

Utilizing Future Female Personnel in the South Korean Military

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Abstract

The South Korean military has undergone four changes in operating methods since its inception with 31 nursing officers in August 1948. While it initially began as a special unit for nursing and other specialized services, it later expanded to include various fields including technology, administration, and special forces. However, analysis shows that there have been few significant changes in how it operates and remains largely centered around technology, administration, and special forces. With the development of advanced science and technology and a decrease in military resources, there is a need for the South Korean military to proactively expand its use of female personnel, as has been done by the US military, Canadian military, Israeli military with female conscription, and Norwegian military. In order to achieve this, there needs to be a cultural shift towards co-ed military units, improvements in facilities and equipment, adequate pay and benefits, and resolution of childcare issues through institutional reforms.

Keywords: Future, Female, Personnel, Organization, Culture, System, Decrease Military Service Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

South Korea is a low birthrate country with a total fertility rate of less than 1. As a result, the reduction of military resources will inevitably follow, and the proportion and role of women in the military will become increasingly important. While South Korean female soldiers are active in all fields, including infantry and combat unit commanders, their actual operating ratio in combat is analyzed to be minimal. However, with changes like warfare and social environment, it is necessary for the South Korean military to actively utilize women's personnel as the United States and Canada have done by proactively expanding women's personnel, and as Israel and Norway have done by adopting women's conscription. This is due to population cliffs that lead to a shortage of military resources, the possibility of overcoming the difference in physical ability between men and women due to the development of science and technology such as exo-suit, which supports muscle

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strength, and the expansion of women's participation in public sectors. This is evidenced by the case of foreign troops who have experienced changed war patterns such as the United States, Canada, Israel, and Norway presented in the text and promoted the expansion of female manpower and roles. This study analyzes the utilization of South Korean women's personnel from the past to the present, identifies problems, analyzes the cases of advanced foreign militaries, and proposes future utilization strategies for women's personnel in the South Korean military.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1 Operating System

The South Korean Women's Army was established in the aftermath of the Korean War. Although there were previous women's activities related to national defense, such as the founding of the Air Force Women's Army, the history of women soldiers performing substantial missions began in the Army. Since the establishment of the Women's Volunteer Corps in September 1950, it has been regarded and managed as infantry in the troop information and education, Corps, Division, and Intelligence Unit, and after the war, it has been used as an administrative support force. In 1989, after the Women's Army was disbanded, it was converted to seven branches, including infantry, and currently operates female personnel in all branches [1].

Female soldiers are selected through training programs such as each military academy and student military school, and the military academy selects female soldiers within 10% of the total number of personnel. The scale and role of the Women's Army are continuously expanding. In 2017, the Women's Army had 10,555 personnel, accounting for 5.9% of the total military personnel, but under a five-year plan to expand women's entry into the public sector during the Moon Jae-in administration, the expansion of female personnel in the Women's Army was promoted. They established a goal of increasing the total capacity to 8.8% by 2022, with officers expanded to 10.9% and non-commissioned officers to 7.9%. Furthermore, as a national defense task of the Ministry of National Defense, they are promoting the guarantee of working conditions for female soldiers, expanding the advancement of female personnel and ranks, and improving systems to support pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare for female soldiers [2].

2.2 Research Contents

The operation of female personnel in the South Korean military can be broadly divided into four stages, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Changes in the Operation of Female Personnel in the South Korean Military

Stage	1940s ~ 1950s	1960s ~ 1970s	1980s	1990s ~ Present
Content	Mainly focused on nursing and administrative roles	Selection of the first female soldiers for combat units and other positions Formation of combat units	Reduction in the number of female soldiers	Disbandment of women's army corps, Integration into combined army

a. 1948~1950s

Following the establishment of the Army Hospital on May 1, 1948, after the Japanese colonial era, the need for nursing personnel arose and female nursing officers were commissioned as officers. On February 15, 1949,

the Women's Aviation Education Unit under the Army Aviation Headquarters was founded, and the first women's military organization in South Korea was established when the Women's Volunteer Army Education Unit was organized in September 1950, during the outbreak of the Korean War.

b. 1960~1970s

In 1969, as part of measures to strengthen preparations against North Korean aggression following the January 21, 1968 Presidential Palace Raid incident, a special forces unit for women was recruited, and Corporal Jeong Hyo-dan and seven other women who completed the combat training became the first female combat personnel in South Korea [3].

c. 1980s

In the 1980s, the number of female soldiers in the military was reduced by 33%. Female soldiers were criticized for performing inefficient tasks such as typing, which increased the cost of maintaining the military. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, there was a surplus of human resources in the military due to a high birth rate from 1961 to 1987[4]. However, in 1989, in accordance with the orders of the 13th President, Roh Tae-woo, the operation of female personnel was expanded into the national defense field. Starting in 1990, the Women's Army was integrated into the Army's various branches, welcoming new changes.

d. 1990s to Present

In 1993, female soldiers began performing duties in various regions in both the rear and front lines after serving as a platoon leader in the training battalion for new soldiers. In 1998, female cadets were admitted to the Army Officer Candidate School, and in 2002, the first female general and nursing corps officer were born. Since then, all military education has been integrated with the male soldiers. As a result, the Women's Army School was dismantled on October 3, 2002.

2.3 Trends in the Operation of Women in Foreign Military Forces

Since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325[5]. in October 2000, the proportion of women in military forces has increased worldwide, and their roles and methods of operation have been improved and expanded. In particular, the role of women in the military, which was previously limited to technical and administrative positions and special forces, has been expanded to combat troops, such as those performing counterterrorism and special operations, following the verification of their capabilities through numerous wars.

The United States and Canada are representative examples of countries that have expanded the ratio of female officers and combat troops. In addition, Israel and Norway, which have chosen to implement women's conscription to perform the same military duty as men, have also strengthened the social status of women in the military. The utilization of women in the military in these countries is as follows.

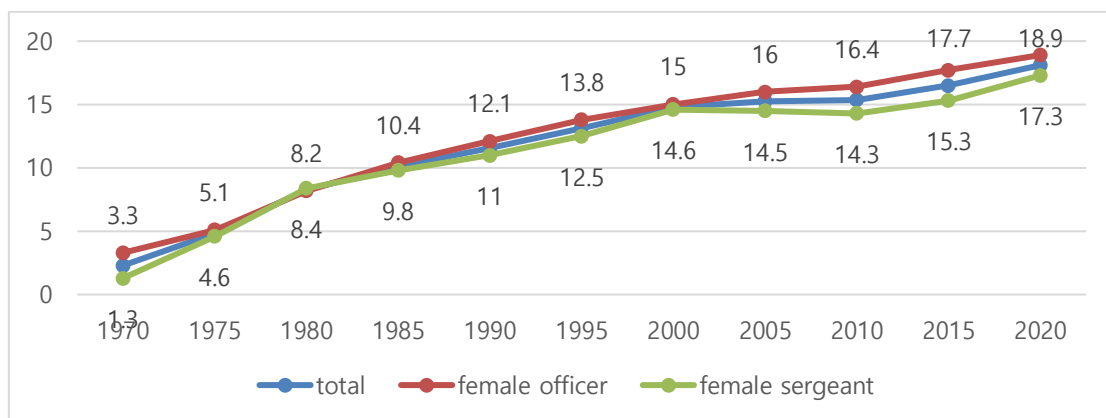
a. Countries with Expanded Women's Military Personnel

1) United States

In 1901, the US military established women's military personnel under the name of the Army Nurse Corps, the first of its kind in the world. The US military is a representative country that aims to expand the proportion of women in military leadership positions. Prior to World War II, women in the military were limited to nursing and clerical work, but their roles were expanded during the war to include fields such as communications, maintenance, intelligence, and supply.

However, the continuous expansion of the proportion and roles of women in the military occurred after the enactment of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948. In particular, after the Gulf War in 1991, it was proven that gender roles were not important in advanced science and technology, leading to a significant expansion of women's representation in the US military.

Since the Iraq War in 2003, about 90% of military positions have been opened to women, and as of 2014, women accounted for more than 10% of the 2.7 million military personnel deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. As of 2020, women make up 18% of the total military personnel (18% in the Army, 21% in the Navy, 22% in the Air Force, 8% in the Marine Corps, and 16% in the Coast Guard). Since the lifting of restrictions on women's military roles in 2016, policy barriers that hindered women's advancement in the US military have been removed. In May 2021, the Biden administration also appointed the first female Secretary of Defense.



Source : Eun-Jung Lee(2022).

Figure 1. Changes in the percentage of female troops in the U.S. Army

2) Canada

Canada is also a country that is expanding the proportion of female personnel among its military leaders, similar to the United States. The current Minister of National Defence in Canada is a woman and is the second woman to hold the position since the 1990s. Canada lifted its cap on the number of women in the military in 1971 and enacted the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1978 and 1985, respectively, to expand the role of women in the military. In 1987, after an impact assessment on the employment of men and women in combat units, the proportion of women in combat troops was expanded. As a result, during the Iraq War, about 10% of Canada's regular army were women.

As of January 2020, the Canadian Armed Forces had about 119,000 members, of which 15,672 were women, or 16%. In the army, the proportion of women is as high as 13.5%. Canada is revising relevant laws and personnel policies to increase the entry of outstanding female personnel into the military and has set an ambitious goal of expanding the proportion of female military personnel to 25% by 2026. Canada's military operates without discrimination against men and women in all areas, based on strict performance criteria.

b. Countries with female conscription

1) Israel

Israel is a country that conscripts women and maintains a ratio of 33.3% women in the military. This high proportion of women in the military is based on the threats facing Israel from both inside and outside the country. While military service in Israel lasts 24 months, exemptions are possible for religious, marriage, pregnancy, and other reasons, so in reality, only 40-50% of women actually serve. About 4% of all female soldiers perform combat missions such as infantry, artillery, and armor, while the rest work mainly in administrative, communication, and air traffic control fields[6]. Women in the Israeli military are also assigned combat missions such as surveillance, reconnaissance, and sniping. The mixed-gender "Wildcat" unit is dedicated to counter-terrorism operations in the southern operational zone, and 55% of the intelligence personnel, known for their excellent ground intelligence gathering skills, are women.

2) Norway

Norway is also a country that conscripts women, with a total of 17.3% of women in the military. Norway is the first NATO country to assign women to all combat positions, and women are free to voluntarily enlist. In 2014, a female-only platoon (Hunter Troop) was established in the special forces (FSK), which must pass rigorous physical tests before being admitted and perform the same missions as male soldiers. Men and women also use the same living quarters and uniforms naturally. The reason why Norway is able to implement such female conscription is that the entire population has a high level of gender intelligence, considers military service honorable, and because the social benefits provided during military service are significant.

3. CONCLUSION

Expanding the role of women in the military is inevitable, considering global trends such as a declining population leading to a reduction in military resources, advancements in science and technology that overcome physical differences between genders, and the strengthening of women's social status. This can be seen in the cases of foreign militaries as mentioned earlier. However, whether to choose to expand women's military personnel like the US and Canadian armies or to choose female conscription like Norway and Israel, requires national consensus. In any case, the following efforts are necessary to expand women's military personnel.

Firstly, it is necessary to significantly reorganize the current military branch system and gradually expand women's personnel to all branches, considering the pace of improvement in weapon systems due to advancements in science and technology. However, rapid reorganization of the branch system may lead to unnecessary competition and administrative waste in various fields such as positions, working environments, and promotions. Therefore, it should be pursued gradually from a long-term perspective.

Secondly, to expand women's military personnel like the US and Canadian armies, it is necessary to increase the proportion of women in key policy-making departments, as Canada selected a female defense minister and the US selected a woman as the defense department chief. This is necessary to raise the voice of women soldiers and improve their rights. Furthermore, I believe that our military needs to make bold efforts to expand the role of women in all areas based on performance without discrimination, as seen in the Canadian military which has lifted the ceiling on the number of women in the military and currently has 18% of its military personnel made up of women, and in the case of the US military which maintained a proportion of women soldiers at more than 10% among the 2.7 million soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan until 2014.

Thirdly, we need to benchmark the advanced militaries that have implemented conscription for women while still operating their military stably, such as Israel and Norway. The Norwegian parliament made efforts to create the first law on compulsory military service for women among European countries, creating a gender-neutral military to enhance the competitiveness of the military and broaden its diversity. As the opinion arises that "the system of only conscripting men actually acts as a mechanism that excludes and discriminates against women" in countries with a high participation rate of women in economic activities, I think it is necessary for Korea to consider how women can participate in the military in some way, as the participation rate of women in economic activities is also increasing. Our military is facing a situation where it is difficult to expect sufficient military resources as in the 1980s, and even faces competition from various occupations in society. The realistic way to compensate for this is to bring in excellent female personnel to the military, which requires a long-term policy and practical efforts as mentioned above.

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