

Gender and National Security: The Introduction of International Norms Relating to Gender Equality in the Japanese Self-Defense Forces¹

- Abstract -

The promotion and protection of basic human rights and the promotion of norms relating to gender equality have been important features in the post-Second World War period. Compliance with international gender equality norms has become a requirement for legitimate statehood. Even such rigid and conservative sectors as the national security sector have not been immune to the impact of the internationally spreading gender equality norms. Although Japan has generally been criticized for lagging behind other developed democracies in this area, gender integration in the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) has steadily advanced.

This study seeks to introduce a political science perspective in the scarce research about gender and the SDF. It emphasizes the importance of norms over material considerations in the formulation of gender policies in the SDF. Using a norm localization model (Acharya 2004), this paper investigates through which mechanisms international gender equality norms have influenced the process of gender policy making in the SDF, and the features of the norm internalization process. The analysis is based on secondary and primary sources, Japanese and international, memoirs of key persons, and report by the Japanese media.

International gender equality norms were internalized in Japan through the process of norm localization. The content of foreign norms (i.e. women's economic and political participation) was adjusted to local normative priors (i.e. women's family responsibilities) retaining the domestic normative hierarchy. The paper reveals that the SDF has actively participated in the norm internalization process, borrowing needed elements from international gender equality norms, and contesting domestic gender norms.

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Introduction

The promotion and protection of basic human rights and the promotion of norms relating to gender equality (international gender equality norms) have been important features in the post-Second World War period. With the prescription of equality of the sexes in its constitution of 1946, and the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1980 and its ratification in 1985, Japan also accepted these norms. Nevertheless, it has often been pointed out that Japan is lagging behind other developed democracies in dealing with gender related problems.² In addition, the adoption and adherence to the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination by international society have brought the military and gender, once considered to have little or no relation, in close connection. The main driving force behind the increase of female participation in the armed forces in peacetime seems to have been a change in the understanding of men's and women's roles, adoption of the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment and respect for individual human rights, and liberties and equal protection by law.

The military holds a special status which permits it exercise powers usually denied other state institutions. It is a rigid and impenetrable institution responsible for the protection of the state's sovereignty. Due to its war-fighting function it enjoys benefits not accorded other government institutions. It is often exempted from the application of various legal provisions regulating relations in the civilian sphere.³ However, the "armed forces need the support of the wider society to perform [their war-fighting] function and, particularly in democracies, must reflect its prevailing norms and values".⁴ Therefore, although often not required legally, the military has the need to comply with

² According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2011 ranking Japan ranks 98 out of 135 countries, way behind other developed democracies, World Economic Forum, 2011, 8-11.

³ Under Article 108 of the SDF Law the SDF is exempted from a number of provisions regulating labor relations and employment, Self Defense Forces Law, Law No.165 of 1954.

⁴ Dandeker and Segal 1996, 40.

laws concerning non-discrimination, equal employment and career opportunities.

It is important to emphasize the specific circumstances additionally alienating the SDF from society. The SDF carries the burden of a historical legacy of a defeated and discredited Japanese Imperial Army (the JIA). In recent years public attitudes towards the SDF have significantly improved as a result of its successful performance in international humanitarian and reconstruction missions, domestic disaster-related activities, raising sense of insecurity domestically due to increased security threats in the region, et cetera. However, the SDF is still a socially and politically marginalized organization. The Japanese government has gone through great pains to emphasize a non-military and defensive character of its armed forces in order to keep them within the constitutional framework and reduce both domestic and regional anxieties about a resurgence of Japanese militarism.⁵

On the other hand, women in the Japanese labor market have continually challenged perceptions of women's paid work as a secondary activity and resisted pressures to withdraw from the paid labor market after marrying and having children. Socially constructed perceptions of women as homemakers, pacifists and givers of life in need of protection are juxtaposed with the perception of the military as a masculine institution that engages in violence women should eschew. Japanese women's movements have mostly ignored the SDF either by denying its very existence or rejecting it as unconstitutional. Although they put great efforts in the improvement of women's position in Japanese society, they have virtually neglected policies of female integration in Japanese armed forces. However, women in Japan have shown an interest in and have steadily responded to recruitment demands of the SDF since its establishment.⁶

⁵ By the Constitution of Japan of 1947 the Japanese government formally renounced war as its sovereign right, and proscribed settlement of international disputes through the use of force. Article 9 of the Constitution also states: "...land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential will never be maintained."

⁶ In 2011 there were about 12 200 female uniformed personnel in the SDF, Ministry of Defense, <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/hyouka/tokei/women.html> (2013/3/27)

States do not exist independently from the international society in which they act. Ideas, norms and institutions at any given time influence their interests and identities. *International norms* are defined as “standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity”.⁷ Krook and True paraphrase Wiener and define international norms in the following terms: “International norms are typically defined as ideas of varying degrees of abstraction and specification with respect to fundamental values, organizing principles or standardized procedures that resonate across many states and global actors, having gained support in multiple forums including official policies, laws, treaties or agreements.”⁸ Those norms are often but not necessarily embodied in treaties, declarations and recommendations of international organizations.⁹ *Gender equality* is defined as “the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men.” It has become a central subject to the international norm-setting process and part of the requirements for a legitimate statehood.¹⁰

This paper examines how and why international gender equality norms were introduced in the national security sector in Japan. Specifically, through which mechanisms were international gender equality norms introduced in the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (the SDF)? What were the features of the norm internalization process? Did the domestically accepted international norms undergo changes in the processes of internalization, and how the internalization process reflected on the SDF gender policies? Also, this study seeks to identify whether there was significant divergence from the international gender equality that led to a hollowing out of international gender equality norms? For the purpose of this research a case study of the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces will be conducted.

⁷ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891.

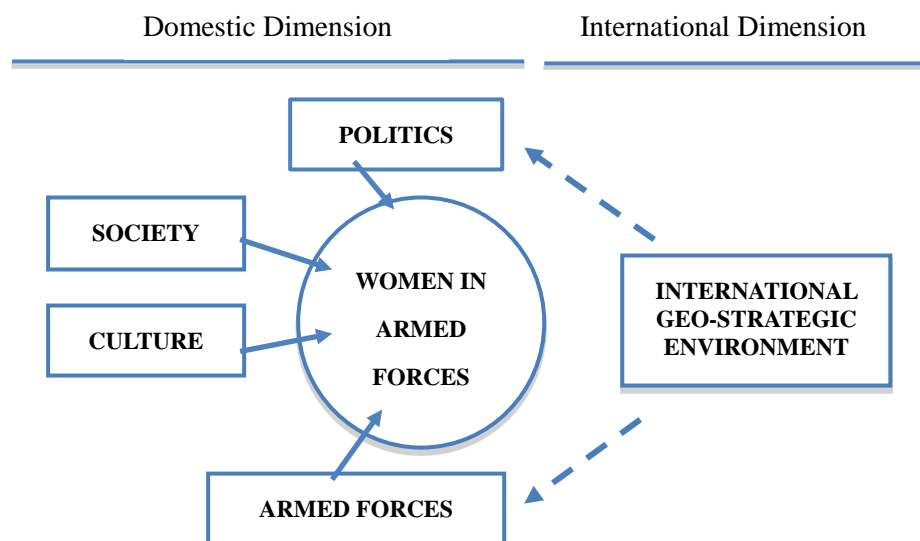
⁸ Krook and True, 2011, 1-2.

⁹ True and Mintrom 2001, 40.

¹⁰ Gernet 2005, 5.

The majority of relevant scholars who seek to identify factors that influence female participation in armed forces emphasizes the relevance of the military's need for personnel as the primary factor of influence. Nevertheless, the case of the SDF casts a doubt on this claim. Specifically, Segal posits that the primary impetus of female participation in the military are the military's need for personnel and that this dictates number of women enlisted. On the other hand, the level of egalitarianism in the wider society is positively correlated with women's military roles.¹¹ However, neither Segal's theory nor later models by, Iskra et al. and Kümmel that are based on this theory deal with a question of how specific domestic socio-cultural and political norms that affect female military participation come to be constructed (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Summary of factors affecting female participation in armed forces proposed by previous studies



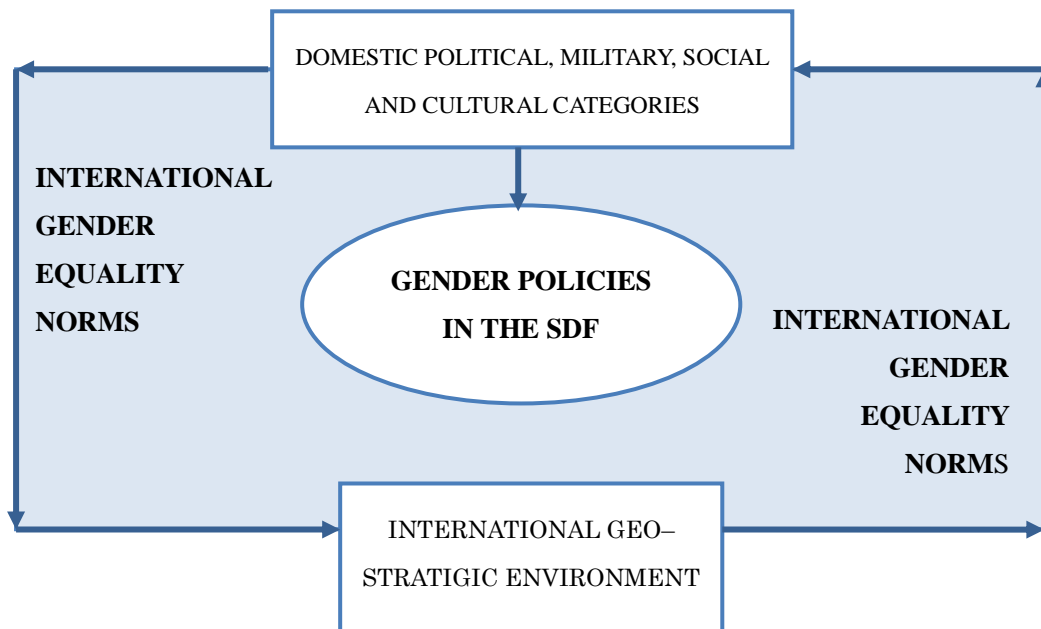
Source: Segal M. (1995), Iskra et al. (2002), Kümmel (2002), created by the author

Further, international normative factors remain virtually unaddressed. Finally, the majority of research in this group is based on the experiences of the armed forces of Western European and

¹¹ Segal 1995, 758-60.

North American countries.¹² Up to the present, the most comprehensive study on the topic of gender and the SDF was conducted by a sociologist Sato.¹³ Sato points out that the change of values regarding gender on the international level had an impact on gender ideology and gender policies of the SDF. However, she does not pursue this argument any deeper as her focus is on the role – that is, the lack thereof – of the Japanese women’s movements on those ideologies.

Figure 2. Model of Factors Affecting Gender Policies in Armed Forces of Japan Proposed by This Study (created by the author)



This study introduces a dimension of international gender equality norms into the analysis of the gender policies of the SDF (Figure 2). It is also an attempt to verify Segal’s theory in the case of armed forces of an Asian country. Further, this study seeks to contribute to the scarce literature on the topic of gender and the SDF. As the few previous studies on gender and the SDF – including Sato’s – are mostly conducted in the field of sociology, this paper aims to contribute to political

¹² Although, Iskra et al. use Mexico, Zimbabwe and Australia as case studies.

¹³ Sato 2004.

science research on the above topic. It focuses on the role international gender equality norms play in the political process of national gender policy formulation. Finally, though the sector of national security is generally considered to be guided by notions of material power and interests, this study seeks to strengthen the arguments of those IR scientists who claim that norms matter in the national security sector as well.

In international relations literature, “Asia is understood as a region where international norms and law are least influential”.¹⁴ Furthermore, the national security sector is regarded as one of the most conservative sectors, and material security concerns are considered to be a primary factor in decision-making. Establishing a causal relationship between international gender equality norms and gender policies in the Japanese armed forces will provide a strong test for the hypothesis of this study that such a causative relation exists.¹⁵ This study relies on the constructivist analytical framework of evolution and domestic influence of international norms put forward by Finnemore and Sikkink, Acharya, and Checkel.¹⁶ The theory of internal and external dynamic of norms proposed by Krook and True is significant as it puts the emphasis on *power* as an integral element of the process of social construction.¹⁷ However, this paper will center on findings that support Acharya’s theory of localization. In this study “introduction” of international gender equality norms corresponds to domestic internalization of those norms through legal and bureaucratic institutionalization.

A qualitative research analysis based on a single case-study of Japanese armed forces in the period 1954-1992 will be conducted and the process-tracing method will be applied.¹⁸ The empirical research of this study is based on the primary and the secondary sources. Among the primary sources

¹⁴ Flowers 2009, 1.

¹⁵ George and Bennett 2004; King et al. 1994; Van Evera 1997.

¹⁶ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Acharya 2004; Checkel 2001.

¹⁷ Krook and True 2010, 6

¹⁸ George and Bennett 2004, 206.

are Diet committee records, international and national legal documents related to the advancement of gender equality, national and international official documents and statistics, memoirs of key persons, and major Japanese newspaper media reports. The within-case analysis will be supplemented by a comparison with the US, Great Britain and Canada. These countries have advanced gender policies and served as models for the SDF's gender policies.¹⁹ They share similar political and economic characteristics with Japan: developed democracies with liberal economies that provide significant contributions to international peace-preservation and development activities.

This study revealed that international gender equality norms were not taken for granted in the internalization process in Japan and domestic ruling elites actively employed localization. After the defeat in the Second World War, these norms were imposed on Japanese ruling elites through direct coercion by occupation authorities. However, the change of state's identity to a member of the international society equal with other developed democratic countries is one of the major factors that influenced active introduction of those norms by local elites in the 1980s. In addition to economic power, what came to be pursued were international acknowledgement, respect, status and legitimacy. Still, elements that diverged to a greater extent from domestic normative priors were abandoned and the meanings of norms were reinterpreted to better fit realities of the Japanese socio-cultural, political and economic circumstances. Regarding the SDF, it was an active contestator of norm content in the process of internalization of localized domestic norms. The organization borrowed directly from the content of international gender equality norms those elements congruent with its identity and preferences not available in domestic normative content. Also, the policies were formulated and revised under pressures from the government of Japan and/or Japanese society. This study revealed that global gender equality norms localized domestically in the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s underwent a hollowing out in the process of internalization. Also, based on the findings of this

¹⁹ Japan Defense Agency, 1992, 139.

study, the relation between gender policies of the SDF and armed forces of other developed countries seems to be correlative rather than causative.

1. Introduction of International Norms relating to Gender Equality in Japan and the Self-Defense Forces

1.1 Localization of International Norms

Finnemore and Sikkink place *internalization* at the “far end of a norm cascade” where norms “acquire taken-for-granted quality” and are no longer challenged.²⁰ However, Acharya points out the contestation of global norms at the local level and the local actor’s agency in response to foreign ideas based on their cognitive priors and identities. *Localization* is defined as “the active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices”.²¹ New norms are also subject to pruning, which refers to local agents’ selective choice/rejection of those elements of new norms which are more/less compatible with the preexisting normative structures. However, external and local norms are mutually constitutive, as prior local norms get reshaped by the new norms as well.²²

1.2 Introduction of International Norms Relating to Gender Equality in Japan

International gender equality norms in Japan were internalized in Japan through the process of localization. In the post-WWII period the principle of equality between men and women was introduced as a part of a comprehensive reform process imposed on Japan by the occupation authorities. On the international level gender equality was interpreted as “functional equality” based on the difference in functions men and women were expected to perform in society.²³ Women’s

²⁰ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895.

²¹ Acharya 2004, 245.

²² Acharya 2004, 252.

²³ Yamashita 2010, 29.

main responsibility was considered to be caretaking for the family whilst the labor market was characterized by strict gender segregation. At the domestic level, women's rights were grafted onto the emerging prewar norm of protection for women. An element of extensive protection for women was incorporated into the international norm content, with such equality termed "discriminative equality."²⁴ This eventually led to the crippling of women's economic activity and hampering the supply of labor in a rapidly expanding economy.

In the 1970s, Japan became the number two economy in the world, and state identity changed from an isolationist one focused on economic rebuilding to a state seeking an active role in international society. Simultaneously, the Japanese government became more sensitive to identity-based foreign pressures to adopt international norms that diverged from domestic ones. Between the mid-1970s and 1979 gender equality norms were renegotiated on the international level and "full equality" was institutionalized in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).²⁵ This implied equal rights and responsibilities of men and women in all spheres of life, including family. Through the process of the signing and ratification of the CEDAW (in 1980 and 1985 respectfully) and subsequent institutional harmonization with the treaty, "discriminative equality" was abandoned in Japan. Gender equality that would give more freedom to women to pursue social and economic activities was grafted to the economic development of the state. However, the element of equal responsibility of men and women for the family was "pruned." The gendered division of labor and women's family roles as primary caregivers was preserved as an important element of domestic gender equality norms. Such interpretation diverges significantly from the principles spelled out in the CEDAW. Therefore, it may be concluded that global gender equality norms localized in the 1980s underwent a hollowing out in

²⁴ Kanzaki 2009, 103.

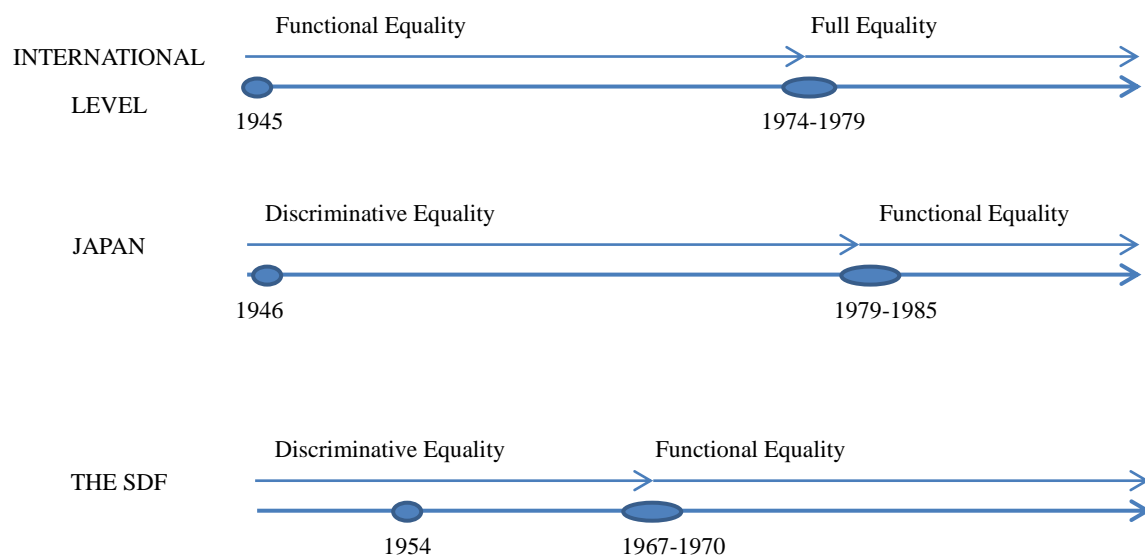
²⁵ Yamashita 2010, 30.

the process of internalization. Nevertheless, through these normative changes, women's access to non-traditional occupations was expanded, including access to non-traditional sectors such as the military.

1.1 Introduction of International Norms Relating to Gender Equality in the SDF

The SDF was an active agent in the internalization of international gender equality norms. The international gender equality norms localized domestically were not taken for granted and internalized as such in the organization. The SDF borrowed from the content of international gender equality norms those elements congruent with the identity and preferences of the organization. It also actively contested elements of domestic norms that diverged from the identity and preferences of the organization. However, when SDF gender policies diverged significantly from generally accepted gender equality norms in Japanese society, social sanctioning threatened the organization and led to the revision of diverging SDF gender policies.²⁶

Figure 3. Changes in types of gender equality norms prevalent on three levels of analysis in the period covered by this study – International, Domestic, Organizational (created by the author)



²⁶ “Social sanctioning” (such as NGO shaming) is a coercive mechanism directed at cost/benefit calculating elites to force them to comply with new norms, Checkel 2001, 558.

2. Gender Policies in the SDF (1954-1992)

2.1 A Woman a Nurse (1954-1966)

Women have participated in the Japanese armed forces since their re-establishment in the 1950s. Initially, 10 female civilian nurses were recruited by the National Police Reserve. In 1952, 57 female nurses were given regular service status within the ground forces of the National Safety Forces.²⁷ The ranks they occupied were all above the SDF equivalent of sergeant major, while the highest rank was the equivalent of SDF major. The policy of recruitment of women only in the capacity of nurses continued until 1966. At this point, the number of SDF nurses was 417.²⁸ The SDF nurses showed high competence and reliability. In 1963 the GSDF commenced a study of the possibility of establishing a program of recruitment of female uniformed personnel in occupations other than nursing. The study was primarily guided by the Ground Staff Office and the following aims were proclaimed: *To provide all citizens irrespective of their sex the possibility of direct participation in national defense; to engage women in occupations appropriate for women and to enable efficient use of male service members in frontline units; to increase the understanding and public image of the SDF in the civilian population, especially among women in general, through integration of women within the organization.*²⁹ A study group consisting of four SDF nurses was sent to conduct research on the integration of women in the US Women's Army Corps.³⁰

1.3 From A Supplementary Labor Force to an Integral Part of the SDF (1967-1979)

In 1967, the program of recruitment of female uniformed personnel in occupations other than nursing was formally established in the Ground Self-Defense Forces (GSDF). Among the basic guidelines for placement of women to jobs other than nursing was to distribute them to job areas

²⁷ Sato 2004, 104.

²⁸ 55th session, House of Councilors, Cabinet Affairs Committee Meeting no. 29, 1967/7/19, Yutaka Shimada (JDA Head of Bureau of Defense Policy).

²⁹ Fujin jieikan kyōikutai 1998, 71.

³⁰ Sato 2004, 120.

“appropriate for women”.³¹ The Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF) and the Air Self-Defense Forces (ASDF) followed in 1974. Since 1975 the Japan Defense Agency (JDA)/SDF was encouraged to consider recruitment of women as doctors and dentists, something implemented in 1978.³² In 1979 the request from politicians to consider opening the National Defense Academy (NDA) and the National Defense Medical College for female students was put before the JDA/SDF leadership. However, it was not acted upon.³³

Female SDF personnel were praised by the SDF leadership for their reliability and high performance quality. However, there was actually little consensus within the organization on how many women would be “appropriate” to recruit or what jobs were “appropriate” for them. A clear and comprehensive policy regarding female integration in the SDF was lacking and this process advanced slowly, being challenged both internally and externally. The principle of military effectiveness was invoked when justifying women’s exclusion from specific occupations and positions. In 1979, the total number of women in the SDF stood at 2782, comprising slightly more than one percent of total SDF personnel.³⁴

1.4 Narrowing Female Exclusion (1980-1992)

During the 1980s, the expansion of occupations available for women was based on the principle of exclusion of women from combat units, combat-support units, and occupations that were physically demanding to a considerable extent.³⁵ The steady increase of female SDF personnel continued throughout the 1980s. It was decided to expand occupations available to them from the

³¹ Fujin jieikan kyōuikutai 1998, 72.

³² For example see 76th session, House of Representatives, Cabinet Affairs Committee Meeting no. 6, 1975/11/20, suggestion by Youzou Kato (LDP).

³³ For example see 87th session, House of Councilors, Budget Committee Meeting no. 13, 1979/3/23, Aiko Shimura (LDP).

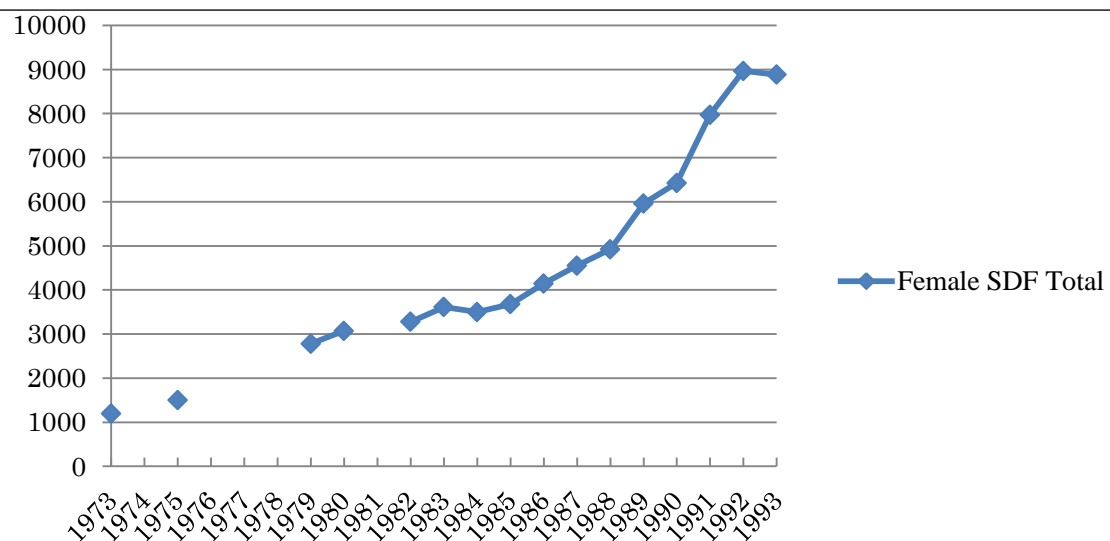
³⁴ 87th session, House of Councilors, Budget Committee meeting no 13. 1979/3/23, Genri Yamashita (JDA Director General, LDP).

³⁵ Fujin jieikan kyōuikutai 1998, 72.

previous 39 percent to 77 percent of all job areas in the SDF. However, policy-makers were rather unclear about the numbers of women to be recruited, and it was left an open issue for ongoing study.³⁶

In 1982 the decision was made to open the Medical College, which was implemented in 1986.³⁷ In 1986, education for female officers, including senior commanding officers and staff officers commenced as well. In 1985 women were assigned to duties on board transport ships, tugboat operations and other logistic services.³⁸ The NDA opened its doors to women and accepted its first female cadets in 1992 – 13 years after the issue had been placed on the political agenda. In 1993, all job areas in the SDF were formally opened to women.

GRAPH 1: Increase in the number of female uniformed personnel in the SDF



Source: *Defense of Japan* (1983-1994), Ministry of Defense (1980), Diet records (1973, 1975, 1979), compilation by the author

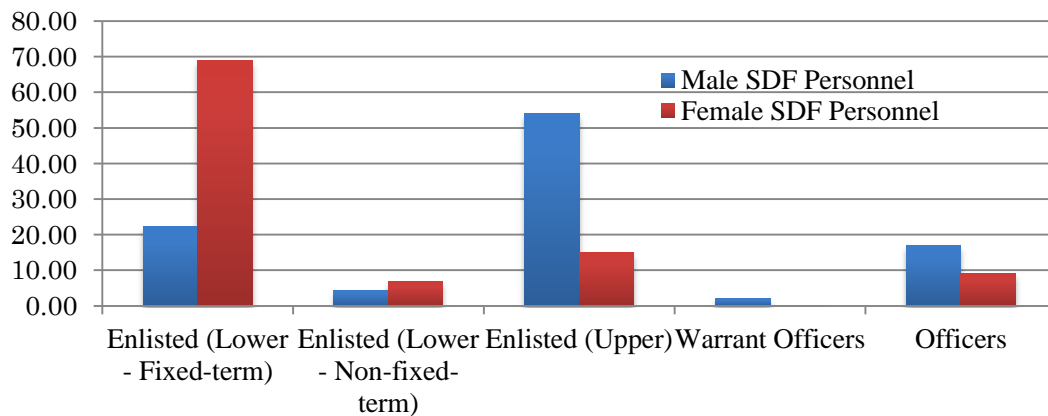
³⁶ *Mainichi shinbun* reported anxieties within the SDF that the morale among the personnel might be reduced in the case of “unbalanced” ratio of male and female personnel, *Mainichi shinbun*, morning edition, 1988/12/29.

³⁷ Doi 1988, 67.

³⁸ Japan Defense Agency, 1991, 137.

However, female integration in the SDF was of a lesser extent than the increase in numbers of women or job areas formally available to women may indicate. The principles of privacy protection and maternal protection provided basis for *de facto* exclusion of women from many jobs within the SDF, replacing the principle of military effectiveness. In spite that service areas opened for women were expanding, the majority of women were recruited for short-term service and placed among the lowest echelons of SDF personnel. Namely they were recruited for a fixed-term service as enlisted lower personnel – private 2nd class, seamen and airman 2nd class (*shi*), for which men and women of 18-26 years of age were eligible. Assigning women to fixed-term female *shi* class personnel enabled transfer of a certain number of men to non-fixed term. The data indicate that gender policies of the SDF encouraged women to resign upon marriage or childbirth, a cycle that would enable efficient personnel turnover and reflects the situation in the Japanese labor market in general.

GRAPH 2: Proportion of male SDF personnel in comparison with female SDF personnel by ranks (end of 1992)



Source: *Defense of Japan* 1992, 312.

As the data below show, there was also a considerable reduction in the proportion of female

SDF officers, whereas the proportion of male SDF officers slightly increased (see Table 1). In addition, female officers were concentrated in job areas that were perceived as traditionally suitable for females.³⁹ According to the 1982 data, 69.87 percent of female officers were assigned to medical-related occupations.⁴⁰

TABLE 1: Changes in ratio of ranks occupied by male and female SDF personnel						
Year	1983		1987		1992	
Rank/Sex	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Officers	16.74	15.04	16.34	13.18	16.88	9.03
Warrant officer	2.09	0	1.93	0	2.21	0.01
Enlisted (Upper)	51.50	16.64	51.38	17.36	54.09	15.06
Enlisted (Lower)	1.60	10.80	1.55	8.64	4.44	6.93
Non-fixed term						
Enlisted (Lower)	28.07	57.52	28.79	60.82	22.39	68.97
fixed term						
<i>Source:</i> Defense of Japan (1984, 1988 and 1992), compilation by the author						
<i>Note:</i> Data for 1983 represent data for FY 1983, data for 1987 and 1992 represent data for the end of the year						

However, female integration in the SDF was of a lesser extent than the increase in numbers of women or job areas formally available to women may indicate. The principles of privacy protection and maternal protection provided basis for *de facto* exclusion of women from many jobs within the SDF, replacing the principle of military effectiveness. In spite that service areas opened for women were expanding, the majority of women were recruited for short-term service and placed among the lowest echelons of SDF personnel. Namely they were recruited for a fixed-term service as enlisted lower personnel – private 2nd class, seamen and airman 2nd class (*shi*), for which men and women of 18-26 years of age were eligible. Assigning women to fixed-term female *shi* class personnel enabled

³⁹ Japan Defense Agency, 1992, 138.

⁴⁰ The data about the structure of women officers were available only for the year 1982, Ministry of Defense 1982, 208.

transfer of a certain number of men to non-fixed term. The data indicate that gender policies of the SDF encouraged women to resign upon marriage or childbirth, a cycle that would enable efficient personnel turnover and reflects the situation in the Japanese labor market in general.

3. Analysis of Gender Policies of the SDF

3.1 The SDF as an Agent in the Internalization Process

Factors influencing gender policies in the SDF can be divided into three broad categories. The first category is related to domestic cultural, political and socio-economic factors emphasized by Segal and Iskra et al.⁴¹ The second category is related to gender policies applied in the armed forces of other countries,⁴² primarily the developed democracies of the West such as the US, Great Britain and Canada. The third category is related to the impact of international gender equality norms on the gender policies of armed forces, something that has largely been neglected in previous studies. International gender equality norms were internalized in Japan through localization. The SDF was an active participant in this process, borrowing from the content of international gender equality norms those elements corresponding to its own preferences and identity. The SDF also actively contested domestic gender equality norms alongside other political and social actors.

The recruitment of female SDF nurses in the first observed period (1954-1966) represented a break with the Japanese domestic tradition of the exclusion of women from the armed forces. Further, the initiative to introduce a program of recruitment of women for occupations other than nursing that would “provide all citizens irrespective of their sex the possibility of direct participation in national defense” indicates the shift from “discriminative equality” to “functional equality” within the SDF leadership. On the one hand, the recruitment of women as service members was identified as one of the military’s tools for improving the SDF’s image amongst the Japanese population, as it

⁴¹ Segal 1995; Iskra et al. 2002.

⁴² Kümmel 2002, 628.

emphasized its break from the discredited the JIA in which the participation of women as service members was strictly forbidden.⁴³ On the other hand, the SDF's limited budget, few prospects for advancement and early retirement schemes contributed to difficulties in acquiring needed personnel in a rapidly growing economy, especially in its ground branch.⁴⁴ Nursing was an occupation traditionally perceived as suitable to women's caring nature and was performed by women in the strictly gender segregated civilian labor market of Japan. The reliance of the SDF on women to perform nursing tasks therefore corroborates Segal's claim that "when gender segregation is extremely high, the military must rely on women to perform military functions dominated by women in the civilian workplace".⁴⁵

Women's military service in jobs traditionally considered female was part of the internationally accepted gender-related norms among the war-winning democratic countries. From this international framework, the SDF borrowed needed elements to gain legitimacy for its own policies. The commencement of women's recruitment as nurses, and later moves towards the establishment of a program for the recruitment of women in general occupations can be explained as a result of the rationalist calculations of the SDF's leadership, whose objective was to fill ranks with suitable personnel, as well as improve the organization's unfavorable popular image. In other words, the SDF's earliest gender policies in part follow "the logic of consequences," whose proponents view political actors' behavior as rational action driven by calculations of its consequences as measured in relation to prior preferences.⁴⁶ Although gender policies in the SDF throughout this period followed the domestic norms of "discriminative equality," these policies can be placed among the more egalitarian ones both internationally and domestically. On the one hand, women were given regular

⁴³ Sato 2004, 105; Ben-Ari 2007, 84.

⁴⁴ Sato 2004, 141-142.

⁴⁵ Segal 1995, 767.

⁴⁶ March and Olsen 1998, 950.

SDF status in the ground forces, and were not discriminated against in terms of pay and benefits, as was the case in the armed forces of the US and other democratic countries which served as a model for the SDF gender policies.⁴⁷ Domestically, the SDF's treatment of female nurses was fairly better than the treatment experienced by nurses working for either public or private civilian employers. This aspect of the SDF's gender policies is better understood if viewed from the perspective of "the logic of appropriateness."

"The logic of appropriateness" is based on actor's identity and starts from the assumption that human actions are driven by what is perceived as appropriate and legitimate behavior in a specific situation as well as within their respective communities.⁴⁸ In the post-WW2 period the SDF was embracing the identity shared amongst the armed forces of modern democratic countries of the West, countries in which support for women's economic participation and their rights to engage in public sphere was increasing. This assertion is corroborated by the decision of the SDF leadership to formally emphasize women's relevance alongside men's in the sphere of national security by 1963, which better corresponded to the internationally adopted "functional equality" rather than the "discriminative equality" localized in Japan after the end of WW2. A number of factors contributed to this identity change, including the increased opportunities of international socialization; the diffusion and dissemination effects enabled by the US-Japan military alliance;⁴⁹ the ascendance of the JDA/SDF's political and military leaders, who embraced more egalitarian values than the previous generation; and the need to improve the public image of the organization. Nevertheless, the gender policies of the SDF in this period did not diverge significantly from domestic gender equality norms, and there is no evidence that they steered public opinion or invoked much debate among other political actors.

⁴⁷ Sato 2004, 104; Doi 1988, 66.

⁴⁸ On logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness see March and Olsen 1998.

⁴⁹ Kimmel 2002, 628.

In the second observed period (1967-1979), the SDF's decision-makers initially turned to the international normative framework when framing their policies. The available data indicate that at the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 1970s an interpretation of gender equality as "functional equality" was adopted. The SDF political and military leadership strived to have the organization be acknowledged as a modern one that shared norms and values of armed forces of developed democratic countries. On the other hand, embracing these values supported female participation in defense of the country (albeit as an auxiliary force), which would provide the SDF with another pool of candidates to increase the personnel fill-rate. By the mid-1970s the SDF came to be pointed out as one of the role models for other, civilian government authorities with respect to the integration of women at the workplace.⁵⁰ As women were not recruited in larger numbers, the identity of the organization serves as a better explanation for the SDF's gender policies than the "need for personnel" variable. One of the LDP "hawks," Yasuhiro Nakasone, was a JDA Director General in 1970 and he submitted a proposal to make a significant increase in the number of female SDF personnel to greatly expand job areas available for them, and to introduce a program of recruitment of women in general occupations in the MSDF and ASDF. Nakasone pointed out that increasing women's participation in the SDF would allow women to "exercise their abilities in the public sphere."⁵¹

Nakasone's gender policy proposals were driven on the one hand by "the logic of consequences," as his primary concern was to increase the SDF's military effectiveness and to ensure necessary levels of personnel fill-rates. The demographic and economic trends showed that the SDF would be facing harder conditions to fill their ranks in the future. The experience of the US military proved that the recruitment of women with competence for supporting roles successfully

⁵⁰ Curiously, police and the Coast Guard were raised as the other role models, 65th session, House of Councilors, Communications Committee Meeting no. 3, 1971/2/18, Keisuke Shiode (Komeito).

⁵¹ 63rd session, House of Representatives, Cabinet Affairs Committee meeting no. 31. 1970/10/28, Nakasone Yasuhiro (JDA Director General, LDP).

relieved qualified males for more effective use in combat related tasks. On the other hand, Nakasone's personal values about gender roles were based on norms of functional gender equality. He emphasized the kind and wise nature of a woman as a supportive mother and a wife on the one hand; while on the other he conceived women as a valuable asset of the state and society: to be drawn as a supporting, auxiliary force in the case of necessity.⁵² However, Nakasone's proposals were too much at odds with domestic gender norms emphasizing women's inferior working consciousness; their family responsibility; and their pacifist nature in a social environment characterized by antimilitarist sentiments. As a result, the following Fourth Defense Build-up Plan (1972-1976) was toned down and emasculated Nakasone's initial proposals. Through the rest of the decade and in the 1980s the gender policies of the SDF were advanced in line with these proposals. However, subsequent policies were more in line with commonly shared social values regarding roles of men and women on the one hand; and on the other were designed and implemented in a more favorable normative environment of the 1970s and the 1980s.

In the third observed period (1980-1992) the pace of gender integration in the SDF slowed in comparison with changes in Japanese society. Although the number of women in the SDF increased, and their leadership roles were acknowledged and job areas expanded, the SDF was showing resistance towards external political demands to increase the pace and scope of change in a more egalitarian domestic normative environment. Without the objective of the ratification of the CEDAW in 1985, there would be little chance for domestically initiated legislative reforms providing a wider scope of job opportunities for women in the SDF. The driving force behind women's integration in the SDF was no longer the SDF's leadership. It was the need to achieve the Japanese government's objective of institutional harmonization with the CEDAW's provisions. This is reflected in one of the statements by a high official of the Japanese Defense Agency in 1985: "As a matter of fact, in the

⁵² Nakasone 1992, 70; 91.

recent frame of the women's international year and alike, as well as with respect to the issue of equality between men and women in employment, we also are racking our heads a bit.”⁵³

Political pressures were exerted on the security policy decision-makers to open the NDA academy for women and to open more occupations for women. For example, in 1984 a revision of the Mariners Act was discussed in the parliamentary Committee on Transportation in the context of legal harmonization with the CEDAW.⁵⁴ A JDA representative communicated that the SDF was exempted from the application of relaxed regulations regarding female seafarers work activities or maternity protection, and stated that for the time being there were no plans to allow women to serve on board a ship due to the combat function of military vessels.⁵⁵ However, the very following year (1985) women were assigned to duties on board transport ships, tugboat operations and other logistic services.⁵⁶ Although the author of this study could not acquire data about the process of the change of this policy, it may be concluded that the relaxation of regulations regarding working hours and night work that was a part of the legal harmonization with the CEDAW contributed to women's access to jobs on ships, and to service on the MSDF naval vessels specifically.

Still, the SDF's gender policies in this period converged with international gender equality norms of “full equality” that were during the first half of the 1980s localized in Japan as “functional equality”. With the exception of the policy of exclusion of women from the NDA, the gender policies of the SDF in general did not lead to social sanctioning in this period.

The military is one of the representative sectors considered traditionally male. However, as Segal predicts, changes in domestic gender equality norms provided more support for women to

⁵³ 102nd session, House of Representatives, Budget Committee meeting no. 4, 1985/4/19. Kouichi Kato (JDA Director General, LDP).

⁵⁴ *Senin hou* (Mariners Act), Act No. 100 of 1947.

⁵⁵ 101st session, House of Councilors, Committee on Transportation meeting no. 18. 1984/7/27. Masataka Suzuki (JDA Bureau of Personnel, Head of the Second Personnel Division).

⁵⁶ Defense of Japan 1991, 137.

engage in non-traditional and male-dominated areas in Japan as well.⁵⁷ This change in values regarding the scope of activities appropriate for women can explain the acceptance of, and active support for, increased women's participation in the SDF by ruling elites in the 1980s in contrast to the break on Nakasone's gender policy proposals in 1970.

3.2 Weaknesses of the Rational Explanations

In 1970, then JDA Director General Nakasone's plan for increased recruitment of women in the SDF was shelved after the JDA/SDF leadership suffered intense political critique and social sanctioning. Nakasone considered that jobs in which "women could be used" could be expanded considerably in the areas of communications, supply, the medical corps, recruitment, public relations, office administration and similar jobs unburdened by physical strength requirements.⁵⁸ He also supported a proposal to increase the number of female SDF service members from between 500 and 600 in 1970 up to 6000.⁵⁹ However, these proposals were met with hostility from opposition parties both of which espoused strong anti-military sentiments. The proposal met with opposition from LDP conservatives too. The SDF leadership crossed the line of appropriateness with a bold policy proposal for a several-fold increase in the number of female SDF and for opening of a wide scope of non-traditional job areas for women in the SDF at a moment when women's roles in the civilian labor market were still very limited. The content of Nakasone's proposals diverged significantly from the cultural and social values and expectations about appropriate roles for working women. Therefore, it may be concluded that domestic norms regarding appropriate roles of women trumped the military's needs for personnel.

Further, in spite of the fact that the MSDF and ASDF faced no recruitment difficulties the program

⁵⁷ Segal 1995, 766-767.

⁵⁸ 63rd session, House of Councilors, Cabinet Affairs Committee meeting no. 17, 1970/5/12. Nakasone Yasuhiro (JDA Director General, LDP)

⁵⁹ 63rd session, House of Representatives, Cabinet Affairs Committee meeting no. 31, 1970/10/28. Nakasone Yasuhiro (JDA Director General, LDP).

for the recruitment of women was introduced in 1974 in these two branches of the SDF as well. A convincing explanation for this decision cannot be provided from the perspective of “the logic of consequences”.

In addition, the SDF’s recruitment difficulties were somewhat graver in the 1970s than in the 1980s, and it would have been rational for the organization to recruit more women in traditional and non-combat occupations to ameliorate recruitment problems. This would have relieved more male personnel for combat and combat-related positions and in that extent would have contributed to the “military effectiveness”. However, the recruitment of women and opening of jobs available to them only markedly increased in a more egalitarian normative environment of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

Finally, in the second part of the 1980s and especially at the beginning of the 1990s, the exclusion of women from the NDA came to be considered as a practice divergent from international standards of appropriate behavior commonly shared among developed democratic countries. The JDA/SDF leadership based the justification of its exclusion primarily on the principle of military effectiveness. It also may be argued that the SDF, being a relatively small armed force with very limited opportunity of advancement to high level posts, further discouraged a change in policy . The opening of the NDA for women would increase already high competition rate for high military posts and discourage perspective high quality male candidates from enlisting. However, the exclusion of women from the NDA was criticized from within the ruling LDP and from the opposition parties while the media gave this issue increasing attention. The divergence between the JDA/SDF policies with respect to equal educational opportunities for men and women was highlighted both in the context of Japanese society and in the context of international practices of developed countries.⁶⁰ In addition, the attempt by the JDA/SDF leadership to introduce a system of limiting quotas (7% at the

⁶⁰ *Mainichi shinbun*, morning edition, 1990/3/6.

time) for female students upon opening the NDA was criticized as “outdated” and subsequently abandoned.⁶¹

Within the context of the ratification of the CEDAW, before and after, political and social pressures on the NDA to change its exclusionary practices towards women increased. It may be concluded that the need to comply with norms relating to equal opportunities in education were strongly supported by the Japanese political elite and society at large, trumping the SDF’s needs and preferences regarding its personnel. Based on the above examples it may be concluded that when gender policies of the SDF diverged significantly from gender norms and values prevalent in the society, the organization faced political pressures and social sanctioning that compelled it into complying with those norms and values. The above examples confirm the assertion of Dandeker and Segal that armed forces must reflect prevailing norms and values of the wider society, and go against Segal’s claim that the military need for personnel is what dictates the number of women enlisted.

3.3 The SDF in a Comparative Perspective

Military policies of other countries are often raised as a factor that influences how policies are shaped in armed forces of a specific country. However, based on a supplementary comparison between gender policies of the SDF and armed forces of the US, Great Britain and Canada, this study maintains that the connection is correlative and not causative. For example, the armed forces of Japan are based on the model of the US military, and they reflect the structure, organization, training methods, strategic planning, armament (save nuclear armament), and even military terminology of the US military forces.⁶² Gender policies of the SDF were also based on the US model. However, the leadership of the SDF did not adopt a number of restrictive service policies of the US military that discriminated against women, such as two percent ceiling on women’s participation in military,

⁶¹ 120th session, House of Councilors, Education Committee meeting no. 4. 1991/3/26. Terumi Kasuya (JSP)

⁶² Katzenstein 1996, 102; Ben-Ari 2007, 88; Frühstück 2007, 66.

restriction to colonel rank, retiring restrictions et cetera.

In addition, rather than serving as a model for change for the SDF, significant advances in gender integration in the British military since 1988 undermined the grounds on which the SDF had been justifying its exclusion policies towards women. Under the rationale of maintaining combat effectiveness of the armed forces, the British military was initially exempted from domestic laws stipulating equal treatment and non-discrimination. However, in addition to domestic legal pressures Great Britain was placed within a regional normative framework in which principles of respect for human rights and freedoms, equality and non-discrimination were championed.⁶³ Community law undermined the grounds of this exemption.⁶⁴ The military faced demands to base its exclusion policies on solid grounds defensible before a court of law and not on traditional values regarding gender roles.⁶⁵ From 1988 the gender policies of the British military led to increasing integration of female service members. In 1991 the policy of compulsory discharge due to pregnancy was abandoned, the first women pilots and navigators graduated, and women were deployed to areas with hostilities for the first time since the end of the Second World War. The least integrated of the three services was the Royal Navy which was, upon ministerial request, forced to devise more radical integration policies.

After the mid-1970s the SDF's gender policies came to lag significantly behind those of the armed forces of the US and Canada, and in a considerable extent behind those of Great Britain (both in quantitative and in qualitative terms).⁶⁶ What may have accounted for this gap? Major factors that contributed to egalitarian gender policies in armed forces of the above countries and were in a great

⁶³ Equal Treatment Directive of the European Commission 76/207 of 1976.

⁶⁴ Woodward and Winter 2004, 289.

⁶⁵ A number of European countries such as Denmark, Belgium and Holland incorporated the 1976 Equal Treatment Directive into their national legislations, applying them directly to their respective militaries. In effect, this undermined the legitimacy of military's claims for exemption from norms of equal opportunities and treatment in employment in the regional context.

⁶⁶ Japan Defense Agency, 1992, 139.

extent lacking in Japan are the following: existence of well-organized movements for women's rights that targeted policies of the military; the availability of ruling elites strongly supportive of gender equality; the willingness of courts to use the available laws to exert pressure on the military to change its discriminative practices; the availability of strong anti-discrimination legislation, and (in the case of Great Britain) integrating regional community that championed and codified principles of gender equality and individual rights and freedoms.

4. Conclusion

Gender policies in armed forces used to be considered as an issue for each state's government and military leadership to decide. However, this is no longer the case. State members of international society in pursuit of respect, status, and legitimacy among their peers cannot ignore issues of gender equality, even in sectors such as national security. Based on this study's findings the direct effect of international gender equality norms on the SDF's gender policies was strongest after the Japanese government signed and ratified the CEDAW and took responsibility to implement the provisions of the treaty. Therefore it may be concluded that the institutionalization of international gender equality norms in domestic legislation and establishment of administrative mechanisms for the advancement of the position of women in society contributed significantly to the advancement of women's position in the Japanese armed forces as well. A question remains whether the SDF will change the basic principle of its gender policies, where it relies on gendered division of labor within the organization, and switch towards "full equality". However, the gender policies of the SDF in the new normative, structural and strategic environment of the post-Cold War period in which women's rights were framed as human rights is beyond the scope of this study.

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