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<td>著者</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Ninic, Slavica</td>
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<td>掲載誌・巻号・ページ</td>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Kobe University law review, 48: 29-43</td>
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<td>刊行日</td>
<td>Issue date</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>資源タイプ</td>
<td>Resource Type</td>
<td>Departmental Bulletin Paper / 紀要論文</td>
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<td>版区分</td>
<td>Resource Version</td>
<td>publisher</td>
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PDF issue: 2019-01-04
The Introduction of International Norms Relating to Gender Equality in the Japanese Armed Forces in the Period of 1954-1979

Slavica NINIĆ

1. Introduction

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. The relevance of gender equality has increased in this period to “become a central subject to the international norm-setting process and part of the requirements for a legitimate statehood.” Gender Equality is defined as “the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.” With the prescription of equality of the sexes in its constitution that was promulgated in 1946 and came into effect in 1947, and with the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and its ratification in 1985, Japan also accepted these norms. However, it has often been pointed out that Japan is lagging behind other developed democracies in dealing with gender-related problems. In spite of this general criticism, in the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) gender integration has gradually advanced since its establishment in 1954.

Due to their war-fighting function that is considered essential for the protection of a state’s sovereignty, armed forces enjoy a special status and benefits not accorded to other government institutions. Among others, they are often exempted from the application of various legal provisions regulating relations in the civilian sphere. However, “armed forces need the support of the wider society to perform [their war-fighting] function and, particularly in democracies, [they] must reflect its prevailing norms and values.” The leadership of the JSDF has also emphasised the crucial importance of the support by the civilian population for the

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1 Slavica Ninić is a PhD student at Graduate School of Law Kobe University.
6 Christopher Dandeker and Mady Wechsler Segal, “Gender Integration in Armed Forces: Recent Policy Developments in the United Kingdom,” Armed Forces & Society 23 (Fall 1996): 40.
successful performance of their defence mission. The importance of women’s support in particular was explicitly recognised by the leadership of the Japanese armed forces early on, and female participation was formally encouraged.

Having the international acknowledgement of the importance of female military participation in mind, and considering that Japan is one of the most developed democratic countries viewed as crucial for the stability of Asia, as well as a significant contributor to international peace and development, it is puzzling that very little attention has been given to factors influencing gender policies in the Japanese armed forces. This scarce research on the topic of gender and the JSDF is of a rather recent date and belongs primarily to sociology. Sato conducts an in-depth analysis of the influence – that is, the lack thereof – of the Japanese women’s movements on gender ideologies in the JSDF. Sato, Ben-Ari, and Frühstück point at the importance of the rationalist calculations of decision-makers in the formulation of gender policies in the JSDF. These authors maintain that the promotion of gender equality in the Japanese armed forces is used as a strategy to supplement the shrinking pool of male candidates, as well as to deal with the hostile social and political environment. The importance of the influence of the JSDF’s recruitment needs on gender policies in the JSDF is highlighted.

This paper introduces a dimension of international norms relating to gender equality (hereafter, international gender equality norms) into the analysis of the gender policies in the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (JSDF). It is a political science research that explicates how and why international gender equality norms were introduced in the Japanese armed forces in the period of 1954-1979. Specifically, how and why different and competing norms relating to gender equality - domestic and international - were internalised in the organisation; how international and domestic gender equality norms influenced policy choices of the security-policy makers with respect to gender policies; were there divergences between norms reflected in gender policies in the JSDF and those generally accepted in the wider Japanese society; and how those divergences were overcome. It is the hope of the author that this study will strengthen the arguments of those scholars of international relations.

7 In the “Basic Policy for National Defence” that was adopted by the National Defence Council and the Cabinet in 1957, the Japanese government included the fostering of public welfare and enhancing people’s patriotism among the principles for the achieving of the objective of Japan’s national defence. Japan Defence Agency, Defence of Japan 1984 (Tokyo: Japan Times Ltd., 1984), 60.
10 While having in mind that gender policies cannot be and should not be reduced to policies for women, gender policies in this paper refer primarily to the JSDF’s policies targeting female JSDF service members as policies targeting their male counterparts are of a more recent date.
(IR) who claim that norms matter in the national security sector, a sector which is generally considered to be guided by notions of material power and interests.

This study will rely on a model of factors influencing women’s quantitative and qualitative participation proposed by Segal, and its subsequent revisions by Iskra et al. and Kümmel.\footnote{Mady Wechsler Segal, “Women’s Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present, and Future,” Gender & Society 9, no. 6 (1995): 757-775; Darlene Iskra, Trainor Stephen, Marcia Leithauser and Mady Wechsler Segal, “Women’s Participation in Armed Forces Cross-Nationally: Expanding Segal’s Model,” Current Sociology 50, no. 5 (2002): 771-797; and Gerhard Kümmel, “When Boy Meets Girl: The ‘Feminization’ of the Military – An Introduction Also to be Read as a Postscript,” Current Sociology 50, no. 5 (2002): 615-639.} The above authors propose a number of explanatory variables, which are categorised into the military/armed forces, cultural, social, and political variables. Segal’s main posits are: 1) That the primary impetus for female military participation is the military’s need for personnel and that these needs dictate the number of women enlisted; and 2) That the level of egalitarianism in the wider society is positively correlated with women’s military roles.\footnote{Segal, 760.} These authors focus on domestic factors and test their hypotheses primarily using the cases of the armed forces of Western European and North American countries.\footnote{Iskra et al. included Mexico, Zimbabwe, and Australia in their analysis in the attempt to overcome this bias.} Although Kümmel added international geo-strategic environment as another category, neither the initial model nor later ones give specific attention to the influence of international norms relating to gender equality.

The following section will give an overview of the methodological and theoretical framework of this study. Then, three types of gender equality norms identified on international, domestic, and organisational levels of analysis in the period covered by this study will be described, and the introduction of international gender equality norms in Japan will be given. In the fourth section, a short history of the JSDF will be given, as well as an overview of the development of gender policies in the JSDF in the period of 1954-1979. In the fifth section, a number of factors that influenced gender policies in the JSDF in this period will be presented, with the focus on normative factors.

It was found that rationalist factors such as recruitment needs served as an incentive for female recruitment. However, qualitative and quantitative integration of women in the JSDF was to a great extent influenced by norms relating to gender equality (both international and domestic) that provided guidelines about the appropriate behaviour for the JSDF’s political and military leadership that embraced the organisation of an identity of a modern armed force of a country in the Western democratic block. The top leadership of the JSDF actively borrowed elements of international gender equality norms that corresponded to the objectives and the identity of this organisation, while avoiding policies that markedly conflicted with domestic gender equality norms. The influence of enabling and/or constraining effects of gender equality norms (domestic and international) on policy-makers’ decisions regarding qualitative and quantitative integration of women in the JSDF makes it possible to gain a better understanding of specific gender policy choices.
2. Methodology

The constructivist analytical framework of evolution and domestic adoption of international norms is used in this study.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{International norms} can be defined as “ideas of varying degrees of abstraction and specification with respect to fundamental values, organising principles, or standardised procedures that resonate across many states and global actors, having gained support in multiple forums including official policies, laws, treaties, or agreements”.\textsuperscript{15} Although international norms are not necessarily embodied in documents of international organisations, this study based the categorisation of international gender equality norms primarily on the documents of the United Nations (UN), as well as those of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).\textsuperscript{16} In addition, Western developed countries exerted significant influence in the process of (re)construction of international gender equality norms.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, prevalent beliefs and values regarding gender equality shared among key actors in the North American and in Western and North European countries – with special emphasis on the U.S. – are also taken into account.

The “introduction” of international gender equality norms corresponds in this paper to the domestic internalisation of those norms through legal and bureaucratic institutionalization, including the application of domestic mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality in practice. Domestic internalisation of international norms should not be regarded as an unproblematic process in which international norms “acquire a taken-for-granted quality.”\textsuperscript{18} Global norms may be contested at the local level where domestic elites choose how to respond to foreign ideas based on their cognitive priors and identities.\textsuperscript{19} Further, compliance with international norms includes rational instrumental choices (cost/benefit calculations) of actors with given

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Finnemore and Sikkink: 906.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Finnemore and Sikkink: 895.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Acharya posits that international norms are internalised domestically through the process he terms “localisation”. \textit{Localisation} 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.” Acharya: 245.
\end{itemize}
preferences on the one hand, and social learning on the other hand. Mutual learning (complex social learning) in a dynamic environment of social interaction between agents may lead to a change of agents' preferences, and the reshaping of their interests and identities.

This study covers the period since the establishment of the JSDF in the early 1950s to the passing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the UN General Assembly in 1979. In 1980 the Japanese government signed CEDAW and commenced institutional preparations for its ratification in 1985 that included significant legal and administrative changes. The analysis of the influence of international gender equality norms on gender policies in the JSDF after the Japanese government’s assumption of the responsibility to implement provisions of this treaty is worth a separate study. In addition, the public image of the JSDF improved and public support for the armed forces increased during the 1980s. As public image/public support is one of independent variables most emphasised by researchers on gender in the JSDF, it is preferable to observe gender policies in the JSDF in the period when this variable was relatively stable.

A qualitative research analysis based on a single case study of the Japanese Defence Agency (JDA), the Japanese Ground, Maritime, and Air Self Defence Forces (JGSDF, JMSDF, JASDF), the National Defence Academy, and the National Defence Medical College. A process-tracing method will be applied. The empirical research is based on primary and secondary sources, such as Japanese Diet committee records, international and national legal documents related to the advancement of gender equality internationally and domestically, annual reports on defence, national and international, official documents and statistics, as well as memoirs of key persons.

3. The Three Types of Gender Equality Norms Identified at National, International and Organisational Levels in the Period after the Second World War until 1979

Norms are not fixed notions. They include a continued potential for contention, and their internal definitions are subject to change and evolution. However, norms are “anchored in language and revealed by repeated speech acts, leading to a semblance of permanence.” Whereas the content of gender equality norms (both international and domestic) was continuously contested by different agents, a stability
of certain core ideas makes it possible to categorise gender equality norms in the period observed in this study to “discriminative equality”, “functional equality”, and “full equality”. Before turning to the description of these norms, it should also be noted that norms can regulate or constitute an actor’s behaviour and are thus most commonly divided into regulative and constitutive norms. Regulative norms provide guidelines in policy-making, prescribing, proscribing, and ordering actors’ behaviour. Constitutive norms, on the other hand, express actors’ identities that define their interests, and actors’ perceptions of their interests shape their behaviour. Norms can also have an enabling function. Whereas constitutive norms give meaning to an actor’s specific action, enabling norms permit a specific action “which could not otherwise have been undertaken.”

“Discriminative equality” acknowledges women’s basic political and civil rights on the one hand, and functional division of men’s and women’s roles on the other. It shares many elements with “functional equality” described below. However, women are perceived as inherently less competent than men and, along with minors, an object in need of extensive protection by the state. This norm was constructed in post-war Japan and was prevalent until the beginning of the 1970s, when the norm of “functional equality” came in its place. “Functional equality” implies equal value but different functions of men and women in the society. This norm was prevalent in Western democracies until the mid-1970s, and was adopted in Japan during the 1970s. Women’s family roles were emphasised on the one hand, whereas women’s economic and political participation was acknowledged and encouraged on the other hand. In 1970s, “full equality” of a woman with a man as an individual and independent human being was advocated on the international level. This norm was embodied in CEDAW that rejected gender-based division of roles, and demanded equal rights and responsibilities for men and women in all spheres of life.

The principle of equality between men and women was spelled out in 1945 in the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirmed in a number of other international documents. This principle was codified in 1947 by the post-war Japanese government in the Constitution of Japan under overt coercion from the U.S.-led occupation authorities who were directing the process of democratisation in the post-war Japan. Until this change, women were placed in extremely subjugated positions in a deeply militarised Japanese society. Due to the limited human and other resources of
occupation authorities, international gender equality norms were internalised by domestic ruling elites, and were subsequently reinterpreted and institutionalised domestically as “discriminative equality”. Extensive discriminative measures targeting women and minors in the labour market were introduced, which resulted not only in the protection of women in the post-war labour market, but also in severely hampering women’s economic activity as late as the 1980s. In the 1970s, rapid economic growth, increased education of Japanese women, and international trends towards the empowerment of women contributed to the replacement of “discriminative equality” as a prevalent domestic gender norm with “functional equality”.

4. The Establishment of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces and an Overview of Its Gender Policies since the Beginning of the 1950s until 1979

Japan underwent a complete demilitarisation upon its unconditioned surrender in 1945. All military institutions were dismantled and a great number of military and political elites were purged from public life. However, due to the intensification of the East-West conflict, and especially after the eruption of the Korean War, Japan was pressured by the U.S. to rearm. In 1950, the National Police Reserve was created, which was strengthened and reorganised into the National Safety Forces in 1952. In 1954 the JSDF replaced the National Safety Forces. The JSDF was comprised of separate land, sea, and air forces and reflected the structure, organisation, training methods, strategic planning, armament (except for nuclear armament), and even military terminology of the U.S. military forces. The JSDF was an all-volunteer force with uniformed personnel designated as “special civil servants”.

The Japanese Defence Agency (JDA) was established within the Prime Minister’s office to head and supervise the JSDF. The principle of civilian control that relied primarily on bureaucratic and legal external controls was introduced. The government underwent great pains to emphasise the non-military and defensive character of the new forces in order to keep the JSDF within the constitutional framework. The difficulty in reaching consensus among various political actors about the position of the new forces led to their social and political isolation and quasi-legitimate status. Anti-militarist sentiments were very strong among the populace well into the 1970s. In the 1970s, in spite of various administrative, legal, and budgetary constraints, rapid economic growth contributed significantly to the expansion of the JSDF in terms of budget and military equipment, whereas the number of troops increased incrementally as well.

29 Frühstück, 66; and Ben-Ari, 88.
After World War II, women participated in the Japanese armed forces upon 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.31 The ranks they occupied were all above the JSDF’s equivalent of sergeant major, while the highest rank was the equivalent of major. This policy of recruitment of women only in the capacity of nurses continued until 1966. At that point, the number of JSDF nurses was 417.32 In 1963 the JGSDF Staff Office commenced a study of the possibility of establishing a program of the recruitment of female uniformed personnel in occupations other than nursing. A study group consisting of four JSDF nurses was sent to conduct research on the integration of women in the US Women’s Army Corps (Sato, 2004).

In 1967 the program of recruitment of female uniformed personnel in occupations other than nursing was formally established in the JGSDF. The JMSDF and the JASDF followed in 1974. Since 1975 the JDA/JSDF was encouraged to consider recruitment of women as doctors and dentists, something implemented in 1978.33 The recruitment of well-qualified young women proceeded smoothly, with female JSDF personnel exhibiting a work performance of high quality. In the 1970s, the JSDF was pointed out as one of the most successful government institutions with respect to the policies of “equal treatment” between men and women.34 In 1979, the total number of female JSDF personnel stood at 2,782, comprising slightly more than one per cent of the JSDF’s total.35

5. Factors Influencing Gender Policies in the JSDF
Recruitment of Women as Nurses (1954-1966) and the Introduction of the Program of the Recruitment of Women in General Occupations in the JGSDF

Gender policies of armed forces of developed democratic countries have served as a model for the gender policies in the JSDF – primarily those of the U.S. armed forces, but also gender policies of armed forces of the Great Britain, Canada, Australia, France et cetera.36 In the above countries, military contribution of women to the war efforts during the two world wars significantly contributed to their integration in the armed forces after the WWII, as well as to the improvement of

31 Sato, 104.
34 For example, see Japanese Diet Records, 65th Session of the House of Councillors, 3rd Communications Committee, February 18, 1971, Keisuke Shiode (Komeito).
women’s position in the labour market in general. In the case of Japan, women were formally recruited by the Japanese Imperial Army (JIA) for the first time in March 1943 when a signal corps of about 400 women was established under the command of a young officer, Major General Eiichi Tatsumi, Chief of Staff of the Eastern Military Command.\textsuperscript{37} However, this was an isolated case with little influence on Japanese women’s post-war economic participation or their participation in the JSDF.

The establishment of the above unit was a result of personal efforts of Major General Tatsumi who advocated the idea that women should be recruited. He based his arguments on successful experiences of armed forces of the Great Britain, where he had been posted previously. Although by 1942 the JIA was facing increasingly grave shortages of manpower and recruitment of women had been discussed as a possibility, the idea had little support among the top military leadership. Participation of women in the military was perceived as going against cultural customs and practices on the one hand, and women were considered of inferior abilities on the other. Systematic female recruitment in the Japanese armed forces had to – in spite of great military needs for personnel at the time – wait for a more egalitarian normative environment of the post-Second World War period.

Extensive normative changes in the post-war Japan can be understood as a process resulting from demand for new ideas and norms. Among others, such demand may result from an “exogenous shock”, from dramatic policy failures or disillusionment.\textsuperscript{38} It can be argued that the extensive normative changes in post-war Japan were made possible by the combination of the above factors - the defeat and allied occupation represented an “exogenous shock” that was accompanied by both dramatic policy failures and disillusionment. The defeat, the destruction of the country and the occupation led to the discrediting of former political and military elites, as well as the ideas and values they held. In the process of the establishment of the JSDF in the beginning of the 1950s, a policy was adopted to exclude officers who participated in Japanese imperial military from participation in the new armed forces.\textsuperscript{39} Although the lack of men meeting the above requirement hampered full implementation of this policy, leading positions in the JSDF were open for relatively young officers.

According to Iskra et al., “the younger the forces (including the leaders) the more egalitarian the gender ideology...”\textsuperscript{40} Although written material where early discourse relating to the recruitment of women can be found is lacking, subsequent policies of the JSDF speak in favour of this hypothesis. Gender policies in the period 1954-1966 followed strict gender segregation of the Japanese labour market, limiting female recruitment to nurses only. However, these policies can be placed

\textsuperscript{37} For the historical account about the establishment of a war-time women’s signal corps in the JIA on which this and the paragraph below are based, see Takeshi Hara, “Hondo bouku tsushin ni nin’jita joshi tsushin tain” (The Japanese Women Signal Corp for Homeland Air Defence), Gunji Shigaku 41, no. 4 (March 2006): 65-68.

\textsuperscript{38} For theoretical argument on demand for new norms, see Pinnemore and Sikkink, 909; and Acharya, 246-247.

\textsuperscript{39} Sato, 97-98.

\textsuperscript{40} Iskra et al., 789.
among more egalitarian ones. On the one hand, pay and treatment for nurses in the JSDF was fairly better than that of nurses working for either public or private civilian hospitals in Japan. On the other hand, although gender policies in the JSDF were based on the US model, its leadership chose not to adopt a number of the U.S. military’s formal restrictive service policies targeting women. The JSDF nurses were given regular JSDF status in the ground forces, and were not discriminated against in terms of pay and benefits. In this sense, initial gender policies in the JSDF were formulated to reflect principles of gender equality advocated by the UN and ILO.

As a consequence of the extraordinary economic growth of the 1950s and the 1960s, the problem of acquiring needed personnel became graver for the JSDF. Labour supply shortages in a rapidly expanding economy were acutely felt by the JSDF, which was a socially marginalized organization with limited budged, few prospects for advancement and early retirement schemes. In 1963 three aims of the program of recruitment of women in general occupations (occupations other than nursing) were proclaimed: 1) to provide all citizens irrespective of their sex the possibility of direct participation in national defence; 2) to engage women in occupations appropriate for women and to enable efficient use of male service members in frontline units; 3) to increase the understanding and public image of the JSDF in the civilian population, especially among women in general, through integration of women within the organisation.

A number of authors argue that women were used by the JSDF’s leadership to a significant extent as a tool for improving public image of the organisation and attracting more male candidates. Whereas the second and the third aims confirm the above posits about recruitment of women as a cost-benefit calculation of the JSDF’s leadership, the first aim and in part the second aim reveal that international gender equality norms form a normative base of this policy. The first objective of the program reflects the core element of international gender equality norms that were internalized in Japan after the WWII – equal rights of men and women. However, as no reference to the contribution of female signal corp during the WWII was found, it may be posited that formulating women’s participation in national defence alongside men in occupations “appropriate for women” is an element the JSDF’s leadership borrowed from international normative framework.

In this connection, the second aim of the program of recruitment of women in general occupations reflects the norm of “functional equality”, which guided gender policies in armed forces of other democratic countries, rather than the domestically prevalent “discriminative equality”. While emphasising the need for women to preserve their feminine qualities on the one hand, a number of new job areas were raised as better suited for females than for male service members on the other. Among those were jobs in the areas of general affairs, correspondence, personnel

42 Fujin jieikan kyouikutai, 70.
43 Sato, 105-106; Fruhstuck and Ben-Ari: 25; Ben-Ari: 84.
affairs, procurement, accounting, and other clerical jobs. Women’s ability to perform successfully in the public sphere in general, and in national defence in specific, was acknowledged. However, in accordance with the norm of “functional equality”, their participation in the JSDF was to be limited to those functions which were considered appropriate for women. The introduction of the program for female recruitment in general occupations invited interest from opposition parties, and the desire of the JSDF’s leadership to avoid criticism may have contributed to the slow pace of the program implementation.

Nakasone’s Policy Proposal (1970)

Although available records support the hypothesis that the recruitment of women in general occupations was based on cost-benefit calculations of the political and military leadership of the JSDF, the program itself did not actually serve this purpose to a significant extent. A small number of women that were almost completely recruited in the area of communication relieved few men “at the front line”. The attempt of the JSDF’s leadership to actually use women in a meaningful extent in 1970 was met with political resistance in an unsupportive domestic normative environment. In 1970 JDA Director General Yasuhiro Nakasone came out with a proposal of solutions for alleviating the JSDF’s recruitment difficulties by, among others, increasing significantly the number of female service members and job areas available to them. This proposal was based on “functional equality” rather than the “discriminative equality” that was still prevalent domestically. As a consequence, regardless of the JSDF’s recruitment needs, political and social pressures forced the leadership of the JSDF to revise their policies to better reflect domestic gender equality norms.

Firstly, the proposal included a ten-fold increase in the number of female JSDF personnel (from the existing 500-600 to 6000). Secondly, expansion of jobs available to women in the areas of supply, recruitment, public relations, and similar jobs not accompanied by physical strength requirements was proposed. This came at a time when women were not yet engaged significantly in these job areas in the civilian labour market. Finally, the establishment of the program of female recruitment in general occupations in the JMSDF and the JASDF was also proposed. Although Nakasone’s personal influence on the content of this proposal may have been strong, this policy proposal was based on Nakasone’s discussions with the military and

44 Fujin jieikan kyouikutai, 72.
45 For an example of the discussion on the expansion of job areas for women in the JSDF, see Japanese Diet Records, 55th Session of the House of Councillors, 29th Cabinet Affairs Committee, July 19, 1967; and Japanese Diet Records, 55th Session of the House of Councillors, 30th Cabinet Affairs Committee, July 20, 1967.
46 Recruitment of women in areas such as communication, accounting, and general affairs that “women can perform sufficiently well” was taken into consideration as a way to increase personnel fill rates. Japanese Diet Record, 46th Session of the House of Representatives, 48th Cabinet Affairs Committee, June 22, 1964, Tokuyasu Fukuda (JDA Director General, LDP).
political leadership in the JDA and the JSDF on the one hand, and civilian experts and intellectuals on the other.\(^{49}\)

In addition to rationalist arguments to support this proposal, Nakasone used normative arguments as well. Nakasone held pro-Western beliefs and socialized closely with political and military leaders of the U.S., where the norm of “functional equality” was widely embraced. He emphasized the kind and wise nature of woman as supportive mother and wife on the one hand, and on the other hand conceived women as a valuable asset of the state and society to be drawn as a supporting, auxiliary force when necessary.\(^{50}\) According to Nakasone, women’s participation in the JSDF would allow them to “exercise their abilities in the public sphere.”\(^{51}\) Also, Nakasone praised the excellent job performance of the female JSDF and expressed the opinion that all three branches of the JSDF should have women do the jobs they are able to do. Nakasone’s proposal was in line with the norm of “functional equality,” rather than the “discriminative equality” that was still prevalent among the Japanese conservative ruling elite. The above proposal was made in the domestic normative environment in which it was not widely accepted that women did have abilities useful in the public sphere, which may have contributed to its subsequent revision and toning down.

**Gender Policies of the JSDF in the More Egalitarian Environment of the 1970s**

General concerns existed both among politicians and within the JSDF about the deterioration of military effectiveness, as women were perceived to have lesser abilities than men. As one Diet member from the opposition party Komeito stated, “It is wrong to think simply that WAC [Women Army Corps] can be used to substitute [the male] JGSDF shortage. Naturally, the content of their work differs, and in spite of what is called equal rights of men and women, each has its own different sphere. I want you to pay that a due regard.”\(^{52}\) The LDP Diet members were generally supportive of the expansion of women’s roles in the JSDF.\(^{53}\) However, it was implied that women would be kept in support and rear units. Towards the end of the decade they adopted more supportive attitudes regarding female JSDF personnel. Regarding the JSDF, although there was no internal resistance towards the recruitment of women as nurses inside of the JSDF, the resistance towards the extension of women’s roles was strong within the JSDF among military personnel below staff officer levels.\(^{54}\)

Labour shortages in the rapidly expanding economy and increased education

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52 Japanese Diet Records, 72nd Session of the House of Representatives, 27th Cabinet Affairs Committee, May 9, 1974, Katsutoshi Oniki (Komeito).
54 Sato, 122.
and skills of women contributed significantly to the acknowledgement of the importance of women’s economic activity and the enhancement of job opportunities for women domestically by the beginning of the 1970s. In addition, Japan became one of the top economies in the world, and state identity changed from an isolationist one focused on economic rebuilding to a democratic state seeking an active role in international society. As a result, the Japanese government, seeking legitimacy as a responsible member of international society, became more sensitive to international normative pressures. Among these were pressures from the UN and internationally influenced domestic women’s movements to improve women’s position in domestic society. These international and domestic developments lead to the weakening of “discriminative equality” in Japan and a significant strengthening of the “functional equality”.

As the recruitment of well-qualified young women proceeded smoothly, with female service members exhibiting a work performance of high quality, the policy of female recruitment in the JSDF came to be generally accepted during the 1970s. Already at the beginning of the 1970s, the JSDF came to be pointed out as an organization with successful gender policies of “equal treatment” between men and women that should be looked upon by other government ministries and agencies that were facing labour shortages. Political groups who previously opposed the recruitment of women in the armed forces as something jeopardizing its military effectiveness now became supportive of it. Nevertheless, this acknowledgment was based on “functional equality” and not on the “full equality” that was advocated internationally at the time and embodied in CEDAW in 1979.

In the more egalitarian domestic normative environment of the 1970s, the program of female recruitment in general occupations was implemented in the JMSDF and JASDF in 1974, even though they recorded high fill rates and did not experience the recruitment difficulties that the ground forces did. Possibilities for women to reach commanding positions were created in the medical corps, which was enabled by the combination of both material and normative factors. On the one hand, there was a grave lack of male doctors and dentists in the 1970s, which provided material incentive to open these positions to women in the JSDF (implemented in 1978). On the other hand, the armed forces of other developed democratic countries acknowledged women’s ability to perform commanding tasks. In addition, domestically, the medical field was a job field typically perceived as suitable for women. Therefore, a policy of appointing women to commanding positions in medical field was generally accepted, as both material and normative conditions worked in favour of this change. It was in line with well established international practice, and did not create significant divergence with domestic gender equality norms in the end of the 1970s.

Gender policies in the JSDF in the implementation process met with internal resistance, primarily from the middle and lower echelons in the JSDF. For example, one of the first women in the Officer Candidate’s School of the JMSDF...
at Etajima Island recollects complaints being voiced in 1974 against “high heels marring Etajima”. On the other hand, female JSDF personnel, while following standards of behaviour imposed on them, actively challenged barriers to their career advancement, greater integration and equality of treatment within the armed forces and combining work and family life. For example, JDA Director General Yamanaka stated, “Among female service members, the WAC, there are those who are saying, we also want to be given the same training as regular sergeants and privates.” The female service members were praised by the JSDF leadership for their reliability and high quality of their performance, which may have facilitated the subsequent expansion of the number of female recruits, occupations available to women, and ranks which they could reach.

Since 1975, in the connection with the International Women’s Year (1975) and the Decade of Women (1976-1985), the Japanese government commenced the institutionalisation of international mechanisms for the advancement of women. In 1979, when the CEDAW was about to be adopted by the UN General Assembly, clearly stating the responsibility of states to provide equal educational opportunities and curricula for female and male students on all levels of education, the request to consider opening the National Defence Academy (NDA) and the National Defence Medical College for female students was put before the JSDF leadership. The request to open these educational institutions was framed in the context of domestically accepted responsibility toward the implementation of international recommendations with respect to gender equality on a national level. It was pointed out that the NDA was lagging behind other similar institutions, both domestic and foreign.

CONCLUSION

Including the factor of international norms relating to gender equality in the analysis of gender policies in the JSDF contributes significantly to the understanding of gender policy choices made by the political and military leadership of the Japanese armed forces in the period of 1954-1979. Gender policies in the Japanese armed forces were not based on rationalist calculations only. They were formulated in accordance with the identity that the JSDF’s political and military leadership embraced for the organisation after its establishment - the identity of the armed forces of a modern country of the Western democratic block. The leadership of the JSDF found standards of appropriate behaviour for the armed forces with such an identity in international norms embodied in documents of international organisations.

56 Interview with Ryoko Imamura, “Fujin jieikan teichaku no tame zenryoku de michi wo kirihirakimashita,” (We Created a Path for the Female Self-Defence Force Members to Establish Themselves) Mamor 78 (August, 2013): 15.
57 Japanese Diet Records, 72nd Session of the House of Representatives, 27th Cabinet Affairs Committee, May 9, 1974, Sadanori Yamanaka (JDA Director General, LDP).
such as the UN and the ILO on the one hand, and in gender policies of armed forces of other developed democratic countries such as the U.S., Great Britain and others on the other hand.

Until the mid-1970s, the leadership of the JSDF introduced international gender equality norms by borrowing those elements that fit with the objectives and the identity of the organisation. However, since the mid-1970s, the influence of international gender equality norms on the JSDF started coming through the government of Japan, which was adopting those norms under the pressure of domestic women’s movements, international organisations, and peer members of international society. Norms constitutive of the identity of the young post-war leadership of the JSDF were supportive of female integration. Domestic gender equality norms and domestically internalised international gender equality norms on their part exerted great influence on gender policies of the JSDF. They constrained policy choices of decision-makers on the one hand (e.g. the shelving of Nakasone’s proposal), and had enabling effects on the other (e.g. the introduction of the program of recruitment for women in general occupations in the JMSDF and JASDF).

Particularly the constraining effects of domestic norms served to bring the JSDF’s gender policies in harmony with gender equality norms prevalent in the wider society. When gender policies of the JSDF threatened to diverge significantly from the prevalent domestic gender equality norms, the constraining effects of the domestic norms would lead to the revision of the diverging policy. This was the case even when the requirements to harmonise policies with domestic gender equality norms went against the material interests of the JSDF, such as acquiring gravely needed personnel. Hence, Segal’s posit that military recruitment needs are the single most important factor dictating the number of women recruited was not collaborated in the case of the JSDF. In the period observed by this study, the constraining effects of domestic gender equality norms seem to have had a negative influence on women’s integration in the JSDF. However, this finding is valid only in the period presented in the study above and should not be generalised further.

On the other hand, the recruitment of nurses, and later of female doctors and dentists, indicates that challenging foreign ideas (i.e. female participation in the military and the idea that women can be competent leaders) were not constrained domestically when framed within a well-established and accepted normative framework (medical occupations are suitable for women). In addition, the JSDF’s gender policies that were based on the norm of “functional equality” were more readily accepted by other domestic actors when the identity of the JSDF leadership and the Japanese government and society converged in the 1970s. In the 1980s, in the context of signing and ratification of CEDAW (1980 and 1985 respectfully), the JSDF found itself operating in a new and more egalitarian normative environment. Support for the armed forces increased among the populace, and personnel fill-rate increased. How the international norm of “full equality” influenced gender policies in the JSDF in different normative and material environment of the 1980s and beyond requires further analysis that is beyond the scope of this study.