

# *Feminist institutionalism*

Book or Report Section

Accepted Version

Holmes, G. (2020) Feminist institutionalism. In: Oksamytna, K. and Karlsrud, J. (eds.) United Nations Peace Operations and International Relations Theory. Manchester University Press, Manchester. ISBN 9781526148872 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/86471/>

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Publisher: Manchester University Press

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## **Feminist Institutionalism**

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Feminist Institutionalism aims to understand and explain how power is distributed within institutions. Emphasising gender as a primary unit of analysis, FI's political project seeks to disrupt existing power settlements within institutions and facilitate change by identifying and challenging institutional barriers that maintain gender inequalities and other forms of discrimination. In peacekeeping contexts, these institutional barriers produce gender biases that prevent women from taking up leadership roles and stalls the creation and design of gender-just peace operations. Pillar One of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) calls for the participation of women at all decision-making levels, including in international, regional and national security institutions and in preventing, managing and resolving conflict. Women's meaningful participation cannot be achieved without institutional change, often facilitated by equality and diversity initiatives and gender-sensitive Security Sector Reform programmes within the institutions engaged in peacekeeping, and within peacekeeping missions themselves. However, little is known about how gendered institutional barriers are sustained over time; the intended and unintended gendered effects of organisational change in peacekeeping institutions and what change mechanisms are most effective.

This chapter explores how Feminist Institutionalism (FI) contributes to explaining how peacekeeping is a gendered enterprise in the context of the global racialised and classed

power relations that underscore contemporary international peacekeeping. The chapter discusses the key assumptions of Feminist Institutionalism and considers how the theory can help explain why contemporary peace operations take the shape that they do. Applying an FI approach to the study of institutional change and institutional reproduction, the chapter then examines how the implementation of gender equality initiatives in the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) impact on the way in which female military peacekeepers from Ghana are deployed to UN peace operations. Drawing on field research conducted in Ghana in 2017, the illustrative case study considers how incremental change processes take effect and examines the frictions that exist when internal ‘institutional enforcers’ attempt to reproduce the GAF’s existing gender order, often by resisting change imposed by external and internal ‘feminist activists’. Two institutional barriers that are known to prevent women’s meaningful participation in peace operations are examined: recruitment processes and deployment criteria (Ghittoni et al. 2018).

## Feminist Institutionalism

Feminist Institutionalism (FI) is a body of theory that seeks to understand and explain how power is distributed within and across institutions. The theory-building project of FI began in the mid-2000s, when feminist political scientists examined how seemingly bureaucratically-neutral structures, rules, norms and practices that constitute institutions are gendered and produce gendered effects (Chappell 2006; Kenny 2007). FI builds on New Institutionalism, which traces how institutional continuity and change occurs, but argues for the importance of incorporating gender into institutional-level analyses.

Feminist Institutionalism therefore shares many of the theoretical assumptions of the different strands of New Institutionalism and FI scholars have created dialogues between the two types of theory and identified synergies to demonstrate how a gendered approach can add value to the study of institutions (Lowndes 2009: 92; Mackay et al. 2010). Like New Institutionalism, FI reflects the Critical turn's rejection of the positivist theoretical approaches applied to earlier analyses of institutions (Lowndes 2009). Feminist Institutionalists foreground institutions as a primary explanatory variable in political analysis and gendered social actors as central to the analysis of the economic, social and political behaviour of institutions (Mackay et al. 2010: 573). Inspired by agency-structure debates, Feminist Institutionalists contend that institutions are not a-temporal, static, monolithic 'things' but dynamic entities that constrain or enable the behaviour of social actors working inside and outside of them. Since they are dynamic, institutions evolve and may be altered by social actors (Chappell 2006: 224).

An FI approach helps to explain how institutions function and elucidates on context-specific relationships between institutions and gendered social actors (Chappell 2006: 223). Formal and informal rules, norms and practices 'prescribe' and 'proscribe "acceptable" masculine and feminine forms of behaviour' for men and women within institutions and 'produce outcomes which help to...re/produce broader social and political gender expectations' (Chappell 2006: 225). Formal (codified) rules, norms and practices as well as 'bureaucratic neutrality' establish the institution's 'gendered logic of appropriateness' which regulates social actors (Chappell 2006: 225). This gender logic is enforced by informal routines, norms and practices and subtle forms of violence targeting social actors that threaten the stability of the institution. Feminists are also interested in tracing how change occurs within institutions and how different types of change process – such as small incremental changes over time or large exogenous shocks – can result in different intended

and unintended gendered outcomes. Examining the relationship between continuity and change, FI scholars identify several types of social actor, including ‘reformers’ and internal or external ‘feminist activists’ who seek to reengineer or transform institutions,<sup>62</sup> and ‘institutional enforcers’ such as powerful male elites that benefit the most from the established gendered logic of appropriateness, and in whose best interests it is to retain the institution’s status quo (Mackay 2014).

As a political project, FI acknowledges that women ‘continue to suffer discrimination and lower levels of representation because of their sex’ and Feminist Institutional scholar pay particular attention to women’s inclusion within and exclusion from institutions, their experience and engagement in institutional dynamics, and how effectively gender equality reforms facilitate the redistribution of power within institutions (Chappell 2006: 222; Chappell and Waylen 2013). This focus has been enabled by the evolution in thinking about gender within feminist discourse more broadly, and the emergence of more complex understandings of gender as socially constructed, fluid and continually negotiated (Krook et al. 2011: 4). Identifying gender as a process, FI scholars seek to expose and explain how gender relations underscore the seemingly neutral structures of institutions (Chappell 2006: 224). The emphasis on gender as socially constructed has led to the development of intersectional analyses that examine how institutions constrain or enable the behaviour of a diversity of social actors categorised according to prescribed social divisions such as class, race, gender, sex, sexuality, age, ableism and religion. This has opened up the study of institutions to examine how women and men of colour and other(ed) minority women and men may be enabled or constrained and discriminated against across time and place within a given institution (Kenny 2007; Ahmed 2012). By drawing on feminist theories and a

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diversity of feminist methodologies, Feminist Institutionalists have contributed to understanding how boundaries between political institutions and the private lives of social actors become demarcated (Krook and Mackay 2011: 5). For example, when institutional dynamics shape the policies that impact on the daily lives of those social actors. The aim of this theorising is to help feminist activists and their supporters disrupt existing institutional gender logics and gender biases and facilitate change to create gender-just institutions (Lowndes 2015: 689).

Though Feminist Institutionalism has significantly enhanced understandings of how institutions operate, and how social actors interact with institutions, much of the research and theorising has concentrated on the study of domestic-level political institutions of governments in the global north and global south, rather than international and regional institutions. Scholars of Feminist International Relations have only recently begun to apply FI approaches to examine how international and regional security institutions such as the UN, NATO, the European Union and African Union are gendered and produce gendered effects for social actors that interact inside and outside of them (Holmes et al. 2019). Here, emphasis is placed on how effectively international institutions are implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and its related resolutions, though it is recognised that there are many other policy areas that demand attention (See Basu 2010; Wright 2016; Hurley 2018; Bastick and Duncanson 2018; Kronsell 2015; Guerrina et al. 2016).

These scholars draw on theorising about gendered international institutions that pre-dates FI, but apply the conceptual tools developed and employed by Feminist Institutionalists. Nevertheless, a Feminist IR approach has much to offer the Feminist Institutionalism project and there is still significant potential to further develop this body of

theorising. A Feminist IR approach can be used to analyse the transnational and transregional workings of international security institutions and adds a global perspective to analyses of formal institutions, as well as the informal within institutions (Holmes et al. 2019). Feminist IR has also tended to engage more extensively with postcolonial theories, which have the potential to facilitate the development of innovative methodological tools and approaches that can be used to overcome access challenges such as uncovering informal rules within institutions – as FI scholars have called for (Kenny 2007: 95; Krook and Mackay 2011; Lowndes 2015). Adopting postcolonial theories may help feminists investigate how competitions and partnerships between patriarchal regimes emerge within international institutions; examine why the bodies of some social actors are regarded as the ‘accepted norm’ in some institutions and not others (Holmes et al. 2019); uncover why and when social actors choose to comply or challenge an institution’s gendered logic of appropriateness, and expose the gendered, classed and racialised power relations within and between national, regional and international institutions operating within the international system.

### Feminist Institutionalism and peacekeeping

Unsurprisingly, due to the original focus on national political institutions and the limited engagement with the theory in the field of International Relations, Feminist Institutionalism has not been applied to UN peacekeeping, despite synergies between the intentions of scholars researching peacekeeping as a gendered enterprise and the political project of FI. This is most notable in the shared ambition to redistribute power within institutions involved in peacekeeping; to facilitate gender equality reforms; to overcome the institutional barriers that prevent women’s meaningful participation in peacekeeping; to redesign and restructure peacekeeping workforces so that women are engaged in decision-

making at the tactical, operational and strategic levels in peacekeeping; to respond to the gender-specific needs and concerns of the host population (the social actors that interact with peacekeeping institutions)<sup>63</sup> including preventing peacekeeper violence such as Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and child abuse; and to ensure a gender approach is incorporated at all stages of a peacekeeping mission – from design to drawdown and withdrawal, as recommended in the UN’s Global study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2015) (United Nations 2015). Feminist Institutionalism has informed important research in the field of Critical Military Studies where scholars have examined how national military and police institutions constrain and enable female security actors, and assessed how effectively gender equality reform programmes have been implemented by individual militaries and police forces, but much of this research observes state-level institutional barriers in isolation to the broader institutional structures of international peacekeeping (see Carreiras 2006; Sion 2008; Duncanson 2009; Egnell et al. 2014; Wilén and Heinecken 2018).

So how might a Feminist Institutional approach to the study of peacekeeping research enhance understandings of why and how contemporary peacekeeping operations take the shape that they do? An FI approach would suggest that peacekeeping missions are not stable, monolithic institutions and are instead formed out of constellations of gendered institutions that interact with one another. While contemporary peacekeeping missions are designed prior to mission start-up, they are temporal and dynamic in nature, with mission success dependent on many variables including the political will of the host nation, availability of UN financing, resources offered by UN member states and deployment constraints. How peace operations experience continuity and change is therefore determined by the interests of a vast network of social actors that operate within or interact with

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63 See DeGroot, 2001; Bridges and Horsfall, 2009; Beardsley and Karim, 2013; Karim and Beardsley, 2017; Heathcote and Otto, 2014; Heinecken, 2015; Jennings, 2011; Pruitt, 2016; Rupesinghe et.al., 2018.



peacekeeping institutions. Collectively, these institutions constitute the peacekeeping institutional matrix.

Contemporary peace operations are formed out of gendered formal and informal rules, norms and practices that are intended to regulate (govern) peacekeeping institutions and peacekeepers (Holmes 2019). Peacekeeping institutions including Troop Contributing member states, TCC militaries and police forces, civilian peacekeeping institutions (international NGOs), external contractors, UN organs and agencies (for example, UN Security Council, DPO/DOS, UN Women) and the social actors that work within these institutions must cooperate effectively to deliver mission objectives. Cooperation in international peacekeeping is also shaped by global racialised power inequalities, often described as the ‘global colour-line’ (Razack 2004: 9; see also Henry 2015) in peacekeeping. Cold-Ravnkilde et al. show how structural inequalities in the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) reinforce cultural differences between (predominantly male) African and European military peacekeepers which in turn determine how dangerous roles and functions, as well as mission supplies are allocated (Cold-Ravnkilde et al. 2017). African soldiers deployed in their national battalions and companies disproportionately suffered and experienced higher death tolls than European peacekeepers, who tended to work in the more protected UN compounds and in strategic roles within the mission head office. These kinds of racialised structural inequalities, evidenced in the informal rules, norms and practices of MINUSMA, led to intra-mission frictions which slowed down the mission and prevented peacekeepers from effectively delivering mission objectives (Cold-Ravnkilde et al. 2017: 35). In this instance, racial hierarchies informed the logic of appropriateness of MINUSMA.

A Feminist Institutionalist approach would take this analysis one step further to explore how MINUSMA's logic of appropriateness is informed by gendered and classed inequalities, in addition to racialised structural inequalities. Rather than conceptualise the mission area as primarily a geographical space, as has been the case in many ground-breaking studies to date (see Higate and Henry 2009; Auteserre 2014; Smirl 2015), emphasis is placed on how intersecting global structural inequalities manifest in the formal (visible) laws, standards and protocols and informal (hidden) rules, norms and practices within and between peacekeeping institutions that operate within and outside of the mission area. Complementing existing studies, a Feminist Institutionalist approach therefore enables the researcher to 'grasp systems of interaction across formal [and informal] barriers' (Bogason in Lowndes 2009: 94), but adds greater nuance by examining how a diversity of gendered peacekeeping actors are constrained and enabled or are subjected to racialised and gendered effects in different institutional contexts, and how these influence political behaviours and decision-making in international peacekeeping.

An FI approach can help to identify how the behaviour of different peacekeeping institutions, acting both individually and in partnership with other institutions in the context of decentralised governance arrangements results in intended and unintended gendered effects for the recipients of peacekeeping and peacebuilding tasks in the host nation including preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), helping survivors of Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) and implementing liberal peacebuilding initiatives, for instance educating and empowering women. Undertaking comparative analyses while adopting an FI approach can also expose and explain the institutional conditions under which exogenous and endogenous change processes are successful in delivering the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda, and the conditions under which change processes and initiatives are stalled.

In doing so, feminist activists may become better equipped with the knowledge and vocabulary required to disrupt existing power settlements in international peacekeeping.

### Integrating female military peacekeepers from Ghana

Examining how the UN's directive to integrate more female military peacekeepers is implemented by Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), the following case study illustrates how a Feminist Institutionalist approach contributes towards explaining how peace operations take the gendered shape that they do. The case study examines gendered institutional dynamics and the frictions that occur when exogenous feminist activists from the UN's Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and internal male GAF feminist activists attempt to improve deployment opportunities for Ghanaian female peacekeepers working in UN peace operations. The case study is informed by 45 depth-interviews with senior leaders, trainers and male and female military personnel of mixed ranks conducted during field research in Accra, Ghana in January and February 2017. Analysis of GAF policies and procedures was undertaken to gather formal rules and regulations around recruitment and deployment of peacekeepers. Informal gendered rules, norms and practices were gathered during depth-interviews, wherein research participants shared personal stories about their experiences working in the Ghana Armed Forces and in UN peace operations. Through conducting a discourse analysis of these narratives, an understanding of how GAF gender equality initiatives were implemented is constructed. Research participants consented to the interviews and are referred to by rank and role to ensure anonymity.

## **Incremental change processes within the GAF**

When UNSCR 1325 was unanimously adopted in 2000, Pillar One called for fundamental change to the gendered structure and composition of all security institutions engaged in peacekeeping. Yet feminist scholars and policymakers have been critical of the resolution's failure to serve as a catalyst for large scale, rapid change, noting that gender balancing and women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping follows a much slower pace with small, incremental change processes appearing to be most effective (Heathecote and Otto 2014). DPO in New York decides the number of female military peacekeepers required of Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) for each peacekeeping mission, though it is the responsibility of individual TCCs to source and recruit female peacekeepers with the appropriate skills and experience from their ranks. Since most peacekeeping troops on the ground are recruited from countries of the Global South, African, Asian, South American and Middle Eastern militaries are under more pressure to implement gender mainstreaming initiatives than militaries in the Global North and at a much faster pace. This expectation has placed increased pressure on women from the global south to carry the burden of security by delivering on gender-sensitive UN mission targets (Henry 2012).

In line with global trends, Ghana Armed Forces has been increasing its female contributions since the introduction of UNSCR 1325 in 2000.<sup>64</sup> Rather than design and implement a gender-sensitive Security Sector Reform programme to transform the masculine-dominated culture of the armed forces, facilitate the integration of women into the military and increase acceptance of female military personnel's skills and abilities at all decision-making levels, GAF senior leaders introduced new gender-sensitive policies incrementally to quickly accommodate women and to mitigate gender issues as and when

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<sup>64</sup> Male GAF officer 1, interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, 2 February 2017.

they arose. This was achieved through the mobilisation of a mechanism called institutional layering, whereby ‘new elements’ (in this case women and the gendered functions they deliver such as assisting female survivors of CRSV in peace operations) are ‘attached to [the] existing institution’ (Van der Heijden 2011:1). Although the aim is to ‘gradually change [the institution’s] status and structure’, institutional layering does not require replacing existing policies, norms and practices and therefore does not necessarily threaten the status quo of the institution (Van der Heijden 2011:1). Gender issues that senior leadership addressed tended to be the ones that were perceived to destabilise the existing institutional masculine core of the GAF and were therefore a concern for elite military men. For example, fearing that women’s integration into peace operations would result in the decline in discipline among the troops, commanding officers introduced an informal policy preventing men and women from socialising in the Ghanaian base camp after 7pm at night.<sup>65</sup> Yet, the gendered consequences of this informal policy – for instance, those related to the social isolation that female peacekeepers experience in the mission – were not formerly addressed by GAF senior leadership.

Institutional layering was evident in the narrative about GAF recruitment policies and processes articulated by a male Lieutenant Colonel. Operating as an ‘institutional enforcer’ in his capacity as head of an administrative directorate, the Lt. Colonel classified the integration of women as part of the process of ‘restructuring’ the Ghana Armed Forces. When further probed what he meant by restructuring, the director changed his phrasing to claim that women’s integration constituted ‘the expansion [of the GAF] and then adding more rules’. He continued:

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<sup>65</sup> Male GAF officer 1.

We are required to create specific areas in job descriptions where we have to incorporate women to assist as part of the job. I don't think [the institutional structure is] anything different...As I said, it's just an expansion of whatever we have. When I look at the expansion of the medical units, where we need more female nurses, or in the communications outfit, the IT areas, we need [women there] as well, and even in the infantry units, where we might require some of the women in clerical roles to support the units.<sup>66</sup>

Although GAF senior leaders always ensured they had enough women to meet UN quotas<sup>67</sup>, their focus on numbers recruited rather than on women in leadership and the lack of equal opportunities for women across all trades and units meant that those women deployed often did not have the skillsets required by the UN. At the time of the field research, the GAF had not developed equal opportunity recruitment campaigns to encourage women to join conventionally 'masculine' trades such as engineering, critical military functions and combat units, nor established a talent pipeline to fast track female military personnel for promotion into leadership positions. Instead, most women were slotted into traditional feminised trades such as administration, cooking, nursing and accountancy where female officers held management positions. Indeed the most senior woman, who was a brigadier general, worked in finance. The director interpreted women's entry into these trades as evidence of positive discrimination, arguing that all recruitment criteria including age, physical fitness and academic ability were the same for men and women. He remarked:

The other thing that maybe favours the females is the trade. So, for example, you have more clerical staff, catering staff, nurses – these ancillary activities. You have more of them going to the females. And then the hardcore work of the military – that is the infantry and the weapons – they go to the males. It doesn't mean that you don't find females in those units.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Male GAF officer 2, interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, 1 February 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Male GAF officer 2.

<sup>68</sup> Male GAF officer 2.

Yet, as in many African countries, high unemployment in Ghana and a large pool of educated, young potential workers meant that competition to join the GAF was fierce for both men and women. Several of the women interviewed indicated that they joined the military because it was the only option available to them to pursue a career in the trade that they had trained in. One female lieutenant who was a head nurse stated that she had joined the military during the ‘special medical intake’ recruitment period, but previously had had no desire to be a soldier.<sup>69</sup> As another male senior leader explained, women tended to apply to join the military because they knew they had the qualifications required to be accepted into feminised trades. Other female soldiers interviewed who signed up as soldiers and who believed they were capable of succeeding in more senior and challenging positions expressed their frustration at being prevented from competing with men for combatant roles and spoke of being segregated throughout their military career and when deployed to UN peace operations.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, those women who joined the military for job security alone and did not wish to engage in kinetic activity inadvertently lent credence to the argument proposed by institutional enforcers within the GAF that men and women should deploy to UN peace operations in their ‘natural’ gender roles. This meant men should work on the frontline and women should work in service roles – either in the more protected Ghanaian base camp or in UN headquarters – and should only partake in frontline activities when women were required, for example when liaising with local populations in IDP camps, where they are expected to use ‘feminised’ skills in communication and care.<sup>71</sup> These recruitment

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<sup>69</sup> Female peacekeeper 1, interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, 31 January 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Female major, focus group with author, Accra, Ghana, 3 February 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Male GAF officer 3, interview with the author, Accra, Ghana, 2 February 2017. See Holmes, 2019 for an analysis of how women are trained to undertake feminised roles once deployed.

processes directly impacted on how Ghana Armed Forces could meet the UN's requirement to redress the gender balance in peacekeeping workforces.

### **Feminist activist work**

In a challenge to institutional resistance, external feminist activists and internal GAF feminist activists have used alternative incremental change processes with the intention of replacing discriminatory policies, norms and practices and with the longer-term view to disrupt and rebalance existing gender power relations in the GAF. To an extent, these incremental change processes were made possible by the ad hoc approach to gender mainstreaming adopted by GAF senior leaders. For example, DPO staff focused on nurturing a Ghanaian male feminist activist when in 2012, a male Lieutenant Colonel seconded to DPO in New York for three years was asked to develop gender awareness pre-deployment training materials which would be distributed globally to military peacekeepers. At the time, the trainer did not self-identify as gender aware, but after having developed the training package, he began to operate as a feminist activist within the GAF on his return to Ghana. He explained:

That's how I became involved in these gender matters...It was good. It was revealing to me because as a West African, we have these stereotypes about the superiority of men over women and all that stuff, especially in the military. I had to do a lot of research to develop the [training] materials. I had to look back on my own experiences – peacekeeping experiences. It was good. From there, at least that gender awareness came to me. [When I returned to Ghana] I *had* to change the [pre-deployment] training curriculum. I brought in gender and started a crusade – a gender crusade in the military. Whenever we have a meeting, I try to bring up this issue.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Male GAF officer 3.



Identifying, what he called ‘sub-cultures’ within the Ghana Armed Forces (wherein the dominant culture perpetuated the discriminatory norm that women were not full members of the military institution), the feminist activist claimed that Ghanaian peacekeepers took the stereotypes about Ghanaian women ‘to the field’ (peace operations) and that ‘We [the military] don’t want to send the women to the frontline in any capacity’, whether it be ‘in a combatant role or as a nurse or a radio operator’. While deployed as an assistant operations officer in Sierra Leone, this feminist activist tried to end women’s occupational and physical segregation in the mission area and improve GAF women’s deployment opportunities when he was responsible for placing Ghanaian peacekeepers on duty. However, his efforts backfired when more senior institutional enforcers used subtle, coercive tactics to prevent him from changing conventional practice resulting in a friction that slowed down efforts to meaningfully integrate and effectively utilise skilled women in peace operations. He explained:

There was this medical lady that I put on duty and the duty was overnight. You go and stay in the office, you stay overnight like a watchkeeper. They [his senior colleagues] were like, “No, no, no, no. You know you don’t have to put the woman on duty.” I said, “No.” I insisted that she must go, she’s also an officer, right? So, she must also go on duty. That day [I had] a barrage of calls. Even my boss called me and said, “No. You see this one? She’s a woman and you know it’s only men there.” Then I insisted that day she did the duty. My boss said, “Okay, put her at risk.” But he didn’t accept it. He insisted. So, I didn’t put her on duty again. For that night she did the duty. From there, I didn’t put her on duty again.<sup>73</sup>

In contrast, a more senior feminist activist who had more power and a stronger voice within the institution was successful in challenging his colleague’s gender biases while deployed to Lebanon, demonstrating how his perseverance significantly improved women’s opportunities in the mission during his time and during future rotations. He observed:

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<sup>73</sup> Male GAF officer 3.

Initially, the females were segregated into a warehouse and in one headquarters, even though we had different locations. But I said, “No. I think it’s wrong. We’re not giving the ladies or the females that initiative. We are not integrating them well by putting them in one position at the headquarters and in one building.” So, what I said was that we will distribute these females to the various positions...This was the first time we were going to do it. So, when my commander said they [the women] don’t have washrooms. I said no way. The females can use the same washroom as me. It doesn’t matter. They’re the same human beings. Or if you insist for cultural reasons that we should get washrooms, I can get them for you. And I insisted, and we distributed them [the women]. That was the very first time it happened in Lebanon. And I did it.<sup>74</sup>

Despite instances where incremental change had been successful, both external and internal GAF feminist activists were limited in their ability to facilitate change because they were only able to disrupt discriminatory norms and practices at the operational and tactical levels within the military. Without disrupting the power settlement at the strategic level, the feminist activists were not able to disrupt the GAF’s status quo and the masculine institutional core remained intact.

## Conclusion

Feminist Institutionalism, with its emphasis on explaining and understanding gendered power relations and continuity and change within institutions provides valuable theoretical and methodological tools for analysing international peacekeeping, which in this chapter is conceptualised as a changeable and evolving institutional matrix. Given the vast range of international, regional and national institutions engaged in peacekeeping, a Feminist Institutional approach has much to offer studies examining why contemporary peace operations take the gendered shape that they do. Adding a feminist IR perspective to the

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<sup>74</sup> Male GAF officer 1.

study of peacekeeping institutions, this chapter calls for analyses that consider how global gendered, racialised and classed power relations inform institutional change processes and initiatives, as well as political behaviours and decision-making in international peacekeeping. As the Ghana case study illustrated, international pressure to rapidly recruit and deploy female peacekeepers from militaries in the Global South led to an organic, unplanned approach to gender mainstreaming, whereupon strategic level institutional enforcers used institutional layering – an incremental change process that involves adding formal and informal policies and practices to existing policies and practices – to quickly accommodate a larger number of women into the military without disrupting the institutional status quo. The case study also examined the frictions that exist between institutional enforcers and feminist activists who, often operating covertly, attempt to evolve the military institution by introducing alternative policies and practices incrementally – in this case with the intent of improving GAF women’s deployment opportunities. It was argued that these frictions slowed down the DPO’s efforts to deploy more gender-balanced peacekeeping workforces to UN peace operations, and to make better use of women’s skills and experiences once deployed. In this respect, a Feminist Institutionalist approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how change management mechanisms sustain or challenge discriminatory rules, norms and practices in peacekeeping institutions and can be applied to TCC security institutions located in both the Global South and Global North to ascertain the context-specific institutional barriers that hinder the democratisation of contemporary peacekeeping workforces.

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