generational and regional. Younger women and women in major cities tend to have more opportunities than women in rural communities and older generations. In Venezuela, for instance, women have taken on a more public role and are active in all sectors of society. While they are still expected to take care of household duties and childrearing, they are making gains in terms of their equality with men. There are also a large number of social programs aimed at supporting women and helping to increase their empowerment and opportunities, including programs to address poverty among women and childcare programs to

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<sup>207</sup> The World Bank, “Good for Them and the Brazilian Economy,” February 22, 2013; World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2013*, 2013, pp. 12-13, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20).

<sup>208</sup> Rosario Underage, “Women and Work in Chile,” University of Warwick, Background and Study proposal, n.d..

<sup>209</sup> Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “Paraguay Makes Step Forward for Women's and Indigenous Rights,” COHA Research, July 6, 2011; “Culture of Paraguay,” Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 21, 2015; Natalia Ruiz Diaz, “Paraguay: Women Growing in Politics – at Pace Set by Men,” *InterPress News Agency*, April 7, 2009.

<sup>210</sup> UNICEF, “The Situation of Women in Bolivia,” [http://www.unicef.org/Bolivia/children\\_1538.htm](http://www.unicef.org/Bolivia/children_1538.htm), accessed February 25, 2012; “The Culture of Bolivia,” Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; United Nations, “Bolivia: Productive Patrimonial Assets Building And Citizenship Programme For Women In Extreme Poverty,” Case Studies from the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, 2013.

allow women to work outside the home.<sup>211</sup> In Brazil, progress for women has been especially significant in major cities where women are beginning to break out of traditional roles and to take a more active stance in pushing for their rights. Recent legislation grants women greater legal protection, including against domestic violence. Women in Brazil are also making significant progress in education—more women than men are now enrolling in higher education.<sup>212</sup> In Panama, women are taking larger roles in the public sphere and increasingly rejecting narrowly defined traditional roles. Women have taken positions of influence throughout society and there are many women's rights groups who promote opportunities for women. However, some discrimination against women and machismo tendencies remain.<sup>213</sup>

However, despite the social progress that women have made, severe violence against women, including domestic and criminal violence, murder, and kidnapping, continues to be rampant throughout the region. Many governments have taken steps to combat this violence, but as of yet, have not made significant progress. Furthermore, cultural biases also appear to contribute to the pervasive violence against women and the relatively limited efforts of many governments to stop this violence. Several examples of this violence and discrimination have already been provided, including El Salvador's imprisonment of women who miscarry and Guatemala's high femicide rate.<sup>214</sup> Another example of the dichotomy between social advances and extreme violence exists in Honduras. In Honduras, women are making inroads in challenging traditional roles and assuming positions of authority in the public sphere. Women do receive respect from their husbands, but also face significant domestic violence and some sexual harassment. There is a strong women's rights movement, led by women who protest and advocate for legal equality and against discrimination. However, these women are often detained by police, beaten, and held for days without food, water, or medicine. Thus, while progress is occurring, women continue to struggle with discrimination and violence, even from government sources.<sup>215</sup> In Nicaragua, violence against women actually seems to be worsening.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Venezuela Information Office, "Revolutionizing Women's Roles in Venezuela," October 11, 2008; Dutka, 2015.

<sup>212</sup> The World Bank, "Women at Work, Good for them and the Brazilian Economy," February 22, 2013; World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2013*, 2013, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf#page=20](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20).

<sup>213</sup> Carrasco, 1996.

<sup>214</sup> Guevara-Ross, 2015; Guatemala Human Rights Commission, "Women's Right to Live," 2015; "Culture of Guatemala," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2014.

<sup>215</sup> Williams and VeneKlasen, 2009; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Honduras: United Nations Human Rights Expert Calls For Urgent Action To Address Impunity For Crimes Against Women And Girls," <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14833&LangID=E>, accessed May 1, 2015.

<sup>216</sup> Association for Women's Right in Development, "Nicaragua: Decree to Implement Law On Violence Against Women - A Setback For Women's Rights," November 14, 2014; Tim Rogers, "Feminists Denounce Nicaragua's Culture of Impunity," *Nicaragua Dispatch*, March 19, 2013.

Finally, in the religious sphere, secularization has been weakening formerly strong conservative influence of the church in many USSOUTHCOM countries. While religion retains a strong influence in Argentina, Ecuador, and Brazil, it has lost much of its influence in Bolivia and Costa Rica.<sup>217</sup> However, in other countries, such as Guatemala and El Salvador, even as the church loses some of its religious influence, it has retained a powerful influence as an institution.<sup>218</sup> In this role, the church continues to perpetuate more traditional positions for women, although this influence is typically stronger among older generations. Finally, the rise of Islam in some nations included the Caribbean nations and Guyana may be trend to watch.<sup>219</sup> As of yet, Islam has not had an effect on women's roles, but as practiced elsewhere, Islam has often exerted a more conservative influence on women's rights and positions in society.

Importantly, although slow, these changes in the roles and position of women in USSOUTHCOM countries are likely to lessen the challenges faced by female SF soldiers working in these areas. As women gain increasing freedom and more influential economic and political positions and as women increasingly enter all areas of the public sphere, female soldiers are likely to have an easier time working with men from the host nation, and gaining access to important contacts or activities. This shift is an important one when considering the future of female SF soldiers in the region.

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<sup>217</sup> Vega, 2013; Foundation for Sustainable Democracy, "Gender Equity Issues in Argentina," <http://www.fsdinternational.org/country/argentina/weissues>; "The Culture of Bolivia," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; "Culture of Brazil," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2015; Rex A. Hudson, ed., *Brazil: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997; Marcel Evans, "Shift in Traditional Roles of Women in Costa Rica," *The Cost Rica Star*, December 26, 2013, <http://news.co.cr/>; Ruxandra Guidi, "A Boon for Ecuador's Women," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2014.

<sup>218</sup> Guatemala Human Rights Commission, "Women's Right to Live," 2015; "Culture of Guatemala," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 15, 2014; United Nations Women, "Time for Women to Shape Politics in Guatemala," September 9, 2011; National Democratic Institute, "New Report Examines the Reality of Women's Participation in Guatemalan Politics," January 24, 2014; Human Rights Watch, "Guatemala: Women and Girls Face Job Discrimination," February 12, 2002; United States Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Report: El Salvador*, Washington DC, 2010.

<sup>219</sup> DevTech Systems, Inc., *Gender Assessment for USAID: Guyana*, August 2003; Anna Mahjar Barducci, "Wearing the Hijab in the Caribbean," Gatestone Institute International Policy Council, August 1, 2011, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2313/hijab-Caribbean>; "Culture of Guyana," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 13, 2015; "Culture of Suriname," Countries and their Cultures, accessed April 14, 2015; United States Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Report: Suriname*, April 8, 2011; Karin van Nieuwkerk, *Women Embracing Islam*, University of Texas Press, 2009.

## 9. Conclusions and Implications

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Given the findings presented in the previous chapters of this report, four main conclusions arose from our analysis:

- Responses of local forces and communities to female SF soldiers are likely to be very context dependent
- USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM will likely be the most challenging AORs
- Female SF soldiers may provide enhanced capabilities for CT, SFA, SR and UW in some regions
- FID may be particularly challenging for female SF soldiers in some regions.

We discuss each of these conclusions below, as well as discuss their implications, and potential areas for future research should SF positions be opened to women.

### *Responses of Local Forces and Communities to Female SF Soldiers are Likely to be Very Context Dependent*

Our findings indicate that there will likely be great variations (not only across countries, but also within them) in the ways indigenous forces may respond to female SF soldiers. Our summary findings in Figure 2.1 highlight that it will likely be difficult for female SF soldiers to operate in some regions and countries, but in other areas they will likely be able to operate with minimal or no challenges. Because gender norms vary so much at the local level, that local context will likely impact the types of challenges and opportunities that individual teams with female SF soldiers may have on any particular mission in any particular local area.

As a result, the degree to which female SF soldiers could enhance the current capabilities of SF units greatly depends on the type of mission being carried out, and the local context in which it is being carried out. For some missions in some areas, female SF soldier could be great assets. For other missions in other areas, female SF soldier may find it challenging to carry out those missions due to local gender norms.

### *USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, and Parts of USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM Will Likely be the Most Challenging AORs*

Our findings indicate that the most challenging AORs for female SF soldiers to operate in will likely be USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, and parts of USPACOM and USSOUTHCOM. It is likely that female SF soldiers operating in these AORs will face the most resistance from local

forces during FID missions, the most restrictions in their movement and access, and the most threats of violence due to their gender. However, it is important to note that we also found that female SF soldiers may be able to provide the greatest enhanced capabilities in these same regions because they may be able to gain access to populations and information that are not accessible to male SF soldiers.

### *Female SF Soldiers May Provide Enhanced Capabilities for CT, SFA, SR, and UW in Some Regions*

Our findings indicate that female SF soldiers may be able to provide enhanced capabilities for the following special warfare missions: CT, SFA, SR and UW. In some countries, female SF soldiers may be uniquely positioned to gain access to information, influence portions of the local population, or train female members of the local military or police forces. As mentioned above, it is important to note that we also found that female SF soldiers may be able to provide the greatest enhanced capabilities in the regions where it may be the most difficult for them to operate. Many of those regions are changing rapidly and experiencing ideological struggles between conservatism and liberalism—struggles in which indigenous women are playing increasing roles. Female SF soldiers may be able to establish relationships with key local female influencers in ways that male SF soldiers cannot. While female enablers such as Cultural Support Teams and Female Engagement Teams have provided such attached support in the past, in those areas where the local context warrants, there may be an advantage to having female SF soldiers organic to SF units so that they can establish long-term working relationships with both indigenous communities and the unit.

### *FID May be Particularly Challenging for Female SF Soldiers in Some Regions*

Our findings also indicate that the most challenging mission for female SF soldiers in several AORs is likely to be FID. In some areas with strong patriarchal cultures (particularly in USAFRICOM, USCENTCOM, USPACOM, and USSOUTHCOM), indigenous forces may refuse to be trained by female SF soldiers or to take orders from them due to local gender norms. This may be especially challenging when female SF soldiers outrank the indigenous forces they are charged with training. Anecdotally, we are aware of analogous situations in which local forces have resisted taking orders from male U.S. forces due to local norms (e.g., local indigenous Muslim forces refused to take orders from U.S. soldiers who did not have beards). Situations in which either male or female SF soldiers experience resistance from local forces could be handled in the same manner—that may mean temporarily reassigning someone from a particular task on a mission in favor of someone that can more effectively establish a trusted relationship with local forces.

## Implications

These conclusions have three major implications:

- Information on the local context in which operations will be conducted is critical
- Effective strategies need to be identified to mitigate potential challenges female SF soldiers may face
- Potential implementation strategies (including assignment policies for female SF soldiers) also need to be identified and evaluated.

### *Information on the Local Context in Which Operations will be Conducted is Critical*

Given the tremendous diversity in how local forces may respond to female SF soldiers, information on the local context in which operations will be conducted is critical. Such detailed information can help USASOC decide where female SF soldiers could provide enhanced SF capabilities, and where they may face challenges due to the local context. Such information on the local context could also provide valuable information for SF missions in general, and could impact assignment decisions for both male and female SF soldiers.

### *Effective Strategies Need to Be Identified to Mitigate Potential Challenges Female SF Soldiers May Face*

In addition, further research needs to be conducted to identify effective ways to mitigate the potential challenges identified in this report. The United States routinely sends female diplomats and non-infantry female service members into regions and countries around the world—including some that we have identified as potentially particularly challenging. The lessons learned from those experiences could provide valuable insights into how other organizations have mitigated the potential challenges that we identify.

### *Potential Implementation Strategies (Including Assignment Policies for Female SF Soldiers) Also Need to be Identified and Evaluated*

If SF positions are opened to women, USASOC will need to decide on the processes and policies for assigning missions and regions/countries to female SF soldiers. Because there is likely to be great diversity in how local forces may respond to female SF soldiers, decisions regarding which missions and which regions/countries female SF soldiers are assigned to may need to be context dependent. This could involve various options including establishing a uniform, centralized process or delegating authority to local commanders. However, if USASOC chooses to delegate authority over assignment decisions to local commanders, clear guidelines and policies will be needed to avoid confusion on both the part of commanders and female SF soldiers. Whatever process is chosen, assignment decisions should ultimately be tied to mission

effectiveness and the soldier—whether male or female—that can most effectively carry out the particular mission at hand should be assigned to it.

## Potential Areas for Future Research

If SF positions are opened to women, we suggest several potential areas for future research that could assist USASOC in developing implementing policies for integrating women into SF units. These include:

- A deeper dive on challenges that female SF soldiers may face and capabilities they could provide in specific countries or regions
- A deeper dive on challenges that female SF soldiers may face and capabilities they could provide on specific missions
- An analysis of how to mitigate potential challenges that female SF soldiers may face. This could include:
  - Identifying lessons from other organizations that assign women to areas with high levels of gender discrimination (e.g., the United States Peace Corps, the United States Department of State)
- An analysis of potential implementation policies, including:
  - Criteria for assigning women to missions
  - Guidance for commanders.

## Appendix A: Country Ratings

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**Table A.1. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across USAFRICOM Countries**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Number of USAFRICOM Countries</b>
Severe	19
Major	35
Moderate	0
Minimal/None	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.2 USAFRICOM Countries That May Present Severe Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Country</b>
Severe	Angola
	Central African Republic
	Chad
	Democratic Republic of Congo
	Guinea
	Guinea Bissau
	Liberia
	Libya
	Mali
	Mauritania
	Niger
	Nigeria
	Republic of the Congo
	Sierra Leone
	Somalia
	South Sudan
	Sudan
Swaziland	
Zimbabwe	

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

Table A.3 USAFRICOM Countries That May Present Major Challenges for Female SF Soldiers

Major	Algeria
	Benin
	Botswana
	Burkina Faso
	Burundi
	Cameroon
	Cape Verde
	Comoros
	Cote D'Ivoire
	Djibouti
	Equatorial Guinea
	Eritea
	Ethiopia
	Gabon
	Gambia
	Ghana
	Kenya
	Lesotho
	Madagascar
	Malawi
	Mauritius
	Morocco
	Mozambique
	Namibia
	Rwanda
	Sao Tome and Principe
	Senegal
	Seychelles
	South Africa
	Tanzania
	Togo
	Tunisia
Uganda	
Western Sahara	
Zambia	

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

**Table A.4. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across USCENTCOM Countries**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Number of USCENTCOM Countries</b>
Severe	9
Major	11
Moderate	0
Minimal/None	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.5. USCENTCOM Countries That May Present Severe or Major Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Country</b>
Severe	Afghanistan
	Iran
	Iraq
	Oman
	Pakistan
	Saudi Arabia
	Syria
	U.A.E.
	Yemen
Major	Bahrain
	Egypt
	Jordan
	Kazakhstan
	Kuwait
	Kyrgyzstan
	Lebanon
	Qatar
	Tajikistan
	Turkmenistan
	Uzbekistan

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

**Table A.6. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across USEUCOM Countries**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Number of USEUCOM Countries</b>
Severe	0
Major	1
Moderate	18
Minimal/None	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.7. USEUCOM Countries That May Present Major or Moderate Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Country</b>
Major	Turkey
Moderate	Albania
	Armenia
	Azerbaijan
	Belarus
	Bosnia and Herzegovina
	Croatia
	Cyprus
	Greece
	Kosovo
	Latvia
	Macedonia
	Moldova
	Montenegro
	Portugal
	Romania
Russia	
Spain	
Ukraine	

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

Table A.8. USEUCOM Countries That May Present Minimal/No Challenges for Female SF Soldiers

Intensity of Challenges	Country
Minimal/ None	Andorra
	Austria
	Belgium
	Bulgaria
	Czech Republic
	Denmark
	Estonia
	Finland
	France
	Georgia
	Germany
	Hungary
	Iceland
	Ireland
	Israel
	Italy
	Lichtenstein
	Lithuania
	Luxembourg
	Malta
	Monaco
	Netherlands
	Norway
	Poland
	San Marino
	Serbia
	Slovakia
	Slovenia
Sweden	
Switzerland	
United Kingdom	

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.9. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across USNORTHCOM Countries**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Number of USNORTHCOM Countries</b>	<b>Country</b>
Severe	0	
Major	0	
Moderate	1	Mexico
Minimal/None	2	Bahamas, Canada
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.10. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across USPACOM Countries**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Number of USPACOM Countries</b>
Severe	10
Major	9
Moderate	13
Minimal/None	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.11. USPACOM Countries That May Present Severe or Major Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Country</b>
Severe	Bangladesh
	Brunei
	Burma
	Indonesia
	Laos
	Malaysia
	Maldives
	Nepal
	North Korea
	Timor-Leste
Major	Cambodia
	China
	Fiji
	India
	Kirbati
	Philippines
	Singapore
	Sri Lanka
	Thailand

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

**Table A.12. USPACOM Countries That May Present Moderate or Minimal/No Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Country</b>
Moderate	Bhutan
	Japan
	Marshall Islands
	Micronesia
	Mongolia
	Papua New Guinea
	Salomon Islands
	Samoa
	South Korea
	Tonga
	Tuvalu
	Vanuatu
	Vietnam
Minimal/ None	Australia
	Nauru
	New Zealand
	Palau

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

**Table A.13. Intensity of Potential Challenges Across USSOUTHCOM Countries**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Number of USSOUTHCOM Countries</b>
Severe	0
Major	13
Moderate	23
Minimal/None	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.14. USSOUTHCOM Countries That May Present Major or Moderate Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

Intensity of Challenges	Country
Major	Belize
	Colombia
	Cuba
	Ecuador
	El Salvador
	Guatemala
	Honduras
	Martinique
	Mayotte
	Montserrat
	Nicaragua
	Paraguay
	Peru
Moderate	Anguilla
	Antigua and Barbuda
	Argentina
	Bolivia
	Brazil
	Chile
	Costa Rica
	Curacao
	Dominica
	Dominican Republic
	French Guiana
	Grenada
	Guadeloupe
	Guyana
	Haiti
	Jamaica
	Panama
	St. Lucia
	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
	Suriname
	Trinidad and Tobago
Uruguay	
Venezuela	

Source: RAND analysis, 2015.

**Table A.15. USSOUTHCOM Countries That May Present Minimal/No Challenges for Female SF Soldiers**

<b>Intensity of Challenges</b>	<b>Country</b>
Minimal/ None	Aruba
	Barbados
	Bermuda
	British Virgin Islands
	Cayman Islands
	Falkland Islands
	St. Barthelemy
	St. Kitts and Nevis
	St. Maarten
	Turks and Caicos

Source: RAND Analysis, 2015.

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