

Gender Integration Policies within the Jordanian Armed Forces

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Received: 13/11/2024

Revised: 9/1/2025

Accepted: 18/2/2025

Published online: 1/3/2026

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Citation: Aqeel, W. M. (2026).
Gender Integration Policies within
the Jordanian Armed
Forces. *Dirasat: Human and Social
Sciences*, 53(8), 9723.
<https://doi.org/10.35516/Hum.2026.9723>

Abstract

Objectives: This study aimed to provide a theoretical overview of political literature related to women's studies and gender issues, examine the reality of gender empowerment in the Jordanian Armed Forces, and identify opportunities and aspirations regarding gender issues within this context. It also analyzed the relationship between gender issues and trends in gender militarization in Jordan.

Methods: The study employed a historical approach to describe the gender perspective on women in political literature. Additionally, it utilized a descriptive-analytical method to examine policies and strategies that contribute to women's empowerment and integration into the Jordanian Armed Forces, exploring associated challenges and opportunities.

Results: The findings revealed that the Jordanian Armed Forces have adopted an approach to empower women and integrate them into the military structure through a national strategy aimed at enhancing their participation. These efforts align with national policies promoting gender equality and NATO's objectives.

Conclusions: Despite challenges in implementing gender integration strategies within the Jordanian Armed Forces, there are promising opportunities for women's empowerment and inclusion. Progress is being made through national programs, strategic initiatives, and international military agreements.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, Gender integration, Jordanian Armed Forces.

سياسات ادماج النوع الاجتماعي في القوات المسلحة الأردنية

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ملخص

الأهداف: هدفت الدراسة إلى تقديم عرض نظري للأدب السياسي الخاص بدراسات المرأة وقضايا النوع الاجتماعي، وإلى تعريف واقع التمكين الجندي للمرأة في القوات المسلحة الأردنية، ومعرفة حدود الفرص والآمال تجاه قضايا النوع الاجتماعي فيها؛ بغرض تحليل طبيعة العلاقة ما بين قضايا النوع الاجتماعي واتجاهات العسكرية الجندرية في الأردن. المنهجية: اتبعت الدراسة المنهج التاريخي الذي تضمن سرداً توضيحياً لطبيعة المنظور الجندي للمرأة في الأدبيات السياسية، ثم استعانت بمنهج التحليل الوصفي لتحليل طبيعة السياسات والاستراتيجيات التي تسهم في تمكين المرأة وإدماجها في بنية المؤسسة العسكرية الأردنية، عبر عرض المعوقات والفرص التي تواجه عملها بتلك المؤسسة. النتائج: أظهرت النتائج أن القوات المسلحة الأردنية قد انتهجت نهجاً يسعى إلى تمكين المرأة إدماجها في بنية المؤسسة العسكرية، عبر تبنيها استراتيجيات وطنية لتعزيز انخراطها بالعمل العسكري، وقد تلاقت أهدافها الوطنية لتعزيز مساواة المرأة بالرجل مع السياسات الوطنية وأهداف حلف الناتو.

الخلاصة: برغم مجموعة التحديات التي تواجه استراتيجية إدماج النوع الاجتماعي في المؤسسة العسكرية الأردنية فإن هناك فرصاً واعدة لإدماجها في القوات المسلحة الأردنية معززة بحدوث تغير وتطور في مشاركتها عسكرياً عبر البرامج والاستراتيجيات الوطنية والاتفاقيات العسكرية الدولية.

الكلمات الدالة: تمكين المرأة، دمج النوع الاجتماعي، القوات المسلحة الأردنية



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Introduction

Women's studies represent a pivotal field of knowledge within international politics, functioning as an interdisciplinary academic domain that addresses themes such as identity, gender, political participation, social work, productive activity, and other influential branches of gender studies. However, an examination of classical political literature reveals a notable absence of women as an autonomous subject separate from men. In these works, women are rarely analyzed independently of men, suggesting that the impact of politics is assumed to be identical on both men and women.

Towards the end of the last century, the study of women began to be approached from various perspectives under the umbrella of feminism or gender studies in international politics. If we attempt to categorize these political literatures based on their stance towards women, we find that one category rejects the very concept of feminism both as an idea and a subject of study. Another category advocates for engaging with feminist ideas but within the framework defined by masculine-centered literature. The third category is concerned with gender equality.

This study aims to contribute to the theoretical field of feminist studies by examining the use of women's issues as an independent subject within security and military studies. Given the demanding nature of military service, women face significant challenges in proving their competence and capability within this profession. Therefore, this research investigates the involvement of Jordanian women in the military, focusing on the gender mainstreaming policies adopted by the Jordan Armed Forces with the support of NATO, and in alignment with national plans for women's inclusion and equality within state institutions. Jordan has intensified its efforts to increase women's participation in the military since their initial enrollment in 1960. Gradual progress has been made since the integration of women into service sectors in 1976, and significant strides were taken to include women in operational military service from 2000 onward. However, these advancements have not eradicated the nuanced challenges and costs associated with this progress.

However, the most significant momentum in elevating women's roles and presence within the military occurred following their deployment under NATO command in Afghanistan in 2001. Subsequently, the hotel bombings of 2005 and the escalation of terrorist activities, there was a substantial expansion of women's roles in security and military sectors, particularly within intelligence and counterterrorism units. Concurrently, Jordan demonstrated a steadfast commitment to enhancing women's participation in military service and peacekeeping missions led by the United Nations, aligning with Jordan's progressive stance and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Importance of the study:

This study contributes to the field of security studies and gender studies as a significant area of knowledge in international relations. It does so by examining the evolving conceptual framework of gender in the context of militarization and security, influenced by external factors. Moreover, the study delves into the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies within the armed forces. This research will reveal the trajectory of military gendering in Jordan and its relationship to partnerships with military alliances such as NATO, as well as the rising security role of women in developing societies in the Middle East.

Objectives

This study primarily aims to analyze the policies and dimensions of gender integration within the Jordanian Armed Forces to elucidate the intersection between gender issues, militarization, and security in Jordan. It further aims to investigate the scope and trajectory of women's military roles, framed within the context of gender integration policies in this institution. To achieve this, the study incorporates several sub-objectives:

- To examine how women's issues are addressed in comparative political literature, particularly in Western and Arab contexts.
- To analyze the current state of women's empowerment and integration within the structure of the Jordanian Armed Forces.
- To evaluate the extent of institutional reforms in fostering women's participation and assess how these reforms are influenced by internal factors, including national strategies, policies, and initiatives, as well as external factors, with a focus on the role of NATO given Jordan's status as a strategic partner.

Research Problem and Questions

The persistence of a significant gender gap within the military institution constitutes one of the primary challenges to women's participation in the Jordanian Armed Forces. Against this backdrop, the study addresses the broader issue of gender dynamics in Jordan, focusing specifically on the military sector, which represents one of the largest government sectors in the country. The study seeks to investigate whether the Jordanian Armed Forces have developed and implemented an effective national strategy to enhance women's participation in military roles. Recent institutional efforts to adopt gender integration policies demonstrate a growing commitment to addressing women's issues and promoting gender equality. The central research question is articulated as follows:

- What is the current state of gender integration policies in the Jordanian Armed Forces?

To address this primary question, the study poses the following sub-questions:

1. How are women's issues conceptualized within political literature, particularly from a gendered perspective?
2. What is the current state of gender empowerment for women within the Jordanian military institution?
3. What are the prospects for successfully integrating women into the Jordanian Armed Forces?

Study Hypothesis:

The study is based on the central premise that the Jordanian Armed Forces have adopted a national strategy for gender integration in military service, aimed at reducing the gender gap within this sector. This decision stems from the political leadership's recognition of the importance of leveraging the potential of women in this field. However, given the magnitude of challenges facing gender integration policies within the Jordanian Armed Forces, it appears that the military will not be able to fully achieve its ambitions or implement its projects without the support of international partners.

The hypothesis of the study is built on the assumption that the Jordanian Armed Forces aim to adopt gender integration policies to narrow the gender gap, driven by both domestic and international interest. The hypothesis is articulated as follows:

"The gender gap within the Jordanian Armed Forces narrows as gender integration policies are adopted."

Study Methodology

The study employed both historical and analytical approaches and their associated frameworks. The historical method was utilized to trace the conceptualization of gender perspectives in Arab and foreign political literature. This included analyzing the perspectives of Greek philosophers and Western thinkers within liberal, critical, and Marxist schools of thought, as well as examining the contributions of Arab reformist, modernist, and conservative thinkers regarding women's issues and gender.

The analytical method was employed to examine the roles played by the Jordanian Armed Forces in promoting gender empowerment. The gender integration strategy of the Jordanian Armed Forces serves as a critical framework for the military sector's policies in Jordan, providing a roadmap to translate the Kingdom's commitments to international resolutions on gender equality into actionable steps. This analysis involved describing and evaluating the presence of women in the military, their participation in military operations, and the challenges or opportunities they face. These elements collectively reflect the adaptability and complexity of the military institution's role in fostering women's empowerment.

Study Concepts and Terminology:

Women's empowerment: A comprehensive process through which women gain greater control over their life circumstances, including several economic, political, educational, and health (Abdul Jalil, 2022, p. 246). It thus works to help women and the most vulnerable groups obtain societal support with the aim of creating equal opportunities with other more powerful groups (Bani Irsheid, 2024, p. 9).

Gender integration in the military: means creating equal opportunities for women with men in the military field with the aim of improving their position in the military institution as a member with a military character who undergoes military

combat training parallel to her male colleagues, carries weapons, and participates in military operations in field military units and in various military branches.

Previous studies:

There are a group of previous studies that addressed this topic, as follows:

The study of Nall, J. D (2023) entitled: (Flying with Wings of Determination: British, Soviet and American Women Pilots During World War II) The researcher used the comparative historical analytical method, as the study addressed expanding the circle of discussion in the West about the discrepancy between liberal and feminist views on the role of military women in war, socially and militarily, by dropping the role of women and their weight in the war effort after World War II.

Whitehead, M. J. (2021) study, titled: (The Military Promotion Process: The Lived Experiences of African American Women in the Military) used a content analysis approach by taking samples of African American and Anglo-Saxon women within the US military, where a number of criteria were set in terms of promotion processes and opportunities available for career advancement. The study found that there is a difference between white and black women in terms of career advancement and sexual harassment, which confirms the influence of race among women in the US military.

Spragg, C. L., (2020) study, entitled: (Understanding the Experiences of Military-Related Sexual Violence Among Women in the Army National Guard), the study sought to identify the experiences of military-related sexual violence among women in the US National Guard, where the researcher used the statistical analysis method through a questionnaire and conducting personal interviews with female recruits, and reached the factors that contribute to sexual violence in the US Army and the mechanisms followed to recover from these experiences.

A study by Awfi (2018) entitled: The professional challenges facing female workers in the Palestinian Presidential Guard, where the study examined the challenges facing female soldiers, and the study concluded that there is no equality in occupying leadership positions or job positions between men and women despite their competence, as there are many challenges facing female soldiers, perhaps including challenges related to the profession itself in addition to social and economic challenges.

The study of gender in the Arab world was not better than it was in other regions of the world during the twentieth century, as it faced major challenges represented by the nature of the circumstances experienced by Arab societies that suffered from political, economic and social instability (Whitehead, 2021, p10).

Nevertheless, with the turn of the 21st century, several new concepts emerged, many linked to the broader notion of human security, encompassing social cohesion, human rights, and women's rights. These concepts aimed to empower women and improve their socio-economic and political standing within their communities (Aqeel & Akhw Rshideh, 2022). Subsequently, the terms women's empowerment and social inclusion gained prominence, as the most vulnerable groups in society, with equal opportunities in politics, economics, education, and health (Bani Arshid, 2024, p.9). Others view these concepts as strategies to draw attention to the marginalized status of women and their limited access to opportunities (Shamlawi, 2019).

First: Women and Gender in Western Literature:

1. Greek Philosophers: In *The Republic*, Plato envisioned an ideal state organized into a hierarchical structure with philosophers at the apex. Notably, he proposed a gender-neutral system for this ruling class. However, his views on reproduction were more restrictive, as he advocated for state-controlled procreation. Despite this, Plato argued that women and men, could be equally capable, even in military roles. As he stated, "The same nurture which makes a man a good guardian will make a woman a good guardian too" (Plato, 2013, p. 213).

As for "Aristotle's", he saw that nature is based on the principle of the work of everything, and thus nature divided the roles between the man and his control and the submission of the woman, so through the nature of the psychological and physical composition, the person finds himself led by them, which represents the nucleus of society and the center of satisfying its sexual needs and preserving the species, but he opposed the communism of women in Plato, and considered them from the free class (Barakat and others, 1989, pp. 46-47).

2. **Judaism and Christianity:** Judaism viewed women as being somewhat distinct from men and made them subordinate to them. It was mentioned in the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible, for instance, asserts in Genesis 3:16, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"⁽¹⁾.

In Christian teachings, the Gospel revolutionized the centrality of women in religious thought, as God made the Virgin Mary his saint and the mother of Christ. Christ came with sympathy and tolerance for women whose mistakes he overlooked, as Christ said about the case of the woman accused of adultery, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her"⁽²⁾.

In the middle Ages, the ecclesiastical thought, shaped by saints and early Church Fathers, developed a tendency to diminish the status of women and assert male dominance. Women's roles were often reduced to sexuality and reproduction. For instance, Saint Augustine, described his relationship with the opposite sex as "licentious" in his Confessions (Augustine, 2012, p. 45). Similarly, Roman philosophy, particularly during the heroic age, glorified male dominance, viewing men as the architects of victory and their supremacy as aligned with the concept of natural law (Abdul Jalil et al., 2022, p. 77).

3. **Liberal Philosophy:** Rousseau divided societal life into two spheres: the domestic sphere, which was the domain of women, and the public sphere, encompassing economic and political life, which was reserved for men. In his work (*Émile*), Rousseau argued for the necessity of differentiating between the roles of men and women for the sake of the common good. Criticizing advocates for women's equality, he asked rhetorically, "Do you want her to be a wife and a nurse today, and tomorrow a soldier and a warrior?" (Rousseau, 1958, p. 240).

John Locke posited that prior to the establishment of civil society, humans lived in a state of nature characterized by peace. He argued that nature is fundamentally benevolent and that it is human transgression of natural law that leads to disorder and societal collapse. Locke believed in a natural distinction between men and women, grounded in biological and intellectual differences (Locke, 1960, pp. 20-22). He contended that men serve the state, while women serve men. A woman's value to the state, according to Locke, is derived from her success in raising children, whereas a man's value is inherent in his status as a citizen from birth.

Herbert Spencer and Maximilian Weber argued that issues of democracy and bureaucracy are fundamental to social matters, shaping the rational nature of horizontal and hierarchical relationships. They contended that the notion of gender distinction is a product of rigid legal and constitutional systems (Aqeel, 2020). From their perspective, this issue is not driven by emotional bias, and they therefore believed in the importance of both women and men in building the state and its institutions. Similarly, classical economists such as Adam Smith and Bertrand Russell argued that any role for women outside the home aligns with the natural laws of the division of labor and contributes to societal harmony (Kazem, 1989, pp. 129-132). In contrast, existentialist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre maintained that womanhood is not merely a biological category but a cultural identity (Handawi, 2016, p. 11).

4. **Modern Marxism:** Friedrich Engels, one of the founders of socialist and Marxist thought, argued in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* that "the mode of social existence is based on an inverse relationship: the weaker the tools of labor and their mode of development, the stronger and more influential the sexual bonds in society, and vice versa" (Engels, 1957, p. 57). He also dedicated a chapter to the evolution of the family within the transformations of human societies, arguing that human beings are essentially creatures who have gained control over food production, in addition to their role in reproduction.

Engels also divided human history into three stages: the first was "savagery," characterized by the dominance of clans or tribes over individuals, which dictated the conditions of human existence. The second stage was "barbarism," during

¹ The Holy Bible - Old Testament, Book of Genesis, Chapter 3, p. 7.

² The Holy Bible, New Testament, Gospel of John, Chapter 8, p. 161.

which humans, through physical labor, were able to meet their needs through agriculture and animal domestication. The third stage was "civilization," marked by humanity's domination over nature through industrial production, intellectual pursuits, and the provision of the means of subsistence (Engels, 1957, p. 57).

As for what Karl Marx proposed in his scientific Marxism about the role of women in social life, it is the result of his analysis of the origin of the family first and the relations of production second, where his ideas can be summarized as follows (Marx & Engles, 1955, pp385-405):

- a. Woman is the axis of society, and the reality of her oppression can be traced back to private property, making her an exploited entity.
- b. The law of class struggle, which applies to workers, will also apply to women.
- c. The basis of class struggle is economic, rooted in the ownership of the means of production, rather than biological divisions.
- d. The solution lies in the full inclusion of women in paid productive work.

Second: Women and Gender in Arab Literature:

1. **The Quran and Prophetic Tradition:** Islam views women as equals in humanity, originating from the same essence. Allah states in the Quran, "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women"⁽³⁾ (Surat An-Nisa\ 4:1). The Prophet Muhammad also accorded great respect to women, maintaining their dignity and honoring them. Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet said, "And take my advice regarding good treatment of women" (Al-Asqalani, 1985, p. 5185). The Prophet also said, "The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family" (Al-Tirmidhi, 1996, p. 3895).

2. **Reformist Movement:** Women's issues gained significant attention from Islamic reformist thinkers at the beginning of the 20th century. Prominent figures such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Muhammad Abduh, and al-Ghazali adopted a moderate Islamic approach to women's development, focusing on enhancing their education and work skills. Al-Ghazali, in particular, addressed several controversial issues related to women, including hijab, work, and social interactions, and their involvement in (da'wah, Islamic call). Al-Ghazali allowed for women to leave their homes but stipulated that they should not "show off" in public by attracting attention, and that they should dress modestly, avoiding excessive adornment (Ben Abdelnabi and Enaya, 2020, p. 44).

3. **The Enlightenment Trend:** Qasim Amin emerges as one of the most prominent modern thinkers who advocated for women's rights at the turn of the 20th century. In his seminal work, "The Liberation of Women," published in 1899, Amin argues that the decline of the nation is not rooted in economic conditions but rather in societal stagnation stemming from ignorance. He calls for the enlightenment of society through the intellectual and cultural upliftment of women. As he states, "Women require education to become rational human beings... They need education to enable them to fulfill their own needs and the needs of their children" (Amin, 2017, p. 19).

Similarly, the thinker Abdullah Afifi, in his 1932 work, "The Arab Woman in Her Pre-Islamic and Islamic Periods," asserts that women are not inherently weak beings. In pre-Islamic Arabia, they enjoyed a level of equality with men. He writes, "In an era when Roman women were subjugated to men, their Arab counterparts were at the pinnacle of freedom and equality" (Afifi, 1932, p. 28).

4. **The Contemporary Feminist Trend:** Fatima Mernissi, Mona Eltahawy, and Nawal El Saadawi are widely recognized as radical thinkers at the forefront of the Arab women's liberation movement. Their numerous publications have advocated for women's liberation and emancipation from social and economic dependency on men. In her early work, *The Naked Face of Arab Women* (1977), El Saadawi boldly asserts, "No one claims to have dominated women, for they were protectors, rulers, owners,

³ The Holy Quran, Surat An-Nisa, verse 1: 4

and goddesses," and further states, "They donned iron and chain mail at the Battle of Uhud and wielded swords, piercing chests" (El Saadawi, 2017, pp. 34-43). El Saadawi argues that women's bodies belong solely to themselves, and that they historically enjoyed the right to choose their husbands during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods. She contends that women were once dominant in society, engaging in agriculture and commerce, but their status declined with the advent of land ownership.

In contrast to the radical feminist perspectives discussed earlier, a number of moderate feminist thinkers emerged who advocated for women's rights and equality with men. Tahar Haddad, in his seminal work, *Our Women in Sharia and Society*, begins by asserting, "Woman is the mother of humanity... and Islam has granted her equality with men" (Haddad, 2011, p. 3). Conversely, the thinker Abd al-Rasul Abd al-Ghaffar, while appearing to oppose extremist views on women's liberation (Taher, 1987, p. 51).

Second Domain: The Reality of Gender Empowerment for Women in the Jordanian Armed Forces

In response to international directives following the 1970 Mexico Conference and the 1980 Copenhagen Conference, which emphasized the necessity for women worldwide to have the right to development, equality, peace, and the improvement of their economic, social, and cultural conditions, the Jordanian Women's Union was established in 1981 under the personal initiative of Her Excellency Mrs. In'am Al-Mufti, the Minister of Social Development (Al-Burini and Al-Hindawi, 1994, p. 18).

Firstly: The Reality of Women's Work in the Jordanian Armed Forces

The role of women in the military has evolved significantly since their entry into the Royal Guard in 2000 to serve in the Royal Guard's Special Protection Unit. Subsequently, in 2005, female officers were recruited for the Royal Military Academy and assigned to various branches including Signal Corps, logistics, supply, the Royal Air Force, and naval command. In 2007, a female military police company was formed, and in 2016, female flight candidates were recruited. Since 2018, women have taken on roles in rapid intervention, special operations, operational missions, and intelligence (Jordanian Armed Forces, 2023).

1. The Extent of Women's Presence in the Jordanian Armed Forces

According to the 2022 Arab Human Development Report, the Social Gender Development Index indicates that Jordan has achieved a high level of human development for women, in contrast to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries despite their higher income levels. The report highlights that Jordan has a very high level of human development overall, although there is a gap in terms of higher income for males compared to females in terms of per capita Gross National Income (Arab Human Development Report, 2022).

The 2022 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum indicates that Jordan ranked 122 out of 146 countries in terms of gender gap, with a score of 0.639. This represents an improvement from the previous year when Jordan was ranked 131 with a score of 0.638. However, Jordan's female labor force participation rate is only 13.47%, placing it at the 125th position globally. In terms of wage equality, Jordan ranks 53rd. The unemployment rate among females aged 15-64 is 26.72%, compared to 17.16% for males. It's worth noting that the total female population in Jordan is 5.04 million, while the male population is 5.17 million (World Economic Forum, 2022).

In parallel, the reality of women in the Jordanian military does not deviate from the findings of international reports regarding the general situation of working women in Jordan. Assistant Chief of the Joint Staff for has indicated that the percentage of female combatant military personnel in the Jordanian military was less than 0.5% before 2010, unlike their counterparts in the Royal Medical Services. Therefore, a national action plan was developed in 2017, in cooperation with international institutions, aiming to increase the percentage of women in the military, excluding those in the Royal Medical Services, to 3% by the end of this decade⁽⁴⁾. The total number of women working in the military medical services is 13,386, representing 13.31% (Ghanem & Araqi, 2022). which is lower than expected according to the report by the Malcolm Kerr

⁴ Privet interview with His Excellency Nasr Al-Athamneh, former Assistant Chief of the Joint Staff for Planning, Organization, and Defense Resources, Jordan Armed Forces- Arab Army, Amman-Jordan, June 18, 2023."

Carnegie Middle East Center. This report finds that the total number of women in the Jordanian military is 18,038, representing 17.94% of the military force (Brahimi, 2022).

2. Women's Actual Participation in Military Operations

Jordan Armed Forces – Arab Army have placed significant emphasis on the participation of women in various combat and humanitarian operations alongside the United Nations. The aim is to enhance their combat skills, military knowledge, and field experience. This is seen as a means of promoting gender mainstreaming within military contexts. In fact, the Armed Forces have found that this aligns perfectly with their strategic plan to integrate gender and increase the percentage of women participating in UN missions to 18% by the end of 2024. Notably, according to a 2020 international report jointly published by the Carnegie Middle East Center and the Arab Women's Research and Development Center at the Lebanese American University, only 40 female Jordanian military personnel participated in peacekeeping missions out of a total of 61,611 Jordanian peacekeepers (Ghanem & Araqji, 2022).

From this, it is evident that the percentage of female military personnel participating reached only 0.000645% of the total participants. To achieve the goal of reaching 18%, we would need the participation of approximately eleven thousand female military personnel after undergoing the necessary training and qualification. This is a goal that is far from being realized within the timeframe outlined in the strategic plan.

Despite this, the contribution of Jordanian women in the military to the Afghanistan mission was one of the most significant early combat deployments for Jordanian women. In 2001, as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan, which was a combat mission authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1386, NATO invited partner nations in August 2003 to contribute military forces. Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army responded by sending special forces from the Special Operations Group, which included Jordanian women. Additionally, Jordan deployed a field hospital staffed by Jordanian female military personnel to provide healthcare to Afghan women. Jordanian women also played an active role in providing social services to the Afghan people.

Commenting on the role of Jordanian women in Afghanistan, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis stated in his book, "Call Sign Chaos," that "on patrols, female recruits wearing camouflage hijabs were able to engage with Afghan women in villages in a way that men or non-Muslims could not" (Mattis, 2019, p. 243). The American general, with his strategic expertise, highlighted the significant role played by Jordanian female military personnel in serving NATO's agenda in Afghanistan.

Second: Challenges to Women's Empowerment and Integration in the Jordanian Armed Forces

The gender gap represents one of the most significant obstacles facing Jordanian women within the armed forces. This is due to both the quantitative disparity in the number of women compared to men, as well as the qualitative disparities related to the positions held by women within the military hierarchy. This has had negative implications for their standing within security and military institutions. Furthermore, the issue is not limited to this aspect but is also linked to a set of social challenges that form the broader context of this problem. These include professional challenges related to the nature of the work itself, which may be linked to gender-based assumptions about physical and psychological capabilities, as well as working conditions, colleagues' attitudes, and family circumstances.

1. Conservative Societal Culture

Although women constitute half of Jordanian society (48.5%) and half of its productive capacity, a portion of this energy remains untapped. Jordanian women live in a social reality rooted in a complex cultural compound represented by inherited customs and traditions, as well as religious beliefs that women experience in cities, villages, and rural areas. By tracing the cultural map of Jordanian society, three classic ideological trends that restrict women's field of work have emerged (Al-Sharari & Al-Arabi, 2016):

a. **Traditional Conservative Trend:** This is a traditional rural trend that defines women's role as reproduction and domestic work, rejecting their involvement in any civil or military work outside the home. Women are considered the weaker link in society.

b. **Traditional Modernist Trend:** This is an urban trend that grants women some social and economic rights and allows them to work outside the home within their biological capabilities, but limits their ability to make decisions.

c. **The Enlightened Trend:** This is a productive trend that considers women capable of serving society and places them in a category of creativity and equality with their male counterparts, granting them all rights. However, it keeps women within a framework of political dependency on men.

2. Low Participation Levels and Weak Structural Organization

Despite the expansion of the military institution’s branches and structures, the inclusion of women remains limited. As of the end of 2023, the percentage of enlisted women does not exceed 1.7% of the total active military personnel. Table 1 illustrates the proportion of women in the three main sectors of the Jordanian Armed Forces. Furthermore, the principle of gender equality is largely absent within the organizational framework of the Directorate of Military Women's Affairs, which was established in 1995. Their presence remains modest, especially in areas of training and preparation for military roles. Additionally, there is a need to improve the quality of performance and provide women with the opportunity to work in combat positions, which are still exclusively occupied by men.

From Table 1, it can be observed that the number of women in the military with civilian roles in the Army exceeds those in military roles (2846 versus 1623). The number of women is nearly nonexistent in the Air Force and Navy. Based on the overall percentage (1.7%), the total number of female recruits in 2023 does not exceed approximately 19,000.

Table No. (1): Number of women in Jordan Armed Forces- Arab Army until the end of 2023

Military Branches	Number of women in Jordan Armed Forces- Arab Army			Total of women in the military establishment			
	Officers	NCOs	Civilian	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers of Fighters	Percentage
Land Forces	596	1027	2846	4469	5.1 %	1623	1.88%
Air Forces	44	50	79	173	1.2 %	94	0.67%
Navy forces	2	3	5	10	2 %	5	1%
Total	642	1080	2930	4652	4.62%	1722	1.7 %

Source:: MALCOLM H.KERR GARNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER [https://CARNGIE -mec.org/diwan/87338](https://CARNGIE-mec.org/diwan/87338)

3. Occupational Challenges Related to the Nature of Work

As previously demonstrated, the overall presence of women in the military is significantly lower compared to men. This imbalance indicates a gender gap within the military institution, which can be reflected in all job positions. Additionally, the low number of female recruits(Fighters) can be attributed to the fewer training courses designed to attract women compared to those for men (Jordan Armed Forces –Arab Army, 2023). Furthermore, the recruitment process often involves specific physical, personal, educational, and other requirements and attributes, which may inadvertently favor male candidates over female ones. The nature of military work itself and the inherent physical differences between genders present another significant occupational barrier. This leads to a differentiation in the types of tasks assigned to men and women, resulting in a broader scope of opportunities for men within the military.

Another professional challenge relates to the impact of working conditions on the relationships between married female military personnel, their children, and their spouses. Extended absences from home due to military duties can lead to feelings of instability, stress, anxiety, and guilt among female service members, particularly regarding their children's well-being and education. Moreover, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within the military, where they could better

understand the needs of their female subordinates, poses an additional challenge. Studies have shown that one of the most significant stressors for women in the military is difficulty in dealing with male superiors who may be dismissive or hostile towards their ideas (Owfi, 2018, p. 72). Additionally, research has indicated that women in the military are at a higher risk of sexual harassment and violence due to the nature of military environments, which often involve young male recruits, isolated locations, and an imbalance in the number of male and female personnel at all levels (Spragg, 2018, pp. 8-9).

4. Underfunding and reduced military spending

According to the Jordanian budget law, the total security spending for the Ministries of Defense and Interior is estimated at 3.6 billion Jordanian Dinars (approximately \$5 billion). Of this, only 1.6 billion Jordanian Dinars (\$2.3 billion) is allocated for military defense (Jordanian Budget Project, 2024). This is primarily allocated for operational expenditures in these institutions, as shown in Table 2. Some studies have shown that salaries, wages, and similar expenses in the military institution have constituted an average of 96% of the total budget over the past ten years. As a result, the military institution relies heavily on U.S. and Western aid for its armament needs (Obaidat, 2022). It is noteworthy that the military's share of the overall state budget represents only about 10% of the total budget, which in 2024 was approximately 10.6 billion Jordanian Dinars. In addition, it receives foreign support from the United States and the European Union, as illustrated in Table 3, which shows the defense budget and the volume of U.S. military aid to Jordan over selected years.

Table 2: Size and Percentage of Salaries, Wages, and Allowances from the Defense Budget in Jordanian Dinars for Selected Years

Year	Salaries, Wages, and Allowances	Percentage of the Defense Budget
2014	887,672,000	92.7%
2017	1,115,000,000	96.2%
2020	1,131,059,000	96.8%
2023	1,301,000,000	96.9%

Source: Official website of the General Budget Department (<https://www.gbd.gov.jo/ar/home>)

Consequently, without the support of Western partners, the armed forces would be unable to vertically and horizontally expand their military capabilities or initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement and integration of Jordanian women. While the current percentage of women in military roles, when distributed across the total female workforce, remains modest, the alignment of Jordan's interests with NATO, particularly following the notable contributions of Jordanian women in Afghanistan, presents an opportunity to significantly raise this proportion. The positive impact of female participation is a key factor in this potential increase. In addition, the concept of international security has changed completely after the end of the Cold War to include other concepts such as strengthening democracy, protecting human rights, women's rights, and others (Aqeel & others, 2021).

Table 3: Defense Budget and the Volume of U.S. Aid to Jordan in Billion U.S. Dollars

Year	Jordanian Defense Budget	U.S. Aid
2014	1.350	1.003
2017	1.470	1.319
2020	1.720	1.525
2023	2.300	1.651

Source: Congressional Research Service, (2024) *Jordan: Background and USA Relations*, CRS Report Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress, p. 15. <https://crsreports.congress.gov> RL33546 Official website of the General Budget Department (<https://www.gbd.gov.jo/ar/home>)

Third Domain: Opportunities for integrating and empowering women in Jordan Armed Forces – Arab Army.

The vision of the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) to enhance the integration and empowerment of women within its military structure constitutes a critical framework for realizing the national goal of establishing the JAF as a leading security institution on both the Arab and international levels. This initiative is particularly significant in terms of incorporating gender perspectives and developing the gender capacities of Jordanian women, thus improving their opportunities for advancement within the Armed Forces. This vision aligns with the broader strategic objective of adopting a national policy for the integration of gender in military operations.

First: Official Policies on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

In line with its ongoing reform, development, and modernization efforts, the Jordanian government endorsed the National Strategy for Women in Jordan (2020–2025), a product of collaborative efforts among both governmental and non-governmental institutions. The strategy aims to empower women and foster their participation in both civilian and military sectors, thereby ensuring that women and girls enjoy full human rights and equal opportunities for achieving comprehensive and sustainable development. The National Strategy outlines four key objectives as follows (National Women's Affairs Committee, 2020, pp. 36-38):

1. To enable women to access their rights in a society free from gender-based discrimination.
2. To ensure that women and girls live free from all forms of gender-based violence.
3. To support positive social norms, attitudes, and roles that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.
4. To encourage institutions to implement policies that support gender justice, equality, and women’s empowerment.

On the legislative front, the issuance and amendment of numerous laws and regulations have marked a transformative shift in the women’s sector, recognizing the pivotal role of legislation in safeguarding women’s rights and enhancing their participation in public life—both civilian and military—as well as in leadership positions. These legal amendments are closely aligned with the Jordanian Armed Forces’ policies for gender integration. Over the past five years, a series of legal reforms have been passed with the aim of eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence, while simultaneously enhancing women’s participation in both public and private sectors. These reforms include: the 2024 amendment to the Labor Law, addressing gender inequality among workers and extending maternity leave in both the public and private sectors to 90 days instead of 10; the 2024 amendment to the Social Security Law, which guarantees widows the right to receive their deceased spouse's pension benefits; the 2019 Personal Status Law, which guarantees paid maternity leave for working women, prevents arbitrary dismissal, and provides financial support for child custody; and the 2017 Family Violence Protection Law, which incorporates multiple facets of protecting women from violence and familial abuse (Jordanian Prime Ministry, Official Gazette, 2024).

In addition, several regulatory frameworks have been enacted, such as the 2024 Social Protection Regulation No. (74), which pertains to maternity insurance, daycare services, breastfeeding, and health care for women working in both the public and private sectors, and the 2018 Legal Assistance Regulation No. (119). Furthermore, the 2016 regulation on Shelters for Women at Risk (Regulation No. 171) was issued to provide social, psychological, medical, counseling, cultural, and legal services for at-risk women. Another significant measure is the 2015 Alimony Fund Regulation No. (48), which aids in securing a dignified life for women and their children when the responsible party fails to provide financial support (Jordanian Prime Ministry, Official Gazette, 2024).

Despite these progressive legislative developments, Jordan ranks 123rd on the 2024 Gender Gap Index, a relatively low position. While girls outpace boys in school enrollment rates under the educational attainment indicator, there remain considerable disparities in economic and health indicators (World Economic Forum, 2024, pp. 10-16). Economic empowerment continues to be one of the foremost challenges in the context of women’s empowerment and gender equality

in Jordan, as employment opportunities for women are constrained, and unemployment rates among female university graduates are disproportionately high. Additionally, the gender wage gap remains significant, with women earning 16% less than men for equivalent work (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2024).

In the realm of political participation, notable progress has been made with the recent amendments to the Election Law No. (4) of 2022 and the Political Parties Law No. (7) of 2022 (Official Gazette, Nos. 5784 and 5782), which were introduced in response to the recommendations of the Royal Committee for Political Reform (Alakayleh, Bani Salameh, & Emambocus, 2024)). The Election Law mandates one seat for women in each local electoral district, resulting in a total of 18 seats for women. Simultaneously, the Political Parties Law stipulates that political party lists must include at least one woman for every three male candidates. These reforms led to the successful election of 27 women in the 2024 parliamentary elections, increasing female representation in the Parliament to 19.6%, compared to 11.5% in the previous session. Moreover, over the past five years, women have accounted for an average of 24% of Cabinet positions (5 women in the government of Jaafar Hmoud, 7 women in the government of Bisher Al-Khasawneh).

second: The Gender Integration Strategy for the Jordan Armed Forces 2021-2024.

The Gender Integration Strategy for the Jordan Armed Forces represents a significant framework for military policy in Jordan, particularly in terms of its roles in supporting national and regional security and stability. It also provides a roadmap for translating the Kingdom's commitments to international resolutions related to gender equality. According to the military institution's strategic plan, three strategic objectives have been outlined as follows (Jordan Armed Forces-Gender Integration Strategy, 2021):

1. Enhance gender equality and eliminate all forms of gender discrimination by achieving the goals specific to gender workers, incorporating gender mainstreaming, and achieving an annual increase in the number of women.
2. Integrate gender equality and gender-responsive strategies by increasing the percentage of women in the military, amending human resources policies specific to women, and achieving their participation in education, training, and promotion to senior positions.
3. Ensure internal and external monitoring of the results of gender mainstreaming by strengthening engagement with civil society and conducting monitoring and evaluation of gender initiatives.

The primary strategic objective is to foster a social environment and culture that prioritizes gender equality. This involves establishing a robust infrastructure, including dedicated staff trained in women's issues, and ensuring women's participation and leadership at all levels. Strategic task statements will be employed to this end, along with targeted training programs for women in military roles.

The second strategic objective pertains to achieving gender equality and creating gender-responsive strategies. This involves making improvements to recruitment, promotion, and performance measurement systems at the departmental level to ensure increased female participation and greater access for women to active roles. Furthermore, it is also related to enhancing women's access to leadership positions and increasing their opportunities to contribute to peacekeeping.

The third strategic objective focuses on ensuring commitment and oversight of gender integration activities through the adoption of an annual report on women's participation at all stages of their service. It also emphasizes ensuring institutional cooperation with the local community and civil society.

Third: The Role of NATO in Enhancing Gender Empowerment

The concept of gender empowerment within the NATO military is a product of partnerships with concerned states to create equal opportunities for women and men through initiatives. NATO held its first conference for senior military women in Copenhagen, in 1961, In 1976, the women's committee in NATO was officially approved through document number MC 249 (NATO document, 2021).

In 1997, an advisory office for women was established within the NATO Military Staff (IMS). By early 1998, women in NATO forces became a reality. NATO recognized the vital role of women in war and security and the importance of integrating a gender perspective into military operations to consolidate peace and security in conflict zones. The Women, Peace and Security program was launched in 2000, and an official position was created in the Private Office of the Secretary General, known as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. In 2002, Partnership for Peace (PFP) countries were invited to participate in the annual women's conference in Brussels, followed in 2003 by an invitation to Mediterranean Dialogue countries (NATO news, 2021).

The Women's Empowerment Program comes within the Alliance's awareness of the vital role that women play in promoting peace and security and the importance of integrating the concept of gender in all Alliance circles. Accordingly, the Women's Empowerment Program was launched in 2004 based on Security Council Resolution No. 1325. This may have played a role in establishing the position of Deputy Secretary-General, who specializes in women's, security and peace issues (Obeidat, 2022, p23). On the other hand, this significant position within NATO has had an impact on enhancing the gender perspective in NATO's combat operations and on integrating this perspective (Nall, 2023)

Given NATO's significant focus on enhancing gender empowerment within its institutions, this has been reflected in practical terms towards partner countries, including Jordan. Jordan is one of NATO's most important partner countries in the Middle East. NATO has engaged Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army in a number of programs and development projects aimed at increasing gender integration within the military institution, as follows:

1. Trust Fund Program No. 3: This program is based on the idea of integrating women into Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army and working on their military development and advancement. It is a unique program among partner countries, as a specialized training center exclusively for women was established in Amman. This center is available to train female military personnel at the regional level. The total cost of this project was approximately five million dollars. The project commenced in 2015 and concluded in 2021, and was inaugurated by Her Royal Highness Princess Salma bint Abdullah II (Jordan News Agency, General Bulletin, 2021).

Based on the 2017 Action Plan, Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army aim to increase the recruitment and training of female military personnel to 25% (Salw, 2024). Moreover, the plan allows for the training of senior officers or female recruits from regional countries (International Students). One of the key objectives of the Third Trust Fund was to train female military personnel on gender concepts. NATO, through its Gender Advisor, translated the first gender training course for the region in cooperation with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) based in Switzerland.

2. The Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

Through the Third Trust Fund, financed by some NATO member states, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) was contracted as a paid consultant from the project budget. The purpose of this contract was to assist the Jordanian military leadership in reassessing the gender integration project within the Arab Army, conducting a gender gap analysis, and developing implementable tools to address these gaps (NATO-International Women's Day, 2021).

The study included laws, policies, planning, education, training, the percentage of women, and their locations within the military institution in order to develop an action plan to increase the representation of women in the military. This has had a positive impact on redistributing women across all military sectors, including combat, intelligence, and security sectors. Additionally, it has provided insights into the quantitative aspects of women's actual presence in combat sectors.

3. Training and Visits for Women's delegations

In 2010, a female military delegation visited NATO headquarters at the invitation of the Alliance's diplomatic section. The delegation was led by Colonel Sana Sarhan, head of the Women's Affairs Department in the Jordanian Army, under the patronage of Princess Aisha bint Al Hussein (NATO, News, 2010). Subsequent visits have been made in other years.

In 2019, a delegation of women from the Armed Forces, Civil Defense, and Public Security Directorate participated in NATO's annual conference on the gender perspective, presenting the progress made on Jordan's National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security 2020, with the support of UN Women Jordan (UN Women Jordan, 2019). These visits have served as a valuable resource for Jordanian female military personnel to stay updated on NATO's latest advancements in gender-specific education and training, enhancing their effectiveness within their respective military and security institutions.

4. Enhancing Field Education and Training for Female Military Personnel

Paragraphs 131 and 132 of the Warsaw Summit's decisions in 2016 underscored the imperative of enhancing field education and training for female military personnel within NATO and partner nations, aligning with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The summit's outcomes underscored a significant gender gap within NATO institutions, necessitating targeted interventions. These paragraphs attributed this disparity to inadequate military education and training for women, emphasizing that rectifying this deficiency would not only bolster women's rights within military structures but also foster broader gender empowerment within the Alliance.

NATO worked to bridge this gap by collaborating with member and partner nations. Consequently, Jordan¹ Armed Forces adopted a field action plan agreed upon with NATO to develop education and training for Jordanian female military personnel through educational institutions and training programs, with the aim of identifying weaknesses in both educational and field aspects (Obeidat, 2022, p. 76). Indeed, the establishment of a dedicated training center for women represents a significant milestone both locally and regionally.

5. Participation in Military Exercises and Exhibitions

The official website of the Czech Republic's Permanent Mission to NATO reported that a group of Jordanian female military personnel participated in the 15th NATO Days in Ostrava on September 19-20, 2016. This marked the first time an Arab force had participated in this annual event held in Ostrava, Czech Republic. The Jordanian women conducted a live demonstration simulating the rescue of hostages from an aircraft. The headline of the report stated, "The performance of the female unit of Jordan Armed Forces was one of the most captivating moments of the 15th NATO Days in Ostrava" (Embassy of Czech in Amman, 2015). The participation was attended by the Director of Women's Affairs in Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army and the Jordanian Ambassador. The Jordanian team made a strong impression on other participants and spectators at the 15th NATO Days in Ostrava. Jordan was also described as one of NATO's most active partners, a regional leader in gender equality, and an important ally in Countering extremism and terrorism.

Conclusion and Findings

The subject of women's participation in military service is one of the most sensitive issues in both traditional and modern societies. On the one hand, it presents a challenge to social and religious traditions that prohibit women from entering the military sector, restricting this field exclusively to men. On the other hand, it intersects with the tensions between the fundamental principles of contemporary women's rights and the agendas of feminist movements that oppose women's involvement in military work. This issue was addressed in the first section of this study.

As presented in the second section of the study, the participation of women in the Jordanian military, both quantitatively and qualitatively, remains limited compared to that of men. This has been linked to a set of barriers that hinder gender empowerment within the military, highlighting a significant gender gap within the institution. This gap prompted the Jordanian state to issue and amend several legislations aimed at ensuring gender equality and advancing women's empowerment. In the past five years, a number of legislative reforms have been enacted to eliminate discrimination and violence against women, as well as to enhance their participation in both the civil and military sectors, and protect them from violence. These legislative changes have positively reflected on increasing women's opportunities and strengthening their participation in political, economic, and educational spheres.

Regarding their military participation, which is the focus of this study, the percentage of women's involvement in combat military sectors increased from 0.07% in 2018 to 1.7% in 2023. However, this percentage remains modest due to the cultural, social, and professional challenges women face in this sector, in addition to the technical and financial challenges that the Jordanian military institution itself encounters. This makes the support of international institutions, particularly NATO, essential, given its significant role as a partner to Jordan.

Moreover, the study found that the Jordanian military institution has adopted progressive policies to enhance the integration of women and increase their presence, both in quantity and quality, in military and operational security sectors outside of service roles. This is reflected in the gender mainstreaming strategy, which emphasizes gender equality and maximizes the gains achieved. The Jordanian Armed Forces have developed several national plans to integrate women and ensure their equality with men, culminating in the approval of the Gender Integration Strategy for the Military and Security Sector (2021-2024). This strategy has had the most significant impact on training, motivation, and participation in combat operations.

Thus, official attention has played a positive role in stimulating women's participation in military service through various programs and projects implemented in cooperation with the Jordanian military, which has led to positive changes within the institution's approach to women. These changes are accompanied by amendments to systems and laws that have contributed to creating a safe, attractive, and stable environment for women in the military. Additionally, the plans developed by the Jordanian military in collaboration with NATO have contributed to promoting the assignment of women to combat positions rather than administrative and service roles across all sectors. This represents a notable advancement in the status of women in the military, especially considering their role in Afghanistan, which encouraged NATO to further support the participation of Jordanian women in its military operations. On the organizational front, the establishment of a dedicated department for military women and a specialized regional training center has played a significant role in improving gender integration in the Jordanian Armed Forces, leading to an increased presence of women in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

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